

## 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

### "Corporate Conduct"

On the eve of our Lord's betrayal, He broke bread w/His disciples. There they were, in that upper room where He initiated & facilitated the Passover meal w/them. The Passover was a time of commemoration, a time of celebration & a time of expectation/anticipation. They would reflect *on* & rejoice *in* God's deliverance. How He set them free (in their ancient history) from the chains/bondage of Egypt. – It was through the shedding of the blood of the Passover lamb, that they (by faith) were set free from Egypt & spared the penalty of death...

It was to serve as a foreshadow that would be fulfilled in J.C. the Lamb of God who would shed *His* blood for the sin, not of Israel exclusively, but for all of humanity. That we (through faith in Him) would be set free from the chains/power of sin & its penalty of death, through the laying down of His life on our behalf.

& He would take those basic elements, the bread & the cup, (what we might call Communion, or the Lord's Supper) & memorialize His work upon the cross for us through them. The bread speaking of *His* body *broken* for us, the cup speaking of *His* blood *shed* for us. & He told His disciples (as we'll read today) that as often as they ate the bread & drank the cup they proclaimed His death till He comes again. – He didn't tell them *how* often to eat/drink, simply *as* often... Whenever they partook, they were to do so in remembrance of Him.

What we discover (in the book of Acts) is that initially (at least seemingly) the early church did this on the daily. We read in Acts 2:47, "*So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,*"<sup>1</sup> & As the apostles went out & established churches on the mission field, this was an ordinance that they would put in place. & It seems that several the churches adopted the pattern at least in some measure on a weekly basis. That when they'd come together for study, afterward they would enjoy a meal (a potluck kind of thing) & it would culminate (as their time came to a close) in remembering the Lord in this manner.

But in Corinth, what Paul had established as that time of commemoration, celebration & anticipation, essentially disintegrated into a time of separation & self-gratification. They had managed to take this sacred rite that the Lord had entrusted to His own & somehow twist it into sacrilege. –

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<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ac 2:46]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The Christians of Corinth seemed to struggle in much the same way so many do today. A sense of *entitlement* seemed to infiltrate/permeate their culture. & This most *selfless act* of Jesus became a time of self-centered actions amongst the Corinthians. & Here in 1 Cor Ch 11 Paul seeks to set things back in their proper order.

### Vs 17-19

Again, it's almost as if Paul were writing to any number of church gatherings today. You come together... but ultimately, it's for the worse & not for the better! Now, to their credit, let me say this. THEY GATHERED TOGETHER! Something far too neglected by too many Christians today in direct disobedience to Heb 10:24-25. The Bible is clear, **"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."**<sup>2</sup> Encourage one another, exhort one another, be at church, serve one another, bless, build up one another. Stir up/challenge one another unto good works. Are you serving the body & in so doing, serving the Lord? If not, why not? We're to provoke one another unto good works...

& Listen, I'm so grateful for the ability to have online services. So grateful to be able to get the message of God's word into the homes/hearts of those who can't join us for legitimate reasons (be it health, work or whatever). But getting comfortable staying home because you can just join in online isn't right... You're not together w/the body, you're isolated *from* the body. You're not serving, you're not edifying & building up the body... Those gifts that God has given you are lying dormant w/in you...

My mentality/your mentality in coming together (as believers) shouldn't be, "What will I get out of it?" It should be, "How can I build into it? In what way can I bless & be a part of it?" – The Corinthians were coming together (so we commend them there) but sadly, it was for the worse, not for the better.

Paul says, "1<sup>st</sup> of all, you come together & there are divisions, not just theologically (which we've already noted previously), but pragmatically, you're dividing into these little cliques & social classes. Creating problems, pushing people into positions of needing to decide who they're going to stand with..." Now, "That's not good." He says, "But God will use it." It's fascinating how God can take even what the enemy means for evil & use it for good...

<sup>2</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Heb 10:24-25]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Paul says that God will allow divisions/factions to take place so that it will eventually become evident who is genuine, who is truly godly & who is not... What was meant to be a wonderful time of fellowship was producing factions, instead of simply dining they were dividing & Paul says, "God is going to use that to show you who is truly spiritually mature, & who is simply self-serving." John spoke of something similar when he wrote, *"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us."*<sup>3</sup>

Now, does that mean that anytime someone leaves a church that they aren't truly saved or part of the body of Christ? Of course not. But it does mean that God *will use* divisions & factions to prune & purify the body of Christ (the church).

**Vs 20-22**

The idea being that in commemorating the most selfless act in world history, you couldn't be more self-indulgent! In what should be a time of *commemoration & celebration* that brings you together, you've managed to turn it into a time of *separation* driving you apart!

"The rich in your congregation are glutting themselves while the poor are going hungry. Am I supposed to praise you in this?" What he's talking about is what I mentioned in our time of introduction. They would come together for these Agape' (or Love) feasts. These potluck dinners. But in the ancient Roman world, there were millions & millions of slaves who essentially had nothing... So they're struggling to whip up some scalloped potatoes & those who were wealthy were bringing porterhouse steaks & steamed veggies & those who were well to do would get in line 1<sup>st</sup>, fill up their plates, stack the food & mile high & when those who were poor finally made it to the table... there was nothing left.

So there's all this selfishness & self-serving going on, then at the end someone would say, "Now let's remember the Lord." (Or something along those lines & they'd partake of communion). But Paul is saying, "Look, you're *disgracing* the observance of the Lord's Supper."

& This may seem a bit strange for us, but wild riotous banquets were common in the ancient pagan world in honor of a pagan god. So there were elements of this (of those who were coming out of that environment) that had crept in to their common meal. Some would drink in excess, they'd wind up drunk...

<sup>3</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [1 Jn 2:19]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

How many of you realize that when someone comes to Christ, we want to see everything change instantly/immediately, but typically they grow over time? God saves us, transforms us inwardly, then goes to work changing us practically little by little making us more like Jesus.

But Paul is saying, “You guys ought to be ashamed of yourselves in disgracing those who have nothing by allowing them to go hungry, while you pig out!” Listen, the point of the church potluck isn’t to stuff your gut. It’s to fellowship, build unity & community. It’s ok to be 1<sup>st</sup> in line, just exercise a little self-control so there’s plenty to go around. Pile your plate on the 2<sup>nd</sup> time through the line... He says, “If you want to make sure you’re topped off, hit a drive through on the way home, or eat something before you get to church.”

In short; as believers we’re to be *considerate* of others even outside the body of Christ. How much more in the corporate gathering concerning our bro’s & sisters *in* Christ? Remember these words back in Ch 10? “*Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being.*”<sup>4</sup> In Philippians we read it like this, “*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*”<sup>5</sup> Here’s a little practical application of that. If you’re at the front of the line, w/sky high piles of food on your plate... whose “well-being” are you seeking? ☺

### Vs 23-26

Paul says, “Look, this ordinance I established among you wasn’t something that I just made up because it seemed like something that would be nice to do. I received it from the Lord...” & We don’t know if he received it supernaturally, or if someone like Luke shared it w/him on one of their missionary journeys (because it reads really close to Luke’s account). It doesn’t really matter. When the Lord ministers to your heart, the vessel or means through which it comes is really irrelevant. What’s relevant is that we receive *from the Lord*.

& Note that the Lord, “*on the same night in which He was betrayed*” took bread... & gave thanks. He knew what was coming down the pike, yet He was thankful. Thankful for the Father’s provision, for His plan, His purpose, for the time He had w/His friends, those whom He loved & who loved Him. – Often times you’ll hear of communion being referred to as the “eucharist”. It’s the word that comes from the Greek right here that simply means “to give thanks” or “to be thankful”.

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Co 10:24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Php 2:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But He took the bread (not like a loaf of wonder bread, think of matza, unleavened flat bread) & He broke it & said, "Take, eat, this is My body which is broken for you." Paul places the emphasis on what Jesus said about the meaning of His own death. That the bread spoke & painted the powerful picture of His own body (unleavened, leaven in your bible is a picture of sin, this is why the bread of the Passover was unleavened, because it pointed to the sinless life of Christ) which would be broken for you (& for me).

& What's happening here is fascinating because Jesus is essentially redefining (or perhaps we should say, bringing fulfillment clarity) the point of the Passover. He's establishing a new covenant between God & man, who can do that! Who has the power/audacity to say, "The covenant that God established through Moses is officially coming to a close this night. God is as of right now, establishing a new covenant w/man. Not through the law of Moses, but through the shedding of My blood. It's not about what you need to do for God. It's about what I've done for you..." Only God can establish such a thing, yet here's Jesus doing just that... what does that say of Jesus? ☺ He's God.

But His body, unselfishly assumed, unselfishly given upon the cross, broken (not His bones, His *body* would be rent, torn, broken). Not for any wrong of His own, for us. For *our* sin. "Do this in remembrance of Me." When you partake of these elements, "Remember Me", Jesus says. The unselfish, loving sacrifice for the sake of others.

In the same manner He also took the cup after supper. People wonder, was the wine fermented... I would say categorically, No. Why? Because there was to be no leaven (or fermentation) of any kind during the Passover meal. The blood of Christ was not tainted, it was unleavened, w/out sin... & He says, "This cup in the new covenant in *My blood*." No longer were they to remember back to the blood of the Passover lamb in Egypt. But now they were to remember the Passover Lamb of God, shedding His blood for the freedom of mankind from sin... W/out the shedding of blood there can be no remission, no forgiveness... Jesus didn't open the back door of heaven & slip us in unnoticed. He brings you & me right through the front door as sons/daughters because He *paid* the penalty of our sin...

Isn't it interesting to think that nowhere are we commanded to remember the Lord's *birthday*? The command is to remember His *death-day*. Generally speaking, we don't like to remember "death-days". But Jesus says, "Remember My death." Why? Because as powerful as was His life, and were His teachings, it's not the words of Jesus, or the life of Jesus that saves you. Your life (in Christ) is centered in His death.

If He wouldn't have died *for* you, you wouldn't be alive *in* Him. He paid a debt He didn't owe, because we owed a debt we couldn't pay... So this new covenant; it's about an inward transformation, a cleansing from sin. It's about the will/word of God being written in our hearts, it's *not* about a legal relationship w/God through law. It's about a loving relationship w/God through love. (You might just jot down so as to look up Jeremiah 31:33-34)

### Vs 26

When you partake of the Lord's Supper, you preach the message of the death of J.C. This word "proclaim" is the word for "preach". I'm looking at a room full of preachers here. When you take communion, you're proclaiming to God how grateful you are for the death of J.C. upon the cross. You're proclaiming to the devil his defeat through the death of J.C. upon the cross. You're proclaiming the way of salvation to the world & making sure everyone knows that you're going to heaven, not because of what you've done for God, but by His grace, through faith in what He's done for you...

So think about that. When you bow your head & partake of communion, what are you proclaiming in your heart. Is it the message of, "Man, I hope the restaurant isn't too busy when we leave here." Is it the message of, "Can't wait to watch the game later!" Or is it the message of, "Jesus, I just want to thank You, & praise You for Your selfless sacrifice on my behalf upon the cross. **And I can't wait to see You face to face.**" Because, **"Yes" we look back to the cross. But we also look forward till He comes again. & Jesus assured us that when we're all together in the Kingdom that He's going to host a banquet & we'll all partake together, & what a glorious day it will be when we all eat & drink w/Jesus in His kingdom...**

### Vs 27-28

So we notice that partaking of the Lord's Supper should cause us to look *backward* (to the cross), *forward* (to His coming) & *inward* (to consider the position of our own heart before Him).

However, I do want to address something here & that is this. If you have KJV or perhaps you read it wrong, you'll think that there's something here whereby you must make yourself worthy to eat the bread or drink the cup. The KJV states that if you eat or drink "unworthily", you'll be guilty of the body & the blood of the Lord... So you read that & you think, "Man, I haven't lived my best life this week, I should probably not take part in this!"

But I want to remind you that Jesus said, **“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”**<sup>6</sup> When you’re down because you’ve slipped, stumbled & sinned, I say to you, that’s when you need to come to the table most of all! Didn’t we just spend significant time establishing the fact that we don’t become worthy before God upon the basis of what we do but upon the basis of what He’s done upon the cross? So why then would we suddenly take it upon ourselves to make ourselves worthy? We can’t!

The NKJV does a much better job here (as well as other versions) by expanding upon the word in translating it, “unworthy *manner*”. Paul has been rebuking these Christians for being so flippant, so self-indulgent, so “me 1<sup>st</sup>” in their manner at these gatherings & taking that same self-centered manner into the time that centers around the selfless sacrifice of Christ!

So, this isn’t written w/the thought of needing to excuse ourselves from the table, but instead preparing us to receive it w/a right heart. That doesn’t mean that when you receive it, you have to sort of stare at the floor to try & work up some spiritual feeling. But that we simply open our heart, recognize what Jesus did for you, that He’s here w/you & if you know Him, He dwells *in* you. If there are things you need to confess before Him, then take care of it. Thank Him for His work & partake.

**To be guilty of His body & blood is to not have a repentant heart, after all it was our sin that nailed Him to the cross, & it was His love for you that held Him on the cross. The Corinthians were like we can be. Not so hot at examining themselves, but experts at examining everyone else... But notice Vs 29**

**Vs 29-32**

Anyone up for eating/drinking judgment to themselves? What then is Paul saying? We can judge our own sin, or God will judge it for us. Now, this isn’t the judgment of *condemnation* (Jesus bore that upon the cross). This is the judgment of *correction*. He’s in reference to the chastening, disciplining hand of God. Don’t think of a judge condemning a criminal, but at loving father disciplining his disobedient/stubborn children. (Might write down/look up Heb 12:3-11)

**But note that God’s discipline can include sickness, even death (many sleep). We can be so stubborn in our sin that God will eventually say, “That’s it, I’m bringing you home.”**

(I should also say that not every illness or untimely death in a believer's life is God's discipline, but should He so choose to bring us home, He owns the editing rights to our lives). But when we act w/such disregard toward our bro's & sisters in Christ... We're not discerning the Lord's body... Jesus said, what you do to the least of these My brethren, you do to Me... There should be love & respect toward one another, kindness, consideration... not self-indulgence & actions that are divisive in nature.

Again, condemnation isn't in view, but correction. Look at Vs 32 **(read)**.

& Let me say, we shouldn't be all somber or fearful in partaking of the Lord's supper. But we should be sober, mindful, thankful & joyful.

**Vs 33-34**

Show good manners toward one another. Prefer one another. If you're starving, take it to a drive through or something.

But in reality this principle transcends the church potluck. Being together w/the body on a weekly basis is a great time to work on putting others 1<sup>st</sup>. Serving one another. Purpose to look at our gatherings as an opportunity *not* to ask, "Will I get anything out of services today?" But rather, "What can I say, what can I do that will build into others, that will bless others today?"

When we partake of communion, it's ok to take a moment to remember the process of our Lord's death, but let's also remember, recognize, rejoice in & thank Him for the purpose of His death. The finished work of the cross, has freed you from the power & the penalty of sin... Amen? Amen.

**Prayer Points:**

Father, once again our hearts well up w/thanksgiving. For the truth of Your word, the power of the gospel, that You've set us free through faith in J.C. Now may we respond appropriately, living for You, submitted to You, be glorified in us.

I can't make the gospel (the good news) any clearer. Christ died for your sins, was buried & rose again the 3<sup>rd</sup> day so that you through faith in Him can receive forgiveness. Believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved.