

2110 - The LORD'S SUPPER - 1 Cor 11.17-34

PRELIMS. Paul is here addressing *the Church of God* [1:1]. He is **reaffirming** that in this chapter by saying *when you come together as a Church* [18]. He is not talking to them re their **social** meetings, but the **official** meeting of the Church of God. They often met in each other's houses, but they also met there **as a Church**. This was **before** the **institution** of the Church. Of course this still happens - even with ourselves for BS we meet in Iain/Susan's 'as a Church'!

The Church is the **most important** organisation in the world - appointed to **change** the world! The Church is God's **Special People** formed into one **united group** of worshippers of God! To be **isolated** from the Church is to be **outside** the house and **family** of God, it is to be outside of the Kingdom where King Jesus rules, loves, protects, provides every member with His love and care. The visible Church is where God sends His Spirit to bless His people.

Paul **commends** the Cor Church in many things, *Now I commend you because...you maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you* [2]. We might immediately ask '**traditions**', we don't hold to traditions, do we? Well, yes, we do. Paul of course is **not** speaking of what **we today** may think of as traditional, such RC traditions, etc.

Paul is actually referring to the **regular customs** which the **Apostles instituted** as fixed **spiritual ordinances** set up 'in the **Church**' in **obedience** to, and for the **worship** of, Almighty God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ! Paul used the word 'traditions' to refer to what **he** and the other **apostles appointed** 'in the Church' as a **command** from God Himself. Paul had to constantly **fight against** the teachings of people **claiming** to be apostles of God, but were not! Eg in **Thess** - he wrote: *So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter in contrast to the false teachings in a letter seeming to be from us*, but was not from us at all! [2Thes 2:2,13,]. Thus he **adds** later *keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us* [2Thes 3:6]

So Paul is **differentiating** between what **he** and the **Apostles** laid down in the Church as an **ordinance** and a regular custom and what

false teachers had brought in on their own authority. That is why he says *If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such **practice** nor do the **Churches of God*** [16]. All Churches were given this custom and practice which was known as ‘**the traditions**’ in the Early Church - but they were the **officially appointed** ordinances of God.

Paul does **warn** of new human traditions coming into the Church *See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to **human tradition**...and not according to Christ* [Col 2:8] Paul **does contrast** the man-made ‘traditions’ of the Pharisees with the false ones, stating how *zealous was I for the **traditions** of my fathers* [Gal 1:14]. And our Lord Jesus said *You **leave the commandment of God** and hold to the **tradition** of **men*** [Mar 7:8]!

Actually **most** of the things we do in Church has its **root** in some **man-made** tradition - because **all** the **details** are **not** specified in the Bible for the order of a church service, or baptism, or marriage, or funeral, or **how many** services on each Sunday, or number of times we have the Lord’s Supper etc is not mentioned in Scripture because **some** details are **not** important and **circumstances** dictate!! The **general principles** of the **Word** apply in all such cases!

Now there is one particular ‘tradition’ that Paul instituted which he says *I **do not commend** you!*[17] And it is something ‘**in the church**’ it is *when you **come together** it is **not for the better** but for the worse - it is when you **come together as a Church*** [18]! It is the **Lord’s Supper!** Now the Lord’s Supper is supposed to be a **distinguishing** mark between God’s people and those who are not! *that those who are **genuine** among you may be **recognised*** [19]!! And **how** were they to be recognised? Does it not seem that Paul meant something **outward** and **visible**. It was not simply that those who took the bread and wine from those who did not take it! No! It was the **attitude** they had **between themselves!** There were *divisions...factions* [18,19]!!

In these days before the institutionalised Church, believers met in their own houses. And, as in the **Passover**, which the Lord’s Supper superseded, it was always performed **after** the evening **meal!** Each person **brought their own meal with** them to eat before the Lord’s Supper. What happened in Corinth was that one group of likeminded

believers would all agree to come at a certain time in a certain room in the house, and another group of like-minded people would agree to come at a slightly later time to another room, and so there was **obvious** that all were not united together, for *each one goes ahead with his own meal* [21] before the others would arrive (or vice versa). That is why *when you come together...wait for one another* [33]!

It was not only personal **preferences** to **preachers** (Paul, Apollos, Cephas, etc) that divided the congregation, but sadly **social class** also divided them! Some just did **not** have **any food** to eat at all - they only came for the Lord's Supper! *One goes hungry another gets drunk!*[21] Some came for a **Party!** APP re Church social meetings! *What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?* See how **serious** Paul **considers** this: *Or do you despise the Church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?* [22] They **embarrassed** the lower **classes!** Some came for the wrong reasons. Paul certainly implies that meeting *as a Church* is an important and **serious** business! They were getting **ill** and even **dying** because of their **attitude** towards one another and towards the Lord's Supper! *many of you are weak and ill, and some have died* [30]!

*Paul had to **rebuke** the Cors regarding a most important and unique part of Church tradition! Paul had *received from the Lord* [23] instructions re the sacrament. Some were taking the bread and wine *in an unworthy manner!* [27] They were **guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord** - they were **not discerning the body** of the Lord [29]. That can have **two meanings.** First: The **Church** is the Body of Christ! Some there **refused** to **acknowledge** other **believers** as being part of the Body of Christ - perhaps that was the reason some of them did not eat with others ('I don't believe he/she is a Xn!') They **judged** people 'from the outside', not from the state of the heart! They did not know what the **true marks** of a Xn were!

Some **retained** the bitterness that was between them! They held **grievances** against one another. Paul had to say *When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law* with that brother? [6:1] Yes, he did! They knew little about **forgiveness** among themselves! In fact they did not exercise **forgiveness** to those who injured them! Once you have been forgiven by Christ - you can

forgive others of anything - such is the nature of X's forgiveness, that it **affects** your **own attitude** towards forgiveness and love!

The other meaning of *discerning the body* is: they were not able to eat and drink **by faith!** You need to have faith in order to **benefit** from the Lord's Supper! Taking the body and blood of Christ **without** faith will only bring **judgment** on ourselves - people will see us professing faith and will judge us! Taking the Lord's Supper is an act of **faith** - it is **not** a ritual that anyone can perform!

*There are **four** things we must do in order to come properly to the Lord's Supper: (1) We must **examine ourselves** if we are **worthy!!?** How can we be worthy? Ans: **Only in Christ!** Paul had to say it again in his 2nd letter to them! *Examine yourselves, to see whether you **are** in the **faith**... **Test your-selves**...that Jesus Christ **is in you*** [2Cor 13:5] We are **only** worthy in Christ, for He **alone** is worthy - thus we must be **united** to Him! *But **how** do we know **that?** Paul is really asking the Cors about their **lives** *Let a person **examine** himself ...[28]. Have you anything to **confess** re your **attitude** to people? ... and **so eat** of the bread and wine having **apologised**, etc!*

Secondly, we must **remember** His **death!** *Do this in **remembrance** of Me* [24] **Don't** think of **yourself!** **Think** of His **willingness** to die for you. Imagine the Holy God enduring **pain!** His **holiness** did not **prevent** Him getting '**involved**' in the **worst** part of our sin!

Thirdly, we not only **think** of, and **remember**, what X did for us, but we **give thanks** for Him and His **faithfulness**. Jesus *had given **thanks*** [24]. In contemplating the next few hours, He felt the powers of God's wrath coming on Him, He submitted **His own will** to His Father's will. *Thy will be done!* That was **amazing** considering there was no **justifying reason** why He should take the place of sinners!

Fourthly, in taking the bread and the wine, we **proclaim** *the Lord's death* [26]. We are making an **announcement!** We are making a statement - the **most important statement** in the world!! 'Jesus came from heaven and **has died** for our sins and has **risen** from the **dead** and salvation is **free** in Him for all and sundry who will come to Him!' That, in essence, is what we are saying when we take the bread and wine!

'EXPLANATION'

The Lord's Supper is something **sacred!** It is a **mystery**. It is something **Jesus** instituted to make a **visible difference** between the world and the Church (His people). Its **purpose** is to **increase** their **faith** and **help/encourage** God's people to be **more committed** to Christ. It is to **strengthen** the faith that God has already put in the hearts of His people.

The bread and wine are **symbols** of Christ's broken body and shed blood. It **reminds** us of what God in Christ **did for us**. *God was in Christ **reconciling** the world to Himself!* In this sacrament, God is **giving grace** thru the sacrament to His people who eat and drink by **faith** in Him. The grace is **conferred** by the **Holy Spirit** and the **Word** – only where there is **faith** in the believer. It is an **invisible** work of God. If there is no faith in the individual taking the bread and wine there is no grace received. It is just **because** the Lord's Supper **builds up** the believer in his faith in Christ, that Xns are **commanded** (not advised, but **commanded**) to take the bread/wine.

The Lord's Supper is for God's people who are **following Him**. It is **not** for those who publicly (or privately) **oppose** the **gospel** and live a **profligate** life. It is **not** for **unbelievers** or those who deny Christ's Person/Work. It is **not** for those who say there are **many ways** to God, for Jesus Christ **IS** the **only** way to heaven. *No one comes to the Father **except through Me*** said Jesus Christ!

But it **is** for those who **love** the Lord, who have **surrendered** their lives to Him as Lord. Who believe that His death on the **Cross** was the greatest transaction of all history - it made **atonement** for sin.. It is for those who have come to see that He is indeed the Saviour of the world. It is for those who are **regularly** in **prayer** to Him.

Those who **value** His life, His work, His death, His resurrection.
Those who find **encouragement** from reading/meditating on Him!

Read – Romans: 3:21-26

1 Cor 6:9-11

Gal 3:10-14

REPEAT THE APOSTLES' CREED

Singing

Read – 1 Cor 11:23-26

Prayer “...set apart from a common to a holy use, such as of the bread and wine that will be used in this sacrament...”

Before the Eating One day Jesus and His disciples faced a **crisis**. He had been preaching and great crowds followed Him. But what John tells us is: *that many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him!* This **disturbed** Jesus and His disciples - they must have been shocked and disappointed! So Jesus asked them what they felt, Would they also like to go away? The reply was one of the **best words** of Scripture and are a wonderful **testimony!** *Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that You are the Holy One of God.”* [John 6:68,69] That is your position now as you come to Him and eat/drink His body/blood!

After the Supper –

*So they drew near to the village to which they were going. **He acted as if He were going farther**, but they urged Him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So He went in to stay with them. When **He was at table with them**, He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their **eyes were opened**, and they **recognized Him**. And He vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Did not our **hearts burn within us** while He talked to us on the road, while He **opened to us the Scriptures?**” [Luke 24:28-32]*

Singing