

Discerning The Body

1Cor 11:17-34

The Lords Supper has both vertical and horizontal dimensions. We are like Moses & Aaron and the seventy elders of Israel who were invited by God to come up on Mt. Sinai and eat and drink in the presence of the Lord (Ex. 24). But it is not a meal we eat in isolation from others. We are a congregation assembled around this table and scriptures teach us that we are to be mindful not only of the Lord, but of one another. The Lord's table is a powerful image of the fellowship, love and unity that we are to have with one another.

- I. There was considerable diversity in social standing among the Christians in Corinth 1Cor 1:26-31 *Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-and the things that are not-to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."*
 - A. *Not many of you* implies that **some were** (wise, powerful & of noble birth)
 - B. However all of them had access to God in exactly the same way i.e. **by Grace**.
 1. None of them: thought it up, bought it, or earned it.
 2. The philosopher's hadn't come up with the plan, the rich didn't strike a deal with God and the over-achievers hadn't earned their place.
- II. There was considerable diversity in the spiritual gifts among the Christians in Corinth 1 Cor 12:27-31 *Now **you are the body of Christ**, and members individually. 28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the best*

gifts. *And yet I show you a more excellent way.*

- A. They are individual members of ONE BODY.
- B. Eye, Hand & Mouth could be **distinguished**, but not **separated**.
- C. Uniqueness was for **mutual edification** not **aggrandizement**.

III. Because the Corinthians failed to understand these things rightly, there was considerable division among them.

A. 1Cor 1:10-11 *Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be **no divisions** among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.*

B. 1 Cor 3:1-3 *Brothers, I could not address you as **spiritual** but as **worldly**-mere babies in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?*

1. **Spiritual** = taught/led by H.S.

- a. The true gospel humbles everyone and thus reduce all mankind to a common ground. We all are sinners, saved by grace.
- b. The practical effect of this is to obliterate all grounds of human boasting and feelings of superiority: Male/ female, slave/master, rich/poor, old/young.

2. **Worldly or Carnal** = the way unbelievers think.

- a. Socially fractured, boasting in their gifts, huddling together in factions.
- b. All of this is in play when we come to 1Cor 11 and Paul's detailed discussion of the L.S.

IV. This Leads Us To Consider The Basic Problem At The Lord's Supper.

A. With this background it comes as no surprise that the Corinthian church had turned the L.S. into a **highly sectarian** affair (V. 21 for in eating, each one, takes his own supper ahead of others).

B. In all likelihood the church met at a well to do members house and the Christians would come as they could.

1. It may have been that the better off would get their first, and the slaves and working class would not be able to show up until they “got off work”.
 2. The first ones had quite a feast, but the poor got leftovers (V. 22b).
- C. Paul concludes that this lack of consideration and love for each other demonstrates an utter failure for which he can find nothing worthy of praise (V. 22c).
- V. A Correct Understanding and Application of The L.S. Is The Most Powerful Way Of Dealing With These Problems (VV. 22-26).
- A. Christ Died for them and gave the supper as His memorial.
1. Reflection on this great truth has many implications.
 2. Including our treatment of our table companions.
- B. V. 29 - For Paul there is a double meaning in the phrase “*Body of Christ*”.
1. 1 Cor 12:12-14 *For as **the body** is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free -- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.*
 2. 1 Cor 10:16-17 *Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is **one loaf**, we, who are many, are **one body**, for **we all partake of the one loaf**.*
 - a. The body of Christ = Christ’s human body & the church.
 - b. By eating together from the ONE loaf, we are identified as One body and all In Christ.
 - c. Sharing a table was in Paul’s day the primary symbol of fellowship and acceptance, belonging and mutuality.
 - d. A way to show that a break in fellowship had occurred was by not eating with them (1Cor 5) Just as Peter did with the Gentiles in Gal 2:11,12).
- C. It is important that we also see this as we come to 11:29 *For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the body.*
1. The failure that Paul is addressing was their divisiveness and inconsideration of each other that they manifested at the L.S.
 2. The very thing that should **demonstrate their unity** became an occasion for them to **demonstrate their divisions**.

3. This is further evidenced in Paul's summary stmtnt in v. 33
Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.

VI. Application:

- A. The Lord didn't invite you here alone. This supper isn't just Jesus and you. It is the communion of *the body of Christ*.
 1. This morning our Lord, has brought together a congregation of brothers and sisters.
 2. We are here to **eat** with Him AND each other.
 3. **Behold the goodness and severity of God.**
 - a. We are required to partake of the elements while discerning *the Lord's body = church*. When you partake in this meal without proper consideration for Him or each other you turn the table of **blessing into cursing** and eat and drink **damnation**.
 - b. This is a **table of blessing**, and those who come in the way the host has requested on the invitation given to you will be blessed,
 4. This means if I have problems with my brother I must either:
 - a. play the hypocrite and share the table as if everything was ok.
 - b. Or I will determine to make it right and let go of my stubborn pride.
 - c. Only this table is great enough to make prideful men do just that. Do you want to eat and drink this and be blessed by the Lord?
 - (1) If you hold to your resentment and refuse to eat you will starve.
 - (2) If you hold to your resentment and decide to eat anyway He will discipline and if you continue to harden yourself he will condemn you.
 - (3) You have no choice. let it go and come.
 5. How do you do that? by remembering that:
 - a. **The flour that made this bread was ground in all humility.**
 - b. That the king seated at the head of this table took a beating was spat upon and stripped of all dignity and died for sinners like you and me.
- B. So then put aside all the harbored grudges and come. The king

invites all who are baptized to come to the feast.

C. How should we partake? With Solemn Joy.

1. Jesus provided this feast with his death and that must always serve as the backdrop, thus removing all levity and frivolity.
2. But the Lord isn't dead, He is risen and He is with us.
3. Can the bride weep in the presence of the bridegroom? So let us eat and drink w/ **solemn Joy** for the Lord has spread a feast and invited us.

L.K. -0- 7-11-10