

Eating And Drinking Judgment

"Wherefore, whosoever shall eat the bread and drink 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 prove himself, and so let him eat of the body and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body. For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep. But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world ..." (1 Cor. 11:27-32).

The apostle continues his warnings and exhortations regarding the Lord's supper. As has been shown clearly, the "cup" which all are to drink is the contents, the fruit of the vine. Three times in this section "eating the bread and drinking the cup" are joined together (vs 26-27, 28). Then warning is given that those who partake unworthily are guilty of the "body and blood" of Christ. This shows that the bread represents Christ's body and the "cup" His blood.

One may eat and drink judgment to himself by partaking "unworthy". "Unworthy" refers not to our lives (for none would ever be "worthy" of the Lord's supreme sacrifice and love); rather, "unworthily" refers to the manner in which one observes the supper: "not discerning the Lord's body." To discern means to consider; to think about; to reflect upon. One who eats the bread or drinks the cup unmindful of the Lord's sacrifice these elements suggest, eats and drinks damnation to himself. Thus the command, "Let a man prove (examine) himself."

Personal examination is the criteria in determining who observes the supper. Nowhere may a command be found in which others are to prove someone else; each must prove himself. A segment of our religious neighbors practice "closed communion": the observance of the supper in which none are allowed to share save those of that local church. Suffice it to say authority for the practice rests upon flimsy foundation. It is assumed that it was only after Judas had left the upper room to finalize his betrayal of his Lord that Jesus instituted the supper. We would not argue that the sacred record does so imply, but what significance that lends to the premise of excluding someone from communion is doubtful. What we know is that the Holy Spirit commands each is to prove himself either of a disposition to worthily or unworthily commune, but none others are so directed. So, the practice of excluding from communion those who have been withdrawn from or those who have never obeyed the gospel is a practice for which no biblical authority may be found. The Lord's supper is indeed for those in the

kingdom, but the eating of that supper by one who is already is condemned will not worsen his condition.

"For this cause many among you are weak and sickly and not a few sleep." There are two explanations of this statement *"many are weak and sickly among you and not a few sleep."* Some understand the apostle to mean that when one had partaken in an unworthy manner, bodily ailments, sicknesses, and even physical death had been visited upon him. Others are certain that the phrase *"weak, sickly, and asleep"* refers to spiritual weakness and death.

It must certainly be agreed that an improper attitude leads to a decline in one's spirituality and even to spiritual death. But, there is a problem in applying the phrase to spiritual illness and death in this passage. Loss of spiritual strength, health, and death is the result of one's unworthy manner, but does not constitute God's judgment or chastisement. God would not make one spiritually sick and spiritually weak because of that one's improper attitude in the Lord's supper, man does that himself. By unworthily eating, one brings spiritual weakness and death upon himself; but God, because of one's unworthy eating, chastens with weakness, sickness, and sleep (death). Therefore, we must conclude that the sickness and sleep in this passages ARE reference to physical sickness and death which God sent upon some of the Corinthians as chastisement for their unworthy observance of His supper and also to cause them not to be *"condemned with the world."*

Man may avoid such judgment. If Corinthians would prove themselves, no such judgment or chastisement would come upon them. This is the value of the apostle's appeal: *"But let a man prove himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup."*

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