

A Dangerous Act of Worship Outline

1st Corinthians 11:17-34

- I. The accounts of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament.
 - A. 1st Corinthians 11:17-34 is the first account of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament.
 - B. The gospel accounts came later—Mark about ten years after 1st Corinthians.
- II. Paul's warning regarding taking communion in an unworthy manner (11:27-30).
 - A. Communion can be a very dangerous act (V. 30)
 - 1. Many are weak, sick, and many sleep (died).
 - a. They partook of the bread and cup in an unworthy manner (27).
 - b. They did not examine themselves properly (28).
 - c. They failed to judge the body properly (29).
 - B. This is not about eternal judgement but rather godly discipline.
 - C. Worship is to be taken very seriously—Ananias and Sapphira.
- III. Paul is very upset at the Corinthian church.
 - A. They were worse off AFTER going to church! (V. 17).
 - B. There are divisions and factions in the church (Vs. 18-19).
 - 1. *Schisma*—Torn apart
 - C. God's purpose in allowing the divisions and factions— *So that those who are approved may be evident among you* (19).
- IV. The early church (Corinth).
 - A. Initially met daily to break bread.
 - B. Eventually met on the first day of the week, Sunday (Acts 20:7).
 - C. After worship they participated in a meal—"Agape meal" or "Love Feast".
 - D. Following the Love Feast they would partake of bread and wine.
- V. The Corinthian church
 - A. Greco/Roman Houses
 - 1. Only the wealthy could afford.
 - 2. Two rooms: The Triclinia (for special guests) and the outer room (Slaves).

B. Situation.

1. The rich were abusing the poor within the church—eating and getting drunk while the poor remained hungry AT THE LORD’S SUPPER!

VI. “*This is My body, which is for you...*”

- A. Roman Catholic—Transubstantiation (the bread and wine turn into the physical body of Christ.
- B. Lutheran—Consubstantiation (the bread and wine spiritually turn into the body of Christ.)
- C. Zwingli—The elements are symbolic—a memorial.
- D. Dan—The elements are symbolic of Christ’s body and blood shed on the cross on our behalf as a “remembrance”, more than mental recall, but includes spiritual life change.
- E. Covenant—In the Bible, covenants are binding agreements between two persons, ratified by the shedding and sprinkling of blood (from a sacrifice).

VII. Communion points in two directions:

- A. Back—to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- B. To the future—the second coming of Jesus Christ (V. 26).

VIII. The misunderstanding.

- A. *You should not take communion if you have sinned or messed up.*
 1. You SHOULD take communion if you have sinned and messed up!
- B. Paul is not saying we must *be worthy* to take communion, but we must take communion in a *worthy manner*.

IX. What we are to do.

- A. We must test ourselves—examine ourselves.
- B. Judge the body rightly (V.29).
 1. Most likely the body of Jesus Christ (could be the church).

A Dangerous Act of Worship Pastoral Notes

1st Corinthians 11:17-34

This morning is communion Sunday... we come to the Lord's Table at least once a month, on the first Sunday of every month... On communion Sunday's we do not have Children's church or Club 36 so that we can all be together... This is a time for the entire church family to come worship together.

We've been going verse by verse through the book of 1st Corinthians and we've worked our way through to chapter six beginning at verse 12... As I was studying through this passage this week, by Wednesday I realized that we would be all together this morning...all ages...and this is a passage for mature ears to hear...

So wanting to let you parents decide whether or not to have your children hear this sermon... I've decided to postpone the rest of chapter six for a couple of weeks, when we will have both children's church and club 36 as an option for you.

Something that has been on my mind for some time is to speak directly about communion... the Lord's Table from the pulpit...so we are going to stay in 1st Corinthians but advance down the road to chapter 11 verses 17-34.

There is so much in this passage regarding communion and everything that surrounding it... that I may take the next few communion Sundays and preach on this chapter...There are so many dimensions... so much profound meaning within these verses... this morning I want to focus on one aspect of the Lord's Supper...

That is *the manner in which we partake of the Lord's Supper*...it was the manner of partaking of the Lord's Supper that was the problem at the first century church of Corinth...the Corinthian Church arguably is a picture of what the church has become in our culture today... so this is most certainly applicable to the church this day...

In future Sundays we will link the Old With the New Testaments with the Lord's Supper... we will see how the Lord's Supper is the essence of Worship.... All that coming in the future.

Something to keep in mind as we go through this passage... there is great evidence that this passage was written before any of the gospels...

We might assume that just because Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are at the beginning of the New Testament... and because they are the story of the Good News and so foundational to our Christianity... that they were the first New Testament books written...but this is not the case..

There is literary and historical evidence that places 1st Thessalonians and James as the first two books written along with Galatians... and 1st Corinthians preceded the gospels... Mark was most likely the first gospel to have been written.... Some ten years or so after 1st Corinthians...

This means that Paul's account of the Lord's Supper was the first account in the Bible... the first recording of Jesus's words as He presented the bread and the wine on the night He was betrayed by Judas Iscariot.

let's begin by reading it together.

Read 1st Corinthians 11:17-34

Sometimes it may seem as though communion is like an add on... a religious ceremony tacked on at the end of the service...

It is easy to let communion become just a ritual... a religious act that we mechanically do on a regular basis... [weekly?, Monthly? Yearly?]

What is normal is to let all of our acts of worship to slide into mundaneness... irrelevancy and triteness... what is natural is to think this worship service is really for us... for our benefit... for our inspiration... for our enjoyment... for our pleasure...

One trait of modern church worship is casualness... we approach a church service like we do everything else we do... and if we don't find the worship service pleasing to us... we will go find one that is... [many look like a Ted Talk or more like a motivational seminary with much consideration placed on a pleasing atmosphere, and comfortable surroundings and good coffee and bagels]

But this passage won't let us get away with that... look down at verse 30... it is Paul's warning about not taking the Lord's Supper properly... there is a right and wrong way to participate in the Lord's Supper... it is not about what pleases you... it is not an act of worship to make you feel good.... It is all about pleasing God... and worshipping Him.

Despite what many would like to believe... there are God prescribed specific ways we are to worship... specifically the Lord's Supper.... and there are devastating results if you approach the table wrong.

What this tells us is that worship is a very dangerous act... and should be taken very seriously.

Read verse 30

What is the reason?... why are many in that *church weak, sick and even a number sleep*... sleep usually means death... even a number are "dead"... why would this be so?

1. They partook of the bread and the cup in an unworthy manner (V.27)
2. Because they did not examine themselves properly prior to taking the bread and the cup (V.28)
3. They failed to judge the body rightly (V.30).

Have you EVER stopped to think just how seriously the Lord views communion?... this is a dangerous table to come to...this is literally telling us that an improper approach to the table can result in some serious chastening by the Lord.

This isn't talking about some eternal judgement... God is not going to send any believer to hell for improperly taking the bread and the cup... this is a matter of being disciplined by the Lord... discipline by the Lord is for our good... look at verse 32.

Read verse 32

Are you sensing the seriousness of all this?.... I don't know why the story of Ananias and Sapphira keep popping up it seems like every week in my studies... I think God is trying to remind me so that I can remind all of us that God is Holy... and He is to be taken very, very seriously.

Acts 5...another act of worship is giving your money as an offering to the Lord... that can be dangerous too!... Ananias and Sapphira lied in an act of hypocrisy in their giving and were slain by God in front of the entire church... their bodies buried that very Lord's Day!

That's not the Old Testament!... we would expect something like that there... this is New Testament!... it might not be as dramatic... as instant as it was with Ananias and Sapphira... it may not be something we consciously link to the table...but Paul is telling us

People become weakened... they become ill... they can even die because of the way they treat the Lord's Table!...I doubt we will see people instantly dropping dead for taking the Lord's Supper wrong...we may not even realize that the adversity that has come into our lives might be a direct result of our coming to the table of the Lord in a wrong manner....

Church can be a very dangerous place!...so maybe we should be interested in understanding how we are to approach this wonderful table...it is a wonderful table... it is the very heart of worship...

I'm not trying to scare you away from the table...I want us to embrace the table... I just want us to see the seriousness of every aspect of it...and the great blessing to us when we partake of it properly..... Paul teaches us at the expense of the Corinthian church....let's walk through this:

Read verse 17

This is really something... Paul is upset... he is very upset... we know that because he bookends this passage by saying "**I do not praise you...**" right off in verse 17...and then again in verse 22...**I do not praise you!**

Why doesn't he praise them?... *because they go to church... they come together as a church.... And they are worse off after doing so!... think about that!... you come to church... and when it's all over you're worse for it!...*

You are attending a church that is actually detrimental to your spiritual health!... this is a big ouch is it not?... I think there is a correlation between churches that try to please their attendees rather than preach the Word unapologetically.... Even when it hurts...and church's that are detrimental to one's spiritual health.

You will never leave church worse than you are if you've been fed on God's Word... YOU MAY FEEL WORSE... YOU MAY BE UPSET... YOUR LIFE MAY EVEN GET TURNED UPSIDE DOWN AND NEVER BE THE SAME... BUT YOU WON'T BE WORSE FOR IT!...

In fact... if you are attending a church that never steps on your toes... never makes you turn a little red at times... you're most likely attending a church that is detrimental to your spiritual health!... you leave worse than when you came.

We all need to be uncomfortable in our sin... we need to wrestle with our spiritual lives... we cannot be complacent in our spiritual walk... we need to "***work out our salvation with fear and trembling...***"

Well... the Corinthians church had some internal issues that prevented them from being a spiritually healthy and thriving church...THEY WERE GOING TO CHURCH AND LEAVING WORSE OFF... we've seen some of those issues and Paul points them out again.

Paul says in verse 18 that divisions exist in the church ...division is *schisma* in the Greek... literally a ripping and tearing apart... remember chapter 1?...remember that Paul addressed the fact that they were dividing among themselves... following different personalities... moving in directions that satisfied themselves...

I am of Paul... I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas... and I AM OF JESUS.... They are dividing up in different "factions" verse 19... a faction is a "dissenting group"....so the Corinthian church is dividing up in small dissenting groups... *factions*...

Something not to miss in verse 19... after seeing how serious God takes our worship... you might wonder *why does He allow divisions and factions occur in the church.... Why doesn't He just strike dead those who are causing schisma?...* [Ananias and Sapphira!]

Verse 19 tells us why...**Read Verse 19**

So that those who are approved may be evident among you...you have this large assembly of people called a church...there's an assumption that all are believers...all are there to worship God together... the fact is... not all are believers... not all are true Christians... the way you find out is when the church goes through real trouble... in this case divisions and factions...

The true Christians are going to surface and handle the situation in an edifying way... God often uses darkness to reveal light... what was it that was stirring all this up?... what was it that was causing Paul's angst over this church?.... this is what we need to work through.

The earliest church apparently met on a daily basis in the homes of believers to break bread together... As the church began to spread... it began to meet weekly rather than daily... Acts 20:7 tells us they met weekly... on the first day of the week... that would be Sunday... that by the way is one of the main reasons we meet on Sunday.

They met on the first day of the week to break bread together... this breaking of bread was always done in the context of a meal... so they would all go to church... after church they would have a meal... a potluck after the service.

This by the way proves that the early churches were Baptist Churches ! They always had a POTLUCK!...

This meal after the church worship time... worship time would be a time of singing hymns... Psalms... Praises... prayer and teaching/preaching... after this time they would all gather for a meal... the meal was called the "Agape meal" or the "Love Feast"... they would conclude the meal with communion... the bread and cup....

All this modeled what Jesus did in the Upper room the night before His death.

There were two purposes of this Agape meals... 1. To fellowship together... 2. To share with those who were less privileged... the love feast was a time to "love upon" the less fortunate... the Lord's Supper was a "*koinonia*" or a "*communal participation*"

It was a sharing together in Christ's work on the cross... sharing together in what Christ has done for us... Koinonia means fellowship... so when this church would gather... it was to koinonia... share together... unite together... commune together... participate together their participation in Christ's death..... and His resurrection.

Those who bless the cup and break the bread are celebrating their being unified with Christ and each other... they are proclaiming a solidarity within the members of the church.... Christ's body... now remember this... the early church... especially at Corinth was made up of very contrasting classes of people...

There were the very rich... and there were many slaves... so there was a wide economic gap between church attendees... digging into some historical records we know that the Corinthian church weekly met in houses... these would be the houses of the wealthy....only the wealthy could afford houses in Corinth...

It is estimated that each of these church's meeting in these houses would have about 30 church attendees... Each house would have two major rooms.... One room was called the "Triclinia"... about an 18' square room... this was the special... main room... this is where you would dine... there would be a "triclinium"... a table with three sides... and enough room for 9-12 guest to recline at and eat a meal.

So the host... who was wealthy... would have the wealthiest of the guest dine in the Triclinia... the lower and lowest status of people... the freedman and slaves would be placed in the larger space outside the room...

And get this... it was customary for the people eating in the Triclinia to be served the finest food and wine, while the other room got the leftovers... apparently... that's the case here... this Corinthian house church... meeting in the house of a wealthy church member/host... thinks they are meeting together... in Koinonia... fellowship... they think they're doing church...

They think they are participating together in the Lord's Supper.... But Paul ... says... I do not praise you...

Read verse 20-22

Do you see what was happening?... they are not meeting in koinonia... those in the Triclinia are feasting on trays of the finest foods until they literally they ate until they were sick... in that culture of that day gluttony was the fashion for the higher classes... they would literally eat until they threw up their food.... They had special beautiful ceramic containers that they would throw up in.....

They were drinking the finest wines until they were drunk... while the whole time... all those in the outer room were starving!... it says they had "nothing"!.... the rich were eating surf and turf and cabernet while the poor were getting crackers and water...

Paul says (22) **shall I praise you.... In this I will not praise you.... Shame on you!**... when they should have all been sharing together.... caring for each other... setting aside all class differences... putting aside all privilege... coming together as ONE.... Sharing with each other the unity found only through Jesus Christ...

Remember when Paul started all this.... Back in chapter one verse 10... **I exhort you brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree to have no divisions among you... But that you be made complete (ONE) in the same mind, same judgement.**

Jesus in that great prayer of Jesus to His Father in John 17:11 **I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are,....**

The Corinthian church is not even close to being one!...So Paul puts everything on pause and delivers to them the greatest instruction on the Lord's Supper... the very first Lord's Supper... remember this is the very first account of the Lord's Supper...

In the midst of this horrible act of selfishness... we have this very beautiful passage about sacrifice... grace... surrender...let's read it:

Read verses 23-26

Those are such familiar words if you've been in the church for very long... Words like these are found in all three of the synoptic gospels... Matthew, Mark and Luke... Communion as we call it has been a part of just about every Christian church throughout history... liberal or conservative in theology... but there are great differences in how denominations understand all this.

I think these words are straight forward... but man has made all this very complicated... for instance... the Roman Catholic has a view of communion that they call *transubstantiation*... when Jesus says in verse 24 **this is My body, which is for you**...they say He's speaking of His literal body.

In other words... a priest prays over the bread and the cup and the bread and the cup actually turn into the body and blood of Jesus Christ... as the bread and juice go down the esophagus it becomes Christ's body and blood.

Now think about that... Jesus is standing there in the upper room speaking to His disciples... He takes some bread... He breaks it... and says "*this is my body which is for you*"... Obviously He was not saying they were going to eat His body... His physical body.

Martin Luther came along and said "*that's going too far*".... He said that the bread and the blood didn't PHYSICALLY become the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ... they were "spiritually the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ....con-substantiation.

"Trans" means "changed".... "Con" means "With"...Trans means it literally changes into flesh and blood... Con means spiritually changes.... All confusing...I don't see any of that here.... Along came another reformer after Martin Luther named Ulrich Zwingli who was a leader of the Reformation in Switzerland in 1483....

He got into a number of debates with Luther... and he came to the conclusion that Jesus used metaphors to get across who He was... He said He was "the door".... "He was "the vine"... He was "the way"... these are symbolic illustrations that revealed who He is.... Most protestant denominations embrace Zwingli's teaching that the bread and cup are symbols of what Jesus did for us on the cross...

The bread represents Jesus body... and the blood represents Jesus blood.

What does Paul say this is?... which by the way is taking a simple reading here... not embellishing it... Paul simply says in verse 24 take the bread... eat it... why?... **In remembrance of Me...** we could call it “a memorial”.

Jesus gave up His life, His body for the salvation of His people... the breaking of the bread portrays the breaking of His body... [not the breaking of His bones... remember not one of His bones were broken! As John testifies, “**These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: 'Not one of his bones will be broken'**” (John 19:36).]

But broken as His yielding Himself to death for the sake of believers... His death atones for the sins of believers since He died on behalf of and in place of believers.... when we partake of the bread.... We are to remember that!

Now... I don't believe in Trans or Con... substantiation... but I do believe that the “remembrance” that instructs us to do is more than simply some mental recollection.... I think it involves the total person... it involves the reality of a supernatural change within us the moment we were saved by the power of the Holy Spirit.

You are not in remembrance of “Him” if you are gorging yourself with food and wine at the expense of the poor watching on.... With stomach's growling!.... You are not in remembrance of Him if you are getting drunk at the Lord's Supper!

Read verse 25

Covenants are BINDING agreements made between two parties... in the Bible... covenants were bound by blood... the covenant would be ratified by the blood sacrifice... They would kill an animal and each of the party's would be splattered with blood as if to say *if I break my covenant may I die.*

This cup is the new covenant in MY blood... Jesus is the sacrifice AND the covenant maker... drink this IN WHAT?... IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.... The new covenant was the covenant of salvation, the covenant of forgiveness by God... the new covenant was NOT a cup...the cup symbolized the new covenant in the blood of Christ.... The bread symbolized the body of Christ.

Now.. something here that is not in the gospels... look at verse 26 **Read verse 26**

Communion is an exercise that takes us into two directions...we go **back in time** remembering what Jesus did for us on the cross...and we go forward in time... REMEMBERING that Jesus has promised to return.

When we partake of the Lord's Supper... we are not only looking back.... We are looking forward... the Lord's Supper anticipates Jesus's second coming... looking forward to the arrival of the kingdom of God whose coming has been secured by Jesus's death.

The Lord's Supper is not only a remembrance but also a proclamation of what we have to look forward to!... Yes remember the pain... the death... the blood.... The broken body... but we are to look forward to all of eternity for everything Jesus has done!

This is the joy of communion!... this is the essence of life!.... Communion.... Bathed in blood... and brokenness.... Yielding eternal life for all who believe!... this is the Good News!... this is the most pivotal truths and events in all of human history.... How can you eat and drink and profane the table!?

Read verse 27

This has been a troublesome verse for many... so important not to get this wrong... when it says "an unworthy manner"... Paul is not saying we need *to be worthy* to take communion!.... He is saying we need to *take it in a worthy manner*....

Many people reverse this... many people will not take communion because they sinned... many people refrain from taking communion because they messed up... I'm going to propose to you that YOU NEED to take communion if you've messed up... if you've sinned.

If communion is for sinless people communion is not for any of us... Paul says that communion is for who?... (24) it is for YOU!

Remember the context.... What do we have?... a bunch of irreverent church attendees who are doing the opposite of koinonia... they are getting drunk... they are abusing the poor among them... they are indulging in all things for themselves.... It's like Paul is saying.... Do you think what you are doing is honoring Jesus Christ as you "take the Lord's Supper?"

You take the elements all the while abusing the poor and gorging your mouths with more food than you can digest.

You are trampling on the Lord's Supper!... you don't even have the Lord's Supper in your minds!... There is no "In remembrance of Me" in anything you're doing.... It's all about you!.... notice nobody ever gets drunk for someone else?.... it's all about themselves....

So what should we all do?

Read verse 28

Examine ourselves... in what manner am I partaking of the bread and the cup?... the bread and the cup are such a blessing... as long as the manner in which you partake if it is God honoring...

Read verse 29

He does not judge the body rightly has been difficult to interpret... some say it refers to the church... the body of Christ.... but most likely it refers to the body of Jesus Christ that was sacrificed on our behalf on the cross....

If you think rightly about what Jesus did for you on the cross... The suffering He endured on your behalf... how could you not take the Lord's Supper in honoring manner... in true remembrance of Him.

We are to partake of the bread in a worthy manner

We are to examine ourselves properly before we partake of the bread and the cup

We are to judge the body rightly.