

Let a Man Examine Himself

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, I'd like us to turn once again to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and reading at verse 27.
- 1 Corinthians 11 at verse 27. Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.
- Let a person then examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. Let a person examine himself.
- Let a person examine himself. I thought last week that I would continue on the same theme I was looking at last week on Joseph, but I thought perhaps it was too much of a good thing, and I decided to leave it perhaps to some other time if I'm ever asked to occupy the pulpit.
- And with the congregation approaching an in-house communion, I thought I would preach on this text.
- [1 : 2 6] Let a man examine himself. Not as a means whereby to discriminate, but as a means whereby we can encourage one another in coming to the Lord's table.
- And so in these verses, Paul's primary concern is to teach us the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. It's a commemoration, not instituted by man, but by the Lord himself.
- As Paul here says, For I have received of the Lord in the same night in which he was betrayed, this supper was instituted.
- And that as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do show forth the Lord's death till he come again.
- As we read these words of Paul, there's a whole lot of symbolism going on here.
- [2 : 3 1] Symbolism of Isaac and Abraham. When Abraham is about to kill his son in obedience to the Lord, just to see whether he loved the Lord more or not.
- And there was a ram caught in the thicket and the ram became the substitute for Isaac. There is also the symbolism which is of the Passover, the first Passover, which took place in Egypt and the Mosaic dispensation.
- And the slaying of the lamb without spot and without blemish. And also the symbolism there, which is for us the death of Christ at Golgotha.
- Now, the breaking of the bread represents, as we know, the breaking of the Lord's body on the cross. The nail pierced hands and feet.
- The crown of thorns on his head. The spear piercing his side. And the excruciating agony on the cross as limbs and joints came apart as he hung immolated between heaven and earth.
- [3 : 5 8] And the heat of the middle eastern sun. The wine represents the shedding of the blood of the new covenant.
- This wasn't the shedding of the blood of the bull and goats, as it was in the Old Testament. It's not even the shedding of the blood of a ram, as it was in the case of Abraham when he found the substitute for Isaac.

All this was foreshadowing the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that's what the Mosaic dispensation was all about. Foreshadowing the coming of our Lord into this world and the reason for his coming.

Now, the whole context of this remembrance is the Lord's death. To remember why he suffered.

To remember what he suffered. And to remember it until he come again. And that's surely at the very center of all our lives.

[5 : 05] But as we anticipate the Lord's table in coming days, so we think on these things and we meditate on these things and we prepare ourselves for such a day.

That's what preparatory services are all about. To bring us to remember what we are about to do. If in coming to the Lord's table, there is insult or there is offense, caused or given, then that offense is an insult to the Lord.

That's why the Lord says, if anyone comes in an unworthy manner, he is profaning the body and the blood of the Lord. So let a man examine himself and so let him meet.

But what does it mean to let us examine ourselves? There are a few things which it does not mean. I'm just going to look at them fairly briefly.

One thing we have to insist upon is that when Paul here talks about coming in an unworthy manner, he doesn't in any way imply merit on our part.

[6 : 26] The old word was coming unworthily. It doesn't mean that we come worthily or in a worthy manner. It doesn't imply merit upon us.

That's not what Paul is talking about. Which of us would come? As the psalmist says, who could stand? If the Lord were to mark iniquity, which of us could stand in his presence?

We are all unworthy of the least of God's mercies. And as such, we may come to the Lord worthily, properly, to sit at his table.

Something else that Paul is not talking about here either is of the unconverted coming to the Lord's table. Now, those of you who know something of the history of the New Testament times knows what it meant for Christians to separate themselves out of the community and become Christians and become known as Christians.

They were persecuted. They were ostracized. Many were killed. Some of them were even crucified as the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. So no one would dare to come and be part of this body who were known as Christians because they knew what would happen to them in their daily lives.

[7 : 53] They would no longer be part of the society to which they belonged. In fact, when the disciples of the Lord first came together in Tarsus, they were called Crestus.

Now, it's the Greek word for Christian, the Christ ones. But the word itself is a very guttural word. And so it gives some sort of idea of their thinking.

And they were name-calling. They were, in today's word, it would be abuse. They were calling them names so as to denigrate their standing and to denigrate them as persons, that they were followers of Christ.

And in Paul's days, I said, no one but those who loved the Lord, loved him truly in heart and soul and mind and strength, would dare, would even want to become part of this body who was so much outside the normal society of that day.

So, it's not implying merit. It's not implying those who are unbelievers. And neither does it imply those who doubt. There are many people who do doubt their standing before Christ.

[9 : 17] Many who don't come to the Lord's table, even though perhaps they've been following for years, coming out to prayer meetings. Those whose idea is that they wish to be amongst the Lord's table, but for some reason there's some barrier in their minds or in their hearts not to become members of the body of Christ, communicate members.

And so, Paul is not focusing on those who doubt their calling or their election or don't have assurance. Doubt may make it very difficult to come.

But that's not what's troubling Paul. It would trouble Paul if there were those who were presumptuous, or those who were sure of their situation, and those who thought there was no barrier against them coming to the Lord's table.

That's what would disturb Paul, but that's not what he's talking about here. As he's talking about those who are perhaps not coming, he's saying, if you are doubting, if you love the Lord and still are doubting, the Lord's table, the function of the Lord's table is to strengthen faith, is to encourage us, is to enable us to grow in the grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So coming in an unworthy manner doesn't imply merit, it doesn't imply those who are unbelievers, it doesn't imply those who doubt.

[10 : 55] So the question is, what is Paul concerned about? When he's saying, let a man or a person examine himself. Well, it's coming in a way that contravenes, contradicts the Lord's Supper.

The Supper was instituted as a love feast, where people who loved the Lord would meet together, and they would come and share fellowship with the Lord and tell each other what the Lord had done for their souls, and how the Lord was strengthening them in their walk, and how they were being encouraged continually in their day-to-day life.

Christians would come to these love feasts bringing what they could afford. The poor were bringing what they could bring, and the rich brought more than they could eat or drink, and so everyone could share together.

They would have all things common, and there would be a love feast where rich and poor, the high and the low, would come together in this feast of love, which the Lord had instituted, so that we might be one body, the body of Christ.

But somehow in Corinth, this tradition had broken down. Now if we go back to the early chapter, the first chapter of Corinthians, we see there, there was a party spirit.

[12 : 32] There was already in Corinth this party spirit. Some would say, I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Peter, and some even of Christ. And so there were these four groups who were separating themselves out from one another.

And Paul has to remonstrate and says, it's only Christ you should follow. He has made unto us all things. He has made unto us that which is God-glorifying, and that which brings us to glorify God.

Righteousness and sanctification and redemption. So instead of being in this one place, in the world where slaves and masters, the rich and the poor, could gather together in fellowship, this particular group, were resurrecting all the barriers of wealth.

Paul says here, for in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One is hungry, another gets drunk. What do you not have your own houses to eat and drink in? And so instead of sharing, some were just eating their own food and wouldn't share.

And there was this party spirit, which obviously had grown up, and Paul was talking about in the first chapter, which he saw again. He says, in this, I commend you not.

[13 : 53] There are many things in which I commend you, and the way you are as a church, and the way you are growing, and the way you support other churches. But in this, I do not commend you. You are at fault. So anything less loving, and meek, and gentle, is hard to imagine, as Paul here remonstrates with them.

The table of meeting, which above everything else, is to be an imitation of the table that's in heaven.

The table of the church triumphant, where all is harmony, and all is togetherness, and all is praising God. That wasn't what was happening here.

Instead of being, or showing a oneness, or a unity, what was being displayed was animosity, and a party spirit, and gluttony, and drunkenness.

Today, if we forget, the body of believers, we make up the church, and act in a way, which displays a party spirit, we violate, and we contradict, the unity of the body of Christ.

[15 : 13] See, verse 29, speaks, of not discerning, the Lord's body. which can mean, either the Lord's suffering, and what he did, or the church, the body of Christ, the body of his disciples.

As regards Christ, it means, do we fully understand, what Christ suffered for us? Why he had to go to the cross? Or are we just engaging, in this as a right, some sort of superstitious right, where it will be a good luck charm, as we go through life?

Or does it actually mean something? Thus, we come to the Lord's table, do we realize, what it signifies? It signifies his suffering. As we take, that bread, which represents, his broken body, do we fully appreciate, that here, is the Lord, laying down his life for us?

He goes to the cross, he goes to the altar of the cross, God's altar, to become God's sacrifice, for you and for me. So that we are made, acceptable to God.

It speaks, of the substitution, that's taking place, in my place, condemned, he stood, bearing my sin, and mocking dude. We think, in the build up to the cross, all that he suffered, the plucking of the hair, the spitting at him, the striking of him, it's all, not for himself.

[16 : 39] He couldn't, in a moment, have dispensed it all, and shown his power. But he stands there, meekly, submitting to it, for us, and for our salvation. So he can, go through, with the process of, not doing his own will, but the will of his father, who sent him.

As regards the body of, believers who, make up the church, it's to recognize, that body, and, be integrated into it.

To be part of the fellowship. Be part of the union, who, who come to the means of grace. To escape the wrath, and curse of God, due to us for sin.

Yes, to have faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, to, no repentance unto life. And also, to make use, a diligent use, of all the outward means, whereby Christ, communicates to us, the benefits, of salvation.

The outward means, prayer, praise, fellowship, the means of grace. Sitting, at the Lord's table.

[17 : 51] All these, are part of the, outward and ordinary, means of grace, whereby Christ, shows us, his love, and we should be, sharing in it. Being partakers of it, sharing, with one another.

That's what the word, koinonia means. It means sharing. It means partaking. We are those, who are partakers, of the Lord's, offering for us. And we are partakers, and sharers, of one another's love, and care, and fellowship.

We become truly, the body of Christ. And something else, Paul wants us, to examine ourselves, is this regard. When we come, do we come, giving thanks.

Remember Psalm 92. To render thanks, unto the Lord, it is a comely thing. To thy name, O thou most high, do you praise, aloud, we sing.

Is that how we come? Do we, do we come singing, and, do we come praising? If we go back to, a previous chapter, we see there were, many, who were baptized, into Moses, and, in the cloud.

[19 : 12] And many of them, the Lord, was displeased. They were baptized, into Moses, in the cloud, and in the sea. And with many of them, the Lord, was displeased. Now why, was he, displeased?

Because they were, idolaters. They were fornicators, in the sense, they were, apostatizing, from God. And, they also, were those, who tempted God, who caused, God to be angry, against them.

And they tempted God, by their, continual, complaining. When they first, came out, they kept talking about, the flesh, pots of eeds. Why have you brought us, into the desert, to die?

Take us back to Egypt. After God, had shown him, his power, and his, his majesty, there on Sinai, they went forward, for a short time, and again, they complained, why have we only got, this, this dry manna to eat?

Why are we only, getting quails? Why, why are we only, getting fish? It was, always complaint, always complaint, against God. Why aren't we, getting what we had, back in Egypt? We want to go back there.

[20 : 17] And eventually, God came to the place, where he said, none of you, over the age of, 20 years of age, will enter into the land, I promised to my people.

You will all die, in the desert. And so God, was not pleased with them, because they were complaining. And that's something, we have to remember, God does not approve, of our murmuring, and complaining, as we go along the way.

He has given us, every spiritual blessing, in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus. We should rejoice in it. Rejoice in what he has done, and what he has given us, in Christ.

We often come to our services, and we sing, as I said, to render thanks unto the Lord. But is that how our hearts are? And that's how we, we truly feel, that we come here, to every means of grace, joyfully, wanting to come, not because, because perhaps, it's some sort of tradition, we've grown up with, and we've become used to a habit.

But we desire to come, the Lord's day, and the services of the Lord's day, are something, we join, we rejoice. As Paul says, in Philippians, I say unto you, rejoice, and I say unto you again, rejoice.

[21 : 34] Is that, how we feel, and experience our lives, to be? Are we satisfied, with our lot? No, I want to say more, than satisfied.

Are we, overjoyed with it? Is our cup, running over? Are we singing, and speaking to the Lord, in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody, in our heart to the Lord?

What I want to emphasize there, is making melody, in our heart to the Lord. Are our hearts, distant, or are they truly, united to Christ, making melody to him, giving thanks to him, at all times, in spirit, and in truth.

And if we're not, then to remember, let's remember, to come complainingly, or to come murmuring, is a sin. You know, we have the ability, in our lives, to make mountains, out of molehills.

Or to make, raging rivers, out of streams, in the desert. Moaning, and complaining, to God, that we can't manage.

[22 : 48] Or there's something, he's brought, into our experience, that is beyond, our ability to manage. Is wrong. I said it's sin. Another reason, for coming, to the Lord's table, is to proclaim, the Lord's death, till he come.

And we have to ask ourselves, what are, what place, does witnessing have, in our lives, in our everyday lives?

one of the main reasons, for coming, to the Lord's table, is to be there, as witnesses.

We can bring, disgrace, on the Lord's name, on the Lord's cause, with one hasty word, or with one wrong action.

we can do it, with the places, that we go to, with the friends, that we make, and keep, and associate with, the way that we live, the aspirations, we have for life.

[24 : 05] All these, if we are professing, to be, disciples of the Lord, should, have a bearing, on all these, different aspects, of our lives. We don't live out, our lives in isolation, and having one compartment, for, for the Lord, and his day, and the table, and another, for our everyday lives.

They all have to be, under the one umbrella, so that, we are seen, and live, and behave, as Christians, and those who love, the Lord, every day of our life.

So often, we speak of, making public confession, of the Lord's name, for the first time. But the table, is not a place, where you come, to do anything.

Not even witness. It's a place, where the Lord's, witnesses, come together, to receive. To receive grace, and strength, and mercy, for every time of need.

If there's no real witness, in our lives, it's absurd, to come, to the place, reserved for witnesses.

[25 : 17] That's something, we have to ask ourselves, how is it with us? What place, does witness, have in our lives? Who knows, we're Christians, in our places of work, or when we go on holiday, or wherever, we might be, in the company, of the world.

We are witnesses, in whatever situation, not just in church, or the Lord's table, but in every situation, in every arena of life. The next question, is, what happens, if we don't come, in this way?

If we do come, in an unworthy manner? Well, the answer, is, very, clear. We are profaning, the body, and the blood, of the Lord.

We are guilty, of the, of, the body, and the blood, of the Lord, eating, and drinking, and judgment, to ourselves. Now the old word, was, damnation.

And that used to put, people off, coming to the Lord's table. Well, if, I'm not sure, about my situation, and I might come, in the wrong way, and so eat and drink, damnation to myself.

[26 : 32] Or judgment. But the judgment, is not to eternal, perdition. The judgment, is to chastisement. And it's, but it's no good saying, oh well, if it's only chastisement, that's okay.

Remember what the word says, it's a very, very, very, very, hard thing, to fall, into the hands, of an angry God. He's a God, who condones nothing. He's a God, is a consuming fire.

Now, it might not be judgment, to eternal perdition, but chastisement, can be very severe, in situations, if we, cause, ourselves, to be rebuked, by God, and chastised, by him, to bring us back, into line, and bring us back, into the right way, of witnessing, and living for him.

And so, a chastening, as the Lord brings upon us, will not be joyous, but grievous. And so, Paul says, let a man examine himself, and so, let him eat.

See, self-examination, is not an end to itself. Self-examination, is always a means, whereby, we look at something, we examine ourselves, see, what's wrong, put it right, and then, come and eat.

[27 : 54] Not, see something wrong, and then stay away. But, look at it, put it right, and, then, come, to the Lord's table.

A tradition, grew up, on this island, where, if you were, spiritual, and you were, spiritually minded, and discovered, something was wrong, well, you didn't go, to the Lord's table.

You knew what was wrong, but then, you absented yourself, from the Lord's table. But, Paul, is not saying that. He's saying, that, if there's something, wrong with you, and examine yourself, examine yourself, put it right, and so, eat.

Never, absent yourself, from the table of the Lord. If you're, a Christian, if you love the Lord, that's, where, your place, should be. In writing them, to the Corinthians, he's asking them, to examine themselves, examine their lives, seek out the wrong, put it right, and then eat.

Not confess, that they're wrong, and then, stay away. And so, the question, before coming, to the Lord's table, is not, am I a Christian?

[29 : 13] But, what sort, of Christian, am I? that's what, proprietary services, as I mentioned earlier on, are meant to be about.

Self-examination, confession, humiliation, and prayer. But, they're also there, to encourage, the weaker brethren.

Those who doubt, those who haven't come, perhaps for years, although they love the Lord, and although they are witnesses, because there's something, holding them back.

And so, the proprietary services are there, to encourage us, to strengthen us, to build us up in our faith, and our desire, for the Lord Jesus Christ. So, I encourage you, to come, and to hear, and to, and to, and to believe, and to receive, and rest upon, the Lord, alone.

Many don't come, and because they doubt. It's not those, who have, great assurance, and great faith, who need encouragement.

[30 : 26] But the weak, and the trembling, and the doubting. That faith, won't grow, until you come.

As I said, the table, is a place, for witnesses. If you're, if you're one of those, well come.

May the Lord then, bless these, thoughts to us. Let us then conclude our worship, singing to God's praise, in Psalm, 119, at verse 33, which you'll find, on page 402, and, tunes, Erin.

Teach me, O Lord, the perfect way, of thy precepts divine, and to observe it to the end, I shall my heart incline. We'll sing the whole section, six stanzas, to God's praise.

Teach me, O Lord, the devil of thy precepts divine, and to observe it to the end, I shall my heart incline.

[31 : 54] give understanding, so be thy hope shall I, give him with my whole heart I shall observe it carefully.

And my lost path make me to go. For I delight therein.

My heart come true, thy testimonies. And not to be inclined.

Turn thou away my sight and eyes. From you in gravity.

And in thy good and holy way. Be pleased to strengthen me.

[33 : 41] Confirm to me thy gracious word. Which I did gladly hear.

He drew thy servant, Lord. To this devoted to thy fear.

Turn thou away my dearly ghost.

For who thy judgment be. Though for thy grief sets I have longed.

If thy truth quicken me. And now may grace, mercy and peace.

[34 : 58] In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. One God rest on you. And abide in you. Now and always. Amen.