

THE LORD'S SUPPER AND HOLINESS  
1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Intro: One of the places where the Corinthian church had sinned most grievously against the Lord was in connection with the Lord's Supper. That is clear from this text. It was so serious that some had actually died, and others were at the time that this Epistle was written, sick! From verse 18 it is clear that this was connected with the first problem that Paul discussed in this letter: divisions.

The Lord's Supper was a most holy time for the people of God. It was to be a time of rich fellowship, and of growth in the things of the Lord. It could not be separated from the fact that they were to be a holy people. This was just as much of a contributor to their lives as prayer, Bible reading and teaching, and obedience. They were remembering the Lord!

However, if this were to be a holy time, and to make them more holy, there had to be a time of preparation. This led to their participation. And finally they needed to know that the Supper itself was a proclamation of two of the greatest truths to be found anywhere in the Word of God.

Let us note what the text has to say about these three things.

I. THE PREPARATION.

Three words are important here:

- 1) What it means to eat and drink "unworthily."
- 2) Next the word "examine" in verse 28.
- 3) And then the word "judge" in verse 31.

Paul got back to this in his second Epistle where we can see how he used this word, "examine":

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith . . ."  
Therefore, it seems that Paul was asking the people to search their own hearts to make sure of their salvation. For a church to have all of the problems that the Corinthian church had certainly meant that they should face the possibility that some within the church, as members, were not actually saved.

This is apparent <sup>also</sup> in the Word "judge." It is a word which means to separate between a mixture--such as gold from an alloy. A child of God is a mixture. He still has the old, but he also has the new. As they came to the Lord's table the Corinthians were to look for the evidence of the new.

"Unworthily" means unfit. It can speak of the manner of participation, or it can refer to the person himself.

Putting all of this together, every person who came to the

Lord's Table was to conduct an examination of himself. And the idea in the word was that he was to prove himself with the idea that he would be approved. If there was sin, it, of course, was to be confessed. But the main idea seems to be that of assuring one's self that he was really a child of God.

How could this be done?

Let me point out six passages of Scripture where this word "examine" is used in these two letters to the Corinthian church, and they will help us.

- 1) The indwelling Christ (2 Cor. 13:5). Cf. Gal. 2:20.
- 2) The response to the Word (1 Cor. 11:19).
- 3) The saints (1 Cor. 16:3).
- 4) Love through giving (2 Cor. 8:8; 1 John 3:14).
- 5) Obedience--here through forgiveness (2 Cor. 2:9).
- 6) The blessing of God (2 Cor. 10:12, 18)--"whom the Lord commendeth."

Assurance is a vital part of our salvation and a real contributor to a holy life.

Passing the test (as the word assumes), the next step is

## II. THE PARTICIPATION.

See verse 28. What is he to eat?

A. The bread.

To drink from

B. The cup.

What does this signify? We need to read John 6:50-58 to find our answer.

"The bread" has to do with the incarnation of the Son of God and "the cup" with the fruit of the vine speaks of His terrible death upon the cross. Thus, we are remembering, and reaffirming, our faith in the Person of our Saviour, and in His work for our salvation.

We have brought before us in these elements the awful price of our redemption, and the glorious One Who paid the price.

But there is one other thing:

## III. THE PROCLAMATION.

Cf. verse 26. It is the same word as is used in 1 Cor. 2:2

and 9:14. For us to observe the Lord's Supper is just like we had a Gospel-preaching service. The Gospel is being proclaimed by what we do.

But there is another truth involved here also: the coming of the Lord. See verse 26 again. When He comes, our salvation will reach its fulfillment. By our participation here we proclaim that we not only believe in His coming, but that we are expecting Him!

Concl: What an important time this is for us, and for the Gospel! It must never become a commonplace thing with us. We examine ourselves continually, being assured by what we see when we look into our hearts.

In case a person does not see the evidences of spiritual life, this then becomes the time and place to turn to the Lord.

Note Paul's searching words to the Galatians in Gal. 4:11-20.