

Self examination

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[0 : 00] Will you turn with me now to the chapter that we read, 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and I would like to look for a few moments at verse number 28, where it says, But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. And the word that is of particular interest to us there is this word examine, particularly on the eve of our communion Sabbath.

It is as well for us to know and to examine the word examine. This word examine is used in the Bible to describe the process of refining by fire that takes place when gold and silver are refined and the dross is cast away.

And it is also used in Zechariah, where it is used in the connection of purifying the church. Purifying the church as gold and silver are tried and purified.

Where it says, I will bring them through the fire and will refine them as silver is refined and will fry them as gold is tried.

And it is also used meaning the same thing at the beginning of this letter itself, when Paul is showing how man's work, that is what man does, will be tried and will be tested.

[1 : 19] When man will be afflicted with the fire of affliction and also the fire of God's wrath. The fire of affliction, the fire of God's wrath.

Where it says, every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire. And the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

And it is also used in the same sense by the Apostle Peter in one of his letters, when he wishes that the faith of believer, when tried or tested again by fire, by the fire of trouble, by the fire of affliction, that that faith, he wishes that it be found more lasting than the gold that perishes.

But it's also very interesting that it is used in the Gospel according to St. Luke, when the man comes and gives an excuse for not being able to attend the feast, and he says that he has bought a yoke of oxen, and he goes to prove them.

It's exactly the same word that is used and is translated there. So we see that in all the texts that we have quoted, and throughout the Bible, the meaning of the word is the same.

[2 : 36] It means a thorough trial. We have a thorough trial of the gold and silver by fire, to show the genuineness of the gold and the silver.

And we have a thorough trial of the oxen, to show their strength and their usefulness. So we see that the word means more than just merely examining, or merely questioning.

It means to test and most thoroughly. And from our reading we see that Paul was very concerned about the behaviour of the Corinthians, particularly in the way that they came to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

There was a sinful abuse creeping in to the way that they celebrated the Lord's Supper. Worried that many ate and drank to excess.

That they were guilty of gluttony, they were guilty of drunkenness. Whereas others were hungry because they had nothing to eat. So that there was a two-fold abuse.

[3 : 44] There was a contempt for the poor. They were sort of keeping the letter of the law by coming to the Lord's table.

But they weren't fulfilling the spirit of the law. That they couldn't care less about the poor people who were coming there as well. And also there was a lack of respect for God's own ordinance.

There was a light and flippant attitude to this most solemn ordinance laid down by God himself. And Paul rebukes these people and he rebukes them very, very sharply.

And to add to the scandalous behaviour of these people and to avoid what was coming, to avert the judgment that was bound to come upon them, he speaks very, very severely to them.

And Paul tells them that if they persist in this type of behaviour, they will certainly be punished. As some of them already have. Because he says some of them sleep.

[4 : 50] That is some of them already have died. Some of them have been removed by the Lord because of this. And in order to get them to have a close look at themselves and to re-establish the Lord's Supper in its proper place in their lives, He says to them, let a man examine himself.

Let a man examine himself. Now when looking at these words, we want to look at three things tonight. Let us notice that preparation is necessary for the right of servants of the Lord's Supper. That's the first thing. Then the second thing we see is that the preparation and examination must be a personal, individual exercise. That it must be something that a patient does for himself.

And then finally let us note some of the things in regard to which each man must examine himself. So first of all we see that there is a preparation required before we are able to celebrate the Lord's Supper in a proper way.

We know that there is no engagement that man keeps. But he makes preparation for it. If we have an appointment with somebody of any importance at all, we make sure that we are prepared to meet with them.

[6 : 15] And is it then not highly necessary to make a preparation to meet the Lord of the feast, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, here tomorrow?

God has promised to be especially present with his own people at times such as this. In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and I will bless thee.

God himself says that. And because of the holiness of God, the Old Testament saints, when they were going to meet God, they always made preparation for it.

Remember when God spoke to Jacob and told him to go to Bethel where he would meet with him. Jacob said to his household and all that there were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you and be clean and change your garments and let us arise and go up to Bethel.

There was a spring cleaning of his house. There was a washing. There were new garments. There was a preparation to go and meet with God. And when God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, Moses was told, Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

[7 : 52] And when Joshua, you remember, met the captain of the Lord's host at Jericho, We read that he was also told, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

You see, it was the special presence of the Lord that made the ground holy. And it's the special presence of the Lord here tomorrow that will make this sacrament holy.

David sings in Psalm 26, Mine hands in innocence, O Lord, I'll wash and purify. So to thine holy altar go and compass it will I.

You see, David was aware of the holiness of God. He would wash his hands, he'd purify himself before he would go to the altar. And the same idea is taught us in the New Testament when the Lord Jesus Christ himself tells us in the Sermon on the Mount, If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and they rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way.

First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. So you see, it is very very clear that if we are going to hold this sacrament properly, If we are going to recognize and give the proper place to this sacrament, In our religious calendar, in our spiritual lives, in the life of this church, Then there is a preparation to be made before we come into the Lord's presence.

[9 : 40] Now to carry it down into a practical sort of outworking, Nobody should be watching television late tonight. Because in spite of yourself, the things that come in from the television watching it, They will clutter up your mind.

Do as David did. Wash and purify yourself. Purify your mind. Do not quarrel at home. Let all your arguments, all your worries, let them go. Have peace.

Breathe and have a peace, a time of peace. Because tomorrow, you will be coming into the presence of God himself.

The second thing we notice is that this preparation is a personal, individual exercise. Let a man examine himself.

Himself. Now we are often in danger of leaving this to others. The judgment of others may be honour favourable or unfavourable.

[10 : 45] And others are often very very quick to judge us. If we get a favourable judgment from somebody, Then we are apt to become complacent.

We are apt to become almost high, lifted upon high in our own estimation. If somebody else judges us and assures us and compliments us that everything is alright.

We are apt to have a higher idea of ourselves than we ought to have. If somebody else makes an unfavourable diagnosis of our condition, Then we are apt to feel despairing.

We are apt to feel that things are not right between us and God. We are apt to even stay away from the Lord's table.

In either case, it is very dangerous to rest in man's opinion of us. For a fellow creature cannot judge your heart.

[11 : 55] You can bluff them. He doesn't know you. He can flatter you. There are a whole lot of things that can be done to give you the wrong impression.

And a fellow creature, no matter how honest he is, He can only judge your outward life. He cannot judge your heart. As in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? You see, we are unable to know anybody else's heart. We only see the reflection of their outward appearance.

We don't know their inmost thoughts. We don't know the communion they have with God during a quiet time. We don't know anything about them. So that when we find ourselves in a turmoil, when we look at ourselves and we find that it is impossible to decide by our own judgment, our own state. When we are so confused and so sort of overcome by an examination of our own hearts. Let us join with David in his prayer where he says in Psalm 139 that he sang, Search me, O God, and know my heart.

[13 : 26] Try me, my thoughts unfold. And see if any wicked way there be at all in me. And in an everlasting way to me a leader be.

And also, he sings Psalm 119, Taking his word as a lamp to her feet and a light to her path. We take our hearts to the Bible.

We take our hearts in prayer to God. We examine ourselves. The touchstone is the Bible. We know ourselves. The Bible tells us we start off on good ground.

The Bible tells us your heart is desperately wicked. Your heart is deceitful. And then you pray to God and he brings in this light. His word as a lamp to her feet and a light in her path.

The Bible tells us our heart is not of others. It's not of others we have to give judgment, but of ourselves. It's a personal examination.

[14 : 30] By night my song I call to mind, the Psalmist says, and commune with my heart. My spirit did carefully inquire how I might ease my smart.

You see the search, the proving. The examination is done personally. You're alone with God. And then thirdly we see that the Lord's Supper calls for a response in the believer's life.

And it's in the field of this response that our examination takes place. In the Bible the Lord's Supper is shown forth under four different aspects.

That is, it's described in four different ways. And each way calls for a reaction on our part. A reaction on the believer's part.

First of all it commemorates the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a memorial to the death of Christ. Now as his death was for his people, to pay for the sins of his people, to commemorate his death by coming to the Lord's table is to give public thanks for his death, for what he has done for his people.

[15 : 58] Thanks for the deliverance from sin. Thanks from the dominion. Thanks for the condemnation, for the deliverance of the condemnation of sin. Thankfulness for Christ's death which has done all that for us.

And to do this sincerely, to come with this spirit of gratitude and thankfulness, we must have a personal sense, a personal knowledge of what sin is.

The person who doesn't realize what he has been saved from, doesn't give Christ his rightful place, doesn't really understand what it means to eat the broken bread and to drink the wine.

If you can see and understand and look and examine and see what you have been delivered from, if you can hear the cry of the lost condemned to a lost eternity in your ears, and know that you have been delivered from that by the Lord Jesus Christ, then you will appreciate and you will come with a spirit of thankfulness to the Lord's table, to remember his death.

Also coming to the Lord's table we must have a desire and earnest longing to be rid of sin. We must have a motivating, driving force within us.

[17 : 19] Forcing us to make a sincere effort to forsake sin, to forsake all appearance of sin. The person who comes to the Lord's table knowing that he has a secret sin, knowing that he has still got a secret private sin that he's indulging in, he cannot expect to receive a blessing until he's got rid of that sin, until he's burning with a great desire to do what is right, to clean his life, to purify his life, to make his life, and that is something in Christ's name.

And then we see that we must have a belief within us that it is the death of Christ that is available to deliver us from sin.

We must have a trust that this is so. We can't come to the Lord's table and appreciate it properly and understand it properly if we think that Christ died for sinners but there are also other ways to get to heaven.

We must see Christ as the one alone Saviour. We must see that this is the sacrifice. This is the sacrifice to end all sacrifice. We must see that we ourselves can do nothing whatsoever.

We must see that if Jesus doesn't save us nobody else will that we are lost. We must come knowing that this is what we pin our hopes on, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[18 : 51] And as we think of that we come with a gratitude and love for so great a blessing. And then secondly in the Bible it is presented as a seal to the covenant of grace.

And the Lord's Supper is presented as a seal to the covenant of grace. Where God says in John 3, 16 God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

At Calvary we have proof of that. If we need proof there we have it at Calvary. And Christ wants us to remember that. Christ says remember my death. Remember that my Father gave me his beloved Son so that whosoever believeth in him will not perish but will have everlasting life.

Christ wants us to remember that. That this is a seal on the covenant of grace. Proof of God's loving concern for us. And as we come to the table tomorrow we show our acceptance of God's plan of salvation.

And we reach out to accept and receive all the benefits purchased for us by the Lord Jesus Christ. But we cannot come with just a hazy knowledge of what we are doing.

[20 : 10] We must examine ourselves as to the knowledge we have of this plan of salvation. And we must see and examine how do we accept it personally. Do we come knowing that Christ died for sinners?

Just as a general rule. Or can we see that it is our sins that pin Christ to that tree? Do we see our involvement in it? Do we see and pick up our sins that have crucified Christ?

And do we see it as a personal thing? That Christ died for sinners? And are we able to have the faith and the trust in the word of God?

So that through the cross all the promises and all its obligations become ours. That God promises for Christ's sake to be our God and we accept him as such.

But because we accept him as our God we promise to be his people. We promise to serve Christ. And this service requires a whole lot of things.

[21 : 15] It needs courage. It needs humility. It needs faith. It needs love. Do you see the examination is a tremendous examination. When we examine our faith, our trust.

Do we really believe that the death of a Jew on the cross of Calvary is going to save me? Do we believe it with our hearts? Take that away from us and are we dead? That's what the believer feels. He's got nothing else if he hasn't got that. But because he comes there, he takes obligations on him. He takes the responsibility. God is my God.

I am his. And there's a two way obligation there. But we serve him. We do what is necessary. We do not lie down like cowards and give in to what is evil.

We root out everything that is rotten in us. And we see it and we isolate it. We examine it and we sling it out. And we do it with God's strength. None of this nonsense saying I am weak.

[22 : 18] This has been born in me. This is an illness. This is whatever it is. Absolute nonsense. Through the Lord Jesus Christ we are more than conquerors. And we stand up like men and women.

And we say we belong to God. He is our God. He will help us. We will be his people. And we do not mess about tinkering with the weaknesses of the world. Making excuses for ourselves.

Witnessing in one hand and trailing our feet in the dust of the world. We cannot do that. We come to the Lord's table giving the service that faith, humility, and love and gratitude require.

How can you pretend to be grateful to the Lord when you are still indulging in the very sins that nail them to the cross? And then we find that the Lord's Supper is presented as an act of communion with Christ himself.

The cup is the communion of his shed blood. Bread is the communion of his broken body. That is, in receiving the bread and the wine as memorials of Christ, we receive and take the good things, the blessings, that Christ has obtained for us.

[23 : 38] That his broken body has obtained for us. That his shed blood has obtained for us. We receive them and we lay hold on him as ours.

Christ is mine. He died for me. The broken bread tells me of the broken body. The wine tells me of his shed blood.

Christ is mine. Christ is mine. And in a strange way, I and he are united as one. The believer and Christ become one.

He was our substitute. We were due the death penalty. He died in our stead. He died, me no die.

He is our savior. He gives himself to us. So you see, tomorrow, it is an act of intimate communion.

[24 : 47] So that in our examination of ourselves, we must seek out an intelligent understanding of how the bread and the wine become symbols of Christ's broken body, of Christ's shed blood.

There is nothing magical or superstitious about it. If you do not come in the right way, it does you no good whatsoever.

It does not help you in any way whatsoever. If you do not come in the right way. But if you come accepting through faith that this is a divinely appointed channel of blessing.

If you come knowing and accepting within yourself that this is not a man-made channel, not a man-made ordinance, but that this is God's own plan for his people.

That this is something that Christ himself set up. If you come expecting to receive the blessing, trusting that you will receive because it's his ordinance and you're doing what he's told you.

[26 : 18] Then my friend, you will receive blessing. Maybe not at the table, maybe later on. But you most certainly will receive the blessing.

We must look for and pray for ourselves and for other communicant members that they will have a genuine desire to partake of the greatest grace of God.

This great spiritual blessing. That each one of the believers who come to the Lord's table tomorrow will hunger and thirst after a closer communion with Christ.

Pray that each one of us will be able in our self-examination to cast away altogether from us the dross of lukewarmness.

That we will be able in our self-examination to cast away from us the Lord's table. That we will be filled with a tearful anguish over our own unworthiness, over our own hard and feeling heart.

[27 : 24] Praying that each and every one of us at some moment tomorrow at the table will feel the presence of the Lord.

That we will be filled with the eeriness of God's own presence with us. We will be filled with the Lord, where we will be forced to say, It is the Lord.

Something that is beyond us, but something that no man can take from you. A moment of God's own presence at his table.

And as we go to the table, and as we sit at the table, we must see the need we have to reach out and take the blessing.

Can there be more beautiful words than what Jesus said? Take. Eat. The necessity of appropriation. We have to take it.

[28 : 28] He tells us to take it. There's a necessity laid upon us at the table. This is feeding on him.

With all the time our hearts full of love and gratitude. Love to him who made all this possible.

Amazing love, how can it be that thou O Lord shouldst die for me?

And finally it's an act of communion with fellow Christians. All who waited at the Jewish altars, all who came into the temple, they all professed to be Jews.

And they regarded other Jews as their brethren. And all who frequented the temples of idols were united as joint worshippers of demons. Well all who come to the Lord's table tomorrow are one united company of worshippers.

We worship the same Saviour. We unite the tomb as the living head. And therefore we are united to others as members of the same body.

[29 : 43] Now this is something I think that we all fall down on. We must recognize all other Christians as members of the same body.

We must recognize all Christians as our brothers and sisters in Christ. We publicly proclaim this by coming to the table.

As you look presentee tis this who is a Jerusalem and a mother would be Kafanian, in that – this is not worth reading. For people who exist on physically and that I care, that might be some reasons for your father's sake.

You may not find this by coming to the table as with your son of the lib. It excludes all feelings or all thoughts that are inconsistent with this – envy, jealousy, pride and males. have no place at the Lord's table. A spirit of criticism about somebody's dress, about somebody's behavior, about something or other, about somebody else. It has no place at the Lord's table.

We have no right whatsoever to come with a horse who will have any sort of recrimination against others. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ. They are not at your table. They are not at my table. They are at the table of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must come with the very opposite of these feelings. In our examination of ourselves we must be ruthless and drive out all of those thoughts, all of those feelings that are alien to the true believer. We must come with love for each other. We must come with sympathy. We must come with consideration. We must come with an understanding.

[31 : 24] We must come with an understanding that some Christians are young in the faith. Others are old in the faith. But we are all of the same family. We are all sinners saved by grace.

Yes, the best of us, the to the worst of us, and all in between. We are the same family, sinners saved by grace.

Well, these thoughts on the preparation, these thoughts on the personal aspect of it, and the field of our examination are consistent one with the other. They are not isolated thoughts at all.

And these thoughts are not to be reserved for communion Sabbaths only, but should be ongoing in our hearts and lives.

Our daily walk as believers, our daily walk as Christians, should always be giving thanks to our Savior. But having examined ourselves, having looked at ourselves, having cleansed our hearts, having washed our hands, having purified ourselves, having taken off our shoes because we are on holy ground, or whatever way you put it, having prepared ourselves to come to the Lord's table, there is a duty laid upon us. There is a duty laid upon us. Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. My friend, don't take the easy way out and say, I can't come to the Lord's table. That's the coward's way out. Just because you can't stand an examination, when are you going to stand an examination? Are you going to wait till you stand before the judgment seat of God, before you honestly examine yourself? From the youngest to the oldest. Examine yourselves in the light of the gospel, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. Well, may we all examine ourselves.

[33 : 35] May we come tomorrow, looking for a blessing, and may each one of us meet with the Lord of the peace. Christ is at his table here tomorrow. May we become stronger Christians. May we be hard in ourselves, and soft with others. May we have eyes of compassion to help all those around us. May we live our lives as emblems, as tokens of gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for us.

God bless us. He asks us, do you love me? Do you love me enough to come to my table? Do this in remembrance of me. Amen. Let us pray.

O Lord of heaven and earth, it is with trepidation that we come before thee, as we delve into the examination that is required, as we shudder at the thought of thy holiness, as we fear to bring our own presence into thy holy presence.

Lord of heaven and earth, we ask of thee that thou would show us the Lord Jesus Christ, who makes up our deficiencies, who reaches out with hands of love that bear the scars of his love. Lord of heaven and earth, as we shall be. As he says to his people, fear not, little flock. Help each one of us to be strong in the Lord. Help us to clean ourselves our prayers of all that may be displeasing to thee. And bring us, we ask of thee, to thy table tomorrow, rejoicing in our risen Savior, rejoicing in our Savior who loved us enough to die for us. And if we cannot come rejoicing, bring us, weeping for our crucified Savior, again a Savior who died for us. Bless each one of us.

Bless those in turmoil of mind. Bring them to our knowledge, our peace that comes from thine own presence. And bless each one of us. And take the glory to thyself in Christ. Amen.