

# Preparation for the Lord's Table

*I Corinthians 11:17-34*

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Introduction: This morning we will be joining together to celebrate the Lord's Table. It is one of only two ordinances given to the Church, the other being believers' baptism. These are called ordinances, & not "sacraments." A sacrament, according to the Catholic Church, is "...something presented to the senses, which has the power, by divine institution, not only of signifying, but also of efficiently conveying grace" (Council of Trent). But the Bible does not teach that any ordinance (or so-called sacrament) is able to convey or give grace to the participant. We may define an ordinance as "...an outward rite appointed by Christ as a visible sign of the saving truth of the Christian faith" (Thiessen). In other words, it is a memorial that Christ instituted to cause us to reflect upon His death, burial, resurrection, & coming again. In our text, the Apostle Paul sets forth the most detailed account of how the Lord's Supper is to be conducted. In verses 17-22 we see the perversion of the ceremony; in verses 23-26 we see the purpose behind the ceremony; & in verses 27-34 we see the preparation before the ceremony. This morning we will consider the preparation aspect, as we note together three things: (1) our **avoidance** of the perverted (unworthy) manner, (2) our **adherence** to the proper motive, & (3) our **allegiance** with the pictured message.

## I. Our **avoidance** of the **perverted** (unworthy) manner (:27, 29-32).

### A. The characteristics of an unworthy manner:

1. By ignoring it rather than obeying it (consider it to be irrelevant or unimportant).
2. By failing to observe it meaningfully (a superficial or irreverent observance).
3. By assuming it can save (we are saved by grace alone!).
4. By refusing to confess & repent from known sin.
5. By having a lack of respect & love for God or His people (the Body of Christ?).

### B. The consequences of an unworthy manner:

1. "*Guilty of the body & blood of the Lord*" (:27).
  - a. Treating Christ's life & death as common & insignificant.
  - b. Compare: by trampling on a nation's flag one is guilty of dishonoring that country. Illustrate: A student in a college in Florida who refused to stomp on Jesus' name written on a piece of paper.
2. "*Eateth & drinketh damnation* ("judgment") *to himself*" (:29).
  - a. "*Damnation*" - chastisement; cf. & contrast :32, the condemnation of unbelievers.
  - b. "*Discerning*" – lacking discernment as to the meaning & significance of Christ. Summary: "Sinful participation in the communion table is tantamount to calling down chastisement (not loss of salvation) upon one's self" (Stitzinger).
3. "*Many are weak & sickly among you, & many sleep*" (:30).
  - a. Some of those in Corinth became sick, others even died (Acts 5:1-11; I Jn. 5:16).
  - b. "Such stark reminders of God's holiness & man's sinfulness show what everyone deserves & what some actually receive."  
Application: What if God continued to do this today?
4. "*We are chastened of the Lord*" (:32).
  - a. And not condemned – the believer is not judged & consigned to hell.
  - b. "God disciplines His children not to punish them, but to correct their sinful behavior & to direct them in paths of righteousness." (see Hebrews 12:6)

## II. Our **adherence** to the **proper** motive (:28).

### A. The examination for the assurance of salvation:

1. “*Examine*” – speaks of a rigorous self-examination (not an examination of others & their relationship to the Lord). The word was used of testing metals.
2. “*Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*” (II Cor. 13:5 & cf. II Pet. 1:10).

### B. The examination for the **acknowledgement** of sin:

1. This is an examination of one’s motives & attitudes toward sin (to be confessed now), saints (to make things right with as soon as possible), & the Savior.
2. There should be no unconfessed sin as we enter participation in the Lord’s Table.

Summary: “Believers are challenged to confess their sins (:28). If Christians are willing to judge themselves, confess their sins, & correct themselves, God will not judge them (:31). This self-evaluation must occur on a daily basis (I Jn. 1:9) & especially at the time of the Lord’s table observance” (Stitzinger).

## III. Our **allegiance** with the **pictured** message (:26, 28).

[“*shew*”- “an acted sermon” (Ryrie) The word is used elsewhere & translated “*proclaim*” – as in preaching the Gospel]

### A. The **proclamation** of the *death* of Christ:

1. We proclaim His **voluntary** death > John 10:11, 17-18.
2. We proclaim His **vicarious** (substitutionary) death > I Peter 2:24 & 3:18.
3. We proclaim His **victorious** death > I Corinthians 15:25-28, 55-58.

### B. The **affirmation** of the *return* of Christ: [see Redpath, p. 137]

1. We affirm our **belief** in Christ’s return > Acts 1:11; I John 3:2.
2. We affirm by our **behavior** until Christ returns > I John 3:3.
3. We affirm our **blessing** when Christ returns > Titus 2:13; I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

**Conclusion:** Why do we Christians observe the Lord’s Table? It is **commanded** of us by Christ in Luke 22:17-22. It is also **commended** to us by Paul here in I Corinthians 11. We are reminded in so doing of what Christ has done for us. Note the emphasis upon the word “*remembrance*” (Greek word “*anamnesis*” – our “amnesia”) in verses 24 & 25. The Jews used this term to mean more than just “remembering” something that happened previously. “It meant recapturing as much as possible the reality & significance of a person or situation in one’s conscious mind. Jesus was requesting that all Christians of all times ponder the meaning of His life & death on their behalf. A person can participate in Communion, but if his mind is a million miles away, he has not truly remembered the Lord.” By our celebration of this ordinance we consciously & gratefully remember what Christ has done for us. For the believer, communion is a time for retrospection (looking back), introspection (looking within), circumspection (looking around), & anticipation (looking up). We **renew** our **commitment** to Him, **refresh** our **communion** with Him, & we **review** our **commission** for Him. In this Table we proclaim His death (burial & resurrection) & we prepare for His soon return. May we enter into this observance of the Lord’s Table with the proper attitude & appreciation for all that Christ has done for us. If you have not accepted the Lord as your personal Savior, we ask that you do not partake in these elements until you know for sure that you have been saved (see Redpath, p. 138).