

**TITLE: WHEN TAKING THE LORD'S SUPPER...**

**TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34**

**INTRO:** In Exodus 12, God instituted the Passover meal by sparing the firstborn of all the obedient Israelites. This salvation required the killing of one lamb per household, & its blood to be put on the doorposts. Then, on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of each 1<sup>st</sup> month of the year, the Israelites were to remember this by eating the Passover meal with unleavened bread. It's this meal that Jesus & his apostles were eating when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, preparing to become the *one* lamb for the whole world. The Lord's Supper then is extremely important, and not to be done carelessly & selfishly, as the Corinthian brethren were doing.

**I. PROBLEMS WHEN TAKING THE LORD'S SUPPER (v. 17-22):**

**A. (v. 17-19) FIRST problem – Divisions!**

1. (v. 17) "But in declaring this, I do not praise!" Compare **v. 2**, "I praise you." So there's a subject change here in v. 17. General statement – you come together not for the better, but for the worse.
2. (v. 18) 1<sup>st</sup> of all, there are divisions "*when you come together in the church*" – this is their assembly, not just the LS. He has already addressed division (clearly forbidden in **1:10-13; 3:3f**). There is **nothing** positive in divisions! When worshipping God, we should be one...in fellowship! How can we eat the LS and be at odds with one another? Would Christ approve? **Mt 5:23-24** – "*if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*"
3. (v. 19) "*For heresies (division, sect) in you must be, in order that the tried/approved might be made manifest (apparent, public).*" The understanding here is that error exists. The existence of division proves it! Where truth and error exist in the same congregation, there must be division! Otherwise, those who hold to the truth are allowing the error to continue!

**B. (v. 20-22) SECOND problems (possibly results of the 1<sup>st</sup>) – Not waiting; excessiveness; making the LS a common meal.**

(v. 20) "it (your coming together) is not to eat the Lord's Supper! You may *claim* that it is, but it is not! This is about purpose – their purpose for coming together wasn't correct.

(v. 21) Here are the problems:

1. Some were eating before others arrived (selfishness & lack of unity) - *you're taking your own supper before*, instead of eating together (contrary to how Christ & the apostles partook together)
2. *One is hungry & another drunken*. Some are stuffing themselves, while others were hungry. Neither of these extremes is appropriate for the Lord's Supper! It is not a common meal. But this is one of the problems - they were treating the Lord's Supper as a common meal. Its purpose was **not** for *physical* sustenance. This is why Paul gives the rebuke he does in v. 22.

(v. 22) Paul's rebuke

1. *Don't you have houses to eat & drink in?* This is **not** saying we can't eat in the building (no kitchens)! The building is not the issue. Taking the Lord's Supper in the proper manner *is*. It is **not** a common meal!
2. *Do you despise (think against, disdain) the church of God?* You're encouraging division, & the church is to be united.
3. *Do you shame (dishonor, disgrace) them that have not?* Apparently everyone brought their own food. Not only were the poor unable to afford anything, they were singled out and disgraced as being poor! This is the opposite attitude of **10:24!**
4. *What should I say to you? Should I praise you?* Absolutely not! Your actions are against God and His church!

**II. PURPOSE WHEN TAKING THE LORD'S SUPPER – REMEMBER & PROCLAIM! (v. 23-26):**

**A. (v. 23-25) Institution of the Lord's Supper**

1. (v. 23) Statement of how God's authoritative message & instructions are passed down to us ("*For I received of the Lord...*")
2. (v. 24) Body/Bread– **1**) He gave thanks; **2**) He ate it. "*This is my body which is broken (given- **Lk 22:19**) for you.*"
  - a. Is this his *literal* body (Catholicism)? Is Jesus a literal door or shepherd (**Jn 10**), or the bread of life (**Jn 6**)? How could Jesus give them bread and say, "this is my *literal* body?" This teaching is foolishness! The bread *represents* his body.
  - b. Christ's legs weren't broken (**Jn 19:33**), but His body was. As we *break* the bread, we remember His suffering – that it was **for us**. It was done "for many for the remission of sins" (**Mt 26:28**).
  - c. *This do in remembrance of me*. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> imperative (take, eat). Remember me! Specifically, his death (v. 26).
3. (v. 25) Blood/fruit of the vine– "*In the same way*" (i.e., giving thanks first–**Mt 26:27; Mk 14:23; Lk 22:17**), he took the cup:
  - a. This cup– "contents" (Strongs) – you drink contents, not cup. "One-cuppers" miss this (cf. **Lk 22:17**–cup was divided)!
  - b. The content is "fruit of the vine" (**Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 22:18**). "Wine"(oinos) is *never* used in reference to the LS.
  - c. The new testament (will/contract) in my blood. The old covenant (law) required the blood of animals (new = Christ's).
  - d. *This do in remembrance* – same as with the body (**v. 24**).
  - e. "*As oft as ye drink it*" - Some claim this authorizes taking the LS anytime. This verse says nothing about frequency, & alone would indeed leave it to each congregation's judgment. However, the apostles were guided into all truth, & their example is our guide (1<sup>st</sup> day of the week–**Ac 20:7**– the only verse on this frequency; no other frequency is authorized).  
\*The point Jesus is making is that, **every time you partake**, it should be done in remembrance of Him!

**B. (v. 26) Purpose of the Lord's Supper**

Every time we partake of the LS, we not only *remember* Christ's death, we *proclaim* it! Til he come (LS is not to be forsaken). This shows that we believe He died (and are grateful), and was raised and IS coming back. (Lots to think about during the LS.)

### III. PUNISHMENT WHEN TAKING THE LORD'S SUPPER (v. 27-34):

- A. (v. 27-30) The real problem behind their improper attitude about and treatment of the Lord's Supper:
- (v. 27) Whoever (no exceptions) shall eat/drink unworthily (irreverently) – adverb describing *how* it's being done.  
Unworthily/Irreverently: Defined by context (i.e., what the Corinthians were doing – as he is about to explain)
  - (v. 28) Examine (test, prove – **1 Thess 5:21**) yourself (**2 Cor 13:5**), then eat the bread and drink the cup. Examine yourself, not others. The LS will be of no benefit to you if you're not prepared to remember Christ's sacrifice.
  - (v. 29) Taking the LS unworthily will bring judgment/condemnation – *because you're not discerning* (judge/scrutinize)...
    - The problem - taking the LS in an irreverent way, with no intention of remembering Christ's sacrifice.
    - "Unworthily" doesn't mean that we can't take the LS if we've sinned once during the week! I've known of members who wouldn't take the LS because they didn't feel "worthy." Repentance is part of "examining yourself" – make right what you've found wrong (repent), then you can remember Christ's death – that it is the reason we have the forgiveness of those sins! How you treat Christ's sacrifice is how you treat forgiveness of sins!
    - This examining & repentance should be part of our preparation to worship*, not ignored *until* taking the LS. You should be in the right frame of mind before *all* acts of worship. Which brings us to the next point.
    - The LS, as important as it is, is *not* more important than the other acts of worship (as I've heard so many say). **Ac 20:7** does say that they came together to break bread, but not *only* to break bread. This particular act of worship is done *only* on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week, whereas other acts (singing, etc.) were (and are) done any day (cf. **Ac 16:25**). But this in no way diminishes their significance. **\*Those who show up only to take of the LS ought not show up at all!** This person has not examined himself, gotten his priorities right, and is not prepared to worship! (This also goes for those who willfully miss Sunday morning worship, thinking they can take the LS Sunday night!)
  - (v. 30) Weak & sick (synonyms)...sleep (dead).  
It seems unlikely that he's talking about some physical punishment from God as a result of not taking the Lord's Supper properly. It must be referring to their being spiritually weak & even spiritually dead. The things they were doing were clear signs of this weakness. Of course, ultimate spiritual death (Hell) will be the final punishment for those who don't repent.
- B. (v. 31-34) The solution to the problem
- (v. 31) **Reproof** - If we judge (same as "discern" in v. 29) ourselves, we won't be judged. The idea includes *correction*. **2 Cor 13:5** – "*examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.*" God doesn't need to deal with those who study His word, judge themselves by it, and then make the necessary corrections. But if *you* don't, in the end God will!
  - (v. 32) **Correction** – when we judge (discern, scrutinize) ourselves (by God's Word), we are chastened (disciplined, taught, corrected) by the Lord (**Heb 12:5-11**). This is good because then we won't be condemned with the world.
  - (v. 33-34) **Application** – When you eat the LS, wait for each other. And don't eat for gluttony or even sustenance! If you're hungry, eat at home! You better not have any thoughts of the LS being a common meal. This is a part of worship! It is a very significant moment, in which we remember Christ's sacrifice for us (without which there could be no hope of eternal life in Heaven).

**APPLICATION & CONCLUSION:** In making application, I've never seen any congregation treat the LS as a common meal. But the problem Paul described with this (i.e., not examining oneself & discerning the Lord's body) can be just as big a problem today.

- Some members show up solely for the Lord's Supper, and disregard the rest of worship. "I'd like to at least take the Lord's Supper!" That's great, but why not also, "I'd like to sing praises" or "I'd like to hear the wonderful sermon" or "I'd like to give"?
- Sometimes we're just thinking about other things during the Lord's Supper. Paul is speaking to us in these verses too. Prepare yourself in advance. Examine yourself (judge yourself–v.30), repent of any sins, then come to worship, ready to remember Christ's death for you.