

XX. The Lord's Supper

October 1/3, 2013

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Aim: To understand the purpose and practice of the sacrament of Communion.

In the passage before us, Paul accuses the Corinthians of subverting the Lord's Supper. He says that when they gathered together it did more harm than good (v. 17), that what they were doing could not really even be called the Lord's Supper (v. 20), and that they might as well stay at home and forget the whole thing (vv. 22, 34). The Corinthians believed in the Lord's Supper and regularly observed it. It was the way in which they were observing it that was causing the problem. They didn't intend to subvert the communion, but that was the result of the way in which they were going about it.

One of the many ironies of the situation in the Corinthian congregation was that when they came together to remember Christ's death for them, in the fellowship meal which He instituted, the behavior of some was a profound denial of the very realities they were allegedly celebrating.

A. The Selfishness of Their Observance (1 Corinthians 11:17-22)

1. Deteriorating Assembly (11:17)

¹⁷But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse.

When he introduced the discussion of women's head coverings, Paul praised the Corinthians for holding firmly to the doctrines he had taught them (11:2). Now he has no praise. The instruction Paul is about to give is prompted by a more serious problem than the women's failure in submission addressed in the previous passage. This new problem related to their 'coming together' (*synerchesthai*) as indicated by the fivefold repetition of that verb in this passage (vv. 17, 18, 20, 33, 34). The word can mean either 'to assemble' or 'to meet *together*' and implies gathering for worship. The Christian gathering is no mere assembly but it is to be a meeting together in unity. But the Corinthians 'coming together' did not issue in such unity but in division. It was, therefore, 'not for the better but for the worse.' The term for 'worse' is a comparative of *kakos*, which represents moral evil.

'Giving instruction' (*parangellō*) means 'to command,' specifically to give a charge or order. The basic idea of the word is 'to pass along from one to another.' It was used especially for the order given by a military commander and passed along the line by his subordinates. Paul made it clear that what he was about to say was not merely personal advice. It was apostolic 'instruction' that his readers were commanded to accept and follow.

2. Corinthian Divisions (11:18-19)

¹⁸For, 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, ¹⁹for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

'First' – meaning 'of first importance' – indicates that the lack of harmony in the church is serious. It is not that the Corinthians are slack about assembling, but that they are shameless

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concerning their disharmony. ‘Church’ (*ekklēsia*), means ‘assembly’ or ‘congregation,’ and in the New Testament is never used of a building or meeting place but always of believers.

Ordinarily they met by houses as sub-groups of the congregation. From time to time, however (and we do not know how frequently), they ‘came together as church,’ that is, as he will say later, when the ‘whole church’ came together (14:23). Most likely this was in the house of Gaius, ‘the host of [Paul] and of the whole church’ (Rom. 16:23; cp. 1 Cor. 1:14). But Paul hears that there are ‘schisms’ (*schismata*) among them and he is inclined to believe it. Perhaps this report came also from Chloe’s people who told him of the ‘schisms’ (1:10) which were associated with unnamed local leaders (cp. 4:6).

‘Divisions’ (*schismata*) literally refers to tearing or cutting and metaphorically to division or dissent. Instead of sharing together in fellowship and worship they spent their time in selfish indulgence, arguing, and disputing. Perhaps because he suspected that some of the reports had been exaggerated, the apostle wanted to give them the benefit of any doubt. Yet the reports would not have been hard to believe. Paul began this letter by strongly rebuking them for their *schismata* based on party loyalties (1:10-17; 3:1-3). The believers were also divided socially, as this passage indicates. Those who were well off brought their food and selfishly ate it before the poorer members arrive. The Corinthian upper class disdained even sharing in a ‘pot luck supper’ with their less fortunate brothers and sisters. It was every person for himself.

Their gatherings in order to meet together only revealed how divided they actually were. In verse 19, Paul uses a different word (*haireseis* – ‘heresies’), which in the following centuries would mean departure from orthodox belief. In the unfolding history of the church a ‘heresy’ often became a ‘schism’ even though the words are used here as synonyms.

The paradox of these factions in the Corinthian church is that the worldliness and fleshly disobedience of those who caused the divisions would expose and highlight the love, harmony, and spirituality ‘of those who are approved.’ ‘Approved’ (*dokimos*) refers to that which has passed a test. The term was used of precious metals tried in fire and proved to be pure. Church division, ungodly and sinful as it is, nevertheless is used by the Lord to prove the worth of His faithful saints. In the midst of bickering and divisiveness they are separated out as pure gold is from the dross.

3. Disorderly Conduct (11:20-21)

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.*

It is quite obvious from Paul’s words that the Corinthians had instituted something like a ‘pot-luck dinner’ prior to the actual observance of communion. This meal has come to be known as the ‘agape’ or ‘love feast.’ Evidently most of their abuses of the Lord’s Supper (*kyriakon deipnon*) stemmed from this meal. They could not properly say that this meal was devoted to the Lord. Neither the meal nor the Communion was honoring to Him.

This was a genuine meal, where the church congregated to eat the ‘love feast,’ a meal followed by the Communion. The Communion was connected to this supper in the Corinthian church, but abuses were obscuring its divine purpose and destroying its sanctity. In the early church the love

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feast and Communion customarily were held together, but abuses such as those in Corinth eventually forced the two to be separated in order to protect the Communion. The love feast soon disappeared altogether.

The motives behind the institution of this meal were noble and sound. The whole church family, rich and poor alike, would gather at the appointed time and enjoy each other's food and fellowship. Two great benefits would follow. First, the church family would itself be strengthened. As the people got to know each other better, they could truly bear each other's burdens and be made aware of various needs for ministry. Secondly, those outside the church would surely hear about the gospel of Christ transcending social distinctions and welding diverse people together into one body. Such a phenomenon was bound to attract the interest of unbelievers.

However, what had started out as a noble ideal had disintegrated into a nightmare. The divisions Paul so vigorously denounced in the opening chapter of this letter were more pronounced and evident during the fellowship meal than at any other time. Specifically, some of the more well-to-do members were 'jumping the gun.' Instead of waiting for the starting-time, they were arriving ahead of time. All the better, you see, to sit with your friends and to make sure you get to eat the prime rib you brought rather than the bread and cheese the poor members would bring! When the lower-class members who had to work all day finally arrived, the prime rib was gone, and it was just a hasty snack of bread and cheese or no supper at all! If this wasn't bad enough, some of the 'upper-crust' members were also going overboard sampling the wine and were getting tipsy before the Lord's Supper even got underway.

The practice of gathering together for a communal meal is not condemned; what is censured is an individual consuming his pre-paced food and drink without waiting until others are ready to participate. The church must have seemed like a weird cafeteria in which some, having relatively little, looked on while others gorged. The church has violated the principle of one loaf and one cup, emblems designed to signal oneness in Christ (cp. 10:16-17).

The poorer believers came to the supper expecting to share in the food brought by the wealthy, but they went away hungry—physically as well as spiritually. Those who brought food and drink gorged themselves and became drunk. They mocked the very purpose of the occasion, which was to bring harmony and unity among those who belonged to Christ, as they remembered His sacrifice to make them one in Him.

After the poor had gobbled down their food, this charade known as the love feast came to an end, and the church turned their attention to observing the Lord's Supper. What fine shape they were in! The rich members were stuffed to the gills and under the influence, while the poor members were angry and frustrated over the treatment they received! They could call what they were doing an observance of the Lord's Supper, but it was really nothing more than a mockery of the sacred observance. The Lord's Supper had been subverted.

Those who began before the others may have been the wealthier members who had time not only to eat but also to drink enough to be intoxicated, and those who came later were the 'have nots' who were hungry. Possibly the late comers were slaves as well as poorer members, whose only food on their eventual arrival was the bread and wine of the remembrance meal.

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Thus the community which was intended to find unity in sharing a loaf of bread and wine cup found only disunity, and was torn by schism owing to the rudeness and insensitivity of the wealthy. It was not the Lord's dinner that the Corinthians ate but merely 'any old' dinner.

4. Apostolic Outrage (11:22)

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.*

Rather than honoring the Lord's self-sacrificing love, these greedy Christians cannot wait to fill their own stomachs, irrespective of how this affects others in the group. The wealthy were providing food and drink in considerable quantities for this social meal, but only for themselves. Those who have insufficient are therefore being mocked and denigrated by those who have excess. This arrogant individualism, together with its conspicuous consumption, is scathingly denounced by the apostle. It would be reprehensible enough in the privacy of their own homes but to bring such behavior to the meeting of the church is to despise and humiliate those who have nothing.

In Paul's mind the better-endowed members should have waited until the others arrived and, moreover, shared their food and drink with them. The wealthy had houses in which they certainly ate and drank. By bringing their wealth into the meeting of the saints and flaunting it before the poor, by eating and drinking lavishly, and doing so without waiting for the poorer members, and without sharing with them, they have 'despised' the church of God and mocked the poor among them. Paul is almost speechless in disbelief at their behavior. Here we see something of Paul's passion for the poor (cp. Gal. 2:10).

If they intended to selfishly indulge themselves, could they not do that at home/ Or were they actually trying to destroy the fellowship by flagrantly despising God's church? Or were they so contemptuous of their poor brothers and sisters in Christ that they purposely embarrassed and shamed them? If they could not show love, why have a love feast?

Do the readers scorn the church and 'shame those who have nothing'? Yes, they do. The more wealthy, having the effrontery to treat the less fortunate with contempt, are degrading the symbol of oneness in Christ. The less affluent Christians are 'have-nots,' folks unable to provide their own food to bring to the meeting place.

The cross spells the end of all human pride, all distinctions of wealth, education, birth or background, all elitism. But the very meal that should be the enactment of unity in Christ and in the gospel has become the expression of division, through pride, selfishness, greed, and envy.

B. The Symbolism of the Ordinance (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

These verses are like a diamond dropped in a muddy road. One of the most beautiful passages in all of Scripture is given in the middle of a strong rebuke of worldly, carnal, selfish, and insensitive attitudes and behavior.

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1. Authentic Instruction (11:23a)

²³*For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you...*

The only answer is to return to the original Supper and to the Lord's own words of institution, so as to remind the readers of how far they have drifted from the Master's intentions. Paul affirms that he is simply the channel of revelation, not its source. The Lord had apparently communicated directly with Paul about this matter, and what he received from Christ he transmitted accurately to the Corinthians. Thus, if Paul delivered to the Corinthian church what he had received verbatim from the risen Christ, their misbehavior at the table has to be corrected: for them to bypass the apostle will be to disobey the Lord. This is the issue.

Paul makes it clear that what he is teaching is not his own opinion but God's revealed Word. Most conservative scholars agree that 1 Corinthians probably was written before any of the gospels. If that is true, Paul's account here is the first biblical record of the institution of the Lord's Supper, and includes direct quotations from Jesus. It is perfectly consistent with the gospel accounts, but Paul's revelation most likely was 'received from the Lord' directly, not through the other apostles (cp. Gal. 1:10-12).

Paul must go back to basics, which is why he rehearses the 'tradition' about the dinner of the Lord. Perhaps they have forgotten what it is about, so that he must remind them. Above all, it is not a dinner party at which people gorged and drunk. It is a metaphorical dinner, a dinner whose only food is a small quantity of very simple food, from a shared loaf of bread and from a shared cup of wine.

2. Sacramental Establishment (11:23b-25)

...that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In 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."

The upper room was also a scene of division; it was 'the night when He was betrayed.' Ultimately, this is what the behavior of the Corinthians at the supper table of the Lord was – a betrayal of Him, of His values, and sacrifice.

In the Greek 'had given thanks' is a participle of *eucharisteō*, from which we get Eucharist, the name by which some Christians refer to the Lord's Supper. The bread that had represented the Exodus now came to represent the body of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Clearly, Christ's words cannot be teaching the doctrine known as transubstantiation, by which it is believed that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. The unleavened bread on the table was evidently *not* the body of Christ. He was there, before His disciples, in His physical body. He was thus speaking of a profound spiritual reality, and the broken bread was emphasizing the same message, of a body soon to be broken on the cross.

The physical breaking of the bread was meant to facilitate distribution rather than being a symbolic act: the body of Jesus was never broken (John 19:26; cp. Ex. 12:46; Ps. 22:14, 17).

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‘Do’ means ‘continue doing’ (*poieite*, present tense), from which the Corinthians are meant to understand that our Lord established a repetitive meal of remembrance.

It was ‘for you.’ These are two of the most beautiful words in all of Scripture. Here, the Lord Jesus clearly teaches His substitution in His death; the bearing of God’s righteous wrath; the meeting of sin’s punishment justly, on behalf of His people. The Passover reference is inescapable. Every first-born Israelite son, who was redeemed in Egypt, experienced the substitution of the lamb for himself on Passover night.

When the Bible calls upon us to remember a truth, it is always in order to provoke us to appropriate action. Participation in the Lord’s Supper therefore is always a spur and a challenge for us to live a godly life, making His word our food and His person our sustenance.

The cup that had represented the lamb’s blood smeared on the doorposts and lintels now came to represent the blood of the Lamb of God, shed for the salvation of the world. Passover was transformed into the Lord’s Supper. We now eat the bread and drink the cup not to remember the Red Sea and the Exodus but to remember the cross and the Savior.

In moving from the bread to the wine (v. 25), the apostle emphasizes the unity of relationship with God, and therefore with all fellow-believers, in the new covenant community created through the shed blood of the cross. With these words we move from Passover to Sinai, where Israel received the terms of the old covenant, declared in the law and written in the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 24:7-8). On that day, Israel declared herself to be a covenant community, bound in obedience to her sovereign Lord, set apart from all the nations to live a distinctively different lifestyle as His holy people, His treasured possession. Nor are the terms of the new covenant (cp. Jer. 31:31) any less demanding for those who have been covered by the precious blood of Christ. His blood has created one new covenant community, and to deny that by contrary behavior is tantamount to rejecting the very work on the cross by which the church was brought into existence.

‘Do this in remembrance of Me’ is a command from the lips of our Lord Himself. Sharing in the Lord’s Supper is therefore not an option for believers. We must have Communion on a regular basis if we are to be faithful to the Lord who bought us through the act we are called to remember. Not to partake of the Lord’s Supper is disobedience and sin.

For the Hebrew to remember meant much more than simply to bring something to mind, merely to recall that it happened. To truly remember is to go back in one’s mind and recapture as much of the reality and significance of an event or experience as one possibly can. To remember Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross is to relive with Him His life, agony, suffering, and death as much as is humanly possible. When we partake of the Lord’s Supper we do not offer a sacrifice again; we remember His once-for-all sacrifice for us and rededicate ourselves to His obedient service.

3. Ritual Commemoration (11:26)

²⁶*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

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What was our Lord's purpose in instituting this supper? It was to give His people something to commemorate His death ('do this in remembrance of Me'). Every time the child of God comes to the Lord's Table and partakes of the bread and the cup, he is openly proclaiming that he remembers the death of Jesus Christ on the cross and that he will continue to do so until he is able to meet Him face to face.

Jesus' actions and words were not merely prospective, to explain to the Twelve that night the meaning and significance of what would happen the next day. Rather what Jesus did and said was to be repeated into the future as a way of bringing *Him* to the 'memory' of His people. This matches exactly the Lord's institution of the Passover meal in Egypt (cp. Ex. 12:14). By the actions, the words, and the eating and drinking at the dinner of the Lord, the new covenant people call to mind the death of their Lord on their behalf. Jesus intended His people corporately to remember Him, which they do when they eat His dinner together.

No frequency is given, but it is a permanent feast. It is more than a remembrance for our own sakes; it is also a proclamation for the world's sake. It is a testimony to the world that we are not ashamed of our Lord or of His blood, that we belong to Him and are obedient to Him.

The Lord's Supper is far more than a social meal. It is a proclamation to God and men, a declaration of good news, about our faith in Christ's death. To eat and drink at the *Lord's* Table implies not only saving faith, but a lifestyle lived under His active lordship. It is an act of identification with the Christ who identifies with me in all my sin, by committing myself to live in fellowship with Him and with all my fellow believers.

Regrettably for many people the emphasis in the Lord's dinner is directed towards the tiny elements of bread and wine, that is, in the *objects* that are consumed. But this is only part, and the latter part at that, of what Jesus instituted. *Watching* the actions and *listening* to the words go before the *eating* and *drinking*.

Why should the death of Christ be remembered? It is because of His death that Christians enjoy eternal life. On the cross, Christ took our place. He paid for our sins by receiving in His body the judgment of God. The central principle of the whole plan of redemption, then, is sacrifice. We could not have been delivered from our sins had Jesus not sacrificed Himself on our behalf.

The last three words of verse 26 put the whole issue firmly into an even more demanding eternal perspective – 'until He comes.' The Lord's Supper is not simply an event in time, but an anticipation of eternity. The Christ, whose death is proclaimed, is the Christ who has risen and will come again in power and glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords. In short, at the dinner of the Lord the members tell one another the gospel, centered in the death of Christ and His second coming.

Communion is also a reminder of the Lord's coming again, for He tells us to proclaim His death by this means 'until He comes.' It helps keep us looking forward to the day when we will be with Him. It is a celebration of His present life and of His future return in glory.

The principle of sacrifice that brought Jesus to the cross was nowhere to be found in the Corinthian's fellowship meals or in the Lord's Supper. They were not willing to give up their favorite foods so that poor members could have a good meal. They were not willing to give up an hour or two with their own special friends so they could spend a little time getting acquainted with those who were not in their clique. Irony of ironies – they gathered together to commemorate a principle they were unwilling to practice! The divisive supper at Corinth could

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never be the Lord's Supper, while it undermined the very purpose of His death. It was more like a pagan festival.

C. The Seriousness of Their Offense (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)

1. Unworthy Manner (11:27)

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.*

To eat the bread and drink of the cup of the Lord unworthily, that is, in circumstances of greed, selfishness and insensitivity, as the wealthy Corinthians have done, is therefore to be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, that is, His death. It was precisely those attitudes that brought about the death of Jesus. To repeat them on the occasion of the meal at which His death is recalled means nothing less than to share in the guilt of those who killed Him.

'Unworthily' does not mean feeling ashamed, although to be contrite because of one's sinfulness is the only proper way to approach the table. Paul is concerned with the communicant who has no real interest in the things of God.

One can come to His table unworthily in many ways. It is common for people to participate in it ritualistically, without participating with their minds and hearts. They can go through the motions without going through any emotions, and treat it lightly rather than seriously. They can believe it imparts grace or merit, that the ceremony itself, rather than the sacrifice it represents, can save or keep one saved. Many come with a spirit of bitterness or hatred toward another believer, or come with a sin of which they will not repent. If a believer comes with anything less than the loftiest thoughts of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and anything less than total love for his brothers and sisters in Christ, he comes unworthily. And to come unworthily to Communion does not simply dishonor the ceremony; it dishonors the One in whose honor it is celebrated.

When a Christian comes to the Lord's Table in the wrong way, he treats the death of the Lord Jesus in a shameful way and places himself in the company of those who hate Christ and would crucify Him again. No, he hasn't lost his salvation, but he is acting in such a way that it looks as if he has!

Although this verse is a warning, it is not designed to send us on an endless, but ultimately fruitless, internal quest to find some worthiness in us as we approach the communion table. Rather, to sin against Christ's body and blood must mean to deny the very purpose of His death, namely, the formation of a new community of redeemed people whose lifestyle demonstrates the radical, transforming power of the cross. We shall always, forever, be debtors to mercy alone.

2. Personal Examination (11:28)

²⁸*Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.*

What is the appropriate way to observe the Lord's Supper? Two things are absolutely essential. One is *examination of the heart* (v. 28). This means each child of God is to sift through his heart, confessing the sin he finds there. Paul says the one who judges himself doesn't have to fear God's judgment (v. 31). The Christian is never going to be perfect in this life, but he should

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be examining his heart and confessing his sins on a daily basis. This keeps him in fellowship with the Lord. If the Christian has failed to keep his accounts with the Lord current, the Lord's Supper is a good time to do some catching up.

What self-examination is appropriate, then, before participating in the Lord's Supper? The verb 'examine' (*dokimazo*) is used frequently in the New Testament, and bears the idea of testing something in order to prove it and so approve its validity, or quality. Every individual coming to the Lord's Supper is charged with the necessary duty of testing one's attitude towards all that it speaks and conveys. Do I trust this Christ as my sin-bearing substitute? Am I living in humble obedience to His lordship, the lifestyle of the cross?

By 'test' (*dokimazein*) Paul uses the blacksmith's term for testing so as to approve a piece of metal for strength. Paul calls on his readers then and now to reflect seriously before sharing in the meal. For the Corinthians this would mean 'coming together' in a spirit of genuine brotherly and sisterly love towards all those present, rich or poor.

Self-examination is essential for participation. This means that a worshiper must ask himself serious questions. Do the bread and wine signify anything to him? Because he professes that Christ died for him, does he seek to be in fellowship with the Lord's people? Bearing in mind the Corinthians' abuse of the supper (v. 21), does he despise some with whom he would break bread? Only he can tell. Negatively, self-examination does not suggest that the worshiper ought to avoid communion if he considers himself imperfect. Positively, examination means that he desires to be told again that Jesus died for sinners.

Before we partake we are to give ourselves a thorough self-examination, looking honestly at our hearts for anything that should not be there and sifting out all evil. Our motives, our attitudes toward the lord and His Word, toward His people, and toward the Communion service itself should all come under private scrutiny before the Lord. The table thus becomes a special place for the purifying of the church.

3. Body Discernment (11:29)

²⁹*For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.*

'Judgment' (*krima*) here has the idea of chastisement, not condemnation. The great difference in Paul's use here of *krima* and *katakrima* ('condemned') is seen in verse 32, where it is clear that *krima* refers to discipline of the saved and *katakrima* refers to condemnation of the lost.

The Supper also challenges me regarding my attitude to my fellow believers who are with me, at the table, as God's family. Do I love and honor them? Do I recognize in them the body of the Lord? For my obedience to the gospel, which the Supper proclaims, includes my obedience to the Lord's command to love one another as He has loved us.

By 'body' might be meant the church considered as the localized body of Christ (cp. 10:17; 12:12, 27). Had Paul wished to refer to Jesus' body, he probably would have been explicit, as in 11:24, 27. What he means is that some make light of Calvary and its emblems, disparaging the body of Christ, the church.

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The second part of worthily partaking of the Lord's Supper is *to discern the Lord's body in the process* (v. 29). What is it to discern the Lord's body? It means we recognize that the elements symbolize the body and blood of Christ and salvation comes only from His death on the cross. It means we express our gratitude to Him for His death and we worship Him as we partake of those elements. Examination of ourselves and adoration of the Lord will keep us from falling into the errors of the Corinthians and will make the Lord's Supper a sheer delight.

4. Divine Discipline (11:30-32)

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.*

Apparently, judgment was already in operation. God, of course, doesn't take kindly to such treatment of His Son's death and, in the case of the Corinthians, had already visited judgment upon them. Paul says some of them were sick and some had already died because of the way they had profaned the Lord's death and trampled upon it.

'Weak' might signify bodily weakness, 'ill' (*arrōstoi* = 'without power') possibly referring to disablement: God has smitten many Corinthians. The present tense in 'falling asleep' is vivid: Paul has learnt that some individuals are very ill and anticipates that they will not recover. It is asserted that God has seen fit to shorten the lives of some Corinthians because of their attitude to the Lord's Table; extended service is denied them, though not the promise of salvation.

'Sleep' is here, as in several other places in the New Testament, used metaphorically to speak of the death of believers (as of Lazarus, John 11:11; and Stephen, Acts 7:60). God actually put to death 'a number' (*hikanos*, lit., 'sufficient') of believers in Corinth because they continually despised and corrupted the Supper of His Son, just as He had put to death Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-11).

To be honest and discerning in judging ourselves will deliver us from the Lord's judgment (v. 31). If we come unworthily and are judged by God, it is not for condemnation. It is for the very opposite. God sends individual chastening to push offenders back towards righteous behavior. Even if the Lord were to strike us dead for profaning His table, it would be to discipline us, to keep us from being condemned. We are kept from condemnation not only by decree, but also by divine intervention. God chastens us to keep us from falling from salvation, and will even take our life, if need be, before that could happen.

The recent illnesses and deaths in Corinth were evidences of the Lord's displeasure (v. 32), but not yet of his 'condemnation.' These acts of his 'judgment' mean that they were being 'disciplined.' The verb (*paideuōmai*) is used of a parent disciplining a wayward child so as to bring helpful correction. Let the Corinthians learn from such discipline and repent.

The verb for 'disciplined' (*paideuomothai*) employed by Paul elsewhere, means to train and even to correct – but not to exact a judicial penalty. In that the apostle never associates the term with unbelievers, it may be concluded that the divine discipline is not punitive, although the experience is usually severe. It is to be construed as painful correction inflicted on a loved yet erring, or potentially erring, child (cp. Heb. 12:5-11; Prov. 3:12).

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D. The Summary of the Orders (1 Corinthians 11:33-34)

1. Paul's Teaching (11:33-34a)

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.*

Finally the apostle brings his readers back to the situation which provoked his powerful criticisms of them, that is, their failure to wait for one another when they came together. So he exhorts them to do precisely that. Paul is neither advocating communal eating as the circumstance for the remembrance meal nor urging its discontinuance. Rather, he is saying that, either way, the dinner of the Lord is for all members, rich or poor, slave or free, and it is focused on remembering Jesus through watching the loaf broken and the cup upraised in thanksgiving, listen to His words given on the night of His betrayal, and eating together from that loaf and drinking together from that cup. But do not spoil this act of remembering Jesus and proclaiming His death by allowing the gathering to become separated into the rich at their own affluent dinner party and the poor who arrive late and hungry.

The practical applications are clear as Paul now relates his teaching to the actual situation he has exposed. Respect and acceptance of one another lie behind the word translated 'wait.' There is to be a mutual valuing of one another as members of the church of God that should destroy all the remaining evidences of the sinful lifestyle of pride or envy. Those who want to insist on lavish meals will have to eat them at home, for they dare not import their divisiveness into the church's love-feast.

2. Paul's Coming (11:34b)

About the other things I will give directions when I come.

Paul closes by admonishing the Corinthians to get their lives and their attitudes straightened out, to completely discard their prejudices, their selfishness, and their indifference to God's holy ordinance. Paul's final remark, 'the remaining matters I shall arrange when I come,' must refer to other issues related to worship, the Lord's Supper, or both. He would take care of those matters when he arrived in Corinth personally.

3. Our Application

Some Christians become quite terrified when they read such things and they conclude that the best thing to do is never to partake of the Lord's Supper. Two things must be said in response to this attitude. First, the Lord's Supper is not optional for the Christian. It is commanded, and refusal to comply with such an explicit command from the Lord can also bring chastisement.

Secondly, we must keep in mind that there is a great difference between being worthy of partaking of communion and partaking worthily. No one ever has been, or ever will be, worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper, but that is not what Paul is talking about here. His concern was to get the Corinthians to start partaking of the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner.

For next time: Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-7, 11.