

This is Sunday, the 5th of August, 2018, and Grace and Truth Bible Church has met together to continue our study this morning in 1 Corinthians. We're picking up a new chapter, chapter, what is it, I don't know, pick one—no, chapter 12. We're beginning chapter 12. We've concluded chapter 11. Had my notes stuck in the wrong page there. I thought, that's an odd place to begin. But chapter 12, we'll take a quick run-up to it, reviewing the main argument, main line of argument that began back in chapter 8, because that helps us, as we know, to make context pertinent when we interpret and, of course, apply.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and then we'll begin.

Father, Your provision and Your grace in blessing us beyond what we could ask or think is always something that is impressed upon our minds as we come before Your throne. We thank You for the things that You do for us that we recognize, and probably the many more that You do that are invisible to us or that we don't properly appreciate, to bring us perfectly to that challenge, that opportunity, that area of service that You have designed us for, that You've equipped us to perform, and that prepares us for similar service and function in the ages that are to come.

We thank You most of all for the Lord Jesus Christ, who has opened the door to life and to Your presence, and we're so grateful that we in this age are in Him and share in the destiny that You assigned specifically to those who You have given to Him. And we pray that as we study this portion of Your Word this morning, that it will help us to recognize and to remember the potentials that we have in that status, that we can grow in grace and knowledge, that we'll be motivated and encouraged, strengthened and invigorated for these areas of accomplishment and of laying hold of Your righteousness by our faith. We pray that this passage this morning will be meaningful and pertinent to each one, that Your Holy Spirit will be our teacher, help us to understand it and to figure out what it means in terms of our day-to-day practice in the time that remains to us in this life.

We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

Well, as you will remember, there was an urban metroplex called Corinth that Paul visited, founded a church there, stayed there well over two years, and then left. But the Corinthians, in their milieu, or maybe their melee, their mix of cultural cross-currents there in this sea trading and transporting across the Isthmus situation, found themselves as much as we do in a whipsaw situation with the trends and the values of their culture, which were in contrast to the values that were new to them in Christ that Paul tried to teach them.

There is a new and better way. There is a new and living way. It is a life lived with eyes on eternity.

It is a life that is conditioned on and motivated by love, love for God and love for one another. This transcends and surpasses in every way the limited, short-sighted, and largely selfish mode of life that they were emerging from. Well, you can't necessarily do that in one quick break and become a starry-eyed warrior for Christ and leave behind all of that baggage.

It tends to have its hooks in us. It tends to pull us, and we're inevitably connected to the secularized and materialistic culture around us. In this particular section we've been looking at, beginning in chapter 8, what we have found is that, having addressed some other areas, Paul is now looking at the fellowship of believers.

In this case, it's in the context of the local church. For us, it is that and all of the other believers to whom we are connected. In the ancient day, without the internet, without Facebook and Twitter and Pinterest and TumblrUpon or whatever they all have, there's the ability to stay connected to people that are at a great distance.

In those days it really wasn't practical, so your believer fellowship was in the local church. So it's convenient to address our horizontal relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ in terms of the church. But don't limit it to that, because we meet twice a week. What do you do the other 98% of the time? Well, anytime you are conversing, anytime you are connecting, anytime you are communicating, anytime you are having fellowship with other believers, these things apply.

So it's convenient that it was all in a context of corporate worship, and that's really what he's talking about here. The big theme is twofold. First of all, it is different than the world.

Do you remember back in chapter 8 and moving all the way forward into chapter 10, he was talking about meals at the temple, the idol meals. Should you go up there and partake and participate? You've got to note, my daughter's first birthday has come, we're all going to celebrate up at the temple. Paul says you can't do that for a couple of reasons.

First of all, that temple is founded with its eyes looking toward false gods behind whom are demons. This is the fellowship of demons, and you cannot partake of the fellowship of Christ and the fellowship of demons at the same time. And we saw, when we looked at that, that we have got to make a choice, and not just one choice but many choices, about how we spend our time, how we look at what is pitched our direction in terms of social media, entertainment, television, radio, print, conversations.

I feel really sorry for young people that are in college, anybody else that's in college for that matter, because of the constant flow of secularistic, humanistic, evolutionary thought. It is a constant drag. It has its hooks and it pulls us into the ways of the world.

Paul teaches a different perspective, a better way, being mindful of who we are. So we saw, ever since chapter 8, looking specifically at one of the unique distinctives of believers is our collective fellowship. Our fellowship is on a different foundation.

He talked about the foundation of the manna and the water that the Israelites drank. They were bound together by their baptism in Moses in the sea. They had a unique experience.

They had a unique identity. They had a unique destiny that God assigned them. And Paul brought that up to the Corinthians, and he said, you have a unique identity.

You have a unique connection to God through Christ, and you have a unique destiny, and you have to have that guide your decisions and where you are and what you do. Well, this all sounds fine in the abstract, but how does it work itself out in practice? Most of us don't hang out in dives and opium dens, and we don't go out and commit overt crimes. We keep to ourselves.

We're generally moral. So are tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of other people that are unbelievers. It's not enough to just not be a rascal and not be an evildoer and not be some sort of criminal.

Lots of people can do that. Lots of people have a personal morality, and they say, well, these things are wrong, and I'm not a wrongdoer. I'm a right-doer.

There were plenty of those people in Corinth. It is not enough. It doesn't have any traction at the judgment that you are a nice person.

Lots of nice people are going to be extinguished in the lake of fire. Lots of nice people are going to be saved and resurrected and in the darkness which is outside. It's not enough to just not be evil.

We have to have active good, and so Paul in this section is driving toward that conclusion using questions and issues in the Corinthian church to get there. These are his steps in the stair. So he began in chapter 8. Just flip back and just glance over chapter 8. Now concerning things offered to idols, and any time Paul in this letter says, "Now concerning," he's referencing the letter they wrote him.

Other times he says, "I hear it is reported among you." These are things that Paul got not from the letter but from people that have visited and come back and said, "Oh, Paul, that Corinthian church is a piece of work." They have written him a letter.

There's been other letters going back and forth, and they wrote and they said, "Well, now, you know, we think that freedom in Christ and idol is just a rock and it's really good food and, you know, this will help our connections in the community. We want to go up and go to these temple meals." And Paul says, "Now concerning things offered to idols."

He says, "Go with what you know. We know that we have knowledge. We also know that knowledge without what? What does it say? 8.1. Knowledge puffs up, love edifies."

You've got to have this love. This is the missing ingredient. Secularistic, materialistic, humanistic world has affection.

It has enjoyment. It has attraction. It even has fascination and allure and, you know, crush-type interest in one another.

It doesn't have this kind of love because this kind of love, it doesn't have humanity as its source. It doesn't depend on us. This is the love of God.

Romans 5:5, love comes from God the Holy Spirit. If you're not saved, you don't have the Holy Spirit. If you're not cultivating His presence and power by feeding and nourishing your soul in the Word of God, the Holy Spirit cannot generate and sustain and direct and guide this divine love.

It is a love that takes action. It is sacrificial toward self. It is beneficial toward others.

Now, listen, there's plenty of unbelievers that are sacrificial toward self and beneficial toward others. You've got your altruistic doers of good. What's the difference? When it is the love of God, when it is motivated and enabled and guided by God the Holy Spirit, when it is conditioned and undergirded and given shape and form by God's Word, here's the difference.

God's glory reflects off of it. It leads to and partakes of and links us to eternity, and God is pleased. And that results in supernatural blessing, supernatural inheritance, supernatural power to do actual good in the world.

Many people think they're doing good. Doctors thought they were doing good when they used thalidomide back in the 1950s. People thought they were doing good when they used plastic mesh to fix hernias and sagging inward parts for people.

And, oh, come to find out, the mesh doesn't last very long. It breaks and it creates more problems than it solves. And now they've got all these corporate lawsuits.

You see the ads on TV sometimes. Well, has your mesh come all apart and are you upside down and lumpy and has all your stuff quit working? And sue these people. They made bad mesh.

It seemed like a good idea at the time, seemed like a good idea at the time. Well, from what I knew, my intentions were good. Your intentions were good, but you know what you lack? You lack the Holy Spirit.

You lack the wisdom of God. You lack that connection to eternity that makes things count in transcendental, four-dimensional ways. There is a way that seems right to a man.

And you say, "Well, I've got to be okay because it seemed right to me at the time." The ends thereof are the ways of death because we are limited, we're short-sighted, and we constantly underestimate just how stupid and short-sighted we are when we think we are doing good. Have you ever had somebody try to do good for you, but it was actually kind of a pain? It can happen.

It happens all the time when we're operating in our humanity. So Paul says, you know, you think you're doing good to your Corinthian neighbors because they say, "Oh, help me celebrate. We're having an occasion.

Come up to the temple." And you say, "You know, I really think that maybe not very many people will come. I should go and be a part of that and support them and encourage them and make them feel like I'm their friend."

And yet you are compromising important and eternal things. How would you know whether or not to go? Well, if you're an unbeliever, it doesn't really matter. If you're a believer that's uninformed and not practicing your Christian faith, you are going to do damage.

Yes, you went and everybody had a good time, but you got compromised. You ended up as a part of a demon-worshipping ceremony and the path to Christ and the path to life eternal and the path to that same wonderful wisdom of God-guided life has been fogged up because they can't tell the difference between you and their other friends. And that point right there, what is the difference between you and everybody else, is the reason he has been talking in our most recent context about the Lord's table.

What table did he start talking about? The one up in Corinth, the one up at the idol temple. Everybody have a good time, the wine flows, it's the best food in town, and everybody is hilarious and celebrating, and pretty soon they start drinking toast to Artemis and to Isis. And first thing you know, you find that the occasion has turned licentious and it has turned pagan and it has turned to an emphasis and a participation in things that are antithetical to the Lord Jesus Christ.

You're in the company of people who want to engage in activities and to say things and express viewpoints and go along to get along. Come on with us, and you don't want to be frowned at across the table, and have another glass and have some of this and, hey, chant with me in this Corinthian context. It happens today where bad company corrupts good morals.

You say, "Well, I'm just focusing on the good part over here." You can't do that, Paul says. You are unique, you are separate, you are apart. It doesn't mean that we go out of the world, but there are certain things where, certain areas where the distinction is critical.

There has to be a difference. Many times we've said there ought to be a difference. If you're a believer, there ought to be a difference in your life.

There ought to be a difference in your motivation. There ought to be a difference. And that's our growth.

That's our Christian growth. There has to be a difference between us and unbelievers. Well, let me ask you this.

Was there a difference between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Pharisees? Was there a difference between the Lord Jesus Christ and the prevailing religion of the day? If people like Anna and Simeon and Peter and James and John and Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew and the other Judas and the other Simon and all the rest of those disciples and all of the people who came and listened to Jesus on the mountainside, why did they come? The woman who washed His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. The Syrophenician woman who talked about the crumbs falling from the table. These people were looking for truth and looking for life and looking for answers.

They came to the Lord Jesus Christ because He was different. Because He was actually from God. Because He had actual power.

Actual life. Not temporary Band-Aid fixes. I was thinking about Band-Aids the other day.

Somebody smashed their finger with a hammer and I thought, you know, putting a Band-Aid on a smashed finger isn't all that helpful because you've smashed it. You know, your human solution here is very limited. How do you, you know, you can spray Bactine on there and you can wrap it with a Band-Aid.

Maybe your fingernail is bleeding, which it was, but you know, the interior has been smashed. And there's only, you know, human solutions can only address a small part of that problem. It takes the healing power that God put in the body to repair and restore and renew and make whole.

And our little old Band-Aid and our little old squirt of antibiotic, it's not bad, but it doesn't perform the healing. It doesn't restore and renew. That can only come from what God has put in the body.

Same thing with us. There are limited, there are charities. You know, people have looked around and said, "Well, you know, all of these Christians are taking credit for all the hospitals and the missions and the education and all the rest of it.

We're secular atheists, humanists. We can all be righteous too. Let's all get together and pool our money and, you know, do a concert for Bangladesh or let's all get together and establish a charity and we'll help people."

What inevitably, the government's been trying to do this for decades now, trying to help people with welfare and with unemployment, right? How's that working out? Well, let me ask you a different question. What's your tax rate and how much of that is going to social programs and how well are they working? Remember, I remember, some of us are old enough to remember Lyndon Johnson, President Johnson. He had two wars going at the same time.

One of them was in Vietnam, and what was the other one? We're fighting the war on poverty. So we got our tails kicked in Vietnam. How did we do with poverty? The same.

There's just as much or more poverty now as there ever was, and there have been literally billions—I'm not saying millions or hundreds of millions—billions of dollars. Look up the statistics that have been shoveled into the hole of human poverty and it hasn't fixed it. Why? It's a human Band-Aid and a squirt of Bactine on a problem that is intractable so long as people are godless.

Godless people aren't going to administer that system properly. Godless people are not going to avail themselves of that system properly. It is self-centered.

It is greedy. It is avaricious. It penalizes work and rewards indigents, and it's a typical human good.

People can say, "Oh, I'm so glad that a part of my tax money goes to help the poor. I'm all in favor of helping the poor." But if you really want to help the poor, do something direct.

Find a Christian mission that will not only feed and clothe them, but help them understand the precipice on which they stand of life and death and a future with God or no future at all and sustaining grace for this life. Something to help order their thoughts and direct their motives and encourage them into a path where they can have self-esteem because they are making their own way and they are now independent and they are functional and they are a blessing to those around them with divine wisdom and divine provision instead of a temporary, misdirected, failing, corrupt. Human good is like a zombie movie.

Things are moving, but it's not good. That's human good. You want genuine life.

You want genuine growth. You want genuine positive movement. So, Paul is talking about that here.

And we have to keep this in mind as we get into these. We're going to the tongues chapters now. Tongues.

The next section here, 12-14, is where Paul really gets to his point. And he's going to use this tongues thing to sum up everything he's been saying in the letter. So, he began with those meals and we saw last time he talked about the meal that believers share in the name of Christ, the Lord's Supper.

Look at that last section real quick because that's going to help us understand chapter 12. In the giving of these instructions, verse 17 of chapter 11, "I'm giving you these instructions." What instructions? How communication should occur in the church.

How praying and prophesying should occur in the church. Remember that? It's order in the church. Now why is he saying women ought to behave a certain way and they should not pray or prophesy in an improper manner? Why? What did we just say about chapter 8? What characterizes the pagan, godless, idolatrous, demonic worship up the hill? Priestesses, temple prostitution, you know, the oracle at Delphi was a woman.

The Vestal Virgins and the prophets and all that, they were women. And pagan, godless, demonically inspired and conditioned worship had women involved with their physicality, their sexuality, their come-hither, prurient interest attraction. And people went there because it was salacious and it was a bacchanal, it was a, if you know what that is, Bacchus the god of wine, you know, that people would go and celebrate him.

And it always led to all kinds of promiscuity and perverse, self-gratifying behavior. Paul said our faith is different and it needs to look different. Hear me now.

We're not so concerned about whether a woman can pray or prophesy or even teach in a church. I'm not particularly troubled by women pastors. I think there's been sort of a legalistic misapprehension of what Paul is saying when he says, "I will not suffer a woman to, you know, exert authority or to teach," you know, they need to be, you know, there's this silence thing, you put all the women on one side of the church and they've got to shut up and don't say anything and don't do anything.

It missed the point. The point, the real point that Paul is making in that is when people look at your worship of the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father through Him, it needs to be distinguishably different. It needs to reflect, not just any old difference, I mean, we could all wear a purple hat to church and say, "Look, we're the, you know, first purple church hat of wherever."

It's not just difference for its own sake. It is difference that reflects the difference, capital D, that reflects the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit, that reflects the wisdom and the truth of His Word, that reflects the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and the glory of God the Father. And whatever culturally significant differences we practice down through the ages, we should be identifiable as those who are committed to Christ.

In this day, part of that was, I don't look anything like a temple prostitute and our worship services don't look anything like what happens at the idol-worshipping temple. We don't look like that. Now, application.

How should churches look in the modern day? How do churches look in the modern day? Does your church look like a rock concert? How is that making a distinction between, you know, worshiping the lead singer for some band and coming together to appreciate and to learn more about and to be closer in thinking and function to the Lord Jesus? If your music sounds the same, and if your preaching sounds like a pep rally or like a political speech or like an appeal to just your sense of humor or your interest in the little blurbs that come up on your screen when you try to read your email, did you ever try to get to your email on a PC anymore? They won't let you go to your email. I cannot click email and there it comes, unless I load a copy of Thunderbird and bypass.

If you get your mail on the web, they force you to look at a page before you can get there. My email has been sold twice now, and now AOL has it. It used to be Comcast, then Verizon bought it, and then AOL has it from Verizon.

But you can't get there for years now. In fact, I've written letters and complained because that homepage thing would have, you know, rainbow parades with people in feathers and boas and things marching, and I couldn't not look at that in order to get to my email through the web interface. That's when I loaded Thunderbird the first time, because they didn't respond to my letter.

I said, "Look, you're entitled to your politics and your opinion and everything else. If you want to put this on any page you want, don't force me to look at it when I'm trying to do a utility function here of reading my mail. You will not let me bypass that screen, and it's not right."

There ought to be a difference. And when people look at us in our fellowship and in our worship, there ought to be a difference. This is one of the reasons I wear a coat and tie.

Nobody wears a coat and tie anymore, even in the church. Is a coat and tie anything? Does the Bible prescribe it? Does it say, "Behold, when the pastor standeth up, he ought to have something around his neck so you can grab it and pin it to the ceiling?" No. Why do I do this? I want to look different.

I'm either a preacher or a politician. The only people that wear coats and ties anymore are old-style pastors and politicians. That's about it.

Business meetings, it's business casual. Sometimes I wear a jacket, but it's an open-collared shirt or a round-neck shirt with no collar, with a jacket on. It's the Steve Jobs look.

And that's fine. I don't care what they do. Go be warm, be fed, wear your piercings or whatever you want, show your tats at the business meeting.

That's what everybody does now. It's like an emblem. But in church, you and I, and in our association, remember the church is just emblematic here in Corinth.

It's our associations with our fellow believers. It ought to look and it ought to be, most importantly, different. We don't get together because we're out for stimulation and, "Oh, they're so funny."

What a sense of humor. I can't wait to spend some time with that person." We have a shared interest in X or Y or Z. I really love that video game.

I was, I hate to say this, and I only use it for illustration purposes, but I get into a lot of houses and see a lot of different lifestyles as I go around and tune pianos. I was in a house tuning a piano and the teenage son was home, very big for his age. I had football coaches probably calling him every other day.

But he was sitting there and his cell phone rang. He was watching me tune. He was interested.

I explained to him how it works. But his phone rang. And so then, you can't help it, we're trapped in the same room.

He could have left, but he didn't. And he was just standing there and he was talking to some friend, but it was so cryptic. It was worse than listening to two Marines talk, you know, with acronyms and that.

But I gathered over the course of this that they were talking about a video game or an online game or something that they both play. I couldn't make heads or tails of it, except that, you know, well, you know, our friend Horvath, you know, found the crux of Methuselah and has gone in and, you know, well, he's got this, that, and the other. And they're talking about all of these things.

If you read Harry Potter backward, that's kind of what the thing sounded like. But I mean, he was largely, he was very helpful, you know, I needed something and he got it and I had to put on some strings and so he, I always need a wastebasket for the copper windings, and very helpful, very nice kid. But he was just kind of matter of fact and routine, pleasant, courteous, helpful.

But when that phone rang and he started talking about the, you know, Methuselah of the, you know, the horcrux of this, that, and the other, I mean, animation, passion, interest, creative thought, every—he just came alive because he was in his element, you know. That's, you get the idea, this guy really is invested in this game and the other people that play it with him.

And I thought, you know, wouldn't it be great if that was us in our Christian faith and when you get somebody on the subject of the Lord or you get somebody on the subject of what Scripture says, you find out, well, this is the center and the axis around which this person's life and thinking really revolves. Paul is trying to get the Corinthians to realize that their practice and their identity, what they do and how they do it, is the body of Christ. It is the presence of Christ.

Christ didn't come and blend. He didn't go down and put on a Pharisee suit and sit by the temple and you really had to talk to Him to find out that He knew something the other Pharisees didn't know. Did He? Did Jesus have to be poor and have nowhere to lay His head? Was that necessary? Why was Jesus without resources? Why was He sustained by the donations of people who knew who He was and wanted to make that investment and were happy to have a way to express their appreciation to God for His Son, the Lord Jesus.

And these ladies would get together and they would provide food and they provided resources and a place to stay as Jesus and His disciples traveled. I mean, 13 guys, and they put them up so they have a place to stay. But why was Jesus poor? Why? Just, well, you know, poverty is humility.

What's the biggest distinction He can make between Himself and the scribes and Pharisees and the elders and the chief priests? They're all, without exception, rich. Very rich. And they stand out and drop big bags of money into the coffers down at the temple.

And they, you know, Jesus said, "Rich man, poke a camel through the eye of a needle faster than that guy is going to find the values of the kingdom and be able to not just see it but enter it." Why? He's all swelled up with something else. That's his passion.

His robes and his finery and his sumptuous feasts and his relations with other sumptuous well-off people, that's his thing. That's what makes him come alive. That's what defines him and makes him passionate.

Paul says, those people that are inviting you up to the temple, their passion and their identity is all wrapped up in that worship which is ultimately demon worship. You are supposed to be different. You've got to find a way to stand out.

Not so that you can model something different. Not so that you can just look different for its own sake. But you've got to provide light when there's nothing but darkness.

There's got to be a contrast. People that deal with photography know all about the use of light. Remember that guy, Painter of Light, what was his name? Kinkade.

Yeah, Kinkade. Painter of Light. Why are his paintings? You can look at one of those and say, "That's Thomas Kinkade right there," if you remember his name.

Why? I remember it's the Painter of Light because the way that guy uses light when he composes and presents a scene is unique. You and I are supposed to be unique. All of this stuff isn't really about where do you eat what food and did it sit here or did you buy it there.

Paul says don't ask questions for conscience sake on that stuff unless it becomes an issue of the difference. If someone asks you, if someone tells you this was offered to idols, they're saying, is there any difference between you and these idolaters? That's when you make the issue. Isn't it sort of puzzling that Paul says, "Well, don't worry about it unless somebody says it's been offered to idols.

Now worry about it." Just because somebody pointed it out? Has the reality changed at all? Isn't there some absolute moral right or wrong? Yes, there is. And the moral right or wrong is you and I have a responsibility as the body of Christ to, A, look like Christ in the sense of being distinguishable and different and a place to go when you tire of the shadows and the darkness and the insufficiency of the Band-Aids and the Bactine of this world and you want genuine life and genuine healing and you're sick of, maybe people never get sick of zombies.

How many zombie movies have been made? I think they're in the thousands. And the people have a fascination. Some people love darkness rather than light, and that's their choice.

But we should be different and we should be defined by and we should find ways to express the life that is in us through Christ. And that's what all of this is. The women praying and prophesying with their head uncovered.

You know what did not prevail in Corinthian culture was respect for authority. So Paul says one way you can stand out and be different is that your men reflect respect for the authority of Jesus Christ in the way they run their households and the way they respect their marriage and the way they order their lives and train their children. Women can reflect that difference, that understanding of divine authority and its delegation of responsibility, by reflecting respect for their husbands in the assembly.

This doesn't happen up the hill. This doesn't happen out in the world. But you are different.

And that love that reflects humility and humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, He will exalt you in due time. You don't have to try to exalt yourself. That's a uniquely Christian value.

And you can reflect it in your cultural practice. Now, head coverings and how short your hair is, it doesn't communicate anything. So we find new ways, new cultural ways, to communicate these truths that distinguish and set apart Christ.

So, we ended chapter 11 beginning at verse 27. Therefore, whoever eats, and you have in verse 27 it says, "Whoever eats this bread," and you think it's referring back to the bread in the cup that Jesus shared with His disciples in the preceding four or five verses there, 23 through 26. The word this was added later.

All of the early good Greek manuscripts in verse 27: "Therefore, whoever eats the bread," eats the bread. It's not this bread that he was just talking about with the Lord Jesus. It's not upper room special bread.

Whoever eats the bread or drinks a cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner. Some translations say unworthily. And it feeds into this idea that I mentioned before that I absorbed when I was a little kid, that you've got to be sure your heart's right.

You've got to think deep thoughts and be profound and picture the cross and self-judgment and I don't want to die. I don't want to get sick. God pays special attention to who I am and what I'm doing at the point that I have those elements in my hand.

No. No. And no.

Whoever eats bread or drinks the cup, this is whoever operates in the realm of Christian fellowship. Christian fellowship in the first century was defined by its meal because it was a natural carryover from the fellowship

meals of idol worship. It was a natural carryover for the Jews of the fellowship meals that they shared in their Israelite law-defined families and fellowship.

Passover being the annual ultimate expression of that. But anytime they had the fellowship offering and partook of it. So the meal spoke for and symbolized interaction with others.

And Paul says when you are interacting with others, in that context it was the weekly get-together meal that they had. And I only say weekly because that's what church tradition tells us. They got together on the first day of the week and every time they met, it was a meal.

Because that's what people did when they met for worship. They ate. And Paul says you cannot go eat the fellowship meal for that worship over there and eat the fellowship meal for this over here.

Much less bring the practices of the pagan fellowship meal into your Christian fellowship meal. And guess what they did up the hill at the Isis Ashtar Temple. They grabbed for the jug of wine and the new plate of roasted wings comes out.

Grab it. Get the best. You're sitting the closest.

You're at the head of the table. They put the plate down at the head of the table. The most important people are at the head.

And they grab it first. And it's first come, first served. Get it before it's gone type of thing.

Paul says none of that should pertain at your Christian fellowship meal. It should be obvious. If somebody walks in and sees your meal, what a difference from what's going on at the idol temple.

These people are considerate. They're asking, "Would you like some of this?" And they're being especially sensitive to people for whom this may be the only real good meal they get all week. And it's been provided by people who have, and it is a way for people who are well off to share.

And so they say, "Hey, let's look out for you." Do you think any of that happened up at the Acrocorinth? Do you think any of those pagans up there were like, "Oh, look, here's a poor guy"? They despised and spit on the poor. They probably wouldn't even let him in the door.

"You're not dressed properly. We have a code here. Come back later.

Look at the back door. We'll throw the scraps out there." Every man for himself.

Self-gratification. Stimulation. Rip-roaring good time.

Don't want to be troubled by the poor and the ragged in your periphery. In a Christian assembly, slaves, impoverished people, well-off people. But the well-off people should be, and in many of the Christian churches were, looking out for one another.

It is defined by love. It's that supernatural love of God the Holy Spirit. It is genuine sensitivity.

And when they do that, what are they doing? It's not just a good deed. "Oh, look, the poor person got a nice meal." Any unbeliever can give a poor person a nice meal and go pat himself on the back.

What's the difference when it happens in a Christian context? It is a reflection and it is a manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself with divine love, divine motivation, looking to eternity in that act. Transcending the moment and transcending the immediate and transcending the materialistic and partaking of eternity. It resonates.

It hooks into. It is a deed that is in the books. It is something that the Lord Jesus is going to say, "You know, if I was there, that's what I would have done." The widow's cruse, the flour for sustaining.

So, whoever eats, this is verse 27 of chapter 11, whoever eats the bread or drinks a cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner. Not unworthily. We're not talking about the qualities of the person.

It is the manner. It's how you do what you do. It's why you do what you do.

And this is one place where the King James and New King James really do a better job than your NIV and some of the others. Some of these will say, "Eats and drinks unworthily," as though you weren't good enough to do it. You didn't properly purge and cleanse and go through some necessary precursor ritual.

No. In an unworthy manner. How are you treating people as you engage in this activity? That's the manner.

And the manner, you're saved, you belong to the Lord Jesus, but what you do doesn't reflect Him and doesn't reflect your faith. Will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Well, not the blood.

Cross out blood. Several things you have to cross out in here, and one of them is this bread should be the bread, and in the last line, guilty of the body of the Lord. You can't be guilty of the blood.

It's the body. When you look around at your fellow believers, they're not the blood of the Lord. The blood of the Lord is the new covenant.

That's the promise. That's the connection to the Lord Jesus Christ. The body and being members of it, that's our horizontal relationship, and if you partake of the bread and if you partake of the cup in an unworthy manner, the food and the drink at the meal, you're guilty of the body.

You are disrespecting your fellow believers in doing that. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. Examine himself.

Stop and say, "Do I look like a pagan here? Am I just importing secular values into my Christian worship?" Now how else could that take place? How would it take place today? If your worship service looks just like a lot of other secular, godless convocations, if it's a pep rally, if it's a ball game, if it's a rock concert, if it's a classical concert, it doesn't really matter, but if it partakes of the world and is largely indistinguishable other than a few praise the Lords here and there and the words to the music are different but the music sounds exactly the same. You do an instrumental version of it and you can't tell it from regular music. Why do I like the old hymns? Same reason I wear a coat and tie.

Nobody goes to a rock concert and plays the old hymns. You don't turn on the radio and hear the old hymns. The old hymns have great musical quality, they have wonderful lyrics for the most part, and they distinguish us.

In movies, when they want you to know that there's a church nearby, even before the camera swings in that direction, you hear choral singing of a hymn. Right away you say, "Oh, church." I mean, it's that quick.

You hear, "Rock of Ages," oh, there's a church. Three notes. Four notes.

You know it's a church, it's Christians, and they're singing. Try that with Christian Contemporary. Now, nothing wrong with it.

If you like Christian Contemporary, that's fine. I'm just saying. Paul's point.

What Paul is saying is you ought to look different and examine yourself. Do you look different enough that somebody who is seeking Christ is going to say, "I think maybe that person knows. There's a quality and there's a direction and there's a passion in their life that I'm looking for.

They've got it and I don't." Many of us got saved that way. Looking at somebody we knew that was different.

And they said, "Well, the difference in my life is Christ. That's what gives me peace. That's what gives me strength.

That's what gives me hope. That's what enables me to persevere when the chips are down. I know that this life is temporary and I have an absolute assurance that it has a purpose even if I don't understand it.

I'm in the hands of my Heavenly Father. I belong to my Lord Jesus Christ. I am enabled and empowered and accompanied and comforted by His Holy Spirit.

And I know exactly what's going to happen at the end of my life. And I actually kind of look forward to it. I'm not afraid of death.

I don't fear it. I'm not worried about it. I'm not worried about all the other people around me that have already died.

And, well, what became of them? I know all the answers to those questions. I have peace. I have certainty.

And I have accomplishment available to me day by day in my life. When I spend this 24 hours, we're experiencing a day right now. This day has come.

It's here. And it is going to be gone. What did it purchase? What did the time buy? We're told, redeem the time.

Trade that time. Because if you don't, the days are intrinsically and inherently worthless. They're evil.

Invest it. Make it count. Get it back with interest.

And that's what you and I can do day by day by day just by examining ourselves. What does he mean by examining yourself? Oh, you know, let me make sure I'm fessed up and I've accounted for all my known sins and done the 1 John 1:9 thing and don't want to drink the Kool-Aid before I've enumerated all the sins I can think of and kind of done some internal invisible breast beating and being sorry and whatnot. That's not what he's talking about.

He says, when you anticipate being around your fellow believers, that's what this meal was. Before you do that, stop and reflect. Maybe offer a prayer.

Lord, bless the fellowship and my participation in it. Let it be a blessing to me and let me be a blessing to others and let our fellowship reflect the presence and the power and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ through the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit that ultimately points to the Father. What was Jesus' purpose? If I am lifted up sacrificially, I will draw all men to me.

If we sacrifice some of the gratifying pleasantries of this life in the interest of being worthy, people will be drawn. People will see a difference. And it will happen in some of the most unexpected ways and often in ways that you don't even recognize or are not even aware of.

Whoever eats and drinks, verse 29, see where it says, "in an unworthy manner"? Cross it out. It's not there. He who eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the body.

See where it says Lord's body? I almost hesitate to do it in a Bible, but cross out Lord's. Lord's is not there. Verse 28 reads: "For he who eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment to himself if he is not discerning the Lord's body."

If you are in fellowship and you are not sensitive to your fellow believers, that fellowship is going to be a judgment for you. He who eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment to himself, and you have to kind of put in parentheses to make sense of the Greek, if he is not discerning the Lord's body. You could swap the phrases, you know, in Greek phrases move places.

He who eats and drinks, not discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment to himself. I think I said Lord's a minute ago, but I can't get over my print here. He who eats and drinks, not discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment to himself.

That's the entire content of that verse. Cross everything else out. For this reason, verse 30, many are weak and sick among you and many sleep.

It isn't not having enough self-abnegation or not enough proper contrition and appreciation and all of that when they are taking a ceremonial cup or eating a ceremonial piece of bread. This is insensitivity to your fellow believers. You know, do unto others as you would have others do unto you is the golden rule, but you get the idea that God is looking and saying, you know, here are poor and needy people and you are insensitive and uncaring about their needs, so guess what? You are going to experience neediness and loss.

If you're not sensitive to the neediness and losses that others have experienced, you're going to be needy and you're going to have loss. You will be weak and sickly, and some of you have been taken out completely because you're such a negative influence in the fellowship. It's like God had to purge the world at the flood so that He could keep the people who were interested in Him alive, and when you get down to one guy and his family, time to wipe the slate.

And in this fellowship and in this day, remember now, we're coming up on sign gifts. In this day things were signs right after the law. I mentioned before, "Do no work on the Sabbath. Six days labor, do all your work. Seventh day, rest." Guy went out the very next day, started picking up sticks. God says, stone him to death.

Stone him. Everybody that worked on the Sabbath didn't get stoned. That guy got stoned.

Why? It's at the inception. It is emblematic. It is, it communicates the importance of that truth.

It doesn't mean that that's the penalty every time somebody picks up a stick on the Sabbath, but it expressed God's attitude and how seriously He took it. Same thing here. Not everybody who is insensitive to their fellow believers is going to be weak or sickly or sleep, die, but it happened in this case to emphasize how seriously God takes love for one another.

All of those one another passages. It's serious, and it can't just be an overt action. "Well, I'll model a good behavior, you know, I want people to think of me as a good person, so I'll do this good deed." It is Holy Spirit-guided, Holy Spirit-enabled, divine love-motivated.

That's what connects it to heaven. That's what connects it to Christ. That's what shines the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God.

What does Paul say in another place? "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not. Otherwise the light of the glorious gospel would be shining." If you try to function in a Christian fellowship with a blinded mind, you're an enemy of the cross, you're fallen from grace, you're with friends like you.

The Lord doesn't need enemies. And so it's serious. For this reason, many are weak and sick among you and many sleep.

Verse 31, it's not "for if we would judge ourselves," it is "but." This is *de*, not *gar*. It's another textual change that should have been left alone.

But if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. So this goes back to verse 28. You can see a little bit of a chiasm here.

Let a man examine himself in 28, but if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. If we would pay attention to the necessity to be different and to be defined by the presence and power of God's Word, which together is Christ in us, the hope of glory. The Word is the bread of life.

The first Adam became a living soul. The second Adam is a life-giving spirit. Paul says again in another place, well, we as His body with that divine life of the Holy Spirit that makes us sensitive, self-sacrificial, beneficial, Philippians chapter 2, that distinguishes us from the world.

Remember when he was talking about head coverings and he said women ought to keep their heads covered because of the angels. Do you think that there is a distinction between the unfallen angels and the ones that have followed Satan? Do you think there's a difference? Angels are observing us. Do they see a difference? The world is a distinction between angels and the saints. Do you think a difference between you think is a difference between because we have judged ourselves and we choose Christ, we choose His attitude, we choose His love, we choose His function on this earth to glorify the Father, not to glorify ourselves, not to make an issue of ourselves.

Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, and this goes all the way back, it says wait for one another, but wait for *ekdekomai*, and it means to receive or to welcome.

Receive and welcome one another. If you're going to receive and welcome somebody, a lot of churches do this, I think it's a great, it's a great tradition, but there will be a guy, sometimes it's a deacon, but somebody is like the appointed greeter, and he's at the door, and when you come in, the church makes sure that somebody shakes your hand and says, "We're glad you came, we're glad to see you." You can be a member or a visitor, but they don't want to just leave it to random chance that hopefully somebody will notice that, hey, somebody's here that doesn't usually come, or, you know, here's somebody that's been away for a while, and there's somebody there to recognize and receive and welcome people who come to the fellowship, right? And Paul says, when you come together, it is an outward-looking attitude.

I'm looking at others, I'm receiving them, I'm wanting them to feel at home and comfortable and benefited. Make sure that they can see and that they can hear if there's, you know, a large place and they're hard of hearing, seat them near the front. Make sure they've, that they're comfortable, that they know where things are, that they know how to get to the Sunday school class for them, or they know where the restrooms are, they know, you know, when the church service starts, or they got little kids, here's where the nursery is, or the Sunday school for their kids, but somebody is looking out for them, attentive to their needs.

Receive, welcome, that's the word here. Wait for sounds like, well, you know, hurry up and get your chicken wing here so I can have my food. It's much more than that.

It is to receive and to welcome. And if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. Now, all of this misunderstanding that has taken place in the traditional Christian church about the Lord's table, it's a ritual, it's an ordinance, it, you know, God pays special attention anytime you're having communion, doesn't reflect Paul's context here.

Look at verse 21. "In eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others. One is hungry and another is drunk."

And everything in between is justification for his conclusion and his declaration of what needs to happen. And he doesn't say, be sure you, you know, have the right attitude and that you observe this ritual in the proper way at the proper time. He says, "Therefore, my brethren," this is the big finish, the most important point, love one another.

Receive and welcome one another. You got a raggedy person here, receive them, welcome them. You're all brothers and sisters in Christ.

And if food is your issue, eat at home. So that you can, you know, if your hunger makes it impossible for you to recognize other people and all you can do is see the food in the table, then eat before you come. So that when you get to the meal, you can do what you're supposed to do.

You've got to be different than the world. You can't have a simulated righteousness, it has to be actual righteousness. The rest I will set in order when I come.

You can only wonder what was the rest. There are other things they had written about in their letter. Evidently, whatever their concerns were, it was, maybe it was personal, maybe it was individuals in the church that were running amok or that they thought were running amok because they didn't go along.

Paul says, "I'll talk about that when I come." Whatever it was, it didn't need to be a part of the Inspired Record. Well, that finally brings us to chapter 12.

We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll have a short session to make up for this long one on the beginning of chapter 12, concerning spirituals, concerning spirituals. We'll pause here and take our break.