

“Do this in Remembrance of Me”

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“In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” (1 Cor. 11:25)

Read 1 Cor. 11:17-34

The Lord’s Table is one of God’s grace gifts to His church. In its symbolism we have the Lord’s death and in its celebration we have portrayed the unity of His people being of one body. Nothing else done by the church can so powerfully do this.

It is against this backdrop that we have the setting of the Lord’s Table. Meals are universally seen as a time of relaxation, conversation, solidarity, protection, and family. Meals mark events. They are points in time where people stop and re-connect. They function as memorials, markers, signs. It is of no small coincidence that the Lord’s Table is celebrated as a meal. And many would argue that the Old Testament counterpart to the New Testament Table is the Passover meal. The Passover meal is a memorial celebrating through remembering the nation of Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The Lord’s Table is no less powerful. Here His people celebrate through remembrance the church’s deliverance from sin’s bondage.

The context in 1 Corinthians 11 is one of divisions and factions (vv. 17-19). Paul is grieved that such division exists. In verse 20 Paul reminds them that the Table is to be a sign of body unity. The Table speaks of others. It is to be a selfless act. And yet the Local Church was being divided through selfish acts (vv. 20-22).

Verses 23 -26 reflect Matthew 26:26-30 where our Lord in the celebration of the Passover meal gave the elements present (i.e. unleavened bread and wine) new meaning. Jesus Christ voluntarily gave up His life for His people. In His death, His people would become one new man (Eph. 2:15). He has broken down the middle wall of partition that was between us (Eph. 2:14). Because of His cross work, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). This is what the Table powerfully communicates. When we divide the body through selfishness and pride, we are desecrating the cross work. To do so is to treat the Table in an unworthy manner and body division has its own divine (though providential) judgment against it.

Verse 27 provides a conclusion to the previous thought. As noted, if you are a divisive person, you are partaking of the Lord’s Table in a manner that is not compatible with what the Table represents.

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It is important to note how division has been a consistent theme throughout the letter and among the people of God in the body of Christ at Corinth (1:10; 11:18; and 12:25). This divisive spirit had permeated the celebration of the meal preceding the Table and was undermining the Table's intent. A factious person is speaking against what Christ did. He is liable, in danger of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.

It is for this reason the apostle Paul exhorts his audience to examine themselves. Before we partake of the elements we must ask ourselves as to whether or not we are saved and thus part of His body. If I am saved, I am part of the body. If I am not saved, then I am not a part of the body. If I am a part of the body, why would I be polarized against it? Why would I be seeking to harm my own body? This is the kind of examination that is needful and important.

Verse 30 outlines for the body the inherent demerit to body division. If we understand what the Table represents, how can we carry a grudge, or bitterness, or have an unforgiving spirit? Such attitudes on our part are to be put off as works of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21; Col. 3:5).

Verse 31 speaks of a true self-assessment. What is a correct assessment of who I am? An accurate assessment of who you are sees yourself as nothing apart from His work. an accurate assessment of who you are sees yourself as a part of one body. It is seeing your self in light of 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. You are no better or worse than anyone else. This is an accurate assessment of who you are.

God's discipline against those who divide the body is providential and sure. A factious spirit has its own retribution. Paul's advice is stated in verses 33 and 34 concerning the meal preceding the Lord's Table. Do not allow your physical appetites to make you factious. Come to the Table already full so that you will not be divisive. It would appear that the historical context is something different than what we are currently practicing or experiencing in the Church today.

As a fellowship, let us use the Table as a time to call His people to body unity. Let it be a time where we cast off bitterness, grudges, and unforgiving spirits. Let the Table be a time when grace reigns.