

Communion Sermon

By Rev. Richard Sharpe

Remember the Sacrifice

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:23–32

Introduction: The Corinthian church was a troubled church with many problems. We say that all churches have problems because they have people in them. The people in this particular church of Corinth were people who had no problem putting up with sin among other church members. They had no reservations against treating some people better than others. They had no qualms about withholding their food from those who were less fortunate. At the beginning of the church there was a fellowship dinner called a “love feast,” which was followed by communion. Some call this the Agape meal and still practice it in modern churches. Everyone was to bring something to this feast and share what they brought with everyone who attended, much like our modern pot-luck dinners. Imagine someone withholding their pot-luck stew from certain members of this congregation; that’s what was happening! Paul strongly opposed this behavior. In his letter, he warned them that they were not honoring the memory of Christ’s death for their sins. In fact, he told them that they were sinning at the communion table. He wanted it to stop. Listen to this passage as we unpack it.

1. Proper elements for the Lord’s Supper (vv. 23–26).

“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; 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.’ 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.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”

Paul received instructions from Christ regarding the supper. Paul was an apostle who accepted Christ after His crucifixion. He was one who used to persecute the church. He was saved in a miraculous manner. Paul went away for three years to be instructed by Christ; one of the

things he was instructed in was this supper. So he shared what he had learned with authority to the Corinthian church. They were instructed in the proper way to celebrate the Lord's death.

- a. *The bread.* The bread was to represent the body of Christ that died on the Cross for our sins. He suffered many abuses on his way to the Cross. His body was in rough shape on the Cross. He suffered on the Cross. He gave His all for us.
- b. *The cup.* The cup was to represent the blood of Christ that He shed on the Cross for our sins. The Bible says that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin (Heb. 9:22). Christ had to shed His blood for us. The animal sacrifices in the Old Testament looked forward to the time when Christ would shed His blood for the sins of the world. This sacrifice was the final one needed to save the world. His blood was enough for all those who accept Him as their personal Savior. Paul tells us that celebrating with these elements reminds the people of the church of Christ's sacrifice. We so often and so easily forget; we often complain about small sacrifices we must make, ignoring the incredible sacrifice of Jesus' body and blood!

2. Proper attitude for the Lord's Supper (vv. 27–29).

"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."

There are two ways someone could take the Lord's Supper. Paul makes this clear to the members of this church. He makes it plain to us as well. What makes the difference?

- a. *Those who examine themselves before taking the supper.* The ones who examine themselves before they partake of the supper are the ones who are taking it in a worthy manner. For what are they examining themselves? For sin; sin keeps us from a right relationship with the Lord. When we examine ourselves, we are to confess it. God has promised to forgive us and restore us to a proper fellowship with Him (1 John 1:9).
- b. *Those who are judged for not examining themselves.* This group is made up of individuals in the church who choose to come to

church flippantly, not taking seriously sin that may be plaguing their lives. They might be people who have accepted Christ as their Savior but are living an uncommitted life. They are those that we sometimes call “Sunday Christians;” those outside the church call these people “hypocrites.” This group is known to the pastor as individuals who sit, soak, and sour in the pews. They are usually the ones who find fault in everything in the church. They are those who normally are not involved in daily Bible reading. There are many things that separate them from God. This type of person should reflect and repent before taking the Lord’s Supper, for the Lord will not tolerate this behavior; there are consequences:

“For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world” (vv. 30–32).

- i. Many become weak and sickly. This type of judgment is called “chastening.” Those individuals who have accepted Christ as their Savior, but are not living for the Lord, will be judged by the Lord. If any of you is living a life of sin, but is not being chastened or disciplined, check yourself to be sure you are a true believer. The Bible says, “For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives” (Heb. 12:6). We see many Christians who are in this condition. I once visited a hospital room where a woman was having a health issue. She said to me privately that she knew she was having this problem because she was involved in an affair. She confessed the sin to the Lord and she was healed. Before you involve yourself in the remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice, repent, be restored, and renewed.
- ii. Many die. This judgment is terminal. The Bible uses the term “sleep” when it talks about a Christian’s death. Here we find that some Christians die prematurely because of sin in their lives. I had a teenager in one of my churches who had a problem with drinking. He came to the parsonage on a regularly basis wondering what to do with this problem. I gave him some suggestions, which he never followed. He “needed” to be with his friends. One night the friends challenged him to drink a bottle of whiskey after he had consumed a lot of

beer. He died of the combination. He knew what needed to be done, but he didn't want to give up his friends. Friends, don't let it go this far. Cut sin off at its roots, for Scripture tells us, "when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:15).

Conclusion: The Corinthian church had some real problems. The church today has many of the same problems. There are Christians who come to the Lord's table without examining their lives. They are challenging God's Word; they will lose. God is going to deal with His children. If you are here today and have not been examining your life for sin, I would challenge you today to examine your relationship with the Lord. Are you in fellowship with Him? Are you keeping short accounts with Him? If there is sin in your life, are you willing to confess it, turn from it, and follow the Lord more closely? Only you can make that decision. The Lord's Supper can be an experience of worship and worthiness, a time of repentance and remembrance, or it can be a time of disobedience which will result in God's ultimate discipline. Let's spend some time in prayer and self-examination before we partake in the Lord's Supper.