

Proclaim the Lord's Death Until He Comes
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1 Corinthians 11:17-34
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Last week we looked at 1 Corinthians 10 and we were considering this passage of Scripture where Paul is asking the Corinthian church to look back in the past at the example of the children of Israel in particular, when they were in the midst of the wilderness wanderings, and to look at many of their failures to consider how God had provided for them in every way with His presence, and with His provision. And yet, they did not take those blessings that God had given them and put them to the right use. So He wanted the believers at Corinth to look at their own lives, and the choices that were facing them, and for them to see that in the same way that God had provided for them, and given them every provision, and had given them His presence as well. We ended with a great promise, and it is that promise that there is no temptation that is going to set upon us that is not common to man, but that God is faithful. He is faithful and He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear.

Well today in preaching again, I thought we could stay in 1 Corinthians, and when I considered that we were celebrating the Lord's Supper today, I thought how appropriate would it be to jump over to Chapter 11 and to consider this wonderful passage that we've been given in the New Testament which covers not only a consideration of the institution of the Lord's Supper, but a specific example, in a church, where there were abuses going on with this, to call us to consider the great weight, and the importance of the supper. So if you have your Bibles today, if you would turn to 1 Corinthians 11, I'm going to be reading from Verse 17 to the end of the chapter which is Verse 34, and then we will consider these verses together as we ourselves, as a body of believers, prepare today to take the Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians 11:17-34 ~ But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, 19 for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. 20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. 21 For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of

God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when 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. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, 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.

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

33 So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— 34 if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

Let's pray.

Father, I come before You now lifting up this section of Scripture. Father, we pray that as we read, and consider these words, and its application to our lives, that You, oh Lord, would do a mighty work. That You would help me to bring forth this truth in a way that honors You, and that You would give open ears and hearts to those that are here. And I ask this in Christ's name, Amen.

Now I want you this morning to imagine yourself as a member of the church in Corinth back in the 1st Century. So the day has come for you to go and to gather together with your fellow believers at the church. You know that the common practice is that you are going to get together and you are going to be meeting at someone's house, probably a very large house of someone in the church. You will get together and you are going to partake of a common meal together. In the midst of that meal, you will be celebrating the Lord's Supper together, remembering the

death of Jesus Christ. But as you show up for the meal, and for the meeting, things start to seem a little out of line because you look over here and you see that there is a small group of people that have already started to eat by themselves, and they haven't waited for others. Not only that, but they seem to have a large quantity of food over at their table, but you notice over here there is another family and they are not eating. In fact, they really don't have any food with them, and they are hungry. Then over here is a group of three men, and they seem very merry, but it is not the joy of the Lord that they are experiencing as their strength, it is the effects of the alcohol that they are imbibing so that they can have this worldly, carnal experience together. You think in your mind, "I thought we were coming here for a holy purpose. I thought we were those who had been called out of darkness, into light, and that we were going to celebrate the somber event of the death of Christ." Well, just consider that in your thinking, that that maybe somewhat of the picture of what was going on at the church in Corinth at this time.

Now that picture for us is so far distant from our experience that it is a little bit hard for us to even imagine that that could happen. When we celebrate the Lord's Table, as we will today, we do it in a very controlled manner here in the service. It is a certain part of our worship together, that if you were to try to reenact the abuses that are talked about in this chapter, you would have to work very hard. It would be very odd if I looked back in the back and I saw someone with a couple of coolers back there, and as we were getting ready to take the table together, that they are sitting back there starting lunch. It would be just so out of place for us that it is hard for us to really put ourselves in that place.

I think for us to understand the message that God has for us today, we have to start with that original context, understand it, understand the warnings, the admonitions, and then try to work through and understand what we can distill out of that, and bring to us today, that still applies, so that we can glorify God. The title of today's sermon is 'Proclaim the Lord's Death until He Comes'. It is a reminder, as we read through these verses, that when we celebrate the Lord's Table, that we are not just going through a ritual, or a rite, but we are proclaiming the death of Christ. But we are not proclaiming it, the church will not proclaim it forever, because there is a hope that Christ is returning just as He promised to His disciples that night, that He is going away from them, but that He is going away to prepare a place for them. And that if He goes away to prepare a place for them, that He is going to come back so that they would be able to be with Him where He is. So the title, 'Proclaim the Lord's Death until He Comes', and we're going to look at this passage in three sections. Number one, I want you to handle holy things in a holy manner, as we look at Verses 17-22. The second point, I want you to remember Christ's sacrifice

on your behalf, looking at Verses 23-26. Then the third point, I want to call you to examine yourself for worthy observance, in Verses 27-34.

1) Handling Holy Things in a Holy Manner:

Let's go ahead and start looking at our first point, handling holy things in a holy manner. We mentioned last week that the overall context of the city of Corinth, it was a trading center, it was a place where there were a lot of people, from a lot of nations that were coming and going there. It was a place where there was both trade by land and by sea, so you have this influx of people. Corinth was known for its immorality. We mentioned last week that the term '*Corinthian girl*' was another term for prostitute, and that to '*Corinthianize*' was to go deep into immorality yourself. That it wasn't just the people who had come from outside of Corinth, in and out, that were bringing this, but you had there the Temple of Aphrodite, with a thousand cult prostitutes. This was the setting in which the church of Corinth was founded, and in which the believers lived.

So as they walked the streets, and went about their business, all of this was going on around them. Important today as well is that the founding of the church in Corinth, apostle Paul was the one who founded the church. We read about that in the book of Acts in Chapter 18, so that he was the one who would have built their foundation in Christ. He was the one who would have given them the basic understanding of the Gospel, helping them to understand from the background, the Old Testament, Jesus is the Messiah, and laying out for them the practice of the church. So when he writes to them specifically about their practice in the Lord's Supper, it is sort of like a father writing off to the children who are away, and saying, "Now I told you how you are supposed to do this, and I laid this out for you, but you've gone astray from what I shared with you, and now I need to call you back to the original way that you should have gone."

As well we know that Chapter 11, and the issues with the Lord's Supper, are just one of a long series of problems and abuses in the church. It is very easy when we read 1 Corinthians sometimes to get a little bit self-righteous in our attitudes because we read about the things they were doing, and some of the things were so bad that it amazes us. How could they tolerate a person in their church doing gross immorality that even the world thought was bad? How is it that they could tolerate the lawsuits that were going on among themselves? How is it that they could be so factious, and so divided? How is it that when we read here that they could take a fellowship meal, and they could turn it into something that did more harm than good? But we need to be careful because in our hearts are all those seeds of sin that

they followed, and they pursued, and that we don't need to stand in self-righteous judgment over them, but we need to hear the message that God had to them, and then what it comes to us.

Last week when we looked at the warnings, the strong warnings that were given to these people based upon the history of Israel, there is an emphasis in that chapter on idolatry, and not worshiping God in a way that He should not be worshiped, and not turning aside to the idols around them, and to handle things in a holy way. We mentioned the problems that they had with their worship. The context here was, what is often referred to as *'The Love Feast'*, or *'The Agape Feast'*. It was similar in some ways to what we practice. We have fellowship meals. When we have our business meeting next month, we will have a meal after church there. We meet together on Wednesday nights. What would have been a bit different here would have been the format which with the Lord's Supper was taken. So imagine that you are having a meal together, perhaps some of you have experienced this before in other settings, where you actually took the Lord's Supper as part of a meal. So here you are in a place, and you are eating, and you are eating bread for nourishment, not just here where we celebrate it as one of the elements of the Table. But then in the context of that, the bread is broken, and you acknowledge the body of Christ, and then later there is a cup that could have been passed. Today, of course, we have a lot more concern about sanitation, and concern about germs and all this, and so if I told you that I was going to bring a common cup, and pass it around to every one of you, and let every one of you put your mouth on it, you would have some problems with it probably, perhaps. But that would have been something not so foreign to their culture, and maybe some of you in other cultures have experienced a cup that goes around. I did once in outer Mongolia, and that was an experience, and you had to drink or you were rude, and so you just did it.

So that was the context, now I want you to consider as well the makeup of the people of the church as it relates to this. We can look at our church today, we have people from many different backgrounds, spiritual backgrounds, geographical backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds. They had many of the same issues here. You would have had Jews that had grown up as devout Jews, and had followed God's law all their life, and had come to Christ. You would have had those Gentiles who had grown up in Corinth, and maybe had experienced themselves some of that immorality that was all around them. Then on top of that, you would have had the distinctions of class, perhaps laborers that were there, and even slaves at that time in the Roman Empire. Then on the other extreme you would have had those who are very wealthy and would have had a lot there. So this provided a context for some of those offenses. Well the thing that he's writing to them, as he puts this

forth to them, he speaks it and then he says, “You know it is really not the Lord’s Supper that you are eating.” He says, “It’s not that, and the implication is, it is your own supper. That whatever you may in your mind think that is going on, because of the way you are acting with these factions, and with these distinctions, and not considering other people, all that is going on, it is not the Lord’s Supper. You are not treating it the way that God intended it to be.”

Consider some of the issues here, the selfishness of not waiting for others to eat. Now you know how it is when you get hungry, and it is late for dinner, and you just want more than anything else to eat? And you know that there is this kind of sensitivity to other people that you need to have sometimes? Well, in this particular case it is even more than that. The point is they got together to celebrate as a body, everybody getting together, not simply people on their own schedule picking up some fast food, and going over in their corner and eating it, and saying, “Okay, that was a great meal.” But the point here was unity, it was the body coming together so that the rich, and the poor, the Gentile, and the Jew, the person from this country, and that country, and this culture, and that background, all came together and in common they could eat this meal together so that those distinctions between them could be diminished. The disparity, even considering that in this holy time that people would be gorging themselves over here, and allowing people over here to go hungry. Imagine the message that communicates. The message is not the love of Christ, it is not the love of a brother and sister to a fellow brother and sister, but in a way it makes it an even stronger message of, “I have my world, I have all I need, and I don’t care about you, and your concerns, and your burdens.” So this was going on and then as well, the drunkenness that apparently was taking place, that here are people instead of seeing the cup, which would have had wine in it, as being something that was to be celebrated as a symbol of the blood of Christ, that they were abusing it to become drunk, and to sin against the Lord. As I mentioned earlier, it is hard for us to imagine this going on at Providence Church, this particular instance and case. We aren’t set up with this format, but I want to call to your attention that we do need to pay, we do need to look and consider, we need to understand that we need to handle holy things in a holy way.

Now as Protestant believers in a church setting that is not a high church setting, we don’t have a preponderance of rituals and ceremonies. We don’t have special garments that those who lead in worship wear. We don’t have many of the corruptions that came into the church, in the early church in the middle ages that added things to the simple worship of God. But that doesn’t mean that our worship before the Lord, and what He has given us, is not holy. In fact, many times those extra, outward circumstances that have been added to worship really diminish true

holiness because they make the outward form what is important. The lack of outward show in our buildings, our garments, and our worship does not make the careful handling of holy things of any less value. The manner with which we approach the Scripture, the word of God, our prayer, our private worship, and our public worship, cannot be careless and thoughtful.

One challenge we face with this today is that we live in a culture that has progressively become more and more informal. Now I'm just saying that it is, I'm not making judgments one way or the other, but if you compared our society 50 years ago, we more and more have gone the route of informality. It is informality in the way that we speak to one another, informality in the way that we dress, informality in the way that we communicate. Can you imagine the way that we use email sometimes, and text messages, and Twitter, and everything else? We just want to communicate this little thing, and sometimes do we need whole words? You can just use a letter or a couple of symbols there to communicate your message. Or maybe I just send you a happy face, and that is all I need to send you to let you know, "How are you doing?" I can just send you a little smiley, or I can send a little sad face, and of course as technology developed you could get a lot more creative with these to express your emotions and your feelings. So we live in a culture that is increasingly becoming more informal, and the challenge that we face with that is to remember that when we come to the worship of God, that this doesn't change with our culture, and that when we come to worship together, we are not called to treat this the same way we would if we were getting together over a cup of coffee at Starbuck's. We need to remember that we are coming into the presence of God, a holy God, who is to be worshiped, and to be revered.

Today as we consider this point, we know that the excesses that were there are not immediate temptations to us, but I would ask you to consider into yourself how you handle holy things. When you come to holy things, do you reverence the God of awe in wonder? In the way that you approach these, are you able to, in your mind, even though in an earthly life we go from this activity, to this activity, to this activity, to this thing, to this thing, to this topic, to this topic, but when you hit upon something that is of eternal value, to be able to in your mind switch gears, and say, "Now is a time to be careful. Now is the time to be even more sincere, and to be more reverent."

2) Remembering Christ's Sacrifice on Your Behalf:

Now having considered this first point about handling holy things, let's move on to the second point, remembering Christ's sacrifice on your behalf. Now Paul's

antidote to their problem in speaking to them, is to remind them of what they should be doing and should be focusing in as we read in Verses 23 to 26, for he says:

1 Corinthians 11:23 ~ For I received from the Lord that what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on 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;...

So Paul is communicating to them, he's reminding them, of something he's already taught them as a church body in the past when He was physically with them. He would have had the experience of celebrating with them in the past, teaching them how they should worship the Lord. We read here that it's something that he received from the Lord. Now, we don't get any more specific detail on this. The practice and celebration of the Lord's Supper could be something that God had revealed to him directly and instantaneously as He did other things. It could have been something that God used the other apostles. For instance, we read in Acts how He spent some time with Peter and the other apostles. We know in the book of Galatians that many times he tends to stress in that book how it was that God had revealed certain things directly to him, but regardless, the key here is that this was from the Lord. This was from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It was not a matter of Paul's invention. Consider today that if we opened up worship to our own inventions, how many models of worship we could come up with. Perhaps you would have a creative idea, the person over here would, another person, and we could all come up with a different form of approaching a holy God. But we keep in mind here that Paul is stressing that this was from the Lord directly from Himself.

The different Gospel accounts provide a record of the institution. We read one of these from the Gospel of Luke earlier in the service. We also find accounts that are given from the Gospels of Matthew and from Mark. The Gospel of John does not record the institution. It records, however, the instance of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples, focuses more on the betrayal that is there, and for us to consider this practice of the church, we need to remember that the background with which this was given was the background of the Passover feast laid out in Exodus 12. So if we look back on that background, I want you to remember for a minute in the history of Israel how Moses was going to the Pharaoh and he was asking the Pharaoh, or telling the Pharaoh, "Let my people go," and the Pharaoh would not, and he vacillated back and forth, and so God sent a series of plagues upon the people. He had sent nine plagues but Pharaoh would still not let them go.

So finally the Lord tells His people that there's going to be a last plague, and that this is going to be the final one, and in this plague, I'm going to pass over, I'm going to go over Egypt and all of the firstborn are going to be killed. But to His people He said, "But I'm going to give you a certain kind of protection and that is that you're going to take a lamb and you're going to kill this lamb, and you're going to take the blood, and you're going to put that blood on the doorpost and upon the lintel, and that you are going to be passed over when the death angel comes over." And so this was God's great provision for His people to spare them. They were spared with the blood that was there.

When Jesus was instituting the Lord's Supper as we read earlier in one of the Gospels, it was in the context of the Passover meal itself that He was breaking the bread and that He was fellowshiping with them, and remembering this great event, pointing forward to what would take place upon the cross. Now, in this way that He presents the meal, I'll say a few words that relate to the meaning, some things that it means and doesn't mean. He says in Verse 24 of 1 Corinthians 11:

1 Corinthians 11:24 ~ and when He had given thanks, He broke it (that is the bread) and said, "This is My body, which is for you;...

Those of you that are familiar with church history and have looked back at the time of the Reformation know that there has been a tremendous amount of ink that has been spilled in the past over the exact meaning of these words: *This is My body,...* and actually today there continues to be quite a lot of ink that is spilled over these words. It's important for us to remember that the key here is that when He says, "This is My body," He's referring to the sign, and He's not implying that the bread is magically transformed into the body of Christ.

Now, we don't have time here in the midst of this sermon to do a theology discussion over the four different views of the Supper—transubstantiation, consubstantiation, the spiritual presence view, and the memorial meal view. I will make some reference to it, but there's not enough time to really engage in all of those. But the key that I want to bring forth is He was showing the sign and it didn't become the thing signified, if you understand what I'm saying. When you drive on the road and you see a sign overhead on I-85 that says *Sugarloaf Parkway*, that sign does not become Sugarloaf Parkway. It's something that points to something else. So you look to the sign and the sign is pointing toward something else, and that's the function of the sign. And so it is when we even today will take these small pieces of bread and we will look at it, that there is no magical transformation. That bread is remaining bread, and it is not the bread

itself, the quality of it. It might be really good bread. I've celebrated the Lord's Supper before where people had these wonderful homemade breads that they passed out, and you put these morsels in your mouth, and in some ways it was a little distracting, because I thought it was at the end of the service, and I thought, "Wow, this is really good bread," but that wasn't the point. The point was this bread is just a sign that is pointing forward to Christ and the sacrifice that He made on the cross with His body. So we have to keep that in our minds at all times.

Some of you may remember the specific disputation that took place between Martin Luther and Huldrych Zwingli in the past, around the earlier days of the Protestant Reformation, that Martin Luther who held a view that was closer to transubstantiation was so dogmatic about this bread being the body of Christ, that there's this image of Luther just pounding his fist on the table and writing out, "This is My body," not being able to get away from that literal understanding. But I think it's important to keep in mind that it is that sign that we focus on in terms of both the bread and the wine.

Now, I will mention one passage out of the Baptist Confession that I think explains this well. Perhaps this doesn't fully explore it, but when it speaks of the Lord's Supper, it says that worthy receivers (that is, those receiving the Supper), outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this ordinance, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally (that is, physically in the body), but spiritually receive, and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death; the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally (that's externally), but spiritually present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses. So it's kind of a mouthful, but the point here is to say that yes, God is working in the Supper in a special way for us, but not in a carnal way, not in a physical way of transforming those elements into something that they are not.

Now, regarding the blood, in particular in this passage, as well as in Luke, it stresses the fact that Jesus said:

1 Corinthians 11:25 ~ ...“This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

So He refers to the blood in the symbol there of the new covenant in Jesus Christ. We can consider the old covenant when it was instituted and it was confirmed back in Exodus 24. I'll read some verses from there. This is Exodus 24:6 where there was a ceremony where:

Exodus 24:6 ~ And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood (these were from sacrifices) he threw against the altar. 7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” 8 And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

So you get the picture there of that first covenant ceremony that was there in the old covenant. If you were standing there in the front row and the blood from these sacrifices was being sprinkled on you, and you had seen these animals that had been sacrificed, and in the presence of God you had said, “All that You command, we will do,” and here’s the blood put out there—we also read in that passage in Exodus 24 that not only was there this confirmation, but afterwards there was this amazing description of a covenant meal, because after that we read:

Exodus 24:9 ~ Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, 10 and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. 11 And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

Now, think about that image for just a minute, of going up at that time and beholding God and having Him provide a meal for His people, confirming this covenant that He made with them. Today we can rejoice that as we read in the book of Hebrews, that Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant He mediates is better since it is enacted on better promises, in Hebrews 8, where the new covenant is lined out. Today as we consider this institution and this meal, that God has provided a covenant meal for us as well, we may supply these physical elements down here. They didn’t magically appear this morning at the front of the church, but it is the Lord that blesses our celebration and makes it holy unto Him.

Well, having looked at this second point in remembering the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf, I want to go to the third point, calling you to examine yourself for worthy observance in Verses 27 to 34.

3) Examine Yourself for Worthy Observance:

Most of you who have been here know that before the Lord's Supper is celebrated that we have a period of time where Ty would read kind of a warning, an invitation, but at the same time a warning calling people to partake, but at the same time doing what is often called fencing the table, that is, helping people understand what a solemn and holy thing it is, and that practice, generally speaking, is taken from this last part of our passage, for we read in Verse 27:

1 Corinthians 11:27 ~ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

Now let that verse sink in with you for just a minute. That's a very heavy verse to read from Scripture. It says that if you do something here that for us may not seem like such a big deal, that is to physically not approach this time in the right way, that it's possible that you may be guilty before the Lord of a specific offense versus the body and blood of the Lord. Now, that's heavy, and it's easy for us in our cultural of informality to not understand the weight and the gravity of such things, and so this is the blessing God has given us in Scripture, that it calls us back, and it wakes us up, and it reminds us of who He is and His nature. In Verse 28, we read the exhortation that we are to examine ourselves:

1 Corinthians 11:28 ~ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Now, the message here is actually very clear. It's just a hard part to take, and that is that the celebration is such a serious matter that God was speaking through the apostle Paul in this context in 1 Corinthians to the church, and telling them that your abuses that you didn't even pay attention to are actually a very serious matter before the Lord. I want to talk for a minute about this call for self-examination, because I believe that there are two extremes that we can go to in examining our self regarding our standing before the Lord. One extreme is the extreme that you can find from the man on the street, and that is the unexamined life. It is, "I feel good. The sun is shining. The world seems okay, and everything's good with me." That is a life that is unexamined where an individual refuses to even consider for a minute that there is a God, and that if there is a God, that he or she is accountable to that God, and that he will one day or she will one day stand before Him in judgment. So this is a far extreme over here.

The other extreme is one of overly morbid and scrupulous introspection that can only end in despair and depression, that is, if you can find that one thing in your life where you're not on par with what God has commanded, and you just sit there and you mull over it, and mull over it, and mull over it, and keep driving and going farther down, and farther down, and farther down, to the point where you are in despair. But this can't be a biblical approach either because God has given us in the Gospel of Christ hope, and the hope is that no matter the weight of our sin, that we have a Savior who has paid for that sin, that no matter what we did 20 years ago or 10 years ago, or what we did yesterday, that if today we are trusting in Christ, that if we've been saved by His grace, that we have been brought out of darkness into light, and that sin was paid for on the cross of Jesus Christ, that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. No condemnation at all. So we have to take hold of that and we cannot allow our sense of our sin to take us to a point of overly morbid introspection.

Now I would argue with you I think culturally today, both in the culture itself and in the church, we probably are more toward the side of less self-examination than we are toward overly morbid, but that can range between individual and individual, but yet there is a call here to do it, and so I must bring it forth to you. We need to remember that participation in the Lord's Table mandates spiritual discernment, that is, even if you want to partake of this meal, that if you are not in Christ, you don't need to do that. It also means that if you are not walking in a way that is glorifying to God and you're not willing to turn from sin that you know about, that you are not to come to take it either. We read in this specific example in Corinth that there was a result from people who were abusing this table, and this too I think along with the abuses that were taking place is very hard for us to imagine, because what we read here in Verse 30 is that the judgment that had come upon them temporally, is that many of them were weak and ill and that some had died.

Now, this is the apostle Paul speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit directed by Him prophetically. Understand that, because he is saying to the Corinthians that God had brought a corporate judgment over their church. Now, this is strange to us, but consider the letters to the seven churches in Revelation and what God had said to some of those churches if they didn't repent, that in some cases He was going to remove their lamp stand, and that there was going to be a type of a corporate, temporal judgment that would be brought upon them. The Lord is saying this is such a serious matter, what they had done, that in this case that was the reason some things had happened to people.

Now, we don't need to go and say if you're sick, if a person died, it's obviously because God's disciplining you for your sin. That's the wrong place to go with this. We know that the reason that sickness and death have come into the world is because of sin's entrance and that we all are going to die if the Lord doesn't return and come back before our death. That's the path that we're on. It doesn't matter how much we advance in medical technology, how much we are able to increase our span of life, but we are going to die because sin has come into this world. But at the same time, we need to take into consideration these words, how serious of an offense was going on, and how much it displeased the Lord.

Today as we prepare ourselves to go ourselves to participate and to partake of the body and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, I'd like for you to consider the words of a hymn, two verses of this from *Stricken, Smitten and Afflicted*. The writer says this:

*Tell me ye who hear Him groaning,
Was there ever grief like His?
Friends through fear, His cause disowning
Foes insulting His distress
Many hands were raised to wound Him
None would interpose to save
But the deepest stroke that pierced Him
Was the stroke that justice gave*

*Ye who think of sin but lightly
Nor suppose the evil great
Here may view its nature rightly
Here its guilt may estimate
Mark the sacrifice appointed
See who bears the awful load
Tis the Word, the Lord's Anointed
Son of Man and Son of God*

Today I ask you: Have you come to Jesus Christ? Have you sat perhaps many times in church services under the preaching of the word of God? Have you watched as others passed the elements before you and wondered what was all this about, this strange ceremony of the church? Today as we consider the death of Christ, I want to call you to see that the death of Christ happened not because Jesus needed to go through some act of obedience for His own improvement, but He did it because men and women and boys and girls like you and like me have turned

away from a holy God, have sinned against His holy commandments, and now without Him would stand under the judgment of God. Today I ask you: Have you repented of your sins and called on Jesus Christ? For we have this great promise in Scripture that whoever calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved, that He is a great, and mighty, and merciful Savior, that whatever it is that you think you have done that is too great for Him to forgive, is not, that upon the cross of Jesus Christ where He died, God poured out upon Him all His wrath on the sins of those who believe.

I urge you today as we begin to partake the Supper to not let this instance pass beside you, to take seriously to your heart your need to come into a right relationship with God, because it is appointed for man to die once and after that to face judgment, and it is a sure and certain promise just as it is that one day Jesus Christ will return again, this time to take His people home. Will you come to Christ today? Will you observe the sacrifice that He made for sinners and turn from your own sin, your own will, and your own way, and humble yourself and walk and follow after Him? At this time, we are going to move into the celebration of the Supper itself. I'd like to call the men forward who are going to be serving the elements today.

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