

1Corinthians 11:29-34 "Judge Yourself Rightly"

Last week we met here around the table of the Lord to worship Jesus Christ and remember what it was that has allowed all of us to be reconciled to the Father. We see this clearly in the words of Jesus which Paul shares with the Corinthians.

1CO 11:23-26 "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 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." 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." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

This table of the Lord demonstrates the cost of the penalty of sin. We know that the wages of sin is death and nothing short of the death of our sinless Savior would satisfy the justice and wrath of God on our behalf+.

When Christ sacrificed His life on the cross for us He declared, "it is finished." The debt has been paid in full. There is nothing anyone could add to His sacrifice, nor could there be any other payment that would be needed. And we see that the payment was received by the Father on our behalf as Christ was raised from the dead as He is received back to the Father.

ROM 6:9-10 "For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God."

And if we have received His free gift of eternal life by repenting of our sin, and embracing the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross by faith, then we too have this resurrection life in Christ.

And that's why Paul could continue in Romans 6 to show the Romans, as he does for all of us, that if we have this life in Christ then it should manifest itself in such a way that we no longer pursue or live in the old life, or the old ways.

ROM 6:11-12 "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires."

And this is the message Paul is bringing to the Corinthians as he gives them a picture of this life purchased at the cross. And then he forces them to remember that if this new life in Christ has placed each of us in the family of God, then the unity we should have in the Spirit should manifest itself in such a way where the body of Christ is seen to be unified and glorying in the life purchased for us at Calvary. And this is partly the message Paul gives in our text.

1CO 11:29 "For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself."

There are two lines of thought on the meaning of this passage, and both are true. One thought is that "the man who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner does not realize what the sacred symbols mean. It may mean that he eats and drinks with no reverence and no sense of the love that these symbols stand for or the obligation that is laid upon him." (William Barclay)

And so, the body of the Lord would include every aspect of Christ's redemptive work which we shouldn't take for granted.

But the phrase, "the body of the Lord", may also stand for the church. Keep in mind that Paul has spent a great deal of time rebuking and correcting these believers because of their unwillingness to see the body or the church as a living organism, which has been purchased equally and is designed to reflect their Savior, not through party spirits, but through a willingness to unite and represent their Savior as the body of Christ.

Many of these people were not willing to come together. In practice they were saying that the body of Christ was a freakish representation as the parts of the body were separated, and yet making the claim that they were still one. Imagine going to a circus freak show and seeing body parts scattered in a cage all moving and doing their own thing claiming to be a shining example of how a body worked.

Not discerning the body of the Lord is not to recognize and appreciate the infinite cost of His life on the cross, but it is also not to recognize the reason for that cost, which is to purchase a people

for Himself to glorify Him forever as they walk in the unity of the Spirit.

And if a person comes to the table proclaiming to the church and the world that they are a viable part of the body, while denying the proper outworking of that body, they misrepresent the One who died for us, and rose from the dead for us, so that we would be new creations living in the power of the Spirit to the glory of God.

Our Lord cares much too much to let His body go off in all directions without being firmly connected to the Head and each other for the advancement of the Kingdom of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And this is why, "anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself." (vs.29)

Now, in what sense can a believer be judged and by whom? Well, we know that when a believer is judged by the Lord it is not a judgment regarding his eternal position before the Lord because that judgment was made once and for all at Calvary. Our position in Christ is secure and not in jeopardy of being lost.

JOH 6:38-40 "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that ***I shall lose none of all that he has given me***, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and ***I will raise him up at the last day.***"

This is what Paul meant when writing to the Romans.

ROM 8:1 "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,..."

By the way, the words being used in our text and in Romans 8:1 for judgment and condemnation are similar and yet different in meaning.

Unfortunately, the KJV uses the word damnation in our text when it says that, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." I say unfortunate because the Greek word could certainly be translated condemnation, but in the English condemnation may have a different connotation but could include the idea of being eternally lost, or damned.

But, damnation is not what is being spoken of in verse 29. The word the KJV uses in our text for damnation, and the NASB and

NIV uses for judgment, is the same Greek word *krima* and it means judgment or condemnation of a wrong. In other words, if you disobey the Lord He may judge you for that disobedience but only in so far as He is trying to correct the behavior of one of His children.

The word that is used for condemnation in Rom.8:1 when Paul says, "therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus", is the Greek word *katakrima* which speaks of a damnatory sentence, condemnation in the eternal sense.

And so, in Rom.8:1 Paul is saying that the judgment being avoided for the believer in Christ Jesus is the judgment given to all men outside of Christ which is eternal separation from God.

As believers we don't fear that judgment from God. But this doesn't mean that God takes a vacation from being involved in the lives of His people when it comes to making judgments which might involve our discipline.

And there is no believer who is exempt from this judgment of God, or this scrutiny from God, who is always working in our lives so that we might become more like Christ.

ROM 8:28 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

We usually look at a passage like this and conclude that anything bad happening in our lives will be used by God as He works for the good in our lives. And this is true, but it also involves God working for our good as He sometimes judges our bad behavior and is actively engaged in changing it through whatever means He has at His disposal.

We see a similar promise when Paul wrote to the Philippians as he wrote to them about God's active involvement in their lives which would certainly not exclude righteous judgments He may make so as to bring about the desired effect for that person's life to the glory of God.

PHI 2:13 "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

Where judgments from God in the lives of His people may be necessary, they will be varied and commensurate with the sin in our lives according to His good pleasure and for our good.

But whether a babe in Christ or a seasoned saint actively involved in the work of God, every believer will and must find himself at times being judged by God in the best sense of the word so that we will all grow up in Christ. Even those deemed to be leaders in the church don't escape this as James points out in his letter.

JAM 3:1 "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."

This would certainly include the general judgment of others around us, but in the context of James it is dealing with faith without works and how God views that. And so, in the context there the judgment James speaks of for teachers would certainly include the judgment from God who is always involved and tweaking our lives, if you will, so that we might be better equipped to serve and love Him and others.

And so, back in our text, when Paul exhorts these believers in Corinth to examine themselves before they come to the table, a major part of what he is trying to convey is that you and I examine ourselves to see how we fit into the body and how we are actually representing Christ in that body.

But as we continue in our text it seems apparent that despite the glaring problems these people had, some of them weren't willing to repent. It's not as though they were ignorant of their responsibilities in the body, since Paul had been with them for a while and had faithfully taught them the truth, it's just that their pride would not allow them to obey.

And like a child having a tantrum, where the parent comes along side and takes drastic measures to restrain that problem, God sometimes comes along side His children who will not submit and He may take drastic measures for the sake of His family and the love of that child.

1CO 11:30 "That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep."

This is a very interesting passage. Paul begins by saying, because you eat and drink without recognizing the body of the Lord, you eat and drink judgment on yourself, this is why some of you are weak and sick and a number of you have fallen asleep.

Paul says that since you won't consider your responsibility to the body of Christ, and what the body of the Lord represents in the

sacrifice on the cross when you come together at the table, then the Lord Himself will teach you that such an attitude will bring His judgment so as to fix the problem.

Often times we think that God is just being mean when He disciplines us, but the reality is He is loving us more than we could ever begin to imagine. But of course the discipline is meant to have its desired effect of getting our attention and bringing us back into a right fellowship with Christ and the body.

But notice what the judgment God brings upon the church in Corinth. "That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep." Now, there are a number of questions which should be posed here.

Does this mean that whenever we become weak or sick that we have necessarily come under God's disciplinary hand? Does this mean that any time someone in the body of Christ dies that God is displeased with that person or the church and He is trying to correct some problem?

And what about the ones who were sick and then died? Were they the ones who were guilty, or were they just the ones God used as an example for the sin of someone else in the body? And isn't it just a bit extreme to cause someone to get sick or even die for such an abuse in the church? And does God judge the same way today in the church?

We may never know the answers to all these questions on this side, but one thing is certain. In Corinth, this particular church was judged by God in just this way and it was a righteous judgment.

Let's consider what Paul says. "Many among you are weak and sick and a number of you have fallen asleep." Was this a divine intervention, or was it a natural outworking of their sin? It could be both. And by the way, when Paul uses the phrase fallen asleep, he means they have died, in the same way Jesus spoke of how Lazarus had fallen asleep to his disciples, when He meant he that had died.

God has certainly been involved in such discipline of this extreme kind in other portions of Scripture. We know, for example, that God's direct intervention in the lives of Ananias and Sapphira in the early church was swift and final.

ACT 5:1-10 "Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. 2 With his wife's full

knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. 3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. 6 Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. 7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price." 9 Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also." 10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband."

The context here in Acts had a number of prominent people in the Church selling land and houses and then bringing the entire amount to the apostles and laying it at their feet to take care of many who had nothing. It all seems very innocent and apparently this is what Ananias and Sapphira did as well.

The problem with Ananias and Sapphira, however, was not in what they brought to the apostles, but what they didn't bring. Apparently, what they had done was to come to the apostles claiming to have sold the property for a certain amount and then giving that entire amount, when in fact they sold it for more and brought only what they had claimed to have sold it for.

In other words, they lied about the price to make themselves look good while also keeping some of the profits for themselves. Peter says, the entire amount was yours. You could have kept the whole thing or brought only a portion, but because you're trying to make yourselves look good to the body of Christ, while lying about what you actually made, and keeping it, God has something to say about it.

In that case God took the lives of these two people precisely because of their lying. And notice that Peter says, you've lied against the Holy Spirit, in Acts 5:3, and then he says, you've lied to God in verse 4.

For those, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, or the Mormons, or any other cult which does not recognize the deity of the Holy Spirit as being the one true triune God, Peter makes it clear that He is. To lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God.

But this particular judgment from God was meant to keep the integrity of His church intact. And it had its desired effect.

ACT 5:11 "Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events."

Now someone might wonder, since God took the lives of Ananias and Sapphira, were they actually unbelievers disguising themselves as Christians? The answer is no. There is no reason to believe that they were unbelievers. They were recognized as belonging to the church. They were told that they lied to the Holy Spirit which suggests that the Holy Spirit was offended and grieved by the actions of two of Christ's people.

If we were to suggest that every unbeliever who has ever lied should face the same immediate judgment none of us would ever have made it. The context in Acts, like the context in Corinthians, is dealing with professing believers in the church.

Now, only God ultimately knows the hearts of anyone, including Ananias and Sapphira. But I wouldn't be surprised to see them both in heaven and rejoicing that God used them to put a check on the rest of the church.

And so, yes, it is not beyond the scope of God's judgment to use sickness and death as a judgment for God's people under special circumstances to discipline His people. I say under special circumstances because, again, if we all got the same kind of judgment for sinful behavior none of us would make it very far in the church. And so, we cannot make such judgments on those in the church who get sick or die. In Peter's case, God Himself revealed it to him regarding Ananias and Sapphira.

But Paul is trying to make the point that sinning with impunity does not exist in God's economy, despite the fact that we are secure in our salvation. And really he is saying that if we ever think we can sin with impunity than we really don't understand the grace and salvation we say we have.

But Paul says, 'look, you can avoid this whole thing by judging yourself instead of having God judge you on the matter when you're not willing to judge yourself.'

1CO 11:31-32 "But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. 32 When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world."

Here again, we have different uses of the word judgment. "If we *judged* ourselves, we would not come under *judgment*."

Two different words are used for judgment here. To judge ourselves is the Greek word *diakrino*, and it means to separate or make a distinction or discriminate. In other words, we need to make a distinction between what God's word says and then separate ourselves from those things which are out of accord with His word.

This is a healthy judgment we make on ourselves daily. And Paul says that if you're going to come to the Lord's Table, claiming to be united to Christ and unified with the body, and yet you're blatantly causing division, then you better make the right judgment about yourself according to God's word and make the changes with the help of the Holy Spirit that He wants you to make.

And Paul says that if we will take a preemptive approach to our walk and then resolve whatever problems we know of in our lives, then we won't have to come under God's judgment, which is the Greek word here in verse 31, which is simply *krino*, which infers that God will personally pick out the problem and deal with it Himself, either using other people or circumstances in our lives.

And so, Paul says that one way or another someone needs to make such biblical judgments in their own lives; it will either be the individual or God. And what we find in our lives is that it's always a combination of both as our hearts sometimes don't judge rightly concerning sin in our own lives.

But so, as not to crush the spirits of these people in Corinth, Paul says that even if you receive such judgments from God they are not meant to damn you to eternal separation from God, they are actually meant to show how you belong to a heavenly Father who only loves you and is separating you from the world which will receive such damnation.

1CO 11:32 "When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world."

Here Paul makes it clear that our judgment as believers is only unto discipline, and we know that any discipline from our Lord is only for our good and the good of the body.

HEB 12:5-8 "And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons."

None of us likes discipline. None of us likes to be called in by our bosses and told that we're slacking or not getting the job done properly. None of us likes to be singled out in school and told that we got the answer wrong because we didn't study. And you know what? God knows that we don't like discipline.

HEB 12:11-13 "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed."

There's a reason for it all if we're willing to submit to the Lord's discipline. But now Paul gives a very practical solution to their problem. And if we're going to be disciplined it's always nice to know exactly how we can alleviate the problem so we can get on with the work. And this is the case in Corinth.

1CO 11:33-34 "So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. 34 If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions."

Notice how Paul continues to call them brethren. Even in the midst of discipline Paul comforts them with the fact that they are still part of the family. But then he says, 'here's how you need to deal with each other when it comes to worship and the Lord's Table.'

Paul essentially tells them to wait for everyone before you start your love feast. Don't give the impression that you're being selective with your fellowship. We all belong to the same Lord

and the same church and each is to be treated as a brother and sister and the unity must come to the forefront in the unity of the Spirit.

And if you're coming to church only to satisfy your physical hunger then you're coming for the wrong motive. Go ahead and eat at home. Your stomach is full and you can concentrate and meditate on the business at hand which is to remember your salvation and worship the Lord.

Paul has got other things to bring up about these issues but they can wait until he sees them.

1 Corinthians 11:34 ...The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.

Paul figured this is enough for them to chew on, and he doesn't place any more burden on them at this time. The rest can wait since he's dealt with the bigger problems. But the bigger problems need to be dealt with because they will not automatically go away unless they're willing to do what they need to do for the sake of the body and the glory of Christ.

I like the way Jesus comforts us when we do mess up or when our lives are not moving in the direction we want, or when we're just confused with how we should love and serve Him, and it's in the context of being weary and burdened. And it's His word to the church and to us.

MAT 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Taking Christ's yoke is a choice to humble ourselves under His might and strength and love, and to trust that He will always lead us in the way we should go, even if that way is sometimes confusing and scary. Remember, He will never leave us or forsake us, even if He has to sometimes judge us and discipline us for our own good.