

Growing Spiritually: Waiting for Each Other at the Lord's Table
1 Corinthians 11:17-34
Sermon Outline

Introduction: We grow spiritually through the Means of Grace, the gifts God has given that he has designed for our growth. One of them is the Lord's Supper. How can we benefit spiritually from it?

I) By recognizing Jesus' presence whenever we gather, especially at the Lord's Table

A) He is there (here)

v. 20: When you come together it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat
Your behavior denies that he is host—when he is!

v. 29: Discerning the body

Jesus, bodily raised, is there (here) by the power of the Spirit

vv. 28-30: This is why many of you are weak and ill...

We ignore the Lord's presence at our peril
Still true?

vv. 24-25: ...in remembrance of me (not simply, in remembrance of my crucifixion)

Saved not by a doctrine but by a Person—a Person who is present at the Table

B) How do we recognize him better?

II) By proclaiming Jesus in our behavior

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

A) The Corinthians

Self-centered free for all

v. 20ff: ...one goes hungry, another gets drunk...Do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?

The critique:

B) Us

v. 28: Examine yourselves and so eat the flesh and drink the cup.

Positive signs:

1) Putting things right

2) Resisting “birds of a feather flock together” syndrome

3) Waiting for each other

v. 23: So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) The means of grace (FWPSM: Fellowship, the Word, Prayer, the Sacraments, and Mission) are like a well-balanced diet. We need a steady diet of all of them in order to grow spiritually. Spend a few moments analyzing your spiritual diet over the past month. Has it been adequate? Has it been balanced—with all the components represented? If not, what evidence can you detect of malnourishment?
- 2) Read over 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. What evidence do you find in the text for the assertion that the Lord Jesus is actually present at the Lord's Table when we celebrate it?
- 3) What concrete steps can you take to heighten your awareness of the Lord's actual presence at the Lord's Table whenever you participate in it?
- 4) Look at 1 Corinthians 11:28-30. What is Paul saying? Have you ever noted this phenomenon? If not, why not?
- 5) Reflect on the following statement: "When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he said 'Do this in remembrance of me,' not, 'Do this in remembrance of my crucifixion.' Certainly we are to remember his crucifixion at the table. But we are to do more than that. We are to remember him. This so the case because we are not saved by a doctrine, but by a Person who loves us very much."
- 6) What is Paul's critique of the Corinthian practice of the Lord's Supper? Why is Paul so upset?
- 7) Like the Corinthians, the Lord wants us to "examine ourselves and so eat the bread and drink the cup" (v. 28). The essential question to be asked is this: "Does our behavior at the Lord's Table and in our corporate life generally proclaim the self-giving love of Jesus, the unity that that self-giving love has forged, and the hope of his return?" What is your answer to this question? Illustrate concretely and try to come up with at least two practical ways that you can contribute to improving the situation.
- 8) There is nothing wrong with the differences (ethnic, financial, season of life, educational, etc.) differences that exist in the church. The danger occurs when we allow these differences to lead to division by allowing ourselves to gravitate unchecked towards those with whom we have an affinity and away from those with whom we do not have an affinity. What are you doing to reduce the "birds of a feather flock together" syndrome?