1 Corinthians 11 (Part 2): 17-34 • Do This in Remembrance

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

We covered the first part of chapter 11 last week, so we're going to be picking it up in verse 17 through the end of the chapter. Go ahead and follow along as I read, and then we'll get into it and unpack these verses.

"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. [18] 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, [19] for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. [20] When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. [21] For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. [22] 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.

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." [26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

[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. [28] Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29] 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. [31] 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.

[33] So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— [34] if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it

will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come." (ESV)

Stop there. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, open our hearts. We invite Your Holy Spirit to reveal Christ, to speak to us about this passage, and to talk to us about what it means so that we can apply it in our lives. Lord, that's the goal here: to take the Word, not just hear it, but apply it.

We ask, Lord, that You would be the strength of our lives to accomplish that. Do this work, Lord, in us. We ask in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

I can imagine that this was somewhat of a challenging letter for Paul to write because it's not fun bringing corrections all the time. You just always feel like the big bad guy.

I remember when I was raising my kids. One of my sons—I won't say which one, but one of them went through that really obnoxious stage that boys do. You guys who have raised boys know. It usually starts around 7 or 8 years old and goes till about 14. And they're just everything they do is obnoxious. They're just always doing really embarrassing things like, hey, Dad, listen to this, and I can make this noise, and teasing their sisters until they cry.

I felt like, while I was raising my son during that time, all I ever said to him was, don't do that. That was the extent of our relationship. It was just, knock that off, please. And I even, at one point, got so distressed I went to Sue and I said, this is terrible! My total relationship with my son is all corrective. All I ever say to him is just, knock that off. It's just not fun.

And yet, this is what the general gist of this letter is. And I'm sure it was difficult for the Corinthians as well to read it. I mean, look at some of the things he says. He starts off in verse 17 by saying, in the following things that I'm going to be bringing up here, I actually don't have anything good to say. He tells them here that when they come together, it's, they don't do any good. In fact, they do harm. That wouldn't be a fun thing to hear about your church.

I mean, imagine, it's a very sad thing to think that somebody could go to church and then leave and be worse off than when they'd gotten there. You know what I mean? I mean, to walk out of church going, wow, I was in a pretty good mood when I came, and now I'm like totally bummed, or something, or discouraged. Or something like that, but to be worse off after church? That's what Paul is

saying to them. And it particularly related to how the Corinthians were observing the issues of the Lord's Supper.

Now, as we talk about the Lord's Supper and how they did the Lord's Supper, I need to give you a little background because it was very different from the way we do it. Our methodology in observing the Lord's Supper is quite different from the early church. They connected it with actually a potluck. And they didn't call it a potluck. They called it an agape feast. And the word agape just means love. It was there, it was a love feast.

And it was just a big meal that functioned essentially like a potluck. People would bring food to share, and after the meal, or at the very tail end of the meal, they would then take some bread and they would take wine, and they would go through the observance of the Lord's Supper. But they would — the Love Feast meant communion, and to say communion or the Lord's Supper meant the Love Feast. It was all considered part of the same thing.

And here's the problem: as you can see, as Paul's writing this section to them, they, instead of sharing their food with one another for this potluck that they're doing, some of those folks who were of some means would go ahead and just start eating in their little group instead of sharing the food with others. And there was this awkward sort of a thing where folks who didn't have anything to share (and keep in mind, in the early church, there was great poverty, and many of the people who attended those early church were actually slaves).

That's why Paul actually gives direction in books like Ephesians and others about how slaves should respond to their masters and how masters should respond to their slaves, because in some cases they were both attending church together. And talk about awkward! But you've got some people who don't have anything to share, and you got other people who have an abundance, and Paul says the people who had an abundance were just going ahead and eating and they weren't caring about the other people. So you have this classic dividing of the body into the haves and the have nots.

And he says in verse 18, if you'll look with me in your Bible there. He says, *"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, [19] for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized."* And he uses two words here: divisions and factions. And he's going to apply that in a moment to their observance of the Lord's Supper.

But, by the way, don't look for something different in those two words. They mean the same thing: divisions and factions. And we're not talking about church splits here, okay? Some of you have been involved in a church split, and they're horrible. That's a situation that comes to such a head that two or more groups within the church decide to part ways, and some go with one leader and some with another. And it's a terrible sort of thing.

Paul isn't talking about that. He's talking about one body there in Corinth, but still, there are divisions among them. And what that means is people of like interests and similar social standings were connecting with one another in such a way that they would withdraw from the others and only associate with people in their own group, okay.

Now, let me stop here for a moment to just acknowledge that fundamentally, there's nothing wrong with connecting with people in church who are of like interests and that sort of thing. I mean, that's normal and it's natural. You get to know people, you find out that there's other people who are in the same position of life that you're in. You, there's other couples here that are just beginning to raise their children. And if you're a young parent with small kids, you see them and you gravitate toward them.

And then you got other people who've got teenagers. And so you connect with those parents because you have something in common. There's all kinds of things that we have in common. Sometimes they can even be pleasure related. You know, these people are really into camping, and that's, we love that as a family. And so, we connect with them and technically, there's nothing wrong with that, okay? Let's not get weird about this.

What Paul is addressing in the Corinthian church is a focus on those sorts of like interests that is so extreme and so fixated for these people that now they are no longer connecting with other people in the body of Christ. And that, by the way, is the definition of a clique. If you look it up in the dictionary, a clique means a closed group; a closed group. You got people who have like interests and so forth, but the group is closed. It's not open for other people to connect in that.

And when that happens, the body of Christ becomes something other than what it was intended to be, which is an open-hearted, open-handed community of faith, where new people or people of different interests are embraced and welcomed and encouraged.

I was chatting with a couple, just a couple of weeks ago, who do a lot of traveling, and they were sharing with me how they had gone to a church. They pop into a lot of churches, sometimes one or only two times while they're in an area and then move on. But they were telling me how they went to this church, and the church, the fellowship had... they had a coffee time. I don't know if it was before or after the service.

But they all went into this little fellowship room, and there was coffee served for everybody. So, they went in with everybody else. And they're standing around in this room having coffee, and they said, no one, no one said good morning or anything. They just kept to their little groups, talking among themselves and that sort of thing. And these guys are just standing there with their cup of coffee, together, and nobody is saying anything, which is really awkward. Because you don't know anybody, and you know when you're the... when you're the odd man out, that's hard, isn't it?

How many of you guys, you don't need to raise your hand or anything like that, but I'm sure there's a good number of you who probably find it really hard to go to a new church. I do. That's why I started pastoring. I just never have to go to a new church. I hate it. It's really awkward because you're brand new and nobody, you don't know anyone. And if they decide not to be friendly that day, you're just like, whatever. And you come, you sit, you go through the thing, and then you leave. And it's like, wow, that was great.

And I know there's a lot of dynamics that play into it. In 25 years, we've—Sue and I have had people say to us, this is the friendliest church I've ever come to. And on the same Sunday, we've had people say, this is the most unfriendly church I've ever been to, on the same week! And I'm like, okay, people are weird, right? Or something. But there's a dynamic that is going on that sometimes goes beyond us.

But as the body of Christ, I think all of us, we want to have our fellowship be a place that's warm and friendly and welcoming, and Paul's talking here, and he's going to get into this as it relates to the Lord's Supper in just a moment. But he's talking about something that's important for us to hear, and that is that we need to be an open-hearted, open-armed community of people so that when folks come in from the outside and they're doing that really hard thing of coming to a new church, that we're there to welcome them and we're there to say, hey, we're really glad you're here.

And I know some of you find that really difficult because you're introverts, and you know what? I'm an introvert. I find it very difficult to meet new people.

And you might be thinking, well, that's stupid, Paul, you're not an introvert. You're up talking in front of people. Introvert isn't the same thing as shy. It just means that confronting or talking to new people and getting to know people, it's just hard for you.

And some of you guys, you're extroverts, and you're just like, it charges your battery to talk to new people. You guys need to be greeters; you need to be out front and smiling and talking, and hopefully we've got some of you plugged into those roles. But overall, we just need to get out of our comfort zone, even though it's a natural gravitational pull for us to connect with people of like interests and so forth and people we feel comfortable with. We've got to just move beyond that, so that there aren't any closed groups in the church. Have we been guilty of having closed groups? Oh yeah, oh yeah, sure. Guilty as charged, but we need to move beyond it. And this is a reminder for us to do that.

Now he goes on here in verse 20, and he's going to connect this closed sort of a mentality in the fellowship to communion. And he says in verse 20, *"When you come together* (he says)*, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. [21] For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal.* (And) *one goes hungry, another gets drunk."* Now, he starts off by saying, when you guys come together to have communion, it's not communion.

Now, they could have taken issue with that and said, well now, wait just a minute. You weren't here. Of course we're having communion. We had the bread, we had the cup, we were doing it. We said the stuff, sure we're having communion. Paul says no, it actually isn't the Lord's Supper and I'll tell you why. Because the behavior and the attitude of your heart is so contrary to the message of communion, to the heart of communion, that what you are doing at that time isn't even communion.

So he says in verse 22, he says, *"...*(don't you guys) *have houses to eat and drink in?*(He says, and then he asks this question). *Or do you* (actually) *despise the church* (which is the body of Christ)*..."* Because that's what was going on, people. There was— their attitude was so bad. They literally were despising the body of Christ. And they were humiliating people who showed up for church and had nothing to offer.

And instead of welcoming him into their group and say, hey, you guys, we're really glad you're here, recognizing, no, you don't have to say, I see that you don't have anything to share. You just say, hey, come sit with us. Come on over here. Let's get to know each other. Yeah, we're not part of the same social standing, perhaps in life or whatever. But you know what? We're the body of

Christ, and together in Christ, we are brothers and sisters. So here let's, come on, come sit with us, sort of a thing.

And he asks, here at the end of verse 22, what am I going to say? Am I actually going to pat you on the back for this kind of behavior? Absolutely not. He says, I'm not going to do that. And like I said, at the end of their feast, their potluck, if you will, they would take some of the bread and they take some of the wine and they would go through and reenact the Lord's Supper and in somewhat of the same way that we do today. But Paul is telling them when your heart is so disconnected from your brothers and sisters in Christ and how they feel, where they're at in life and you're so closed off from them, you can't have the Lord's Supper and have that attitude. It's impossible.

What you're having is not the Lord's Supper. Even though you're going through the outward motions of it, when you become, when we, let's just say it the way it is: when we become so self-focused in our own little groups, there is no way that we can really truly remember what Jesus did on the cross, which is what we're supposed to be doing, right, during communion. He says there's no way you can do that when your heart and your behavior are so deplorable and contrary to what communion is all about.

These comments by the Apostle Paul remind us of something that it's always good to remember, and that is just how God feels about what we're doing: mindless, purposeless religious exercise, which I dare say at some time in our lives, we have all participated in some way. Things can so easily become perfunctory, and it's just like we just go through the motions. I mean, it happened to Israel. God had to call Israel on the carpet through the prophets on several occasions because they were just going through the motions.

Sure, they were doing everything they've been told to do. They were sacrificing; they were offering incense; they were doing, coming with their animals and slaughtering them and blood on the altar and da, da, da, and all the whole Mosaic trip. They were going through it; they were doing it. And yet God was saying, stop it. Stop it. Just stop. It doesn't mean anything to you. It's just empty, religious nonsense. And we've all been there.

God specifically spoke through the prophet Isaiah in this particular way. Let me show you this.

Isaiah 1:12-17 (ESV)

When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my court? Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure inquiry and solemn assembly.

He says, *"When you come to appear before me,* (so) *who* (exactly) *has required of you this trampling of my court?* (He says), *bring no more vain offerings;*(the word vain means empty, meaningless, he says) *incense is an abomination to me.* (Now, people, they've been told to burn incense and yet He says it's an abomination.) *New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure inquiry and solemn assembly,* (he says)*."*

He goes on to say,

Isaiah 1:12-17 (ESV)

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

Isaiah 1:12-17 (ESV)

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

What is God saying here to the nation of Israel? He's saying, stop coming before me with all of this meaningless religious observance because you're missing the point. God doesn't want us putting in our time to fulfill some level of religious obligation. I know all about that because I was raised in such a way.

I mean, as a kid, I went to church because it was our religious obligation, and I hated every minute of it. And I knew when I turned 18, that was it for me. Boy, as soon as I was out from under my parents' home, I didn't darken the door of a church because it was meaningless. It was empty. And I became very... I hated the taste of religion in my mouth because there was nothing to it.

God doesn't want us to fulfill mere religious obligation; He wants our hearts. He wants our hearts! He wants our hearts to be His. This comes up in the subject of giving all the time. People, one of the most common questions people ask me related to the Bible, is about giving. They're very confused overall, people, about tithing and giving and stuff like that.

And they're like, pastor Paul, I don't understand, should we tithe? Are we still supposed to do 10 percent like they did in the Old Testament? Or what exactly? And how much am I supposed to give? And I, da, da, da. And I can tell by the question, it's just an obligation, that there's really no desire. There's no desire! There's no...

Here's what Paul said, God wants a cheerful giver. And that is, that's pretty much the essence of how you're to be guided in the New Testament understanding of giving. Do it cheerfully. If you're not doing it cheerfully, then it's just obligatory. Don't do it. That's what God’s Word says. Just keep it. It's not doing any good, it's not doing you any good, so just keep it.

Be a cheerful giver. The people who are cheerful givers, they never ask. They just do it. And they're like, yippee, yeah, sort of thing. And the people who are not cheerful about it, they're like, what am I supposed to do? Because it's an obligation. God doesn't want your obligatory religious observances and actions. He wants your heart.

Well, pastor Paul, how much of what I have belongs to God? All of it. How much am I supposed to give? Whatever you can be cheerful giving. Otherwise, don't do it. Wow. God wants my heart. It's not a legalistic requirement. He wants my heart.

That's what he's saying to the nation of Israel: Stop it. Stop bringing all this stuff. I want your hearts. I want you to desire what I desire. I want you to love what I love. I want you to do what I do. What Paul is saying to the Corinthians as it relates to the communion celebration and the observance of the Lord's Supper is, he's saying, there's a message here; God wants you to pay attention to that message. What is the message of the Last Supper? It's all about sacrificial love. And that's exactly what they weren't doing in Corinth.

What Paul has to do is, he has to take them back. And that's what he's going to do here, in these following verses, beginning in verse 23. When we start getting perfunctory, and we start just doing things because I think I'm supposed to do this. Why am I doing it? I don't really know why. See, that defines religion, doesn't it? Why, you ask people who are religious, why do you do that? Well, we always have done it. Right?

And that's about the fullness of their explanation. Is there a love for God? Is there a desire to serve and glorify God? No, it's just we've always done it this way. You know, it's empty. What we got to do is we got to go back to the beginning. And Paul's going to take him back, as far as the Lord's Supper goes, back to the beginning.

Look at verse 23, he says, *"*(Listen), *I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you* (we're going back to the beginning here)*, that the Lord Jesus on the night* (that) (correction: *when*) *he was betrayed took bread…"* By the way, that Greek phrase there, "on the night he was betrayed," literally means, "while he was being betrayed." So the Last Supper, don't ever forget that, was going on while Judas was betraying him.*"*...(He) *took bread* (verse 24), a*nd when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you.* (Look at this last sentence.) *Do this in remembrance of me."*

Paul shows here that when the Last Supper took place, it wasn't a love feast. First of all, they were celebrating the Passover meal, but during the course of that meal, Jesus began to set a new course with the food, and He begins to speak of this bread as His body, and he says, *"...Do this in remembrance."*

We remember that communion is all about remembering: *"...Do this in remembrance."* In other words, that's a way of saying, think about me and what I did for you while you do this, take this bread and make and cause it— allow it to cause you to think about me, and what I accomplished for you on the cross. It means that Jesus is trying to focus us on the purpose of His death on the cross.

The purpose of Him going there, and we get messed up about the purpose sometimes, and it becomes all about us. We'll say, what was the purpose of Jesus going to the cross? Oh, that's easy. I know. I know it was to save me from my sin. Yeah, but yes, it was ultimately, but you understand people that there's more to it, there's a body connection to it, the whole thing.

The purpose is so that Jesus might show that powerful depth of sacrificial love from God to man. We forget sometimes, even though John 3:16 is the most popular verse, I think people probably have: *"For God so loved the world that*

He gave…" And that was the purpose; that's what Jesus came to convey on the cross. And when we take those elements of communion, and we observe that, and we remember, we're remembering the depth of God's amazing love for us, right? We're that's what we're supposed to be remembering.

The Corinthians weren't remembering that, you see, because they were doing their own thing and forgetting about other people, forgetting about your needs, her needs, and his needs. And it's just all about my needs! And that's why Paul said, when you guys get together to do the Lord's supper, you're not even doing the Lord's supper because the Lord's supper is about remembering the depth of the love of God. You see, and you're not doing that. So you're not doing the Lord's Supper. I don't know what you're doing, but it's not right, and it's not good.

He goes on here, verse 25. He's bringing it back to the beginning, remember?: *" In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it,* (again) *in remembrance of me."* (And then Paul makes this statement in verse 26.) *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup* (there's a proclamation going on, he says)*, you proclaim* (what?) *the Lord's death…"*

And we know the purpose of that death was to show the depth of God's love, that mankind might be saved when they come to faith in Jesus. So, you proclaim that death until the Lord comes. We've been given a command by God to keep doing it until He comes back. We're to occupy by remembering, right, until He comes back.

And we can't afford you guys to let communion become stale and meaningless. Oh, I am surprised! I'm surprised that God didn't strike me dead as a child because of the way I treated communion when I was a kid, sitting in church, bored out of my skull. And we did communion probably once a month, I suppose. And we were, I... oh, thank God for his mercy. He knew that I was just an idiot and didn't understand. But the point is, it just became this perfunctory nothingness, and we have to guard against that, even as born again believers.

We have to guard against this thing becoming just functionally empty for us, where we just go through the, oh, here's the communion time, okay, here's the plate there, take my stuff, pass it along, we got it, okay, boy, I wish he'd get done with this thing, got to get home, game's probably already going, or whatever I'm thinking about. I don't know, I'm just thinking about what's going on after church, and let's take the bread, oh, the bread, yeah, anyway. And I'm just going on thinking about my world, my life, and this particular, oh, the cup,

yeah, okay, good, okay, thanks God, good, fine. And we just move on, and it's just this blur, rather than a real declaration of proclaiming, God proclaiming your death and remembering the depth of your love.

Now, before I move on here and cause what he's going to do at the end here is he's going to talk about the consequences of when we just, when we don't have our heart in the right place or whatever. But I want to just look again for a moment, if I may, at what Paul said here when he said in verse 25, remember he said, Jesus lifted up the cup and gave thanks, and he said, *"...This cup is the new covenant in my blood…"* Did you catch that?

This occurs here in 1 Corinthians: *"This cup is the new covenant in my blood."* It was established that night. It was sealed that day when Jesus, with his blood, sealed that covenant, and it is a new covenant. It is a New Covenant. This sounds just completely obvious because it says here Jesus said He raised the cup and said this is the cup of the New Covenant.

And yet for almost 2,000 years, Christians have been trying to merge the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, and you got all these problems that come from it because you know what? It's like putting a square peg in a round hole or vice versa.

We want to keep going back to the Mosaic Covenant somehow, and Jesus says, this is the blood of the New Covenant. And we're like, well, yeah, but… And then we got, well, but we got a, it's Sabbath keeping, that's what we got to do. That's part of the old covenant. And then when you got some people over here that are doing the food laws, and you got other people over here that are doing these sorts of things. And they're trying to merge the Old Covenant with the New Covenant, and Jesus says this is a New Covenant. In fact, it was something that God prophesied hundreds of years before the fact through Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV)

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the days when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.

When He said, *"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant* (right) *with the house of Israel and the house of Judah* (look what he goes on to say, people don't get this, or they don't see it)*, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers…"* People, did you see that? The

New Covenant is not like the Old Covenant. It's not like it. It's different. And I like this one better, by the way.

He goes on, he says, I'm going to make this New Covenant. It's not going to be like the Old Covenant they made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. That dates it for us, doesn't it? That was through Moses. We know exactly what the old covenant was. It was the Mosaic covenant, right? He says, even though I was a husband, declares the Lord.

> *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, "Know the LORD; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their inquiry, and I will remember their sin no more."*

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: (Now he's talking about the new one)..." He says, I'm going to put my law within them. It's not going to be on tablets of stone anymore. I'm going to write it on their hearts. And I'm going to be their God and they're going to be my people. In fact, it's going to be so powerful, this work of the Holy Spirit in them, that no longer will a man have to teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, know the Lord. They're all going to know me. They're going to know me from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. And I love this last part: *"...For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sins no more."* That's the New Covenant.

I like the New Covenant. It's like, sign me up for that one, right? I like this idea. This is something God talked about a long time ago, way before even it got inaugurated. I'm going to make a new covenant; not going to be like the old covenant. It's going to be different. I'm going to take my law, put it inside them. He was talking about the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell people, to change us from the inside. Ah, it's powerful. It's wonderful. That's what he means, though, when he talks about or quotes Jesus saying, this is the cup of the new covenant in my blood.

Look what he goes on to say in verse 2, look in your Bible, *"Whoever, therefore* (now he's going to talk about consequences), *eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner* (Those are important words, those

three right there: an unworthy manner. Take note of those) *will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord."*

Now that's sobering. Paul says, if you eat or drink, he's talking about, again, the Lord's Supper, in an unworthy manner, there is some guilt that goes along with that. We need to understand what an unworthy manner is, and I need you to pay attention to this because this is important.

First of all, I'm going to tell you what Paul says. Paul is not saying he is not saying that you and I need to be worthy to take communion because you never will be worthy to take communion and neither will I. It's not about our worthiness. What Paul is not saying, you guys need to get worthy. You need to get your lives in order and get worthy before you take communion. He's not saying that.

Listen, salvation is through the mercy of God. Do you understand mercy? Mercy means I don't get what I deserve. What I deserve is judgment. I don't get judgment. That's mercy. I get blessings. That's grace. God blesses me. I don't deserve it, but I get it anyway.

So, he's not saying, clean up your act before you take communion in that particular way. Because listen, people, the only way that you and I will ever be worthy to approach God is when we come to Jesus by faith and we accept what He did for us on the cross and we clothe ourselves with His worthiness.

The Bible calls it the robe of righteousness, and I hope you have it on because it's the only means by which you and I can approach the Father (Isaiah 61:10). It's the only means by which you and I can enter into His presence. You can't walk into the presence of God saying, here I am, God, in all my splendor. Because He's going to say, you're not worthy. You're not worthy to be in my presence.

We humble ourselves, admit that we're not worthy, except Christ as our savior. We put on that robe of righteousness. What is the worthiness we've put on? It's His. And now, we come before the Father, and the Father looks at you and me and goes, oh yeah, see, my son is worthy. And now, He has imputed that worthiness to you. And you can now come into my presence anytime you want because you are worthy in Christ or because of Christ, right? That's a beautiful thing. Paul is not encouraging you and me to be personally worthy.

When he speaks of observing the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, he's talking about approaching the whole observance with the wrong attitude, with

carelessness, with an irreverent spirit, with a heart that does not consider the body of the Lord and the body of Christ. It's totally focused on me; it's totally focused on how I feel or whatever. And it's not about commemorating the death of Jesus. I'm either going through some religious observance of obligation, or I'm just thinking of something else, but I'm certainly not thinking of you. And I'm not thinking of Him either. And that's eating and drinking in an unworthy manner, because the whole thing has just become a religious empty exercise.

In order to get our hearts right in the first place, Paul suggests the following, look at verse 28, he says, *"Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup."* You want to eat? You want to participate in communion? Wonderful! What does he say to do first? Examine yourself, take inventory of your own heart, recognize and acknowledge the sin in your lives, confess it to Him before taking communion. And if you're treating someone badly, stop it.

I want you to understand that God isn't expecting you to clean up your life, but He is asking you to recognize where it needs to be cleaned and to confess it to Him, and you will come before the Lord in a worthy manner. Just simply saying, Lord, you know what? I fail a lot and I confess to you, Lord, my sin.

You remember Job, the very beginning of the book of Job. Do you remember? It says that his kids used to get together and put on these big feasts. And afterwards, Job used to do a sacrifice to the Lord, just in case his kids might have sinned. He didn't know of anything they had done, but he thought, I'm just going to do it just in case. I'm just going to cover this thing. He used to offer sacrifices for his children just in case (Job 1:4-5).

This is a soft-hearted man who recognizes that we fail, and he needs to come before the Lord from time to time. And just say, Lord, I fail. I can fail. And boy, when I do it, I can do a big job of it. I confess that to you. Lord, if I've, if there's a specific area where you want to convict me in, please do. But I just want to be open, Lord, just to confess to you that I'm not coming in my own righteousness. I'm not coming before you in my own worthiness. I am robed in the blood of Jesus Christ. And that's the only way I can come before you. And Lord, I need to be mindful of what I'm doing right now. I need to be mindful of what you did for me. And I need to be mindful of my brothers and sisters as well.

And that's why Paul says in verse 29, "*... anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body* (And the body can refer to both the body of Christ as far as the specific physical body of Christ and the spiritual body of Christ, which is you and I. He says, whoever does that) *eats and drinks judgment on himself."* In

fact, he goes on to tell him, that's why some of you have even gotten sick and some have even died. There have been consequences.

And so he says in verse 31, *"... if we* (simply) *judged ourselves truly…"* The word "truly" means sincerely. If we simply judged ourselves, and he's talking about taking inventory. He's talking about looking at my life and saying, Lord, I invite you.

Remember what David prayed? He said, search me and know me, right? See if there be any wicked way in me (Psalm 139:23-24). That's a bold prayer, don't you agree? Lord, search me. In other words, turn on the searchlight of the light of your presence and shine it around in my heart and see if there's problems. See if there's issues. See if there's something there that's yucky and gunky and needs to be taken care of.

The reason that's a bold prayer is you can bet, if you're a betting person, He'll find something. None of us have a pure heart completely, but it's a beautiful prayer because it trusts that God, when you find something, you're not going to reject me. You're not going to strike me dead. You may discipline me, but you will want to show me for my own good, what is there so that I can simply bring it to you and confess it.

Christians, don't ever be afraid of having God highlight your sin. Don't ever be afraid of that. Don't ever be afraid of God confronting you with your sin. We know what to do with sin, don't we? We take it to the cross. That's why Jesus died. Somebody brings up your sin or the Holy Spirit brings up some sin in your life, don't be afraid of it. Don't ignore it. Don't deny it. Take it quickly to the cross. Lord, boom. Guilty as charged. I confess that this is true about me. I confess it and I ask you to forgive me. And this is exactly why you died and paid the penalty of my sin so that I could be forgiven.

That's why Paul says, if we judged ourselves with sincerity of heart, we wouldn't be judged. Verse 32 says, but when he reminds us, but when you are judged by the Lord, it's actually discipline that he's bringing into your life. He's disciplining you now that you will not be condemned later with the world.

Verse 33: *"So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another…"* It's another way of just saying, think about other people in the room. Care about what's going on in their lives. Care about the people that don't have anything. Care about them, so wait. He says, if anyone is hungry, if you're starved, just eat at home —so that when you come together you won't be

bringing judgment upon yourself. And he says, *“ [34]... about the other things, I will give* (some) *directions when I come.”*

Let me just end with a quick note here. Earlier in the passage, Paul makes the statement as he's recounting the Last Supper: he quotes Jesus saying, with the bread, this is my body, and then later with the cup, this is my blood. And of course, throughout the ages of the Christian church, people have asked the question: was it literally the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ?

Roman Catholicism decided it was, and in fact, came up with a teaching which says that when the priest prays over the elements, they literally become the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. It's called transubstantiation. The Lutherans have a similar teaching, just turned down a little bit. Martin Luther wasn't super hep on the Catholic version of it, so he toned it down a bit, and said that the body and blood of Jesus were supernaturally present in the element.

But the fact of the matter is, the bread and the wine are meant to be symbols that cause you and I to remember the reality. The symbols spark memory of the reality; they are not the reality. Don't ever forget, people, that we are saved by grace through faith. It is not by eating and drinking or anything like that; it is by putting our faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. And those symbols, beautiful as they are, do not save anyone. The reality is what saves you, what Jesus did for you when He bore your sin on the cross, when He shed His blood and paid the penalty of your sin.