

# 1 Cor 11

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 02 March 2014

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[ 0 : 00 ] And because the first opportunity I have to preach at our communion service, I thought it was helpful for us to go back. What does the Bible say? What is it that we're doing here?

To many people, even some Christians, it's a bit of a mystery, communion service. But it shouldn't be at all. It should be, for us, a wonderful occasion. So we're going to read from 1 Corinthians, and we're going to start from verse 17, and read through to the end of the chapter, end of chapter 11.

So here is God's word. This is what God wants us to understand, and we need his help for that. 1 Corinthians 11, verse 17. In the following directives, I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good.

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. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval.

When you come together, it's not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk.

[ 1 : 13 ] 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. For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you. The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread. When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body, which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. 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.

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 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.

A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick.

[ 2 : 22 ] A number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined, so that we will not be condemned with the world.

So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. If anyone is hungry, you should eat at home, so that when you meet together, it may not result in judgment.

When I come, I will give further directions. We're thankful to God that he is clear and plain in his word to us. 1 Corinthians 11, because we're going to be in that passage that I read a few moments ago and in other parts of 1 Corinthians 2 and one or two places in the Bible as well.

Just as you're turning there, I'm going to go back a page to 1 Corinthians 10 and read just a few verses from there, which are also in keeping with this theme of communion or the Lord's Supper.

Verse 14 of 1 Corinthians 10. Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. I speak to sensible people. Judge for yourselves what I say.

[ 3 : 32 ] It's not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks, a participation in the blood of Christ. It's not the bread that we break, a participation in the body of Christ.

Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. I'm sure like myself, many of us were sat around the table at this lunchtime enjoying a very nice meal.

It was a similar situation once where a family was seated around the dining table. And it was their evening meal. And the youngest child stretched out his hand to take the last bread roll, reaching right across the table.

Matthew, boy's mother, shouted, where are your manners? Haven't you got a tongue in your head? Yes, mom, I do, said the young boy.

But it's just not long enough. It's a very old joke, I must admit. But then the matter of table manners is a very old problem.

[ 4 : 42 ] It's one of the several areas that the Apostle Paul had to raise with the church at Corinth right back in the first century. Their table manners. Their table manners were atrocious whenever they came around the Lord's table.

And Paul could find nothing praiseworthy to say about them. As he says there in verse 17, in the following directives, in other words, concerning the Lord's table and supper, I have no praise for you.

Nothing good to say about what you do. Your manners are terrible. When you meet together at communion, it really is an awful thing. In fact, he says your meetings do more harm than good.

They're harmful. They're dangerous. They're destructive. And these verses that we read here are really part of a larger section in which Paul has been talking about and tackling the thorny subject of Christians meeting together.

There was a lack of order in what went on. And there were wrong attitudes that were flying about in the church. And Paul has to devote a very sizable part of his letter to dealing with the behavior of public meetings, of worship.

[ 5 : 54 ] And in this section, especially, his focus falls upon what we call communion or the Lord's table, or as he calls it here, the Lord's supper. Verse 20, when you come together, it's not the Lord's supper you eat.

And even at such a serious occasion as communion, as it is, when the whole church is centered upon remembering Jesus and his death on the cross, there were deep divisions present in the fellowship.

As he says there, verse 18, in the first place, this is the first big problem, I hear when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent, I believe it.

Division in the church was a real plague upon this fellowship in Corinth. And yet Paul says that some divisions are necessary.

Do you see that? Verse 19, no doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you has God's approval. Why? Why do there have to be divisions?

[ 6 : 51 ] Well, because really they highlight what's going on on the inside. The activity, the division and the divisiveness that was going on on the outside between people was reflected what was really going on in their hearts.

How we behave is a reflection upon our relationship with God. You can't separate the two. You can't simply say, well, I'm a Christian, but it doesn't matter how I live, just as much as you cannot say, I'm a Christian because the way I live.

Our heart and our life must come together. James' letter, which we've been studying in the Bible study, says that very clearly, doesn't it? Faith and works, life and faith go together.

And the divisions that Paul is talking about here within the church are not simply matters of tradition. He's not simply saying, well, you know, you lot like to do it that way and you lot like to do it that way and it's your culture, it's your tradition and that's fine.

No, he's not saying that that's the right way to do it or that's the wrong way to do it or that's the traditional way to do it. Really he's saying this, that there are divisions which show whether we truly are Christians or not.

[ 7 : 57 ] Divisions which show whether we truly are born again of the Holy Spirit and living out what we believe and by the power of the Holy Spirit what we do.

Back in chapter 10, verse 31, he says, makes this clear. He says, so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. That's what it's showing.

The way that you're acting and behaving shows whether you're doing this for the wrong reasons or whether you're doing it for God's glory as you're eating communion and sharing together. And some of those who were living in the church in Corinth, behaving in this way, were acting so badly that instead of when the church met together, people were blessed and encouraged and helped.

We're told there they were harmed and their faith was destroyed or damaged in some way. What a terrible thing, isn't it? What a terrible thing to come to church and instead of going out saying that was a blessing to me or that did my faith good or that strengthened me.

They were actually leaving church saying, I wish I'd never been there. It's a bit like going to the doctor and saying, I really want the doctor to help me to feel better and actually go away feeling iller than you when you came in.

[ 9 : 17 ] You wouldn't really want to go to that doctor again, would you? Perhaps that's the reason why some people come to church and stop coming. It's very clear though, isn't it, that the reason that Jesus instructs us to celebrate the Lord's Supper is that he wants to do us good.

That's inferred, isn't it, by what Paul is saying. For your meetings do more harm than good. In other words, the purpose of you meeting, the purpose of you gathering around the communion table is to do your good. That's a wonderful thing.

Church is not, isn't it? Church is not about sort of winning God's favor, getting him on our side, doing our religious bit for the week. Rather, when we come to church on a Sunday, we're coming saying, I need something.

I want God to meet with me. I want God to bless me. I want him to do me good. And that's why God has given us church. He hasn't given us church that it should be a burden around our necks. Saying, oh, every Sunday I can't go and watch the football or play the sports because I've got to be at church.

Rather, God has given us church because he says, this is the very best for you, dear Christian. This is the place where you need to be. This is where you're going to be helped and where you're going to be encouraged. God has given us church for that.

[ 10 : 25 ] And he's given us this meal, as it were, this celebration of communion as well for that purpose. If that's the case, if that's the case that God wants to do us good and to bless us when we take communion, then we need to take on board what Paul's saying.

Because what he's saying to the church there is to correct those things. So that instead of it being harmful, it is good for them. And so if we take notice of what he says, then it will help us to actually get the most out of communion.

To get the most blessing out of it. The most help out of it. The most encouragement out of it. Because as we know and we realize, it's not by eating the bread and drinking the wine.

That doesn't sort of feed us and nourish us physically. It does us no good. In one sense, it's just bread and wine or grape juice. So the blessing comes through something else.

So what is it we need to do? What does Paul have to say here to these Christians and to us? So that we can really know blessing in communion.

[ 11 : 33 ] He tells us, first of all, there's something that's got to be got rid of. There's got to be a clear out. There's got to be a sorting out. There's got to be got rid of selfishness. Selfishness.

Look what he says is happening in verse 21. Verse 20 rather. When you come together, it's not the Lord's supper you eat. Verse 21. For as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else.

There's selfishness going on, isn't there? In the church in Corinth, it seems very clear that what was happening is that before they had the Lord's supper, as we might call it, in this way, this remembrance meal, they also had like a fellowship meal together or lunch together.

We have those once a month here. Next week is one of those. And they would sort of combine the two. They'd have a fellowship meal and eat together. And then as part of that meal or at the end of that meal, they would also share in remembering the Lord's supper, remembering Christ dying for them.

It was all part of this sense of unity and being one together in Christ. And what would happen is, again, similarly to our own church sort of lunches, everyone would bring along a contribution according to how much they could afford to share in the meal.

[ 12 : 42 ] Those who are affluent and well-off might bring a big chocolate gatto or something like that. And those who are a little bit poor might be able to bring a bread roll. But everybody brought something. And they were able to share that together.

But also there was difficulty. Not only were people rich and poor, and so they weren't able to always bring the same sort of thing, but also some of them had difficulty getting there at the right time.

Some people were clearly arriving on time or a little bit earlier. Others were having difficulty getting there until much later. That was almost certainly the case for slaves in the first century.

A slave in the first century of whom there were many, many of the first converts were slaves, the very lowest classes of all. They couldn't get along to church until their masters released them from their duties.

They probably had to feed their masters and care for them and so on. And then perhaps when they'd done all of that, they were free to go. The problem arises, of course, is that those who got there early, probably the better off ones, the richer ones, when they got there, they didn't really feel like waiting for the slaves to come along.

[ 13 : 46 ] And so they stuck in to the grub. And so by the time that the others got there, all the food was gone, all the drunk, sorry, all the drunk, I haven't been drinking, all the drink was drunk.

And quite a few of them were worse for where? For the wine. Verse 21. Don't you have homes to eat in? Do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?

Then verse 21. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. And so you see there's this gluttony, then this overindulgence that's going on, even in the church. And what's it showing? It's showing there is selfishness.

There's a lack of love within the body of Christ. There's not a concern for one another. There's not a thought for one another. There's very much, well, like the world, I suppose.

There's not a thought for one another. There's not a thought for one another. They were despising and humiliating their fellow believers. Now it's very unlikely, of course, that when we come to share communion, and as we pass it around, that one person will eat all the bread, and leave none for anybody else, or drink all the wine.

[ 14 : 52 ] But if we want to know real blessing as we share in these things, then we need to practice what the Corinthian church failed to practice. And that is this, love for one another.

Love for one another. We need to be the opposite of selfish. There needs to be that united care and love and concern for one another when we take part in communion.

Because that's exactly what we're doing, you see. When we eat in this way, we're actually declaring our unity in Christ. We're saying that we are one with one another. That's why when we take communion, it's not something for every single person.

That's why we don't take communion out onto the streets and say, you have some of this. We'll help them in other ways and give people food when they're hungry. But this is something especially, and only for Christians, because it's saying we are one in Christ.

We believe the same things. We have come to experience the same salvation as one another. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. This is what we read a little bit earlier, wasn't it?

[ 15 : 54 ] In chapter 10, verses 16 and 17. It's not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks, a sharing. That's literally the word, a participation, a sharing in the blood of Christ.

It's not the bread that we break, a sharing in the body of Christ. Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body. For we all partake of one loaf. That's why it's lovely to have the one loaf.

It doesn't matter whether we have little bits of bread on a plate or whatever. But it's lovely to have the symbolism there. One loaf, we are one body. We are one in Christ. And so when we come to communion, the question is this.

Do I love my brothers and sisters in Christ that I'm sharing this with? Am I harboring unforgiveness to anybody in this church? Am I out of sorts with anybody in this church?

Am I thinking bad thoughts about them or judging them in a wrong way? Or even perhaps am I failing to receive them as my brother and sister in Christ? You can say, well, you know, I've got nothing against so and so.

[ 16 : 57 ] I don't talk to them. That's not loving one another, is it? You see, if we start to go down that road, if we allow ourselves and open ourselves up to that sort of attitude, then we're going down the road of the church of Corinth.

We're entering into that same sort of territory of selfishness and of sin. That's why a little later on in this passage, Paul urges self-examination with respect to the body of Christ.

Verses 28 and 29 in chapter 11. He says this, A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. Anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Now, he's not talking there primarily about recognizing that the bread is the body of Christ. He's talking about the body of the Lord, which is the church. If we don't recognize that we're part of the church, then we're not coming with the right attitude.

Let's examine ourselves. You see, we're coming, we're not coming as individuals. I know there's an individual element of it because we have individual cups. But this is not an individual matter.

[ 18 : 09 ] Church is not an individual matter. Yes, by God's grace, we are individuals. And God loves us and cares for us individually. But what has he done? He's brought us into a covenant family.

He's brought us into a united body. That's all of 1 Corinthians 10 and 12, isn't it? They're all parts of one body. So we can't just strike off on our own.

This isn't something that we do just in our own homes by ourselves. We pray in our own homes by ourselves. We read our Bibles in our home by ourselves. We may even sing and worship God in our homes by ourselves.

But we don't take communion by ourselves. We take it with at least one other believer because we're expressing this unity that we have. We are one together in Christ. And that is, of course, a unity of love.

Now, the second thing that we must remember here from Paul's teaching, if we are to get blessing from sharing in the Lord's Supper, as he goes on, we need to recognize the symbolism, the symbolism of what's happening here.

[ 19 : 12 ] That's verses 23 and following. But he speaks about what happened and what the Lord Jesus said on the night of his betrayal before his death. The Lord Jesus, he says, verse 23, took the bread.

And when he had given thanks, he broke it, saying, this is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. There's a symbolism. They're familiar words to us, aren't we, as Christians?

Every time we take communion and every time we think about communion, we remember those words of Jesus. Every time we come to Easter and to that Easter week, we think about Jesus' words.

The very words that he himself spoke to his disciples. That's why Paul says here, I receive from the Lord. Paul doesn't say, this is what I'm telling you to do. This is how I'm telling you to think.

He could have done that. He had the authority as an apostle to do that. But he's actually saying, look, this isn't just me beating my drum. This is what Jesus had to say. Pay attention.

[ 20 : 13 ] It should be all the more precious to you, all the more vital to you. And so he calls us to recognize the symbolism.

What's the true meaning in the bread and the wine? What are we really celebrating? What are we meant to be thinking about? What are we meant to be understanding? Above all this eating and drinking is an act of remembrance.

Remembrance. As Jesus said, this is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. Jesus has to be the very center of what we're about. Do this in remembrance of me.

Cast your minds upon me. Think about me. Think about who I am. Think about what I have done. Think about your relationship to me. And what are we to see?

Well, what are we to see? The symbolism we see, first of all, in the bread, isn't it? Jesus said, this is my body, which is for you. Jesus did not want his disciples or us to think that in some strange way, the bread was changed into the body of Jesus.

[ 21 : 23 ] In other words, his flesh, his physical body. Jesus didn't want us to think that. It's totally wrong when some people say that. Jesus wasn't meaning that at all.

See, Jesus' body still belongs to him, if I can put it that way. He still has a body in heaven. It's a resurrected body. It's a perfect body. It's a sinful body.

But his body's in heaven. It doesn't come back and forth to earth anymore. He came to earth and took on our human nature. But now he's back in heaven. So this bread is not going to be changed or become his body. That's where his body is.

When he says what he says, he means, literally, this is a symbol of my body. This is to represent. This is to make you think about and remember my body.

What happened to his body? Well, it was his body that went to the cross, wasn't it? It was his body that was nailed there. It was his body that suffered there. It was his body that died there for us.

[ 22 : 18 ] Which is for you. On your behalf. This is to remind you that there was a fully human person who truly suffered and truly died.

And yet was truly God as well. And why did he do that? Why did he suffer in that way? Why did he bear such pain and agony? Why was he treated as a sinner? Well, it was for you and for your sake and mine.

In our place is our substitute on our behalf. And we're meant to be thinking on that and remembering that with great thankfulness and appreciation. That Jesus did that for me.

He went to the cross for me. Jesus tells us that we're to feed. To feed on his body.

Back in John in chapter 6, there was a great debate about this. So much so that some of his followers ended up turning their backs on him and leaving him. Because they couldn't take it in. But in John in chapter 6, Jesus says this.

[ 23 : 23 ] I tell you the truth. I am the bread of life. Verse 48. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert. Yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven.

Which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread. And came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh which I give for the life of the world.

What did Jesus mean by that? Well, he explains. He tells us just a verse earlier. What he meant is this. Those who believe in him and put their faith in him. Verse 47. And I tell you the truth. He who believes has everlasting life.

So feeding on Jesus is not the taking of the bread. That's a symbol. It's a symbol of this. Of saying Jesus is the one who satisfies all my needs. Jesus is the one.

I need him more than I need food. I need him as the one because he feeds my soul and my spirit and gives it life. And when I'm taking of communion, I'm expressing my utter dependence upon Jesus and what he's done for me at the cross.

[ 24 : 30 ] And what his body has accomplished for me in dying in my place. And I'm feeding on him. And I'm receiving from him. And I'm receiving good things that will nourish and strengthen and help me.

Take Jesus as the provider of everything for us. So that's the first symbol. The first symbol is the bread. The picture of his body. The representation of his body.

Eating of that, we are saying these things. And then, of course, it's the same with his blood. Or with the drink. When we drink the wine. Again, that's to be an act of faith.

Drinking his blood. John here in chapter 6 again. This time verse 54. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life. And I will raise him up at the last day.

For my flesh is true food. That's the sense of the word there. It says real, but it means true. And my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.

[ 25 : 34 ] Again, what does the blood do? It reminds us. Sorry, what does the drink do? It reminds us of Jesus' blood. That paid the price for our forgiveness.

The ransom price to set us free from sin. From sin's curse. From sin's power. From sin's condemnation. From sin's judgment. A price had to be paid.

And it was the price of his own blood. We think about the life being in the blood, don't we? When we say, when somebody was sort of, I hope this hasn't happened to anybody, but somebody bleeds to death.

He said, well the life blood ran out of them. Again, this is true of Jesus. When we're around the table, we're reminding ourselves that Jesus' blood was poured out.

And there's a sense of washing and cleansing us from our sins as well there. Jesus did all these things for us.

[ 26 : 35 ] When we drink of the cup, we are by faith thanking God. Thanking God for the wonderful cleansing from all of our sin that Jesus has brought for us. We're reminding ourselves that there's nothing that we can do to make ourselves right with God.

There's nothing we could possibly do to wash ourselves. You know, when we think of things like baptism, it's not when we're baptized that our sins are washed away.

That's again just a picture. A picture of washing of the soul. Washing of the heart. And that can only be done by the blood of Jesus cleansing us, washing us, as we put our faith in him and ask him to take away our sin.

It's a horrible thing, isn't it? Guilt. To feel bad about yourself. It's a horrible thing to feel that sense of condemnation. Of knowing that there's bad.

And you know what happens, isn't it? You say something really nasty. You may just be caught off guard or something. But you say something really nasty to somebody. And afterwards you feel so bad. And you wish you could take it all back.

[ 27 : 41 ] Wish you could sort of press the rewind button on your life. And go, and take it. But you can't, can you? It's out there. It's done. The sin is committed. Here's the wonderful thing.

Jesus cleanses us from all of our sins. There is complete and full forgiveness. And it's a forgiveness that is felt. It's a forgiveness that is real.

It's not just a simply sort of telling yourself over and over again. You're a good person really. You're a good person really. You're a good person really. No, you're not a good person really. And it's when we acknowledge that we're not a good person really.

That we are then ready to receive the forgiveness that Jesus brings and paid for. So we're drinking and purposely saying, yes, I am a sinner.

I have broken your commandments, God. I don't deserve anything but judgment really and condemnation. But I'm so grateful that Jesus has died in my place.

[ 28 : 40 ] And that his blood was enough to wash all my sin. So God wipes the slate clean of your life and mine. And that's exactly what we're doing.

We're doing this. Why are we doing it so often? Because we do it once a month here, don't we? Some churches do it more regularly than that. Some do it less. But why do we keep on doing it? I mean, when you're baptized, it's just once.

You're either baptized when you're a child of believers or you're baptized when you come to faith. There's one baptism. Why do we take communion again and again? Well, several reasons.

One is, of course, that we keep forgetting. So Jesus says, do this in remembrance of me. We're forgetful. But also we're doing something. We're renewing our faith and our trust in Christ again and again.



And more than that, says Paul, we're proclaiming Jesus' death. You see it at the end of verse 26. Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

[ 29 : 43 ] We're going to continue to do it until Jesus returns again. We won't be doing it in heaven. There won't be any communion or Lord's Supper in heaven. We won't need to. Because we won't be forgetful of Jesus, will we?

And because, of course, we won't need to be reminded of forgiveness or need that forgiveness. Because there we will be without sin. But up until then, we're proclaiming, we're saying again and again, Jesus died for me.

Jesus died for me. And my sins are forgiven. And isn't that comforting? Isn't it wonderful to be reminded your sins are forgiven? We need to keep reminding ourselves.

Because I tell you what, there's a devil and he's real. And he will keep telling you you're a sinner and you're useless. And God can never forgive you for what you've done. And he wants no part of you. And he's going to keep on telling us that.

And so we need to keep reminding ourselves and being reminded, no, my sins are forgiven. Jesus has paid the price for me. His body was sacrificed in my place, taking the punishment I deserve. And his blood was shed to cleanse me and forgive me.

[ 30 : 46 ] What a comfort it is. You see what Paul is meaning then? He says, does more harm than good. They're missing out on all of this. Because all they were concerned about was eating and getting drunk. It sounds familiar, doesn't it?

In the world in which we live. So many people are just concerned about eating and getting drunk. They're missing out. Finally, just finally then, dear friends, one thing else we must close with and think about here.

We've talked about the fact that we need to get rid of selfishness. We've thought about the importance of symbolism. But there's something here that really strikes home in these last few verses of 1 Corinthians 11.

And that's the seriousness. The seriousness of what we're about when we come to the Lord's Supper. And the blessing that comes by thinking seriously about these things. You see, by acting in a selfish way, as these Corinthians had done.

And acting in a way without really understanding and thinking about what it meant to take communion. They were treating the Lord's Supper as something unworthy.

[ 31 : 52 ] They were despising it. Verse 27. Look what he says. 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.

It's not a light thing to come to communion and to take it willy-nilly and unthoughtfully or with harboring unforgiveness. It's a serious thing. It's something which God says is sin against Jesus himself.

And in fact, so serious is it. Paul goes on to say that some of them have become sick and some of them have died because they haven't had the right attitude of heart.

There in verse 30. That's why many among you are weak and sick and a number of you have fallen asleep. Now the word fallen asleep, as you know, in the New Testament is code for dying.

Because for the Christian, when we die physically, it is just like that. We're not dead. That's not the end. It's simply that we're entering into rest.

[ 32 : 52 ] Into that place of perfect rest and peace with God. There's nothing to be feared for death. The Christian has nothing to fear of death. It's as fearful as falling asleep. But that's what he says.

Isn't that amazing? This is God. Remember, this is God doing this. Let's not be any, let's not pretend. This isn't the devil doing this. This isn't just sort of people having coincidental, you know, death.

Something that God is doing when these people come. That's why it's serious. They were treating it casually. They were treating it without respect. Without any sense of seriousness.

To them, communion and the Lord's sub was simply just a bit of a knees up. Getting together. A jolly. And so they lost all the blessing that God had in store for them.

And even worse, we find that God was judging them. If we judge ourselves, he says, verse 31, we would not come under judgment. This is God's judgment. The repercussions are very real.

[ 33 : 57 ] So since it's a serious matter, just as we close, it's a serious matter. What are we to do? As we prepare now, we're coming to communion now. How are we to think about it? How are we to approach it? Two things I think that Paul says here.

We've already mentioned one of them, but we'll say it again. Again, examine yourself, verse 28. Man ought to examine himself. And what are we looking for? When you conduct an examination, you're looking for something.

You're searching for something, aren't you? The police break into somebody's house. They suspect that they're a drug dealer. And they go through the house. And they look in the toilet system. And they look under the floorboards. They're searching.

They're examining. What are we to be looking for? Well, several things. First of all, am I truly born again? Am I a real Christian? Have I really trusted in Christ as my Savior?

Do I know that he's come into my heart and life? And that I'm his? That's vital, isn't it? Then we need to examine ourselves. Is my faith really trusting upon Jesus' death for me?

[ 34 : 56 ] Am I hoping that perhaps I'll get to heaven or I'm right with God because I try to live a good life? Or is it really because I know Jesus has died for me? Have I asked for that forgiveness?

Am I walking rightly with God? And with my fellow Christians? Is there unforgiveness there?

Perhaps I hadn't thought about it before. Perhaps I'd rushed it aside. Perhaps I'd not thought about it. Perhaps I'd subverted it. Am I judging my brothers and sisters in Christ harshly?

Unjustly? Am I really walking in right fellowship with every single person in this fellowship? Do I need to put things right with another Christian?

Examine ourselves. And then secondly, Paul says we are to judge ourselves. So he says there in verse 31, If we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.

[ 35 : 57 ] Judgment is to pass judgment upon yourself. To take action. Do you need to repent of your sins? Repent then. Don't just examine yourself. It's a bit like saying, well, you know, we've got the builders in and he's looked over the building and he says, well, the roof's about to fall down.

And the floor's about to give way. Say, oh, thank you so much for that. Goodbye. And don't do anything about it, do we? Right, let's put it right. So we're this sin.

Repent. We haven't trusted in Christ. Well, here's the opportunity. Don't put it off. Don't say, well, I'll do that another day when things are better. Do it now. As God's been speaking to you.

As the Holy Spirit's been examining your heart and he's been playing his finger upon you. It's not me been doing that. If that's how you feel, it's the Holy Spirit's been doing that. God's been doing that. Why?

Because he wants to bless you. Because he wants to save you. Repent. Get right with God. If there's somebody that you have a grudge against, decide to forgive them.

[ 36 : 58 ] Let me say this to you, dear friends. A whole new sermon in one sense. But forgiveness begins with a decision of the will. You can say, I don't feel like forgiving them.

I'm still hurt by what they've done. And I'm not denying that. But, dear friends, we have to begin. And we have to begin with the will that says, I will forgive them. I choose to forgive them.

Pray for them. It may not be that you ever lose the pain of what they've done to you. But let me say this to you. It's more important that you're right with God than that you bear a grudge.

And haven't we seen what bitterness does? Haven't you seen the destructive nature of bitterness when it's held on to? Get rid of it. Judge yourself.

Determine to be reconciled. If you need to go and say sorry to somebody, then determine that you will do just that. Where you've hurt them. Where you've been acted wrongly towards them.

[ 37 : 56 ] And perhaps there's things in your life that you know that they shouldn't be there. There's habits and practices. And they're sinful. And you know that you shouldn't be doing them. Well, decide again. Say, from this day forward, I will not do them.

Lord, help me. Say no to sin and yes to righteousness. We're coming to this table. And it's a most wonderful event.

And God wants to bless us and do us good here. He wants to feed us and nourish us. He wants to remind us of our sins being forgiven. He wants us to be built up and strengthened. May he do just that.

We're going to sing together. And then Richard's going to lead us. And we're going to probably spend a little bit of time reflecting upon these things. But let's sing together as we prepare to come to the communion table.