

Remembering the Covenant

1 Corinthians 11:23-34
SS Lesson for 11/26/2017

Devotional Scripture: Matt 26:17-30

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON

Key Verse: 1 Cor 11:25

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

INSTITUTION OF THE NEW COVENANT (1 COR 11:23-26)

The Elements

1 - Bread / Body

Jesus is the bread of life (John 6:48-51)

Jesus is the Word of life (I John 1:1-2)

The Word of life became flesh in the form of Jesus (John 1:14)

God offers spiritual food without cost (Isa 55:1-2)

2 - Cup / Blood

From the beginning God stated that the blood was for the forgiveness of sins (Lev 17:11)

Only God's blood is powerful enough to cover ALL sins (Heb 9:13-15)

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Heb 9:22)

Reason for observance

1 - Remembrance

So it can be taught to future generations (Exod 12:26-27)

So that we don't forget God's blessings (Ps 105:3-5)

So that we can be comforted (Ps 119:52)

So that we will understand God's Word (Mark 8:17-18)

2 - Proclaiming Jesus' death

Proclaiming Jesus' death for the ungodly (Rom 5:6)

Proclaiming Jesus' death for the sins of all (Rom 6:10)

Proclaiming Jesus' death so that we live for Jesus (2 Cor 5:15)

Proclaiming Jesus' death and His intercession for us (Rom 8:34)

3 - Observance should occur until Jesus' return

Observe until we are judged on all that we do based on our motives (1 Cor 4:5)

Our job while we are waiting is to continue to do His will (I John 2:28)

OBSERVING AND REMEMBERING THE NEW COVENANT (1 COR 11:27-34)

Observing and Remembering in an Unworthily Manner (27)

Unworthy because of wrong reasons or right motives (Matt 22:11-14)

Unworthy because of trying to serve two masters (1 Cor 10:21)

Guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord (27)

It is explained later in the Bible as bringing on judgement (1 Cor 11:29)

Guilty because of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:31)

Guilty because of rebelling against Jesus and becoming His enemy (Isa 63:10)

Examining ourselves (28)

God does the testing and examining (Ps 26:2)

Means giving careful thought to what we are doing (Hag 1:5)

It means verifying our faith (2 Cor 13:5)

It means being at peace and clear conscience with God (I John 3:19-20)

Discerning the Lord's body (29-30)

To discern, we must be in a right fellowship with God (Rom 3:10-11)

To not discern is to doubt and participate not from faith (Rom 14:23)

To not discern is to deserve punishment for trampling under foot Jesus' work (Heb 10:29)

Disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world (32)

God's discipline brings eventual relief and salvation (Ps 94:12-13)

God disciplines those He loves (Prov 3:11-12)

Discipline that proves we are God's children (Heb 12:7-8)

Resulting commands to the Corinthians to resolve their problems (33-34)

1 - Wait for all the Members before observance

When Christians are together and on one accord, there is power (Acts 4:31-32)

Assembling together provides a vehicle for encouragement (Heb 10:25)

2 - Eat at home to satisfy hunger and thirst

To eat, we must work for our food (2 Thess 3:10)

Never be a burden on others (2 Thess 3:7-8)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

Conclusion: What Should We Do to Avoid or Correct This Problem?

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reviews for our understanding how the communion service is an aid to **Remembering the Covenant**. The study's aim is to appreciate the provisions of the new covenant for New Testament believers. The study's application is to think consciously about the new covenant connection in our communion services.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: 1 Cor 11:25

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."

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

At Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper with His disciples (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20) the bread and cup were part of a meal, with the bread probably broken near the beginning (cf. "when He had given thanks," 1 Cor. 11:24) and the cup taken at the end (cf. "after supper," v. 25). By the time Paul wrote, the Lord's Supper was celebrated in two stages which consolidated the partaking of the bread and cup at the end of a communal meal. The worship with the bread and cup came to be called the "Eucharist" (*Didache* 9:1; Ignatius *Letter to the Philadelphians* 4), from the Greek word for "thanksgiving" (*eucharisteob*). The communal meal was called the *Agapeb*; (Jude 12; Pliny *Letters* 10. 96.7), a Greek word for "love." What bothered Paul about the Corinthian celebration was that the *Agapeb*; meal had become an occasion not marked by love for fellow Christians but one of self-centered indulgence. In the subsequent development of the church the celebrations came to be divided (Ignatius *Letter to the Smyrneans* 8; 1-2; and [apocryphal] Acts of John 84), possibly on the mistaken assumption that Paul had advised the Corinthians to do that (cf. 1 Cor. 11:22, 34).

11:17. As in the preceding discussion on womanly excesses in worship, Paul had no commendation (but cf. v. 2) for the Corinthians when it came to their practice of the Lord's Supper. In fact an experience meant to build up the church was actually having the opposite effect: **your meetings do more harm than good.**

11:18-19. The church was divided at a celebration which was meant to express unity (cf. 10:17). If these **divisions** (*schismata*; 1:10; 12:25) were related to those noted earlier (1:10-4:21), then one factor contributing to those divisions is evident here, namely, economic differences in the church (11:21). Paul did not want to believe the report about their divisions (v. 18b), but he knew that sin was inevitable (cf. Luke 17:1) and would not pass unnoticed by God. **God's approval** (*dokimoi*) resumed a point Paul had discussed earlier (1 Cor. 9:27-10:10), where he used in 9:27 the contrasting word "disqualified" (*adokimos*). In the whole nation of Israel, freed from bondage in Egypt and bound for the Promised Land of Canaan, only two of that vast company gained God's approval and entered the land (cf. 10:5). Many in the Corinthian assembly did not have this approval, which His discipline on them demonstrated (cf. 11:30-32). If the Corinthians thought the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and baptism somehow communicated

magical protection to the participants (cf. 10:12; 15:24), Paul's excoriation must have been doubly painful since their behavior at this rite was directly linked to their chastisement (11:30-32)—the very thing they sought to avoid.

11:20-21. The Lord's Supper should have been the remembrance of a preeminently selfless act, Christ's death on behalf of others. Instead the Corinthians had turned the memorial of selflessness into an experience of selfishness and had made a rite of unity a riotous disunity. While **one** brother went **hungry** because he lacked the means to eat well, **another** brother drank to excess.

11:22. If the Corinthians wanted private parties they could have them in their **homes**. The meeting of the church was no place for a sectarian spirit of any sort, especially since the Lord's Supper was intended to commemorate just the opposite spirit. To act in a spirit of selfish disregard for the needs of a brother was to **despise the church of God**, composed not of lifeless stones but of living people who could be grievously hurt. Did the Corinthians somehow think their libertarian acts were a matter for **praise**? (cf. 5:1-2) Just the opposite!

11:23-24. Paul proceeded to remind the Corinthians of what they knew but had denied by their actions. Whether this teaching came to Paul directly (by a vision; cf. Gal. 1:12) or indirectly (by men; 1 Cor. 15:1), it came with the Lord's authority. The bread represented the incarnate body of Christ unselfishly assumed (Phil. 2:6-7) and unselfishly given on the cross for the benefit of others (2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:8), that kept needing to be remembered (cf. 1 Cor. 4:8-13).

11:25. The wine was a poignant reminder of Christ's **blood**, without the shedding of which there could be no forgiveness from sin (Heb. 9:22) and through which cleansing and a **new** relationship (**covenant**) with God was made (Heb. 9:14-15). The word "covenant" referred to a relationship in which one party established terms which the other party accepted or rejected. The focus of the Old Covenant was the written Word (Ex. 24:1-8). The focus of the New Covenant is the Living Word (John 1:14-18). Christ intended the **cup** to be a representational (cf. John 10:9; 1 Cor. 10:4) reminder of Him: **do this... in remembrance of Me**.

11:26. The Lord's Supper was a visible sermon that proclaimed "the message of the Cross" (1:18, 23; 2:2, 8), that is, the reality of **the Lord's death**, and also the certainty of His return (**until He comes**) (cf. John 14:1-4). Though there apparently was no prescribed schedule for the observance of the Lord's Supper (cf. Ignatius *Letter to the Ephesians* 13:1), **whenever** it was celebrated its message of humiliation and subsequent exaltation (Phil. 2:6-11) went forth. This was a needed reminder to all saints, especially those in Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 4:8-13).

11:27-29. The Corinthians' despicable behavior at the communal meal was not without result, which Paul proceeded to point out. Nowadays when this passage is read before participation in the Lord's Supper, it is usually intended to produce soul-searching introspection and silent confession to Christ so that no one will sin against the spiritual presence of the Lord by irreverent observance. Paul's application was probably more concrete. No doubt his experience on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:4-5) contributed to this, for the body of Christ is the church, which consists of individual believers (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12, 27). His body, the church, is also pictured by the bread of Communion (5:7; 10:16-17). Thus to sin against another believer is to sin against Christ (8:12). Those **guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord** were those who despised a poorer member by utter disregard for his need (11:21-22). These came to the remembrance of Christ's work of unity and reconciliation (cf. Eph. 2:15-16) with a trail of deeds that had produced disunity and alienation! If these would **examine** (*dokimazetob*;, "test to approve," 1 Cor. 11:28) themselves, they would see that they lacked God's approval (*dokimoi*, v. 19) in this behavior. They should seek out the wronged brother and ask his forgiveness. Only then could a true spirit of worship flourish (cf. Matt. 5:23-24 and *Didache* 14. 1-3). Coming to the Lord's Supper without that sin confessed brought **judgment** on the guilty participants. Only by recognizing (*diakrinob*, "properly judging") the unity of **the body of the Lord**—and acting accordingly—could they avoid bringing "judgment" (*krima*) on themselves.

11:30-32. What that **judgment** entailed was then explained by Paul. In brief, it was sickness and death (cf. 10:1-11). The solution was self-examination (*diekrinomen*, 11:31; cf. vv. 28-29; 5:1-5; 10:12), self-discipline (9:27), and promoting of unity. The alternative was God's judging (*krinomenoi*, 11:32), which was a discipline that they were then experiencing. This was not a loss of salvation, but of life (cf. 5:5).

11:33-34. If the believers were self-disciplined, they should **wait** in the *Agapeb*; meal till all arrived. This also may have implied sharing the meal with others (cf. v. 22). If the demands of hunger were too great for some, they should satisfy those pangs **at home** before coming to the assembly. The Lord's Supper was a time not for self-indulgence but for mutual edification (v. 26). If the former prevailed, God would continue

to discipline severely. Other matters—apparently less serious aberrations related to the Lord's Supper—Paul would attend to when he returned to Corinth (16:5-9).

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

We have learned a lot about God's covenants over this past quarter of study. We have seen some of the powerful signs of God's covenants and studied some of the individuals through whom God mediated His covenants promises. We have also seen (most significantly) how His covenants expand outward into the new covenant through Christ and includes an eternal and glorious kingdom. This week's text focuses on the practice of communion. This ordinance too has covenantal significance. It would be a shame to fall into the practice of taking this observance for granted, not engaging its powerful meaning afresh each time. In the practice of the Lord's Supper, we remember the Lord's provision of salvation. The Corinthian church was a troubled church, perhaps the most troubled of all the churches to which Paul wrote. In many ways, including their observance of communion, their life together manifested divisions (I Cor. 11:18), heresies (vs. 19), and disorderly conduct (vss. 20-22), so Paul's teaching in this passage relative to the practice of communion was corrective in nature. He was reminding the church of the proper way to do it and to understand it. And it remains an instructive reminder for us today. The ordinance of communion is meant to be a memorial. It is striking to notice how many times in Scripture we are exhorted to remember something (cf. Jude 1:5,17). There is value in remembering as we internalize vital truth again and again. The vital truth of communion is that it is representative of God's covenant of salvation with us. The term used for covenant here, "testament," is the same term translated "covenant" elsewhere. Communion is thus a memorial of the initiating event of God's new covenant, the atoning death of Christ. The elements of the bread and the cup bring to remembrance the death and shed blood of our Lord, by which He secured our salvation. By His death and shed blood, we are able to receive His unbreakable covenantal promises of salvation. All that we have received and will receive from God is symbolized in this simple memorial act. Communion is not a mere ritual or obligatory practice. It is a holy event in which we enter once again into an experience of God's powerful covenant with us. God is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. When He promises to save us, it flows from His covenant-making nature. Communion calls this to our minds and hearts and causes us to reflect on it each time. Are we carefully observing the Lord's Table? Are we pondering the deep and profound promises that have been given to us? Sometimes we get focused on the logistics or the procedure, but the Lord wants us to remember "the new testament in [His] blood." We meet with the Lord afresh each time that we partake. Thus it is with great joy that we ought to engage in the communion ordinance and thereby remember the powerful and eternal covenant we are part of. Communion is a fitting capstone to a study of God's covenants.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The church in Corinth was started by Paul on his second missionary journey in the early AD 50s, barely 20 years after the death and resurrection of Christ. Corinth was not a center of renowned culture like Athens, but a city of hard-working folks from many backgrounds. It had a Jewish community, and it is here that Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, Jews who had come from Rome and were running a tent-making business (Acts 18:2, 3). Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla worked together in other venues (see Acts 18:18; compare Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19). The Corinthian church was a rambunctious and troubled group. It had problems with factionalism, immorality, rivalry, divorce, and false doctrine. Despite its troubles, though, the church in Corinth had a throbbing vibrancy and dynamism that shone through its mistakes. It had a large place in Paul's heart. He started the congregation and saw it through its birth pains, left and returned for at least one visit, and wrote two substantial letters to help it sort out problems (1 and 2 Corinthians). The trials of the Corinthians that caused Paul to write become a blessing to us, for we are able to see how the great apostle dealt with difficult issues in a godly and inspired way. At the heart of the problems in Corinth was a disrespect that some members had for other members. This lack of concern caused a crisis in the way they practiced the Lord's Supper. Understanding the way the Corinthians met for worship will give context to today's lesson text. First, the weekly meeting of the Corinthian church was likely on what we would call Saturday evening. In Jewish reckoning, one day ended and a new day began when the sun went down. The first day of the week, Sunday, therefore began on our Saturday night. The Corinthian church probably chose to meet in the evening because many of its members worked (some were slaves) and could not gather during the day. Second, the Corinthians observed the Lord's Supper each week as part of their worship service. It would not be overstatement to say that this was the central part of their time together. Churches today celebrate the Lord's Supper with differing

frequency and importance, but for these ancient Christians it was central and weekly. This makes Paul's comments about the Lord's Supper very important, and this centrality causes it to be a reflection of deeper spiritual and social currents within the congregation. Third, the Corinthian Lord's Supper was in the context of a fellowship meal. They did not have the option of tiny plastic cups or individual wafers purchased from the Christian supply house in Corinth. Rather, they used bread and wine that was a normal part of meals. How this worked, exactly, we do not know, but it created problems. Apparently the meal began before everyone arrived, and sometimes there was no food left by the time they did arrive (1 Corinthians 11:17-22). This produced an awkward atmosphere of disrespect that belied the message of unity that should have been at the core of remembering Christ in community.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Institution of the New Covenant (1 Cor 11:23-26)

23 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;

24 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."

25 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."

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

The Elements

1 - Bread / Body

Jesus is the bread of life (John 6:48-51)

48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. 50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Jesus is the Word of life (1 John 1:1-2)

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched-- this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

The Word of life became flesh in the form of Jesus (John 1:14)

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

God offers spiritual food without cost (Isa 55:1-2)

1 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. 2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.

2 - Cup / Blood

From the beginning God stated that the blood was for the forgiveness of sins (Lev 17:11)

11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

Only God's blood is powerful enough to cover ALL sins (Heb 9:13-15)

13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! 15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance-- now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Heb 9:22)

22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Reason for observance

1 - Remembrance

So it can be taught to future generations (Exod 12:26-27)

26 And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' 27 then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'" Then the people bowed down and worshiped.

So that we don't forget God's blessings (Ps 105:3-5)

3 Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. 4 Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. 5 Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,

So that we can be comforted (Ps 119:52)

52 I remember your ancient laws, O LORD, and I find comfort in them.

So that we will understand God's Word (Mark 8:17-18)

17 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? 18 Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?"

2 - Proclaiming Jesus' death

Proclaiming Jesus' death for the ungodly (Rom 5:6)

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

Proclaiming Jesus' death for the sins of all (Rom 6:10)

10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

Proclaiming Jesus' death so that we live for Jesus (2 Cor 5:15)

15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

Proclaiming Jesus' death and His intercession for us (Rom 8:34)

34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

3 - Observance should occur until Jesus' return

Observe until we are judged on all that we do based on our motives (1 Cor 4:5)

5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

Our job while we are waiting is to continue to do His will (1 John 2:28)

28 And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

Observing and Remembering the New Covenant (1 Cor 11:27-34)

27 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.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

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

33 Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.

34 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.

Observing and Remembering in an Unworthy Manner (27)

[Unworthily] Perhaps there is no expression in the Bible that has given more trouble to weak and feeble Christians than this. It is certain that there is no one that has operated to deter so many from the communion; or that is so often made use of as an excuse for not making a profession of religion. The excuse is, "I am unworthy to partake of this holy ordinance. I shall only expose myself to condemnation. I must therefore wait until I become more worthy, and better prepared to celebrate it." It is important, therefore, that there should be a correct understanding of this passage. **Most persons interpret it as if it were "unworthy," and not "unworthily," and seem to suppose that it refers to their personal qualifications, to their "unfitness" to partake of it, rather than to the manner in which it is done. It is to be remembered, therefore, that the word used here is an "adverb," and not an "adjective," and has reference to the manner of observing the ordinance, and not to their personal qualifications or fitness.** It is true that in ourselves we are all "unworthy" of an approach to the table of the Lord; "unworthy" to be regarded as his followers; "unworthy" of a title to everlasting life: but it does not follow that we may not partake of this ordinance in a worthy, that is, a proper manner, with a deep sense of our sinfulness, our need of a Saviour, and with some just views of the Lord Jesus as our Redeemer. Whatever may be our consciousness of personal unworthiness and unfitness-- and that consciousness cannot be too deep-- yet we may have such love to Christ, and such a desire to be saved by him, and such a sense of his worthiness, as to make it proper for us to approach and partake of this ordinance. The term "unworthily" [anaxiōs (grk 371)] means properly "in an unworthy or improper" MANNER "in a manner unsuitable to the purposes for which it was designed or instituted;" and may include the following things, namely: (1) Such an irregular and indecent observance as existed in the church of Corinth, where even gluttony and intemperance prevailed under the professed design of celebrating the Lord's Supper. (2) an observance of the ordinance where there should be no distinction between it and common meals (Note on <1 Cor. 11:29>); where they did not regard it as designed to show forth the death of the Lord Jesus. It is evident that where such views prevailed, there could be no proper qualification for this observance; and it is equally clear that such ignorance can hardly be supposed to prevail now in those lands which are illuminated by Christian truth. (3) when it is done for the sake of mockery, and when the purpose is to deride religion, and to show a marked contempt for the ordinances of the gospel. It is a remarkable fact that many infidels have been so full of malignity and bitterness against the Christian religion as to observe a mock celebration of the Lord's Supper. There is no profounder depth of depravity than this; there is nothing that can more conclusively or painfully show the hostility of man to the gospel of God. It is a remarkable fact, also, that not a few such persons have died a most miserable death. Under the horrors of an accusing conscience, and the anticipated destiny of final damnation, they have left the world as frightful monuments of the justice of God. It is also a fact that not a few infidels who have been engaged in such unholy celebrations have been converted to that very gospel which they were thus turning into ridicule and scorn. Their consciences have been alarmed; they have shuddered at the remembrance of the crime; they have been overwhelmed with the consciousness of guilt, and

have found no peace until they have found it in that blood whose shedding they were thus profanely celebrating.
(from Barnes' Notes) *Note: Bolding and emphasis is mine - jrh*

Unworthy because of wrong reasons or right motives (Matt 22:11-14)

11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 12 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. 13 "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 "For many are invited, but few are chosen."

Unworthy because of trying to serve two masters (1 Cor 10:21)

21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

Guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord (27)

It is explained later in the Bible as bringing on judgement (1 Cor 11:29)

29 For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Guilty because of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:31)

31 And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

Guilty because of rebelling against Jesus and becoming His enemy (Isa 63:10)

10 Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them.

Examining ourselves (28)

God does the testing and examining (Ps 26:2)

2 Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind;

Means giving careful thought to what we are doing (Hag 1:5)

5 Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways.

I means verifying our faith (2 Cor 13:5)

5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you-- unless, of course, you fail the test?

It means being at peace and clear conscience with God (1 John 3:19-20)

19 This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence 20 whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

Discerning the Lord's body (29-30)

To discern, we must be in a right fellowship with God (Rom 3:10-11)

10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.

To not discern is to doubt and participate not from faith (Rom 14:23)

23 But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

To not discern is to deserve punishment for trampling under foot Jesus' work (Heb 10:29)

29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

Disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world (32)

God's discipline brings eventual relief and salvation (Ps 94:12-13)

12 Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law; 13 you grant him relief from days of trouble, till a pit is dug for the wicked.

God disciplines those He loves (Prov 3:11-12)

11 My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, 12 because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

Discipline that proves we are God's children (Heb 12:7-8)

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?
8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

Resulting commands to the Corinthians to resolve their problems (33-34)

1 - Wait for all the Members before observance

When Christians are together and on one accord, there is power (Acts 4:31-32)

31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. 32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

Assembling together provides a vehicle for encouragement (Heb 10:25)

25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

2 - Eat at home to satisfy hunger and thirst

To eat, we must work for our food (2 Thess 3:10)

10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

Never be a burden on others (2 Thess 3:7-8)

7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Conclusion: What Should We Do to Avoid or Correct This Problem?

As we come to the 11th chapter of 1 Corinthians, we see that Paul was hardly speaking hypothetically in 9:24–10:13. Those who would win the race must exercise self-control "*in all things*" (9:25). Who would have ever thought that self-control was necessary in the church meeting? But it is vitally important there. The Corinthians should have had the self-control to wait for those who must come late and the self-control to share their food with others. Later we will see that they need self-control in speaking and sharing in the church meeting, for only one can speak at a time, and only that which edifies is to be spoken.

The problem Paul exposes in the Corinthians' celebration of the Lord's Supper should be instructive to us. I doubt very much that the Corinthians grasped the seriousness of the sin they committed by failing to wait for the rest of the church before beginning the Lord's Supper. I imagine they were shocked to learn that this was the reason for sickness and death in their assembly. Some of our most serious sins are subtle sins, sins that our culture may not even regard as bad taste. The Corinthians' practice at the Lord's Table was sin because it distorted one of the great symbols of our age, the celebration of our Lord's suffering and death on our behalf. *The Lord's Supper commemorates what the Christian has experienced in Christ, and it proclaims to unbelievers what every person must do to enter into intimate fellowship with Him. To disregard or distort the symbolism of the Lord's Supper is to distort and misrepresent the gospel.* No wonder the Corinthians are sick and dying!

But this text was not written to the Corinthians alone; it was written to **“those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (1:2). As we conclude, let us consider some of the ways this passage may affect us.

(1) *We need to be reminded of the subtlety of sin.* Sins should not be determined on a cultural basis but rather on a biblical basis. The Corinthians were guilty of a deadly sin, and they hardly seemed to know it. As we observe the exposure of this sin in Corinth by Paul, let us open our own hearts and minds to the Word of God and the Spirit of God, asking as the psalmist did to have our sins exposed and cleansed:

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; 24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way (Psalm 139:23-24).

(2) *We must be alert to the dangers of repeating a ritual without reexperiencing its reality.* God gave the Israelites many symbolic celebrations to observe. Their purpose was to commemorate God's great acts in the past and to remember His covenant(s) with them. The prophets frequently rebuked the Israelites for repeating the rituals, while forsaking or forgetting the realities behind them. The solution to religious ritualism is not to forsake the ritual, or to do it less frequently, but to seek always to perform the rituals in a way consistent with the reality they symbolize.

Some people wrongly suppose the Lord's Supper will be more significant to them if they observe it less frequently. I simply remind you that Jesus commanded His disciples (and therefore His church) to be doing this until He comes. The practice of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament churches was first daily (Acts 2:42, 46), and then weekly (20:7). Those who think that monthly, quarterly, or annual celebrations of the Lord's Supper are sufficient seem to think too lightly of that which it symbolizes and of the value of the symbolic observance of communion to remind them of the realities of the gospel and its message of reconciliation with God and men. Paul did not tell the Corinthians to stop eating a meal or to meet less frequently, but to continue meeting as they have with a renewed appreciation for what it means, and a renewed commitment to celebrate the Supper in a way that is befitting to its message.

(3) *We need to recognize the limitations imposed upon us by not having a communal meal and correct these as best as we can.* In many ways, the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the ancient churches is more foreign to us than the matter of head coverings. We do not observe the Lord's Supper as a supper, but simply by partaking of the symbolic bread and cup. In the way our auditorium is arranged, we partake of communion while looking at the back of other people's heads. In Corinth, the celebration took place as a part of an intimate meal and with believers looking at one another face to face. We use matza for the bread. Several pieces of matza are placed in a cloth and crushed and then passed out to all. The matza is good in that it is unleavened bread, but it is not so good in that it is not **“one loaf.”** Matza does not visually symbolize the unity of the body of Christ as it could. Perhaps we should consider changing to one real (unleavened) loaf, which is broken before all. The cup as we distribute it is not a common cup from which all drink, but trays of individual cups. Once again, the element of common participation from one **“cup”** is symbolically lost. Having traveled in India and partaken from a common cup in a congregation where there was the danger of spreading sickness, I realize that a common cup may not be wise (humanly speaking). Perhaps we should pour the wine from one container into several of the cups, so that the element of unity is visibly expressed. In this day when “worship centers” are “in,” I wonder if we should consider building such a worship center in the light of this text in Corinthians, rather than according to other considerations.

(4) *We need to recognize the importance of all believers in a church being present at the Lord's Supper.* The importance of this can hardly be overstated. Paul taught that the one loaf symbolized the whole body of Christ, at least the whole body of believers that met as a local church. For one segment of the Corinthian church to go on with the Lord's Supper without the rest was a most serious violation of the symbolism of that supper. Our problem as a church is not that some believers go ahead with the Lord's Supper before others can get there. Over the years there have always been a few who never seem to get to the meeting of the church on time. Paul

only chastised the Corinthians who did not wait because the others could not arrive any sooner. In our church, he would probably chastise those who could get there on time but often do not. If not waiting is a serious offense, maybe being late is serious too. What then can we say for those who make no effort to attend the Lord's Supper at all? Those who have not taken this part of the Sunday meeting of the church have something very serious to consider.

If it is vitally important for every member of the local church to be present at the Lord's Supper, I wonder if this does not raise some troubling questions about the size of the local church. The megachurch is the new fad. The larger the church, the more programs and perks it can offer its members, everything from skating rinks and swimming pools to programs tailored to special needs. But what if all those who identify themselves as members of a particular church cannot share the "one loaf" together? I know of no church in the New Testament where the whole congregation could not meet together at one time. It seems sad, at the very least, for church members to identify themselves in terms of what hour they attend or by what door they enter and exit. I wonder if a church is too large when every member cannot meet in one place to remember the Lord's Supper.

(5) As a local church, we need to recognize, symbolize, and practice our fundamental unity with all those who trust in Christ and avoid unbiblical distinctions which improperly divide us as believers. One of the foundational principles of the "church growth movement" is the principle of homogeneous grouping. In cliché terminology: "birds of a feather flock together." Church growth experts have determined statistically that the churches which grow biggest and fastest are those which appeal to one segment of society. In other words, to be a rapidly growing church, we would have to appeal to one race and even to one segment of our society. You would not want to try to reach intellectuals and white collar workers along with illiterates, street people, and factory workers. People do not feel comfortable with people who are not like them. This is the kind of thinking which seems to justify churches appealing to only one group. And by the way, guess which groups are sought and which are not?

The church cannot be true to its nature and calling and follow this principle of homogeneous grouping. Jews were not comfortable with Gentiles nor were Gentiles comfortable with Jews. So what? Paul would not allow Peter to identify himself with the Jews and at the same time separate himself from the Gentiles (Galatians 2:11-22). He saw this as a frontal attack on the gospel, and he would have no part of it. James would not tolerate a church which gave preferential treatment to the rich and which treated the poor as second-class citizens (James 2). The church which best represents Christ as a local manifestation of the body of Christ is that church which is made up of various races (ideally, all the races represented in that region), various socio-economic groups, the whole spectrum of society. Does this fly in the face of man's human nature? Good! The church does not operate according to human principles, nor does it exist on the basis of human power. The church is supernatural, and unity expressed in diversity proves it. Let us not seek to operate as the world does, but as God does, by breaking the rules of "church growth" and following the rules of Scripture.¹⁶¹

Let me mention some of the divisions and distinctions which may violate the spirit and teaching of Paul's teaching in our text. Denominationalism is certainly one form of division which needs to be scrutinized. I am not saying that a local church cannot or should not have its own distinctive doctrinal statement or practices, but I am saying there should be times when saints can affirm their oneness in the body of Christ in some tangible way. Churches should not be distinguished on the basis of race. Racism is a fact of life in many, if not most, churches. And then there are the laity-clergy distinctions which exist in so many churches. In those few times when communion is observed, who passes out the bread and the wine? Does this divide the body in a way that the Bible does not allow? And what of closed communion? Should those who profess faith in Christ be barred from communion because they do not possess a letter of commendation, or because they have not been baptized by a certain church or denomination? Are we guilty of shaming and despising certain segments of the church? What shall we do about it?

(6) We should beware of evaluating our worship in terms of what it does for us. I suspect you have frequently heard the question asked after church, "How did the church meeting go?" The basis on which we answer that question tells us a great deal. Unfortunately, we tend to measure the meeting by what it did for us. Did we feel elevated in our spirit? Did we come away feeling good? Did others say or do what we hoped for? Did we have the opportunity to do or to say what we wanted? We indulge ourselves in other ways than in food. Self-indulgence is all too often a motive or a goal in our worship. We worship because of what we hope we will gain. I must warn you that this is a most dangerous goal. The element of sacrifice is primary in everything we do as Christians, including celebrating the Lord's Supper. If sacrifice is a significant element in worship, the question we should be asking to evaluate the quality of our worship is, "What did I give (up), and what did God gain?" All too often we worship expecting God to give and ourselves to gain. As we see in this text and in the

chapters to follow, we are also to sacrifice so that our fellow-believers might gain, so that they might be edified. The element of sacrifice was missing in Corinth, as it is frequently missing in our worship today.

(7) We should be sobered by the meaning of the Lord's Supper and how seriously God takes misconduct at the Supper. Some Christians wrongly measure worship on an emotional scale. If they come away "high," they have worshiped, they think, and if they have been sobered or saddened, they have not worshiped. Because I have observed worship in a variety of cultures, I have learned not to be too hasty in what is true worship and what is not. I have been in a number of prison chapel services, and there is often a great deal of emotion and enthusiasm. But the moment some of these inmates get outside the chapel doors (or outside the prison gates), everything changes. True worship is not just getting exhilarated. True worship must begin with an appreciation of the fact that we are in the presence of a holy God, a God who hates hypocrisy and sin. I think the Corinthians were having a good time in their worship, not unlike the good times the pagans were having at their idol worship celebrations. But let us keep in mind the sobering fact that many of these Corinthian saints were sick or dead. Worship in the presence of God should be a sobering experience.

Now having said this, I do not mean that a "sober" or "somber" service is necessarily true worship any more than an exuberant service is. *I mean to say that true worship cannot exist where the holiness of God is not grasped and where the seriousness of impure worship is comprehended.* When we truly fathom the holiness of God and its implications for our worship, we can worship joyfully, within the boundaries of God's Word. I see this illustrated in the life of David as recorded in 2 Samuel 6. There was great joy among the Israelites as the ark of the covenant was being transported to its proper place, but Uzzah reached out and touched the ark and was struck dead. Uzzah had the most noble intentions, it seems, but he did not appreciate sufficiently the holiness of God (and, by association with God, the ark) and the laws of God which governed the way the ark of God was to be transported. When the anger of the Lord burned against Uzzah, David himself became angry—with God. God had rained on his parade. It was not until after God's blessings were observed on the household of Obed-edom (where the ark was temporarily kept), and until after David remembered that God had specifically instructed His people as to how the ark was to be carried, that he was able to worship the Lord joyfully in the presence of the ark.

The worship of our Lord at the Lord's Supper does not need to be a funeral service. But the Lord's Supper is a remembrance of His sacrificial death for our sins. The Lord's Supper is a most serious occasion, and those who conduct themselves inappropriately are living dangerously. Joyful worship must never be separated from a healthy fear of the Lord, and attention to the principles and precepts He has set down as to how our worship is to be conducted.

(8) We need to be very sensitive about the unconscious or conscious disdain and/or shaming of the poor, by structurally making them stand out as poor. I do not know whether the shaming of the poor in Corinth was purposeful or not, but I am confident that the affluent saints did not seem to care if their actions resulted in shame for the poor. There seems to have been a calloused disregard for the poor then, as there may very well be today. As a church, we are striving to avoid situations which might shame those with lesser means. For example, when we have a church camp, we do not wish to exclude children because they do not have the means to pay. Beyond this, we endeavor to provide the means for those without funds for camp in such a way that they are not singled out and thereby shamed. We try to be careful not to plan trips and social outings which will exclude those without the means to go. Our Benevolence Committee seeks to minister to the financial and material needs of those inside and outside our body, and they do so quietly and confidentially so that those who are helped are not shamed in the process.

I am convinced that sharing with those in need is one of the first fruits of genuine conversion. It certainly was quickly evident in the newly-born church in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37). Sharing should begin with those within the local church, but it should surely not stop there. The new church at Antioch enthusiastically shared its means with the saints in Judea when they knew that a famine would cause many hardships (Acts 11:27-30). The Macedonians eagerly shared with the needy as well (2 Corinthians 8 and 9). We should do likewise. We should not be calloused to the needs of our fellow saints in South Dallas or in South America. We cannot meet all the needs of our brethren around the world, but we certainly should strive to do more in this area.

(9) In a welfare-oriented society like our own, there is a danger of the opposite error, those with lesser means expecting the more affluent to carry the whole load. The affluent Corinthians were guilty of not sharing their food with the poorer saints and thereby shaming them. There is today a danger Paul did not mention and which did not seem to be as great a problem in those times—"mooching." There are those today who have less means than some others, and they seem to expect the affluent to carry the entire burden. They are more than content to

let others supply all their needs while contributing nothing themselves. I am reminded of our Lord's commendation of the widow who gave her last two mites—all that she had. She did not hoard her two mites, consoling herself with the thought that there were plenty of rich folks around who could cover what she failed to give. She gave what she had, and our Lord commended her for doing so, in faith and obedience.

The man with but one talent in Matthew 25 was irresponsible and consoled himself that he had little entrusted to him while others had greater means. His master (who symbolized God) had harsh words for him (Matthew 25:14-30). The Macedonians were a poor people, but they gladly gave sacrificially above and beyond what would have been expected of them (2 Corinthians 8:1-6). In this church, as in virtually every other church, there are those who expect to be ministered to and provided for by others but who give nothing themselves. I am speaking of money, but I am also speaking of ministry. If it was wrong for the affluent Corinthians not to share out of their means, it is also wrong for anyone to refuse to share out of the means they have. Let us not look to others to provide for us what God has enabled us to provide for ourselves, and to provide for others:

14 “Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me. 15 You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. *And none shall appear before Me empty-handed* (Exodus 23:14-15, emphasis mine).

28 Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need (Ephesians 4:28).

(10) The good news is that even when sins as serious as those in Corinth are taking place in the church, God will use them for His glory and for our good. Paul does not wring his hands over the situation in Corinth, even though he might like to wring their necks. But even when the church is behaving as badly as many were in Corinth, God's purposes are not frustrated. I think this is why Paul could be direct and confrontive, and yet still admonish these saints as his dear children in the faith. God is glorified when He disciplines the saints before the world and before the celestial beings. God's holiness is surely evident when He disciplines His children, and so is His faithfulness and love. Remember that even in the discipline of death, God's actions are for our best interest:

32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world (1 Corinthians 11:32).

When there are many in the church who are not conducting themselves as they should, this provides the occasion for those who are approved of God to become evident (11:19). And how are the approved evident? *First*, by their own conduct. They will not allow themselves to be squeezed into the mold of the world or even of their erring brethren. They will stand out by doing what is right. *Second*, they will become apparent by taking the appropriate actions to correct the evils they see, just as we find Paul rebuking Peter for his hypocrisy in Galatians 2. *Third*, they will think and act in accordance with the gospel, rather than in accordance with the thinking of others. Here, and in Acts 15 and Galatians 2 (as elsewhere), Paul sees the seriousness of the error because he always views things from the vantage point of the cross of Christ. *Fourth*, those who are approved will be evident in the attitude and manner by which they seek to correct those in error:

24 And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

We live in a world which knows not the unity and fellowship which Christians possess, and which we should practice at all times, especially in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. If you are reading these words, my friend, and you have never experienced the forgiveness of your sins and the intimate fellowship with God and with other Christians of which Paul has been writing, I urge you to “come to the table”; that is, that you come to Him Who is the “**Bread of life**,” and Whose blood was shed for you. Come to Jesus Christ as the sinner you are, and partake of His sacrificial death on your behalf. To do so is to not only entitle you to sit at His table every week at the Lord's Supper, but to sit at His table throughout all eternity in the kingdom of God.

(Adapted from URL: <https://bible.org/seriespage/23-corrections-communion-1-cor-1117-34>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

I had the honor of sharing the Lord's Supper with an African village congregation a few years ago. This was a very poor community. The church building was a thatched-roof hut with a dirt floor. There were no modern facilities, padded chairs, or technical enhancements as I was accustomed to at home. The worship service was much longer, with energetic singing, multiple sermons, and performances by joyous children's choirs. At the end, we celebrated the Lord's Supper. It was a little different, with an assortment of glasses and a freshly baked loaf of bread. We took turns coming in an unhurried manner to the little table where the elements sat. The number of glasses for the red juice was insufficient, so these were refilled as the service proceeded. People came to the table in groups, often holding hands and offering expressions of praise and prayer. It took about 30 minutes, much longer than the efficient five-minute celebrations at my church back home! Yet I felt I was at home. The culture shock for me of being in an African village was great, but the comfort of meeting with fellow believers around the Lord's table outweighed this. Jesus' presence was there too, and I could not help but remember him and the sacrifice he made for me and for my fellow believers. The Lord's Supper is a time to remember our new covenant with God, founded on the fact that Christ's death makes forgiveness possible. It is also a time to remember that he did not die for me alone, but for all who come to him as the New Testament directs. I still see their faces when I come to the table.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. Even more than the earthly assets that we cherish and bequeath, we must impart God's Word (I Cor. 11:23-24)
2. Honor Jesus' sacrifice in your heart and in your actions (vss. 25-26)
3. Outward signs of our covenant with God must reflect a new life yielded and accountable to God (vss. 27-28)
4. Every communion service reminds us of Christ, warns us of God's judgment, and points out our need to repent of our sin (vss. 29-32)
5. The fellowship and worship of communion is not designed for our entertainment or satisfaction (vss. 33-34)