

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

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Date: 03 May 2009

Preacher: Arthur Jackson

[0 : 0 0] Good evening to you. I add my welcome to that of Robert. We're glad that you're here, that you've joined us for this weekly communion service. Let me pray and we'll get started in God's word.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the evening and the privilege of being here with your people. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen. For, or in the next 40 minutes or so, the liturgy that has been set out before us will take us, indeed, to the Lord's table, communion, the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, as it is variously called. I will go up, I will prepare the table, and most of us here on this evening will come forward, we'll take a piece of the bread, we will dip it in the wine, and we will prayerfully consume this meal. Why do we do it? We do so because our Lord has commanded that we do so those who are his followers. And in doing so, we remember remember our Lord. We remember his death on our behalf, and we're reminded of our participation in it, our communion with him, our sharing with him by faith. Furthermore, in doing this, we acknowledge, as it was read in John chapter 6, Jesus is the very source of our life in an initial sense as well as in an ongoing sense. Christ is our life, our strength. He is the one that provides us with our ongoing spiritual nourishment. So we come to our text this evening. The text that we have before us is both familiar as well as not so familiar. At the center of this text from verses 17 through 34 are the very familiar words of Paul that really zeros in on the words of Jesus and the institution of what we know as the Lord's Supper or communion. But what we see here, Paul is not so much concerned with the liturgy as he was living in a way that expressed their union with the very life of Christ. It's one thing, friends, to participate in the liturgy, the ceremony. It's another thing to live in a way that shows that you in fact are in accord with what the ceremony represents. So with that in mind, now I want us to see some things from this particular text on this evening. Here's the idea.

The body of Christ, that is the church, both in their gatherings and their living, must consider and embody the selflessness of Jesus. In their living and in their gatherings, we must consider the selflessness of Jesus and thereby make the necessary adjustments so that our living matches our liturgy. Because we can make one statement by our coming here on this evening and partaking of this table, but the question is, how consistent is your living with the liturgical statement that you will make within the next 45 minutes or so? The whole of our lives must demonstrate our true communion with our selfless Savior. So here are the three things. Here are your bullet points for this evening that I want you to see. In verses 17 through 23, we see self-indulgence condemned.

Self-indulgence condemned, 17 through 22. In verses 23 through 26, self-sacrifice commended.

Self-indulgence condemned, self-sacrifice commended. But in verses 27 through 34, self-examination and mutual consideration is there encouraged. It's encouraged, huh? Well, we heard the text this evening, didn't we? And on the basis of what we see in 11:34, there were some things that could await Paul's attention. You see that there? He says, about other things, I will give directions when I come.

[5 : 25] On the other hand, there were certain things that had risen to a priority that though he was absent from them, there were some things that he needed to say and he needed to say it then, huh? Look at verse 17.

In the following instructions, I do not commend you because when you come together, it is not for the better, but for the worse. Just think about that. No praise here. When you come together, it's not for the well-being of the body. It's not for the edification of the body. As a matter of fact, Paul would actually throw a red flag here. It says, this is not good. What is going on among you, huh? Why was it that Paul had no praise for the Corinthian believers? It was because their weekly feast, their weekly love feast gatherings, if you will, they were soiled by selfishness, huh? Did you notice in the text that

Paul's words concern their gathering? We see that. Look at verse 17. Because when you come together, verse 17, look at verse 18, when you come together as a church, and you see that word repeated in verse 20, or that phrase repeated, verse 20, verse 33, verse 34. Look at what it says. If someone is hungry, let him eat at home so that when you come together, it will be, not be for judgment, huh? Again, it concerned their particular gatherings. Specifically, it was likely that they gathered weekly again for what was known as the agape, or love feast. This was a potluck kind of gathering where believers could bring certain foods, and they could pull, they would pool their resources and share a common meal together, much like what we would do at a good common church potluck. But a part of this, and several years ago, when David and I preached through Acts, that's when we really initiated what will happen this coming

Sunday after our morning service, was our family gatherings. So communion, we will have communion before, back in that day, it was likely that communion or the Lord's table was on the back end of the love feast.

So this was the context in which these problems arose. Look at verse 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, huh? Divisions were a problem. Chapter 1, verses 10 through 17, we found that out. It was a personality-based division back there. I'm of Paul. I'm of Cephas. I'm of Jesus, huh?

[8 : 36] Given the makeup of the congregation, there were several possibilities for why there were divisions among them. It could have been a Jew-Gentile kind of division that they were dividing along those lines, or could have been a male-female kind of division. We just looked at chapter, first part of chapter 11, didn't we? It could have been the charismatic, non-charismatic, the hand-lifting versus the non-hand-lifting division. The speaking in tongues group versus the non-speaking in tongues group. That could have been what was in view. But there probably was something more basic, huh? The church then, as has the church through the ages, has had the haves and the have-nots, huh? Persons of means. Persons who have little or no means. Could have been those who were at the top of the social structure versus those who were at the bottom of it, huh? We still experience some of that today, do we not? This was likely the division that was in view. Schisms, according to verse 19, among them amounted to a testing process, huh? That would expose the wheat from the tares of the chaff, the real from the counterfeit, the cream from among them would rise to the top. Notice what it says. For there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you might be recognized. It was those who had no group, but they had the approval of God, if you will. And that's what's in view in verse 19. There was a lack of consideration among them. Think about it. Some of them were overfed. Some of them were not fed at all, huh? You see that?

As it's for eating, one goes ahead with his own meal, one goes hungry, another gets drunk. For the poor among them in that day, this particular meal was likely the most substantive meal that they would have in a given week. And if that were you, if this was the main meal of the week for you, you'd be looking forward to it. I mean, think about it. I mean, we probably look forward to breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day. And good portions at that. But think about how you would feel, but then you come and you were on the margins in that particular group. There were those who were humiliated, because they had nothing. And think about it. Here we go. This was selfish. It was inconsiderate.

And, but this was the setting in which there was the Lord's table. Huh? How ironic. How inconsistent this was, huh? And that's why Paul says in verse 20, notice with me, when you come together, this is not the Lord's supper that you eat. Huh? Why not? Because the conduct dishonored the Lord rather than honored him. And if that's the case, how can you call this what you're doing? How can you call that the Lord's supper? Huh? No praise, no applause, no commendation, because what they were doing opposed the selflessness of the one that they were calling the Lord. Their conduct was in conflict with what their, with their Christian testimony, Paul would say, out of bounds. Out of bounds.

File, huh? In a ceremony that symbolized their common participation and sharing of Christ and the saving work for them, there was conduct that was inconsiderate of those that they were sharing communion in Christ with. Self-centered indulgence must have no place in the community, in the body that was formed on the basis of selfless sacrifice. And that's the idea.

That's why it was so egregious. Because the very community that was formed on the basis of what Christ did, they were there demonstrating conduct that was in conflict with the very foundation that brought them together, huh? Self-indulgence is condemned, not commended. Paul then in the verses that follow in verses 23 through 26, he brings them back to square one, huh? Self-sacrifice is there commended.

[14 : 03] Look at there, we hear it monthly or even weekly in this service. I receive from the Lord what I also deliver to you. So he's bringing Christ into the equation. He is bringing Christ into the picture that the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread. So in the context then of correcting the abuses in the local assembly, Paul called their attention to what should guide Christian liturgy, but it also should guide our Christian living. What does he do? He points to Jesus, huh? That's what he does in these verses. He points to him. And notice that we see what we see here, the reference here is not to the miracles or to the might of Jesus. Paul refers to his death.

Jesus and his redemptive work were and are the centerpiece, the very centerpiece of Christian living and liturgy, huh? He has given us in view of that. And think about this, how marvelous it is that we can come on a weekly basis and we can come right back to the center. We can come right back to square one. It's a simple ceremony, but oh how significant this ceremony is. It reminds us, the Lord Jesus himself, according to this text, he issued the invitation. The command to observe communion comes from the Lord himself. We are in obedience to the Lord in this particular service and recognizing him through communion. When did he do this? When did he initiate it? He initiated this invitation at a very crucial hour. It was a very timely lesson because it came right on the front end, on the threshold of his crucifixion, the night in which he was betrayed. He took these everyday kind of emblems and he taught, huh? He can, in doing this, he connected his redemptive work with what was pictured in the Old Testament Passover meal, the Passover lamb. The blood of the Passover lamb would be applied and that would be that which would save. And so would his blood, huh? What did he use to teach? What we would have tonight before us, bread and wine. And as those under the old covenant demonstrated their participation in the covenant, by partaking of the Passover meal, so those who share in Christ's redemption partake of the elements that symbolize his saving and his redeeming work.

Back to square one. And in that, Christ's selfless sacrifice is here commended. Paul commended it to the Corinthians. I have commended to you Chicagoans tonight.

Calls us back to square one in this meal and through these words. It's a gospel meal, friends. Did you notice that, huh? As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death.

It's a proclamation. It's a visual proclamation and it's accompanied by words that remind us of the significance of his saving death. The good news that all who embrace him embrace the very source of life. We do it by faith. And God in his grace says, those who embrace my son as the source of life, you are partaker of life itself. It's a meal. It speaks of Christ's saving work.

[18 : 17] It's a meal that nourishes spiritually for us. You can come on this evening and you, in fact, can be strengthened. It's a meal that helps us come into the presence of the one who is the host himself, even Christ. Oh, so when you come in a matter of minutes now, you're coming to be reminded. You're coming to be nourished. You're coming in a special way to the very presence of Christ. So, from their self-indulgence, Paul turned to our Lord's selfless sacrifice. And from here, in verses 27 through 34, self-examination and mutual consideration are encouraged. Here's the idea. Self-focus examination is essential for personal as well as corporate well-being. Notice verse 27.

Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord, and here it is, in an unworthy manner, and he's referring back to the way that they observed it, what he's calling, he cried foul against, verses 17 through 22, will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

Let a person examine himself then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For everyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks damnation or judgment on himself.

There's the warning, verse 27. Those who were inconsiderate of Christ and others are those who partake of this meal in an unworthy manner and are thereby guilty of dishonoring Christ's body in blood.

They treat Christ's sacrifice as unholy. They treat it disrespectfully. And they're regarding that which was holy as common or even unholy. And thus Paul, in view of this, he encouraged self-examination.

[20 : 38] Self-examination. Certainly this was the best course of action. It's the responsibility of each person who partakes of the meal for self-examination. Now he's not telling me to examine you or you to examine me. No, it's self-examination that's being encouraged. While there needs to be self-examination, there also needs to be consideration for other people in the body, the whole. You don't go from inconsiderate action in the body to partaking of the Lord's table that includes all of the body.

It's hypocritical to do that. There were those among them suffering the consequences of their lack and consideration for others in the body. And these punishments inflicted speak of the seriousness to which the Lord deemed these offenses. Some had even been disciplined, according to this text, to the point of death. The discipline of the Lord is for our correction and for our ultimate protection.

When it's done now, when we do the self-examination, self-judgment, and even when the Lord chastises us on his own, it's for, it precludes the need of the latter. If we do it, the Lord doesn't have to do it.

If the Lord does it now, we're not condemned later with the world. So then, my brothers, when you come together to wait for one another, huh? Here's the idea there that needed to be some self-restraint, huh? Consideration for others in the body. What needs to happen when Christians get together for the, for communion? They're supposed to share with each other. Selfishness needed to cease.

Thoughtful consideration needed to prevail, huh? One of the things that we have here would be what you would call table manners, if you will.

[22 : 46] What are the table manners for this ceremony or for worship, huh? Now, while the context is worship, these things were not simply good for the table. They were good for the whole of the Christian life.

Table manners for Christian living, if you will. And here's the idea, friends, on this evening. Coming to the table reminds us of the needs for these things at all times, huh? It's not just when you gather at a potluck or a Christian meal, huh? Or even communion. When these things are in mind as far as selfless consideration for others in the body, huh? When we do so, our body is healthy and our witness in the world is effective when we follow Christ and his selflessness and his self-giving.

Here, friends, is a word that's good for the kind of body that God is calling us to be. I don't know if any of you have seen the old or the newer version of the movie called, guess who's coming to dinner, huh?

And the idea there is that a brother, a black brother, was coming to dinner to this white family, huh?

What's your point, Pastor Jay? The Lord has called, even in our body, people from various backgrounds, he's called us to the table, huh? Different races, classes, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, huh?

[24 : 37] Are we honoring and deferring to all that the Lord has called to the table? Are we being inconsiderate in our living, in our gathering of those who may not be like us? Are we holding on to who we are and what we have to the point that it is not considering others? Some things we may not be releasing in order to be the kind of body that the Lord has called us to be? Are we honoring and deferring to all who come to the table or simply some who come to the table, huh? You and I must be aware of the pride that we have that feel and we feel justified in our mistreatment of people because of actual or perceived differences, huh? Such conduct, individually and corporately, friends, is self-destructive and it does not honor God. It is a violation of the very foundation, the very square one call to Christ in who he is, huh? If we indeed follow Christ in his self-giving, in his selflessness, the world will have to stand and take notice because the things, the very things that divide and separate them have been overcome in our midst. As each of us, we demonstrate, we demonstrate our connection to Christ through not just the liturgy of communion, but in the living that mimics the selfless love of Jesus Christ, huh?

The body of Christ in their gatherings must consider the selfless love of Jesus, the one who gave himself that we might live, and in doing that, we must make the necessary adjustments in our thinking and living that matches our living with our liturgy. I believe that's what Paul is helping us to see. That was the message back then for the Corinthians, and it's the message today for Chicagoans. May we hear it, live it for the glory and honor of God. Amen.

Amen. Amen.