

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

1 CORINTHIANS 10-11

Once, a tourist was traveling through an Indian Reservation, where he was introduced to an Indian chief who was said to have a perfect memory.

The tourist was skeptical. He decided to test the chief, "Tell me, what did you eat for breakfast on August 2, 1954?" The chief answered, "Eggs."

The tourist scoffed, "Yea, everybody has eggs for breakfast." He left the reservation unimpressed.

Ten years later, the same tourist stopped at the same Indian Reservation. As soon as he exited the bus, guess who he saw? The chief with the perfect memory!

The tourist slapped him on the back and jokingly said, "How, chief!" The Indian answered, "Scrambled!"

Well, in chapter 10, Paul jump starts our memories.

He takes us on a tour down memory lane. He recounts Israel's history as an example for the Church.

Verse 1, "Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud..."

When the Hebrews exited Egypt, they followed a cloud by day and a fire by night. What a sight it was!

Obviously, God wanted their eyes fixed on His glory!

And they "all passed through the sea..."

It doesn't matter how many times I watch the "The Ten Commandments" I always get goosebumps when Moses

Heston raises his rod and the waters of the sea part before Israel's astonished eyes. Imagine, having been there as an eye-witness to the miracle...

And they "all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea..." Realize what happened to Israel historically is analogous to what happens to Christians spiritually. As the Hebrews were baptized into Moses, in a spiritual sense you and I are baptized into Christ.

Think of the parallels... Our deliverer, Jesus, has led us out of the Egypt of this world. He's freed us from sin's slavery. He's done a miracle by parting the waters of forgiveness. We've crossed over into a new life.

We're now a new nation, a new people... under new management... we've become new creations in Christ!

In addition, we "all ate the same spiritual food..."

Recall how God satisfied Israel's hunger? For forty years He supplied them "wonder bread" or "manna." It was supernatural fiber and nutrition provided by God Himself. Psalm 78:25 called the manna "angel's food."

It was the first angel food cake!

And God has also given us miracle bread to eat. Jesus is "the bread of life." He's food for our soul. He's spiritual sustenance. Jesus is the ultimate power bar.

Verse 4, "And all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." Twice during Israel's wilderness wanderings, God drew water from a rock.

The first time Moses was told to strike the rock. He did and water gushed out... The second time God said "speak to the rock..." but Moses was angry. He was fed up with Israel's complaining, so in his frustration he disobeyed God. Moses misrepresented God... instead of just speaking, Moses struck the rock a second time.

And for this act of defiance, God barred Moses from the Promised Land! He saw the land, but didn't enter...

We read of Moses' punishment and wonder if God wasn't excessive? *Did the punishment fit the crime?*

That is until we get to 1 Corinthians 10.

For here, Paul tells us that the rock in the wilderness was a type of Christ. Verse 4, "*that rock was Christ.*"

Apparently, quenching the thirst of a few million Hebrews was actually the peripheral issue. God's main objective was to paint a picture of the Messiah.

Jesus had to be struck - *once and for all* - on the cross. Now, all believers have to do is speak to the Rock, and God pours spiritual refreshment into our hearts. But Moses struck the rock a second time and blew the analogy. That's why Moses was punished.

Verse 5, "*But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.*" The word "*most*" is an understatement.

"Most" was all but two - Caleb and Joshua. Everyone else died because of their unbelief! And Paul's point is this - *a good beginning doesn't ensure a good ending.*

Like the Israelites of old, the Corinthian believers had also seen miracles - and they'd eaten the Bread of Life, and drank spiritually from the rock that is Christ.

Yet, that doesn't mean they won't die in the desert if they become prideful - and stop trusting and following, and depending on Jesus! Paul's point is this, **it's not how we start that matters most, but how we finish!**

"Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

Paul quotes Exodus 32:6. While Moses was meeting with God on top of Mount Sinai, Israel was feasting and dancing around their golden calf. They couldn't wait on God for forty days before they sought His substitute.

Verse 8, "Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day 23,000 fell..."

Read Numbers 22-25, the story of Balaam, for the ugly details. Again, Israel showed their propensity for lust and idols... The king of Moab hired Balaam, an occult practitioner, a middle eastern soothsayer, to place a curse on the encroaching Israelites. But the true God prohibited Balaam from installing his curse.

But Balaam was greedy. He found a workaround. He told the Moabites that though God wouldn't let him curse the Israelite people, the Moabites could get God to curse them Himself. Balaam told the king of Moab to send his temple

prostitutes, and exotic dancers, and cocktail waitresses to tempt the Israelite men with idols and illicit sex. Once they succumbed, their own God would judge them, which is exactly what happened.

They fell to their own lusts. Now Paul is warning the believers in Corinth not to head down that same path.

"Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents..." Here he references Numbers 21. Israel complained and murmured over God's provision and was snake bit.

When God's people are known more for grumbling than gratitude, the bite of judgment is on the horizon.

"Nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer." There's a Jewish tradition that attributes God's harshest judgments to a single angel called "**The Destroyer.**"

This angel is like a divine battleship! Trust me, you don't want to meet "**The Destroyer**" in a dark alley!

But the surest way to *rumble* with "**The Destroyer**" is to *grumble* about God's provision. Murmuring and complaining is really just a lack of faith. If we really believe God is in control, we'll stop our bellyaching.

I'm sure you've heard the expression, "**Experience is the best teacher!**" But it doesn't always have to be your experience. Why keep slamming your head against the wall when you can learn from other people's mistakes!

And this is why Paul gives us this history lesson. He wants to save the Corinthians a bruise on the noggin.

He tells them in verse 11, “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” What happened to Israel is an example to us. Christians are vulnerable to the same miscues. **If you don’t learn from history, you’re sure to repeat it.**

Thus, read verse 12 carefully, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” Stay on your high horse long, and you’ll eventually get bucked off.

It reminds me of Jose Cubero, one of Spain's most brilliant matadors. He died in Madrid at 21 years old.

After thrusting his sword into the bull one last time, **Cubero spun around to acknowledge the cheers of the crowd. He didn't realize the bull still had one final lunge in him, and it ran its horn through Jose's heart.**

Today, a statue memorializing the event sits outside the bullring. It's a warning that pride is the enemy of all!

Verse 13, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

When the Union Pacific railroad ran its first line from St. Louis to California, it **built a trestle bridge over a deep gorge. To assure safety, the chief engineer parked a train with**

boxcars - loaded down with twice their normal payload - on top of the bridge for two weeks.

One of the workers was upset, "*What are you trying to do, break it?*" The engineer replied, "*No, I'm showing that it's unbreakable.*" And this is why God allows us to be tempted - to demonstrate His ability to keep us.

God knows our breaking point better than we do. He's aware of what we can and can't handle.

At times, God tempers the temptation... At other times, He increases our resistance... But He always provides a way out. There is always an escape hatch.

Here are four truths to remember whenever you're tempted:

1) **You're not alone.** Everyone gets tempted. It's the price for being human... 2) **God is faithful.** It's no sin to be tempted. He's with you in the struggle...

3) **The temptation is winnable.** You might not be able to beat it, but God can... 4) **There's always a way out.** God has an exit strategy, just look for it...

That's why he says in verse 14, "**Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.**" In Chapter 8, we learned that some of the Corinthian believers felt the freedom to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. And Paul affirmed their freedom to do so. Meat is just meat.

But apparently, other believers had carried their freedom too far. There's nothing wrong with eating a cut of meat that was once sacrificed to an idol.

But when you eat that meat in the pagan Temple... with your pagan friends... in the context of a pagan celebration... while

the pagan priest is performing his pagan rituals... and uttering his pagan incantations... At some point, your freedom turns to foolishness.

Some of the Corinthian believers had crossed the line. They inadvertently got sucked back into idolatry.

Paul illustrates what happens at the altar of an idol by explaining what happens at the Lord's table...

He says, “I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.” Communion is a fitting name for what Jesus commanded. When we come to the Lord's table to eat and drink, we commune with the Lord behind the table.

A fellowship takes place with the Spirit of Jesus.

Communion is the point of contact where we release our faith. At the table, we can reach up in faith and touch the hem of Jesus' garment. Communion is a special occasion for us to fellowship with His Spirit.

In verse 18, Paul says the same was true of the OT sacrifices, “Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?”

In essence, a sacrifice was a spiritual transaction. The worshipper approached the altar from the physical side, but the Spirit behind the altar was also present.

In the OT Temple and at the Lord's Table, the worshipper was met by the Spirit behind the altar or the Holy Spirit. A literal **communion** takes place.

And this also occurred in the pagan temples.

Verse 19 tells us, “**What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything?**”

An idol is nothing but a stick or stone. There’s nothing divine about an idol. That’s why for a believer in the know, meat sacrificed to an idol was just meat.

But in the ritual of sacrificing that meat, spiritual forces are at play. When an idolater brings his sacrifice to the pagan altar, there is someone there to receive it... not the idol, *it's nothing*, but there are demons.

Paul says, “**Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.**”

Idols are idols - meat is just meat - but idolatry is demonic. So don’t walk into a pagan temple as if nothing spiritual is going on. *Demons are dancing...*

Here’s a modern-day example that might apply... A fortune cookie is nothing but a tasty mix of flour and sugar - with a silly message inside. But if you take that message seriously as a prediction of your future, it becomes a form of sorcery. We’re not to seek the future supernaturally apart from God and His Word.

The message doesn’t somehow corrupt the cookie. I’ll eat the cookie, but I’ll take no part in the prediction.

So often whether something is good or evil depends on its context. Meat is harmless until it is used in a ritual that engages a demon. Likewise, a fortune cookie is benign until it becomes an attempt to predict the future through demonic influence. Then it becomes sin.

Verse 21, “**You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?**”

Understand what was going on in the church at Corinth. The Corinthians were free. They knew idols and meats were nothing. But they took it too far...

They figured it was okay to go to *family gatherings in the local pagan temple*. When *their company had the pagan priest dedicate the new store*, they participated. They failed to grasp the spiritual factors at play.

The believers were flirting with idolatry as if there was nothing to it - there is nothing to the idol or meat, but idol-worship is real and it's demonic. In essence, they were flirting with demons. And you can't follow Jesus and flirt with demons. God gets very jealous!

Paul says in verse 23, “**All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.**” Here again is the Christian ethic. God gives us carte blanche freedom to do anything we like. As long as we live by *love*, not *law*.

It's love that determines what's “**helpful**” and what “**edifies**.” The only thing I'm not free to do is what **causes me to**

fumble away my faith, or causes you to stumble in your faith - then that becomes off-limits.

Love is the key to living the Christian life. “Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being.”

Paul continues to deal with this issue of food. “Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience’ sake; for “the earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness.” If you have a private barbecue for friends and family and everyone realizes that meat is just meat, then go ahead, fire up the grill!

But... “If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience’ sake. But if anyone says to you, “This was offered to idols, do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience’ sake; for “the earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness.”” If you’re invited to someone else’s house and nothing is said about the meat, then eat it. Obviously, it’s not an issue with anyone at the dinner.

But if your host mentions that the meat was offered to idols; obviously, it’s an issue to him. And if you love this person; then what’s an issue for him will be an issue for you. You’ll avoid any association with idolatry.

In verse 29, Paul clarifies who’s conscience it is he’s concerned about. He says, “Conscience,” I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another man’s conscience? But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks?”

The problem is not Paul's conscience, but the conscience of the person who doesn't have the same understanding of liberty as Paul. He'll see Paul's exercise of freedom as sin.

This man judges Paul by the restrictions of his own conscience. Paul gives thanks for what this man views as a compromise. Paul is saying *why add fuel to his fire*. Why do things you know he's going to misinterpret...

If my liberty is going to be viewed by someone else as a moral lapse or as poor judgment - or worse, as a betrayal of Christ - *why even go there?* My primary concern should be to protect my witness for Jesus.

Verse 31, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.” Here’s Paul’s advice, “*give no offense.*” Do nothing that would give the impression you’ve compromised your loyalty to Jesus!

Evaluate your every activity - your every use of time - your every pleasure - **by whether it promotes the Gospel and builds up the church.** This is how Paul lived... not just what was allowable, but what’s helpful.

In “*whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*”

This is the context in which Paul makes his amazing declaration, 11:1, “*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*” Paul was like Jesus, he used His liberty to spread the Gospel and build up the church. And he wants us to be like him - *do all to God’s glory!*

Verse 2, “Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.” The Corinthians did certain things right, but they had some glaring problems.

Notably, **the public assemblies of the church were out of order**. And the next four chapters address the misuses and abuses occurring in their public meetings.

And the first issue Paul addresses are gender roles.

Verse 3, “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” Authority matters to God.

He has designated roles and established rank in the church and in the home. Look at nature and you'll discover God created all life with order and structure.

“**All chiefs and no Indians**” isn't order, it's chaos.

God has a definite chain of command, and here Paul lists it... **God the Father is head over Christ, Christ is head over the man, and man is head over the woman.**

And notice, the only decline in equality in the chain is between Christ and man. God the Father is head over Christ, though both are equal in nature and substance.

Man is head over the woman though again both are equal in value... But, **equal does not mean the same.**

The Father and Son are equal in nature, but different in roles. The same is true for the man and woman.

Actually, I'm not sure it's accurate to say the wife and husband are equal. Truth be known, most wives are superior to their husband. A woman's submission to her husband has

nothing to do with any inferiority on her part. It's the role that God has assigned to her.

Verse 4, “*Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.*” When a Jew enters a synagogue or prays at the Wailing Wall, he does so with his head covered. He wears a yarmulke. It can be colorful and sport a favorite team.

Or this year in Israel, I saw one stitched with the word “Trump.” The President has been Israel’s friend.

But all Jewish males wear a skull cap. It’s a reminder that someone is over them - that they’re under God.

This is why it’s strange to hear a Jewish rabbi, like Paul, say, “*every man... having his head covered, dishonors his head.*” Remember though, Paul is writing to Greeks, not Jews. When a Corinthian entered a pagan temple to worship an idol, he would wrap his toga over his head. In Corinthian culture, a Christian who prayed with his head covered was associating with idol worship and was sending a wrong message.

“*But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.*”

In Corinth, Christian men prayed uncovered, while believing women wore a light headscarf. At the time, all Oriental women wore their hair long and under a veil.

This wasn’t the heavy burka worn by Muslim women today. The veil was a light shawl draped over her head.

It was a symbol that the woman was under authority. She was living in submission to a husband or father.

The only women in Corinth who wore short hair or ventured into public without a veil were prostitutes...

Recall, when the woman came to Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair... Apparently, what appalled the Pharisee was when the woman removed her veil and let her hair down. This was a first-century taboo.

And evidently, this is what was happening in Corinth. The Christian sisters were enjoying their freedom in Christ - to the point, where they thought they could shed their veils. It was first-century women's liberation.

They weren't bra-burners, but veil-shedders.

Here's a side-bar... It's interesting that this female liberation began among the first Christians. **Nothing has done more for women's rights than Christianity!**

In the Greco-Roman world - and Muslim world - even in ancient Israel - women were considered a man's personal property. They were a notch above a slave.

It was Christianity that ennobled women and elevated their status. Paul declared in Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ..." This was a new and revolutionary idea that echoed throughout the ancient world.

But recall Paul's point in these chapters. As with meat sacrificed to idols and the privileges of an apostle, there are

times when a Christian curtails his or her freedom for the sake of the Gospel. This needs to be the attitude of the Christian women in Corinth.

The Corinthian ladies were free to shed their veil, but what message would that send to their neighbors.

God still has a chain of command in the church and home. He wants men to lovingly lead and women to willingly follow. Thus, for a female to throw off a symbol of submission it would be seen as bucking God.

In 21st century America, customs and symbols have changed, but biblical principles have not. **Cultural symbols vary, but creation principles remain the same.**

Today, if a woman wears a veil or scarf it has nothing to do with her submission to her husband. *It's either a fashion statement or she's having a bad hair day!*

Ladies, don't think you need to start a veil collection.

But there are symbols of submission in modern culture that a Christian lady should take seriously if she wants to convey an attitude of submission. For example, taking your husband's last name makes a profound statement. As does wearing his wedding ring and exchanging traditional vows... **A Christian lady is responsible for the message she sends to her culture.**

Verse 6, “**For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn.**” Paul is being sarcastic. He’s saying if a woman wants to go without a headscarf, then she should just go all out and shave her head - *it made the same statement to the pagan community in Corinth.*

He writes, “But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.”

When God created the man, He said, “It is not good for man to be alone.” God’s ultimate answer for this aloneness was to take **from** his side and make **for** him a woman. After Eve was created - literally, a part of the man was missing. **And it’s no shock to most women to learn that their husband is not all there.** Thus, for a man to be complete he needs a woman by his side.

The woman was created **from** and **for** the man. As man is God’s pride and joy - *His glory* - the woman is *the glory of man*. A husband takes pride in his wife.

Thus, a woman will find her greatest fulfillment helping the man she loves; while a man finds his highest fulfillment protecting and providing for his wife.

And as if this passage wasn’t tricky enough, check out verse 10, “For this reason, the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.” *What do angels have to do with gender roles?*

We’re not sure. But in Scripture, angels seem to have high regard for rank and order. Both angels and demons are organized in “**principalities and powers**.”

Remember, when Satan stepped over God’s chain of command, he got the boot... Angels are interested in how

God orders authority, and therefore pays close attention to the role play between male and female.

But just because men are head over women, it doesn't mean they should be haughty, *and not realize their dependence on women*. God made the sexes interdependent. Verse 11 "**Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.**" Both sexes need each other. Our roles should complement - not compete, or cancel out.

"**For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.**" The first woman came from the first man, but every man since has come from a woman. God made it so *women need men and men need women*. We're interdependent - different in roles, but equal in value.

Paul stays on subject in verse 13. "**Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering.**" Wow, here in Chapter 11, we're going from one hairy issue to another!

Apparently, prior to a headscarf - or any other cultural symbols - God ingrained into nature certain signs of submission... i.e. the length of a person's hair.

And it's amazing to me how the length of our hair can and has revealed the state of people's hearts.

Though there are diverse nuances in this, it is true that generally speaking in most cultures - both ancient and modern - women have worn their hair longer than men.

Remember, in the 1960s when young men bucked the establishment, what was the symbol of their rebellion? *Long hair...* And whenever women have rebelled against traditional roles what's one way they've expressed their defiance? *With short hair.* **The length of your hair can reveal the lean of your heart.**

Now, I don't want to go too far down the rabbit hole here. I realize, there're a lot of men who grow their hair long just because they like it long. And women cut their hair short because it's easier or cooler... It's also true that the terms "long" and "short" are relative. *What's long?* If you're bald, everybody's got long hair! I've always considered long hair as hair longer than my wife's - *whatever length hers happened to be at the time.*

And there's another biblical principle that stands out. 1 Samuel 16:7, "**Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.**" Realize, when God looks at us, the first thing he sees is our heart, not hair.

But can the length of your hair say something about your heart? Paul says, "**Yes.**" Nature itself dictates that generally women have longer hair than men. And when either sex defies nature, it can be a sign of rebellion.

I love how Paul finishes up his thoughts on gender.

Verse 16, "**But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.**"

Paul isn't going to argue over gender issues. *There's nothing to argue.* God created us and assigned us certain roles. It's not Paul's opinion or anybody's opinion. It's God's Word. You either believe it or not.

Verse 17, “Now in giving these instructions, I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse.” Paul is dealing with problems in the public assembly of the church in Corinth... In essence, he says, “It'd be better if you guys closed the doors. Your meetings on Sunday do more harm than good.”

“For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part, I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.” Divisions are never good, but necessary.

Be suspicious of people who want perfect unity in the church and damp down dissent. Where there's perfect unity, somebody isn't thinking or is being suppressed.

God created the church to be self-correcting.

The movements of the Holy Spirit, the living power of God's Word, the fresh conscience of every new believer - are the tools God uses to keep the church on track and make course corrections when necessary.

There have to be disagreements for corrections to occur. “*Factions among you*” are not always bad.

Verse 20, “Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one

takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.” The believers in Corinth were getting drunk at the communion table.

Realize, in the early church, believers gathered on the first day of the week for a church-wide pot-luck.

They called it the **agape-feast** or **love-feast**. It was a meal followed by Communion. But the Corinthians behavior contradicted the name of the meal. There was nothing loving about their gatherings. They fought for first dibs on the food. They drank too much wine. It was a free-for-all. There was *no love* at the *love feast*.

Their practice of the Lord’s Supper left out the Lord.

Paul writes, “**What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.**”

The Corinthians can pig out and get drunk at home.

They didn’t need to bring such behavior to church and make a mockery of worship, and fellowship.

The early church was highly populated by the poor and slaves. For many of its members, this was the only decent meal of the week. This love feast was a sham!

Verse 23 is what every pastor should be able to say when he stands to preach! “**For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you...**” What we give to our congregation should be what we get from God...

And Paul recounts Jesus’ words at His last supper. “**That the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took**

bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner, He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." Jesus took the Passover Seder, a 1500-year-old tradition, and gave it new meaning. From then on the bread would represent **His body**, and the cup of wine would remind us of **His blood**.

The **bread** or matzoh served at the Passover Seder symbolized **faith**. The cakes were made in haste, baked without yeast in anticipation of the next day's deliverance. Now they speak to us of our faith in Jesus.

The **wine** symbolized **sacrifice**. It was a reminder of the blood smeared on the doorposts of every Hebrew house. Because of that blood, God's judgment passed over, just as it passes over us, due to Christ's blood.

Over the centuries, different views have developed to explain the significance of communion. Roman Catholics consider what happens nothing less than **magical**. The bread and wine turn into the literal body and blood of Christ... Baptists view it as a **memorial**. It's just a reminder of the historical event of Calvary.

But I believe the last few verses of Chapter 10 teach something more - that communion is **mystical**. It's an opportunity to truly experience Jesus spiritually.

Recall earlier, Paul said that by going to the altar of an idol, you create an entry point for the spirit behind that idol. Well, likewise to eat and drink at the Lord's table you create an

entry way for the Spirit of Christ to work in your spirit. You can expect a real communion.

Verse 26, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup...” Notice, he doesn’t tell us “how often,” just “as often.” That leaves the frequency of communion up to each church and individual believer.

But as often as you do it, “you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” We declare His sacrifice for us.

“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” This was the verse that struck horror in me as a child. The way our former church interpreted verse 27 it robbed me of the joy of communion. I was afraid.

The idea was that unless you made yourself “worthy” and lived as a good Christian - or at least put yourself through a rigorous self-examination and confessed all your sin - you shouldn’t participate. Communion could be hazardous to your health, even threaten your life...

“For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself...” We were fearful of God’s judgment... but in reality, we should’ve been fearful of bad grammar - that was our real problem...

We mistook an adverb for an adjective.

The OKJ uses the word “unworthily” as an adverb describing the act of eating - not as an adjective relating to

the eater. The NKJ offers a better translation, "in an unworthy manner." No one can make themselves worthy of communion. The point of the Gospel is that we're unworthy and can't do it ourselves. If we could be worthy, Christ would've never had to die!

Paul is reiterating what he's already said. Don't pig out and get drunk, the Corinthians should approach the Lord's Table with a humble and grateful heart. No one is **worthy**, but we all can come in **a worthy manner.**

Notice the last line in verse 29, "not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep." Or literally, are dead.

I always interpreted this as part of the scare tactic. If you didn't clean yourself up before taking communion; God could make you sick or even strike you dead.

But notice the phrase, "*not discerning the Lord's body.*" Isaiah 53:5 tells us, "by His stripes we are healed." Jesus paid for our healing in His body.

Thus, if you just blow through communion without recognizing what it means, you'll miss out on a healing.

That's why church members were weak and sick.

Paul wraps up his thoughts in Verse 31, "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." God is a father who loves His kids enough to correct them...

“Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.”