

Matthew 22-11-13a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 13th day of November 2022. We're looking at the upper room meal and the words of the Lord Jesus to his disciples on that occasion centered around the bread and the cup as they were presented during the meal.

And this has taken us to 1 Corinthians. We looked at this last time in terms of context and the essential framing for what Paul has to say using these elements as an illustration. So we're going to pick that up this morning.

You can be turning to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, where we'll pick up and complete our review of this very pertinent and useful summary of teaching from the apostle that helps us understand what Jesus was saying and doing on this occasion. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and we'll begin. Father, we thank you for granting us another day, another space of time to invest what you have allotted to us by way of stewardship, to redeem the time, to lay up treasure in heaven, to prepare and become equipped for every good work so that we can serve you and reflect the Lord Jesus Christ both now and in the kingdoms to come.

We pray that as we look at these sections of your word together, that the Holy Spirit will minister them to our hearts, impress them on our minds and our memories, so that we will truly be transformed and renewed, and we will understand your good and acceptable and perfect will such that we can shine as lights, we can represent the Lord Jesus as his body on this earth, and by the hope that shines through us, draw others to you through the Lord Jesus. We pray it in his name. Amen.

Let's cruise into our passage for this morning by quickly rehearsing what we saw in chapter 10. The lead-up is so essential. The all that you find in chapter 10.

Brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. This is the introduction by Paul to this concept that is going to permeate the next two chapters, eating and drinking in the context of a large group that is nevertheless divided. They are not all the same, even though they all were given the same start.

All came, you could add, all came out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb and were baptized, all of them. But verse five, with most of them, God was not well-pleased. Paul is going to pick up this thread in chapter 11, when he says, I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.

But in 11.3, he says, I want you to remember that there is a principle of structure and a

principle of respect. There is structure and there is respect. And functioning in a structure, there has to be both respect for the structure, respect for the originator and author of that structure, the authority behind it, and respect for the people who occupy various places within this hierarchical, organized system that comes from God.

There is respect in three directions at once. Respect for the structure itself and respect for the people in it is based on and founded on respect for God in the same way that love for one another and the assignments that have been given to one another, whether it's spiritual gifts, whether it is those who are parents, those who are children, those who are spouses, those who are authorities in the workplace or in the realm of academia, wherever it may be. Respect for that system, respect for those who occupy it is based on God, whether it is love or this outward looking honor for what God has created.

It is sourced in God, based on God that comes first. There are any number of people, movements, organizations, books, videos, social influencers who are trying to fix what is broken in the realm of the horizontal, encouraging more love, encouraging respectful dialogue. Let's all get together and avoid contempt.

Let's stop using harsh language. Let's find compromise. Let's find common ground.

This is all great, but here's the problem. The concept is wonderful. The goal is worthy, but I would say the great majority of those you listen to calling for do not understand the means.

Calling for it is not enough. Recognizing the need is not enough. Passionately hoping that it will come to pass is not enough.

In the same way that having a productive, fruitful spiritual life with blessing and service now and opportunity and service in the future, it's a wonderful goal. Passionately to be desired, devoutly to be wished, but if you don't know the means, if you can't make it happen, you're wasting your time, strutting and fretting your hour on the stage, sound and fury signifying nothing, because all of your protestations, all of your calls and your pleadings are without fruit if you can't get there, if it can't be made to happen. And that starts with the vertical.

You cannot reform. You cannot correct. You can't solve problems without God.

They don't solve. They aren't fixed. Even in cases where people think they are fixed, you have typically swapped out one central problem for five or six peripheral problems.

Look at any government program that is designed to fix a problem and read what the people involved in it write about the concomitant side effects. We are not able to remediate the effects of sin and evil, the fallenness of our nature, the corruption that is in the world, the influence of Satan and his angels, his program. We can't fix that.

We are powerless to oppose it in any meaningful way unless and until we connect with God first, and we have the power of God coming into the life of the believer through the word of God and the spirit of God. Now I have an effective bursting radius. Now I can make a difference where I am because the power of God is radiating out of me.

And God does have the power to identify the true source of a problem and fix it at the source, not band-aid it, not paint over it. You haven't lived until you've had a rotting structure, especially if you're trying to sell a home and you really don't want to spend the money to replace the fence. So let's stain the fence.

I don't want to replace that trim on my house. I'll just paint it. But it rots under the paint and you don't solve a problem.

And at best, you deceive someone into believing something is healthy by its outward appearance and it's rotten underneath. You've wiped the outside of the dish, but it's corrupt inside. You've whitewashed the tombstone.

Inside, it's full of dead men's bones. This is most of what happens from the efforts of social justice wars and calls for peace and love and acceptance and let's get rid of this prejudice and that bigotry and this glass ceiling and that. You can't fix that stuff by going straight at it.

I haven't mentioned it in a while, but one of my all-time best understandings came from reading a book by Liddell Hart as a part of my military self-education. Nobody recommended it to me. I didn't have to have it for a course, but I saw it on the bookshelf when I was getting my required books and it's called The Strategy of the Indirect Approach by a very wise man, Liddell Hart.

He was talking in the context of military conflict and how massing your armies and attacking the enemy at his strong point is often an exercise in loss and failure. The indirect approach is the end around. It is the flanking movement.

It is hitting them where they ain't, probing and finding a weak spot, exploiting as Joab did when David was attacking the future city of Jerusalem and they found a way through the defenses that was hidden and unknown. This has been the story of many seemingly impregnable cities and armies that were nevertheless defeated. If you read the historical record of what happened to Babylon, when Belshazzar and his feast and the writing on the wall, the details are not given in Daniel, but they are given in history that the way the Medo-Persians defeated Belshazzar and his armies were a Belshazzar and his armies were partying and at ease.

And B, they thought their walls were impregnable, but the Medes diverted the water that came into the city so that the creek bed dried up and they just marched under the walls where the water had been flowing and came right in and took it. The indirect approach.

And we're so quick to say, here's a problem.

I'm going to do a superficial fix. And we don't stop to think about root causes and a permanent correction that attacks that issue at its source. The source is evil.

There is evil in human nature. There is evil in the dark forces of fallen angels. And we have to have the power and the means of addressing these things at their source.

So Paul is going to bring that up. And in 1 Corinthians 10, everybody gets the same start. Everybody is delivered from the power of the Egyptians and the slavery that has been perpetrated on them for decade after decade after decade.

They all drank the same spiritual drink. They all ate the same spiritual food. They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them.

And this is a clue that Paul is going to be using many spiritual metaphors as he communicates these truths. With most of them, God was not well-pleased, verse 5, for they were scattered in the wilderness. They fell short.

These things became our examples to the intent that we should not desire evil things as they desired. Now, let's think about desire. We typically are overcome with a desire without deciding that we are going to develop it.

We see a thing and we suddenly want it. This is the basis for advertising. We've talked a little bit about this on Wednesday night in terms of how the fear of the Lord insulates us and inoculates us from subtle manipulation of our minds by people who know how to appeal to, how to create and then exploit desire within us.

You see the thing, you want the thing. So we should not desire evil things. These are examples.

So how can I fix these desires that arise within me without my conscious choice? I need a nature that recognizes these things as foreign and attacks and overcomes and expels them. This is why having a healthy immune system is such a wonderful thing. I don't consciously identify germs that come into my body.

I have a system within my body that identifies bacteria and viruses as foreign and attacks and hopefully eliminates and overcomes them. It's an awful thing when your immune system is compromised or fooled or hijacked or weakened because you lose that innate and unconscious ability to recognize what is not healthy and not fruitful and not productive and have it sort of automatically be expunged. In the spiritual realm, we can't just decide that the leeks and garlics are evil, so no leeks and garlics.

We'll never plant them in the land. Leeks and garlics are bad. The desire to return to Egypt should have been expelled by a nature conditioned by faith in God, hope in His

promises, and love for fellow Israelites, faith, hope, and love even in the Old Testament.

But to allow one's mind and heart to wander and to seek gratification, you end up with the golden calf. You end up with the ground opening up and swallowing Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. You end up with snakes in the desert.

You end up with all kinds of defeat and failure due to not developing a nature that naturally resists these things. These became our examples to the intent that we should not have these desires. We should not become idolaters as some of them.

Nor let us commit sexual immorality. All of these are directing faith and attention to that which is not God. It is making a god of self.

I will worship and please myself. I will try to worship and please false gods because my hope in success and prosperity doesn't depend on faith in the magic, superstition, the experiences I see of others, anything but the truth of God and the strength and power of God. We are so easily misled.

Nor let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted and were destroyed by serpents. Nor complain as some of them also complained and were destroyed by the destroyer. All these things happened to them as examples and they were written for our admonition, our warning, our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

There has never been a better time to be a child of God than now. We have copious illustration. We have copious admonition.

We have so many examples. Unprecedented access to the word of God. Therefore, verse 12, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

This is another call to humility. We've seen the central foundational role of humility in the fear of the Lord. To love God and to love one another has to start with humility.

Arrogance doesn't look out for the best interest of others. Arrogance seeks its own. Paul says a few chapters forward in this letter, love does not seek its own.

No testing has overtaken you except such as is common to man. But God is faithful. Notice he doesn't just say but the situation will always have an out.

There will always be an exit or a fire escape. There will always be a parachute. There will always be some fix.

God is faithful. That's the root. And this is such a central concept.

When we come to a fork in the road, when there is an option, I can throw in with these who want to return to Egypt. I can throw in these who want to appeal to a golden calf and say this is our God. This calf brought us out of Egypt.

I'm going to boil down God to something understandable to me. I don't understand the ineffable invisible God of Sinai with thunder and lightning and smoke and Moses glowing face. I want something I can understand.

I can understand an image. I can understand the Apis bull that is sacrificed in Egypt. So let's make ourselves a calf.

He's a young bull. Let's say this is God. I'm redefining God.

Not on God's terms, but on my terms, on terms that are familiar to me that accomplish my goals and purposes. And by the way, this calf is safe. He doesn't thunder.

He doesn't speak. He doesn't have commandments coming down off the mountain. He's just shiny and unmoving.

So in his shadow, I can serve myself, seek myself, and pat myself on the back with my confirmation bias that, look, the calf doesn't mind if I sit down to eat and rise up to play. This calf is fine with it. And by the way, he's so shiny I can see my reflection in his sides.

Redefining God. And they didn't say this is our new God. They said this is God.

This calf, this calf God is what brought us out of Egypt. I'm going to change God into an image that I like and that I can understand. And by the way, I can control.

I can put this calf on a cart and haul him around. He's portable and under my control. So God is faithful.

This is our starting point. We are going to be looking at the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. And I will tell you before I tell you, I'm going to tell you what we're going to see.

We're going to see it. And then I'm going to tell you what we saw. And it all centers on this concept.

God is faithful. You may not understand it. You may not be able to compute it.

You may not be able to make sense of it. You may not be able to deduce or logically arrive at a reason for it. It seems unreasonable.

It seems irrational. It seems unnecessary. It seems fruitless.

It seems obscure. It seems that it's thunder in the smoke on top of the mountain. The mast that we lash ourselves to first, foremost, and always, it always has to start with the vertical.

You cannot solve a problem. You cannot survive a problem. You cannot be fruitful during a problem.

You cannot have a meaningful life if you do not have that vertical post of the cross that holds everything else up. And that vertical understanding is God is faithful. God is faithful.

I may not know anything. I may not understand anything. It may be completely confusing, seemingly chaotic, meaningless, unnecessary.

But what do I know? What will I die for? God is faithful. This is the underlying thought when Job answers his wife. She says, curse God and die.

What does he say? Though he slay me, I'm going to trust him. It wouldn't make any sense to me for God to kill me. I don't feel like I'm worthy of death.

Certainly haven't committed any death penalty worthy crime. Wouldn't make any sense to me if God came down and slew me. But I don't care.

Though he slay me, I will trust him. And with that trust comes honor, fear of the Lord, effort and desire to serve the Lord in whatever way. God is faithful.

You cannot miss this point if you want to understand what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 11 about the supper. It's an odd thing. You say, what's this got to do with the supper? They ate the same spiritual food.

They drank the same spiritual drink. But with most of them, God was not pleased. Why? They missed this.

God is faithful. Why did they make the golden calf in the first place? Well, our government is malfunctioning. Our leader has gone up in the mountain and we don't know if he's ever coming back.

Our government has failed us in the person of Moses and Joshua. So we've got to take things into our own hands. And this seems like a bad idea.

We're out here. We don't have any protection. We don't have a trained army.

Just a few weeks ago, we were slaves. We're not equipped. We're not qualified.

We need a God and we need one that we can look at and manage and understand. So we'll model ourselves on the nations. Later on, this same Israelite nation and people are going to say, give us a king.

A few hundred years hence. Because the nations have a king. Well, the nations have a God they can see.

That makes sense to me. That I can understand. God is faithful.

What separated the most with whom God was not well pleased and the few with whom

God was pleased? Who recognized, I may not understand where Moses is, what he's doing up there. The mountain scares me. I'm intimidated by circumstances.

I feel naked and exposed and vulnerable out here in the wilderness. Any army from any direction could come and try to take the treasure that the Egyptians gave us. We're a target.

I feel very insecure. I feel very uncertain about the future. Where will our grain come from? We're moving around.

How are we going to plant crops? How are we ever going to survive? This just looks completely foreign and largely hopeless. God is faithful. This is what God is looking for.

God is not looking for people who can logically parse evidence and say, well, like in a courtroom, the benefit of the doubt, the preponderance of the evidence suggests that this person is guilty or not guilty. There is or isn't a God. He does or does not involve himself in human history.

He is or is not personal and real. He does or does not conform to what the Bible says about him. He is or is not just when it comes to wiping people out in the flood or wiping the Canaanites out with the Israelite armies or all whatever else you want to say, whatever else you want to understand and conclusions you want to draw.

The fundamental question for you and for me and for every other human being, when the truth of God is revealed, what may be known of God is manifest in creation. The question is, is this a God in whom I can place my faith? Is he a trustworthy and faithful God? I start with that. I choose that.

I'm not convinced of that by a preponderance of the evidence. And this is the filter. It's so interesting.

I've been working a lot with filters over this past summer. You've got fuel filters. You've got vacuum cleaner filters.

You've got air conditioning filters. You've got an air filter in your car. And different filters filter for different things.

In the hospital, they can filter your blood. They can get bad things out of your blood. The filter is specifically designed to allow certain things through and stop other things, right? God is looking not for people who are so smart that on balance, the reasonableness of the evidence tells me there is a God.

God is looking for people whose free will chooses to believe that God is and that He is faithful. What does Hebrews 11, 6 say? We all learned it together. Without faith, without trusting in God, it's impossible to please Him.

He that comes to God, and what is the distance you cover, and how close do you get to Him? He that comes to God must believe what? That He is and that He is a rewarder. It doesn't even say and that He rewards. He is a rewarder.

It's something about the character of God, the person of God Himself. He is one who rewards. He is the rewarder of those who are looking for Him, who are seeking Him.

For us, seeking Him in every circumstance, trusting that He knows what He's doing, even though it makes no sense to me whatsoever. I can name any number of things that make totally no sense to me, but I know that God is in every area of my life because I belong to Him. I have been bought with a price.

I belong to God. I have the option of either going my own way or recognizing my calling and understanding that if I believe in that call, and I believe in the God who called me, and I believe in the Christ who made that calling real and made it possible, then all things work together for good. All things work together for good, Romans 8.28. To those who love God, who choose to appreciate who and what He is and how He works, who recognize that He is faithful and will go to the mat for that belief.

God is faithful. He's got an answer in this situation. This is what Paul leads with in 1 Corinthians 10.

We have to understand this to get to chapter 11. People that jump into the middle of a letter and pick a paragraph and draw a bunch of faulty conclusions from it do it because they don't read the letter. They don't get into the flow and the heart and the mind of the argument.

So, God is faithful. There is a reason Paul is covering this with these divided, quarreling, at-each-other's-throat Corinthians. You remember the first several chapters.

There are wars and divisions among you. It shouldn't be that way. You shouldn't be looking at each other, judging, backbiting, deciding who's got it right and who's got it wrong.

I'm of Apollos. I'm of Cephas. I'm of Christ.

I'm better than all of you. I don't pick a denomination. I'm a Bible church, so you all can fight over Luther and Calvin and the rest of them.

We're of Christ. He says you're still wrong. You should not be divided.

The division is caused by looking at each other. If you were united under the head, if you were looking to God through Christ, you wouldn't be splitting up over minor things. You wouldn't be creating a golden calf and making God in your own image and then deciding who is and isn't going to worship that image and they're in or they're out of my click and

so on.

So, there is a way of escape, and a way of escape is a very broad term. It doesn't mean the problem is going to go away. How do I know that? What's the next phrase? With every challenge, with every test, God will provide a way.

Just leave escape out of it for the moment. God will also make the way that you may be able to bear it. There is a way, because God is faithful, that whatever is happening, whatever is going on, you will bear up under it.

You will endure. You will persevere through it. Your strength will be God's strength, manifest in weakness.

Paul had a thorn in the flesh. What did God say? Three times happened so many times. The sheet is let down for Peter three times.

It's always either three times or seven times, it seems like, but three times Paul prayed that God would remove the thorn in his flesh. God said, no, you need that thorn. My strength is made manifest in your weakness.

It's all about God and his faithfulness. Am I choosing that the power of God be made manifest or am I choosing my comfort and my plan of Sam that I think is so good and that's going to make me so happy? It's a choice. We choose to believe that God is faithful.

If we come to God, we have to believe that he is faithful to reward those who seek him. But it's a choice. It's not based on a logical system of deduction.

There is evidence and there is communication. There is enough information available to make this choice. But it is a choice.

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. Flee from what you just heard reviewed with the golden calf people. Flee idolatry.

Don't tolerate it. Don't dabble in it. Don't do both and.

Flee it. There is a time to resist the devil and he will flee from you. There are other times to flee youthful lusts.

Flee idolatry. I speak as to wise men. Judge for yourself what I say.

Now he's going to return to our subject, the cup of blessing, which we bless. Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? This is not a special magical cup. This is not the communion cup.

It's a cup of blessing. This is talking about coming together for a communal meal and

saying the blessing. Father, we thank you for this food.

We thank you for the bread we break. We thank you for the beverage we drink. And it is a cup of blessing, which we bless.

It doesn't say it's blessed because it's the blood of Christ. It's blessed because it represents the new covenant. It's blessed because we bless it.

The cup of blessing, which is blessed because we bless it, it becomes blessed as we recognize that it is from a faithful God. The source makes the cup blessed. The cup is not the holy grail.

The contents are not the transformed wine that becomes blood. It's blessed because we bless it, because we invest it with meaning as we appreciate and worship and trust a faithful God. That's what makes the cup blessed.

It could be anything. It can be everything. What do you have that you did not receive? It's a blessing.

I take it as from God. Peter is told, see this sheet full of unclean animals? Arise, kill, and eat. What God has sanctified, let no one call common.

God has sanctified. He doesn't say it is now no longer against the law. The person of God has made the issue three times for Peter.

God has sanctified it. If you trust God, if you worship a faithful God, and God says it's okay, it's okay. The fascinating observation to make about Adam and Eve in the garden, and why partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil produced the fall, there wasn't anything intrinsic.

The whole garden could have been an apple orchard, and they could have all been identical apple trees. And God says, this tree, I'm calling this the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And the day you eat of this one, you're going to die.

The fruit's not poison. It has nothing to do with the tree. It has everything to do with the God who says, eat from all of these others.

Don't eat from this one. What is your view of God? Do you trust a faithful creator? Do you put your faith in, and do you choose to serve God? The action, the content of the tree, what kind it was, the fruit was obviously good to look upon. The Bible tells us so.

But so was the fruit of every other tree in the garden. God saw everything He made, that it was good. There was no ugly fruit in the garden.

There were no green peppers in there. It was all good fruit. Have you seen some of these pumpkins and squashes they grow now? That's just the ugliest looking things I've ever

seen.

They look mutated. We've got some here. That wasn't in the garden.

Everything was beautiful. Everything was perfect from the hand of God. It wasn't GMO.

It wasn't crossbred. It was perfect from the hand of God. It was first generation creation from God.

Everything was perfect. But what appealed to Eve? It's desirable to make me wise. It's not desirable to please God.

It's desirable to gratify me. I like the way it looks. I think I'm going to like the way it tastes, and I'm going to love being like God, knowing good and evil.

I get my eyes on me. And then I'm going to get my eyes on Adam because I need to help him. I don't want to be smarter than him.

He's my husband. He needs to be as smart as I am at least. So let me feed him some of this so that I'll help him.

Didn't God say I'm a help meet for him? Well, I'll help him meet death. What's the point? Everything is on what pleases God. Placing our faith in God, whether we understand it or not.

This is the core. This is why Job is approved. Despite the questions, despite the chapters and chapters of dialogue, Job is approved.

Job never does get chapter 1 and 2 of the book. We have no information that Job ever got the conclave in heaven and Satan coming in and God saying, have you seen my servant Job? Well, let's talk about Job. Let's make Job an experiment.

Let's make him a demonstration. There's no indication that Job personally ever got that information. Does God explain it when he comes in the whirlwind and say, well, Job, here's why you had to suffer.

I was making a point to Satan. Job doesn't get that information. What does God say? I'm the creator God.

Do you know what I know? Look at the animals, how they get their food. Look at the operation of condensation and evaporation and the way the planet works. Look at everything I've put together.

Do you trust me to know what is best or not? Job says, I'm shutting up. I do trust you. Job is never described as anything but a righteous man who fears God.

And it is the fear of the Lord that vindicates Job. And ultimately, at some point, he either

has or will get to read the book of Job and, oh, now I understand. But that understanding is not what drove his fear of the Lord, his obedience and his faith.

It isn't what God honored his understanding and saying, oh, well, if you explain it to me, I can do it. Job had no explanation. He still says, though he slay me, yet will I trust him.

I will do what I know God wants. Doesn't make any sense to me. This is Abraham climbing Mount Moriah with Isaac and a knife.

Doesn't make any sense to me. But I know it's the will of God. I will trust him.

He is a faithful God. And you notice that there is vindication for Job. There is vindication for Abraham.

And there is vindication for us. Well, this is the threshold that we cross to get into the room where the Lord's Supper is being served. And we'll see what the meaning of it is according to the Apostle Paul when we come back from the break.