

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Verses 17-19:

--(17) Paul had just praised these Corinthians for their general faithfulness to the traditions he passed on to them. But now, he has to address something where he has no praise for them.

--Unfortunately, things are so bad that he says their gathering was ***not for the better but for the worse!*** As he ends his argument with them here he will warn: **(34) *lest you come together for judgment.***

--It is possible to have a Christian gathering produce more harm than good! We need to think about what we are doing when we come together as the church.

--Also, in the context, it seems that the type of coming together as the church that Paul is referring to is their love feasts before they shared communion together. This was a common practice in the early church. **(Acts 2:46)**

Jude 12: *These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves.*

--(18) Paul is shocked and reluctant to believe that the divisions he reprovved earlier **(1:10; 11:18; 12:25)** in terms of worldly wisdom and various teachers also spilled into their sharing of communion.

--The word ***divisions*** can also be *rents* as in a new patch on old garments **(Mt. 9:16; Mk. 2:21)** or the divided ideas around the person and message of Jesus Christ **(Jn. 7:43; 9:16; 10:19)**.

--(19) Even though Paul doesn't want to believe this of them specifically, he gives a theological underpinning for why he cannot be shocked. Paul knew that there ***must*** be factions in the people of God so that ***those who are approved may be recognized.***

--Divisions, tears, and heresies appear in the church to help make manifest—reveal the truth of what people are and what people believe. Even the early church had its fair share of these lessons: Judas with Jesus; Ananias & Sapphira; Hymenaeus & Alexander; etc.

Matthew 18:7: *Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!*

--These types of things must happen but beware of which side you end up on!

Verses 20-22:

--(20) Paul's point here is very simple. They might think that they are taking communion together but what they are doing is totally out of character with the *person* of Jesus Christ.

--(21-22) We don't know exactly how this all worked out: Triclinium Vs. Atrium; Some ate early; Rich with larger portions are the meal; Separating into have's/have not's; Leaving just the bread and wine for the poor; they were also getting drunk!, etc.

--The reality is likely a mix of these things and more. The end result was that they: ***despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing.***

--***Despise*** as used in **Mt. 6:24** (one of the two masters) + **18:10** (the little ones).

--The Corinthians had turned the table of the Lord into a place of contempt for the brethren that Jesus died for. This is why Paul has no praise for them.

*Hodge (1 Corinthians): *"If within twenty years of its institution the Corinthians had turned the Lord's Supper into a disorderly feast although the apostles were still alive, we need not wonder at the speedy corruption of the church after their death."**

Verse 23:

--Here Paul goes back to the very basis of the Lord's Supper. He wants to make the point that they are not eating the *Lord's* Supper because their actions do not reflect the institution that came from Jesus Himself!

--Remarkably, Paul is claiming direct revelation from Jesus Himself. Paul does so on more than one occasion: **(15:3; Gal. 1:11-12+17-18)**.

--Where or when did he receive this? Likely during his time in Arabia or Tarsus but we do not know.

--Paul also emphasizes here that Jesus instituted this meal ***on the same night in which He was betrayed!***

--When Satan did his worst Christ was victoriously giving one of our most cherished blessings.

--Sitting at that first communion table was a true enemy who was still loved and treated kindly by Jesus Christ. So it has been and will be at all communion gatherings till He returns!

Verses 24-25:

--I know there are a lot of thoughts and traditions about communion in the Church. I just want to say a few things.

--First, we must remember what is happening here. Paul is making a specific point about the character of the communion table. He is not giving an exhaustive teaching on communion.

--Second, there is no way that the original tradition from Jesus Himself was understood by those disciples as a mystical change to literal body and blood. And they were the ones who passed it down from Christ Himself.

--Third, the bread is called Christ's body in the same sense that the cup is called the new covenant. We receive the benefits of what Christ's body and blood procured for us through faith.

--Notice, His body was broken ***for you*** (substitutionary atonement). His body was offered like the sacrificial lamb for us.

****Hebrews 10:5: Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me."****

--Notice, the cup is ***the new covenant in My blood***. The Old Covenant gave laws but couldn't change you. The new covenant makes us washed and places the new laws in our very hearts. It makes us new people—new creations—with new natures!

Hebrews 8:10: For this is the new covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

--In this, Paul wants them to *see & remember* how giving Jesus is and who He has made them by the new covenant in His blood!

Verse 26:

--So every time they came to the Lord's Supper they were to **proclaim** something. The word is most often translated *preach*.

--When we take communion we are saying something about Jesus Christ, and about ourselves. We are saying that He is a great Savior and that we are all great sinners.

--When He comes there will be no more danger of our forgetting Him!

Verses 27-28:

--**Therefore** brings us back to Paul's line of correction.

--What does it mean to take the Lord's Supper **in an unworthy manner?**

--First, it has nothing to do with unbelievers since they are not even in the context.

--Second, it has nothing to do with our personal worthiness in terms of salvation because that is the very reason that Jesus Christ had to die. We can never be worthy on our own.

--Paul is not talking about the worthiness of the person but the worthiness of the *manner* or *motives* in which they come to the Lord's Supper. Isn't it interesting that Paul never calls into question the reality of the salvation of these Corinthian believers—as so many “spiritual” modern Christians do with others—but yet constantly addressed their practice or persons?

Mackintosh (Handfuls of Pasture Vol. 1): “I never think of setting my child to judge as to whether he is my child or not, but I expect him to judge himself, as to his habits, for if he do not, I may have to do, by chastening, what he ought to do by self-judgment. It is because I look upon him as my child, that I will not allow him to sit at my table with soiled garments and disorderly manners.”

--We are not saved by personal holiness but we are saved to personal holiness.

--**(28)** So we are called to **examine** ourselves—not *for* salvation but *because of* salvation—and then eat and drink.

--To **examine** means to *test or prove* and is used in Scriptures such as: **(2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4; 1 Thess. 5:21; etc.)**.

--The idea here is preparation for participation. I am to see my sin as God sees it in light of the cross and then remember His body and blood. I am not to ignore, justify, embrace, celebrate, or enjoy the sin in my life that Jesus had to die for.

--To take part in the Lord's Supper that way makes me **guilty of the body and blood of the Lord**.

--What does that mean? It means that I am acting like those who ignore or reject or resist the fact that Jesus Christ paid for their sins on the cross—what my whole Christian life is about!

Have we forgotten our deliverance so quickly like the Israelites forgot that Passover night?!
--I must realize that is where all my hope and forgiveness is and then also realize that all of those around me in the Body of Christ also have the same hope and foundation.

Verses 29-32:

--If I refuse this sincere and humble examination in light of the cross then I put myself in a place where God may chasten me as His son or daughter.

--(30) This verse means exactly what it says. You can think of Josiah, Samson, Ananias and Sapphira, **1 John 5:16-17**, etc. God the Father is not playing around with the death of His only Son.

--Notice as well, the type of judgment that Christians face is not the loss of salvation but present *chastening* so that we are not ***condemned with the world***.

--Does this scare you? Well, it should! God isn't into playing religious games. He means business. He cares more than we know about His Son, He cares more than we know about His bride the Church, and He cares more than we know about us as His sons and daughters.

--What did Paul want the Corinthians to do to keep themselves from this chastening? What is our preventative measure? Self-judgment. ***For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged (31)***.

--To judge ourselves is to say what is true of our own sin in the sight of God. It is to see my manner of living and my motives for living as God sees them.

--There are three basic levels of Biblical judgment.

1) Self-Judgment: The Holy Spirit reveals to me my sinful nature in some regard and I repent and go and sin no more. Things are settled between Him and I.

2) Church-Judgment: When a personal sin is ignored, justified, embraced, or left unjudged then that sin spills out to those around me. This is where the church is meant to step in as we see in: **Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 3; Titus 3:9-11; etc.**

--When another believer who loves God and walks with him comes to you and points something out you better take that seriously! That may very well be God's gracious intervention in your life.

3) Divine-Judgment: When we refuse to judge our own wrongs, and then we refuse to respond to the correction of others or the church, then God will step in Himself.

Verses 33-34:

--Here Paul brings it all the way back around again to their selfish and unloving personal interactions with one another. The formula is simple. When you come together recognize the Lord's Supper accordingly in brotherly love and eat at home if you cannot control yourself.

--This type of examination and personal judgment is not supposed to be a once-a-week ritual before the ritual of communion but an everyday lifestyle even when we are eating in our own homes. You cannot be "right" with God by confessing one day a week and ignoring Him the other six.