

The Gathering: Remembering Christ Together

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Date: 08 May 2016

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[0 : 00] In the following directive, I have no praise for you.

For your meeting, do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you. And to some extent, I believe it.

No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper you eat.

For as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, other gets drunk.

Don't you have homes 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 praise you for this?

[1 : 02] Certainly not. For I receive from the Lord what I also pass on to you. The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 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. In the same way, after supper, he took the cup, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in the unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

A man ought to examine himself before he eats the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizes the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment on himself.

[2 : 12] This is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judge ourselves, we will not come under judgment.

When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other.

If anyone is hungry, he shall eat at home, so that when you meet together, it may not result in judgment. And when I come, I will further directions.

Well, please keep your Bibles open at 1 Corinthians 11.

And we're going to be looking at verses 17 to 34. And let's pray together.

[3 : 37] Our Father God, as we celebrate, as we remember together the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, we ask that you would use these words that we look at together to prepare our hearts.

So that we may benefit richly from the grace and mercy, forgiveness and hope that flows from this simple meal of remembering Christ's death.

So please help us all as we gather and remember. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, when I was growing up in our family home, we had a rule when it came to mealtimes.

You might have the same rule even today. The rule was this. We were not allowed to start eating until everyone was served. In fact, we weren't even allowed to leave the table until everybody had finished.

[5 : 08] Sometimes, I think, in our house, people deliberately took their time so that everybody had to wait. And to a hungry teenager like me who saw mealtime as simply nothing more than a quick refueling stop, it was ridiculous.

It was a stupid rule. However, over time, I began to see the reasoning of my parents. For mealtime is much more than just eating food.

It's family time. It's about sharing, talking, growing in the family relationship. Now, it seems that the church in Corinth were treating the Lord's Supper as just another meal.

At best, it was a quick, personal reflection before God, which had nothing to do with their relationships to each other. So, in verse 17, Paul responds to something he's heard about in the church.

In the following directives, I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. Their table manners at the Lord's Supper were dreadful.

[6 : 28] In fact, their behaviour was so bad. Look at verse 20. When you come together, it's not the Lord's Supper that you eat.

Yes, they were eating the bread and drinking the wine. But really, it had nothing to do with the death of the Lord Jesus. You see, when God saves us, he saves us into his church.

God not only forgives us, he welcomes us into his family. And as God's family, we are to gather together as one people.

So, look at verse 18. He says, In the first place, I hear that when you come together as church. Or verse 33.

So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat. You see, the church is not a collection of isolated individuals.

[7 : 35] We are the forgiven family of God who gather together. That's why we're all here right now.

That's why we've made it our priority to be here. And one of the central things we do together as family is to share in this simple meal that is set out before us today.

The Lord's Supper. It's not a personal refueling exercise where we come individually to get a little bit more grace and a bit of forgiveness until the next time.

No, this is a deeply intimate and communal meal where we gather together as family. So, what should happen when we gather to celebrate the Lord's Supper together?

Well, three big things we're going to look at. First, as we gather round the Lord's Supper, we need to root out any division in Christ's body.

[8 : 50] Root out any division in Christ's body. Look at verse 18. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as church, there are divisions among you.

And to some extent, I believe it. Instead of being united as one, the church is breaking and falling apart. No doubt there has to be difference among you to show which of you have God's approval. Sadly, he's saying, there's always going to be some kind of division. Because, well, God's family is made up of sinners like you and me.

Messy people. And we do, from time to time, fall out. But that is not an excuse. The desire should always be to root out any division in Christ's body, the church.

And sadly, the division was most evident when they gathered to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Verse 20. So when you come together, it's not the Lord's Supper you eat.

[10 : 07] For as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry. And another one gets drunk.

Now, to understand this, we've got to have two things in mind. But when the church gathered in the first century to celebrate the Lord's Supper, it was usually part of a much bigger meal, where they would have a lot more food, and they would share that with one another.

The other thing we also need to remember is that Sunday was just like any other working day. For us, it tends to be a holiday. We don't necessarily go to work.

So for those who were in the church and had very little, those who weren't wealthy, well, you see, they had to go off to work on a Sunday. For others who had a bit more wealth, well, they could afford not to go to work.

They could take the day off. Or perhaps they could even finish up a little bit early. So we can begin to see what was happening as the church gathered. The wealthy who didn't have to go to work, well, they all gathered together for their meal.

[11 : 24] Some nice roast lamb, some nice crusty bread, and a few bottles of fine wine. There they sat, feasting away and enjoying themselves.

Then we could imagine throughout the evening, after a hard day's work, the less well-off, well, they would then arrive. And by this time, all the food was gone and half the congregation were drunk.

At some stage in the meal, a leader somewhere along the line had given thanks to God for the bread and for the wine and then promptly finished off the bottle. It was a mess.

Verse 22. Don't you have homes 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 praise you for this? Certainly not. Now, we might be sitting comfortably this morning and think, that is an absolute disgrace.

[12:38] I would never do anything like that. Well, let's just think about it for a minute. Generally speaking, we are able to gather at the same time.

Most of us do have a Sunday off where we don't have to go to our normal work so we can gather together. We all sit, as we are right now, in a very dignified way, ready to come and share in the Lord's Supper together.

The perfect family meal. Or is it? You see, we share in the meal, but as soon as it's finished, we're out the door and we forget each other.

Oh, we might invite somebody back to the house for lunch, but we only invite those that we like. We certainly don't invite them because, well, they're different.

And socially, if they did come, it would be just, you know, a little bit awkward. We all take the bread and the wine together, but as soon as we get home, the gossip starts.

[13:50] Can't stand the way they do that. Oh, we ask God for forgiveness of all of our sins, but we hold grudges and nurse resentment.

We humbly remember that Christ died for me, but we also remember their sin and what she said and what he did. We ask God for grace and accept his mercy, but see no reason why we should bother to help somebody who's struggling.

Oh, we're not, we're not like that Corinthian church in the first century. We'd never turn up on a Sunday morning drunk and celebrate in the Lord's Supper. No, no, we're much too dignified for that. We share in the perfect family meal. Or do we? Look at verse 22.

Do you despise the church of God with our behaviors? Shall I praise you for division that might exist?

[15:07] for pushing certain people out and not letting other people in? Certainly not.

Root out any hint of sinful division that exists within Christ's body. the second thing.

We must keep central the remembering of Christ's death. As we come to celebrate the Lord's Supper, keep central the remembering of Christ's death.

Verse 23. So Paul says, I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you. You see, the celebration of the Lord's Supper is to be practiced by every church in every age.

It's the Lord's way of making sure that we do not forget the death of Christ, but keep it at the very center of our lives. Verse 26.

[16:18] For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Now there's two things the death of Jesus should teach us in the context of this passage.

The first is this. This meal reminds us that we are united to God through the death of Christ.

We are united to God through the death of Christ. Look at verse 23 again. The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, picture the scene, took bread 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. The bread that we have here on this table is a picture of the physical body of Christ who was torn apart for you and for me when he died on the cross.

For when Jesus died he took my sin and your sin on himself. He was punished. He was broken for us so that we could be forgiven, reconciled and united to our Father God.

[17:57] Because of the death of Christ we can now enjoy oneness with God. No longer in separation but united with God through the death of Jesus.

the second thing it should teach us is that we are united to each other through the death of Christ.

Verse 25 In the same way after supper he took the cup saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me. The wine or the juice as we have it here is a picture of the blood of Christ that was shed on the cross.

The blood of Christ which seals and confirms our new covenant or that new everlasting unbreakable relationship with God.

[19:14] But this new covenant relationship that we have with God is not just an individual personal experience it is a family experience for together we are the new covenant people brothers and sisters in Christ.

In other words we are united to each other. Paul has already addressed this issue if you go back to chapter 10 and verse 16.

Have a look there chapter 10 and verse 16. look at verse 16 now as we read we are going to come across a word which says participation I am going to translate it as fellowship because that is what it really means it is a sharing in a fellowship in with God and with others so verse 16 is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a fellowship in the blood of Christ and is not the bread that we break a fellowship in the body of Christ in other words that as we eat and drink we share in the fellowship with God with his son we are together with him but not only are we with him and enjoy him it also has a knock on effect verse 17 because there is one loaf we who are many and we're many here today but yet we are one body for we all partake of one loaf so you see we are not just united and have fellowship with God we're also one body we have fellowship with one another so as we in a minute will come to celebrate the Lord's

Supper when we hear the words this is my body this is my blood when we see the bread broken the wine poured out when we touch the bread and hold the cup in our hands when we eat of the bread and drink of the wine all of our senses are engaged to remind us so that we never ever forget that we are united to God and as a consequence we are now united as brothers and sisters with each other so root out any division in Christ's body keep central the remembering of Christ's death and the third big thing as we come to celebrate the Lord's supper we need to prepare ourselves to gather at Christ's table now we need to think this through carefully each one of us there's three ways

I think this text is pushing us to be prepared first personal examination we must examine the motives in our own lives examine the motives in our own lives look at verse 27 of chapter 11 therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord for us to come to this table that is before us in an unworthy manner means not to come without sin it means to come with an unrepentant heart an unworthy manner means to come with an attitude that ignores our sin rather than confronts our sin in other words as we come to the table we must come ready to deal with the sin in our lives confess to

[24 : 14] God what is really going on and ask God to change our sinful hearts us verse 28 a man or a woman ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup so before we even eat or drink check your motives this is not about trying to uncover every possible sin we may or may not have committed in the last day this is about examining our hearts to see if I am really serious about dealing with my sinful nature am I ready to root out the grudges that I hold the anger the bitterness the unforgiveness that is festering away am I ready to deal with that today do I truly desire to break the cycle of destructive habits whether it's pornography or alcohol or greed do I really want to root those out of my life will I surrender what takes the place of Christ whatever the cost be it my career or my relationships with one another before we eat of this bread or drink of this juice examine our motives love love the second thing we need to do in preparation is to look at our family relationships we must sort out any broken relationship with each other verse 29 for anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the

Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself now when it says there about recognizing the body of the Lord the body of the Lord not only means Christ himself but the body of Christ the church so if I eat or drink without recognizing the church then I eat or drink judgment on myself so if I have fallen out with another brother or sister in the Lord I need to sort that out before coming to the table I can't eat of this bread and thank God for dying for me and at the same time pretend that the way I spoke to my brother or sister doesn't matter I can't sit here and drink of this cup and ask God for the forgiveness in my life and at the same time ignore the way I treat certain people because they're not like me you see coming to this table is not a private personal experience it is a family meal and we cannot start this meal without first putting right what is wrong so that means that it might be that what we have to do is we need to be calling somebody during the week and asking look can I meet up with you not texting that's not reconciliation we need to come face to face say sorry where we need to say sorry ask for forgiveness before we eat or drink we need to sort out our family relationships so in preparation personal examination think about our family relationships and the third we need to listen to God's serious warning look at verse 30 that is why many among you are weak and sick and a number of you have fallen asleep literally people have died in the church in Corinth this is how seriously God takes sin and how deeply he loves his church God will not put up with believers who persistently remain unrepentant God will not tolerate broken relationships that remain undealt with you see if we don't take sin seriously if we don't deal with broken relationships

well then God will verse 31 if we judged ourselves we would not come under judgment in other words if we did what we were meant to do then there would be no need for God to intervene and judge us now as we read this I know that it can cause great concern and it can trouble us unnecessarily but we need to understand clearly what they're saying so let me just say two things about this warning in verses 30 to 32 the first thing

I want to say to us is this not every illness ache or pain is a sign of God's judgment on our life because of some sin in our life that would be very wrong to say that we may have repented of sin we may know the joy of forgiveness we may be in right relationship with each other and in right relationship with God but you know what we can still have aches and pains and be sick not every sickness is because of sin second it may be that God allows or uses some illness in our life to awaken us to our unrepentant hearts look at verse 32 when we are judged by the Lord we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world in other words

[31 : 30] God can allow me to be weak or sick in some way so it causes me to stop and face up to ignored sin or a broken relationship this is not a sign of God's anger but a sign of his love and mercy upon his church look at the end of verse 32 so that we will not be condemned with the world so that we would not be separated from him for an eternity God would intervene in our lives and cause us to stop and check God loves his church and he loves us enough not to leave us in the mess of unrepentant undealt with sin so before we eat of this bread and drink of this juice listen to

God's serious warnings we are together here to celebrate in the Lord's supper together look at verse 33 so then my brothers and sisters when you come together to eat wait for each other this is not some private personal experience where we come in for our top up of grace and to get a little bit of forgiveness and then go off and do whatever we like and forget each other no this is a deeply intimate family meal where we remember that through the death of Jesus we are united to God and we are united to one another it is the place where we can come openly and freely and come and receive the forgiveness to know that cleansing and the washing away of our guilt and shame to come and do business with God to change our hearts to be more like him we are going to continue in celebration of the

Lord's Supper we are going to sing a song you can remain seated as we sing we sang it I think even last week but I think it is appropriate for us to sing we will sing it a couple times as we are gathered Jesus is here he is present with us by his spirit and his presence with us is demonstrated in the symbols of the bread and the juice reminding us that Christ has died for us so we will remain seated as we sing and him in his bride he and he