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Apology as Antidote

Before we consider this subject, we will first give definitions for the two words in the title:

Apology - A regretful acknowledgment to another regarding an offense or failure

Antidote - Medicine given or taken to counteract the effects of a particular poison

In Psalm 38:18, David makes two clear statements:

"I will declare mine iniquity". Note that he is not hiding his sin. He is honestly admitting it. "I will be sorry for my sin". His attitude shows he sees the evil of his sin, not defending it.

All too often, difficulties arising between brethren, or even between people in general, are best described by Proverbs 18:19, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle". We will call this:

The Breach and the Barrier

Proverbs 13:10 teaches, "Only by pride cometh contention". Pride caused Lucifer's fall from heaven (Ezekiel 28:17). Pride is at the top of the list of six things God hates as seen in Proverbs 6:16-19. What this suggests, quite simply, is that if we, as Christians, should ever find ourselves on one side of a barrier caused by contention with another, we would do well to examine our own hearts (Psalm 139:23-24) for the purpose of flushing out any element of pride that might be hindering us from recognizing our part in a behavioral breach that has led to an ongoing relationship barrier. As the Spirit of God brings before us our fault,

James 5:16 urges us to "confess our faults one to another" and Proverbs 6:1-3 shows that

when we have offended someone, we are to undo our "ensnarement" by going to him or her to make things right. We will call this:

The Snare and the Surety

Generally, the above-mentioned breach and the barrier is thought to be felt by both parties when there is contention. However, there are times when an offense is committed, and the offender is oblivious to having done so. Whichever the case, both scenarios are untenable as to maintaining earthly friendships. But furthermore, as we will see later, such unresolved barriers injure proper sensibilities relative to communion with God. Proverbs 6:3 gives pointed admonition, "Do this now", "Deliver thyself", and "Go to thy brother" and "make sure thy brother". Notice that it does not say that we are to sit and stew, complain to others of our wounds (in some cases, maybe just wounded pride) or wait for our brother to come sheepishly repenting toward us. The Lord expects each of us to make the first move toward reconciliation. It's to be done immediately, it's to be done directly, and interestingly enough, Solomon, by the Holy Spirit chooses to write, "deliver thyself". This is in direct keeping with "always having a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16). The danger of ignoring a defiled conscience is "a seared conscience". The "snare" Solomon speaks of is a defiled conscience that harbors ill will and traps a soul in bitterness and deception. That's what he tells us we need to be delivered from. And finally, may God help us to see that winning our brother overrules winning the argument (contention). Nobody ever really wins in that contest. A brother not gained will affect our worship of God. We will call this:

Remembrance and Reconciliation

There are two portions of scripture in Matthew's Gospel that teach the above principle. Some of this has already been dealt with in our first two considerations. In Matthew 5:22-24, the case

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of a brother offended without satisfactory resolution is stated by our Lord as being a hindrance to bringing a gift to the altar, both as it would relate to existing Jewish tradition derived from the law and to the future millennial kingdom. In Matthew 18:15-19, while similar in principle, yet different in dispensation, the church is now in view as to how offenses were to be handled. One could devote the rest of the page to bringing in other scriptures, dissecting original Greek words, and piling on many applicable ideas but truthfully, a stated principle in John 4:23-24 suffices: God is Spirit. He desires worship. He is to be worshiped in Spirit and in truth. The two cases presented in Matthew's Gospel make it clear that such worship would be impossible by anyone cast into prison, figuratively (Matthew 5:25) or one regarded as a heathen man or a publican (Matthew 18:17). To apologize for offenses presupposes we've already told the Lord about it (1 John 1:9) but still need to clear the air with our brethren.

Apology is the antidote to the poison of pride, the driver of every contention and refusal to admit failure or wrongdoing. Let's remember and confess our faults, seeking to be reconciled with any we have offended before we attempt to remember the Lord each first day of the week. To do so involves learning to use five humble words easy to be understood, even by children, but not always easy to speak honestly. They are: **I was wrong** and **I'm sorry**.

It is man-like to follow the people, to drift with the tide; it is God-like to follow a principle, to stem the tide.

One Loaf & One Cup

Joel Portman

It would only be fair to state that every ordinance instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ that has been reinforced and practiced by the early church has been corrupted or maltreated by subsequent actions of the majority who claim to be Christians. It is sad that those who make their boast in Jesus Christ as their Lord

and Savior, fail to seriously heed the clear teaching and pattern of His own Word. One can understand those who are only 'Christian' in name doing this, but increasingly, those who claim to be fundamental in their belief of Biblical truth think lightly about manipulating the Word of God and failing to keep it as it has been entrusted to us.

Some of these changes obviously must include baptism, since it has been altered from its original meaning and purpose to express something altogether different. An entire list giving evidence of degeneration could be considered, but in this article, I desire to only consider the sacred institution of the Lord's Supper. That anything so sacred and central to Christian experience could be so ruined should cause all true believers to weep with sincere sadness, since it is so closely associated with the Person of our Lord Jesus. Our purpose in this article is to emphasize the importance of the single loaf of bread and a single cup in the Lord's Supper in an assembly, in contrast to the use of individual cups and other forms of bread instead of a loaf.

Its Institution

Our question must begin with, "How did the Lord institute or commence this practice?" Did He use many pieces of bread, wafers, crackers, or other forms of this material? Did He take several cups and say, "Each one of you drink what is in your own cup that is before you?" We must look at the wording of the institution of the Supper in the three synoptic gospels to learn His intention.

Our sole source is the language of these gospels (Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20), when our blessed Lord, on His way to Calvary, celebrated the Passover with His disciples "with great desire". Passover was a celebration of a past event of deliverance that stood above all others in its importance to the Israelites. This was the last time that the Lord would participate in this feast, but it was also the last opportunity for Him to give us the practice and principles of the Lord's Supper.

We read words in each of the synoptic gospels similar to these: "...*Jesus took bread, and blessed (it), and brake (it), and gave (it) to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my*

body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave (it) to them, saying, drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament (covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'"

Notice first that the Greek word translated as "bread" is "artos" (#140), which is used for common bread that was on a table at a meal. Some insist that the bread should be unleavened, and very likely it was in the upper room because of the circumstances. But it is notable that the word that the Holy Spirit and all these writers chose was the word used simply for common bread. "Unleavened bread" would be #106, which has a different meaning in Greek. The selection of words for this history is important, since it is insisting that the type of bread isn't important. At this time of the year when the Supper was being instituted, it was likely barley bread, but perhaps not. So the type of bread is unimportant.

The singularity of the bread isn't quite so much emphasized at this point, since the little word "it" has been added to the text and some may object on that ground. However, all translations of the passage seem to indicate that the verb preceding it must have a singular object so that "it" is properly included. In that case, it is also pointing to something that was a singular object. He didn't say, "these are my body," nor do we read that He took "some pieces of bread" and passed "them" to His disciples. So ONE bread source was used, and we see in 1 Corinthians 11:23-24 that it was understood to be One Loaf, not a slice, large piece, or any other form.

Likewise, there is care in how Scripture speaks about the cup so that it emphasizes "the cup" and "drink ye all of it", not "these are my blood, drink ye all of them." It's clear that the Lord passed one cup to the disciples which they all shared.

Both of these symbols were instituted with specific wording to clearly teach us that He intended for us to have one loaf of common bread and one cup when we remember Him.

Later corruptions of this practice have violated this principle, and we will look at them as we move further in this study.

The Language

It is important to note in this regard, whether in its practice in Acts or in its teaching in 1 Corinthians 10 or 11, that the writers always speak of one bread and one cup. This is very clear in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, where Paul says, "the cup of blessing" and, "the bread which we break". In 1 Corinthians 11:23, Paul refers to what he had received from the Lord regarding the Lord's Supper in language that is essentially the same as that in the gospels, mainly in Luke. So Paul saw the importance and practice of the one loaf and one cup without changing it from what the Lord had instituted in the Upper Room.

Language is very important in Scripture, and if we deviate from the manner in which the Holy Spirit has expressed certain truths, then we miss the meaning of them and will fail to continue in faithfulness to the Lord and His Word.

Its Symbolism

But what does the loaf signify, and what does the cup stand for? In the gospels, we hear the Lord Jesus saying, "this is my body, which is given for you...". We reject the evil interpretation that would equate the bread and the body as if one were the other. That interpretation is impossible, because it distorts both language and reason, for it couldn't be His body while His own hands were handling it! We'll look at that in the last section of this article, so we are left asking, "What did the Lord mean?"

We can receive some help if we look at an Old Testament expression of David in 2 Samuel 23:17. His three mighty men had brought water to him from the well at the gate of Bethlehem, but he wouldn't drink it. He poured it out (as a drink offering) to the Lord with the words, "*Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?*" It's very obvious that the water wasn't their blood, certainly not in its composition, and also, because their blood was still circulating in their bodies. Normal interpretation would understand that he meant that the water in that vessel was obtained at the price of their blood, i.e., it cost them the possible loss of their lives to obtain it for him. There are other similar

expressions that would also illustrate this truth. If we apply this example to the words of the Lord, we quickly understand that He was saying that the bread represented His body, and the cup represented His blood.

Another aspect of the this truth is that in the Bible, eating flesh of men and drinking blood signified killing the persons. Note Psalm 14:4, 53:4, Micah 3:3, "...*who eat up my people as they eat bread...*" so that eating the flesh of another is to partake of the results of their suffering. The Lord Jesus uses this expression John 6:54, "*Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.*" The entire passage from v.51-58 caused many of His disciples to turn away and go back, but He wasn't talking about cannibalism! He meant partaking of the value of His life being given for men and the blessing and benefit that those who trust Him would receive.

Another aspect of the symbolism of these two elements is that they show that a death has taken place. If the bread represents His body, and the cup represents His blood, we notice that in the Lord's Supper they are separated on the table. We know from reading Hebrews 2:14 and 1 Corinthians 15:50 that "flesh and blood" describe normal humanity. When one is living, they are joined together ("*the life of the flesh is in the blood*", Leviticus 17:11), but when separated, it indicates that death has occurred. We should appreciate that the two elements are intended to remind us that He has given His life for us to give us life eternal through trusting Him.

The words in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 tell us that they represent the one basis of our fellowship and the unity of the body of Christ, which is composed of all believers in Jesus Christ during this dispensation. The cup is seen first here, which is opposite to the order in which the Lord instituted the remembrance, because it is what formed and is the basis of the fellowship that we enjoy. In the large sense, this is the fellowship of *the entire body of believers*. But the manner in which it is expressed in this passage signifies that which has formed the unity of *the believers in a local assembly*. We must always remember that the cup represents the sacrificial work of our blessed Lord for us. As such, the importance of

the One Cup is to emphasize to us that it was ONE sacrifice that He accomplished ONCE FOR ALL that has saved us and from which we have derived our spiritual life. To have many cups is to say that there were many sacrifices whereas there was only one, once for all sacrifice of our spotless Lamb (Hebrews 9:25-26).

"The bread which we break" is obviously the bread which that company of believers breaks and partakes of together. Each believer breaks it individually; "break" doesn't refer to some kind of ceremonial act that one person performs, nor does it refer to breaking the loaf into two, an act that is for convenience only. The one loaf can also be seen as symbolizing the one body of Christ which is composed of all believers who form it. We see in the One Loaf a picture of the One Body of our Lord Jesus in which He suffered and endured the judgment of sins at the cross. It is also telling us of the one spiritual body and is emphasizing the unity of the local assembly. This is an aspect of the truth that is often ignored or overlooked. We should be aware that in the Lord's Supper, we are declaring our unity with the saints who compose that assembly as well as with the entire body of believers in the wide aspect.

Its Corruption

We must understand the importance of having one loaf and one cup. If we don't, then we can easily slip into the error of some who use crackers, pieces of bread, or like some, individual wafers. This may be more convenient, but it destroys the picture that we are intended to express. In the same manner, individual cups may be, in the eyes of some, more sanitary (though there hasn't been any proof that using one cup causes the spread of disease to my knowledge). However, it essentially is saying that there were many sacrifices offered for us and thus robs the work of Christ of its uniqueness and value. We should never introduce changes to our practices that corrupt the truth that certain ordained practices are intended to teach because of our own desires or carelessness.

Extreme corruptions of the Lord's Supper have pretended to make it a sacrament, by which is meant that it is an ordinance that imparts grace to the participants. It is never

spoken of in this manner nor intended to be. The supper is not designed for what we receive from it; rather it is an opportunity for us to give to the Lord and its purpose is to render to Him what He can receive from our worship and praise. I don't believe that the Lord instituted this supper so that we could receive something, although we do if we give to Him. It is for us to function as a corporate priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices to God in view of His Son and what He has done.

There is the gross evil called transubstantiation held by Roman Catholics, that teaches that the actual, literal body of the Lord Jesus is present in the bread and the cup (wine). This is an invention that was introduced much later (possibly in 1215 AD) by that religious group. A variation of this is consubstantiation, which doesn't hold that the literal body and blood of Christ is present, but that the "spiritual presence" of Christ is. Both go far beyond what the Scripture teaches, and we do well to reject both of them out of hand.

Let us hold to the simplicity of God's Word and not drift into fanciful teachings or humanistic accommodations to the world and natural desires. May the Lord enable us to be faithful to His Word and to seek to adhere to it in practice until He comes. More than simply partaking of the elements on the table, may the Holy Spirit stir our hearts to have a deep appreciation of the reality of what it represents, and to lift up to God our sincere and deepest appreciation for the Lord Jesus Christ and His great sacrificial work for us.

It is a sin to limit God's goodness, strain God's promises, question God's truth, or doubt God's readiness to receive every anxious soul; and yet it is to be feared we are often found doing so more or less.

Ancient Landmarks: Gospel Work in New Areas

Mark 16:15

Larry Steers

Our Lord gave crystal clear instructions to His disciples before His ascension, *“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15). This command was given to a small number of faithful followers and encompassed the parting words of instruction to them. The world to these men was the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea and the historical record suggests that some of them traveled vast distances beyond this. The command has reverberated through the ages of time and has become personally relevant to many believers in our day.

The Holy Spirit lays it upon the heart that mortal men and women of all nations have an urgent need to hear words whereby they could be born again. Regardless of race, color, creed, or nationality, the gospel is an essential message for all to hear. *“Where there is no vision, the people perish”* (Proverbs 29:18). That is a vision of perishing souls flooding the heart of the believer.

Most recently those who have heralded forth the message of salvation over the internet have touched many regions of the world. For this we can be very thankful, but remember that “go ye” is a very personal command to go. Brethren and sisters have responded, left the comforts of the homeland, espoused the hardships of living in a foreign land and sometimes persecution to reach those in spiritual darkness. We do appreciate their sacrifice and pray for their preservation and the blessing of the Lord upon their labors.

For most of us the world is and will continue to be our neighborhood: the neighbor over the back fence, the person beside us in the workplace or the student at the next desk. All believers are missionaries.

A real pioneer in the homelands is a very rare person today. That is a brother who, with a pressing burden upon his heart, moves into an area to labor, to plough for God.

The purpose of this article is to describe a gospel work in an area of the city of Toronto known as Agincourt. While many labored in this

work, names for the most part will be omitted with very few exceptions lest some are missed. The author, who will be writing carefully, labored for fifteen years in the Agincourt area.

To encourage brethren to launch out into a new work, a word of exhortation to overseers of assemblies. Think of a young brother just commended to the Lord’s work. There are towns and villages near home where there would be ample opportunity to spend hours laboring for God. Also consider his wife who needs a husband at home and his children who need a father. His family and the home area are perhaps more important than a series of gospel meetings in your assembly. But watch! With a letter of commendation in hand the phone begins to ring. He is being asked for a series of Gospel Meetings miles away and is taken from an area ripe for for a pioneer effort.

The greatest pioneer servant since the day of Pentecost was the apostle Paul. Most of the places where he ministered and those he wrote to were assemblies he had seen planted. Many may have a problem to honestly face the words of Paul when he wrote, *“Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation”* (Romans 15:20).

Referring back to Agincourt, there is a concentration of Chinese immigrants in the area. Census figures indicate that there are 600,000 of these people in Toronto. Should you drive through the Agincourt area and beyond there are many signs in Mandarin and Cantonese.

These people are highly educated. Some are dentists, one woman was a heart surgeon. In China they have been indoctrinated with Darwinism. Most had never seen a Bible. They had been taught Chairman Mao’s doctrine that, *“Religion was the opium of the people”*.

Yet many would tell you they felt they had been lied to and that something was being withheld from them. You need not imagine the joy of working with these folks who are open and searching for that something they felt was withheld.

Late in the 1990’s, contact was made with a few of these people. A brother and sister who were in assembly fellowship invited some they had contact with to come to their home for

a Bible study. I am certain that the few of us involved in those initial home Bible studies had little comprehension of the numbers who would come to hear.

That initial contact resulted in a number of home Bible studies. Pause for a moment here. We detest the false doctrine of the JW's but perhaps we could learn from their methods. They knock on doors, get inside homes, teach their evil doctrine and win covertly.

To continue, initially the work commenced and continued with home Bible studies. One Chinese sister lived in a large several storied apartment building. She was exercised to have a Bible study in her apartment. Initially there would be four or five sitting around her kitchen table. She worked her apartment building and there were up to 25 in her apartment, some sitting on the floor, listening to the gospel. God was working.

There was an area of land likely about two acres and sitting empty. It was surrounded by a large shopping mall to the South, several row housing units to the North, and a public library to the West. As far as the author knows that land had never been built on. It was likely well worth over a million dollars. I am persuaded that God kept that lot for a series of tent meetings.

Permission was received from the mall to use the land for tent meetings. Two tents were erected. One large tent was used for Gospel meetings. A second tent was for a children's work which was carried on during the gospel in the larger tent. Younger brethren assisted with the children's tent each night.

This work was not exclusively the writer's nor any full time servant of Christ. A number of older saints contributed valuable help. Several younger believers sacrificed summer employment or further courses and their help was appreciated.

Let me describe a day in the life of these younger believers as they assisted in the meetings. This was not a picnic for them. They arrived at the tent by 8 AM each morning for an intensive prayer time and Bible study. We shared lunch with them in the tent. Following lunch and over the course of the meetings each had an opportunity with us to visit a few of the many contacts made during the series. Others

were on the street corner giving out tracts or distributing invitations in the area. Supper was often in the home of one of the Toronto believers. Arriving back at the tent they set the tents up and got the generator working. Following the meeting, refreshments were served. At that time some of the younger believers could tell individually how they were saved or answer questions, and there were a lot of questions. Then back in the tent for a prayer meeting. How encouraging it was to hear these young men pray with a real burden for a soul they had been speaking to. It was very late before the tent was closed for the night.

Just one incident relative to a comment made by one young brother who I was taking on a visit. He fell asleep in the car. When I awoke him he said, "I did not know that preachers worked so hard". These young believers worked but I am afraid they went back to assemblies with no encouragement to engage in Gospel activity. To overseers again, get young folks occupied with gospel work and it will be a blessing to them and to the assembly.

During the first series, brother Norman Lorimer, a respected overseer, attended most nights. Our brother loved the Gospel and was rejoicing to tell us that he counted 250 in the tent and felt that half of them were not saved.

With respect, I mention another brother, William Mc Bride, who labored for years in Chile. He came at the end of the fourth week, weeping, and said, "you can't quit now". The meetings did continue.

Let me give a word of exhortation here. In our day we hear acceptable ministry at conferences and in Gospel Halls. But the observable fact is many assemblies are dwindling. The gospel has been relegated to lesser importance. Assemblies have canceled that valuable Lord's Day evening Gospel Meeting. Gospel series are of the past. When there is a series that continues for a few weeks some comments are very negative.

Listen to some of the excuses. Most of the believers are older and they cannot handle more than a few nights. The truth is that those older believers long for the good days of gospel harvest. They have a love and a sense of deep devotion to the gospel and if not physically

able to attend be certain they would be much in earnest prayer.

And again, many of us put in long hours at work. We have spoken to older retired farmers who have labored hard in the field, left to go to the tent and after the meeting have returned to the field for a few more hours. Now that is devotion and commitment.

And again, we will have our week or two of meetings but holidays are coming so we will need to close the meetings even if souls are coming. We need and deserve a break. Well, two searching questions come to mind. First, do we really have a concept in our heart of the value of a soul? So we cover ourselves and announce that souls were coming, the meetings have ended, please pray for those who were coming. Secondly, we would respectfully ask why did the meetings end when souls were coming? How many additions to the assembly do you think you may have lost?

And again, think of those young brethren and sisters who sacrificed much to work with us and showed a willingness to learn and help and rejoiced with us when souls professed. Are they just floating along with no encouragement to continue to be active in gospel work? They were taught scriptural principles and witnessed them in operation.

Brethren, get young people occupied in the gospel. Have series of gospel meetings. Those young believers who spent the summer with us in Agincourt will tell you that it was a real encouragement to have a soul tell them that they had just been saved.

Several, saved during the tent meetings, were baptized. The first three in a local swimming pool. Later however it was felt that baptisms should be in the area where the tent was. A portable pool was set up in the tent and several more were baptized.

Eventually for a number of weeks we met on the Lord's Day morning for prayer and Bible study. Yes, we were criticized for this but felt that the new converts needed to make a commitment.

Finally it was evident that the believers should gather to Break Bread. In fellowship with three area assemblies twelve souls gathered in a small class room of the local high school to observe the Lord's Supper. There are

no words in the writer's vocabulary to express, after the years of labor in the area, the joy of listening to those Chinese brethren pour out their expressions of thanks and worship.

This has been written to encourage brethren to be committed to taking the gospel to new areas. But be prepared, you will face disappointments and opposition if you do it.

Let each Christian resolve to give systematically to the Lord's cause; and to put aside, fruits from all profits and receipts, a certain part, which shall be considered as distinctly and exclusively the Lord's to be applied as He may direct. There is something better than this, viz., to consider oneself, one's earnings, one's strength, one's all, as belonging to the Master. But many admitting this theoretically, do nothing practically; and therefore it is better to give a regular proportion certainly, and more as you choose, as a perpetual reminder that all you have and are your own, but Jesus Christ's.

(4) THE PRACTICES

Alan Davidson

(Copied from the Book "There Am I" by this author and is available from the publisher of this magazine)

Having previously considered the Privileges, Principles and Pattern, we will now consider the Practices of a New Testament assembly. In this chapter we shall consider the Scriptural authority for EIGHT meetings of the local assembly. How do the believers gather? What authority do we have from the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles for these gatherings? Do we have Scriptural authority for any additional meetings? These questions must be answered today. In keeping with the aims of this book, we would ask the reader to open his or her own Bible and consider the following Scriptures:

1. THE BREAKING OF BREAD

– Luke 22:14-20; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 1 Cor. 11:20-30.

Saints can and should live in a worshipful spirit at all times. However the Lord's Supper as instituted by the Lord in the upper room, is special. "This do", as an act of obedience (Luke 22:19). To "do" as the Lord did in all simplicity. The breaking of the bread is in order to eat, not nibble. "This do"; is a definite act involving examination, preparation and prior exercise (1 Cor. 11:28).

We "shew", before God, angels, ourselves and the world, "the Lord's death till He come". This is the continual, habitual collective act of the resident assembly; "When ye come together in the church" (1 Cor. 11:18). "When ye come together therefore into one place" (1 Cor. 11:20). "My brethren, when ye come together to eat" (1 Cor. 11:33). This is not a table set up at home, among family, on holiday or any other occasion of convenience. The symbols are nothing in themselves as the Lord was bodily present in their midst in the upper room. The remembrance is a heartfelt act of loving worship calling His person and work to mind, each; "first day of the week" (Acts 20:7). In 1 Corinthians 10:16, the one cup is mentioned first as the basis of fellowship. The "one bread" (loaf) is mentioned second as the apostle enlarges in verse 17 proclaiming that all are one together with who have partaken of that one loaf. 1 Corinthians 11:25 "After the same manner also He took the cup," stresses the actual order of remembrance.

2. THE PRAYER MEETING – 1Tim. 2:1-15

The corporate prayers of the Lord's people gathered as the local assembly are most blessed. This is indicated in verses 8 and 11. (v8) – "I will therefore that the men (males, plural) pray every where..." (v11) – "Let the woman (female, singular, individual) learn in silence with all (complete) subjection".

"Supplications" – WHY we should pray, a definite need.

"Prayers" – WHO we should pray to, a

Superior.

"Intercessions" – HOW we should plead.

"Thanksgiving" – WHEN our prayers are answered.

(v8) "Holy hands" – WHAT condition we should be in; lifting up clean hands marked by righteous conduct rather than posture.

(v9) Females "adorn themselves in modest apparel ... professing godliness with good works" – WHERE personal deportment and conditions at home or in conduct, should not hinder prayer when we come together.

3. THE BIBLE READING – Acts 20:7

Paul "Continued his speech (discussed the Word)".

The public reading and discussion of the Word was most important in early days when not everyone possessed a copy of the Scriptures. In some regions still, not everyone can read or write. It is most profitable for the assembly to select a book or an epistle so that the saints can study and prepare. When they come together the brethren can share their thoughts to the profit of all.

4. THE MINISTRY MEETING – 1 Cor. 14:26

"The church" (local assembly at Corinth) is mentioned nine times in chapter 14. "Speak" occurs 24 times meaning public speaking or ministry. In the assembly gathering, there is not to be a one man clerical or pastor type ministry. "Doctrine" is the expounding or teaching of the Scriptures. "For the perfecting (preparation) of the saints, for the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:12). Some of the temporary sign gifts have ceased since the full canon of Scripture has been given. An elder should be; "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2). An overseer is to feed the flock (Acts 20:28).

5. THE GOSPEL MEETING – 1 Cor. 1:17-18

Among friends and neighbours it is our duty to privately and wisely spread the good news of the Gospel. The public heralding of the Gospel is part of the commission given by the Lord. The emphasis is on the word "preach" or "preaching" which occurs 60 times in the N.T. The Gospel is a simple message of the forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ Who

died for sinners. This message is for all ages and should be presented in such a way that the youngest child can understand and learn Scripture verses.

“The preaching (word) of the Cross” is the message of reproach and repentance which to many is “foolishness”. We should not try to make the message attractive to fallen humanity by emotional entertainment. The only addition needed is that the Gospel be preached “in the power of God”. In most climatic conditions it is best to meet in a simple building which people can recognise as a place where they can come regularly to listen in comfort to the message of the Gospel. “For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake” (1 Thess. 1:5). The Scriptural practice is not to remain remote. Sinners at Thessalonica seeing the manner of the lives of the messengers as examples of what they preached, were convicted by the power of the Holy Ghost to hear and receive the Gospel. They in turn became, “ensamples (stamp of reality) to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia”. “From you sounded out the Word of the Lord”. The Gospel should be preached in fellowship with the assembly, with a view to the building up of the assembly (1Thess. 1:58).

6. THE REPORT MEETING – Acts 14:26-28

The example was set by the apostles and preachers at Antioch. “When they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them” (v27). We should begin at home, then as God guides, to reach out in fellowship with the assembly. A meeting to report what God has done encourages the saints to pray and support the Gospel work in other regions.

7. THE DISCIPLINE MEETING – 1 Cor. 5:4-5

The assembly receives and the assembly of saints puts away. This is a very serious meeting attended only by those in fellowship. “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together ... To deliver such an one unto Satan” (v4-5). The offender proven guilty of one of the six sins of 1 Corinthians 5:11 habitually practiced, is to be put away from the fellowship of the assembly. It is essential that

this discipline be publicly carried out when all the assembly is gathered and when the reason for excommunication is made clear.

8. THE ELDERS MEETING – Acts 20:17

This is an example of a number of elders coming together to consider the care, oversight and well being of the flock; “over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers” (Acts 20:28). This is the only meeting where we have authority for these brethren, to meet separately from the rest of the assembly. We have no other example or authority for any separate meeting according to age (young people’s meeting) or gender (sisters meeting) in the N.T.

May we prayerfully and carefully consider the other seven meetings outlined from the Scriptures. Then convinced that these are the Scriptural practices of the local assembly, may we seek to be fully occupied as punctual, steadfast attendees 100%, at all these meetings.

O Word made flesh!

**O Word made flesh! A tender plant
Out of a dry ground springing,
When Thou wert found in Bethlehem
Men heard the angels singing.**

**O Root of David! Wise men came
With offerings to adore Thee:
Soon all the world shall own Thee Lord,
And kings fall down before Thee.**

**Seed of the Woman! Virgin-born
In thine own world a stranger,
By faith we see Thee on the Throne
Who once wast in a manger.**

**True Vine of God Thy virtues flow
From Paradise supernal,
Through branches that abide in Thee
With fruit to Life Eternal.**

—F. W. Pitt,