

1 Corinthians

Chapter 11:17-34

June 2, 1996

- **1 Corinthians Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Ungodly divisions result from man's wisdom.
- Chapter 2 Carnal man cannot understand our Spiritual God.
- Chapter 3 All Christians will have their labors tried by fire.
- Chapter 4 Boasting in our leaders puffs up and destroys fellowship.
- Chapter 5 Maintain the purity of the Church.
- Chapter 6 Do not dispute before the world and do not partake in sexual immorality.
- Chapter 7 Principles of marriage
- Chapter 8 The responsibility of liberty
- Chapter 9 Those who preach the Gospel should live from the Gospel
- Chapter 10 You cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons.
- Chapter 11 Propriety in corporate worship and communion

- **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

- **Introduction & Review**

Having previously commended the Corinthians for remembering some of the teachings that he had taught them, he moves on this section to rebuke them for a blasphemous demonstration of selfishness and disunity during the communion of the Lord's Table.

- **Exposition**

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

¹⁷ Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse.¹⁸ For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.¹⁹ For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.²⁰ Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.²¹ For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.²² What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.

- In contrast to the prior section, Paul begins with this section by letting them know that he has no praise for the way they have handled communion. The admonishment that he delivers pertains to their corporate gathering where because of their selfishness, the gathering is actually destructive. It is not enough that we simply gather. Gathering by itself will not ensure a blessing but we must gather in fellowship or unity. If we were to gather together as factions it would be better that we had never gathered.
- The Greek word for factions is the word from which we get heresy. However, it is likely that Paul is using an early use of the word which meant divisions or factions rather than the later meaning which pertained to unorthodox opinion or doctrine. However, it also appears that the factions may have been over doctrinal disputes so that those who held particular views might be distinguished from other who held contrary opinions.
- In addition, the factions also pertained to the wealthy versus the poor. Those who had plenty were not sharing or participating with those who had little. The result of these factions is that their participation in the Lord's Supper was nullified.
- Traditionally, in addition to the Lord's Supper there was a meal called the Festival of Contribution. Very similar to our potlucks where each family brought something to share with the entire crowd, apparently, those who had much were bringing much but only for their family to enjoy.

²³ For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."²⁵ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood.

This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

- Notice that although Paul was not at the Last Supper, he received instruction from the Lord regarding the administration of the Lord's table. Our Lord knew this sacrament was important to the unity of the Church, so He ensured that Paul was given adequate instruction.
- Here Jesus self consciously ties Himself to the promise of Jeremiah where God says that He was going to establish a new covenant unlike the first one. This new covenant would be founded on the perfect righteousness of Christ rather than the blood of bulls and goats. The fact that it is new or better, is not to say that God abandoned where He had been. The new covenant was where God was heading all the time. The old was a picture of the new.
- We are not told in the Scriptures that when we partake in communion that we are to put on our holy thoughts or that we are to be super somber. We are not told to drum up some emotion to make the communion look really religious. But there are five things we are told to do that if we consider them properly will produce a holy efficacious blessing. Notice in chapter 10 that Paul refers to communion as the cup of blessing.
- Remember - The first thing that we are told we should be doing during communion is remembering. We are not just drumming up visions of something but we are remembering an actual event that occurred in history that has impact on that which we do today.
- Giving Thanks - The communion is to be a time of thanksgiving. We give thanks because God has provided a means of salvation for the Elect. Because of our flesh, it is easy to forget how awesome salvation is. When we consider that we all have fallen short of the glory of God and are deserving of eternal destruction, to then realize that God has plucked us off of that road should bring incredible joy and thanksgiving. Notice also that not only do we give thanks for the breaking of Christ's body, Christ gave thanks for His broken body.
- Proclaim - The very act of communion is a public proclamation of the death of Christ. It is not just a proclamation that He is dead and gone but that He died on a cross in accordance with the Scriptures. In addition, He was buried according to the Scriptures and that on the third day of burial, He rose from the dead according to the Scriptures. He is not dead and gone, He was dead and is now alive. This we proclaim by what we say and by how we partake in the communion.

²⁷ Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.³⁰ For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.³¹ For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.³² But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.³³ Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.³⁴ But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come. NKJV

- Discern - The fourth thing we are to do in communion is to recognize that we are the Lord's body. The Lord's body is symbolized by the bread but is actually manifest by the collection of the saints *in unity*. Notice we are saying something about the Lord's body when we meet in factions; if the Lord's body is still in pieces that He must still be in the grave because He was put to death. But if the Lord's body is whole again then we realize that Christ rose from the dead and enjoys a unified body.
- Judge - Not examining or judging ourselves violates the previous command. We are told to judge ourselves, not our neighbors. Examination begins with ourselves first. If we do this we can avoid the judgment of God which is always more unpleasant than if we would manifest a tender heart and confess our sins ourselves. If we would do this, then Paul says that we can avoid the Lord's judgment. If we can learn the lesson without the spanking then we can avoid the spanking. But if it takes the spanking in order for us learn the lesson, God spans those whom He loves. If we confess without the discipline, then it becomes obvious that the discipline has already occurred. Remember the difference between punishment and discipline; one is punitive and the other is corrective.
- Paul ends this entire section by commanding unity, thoughtfulness and considering each other more highly than themselves.