

Remembering the Sacrifice
April 8, 2018
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1 Corinthians 11:17-29

“Covered dish,” “pot luck,” – what comes to mind when you hear those terms? The church has been breaking bread together since the very beginning.

Acts 2:42 (ESV)

The Fellowship of the Believers

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

We recall this letter from Paul to the church in Corinth was to answer questions and correct some errors. In this case the Lord's Supper had become a “tailgate party” for the rich people in the church. A drunken feast that neglected the poor among them and destroyed the unity Jesus commanded for his followers. It was serious business deserving a serious rebuke from Paul.

- How could the way you do the Lord's Supper be serious business?
- How could messing up doing communion result in “judgment”?
- This was bigger than a “pot luck” meal. They had missed the significance of this remembrance Jesus commanded his followers to observe.
- They missed the point: followers of Christ need to understand that the Lord's Supper isn't a quaint tradition. It's a solemn remembrance of what Jesus did for us and should be an event that brings unity and not division.

1 Corinthians 11:17–29 (ESV)

The Lord's Supper

¹⁷ 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.

- Again, how can getting the Lord's Supper wrong result in judgment?
- First, let's get a clear picture of what was actually going on.
- The partying Paul refers to was actually happening prior to the Lord's Supper. Tradition tells us the early church would have a meal they called the "love feast" and at the end they would observe the Lord's Supper.
- The word "love" here was "agape," so the meal was to be about sharing the love of Christ as they shared the meal.
- As we look again at Acts chapter two we see how it was supposed to be:

Acts 2:43–46 (ESV)

⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and

breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

- In the church at Corinth, they had gotten far away from that plan.
- Paul had been told of “divisions” in the church. We would call them “cliques.” **How does a clique of work? Why is it a problem in church?**
- Paul acknowledged that there would be differences among church members. In fact, at times the divisions reveal who the true believers are!
- But this was different. Look at verse 21. **What was happening? How were the rich treating the poor?**
- A covered dish supper was meant for sharing. Bring enough for your family and a little more for others. Everyone was to share all the food.
- [Story: My Mother shared our food but had rules for what WE took!]
- The rich people brought lots of food for them and their friends, but ONLY for them and their friends. They also brought lots of wine!
- Paul sizes up the issue concisely: *“one goes hungry, another gets drunk.”*
- This wasn’t just rude and obnoxious. **At the end of verse 22, what does Paul say these rich snobs were really doing?**

Proverbs 14:31 (ESV) gives us this principle:

³¹ Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.

- The whole idea of this “love feast” was to share with all.
- Paul said *“humiliating”* the poor at the love feast was equal to *“despising the church.”* Those are strong words, but this wasn’t just about rudeness.
- **How were these divisions and cliques evidence of a deeper problem in the church? Also, why was a “tailgate party” not appropriate right before taking the Lord’s Supper?**

- Again, Lord's Supper isn't a quaint tradition; it's a solemn remembrance of what Jesus did for us that brings unity and not division in the church.
- The Lord's Supper is one of two ordinances established by Jesus for his followers to observe. The other is baptism. This text is the only place in scripture it's called "Lord's Supper." It's also known as "communion" and "The Eucharist" which means, "the giving of thanks."
- With his next words, Paul gave them (and us) instruction straight from Jesus regarding why and how we observe the Lord's Supper.
- The first thing we see is when Jesus chose to institute this supper. It was "the night He was betrayed." It was also at the Jewish Passover meal.
- This year's Passover celebration for the Jews ended last night. **What is the significance of Passover for the Jews?** Some say the Lord's Supper is like the Christian Passover meal, **how would that be true?**
- Jesus used bread and wine to make an everlasting point about the sacrifice He made and the price He paid for sinful people.
- Jesus broke the bread for sharing as a symbol of how his sacrifice would be shared by all who believe in Him as Savior and Lord. "...[W]hen he had given thanks, he...said, *"This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*
- That's a pretty clear statement of what this symbolic meal means and what believers are to do.
- *"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."*
- *"In the Old Covenant, the Israelites were required to obey God and keep the Law, and in return He protected and blessed them (Deut. 30:15–18; 1 Sam. 12:14–15). In the New Covenant, things change and God becomes the proactive and unconditional source of salvation and blessing. In the New Covenant, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8)."*
- Most of us don't like to remember the death of a friend or loved one, we'd rather remember their life. In this case, Jesus said we NEED to remember his death on a regular basis. **What is our**

**demeanor when we reflect on the death of someone dear?
Contrast that with the Corinthians.**

- Jesus also said we should observe this supper to make a statement: ²⁶ *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*"
- The Lord's Supper causes us to look backward and to look forward. **How should we look backward during the Lord's Supper? How is that personal for each of us? How should remembering Christ's sacrifice make us feel? How should it cause us to look forward?**
- In verse 27 Paul said this special observance should not be taken lightly.

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.

- I'd say having a drunken feast and disrespecting the poor would be an "unworthy manner" to prepare for the Lord's Supper!
- If you want to know how serious the Lord's discipline was for the Corinthians who got it wrong just read verse 30.
- When Paul said a person should "examine himself" he was speaking to that specific situation in the church at Corinth. But, he was also speaking across the centuries to you and me.
- **How should followers of Christ examine ourselves in preparation for taking the Lord's Supper? Who should NOT partake of the supper?**
- **Other thoughts?**

So, What's the Takeaway?

Warren Wiersbe writes:

*"Jesus Christ took the cup and the loaf—the ingredients of a common meal in that day—and transformed them into a meaningful spiritual experience for believers. However, the value of the experience depends on the condition of the hearts of those who participate; and this was the problem at Corinth."*ⁱⁱ

- Wiersbe also gives us some good reminders of how we should prepare our hearts for the Lord’s Supper:
- **First, we should look back (vv. 23–26a).** *The broken bread reminds us of Christ’s body, given for us; and the cup reminds us of His shed blood... everything we have as Christians centers in that death. It is not the life of our Lord, or His teachings, that will save sinners—but His death... Christ died for our sins; He was our substitute (Isa. 53:6; 1 Peter 2:24), paying the debt that we could not pay.*ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Second, we should look ahead (v. 26b).** *We observe the Supper “till He comes.” The return of Jesus Christ is the blessed hope of the church and the individual Christian. Jesus not only died for us, but He arose again and ascended to heaven; and one day He shall return to take us to heaven. Today, we are not all that we should be; but when we see Him, “we shall be like Him” (1 John 3:2).*
- **Third, we should look within (vv. 27–28, 31–32).** *Paul did not say that we had to be worthy to partake of the Supper, but only that we should partake in a worthy manner. At a Communion service in Scotland, the pastor noted that a woman in the congregation did not accept the bread and cup from the elder, but instead sat weeping. The pastor left the table and went to her side and said, “Take it, my dear, it’s for sinners!” And, indeed, it is; but sinners saved by God’s grace must not treat the Supper in a sinful manner.*^{iv}
- This text should remind us that the Lord’s Supper isn’t just a quaint tradition; it’s a solemn remembrance of what Jesus did for us.
- It should bring unity and not division in the church.
- It should be approached with reverence and thanksgiving at the “heart level” remembering what Jesus did for us, and how He calls us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of who they are.
- It should also cause us to look forward to that day when He will return and we will live with Him forever.

ⁱ <https://www.gotquestions.org/old-covenant.html>

ⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 605). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ⁱⁱⁱ ibid
^{iv} ibid