

Taking the Lord's Supper in an Unworthy Manner

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11

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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. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. (11:27–29)

Again Paul returns to warning. Because of all that is involved in the ordinance, **whoever** participates in the Lord's Supper **in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.** One can come to His table unworthily in many ways. It is common for people to participate in it ritualistically, without participating with their minds and hearts. They can go through the motions without going through any emotions, and treat it lightly rather than seriously. They can believe it imparts grace or merit, that the ceremony itself, rather than the sacrifice it represents, can save or keep one saved. Many come with a spirit of bitterness or hatred toward another believer, or come with a sin of which they will not repent. If a believer comes with anything less than the loftiest thoughts of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and anything less than total love for his brothers and sisters in Christ, he comes unworthily.

To come unworthily to the Lord's table is to become **guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.** To trample our country's flag is not to dishonor a piece of cloth but to dishonor the country it represents. To come unworthily to Communion does not simply dishonor the ceremony; it dishonors the One in whose honor it is celebrated. We become **guilty** of dishonoring His body and blood, which represent His total gracious life and work for us, His suffering and death on our behalf. We become guilty of mocking and treating with indifference the very person of Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 7:52; Heb. 6:6; 10:29).

Every time he comes to the Lord's Supper, therefore, a person should **examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.** Before we partake we are to give ourselves a thorough self-examination, looking honestly at our hearts for anything that should not be there and sifting out all evil. Our motives, our attitudes toward the Lord and His Word, toward His people, and toward the Communion service itself should all come under private scrutiny before the Lord. The table thus becomes a special place for the purifying of the church. That is a vital use of Communion, and Paul's warning reinforces that ideal.

A person who partakes without coming in the right spirit **eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly.** Judgment (*krima*) here has the idea of chastisement. Because

“there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1), the KJV rendering of *damnation* is especially unfortunate. The great difference in Paul’s use here of *krima* (**judgment**) and *katakrima* (**condemned**) is seen in verse 32, where it is clear that *krima* refers to discipline of the saved and *katakrima* refers to condemnation of the lost. That chastening comes **if he does not judge the body rightly**, that is, the blood and body used in Communion. To avoid God’s judgment, one must properly discern and respond to the holiness of the occasion.

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