

# 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 – “Do This In Remembrance Of Me”

In chapter 11 we're looking at things going on in the Corinthian church that were out of order. In verses 1-16 we looked at the order that was to exist between men and women in the church. We discussed the wonderful passage of head coverings and what that was all about. But we covered that last week and we're going to move on.

Beginning in verse 17, Paul deals with another issue taking place in the church that also brought disorder and disunity. This time it centered around the Lord's Supper – Communion.

## Outline of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34:

1. The Problem at the Lord's Supper – 11:17-22
2. The Picture in the Lord's Supper – 11:23-26
3. The Potential Penalty from the Lord's Supper – 11:27-34

## 1. The Problem at the Lord's Supper – 11:17-22

**11:17-18 - *Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse.* <sup>18</sup> *For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.***

At the beginning of this chapter Paul had praised them for remembering him and for keeping the traditions (or Word of God) that was delivered to them. They were seeking to follow the instructions Paul had given to them. They were doing well in many of these things, but there were a few things that Paul could not praise them in. The Lord's Supper was one of them. That's why he says, ***in giving these instructions...*** He's going to go through the observances that were to take place around the Lord's Supper, and he's not doing so to say, 'You've done a great job in following these things church.' No, he's writing to say, 'You've really blown it in these areas. I have nothing to commend you in regarding partaking of the Lord's Supper.'

In fact, their coming together as a church was having a greater negative impact on one another than a positive impact (***not for the better but for the worse***). And this is exactly what Paul has been seeking to build the church up in – to be considering others above yourself.

- **1 Corinthians 10:24**, *"Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being."*
- **1 Corinthians 10:33**, *"just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."*

Coming to church is not just about you having a good experience and being ministered to. Oh, I hope you do experience those things, but those are not the initial goals in coming. Church should be about you coming to minister to others and serve one another to their edification and encouragement. Yes, we seek to be instructed in the Word and to grow in Jesus, but when church becomes about your gratification more than glorifying God, you're coming not for the better but for the worse.

Paul has heard that as this church was coming together there were divisions among them. And Paul isn't needing to have his arm twisted to convince him of these things, he's not really surprised by any of this sadly. This is an inevitable result when the flesh rules rather than the Spirit.

These are things that have already been discussed earlier in 1 Corinthians:

- **1 Corinthians 1:10–12**, *"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. <sup>11</sup> For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. <sup>12</sup> Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.'"*
- **1 Corinthians 3:3**, *"for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?"*

**11:19 - *For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.***

Paul did see that though there were divisions and factions (Gk=*haireseis*; heresies) it would only serve to show who were genuinely following the Lord.

- This is not implying that we should be trying to create factions in our midst since it serves a purpose, but rather that these are just inevitable when people are serving themselves, and it only defines those who have not genuinely been serving the Lord.

**11:20-21 - *Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. <sup>21</sup> For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.***

Notice something here: ***when you come together in one place***... This is also mentioned in verses 17, 18, 33, 34. It was the practise of the church to come together. It's still important today for the church to be together!

One thing the early church would do when coming together was to participate in the Lord's Supper. We call it communion today. This took on a much more central position in their gatherings than it typically does today. They would observe the Lord's Supper regularly at their meetings.

This communion became attached to a common meal they would enjoy together. It was called the 'Love-Feast', or 'Agape-Feast'.

- This is where people brought various items for the meal, and everyone could share together and enjoy some good food. It was an opportunity for those who were poor to get a good meal for a change. Often times this was the best meal of the week they would have.
- But this is where the divisions began to set in. People began to divide over social and economic lines. People began to put themselves above others and serve themselves by jumping to the front of the line.
- People were pigging out and leaving no food for the less fortunate. Some were getting drunk and spoiling the significance of this time.
- There was a lack of love at the love feast!

After the meal they would partake of the Lord's Supper – communion. This was significant because Jesus instituted communion after the Passover meal. So by the time they got to this communion, or Lord's Supper, people were not in a good place to observe this rightly. Some were hurt, some were drunk, some were vomiting out back. It was not a good scene and definitely not what communion was to be about.

**11:22 - *What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.***

Paul comes down with some pretty heavy words here. He's upset at the way they've been conducting themselves and the abuses taking place within the church. There was no room for praise here.

So Paul will take some time to instruct them on what communion is really all about.

## 2. The Picture in the Lord's Supper – 11:23-26

**11:23-24 - *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; <sup>24</sup> and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."***

These are instructions that Paul has received directly from the Lord through revelation. This is no mere exercise that Paul felt was a good idea to do, this was the very instruction he received to pass on to the church.

Now remember, communion has its origin in the Passover meal. Jesus instituted this with His disciples the night before He would be crucified. As the disciples sat with Jesus at the table, Jesus took bread, gave thanks for it and broke it, saying: ***this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.***

- Now the Passover meal had great significance to it already. The Passover was celebrated annually to commemorate Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Upon their Exodus they were to prepare bread without yeast, as they were to make their departure in haste, not waiting for bread to rise. They were to go in faith in God's deliverance and provision.
- But now Jesus says this bread is to picture My body. Remember yeast is a picture of sin in Scripture. It's as though Jesus is saying, *the only way you're going to be delivered from sin is through My sacrifice.*
- Sin ravages lives and leaves people broken and maimed. But Jesus would be broken for us! His life would be sacrificed that we could gain life.

What a contrast this spoke of in light of some believers coming selfishly and self-serving to the table of the Lord. Jesus however modeled sacrifice, selflessness, and was broken for you! He lived to bless others.

So do this in remembrance of Jesus. Think about the great work He did on the cross to redeem you and give you life. Let it be a time to think of your brokenness and need for salvation. He did this for you, so let this be a time to remember His great love and grace.

**11:25-26 - *In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”* <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.**

Jesus also took the cup – notice after supper. Throughout the Passover meal there were 4 cups that they would drink from as part of the Passover Seder. This was the cup after the supper, which was the 3<sup>rd</sup> cup – the cup of Redemption! (1<sup>st</sup> – Cup of Sanctification; 2<sup>nd</sup> – Cup of Deliverance; 3<sup>rd</sup> – Cup of Redemption; 4<sup>th</sup> – Cup of Praise).

And Jesus was essentially saying, through My shed blood, your redemption is complete.

- **1 Peter 1:18–19**, *"knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."*

This sacrifice of Jesus ratified the New Covenant. What is this new covenant? It's spoken of in Jeremiah:

- **Jeremiah 31:31–34**, *“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—<sup>32</sup> not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. <sup>33</sup> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>34</sup> No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*

The New Covenant speaks of the way that God will now receive His people. Previously in the Old Testament it was through the law, and the sacrifice of animals. Of which no amount of sacrifice was sufficient to remove the stain or guilt of sin. But now through the New Covenant, Jesus has become our final sacrifice, sufficient to remove our guilt and sin, and bring forgiveness.

When Jesus died the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom, we now have access to the Living God and to enjoy a personal relationship with Him!



The New Covenant was introduced through the cross of Christ.

Whenever you partake of this cup, do it in remembrance of what Christ has done for you and accomplished for you! Just think of where you would be if Christ had not gone to the cross for you.

**...you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.**

Whenever you partake in communion, it's not just a looking back, it's also a looking forward.

You proclaim His death in understanding that sin brings death. But His death conquered all. But you also proclaim His death till He comes. Dead people can't move. What we're saying is that we know Jesus is alive, and He's coming again to rule and reign on this earth. It's not just a memorial, it's a celebration!

- Godet beautifully points out that the Lord's Supper is "the link between His two comings, the monument of the one, the pledge of the other."<sup>42</sup> <sup>1</sup>

3 main views throughout church history of what Jesus meant when He said this is My body and blood:

1. Transubstantiation view – This is where people believe that God transfers the very body and blood of Jesus into the substance of the elements. They believe they are literally taking in Jesus' body and blood.
2. Consubstantiation view – They see the body and blood of Christ as being "present in, with, and under" the elements. Christ is very much present, but not in a physical way.
3. Memorial view – They see the emblems of communion as representatives of Jesus' body and blood. Jesus' statements are meant metaphorically. Remember, when Jesus said these things, He was still in His body and His blood still pumping through. He meant it metaphorically when He originally said it.

### 3. The Potential Penalty from the Lord's Supper – 11:27-34

**11:27 - *Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.***

<sup>42</sup> Godet, *First Corinthians*, p. 163.

<sup>1</sup> MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments* (A. Farstad, Ed.; p. 1789). Thomas Nelson.

Now this verse has brought a lot of fear in people worried that perhaps they've taken communion when they shouldn't have and have now pronounced some curse upon themselves.

This is not saying that those who partake of it unworthily, but rather ***in an unworthy manner***. Understand that we are all unworthy. We're wretched sinners who don't deserve any of this. But this is what communion speaks of. It says that Jesus has done the work to unite us to Him. We are brought into union with Him through His sacrifice. We can't do anything to earn that, otherwise His sacrifice would have been unnecessary. It's all by His grace. Grace that allows us to come in our flaws and shortcomings and remember that His sacrifice accomplished it all for us to be forgiven and saved.

So who then is ***guilty of the body and blood of the Lord***? Those that come and are self-serving, who have not been partaking of these elements in a way of giving thanks to Jesus and reflecting on what He did for us.

- These emblems represent something significant. Don't overlook it because to do so is to dishonor the value of Jesus' body and blood sacrificed for us.
- If you are coming to the table and complaining over the use of Welch's grape juice, or why the crackers are so dry, or why they don't use wine, perhaps you're ***guilty of the body and blood of the Lord***.

**11:28 - *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.***

Take some time and realize your need for this. None of us can be right with God apart from the work of Christ. So have some inward reflection, humble yourself before the Lord, see your brokenness, but partake in gratitude of the One who has made you whole!

**11:29-30 - *For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. <sup>30</sup> For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.***

If people are coming to the table like some in the church at Corinth were, looking only toward their own interest and showing a lack of love to others, they were failing to discern the Lord's body. The Lord's body was given that sin may be put away. But if we're partaking in a sinful attitude, then we're making a mockery of this whole sacrament. It's like we're living a lie.

Because of this, some in the church were being judged. They were weak and sick, and some even succumbed to death. God was demonstrating that communion points to the way sin is dealt with, but if people wanted to keep living a sinful life (especially at the Lord's Supper), He will deal with that sin Himself.

**11:31-32 - *For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.***

There are times we would spare ourselves much if we took a little self-examination. It's not to come down on ourselves but to keep ourselves in check and be sure we are honoring the Lord in what we do.

- **Psalm 139:23–24**, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; <sup>24</sup> And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting."*

When we do experience judgment as children of God, it's really the Lord coming alongside us to chasten us, which is about discipline. He's doing it to correct us and train us so that we won't go the way of the world and experience the condemnation that is due her.

- **Hebrews 12:5–8**, *"And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; <sup>6</sup> For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." <sup>7</sup> If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? <sup>8</sup> But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons."*

Don't be discouraged when chastened, rather receive it as a sign of the Lord's love and care for you and let it lead you to Him!

**11:33-34 - *Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. <sup>34</sup> 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.***

So in conclusion, Paul echoes that sentiment of coming together in unity, in love, and in care of one another. Don't make this common meal together your ticket to pig out. Serve one another and above all, honor the Lord. Don't let this gathering become an occasion for the Lord to have to correct you.