

Title: **A VERY TROUBLING PASSAGE**

Text: 1 Corinthians 11:27-29

Date: Sunday Evening — July 19, 2009

Tape #: Z-67a

Reading: *Allen Kibby and Larry Criss*

Introduction:

Tonight I want us to look at a very troubling passage of Holy Scripture. The title of my message is — **A VERY TROUBLING PASSAGE**. You will understand the reason for that title as soon as I read my text.

The most blessed privilege we have in this world is the privilege of public worship. This gathered assembly, this local church is described in the Book of God as...

- “*The House of God,*”
- “*The Temple of God,*” and
- “*An Habitation of God through the Spirit*”

We recognize the universality of God’s Church and Kingdom. The Church, the body of Christ, his Bride is made up of all God’s elect in heaven and on earth. But that does not, in any way or to any degree, diminish the importance of the local Church. Nothing is more blessed, and nothing is more needful to our souls than the gathering of God’s saints to worship him.

- **This is the only place on earth where we are assured of the presence of our Redeemer** (Matthew 18:20).

(Matthew 18:20) “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

- **When we come together as a local Church, in the name of Christ, God the Holy Spirit comes with us and the gathered assembly of God’s saints is the Temple of the Holy Spirit** (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

(1 Corinthians 3:16-17) “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (17) If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are.”

God sends out his Word through Gospel churches. God gathers his elect by the preaching of the gospel in Gospel churches. God instructs, comforts,

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edifies, and establishes his people by the ministry of Gospel churches. And God is worshipped by his people in divinely ordained ordinances of public worship maintained in Gospel churches.

- Reading the Word
- Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs
- Gospel Preaching
- Baptism
- The Lord's Supper

Perhaps it is the very fact that the local Church is so vital to the welfare of our souls that makes it a huge target for our adversary the devil. He constantly stirs up confusion about the local Church, its proper place and usefulness, and its ordinances. Therefore the Holy Spirit gives us crystal clear instruction concerning these things in Holy Scripture.

I am certain that few passages in the Word of God that have been more horribly misinterpreted and misused than my text — 1 Corinthians 11:27-29.

(1 Corinthians 11:27-29) “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. (28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. (29) For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.”

I do not doubt that these three verses of Scripture have been more troubling to sensitive souls than any others in the New Testament, simply because of the terribly poor teaching of men who do not understand the Scriptures. Very few weeks pass that I do not receive a letter or a telephone call from someone who is terribly fearful that he or she might be eating and drinking damnation to himself by eating the bread and drinking the wine of the Lord's Supper.

Many of the Lord's people read these three verses and think, “Surely, if anyone is unworthy to receive the Lord's Supper it is me.” Satan roars against the weak, untaught, or poorly taught believer, accuses him of sin and guilt, and tries to put him upon a legal footing before God. The old serpent is hellishly subtle and clever. Under the guise of humility and holiness, he would have us turn our eyes of faith away from Christ to

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ourselves. He seeks to make us look to ourselves rather than to Christ alone for our worthiness and acceptance before God.

Who is and who is not worthy to receive the Lord's Supper. Let me answer that question clearly and distinctly now. Then I will show you the answer from the context in which our text is found.

PROPOSITION: Every true believer, every sinner who trusts Christ alone as his wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, is worthy of receiving and is obliged to receive the Lord's Supper.

Now, let's see if I can make good on that statement from this context. The fact is, it is not possible to understand 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 until you understand the entire context in which it is found (verses 20-34). For that matter, it is not possible to understand any text of Scripture isolated from its immediate context and from the larger context of the entire Volume of Inspiration.

In this part of 1 Corinthians Paul is, by divine inspiration, setting in order the disorderly affairs in the local church at Corinth. But, more importantly, he sets before us the proper order of public worship in all gospel churches. Particularly, in chapter 11 verses 20-34, the Holy Spirit tells us exactly what we should and should not do in the observance of the Lord's Supper. Hold your Bibles open and follow me through this passage, beginning at verse twenty.

SPECIFIC TIME AND PLACE

(1 Corinthians 11:20) "When ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not to eat the Lord's supper."

Three things are obvious in this verse.

1. There was a specific place where the Corinthian church assembled for public worship.

There are some who fancy themselves learned, spiritual people, who care nothing for commitment. They like to run from one place to another, or go no place at all, or meet together with God's saints when they please. This they call "freedom." I call it irresponsibility. **When the local church where**

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you are, to which you belong, meets together, it is both your privilege and responsibility to be present. The local church would soon cease to exist if everybody decided run to this place or that, or to no place at all, according to their own whims.

2. When the Corinthian church came together, at the appointed time, they claimed that they did so “to eat the Lord’s supper”.

They met in Christ’s name, according to Christ’s command, with the pretense of observing Christ’s ordinance. But that was not the case at all. No doubt, there were some, maybe many, in the congregation who were sincere worshippers; but in so far as the bulk of the congregation was concerned, their assembling together at these appointed times was not to observe The Lord’s Supper, but the festivities of their own love feasts.

3. If we do not observe the ordinances of Divine worship in the manner prescribe by God, we cannot observe them at all.

The Corinthians said, “Let’s go to church and worship God in the observance of The Lord’s Supper.” But they came to throw a party. Therefore, Paul said, “*When you come together in one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper.*”

At home, our congregation in Danville comes together every Sunday night to observe The Lord’s Supper. This is called “*the Lord’s Supper*” because...

- Christ the Lord is the Author of it.
- He’s the Subject of it.
- He’s the Host of it.
- It is for his family.
- He’s the Reason for it.

ABUSES

(1 Corinthians 11:21) “For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.”

Here Paul explains exactly why the Corinthians’ practice was not an act of worship and could not be considered observing the Lord’s Supper. **They added to the ordinance of Christ a gaudy feast which soon got out of**

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hand. They came not to worship but to feast, not to serve one another but each to eat his own supper. Their “love feast” was a rude, cruel, self-serving, self-gratifying party.

- Rather than waiting on one another, they rudely jumped in front of one another.
- Instead of waiting on the poor, the poor were left hungry.
- While the poor got nothing, those who jumped before them and gorged themselves drank insatiably, to the point of drunkenness.

Read on...

(1 Corinthians 11:22) “What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not.”

This is not a prohibition to having church dinners or to eating in church buildings. We are not idolaters. We do not worship buildings! Paul is simply shaming the Corinthians for behaving as they did, while claiming to worship Christ and keep his ordinance. It is as if he had said, — “If you are going to behave like this, at least stay at home! Do not treat the church of God with such contempt! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves for so shamefully embarrassing your poor brethren!”

BREAD AND WINE

Now, look as verses 23-26...

(1 Corinthians 11:23-26) “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: (24) And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. (25) After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. (26) For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.”

Be sure you do not miss this — **Here the Holy Spirit tells us that when the gospel writers say that Christ blessed the bread and cup there is no implication that he mysteriously consecrated them or changed them.**

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He simply gave thanks for them. Having said that, I will just touch the highlights in these verses. I have expounded them many times and, the Lord willing, will do so many more times. But, for now, let me just remind you of what the Holy Spirit teaches in them.

1. We are to observe The Lord's Supper the same way our Lord did it with his disciples on the night in which he was betrayed.
2. That means we are to do so using unleavened bread and wine.
3. The unleavened bread represents (only represents) the body of Christ, which was crushed beneath the infinite wheel of God's infinite wrath and justice for his people.
4. The wine represents (only represents) the precious blood of Christ, the blood of the everlasting covenant, shed for many for the remission of their sins.
5. We are to observe this blessed ordinance often.
6. As often as we eat this bread and drink this wine we are to do so in remembrance of our dear Redeemer and Savior.
7. In the true observance of The Lord's Supper we show forth, in a beautifully symbolic ordinance, the Lord's death until he comes again to receive us unto himself.

UNWORTHILY

Now read verse 27, where Paul speaks of those who eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily.

(1 Corinthians 11:27) "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

Without question, there is a sense in which it may be said that we eat and drink the bread and wine unworthily, if we use the wrong elements, observe the ordinance without proper reverence, fail to properly think of and remember Christ our Lord, or do not clearly understand the meaning of the ordinance. All of those things are unworthy of men and women who claim to worship our God and unworthy of our great and glorious Christ. But none of those things can be found in this text.

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Commonly, this verse is interpreted to mean that a person is unworthy to receive The Lord's Supper who has a certain amount of unconfessed sin in his life, has not prayed as he should, read the Bible enough, or lived as he should. Again, I grant, there is certainly a sense in which we are all unworthy to observe this ordinance or any other ordinance of Divine service, because we are sinners! But that certainly is not the meaning of the Holy Spirit's words in this text.

I know, with absolute certainty, that the unworthiness spoken of in this text has absolutely nothing to do with the manner in which we keep the ordinance or the depravity, sinfulness, and corruption of our hearts, or even the sins and evil behavior of our lives for one simple reason. **That person who eats and drinks unworthily is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, according to verse 29, he eats and drinks damnation unto himself.** Those things simply cannot be said of any true believer. No true believer can ever become reprobate and be damned (John 10:27-30; Phil. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:5; 1 Thess. 5:24; Rom. 8:28-39; Mal. 3:6; Ps. 23:1-6).

EXAMINE YOURSELF

In verse 28 we are given two things to do as we prepare to receive The Lord's Supper.

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

1. **"Let a man examine himself."**

The text does not say, *Let a man be examined!* It says, **"Let a man examine himself"**.

(2 Corinthians 13:5) "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

(2 Peter 1:10) "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:"

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We have neither the right nor the ability to examine one another, neither as individuals nor collectively as a Church. I pray that God will give us the grace to get beyond the haughty pompous, self-righteous desire and habit of doing so!

2. **Once we have been made to know that we are in the faith, that Christ is in us and we are in Christ, because we trust Christ alone, then we are told to eat.**

For believers the ordinances of Christ are not optional. They are matters of obedience to the revealed will of God. Every true believer is here specifically told by God to eat the bread and drink the wine of the Lord's Table. Now, with that in mind, look at verse 29...

(1 Corinthians 11:29) "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

In this verse the Holy Spirit tells us exactly what it is to eat and drink unworthily. **Those who eat and drink unworthily are those who do not discern the Lord's body.** They are religious, but lost. They may know their church creed backwards and forwards, but they do not know God. They may be very smart and have much discernment about many things, but they have no spiritual discernment. They profess faith, but do not possess faith. They do not discern the Lord's body. **That means they do not understand...**

- The sin and depravity of their own hearts.
- The law and justice of God.
- The necessity of Christ's incarnation.
- The accomplishments of Christ in his flesh.
- The Gospel of the grace of God.

THE PRESUMPTION OF REDEMPTION, RIGHTEOUSNESS, REGENERATION, AND ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF AND A GOD GIVEN FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS DAMNING.

True believers are people to whom God the Holy Spirit has given and to whom he continually gives spiritual discernment.

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(1 Corinthians 2:9-16) “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (10) But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (11) For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (13) Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (14) But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. (15) But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. (16) For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

(1 Corinthians 11:30) “For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”

Paul is here declaring that the judgment of God had fallen upon many at Corinth because, like Uzzah of old (1 Chronicles 13-15), they sought him not after the due order.

1. They claimed to be worshipping God, but they were not. They were worshipping themselves (vv. 19-20).
2. They claimed that they trusted Christ alone as their Savior, but they did not. They trusted their own works!

(1 Corinthians 11:31) “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”

Paul’s language is simple and clear. It is altogether in line with the interpretation I have given of this passage. If you and I will sit in judgment with God against ourselves, as did David (Ps. 51:1-5) and Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-6), we will not be judged and condemned by God.

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That person who genuinely acknowledges and confesses his sin before God is a recipient of and has experienced the grace of God in Christ (1 John 1:7-10).

(1 John 1:7-10) “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (8) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

(1 Corinthians 11:32) “But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

When God deals with us, his elect, for sin, when he appears to be sitting in judgment against us, he is not punishing us for our sins as an angry judge, but chastening us as our wise, gracious, good, and loving heavenly Father.

He chastens us as a Father that we might not be condemned with the world, whom he chastens not. He chastens us as sons, that we might be partakers of his righteousness. Bastards he ignores, passes by, and leaves to themselves, that they may be fitted for destruction.

ORDERLY WORSHIP

(1 Corinthians 11:33-34) “Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. (34) And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.”

Wrapping up his instructions about The Lord’s Supper and our orderly observance of it, the Apostle tells us three things.

1. **We are to deal with professed brethren as brethren until we have absolutely no reason to believe their profession.**

If you read 1 Corinthians you simply cannot fail to notice the carnal divisions, sensual behavior, doctrinal error, and disorderly behavior that

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prevailed among them. Yet, Paul calls these people “*My brethren.*” He was not being sarcastic or insincere.

- True believers often behave in a terribly inconsistent manner.
- Though Paul says and does nothing to promote or encourage inconsistencies or sinful behavior in God’s saints, he loves them still and seeks to both correct their errors and minister to the everlasting consolation of the gospel.
- At the same time, he solemnly warns the self-righteous Pharisee, religious ritualist, and hypocrite of the certainty of divine judgment.

2. **When we come together to eat The Lord’s Supper, we ought to always be thoughtful of and show loving consideration for one another.**

“*Tarry for one another.*” — Not only are we to discern the Lord’s sacrificial body, we must discern and be aware of his spiritual body (the Church), which is also represented in the bread.

(1 Corinthians 10:16) “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?”

As we sit together at The Lord’s Table, let us do so as one family, in loving family unity.

3. **We must not mingle the worship of God with carnal pleasure, or interject into the worship of God that which God has not ordained.**

To mingle human inventions, carnal traditions, and ceremonial religious customs with the worship of God is to run the risk of bringing upon unregenerate men and women the added condemnation of smug, religious self-righteousness. — “**And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation.**”

Again, Paul is not here forbidding eating in the church building. He forbids the interjection of anything into the worship of God. One reason for this prohibition is the fact that those who engage in religious activity, in the pretense and guise of worship, who do not know God eat and drink damnation to themselves!

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APPLICATION

Now, as we sit together at The Lord's Table and prepare to receive the bread and wine in remembrance of our dear Savior, I urge you once more to do three things...

1. Examine yourselves.
2. Remember Christ.
 - His Person!
 - His Obedience!
 - His Sacrifice!
 - The Efficacy of His Blood!
3. Love one another.

Amen.