

# 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

“Discerning The Lord’s Body”

Baptism, and the partaking of communion as represented by the bread and the cup; these are the 2 ordinances that Jesus established for the church. Neither of which save you, both of which bring us up close and personal with the *way* we were saved. Baptism being the initiatory (if you will) aspect of entering in to that identification with Christ, that is, the demonstration outwardly of the transformation of your heart inwardly. **Demonstrating publicly what Christ has done for you personally; as you’re submersed in the water you’re identifying with the death of Christ, and as you’re brought back up out of the water you’re identifying with the resurrection life of Christ that you now walk in, the newness of life that He’s given you.** The bible says, “... *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*” 2 Cor 5:17 So baptism is simply the outward ceremony of that inward reality. Communion being that ongoing (if you will) aspect of our identification with Him and remembrance *of* him, recognizing and realizing His body broken for us, His blood shed for us, and the forgiveness that comes to us through His sacrifice there on the cross.

**Baptism Paul brought up in the 1<sup>st</sup> Ch. You recall that “party” type mentality that was among them, some saying, “I’m of Paul,” other’s saying, “I’m of Apollos,” still others saying, “I’m of Cephas,” and Paul was seeking to point out to them that we’re all of Christ.** That He’s the one who suffered for us, He’s the One who sacrifices His life for us, he said, “*Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*” 1 Cor 1:13 In other words it wasn’t Paul whom they were identifying with in baptism, it was Christ, *His* death, *His* resurrection, *His* saving grace in their lives.

**But there were divisions between them and it was making for problems among them. and It would seem that not only were there divisions with regard to which group they thought was the most spiritual based upon whom they identified with be it Paul, or Peter or whoever, but they also had issues regarding the “haves” and the “have nots.”** The rich and the poor seemed to have their own little cell groups, and apparently not by choice so much on the behalf of the poor. But rather they were segregated by the rich in that the rich were bringing all kinds of food and drink to the love feasts that they would have (we’d call them potlucks or fellowship dinners) and they would prioritize themselves in completely pigging out. **and The poor didn’t have much, therefore by the time the rich had gone through the line, they didn’t get much.** Now you have to remember that there were literally millions of slaves in the Roman empire. **and A large part of the early church was composed of slaves, and for many of them no doubt the only decent meal they could look forward to in the course of a week would be these loves feasts that the church had seemingly once a week as they would gather together.** Yet they were being neglected while the rich were being prioritized. Now this is a problem that James addressed. Remember he said, “...*if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and say to the poor man, ‘You stand there,’ or, ‘Sit here at my footstool,’ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?*” James 2:2-4 He went on to say, “*If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin,*” James 2:8-9

You see Christ breaks down the barriers of social class, ethnic background, and all of those things. There's neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, Barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, we're all one in Christ. But this separation and segregation was poisoning their observance of the Lord's supper.

Because what they would do is that they would come together to fellowship and break bread at these agape feasts and when the feast was over they'd rally together to remember the Lord and His work upon the cross by the breaking of the bread and partaking of the cup of communion. and Paul is going to tell them here that they're all but blaspheming the very nature of what the Lord's supper stands to represent in coming together, separating each other this way, selfishly indulging and then partaking of communion. Because the very nature of the ordinance of communion speaks of the giving of one's self (namely what Christ did) for others. and Yet they're prioritizing themselves and *neglecting* others, and in so doing they're completely disrespecting the reality of what Christ has done to make us one in Him and God doesn't take that lightly. Paul will show them and that His chastening hand is upon them for this very thing.

Now remember the thread that's woven throughout this portion of 1<sup>st</sup> Cor is that of proper order. and Paul will point out to them that they're *way* out of order when it comes to their conduct in their observance of the Lord's supper.

#### Vs17

Remember in Vs 2 Paul gave them praise, he said that they remembered who he was *to* them, and had sought to keep the things he'd shared *with* them. But with the instructions he has to give them now he says, "I don't praise you in this." and He makes a statement that I imagine Paul would make to several churches in our day. He says, "You come together, *not* for the better but for the worse!" **Is it possible to gather together as a congregation and actually leave in a worse state than when you got there? Yes, now we give them props for coming together, something that is sadly neglected by too many Christians today in direct disobedience to Heb 10:25 which plainly states, "...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."** Heb 10:25 and Of course there are other passages that speak to the advantages of the corporate gathering of the body of Christ. But the point here is that at least they were getting together. But unfortunately it was for the worse, and not for the better. **How so, because of these divisions and cliques that were growing between them, doing damage *to* them, festering *among* them and bringing the judgment of God *upon* them as they stood in open defiance to the work that Christ did *for* them and wanted to do *through* them in bringing them together as one. (and We'll see it a little bit later, but the very act of the Lord's supper spoke of unifying the body, yet they were dividing the body.)** Notice

#### Vs18-19

Now I find that sort of interesting. Because we generally think of factions and divisions as nothing but a problem. and In large part they're just that, but what Paul is saying here is that the things which the enemy means to work ruin God can actually take and turn for His glory and our good. Now would God *desire* division in the body, no. But God can take it and make something of blessing and benefit of it.

The short of it is that God can use division as sort of a “sifting” process. and I’m not saying that everyone who leaves Calvary Chapel is an apostate, nor is Paul. But I think it’s fair to say that when issues come up, the way people deal with them and seek to resolve them often demonstrates where they’re at with Christ and how solid their relationship currently is. and Paul is seeking to encourage those who’ve been sinned against to just wait on the Lord and He’ll vindicate them in His time. Ultimately people will recognize who’s in the right, and who’s been in the wrong. God will bear those things out over time and if not ultimately everyone will see on the day we stand before Him. So there’s no need to freak out when someone goes down the road. Yes, it’s always our desire and God’s desire to work reconciliation in a given matter.

But it could simply be that God is shifting things around to carry on a particular work unencumbered by disunity, keeping the body as it were in harmony with Him and His direction for a that work. Now Paul gets into the issue specifically.

### **Vs20-22**

So you understand what Paul is saying. He’s saying, “You may be coming together for *some sort* of supper, but it’s not *the Lord’s* supper you’re coming together to eat.” Why? Because it’s marked by excess on the behalf of some, shameful neglect of others, making some feel embarrassed because they don’t have as much to offer to the gathering. and Paul is saying, “You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!” He’s exasperated, frustrated, infuriated, “What shall I say to you?” Its like, “I can’t even believe we’re having this conversation, what am I supposed to do with you guys? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.” He’s saying that their selfish conduct is disgracing the Lord’s supper. and This is a little foreign to us because in our culture we generally partake of the elements of the Lord’s supper in an atmosphere of dignity. But in their day as I mentioned earlier after they’d enjoyed a common meal they’d basically round the gathering off by remembering the Lord in this way, but they were coming out of the environment of partaking of these wild banquets that were held in the honor of their various pagan gods. So some were even slipping back into that mode, getting drunk in their meal time together when they were supposed to be honoring the Lord. **So you had some people loading up their plates, and by the time it was time for those who were less fortunate to step up to the line (having been placed low on the line of priority) there was nothing left. and Then they tried to round it all off by saying, “Let’s remember the Lord.” and Paul is saying, “Hey there’s nothing godly about your actions at all, they’re down right shameful.”** Because they’re missing the point altogether, they should be spending time blessing one another, edifying and building up one another, not selfishly serving themselves and shaming others. He says, “If you want to serve yourself, you have a home for that.” Today we’d say, “If you know you’re going to loose control in the fellowship buffet, than stop off at burger king on your way and show a little respect for others, so that everyone can enjoy equally the way that God is blessing the body collectively.”

### **Vs23-26**

Now as you know the meal in which Jesus instituted this ordinance was the Passover. That meal (of which you find its origins in Ex Ch 12) that commemorated the deliverance of Israel from the chains and bondage of Egypt. Every man in Israel was to take a lamb of the 1<sup>st</sup> year with out spot or blemish for him and his family on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of a specific month and they were to keep it until the 14<sup>th</sup> day of that same month.

Then it was to be killed at twilight. Some of its blood was to be put on the 2 door posts and some of it on the lintel of the houses where they were eating it. and That night the Lord said that He would pass through the land of Egypt and every house that was found with out the covering of blood, the 1<sup>st</sup> born of man and beast would be struck in that home and they would die. But if He saw the blood He would “Passover” that house and it would be spared from judgment. **and Year after year throughout they’re generations they were to keep that feast to commemorate what the Lord had done, how God had struck Egypt with judgment and had delivered them as by the blood of the Lamb. and What Paul is saying here is that all that was a foreshadowing of the substance that was fulfilled in Christ.** and Jesus took that meal and connected for us the fullness of it’s meaning as demonstrated by the breaking of *His* body, and the shedding of *His* blood as the spotless Lamb of God through who’s death we were delivered from the chains of this world and the bondage of sin.

and There in Vs 23 Paul says, “I’m not making this stuff up, I received this from the Lord.” Now whether he received it by divine revelation or perhaps his long time traveling companion filled him in. That part is irrelevant, the fact is that he is sharing with us is what he received from the Lord.

That the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it. Now there are several things that amaze me about this, Paul is pointing out for us that this took place on the very night that He (that is Jesus) was betrayed. The next day He would suffer the cross for the sin of the world, not only would He be crucified by a foreign power, but He was about to be betrayed *even* by His own, Judas *sold* out, Peter and the rest of the disciples *gave* out, they would *all* forsake Him. What’s my point? That there was plenty on His mind that night. Yet He took bread, (and don’t think of wonder bread, this wasn’t leavened bread, during the Passover there was no leaven present, even in the wine, no fermentation, leaven is a picture of sin in the bible so there was to be no leaven present) this was a flat bread and it had scorched stripes on it from the grill and holes in it from baking it which would obviously point to His stripes and His piercings. **But He took this bread and 1<sup>st</sup> of all He gave thanks. For this simple bread He issued forth a heart of thanksgiving, there was a lot on His mind that night, yet thankful for the Father’s provision for Him and His friends. Then He broke it and began to distribute it saying, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”**

Now what’s happening here, #1 Jesus is *including all* of His disciples, He’s making sure that they’re *all* nurtured (as it were) by this common meal. (Unlike the believers at Corinth were doing) #2 He’s beginning to turn their attention *away* from the sacrificial lamb *on* the table, and show it’s fulfillment in Himself, the sacrificial Lamb of God for the sin of the world right there *at* the table. He says, “This is *My body* which is broken for you.” **and It’s important that we note the word, “Body” as opposed to “Bones.” The scriptures had declared that not a single bone in the Lord’s body would be broken. and You recall that when Jesus was crucified, before the Sabbath came the Jews asked Pilate for the legs of the men on the crosses to be broken so that they wouldn’t be on the cross on the Sabbath. They were asking him to expedite the process. So Pilate said, “Fine.” Well they broke the legs of the thieves on either side of Christ, but when they came to Jesus He was already dead.**

So they didn't break His legs, the soldier thrust his spear in Jesus side and blood and water flowed out (a sign of a ruptured heart), you might say that Jesus literally died of a broken heart. So His bones weren't broken, yet His body was broke open during the scourging. Remember Isaiah wrote, "*He was wounded for our transgression, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.*" Isa 53:5 The body of Christ was broken that we might be made whole, and no doubt that's true spiritually, but I believe that there can be physical healing appropriated to our bodies by faith through the broken body of Jesus Christ I believe that the scriptures will bear witness to that. It doesn't mean that we'll all be physically healed and that we lack faith if we're not. But I believe the reality of it is there and that should the Lord will there can be physical healing in *our* bodies thanks to Jesus being willing to suffer the brokenness of His own.

and Notice He says, "Do this in remembrance of Me." When we partake of the broken bread we're to remember the body of Christ broken for us.

### Vs25

Now there were multiple cups of the fruit of the vine that were partaken of during the Passover meal. The cup that Jesus said *these* words over was known as the "Cup of redemption." and He said, "This cup is the new covenant in *My* blood." Think about the awesome nature of what's going on here, #1 Who but God has the ability to establish a covenant between God and the human race? Yet Jesus says here, "This is a new covenant between God and man and it's sealed in *My* blood." You see the old covenant was based upon man's ability (which was one reason it was a miserable failure) and it was sealed by the blood of the lamb. This new covenant is based upon God's ability (which is why it *can't* fail) and it's sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ We spoke Wednesday evening about the covenant relationship that God has had with man throughout history. and What's this covenant all about? An inward transformation of the heart being cleansed of all sin and entering into a close personal relationship of intimacy with Almighty God through the person of Jesus Christ and So as we partake of the cup we're to remember the redeeming work of Jesus Christ His blood spilled for us, His life poured out, that we might have everlasting life in Him.

### Vs26

You see, not that Passover lamb's death, it was a foreshadowing, but the Lord's death which was the substance. and We note that not only do we look back to the death of Christ at the time we partake of communion. But we also look forward to the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ as well. We proclaim the Lord's death, *till He comes*. We're not only looking back to what He's done, but we're looking forward to what He's going to do when He comes again. and It's awesome to know that we serve a risen Lord and He's gone to prepare a place for us, and having gone to prepare a place He's coming again to receive us unto Himself that where He is, there we may be also.

This word, "Proclaim" it's literally the word for "preach" every time you partake of communion you're preaching a sermon. You're preaching to God, to Satan, and to the watching world around you. The question is what kind of sermon do you preach? Is the sermon of your mind and heart, "I wonder who's going to win the game later?" Or "Man I hope we get out in time to be the lunch rush."

We do well to safeguard the sanctity of the moment in which we partake of the bread and the cup. We should be preaching to God a sermon of rejoicing, praise, humility and thanksgiving, Satan by default hearing the sermon of his defeat and undoing, and to the world around you who watches; of your love for Christ and the acknowledgement of what He's done for you that You might be forgiven of your sin and found acceptable in His sight. **Now I'm not saying that it's nothing but a somber moment, no doubt our hearts should rejoice in the finished work of the cross. But we need to be careful that we not belittle the reality of it in our hearts by our attitudes and accompanying actions that was what the Corinthians were doing.**

Now before we move on let me just say that we don't believe in what's called "Transubstantiation." That's a fancy theological word and it's what Roman Catholicism teaches. and What it means is that since Jesus said, "This is My body, and this is My blood." That the elements of communion become literally the physical body and physical blood of Jesus and we ingest them. **The bible in no way supports that, Jesus also said He was the door, that He was the vine, that He was the bread of life. But we don't believe He becomes a literal vine, or a literal loaf of bread. He's saying that these things represent the work accomplished for you and me through His broken body and His shed blood.** "Symbols?" Yes, but not empty symbols, they're powerful pictures that we enter into and partake of as we Jesus as the fulfillment of God's Passover. and We thank God that as He looks to the door of our heart that He finds the blood of Christ covering us and therefore His judgment passes over us.

#### **Vs27-29**

What's the point here? Proper preparation before participation. He's not saying that as believers we *shouldn't* participate in the Lord's supper, the whole point of Vs 28 is to encourage us to enter into the fullness of it (let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup). But he *is* saying that we need to be mindful of the *manner* in which we partake. **Remember the context, the Corinthians were demonstrating horrible manners towards their bros and sisters in Christ. They weren't being thoughtful towards them, edifying to them, or anything else, they were just thinking of #1.** and Paul is saying, "That's messed up, you're not discerning the Lord's body, you're not being perceptive *of* or sensitive *to* the needs." Remember Jesus looked out for His friends, they weren't being mindful of the body, and Paul is saying, "Your priorities in that are reprehensible."

**You see understand that there's nothing you can do to make yourself worthy of what God has done for you in Christ. If you're not careful you'll read this that way. "If you've sinned with in the last day or 2 and then there's a communion service you better not take it or else you'll be inviting God's judgment."** That's not what Paul is saying, Christ died for sinners, our sin should drive us to repentance before Him, not cause us to run in shame *from* Him. If anyone needs to be in the communion service, it's that guy, that gal. The point here is do you have a heart of repentance? Are you mindful of what the Lord has done *for* you, are you prepared to give Him His way *in* you? Hey, if you want Christ in your life, to rule in your heart, than take it, come before Him, humble yourself, commend the fullness of who you are into His care, His will, His way in your life.

In reality communion has us in what we might call a 4-fold consideration, or contemplation. We look backward to the cross, we look forward to the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ. We look inward for a good heart check, where we're at with the Lord, desiring the fullness of the Lord in our lives. and We look around to the body, are we discerning the Lord's body, are we being sensitive to the needs around us, seeking to serve, bless and benefit the body, or are we self serving, self absorbed, and self consumed.

and Paul tells us here that it's when we don't discern the body (and this may be 2-fold be it being irreverent towards what Christ has done, or insensitive and self serving as opposed to preferring others above ourselves in the body) that God begins to deal with us in a chastening way.

### Vs30-31

Underline that, if we would judge ourselves, be honest with ourselves, scrutinize where we're at and be honest *with* the Lord *about* it, repentant *before* the Lord *concerning* it, then God wouldn't have to chasten our lives. But when we refuse to face the facts God will deal with us. and Paul says, "For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and some even sleep." What's he mean, "Sleep?" He's speaking about a dirt nap, they've died, sometimes believers can sin to the point where God says, "That's it, I'm going to go ahead and bring them home before things get any worse." Now that doesn't mean that every untimely death is God's judgment. Nor does it mean that every time you get sick God is judging you. But God does at times discipline the body in this way, and when he speaks of "judgment" here, it's not a reference to *eternal* judgment, but rather *corrective* judgment. God's not looking to condemn you in Christ, but He does seek to correct you, work repentance in you. Notice.

### Vs32-34

Whom the Lord loves, He chastens. Now I don't know about you but I kinda wish I knew what the rest was that Paul was so flabbergasted by that he didn't even have the heart to bring it up. But he just says, "Look, this much you need to know right now, the rest I'll deal with when I get there.

But I think that it's fair for us to receive the same admonition from the Lord. There's so much out of order with the world today. Even in the body of Christ, in our individual lives, in our families, things that are just out of whack because sin is still present in the world. The Lord would say to us, "Walk in obedience to My Word, and the rest I will set in order when I come." Jesus is coming again, and blessed will be that servant whom his Master finds faithful in these days of small things. Oh how we long to hear, "You've been faithful over a few things I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

and If you're not prepared to enter into the joy of your Lord, you've never given your life to Christ, as we prepare our hearts for communion even now I just want to invite you to consider Jesus Christ His broken body, and His shed blood. He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He took our pain, that we might know His peace, He took our sin, that we might know His salvation, He was poured out unto death, that we might have everlasting life.

Why fight it? Just open your heart and receive His forgiveness, that clean slate and new life that He offers to all who will but believe in Him. The bible is clear that God has so loved you, that He gave His only begotten Son for you, so that if you would just believe upon Him, you'll never perish but have everlasting life.

Prayer Points:

Lord as we prepare our hearts to partake of Your table we humble ourselves before You. and We offer thanksgiving, the adoration and worship of our hearts *to* You. Lord we remember Your death, and look forward to Your return, God may you find us prepared to greet You that we not be ashamed before You at Your appearing. Give us that sense of discernment, a sensitivity to Your body; and Lord may You be truly magnified among us and glorified through us, teach us to be a blessing and not a burden to Your body, help us to grow and mature. and Lord help us that as we partake of the bread and the cup, that we do so in manner befitting to You, for the glory of Your name.