

Title: The Power of the Lord's Supper

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Introduction

1 Corinthians 11:17–34 (NKJV)

¹⁷Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse.

¹⁸For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.

¹⁹For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.

²⁰Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.

²¹For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

²²What! 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.

²³For 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;

²⁴and 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."

²⁵In 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."

²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death** till He comes.

²⁷Therefore 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.

²⁸But let a man **examine himself**, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

²⁹For he who eats and drinks **in an unworthy manner** eats and drinks **judgment to himself**, not discerning the Lord's body.

³⁰For this reason **many are weak and sick among you**, and many sleep.

³¹For if we would **judge ourselves**, we would not **be judged**.

³²But when **we are judged**, we are **chastened by the Lord**, that we may not be condemned with the world.

³³Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.

³⁴But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.

Many Christians interpret the passage above in the following way: "Before you take the Lord's Supper, you need to examine yourself very carefully, check for any unconfessed sins in your life and confess all of them. Then take the Lord's Supper. This is the worthy manner of taking the Lord's Supper. Otherwise, if you take it with any unconfessed sin, God might punish you with sickness or even death, and you cannot come to God to heal you or reverse the sickness, because you did it with your own hands. So, if you feel too unworthy on occasions, it's better not to partake of the Lord's Supper, in order not to be punished by God." However, the above interpretation and practice is not the truth.

Unworthy Person vs. Unworthy Manner

Let's analyze the passage carefully in its context. First, the expression "unworthy manner" from verses 27 and 29 doesn't refer to the worthiness of the person taking the Lord's Supper, but to the worthiness of the manner the person partakes, the worthiness of the way or the method. We can never become worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper, no matter what we do, not even through confession of sins. We have been made worthy once and for all by Christ's blood and sacrifice. We are always worthy to partake. Our righteousness and worthiness is Christ. However, there is a proper and worthy manner of partaking the Lord's Supper.

Taking the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner means first and foremost to assign to it a mental significance when you take it, to think about something and remember of Someone. It's not just eating and drinking. We see that clearly in 3 places in the above passages:

- (1) in verses 17 to 22 when Paul rebukes the Corinthians for eating their suppers without waiting for the others, getting drunk, not thinking of Christ and believing that that's the Lord Supper;
- (2) then in verses 24 and 25 Paul cites what Jesus said that when we take the Lord's Supper we need to remember Him;
- (3) in verse 28 there is an examination and evaluation of ourselves before taking the Lord's Supper.

The Right Way of Discerning the Lord's Body

To summarize, taking the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner means 2 things: to remember Christ in the right way, and to evaluate ourselves in the right way. In verse 24, Jesus says He's body was broken for you, was judged for you, and in your place. The broken bread is a representation of Christ's body being torn apart for you, and He says you should always do this in remembrance of Him, of what He did. That is what correct discernment (or judgement or evaluation) of the Lord's body from verse 29 is. It's a matter of where you place the guilt and judgement of your sins: either on Jesus' body or on you. The same Jesus did with the wine (v. 25), which is a representation of His shed blood.

Every time we take the Lord's Supper (v. 26), we proclaim the Lord's death (or the Lord's judgement) until He comes. In other words, if you proclaim the Lord's judgment for your sins, then you also proclaim your freedom, your healing, your victory, your righteousness and your peace. You evaluate and judge yourself (consider yourself) as righteous, healed, and free. The proclamation of His death is a proclamation of your life.

Taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy MANNER doesn't refer to a person being unworthy because of sins as I mentioned earlier. But rather it refers to not acknowledging correctly that the judgment for your sins was put on the Lord's body and in His blood. And so, by not evaluating correctly, you become again guilty and come under condemnation.

Verse 28 says the Christian must first do that evaluation in the light of what Jesus did, and then take the Lord's supper as a celebration of life for himself, and not of judgement. It's a celebration of what Jesus has accomplished at the cross. And that creates faith in the heart of the Christian for healing and victory. The Greek word for *examine* is *dokimazo* and it means "to test and by implication approve." Those in Christ see themselves approved by God. An old covenant picture may help. At the temple the high priest examined the sacrificial lamb, not the one who brought it. In the new covenant, Christ is our Lamb without blemish or defect (1 Peter 1:18-19). During the Lord's Supper we examine Him and see ourselves as tested and approved in Him.

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NKJV)

¹⁸... you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, as **of a lamb without blemish and without spot.**

Verse 29 says that if someone doesn't discern the Lord's body in that way, then he eats and drinks judgment to himself. He celebrates his own judgment, he does that in remembrance of himself and of his sins, and not in remembrance of the Lord.

The Correct Examination of Ourselves

Today in the body of Christ instead of getting ourselves free of the conscience of sins, and acknowledging the judgement of Christ, we dig up our sins during the Lord's Supper, and become conscious of them (of the fact that we are still sinners). We think it's like going to someone's funeral. Being in that sad atmosphere makes us softer in our hearts, we remember the dead person, and feel like we owe something to him or her (especially if they died because of us), and we want to do something in return. So we do the same with Jesus' death during the Lord's Supper. We think the best way to pay Jesus back for His sufferings is to at least remember our sins and ask for forgiveness, as if we would do Him a favor. However, that's wrong. That is not remembering Him. It's interesting that in the Matthew 26:26-29 account of the Lord's Supper, when Jesus gave His disciples the bread and the wine for the first time, He didn't mention anything in any of the gospels about them confessing their sins before partaking.

Matthew 26:26–29 (NKJV)

²⁶And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

²⁷Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.

²⁸For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

²⁹But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

Verse 30 says that those who don't evaluate themselves correctly by placing the judgment on Jesus Christ, they drink that judgment to themselves. That means they do not appropriate healing and strength for themselves by judging correctly the Lord's death, and thus they continue to be sick, weak and die before their time. The world is in a default state of sickness, death and decay. If you don't proclaim and believe your salvation through the Lord's death, you remain vulnerable to the same things that the rest of the world is vulnerable to. Sickness and early death is not a punishment from God for taking the Lord's Supper without confessing your sins, but it is the normal way that the world functions and to which you're no longer immune to.

In the Greek language, prepositions like FOR and BUT can also be translated as IN, THROUGH, BY, BECAUSE. Verses 31 and 32 can be translated in the following way: "³¹**For if we would judge ourselves** (that is discern and evaluate ourselves correctly in the light of the Lord's judgment, as already being righteous, healed and free of sin), then **we would not be judged** (that is we would not become vulnerable to sickness and death while on earth, as the world experiences by default). ³²**Because when we are judged** (evaluated correctly as already judged in Christ for our sins), through that **we are chastened by the Lord** (that is we are instructed, trained, disciplined – we form a healthy habit of going back to the judgment of the cross in our place), **that we may not be condemned with the world** (being under the same perils as the world)."

The Lord's Supper is a celebration of life and a healthy discipline instituted by the Lord to help us always remember that our judgment was put on Christ. That discipline in itself causes faith to rise in our hearts and a renewal of the mind, resulting in us being healthier and more victorious. If we became sick because we didn't take the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner, that is not a punishment from God, and we still have access to healing and health, just by proclaiming with faith what we have in Christ. Taking the Lord's Supper when you are sick is a great way to exercise your faith. It's saying, "I don't identify with these symptoms. I identify with Jesus, who carried my infirmities and who was wounded so that I might be

healed.”