

1 Cor. 11:17-34 "Every Man for Himself"

For the Children: At a congregational meal, do you find yourself hoping you can get to the best food before others do? That was a problem in Corinth. Some people were thinking of themselves, not others. If the Lord Jesus had not been willing to make sacrifice for others – for us – we would be dead in our sins. It does not add up to say we believe in His sacrifice and love His church, but then put ourselves first. We should be ready to put God first, others second, and ourselves last. That means caring for each other. It often means waiting for others to go first. **Questions:** Give some examples of how you could show love to others in the church. Give some examples of how you could let others go first. Why are selfishness and greed against what the Lord's Supper teaches us?

Introduction:

First Point: What Was Wrong with Their Gatherings

- 1) The Problem of Factions: The problem was not so much the differences of opinion – whatever they were (e.g., preferring one preacher over another) – but the disunity that resulted. Such things are ordained by God, and used by Him for good e.g., to expose hypocrisy, as well as those who are approved by God
- 2) The Problem of Self-Centredness: At the "love feasts," the rich had plenty to eat, while the poor had little. There was also an element of greed in this. Some were putting themselves first. Others were even drinking too much.

Second Point: Why It Was Wrong

- 1) Despising the Church: Such behaviour implied a lack of love for the church and its members. Poorer brethren were being humiliated, rather than cared for. The church was not functioning as the "Body" of Christ.
- 2) Profaning the Table: The "love feast" was apparently being celebrated in conjunction with the Lord's Supper. That Supper was a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice – which has an effect on His Body, the church. The apostle says this is not a true Lord's Supper celebration at all! The Supper is also a proclamation of Christ (v. 26) – but this behaviour does not uphold that proclamation. The Supper implies our unity in Christ – but this was disunity. The Corinthians were profaning the Table, partaking in an "unworthy" manner – making the Supper like a common meal at home.
- 3) Bringing Down Judgement: They were guilty of sinning against the "body and blood of the Lord" (v. 27). This was inconsistent with the sacrifice of His body on the cross, and with its effect on His body, the church. This can bring chastisement – the Lord's discipline - both on individuals and on the congregation as a whole e.g., sickness or death (v. 30). This is aimed at preventing them from being condemned finally, with the world (v. 32).

Third Point: What Was the Solution

- 1) Showing Love to Brethren: The solution to these problems was first to show love to each other. They should allow others to eat first; provide for those in need. Putting others first and caring for each other should characterize the whole of congregational life.
- 2) The Practice of Self-Examination: Self-examination means testing oneself for genuineness and seeking the Lord's grace to refine our lives. We consider our sins, the Lord's gift of salvation, and how we are showing gratitude for this gift. Then we can come to the Supper made worthy by Christ, and in a way that does not treat the sacrament carelessly – taking seriously both Christ's sacrifice and His church (v. 29).
- 3) The Practice of Church-Discipline: "Judging ourselves rightly" (v. 31) refers to the *church* judging itself, not just the individual judging himself. It is an act of love to both individuals and the church collectively, to deter people from coming to the Table unworthily. This is not a mere custom, but a Biblical directive!

Conclusion:

