

A Command to Remember in a Worthy Way

(1 COR. 11:17–34)

What is True & What Christians Should Do:

Jesus Christ initiated the Lord's Supper, which proclaims Jesus' death at Calvary while also looking forward to Jesus' second coming; believers must remember Jesus' sinless life and death, examine their obedience in the new covenant with Christ and with other believers.

1.) Divisions in the church at Corinth had caused Paul to condemn them for not properly partaking in the Lord's Supper (17–22)

- Both **inequity** and **iniquity** at the meals were occurring
 - Lord's Supper during/after an agape meal had become problematic ("when you come together, then, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper," v. 20).
 - "One is hungry and another drunken"; The rich likely had brought great amounts of food while the poor had little (v.21)
 - Such agape feasts did not focus on piety or remembering Christ; their actions in reality despised God's church (v.22)

2.) The Apostle Paul provides us with universal instructions for the practice of the Lord's Supper (23–26)¹

- **Illumination about the practice.** "I received from the Lord"
- **Initiating of the practice.** "On the night when He was betrayed"
- **Ingredients in the practice.** "Took bread ... took the cup"
- **Ideology in the practice.** "This is my body, which is broken for you ... This cup is the new testament in my blood"
- **Invocation in the practice.** "When he had given thanks"
- **Invitation in the practice.** "Take, eat"
- **Instruction about the practice.** "Do this in remembrance of me"
- **Illustration from the practice.** "You proclaim the Lord's death"
- **Inspiration from the practice.** "Until he comes." (Christ will return)

3.) A call to worthy participation and self-examination (27–32)¹

- "*Unworthily or Unworthy Manner*" This **does not** speak of the worthiness of the individual but instead, the loving compliance with Christ's covenant community as to how one conducts themselves and participates in the Lord's Supper.
- Participating "*unworthily*" **does not** mean to "eat and drink with a consciousness of unworthiness." The word "*unworthily*" is an adverb describing conduct, not an adjective describing character. If worthiness was a qualification for partaking of the Lord's Supper, no one would be able to partake of it. Who is so arrogant as to think he is worthy?
- "*Guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*" (v. 27-30). This is another way of saying irreverence in their conduct. To be guilty of the body and blood of Christ is to dishonor and disrespect the body of Christ. He **does not** say all church illness is related to this, neither will it always cause death; other causes may exist.
- Jesus is saying that the shedding of his blood is the means of establishing that new covenant. It provides forgiveness of sins and opens the way for the activity of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer. The whole Jewish system is replaced by the Christ, and everything centers on the death of the Lord; it is His death which establishes the new covenant. See also, book of Hebrews.

APPLICATION (v. 17–34):

- ✓ "Communion is not just another service. It is a solemn ordinance, instituted and commanded by our Lord himself, and charged with deep significance. Before taking part in such a service it is important to take personal inventory of yourself (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5f) so you avoid partaking unworthily (v. 27)."² Ask yourself, given all that Christ has done: are you right with God and others?
- ✓ "Repentant sinners (believers in Jesus) are welcome to participate. Professing believers who are not prepared to give kindly of their wealth to help the poor in their midst, or who treat poorer Christians as lesser in status, or who simply remain unreconciled with fellow Christians, should refrain. Jesus' words concerning a somewhat analogous situation remain remarkably relevant here too: "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Mt. 5:23–24)."³ (Be prayed up, and confessed up)

¹ John G. Butler, *Analytical Bible Expositor: I & II Corinthians* (Clinton, IA: LBC Publications, 2009), 107, 108–109. Bulleted list adapted from Butler.

² Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1985), 160.

³ Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 234–235.

- ✓ Purposefully, Christians are commanded to remember the sinless life of Christ (v.23–24) and what happened at Calvary; they also should remember His resurrection and eagerly look forward to Christ’s promised return (v.26).
- ✓ We should remember the body of Christ and all its details (v.29); it was broken for you! Sacrificial lamb (Passover Bread)
- ✓ We should take a personal inventory of ourselves to ensure that we partake in the Lord’s Supper in a worthy manner. Are you right with God? Or do you look down on the Church of God (v. 22)? Do you not care for your brother or sister? Examine yourself properly so you will not be judged and disciplined by God (v. 31–32).

KEY POINTS (v. 17–34):

- Most evangelical scholars agree this is likely the earliest account of the institution of the Lord’s Supper since the Gospels were written after Paul’s letter to the Corinthians.
- Indeed, it is also likely the earliest record of any words of Jesus, and one of very few incidents in his earthly life which Paul describes. There are some features of this account which we do not find elsewhere, such as the command to continue the service ‘until he comes’ (v. 26).⁴ (it is certain: Christ *will* return)
- Sadly, divisions and factions within the Corinthian church had the Corinthians looking at everyone else except for themselves.
- It is not that we can ever become “worthy,” it is that you must partake of it in a worthy manner. Your sins must be examined. Not others, YOUR sins; so, look at yourself, confess your sins, and repent of your evil ways before God and towards others.
- Unity in the Body of Christ: 1) Between God and You 2) the Body of Christ and You
- Are you concerned for Christ? Are you a caring member of the Body? Love God. Love Others (Mt. 22:37-40).

ON BAPTIST BELIEFS:

- Most Baptists (of all types) do not believe the Lord’s Supper is a sacrament (i.e., it dispenses “grace” to the partaker); The Supper, known as Holy Communion, is one of the two ordinances instituted by God in the New Testament (Baptism is the other) and it is considered a powerfully symbolic observance. It is not a means of bestowing divine grace to others. Rituals do not have an automatic effect on the soul. It reminds us that Jesus is still at work today in us and that He will return. We are sanctified by the truth (i.e., the Word of God, Jn. 17:17). Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Ro. 10:17). The Spirit of Truth will guide us (Jn. 16:13). Men and women are saved by grace through faith, not of ourselves, it is a gift (Eph. 2:4–9).
- It is carried out in the context of a worship service in obedience to the command of Jesus; it rehearses the meal that Jesus shared with his disciples on the night he was betrayed.
- Baptists do not believe the bread and juice metaphysically transform to become the literal body and blood of Christ like Catholics (transubstantiation).
- Baptists do not believe Christ’s body and blood appear “with and under” the bread and juice like Lutherans (consubstantiation).
- Because Baptists believe in the priesthood of the believer, everyone can serve each other (hence passing of the plates around the room); the pastor and deacons often lead this process as ordained servants of Christ’s church.
- In the statement, “*This is my body*,” these words have been made the proof text for doctrines such as transubstantiation and consubstantiation with their literal identification of the bread as the body of Christ. But the linguistic evidence does not support either of those two beliefs. “*This*” appears as neuter in gender (*touto*) in the original text, not masculine as it should be if it referred to the masculine Greek word for bread (*artos*).

⁴ Leon Morris, [1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 156.