

THE FOURFOLD LOOK

1 Cor 11:23-34

- 23** For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;
- 24** 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."
- 25** 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."
- 26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.
- 27** 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.
- 28** But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
- 29** For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.
- 30** For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.
- 31** For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.
- 32** But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.
- 33** Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.
- 34** 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.

A minister asked a group of young children what they thought of this ordinance, and here are some responses: A 6-year old said, "Communion is part of God and God's life." A 10-year old answered, "It reminds me of Jesus and that He died for us." A 5-year old responded, "It makes me happy to remember." And a 12-year old stated, "It's the closest we can get to Jesus."

When we come to the Lord's table, we need to take a fourfold look.

1. WE LOOK BACK - "you proclaim the Lord's death" (1 COR 11:26)

First, we look back to the cross. We are reminded of our Lord's sacrifice; how He gave himself unselfishly and completely, for the atonement of our sins. The marvelous thing about this is that He did this "while we were still sinners" (Romans 5:8). It has been said, "It is easy to love the lovable, but so hard to love the unlovely." Our Lord did what he did for all mankind without exception.

We need to be grateful for this meal. I saw an apron in a gift catalogue that says: "Kiss the Cook". Those who prepare meals appreciate being told that people enjoyed their meal. Jesus has prepared a meal for us that cost Him His life. We should appreciate the sacrifice of our Savior; otherwise we miss the whole point of this meal!

2. WE LOOK WITHIN - “But let a man examine himself.” (1 COR 11:28)

The second look is to the present or within — here and now. Before we sit down to a meal, we need clean hands. You don’t work in the garden or garage and then come inside, sit down, and eat dinner. You wash up first. This is why the Bible tells us to examine our lives before receiving Communion. We may see something that needs to be confessed and cleaned up.

We look at ourselves: what do we see? What are we doing with our lives? How are we living? Are we striving for holiness? Do we put Jesus first in our lives – are we totally committed to Him. Let us truly examine ourselves, look deep into our hearts (1 Corinthians 11:28, 29). God wants us to acknowledge our sins and humbly ask for forgiveness.

When we come to Jesus with remorse and repentance, we find forgiveness, restoration, and an invitation to His table. Some people get so burdened by their sins, that instead of asking forgiveness, they figure they’re too unworthy to participate, and they pass the tray without partaking. None of us are worthy, but if we’ve trusted Christ, we are eligible. He invites and authorizes us to come to the table.

Self-evaluation was what the apostle Paul called for in 1 Corinthians 11. Believers in Christ need to judge themselves, he said, to avoid being judged by the Lord as unfit for His service. In the Corinthian church, the “appearance problem” was especially serious. Those Christians “looked” awful. They were actually getting drunk and quarreling among themselves while going through the motions of celebrating the Lord’s Supper. So Paul said, in effect, “Look at yourselves. What a mess! If you don’t get your lives straightened out, the Lord will have to do it for you.” Then the apostle added the sobering fact that God had already begun to cleanse the church by sending some of them to an early grave. This is a hard truth, but one the church still needs to hear today.

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3. WE LOOK AROUND - “For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.” (1 COR 10:17)

The third look is to the brothers and sisters around us – we give thanks to God for our Christian family. God has placed us together in the family of God, the body of Christ. We need one another.

Harmony at the meal table is important. I heard about a family who got together for a meal, and before long the table conversation got controversial. They started talking about current events, but the discussion slipped into political differences. Not everyone shared the same viewpoint, and the enjoyment of the meal got ruined as they argued. We can’t expect everyone in our congregation to agree on every issue, but we are expected to get along. In vs 17 Paul makes a point of saying that “we are one body” and we “partake of the one loaf.” Conflict, tension, disharmony, can all ruin a perfectly good meal. One thing we don’t bring to the table is divisiveness.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: 10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! 11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Proverbs 27:17:

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

4. WE LOOK AHEAD - “till He comes” (1 COR 11:26)

The fourth look is to the future. Are we looking forward to the time when He will come again and we will have Communion with our Lord in His kingdom? (Matthew 26:29; 1 Corinthians 11:26). Are we looking forward to His coming with joy or with fear?

ILLUSTRATION

Someone once asked Dwight L. Moody, "If you knew the Lord would return tonight, how would you spend the rest of the day?" Mr. Moody replied without hesitation, "I wouldn't do anything different than I do every day." (As quoted by Chlo Lillie in AT HIS TABLE – Standard Publishing Company)

How wonderful if we all could say that! Then we could, with confidence, pray, "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).