

The Wreckage and the Fire - Revival in a Corrupt City

THE SLOW DEATH OF SACREDNESS

The Wreckage and the Fire Pt 18

1 Corinthians 11:27-29 (NKJV) - Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord **in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.** But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

The greatest danger facing the Church is not that we reject what is holy. It is that we slowly become so familiar with holy things that we no longer recognize they are holy.

INTRODUCTION = There are some things in life that lose their value the more familiar they become.

- A new car eventually becomes transportation.
- A new house eventually becomes another place to clean.
- Even relationships can slowly drift from treasured to taken for granted.

Familiarity has a strange way of dulling appreciation. Yet there are other things that should never become common.

- A wedding covenant should never become ordinary.
- The birth of a child should never become routine.

- The sacrifice of a soldier should never become insignificant.
- The Presence of God should never become familiar.

The problem is that sacred things rarely disappear overnight. They die slowly. Not because God changes. Not because truth changes. Not because holiness changes. They die because our perception changes.

- Churches do not usually lose the fire of God because they embrace false doctrine overnight.
- They lose the fire because they slowly lose the fear of God.
- The extraordinary becomes ordinary.
- Wonder becomes routine.
- Reverence becomes ritual.
- Conviction becomes convenience.

Until one day people are handling holy things without recognizing they are holy. That is exactly what happened in Corinth.

- Paul is not writing three disconnected lessons about head coverings, church etiquette, and communion. He is exposing one spiritual disease.

The church had lost the ability to distinguish between the sacred and the common.

Before we judge Corinth too quickly, perhaps we should ask ourselves a difficult question.

- Have we become so familiar with the things of God that we no longer stand in awe of them?
- Have we become so accustomed to worship that we sing without wonder?

So accustomed to prayer that we pray without passion? So accustomed to Scripture that we read it without trembling? So accustomed to grace that we forget what it cost?

That is the slow death of sacredness.

Illustration: In the heart of Moscow once stood one of the most magnificent churches in the world, **the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour (PUT UP PICTURE)**. For generations it stood as a symbol of worship, sacrifice, and the majesty of God.

Then in 1931, under Stalin's militant atheist regime, it was demolished with explosives.

- The government's purpose was never simply to destroy a building. Their goal was to destroy the idea that anything could be sacred.

Years later, on the very site where generations had worshiped, one of the largest public swimming pools in the world was constructed.

- Imagine the contrast. Where saints once lifted holy hands...children splashed in the water.
- Where hymns once filled the air...laughter echoed across the pool.

- Where people once encountered God...others came merely for recreation.
- What had once been consecrated became casual. What had once been sacred became common.

Then, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the swimming pool was removed, and the cathedral was rebuilt.

- Because eventually an entire nation realized they had not merely lost a building. They had lost something much deeper. They had lost their sense of the sacred.

Church...I'm afraid the same thing can happen to us.

- Not because someone tears down our churches.
- Not because someone outlaws our faith.
- Not because someone burns our Bibles.

It happens quietly. Prayer becomes routine. Worship becomes predictable. Communion becomes ceremonial. The Bible becomes familiar. The Cross becomes another story. The Presence of God becomes something we schedule instead of Someone we encounter.

Transition to the Text

Everything Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11 revolves around one phrase. **“...not discerning the Lord's body.”**

- The Greek word ***diakrinō*** means to distinguish, to separate, to recognize correctly, to make a proper distinction.

Paul is not saying they rejected Christ. He is saying they no longer recognized Him correctly. They were looking at holy things...and seeing ordinary things.

This has always been God's concern.

- In Leviticus 10:10, the priests were commanded to distinguish between the holy and the common.
- Ezekiel rebuked Israel because the priests no longer distinguished between the holy and the common.

Now Paul says Corinth has fallen into the very same trap. They have lost the ability to discern what is sacred.

The devil rarely begins by convincing us to reject what is holy. He simply seduces us into treating it as though it were ordinary.

That...is the slow death of sacredness.

TRANSITION: As Paul unfolds this chapter, he reveals three sacred gifts God has entrusted to His Church.

- His Order.
- His Family.
- His Sacrifice.

When any one of those becomes common...the fire begins to fade. Because...

The fire never leaves where the fear of God remains!

I want us to look at three ways sacredness dies.

1. **SACREDNESS DIES WHEN WE PROFANE GOD'S ORDER** - (1 Corinthians 11:2-16)

- Before Paul ever talks about communion...he talks about order. That alone should tell us something. Because before God establishes blessing...He always establishes order.
- **Genesis opens in chaos ->The Spirit moves ->God speaks - Order is established ->Then life begins to flourish.**
 - Paul reaches all the way back to creation because this discussion has never been about cloth. It has always been about the sacredness of God's design. **People get lost debating head coverings and completely miss Paul's point.**
- The issue isn't fabric - The issue is whether we honor what God has established.

God's order is sacred because it reflects His own nature. The Father honors the Son. The Son submits to the Father. The Spirit glorifies the Son.

- There is equality of essence with distinction of role. Jesus is fully God, yet in the incarnation He willingly submitted to the Father's will.

- Paul appeals to that pattern as an expression of ordered relationships, not inferiority.

Lucifer's first sin was not immorality - It was the rejection of God's order.

- **Adam and Eve did not first violate a command. They believed they could improve upon God's design.**

Rebellion has always begun with the assumption that my wisdom is greater than God's.

- That is why every revival in history begins with humility.
- Every collapse begins with pride.

Everybody wants authority. Very few want accountability. The Kingdom has never advanced through self-exaltation. It has always advanced through surrender.

The first thing rebellion destroys is not authority. It destroys your ability to recognize what is sacred.

Once God's order is dishonored...it is only a matter of time before God's people are dishonored. That is exactly where Paul goes next.

**2. SACREDNESS DIES WHEN WE POLLUTE GOD'S FAMILY - 1
*Corinthians 11:17-22***

Paul now shifts from God's order to God's people. At first glance, it seems like he has changed subjects. He hasn't. He's still talking about the sacred.

The first part of the chapter asks, "**Do you honor what God has established?**" Now Paul asks, "**Do you honor who God has redeemed?**"

He opens with one of the strongest rebukes in the New Testament:

"When you come together, it is not for the better but for the worse." (v. 17)

Imagine hearing Jesus say, "Your church service did more harm than good."

Why? Because the wealthy believers were humiliating the poor. They came early, ate their meals, even became drunk, while those who had worked all day arrived hungry and ashamed.

The table that was meant to celebrate unity had become another place of division.

They remembered the Cross while forgetting what the Cross accomplished.

- The Cross destroys every barrier that sin creates.

At the foot of the Cross, kings and beggars kneel on the same ground. Rich and poor. Jew and Gentile. Slave and free.

Every title disappears. Every person stands before God on the same foundation - GRACE.

Preaching Moment - Church, look around this room.

- The greatest miracle here isn't the worship or the preaching.
- **The greatest miracle is that people who would never naturally belong together have become one family through Jesus Christ.**

The Church is not held together by preferences - It is only held together by the blood of Jesus Christ.

- If Jesus shed His blood for them...how dare I shed my criticism against them?
- If Jesus welcomed them to His table...who am I to push them away from mine?

You cannot love the Head while dishonoring His Body.

Every person you see bears the image of God and has been purchased by the blood of Christ. Treat them accordingly.

Transition - Paul has reminded us to **honor God's order**. Now he has reminded us to **honor God's family**. Finally, he brings us to the foundation of it all...**God's sacrifice**.

3. SACREDNESS DIES WHEN WE PROFANE GOD'S SACRIFICE - 1 Corinthians 11:23-34

Paul has spoken about God's order. He has spoken about God's family. Now he takes us to the highest expression of sacredness in all of Scripture - The Cross.

Paul reminds them of the words Jesus spoke on the night He was betrayed.

"This is My body..." - "This cup is the new covenant in My blood."
Then he says something that ought to arrest every believer.
"...not discerning the Lord's body."

- The issue wasn't the bread.
- The issue wasn't the cup.
- The issue was their perception.

The Greek word *diakrinō* means to distinguish, to recognize correctly, to make a proper distinction.

- They no longer recognized what Heaven saw.
- Communion had become another church ordinance.
- The Cross had become another story.
- The holy had become common.

This is why Paul reaches back to the words of Jesus.

Communion is not simply about looking backward. It is about bringing the reality of Calvary into the present. Every time we receive the bread and the cup, we proclaim that our only hope, our only righteousness, and our only salvation is found in Jesus Christ.

Communion is not about the elements - IT IS ABOUT THE SAVIOR.

Preaching Moment

- Can I ask you something? Has the Cross become too familiar?
- The first time you realized Jesus loved you...you wept.
- The first time you understood He died in your place...it overwhelmed you.

What changed?

- The Cross hasn't become less powerful. The blood hasn't lost its power. The empty tomb hasn't lost its wonder.

The question is...

Have we become too familiar with what Heaven still calls holy?

My concern is not that the Cross ever lost its power. My concern is this: Has the Church lost its wonder!

- Don't let me become professional around Your presence.
- Don't let me preach about fire while no longer burning.
- Don't let me talk about Calvary while forgetting what it cost.
- Don't let me become an expert in things that should still leave me speechless.

I refuse to bury the sacred awe of God in the cemetery of familiarity.

CONCLUSION

- Everything in this chapter has been moving to this moment. Paul isn't simply teaching us how to receive communion. He's teaching us how to recover the sacred
- He reminds us...
 - Honor God's order.
 - Honor God's family.
 - Never lose your wonder of God's sacrifice.

Isaiah saw the holiness of God and cried, "*Woe is me!*" Peter saw the glory of Christ and fell at His feet. John saw the risen Savior and collapsed as though dead. No one had to teach them reverence. **Holiness produced it.**

Church, perhaps the greatest judgment God could ever allow is not to remove His presence...but to leave His presence among people who no longer recognize it.

- What has become common...that Heaven still calls holy?
- Has prayer become routine? Has worship become predictable? Has the Bible become familiar? Has the Church become optional? Has the Cross become ordinary?

Today, before we receive these elements, Paul gives us one simple instruction:

"Let a man examine himself..."

Not examine your neighbor. Not examine another church. Not examine another believer. **Examine yourself.**

Ask the Holy Spirit to restore what familiarity has stolen. Ask Him to awaken wonder where routine has settled in. Ask Him to give you a fresh vision of the holiness of God.

**The fire did not go out in Corinth because they lost the gifts.
The fire went out because they lost the fear of God.**

Church...The devil rarely steals holy things. He simply convinces us to treat them as common.