

## Growing in Grace at the Lord's Table 1 Corinthians 11:17-32

### INTRODUCTION

**The Lord's Supper** - what comes to mind when you hear those words? Sometimes we merely go through perfunctory motions at the Lord's Supper. **We dutifully sit in silence, bow our heads while daydreaming of the next movie we hope to see or the project for the week ahead, and take our turn at receiving the elements from the plates passed to us.** We eat and drink and sing, then that's it. We feel as though we've done our religious duty. Maybe we even have the mistaken notion, as popularized in some traditions, that we've added grace to our lives by the very act of eating and drinking at the Table.

The Lord's Supper reminds us of the death of Christ. The Lord's Supper sends a clear message to **all who will listen: because of the dying of His body and the shedding of His blood, a Holy God has dealt with our sins.**

Why observe the Lord's Supper?

(1) To **remember** the body and the blood of Jesus.

(2) To **reflect** on our sin and on His promises.

(3) To **renew** our commitment to Christ and our commitment to each other.

(4) To **rejoice** for He has set us free, and He is coming back! Through the Lord's Supper we declare that we **are a people who have found life in the death of Christ.**

Baptism demonstrates our **initial** identification with Christ and His church. The Lord's Supper celebrates our **continual** identification with Christ and His church.

Together we can **display** the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way we just can't by ourselves.

**There's a community aspect to our Christianity.** The Lord's Supper is a means of grace that helps us grow in grace by recognizing that we are part of the whole. Yes, we enjoy hearing His voice (Bible intake/Word); yes, we enjoy the gift of having His ear (prayer). We also must learn to enjoy the gift of being part of His body...the church. **The Lord's Supper serves this purpose well.**

The primary biblical text on the nature and meaning of the Lord's Supper/Table, also known as Communion or the Eucharist (from the Greek word for the giving of thanks) is **1 Cor 11**. Please open your Bibles to **1 Cor 11:17-32**.

### **I. The Lord's Supper is not to be taken \_\_\_\_\_**

One of the first things to note is that the Supper is not to be taken lightly. Handling the elements ***"in an unworthy manner"*** is the reason Paul gives the Corinthians for ***"why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died"*** (1 Cor. 11:27–30). Great things are at stake when the church gathers at the Table of her Lord. Blessing and judgment are in the balance. This remembrance is **commanded**. Participation in the Lord's Supper is not an option. Prolonged absence from it is spiritually unhealthy and willful neglect of it may be grounds for church discipline.

To partake of the Lord's Table in an **unworthy** manner (v. 27) is to take it without regard to its true worth. To partake unworthily is to come complacently, light-heartedly, giving no thought to that which the elements signify.

To partake in an **"unworthy manner"** thus entails at least three things: **(a) calloused disregard for others in the body of Christ** (see vv. 20-22); **(b) an attempt to combine participation at pagan (demonic) feasts with participation at the Lord's table** (see 1 Cor. 10:14-22); and **(c) flippant disregard for what the elements represent** (vv. 23-26). To be **"guilty of the body and blood of the Lord"** (v. 27) is to treat as **common** or **profane** something which is **sacred**. The Lord's Supper is not just another meal.

II. The Lord's Supper is \_\_\_\_\_ to stimulate in our heart's \_\_\_\_\_ of the person and work of Christ Jesus.

***“Do this in remembrance of me”*** (1 Cor. 11:25). When instituting the Supper, Jesus instructed his disciples, ***“Do this in remembrance of me”*** (Luke 22:19), and Paul twice applies the phrase ***“in remembrance of me”*** in his instructions to the church (1 Cor. 11:24– 25). The Lord's Supper is no less than a memorial meal that draws us back to the cutting of the covenant at Calvary in Christ's self-giving sacrifice for us.

The elements of bread and cup are given to stir our minds and hearts. **The physical action of eating and drinking is designed to remind us that we spiritually “ingest” and depend upon Jesus and the saving benefits of His life, death, and resurrection.** Just as food and drink are essential to sustain physical existence, so also the blessings and benefits that come to us through the body and blood of Christ are paramount to our spiritual flourishing.

III. The Lord's Supper underscores the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ for His own.

IV. The Lord's Supper \_\_\_\_\_ Christians of the \_\_\_\_\_ that awaits them with their Lord.

In this remembering we also ***proclaim*** the Lord's death till he comes. This, then, is not merely an ordinance that looks to the past. **It is an ordinance of hope that points to the future.**

Jesus Christ did not remain in the grave; He is alive. Jesus Christ is not only alive; He's going to return one day and take His people to be with Him for eternity. What a promise! What hope! **Communion reminds us that our salvation has been purchased, our salvation has been experienced, and yet in one sense our salvation is yet to come.** We will not fully understand what Christ has done on our behalf until we see Christ on the throne.

## **CONCLUSION**

In just a few moments, we will partake in the Lord's Supper. Before we do, let us take time to examine our hearts as we draw close to God through this special event. Please allow me to share with you some reminders:

**1. Our approach to the worship of the Lord is an \_\_\_\_\_ of our regard for the Lord.**

**2. Our \_\_\_\_\_ of others is a \_\_\_\_\_ of our love for the Lord.**

**3. The celebration of the Lord's Supper should always be \_\_\_\_\_.**