

First Corinthians

May 18, 2025

Chapter 11

The Matters of Paul's Apostleship

“Paul’s Example in Apostleship”

Chapter 11:17-34

5. Paul’s Instruction of Apostleship

a) Meet Without Divisions

(1) Criticism of the Gatherings (11:17)

Paul has not yet addressed all the troubling issues he has heard about in the Church of Corinth. It is time for Paul’s instructions on Apostleship to revisit the topic of divisions within the Corinthian Church. He urges them to make another crucial correction when they gather for Church, emphasizing the need for unity among the congregation. To illustrate this, he focuses on the divisions that arise during the LORD’s Supper. For this reason, Paul does not commend the Church members. He states that ...

¹⁷ But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse.

Paul cannot praise the Corinthians for their behavior in gatherings, as they do not contribute positively to the Church community. Instead of fostering spiritual growth and unity, their actions lead to increased discord.

(2) Existence of Divisions (11:18)

Paul intensifies the existence of the divisions in the Church when he says,

¹⁸ For, in the first place, when you come together as a Church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it.

Paul directly points out that there are divisions (or schisms) within the Church. This may refer to social, economic, or ideological divides. These divisions weaken the Church’s unity and mission by making it challenging to function as the body of Christ.

(3) Purpose of Factions (11:19)

But Paul sees a purpose of factions in the Church. Verse 19.

¹⁹ For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.

While Paul disapproves of these divisions, they have revealed who among the saints is genuinely faithful or *"approved."* Although the saints undoubtedly recognize the “approved” within the Church, they still have disagreements.

(4) Misinterpretation of the Lord’s Supper (11:20-21)

Focusing on this, Paul reveals the misinterpretation of the LORD’s Supper in the Church of Corinth. Verse 20.

²⁰ Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper, ²¹ for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

The Corinthians view the LORD's Supper as a communal meal. Reading between the lines, Paul accuses the members of arriving at the Supper hungry and drinking to the point of drunkenness.

(5) Rebuke for Disregard (11:22)

The misinterpretation of the LORD's Supper prompts Paul's rebuke for neglecting its true meaning. Verse 22.

²² What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the Church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this, I will not praise you.

Paul questions their motivations and attitudes toward the Lord's Supper ceremony. He expects them to enjoy a regular meal at home. He rebukes their lack of respect for the Lord's Supper at the church, pointing out that their behavior is shameful. Their actions disregard the importance of love, unity, and consideration for one another in the church. Because of this, Paul cannot commend the saints of the Corinthian church.

The LORD's Supper should be a time for reflecting on Christ's sacrifice. It is now time for Paul to give instructions for a proper LORD's Supper service.

b) Meet for the LORD's Supper

(1) The Eating of the LORD's Supper (11:23-26)

(a) Source of Instruction (11:23)

Paul begins by explaining to the saints the source of the instruction he will provide for eating the LORD's Supper. Verse 23.

²³ For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;

Paul's teaching came directly from the Lord. He had already shared this teaching with the Church during his time there. By stating that he "*delivered*" it to the Corinthians, he emphasizes the significance of what the Lord did on the night Judas betrayed him. That night, he began by taking the bread in His hands.

(b) The Institution of the Lord's Supper (11:24)

In verse 24, Paul clarifies that the institution of the Lord's Supper originated from the Lord Himself.

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."

Taking the bread, Jesus gave thanks and broke it into pieces. He then identified it as His body and distributed it to His twelve Apostles at the table. This act symbolizes His sacrificial death and serves as the physical representation of His body. The command to "*do this in remembrance of Me*" established the practice of the supper as a commemorative act, inviting all saints to reflect on Christ's sacrifice.

(c) The Cup and the New Covenant (11:25)

After breaking the bread, Jesus took the cup of wine and referred to it as part of the New Covenant. Verse 25.

²⁵ In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

When Jesus takes the cup, He connects it to the "*new covenant*" in His blood. This signifies a new relationship between God and humanity, established through Christ's final sacrifice. Drinking from the cup in remembrance acknowledges that Christ's blood provides atonement and

redemption for all saints in the future. Just as the bread symbolizes Christ's body, the cup represents His sacrificial death.

(d) Proclamation of the Lord's Death (11:26)

Paul discusses the announcement of the LORD's death as he quotes Jesus, saying,

²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

When saints eat the bread and drink from the cup, they proclaim the Lord's death until His Second Coming. This proclamation serves two purposes: it remembers Christ's sacrifice and declares the saints' faith and hope in His return. It is both a memorial and a testimony to the Gospel message.

The Lord's Supper is essential to the Christian faith, inviting believers to remember and reflect on the significance of Christ's death and resurrection. It encourages them to consider the cost of their salvation and express gratitude for God's grace.

In the Church, the Lord's Supper serves not only as a time for individual reflection but also as a congregational experience that fosters unity among the saints. It emphasizes that all members stand equal at the foot of the cross, transcending any social or economic status within the congregation.

The mention of the "new covenant" links the Old Testament sacrificial system to the final sacrificial death of Christ, which serves as the ultimate atonement for sin. It is referred to as a "new covenant" because, through the LORD's sacrificial death, no additional sacrifices are necessary for the forgiveness of sin.

(2) The Guilt of the LORD's Supper (11:23-29)

(a) Eating and Drinking in an Unworthy Manner (11:27- 29)

(i) Guilt and Accountability (11:27)

The LORD's Supper is a solemn act of worship. Guilt associated with the LORD's Supper can arise from eating and drinking in an "unworthy manner." Paul addresses guilt and accountability in verse 27.

²⁷ Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

"Unworthy manner." What does that mean? How can someone participate in an unworthy manner? Paul will address this in verse 28. With this statement, Paul makes it clear that a saint can take the supper in an unworthy manner. This leads Paul to introduce a concerning thought.

Paul states that if you partake of the LORD's Supper in an unworthy manner, you *"shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord."* This suggests a violation of the sanctity of the supper, likening it to an offense against Christ Himself. It serves as a warning that believers must approach the supper with care, ensuring they possess the right heart and attitude.

(ii) Self-Examination (11:28)

Regarding the LORD's Supper being taken in an "unworthy manner," Paul advises the saints to start with self-examination. See Verse 28.

²⁸ But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Paul instructs the saints to *"examine themselves"* before eating the bread and drinking the cup. It is crucial to ensure that one honors Christ during the supper. Each person must reflect on their faith, attitudes, relationships with others, and personal sins. The significance of the bread and cup reflects Christ's sacrifice, highlighting the aspects that can make someone unworthy.

(iii) Judgment for Improper Participation (11:29)

Paul says there will be a judgment for improper participation in the Supper. Verse 29.

²⁹ For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.

Paul warns that those who eat and drink without properly examining themselves can bring judgment upon themselves. To "*judge the body rightly*" means understanding the importance of having the correct relationship with the LORD before participating in the Supper. A right relationship with the LORD begins with self-examination and personal correction of flaws in that relationship. The Supper should not merely be a ritual or tradition; it is a profound act of worship each time it is observed among the saints in the Church. It represents the unity of the saints as they remember the love of the LORD in His final sacrifice for our sins.