

The Lord's Supper: Remember Everything – 1 Cor 11:23-34 (Part 3)

1 Cor 11:23-34 (p.958); We're in the middle of a mini-series on The Lord's Supper – in order to remember everything about it
Much of which we've already covered in previous weeks, and you can find on our website or at Books & Things

For now, in Part 1, I encouraged you to . . .

Remember the setting (v23b)

- Because it connects The Lord's Supper with the Lord's death
- Because it reminds you of the Lord's suffering

Remember the background (Ex 12:21-27; Lk 22:1-20)

- Because The Lord's Supper is based on the most significant celebration in the Old Testament – the Passover meal
- Because the Passover meal for the Jews, was the last supper for Christ, and became the Lord's Supper for us
- Because Christ is our Passover Lamb
The one who shed his blood, applying it to the “doorposts of our heart” through faith in him and repentance of our sins . . .
That we might be *saved* fr death and the bondage of sin, and made alive in him (**Summ**)

That was Part 1; In Part 2, we found that we need to . . .

Remember the meaning (v24b, 25; Jn 6:48-63)

- That the bread symbolizes Jesus' death for our life

His death, as the Bread of Life, so that we might live
This is my body which is for you (24)

And second . . .

- That the cup symbolizes the salvation that Jesus' death offers and secures

This cup is the new covenant in my blood (25) he said

This cup and what it contains, is symbolic of God's new promise of salvation, offered and guaranteed by virtue of the shed blood of Jesus

So when we eat and drink The Lord's Supper, we're remembering the death of Jesus on our behalf, and the salvation that's ours b/c of it

That's the meaning and symbolism of the bread and cup (**Summary**)

Part 3 then, begins with the purpose

Remember the purpose (v23-26)

Paul wrote in v23-26 . . .

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The first purpose for observing The Lord's Supper is . . .

• Commemoration

Remembering what it is, what it means, and especially, who it's about

Do this in remembrance of me Jesus said (v24)

And then again – *do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me* (25)

Which makes The Lord's Supper a commemoration to mark his death and the salvation it secures; It's a memorial and a tribute at the same time

That's why there's such a mixture of sadness and sweetness

B/c we memorialize and lament the fact that Christ had to suffer and die like he did . . .

While celebrating or paying tribute to the fact that he saved us in the process

- Not only that, but there's also an aspect of thanksgiving in our commemoration

That's why it's sometimes called the *Eucharist*

Which I don't use much b/c of all the sacramental overtones associated with it . . .

But generally speaking there's nothing wrong with it

It's just a Greek word that means “thanks” or “thanksgiving”

A form of which Paul uses here in v24, where it says – he *took bread, and when he had given thanks* [eucharistesas], *he broke it*

All that to say, one of the purposes for observing The Lord's Supper is to commemorate the Lord's death with a memorial, tribute . . .

And a time of thanksgiving all wrapped up in one

The second purpose is . . .

• Proclamation

Proclamation of the gospel

Paul says in v26 – *as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

Proclaim is a word that's used in the NT for preaching the gospel

So one of the main purposes for eating and drinking The Lord's Supper, is to declare or proclaim Christ's death for the sins of the world; Him for us
The Good News that Jesus came to earth, lived a perfect life, died for the forgiveness of our sins, and rose again for our life – life to the full and life forever
Which you can have if you believe in him, repent of your sins, and follow him as Lord
One of the purposes of The Lord's Supper, is to proclaim that – the gospel

- Not with words mind you, but actions

As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

By eating and drinking, we're not only acting out our participation and association with the death of Jesus for our sins, *and* the salvation we enjoy as a result of it . . .

But we're proclaiming it to others by means of a silent drama, a silent movie of sorts

Something we'll do until Jesus returns – *you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes*

Until he comes again to receive us unto himself

At which point we'll no longer observe The Lord's Supper, b/c further proclamation would be moot; There will be no more second chances

But until then, we observe it and proclaim it – often

- Which begs the question, “How often? How often should we observe The Lord's Supper?”

And the short answer is, we don't know; The Bible doesn't say

Paul just says in v26 – *As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death*

Indicating *some* sort of repetition, but not how frequent; He says *as* often as you eat and drink, but not *how* often

And neither do any of the other biblical writers

Including Luke in **Acts 20:7**, where he says – *On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread* [most likely referring to The Lord's Supper], *Paul talked with them*

Again, we can't tell if that was a once in a while practice, or an every week practice

And even if it were an every week practice, it wouldn't necessarily be prescriptive – something commanded for all believers, everywhere

It would simply be descriptive like most of Acts, leaving us much latitude *****

- But at the very least, it seems that once a year should be the bare minimum, b/c that's how often the Passover meal was celebrated, on which it's based
And some churches do that; For which there's nothing wrong

But my personal conviction, is that it should be more often – like every 6 weeks or so

1. B/c our memories are short, and this is too important to forget

2. B/c the implication of **Acts 2:42** seems to be fairly frequent

That's where it says regarding the early church, that – *they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers*

They devoted themselves to it

Which feels like something they were doing more often than yearly

Especially when you consider that the other activities in that list, like the apostles teaching and fellowship, took place *weekly* at a minimum*****

So at the very least, it would seem that their devotion to *the breaking of bread*, implies a frequency more often than yearly

Taking all that into account then, we try to observe The Lord's Supper – commemoration and proclamation that it is . . . (**Summary**)

Often enough to keep it in the forefront of our minds and *devote* ourselves to it . . .

But not so often that it becomes a meaningless, repetitive ritual

Most important however, no matter what the frequency, is to remember the purpose

And then . . .

Remember the warnings (v27-31, 33-34)

Look at what Paul says in v27-31

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.

How we approach The Lord's Supper, and how we participate, matters

So much so that God gives us 3 warnings here of the most dire nature

Warnings that are intended to encourage us toward holiness, and keep us from sin

The first of which is unworthy participation

Remember the warnings . . .

• **About unworthy participation (v27)**

V27 says – *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.*

In light of the setting, and background, and meaning, and purpose, and importance of it all – unworthy participation is a problem

Participating in a way that your heart and life don't match the holiness of the act

Like eating and drinking with a bad attitude about a situation or person in your life

Your heart doesn't match the holiness of partaking in remembrance of Jesus, whose attitude toward you was nothing but holy

In which case you participate in an unworthy manner

Or how about participating with a bitter root in your heart

It's bad enough to let it grow in the first place . . .

But hanging on to those cold, resentful thoughts while eating/drinking, is even worse

You've entered a whole new realm

And then there's participating with blatant, un-confessed *sin* in your heart

Something you've never admitted to God as being wrong, nor asked for his forgiveness

Maybe it's even ongoing for you, and you have no intent or desire to stop; Is that you?

If so, and you eat and drink at The Lord's Supper, you participate *in an unworthy manner*, whether you're a follower of Christ or not

And it leaves you *guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord* (27b)

That is, guilty of treating his death and the salvation he offers, as common, when it's anything but

Guilty of treating something sacred and holy, as mundane and trivial

Guilty of showing disrespect and irreverence toward Jesus and the cross

That's what unworthy participation leads to – irreverence; Which is thin ice

Don't forget that; Remember the warning

- But don't confuse unworthy participation with being an unworthy participant

Sometimes we focus so much on our sin at The Lord's Supper that we feel unworthy to participate

We think, "Lord, I've done so many wrong things recently, there's no way I should eat and drink at your table"

So you don't; And you end up defeating the entire purpose

You end up *compounding* your issues by failing to honor the One who *died* for them

God's not asking you to be a worthy *participant* in The Lord's Supper – if that were the case, none of us would qualify

Rather, he's asking you to participate in a worthy manner

Which depends *not* on the perfection of your life, but the disposition of your heart

There's a story on that note about an old Scottish minister who noticed a young lady in his congregation, consistently refraining from taking The Lord's Supper

And as he talked with her, he discovered she did so b/c she was wracked by guilt, and feelings of unworthiness
Even though she had confessed her sin and made a commitment to turn from it
And I love his counsel; He said, “Take it, Lass. It’s *meant* for sinners.” (Luke Stamps, TGC blog, 8/11); It’s meant for people who need it

Remember that; Remember that God’s not looking for worthy participants, but worthy *participation*

- That doesn’t mean however, we shouldn’t *consider* our worthiness; Look at v28
Let a person examine himself, then [as in, assess the purity of your heart; measure the godliness of your conduct and life], *and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment* [punishment or discipline] *on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly* [if we *honestly* evaluated our lives for sin, repenting and committing to turn from it], *we would not be judged* [we wouldn’t be punished; we wouldn’t suffer the consequences].

V27 was a warning about *unworthy* participation, while this is a warning . . .

• **About casual participation (v28-31)**

One that we’d do well to remember . . .

B/c God is so passionate about the purity and fame of his Son’s name, so passionate about his glory and honor – he will stop at nothing, not even death, to protect it
Not that we should live in fear and *avoid* The Lord’s Supper, but rather, we should take it *seriously* in order to participate in a manner that fits the meaning and importance

That’s the idea when Paul says to examine yourself and *discern the body* in v29

He’s saying – scrutinize yourself, and see yourself for who you really are, how you are when no one’s looking, and what you do as you live your life in your *body*

Given his flow of thought, and the context of the adjacent verses, and his repeated use of the pronoun *himself* – that’s what the phrase *discern the body* means

That we need to examine and see ourselves accurately and honestly – and in so doing, come clean before we eat and drink

B/c once again, *casual* participation leads to judgment; Including sickness and death

And so does selfish participation; Remember the warning, last . . .

• **About selfish participation (v33-34)**

B/c it too leads to judgment; Look at v33-34

So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—34 if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things [which we know nothing about] *I will give directions when I come* [he says].

With this reminder, Paul comes full circle to v20-21 of chapter 11, where he identified 3 areas of selfishness – disregard, neglect, and indulgence; Take a look . . .

When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. 21 For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal [that’s disregard]. *One goes hungry* [that’s neglect], *another gets drunk* [that’s indulgence].

3 areas of selfishness that tainted their participation

And while you may not exhibit those issues in church, at *our* remembrances . . .

To the extent you do so in other areas of your life – to the extent that you disregard people, or neglect them, or indulge yourself in spite of them . . .

You carry those issues with you, and participate in The Lord’s Supper with a selfish *heart* at the very least

Which once again, leads to judgment according to v34; Punishment

Or, as we’ll see next week in v32 – discipline (**Summary**)

- That’s why it’s so important to remember the warnings, and *purify* your heart
A pure heart at The Lord’s Supper is not just a goal, but a requirement
And it’s sometimes symbolized by eating *unleavened* bread – similar to the bread that was used at the Passover meal
B/c yeast, or leaven, is often *associated* with sin in the Bible
So that’s what we’re going to do this weekend – we’re going to eat unleavened bread to remind ourselves and emphasize that a pure heart *matters* at The Lord’s Supper

It’s not *imperative* that we do so – we don’t *have* to use unleavened bread; Nowhere does the Bible prescribe or command such a thing

Nor is it necessary in order to honor the symbolism and meaning of the bread

B/c the bread doesn’t represent purity – it represents the death of Jesus for our life

His death, when he took on *our* impurities; When he bore our sin *in* his body (1 Pt 2:24)

So leaving the yeast in, has just as much symbolism as taking it out; Maybe even more

But I do think it’s helpful fr time to time to use unleavened bread at **The Lord’s Supper**, in order to remember the warnings especially (Servers)

The warnings about impurity, unworthy participation, and the judgment that follows

So let me encourage you to examine your life – to see yourself accurately and honestly

And remember that God’s not looking for worthy *participants*, but worthy participation (Distribute)

- Having cleansed out the old leaven, and been forgiven by the death of Jesus on your behalf – do this in commemoration of him
And having received the salvation that the blood of Jesus offers and secures – do this, as an act of proclaiming it

Pray – Lord, thank you for dying on our behalf, for our sins

And thank you for shedding your blood to save our souls

What *else* can wash away our sins? What *else* can make us whole again?

Nothing; Nothing but your blood; Nothing but the blood of Jesus; We praise you for it