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# 1 Corinthians

**But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 1 Corinthians 11:28**

In the preceding verse, and in the verse which follows as well, the notion of partaking of the bread and the cup in an "unworthy manner" is noted. This then is an insert into the discussion on that concept. Only after determining his motivations as he comes before the table should a person then partake.

The verb for "examine" is *dokimazo*, and it indicates that one should prove themselves concerning sincerity. If one is coming before the table with a feeling of meriting the elements, then they have a misunderstanding of their own state before the Lord. There is nothing in a person which merits what they symbolize. Rather, we are wholly dependent on the grace of Jesus Christ for His work which was accomplished on our behalf.

This concept of personal unworthiness, however, isn't what Paul is referring to (as was seen in the preceding verse). Rather, he is referring to the manner in which one approaches the table. Being unworthy in no way prohibits participation in the Lord's Supper. Rather, acting in an unworthy manner does. An unworthy manner then could actually be demonstrated in someone's belief that they were, in fact, worthy of what they were receiving! In this, true humility is set against feelings of self-righteousness or of "inherently deserving" what the elements signify.

Once one has evaluated himself and tested his motivations, he should then ensure that his actions as he partakes are in line with his proper motivations. If so,

then "let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup." It is a process of internal evaluation combined with an external demonstration which Paul speaks of.

Life application: In receiving the elements of the Lord's Supper, be pleased that the Lord has accepted you by His grace despite your inherent unworthiness to come before Him. In gratitude to this, be sure to conduct yourself in a manner which is worthy of that.

**For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 1 Corinthians 11:29**

"For" builds upon the previous thought concerning the taking of the Lord's Supper. Paul has just noted that partaking in an unworthy manner makes one guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. Therefore, a self-examination should occur before one partakes. And the reason for this is given in what follows the opening word "for." It is because "he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself."

In this, a connection is being made between the judgment symbolized in the elements: that of the death of the Lord, and that of the judgment which one drinks to himself when partaking of those same elements in an unworthy manner. If what Jesus did is treated in an impious or flippant manner, then judgment is to be necessarily expected for that attitude.

The type of judgment is explained in the coming verses, 30-32. It is explicitly noted as temporal, or earthly judgment. And this is what should be expected. If a non-believer partakes of the elements, then there is no true meaning to that non-believer in what they are doing, therefore, no true judgment would work to correct their unbelief. However, if a believer (which is whom Paul is implying in his words) partakes in an unworthy manner, then a temporal judgment, resulting in temporal punishment should be the logically expected outcome. They are already saved by Christ. Therefore, what they need is correction in this life, not in the next.

And all of this is expected because of "not discerning the Lord's body." There was no distinction made between what is holy and what is profane. It implies eating and drinking as if the elements are common and it fails to make the necessary connection to the work of Christ on our behalf.

The King James Version has the most unfortunate and confused rendering of "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." Some speculate that the term "damnation" which they use may have had less force at the time of the translation, but this is improbable. A review of the other uses of the word "damnation" in the KJV point particularly to the punishments of hell. But the word translated here is *krima*. It is more properly rendered "judgment." As Vincent's Word Studies notes, *krima* "is a temporary judgment, and so is distinguished from *katakrima* - condemnation, from which this temporary judgment is intended to save the participant."

This mistranslation has caused many to fall into neuroses over the taking of the elements and it has led many to not take them at all. This then is exactly the opposite of what is actually commanded in that we are, as the Lord says, to participate as "often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me."

Life application: If you have been saved by the blood of Christ, you will never become "unsaved." However, your actions may have consequences in this life and they may lead to a loss of rewards in the eternal state. The way to avoid these pitfalls is to know your Bible and apply it to your life.

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

1 Corinthians 11:30

Because of the "unworthy manner" in which the congregants at Corinth had taken the Lord's Supper, Paul says that "many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep." In other words, he directly equates their weakness, sickness, and deaths to their conduct at the meal. There are a couple things to note about this:

- 1) As he wrote this letter directly to those at Corinth, then his words about the sickness and death must be true, regardless of the reason for it.
- 2) As this letter specifically addresses their improper conduct at the Lord's Supper, this certainly happened.
- 3) Because he is tying their health to the improper observance of the Lord's Supper, he is fully convinced that this is the cause of the ill-health and death; it is a spiritual connection between two physical concepts.

Concerning the third point, scholars have attempted to equate the physical aspect of the meal (overindulgence) with the ill-health and death, but if that were the case then why would Paul only call them out for their overindulgence and improper attitude during the Lord's Supper? In fact, he rhetorically asked them, "Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?" If he was concerned about their portly appearance or their over-indulgence in wine, he would have said, "You are living in an unhealthy way and you will keel over from it some day." But instead, he ties these things directly to the Lord's Supper.

Their weakness, sickness, and "sleep" (meaning death; it is an idiom for death to a follower of the Lord) is a direct result of improper conduct during the Lord's Supper. Although this may have been an occurrence unique to the Apostolic period of the church, there is nothing to suggest that. If there is ill health or even premature death in a congregation, the conduct of the Lord's Supper should be evaluated. What God chooses to use as a form of chastisement and judgment is up to Him. The fact that this is recorded in the Bible shows us that this may occur if the observance is improperly conducted.

Life application: How God judges is up to God. It is our duty to learn His word, adhere to it, and render to Him submission and obedience with a right and holy attitude.

**For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. 1 Corinthians 11:31**

In this verse, Paul makes a change to include himself in his words by saying "we." It is a way of identifying with the Corinthians in the struggle of life and the fight against sin. And how true his words ring in any situation! "For" ties the thought directly to his previous words that "many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep." It is a type of disciplinary judgment which has been rendered upon the church at Corinth to get them to realize their state. In realization, they should then contemplate, and in contemplation, they should act.

The reason for having laws is more often than not a way of keeping people from harm. If we ignore the law, we are bound to get harmed. However, if we are caught in the act, we may receive whatever punishment the law mandates in order to get us to consider and correct our ways. The same is true with the precepts of the Bible. There is an expected standard, often explicit and often implicit. In the case of the Lord's Supper, the standard was and is explicit. We know this because of what Paul said earlier in verse 23, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you."

Therefore, in the verbal instruction of the Lord's Supper he would have given all that was necessary to avoid the judgments which had come upon them. If they had considered their ways, there would have been no weakness, sickness, or death that could be attributed to their improper conduct. However, at the same time, there would have been no instructions for the Lord's Supper in writing for future generations either. So even in the discipline of the Corinthians, a good result has arisen. With the inclusion of these written instructions, all churches have the same information with which to conduct this rite.

Because we have this specific instruction, how much more accountable to the Lord are we! Therefore, let us judge ourselves so that we will not be judged. With your proper knowledge, don't hesitate to note what needs correction in your own church.

Life application: Be sure to read, contemplate, and then apply the precepts of the Bible. In so doing, you will avoid many of the pitfalls which it is trying to keep you from.

*How I cherish my time with You O God!*

*Each moment as I live, You are here with me*

*Every single step that I take on the path which I trod*

*You illuminate it so that I can see*

*Your word is a lamp to my feet, it is true*

*It is a light to my path, wherever I go*

*There is never a time that I am without You*

*I have hidden Your word in my heart, I cherish it so*

**But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. 1 Corinthians 11:32**

This verse shows us that those who are noted in verse 30 as being "weak," "sick," or who even "sleep" (meaning have died) were still saved despite their incorrect actions which led to the judgment rendered by the Lord, termed here as being "chastened." It then shows that the term "damnation" used by the King James translation was in fact an immensely poor choice of words.

There is still salvation for believers who erred in this way because salvation is eternal. When someone believes, they are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee that they will never again come again under condemnation. Thus Paul makes a distinction between believers and "the world" (meaning unregenerate people). For those in Christ, there is the surety of salvation; for those in the world, there is the surety of condemnation.

The chastening of believers is noted in a detailed way in Hebrews 12 and further explains Paul's thoughts in this verse -

"For whom the LORD loves He chastens,  
And scourges every son whom He receives."

<sup>7</sup> If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? <sup>8</sup> But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. <sup>9</sup> Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup> For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness. <sup>11</sup> Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:6-11

Life application: Chastening from the Lord has a purpose that is intended to mold us further to His image and to correctly align our lives with His intent for us. Let us look with gratitude to the Lord that His chastening proves that we are legitimate children.

**Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.**  
1 Corinthians 11:33

"Therefore" is given to sum up all of Paul's thoughts starting in verse 17. In that verse, he noted that those in Corinth had "come together not for the better but for the worse." In explanation of that, in comments intended to correct the problem, and in justification of why his directions were so important, he laid out his points in an orderly fashion until verse 32. In an overall summery statement he then gives them his curative recommendation by beginning with "my brethren."

The addressees, despite their mishandling of the matter thus far, were still considered among the fellowship. The loss of salvation because of their conduct is not even a consideration. And so to these brethren he says, "when you come together to eat, wait for one another." Instead of hurriedly gobbling up the food that was brought to the meal, they should wait until all had arrived and would be willing to fellowship with others and share in what was available.

In this, the believers would truly be a united group and they would be more likely to focus on the Lord and His work rather than on their stomachs. A good way to consider how this is true would be to think of a prayer meeting. If people are continuously walking in and out, then the prayer will by its very nature be dysfunctional. Concentration will be lost, there will be a repetition of prayers already offered, and there may even be resentment by those who had been trying to concentrate because of the stream of interruptions.

Life application: A church which is not run in an orderly and pious fashion will inevitably fail to unite in mind and heart on the Lord. The worship will become less "He" centered and more "me" centered. In all things, let us remember that it is the Lord who is to be exalted during praise and worship.

**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. 1 Corinthians 11:34**

As is evidenced here, the gathering at Corinth was one which eventually evolved into something like a pot-luck supper. The term for it was an agape or "love" feast. But as the ceremony evolved, it quickly left behind the very purpose that the Lord's Supper was intended to convey. Instead of remembering the Lord and His work, it was a chance to eat and be merry. To avoid this, Paul's words of instruction are specific that "if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home."

A regular meal belongs in a regular place. The Lord's Supper belongs among the Lord's people. Paul wanted the two kept separate in order to maintain the dignity of the occasion. He had already noted the consequences of having not treated the



ceremony in a dignified way (in that some were weak, sick, or even dead) and he didn't want that to continue lest they also "come together for judgment."

Again, Paul's words here imply that it is a temporal, not a spiritual judgment. Some translations incorrectly say "condemnation" here. It is a bad choice of words because as Paul says elsewhere, "*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus..." (Romans 8:1). Paul has the best intent for those in Corinth concerning both their continued earthly health and prosperity as well as their spiritual growth in Christ. And his words are recorded to help us in this same manner as well.

In closing out chapter 11 he finishes with, "And the rest I will set in order when I come." There were other instructions, probably unique to the situation at Corinth, that needed to be set in order. However, they either weren't pressing or maybe they were of a delicate nature that he didn't want included in a public letter. What is apparent is that he fully intended to go to Corinth to meet with them in person.

Life application: The directions for the Lord's Supper are given in 1 Corinthians 11 and are based on the words of the Lord as found in the gospels. There is specific instruction and yet there is much detail which is left open to individual choice for the arrangement of the rite. Adhering to what is given and not trifling over things that are left unstated will lead to a sound and healthy memorial which will also be accommodating to time, place, culture, and personal choice.

**Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:**

1 Corinthians 12:1

Paul will now begin a completely new segment of his epistle. After treating the issue of the Lord's Supper, he next moves into the area of "spiritual gifts." This is probably a response to the next item in the letter he referred to in 1 Corinthians 7:1 which said, "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me..." In this

verse, the word "gifts" is not in the original. Rather, it is inserted by translators. In essence, the verse more accurately reads, "Now concerning (things) spiritual..."

"Spiritual gifts" are gifts which have been given by the Spirit for the building up of the church and for the edification of believers. Some of these gifts were certainly apostolic in nature (meaning that they occurred only during the apostolic age which ended with the word "Amen" in Revelation 22:21). Others are gifts which may be seen highlighted at certain special times during the church age when revival is needed. And others are gifts which are common and needed for the church at all times.

The gift of "tongues" is possibly one of the most abused of all of the supposedly received "gifts" within the church today. It is given extended treatment by Paul, particularly in chapter 14. This specific gift is so commonly misused in comparison with how it is defined in Scripture that nothing other than the term "embarrassing" can be applied to its use in churches, particularly in recent times. If the word of God was held in any regard at all, there wouldn't be such a humiliating display of its supposed use. But apparently, Paul went through the same behavior in his time and his words of instruction which were intended to correct the problem have been largely ignored.

There are several certainties concerning gifts which will be detailed now and then evaluated in the coming verses -

- 1) Non-Christians cannot claim their comparable abilities as gifts. They may have them as natural human abilities, but not as spiritual gifts. If it is a true gift, it is given by the Holy Spirit for the glory of God, and the Holy Spirit is only given to true believers in Christ. This is implied by the term "brethren" in this particular verse.
- 2) Regardless of what gift is given, they all have the same divine Source. Therefore, they are all intended to bring glory to God, not to the individual who receives the gift.

- 3) If a "gift" is used in a church and its use contradicts the words of the Bible (which has been given by the Spirit), then it cannot be a true exercising of that gift. Rather than exalting God, it therefore discredits the person who is misusing the supposed "gift."
- 4) Each gift is intended to work cohesively within the body and for the body, not independently of the body. Supposed "gifts" which are disruptive or self-highlighting are not gifts at all, but are unwarranted displays.

And so, in expectation of very important instruction from him concerning the issue of spiritual things he says, "I do not want you to be ignorant." It is the same thought he gave when beginning his discourse of chapter 10 which dealt in detail with sexual immorality and idolatry. Paul's words here contain the same weight and the same heartfelt desire to ensure the glory of the Lord is maintained.

Life application:

Question - How can you know if a certain type of conduct or supposed "gift" which is seen in a church is acceptable or not?

Answer - By reading and knowing your Bible, which is given for this very purpose, and then comparing that knowledge to how the "gift" or conduct is used.

Remedy for bad doctrine - Rightly divide and properly apply the words of the Bible to your church gatherings.

**You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. 1 Corinthians 12:2**

In this verse, Paul is showing a contrast between the "spiritual gifts" mentioned in verse 1 and that of dumb idols. As Gentiles and without the knowledge of the true God, they were "carried away to these dumb idols." As occurs even today, there

are charlatans who pretend to speak for idols or even through idols - things made of stone, wood, metal, or even plastic. They have no true power and they cannot affect our lives in any way.

An example of this from the 115th Psalm provides clarity concerning the matter -

"But our God *is* in heaven;

He does whatever He pleases.

<sup>4</sup>Their idols *are* silver and gold,

The work of men's hands.

<sup>5</sup>They have mouths, but they do not speak;

Eyes they have, but they do not see;

<sup>6</sup>They have ears, but they do not hear;

Noses they have, but they do not smell;

<sup>7</sup>They have hands, but they do not handle;

Feet they have, but they do not walk;

Nor do they mutter through their throat.

<sup>8</sup>Those who make them are like them;

*So is everyone who trusts in them.*" Psalm 115:3-8

It is from such a state that these Gentiles in Corinth had been called. They once followed after dumb idols, having been "led" by them. The word "led" is from the Greek word *apagomenoi*. It carries the idea of being seduced or carried away. Thus, the Gentile world, either uninformed or misinformed about the true God, was carried away in deception by such idols. In contrast to this is the sealing of the Spirit in believers of Jesus Christ. They have been lovingly called out of darkness and into the light of the truth and have been endowed with spiritual gifts to confirm their new position.

Having stated this, Paul will now expand on the thought so that the believers will understand their own position and their own gifts within the body.

Life application: Things that we take for granted as harmless are often most destructive. Knocking on wood, Indian dream catchers, fung shui arrangements,

and even idols within "Christian" circles, such as statues of Mary, crucifixes, etc, will all distract our attention from the truth of our relationship in Christ. Further, our participating in such things can only lead others away from the truth as well. Keep your Bible open, your eyes on Jesus, and your prayers to God through Him alone.

**Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.**

1 Corinthians 12:3

This verse is commonly misunderstood because the context has been ignored. If this were a stand-alone verse, it would seem to say something completely different than is intended. But Paul begins with the word "therefore" to show us that the entire verse is dependent on what has already been said. He has been speaking of "spiritual gifts" as opposed to "dumb idols." A true spiritual gift is one which is given by the true Spirit of God. As the Spirit is a member of the Godhead, then what issues forth from the Spirit will never contradict what the Godhead has proclaimed or ordained.

The Godhead is in full agreement in all things and so any gift which has come from the Spirit will be in line with that precept. Knowing this with all surety, Paul says, "Therefore I make known to you..." His words are given so that the Corinthians will be able to absolutely discern whether a supposed "gift" is really from the Spirit or not. This then must be in response to a matter raised in the letter written to him. Someone must have claimed to prophesy "in the Spirit" and what he prophesied was seemingly contrary to what they thought was truthful. Hence, Paul is giving certain clarification concerning the matter.

In his words, he notes that "no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed." The term "no one" is the Greek *oideis*. It could be a man speaking out of his own head, whether rational or insane, or it could be speaking of a demon influencing a person or somehow (if possible) appearing in order to make a proclamation. In other words, any word spoken by anyone or anything who claims inspiration "by the Spirit of God" is to be considered in this. If that claim is made,

it cannot be true if they call "Jesus accursed." The word for accursed is anathema which carries the idea of being banned or set apart for destruction. It is impossible that the Spirit would say such a thing through someone and therefore, if someone made that statement and claimed they were in the Spirit, they would be proven false.

Likewise, Paul says that "no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." Again, he is talking about someone who is claiming inspiration by the Spirit. Anyone can actually utter the words "Jesus is Lord" but if they are not truly under the influence of the Spirit, then the words have no meaning. However, if they are in the Spirit, then the words are certainly true. The matter here isn't concerning human ability, but rather influence of the Spirit.

The reason why this is important is that there are all kinds of false teachers who stand in the pulpit claiming that Jesus is Lord, but don't truly believe it. Nor are they influenced by the Spirit. This verse cannot be used as a source for following someone simply because they make an oral pronouncement. Instead, it is given as a means of discerning whether a proclamation is truly of the Spirit or not.

Life application: As all Scripture is given by God, nothing that Scripture contains will ever contradict itself nor will it be aligned against the purposes of God. Further, any action within a church which is not in accord with Scripture cannot be of the Spirit. This will become immensely important to understand later when Paul gives the directions for speaking in tongues. If those directions aren't in line with Scripture, then they are not of the Spirit.

### **There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:4**

Paul returns back to the thought of verse 1 in order to continue his discourse on "gifts." There he said, "Now concerning spiritual *gifts*..." after that, he made an explanation concerning the distinction between "dumb idols" and the Holy Spirit. Now, based on understanding the true workings of the Spirit, he notes that, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."

The word "diversities" is used only three times in the New Testament and all three are found in verses 4, 5, and 6. Interestingly, the Spirit is noted in verse 4, Christ (the "Lord") is noted in verse 5, and the Father (called "the same God") in verse 6. Thus, this sequence of verses shows a purposeful expression of the doctrine of the Trinity. The "diversities" then are shown to be reflective of the different workings of the Trinity in the believer.

The process of salvation in the believer is always the same; it is by grace through faith. At the moment of salvation, the believer is sealed with the Spirit. However, from this point, different gifts are highlighted in individual believers, even though the Source of those gifts remains the same. When the sun shines on an individual, the result is the same as the light shining on another person; they both receive the same light. However, when light shines through a prism, the light goes off into a variety of colors. The same light is received, but it is diffused as God determined through the created order. Such is the nature of salvation in the believer followed by the expression of gifts given to and through the believer.

Life application: It is common to quote Jesus' words from Matthew 5:16 which say, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." The light that shines then should be a reflection of the person that you are as gifted by the Holy Spirit. Let the Light which has shone on you be displayed in a manner worthy of the gift which you have received.

**There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.** 1 Corinthians 12:5

Just as there are "diversities of gifts" (v. 4) given by the Spirit, there are also "differences of ministries." The same word translates both "diversities" and "differences." In the sense of differing ministries, the word is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament when referring to the divisions of the priests and Levites recorded in 1 Chronicles and Ezra.

In the church, there are elders, deacons, and etc. Each has a particular ministry to perform and yet, they all fall under "the same Lord" who is the Head of the

church. The "Lord" here is certainly speaking of Jesus who commissioned the disciples in Matthew 10:1 and Luke 10:1 and who designated each apostle according to His choice, such as Peter's appointment in Matthew 16:18 when he was given "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Peter exercised his use of those keys in Acts 2, 8, and 10 during the early establishment of the church.

If an appointment is a true appointment, it falls under the Lordship of Christ and there should be neither feelings of pride nor of lowliness. Rather, each person who is appointed under Christ in true ministry, regardless of its size or supposed importance, is fulfilling a job over which the Lord is in charge. For this reason, both boasting or feelings of lowliness are to be excluded.

Life application: Do you have a ministry within the church? If you clean the bathrooms as your task is that a shame to you? If you are a pastor of an extremely large and popular church, is that a point of boasting to you? Would the people come to a fancy church if the bathrooms were utterly disgusting? So, whose ministry makes that difference? The jobs we might feel as lowly are actually of great importance. All jobs should ultimately be directed to the honor of the Lord.

*Lord establish the work of my hands*

*So that my tasks will bring glory to You*

*May it be that everyone understands*

*You are the reason for all that I do*

*Whether sharing Your good news, my Lord*

*Or cleaning a bathroom on Thursday every week*

*Or teaching others Your precious word*

*In each task, only Your glory I seek*