

Parson to Person

1 Corinthians 11 – Part 5 (Conduct at the Lord's Supper)

“Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you. For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore, whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we

would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come” (1 Corinthians 11:17–34 NKJV).

First Century Application

Paul was disappointed with the Corinthians’ behavior on many levels. He corrected them throughout the letter—but in this case seems to put an explanation mark on one specific error: *“Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse” (vs. 17).*

The Corinthians were failing to rightly approach the Lord’s Table (Communion) in no less than seven ways:

- 1) A lack of reverence for the Lord
- 2) A lack of discernment for the Lord’s body: The Church
- 3) A failure to live in and by a Christ-like, others-centered disposition
- 4) A self-serving desire (lust) to fulfill physical/carnal need(s)
- 5) Drunkenness
- 6) A failure to self-examine
- 7) A failure to self-correct

These “seven deadly sins” advanced to the degree that Paul, for the first time in the letter, said, *“I do not praise you,”* twice!

Apparently the Corinthians were experiencing division, sickness, and premature death as the result of their egregious

errors. Moreover, they had failed to see that the Lord was working through their disobedience! Paul explained, *“For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep”* (vss. 29–30).

Earlier in the letter Paul mentioned that there were schisms within the Church. Here he mentions them again. However, in this case, he points out the error of sectarianism and also adds that the wrong was being exposed in order to identify the truth from error—those in the wrong from those doing well. He wrote, *“I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you”* (vss. 18b–19). The identification points out the positive and the negative—the faithful and the factious.

The Corinthians were “coming together” divisively. Some were “coming together” with no care or concern for others—for whom Christ died. Some of the rich and well supplied segregated against the poor. Some came for feasting and celebration while others came with need of ministry. Herein the full and supplied should have come together to serve the needs of those suffering, but no, they came with disregard for the “Lord’s body” and thus sinned against Christ and dishonored the Lord’s table.

Within the Church Age

We can learn quite a bit from the error of the Corinthians by developing a positive response to their sins. We must come together in:

- 1) Reverence for the Lord.

- 2) Discernment of the Lord's Body: The Church.
- 3) Christ-like, others-centered servanthood.
- 4) Recognition of Jesus' sacrificial love and the spiritual provisions He has provided.
- 5) Sobriety.
- 6) Appropriate self-examination.
- 7) Fitting self-correction.

We are called to service—service to the Lord and men. The physically hungry should meet their carnal needs “*at home*”—or in another environment (vs. 34). We must recognize that drunkenness is always wrong—whether in the church or away. We are Christ's ambassadors! We representative him, as a body, on the earth—in the Church Age. We must reverence our Lord and recognize His great sacrifice—in order to fully enjoy the benefits of the New Covenant.

The inaugural ceremony of the New Covenant occurred on the night in which Jesus was betrayed (vs. 23). As grafted-in Gentiles (or descendent Israelis) who have trusted Jesus for salvation may we never betray Jesus by misrepresenting Him, demonstrating flippant irreverence for His “table,” or failing to properly serve His people—observing His call to edify one another until He comes (1 Thessalonians 4:9–5:11).

I love you all,
Pastor Paul