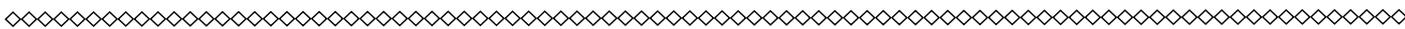




Pastor of the  
International  
Baptist Church  
in Cologne Ger-  
many.

**Sermon Brief**  
**Text: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34**  
**Title: God's Church: At the Lord's Table**  
Lorin L. Cranford

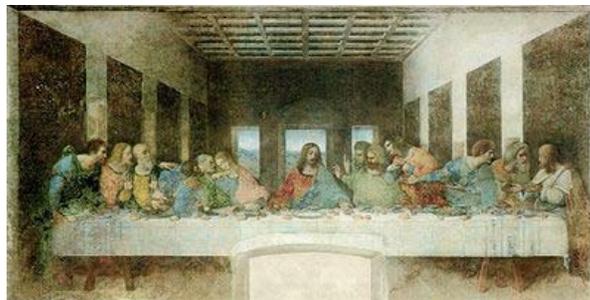
Seeking to faith-  
fully proclaim  
the whole coun-  
cil of God in  
scripture!



### INTRODUCTION

Celebrating the Lord's Supper is a major event in the life of most Christian congregations. And it should be for us as well. Our church constitution specifies that the supper is to be celebrated at least once a month.<sup>1</sup> With the service today we resume that pattern as the church voted to do almost a year ago in the adoption of the present constitution.

This special worship experience has taken on several names over the centuries of Christian tradition. In Baptist heritage it is usually called the *Lord's Supper*, although sometimes Baptists will use the term commonly found among other Protestant groups, *Communion*. In Roman Catholic tradition it is called the *Mass* or the *Eucharist*. In Eastern Orthodox tradition, the name used for this is *Mystical Supper*. When Jesus established this worship event, this is often referred to as the *Last Supper*, since it took place shortly before His arrest and crucifixion. These different names represent very different views about the nature and meaning of what Jesus established.<sup>2</sup>



The passages that serve as the scriptural foundation for the Lord's Supper include the following. In the gospel accounts, one finds a description in Matt. 26:17-30 with parallel accounts in Mark 14:12-26, Luke 22:7-23, and John 13:21-30. Elsewhere the main text is our passage for today, 1 Cor. 11:17-34. A few scattered references to the Lord's Supper can be found elsewhere in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Paul's word to the Corinthians was the first of these texts to be written and one to four decades later came the Gospel texts. From the passages we develop our understanding of the Lord's Supper and then attempt to formulate a 'theology of the Lord's Supper' in the effort to express the religious meaning of these action in the church.

With our text today from 1 Corinthians,<sup>3</sup> we can glean several important insights into this practice in ap-

#### <sup>1</sup>IX. Church Ordinances

##### Lord's Supper

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed *at least monthly*. The Lord's Supper is understood as a proclamation of the atoning work of Jesus Christ and as a symbol of our faith in Christ and our resulting fellowship with God and one another. All of those who know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour are invited to the Lord's Table.

<sup>2</sup>A helpful online survey of both the history and the biblical texts on this subject can be found in the Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology, "Lord's Supper, the," by Peter Toon.

<sup>3</sup>NRSV: 17 Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. 19 Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. 20 When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. 21 For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. 22 What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 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." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. 30 For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. 33 So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

**11.17** Τοῦτο δὲ παραγγέλλων οὐκ ἐπαινῶ ὅτι οὐκ εἰς τὸ κρεῖσσον ἀλλὰ εἰς τὸ ἥσσον συνέρχεσθε. **11.18** πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ συνερχομένων ὑμῶν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀκούω σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν ὑπάρχειν καὶ μέρος τι πιστεῦω. **11.19** δεῖ γὰρ καὶ αἰρέσεις ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι, ἵνα [καὶ] οἱ δόκιμοι φανεροὶ γένωνται ἐν ὑμῖν. **11.20** Συνερχομένων οὖν ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ οὐκ ἔστιν κυριακὸν δεῖπνον φαγεῖν. **11.21** ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον

ostolic Christianity. One must remember that when Paul wrote these words to a specific congregation with a twisted understanding and a false practice of the Lord's Supper. The Corinthian Christian community in the middle of the first Christian century had developed a practice of observing the Supper in a way that Paul condemned, and also that God had condemned through inflicting His judgment on the believers (cf. vv. 31-34).

This issue over the Lord's Supper was but one of several problems regarding the worship practices of the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 11:2-14:40.<sup>4</sup> These range from how both men and women are to be dressed when they pray and preach in the public assembly of the church (11:2-16) to the destructive impact of tongues speaking on the church (14:1-40). The Corinthians struggled to get Christian worship right. Paul in this first letter sought to help them understand the meaning of Christian worship, particularly at the point of their abuse of it.

Thus we look at our text today and seek to find some timeless truths that can be applied to us today, hopefully as we properly observe the Supper in contrast to the Corinthians in the first century. From that quest comes three basic insights that I want to share with you today, as we are "Coming to the Lord's table:"

## BODY

### I. Coming to the Lord's table with the right attitude, vv. 17-22

In this first section of verses, Paul takes the Corinthians to task for abusing the Lord's Supper observance. He had two basic issues with the way they were observing it. First, they were coming together in disunity to eat the supper. See verses 18-19: "For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine." This disunity Paul labeled as not good (v. 17b): "when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse" (*οὐκ εἰς τὸ κρεῖσσον ἀλλὰ εἰς τὸ ἥσσον συνέρχεσθε*). He saw huge problems looming in the way the Corinthians were conducting the Lord's Supper.

The nature of the disunity in this instance related more to the "haves" and "have nots" in the Corinthian church. Verse 21 throws light on this issue: "For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk." The wealthy Corinthian believers gathered in the *triclinium* section of the homes where house church groups met for a festive dinner. The 'have nots' were

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*δειπνον προλαμβάνει ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν, καὶ ὡς μὲν πεινᾷ ὡς δὲ μεθύει. 11.22 μὴ γὰρ οἰκίας οὐκ ἔχετε εἰς τὸ ἐσθίειν καὶ πίνειν; ἢ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ καταφρονεῖτε καὶ καταισχύνετε τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας; τί εἶπω ὑμῖν; ἐπαινέσω ὑμᾶς; ἐν τούτῳ οὐκ ἐπαινῶ.*

*11.23 Ἐγὼ γὰρ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου, ὃ καὶ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ἣ παρεδίδοτο ἔλαβεν ἄρτον 11.24 καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ εἶπεν, Τοῦτό μου ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν. 11.25 ὡσαύτως καὶ τὸ ποτήριον μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι λέγων, Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε, ὡσάκις ἐὰν πίνητε, εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν. 11.26 ὡσάκις γὰρ ἐὰν ἐσθίητε τὸν ἄρτον τοῦτον καὶ τὸ ποτήριον πίνητε, τὸν θάνατον τοῦ κυρίου καταγγέλλετε ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ.*

*11.27 Ὡστε ὡς ἂν ἐσθίῃ τὸν ἄρτον ἢ πίνῃ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ κυρίου ἀναξίως, ἔνοχος ἔσται τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ κυρίου. 11.28 δοκιμαζέτω δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἑαυτὸν καὶ οὕτως ἐκ τοῦ ἄρτου ἐσθιέτω καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ποτηρίου πινέτω· 11.29 ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων κρίμα ἑαυτῷ ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα. 11.30 διὰ τοῦτο ἐν ὑμῖν πολλοὶ ἀσθενεῖς καὶ ἀρρωστοὶ καὶ κοιμῶνται ἱκανοί. 11.31 εἰ δὲ ἑαυτοῦ διεκρίνομεν, οὐκ ἂν ἐκρινόμεθα· 11.32 κρινόμενοι δὲ ὑπὸ [τοῦ] κυρίου παιδευόμεθα, ἵνα μὴ σὺν τῷ κόσμῳ κατακριθῶμεν. 11.33 ὥστε, ἀδελφοί μου, συνερχόμενοι εἰς τὸ φαγεῖν ἀλλήλου ἐκδέχεσθε. 11.34 εἰ τις πεινᾷ ἐν οἴκῳ ἐσθιέτω, ἵνα μὴ εἰς κρίμα συνέρχησθε. Τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ ὡς ἂν ἔλθω διατάξομαι.*

<sup>4</sup>It is very surprising how readily virtually all commentators appear to ignore the fundamental continuity between the arguments and themes of 8:1–11:1 and the application of these very same themes to issues concerning public or corporate worship in 11:2–14:40. Just as some view 9:1–27 as a 'digression' about apostleship which intrudes into 8:1–11:1, so some view 13:1–13 as an unexpected interruption within 11:2–14:40, when the rhythmic discourse on love sums up the major issue in all parts of 11:2–14:40.

In 11:17–32 'the strong' or wealthy turn the Lord's Supper into a festival meal in the course of which socially deprived or economically dependent late-comers are treated as hangers-on who may have to eat different fare in a different part of the house, thereby undermining the 'for others' of the cross itself which the Lord's Supper proclaims (11:26). In 12:1–14:40 the 'gifted' seem hardly to care if less 'gifted' believers somehow feel estranged or second-class (see below, esp. 12:20–22 and 14:20–22). In 11:2–16 both 'rights' to female emancipation and 'rights' to male headship receive careful qualification as contributory strands, but by no means the whole picture within a larger, more complex whole, in which respect for "the other" (the other gender and the outside world) remains a fundamental concern. Love modifies 'freedom' and 'rights' if the good of the whole is thereby better served, and especially if the gospel is more effectively promoted (cf. 9:19–27). [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 799.]

forced to remain in the *atrium* section of the home and simply watch the others as they ate. Did this have anything to do with the mentioning of divisions earlier in Paul's letter? Although scholarly opinion is somewhat divided in its answer to this question, the likelihood is that a connection of some kind exists between the division here and that mentioned beginning in 1:10-17. Paul uses the word *σχίσματα* (divisions) in three separate places in this letter in identifying and addressing the problems caused by divisions in the fellowship of the Corinthians. They were divided over preachers, by economic status,

At the heart of the divisiveness was a feeling of superiority by one group over the others. One expression of this, which very well may have been foundational to the others, was their polarization around their favorite preacher, as Paul describes in 1:10-17.<sup>5</sup> Division is defined by Paul in verse 10b as the opposite of "be in agreement" (*τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες*). The Greek text literally reads "you all be saying the same thing." In order words, the divisions led to radically different viewpoints on numerous topics, and Paul wanted them to come back to a common agreement about the Gospel: "but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose." This divisiveness had led to "quarrels among you" (*ἔριδες ἐν ὑμῖν*). Thus the divisiveness generated friction and tension between the various groups. Although not clearly set forth, the house church nature of the church at Corinth most likely intimates that different house church groups polarized around their favorite Christian leader and felt superiority to the other house church groups.

In chapter eleven this divisiveness evolved into class and social status elitism with the wealthy believers excluding the poverty level believers from table fellowship during the so-called 'love feasts' where meals were provided. The 'have nots' (cf. v. 22, *τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας*) were allowed to participate in the bread and the cup of the Lord's Supper but not the meal time that surrounded the Supper.

In chapter twelve, Paul's use of *σχίσμα* in verses 24-25 underscores even further how contrary to God's plan for his church are divisions: "But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another" (*ἀλλὰ ὁ θεὸς συνεκέρασεν τὸ σῶμα τῷ ὑστερουμένῳ περισσοτέραν δόξιν τιμῆν, ἵνα μὴ ᾖ σχίσμα ἐν τῷ σώματι ἀλλὰ τὸ αὐτὸ ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων μεριμνῶσιν τὰ μέλη*). The opposite of division is that the entire membership demonstrate the same level of caring ministry to all the members. Thus elitism is replaced by equality.

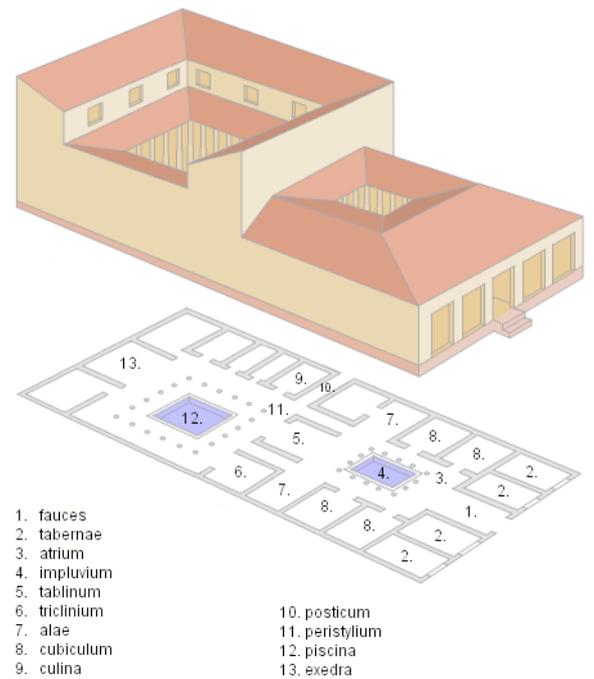
What does all this have to do with us at IBC Cologne? The following applications at least come out of the Corinthian situation. When we come to the Lord's table, we must come in Christian unity as a congregation. For a church to gather at the Lord's table in disharmony and divisiveness is such a denial of the meaning of the supper that God's displeasure will fall on the church in severe judgment, as Paul mentions in v. 30 that happened at Corinth. Unity doesn't mean we all have exactly the same viewpoint as everyone else. Instead, it means that we come together with a unified understanding of the importance of the supper as a testimony, and that we come together as equals, all functioning in the church with respect and compassion for one another.

If you have an issue going with another church member, then you need to follow the Lord's advice in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:23-24): "23 So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift." Jesus expressed a general principle about worshipping God. Gathering around the Lord's table makes the dissolution of quarrels and tension all the more important before we come to the Lord's table.

<sup>5</sup>NRSV: 10 Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. 11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. 12 What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." 13 Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)

17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.



The Lord's table is a critical symbol of oneness and unity among believers. For believers then to gather in disunity is a serious violation of the Lord's table and in effect denies its spiritual meaning. This we as a church must not do!

## II. Coming to the Lord's table with correct understanding, vv. 23-26

The second point emerging out of our passage is found in vv. 23-26: "23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 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." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Here Paul recounts the early tradition of Jesus' institution of the Last Supper on Thursday evening before His arrest and crucifixion on Friday. In the apostle's description he follows closely the description presented by Luke in his gospel account (22:14-20). In both accounts, the sequence of events begins with the bread, interrupted by the Passover meal, and concluded with the cup. Luke provides much greater detail, but the other gospel accounts omit this emphasis. The point seems to be that Jesus took the meaning of the Passover and reapplied it to His crucifixion. For the Jewish people Passover celebration focused on God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery. But in the new covenant established by Jesus, His death represents God's deliverance from sin available to all humanity.

In Jesus' words are the assertion that the purpose of the supper is "Do this in remembrance of me" (*τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν*). And then in v. 26 comes the declaration: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (*ὅσάκις γὰρ ἐὰν ἐσθίητε τὸν ἄρτον τοῦτον καὶ τὸ ποτήριον πίνητε, τὸν θάνατον τοῦ κυρίου καταγγέλλετε ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ*). The supper is a "proclamation of the Lord's death." For every believer participating in the supper the act of eating the leavened bread and drinking the cup is his / her personal testimony of belief that salvation is based solely on the death and resurrection of Jesus. The supper is the Christian public affirmation of the central role of the cross of Jesus in our religious experience.

When you come to the Lord's table, come with the right understanding. Know what you are doing in taking the elements of the supper. The bread affirms the broken body of Jesus. The cup His shed blood. Only in his sacrificial dying does forgiveness of sin take place. Your sins and sinfulness as a believer are now covered by the blood of Jesus! You have been washed in the blood, as the old hymn declares:

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Refrain

Are you washed in the blood,  
In the soul cleansing blood of the Lamb?  
Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Are you walking daily by the Savior's side?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
Do you rest each moment in the Crucified?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Refrain

When the Bridegroom cometh will your robes be white?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
Will your soul be ready for the mansions bright,  
And be washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Refrain

Lay aside the garments that are stained with sin,  
And be washed in the blood of the Lamb;  
There's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean,  
O be washed in the blood of the Lamb!

### III. Coming to the Lord's table spiritually prepared, vv. 27-34

The final point is found in vv. 27-34: "27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. 30 For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. 33 So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come." (11.27 Ὡστε ὃς ἂν ἐσθίῃ τὸν ἄρτον ἢ πίνη τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ κυρίου ἀναξίως, ἔνοχος ἔσται τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ κυρίου. 11.28 δοκιμάζετω δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἑαυτὸν καὶ οὕτως ἐκ τοῦ ἄρτου ἐσθιέτω καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ποτηρίου πινέτω· 11.29 ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων κρίμα ἑαυτῷ ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα. 11.30 διὰ τοῦτο ἐν ὑμῖν πολλοὶ ἀσθενεῖς καὶ ἄρρωστοι καὶ κοιμῶνται ἱκανοί. 11.31 εἰ δὲ ἑαυτοῦ διεκρίνομεν, οὐκ ἂν ἐκρινόμεθα· 11.32 κρινόμενοι δὲ ὑπὸ [τοῦ] κυρίου παιδευόμεθα, ἵνα μὴ σὺν τῷ κόσμῳ κατακριθῶμεν. 11.33 ὥστε, ἀδελφοί μου, συνεργούμενοι εἰς τὸ φαγεῖν ἀλλήλου ἐκδέχεσθε. 11.34 εἴ τις πεινᾷ ἐν οἴκῳ ἐσθιέτω, ἵνα μὴ εἰς κρίμα συνέρχησθε. Τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ ὡς ἂν ἔλθω διατάξομαι.). Here the apostle warns the Corinthians about the consequences of their abuse of the Lord's table and proposes a solution to their problem.

**First the warning:** "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord." As the first step leading to a solution to the Corinthian abuse of the Lord's Supper, Paul issues a severe warning to them. At the heart of this lays God's jealous concern for the observance of the supper to always be done properly. Two key elements are present in Paul's warning: 1) unworthy observance (*ἀναξίως*), and 2) liability to God for unworthy observance (*ἐνοχος ἔσται τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ κυρίου*).

1) *Unworthy observance.* The Greek adjective *ἀναξίως* has been understood in a variety of ways over time.<sup>6</sup> Thieselton's comments are on target both lexicographically and contextually. The Corinthian's discrimination between the haves and the have nots at the festive meal did not fit appropriately the nature and spiritual meaning of the Supper. Thus Paul takes to task strongly those Corinthian believers who came to the Lord's table with the discrimination attitude and action. That this is central to Paul's point is confirmed in his subsequent depiction of unworthy observance in v. 29 as "without discerning the body" (*μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα*).

What does that imply to us and our practice today? Unworthy participation in the Supper essentially means that when we come to partake of the Lord's Supper our attitude and Christian practices, especially our treatment of fellow believers, must "fit" the demeanor of the Supper. In the previous section, vv. 23-26, Paul had described this demeanor by recounting the initial event on Thursday evening before Jesus' arrest. The meal is solemn and terribly important in Christian experience. It sends a message of faith in the crucified Jesus as its witness. The Supper is to bring believers together in unity. Thus we must come to the meal in full recognition of this and with a lifestyle consistent to this solemnity. Then and only then can we come to the table in an acceptable manner!

2) *Liability to God.* In this conditional sentence in the Greek, the *protasis* (the dependent clause) sets up the requirement for proper action defined in the *apodosis* (the main clause). With this sentence framed negatively as a warning, the action defined in the dependant clause (*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner*) leads to the responsibility declared in the main clause (*will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord*). With the use of the indefinite relative clause in Greek (*ὃς ἂν...*) as both conditional and as subject of the verb in the main clause, Paul assumes among the Corinthians violation of proper observance and the resulting liability to God for it.

Again the key to understanding the declaration of liability is the Greek word *ἐνοχος*. Again Thieselton's

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<sup>6</sup>The first major problem concerns the precise meaning of *ἀναξίως* (in an unworthy manner, NRSV, NIV; unworthily, REB, NJB, KJV/AV, Barrett). BAGD and Grimm-Thayer propose for this verse in an unworthy (or careless) manner.<sup>198</sup> However, the adjectival form of *ἀναξίως* in 1 Cor 6:2 conveys the sense of incompetency, or being not good enough for a task, and this coheres with the adjectival meaning in Epictetus and Philo (although it seems to mean unworthy in 1 Clement 47:6). The adverb clearly stands in semantic opposition to the *ἀξίως*, *ἄξιος*, and *ἀξιώ* group.<sup>199</sup> Liturgy and song have familiarized Rev 4:11, "You are worthy, O Lord ... to receive glory and honor and power...." However, as BAGD note, in more common parlance the Prodigal Son exclaims, "I am no longer fit to be called your son, οὐκέτι εἶμι ἄξιος." *ἄξιος* may be used in a bad sense: deserving blows (Luke 12:48), i.e., fit to be punished. In the Apocalypse of John, God and Christ are deserving of honor; for the adjective most broadly denotes fitting correspondence (BAGD) or appropriate weight (Grimm-Thayer). Paul's primary point is that attitude and conduct should fit the message and solemnity of what is proclaimed. At Corinth these were too often not fitting, or, in Meyer's accurate words, "in a way morally out of keeping with the nature (10:16) and design of the ordinance (11:24-25; his italics)."<sup>200</sup> Similarly Wolff, describes this as an "inappropriate" or "unsuitable" attitude (inunangemessener Haltung).<sup>201</sup> [Anthony C. Thieselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 888.]

comments<sup>7</sup> are invaluable for grasping the interpretative issues present here:

The second difficulty arises from how best to translate ἔνοχος ἔσται τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ κυρίου. Barrett follows the traditional rendering of the AV/KJV and RV, *shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*.<sup>202</sup> *Guilty* is also retained for ἔνοχος by REB and NIV, although REB amplifies with *guilty of offending against ...* (as in Barrett's exegesis); NIV, *quality of sinning against ...*; NEB, *quality of desecrating ...*; Goodspeed, *quality of profaning....* However, NRSV, NJB, Collins, and Hays translate *will be answerable for ...*, which reflects H. B. Montgomery's *must answer for* (Centenary Translation) and Parry's *will have to answer for....*<sup>203</sup> Fee accepts *guilty of* but prefers to emphasize the force of liable and rejects NIV's gloss, *guilty of sinning against....*<sup>204</sup> Although we must be extremely cautious about etymology, which usually says more about history than meaning at a later time, Edwards confirms the lexicographical evidence of liable with reference to the continuing force of ἐάν — ἐχόμενος, *held in*, i.e., *held responsible for*.<sup>205</sup> However, as he also points out, in legal contexts such liability to (e.g., the law) usually finds expression with the dative, while that which a person is liable for (e.g., the crime) is usually expressed by the genitive (as here), and then in Koine Greek came to denote the person against whom the crime is committed.

The syntax therefore implies not a sacrilege against the elements of the Lord's Supper but answerability or being held accountable for the sin against Christ of claiming identification with him while using the celebration of the meal as an occasion for social enjoyment or status enhancement without regard to what sharing in what the Lord's Supper proclaims.<sup>206</sup> The lexicographical evidence of BAGD, Grimm-Thayer, Louw-Nida, MM, and LSJ confirms these points. BAGD allude to ἐνεχόμενος, *caught in*, where Edwards had spoken of *held in*, but they offer examples of the respective meanings of the adjective to denote subject to (with genitive), answerable or guilty (with dative, but sometimes genitive), in connection with a crime or a punishment or with "the person (or thing) against whom the sin has been committed ... 1 Cor 11:27...."<sup>207</sup> Grimm-Thayer devote almost a column to the varied uses and contexts, largely in parallel with Edwards, but also describing the word in 11:27 as "guilty of a crime committed against the body and blood of the Lord," which out of context might threaten to undermine Edwards's point.<sup>208</sup> Deissmann claims that the construction in v. 27 represents a Cilician provincialism of Paul, but a range of constructions from legal and political contexts can be found in LSJ and MM.<sup>209</sup> More significant, however, is Collins's observation that vv. 27–32 are "replete with judicial language: 'unworthily ... answerable ... scrutinize ... judgement ... chastise ... condemn,' all belong to the semantic domain of the law and the courtroom."<sup>210</sup>

REB, NIV, and NEB, we noted, found it necessary to gloss or to insert a word or phrase for idiomatic English, even though Fee rejected this. If we follow the line of interpretation proposed, we need, similarly, to explicate the Greek by some such insertion as for so treating, which the context of discourse clearly implies. Otherwise the original danger identified by Fee and Hays re-emerges. Barrett, however, rightly makes a major point here: "That body is not to be interpreted here as equivalent to church is shown by the addition of blood."<sup>211</sup> Exegesis suggests neither, on one side, the notion of sacrilege against the elements themselves, nor, on the other side, mere answerability for social disruption. The focus remains on Christ, and Christ crucified, as proclaimed through a self-involving sharing in the bread and wine. If stance and lifestyle make this empty of content and seriousness, participants will be held accountable for so treating the body and blood of the Lord.

In the subsequent verses, vv. 29–34, two "causal" statements (introduced by γάρ) are given and they provide a fleshing out of the reasoning of Paul about the liability of the Corinthians to God for their abuse of the supper. Verse 29 contains the first amplification: "For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves." Liability implies potential judgment brought upon ourselves. Verse 30 amplifies this further with the assertion that God's judgment had already fallen on the Christian community at Corinth: "For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died." Various illnesses and even physical death are affirmed as expressions of God's intense displeasure with the Corinthians.

The point here is that God takes our observance of the Supper very seriously. And He holds us strictly accountable for how we come to the Lord's table. That strongly suggests that we take the observance just as seriously.

**Then the two part solution:** 1) "Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup," and 2) "when you come together to eat, wait for one another." Paul's admonition to the Corinthians was that they needed to do two essential things in order to correct the problems with their abuse of the Lord's table.

1) *Self examination.* Paul advocates a close self inspection of one's own motives and attitudes in coming to the Lord's table. As Thiselton has correctly observed, the love feast with the Lord's Supper woven into it at Corinth had turned into a social opportunity for self promotion and status seeking inside the Christian community. Class distinctions, although traditional and considered central for banqueting in the Greco-Roman world of that time, had no proper place at the Lord's table. All the surrounding cultural traditions and sense of social propriety had to be shed by the Corinthians before they could come to the Lord's table. Such traditions were contrary to the teachings of Christ and needed to be replaced by new Christian values that originated from the Lord.

How does this relate to us today? Clearly self examination before coming to the Lord's table remains a timeless principle from this text. Our participation in the supper then grows out of that self-examination: "so let him eat...and drink..." (οὕτως ἐκ τοῦ ἄρτου ἐσθιέτω καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ποτηρίου πινέτω). One important note about the orientation of this examination. The Greek verb δοκιμαζέτω points to two important aspects about the examination. The present tense form suggests a deep examination, not a quick glance. The essential mean-

<sup>7</sup>Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 889.

ing of the verb focuses the examination toward proving genuineness, that is, finding a legitimate basis for coming to the Lord's table. Most believers in doing self examination are looking for faults to keep them away from the Supper. But that's not Paul's point here. Look within yourself and find the right attitude. Check your lifestyle and find adherence of your living to the claims of Christ. Then come to the Lord's table in confidence that you are approaching it within God's expectations. Thus Paul declares in v. 31: "But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged."

2) *Deference for our fellow believers.* The social nature of the Corinthian's abuse prompted a corrective growing out of the specific abuse at Corinth. Verses 33 - 34 set this forth: "So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation." Class discrimination and social status seeking lay at the heart of the Corinthian abuse. The solution? Reverse these attitudes and actions. The Greco-Roman cultural values of class consciousness had to be laid aside. The servant posture advocated by Jesus to the Twelve had to take its place.<sup>8</sup> The admonition "wait for one another" (*ἀλλήλοῦ ἐκδέχεσθε*) carries a rich and varied range of implications. Central to its use here is the sense of all groups of believers coming to the meeting place at about the same time and the meal beginning when everyone could eat and drink together on a common basis. One seeming implication of the language of Paul about the Corinthian situation is that the wealthy Christians arrived at the meeting place considerably earlier than was possible for the others who either as slaves or peasants had to work later before being able to come to the house church meeting. Thus Paul's admonition here simply enjoins the wealthy to delay the meal until the others have had time to arrive. And then everyone can eat together.

The second part advocates that these wealthy believers go ahead and eat at their own homes, thus removing most aspects of the love feast and focusing primarily on the Lord's Supper in their table fellowship gathering. This had the practical impact of eliminating a basis for discrimination around a meal table. If the banqueting aspect of the love feast were diminished or eliminated entirely, there could be little status climbing efforts possible. Then a major source of past abuse of the supper will be eliminated.

How does this apply to us today? For one thing, it doesn't mean that the Lord's Supper should never be combined with a fellowship dinner at church. A few groups over the years have wrongly assumed this to be Paul's point. The eating of a regular meal and the Lord's Supper as one focal point of Christian assembly wasn't the problem at Corinth. The problem lay in the Corinthian's not shedding traditional Greco-Roman social custom about a banquet meal when they came to the love feast at church. The concern for status image and social climbing through banqueting was horrifically important in that world.<sup>9</sup> Here is where 'the world' and

<sup>8</sup> Matt. 20:25-28 (NRSV): 25 But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 26 It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

<sup>9</sup>"Virtually every commentator since the early 1980s rightly alludes to the dining customs and arrangements of the Roman world, which would certainly have a direct bearing on the source of splits or dissensions when believers met to share a common meal at which the death and risen presence of Christ was celebrated as the New Passover. The two major factors related to issues of space within a large Roman villa and to cultural customs of distinctions between the status of, and respective provision for, guests of the house.

It is possible to visit the site excavated by the American team led in the late 1970s by James Wiseman of the villa dated between ad 50 and 75 at Anaploga.<sup>44</sup> It lies outside the formal boundaries of the site of ancient Corinth beyond the Erastus inscription. In the Museum of Corinth inside the formally contained site of ancient Corinth the impressive mosaic floor of the *triclinium* (dining room) remains in view and is sufficiently complete to compare its size with the site from which it has been removed. As Murphy-O'Connor observes, the *triclinium* measures 5.5 × 7.5 meters, giving a floor area of 41.25 square meters (roughly 24 × 18 feet). If we allow for the couches on which guests could recline at an appropriate table, it may well be the case that (as Hays suggests) nine guests may have been a normal maximum for this comfortable dining area.<sup>45</sup>

An entrance vestibule led into a central *atrium* or courtyard-hallway, which in turn led to four or five other rooms. These included the *triclinium* (in the Anaploga villa, the first entrance on the right). The *atrium* measured 5 × 6 meters (approximately 16 × 20 feet). However, the *impluvium* (pool to collect water) stood at its center, thereby diminishing practical floor space. Between twenty and thirty people might be able to squeeze into such a place (up to fifty perhaps in the largest villas excavated, but at a post-Pauline date). If they sat or stood, Hays suggests that between thirty and forty would be possible. It is quite clear that when more than nine or ten people came to dinner, the poorer or less esteemed guests would be accorded space not in the already occupied *triclinium* but in the scarcely furnished *atrium*, which functioned in effect as an "overflow" for those who were, in the eyes of the host, lucky to be included at all. The quality of food, drink, service, and comfort would be of a higher order in the *triclinium*, especially if some in the *atrium* could arrive only after the best of the meal was over.

A second factor exacerbates such a category distinction. Pliny the Younger describes in detail the categorization of qualities of food and drink as marks of favor to grades of guests: "The best dishes were set in front of himself [the host] and a select few, and cheap scraps of food before the rest of the company. He had even put the wine into very small flasks, divided into three categories ... one for himself and us, another for his lesser friends (all his friends are graded) and the third for his and our freed persons."<sup>46</sup> The volume of essays *Dining in a Classical Context* takes us still further.<sup>47</sup> According to Booth, only those who assumed the toga vi-

Christian values clashed and Paul insisted that Christian values of equality and mutual respect replace the worldly values that had governed the Corinthian's behavior most of their lives.

What these verses do say to us is this: a genuine sense of unity and mutual respect MUST guide us as a church when we come to the Lord's table. As Paul had affirmed earlier to the Galatians (3:28),<sup>10</sup> the ground is level at Calvary. All come to Christ on the same basis, no matter who they are. And if the ground is level at the Cross, it most certainly is level at the Lord's table.

### CONCLUSION

Today we come to the Lord's table. Are you ready? Let's prepare ourselves to celebrate the Lord's death and our Christian hope for eternal life with Him.

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rilis (i.e., those who were adult males of high status) had authority "to bestow freedom to recline" in a *triclinium*.<sup>48</sup> Favored boys might sit at the foot of the couch used by a high-status male. The pattern encouraged the notion (even if indirectly by analogy) that to be invited to recline near the host in the *triclinium* signified a mark of favor from the host which thereby conferred added status upon the recipient of the honor. Seneca readily identifies the connections between luxurious banquets, abuse of pretty *servuli* or "luckless slave boys," and the abuse of power to confer the status of *convivius* on young men.<sup>49</sup> We should not, of course, equate provincial civic life with all that took place in Rome. However, the very use for manipulative purposes of the varying status indicated by food, drink and the possible locations of diners as close friends, second-class friends, hangers on, clients, head persons, youngsters, and servants speaks volumes about the discriminatory conventions presupposed in Graeco-Roman society. This is all part and parcel of the symbolic world of an honor-shame culture.

The foundation for further research on the reliance of such material for our understanding of the present passage emerged largely with Gerd Theissen's essay "Social Integration and Sacramental Activity: An Analysis of 1 Cor 11:17-34," first published in German in 1974.<sup>50</sup> Commenting on vv. 21 and 22, Theissen notes that "have nots" (μη ἔχοντες) stand in contrast to those who can have "their own meal, ἴδιον δεῖπνον." This is the primary emphasis of ἕκαστος and τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον, although it does not exclude a critique of individualism as well. This issue would assume still sharper proportions if B. B. Blue and B. W. Winter are correct in their assessments of the impact of the famine of ad 51 upon the poor in cities.<sup>51</sup> Followed by Fee, Theissen rightly declares, "ἴδιος and κυριακός refer to questions of ownership": Is it the Lord's [own] supper which is being held, or that of the host and his most favored guests?<sup>52</sup> Who is the focus of attention? For whose benefit is it being held? Indeed, to put it most sharply: Who, indeed, is "hosting" this meal? [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 860.]

<sup>10</sup>NRSV: There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.