

# Correcting Communion

## Using Context to Dispel Communion Confusion

*“...ye were called unto the fellowship of...Jesus Christ our Lord...I beseech you, brethren,  
...be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”– 1 Corinthians 1:9-10*

### 1. Communion Confusion

- a. History proves communion is confusing without a proper understanding of the mystery of Christ revealed to Paul
- b. At best, it's a commanded ordinance, ceremony, ritual, memorial, or time of self-reflection (a lot of protestants)
- c. At worst, it's a sacrament (RCC, EastOrdx, some protestants) – *def.* a rite required to receive grace or blessing from God
- d. Most everyone 1) makes it about putting things in your mouth, and 2) connects it in some way to Israel's New Covenant
- e. Most everyone says communion was instituted by Jesus (Mt 26, Lk 22, Mk 14), but the conundrum is actually Pauline
  - i) Communion (1Co10:16=2x, 2Co6:14, 13:14), Lord's table (1Co 10:21), & Lord's supper (1Co 11:20) = only in Paul
- f. Bible-believing communion is a doctrine that has nothing to do with ordinances, sacraments, food, or Israel
- g. Confusion and tradition create complicated knots in our doctrinal understanding that take time and effort to untie

### 2. Communion and the Fellowship of the Mystery

- a. Communion *def.* = *fellowship; a state of agreement; mutual intercourse in doctrine & discipline; the body of Christians who have one common faith; concord (agreement; union in opinions, sentiments, views or interests; peace)*
- b. Fellowship *def.* = *mutual association of persons on equal and friendly terms; partnership; joint interest; state of being together; intimate familiarity; communion (Fellow → a companion; one of the same kind; an equal; to be joined as one)*
- c. The mystery of Christ concerns a union of believers w/ Christ & each other, once hidden, now known – Eph 3:3-6
- d. Unity = one = same = together = join(t) all speak to the union all believers have in common with and because of Christ
  - i) We are many members in one body with one Spirit – Ro 12:3-5; Ep 2:14-18, 4:4, 5:30-32; Col 3:15; Phi 1:27, 2:1
  - ii) The body has one head, so should have one mind – Ro 12:16, 15:5-6; 2Co 12:18; Gal 3:28; Phi 2:5, 3:16-19, 4:2
  - iii) Same Spirit & same mind should result in the same care for one another – Gal 6:2; Ep 4:17-25; Phi 2:2; 1Cor 12:25-27
- e. Only possible by the shed blood of Christ & conferred upon all that believe today – Ro 3:25, 5:9, Ep 1:7, 2:13, Col 1:20

### 3. Communion in the Corinthian Context

- a. Paul's purpose for writing 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians → They work out their common union w/ Christ & one another – 1Cor 1:9-10
- b. There are divisions and contentions among them (1Co 1:11); they are glorying in men, not Christ (1:29-31, 2:5)
- c. Paul reminds what is most important: Christ & him crucified (2:2) → the mystery (2:7) → the mind of Christ (2:16)
- d. But he cannot speak to them as unto spiritual b/c they are carnal babes not yet ready to handle meat (3:1-3)
- e. So, baby food: we're all one in Christ (3:7-8); ye are God's building, the temple of God (3:9, 16); ye are Christ's (3:23)
- f. Don't be puffed up against each other, all are one in Christ (4:6-7); *warning:* follow how Paul teaches Christ (4:14-17)
- g. They are (wrongly) glorying in liberty & grace (to fornicate, 5:2-6), not respecting the blood & body of Christ (5:4, 7, 12)
- h. They lack meekness toward each other (6:7); ye are members of Christ's body, not your own, act accordingly (6:13-20)
- i. Some contention b/w Jews & Gentiles re: marriage, yet as the Lord has called every one, so let him walk (7:17-24)
- j. Knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies (8:1); an idol is nothing (8:4), but not every man has that knowledge (8:7)
- k. ...meat commends us not to God: for neither if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not are we the worse (8:8)
- l. Your liberty shouldn't be used to hurt another member of the body for whom Christ died (8:9-13)

- m. 1Cor 9 lists examples of how Paul restricts his liberty & power to abide by the principle of charity toward others
- n. Paul has the power to partake of their carnal things (9:1-11), but has not used it so the gospel is not hindered (9:12-15)
- o. Though free, he becomes a servant to all to 1) build the body (9:19, 22) and 2) be partakers together with them (9:23)
- p. "Moreover" (10:1) continuing the theme of restricting liberty for the profit of others (10:33)
- q. 1Cor 10 uses illustrations to explain why idolatry is not ok even though we're under grace:
  - i) Israel in the wilderness was baptized (dry) unto Moses (v2),
  - ii) Israel all ate of the same spiritual meat (v3) & all drank of the same spiritual drink (v4) → Christ's provision for them
  - iii) Yet God was not pleased (v5) because of their idolatry (v7), fornication (v8), tempting (v9), & murmuring (v10)
  - iv) We can learn from Israel's past (v11, v18) → Wherefore, flee from idolatry (v14, v20) ... But why if we have liberty?
  - v) 1Cor 10:16 → emphasis is on "we" to contrast with "they/them" from 1Cor 10:1-11 (drink=cup; eat=break bread)
    - (1) What we drink (nourished by), is it not Christ's provision of forgiveness of sins through his shed blood?
    - (2) What we eat (partake of), is it not the one body of Christ of which we're ALL members together?
    - (3) In the communion of the body & blood of Christ, there are no physical elements—you ARE the host! (v17)
  - vi) 10:18 → another example from Israel: when they eat the sacrifices, they are aligning with what/whom it was for/to
  - vii) Idols & their sacrifices are nothing, but since they aren't of God & we are, we shouldn't identify with them (v19-20)
  - viii) Sacrifices to idols are real food/drink, but we are partakers of Christ: his blood is already shed, we are his body (v21)
  - ix) All things are lawful, but all things edify not (v23); seek not your own, but others benefit (v24); give no offence (v32)
- r. 1Cor 11:1 makes more sense as 1Cor 10:34—the next though begins in 1Cor 11:2 (chapters & verses are not inspired)
- s. Paul praises them for attempting to keep some order (11:2), reminds them of their unity in Christ regardless (11:11-12)
- t. Then he praises them NOT for their behavior when they come together (11:17) because of the divisions (11:18)
- u. They are eating when they come together, but they're not doing it right (11:20-21)
  - i) Own supper ≠ Lord's supper; Your own supper seeks your own profit, the Lord's supper is more like 10:31-33
  - ii) If the Lord's supper is wine thimbles and crackers, you can solve the drunken problem, but not the hungry...
- v. If all bring their own supper, then those who have not will be ashamed in coming together (or not come?)—11:22
- w. 1Cor 11:23-25 → Paul recounts what Jesus did for his disciples the night he was betrayed
  - i) Paul learned this from Christ directly (not MMLJ); Corinthians learned this from Paul in person (not MMLJ)
  - ii) Paul is NOT saying, "When you come together, don't eat a meal—just do wine and crackers like Jesus."
  - iii) Jesus & the 12 ate the Lord's Passover meal according to the law—Ex 12:11, Mt 26:17-30, Lk 22:7-20, Mk 14:12-26
  - iv) Paul is NOT saying, "When you come together, eat the Passover"—1Cor 11:26 (as often, Gal 4:10?), Col 2:16-17
  - v) Paul IS saying, "On the night he was betrayed, Jesus' mind was to serve his friends (& enemies!) both food & his life."
- x. 1Cor 12 goes on to talk about SAME Spirit (12:4), SAME Lord (12:5), SAME God (12:6) given to EVERY member to profit the whole (12:7), for the body is ONE though there be many members (12:12) that drink into one Spirit (12:13).
- y. There should be no schism in the body...members should have the same care one for another (12:25)—ye are the BoC
- z. 1Cor 13 defines true charity: seeking not one's own but the benefit of others with the truth of God. Time to grow up!
- aa. 1Cor 14 → Seek that ye excel to the edifying of the body (14:12); when ye come together, edification is the goal (14:26)

#### 4. Communion Corrected

- a. What we put into our mouth (or not) doesn't affect our standing with God—Rom 14:14, 17, 20-20; Col 2:16, 1Tim 4:3-4
- b. Communion with Christ and with one another as members of his body is true regardless of what we do (or not)
- c. But coming together around who we are in Christ affords us the opportunity to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment, and with the same care one for another, discerning the Lord's body.
- d. Eating together is an easy way to work that out & to use the Corinthians' rebuke as our instruction in righteousness