

Discerning the Lord's Body

1 Corinthians 11:27-32

17 Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. 18 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. 19 For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. 20 Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. 21 For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. 22 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. 23 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; 24 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." 25 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." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. 27 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. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.



The church in Corinth has followed the tradition of the church laid down by the Lord Jesus. They have gathered regularly to participate in the Lord's supper. It has been added at the end of what was likely a weekly communal dinner which was called a love feast. It was a Corinthian church pot luck.

When the church first began in Jerusalem, we learn in Acts 2, this new community of faith met regularly to celebrate the Lord's table and at the same time they gladly began to share things in common with one another. They gave away their food to one another, their possessions to one another, they opened their homes to one another. *We are told that they had all things in common.* Now the church in Corinth wasn't functioning in the same level of communal living as that church in Jerusalem had, but that idea of giving to one another was still expressed in this **love feast**... this pot luck meal where each family would bring some food and they would eat all together. The wealthy family would bring the expensive and finer foods and poor might add humbler elements and together they all were to eat well. Then at the end they would set aside time to hold the Lord's Table together. **But this tradition had become**

tarnished. Some families were arriving early... the poor likely coming in late after their work for the day was done, slaves and common laborers released from their masters. These wealthier members were not waiting for the others but eating their own food before the others arrived. So, the poor remained hungry. Also, it appears some of these were drinking to excess. **Ephesians 5:18** commands that we not be drunk with wine but filled with the Spirit. **Ephesians 5:19** teaches that the result of this filling will be that, in the Spirit, we will sing to one another with songs, hymn and spiritual songs. Now, you cannot be under the influence of the Spirit when under the influence of something else. In our passage persons were drinking until it was influencing their behavior and the Spirit was quenched and there was no harmonizing song, instead there was a discordant note. **It was a mockery of the love feast and of the table of the Lord that was set before them.**

This discordant fellowship in the body was expressive of a discordant life in these individuals. Their hearts and their spirits were not right before the Lord. As such there was a consequence. God sent a correcting measure to them. They were getting sick. They were dying prematurely. God was not giving them health and sustaining power to their lives so that they may live out the grace of God vibrantly as a witness. Let me make a point just here...

1. Do not make the mistake of severing in your thinking your body from your spirit.

We know that our bodies are not the whole of us. We are not mere physical and material beings. We have a spirit as well and immaterial part of us. The bible actually says that for the believer in Christ, *to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.* This is a great promise to us. That said we are not to be dualistic in our thinking. We don't think our spirits are one thing completely separate from our bodies and that there is not interchange between the two. **We do not think our bodies are unimportant or somehow that they stand outside the scope of God's saving work.** Through the saving work of Jesus Christ, we anticipate the full redemption of our bodies one day in the resurrection. But we also see Christ at work in our bodies in this present age. We understand that we were purchased by Christ blood - spirit, soul and body. Because we were purchased, both spirit and body, by the blood of Jesus Christ from sin and its judgment, God has commanded that we glorify God with our bodies. Right now, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Right now, we are commanded to glorify God in our bodies. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** "*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God with your body.*" Yes. At the cross of Christ, you were redeemed from your sins and from the bondage of sin. And it wasn't just the immaterial part of you that was redeemed, bought back from sin and slavery to sin and the condemnation of sin. Your body was bought back to; it was redeemed along with your soul and spirit. That is why the Paul doesn't say, *glorify God*

with your Spirit but instead he says *glorify God with your body*. Be clear. God has bought you spirit and body by the blood of Jesus Christ. And because your body belongs to God He has promised the benefits of sustained health and energy so you may use your body for His glory. **Romans 8:11** says that the Spirit of God who dwells in our bodies dwells there to give life to our mortal bodies. “*If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life (quicken) to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*” Five times in the new testament the word mortal is used and each time it is used to refer to living Christians. Spurgeon spoke on this passage teaching on the Lord who heals us and said this is a promise to us that we may have a foretaste of the resurrection life that will one day come upon our dead bodies. God is promising here to give health and life to our bodies in the here and now.

Again along this same line of thought. This passage illustrates this truth that spiritual health impacts bodily health. There is sin taking place. A spiritual discord happening. And the impact of this among other things is that God chastizes these discordant lives with sickness and even with early deaths.

Transition: Next let’s consider what is the reason for this discord that is taking a toll on the very health of some in the church. In **1 Corinthians 11:29** Paul says that they are not *discerning the body of our Lord*. There is actually some disagreement as to exactly what Paul is referring to. Some believe he is saying that these Christians are not fully thinking through and discerning the physical body of Christ symbolized in the bread and wine of the Lord’s table. Others think Paul is saying that they are not discerning or taking into proper consideration the spiritual body of Christ; that is the church as they participate together in the Lord’s table. Let’s look at both ideas.

2. They were not discerning the personal body of Christ.

They were failing to consider the wonder of all that Christ offered to them in giving up for them His body in sacrifice for their sins. They were not grateful for the life Christ offered to them in His body. They were not discerning the moral glory of the life Christ lived on their behalf.

Man was created for the good pleasure of God. Shortly after his creation he sinned and with that sin the pleasure God took in man was taken from him. Our sin robbed God of his pleasure in us. You will recall in **Genesis 6:6** that at the time of the flood we read that God *repented or regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart*. God no longer took pleasure in the one he created in his image. But then our Lord Christ came in the body and Jesus lived a perfect, happy, dependent obedience life before God the father. And just before Christ went to the cross God the Father spoke out of heaven and said in **Matthew 17:5** “*This is my beloved in Son in whom I am well pleased.*” **God took pleasure in the Lord Jesus.** Listen, when Jesus laid his body

out upon the cross he laid his morally beautiful and sinless, God pleasing life down to take the place of our marred and sinful, God grieving life. And in that moment Jesus also offered up to God his own pleasing life on our behalf. In other words, God had been grieved in man since the fall and his pleasure in us was lost and Jesus in a human body brought to God a humanity He could once again take pleasure in. God takes pleasure in us... living breathing believers because Christ in His body once again made God happy with humanity and Christ that God pleasing body up for us. Not discerning the Lord's body would mean you didn't know or appreciate the way God has made it possible to take pleasure in you. It is through the life of Jesus and you partaking of it.

How do we then discern or properly consider the body of our Lord Jesus? **Well we remember** the life he lived in that body and the life he offers up for us and to us through it. **Remember** Jesus didn't just give us his body as a sacrifice for our sins. He gave it as a sustenance for our lives. **We remember him. By the way you can only remember someone you know.** You can only remember someone you have personally met and encountered. The person who has never received Christ Jesus... never received, by faith, Jesus Christ to live by the Spirit in their own body cannot remember Him and cannot remember anything He has done for them. You have to have met someone and known someone and walked and talked with someone to remember them. **Ex.** We may think about George Washington and consider the life he lived. But no one here can remember him. I can't say to anyone here, "*Hey remember good old Abe Lincoln.*" Can't say it. But there are those who know what I am saying when I say to you just now. "*Remember Jesus. Remember how He lived for you and how He died for you and How He came to you and offered you His life. Remember how He gave you Himself to sustain you as food to eat and live by.*"

Some people may retell the stories of Christ from the New Testament and remember the things that he did. That is as close as they will come to him. They recall what he did. But those who know Him, who have received Him as Savior in their hearts, when they recollect those events are reminded of what **He has done for them** and **what He does for them still** today.

We do not just say, "*Jesus healed the sick.*" We say, "*Jesus heals the sick.*" We don't say, "*Jesus had compassion on people.*" We who know him say, "*Jesus has compassion on people.*" We don't even say just, "*Jesus died and rose again.*" We say, "*The Lord Jesus died for me and lives for and with and in me today.*" **We don't remember an account of Christ. We remember, in the accounts, Christ.** He is to us, "*Jesus, the same yesterday, today and forever.*"

Don't lose sight of Christ in your time. Discern Him. Remember Him. And if you can't remember Him; if you have no ground to understand Christ in this way it

means you have not yet fully believed in Him as your Savior. Then repent and come to Him and ask Him into your life and He will become a living present reality and His whole life will come into view for you and you'll be able to remember Him.

Transition: When we fail to remember Christ... to discern His life and His body set out for us... our lives fall into discord with Christ and with others. When I remember Jesus and His way with me it changes my way with others. When I forget him and fail to discern all that He is to me I fall into selfishness... I fall away from harmony with His life and will and He chastens me... He may withhold from me even health to draw me back to Him.

3. There is a discerning of the Lord's Body as He now lives as head of His church.

You fall off from Christ you fall out from His people. You have the divisiveness that was in Corinth and the lack of consideration among one another that was there. The very next chapter of 1 Corinthians will direct the Christians to consider that they are **members of the body of Christ**. Christ is the head and we are his spiritual body here on earth. His lives in us and assembles us together as a physical expression of His very life. As such we are told we cannot act as though we are independent of one another but interconnected to one another in complimenting service in Jesus Christ. We are so commanded to serve and care for and love one another... why??? because we represent this same glorious body of our Lord we have just spoke of... **Ex.** Remember when Paul was persecuting the church the Lord Jesus revealed himself to him in a blinding light and said to Paul, using his Hebrew name, *Saul, Saul why are are you persecuting me?* **Ex. Matthew 25:31-46** when Christ separates the goats from the sheep... the false believer from the true believer the test will be how they treated the servants of God who suffered in serving him. Jesus will say to the sheep... *Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' ³⁷'Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ³⁸When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ³⁹Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'* You remember Christ and His body given to you and you will live in thoughtful service to His body that remains her on earth still; the church.

Conclusion – given to Christ... remembering Him... committed to serving His body... we may expect the sustaining expression of His health for such a life of service and worship.