

THE LORD'S SUPPER

TEXT: I CORINTHIANS 11:17-34

INTRODUCTION:

1. In I Corinthians 1:10-12, the apostle Paul wrote, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions (strife) among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.”
2. These divisions and factions and contentions are referred to throughout this epistle. Paul says in 3:3, “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”
3. And we see here in chapter 11 that this same divisiveness was even carried over into the Lord's Supper (11:17, 18).

1. **DISORDER REBUKED**
2. **ORDER EXPLAINED**
3. **DISCERNMENT REQUIRED**

I. DISORDER REBUKED

1. In verse 19, Paul says, “For there must be also heresies (factions) among you.”
2. Second Peter 2:1 says, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies...”
3. Titus 3:10 says, “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject.”
4. The Greek word translated “heresy” is sometimes translated as “sect,” such as the sect of the Pharisees, or the sect of the Sadducees.
5. In Acts 24:5, Tertullus accused Paul of being “a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.”

6. When Paul says, “For there must be also heresies (factions) among you,” he doesn’t mean that this is a good thing, but that it is inevitable because of their carnality.
7. However, one good thing that would come out of this bad situation was, “that they which are approved may be made manifest (made known or recognized) among you” (11:19b).
8. Those which are approved would be “made manifest” or made known. Romans 14:18 says, “For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.”
9. “When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper” (11:20). Albert Barnes says, “Whatever, therefore, you may profess to be engaged in, yet really and truly you are not celebrating the Lord’s Supper” (*Barnes Notes*, I Corinthians).
10. Jude 12 refers to “feasts of charity,” communal meals that were common in the apostolic church, and are still popular today.
11. In Paul’s day, the communal meal or “feast of charity” preceded the communion service, but in Corinth there was such disorder that it was ruining the Lord’s Supper.
12. Some people were not sharing their food with others – “For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry” (11:21a). That is, some were hungry because all the food was eaten greedily by others.
13. And some were even getting drunk – “and another is drunken” (11:21b).
14. “Or despise ye the church of God?” (11:22). Barnes says, “they had held in contempt the whole church of God.”
15. “And shame them that have not?” (11:22). Have not food or money, etc. Paul says, “I praise you not” (11:22; cf. verse 17).

II. ORDER EXPLAINED (11:23-26)

1. Paul “received” (11:23) his instructions directly from the Lord. Paul was not in the upper room with the original apostles when our Lord instituted the Lord’s Supper (cf. Matthew 26:26-30).
2. First Corinthians 11:23 says, “That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread...” This is why it is called “the Lord’s supper,” not the Lord’s breakfast.
3. Albert Barnes said, “It is called ‘supper,’ because the word denotes the evening repast. It was instituted in the evening; and it is evidently most proper that it should be observed in the after part of the day. With most

churches the time is improperly changed to the morning -- a custom which has no sanction in the New Testament; and which is a departure from the very idea of a supper.”

4. “And when he had given thanks” (11:24a) refers to Matthew 26:26, which says, “Jesus took bread, and blessed it.”
5. “Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me” (11:24b). Our Lord meant, “This represents my body.” The bread is symbolic, representing His broken body.
6. This does not mean that that bread our Lord held in His hand was literally his body. Barnes says, “Yet this is the absurd and impossible doctrine of the Roman Catholics, holding that the ‘bread’ and ‘wine’ were literally changed into the ‘body and blood’ of our Lord. The language employed by the Saviour was in accordance with a common mode of speaking among the Jews” (*Barnes’ Notes*, Matthew).
7. Compare I Chronicles 11:16-19.
8. It was not really the blood of the men that “put their lives in jeopardy.” It was “water out of the well of Bethlehem.”
9. To King David, this water represented “the blood of the men that put their lives in jeopardy.”
10. The RCC teaches the doctrine of “transubstantiation.” And they literally bow down and worship the bread (communion wafers).
11. Most Protestants hold views that, while not as bad as “transubstantiation,” are still very unscriptural. For example, Martin Luther said there was a “real presence” of the body of Christ in the bread and wine.
12. Lutherans call this “consubstantiation,” an obvious compromise with Rome.
13. Calvin (also an ex-RC priest) taught there was a “spiritual presence” in the bread and wine that promoted grace in the believer.
14. Jesus said, “This is my body” (Matthew 26:26; cf. I Cor. 11:24), meaning, “This is a picture of my body.” Just as you might show a picture to someone and say, “This is my family.”
15. “This do in remembrance of me” (I Cor. 11:24b). Like baptism, the Lord’s Supper is symbolic. The Lord’s Supper is an ordinance, not a sacrament.
16. “This do in remembrance of me” (I Cor. 11:24b). We celebrate the Lord’s Supper to “remember” our Lord’s vicarious death on the cross.
17. There are two church ordinances – baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptism comes first. Baptism illustrates the doctrine of identification – I died with Christ. Romans 6:4 says, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death...”
18. The Lord's Supper illustrates the doctrine of substitution – Christ died for me (11:26).

19. When our Lord instituted the Lord's Supper, He linked together His first coming with His second coming – “ye do shew the Lord's death till he come” (11:26).
20. “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup...” (11:26). No specific rules are laid down concerning how often we are to observe the Lord's Supper.
21. “Drink this cup” (11:26). There is no mention of wine in reference to the Lord's Supper. Our Lord said, “But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom” (Matthew 26:29; cf. Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18).
22. The cup should be unfermented grace juice.

III. DISCERNMENT REQUIRED (11:29)

1. “Unworthily” (11:27, 29) means, “in an unworthy manner,” and has reference to verses 17-22 (Scofield margin).
2. Eating the Lord's Supper in “an unworthy manner” is dangerous (11:27-29). There are consequences of partaking in unworthy manner – “Many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (die)” (11:30).
3. Oftentimes in Scripture, the word “sleep” refers to the death of a Christian (never an unsaved person). In describing the rapture, Paul wrote, “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (I Thessalonians 4:13, 14).
4. Barnes gives several interesting views regarding the phrase, “shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” (11:27). He says Doddridge renders it, “Shall be counted guilty of profaning...that which is intended to represent the body and blood of the Lord.”
5. Grotius renders it, “He does the same thing as if he should slay Christ.” Locke renders it, “Shall be guilty of a misuse of the body and blood of the Lord.”
6. Bloomfield renders it, “He shall be guilty of profaning the symbols of the body and blood of Christ.”
7. Barnes himself says, “The obvious and literal sense is, evidently, that they should by such conduct be involved in the sin of putting the Lord Jesus to death.”

8. “But let a man examine himself...” (11:28), and then he can approach the Lord’s table in a proper manner.
9. “Eateth and drinketh damnation” (11:29) means “judgment” (cf. verse 32).
10. The word often refers to eternal damnation, that is, the punishment of the wicked in hell. But not all of the time. Our Lord used the same Greek word in Matthew 7:2, “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”
11. First, we should judge ourselves, or “examine” ourselves (11:28, 31); otherwise God will judge us. And, when we are judged, “we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (11:32).
12. Verse 33 says, “Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry (wait) one for another” (cf. verse 21, 22).
13. Those who were hungry should eat at home (11:34). Otherwise, they would incur “condemnation” (God’s judgment; the same Greek word translated “damnation” in verse 29).
14. There were other matters that had to be dealt with, but Paul said he would set all of that in order when he arrived in Corinth (11:34).

CONCLUSION:

1. A boy was born into the home of an English pastor. The boy’s mother was from a prominent family of English royalty. In preparation for his life’s work, the young boy was educated in private schools as a small child and at Westminster School, earning a degree in law.
2. After earning his law degree, he later passed his bar examination and was licensed to practice as a solicitor in the lower courts of the English justice system.
3. But the young man was physically frail and emotionally sensitive throughout his childhood.
4. One of the traumatic experiences that contributed to his emotional instability was the death of his mother when he was only six years old.
5. He was never able to properly deal with the overwhelming grief that he experienced as a small child, and this grief stayed with him throughout his entire life. He never stopped grieving for his mother.
6. Even though he passed his law examination and was licensed as a lawyer, the very prospect of appearing before the bar for his final examination frightened him to the extent that he had a mental breakdown from which he never recovered.
7. As a result, he never practiced law. He preferred the study and writing of literature.

8. Added to the anxiety of his bar examination was an unhappy love affair that resulted in an unsuccessful suicide attempt. After his suicide attempt, he was put in an insane asylum for a period of eighteen months.
9. While confined in the insane asylum, and while suffering from prolonged periods of deep depression, he would spend much of his time in reading the Scriptures.
10. Remembering his spiritual upbringing as a child and his concern for the eternal destiny of his soul, he struggled with the question of his salvation and peace with God.
11. One day, while reading the Book of Romans, he was confronted with the words of the Apostle Paul who said: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Romans 3:23-25).
12. While acknowledging his need of redemption and the sufficiency that is in the shed blood of Jesus our great Savior, and being convicted of his sin by the Holy Spirit, the troubled young man was gloriously saved at the age of thirty-three years old.
13. After partially recovering from his melancholia and mental depression, the young man moved into the home of a retired minister named Morley Unwin. There he received the necessary spiritual encouragement and very patient care at the hands of Rev. Unwin and his wife Mary.
14. After the death of Rev. Unwin, the young man moved with his widow's family to the town of Olney, and it was there at Olney that the young man attended the church pastored by John Newton, the author of many hymns, including "Amazing Grace."
15. Here at Olney, the young man and John Newton became very close friends, and they worked together in the writing of religious poetry for the services of the church.
16. John Newton became a spiritual father to the young man, and he did much to help him overcome his spells of severe depression and religious doubts.
17. While living in Olney, the young man wrote 67 hymns. This is undoubtedly his most famous hymn:

*There is a fountain filled with blood
drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains*

*The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he
Wash all my sins away*

*Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God
Are saved, to sin no more*

*For since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply
Redeeming love has been my theme
and shall be till I die*

*When this poor lisping,
stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave
Then in a nobler, sweeter song
I'll sing thy power to save – William Cowper*