

1 Cor 11:28 Self Examination and the Lord's Supper (07-07-2019)

What does it mean to examine yourself in the context of the Lord's Supper? Here are three truths.

1. **Remember the Real Meaning of the Supper.** When we take the Lord's Supper and examine ourselves, we first remember the real meaning of the bread and the wine. I get this from v. 29. The ESV says, "**For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.**" In some way, Paul is saying, "discern the body of Christ" (context with v. 27). In other words, understand what it means to take the Lord's Supper. The bread you are eating and the wine you are drinking has a very clear meaning. The bread and the wine represent the body and the blood of Christ and what he did on the cross. He died. He laid down his life. We know the Corinthians were guilty of not remembering the true meaning of the supper because the way they were acting. The Lord's Supper (for some of them) had become a formality.

Let me try and explain this further. When early Christians came together to meet they shared a meal, often called a "love feast." It was much like our "potluck" suppers. Everybody would come and bring all kinds of food. But what is different about what we do today and what they did was this: They incorporated or added the Lord's Supper into their meeting time with this meal. Towards the end of the meal, they would repeat the words of Jesus. "***This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me. This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. When you eat it, remember me.***"

But, there was great error as they "discerned the body." Look at vv. 17-18, "**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. 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. .**" Then in vv. 20-22 he says, "**When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. 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!**"

You see, there were both rich and poor in that congregation. Probably, there were more poor than rich. And those who brought the food and the drink should have been sharing with their brothers and sisters who had none. Maybe they were coming early and eating their own food with nothing left for the poor. There was certainly class discrimination. There may have also been racial discrimination. Instead of taking all the food that was brought and giving equally to all who were present, cliques were formed, and relatives, friends, those of one clique ate together, probably at private tables, the rich and prosperous separated from the poor, letting those who could bring little or nothing sit by themselves. It certainly wasn't a love feast, much less the Lord's Supper. In fact, Paul says that what they were doing wasn't even the Lord's Supper. Imagine that! To think you were taking the Lord's Supper, but instead, Paul says in vv. 29-30, "**some were eating and drinking judgment upon themselves, and some were weak and ill and some had even died.**"

At this point it is almost as if Paul is so angry at what was happening that he is at a loss of words. "*Can you not discern the meaning of the supper and what Christ did for you!? What you are doing is not CHRISTIAN. What you are doing is a mockery. In fact it is no communion at all! You have the ceremony, but not the reality! You're just eating some bread and drinking some wine. You have forgotten to differentiate between the physical meal and its spiritual meaning. Do you not remember what Christ did for you?!*" Really, the meal had lost its meaning. And this was evident because of the way they were acting. I imagine Paul as saying, "*You may be breaking some bread, passing the cup, and repeating some words of Jesus, but what you are doing has nothing to do with Christ. Therefore, remember Christ! Remember what he did. Remember his death and what it accomplished.*" AND ACT ACCORDINGLY!

Therefore, today, as we take the Lord's Supper. We must remember the meaning! It can never become a formality! If so, we will do essentially the same thing the Corinthians were doing. We must remember what the Son of God did,

especially in his death on the cross. And when we do this properly, we will not be guilty of what was happening in the Corinthian Church.

2. Examine YOURSELF. I get this directly from the command of Paul in v. 28 which says, “**Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.**”

I think it is pretty simple. But, there may be some confusion over what Paul means when he says examine yourself. I think many people are told to examine themselves before taking the Lord’s Supper, and they wonder, “*Have I confessed all my sins? Have I examined myself properly?*” And, we must admit, these are some pretty serious words coming from Paul. Look in v. 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 (1Co 11:27 ESV).**” Then in vv. 29-30 he also says, “**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.**”

Much of the confusion has to do with the word “worthy.” But I must ask: “*Who IS worthy?*” **For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.** That God would speak and allow any of us in this room to hear is absolutely amazing! I feel like the Apostle John when, in his vision he saw the throne room of God. Listen to his words, “**Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.**”² **And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?”**³ **And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,**⁴ **and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.”** Then, he heard these words: “**Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals**” (Rev. 5:1-5)

Let me take a moment so say, If you are in Christ today, Christ is worthy! The benefits of his death have been given to you! “**Therefore, there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.**” If you believe on him, if you have received him, Christ became a curse for you. He was crushed by God on the cross. He took ALL the wrath that your sins deserved upon himself that you would not have to endure what most of the world today will endure for eternity. This is the Lord’s Supper which says, “**This is my body which is for you! Take and eat!**”

So, in this passage Paul is not saying that we must in some way become worthy in our value to God in order to take the Lord’s Supper. Christ is worthy! And IN HIM, we are worthy. Remember the context. The Corinthians were sinning by not making a difference, between the supper and its meaning. They were not following the example of Christ in the ways they were acting to one another. The supper had become a formality. Instead of a supper of love in remembering the death of Christ, it had become a supper of judgment. They were “**guilty concerning the body and the blood of the Lord**” (v. 27). And God was judging in the form of discipline and chastisement. “**Some were weak, some were ill, some had even died.**” But, in v. 31 we read: “**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.**” I believe he was saying, “You judge yourselves. Look at your lives. Remember the meaning of the supper.” In a way, he was saying, “*humble yourselves or God will. For God disciplines those he loves.*”

So, to examine ourselves as we take the Lord’s Supper does not mean that we confess our sins in order to make us worthy. To examine ourselves doesn’t mean that we must become perfect. Christ is perfect! Because of his blood, we daily feast at God’s heavenly table. In the end what does it mean to examine yourself before taking the Lord’s Supper? The Heidelberg Catechism says it well as it answers the question: “*Who may be admitted to the Communion table?*” *Answer: “Those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins, but who nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their continuing weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life. Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however, eat and drink judgment on themselves.*” Repentance! Yes, confess your specific sins. But we know we can’t confess them all! But our hearts are repentant, trusting in the finished work of Christ. And, as we examine ourselves, we really and truly don’t want to sin and do the things we are confessing.

As far as “worthiness” is concerned, I think it goes back to truth #1. The motive of our hearts and the way in which we treat one another shows the worth of the gospel. It is similar to what Paul says to the Philippians in 1:27: **“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ . . .”** Christ is WORTHY! We are not. But, our lives show the worth of the gospel. The way we take the supper shows the worth of gospel, particularly the death of Christ.

3. Love the Body of Christ. Look at v. 33 **“Wait for one another.”** Consider one another. Consider those sitting next to you in “this” body of Christ. And do this in light of what Christ has done for us. The best explanation of what Paul means is found in Philippians 2:1-7. Listen to his instructions: **“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men”** (Phil. 2:1-7).

You see, one of the evidences that we are in Christ is this: We love one another. We consider one another.

So, how can we examine ourselves this morning? There is much I could say; and I am SURE I have missed much in this passage, but here a few things to consider as prepare to take the Lord’s Supper.

1. As a non-Christian. If you are not a Christian, you have no business taking the Lord’s Supper. There are no benefits for you.

2. As an individual Christian. If you are in Christ this morning, there is nothing that should keep you from coming and taking the Lord’s Supper. OF COURSE examine yourself in all areas. This is part of our **“testing to see we are in the faith.”** This is part of your **“working out our salvation with fear and trembling.”** But, you can rest assured, that if you come with a repentant heart, trusting in Christ, you are not taking unworthily.

3. As a Church. We must consider one another. If we should see that we are behaving in the way the Corinthian Church behaved, I believe we must get things in order and, by God’s grace, make things right. One of the things that will help us is to read our church covenant together; which is what we will do at this time.