

# High Peaks Bible Fellowship

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## Abusing Christian Liberty in Church *Misbehavior at the Lord's Supper* 1 Corinthians 11:18-34

### Introduction

- In our previous session, Paul dealt with the misbehavior of some Corinthian women during their church services. He outlined the principle of God's hierarchy of authority, and then described the disgrace of failing to follow appropriate customs that uphold God's hierarchy of authority.
- In the transition verse between the last section and this section Paul had said, "In giving this instruction I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse" (1 Cor 11:17). The weekly gatherings of the church in Corinth had become a time when the local body of Christ was not being built up, but they were in fact being torn down by their own disgraceful practices.
- In the section today, the apostle Paul will address another serious problem with their abuse of liberty and unloving behavior. Here he focused in on their celebration of the Lord's Supper.



### Specific Problems in their Assemblies (1 Cor 11:18-22)

- "In the first place" = If we look down further in these paragraphs we never see Paul saying, "In the second place or third place." He is not giving an ordered list of things he wants to discuss. He is using the word first (*protos*) to mean *primary*. We know that Paul had already spoken about one of the misbehaviors during their church services -- that of the women going unveiled, which was contrary to the cultural practice of that day for women of good character. But now Paul is going to discuss another issue that actually takes *precedence* or is *more severe* than the previous issue.
- "When you come together as a church" = Two Greek words ensure that we understand he meant the regular meetings of the local church in Corinth: *sunerchomai* = to gather together, and *ekklesia* = assembly. The specific occasion Paul has in mind is their gathering together as an assembly of believers on the first day of the week for the purpose of public worship, prayer, and teaching of the Word.
- "I hear that divisions exist" = He keeps on hearing (present continuous action) that divisions exist within their assembly. Divisions (*schismata*) = schisms, from *schizo* = to split, tear, or rend apart. This is the same word that Paul had used in 1 Cor 1:10 where he exhorted them to have unity rather than divisions in their assembly. These divisions became especially evident during their gathering together as a church for the Lord's Supper.
- "In part I believe it" = Since Paul had heard this report from reliable people, he could not help but think that there was something to it.
- "There must also be factions among you" (*haireseis*) = literally "an act of choice" which came to mean a chosen way of life, a belonging to a sect or party, not always in a bad sense, but in the sense of *schools* that were common with the philosophers of that day. This is a different word

than he used to describe their *divisions*, the splits or tears that characterized the different groups in Corinth. When Paul said, "There must be factions among you" it is almost as if he would expect this kind of taking sides so occur in their situation.

- "So that those who are approved may become evident among you" = Here Paul gives the purpose for these factions. Approved (*dokimos*) means to be proven by testing. Evident (*phaneros*) means to become apparent, manifest, visible to all. God's purpose in these factions was to make the ones who have been tested and approved become easily recognizable by everyone. Without a dark backdrop, those objects that are light colored will not stand out as clearly. It was necessary for there to be factions in order for the ones who were approved by God to be clearly evident, because the *godliness* of some would form a stark contrast to the *worldliness* of others.



- "The Lord's Supper" = literally, "the supper belonging to the Lord" (*kuriakos*). Supper (*deipnon*) = the main meal of the day, usually held in the evening. This phrase was used to describe a sort of church supper that was held before the Lord's Supper or communion service. In following this practice, the church may have loosely patterned this supper after the Passover meal during which Jesus instituted this ordinance.
- The historical background that may have influenced the church supper in the city of Corinth  
The city of Corinth had many social clubs or fraternities which promoted a spirit of good fellowship by hosting common festive meals, usually in gardens near a pagan altar. The apostle Paul was saying here that when they gathered together as a church, they were claiming to celebrate the Lord's Supper, but really they were imitating the pagan supper clubs that were common in their city. In doing this, they were making a mockery of the celebration of the solemn Lord's Supper service.
- "In your eating each one takes his own supper first" = When they arrived for their group supper, each person would serve and eat without any concern or consideration for others. The verb translated take first (*prolambano*) means to take before others. They had an attitude of "First come, first served!" and they were showing no regard for whether there was enough food left for anyone else.
- "One is hungry and another is drunk" = This was the result of their selfish and unloving behavior. Hungry = means "deprived of food" -- nothing was left for him at the feast table. The people that came earlier had plenty to eat and drink, but there was very little left for anyone who came later. Drunken = means to become inebriated or intoxicated. This kind of disgusting conduct was considered shameful even in the pagan club suppers, but here the Corinthian Christians were indulging their own sensual appetites in eating and drinking, rather than solemnly celebrating the Lord's Supper itself.
- "Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink?" = If they wanted to have a party, they should have it at home rather than during the public gathering of the church for worshipping the Lord. The word for drink is the normal Greek term meaning to take liquid refreshment. But in his previous description of their feasts, Paul had specifically used the term which means *intoxicated* or *drunk*. It is fine to take liquid refreshment, but we should not drink to excess -- even in our own homes.
- "Do you despise the church of God?" (*kataphroneo*) = literally, to think down; to think little of something; not having the proper respect for something. The kind of partying that the Corinthians were doing was destructive and degrading as part of the regular gathering of the church. See also what Paul said in 1 Cor 10:16-17 about the fellowship (*koinonia*)



and unity that should result from celebrating the Lord's Supper as a church.

- "And shame those who have nothing?" (*kataischuno*) = literally, to shame down; to cause to blush or be embarrassed with dishonor. Those who have nothing are the "have-nots" -- the ones who are left with nothing at the church gatherings.
- "Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you!" = Here Paul used the same word for praising or commending someone (1 Cor 11:17), but again it is in the negative. One could certainly not call this event a common supper (*koineon deipnon*), let alone a Lord's Supper (*kuriakos deipnon*). It was this kind of conduct that eventually led to the complete separation between the Love-feast and the Lord's Supper in later church history.

## The True Meaning of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:23-26)

- "I received from the Lord" (*ego gar parelabon apo tou Kuriou*) = The pronoun ego is placed forward in this phrase for emphasis: "I myself received from the Lord" -- this is Paul's claim to receiving direct revelation from the Lord Jesus concerning the institution of the Lord's Supper service. This fact alone should be enough to emphasize the great seriousness and solemnity of the Lord's Supper service.
- "I also delivered to you" (*paradidomi*) = This is the same term that Paul used in 1 Cor 11:2. Paul had founded the church in Corinth and had already taught them about the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. The verb is in the aorist tense, indicating a definite point in time when Paul had taught this doctrine to the Corinthian church.
- "He was betrayed" (*imperfect tense*) = this means "He was *being* betrayed." In other words, He instituted the Eucharist while His betrayal was actively happening. The apostle Paul described Christ's betrayal as the backdrop for the Lord's Supper in order to show the great seriousness and solemnity of the ceremony. In order to celebrate the Lord's Supper in a proper manner, we must remember the circumstances in which Christ instituted it.
- "When He had given thanks" (*eucharistesas*) = First aorist active participle of *eucharisteo* from which our English word Eucharist comes.
- "He broke it" = We tend to associate the breaking of the bread with the damage it causes to the loaf, and this does represent the damage done to the physical body of Jesus during His crucifixion. But the idea behind the breaking of the bread also involves distributing the pieces equally among all those at the table. This is in direct contrast to the approach of the Corinthian believers, which was "Every man for himself!"
- "This is My body which is for you" = The bread was intended by the Lord as a symbol of His own physical body which was broken and damaged, ultimately to the point of death on the cross. Not one bone of Christ was broken (see Ps 34:20), but His skin and flesh were broken open and wounded with fists, rods, whips, thorns, nails, and a spear.
- "Do this in remembrance of Me" = The purpose for celebrating this ceremony is to remember the suffering of Christ on our behalf. Remember (*anamnesis*) = to recall to the mind. It is important for all believers to call to mind what Christ suffered on our behalf -- we can each say, "He endured that agony for ME! He took the punishment that I deserve!" There are some church denominations that believe the service of the Lord's Supper is a reenactment of the actual sacrifice of Christ, so that Christ is really re-sacrificed every Sunday over and over again. It is as if the death of Christ once on the cross was not sufficient to pay for the sins of the world. But according to His own words, we are merely remembering His *once-for-all* sacrifice for us.
- "This cup is the new covenant in My blood" = The cup stands figuratively for the red liquid which it holds, and this liquid in turn is a symbol for the blood of Christ which was poured out in death for all of mankind. Since this is a symbol within a symbol, it is clear that Christ intended this to be taken figuratively as a representation of His death on the cross for sin.
- "The new covenant" (*diatheke*) = this term means "a disposition or arrangement of any sort, which



a person wishes to be valid; often, the last disposition which a person makes for the distribution of his earthly possessions after his death; a testament or will." In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word *diatheke* was used more than three hundred times to translate the Hebrew word *berith* (God's covenant with men). The Gentiles typically did not believe that an infinite God could enter into a covenant or agreement with finite creatures. Therefore, the translators of the Greek Old Testament chose a word which would represent God as expressing his *will* to them in His revelation.

- Paul used this term here to describe the new agreement or covenant that God was making with man in contrast to the old covenant made through Moses in the Old Testament Law. The Old Covenant was ratified and confirmed by the blood of bulls, which was called "the blood of the covenant" (Exo 24:8), but the new covenant was ratified with Christ's own blood. The wine in the cup was a sign or symbol to represent this truth.

## What is the New Covenant?

- The New Covenant was first mentioned when the prophet Jeremiah *predicted* the coming of the New Covenant in Jer 31:31 - "Behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." The New Covenant is something God desires to establish with the nation of Israel as a whole, and it will not be established until some time in the future.
- Jeremiah directly contrasted the New Covenant with the Mosaic covenant, "Which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt" (Jer 31:32). One of the unique aspects of the New Covenant is that God will give all of His people a renewed heart & mind, and He will provide forgiveness for all of their sins (Jer 31:33-34). This is a perfect description of what the New Testament calls regeneration which occurs at the time of salvation and includes the special ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit (a ministry that was not available in the Old Testament).
- We know from the New Testament that many individual Jews did become believers and experience some of the promised blessings, but the nation of Israel as a whole certainly has not entered into the New Covenant as it is described in the book of Jeremiah. Something obviously took place that allowed some of these blessings to be experienced by individual Jews who put their trust in Christ for their salvation. Christ accomplished something important for His people Israel, even though the nation as a whole is not currently participating in it now.
- Even though the New Covenant is still awaiting enactment with the nation of Israel at Christ's Second Coming (Rom 11:26-27), Christ made all the required preparations by ratifying the New Covenant through His blood sacrifice on the cross. The testimony of His blood shows that He is the guarantee of this *better* covenant (Heb 7:22) which He will enact with Israel in the future at His Second Coming.
- We know from the New Testament that many Gentiles also experienced the blessings of salvation, but they certainly cannot be fulfilling the New Covenant as it is described in the book of Jeremiah. The New Covenant can be fulfilled only with the intended recipients = the nation of Israel. In the bread & the cup of the Lord's Supper, church age believers have a memorial service for Christ's ratification of the New Covenant at His First Coming, until He comes again to officially enact the New Covenant with Israel at His Second Coming.

## Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me

- In the original language, "*as often as*" is the normal way of expressing an activity that is regularly repeated over time. This is intended to be a reoccurring memorial service of Christ's work on our behalf.
- "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup" = Notice that not just any bread or cup is in mind here, it is this bread and this cup. It is the bread & cup that is taken in the correct way in celebration of the ordinance instituted by Christ according to His instructions. There are some

church groups which believe that when the bread and liquid are blessed, they are transformed into parts of the actual flesh and blood of Jesus. But we can see here in the words which establish this ceremony that even after they have been blessed & distributed equally among the participants, and even while they are being eaten, they are still identified as actual bread and juice.

- "You proclaim the Lord's death" (*kataggello*) = to declare, announce, or proclaim publicly. This was intended as a public service which graphically demonstrated all that Jesus Christ did for us. In fact, since this has been a regular practice of the church throughout the centuries, even people who were not members of the body of Christ came to understand the message behind this ceremony.
- "Until He comes" = This tells us not only that Jesus will return in a glorious Second Coming, but also that the celebration of this church ordinance has a definite ending point -- the Lord's Supper is intended as a ceremony for believers to communicate an important message during the Church Age. Its purpose is to keep alive the memory of Christ's ratification of the New Covenant until the day when He personally arrives to officially enact that covenant. When He arrives, there will be no need for symbols to represent His body, because He Himself will be with us. Our regular participation in this ceremony helps us to keep looking forward to that day when He will come again.

### The Seriousness of Observing The Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:27-32)

- "In an unworthy manner" = The word *unworthily* is an adverb, so it describes the verbs (eating & drinking) -- it describes the way in which the Corinthians were eating and drinking. In 1 Cor 11:18-22, Paul had already given some specific details of the unworthy manner in which they were taking the Lord's Supper.
- "Shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord" (*enochos*) = this word means "subject to or liable to something, especially liable to a penalty or a punishment." By coming to the Lord's Supper in the way that the Corinthians were doing it, they were actually incurring punishment from the Lord for failing to give due weight to this serious occasion of remembrance. They were making no distinction between the Lord's Supper and a common supper or festival.
- "But a man must examine himself" (*dokimazo*) = This term is related to the word *approved* in 1 Cor 11:19, which means tested and approved. We should measure our actions and attitudes by the standard of the true meaning of the Lord's Supper (which Paul had just presented), and we should be certain that we are participating in this ceremony with the right attitude or intention -- which is to communicate the memory of all Christ accomplished for us on the cross.
- "And in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup" = It is only after the seriousness of self-examination that a person should participate in the elements of the bread and the cup.
- "Eats and drinks judgment to himself" (*krima*) = This word does not have a definite article -- it is not the judgment, as in the final and ultimate judgment, but simply a judgment of some kind. The judgment Paul is talking about here is equivalent to the consequences of being "guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord" (1 Cor 11:27) which meant "subject to penalty." This is the way the term judgment is being used in this verse. In the very next section of this chapter, the apostle Paul will give several examples of the types of judgments he had in mind.
- "If he does not judge the body rightly" (*diakrino*) = This term is a compound form of the word for judgment, and it means "to separate, to discriminate between one thing and another." Here it is being used to describe something like the process of self-examination that Paul discussed in the previous verse (1 Cor 11:28).

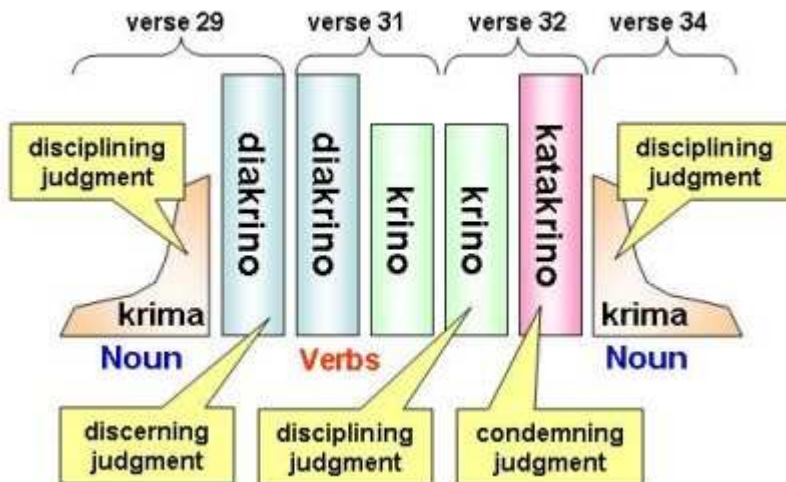




## Chart of the Greek Words for Judging

Verse	Word	Part of Speech	Meaning
29	krima	Noun	A judgment; a decision; an opinion formed after considering the facts; a choice made from among the alternatives.
29	diakrino	Verb	To judge between; to make a distinction; to see or accurately discern a difference between things.
31	diakrino	Verb	(see verse 29 above)
31	krino	Verb	[Passive] To be judged; to undergo examination, scrutiny, or testing regarding what is right and proper, often with the idea of being found worthy of discipline, correction, or punishment.
32	krino	Verb	(see verse 31 above)
32	katakrino	Verb	To reach a final verdict in the negative against someone; to sentence someone to condemnation (especially to ultimate condemnation).
34	krima	Noun	(see verse 29 above)

- "For this reason" = Because they were not judging rightly, the punishments described in this verse have been inflicted upon them. These judgments represent the Lord's discipline because of their sinful attitudes and actions during the Lord's Supper services.
- "Many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep" = Many (*hikanos*) means a sufficient number. Weak (*asthenes*) means feeble or without strength, and Sick (*arrhostos*) means suffering from continued ill-health. Sleep (*koimao*) is used in a figurative sense for death (see 1 Thess 4:13-15).
- We should be careful not to form a general principle from this particular case. It seems obvious that the apostle Paul had specific revelation from the Lord about the Corinthian situation -- God had told him that some cases of physical affliction were directly related to the sinful behavior among believers in that local church.
- "If we judged ourselves rightly" (*diakrino*) = In verse thirty-one this means "to carefully discern through examination" just as it did in verse twenty-nine.
- "We would not be judged" (*krino*) = the passive form of the verb which is related to the term judgment (*krima*) from verse twenty-nine. The same parallel set of terms for judging and judgment are used in the same way between these two verses. This verse seems to be the *inverse* statement of 1 Cor 11:29 where Paul said, "If he does not judge rightly, he eats and drinks judgment to himself." Here in 1 Cor 11:31 Paul says, "If he does judge rightly, he will not be



judged."

- "But when we are judged" (*krino*) = This is the same term that was used in verse thirty-one above, but 1 Cor 11:32 confirms for us what Paul meant when he used the word *krino* in the previous verse. This kind of judging is equivalent to the Lord's discipline of a believer.
- "We are disciplined by the Lord" (*paideuo*) = This term literally meant "to treat as a child" and its meaning was broadened to "instruction or education, especially through chastisement or disciplinary action." This is the same term that is used in that wonderful passage about the Lord's discipline of believers in Hebrews 12:5-11.
- "So that we will not be condemned along with the world" (*katakrino*) = Here Paul used another of the related words for judgment, this time indicating the condemnation of the unsaved. It might sound like Paul is saying, "Believers need the Lord's discipline so that they will not be condemned as unbelievers." However, we know from other Scripture passages that "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1).
- In 1 Cor 11:31-32 Paul used all three of the related terms for judging: *diakrino* (discernment), *krino* (discipline), and *katakrino* (condemnation).
  1. Paul picked up the meaning of *diakrino* from 1 Cor 11:29 where he had said they were to discern the Lord's body in the Lord's Supper, and therefore they were to discriminate between this ceremony and everyday feasting.
  2. Then he used the term *krino* to indicate the discipline or chastisement of the Lord on those who are His children, but who are misbehaving.
  3. Finally, at the end of verse thirty-two Paul graphically drew attention to the importance of exercising this kind of *diakrino* (discernment) by contrasting it with the term *katakrino*, the final separation of the unrighteous from the righteous.
- Just as a Christian should be able to discern his unique relationship to God through Jesus Christ as contrasted with the unsaved of the world, in the same way a Christian should also be able to discern the meaning of the Lord's Supper and distinguish it from sinful indulgence in feasting.

### Paul's Instructions for Properly Observing the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:33-34)

- "So then, my brethren" = Here Paul gives his concluding instructions to them, and he calls them his brethren. Even though he has given them a strong rebuke, he still recognizes them as his brothers and sisters in Christ. This helps to soften the blow of his rebuke, and it also prepares them to continue listening to the rest of his instructions in the following chapters of the letter.
- "When you come together to eat, wait for one another" = Paul's first instruction is that they are to wait for each other. Paul had already told them that if they are hungry they should satisfy their appetite in their own homes (1 Cor 11:22), so here he probably means that when they come together as a church to celebrate the Lord's Supper ceremony they are to wait for each other before beginning.
- "If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home" (*peinao*) = Paul's second instruction is that they are to satisfy their appetite at home rather than at church. The term *hungry* is the same word Paul used in 1 Cor 11:21, so here it means that the Corinthians are not to make the church gathering into a time when they focus on satisfying their desire for food and drink.
- "So that you will not come together for judgment" (*krima*) = Here Paul is saying that if the Corinthians will follow these simple instructions, then they can avoid the discipline of the Lord for their wrong actions and attitudes toward the Lord's Supper. This term for *judgment* is the same



term that Paul used when he began in 1 Cor 11:29. It is placed here like a bookend that brackets this part of the discussion.

- "The remaining matters I will arrange when I come" = Evidently there were several other issues with their practice of celebrating the Lord's Supper, but they were minor matters that Paul would discuss when he visited them in the future. According to Second Corinthians, Paul did make a brief "painful visit" to Corinth before he wrote that letter (2 Cor 2:1; 12:14; 13:1-2).

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