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Sermon Notes

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## **Preparing for the Lord's Supper**

### **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

#### The Corinthian Context:

- Talented, gifted church
- Split by divisions based on human pride
- Immature
- Dealing with doctrinal and practical problems...
  - Sin in the church and church discipline as a result
  - Sexual immorality
  - Marriage, divorce, celibacy
  - Food sacrificed to idols
  - Financial support for ministry
  - The role of women in church life
  - Speaking in tongues & prophecy
- Focusing on the importance of the resurrection body

In the midst of all these swirling issues, Paul takes up the topic of the way the Corinthians were celebrating the Lord's Supper

Reading the lines and between the lines, it seems that some of the Corinthians were acting very irreverently toward the ordinance of the Lord's Supper

Some were looking on it as an opportunity to eat and drink all their woes away... feeding their faces and drinking perhaps even to the point of drunkenness

Though the Lord's Supper was meant to unite the church around the death and resurrection of Christ, it actually was a source of shame... putting their disunity and carnal selfishness on display for all to see

In the midst of these teachings, Paul drops a theological bombshell:

***1 Corinthians 11:27-30 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without***

***recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. <sup>30</sup> That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.***

Astonishing!! The Lord takes this ordinance so seriously that He was willing to afflict some of His own people with illness and even with death because they had eaten and drunk in a manner unworthy of the Lord

So Paul, moved by compassion for them and moved by zeal for the Lord... really moved by the Spirit of the Lord Himself, wrote these verses

His purpose... to warn them to take the Lord's Supper very seriously, lest they be judged by taking it in a wrong manner

BUT MORE... that they may be blessed genuinely by the richness of the spiritual blessing the Lord intended by the Lord's Supper

This also is my purpose today... I realized this week that I have never preached a sermon in 8 ½ years of preaching here at FBC... I had never preached a single sermon on the Lord's Supper, and I strongly felt led by the Lord to change that today

The Lord's Supper was meant to be a rich river of blessing for the church of Jesus Christ

And so it has

But it has also been a source of immense controversy as well

#### Historical Context:

I was raised Roman Catholic, and we were taught that the bread and wine, through the miracle of transubstantiation, became the ACTUAL BODY and BLOOD of Jesus Christ, and that only by physically partaking from it could we be saved

Martin Luther, the great reformer of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, trembled so violently when he performed his first mass as a Catholic priest that he actually spilled the precious wine on the table; after he came to evangelical convictions, he still believed the bread and wine became in some sense the actual body and blood of Christ

Ulrich Zwingli, who lived at the same time and carried out a powerful reformation in Switzerland, so opposed the old Catholic ways that he rejected the significance of the Lord's Supper entirely and believed it to be merely a memorial, totally man-centered, and nowhere near as significant as the faithful preaching of the Word

#### Modern Context:

Modern evangelical churches have tended to follow Zwingli's "memorial view" and have greatly minimized the Lord's Supper in the life of the church... the Lord's Supper is therefore held usually on Sunday evenings quarterly or less, to a fraction of the congregation

This practically makes the Lord's Supper DISAPPEAR from the life of the church

We MUST NOT follow such a pattern

BUT neither must we believe that the bread and grape juice are miraculously transformed into the ACTUAL body and blood of the Lord

My purpose here is to begin teaching you HOW TO LOOK AT THE LORD'S SUPPER... or better, "How to look to Christ in the Lord's Supper"

***Hebrews 12:1-2 let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith***

## I. Looking Back

### A. To the Passover

1. The night of the Lord's Supper was a *seder*, a Passover celebration
2. There are five key parallels between the Passover and the Lord's Supper
  - a. Both the Passover and the Lord's Supper were established as **lasting memorials**, to be commemorated from generation to generation
    - i) The Passover commemorated the Exodus of the Jewish nation from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land... the night of the Passover was the tenth and final plague, the terrifying plague on the firstborn... each Jewish home sacrificed the Passover Lamb and painted the lamb's blood on their doorposts and lintels; the angel of death saw the blood and passed over the Jewish home
    - ii) The Lord's Supper was established to replace the Passover which Christ was about to fulfill... never again would a Passover Lamb need to be sacrificed, for Christ, the Son of God would die as the Lamb of God whose blood would take away the sins of the world
    - iii) Both were commemorated in lasting ceremonies, to be passed on from generation to generation

***Exodus 12:14 "This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD-- a lasting ordinance.***

***1 Corinthians 11:23-26 The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> 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." <sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this,***

**whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. " <sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

- b. Both services involved bread
- c. Both services involved wine
- d. Both services involve community
- e. Both services commemorate redemption

So, at the time of the Lord's Supper, we look back to the Passover

We also LOOK BACK...

B. To the Last Supper, the Night Jesus Was Arrested

***1 Corinthians 11:23 The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread***

1. We remember how Jesus was with His disciples the night He was betrayed
2. We remember how His betrayer dipped his hand into the dish with Jesus, then left to betray him
3. We remember how sad and troubled Jesus' disciples were... and yet how glad Jesus was to eat this one final meal with them
4. We remember the events of that somber night

We also LOOK BACK...

C. To Christ's Death: Body and Blood

1. The bread symbolized Christ's body... broken for us on the cross
2. The blood symbolized Christ's blood... shed for us on the cross
3. This death is the center of our redemption... a clear recognition of one central fact

***Romans 6:23 the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Christ's identification of the bread with His body and of the wine with His blood focuses our attention on the need for a substitute who would sacrifice Himself in our place to pay the penalty for our sins

We also LOOK BACK...

D. To the New Covenant

1. The Passover was an Old Covenant ordinance...
2. The center of the Old Covenant was the need for BLOOD SACRIFICE

***Leviticus 17:11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.***

***Hebrews 9:22 without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.***

3. Christ here instituted a New Covenant in His own blood, thus ending forever the need for animal sacrifice

***1 Corinthians 11:25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."***

By this New Covenant in Christ's blood, the wrath of God is totally satisfied, we are reconciled to our Holy Father, we are made one with Christ... we are FORGIVEN!! We are made forever God's covenant people

We also LOOK BACK...

#### E. To Our Personal Faith in Christ

1. This is a good time to remember your own personal testimony of faith in Christ
2. How you first believed, how you first came to trust in Christ
3. How the Lord has dealt so graciously with you in the years that followed that initial commitment to Christ
4. WITH GREAT THANKFULNESS you should look over the years of your Christian pilgrimage up to this moment and understand that, had Christ not protected your precious faith every step of the way, you would have fallen away a long time ago

Thus we LOOK BACK... to the Passover, to the Night Jesus was betrayed, to Jesus' body broken and blood shed on the cross, to the New Covenant established in His blood, and to our personal faith in that blood

## II. Looking Up

### A. To God the Father

Whenever Jesus gave thanks for food, He looked up to His heavenly Father

***Matthew 26:27-29 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. <sup>28</sup> This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured***

***out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup> I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."***

1. It was God the Father who crafted this salvation plan
2. It was God the Father who was delighted to crush His Son on your behalf
3. It was God the Father who did not spare His only Begotten Son, but gave Him up for us all
4. It was so that He might bring us to God the Father, and safely into His Heavenly Kingdom
5. The Lord's Supper is part of the Father's sweet efforts to reconcile rebellious sinners to Himself in Christ

#### B. To Christ, Our Faithful High Priest

1. The Lord's Supper is a constant reminder of our ongoing need for Christ's ministry as our great High Priest
2. NOT as Roman Catholic theology teaches, as though the Lord's Supper were a sacrifice a human priest continually offers to God the Father
3. NO... Jesus was offered ONCE FOR ALL TIME, and need never be offered again
4. But the ongoing, lasting, repeated nature of the Lord's Supper reminds us of our ongoing need for Christ and for His ministry at the right hand of God the Father
5. The eating and drinking reminds us of the constant need for ongoing partaking of Christ... not just one time but continually and spiritually

***John 6:53-56 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. <sup>56</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.***

The easiest thing is to slide from these verses into the Catholic view that the bread and juice are actually the body and blood of Jesus... but the eating and drinking Jesus means in John 6 is a PARTAKING in the BENEFITS of His death, an ONGOING and CONSTANT partaking, as we constantly need food and drink

#### C. To the Spirit, Our Power

1. Though the Spirit isn't mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11, yet Paul ever moved far from the doctrine that it is only by the ministry of the Holy Spirit that we partake in Christ

2. It is the Spirit's ministry to apply Christ directly to each trembling heart and hungry soul
3. It is the Spirit's ministry to take dry old ideas and black and white text on a page and make it ALIVE in human hearts
4. Look now to the Spirit... ask Him to seal you again in Christ, to remind you as you eat of the Lord's Supper that you are Christ's and that He is yours

SO, at the time of the Lord's Supper, WE LOOK UP to God, the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit

### III. Looking Within

#### A. To Our Sinfulness

1. Look at the ugly sinfulness of the first century church in Corinth

***1 Corinthians 11:17-22 In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. <sup>18</sup> In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. <sup>19</sup> No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. <sup>20</sup> When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, <sup>21</sup> for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. <sup>22</sup> Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!***

2. So also we must look within to our own sinfulness
  - a. We complain and fail to give God thanks for His many gifts
  - b. We lust and stumble into idolatrous impurity
  - c. We argue and bicker and show great selfishness
  - d. We fail to live for God's glory and Christ's Kingdom
  - e. We fail to witness or care for the needs of the poor
  - f. We do not live up to the calling we have received
3. THEREFORE every Lord's Supper is a time to do serious business with God... to acknowledge the SERIOUSNESS of sin

***1 Corinthians 11:27-29 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and***

***blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.***

4. We don't eat flippantly or lightly; we bow in our hearts and search our hearts for sinfulness; we bring out those sins and allow Christ's all-sufficient blood to cover every one
5. We "JUDGE OURSELVES" so that the Lord won't have to judge us
  - a. This means we repent and bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance
  - b. We deal seriously, not lightly, with sin

***Isaiah 66:2 declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.***

We also LOOK INWARD...

#### B. To Repentance and Faith

1. This is a meal of thankfulness, not of sadness
2. FULL PROVISION is made for any who genuinely repent of sin and trust in Christ

Illus. Scottish pastor serving the Lord's Supper to his congregation, saw a young woman, who was weeping over her sin, and dared not reach forth and take the bread; the pastor, knowing her genuine faith in Christ and the reasons for her inner grief, leaned forward and said quietly to her, "Take it lassie, it's for sinners."

So, we LOOK INWARD...

#### C. To the Testimony of the Spirit

1. It is the Spirit's work to assure us of Christ's full forgiveness
2. It is the Spirit's work to comfort us as we grieve over our sinfulness
3. It is the Spirit's work to assure us that we are children of God

***Romans 8:16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.***

Therefore, we LOOK INWARD...

#### D. To Ensure We Are Eating Worthily

1. If we eat in a manner unworthy of the Lord, we are sinning against the Body and Blood of Christ



2. This is especially true of a gospel hypocrite, who is not genuinely converted, who just knows how to fake Christianity on Sundays and live like the world the rest of the week
3. It is also true of any unbeliever, who partakes of the Lord's Supper for earthly reasons, to impress or please some other person while despising the Lord whose blood paid for the feast
4. These people are actually eating and drinking judgment on themselves by partaking in the Lord's Supper
5. Lest anyone think for a moment that this is some slight memorial, some inconsequential ritual, think on the severity of the penalty the Lord enacted on some Corinthians who DIED because they ate in a manner not worthy of the Lord

#### IV. Looking Down

##### A. To the Bread and Juice

1. When you take the elements, look down at your hands
2. Look at the piece of physical bread and the actual cup filled with grape juice
3. These are physical elements... they have an aroma, a flavor, an appearance, a weight
4. The physical nature of this ordinance reminds us of the actual BODY and BLOOD of Christ, that, in the fullness of time, were actually given for our sins
5. It was no theory, no philosophy, no theology that was nailed to the cross... but the PHYSICAL BODY of Christ

***Colossians 1:21-22* Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. <sup>22</sup> But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation**

***Hebrews 10:19-22* Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, <sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near to God**

##### B. To the Physical Body of Christ Given ONCE

1. No, the bread IS NOT the actual BODY of Christ

2. Neither is the grape juice the actual BLOOD of Christ
3. That doctrine demeans the ONCE FOR ALL sacrifice of Christ's physical body
4. That offering needs NEVER be repeated again
5. But when our physical hands hold physical bread and cups of physical grape juice, we are reminded of a certain place and time on this planet when God's incarnate Son gave up His physical body for our sins
6. AND they remind us of the time when our hands will be made new in the Kingdom, resurrected bodies in a resurrected universe

## V. Looking Around

### A. To the Body of Christ... the One True Church

***1 Corinthians 11:33 So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other.***

1. The Corinthian church struggled with unity
2. They argued, bickered and acted selfishly with each other
3. They hurried ahead and gorged themselves on bread meant for everyone
4. BUT the Lord's Supper was meant to portray our unity with each other
5. The ONE LOAF symbolizes ONE BODY of Christ

***1 Corinthians 10:17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.***

6. So also Jesus' fellowship statements

***Matthew 26:26-27 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." <sup>27</sup> Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.***

### B. To Our Fellowship Together

1. When we wait for each other, when we look around the room and realize we're not alone at this banquet table
2. When we look around and see the faces of other believers, we feel acutely the UNITY of the Body of Christ... we are one in this fellowship; when one member partakes, we all partake

3. So also we know that there are believers all over the world that partake in this simple feast... all of them united by one Spirit into one body

We also LOOK AROUND...

#### C. To the Watching Unbelieving World

1. If a pastor does His work properly, all unconverted persons in the sanctuary will be suitably warned NOT TO PARTICIPATE
2. They can observe, they can look on, but until they commit themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ in the abandonment of faith, trusting His blood to atone for their sins, all they are doing is eating and drinking judgment on themselves
3. BUT the Lord's Supper itself is a PROCLAMATION of the gospel, silently acted out in front of a watching and not yet Christian audience

***1 Corinthians 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.***

PROCLAIM then the SAVING POWER of Christ's death... and keep PROCLAIMING it; O how the dying world needs to hear this proclamation of the Lord's death until He comes... indeed, BEFORE He comes, before it's too late

## VI. Looking Forward

#### A. To the Future Coming of Christ

1. Yes, Christ is COMING

***1 Corinthians 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.***

2. We just stated it very plainly... Jesus is coming back someday
3. This homely, symbolic feast, saturated with the powerful ministry of the Spirit, will someday give way to the reality of the returning King
4. And when He comes, He will come in open, powerful glory, with the armies of heaven

***Revelation 19:11-16 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. <sup>13</sup> He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. <sup>14</sup> The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. <sup>15</sup> Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with***

*which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

B. To the Future Feast in His Kingdom

1. This homely little symbolic feast will give way to a sumptuous feast in the Kingdom of the Father
2. There we will eat and drink at the table of the King

***Matthew 26:29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."***

3. We will sit with redeemed brothers and sisters from every tribe and language and people and nation
4. We will partake in delicacies we cannot even comprehend, and no earthly feast can compare with the sweetness of the food and refreshment of the drink and the richness of the fellowship... seeing God's face smiling and welcoming a countless multitude to His generously laden table
  - a. Jesus said He would drink of the fruit of the vine ANEW in His Father's Kingdom
  - b. What will that NEW WINE taste like? What will NEW FOOD taste like? What will the NEW SONG that we will song sound like?
  - c. Full understanding of these future realities is waiting for us, and has not yet been made known

***1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known.***

***1 Corinthians 2:9 "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"***

***2 Corinthians 12:3-4 And I know that this man-- whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows-- <sup>4</sup> was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.***

5. Many scriptures speak of this sumptuous banquet

***Matthew 8:11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.***

**Matthew 22:2-4** *The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup> He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. <sup>4</sup> "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'*

**Revelation 19:9** *Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."*

Ultimately, we LOOK AHEAD...

### C. To Our Future Resurrection

1. The best feast of all... the death of death

**Isaiah 25:6-8** *On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines. <sup>7</sup> On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; <sup>8</sup> he will swallow up death forever.*

2. Our resurrection bodies... the joy of the feast will never end, though we will not be sitting at the banquet table endlessly, yet consistent times of feasting in the Kingdom will characterize our eternity with God in the New Heaven and New Earth

### **Summary:**

In the Lord's Supper we are invited to a comprehensive, spiritual look by the Spirit of God

**To Look Back:** in remembrance to the Passover, to the Night Jesus was betrayed, to Jesus' body broken and blood shed on the cross, to the New Covenant established in His blood, and to our personal faith in that blood

**To Look Up:** in dependence on God, the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit

**To Look Inward:** in repentance for Our Sinfulness; To Repentance and Faith; To the Testimony of the Spirit; To Ensure We Are Eating Worthily

**To Look Down** in understanding that the actual bread and juice reminds us that Christ's actual physical body died and His physical blood was shed

**To Look Around:** in commitment to the Body of Christ, the one true Church united all over the world, and to remaining work of evangelism to a watching world of unbelievers to whom we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes

**To Look Ahead:** in hopeful trust to the Second Coming of Christ and to the Eternal Kingdom of His Father where we will feast in resurrection bodies forevermore