

1 Corinthians 11:17-34



05



HOLINESS IN WORSHIP: THE LORD'S SUPPER

Daily Readings

01 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

02 Luke 22:14-20

03 Matthew 26:26-30

04 Mark 14:22-26

05 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

06 Acts 2:42

07 John 14:1-4

WEEK 05

Holiness in Worship: The Lord's Supper

In this passage, two themes from 1 Corinthians come together: proper worship and divisions in the community. Earlier in chapters 1-4, Paul addressed the problem of the church separating and dividing according to significance and party lines. The church at Corinth was fractured and often failed to experience and enjoy unity.

When the church gathered for the Lord's Supper, apparently they were dividing themselves between the "haves" and the "have nots." The one group was having a feast while the other went hungry. Paul argues that this betrays the very meaning of the Lord's Supper, which was to remind us of the loving sacrifice of Jesus. Thus, Paul gives the weighty challenge that we examine ourselves before eating. Eating in an unworthy manner could bring sickness on those who do so.

This passage has caused great fear for many believers, dreading the possibility of taking the Lord's Supper without having confessed forgotten sin. This misses Paul's point. The meal is supposed to be a reminder of God's grace, not a spiritual beat-down. Paul is more concerned that believers would engage the practice in a flippant way that divides the church and hurts others. The call is to take the supper with the reverence and love of which it is worthy. This may in fact involve confessing sin that we have been harboring, but it also includes offering love and grace to others. None of us comes to Christ already clean. We come to Christ to be cleansed.

CORRECTING AN ABUSE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. ²⁰ So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, ²¹ for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. ²² Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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, 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." ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹ But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. ³² Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

³³ So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. ³⁴ Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment.

And when I come I will give further directions.





WARM UP

Which is your favorite meal? Breakfast, lunch, or dinner? What is the most memorable place you've ever eaten? What is your favorite restaurant?

Do you have a memorable moment regarding taking communion, the Lord's Supper?

EXPLORING 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34

Based on verses 17-22, what was going on in the Corinthian gatherings where the Lord's Supper was observed? How were they abusing the observance? (Remember the cultural setting of the city.)

What are Paul's directions for observing the Lord's Supper in verses 23-26? What does Paul mean when he says he "received this from the Lord?"

What does Paul mean when he speaks of observing the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner (verse 27)? Does this mean one has to be "perfect" before partaking?

Paul points out that we should approach partaking of the Lord's Supper seriously. How can one best prepare to take the Lord's Supper to avoid being disrespectful or careless?

Discussion Guide

APPLICATION

Discuss these elements of the Lord's Supper: participation, remembrance, and proclamation. How are each of these essential for every believer?

THINK

Individually, take a moment to prepare your heart to remember and proclaim the Lord's death.

As a group, read this passage aloud, in unison together, then observe the Lord's Supper.

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

Luke 22:14-20

PRAYER

List one or two prayer concerns to share with your group.