

31. Learning to Wait for One Another

In our last topic, we saw that one of the ways that we show the love of Christ is by learning to teach the Word of God to one another. We saw that in the early church the men were all taught to teach the Word of God both publicly and privately. They were also taught how to teach their families in their homes. We saw that every Christian was to learn to be ready at all times to answer the questions of others about the hope that they had in Christ. We also saw ways that we can equip Christians to share the Word of God.

Today, our topic will be to learn what it means for Christians to learn to wait for one another. In 1 Corinthians 11:33-34, we read, “Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.” These verses come at the conclusion of the section in the chapter on the communion service. The reason for this was due to the fact that the Christians in the early church had a meal in conjunction with their communion services.

Acts 2:46-47 says, “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Here, we see that the early church had their communion services in homes. This provided an ideal opportunity for their families to see and hear about the death and resurrection of Christ. As verse 47 points out, the result of this was that people were coming to Christ daily as they heard about the death and resurrection of Christ in their homes.

As churches developed in other cities, the churches gathered together and had their communion services in conjunction with a meal on the first day of the week. Acts 20:7 says, “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” That particular service was interrupted by a young man falling out a window from the third story where they were meeting and he was taken up for dead. After Paul raised him back to life, Acts 20:11 says, “Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.” Here, we see that they had communion, ate a meal together and then talked together until morning.

It is in this context of the whole church having communion and eating a meal together that the Corinthians were told to learn to wait for one another. In Corinth, and many other cities in the Romans Empire, many of those who became Christians were slaves. They could not go to the services of the church until they had completed their work for their masters. As a result, many of those who were slaves would arrive late for the services. Instead of waiting for those who were slaves so that they could also participate in the communion service and love feast that followed, the Corinthians would go ahead and eat before the slaves arrived. This meant that there was no food for the slaves when they arrived and those who were slaves were not being treated as equal brothers and sisters in Christ.

James discussed a similar situation when he talked about the way that the rich treated the poor.

James 2:4-6 says, “Have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?” Here, we see that the rich were not treating the poor as brothers and sisters in Christ. The rich were not recognizing the poor as full partners in ministry.

The word that is translated “wait” in 1 Corinthians 11:33 is used eight times in the New Testament. A look at some of the other passages will help us to understand more fully what it means to wait for one another. In James 5:7, we read, “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.” In this verse, we see that the farmer that plants seed “waits patiently” until the seed receives both the early and latter rain so that the crop can grow and mature. Part of the problem in the church at Corinth was the fact that the people lacked patience and were unwilling to wait until the slaves could join them for the communion service and the love feast. In fact, they were showing a total lack of love for brothers and sisters in Christ that were also slaves.

In Hebrews 11:8-10, we read, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Abraham showed great patience as he “waited for” the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Here, we see that the combination of the faith and patience of Abraham caused him to live in tents for most of his adult life because he “waited for” that city.

This same patience was shown by the people mentioned in John 5:3 where we read, “In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water.” Here, we see that people with a great variety of physical problems “waited for” the moving of the water. In that passage, we see that at least one man had been unable to walk for thirty-eight years. Christ told this man “to take up his bed and walk.” Here, we see that he and many others had waited there a long time hoping to be healed.

This word is used to refer to the Father in 1 Peter 3:20 where we read, “Who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.” In this case, we see that the Father “waited patiently” the entire time that Noah was building the ark before He brought judgment on the rest of the evil people on the earth. This word is used to refer to Christ in Hebrews 10:12-13 where we read, “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.” Christ is still “waiting patiently” for that time when His enemies will become His footstool.

The word is also used in Acts 17:16-17 where we read, “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens,

his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.” Paul was “waiting patiently” for Silas and Timothy to rejoin him after he was forced to flee from Berea. However, as he “waited patiently”, he also used his time to serve the Lord by sharing the Gospel both in the synagogue and also in the marketplace.

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, we read, “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” In these verses, we see that love is described. We see that love is patient (suffers long) and love is kind. We see that there are eight things that love does not do and five things that love does. Finally, we are told that love never fails. Here, we see the reason why we are to wait and be patient with one another. As we are patient with other Christians, we are showing our love for them.

Today, we live in a world that has become very driven. People are either driven by fear or they are led by the love of Christ. Those who are driven by fear will drive others. The tragedy is that many Christians are still so driven by their own fears that they continue to drive others. As we take root in the love of Christ, we learn to be led by His love and we also learn to lead others instead of drive them. Paul discusses problems in nearly every chapter of the book of 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 3:3 says, “For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” We see that this church was still driven by fear and as a result the Christians there were experiencing much envy, strife and division. That is the result when Christians continue to be driven by fear.

However, Christ wants us to take the time to show new Christians how to be led by the love of Christ. That means that we must be led by the love of Christ ourselves. Since love is patient and love is kind, we can tell by our interaction with others whether we are still driven by fear or whether we are led by Christ. If we have learned to be led by Christ, we will be patient and kind. When people are patient and kind, others are drawn to Christ because they see love in action. Luke 15:1-2 says, “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’” Christ was led by love and the tax collectors and sinners were drawn to him. The Pharisees and scribes were driven by fear and would not even eat with tax collectors and sinners. The question that we need to ask ourselves is, “Are we drawing others to Christ with patience and kindness or are we driving others from Christ because we are still driven?”

The Lord wants us to help our physical and spiritual children learn to lead others with patience and kindness. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to take root in the love of Christ so they lead others with patience.