

The Lord's Supper

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[0 : 00] Have you ever thought about how everywhere we go, we're surrounded by symbols? Some of you may have come in this morning and you saw a police car or a police officer, maybe a star on the side of the car.

Some of you may have had an up-close personal picture when you got stopped for speeding. That happens sometimes. Most married people in this room, you look down, you see a symbol, this wedding ring.

Look over here, you see the symbol of that flag. I hope that when you came in this morning, you saw these trays here and thought about what they contained, the symbol of bread, the symbol of that cup.

That's what we're going to be looking at this morning. You know, some of these symbols, we just know. Maybe we're taught growing up, we know how to treat them, how to show respect or how not to disrespect them.

For example, that flag. There's a lot of different ways to show respect in terms of the place it's displayed, the way that it's folded, the way that it's even disposed of when it's worn out.

[1 : 35] Do you know, though, how to treat the symbols of the Lord's Supper with respect? Do you know how to observe the Lord's Supper in a way that will truly honor the Lord who has given us this ceremony?

The Apostle Paul explains in great detail for us 1 Corinthians chapter 11, what the Lord's Supper is all about, how not to disrespect it, how to prepare ourselves even for observing it.

I want you to look with me this morning in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. We're not going to look at the whole chapter, but the section dealing with the Lord's Supper is in verses 17 through 34.

The first section I just want to summarize for you, that's where Paul condemns the abuse of the Lord's Supper. 17 through 22. Have you ever thought that the longest section in the New Testament related to the Lord's Supper, what gives us the actual details of how Jesus instituted it, the earliest details written in Scripture, it's in the context of a church that abused it, that didn't take it seriously. That's what verses 17 through 22 is actually condemning. See, the Lord's Supper in the church at Corinth, took place as a part of a church-wide meal, what we might call a covered dish supper.

[3 : 11] That was fine. That was not the problem. The problem in that church was there were some wealthy, affluent members, and they brought good dishes.

You know, they brought probably pork tenderloin. No, they wouldn't have brought that. Some of them were Jewish. It would have offended them, wouldn't it? They brought good food.

That's what they had at home. That's what they were used to. And they brought their well-filled baskets, and they spread it out for one another and absolutely offended the poorer, less affluent church members who did not have food like theirs, or maybe not enough at all.

And so instead of coming together and observing the Lord's Supper in a way that would honor the Lord and bring them together as a church family, focusing on what Jesus had done for them, the way they observed it, it divided the church.

It caused hard feelings. And Paul actually condemns it as dishonoring to the Lord, and he calls them on the carpet for it.

[4 : 31] In fact, he says in verse 20, we're in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, that what they were doing was so far from what Jesus intended that it did not even deserve to be called the Lord's Supper.

Look at it. When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat. This is here for us to understand. There's a way to come here as members of the church and do it all wrong.

Dishonor the Lord and not in any way bring us together as a church family with a singular focus on what Jesus has done for us.

We need to observe this meal. We need to do what we're doing this morning in a way that will honor the Lord Jesus for sure, but also unite us in our common faith, trust, confidence in who Jesus is and

what He did for us when He died on the cross.

Paul explains the way that we need to go about this by telling us how Jesus instituted it in verses 23 through 26.

[5 : 50] I want you to pause that for just a moment. We're going to come back to it and read it as we actually observe or take in these elements. Let's look at really the lengthiest section.

Verses 27 through 34, where we are warned to seriously prepare to observe the Lord's Supper. Paul's writing to a church that had all kinds of issues and he tells them, you can do it right. Even you can do it right, he's telling these people.

But it applies to us today. We need to observe the Lord's Supper the way that would most please the Lord and he tells us, beginning in verse 27, read it with me.

Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks of the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

[6 : 53] Let a person examine himself then and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

That is why many of you are weak and ill and some have died. You may be reading a translation that says, and some have fallen asleep. Paul likes to use that way of describing death for Christians.

Verse 31, but if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

The Lord's Supper is a serious time. It's a serious time for us as Pickens First Baptist Church this morning. We are warned here not to do this in an unworthy way.

What's he talking about? Look at verse 27, the word unworthy. In the context, that refers specifically to the division that was taking place in that church that I told you about at the beginning.

[8 : 07] But I want you to think about why there was division. Why did some of those church members exclude others? There was pride for sure.

There was selfishness. There was just plain selfishness and greed. There was prejudice. No, it wasn't racial prejudice.

Socioeconomic. They were class conscious. Bottom line is, these church family members, they didn't love one another.

They didn't treat the whole family like members of the family. They just weren't acting like God's children.

They were not loving one another as brothers and sisters are supposed to. I know brothers and sisters, some of y'all got in a fight before you left home this morning.

[9 : 09] Some of you probably got in a fight in the car. Come in here. Some of you, parents threatened you. I can remember being, I'll use the word back in my day, whipped with a belt with my mother like this from behind.

Brothers and sisters, a lot of times, don't love one another or don't act like they love one another. But you know, deep down, your brother or your sister, they are special.

They've got the same blood flowing through them. And you may some days fight and try to kill one another, but don't let somebody outside the family do that. You'll take up for them.

Because the family is supposed to be tight. They're supposed to be real love. And deep down, you know what I'm talking about. Well, that is supposed to be how we feel about one another.

We have a common Father. We have a common Lord. We're partaking of a common meal that focuses on what our Lord has done for us. And so we need to examine ourselves.

[10 : 26] We need to make sure that we are not guilty of pride. Maybe not in relation to one another, but in any way.

You know, this is a warning about coming to the Lord's table in an unworthy way. That could apply to any unconfessed sin. Anything that you're refusing to obey God about, that is a hindrance to your coming into His presence and observing this Lord's Supper in a way that would please Him.

None of us, we know this, none of us are worthy truly to observe the Lord's Supper. But God has acted in grace in sending His Son to die for us.

Jesus willingly, out of mercy and love, gave up His life to pay the penalty for our sins. We can come to the Lord's table in a worthy way, trusting in Jesus Christ for our salvation and humbly seeking God's help to love one another like real brothers and sisters.

It's important, as we observe this meal this morning, that we examine ourselves right now before we partake of it. To come to the Lord's table with unconfessed sin or listen to this, a casual, flippant, I don't give a rip attitude.

[11 : 59] It's important, the attitude that we come this morning, understanding that these elements, this bread and this cup, that symbolizes the Lord Jesus' body and His blood.

It symbolizes Him and giving His life for us. This is one time when you come to church that you really and truly need to be serious, you need to be focused, you need to be thinking about who Jesus is and what He's done and desire by your attitude to honor Him, to thank Him as you partake of this meal.

If you don't, if you refuse to, it's like bringing judgment upon yourself according to verse 29. Look at it. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

That could be referring, probably is referring to the body there, not the body of Christ, but the church body. He is writing here specifically to this church over the way they're mistreating one another, the divisions that are happening.

But the point is, we've got to judge ourselves, examine ourselves, look closely at ourselves. Is there anything that would hinder us from real fellowship with the Lord and with one another?

[13 : 25] In the Corinthian church, this judgment included sickness and even death according to verse 30. Now the truth is, God does not often discipline His people this severely.

That's why many of us are here this morning. Right? If God judged all of our sin like He did occasionally in the New Testament, we wouldn't survive either. But God takes sin seriously. So seriously that at times He made examples. In Acts 5, a man by the name of Ananias and his wife Sapphira, they were killed because they lied to the Holy Spirit.

There were people who so abused the Lord's Supper, so dishonored God by their attitude or actions, the guy either inflicted them with sickness or just killed them outright to make a point. Severe discipline. But let's not overlook the fact that today, right now, God still takes sin seriously and He does discipline His children, us, when we need it.

[14 : 34] That's because He loves us according to Hebrews chapter 12. Look, for the Lord disciplines the one He loves and chastises every son whom He receives.

God disciplines us for our good. He disciplines us to correct us, to bring us back to Himself. Sometimes to keep us from doing worse to ourselves.

The best way to avoid God's discipline, verse 31, is to judge ourselves. The word judge here carries out the idea of serious self-examination.

One way you can avoid God's discipline is to examine yourself. Look at yourself in light of God's Word. Right now, let's just take some time.

Ask God to help you to seriously examine yourself just like we're told here in verse 28. If you need to confess sin to God right now, do that.

[15 : 42] Just tune me out and just agree with God about what He's convicting you about. Change your mind about it.

Turn from it. If you're a Christian trust that Jesus paid the penalty for that sin, ask God to forgive you right now.

It could be that your problem is not between just you and God. It could be your problem is with someone else. You see, that was going on in the church at Corinth.

And if you're out of fellowship with another Christian, and let's think about it as this passage is talking about it, in particular, somebody in this church, you need to ask God to show you what you need to do in order that you and that person can be reconciled.

Now, it may be that you already know it's obvious something's been said, something's been done. there's no doubt. You know what you need to say or do to initiate the reconciliation process.

[16 : 53] But if you know somebody's got something against you, there is a problem, you don't know what it is. Ask God to give you the wisdom to know how to approach that person to try to find out what it is so that you can be reconciled with them.

You know, the Scripture is real clear. If we will confess our sins, God will forgive us. Scripture says in 1 John 1, 9, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You can be forgiven. Scripture is also clear that we have a responsibility to live at peace with all people, at least as far as we're concerned.

Look at what Paul said in Romans chapter 12 and verse 18. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Sometimes it's not possible. Sometimes something happens and you want to make it right but somebody's written you off. You so offended them, you so wronged them that they don't want to forgive you.

[18 : 03] They don't want to listen to your apology. If that's the case, you can't do anything about it. The Scripture is clear if possible. So far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

But you do what you can do. You make sure that the problem's not your unwillingness to reconcile. As we observe the Lord's Supper this morning, every Christian is invited to participate.

You do not have to be a member of this church. But the Scripture is clear that only Christians who are seeking to live in fellowship with the Lord and their fellow Christians should participate.

So with that in mind, let's look now at how Jesus intends for us to observe the Lord's Supper in verses 23 through 26. In verses 23 and following, Jesus tells us.

Paul is telling us what the Lord revealed to him. Look at it. Verse 23. For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and said, This is my body which is for you.

[19 : 27] Do this in remembrance of me. Jesus took the bread and said that. He held up the bread and said something.

He held up the bread and said, This is my body. What he meant was that the body, the bread represents or symbolizes his body.

Jesus was not saying that the bread was literally his body or actually became his body. That's the Roman Catholic Church's incorrect teaching.

What they call the doctrine of transubstantiation. That the bread and the wine actually turns into the body of Jesus. To be honest with you, that's just ridiculous.

That's not what Jesus meant. It's not what Jesus means now. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he was standing beside them with them.

[20 : 29] And when he took bread and said, This is my body. They all knew Jesus is standing there. The bread symbolizes his body.

The cup, the wine in it symbolized his blood. No one had any confusion. It's like Jesus giving other analogies.

He talked about I am the door. You think anybody who actually heard him thought he would thought of himself as a real literal door? He said, I am the vine. Did people think he was actually a literal vine growing somewhere?

No. We understand symbols. That's what Jesus was saying. He's speaking figuratively. this is my body, he says, which is for you or given for you, it says in Luke 22, 19.

He's describing giving his life. He's describing dying for us. The scripture says it real clearly.

[21 : 40] In the presentation of the gospel presented in 1 Corinthians 15, Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. He gave his body, he gave his life for us.

And then, do this in remembrance of me calls for us to carefully reflect, think deeply about what the Lord has done for us.

We must never fail when we come to the Lord's table to make much of his death for our sins. I mean, this is the basis for our salvation.

God accepts us because Jesus paid the penalty for your sins. You think of it personally. As you take that bread, just a few minutes, you're going to be holding it in your hand.

You think about the fact, Jesus gave his life in order to save you. Think to yourself as you hold it. Jesus gave his life in order to save me from the penalty of my sin, which is eternal death, which is eternal separation from God in hell.

[22 : 50] That's how much he loves you. That's how much our Heavenly Father loves us to send Jesus to do that. Let's prepare.

Let's pray together now. Would you join with me? Amen. Amen. Amen. Absolutely. Amen. Amen. Jesus is a Christ.