

## 28. Understanding the Importance of Self-Examination

In our last topic, we saw that we are to help our children understand why we remember the death of the Lord. We saw that the death of Christ on the cross and the shedding of His blood for us is what made it possible for us to receive forgiveness of sin. We saw that Paul rebuked the Christians in Corinth because by their actions they were committing sin and their sinful actions did not show the unity of the body of Christ at all. We also saw that communion is to be a time to remember that Christ wants us to have a clear conscience so that we can enjoy the privilege that we have been given to serve God without guilt. Today, we will see that we also want our children to understand why it is important to examine our lives so that we can enjoy this privilege that God has given us.

In 1 Corinthians 11:27, we are given this warning, “Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” The word that is translated “an unworthy manner” means *to share in the communion service with a wrong attitude or with unconfessed sin in our hearts*. That is why it is always important to have a time of self-examination before we participate in a communion service.

Self-examination will cause us to deal with any sin that is hindering our fellowship with Christ or with other Christians. Since the roots always determine the fruit, we need to especially examine our lives to see if we have either of the two negative roots that are mentioned in the New Testament. Hebrews 12:15 says, “Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.” If we allow a root of bitterness to remain in our life, it will cause us to have an unforgiving attitude toward others. A root of bitterness will produce the fruit of the flesh instead of the fruit of the Spirit.

A second negative root is mentioned in 1 Timothy 6:10 where we read, “For the love of money is a root of all *kinds* of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Here, we see that this root can cause people to stray from the faith because of their greediness. The word “pierced” means *to torture one’s soul with sorrows*. A root of the love of money will cause a person to experience torture in their soul and much sorrow. In contrast, 1 Timothy 6:6-8 says, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” This is why it is very important to examine our lives for either one of these roots before each communion service so that our lives will bear the fruit of the Spirit.

Once we have confessed any sinful roots in our lives, then we need to examine our lives and confess any unconfessed sins. In 1 John 1:9, we are promised, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We want to help our children understand that as we confess any unconfessed sin, God is faithful to forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We want to help them understand that God is just to forgive and cleanse us because of the fact that Christ paid for that sin by shedding His blood on the cross and the Father showed that He was satisfied with the payment by raising Christ from the dead.

Many of the Corinthians were not experiencing the joy of coming to the remembrance of the body and blood of Christ with clean hands and a pure heart. That is why Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:28-30, “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep.” This is why it is so important to have a time of self-examination before each communion service. Then, we can remember what Christ has done as we come to remember Him with clean hands and a pure heart. We want to show our children by our example that we take time to examine our own lives before each communion service so that our lives are pure before the Lord as we eat the bread and drink the cup.

We do not want our physical and spiritual children to follow the negative example of the Corinthian Christians and eat and drink in an unworthy manner. We see that God said that their choice to eat in an unworthy manner was having a great effect in their lives. God says that a person who drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself. The person who is not a Christian is already facing eternal judgment. However, the word translated “judgment” is also used to refer to Christians. In 1 Peter 4:16-17, we read, “Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” Here, we see that this word is used to speak of the discipline that God brings on the church or the individual Christian for the purifying of our lives.

In 1 Corinthians 11:29-30, we see that Paul is pointing out the consequences for Christians when we treat the sufferings and death of Christ for our sins as though His death means little or nothing. It is that death that paid the penalty for our sin. To have disrespect by remembering the death of Christ when we know that we have unconfessed sin in our lives is an action that shows we have very little love for Christ and the penalty that He paid for our sins by His death. As a result, we see that Christ may bring three different forms of discipline. The word translated “weak” means *feeble or without strength*. The word that is translated “sickly” speaks of physical sickness. The word that is translated “sleep” is a word that is used to speak of the death of a Christian. The word is used four times in 1 Corinthians 15 and three times in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15 to speak of the death of Christians. As a result, we see that the discipline of the Corinthian Christians included physical weakness, sickness and even physical death.

That is why 1 Corinthians 11:31-32 goes on to say, “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” Here, we see that if we examine our own lives and confess our sins we do not need to fear that it will be necessary for Christ to discipline us for our sin. If we choose not to examine our lives and confess our sins, we will experience the discipline of the Lord. However, we do not need to fear that we will be judged with the world. Romans 8:1 says, “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” The fear of eternal judgment for the Christian has been removed.

Based on the fact that many of the Corinthians had experienced some form of discipline from the Lord for their disrespect of the Lord and of one another, Paul went on to encourage the Corinthians to show their respect both for the Lord and for the Christian slaves. 1 Corinthians 11:33-34 says, “Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.” First, Paul spoke to them about the way to show respect for the Christian slaves. Since the slaves could not come to the love feast until they had finished the work that was required by their masters, Paul told the other Christians, to wait until the slaves arrived before they had their love feast.

Here, we see that one of the ways that we show disrespect for the Lord is by showing disrespect for other Christians especially the poor. James 2:5-9 says, “Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” We want to help our children develop a great respect and concern for the poor by our own example. As they see the concern that we have for the poor, they will develop the same concern. Then, they will be able to provide an example that will help other Christians learn to show that same respect to the poor.

Paul also told the Christians in Corinth that if they were really hungry they should eat at home, before they came to the love feast, so that they would not dishonor the Lord by eating so much food that they did not leave food for some of the other people who were at the love feast. Here, we see that Christ wanted the Corinthian Christians to learn to share with others, instead of having a greedy attitude that caused them to think only about their own desires. Paul said in Philippians 2:4-8 that we should follow the example of Christ. Those verses say, “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient *to the point of* death, even the death of the cross.” As we show our children by our example the importance of being concerned for others, they will also learn to have that same concern.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to examine their own lives each time they come to a communion service. In this way, we are showing them how to really show respect and love for Christ in the communion service. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide an example for your children to follow.