

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 23RD - 24TH, 2022 // BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

NOT FOR THE BETTER, BUT FOR THE WORSE (1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-19)

Paul is writing to this church about the issue of **disorder within their worship gatherings**.

- Chapter 11 deals with **two major issues** regarding this question.
- Vs. 2-16 address the issues regarding the roles of men and women in a **Christian worship service (order, authority, accountability, and appropriate attire/practices)**.
- Vs. 17-34 address the dysfunction happening during the **"Love Feasts"** & the **Lord's Supper**.

In the early church, **Christians would celebrate the Lord's Supper** with great banquets they called, "Love Feasts" (1st century potlucks).

- These "love feasts" were to be times of **fellowship, community, and friendship** and would climax in observance of the Lord's Supper.
- But in the city of Corinth, **these fellowship dinners were doing more harm than good** (vs. 17) - there was some serious dysfunction.
- 1. **Cliques, Divisions, and Factions** (vs. 18-19, 21). Because of a lack of unity, these church gatherings consisted of folks **splitting up into cliques** rather than fellowshiping with the whole church family.
- 2. **Lack of Consideration for Others** (vs. 20-22). Those who were rich brought a great deal of food for themselves, while the poorer members went hungry.
- 3. **Excess & Overindulgence** (vs. 21). Some members were so **selfish and inconsiderate that they were even getting drunk** at the church potluck!

THE ROOT CAUSE - SELFISHNESS & DIVISION (VS. 18)

We tend to **make light of church drama and petty selfishness**, as if it's simply an inevitable part of doing church.

- But for Paul, this is **deep-rooted spiritual** issue.
- Division, factions, and **selfish behavior in church reveal hearts of people** who are still very much devoted to making themselves the practical god over their own lives.

Paul sees these **problems of selfishness** and disunity as so serious, that he makes a quite shocking statement - "God must be allowing these factions to exist in order to reveal those who were true believers within this church" (vs. 19).

- In other words, there were some within this church who were **Christian by name** only, but their true identity was being revealed by their behavior.

Over time, those who **belong to Christ will be made evident by their lifestyle**, not their words.

- Lifestyles that are marked by **selfishness, lack of consideration for others, and overindulgence** are indicators of hearts that haven't fully surrendered to Jesus as king.
- When it comes to Church - are you looking for what you can **"get out of it,"** or what you can **"give to it"?**

THE LORD'S SUPPER (1 CORINTHIANS 11:20-26)

The behavior of this church was so **dysfunctional and selfish**, Paul says that when they came together to worship and eat, it's not the **"Lord's Supper"** that they were celebrating (vs. 20).

- Their selfish conduct **disgraced and devalued the One in whose name they had gathered** to worship.
- In this culture, at banquets it was expected that the **upper class would receive more and better food than the lower class**.

It seems like this cultural practice carried over into these **Christian love feasts**, as some people had plenty to eat and drank so much wine they got drunk, while others went hungry (vs. 21b).

- Paul is **understandably frustrated** by this!
- These Christian dinners should have been **opportunities for fellowship** and encouragement, but these believers were just using it as a time of indulgence and humiliation.

So, Paul says, "Let the rich eat at home if they're hungry - when you **embarrass and humiliate** believers who have less than you, **you're actually despising the church!**" (vs. 22)

- The church consists of people - **it's not a building or a service**.
- So, when we **hurt, embarrass, humiliate, belittle, or discriminate** against others within the church, we're **despising the very body of Christ** (1 Corinthians 12:27).

What follows is Paul's instruction on how believers are to **observe the Lord's Supper in a way that honors God, honors others**, and helps us remember what our worship is to be about (vs. 23-26).

- It's so easy to **make church all about us!**
- It's so easy to **make church, church events**, or worship practices simply **ceremonies to endure** instead of spiritual practices to engage in.

The sacrament of communion, or the **"Lord's Supper,"** or the Eucharist is a deeply meaningful, symbolic act of worship given to us as Christians that **points entirely to Jesus**.

- It actually originates from the Passover meal that **Jewish families observe each year** to remember God's deliverance from Egypt.
- Every element of that meal is **deeply symbolic and carries multiple layers** of meaning.

In the gospels, Jesus celebrated Passover with His disciples, and He redefined the elements in light of His **upcoming sacrifice**.

- The broken, unleavened Passover bread is **His body of which they must eat** (John 6:53), and the cup of wine is His blood that they must drink (Matthew 26:26-28).
- Covenants in the OT were often established by blood, and **this new covenant is no different**.

But this time **the blood that establishes the new covenant** is the blood of Jesus.

- Just like the Passover lamb **whose blood marked the doorposts of the houses so the angel of death** would "pass over" the Israelites, so now Jesus, the "Lamb of God," will mark His people with **His blood so they'll never taste death**.

- The new covenant meant that **it would no longer be the blood of animals** that would cover their sins...
- It would be **the blood of the Messiah King Himself that would seal** this new covenant between God and His people (Hebrews 7-10).
- Humanity would now have **forgiveness of sins and access to God** because of the sacrifice of Messiah in our place!
- Our response is to **receive this gift God has offered us and to allow His presence** inside of us to change and transform us (**Union with Christ**).

REMEMBER THE SIGNIFICANCE (VS. 23-26)

The bread we take symbolizes **the broken body of Jesus**, and the wine symbolizes the blood of Jesus.

- As often as we take **the bread and wine**, we're to do it in, "remembrance" of Jesus' sacrifice.
- If it becomes a ritual that we take without truly practicing "remembrance," **we're completely missing the point**.

What are we to remember?

- Remember **Jesus Himself** - His love, protection, provision, and ongoing grace for us.
- Remember **Jesus's substitutionary sacrifice** for us (vs. 23-25).
- Remember **His forgiveness** through the new covenant (vs. 25b).
- Remember that Jesus is coming again (vs. 26).

EXAMINE YOURSELF (1 CORINTHIANS 11:27-34)

When Jesus was crucified, **the guilty parties responsible for nailing Him to the cross stood by indifferent, laughing and pursuing pleasure** as He bled to death (John 19:23-24).

- This is what we do when we **disrespect communion through taking it carelessly**.
- If we come to the table in an **"unworthy manner"** we will be "guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord" (vs. 27).

Before we observe communion, we must **"examine ourselves"** (vs. 28) - we must take a private mental and spiritual inventory of our lives.

- Am I **truly trusting in Christ** for salvation?
- Is there any **unconfessed or unrepented sin**?
- Am I at odds with any believer or am I holding onto **resentment or unforgiveness** towards anyone?
- Is there anything **I should be doing** that I'm refusing to?

Anyone **who eats and drinks without discerning what they're actually doing** "eat and drinks judgment on himself" (vs. 29).

- Because of the irreverent, sinful, and self-centered manner this church was coming to the Lord's table, **God's divine discipline was taking place**.
- Many of them were **suffering sickness and even death** because of this lack of respect and reverence towards the Lord (vs. 30).

God still **disciplines His children!** (Hebrews 12:6, vs. 32)

- As uncomfortable as it may make us, there is a **biblical category for God** using physical death as a divine consequence of sin (Acts 5:1-11).
- This doesn't mean that when **Christians die or get sick** it's automatically because of their sin.
- God loves us enough to **get our attention if we're behaving in a destructive manner**.

But if we **judge ourselves accurately before we take the Lord's Supper**, we won't have to worry about God's divine judgment (vs. 31).

- So, Paul tells the church in Corinth to make sure that when they gather, **they share with others** (vs. 33), and if they're hungry and tempted to overindulge at the Love Feast to **just eat at home** (vs. 34).
- That way their gatherings won't be to **invoke the divine judgment of God**.

The big idea is that God wants from us **hearts that are fully engaged in the practices** He's given us that point to incredible spiritual realities.

- He wants our **hearts, our attention, and our love** more than our observance of certain rituals.
- God also wants our **hearts to be others-focused**, not self-focused.
- What does it say about **our hearts when we see the worship of God as a wearisome burden** or as an opportunity to gratify our own flesh?

4 BIG CHURCH PROBLEMS (1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34)

- Cliques, Divisions, & Factions (vs. 18-19, 21)
- Lack of Consideration for Others (vs. 20-22)
- Excess & Overindulgence (vs. 21)
- Careless & Apathetic Worship (vs. 29-30)
- **Have we been guilty of taking part in any of these?**
- **2 Corinthians 5:15**

"...SHOULD NO LONGER LIVE FOR THEMSELVES"

- The great lie is that **happiness and fulfillment** can be found in putting yourself first.
- Selfishness is **slavery - true freedom isn't the ability** to do whatever you want, it's the ability to do what's right.
- Lifestyles that are marked by **selfishness, lack of consideration for others, and overindulgence** are indicators of hearts that haven't fully surrendered to Jesus as king.
- Who are we **living to serve?**

"WE REGARD NO ONE ACCORDING TO THE FLESH..."

- When Jesus changes us, **we start seeing spiritual realities** instead of just physical realities.
- We see other believers as **family members and parts of Jesus's own body!**
- We start seeing **non-believers as people for whom Jesus shed His blood!**
- We stop seeing ourselves as **the center, master, and king over our own lives**.