

1 Corinthians 11b

Why was Paul critical of his Corinthian believers (vv. 17-18)? There was bickering and divisiveness among them when they celebrated the Lord's Supper (Communion) together to the point that Paul could say their gathering did more harm than good. Celebrating the Lord's Supper together was intended to commemorate just the opposite spirit – one of harmony and unity.

What is one positive aspect of divisions within the church (v. 19)? Divisions are inevitable and clarify those whom God approves as faithful and trustworthy and those who are not, which would then be recognized among the Corinthians. Divisions are proof that some have failed to discern the mind of the Lord.

What were the specific abuses in connection with the Lord's Supper that Paul rebuked them for (vv. 20-21)? The Lord's Supper was usually part of a common meal the Christians shared together in a spirit of love and fellowship, the so-called "love feast." But before very long, abuses crept in. Each family was bringing its own food, not waiting on one another and eating what they had brought and not sharing. While one brother went hungry because he lacked the means to eat well, another brother drank to excess. This was hardly a picture of Christian love and unity (Acts 2:44-46; 4:32, 34-35).

What further guidance did Paul give (v. 22)? If they were going to act like that, they should stay home and eat rather than humiliating their less fortunate believers. A Church where social and class distinctions exist is no true Church at all. A real Church is a body of men and women united to each other because all are united to Christ.¹

How does Paul describe the contrast between their conduct and the real meaning of the Lord's Supper (v. 23)? He goes back to its origin; the night Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. He shows that it was not a common meal or a feast, but a solemn ordinance of the Lord.

What did Jesus mean when he described the bread as "my body" (v. 24)? He meant, "This represents My body." His statement was completely symbolic. The elements were understood to be pictures or emblems of the body and blood of Christ.

The Roman Catholic dogma of *transubstantiation* insists that the bread and the wine are literally changed into the body and the blood of Christ. The Lutheran doctrine of *consubstantiation* teaches that the true body and blood of Christ are in, with, and under the bread and wine on the table.

In answer to these views, it should be sufficient to remember that when the Lord Jesus instituted this memorial at the Last Supper, His body had not yet been given, nor had His blood been shed. When the Lord Jesus said, "This is My body," He meant, "This is symbolic of My body" or "This is a picture of My body which is going to be broken for you."

What did Jesus say about the wine (v. 25)? He said that it represents the New Covenant in His blood. This refers to the covenant that God promised to the nation of Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-34). It is an unconditional promise by which He agreed to be merciful to their unrighteousness and to remember their sins and wickedness no more.

The New Covenant replaced the old Mosaic Covenant (Hebrews 8). Note that the purpose of both communion elements was one of remembering.....reflecting on the significance of both His broken body and His shed blood.

Although initially promised to Israel, the New Covenant is in force at the present time and it covers all who trust the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.....both Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 3:6). The new covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and that is why He speaks of the cup as being the new covenant in His blood. The foundation of the new covenant was laid through the cross.²

How frequently should the Lord's Supper be observed (v. 26)? Whenever. No legalistic rule is laid down; no frequency of observing is prescribed; neither is any fixed day of the week given. The practice of the disciples was to celebrate on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). It is interesting that nowhere are we commanded to remember the Lord's birthday but we are instructed to remember His death-day. That demonstrates the relative importance of the two events.

What is meant by "an unworthy manner" when partaking of communion (v. 27)? Paul is referring to the disgraceful conduct which characterized the Corinthians as they gathered together for the Lord's Supper (vv. 20-21).

They had also lost the point of the celebration, which means proclaiming salvation through Christ's death. Being "*guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord*" means being guilty of treating the bread/cup in an unworthy manner, i.e. they were guilty of self-centered, irreverent behavior, which does not line up with properly celebrating the death of Christ.

How are we to prepare ourselves to take communion (v. 28)? We should introspectively examine ourselves. Sin should be confessed and forsaken; restitution should be made; apologies should be offered to those we have offended. In general, we should make sure that we are in a proper state of heart, mind and soul.³

What is the consequence of eating and drinking in an unworthy manner (vv. 29-30)? It results in divine "judgment." In Corinth, God was judging with sickness and death ("*a number ... have fallen asleep*"). The reasons were selfish living (v. 21) and thoughtless participation in the communion service.⁴ Because they did not judge sin in their lives, the Lord was required to take disciplinary action against them.

What was the solution to that judgment (v. 31)? The solution was self-examination (11:31; vv. 28-29; 5:1-3), If God's people do not judge their own sins themselves, God will judge them.

What is the purpose of the Lord's judgment (v. 32)? To discipline us so that we might repent of our sins and grow in grace. God is dealing with us as with His own children. He loves us too dearly to allow us to go on in sin. Thus, we soon feel the shepherd's crook on our necks pulling us back to Himself⁵ to spare us from the condemnation of the world.

In what way does Paul urge them to be self-disciplined (vv. 33-34)? Paul pretty much already covered this in vv. 20-23. The Lord's Supper was a time not for self-indulgence but for mutual edification (v. 26). If their unloving selfishness prevailed, God would continue to discipline severely. Wait for each other or eat at home.

¹ Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Corinthians, 2019 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 202

² MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1789). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Corinthians, 2019 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 213

⁵ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1789-1790). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.