

1 Corinthian Series #28
"True Communion" 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

I. INTRODUCTION

A. You're Back

1. After last week, with its politically incorrect message .
- ..
2. I was interested to see who would show up today
3. Clearly, you are more concerned with being "*Kingdom Correct*" than "*Politically Correct*."

B. Today

1. Our passage today deals with the Lord's Supper and the abuses it was enduring in Corinth.
2. While the Lord's Supper is something that is uniquely Christian -
3. The truths we will discover speak right to the heart of one of the most heated and violent debates of our time = Racism.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 17

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

1. In this section - Paul is dealing with 3 problems in their public worship
 - a. last week = relationship between men & women
 - b. this week = abuses of the Lord's Supper
 - c. next time = abuse of the gifts of Holy Spirit
2. In V. 2 - he had praised them for their faithfulness in other things
3. But now - regarding the Lord's Supper he criticizes them
4. When they get together they do more harm than good

B. Vs. 18-19

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.

1. Paul spent the whole first part of the letter rebuking their factions and divisions
2. Here he returns to that theme but puts it in a new light
3. Their divisions were most obvious when unity among them should have been their most outstanding mark = at the Lord's Supper
4. He rebukes them for their divisions - but also knows that sometimes it is necessary to divide so that those who are right might stand out in opposition to those who are wrong
5. In any case - factions are always a sign of selfishness and error

C. Vs. 20-21

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.

1. In many ways, ancient world much more sociable than we are today
2. Regular part of social life to meet with a large group of people & share a common meal
 - a. each person or family would bring something
 - b. throw it all together
 - c. each took of whole
 - d. potluck!
3. This practice became an institution in early church
4. Called the "Agape" or "love feast"
 - a. Jude 12
 - b. see it as a part of first Christian fellowship in Acts 2:46-47
 - c. Acts 2:46-47 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.
5. A time of true fellowship > common sharing
 - a. church made up of people of all backgrounds
 - rich & poor
 - slave & free
 - men & women
 - Jew & Gentile

- Greek & Barbarian
- culture & coarse
- young and old
- b. in world, rigid barriers between them
- c. almost like caste system if India
- d. church one place, only place where these distinctions were not in force
 - in Christ, all one
 - Gal 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.
- e. during Love Feast, they all mixed; shared a common meal.
 - wealthy brought more
 - poor & slaves; out of their meager resources
 - for them maybe only good meal all week
- f. finish feast with Lord's Supper
- 6. In Corinth, things had gone horrible wrong at the Love Feast
 - a. the social distinctions were still in force
 - b. rich brought a lot - but kept to themselves
 - c. poor were pushed off to the side; left hungry
 - d. even worse, some were drinking too much
- 7. What was meant to be a time of the expression of Christian unity had become a sham and was actually working against the purpose of the church
- 8. Why Paul says in V. 17 **"Your gathering does more harm than good."**

D. V. 22

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.

1. The root cause of the problem was their selfishness
2. Paul says, "Look, if you're so hungry, have something to eat at home. But when you come to the assembly, bring something to share with those who have nothing."
3. He asks, **"Do you despise the church of God?"**
 - a. church - Greek *ecclesia*
 - b. an assembly
 - c. not buildings = people
 - d. **"Do you despise the people of God?"**
4. **"Do you shame those who have nothing?"**

- a. a stinging rebuke!
 - b. the message of Christ is that He takes away our shame
 - through His death
 - the shame for our sins has been removed
 - no shame before God for those in Christ
 - c. so, no shame among each other in Christ
 - we are called to guard each other's dignity
 - no matter what our social rank or position
 - our union in Christ far outshines all other marks of distinction
 - d. but in Corinth, the "haves" were shaming the "havenots" with their selfishness and pride
5. The way Paul remedies this terrible state of affairs is by reminding them of the true meaning of the Lord's Supper
 6. These next verses are like a diamond in the middle of a muddy road
 7. We have used them often in our celebration of Communion
 - a. so many of us are familiar with them
 - b. it comes as a bit of a shock to realize they are placed in this setting

E. Vs. 23-26

23a For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you:

1. Paul not one of the original 12; so when did he receive these instructions for the Lord's Supper?
 - a. don't know
 - b. simply passed down by apostles to the rest of disciples
 - since Jesus had originally given them
 - he says that they come from Him, not man
 - c. in Gal. 1, Paul says that he had received his message direct from Christ
 - we know he was given a vision of Christ on the Road to Damascus = converted
 - then went to Arabia for a couple years
 - possible Jesus appeared to him there and spoke to him
 - d. in any case, the point is that the Lord's Supper is not merely a religious ritual dreamed up by priests
 - e. it is something Jesus has called us to as a continuing act of obedience as we follow Him

23b 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."

2. The setting of the first Lord's Supper was Passover
 - a. a remembrance of the Exodus from slavery to Egyptians
 - b. blood of the Passover lamb on doorposts protected the house from the destroying angel
 - c. now; Jesus was giving new meaning to the Passover meal
 - He had come as the final Passover lamb
 - with the shedding of His blood comes
 - > freedom from slavery to sin
 - > protection from the judgment of God
3. Toward the end of the meal, He took a piece of unleavened bread,
 - a. broke it and passed it round
 - b. each broke off a piece and ate
 - c. as they did, Jesus said, "This is my body broken for you."
 - d. signifying how His body would be offered up in death in their place
 - e. Jesus died as our substitute
 - He took our place on the cross
 - and when He hung there, all the wrath of God against sin was poured out on Christ
 - this is how God can forgive you
 - > He doesn't just wave your sin away
 - > He doesn't just blink it away
 - sin earns a penalty that must be paid
 - the penalty for your sins has been paid by Christ
4. Twice Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me."
 - a. at breaking of the bread
 - b. at the passing of the cup
 - c. both of these picture His death as he says in v. 26 . . .

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

5. But the Lord's Supper is more than just a memorial or

- monument to the memory of Christ
6. Forefather's Monument in Plymouth
 - a. spectacular!
 - b. 4 sides; each rep. the spirit of the Pilgrims
 - c. tells a remarkable story of the godliness and faith of the men & women who settled Plymouth Plantation
 - d. I stood there in awe
 - felt so small
 - > in size, yes
 - > but even more, when compared to the lives memorialized by the monument
 - my faith seemed so meager
 - my experience so inconsequential
 - a spiritual dwarf among giants of faith
 - e. it made me feel apart, distant
 - cold, towering
 - impenetrable
 7. The Lord's Supper is not like that
 - a. we are not invited to admire from afar
 - b. to walk around and gaze with awe and distant admiration
 - c. we are called to sit and eat
 - d. we are called to remember by partaking
 - e. this is no cold, distant monument
 - f. it is a fellowship meal in which Jesus is present
 - His presence is not in the transformed bread and wine
 - His presence is by the Spirit
 8. That is Paul's whole point here
 - a. when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, it is a sharing in Him
 - b. and since we all share it together, we are bound together as one in Him.
 - c. the rich man comes to God the same way the poor man comes (the Greek & barbarian, men and women, young and old)
 - d. in Christ we are all one!
 9. To celebrate the Lord's Supper . . .
 - a. while holding ourselves aloof
 - b. or considering ourselves better than others
 - c. or being prejudice
 - d. is to be **BLIND!!!**
 10. The Lord's Supper is supposed to be the time and place of consummate unity in Christ

F. Vs. 27-29

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.

1. What does Paul mean by celebrating the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner?
2. First of all, let's see what he does not mean . . .
 - a. does not mean that a person has to be perfect
 - b. if that were the case, no one would eat
 - c. like JW's
 - d. none of us is worthy in ourselves
 - e. we are sinners in need of a Savior
3. No, the context here is all important
4. Paul is saying that when we come to the Lord's Supper, we must examine ourselves to see if we have a heart of union with Christ and with one another
5. Notice the wording of v. 29 = "he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."
 - a. take a look at 1 Cor 10:16-17 "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread."
 - b. the elements of the Lord's Supper not only symbolize Christ
 - c. they symbolize our union THRU Him.
 - d. that is why Paul uses the word "communion" here for the Lord's Supper
 - e. when we partake of the Lord's Supper, we are in communion with Him and each other
 - f. the bread not only pictures His body broken for us, but His body = the church
6. To partake of the Lord's Supper while remaining divided, factious, jealous, and prejudice is unworthy of the Lord who bought us all
 - a. would you walk into someone's house and start criticizing their family members?
 - b. only if you didn't care about offending the head of the house

- c. our Father in heaven is offended when members of His family are belittled or shamed
- d. how wrong when it is other members of the family that do the shaming!
- 7. Luke and Tyrell used to play together great
 - a. but no more
 - b. a while back, they fell to picking at each other
 - c. trying to get each other into trouble
 - d. we had to put an end to it
 - e. and at times, it took strict discipline and chastising
- 8. God will not tolerate dissension and division among His people
 - a. prejudice and hatred will be judged
 - b. notice the next verse . . .

g. Vs. 30-32

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

- 1. Tough verse! What is Paul saying here?
- 2. Let's read on and see . . .

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.

- 3. Because the Corinthians were so factious and divided, God had chastened them
 - a. this chastening came in the form of physical sickness
 - b. some had even died!
 - not that God smote them to kill them and send them to hell
 - but because they stood in danger of gross sin that would deeply affect others, and maybe even fall away
 - in order to keep them from doing that, He took them
 - what's my justification for coming to that conclusion?
 - v. 32

H. Correction

- 1. Paul gives good counsel for the correcting of the error of the Corinthians

2. FIRST = Remember the Lord!
 - a. they could do that by celebrating the Lord's Supper in the right frame of mind
 - b. he died for ALL of us
 - c. we all have the same need before God
 - d. we all come the same way
3. SECOND = Jesus is coming again
 - a. we are to remember His death, TILL HE COMES!
 - b. remembering the Lord's return is a great motivation to right living
 - c. 1 John 3:3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.
4. THIRD = Examine Yourself
 - a. **v. 28** - let a man examine himself
v. 31 - For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.
 - b. what is your heart toward the body of Christ?
 - c. not just your own little niche or clique -
 - d. your brothers and sisters in Christ on a larger scale -
 - different color or nationality?
 - different social group?
 - different neighborhood?
 - different age group?
5. FOURTH = Consider Others

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

34 But 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.

- a. in Corinth, they rushed through the love feast before others could get something to eat
- b. some years ago - couple came to potluck at our house
 - little food; they were first in line
 - piled plates high; left little for the rest of us
 - hurried to seat, ate, went for more
 - we had a few come late, and only got salad and bread.
- c. a mark of being born again is a sincere love of the brethren
- d. we must take thought for the needs of others
 - guys, if crowded, let women sit
 - parking; leave first spaces for visitors and those who don't get around so easily
 - child care and S/S teachers; don't leave for

"others"

- e. the Body of Christ is just that; a body
 - each part has a role to play
 - what would you think of a part of your body that refused to contribute?

III. CONCLUSION

A. Unity

1. How wrong it is when there are division in the church
2. We expect the world to be divided and factious but not those who have been redeemed by Christ
3. Now the world is demanding "tolerance"
 - a. there is a hue and cry that is going up all over
 - b. racism and bigotry is being attacked
 - c. the political correctness movement is even trying to remove labels from language that might be deemed offensive
 - d. but for all the talk about tolerance, there is only increasing strife, violence, hatred and bigotry
4. The church must be different
5. What the world wants but cannot achieve must not only be a creed of the church, it must be a living reality

B. How Are We Doing?

1. Look around
 - a. is there unity here?
 - b. do we care for one another?
 - c. or are we divided and factious?
 - d. shaming each other and grieving the Lord who bought us?
2. Really, we aren't divided into camps that war against each other
3. But at the same time, there isn't a strong bond of unity in the Spirit either
 - a. one early critic of Christianity wrote, "Look at how they love one another!"
 - b. I believe that is what God would have for us
4. Let us each examine ourselves about our attitudes toward each other