

THIS IS MY BODY

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Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11: 23-29

1 Corinthians 11:23-29

²³ For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which 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 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. ²⁸ But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly."

So he starts by saying very clearly, *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you.* This is Paul's way of emphasizing both the authority and the faithfulness of the message that He is about to share. Though Paul was not present, we know that at the Last Supper, he makes it very clear that the instructions he received, he received as revelation from God, and we see that in Galatians 1: 11-12, where he talks about the revelations that he received.

Then he goes on to say *"On the night when He was betrayed."* *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, on the night when Jesus was betrayed.* Paul anchors the Lord's Supper in a real historical and emotional context.

It wasn't during a time of celebration or ease. It was on the very night that Jesus was betrayed by Judas leading to His arrest, His trial, and then His crucifixion. And it underscores the weight and significance of what Jesus did. The institution of the Lord's Supper was not just a casual event. It was intentional, it was sacrificial and it was deeply personal.

So in this simple sentence, Paul is reminding us that this is a sacred tradition handed down from Christ Himself, that it took place under the shadow of betrayal and suffering and therefore it must be observed with reverence, with unity and self-examination, not as just a routine or a careless ritual.

As we look at the next few verses, we see that there are four compartments to what Paul is saying.

I. REMEMBERING CHRIST'S SACRIFICE.

This is My body given for you.

These few words spoken by Jesus at this moment, at the Last Supper, are very, very intimate. Full of meaning and rick with love. So, as we begin to unpack these verses almost line by line, I want us to approach this with a sense of reverence, for it was a costly sacrifice, humility because there is nothing to be proud of, and with great awe at the incredible love that Jesus had in coming down for us.

This is My body, He says. Jesus doesn't say: This is the body. He doesn't say: This is a symbol of sacrifice. But My body emphasizes ownership. Jesus is giving Himself, not something that is separate or distant. His body was real, fully human and subject to suffering which He went through. He chose to offer His own physical life – bearing pain, scourging, humiliation and ultimately, death. So, it's deeply personal on His part. He wasn't detached at all. He felt every lash, every thorn, every nail. And still, He gave it willingly. This is My body.

Then it was given. *This is My body given...* Notice that Jesus didn't say taken. His life wasn't stolen from Him by Roman soldiers or religious leaders. He voluntarily surrendered His life out of love. You remember Him saying in John 10:18 *No one takes it, i.e. My life, from Me, But I lay it down of My own accord.* Speaks of a deliberate gift, a self-offering. The cross was not an accident. It was a mission. It was His mission. *This is My body given for you.* This is perhaps the most staggering part of this statement. You, not humanity in the abstract, but you personally and individually. Jesus didn't die for a crowd. He died for you, with your name, your sins, your struggle on His mind.

This phrase makes the gospel profoundly personal. *He loved me and gave Himself up for me*, Paul writes in Galatians 2:20. So when we hear "for you", it means He sees you, He values you, He knows you and He chooses you. "For you!" This is love with a name, your name. So, when we come to the Lord's table, beloved, we are not just remembering an event. We are responding to a personal invitation. Jesus is not just saying, "Look at what I did" but "This is My body given for you." Will you receive it? Will you remember it? will you live in light of it?

C.S. Lewis says, "He died not for men, but for each man. If each man had been the only man made, He would have done no less." In other words, if you were the only one on this earth, beloved, He would still have died for you. Your name was on His heart when He gave His life for you.

Do this in remembrance of me.

What does this mean? It refers very specifically to the Lord's Supper. Do this, a physical act of eating and drinking together. An act that is instituted by Jesus to be repeated by His followers. This was more than a meal. It was a symbolic participation in the gospel. The bread represents His body. The juice represents His precious blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

This is an intentional act of remembering through the Lord's Supper. *Do this in remembrance.* What does He mean by remembrance? Remembering what? In biblical thought, remembering is active, it is participatory, and it is heart-centered. That's what it means to remember. It means reflecting deeply on Christ's suffering, death, and love.

We cannot ever come to this table without remembering how He suffered. And His love! His incredible love for us. it means remembering to realign our hearts with what Jesus has done. In the light of what He has done for you and for me, we realign our hearts and our wills to live by what He wants. It means remembering our trust in His grace, that every situation we face, we can face it in His grace. When we have come to the end of our striving, His grace is only just beginning.

Then it means remembering and rejoicing in our forgiveness and renewed identity. Forgiveness of our sins and the fact that we are now sons and daughters of the Most High God. He is our Father and we are now incorporated into the family of God.

Think of it like this. Not just remember what happened, but remember why it happened, who it was for, and what it means for you now. Why? Because we are prone to wander. We forget grace and try to earn salvation, do things by works, or we drift from love to legalism on one side or apathy on the other. Legalism – I've got to be in church every Sunday, especially on the first Sunday of the month

because communion is served. Legalism or apathy. I'm saved. I have my ticket to heaven. I don't need to worry about how I live my life.

And we forget that love is central to how we live our lives. everything that we do, we do out of a love relationship with Jesus. "Do you love Me, Peter? Only then feed my sheep." Get into ministry, do what needs to be done only when you can say 'Yes' to love.

"Do this" is to participate regularly in communion. *"In remembrance of Me."* Let it move your heart to worship, gratitude, and a renewed sense of commitment. We always come here, partake, and then we go back thinking: I've got to do better. I've got to allow God's grace to flow even with more intensity through my life because that's what it means for us, or it must mean.

Charles Spurgeon once said, "The Lord's Supper is not an empty ritual, but a powerful reminder that Christ's body was broken and His blood shed, not in theory but in truth for you and for me.

II. THE PROCLAMATION

v. 26 *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.*

Every time we take part in communion, every time we take the bread, and every time we take the juice, we are preaching a sermon without saying a single word. It stands there eloquently talking about something.

As we come beloved, we know what we are coming to. It can never be a ritual, a mindless exercise of coming to the table, taking the bread and the juice, and walking away. It can never be that. it preaches the gospel of salvation, of love that God had for each one of us. The elements speak. They call out to be understood. If someone who is unfamiliar with this table were to say to you: What does this bread mean? Then we'd get an opportunity to say, "It's the Body of our Lord." and if they asked: Why is the bread broken? Then we would respond gently, of course, "Because His Body was broken for us, wounded, pierced, lashed, bruised, and crushed so that we might be made whole.

Why do we eat it? they may ask even further. Because He said, "I Am the Living bread. Whoever eats this bread will live forever." In taking the bread, we say, "I need His life in me. I receive His sacrifice for me." And what about the juice? What does the juice represent? And we. Would say, "It is His Blood poured out at Calvary. But why focus on blood? they may wonder. After all, blood is not something that we tend to celebrate. And yet, we would say, in Leviticus 17: 11, "God said the life of the flesh is in the blood." When Jesus gave His blood, He gave His life. It was not spilled randomly. It was poured out with purpose.

He was the unblemished Lamb of God, sent to pay for the sins of the world. But the writer of Hebrews says, "Without the shedding of blood, there is not forgiveness." John Stott once famously said, "Not one drop of Jesus' blood would have been spilled on those dusty slopes of Golgotha if it wasn't absolutely necessary." And it was.

So, the broken bread and the cup of suffering either eloquently or silently preach the gospel. They declare: Jesus came, Jesus died. Jesus paid the penalty for our sin. Jesus rose again and Jesus will return. That's why when Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:26, he says, *"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."* Every time there's a proclamation that goes out, and will keep going out until Jesus comes again.

So, this is not an empty ritual. It's a sacred proclamation. This is where grace is tasted. This is redemption, your redemption, my redemption, remembered.

So, come not lightly, but joyfully. Come not with guilt, but with gratitude. Come not just to eat and drink, but to remember, to proclaim and to receive anew the mercy and love of our Savior. *Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.*

III. WE NEED TO EXAMINE OUR HEARTS.

Let a person examine himself then and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

What does it mean to examine ourselves? It means to press pause and honestly assess where we are spiritually. Our spiritual condition before the Lord. It's not about perfection. It's about humility, sincerity and truth. To look deep inside and examine.

How do we do that?

1. Confession of sin. Acknowledge any unrepentant sin. Bring hidden or habitual sin into the light of God's mercy. Remembering 1 John 1:9 which says, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, will forgive us our sins and then cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*
2. We check our relationships. Am I holding on to bitterness, unforgiveness or division within the body of Christ? Paul specifically warns in v. 29 against not discerning the body (and we'll get into that), but referring to the unity of the church. Reconciliation matters at this table.
3. We evaluate our motives. Why am I coming to this table? Out of habit, ritual or genuine gratitude? Am I honoring the Lord's death and resurrection in how I live?
4. We reaffirm faith and dependence. Do I recognize that it is only by His broken body and shed blood that I am saved? Do I recognize that? Am I resting on my own efforts rather than in His grace?

Charles Spurgeon said this beautiful line. "The table is not for the perfect. It's for the penitent." Communion is not a reward for spiritual achievement. It's a means of grace for those who need to know their Savior. So we don't come because we are worthy. We come because He is worthy.

The danger, Paul is warning us, is that sin is not general. We all fall short, but an unrepentant attitude or a casual approach or a divided heart is something we really need to watch out for before we come to this table.

So, we examine ourselves to look inward in humility, to look upward in faith and then to look outward in love to people around us. Then we come, not staying away in fear, but drawing near in faith and repentance, knowing that the table is for those who know they need Jesus. The table is a litmus test for where we are in our walk with God. As the old hymn says, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling."

IV. DISCERNING THE BODY.

v. 29 *"For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself."*

What does discerning the body mean? The phrase 'the body' can be understood in two kind of complementary ways and both are deeply connected to how we approach the Lord's table.

- The body of Christ broken for us. Paul has just reminded the Corinthian church that the bread represents Jesus body broken for us in v.24. So, at the very least, discerning the body means recognizing the sacred significance of Christ's sacrifice, not treating the elements as common or routine, taking communion with reverence, remembrance and gratitude. To not discern, in this sense, is to eat thoughtlessly without recognizing the cost of the cross.
- The body of Christ which is the church. In the wider context of 1 Corinthians 11, and if you had the opportunity to read through the chapter, you will see that Paul is addressing all kinds of issues in the church at Corinth. He is addressing divisions, he is talking about the inequality that they have shown to people, the selfishness that's prevalent among the believers during their gatherings.

The table of the Lord at that time in the 1st century early church was that they were all gathered actually for a meal. But what he found was that some were eating and drinking excessively while others went hungry. The wealthy were isolating themselves and the poor were being shamed. This fractured broken behavior contradicted the unity that the Lord's Supper was meant to express. So there were people who went hungry because there were gluttons in their midst. People who just came to eat forgetting what it meant, only looking to the outward form without the meaning that is attached always to form

So, not discerning the body refers to failing to recognize fellow believers as part of Christ's body, ignoring the unity and mutual care that must mark a church. Partaking while harboring division, pride or disregard for others in the congregation. In other words, you cannot rightly remember the broken body of Christ while you are breaking the body of Christ.

Why is this so serious? Because the Lord's table is a visible sign of unity.

v. 17 says, *"Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."* Unity is at the heart of the Lord's Supper. So, taking communion while ignoring the needs, dignity or spiritual well-being of others violates the very meaning of this meal.

Therefore, before coming to the table, we're invited to reflect not only on our own hearts, but also our relationships. Ask ourselves, is there someone who I need to forgive? Someone I've wronged or judged or misjudged? Recognize the community gathered with us, not just as individuals but as a body, the family of God.

The Lord's Supper, beloved, is not merely looking back, but leaning in into deeper communion with Christ and His church. So as we come, let us approach the table humbly, for we are unworthy. Gratefully, for He has paid the price. Joyfully, for we are forgiven and part of the family of God. And hopefully, for He's coming again.

So, in light of all that we have seen through these verses, as we prepare to come to the table of our Lord, I want to read a couple of verses from Psalm 139 for all of us to just see ourselves through the grip of these verses and then allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us and then for us to respond.

"Search me, oh God, and know my heart. test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there's any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."

Search me, test me, see me, and then lead me out into everlasting ways, righteous paths, pastures. So, would you take a moment, bow your heads, close your eyes if you need to. Just allow the Spirit of God to speak to you. And if there are things that need forgiveness, confess them and invite the Holy Spirit to bring God's forgiveness and cleansing.

Lord, forgive us for times when we may have come casually to this moment or when we have come and treated it as a ritual that we do every first Sunday. Forgive us Lord. This memorial is a costly memorial for you. And yet in your incredible love, you offered it freely to us. Grace, Lord, just unmerited favor. We didn't merit what you've given us. And so humbly we receive it and are reminded as we come of your love for us. Help us to live in that love. Help us Lord to always be able to do everything out of that love and all the prayers Lord that have gone up to you asking for forgiveness and cleansing Lord answer that we may walk in paths of righteousness because that is for your name's sake itself. Lord Jesus, in your name and remembering you, we make this prayer.

Amen.
