

## Intro:

1. I'm quite glad to be finished with the first part of chapter 11 and able to move into a wonderful passage that focuses on our Lord Jesus.
2. Today's passage addresses the observance of Communion. It actually has several different names:
  - a. Holy Communion, the Eucharist (meaning giving thanks), Sacrament of the Table, the Blessed Sacrament, or The Lord's Supper,
  - b. It is a Christian sacrament or ordinance, generally considered to be a remembrance or re-enactment of the **Last** Supper, the final meal that Jesus Christ shared with his disciples before his arrest and crucifixion, during which he gave them bread, saying, "*This is my body*", and wine, saying, "*This is my blood*".
3. The Last Supper was observed in association with the Jewish observance of Passover.
  - a. Their annual celebration/remembrance of when God delivered the children of Israel out the slavery of Egypt.
  - b. Recorded in: Matthew 26:26–30; Mark 14:22–26; and Luke 22:14–20

**Read 1 Cor 11:17-34 and Pray<sup>1</sup>**

1. I love that Jesus loved to eat.
  - a. Some of His most notable miracles involved food and drink.
  - b. He regularly ate with sinners and tax collectors.
  - c. It was over a meal that Jesus responded to many of their questions.
  - d. Two passages of note:
    - i. Revelation 3:20 *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise marked, all scriptures taken from the New King James Version. © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

- ii. Revelation 19:7–9 <sup>7</sup> *Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.* <sup>8</sup> *And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.* <sup>9</sup> *Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' "* *And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*

- 2. And it was over the course of a meal that Jesus imparted to us a very meaningful observance where by elements of food and drink would be used to help us remember who we are and where we are headed.
  - a. But the Christians in Corinth were messing up the observance and missing the point of it.

1 Corinthians 11:17 <sup>17</sup> **Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse.**

- 1. The phrase “**come together**” is used 5 times, also in verses 18, 20, 33, 34 and it speaks of gathering as a church body.
  - a. Of course they did not have church buildings at that time, but the lack of a building didn’t prevent them from gathering together for corporate worship.
- 2. The person today who tries to fool themselves by saying, “*I don’t need to go to church to worship God*” is acting contrary to biblical instruction (Heb 10:25 – do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together)
  - a. And they’re ignoring the biblical example and precedent set by the first century church.
- 3. With regard to the Corinthian Christians, they were keeping the traditions and customs Paul taught them, this much we know from 1 Cor 11:2.
  - a. But there were two significant things that needed to be addressed and corrected with regard to their group gatherings.

1 Corinthians 11:18 <sup>18</sup> **For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.**

1. First, I want to focus on the phrase “**in part I believe it**”
  - a. Within most people resides a natural curiosity; we want to know what’s going on. No one wants to be left in the dark.
  - b. But there’s a fine line between ‘*being in the know*’ and lending ear to gossip.
  - c. The bible condemns gossiping, which is also called tale bearing and whispering.
2. In this little community, news travels fast, but I challenge you, don’t be one who spreads gossip or even lends ear to it.
  - a. But what happens when you weren’t looking for it, but you do hear some gossip?
    - i. Remember what Paul said, “**in part I believe it**”
    - ii. In other words, what Paul is saying is that you can’t believe everything you hear.
  - b. Paul was able to believe some of what he heard because some of that information came from a trusted source...
    - i. Those of Chloe’s household (1 Cor 1:11) had informed him.
    - ii. Not by gossip, but as a matter of concern over where things were headed.
    - iii. Notice, Paul mentions the source of his information in 1 Cor 1:11. This is what differentiates it from gossip.
    - iv. With gossip people say, “*You didn’t hear this from me...*” or “*Don’t say anything, but I heard...*”
3. The first problem Paul addresses is divisions within the church, specifically while celebrating the Lord’s Supper.
  - a. But *true* Christianity broke down those barriers.
  - b. With Christ... Galatians 3:28      *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

- c. *It has been passed down that once when the Duke of Wellington remained to take communion at his parish church, a very poor old man went up the opposite aisle, and reaching the communion table, knelt down close by the side of the Duke. Someone came and touched the poor man on the shoulder, and whispered to him to move further away, or to rise and wait until the Duke had received the bread and wine. But the eagle eye and quick ear of the great commander caught the meaning of that touch and that whisper. He clasped the old man's hand and held it to prevent his rising; and in a reverential undertone but most distinctly, said, "Do not move; we are all equal here."<sup>2</sup>*
- d. The problem was that the believers in Corinth were willfully separating themselves to the exclusion of others.
- e. Small groups have their place, but we should still be interacting and connecting with other Christians outside of our small group.

1 Corinthians 11:19 <sup>19</sup> **For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.**

1. This is an interesting and wise observation:
  - a. The word **approved** means tested and found genuine or sincere
2. Divisions and factions test the character of a man; those who are truly genuine or sincere in the faith will be recognized. How so...?
  - a. They are the ones who **didn't** fall into the trap of dividing themselves.
  - b. They are peacemakers and Jesus said in Matthew 5:9, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.*"

1 Corinthians 11:20-22 <sup>20</sup> **Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. <sup>21</sup> For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. <sup>22</sup> What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.**

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<sup>2</sup> Bible Illustrations Book One. #389. © 1995 by AMG International, Inc.

1. The Corinthian Christians thought they were observing the Lord's Supper, but Paul boldly tells them otherwise.
  - a. Even though they had the elements of Communion or the Lord's Supper, what they were doing was not truly partaking of the Lord's Supper.
2. Historical setting of the early church:
  - a. The early church was very social.
  - b. The early believers commonly gathered for a communal meal called the *Agape (love) Meal*.
  - c. Partaking of the Lord's Supper often followed the Agape Meal.
  - d. READ Acts 2:42-27 (God's Word is for Everyone)
3. I think the formally established church buildings have done more of a disservice to Christianity than they are helpful.
  - a. People have come to think that the building is the church. We say we are "going to church."
  - b. And people have come to expect that "the church" will provide religious services and lead in observing religious sacraments.
  - c. But it wasn't that way; for about the first 300 years the church was comprised of people who simply met in private homes.
  - d. Generally speaking, the people were simple, sincere, cooperative, and compassionate toward those in need.
4. So what was the problem in Corinth? Verses 21 and 22 lays it out. It can be described in one word: **Selfishness!**
  - a. The hungry people were pigging out on the Agape Meal with no regard to others.
  - b. Some were getting drunk before they had even finished the meal so when it came time for Communion they were already plastered.
  - c. And there were some who were completely overlooked and didn't get anything to eat, they went hungry.

5. In part, I can relate to this. When I was a young Marine, I ate so much food. My metabolism was crazy high!
  - a. Sonya would feed me before we went to someone's house for dinner so I didn't eat all the food that was available.
  - b. Without even knowing it, Sonya was applying Paul's principle found in verse 22 of eating in your own home so that you don't despise and shame others or yourself by your actions.
  
6. There was also excessive drinking taking place.
  - a. I've never seen good things come from drinking!
  - b. I've never heard someone say in a positive light, "*Guess what happened to me after I finished drinking all night long at the bar?*"
  - c. I've never heard someone say, "*Boy my marriage has gotten so much better and my professional career has really taken off since I started drinking all the time.*"
  - d. **I have** seen person after person lose something after drinking and I've never seen anyone gain something from drinking.
  - e. It's like Russian roulette – it's good and fun for a time, but it is eventually going to bite you in the rear.
  - f. Now think of how many people you've run into that now say, "*I don't drink anymore.*" Why do they say that? Usually because they got bit.

So if they are doing it all wrong, then what's the right way to observe the Lord's Supper? Paul's about to tell them:

1 Corinthians 11:23 <sup>23</sup> **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;**

1. If I were Paul, I'd have a hard time not being really irritated with the Christians in Corinth because Paul had already taught them this.
  - a. Notice the past tense words, received and delivered.

Jesus took the bread...

1 Corinthians 11:24-26 <sup>24</sup> 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." <sup>25</sup> 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." <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

1. Simply stated: The Lord's Supper or Communion is a time when the believer remembers that like bread, Jesus' body was broken on His journey to the cross.
  - a. And like wine, Jesus' blood was poured out in His death on the cross.
  - b. I'll explain more in just a few minutes.
2. Paul's words "For as often" as you do this means there is no set timetable, nor is there an established frequency.
  - a. We are free to observe the Lord's Supper as often as you'd like.
    - i. As a church, we usually do it about once a month; loosely scheduled around the first Sunday of the month but I will change that from time to time based on the particular passage we are covering.
    - ii. For example, we will partake of Communion today to complete our study of this topic.
3. In Paul's instructions we also see that there is no priestly representation required.
  - a. The believers would partake of the Lord's Supper regularly after they finished an Agape Meal in their home.
  - b. And we too can partake of communion in our own home with our Christian family and friends.
  - c. Don't forget that we are all part of a holy and royal priesthood in and through Christ our High Priest. (1 Peter 2).

1 Corinthians 11:27-29 <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

1. It does not say "if you are unworthy", it says if in an unworthy manner you eat and drink

- a. Paul is not speaking of the man, but the manner.
  - b. Communion is for the sinner who is saved by Grace!
2. But it is unworthy if you partake in a...
- a. Ritualistic manner.
    - i. Jesus taught that we should avoid vain repetitions thinking we'll be heard because of our many words.
  - b. Superstitious manner.
    - i. Communion does not make you more holy.
    - ii. Communion cannot save you. Only Jesus Christ can.
  - c. Sinful manner.
    - i. If we are walking in sin, then self-evaluation and repentance is appropriate before partaking.
  - d. Frivolous manner.
    - i. Not serious in attitude and behavior.
    - ii. Psalm 51:17            *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.*
3. “not discerning the Lord's body” could mean Jesus’ body or the church.
- a. To partake of Communion in a unworthy manner harms the Lord’s body.  
How so...?

1 Corinthians 11:30            <sup>30</sup> **For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.**

- 1. Not all sickness is God’s judgment, but at the same time, scriptures indicate that sickness and premature death can be consciences of sin in our lives.
- 2. The word **sleep** is a reference to the dead.
  - a. Christians sleep. At death, your body lies in the ground and soul and spirit go to be with the Lord until the resurrection when you are given a new body.

3. I've heard some say, "you better explain that someone who is not saved should not partake of the Lord's Supper because they are bringing judgment upon themselves."
  - a. An unbeliever already has a judgment upon them. They are condemned to hell – eternal damnation if they don't repent and find salvation in Jesus Christ alone.
  - b. Paul is speaking of believers.

1 Corinthians 11:31-32 <sup>31</sup> For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

1. The Lord often gives us the opportunity to correct ourselves, but when we don't, the Lord will often lovingly intervene by disciplining us.
2. According to Hebrews 12 we know that the Lord chastens those whom He loves.

1 Corinthians 11:33-34a <sup>33</sup> Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. <sup>34</sup> But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment.

1. When you are in the presence of other believers, the Lord's Supper is something that should be celebrated together.
  - a. Wait for one another.
  - b. Take whatever steps are necessary to bring your appetite under control so that you and your brother or sister can properly partake of the Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians 11:34b **And the rest I will set in order when I come.**

1. These other unmentioned problems were things that God chose not to include for our instruction.
  - a. They were problems that would be addressed when Paul visited them in person.

## When partaking of Communion

1. When partaking of communion we should:
  - a. Look back in remembrance of the finished work on the cross
    - i. Not the process of death on the cross, but the purpose – to make a way for sinners.
    - ii. We should not be focused on the pain, but on the gain!
  - b. Look in – Christians should take steps to avoid partaking in an unworthy manner.
  - c. Look up—in thanksgiving to God just as Jesus gave thanks.
  - d. Look around – wait for one another for we are a part of one another.
  - e. Look forward – Christ’s second coming.
    - i. By partaking of the Lord’s Supper we are proclaiming the sufficiency of His Death and Resurrection till He comes again.
    - ii. When is He coming? I think very soon!
      1. Pakistan has experienced epidemic flooding.
      2. Russia will start loading a nuclear reactor in Iran with fuel next week; what will Israel’s arch enemy use this facility for?
2. Quote for perspective: Spurgeon said, *“Never mind that bread and wine, unless you can use them as folks often use their spectacles. What do they use them for? To look at? No, to look through them. So, use the bread and wine as a pair of spectacles. Look through them, and do not be satisfied until you can say, “Yes, yes, I can see the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”*