

The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Paul praised the Corinthian church for keeping the ordinances that he delivered unto them (v. 1).

There are two “ordinances” we observe as a church: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These two ordinances taken together picture the Gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). The Lord’s Supper shows forth Christ’s death (1 Cor. 11:26). Baptism pictures Christ’s burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:4— “...we are **buried** with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was **raised up** from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”).

In a few minutes we will be observing the Lord’s Supper. As we do, I want to make sure we understand the significance of this ordinance.

Too often, communion is nothing more than a meaningless tradition or ritual. It has lost it’s meaning and become a formality.

I. The ASSEMBLING of the church (vs. 17-20— “...come together...”). Cf. Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7-8

➡ The very name “*the Lord’s supper*,” reminds us that He is the Host at His table. He is be the object of our attention and the center of our devotion. As Jesus said, “... *this do in remembrance of Me.*”

II. The ABUSES to be corrected (vs. 21-22).

➡ While Paul praised the Corinthians for keeping the ordinances, he rebuked them for abuses that were occurring at the Lord’s Table.

Paul spent eighteen months in Corinth teaching the Corinthian believers daily. But in the course of the five years he had been gone, the Lord's Supper degenerated into a drunken party.

A. ABUSE #1 — A splintered congregation (v. 18). Outward unity (v. 20); inward strife. Physical unity doesn't mean there is spiritual unity (v. 20).

➡ “*I partly believe it*” (v. 18). Paul was reluctant to believe all the report he had heard. Church people would be wise to follow

Paul's example and be hesitant to believe the rumors and gossip which they hear at church.

B. ABUSE #2 — A sectarian presence / doctrinal heresies (v. 19).

C. ABUSE #3 — A self-indulgent spirit (vs. 20-22).

Prior to Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper with His disciples they enjoyed the Passover meal together (John 13:1-2). After the meal, Judas left to betray the Lord. Then Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (John 13:21-30 cf. Mt. 26:20-30). The passover feast and the Lord's Supper were two separate events.

The Corinthian church was incorporating the Lord's supper as part of their love feasts. To make a present day application, it would be like a church observing the Lord's Table at a pot-luck meal, banquet, or church picnic.

1. The Lord's Supper isn't a place to satisfy one's physical hunger (v. 21).
2. Meals were to be kept distinct and not confused with the Lord's Supper. If you are hungry, eat at home, not at the Lord's Table (v. 34).

III. The **APPRECIATION of the custom** (vs. 23-26).

➡ It is a time to "give thanks" (v. 24). When you lift the cup and partake of the bread, you are saying, "Thank You, Lord, for suffering in Your body in my place, and shedding Your blood for my sins."

A. The implication of Christ's RESURRECTION (v. 23). How could Paul receive a revelation from the Lord if He were dead and buried?

➡ A living Lord communes with us at His table.

B. The ingredients we RECEIVE— They were *not* samples of the body and blood of Christ. The first Lord's Supper makes that clear. Christ was there in bodily form but no one ate His body or drank His blood. It was all symbolic.

1. His cleansing blood is represented in the cup (unfermented fruit of the vine)—v. 29

2. His crucified body is represented by the broken bread. A body that was without sin... a body underserving of such severe punishment... and yet it was broken for you, and I!
- C. The instruction to REMEMBER— The Lord's supper is a string around our spiritual finger to remind us!
1. In many churches, communion is a somber, sad experience. This is due to the emphasis placed upon the process of Jesus' death rather than on the purpose for His death.
 2. Jesus' intent for us is not that we dwell on His pain, but be blessed by our gain—that because of the finished work at Calvary, we are gloriously and totally freed from the power and penalty of sin. GLORY!
- D. The inspiration that is REASSURING— Jesus is coming again. I raise the cup to His coming! I eat the bread in faith that I will see Him face to face. We can only be prepared for His second coming if we understand what He did in His first coming.

IV. The **ADMONITION of chastening** (vs. 27-32).

➡ Self-examination.

- A. The INDIVIDUALITY of the examining (v. 28).
- ➡ Self examination/judgment is essential before partaking of the Lord's Supper (cf. v. 31; 2 Cor. 13:5). We are not judge others, but ourself!
- B. The INTENTION of the examining (vs. 27, 29)
1. "*Unworthily*." This is not the worthiness of the individual but the proper conduct of how one participates in the Lord's supper. The word "*unworthily*" is an adverb amplifying conduct, not an adjective amplifying character. If personal worthiness was a qualification for partaking of the Lord's supper, no one would be able to partake of it.
 2. Proper discernment (v. 29). "*...not discerning the Lord's body*," is a reference to Christ's spiritual body, the church, not His physical body (10:16-17; 12:13, 27). When a Christian partakes of the Lord's Supper, he is to discern his rela-

tionship in the body of Christ—Is he “right” with his brothers and sisters in Christ.

➡ It would be “unworthy” for a person to partake of the Lord's Supper if:

- He was not part of the Lord's body;
- He had ought against someone in the Lord's body;
- He has not “judged” any sin in His life.

3. Dangerous consequences of partaking "unworthily" (v. 27, 28). To partake of the Lord's Supper "*unworthily*" is to incur the guilt of Christ's death.

“Damnation” = To bring under judgment. There are two types of damnation (eternal; temporal). It is possible for a Christian to be temporally "damned" (Rom. 13:2; 14:22-23; 1 Tim. 5:11-12).

➡ The chastening of the Lord (vs. 30-32). Partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily produces three kinds of Christians (v. 30):

- WEAK Christians;
- SICKLY Christians;
- DEAD Christians. Some of the Corinthians were so unresponsive to dealing with their own sins, God had to remove them from the earth (3:17; 5:3-5 cf. 1 John 5:16).

➡ Either judge your own sin, or God will judge it by chastening you (Heb. 12:5-13; Rev. 3:19).

SUMMATION: Before we partake of the Lord's supper, would you examine yourselves...

- Have you trusted the Lord Jesus as your Lord and Savior?
- Is there any unjudged sin in your life?
- Are you right with your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- Are you prepared for His second coming?