

SERMON: The Abuse of the Lord's Supper, Part 2

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Introduction

- A. Lord willing, the next time we will celebrate the Lord's Supper together will be in two weeks on September 9th. Will you and I participate? Will our children? It not, why not, and if so, with what kind of heart toward Christ and all of His people will we participate? The answer to these questions obviously matters to the crucified, risen, reigning, returning Lord Jesus Christ, or He wouldn't have inspired and preserved this text of Scripture before us.
- B. So we continue today our study of the Corinthian church's abuse of the Lord's Supper in this Christ inspired and Christ preserved record in chapter 11 of 1 Corinthians. It is good for us to take time to digest what Christ through His apostle Paul provides for us here in order to prepare us for each time we celebrate the Lord's Supper, so that we will not celebrate it in a way that does more harm than good to the church, to ourselves, or to our children who participate.
- C. Last week we observed ...

I. 11:17-22 The problem in Corinth - loveless divisions at the Lord's Supper

- A. 11:17-19 New Testament body of believers in Corinth was repeating the mistake of Old Testament Israel in abusing their God-appointed, symbolic, sacrificial feasts and meals in a way that did more harm than good.

Isaiah 1:12 "When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts? ¹³ "Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies-- **I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.** ¹⁴ "I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them.

1 Corinthians 11:17 But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because **you come together not for the better but for the worse.** ¹⁸ For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that **divisions (schismata) exist among you;** and in part I believe it. ¹⁹ For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.

- B. 11:20-22 The description of the divisions and abuse taking place during the Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians 11:20 Therefore **when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper,** ²¹ for in your eating each one takes **his own supper** first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. ²² What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? 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 will not praise you.

1. But Paul tells them that what they think is the Lord's Supper is not the Lord's Supper that they are eating. They have perverted it into something over which the Lord has no ownership, and would not ever host.
2. The Passover supper at which Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper consisted of a full meal. It was typical in pagan society for worshipers to eat a feast in conjunction with their sacrifices. It appears that the church would have a communal meal in conjunction with celebrating the Lord's Supper. But those of greater means were eating their own food with others in their socio-economic class, either in the dining hall of the home while others gathered in the courtyard, or in the presence of those who had little or no food. There was no sense of being one family in the Lord, no visible expression of unity, but rather schism, no sharing in what the Lord provided. Drunkenness, bad in and of itself, underscored that some kept their excess for themselves in the face of other who did not have enough.

James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren: **did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom** which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶ **But you have dishonored the poor man.**

3. This was a supper, but it was not the Lord's Supper they were eating, because in it they are not reflecting or proclaiming what the meal meant as taught by the Lord. The true meaning of the Lord's Supper, according to what Jesus said about this meal, should inform them (and us) and direct their (and our) hearts to be one with the heart of Jesus in this matter.

II. 11:23-26 The meaning of the Lord's Supper informs and mends loveless schisms.

- A. What will heal our hearts from any abuse of the Lord's Supper is to embrace by faith the words of Jesus. In these words we see the heart of Christ towards His church, displayed in his self-sacrificial actions, in the riches of His New Covenant grace procured for us, and in His call to us to respond by "remembering" Him.

1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "**This is My body, which is for you (plural); do this in remembrance of Me.**" ²⁵ In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "**This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.**" ²⁶ **For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.**

1. The Lord's Supper is founded on the sacrificial death of Jesus "for you (plural)." His attitude of love, mercy, kindness, forgiveness, patience, good will toward us which led Him obediently to death for us on the cross should turn our own hearts, like Christ's, toward all for whom Christ died as we celebrate this Supper, in which we proclaim Christ's death for us all. To be hostile or indifferent toward other believers is to take sides against Christ and His purpose in dying for them, a death them we supposedly celebrate and affirm by our participation in the meal.
2. Recalling this truth is to lead to responding to this truth with Christlike attitudes and actions towards all of His people - "Do this in remembrance of Me." In the Old Testament "remembering" is rarely used as our common English meaning of mere mental recall activity, but often involves an active response to such recall. I.e., it involves both thinking and acting, as it sometimes also does in the New Testament, including here in our text. E.g., ...

Genesis 30:22 Then **God remembered Rachel**, and God gave heed to her **and opened her womb.**

Galatians 2:10 They only asked us to **remember the poor**-- the very thing I also was eager to do.

III. 11:27-34 The Consequences of Abusing the Lord's Supper and the Correction of All Such Abuse.

- A. The consequences of abusing the Lord's Supper.

1. Non-participation in the Lord's Supper is significant for what it indicates. We do not pledge anew our faith, love, and loyalty to the crucified, risen, reigning, returning Christ, nor do we publically identify ourselves as belonging to the body of believers for which He died.
2. Abusive participation in the Lord's Supper is significant for its consequences.
 - a. We become guilty before the Lord Jesus. If we are wrong-heartedly participating in the Lord's Supper, we become guilty/liable for the body and blood of Christ. That is, we leave the Lord's side and align ourselves with the rulers of this present age who crucified the Lord.

1 Corinthians 11:27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, **shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.**

- b. We become judged by the Lord Jesus if we do not rightly discern the collective purpose for which He offered His body up unto death and the implications such an offered body has for our attitude His church. Parents, protect your children from participating wrongheartedly.

1 Corinthians 11:29 For he who eats and drinks, **eats and drinks judgment to himself** if he does not judge the body rightly.³⁰ **For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.**

- c. While such judgment has redemptive purposes, failure to respond through repentance and faith to such judgment will result in judgment that has destructive purposes.

1 Corinthians 11:32 But **when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord** so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

Revelation 3:19 **Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline;** therefore be zealous and repent.

- B. The means of escaping/avoiding the consequences, something Jesus obviously desires for us (or He wouldn't have Paul commend this to us), is a self-examination/testing (dokimazo) before participating in the Lord's Supper to ensure our right-heartedness before the Lord.

1 Corinthians 11:28 But **a man must examine (dokimazo) himself,** and **in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.**

1 Corinthians 11:31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.

1. Am I recalling and responding to the redemptive purposes of Christ's death for us?

1 Corinthians 11:24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "**This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.**"²⁵ In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "**This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.**"

Matthew 26:28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many **for forgiveness of sins.**

2 Corinthians 5:15 and He died for all, **so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him** who died and rose again on their behalf.

2. Am I recalling and responding to the social implications of Christ's death for us?

1 Corinthians 11:22 ... Or **do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing?**

1 Corinthians 11:33 So then, my brethren, **when you come together to eat, wait for one another.**³⁴ If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.

1 John 3:16 We know love by this, that **He laid down His life for us;** and **we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**

Conclusion

- A. Our emphasis in celebrating the Lord's Supper has focused largely on the significance of the Supper for those who have already examined themselves and who to hold the bread and cup with a sincere faith in Christ.
- B. But it is good for us to take time to digest what Christ through His apostle Paul provides for us here to prepare us for each time we celebrate the Lord's Supper, so that we will not celebrate it in a way that does more harm than good to the church, to ourselves, or to our children who participate.
- C. We next plan to celebrate the Lord's Supper in two week. If we haven't been examining/testing the genuineness and sincerity of our hearts toward the Lord Jesus and all of His people already, the time to begin is now.