

Speaking Where The Bible Speaks

by Micky Galloway

The apostle Peter wrote, *“if any man speaketh, (speaking) as it were oracles of God; if any man ministereth, (ministering) as of the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen”* (I Peter 4:11). The apostle John added to this, *“Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son”* (II John 9). The apostle Paul wrote, *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema”* (Galatians 1:8). There was a time when these statements were well understood. The meaning was clearly expressed by some, *“We must speak where the Bible speaks, be silent where the Bible is silent, call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways.”*

It would appear that some believe this to be old fashioned or that we are not consistent, therefore the plea to *“speak where the Bible speaks ...”* must be cast aside. Perhaps study and restudy is necessary to maintain consistency in practice, but the plea is right and must not be cast aside. The examples of the Old Testament, written for our learning (cf. Romans 15:4), verify that a plea to abide in the authority of God cannot be wrong. Cain sought to operate on the silence of God (Genesis 4:1-7). Since faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17) and Abel, in Hebrews 11:4, was said to have offered his sacrifice by faith, we conclude that God had told him what to offer. He had also told Cain what to offer for *“there is no respect of persons with God”* (Romans 2:11). Abel based his action on what God said, while Cain appealed to the silence of God. Nadab and Abihu presumptuously offered *“strange fire,”* that is, fire which the Lord had *“commanded them not”* (Leviticus 10:1-2). They did not burn incense on their censers with the perpetual fire of the altar (Leviticus 6:13; 16:12), but from some other source. Their appeal to the silence of God was answered by His wrath.

As long as we are speaking where the Bible Speaks and remaining silent where the Bible is silent, we are *“speaking the same thing, ... of the same mind, of the same judgment”* (I Corinthians 1:10; cf. 4:17; Philippians 3:16).

F. LaGard Smith, in his book, **RADICAL RESTORATION**, states, *“in this regard, perhaps the most universally-overlooked feature of the Lord’s Supper as practiced in the primitive church is that – from all appearances – (emphasis mine, mg) it was observed in conjunction with a fellowship meal. That is, a*

normal, ordinary meal with the usual variety of food. However, unlike normal, ordinary meals, this combined table fellowship and memorial was shared among the disciples for the special purpose of strengthening, not just their physical bodies, but their common bond in the spiritual body of Christ. Hence, Jude's reference to their 'love feasts'" (pages 128-129).

Smith assumes "from all appearances" that the Lord's Supper includes a normal ordinary meal. The fact that the Lord instituted this supper in connection with the Passover feast is no proof that the Jewish meal was a part of what he authorized. The text clearly states that Jesus "*after supper*" took "*bread*" and the "*cup*" and instituted His own memorial feast (Luke 22:20). When Paul repeats this to the Corinthians, after telling them to eat meals at home rather than in the assembly, the apostle specifically said that "*after supper*" the Lord took the "*bread*" and the "*cup*" to institute His meal of communion (I Corinthians 11:15). It is strange indeed, that IF a full meal was intended by the Lord, that the apostle Paul would prohibit it and correct its abuse by telling brethren to eliminate it and eat at home. "*What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? ... If any man is hungry, let him eat at home*" (I Corinthians 11:22,34).

The proposal, "The Scriptures teach that it is the work of the church to provide for common meals when said meal is designed for social and/or recreational purposes," cannot be defended. Can it now be that some will argue that the common meal is to be included as an act of worship as a part of proper observance of the Lord's Supper? Indeed, we are told that the church in Corinth was eating a common meal intending to use the elements of their common meal to observe the Lord's Supper. However, the context indicates they had corrupted the Lord's Supper into their own supper, a common meal. "*When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper: for in your eating each one taketh before (other) his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken*" (I Corinthians 11:20-21). In doing so the Corinthians had despised the church of God by distorting its divine nature and purpose. Their actions also shamed them that were poor. Paul's statement, "*What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in*" indicates that the common meal was to be eaten at home as a function of the home, not a work of the church.

No man has the right to prostitute the energy, strength, zeal, or resources of the church of our Lord to serve human aims or purposes. We must let the church be distinct as the church, so adorned as to glorify the head – even Christ. God gave His Son for it. The Lord of glory died for it. We must not bring its lofty mission down to serve the outward man, but rather we must keep it pure to serve the interest of heaven for which we must strive. Let us renew the plea to "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent."