



1 Corinthians 11:27-29

(27) Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. (28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. (29) For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

King James Version

The apostle Paul tells the Corinthians that when it came time to take the Passover, they were in danger of eating and drinking judgment to themselves. Why? It was not that they were somehow failing to appreciate Jesus Christ's physical body, but because they were not being partial to His *spiritual* Body as a whole.

To make this practical, consider a principle of valuation. In the world, an object's value is primarily determined by what someone is willing to pay. An artist may claim his painting is worth a million dollars, but the actual monetary value comes when someone buys it. Thus, for fine art, furniture, and other expensive collectibles, records show how much it sold for as a means to gauge the value.

Consider the value that *we* have as individuals, based on what the Father and the Son together were willing to pay for us. Reflect on the incomparable worth of the blood of the perfect and sinless Son of God. Ponder the Creator's supreme act of condescension in donning the form of a flesh-and-blood human and then giving that life as payment. Rather than allowing us to receive the wages of our sin, He paid that debt with a currency impossible for a human to assess, which gives us some idea of our value to God.

Next, we should apply this incomparable value to someone else in the Body with whom we feel a close connection—perhaps a spouse or a good friend.

God paid the same price for him or her because that individual incurred the same debt. Consider the value the Father and the Son now place on him or her based on what They were willing to pay.

Finally, we must take this exercise one step further. Perhaps there is some part of the Body—maybe someone in our own congregation—whom we know we should love but do not like very much. Consider the value we place on him or her, then consider the price the Father and Son have *already paid* for that person. How does our valuation compare with God's? Or is it more comfortable to regard some as outside the Body than to be partial to them (as 'discern'—*diakrino*—indicates)?

By not discerning the Body of Christ correctly, that is, by esteeming some members and despising others, the Corinthians were, in effect, signifying that Christ's blood—the life of the very Creator!—was worth more when it came to some parts of the Body than to others. Thus, Paul warns in [1 Corinthians 11:27-29](#), if they were not properly discerning the *whole* Body in their conduct throughout the year, they stood in grave danger because they would be unable to value and appreciate Christ's sacrifice in their fellowship with Him through the Passover. In not recognizing the God-given and inestimable worth of *all* the others in Christ, they were diminishing Christ! Just a few chapters before, Paul had written, "But when you thus *sin against the brethren*, and wound their weak conscience, *you sin against Christ*" ([1 Corinthians 8:12](#); emphasis ours).

The result of taking the Passover unworthily is that we come under judgment. As Paul points out, the sickness and premature death that God judged "many" with ([1 Corinthians 11:30](#)) resulted from their making an improper distinction about—and being partial to—the Body of believers. (Note that in Greek, "judgment" here does not indicate condemnation.) That judgment includes the removal of protection, even as God did not protect the Israelites in Egypt from the death angel if they were not under the blood of the Passover lamb.

Paul does not imply that every illness or death has its source in an improper discernment of the Body. In [John 9:3](#), Jesus reveals that the man's blindness resulted not from his or his parents' sin but to display the works of God in him. Sometimes, the "sins of society" lead more directly to disease rather

than our own sins. Even so, numerous examples exist of God striking His servants (or their family members) with sickness or even death for certain sins. Even Paul (as Saul) was "judged" with blindness for a time for His persecution of the Body!

Thus, if we are not adequately judging ourselves ([I Corinthians 11:31](#)) about the value we place on all parts of His spiritual Body, and God deems it is time for Him to judge us instead (verses 29, 31), then partaking of Christ's sacrifice will not provide healing but the reverse. If we are in opposition to Christ through despising parts of His Body, His sacrifice will not be a blessing for us but more like a curse. His stripes will not heal us but rather indict us.

Still, if God has to judge us for not discerning the Body, it is for our benefit, keeping us from actual condemnation: "But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" ([I Corinthians 11:32](#)).

It is impossible to appreciate and value the shed blood of the Savior at Passover while devaluing parts of His spiritual Body throughout the rest of the year. When observing the Passover, we must remember that just as we are in fellowship with [Jesus Christ](#) through symbolically eating and drinking of His sacrifice, we are also in fellowship with His spiritual Body. We need to keep in mind the value that He has placed on each of us through His redemption and the obligation we now have to value *all* the members of His Body.

— David C. Grabbe

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