

Let a man examine himself

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[0 : 00] For his blessing and his help on our service tonight, can we turn together to words which we find in 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

And we're looking tonight together at verse 28. 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and at verse 28.

But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.

Now, as we intimated last Sabbath day, we hope to join together in the remembrance of the Lord's death.

Around the Lord's table in a couple of weeks in the congregation here.

[1 : 14] And I think that it would be very fitting that these Sabbath evenings tonight and next Sabbath evening should be taken up with an examination, a study of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in which we hope to engage in so short a time.

And as I was considering how to approach these studies, I thought that maybe it would be best to begin with this question.

How are they who receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to prepare themselves before they come to it?

How are we to prepare ourselves for coming to celebrate the Lord's Supper? Well, the Bible clearly teaches us in this verse that we have as our text tonight, that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is to be approached with self-examination.

And I think tonight we are going to mention ten points. Now, that sounds a terrible amount of points to have to take with you in a sermon.

[2 : 53] But I think it will be helpful for us if we consider these ten points in which those who intend to come to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper should over the next days in a very particular way, and for the rest of our lives in a general way, be examining ourselves.

And then, after we have looked at these ten points, briefly, we are going to mention two accompaniments that should be with these means of self-examination.

So we have ten thoughts about self-examination, and two thoughts about what should accompany our self-examination as we prepare for the remembrance of the Lord's death among us as a congregation.

And first of all, I would like to mention this as perhaps the primary source of self-examination.

We are to examine ourselves as to our being in Christ. You know, my friend, that's the most important question that you could spend time meditating on in this world.

[4 : 25] And I hope that all of us are spending time giving thought to this great question, Am I his or am I not?

There are some people, you know, and they live their lives on a very superficial level. And I'm afraid, you know, that our generation, our day, is a very superficial generation.

People don't want to think about these solemn things. And they say if they hear a sermon about self-examination and these very important issues, they say, surely we're not going to be so solemn.

Surely we're not going to spend time thinking of these things. But do you know, my friend, this question is so important that your whole eternity rests on this, the answer to this one, Am I his or am I not?

And oh, my friend, let me just say to you in the passing, if you don't spend time thinking of this question, I'm going to tell you what the Bible says about the likes of you.

[5 : 46] The Bible says the fool has said in his heart that there is no God. And if you're not concerned about whether you're in Christ or out of Christ, then, my friend, it's true to say of you, really, you're acting the fool, you're playing the fool, and you're spending your life on the superficialities of this world, and you're not giving time to the great, great question, Am I in Christ or am I not?

Now, why should you ask this great question as you examine yourselves for going to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper?

Why should you ask, am I in Christ or am I not? Well, it's quite simple. There are people in this world who are invited to come to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

And there are people in this world who would do themselves a service, do the Church of Christ a service, and especially do a service to their own souls if they stayed away from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Because, you know, friend, there is no place at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for those who are not Christ, who know not the Lord, who care not that the Lord was crucified.

[7 : 23] Friend, it would be better that you stayed away if you're a stranger to the grace of God. And if you haven't entered into union with Christ, then it's better for you that you should never go to the Lord's table than that you should go as a man who is Christless.

And therefore, I put this point at the very head of my sermon tonight. I put it as the first and the great, great issue for every man in this church and every woman in this church.

Am I Christ's? Or am I not? That's what your eternity is hinging on. That's the great question that will make the difference between heaven and hell for you, my friend.

And therefore, would it not be wise for you at this time while you have an opportunity to spend time over this question, Am I in Christ?

You know, friends, time is short. Time is short. We've only got a few short years in this world. You ask the oldest woman or the oldest man in this congregation tonight how they felt their life.

[8 : 48] And I'll tell you what they'll say to you. Ask the septuagenarians and the octuagenarians. Ask them this question, What's your life been like?

And they'll tell you that life is a vapor that appears for a little while. And then it vanishes away. They'll tell you the same thing, every one of them.

Time is so short. And you know, friend, you've only got a short time, and so have I, to consider this great issue.

Am I in Christ? Or am I not? It's an issue, you know, on which we could spend the whole of this sermon. I'm sure we could make ten sermons on self-examination.

Self-examination. But truly, tonight, this is the question of questions. Do I know Christ? Is he mine? Have I received him into my heart?

[9 : 46] Into my life? Do I know him as my own saviour and my own lord? How would you answer that question tonight if you're starting a course of self-examination?

Sinner, let me ask you, because we're both sinners. How would you answer this great question? Do I know Christ? Or do I not know him at all?

Am I a stranger to his grace? Am I a stranger to God? You know, there was a famous minister in Scotland a man from, in the city of Dundee, Robert Murray McChain, and he made a beautiful hymn.

And he describes his life before he came to know the Lord, before he found Christ. This is what he says. I once was a stranger to grace and to God.

I knew not my danger. I saw not my load. When friends spoke and wrapped you of Christ on the tree, Jehovah Sidkenu, was nothing to me.

[10 : 56] Is it true tonight, my friend, that Christ is really nothing to you? When you come to the touchstone of self-examination, is it true that you have no Christ?

You have no saviour. You have no saviour from sin. Oh, friend, make this an issue. Make it the burning issue of your life.

Do I know him? Do I, have I experienced him? But then secondly, I think, in preparing for coming to the Lord's table, God's own children, should examine themselves, secondly, about their sins, and about their shortcomings.

Now, if you're a Christian, and if I'm a Christian, there's one thing in the world that makes us grieve, isn't there? And it's this, that we have sinned against God.

That we've sinned against God. And not only that we have sinned against God, but that we're continuing, and continually sinning against God.

[12 : 13] It's not something that was true of our past. It's true of our present. And it'll be true of our future. As long as we are in this world, we're the ears of sin.

And you know, one of the great problems of the 20th century is this, that we're living in a century when people really make light of sin.

But you know, child of God, you and I dare not go to the Lord's table making light of sin. The very fact that we're going to remember the death of Christ ought to make sin a very serious matter as we go to prepare ourselves for going there.

Because what put Jesus to the cross? I'll tell you the answer. The answer is this, my sins put him there, your sins put him there, so we dare not go with our light view of sin to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Because if we do, you know, if we can shake off our sin like water of a duck's back, then let me tell you, I'm afraid for you, that really, you don't have any real interest in the Christ of the Gospel.

[13 : 39] Because where a person is really honest with God and examining himself to go to the Lord's table, he's got one great vision, my sin, my sin.

Remember this, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper isn't for sinless people. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is for sinners who have come to confess and to forsake their sin as they come to a living Savior.

And I believe with all my heart that an element of preparing for the Lord's Supper is the element of confession of sin as you contemplate your privilege of coming to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Have you examined them yourself then and are you examining yourself after your sins and your shortcomings? Just think, since last you sat at the Lord's table, how many sins you've committed against God.

Have you gone with them to the throne of grace? Have you gone with them to Christ, my friend? Do you go to him and do you ask him for his forgiveness?

[15 : 06] Because that's what self-examination really ought, that's where it really ought to bring you. It should bring you to the cross where you're asking God in Christ to freely pardon all the transgression you have done.

then thirdly, we're to examine ourselves as to the truth and measure of our knowledge.

Now it seems to me that in the world tonight there are two kinds of knowledge and if I can just sum them up I would sum them up like this.

there is in the world tonight a person who might have a great measure of head knowledge. There are people like that, you know. They've got a great measure of head knowledge and you can ask them anything in the Bible and they'll tell you all about it because they know their Bible inside out.

let me tell you something that was once said to me before I was converted to Christ. You know someone said to me you know your Bible but your life makes it perfectly obvious that you don't know the author.

[16 : 31] Is that the story of anyone's life in this place tonight? As you seek to examine yourself before God you know your Bible your place is never empty in the house of God and you know it inside out and you can argue the toss with people about the Bible but sadly you don't know the author of the Bible and that illustrates the two kinds of knowledge.

There's a head knowledge without a personal knowledge of Christ and there's another kind of knowledge which I would call tonight a heart knowledge that is conjoined with head knowledge in a personal experience of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Which of these knowledges do you have? Do you just have a bare head knowledge? Well you know it's not a bad thing to have a head knowledge I'm glad when I see people who know their Bibles don't think that I'm criticising that but I think it's better for you to have a head knowledge and a heart knowledge to know Christ in a personal way in his own gospel and in his own salvation examine yourself as to the truth of your knowledge and then the other side of this coin is this as you prepare to go to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper if you're spared in a couple of Sabbath days examine yourself as to the measure of your knowledge now what are you asking when you examine yourself as to the measure of your knowledge you're asking yourself am I growing in the knowledge of the

Lord do I know him better than I knew him when last I sat at the Lord's Supper or have I just frittered away another six months of my life not really getting to grips with the truth of God not getting to grips with God himself not really seeking him you know these are questions that we should be asking as we prepare to go to the Lord's table have I grown in my knowledge of God do I know I'm better than I knew him beforehand or am I still living in the shallows oh friends how many of us are content to live in the shallows of the knowledge of God let me tell you my friend that the picture that the Bible makes of the Christian life is an ocean in which there are waters to swim in get out there get out into the depths my friends and swim in the ocean of God's revelation so that you'll grow in the knowledge of God and you'll get a know better as you go on examine yourself as to the truth and the measure of your knowledge and then we should examine ourselves as to our faith as to our faith is our faith a growing faith is our faith a strengthening faith is our faith an increasing faith do you remember the great burden of the disciples of Jesus they came to Jesus one day and they said

Lord increase our faith is that a burden with you that your faith would increase and that it would grow well let me tell you this a living faith must be a growing faith must be a growing faith and how can I know that my faith has grown since I last remembered the Lord's death in the congregation well I can know it in this way do I trust my Saviour more today than I ever trusted him before do I have a deeper trust in the Lord as I follow on to know him do I trust him more and more do I or am I still failing to trust him and failing to put my trust in him as I go on faith is trust trust in

[21 : 13] Christ is your trust growing is it increasing is it getting more firm as you go on in the Christian life and then there's our fifth point of self examination and it says examine your repentance examine your repentance ask God questions about your relationship to your sin am I turning away from my sin with grief and hatred of my sin to Christ more than I ever did before you know that's a question that you should have as you approach a coming communion season do I have a more inveterate hatred of my sin than I ever had before do I really hate this great great problem in my life the problem of my sin or do

I love my sin is my sin a darling to me as I go on you know there are people in the world and they have darling sins oh be afraid every day that you live that any single sin can be a darling to you be afraid that sin can so creep into your life that you would in any way love it or bear a desire for it examine yourself on your repentance and examine also our love to God and the brethren that's another point that we should be examining ourselves on do I love God do I love my brethren in the gospel of Christ do you remember the great words of the apostle of love John remember what he said he said this we know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren we love the

Lord's people and I don't believe that you would ever love the Lord's people unless first you loved the Lord do you remember when God began to attract you by his gospel and when the gospel began to woo you to Christ you used to think if only I could get into the company of the Lord's people I love these people because they've got something that others don't have in the world and I'm attracted by them and I want to be one of them and I want to be in their company I love them do you love the Lord's people like that do you want to be with them are you interested in the things in which they're interested these are things that should be making you examine yourself because you wouldn't love the Lord's people if you didn't love the

Lord himself you had no interest in the Lord's people when you were on the mountains of forgetfulness you had no interest in the Lord's people and what they were doing when you were quite content to go on in your rebellion against Christ you had no interest in what they were doing but now things are different you know and you want more and more to be with them and that's somewhere that you should be examining yourself as you prepare to come to the Lord's table do I love them and examine your love to God and the brethren and also examine your charity to all men now what do I mean by this well I'm going to ask you a question tonight do you love your enemies do you love your enemies how can I know that I love my enemies you know

I think that where Jesus says love your enemies it's one of the greatest requirements of the Bible love your enemies one of the hardest things to do until the grace of God makes it easy for you but I'm going to tell you tonight I think how you can love your enemies you can love your enemies as you forgive wrongs that are done to you that's how you love your enemies as you learn to forgive wrongs that are done to you and the kind of people that should come to remember the Lord's death are people who have come to learn what it is to forgive from their hearts wrongs that are done to them that's what charity towards all men really means and that's what we're to do as we prepare to come to the sacrament of the

[26 : 47] Lord's Supper we're to examine our desires after Christ do I really want it do I really want to you know the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as I hope we'll see next Sabbath evening is a sacrament in which God's people feed on Christ it's a means of grace that's what it is it's a means of grace and as you prepare to go to this means of grace your greatest desire is that you would have communion with Christ himself in the supper you want to have communion with him you want to meet with him there you've got desires that the world don't know anything about desires to have fellowship with

Christ do you want that God sets great store by the desires of his people and I think I want to just stop for a moment and I want to speak to some folk here tonight who are seekers after Christ and I want to speak to you because I believe with all my heart that there are some of you in this gathering tonight and really although you've never come out publicly on the side of Christ although you've never even shown that you want to come to the prayer meeting with the people of God secretly in your life there are new desires new desires that nothing in the world will ever fulfill but a personal experience of a personal

Christ I know it I know there are people in this congregation and that's true you've got a desire secretly to be Christ and to know him and to get to know him more friend that's a desire that you should never quench in your life you know it's possible to quench these desires that's why the Bible says my spirit will not always strive with man that's why the Bible says grieve not the Holy Spirit of God that's why the Bible says quench not the Holy Ghost it's possible to be quenching the movement of the spirit in your life but my friend if you've got a desire however weak that desire is after Christ feed it go with the Lord's people where they go go to the companies of

God's children where they meet and ask questions from your friends who are Christians and ask them how did you get this for yourself who knows but this might be the time for you to get it oh you know I'm cherishing hopes that at this forthcoming communion season God's going to be here I believe he's going to be here in a wonderful way I do and I believe that in the passing there are some of you who have been wrapped up with a desire to get Christ for your soul and he's going to bring you into that most wonderful fellowship with himself you know the time isn't long till he's going to come into our midst in a wonderful way friends he's going to move he's going to come we don't know when who knows but tonight itself he could come and there are some of you here maybe you've been seeking him secretly

God hears the desires of your heart my friend you've never given expression to them you maybe never told anybody the way you really feel that God hears and if I'm not greatly mistaken it won't be long till he'll reveal himself to you and till he'll show himself to you in the most wonderful way oh what a glorious day it'll be when Jesus will reveal himself to you what a wonderful day do you long for it do you long for it are there times you know when you say to the Lord in the quietness of your heart Lord are you never going to come are you never going to come I think you will my friend I think you will and I believe that there are some here and some there that are going to be plucked like brands from the burning going to be touched by the spirit of the

[32 : 01] Lord going to be touched by the grace of Christ and no longer will you be able to hold back but you must come oh my friend feed that desire you're here today and you're saying all I've got is a weak desire I wish I I wish I could see I see it always it's so small but you know what the Lord says the Lord says that the kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed the smallest of all the peas and that's the way God's grace begins with lives and hearts it begins in a small way just in a desire but God feeds it and makes it to grow oh I'm longing to see it growing in your hearts and in your lives you young folk and grey friars you not so young folk and grey friars I'm longing to see this happening we've seen it before and something tells me we'll see it again yes examine your desires after Christ make this an opportunity oh make this forthcoming communion season an opportunity to examine whether or not you really desire him whether you want him to come you know there was a time in Israel in the days of

Jesus on earth when the great question that was on everyone's lips was this will he come to the feast will he come to the feast now Christian tonight is that your own desire as you prepare for a forthcoming communion season will he come to the feast the feast would be empty if David's place is empty at the feast yes oh make this an opportunity to sharpen and quicken your desires after Christ the ninth examination that you're to carry out on yourself is this examine your new obedience and finally tenthly examine the renewal of all these graces in your life are they fresh do you know a communion season and a first coming communion season is an opportunity to ask am I keeping fresh with God you know the way when you look in some shops in fish shops for example you see fish lying on the slab and they're old and they're stale and they're not they're not really they're not really attractive anymore well you know there are times

I think when our Christian lives can get just something like that they get stale we get stale but the communion season is an opportunity to examine ourselves as to whether we're keeping fresh with God and whether the graces of the Holy Spirit are in fresh exercise in our lives I promised you that there were ten points on which we could examine ourselves these are the ten but now there are two accompaniments and as you come up over the next two weeks towards the communion season there are two things that would be good to accompany that self examination now let me just say in the passing it's not just before the communion season you should be examining yourself sometimes you know when we have these six monthly communions in the free church people run away with the idea that the ministers want them to examine themselves every six months you dare not go a day or a week without something of this in your life you dare not but what are the two accompaniments well the first one is this serious meditation serious meditation what about giving ourselves as a congregation over to serious meditation how would you do that as a

Christian well I hope as a Christian you're a man or a woman who reads your Bible and goes to your Bible every day and I hope when you go to your Bible in this fast quick world that we live in you don't go to your Bible and just read a little passage and then close it and say that's my portion for today that's my quiet time over do you know something that you should be doing and I should be doing with the word of God we should always be going around chewing the cud on it chewing the cud you know there are times when you see the sheep and they sit down in the field and they're not eating at all but their mouths are chewing away chomping away at it they're chewing the cud well you know it would be a lovely thing if I and you as Christians did this more get a verse of scripture early in the morning and take it with you for the day and now and again as you're going through the mundane tasks of your day chew the cud on that text meditate on it may your meditations lead you to

Christ in the world that would be a blessed way to prepare for a coming communion that there would be more meditation in our lives you know I have the utmost sympathy with Christians who are living in an industrialized society living the fast life that our generation lives you know even in some ways the work of the ministry of the gospel in the 1990s is caught up with this fast life that we live and I'm afraid we're not giving ourselves enough to meditation to meditation meditation in the word of God that's where you should be and I should be more as we prepare our hearts as we seek to prepare our hearts for the coming communion meditation meditating in the word and I said there was another final accompaniment to the work of self examination and it's surely this as you go and as we come together to the communion in the next week or two may our lives be lives of servant prayer servant prayer you know you and

[39 : 22] I as we prepare to go to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper we're going really going to the highest privilege that Christians can have on earth where we sit and we eat the bread and the wine and we commune with Christ in his body and blood it's our highest privilege may we do it with servant prayer may we go to it in fervent prayer you know what the Bible says about fervent prayer the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much and oh my friends if there's anything that acts as a condemnation of the lifestyle of the 1990s even the lifestyle of the

Christian world of the 1990s surely it's this to a large extent it's a lifestyle devoid of fervent prayer is it any wonder you know that our services are so tearless is it any wonder you know that we have so little power in the pulpit and to such a great degree our lives have so little serious meditation and fervent prayer oh may God grant us that we'll prepare for the coming communion season in this way self examination meditation and fervent prayer let us pray our gracious

God we have been dealing with solemn things tonight but help us to realize that thou dost say let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup watch over us bless us keep us from all evil and all we ask is in Jesus name Amen Amen Amen