

# **1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE**

## **Part XXVI: Remembering The Example Of Christ's Selflessness At The Lord's Table**

**(1 Corinthians 11:20-34)**

### **I. Introduction**

- A. At the root of a life lived by means of the sinful nature is selfishness where true godliness is actually selfless.
- B. Selfishness plagued the carnal Church at Corinth, even in regard to observing the Lord's Table (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 531), but Paul corrected this error in 1 Corinthians 11:20-34, showing how the Lord's Table should cause us to recall Christ's exemplary, infinitely selfless work for us. We view this passage for insight:

### **II. Remembering The Example Of Christ's Selflessness At The Lord's Table, 1 Corinthians 11:20-34.**

- A. In the Early Church era, the Lord's Supper "was celebrated in two stages which consolidated the partaking of the bread and cup at the end of the communal meal," Ibid., p. 530.
- B. However, at Corinth, the meal had become "an occasion not marked by love for fellow Christians but one of self-centered indulgence" where wealthy believers ate well and even became drunk in partying with the food they had brought to the meeting while the poor ate nothing, producing "riotous disunity," Ibid., p. 530-531.
- C. In contrast, the "Lord's Supper should have been the remembrance of a preeminently selfless act, Christ's death on behalf of others," Ibid., p. 531. Paul thus confronted these abuses in 1 Corinthians 11:20-22:
  - 1. He critiqued the Church at Corinth for gathering together for the Lord's Supper because instead of truly remembering Christ's selfless act on the cross, they were acting selfishly, with some partying and getting drunk while others were shamed for lacking anything to eat or drink, 1 Corinthians 11:20-21.
  - 2. Instead, the rich should have partied in their homes, not selfishly defiled the Lord's Table when the ordinance was meant to recall Christ's selfless atonement for sin, 1 Corinthians 11:22.
- D. Then, in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Paul gave instructions on rightly observing the Lord's Table (as follows):
  - 1. First, he reported how the Lord Himself had instructed him and how he had already taught his readers that the Lord Jesus the same night He was unjustly betrayed, He graciously took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and told His disciples to eat it as it pictured His body that was selflessly broken for them, 1 Cor. 11:23-24a. The eating of the bread was to recall Christ and thus act as an example of selflessness, 1 Cor. 11:24b.
  - 2. Second, Jesus similarly took the cup after He had dined, announcing that it pictured the new covenant in His blood, that the disciples were to partake of it in remembrance of Him, 1 Cor. 11:25. Once again, this act implied focusing on Christ's selfless atonement for believers as their example in relating to each other.
  - 3. Paul added that as often as believers observe the Lord's Table this way, they testify of Christ's death in their behalf and of His coming Messianic Kingdom, indicating from the context again the believer's need to follow the Lord's selfless example of the cross until he reaches that Kingdom, 1 Corinthians 11:26.
- E. These instructions on observing the Lord's Table in the context of heeding Christ's selfless example led to necessary applications to correct sinful selfishness at Corinth as Paul directed in 1 Corinthians 11:27-34a:
  - 1. If a believer then ingested the elements of the Lord's Table unworthily, that is, by harboring sin such as disrespectful, unloving selfishness, he would be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, 1 Cor. 11:27.
  - 2. For this reason a believer should examine himself to see that he not harbor sin before partaking of the elements, 1 Cor. 11:28. Failure to do so caused the believer to bring God's discipline on himself, a discipline that could lead to physical weakness, sickness or even premature death, 1 Cor. 11:29-30.
  - 3. The believer was then to judge himself and confess his sin to avoid God's family chastening for believers that occurred so they would not be judged along with the world in its eternal judgment, 1 Cor. 11:31-32. [God does not want to judge the believer along with the world's judgment, so He has a family chastening.]
  - 4. Accordingly, Paul directed that when believers met for their communal meal that was followed by observing the Lord's Table, they were to wait for everyone to arrive so that they could all partake, and that those who were very hungry should eat at home before coming to the gathering to negate the temptation to gorge themselves that they not meet together in a way that led to God's discipline, 1 Cor. 11:33-34a.
- F. Paul added that he would address other lesser issues on this topic when he came, 1 Corinthians 11:34b.

***Lesson:*** *Opposite the selfish indulgence that marked the Corinthian believers' observance of the Lord's Table, they were to mimic Christ's selflessness for the Church as recalled in the observance of the ordinance itself. Thus, every believer was to conform to this truth by confession of sin and selflessness or suffer God's severe discipline.*

***Application:*** *May we observe the Lord's Table with an attitude of selflessness and with our sins confessed.*