

Unity of Love

Eric Ross / General

Communion of Saints

Proclaim the Lord's Death Until He Comes

1 Corinthians 10:23–33 - 1 Corinthians 11:34

Paul tells the believers in 1 Corinthians 10:23 "All things are permitted, but not all things are profitable", then points them to Jesus Christ our example in

1 Corinthians 11:1 LEB

¹ Become imitators of me, just as I also *am* of Christ.

Then Paul reminds them of the Lord's supper, communion, the time when we all come together to remember the covenant that we have through the body and blood of Christ as Jesus said in

1 Corinthians 11:25 LEB

²⁵ Likewise also the cup, after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of me."

But it is more than remembrance as Paul now says in

1 Corinthians 11:26 LEB

²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Communion is also a declaration of what Jesus Christ did on the earth.

Not All Things Are Profitable

1 Corinthians 10:23–33

Sometimes the message is very simple and Paul gives us a very practical guide for

our behaviour in

1 Corinthians 10:23 **LEB**

²³ All *things* are permitted, but not all *things* are profitable. All *things* are permitted, but not all *things* build up.

First, we must understand that we are free in Christ. God had told us to go and take dominion and we can. But we are also accountable for our actions. Some things that we could do, have bad consequences either for us or what can be even worse, is when our actions hurt other people. Then Paul repeats our freedom by saying it in a different way in

1 Corinthians 10:26 **LEB**

²⁶ for "the earth *is* the Lord's, and its fullness."

But not everyone understands this so Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:29 yield yourself to "the conscience of the other person" so in 1 Corinthians 10:33 "that they may be saved".

Become Imitators of Me, Just as I am of Christ

1 Corinthians 11:1–8

Paul admonishes them to follow him, and as Paul always does, he turns to Jesus Christ as the example he follows in

1 Corinthians 11:1 **LEB**

¹ Become imitators of me, just as I also *am* of Christ.

He then commends them in

1 Corinthians 11:2 **LEB**

² Now I praise you that you remember me *in* all *things*, and just as I handed over to you the traditions, you hold fast to *them*.

for remembering and holding onto the traditions. Now, we know that Jesus had rebuked the Pharisees and the scribes for their traditions in

Mark 7:13 **LEB**

¹³ *thus* making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down, and you do many similar *things* such as this."

We know that Paul's tradition is Jesus Christ and him crucified in

1 Corinthians 2:2 LEB

² For I decided not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

1 Corinthians 2:5 LEB

⁵ in order that your faith would not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Paul's traditions I take to mean; the gospel of the Kingdom, Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected, water baptism, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and communion that he just mentioned. Then again Paul points to Jesus Christ and makes this strong point, in

1 Corinthians 11:3 LEB

³ But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the man *is the* head of the woman, and *the* head of Christ *is* God.

We all come under the authority of God through Jesus Christ.

Does Not Nature Itself Teach You

1 Corinthians 11:9–16

There are some things that are obvious about this world and our lives if we just look to see as Paul says in

1 Corinthians 11:14–15 LEB

¹⁴ And does not nature itself teach you that a man, if he wears long hair, it is a dishonor to him?

¹⁵ But a woman, if she wears long hair, it is her glory, because her hair is given for a covering.

And I think this is clarified in

Romans 1:19–20 LEB

¹⁹ because what can be known about God is evident among them, for God made *it* clear to them.

²⁰ For from the creation of the world, his invisible *attributes*, both his eternal power and deity, are discerned clearly, being understood in the things created, so that they are without excuse.

But we should also recognize that nature is not a perfect teacher because it is also fallen into sin in

Romans 8:19 LEB

¹⁹ For the eagerly expecting creation awaits eagerly the revelation of the sons of God.

Romans 8:22 LEB

²² For we know that the whole creation groans together and suffers agony together until now.

I Received From the Lord What I Also Passed On

1 Corinthians 11:17–24

Paul established a tradition with them, “the Lord’s Supper”, also called “eucharist” or “thanksgiving” and “communion” or “fellowship” ... reminding Christians that they share the loaf and cup at His table, not their own.

¹ Howe, C. L., Jr. (2003). Ordinances. In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (p. 1229). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

Paul said in

1 Corinthians 11:23–24 LEB

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread,

²⁴ and *after he* had given thanks, he broke *it* and said, “This is my body which *is* for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Here, “Paul stressed the memorial aspect of the Supper. “Do this in remembrance of Me.” Christians were to remember that the body of Christ was broken and His blood shed for them.”

¹ Howe, C. L., Jr. (2003). Ordinances. In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (p. 1229). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

And this time of remembering Christ, was not an individual time, but a communal one. They were all to be together remembering the new covenant (see Jeremiah

31:31–34). But the occasion is not one of unity, but of strife and division. Paul rebukes them for the factions that exist in what is the body of Christ, the Church.

Proclaim the Lord's Death Until He Comes

1 Corinthians 11:25–34

Paul continues telling them about the Lord's supper but this is not just a ritual, in this moment, we are proclaiming the lords death in

1 Corinthians 11:25–26 LEB

²⁵ Likewise also the cup, after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of me."

²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

This new covenant is not just about healing, his body broken for us, but also about complete forgiveness of sin, his blood given for us.

Joining together for communion, is also joining together before the Lord and we before we do, Paul tells them to take time for introspection. Do they have their life in order? Are they being the Christian people God wants them to be and that the world needs to see? Paul says in

1 Corinthians 11:28 LEB

²⁸ But let a person examine himself, and in this way let him eat from the bread and let him drink from the cup.

Then he adds in

1 Corinthians 11:31 LEB

³¹ But if we were evaluating ourselves, we would not be judged.

and if we truly understand the communal nature of this moment, that we are all one as members of the body of Christ we would then be willing to wait as he says in

1 Corinthians 11:33 LEB

³³ So then, my brothers, *when you* come together in order to eat *the Lord's supper*, wait for one another.

These Three Remain: Faith, Hope, and Love

1 Corinthians 12:1 - 1 Corinthians 14:40

Paul teaches believers to understand their differences the way God does. Just as God made our bodies with many parts, and we appreciate and use them all, so we should view the body of Christ. There is in our fallen nature, this desire to be with others that are like us and we use differences as a way to separate ourselves by race, ethnicity, social standing.

But God wants us to operate together, valuing our differences, as the parts of our body do. Paul then extends this to spiritual gifts which are given for the edification of the body. The gifts are not to lift up the individual, but to help the body.

Finally, Paul comes to a description of the mature believers as they operate together in their gifts, where in 1 Corinthians 14:32 "the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" and love mediates as each exercises preferential care for those around them in 1 Corinthians 14:39–40 So then, my brothers, desire to prophesy, and do not prevent speaking with tongues. 40 But let all things be done decently and according to proper procedure.

Concerning Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:1–11

The Corinthians new about idolatry and the influence of spirits, often for evil on the lives of people. Paul here though explains the Holy Spirit, the one that seals us as believers in Christ. It is this same Holy Spirit that is our teacher and guide. And, it is this Holy Spirit that manifests differently in us as we are endowed with these gifts of the Spirit that Paul describes in

1 Corinthians 12:7–11 **LEB**

⁷ But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for what is beneficial to *all*.

⁸ For to one is given a word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another a word of knowledge by the same Spirit,

⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing of spirits, to another kinds of tongues, to another interpretation of tongues.

¹¹ But in all these *things* one and the same Spirit is at work, distributing to each one individually just as he wishes.

- word of wisdom
- word of knowledge
- faith
- gifts of healing
- miraculous powers (working of miracles)
- prophecy
- distinguishing of spirits
- tongues (diversities of tongues)
- interpretation of tongues

In

1 Corinthians 13:2 **LEB**

² And if I have *the gift of* prophecy and I know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that *I can* remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

Paul talks a bout "all faith" and this "Mountain-moving faith was "a proverbial expression for accomplishing something impossible in a miraculous way (see Matt. 17:19–20; 21:21; Mark 11:22–24; Luke 17:6".

Ciampa, R. E., & Rosner, B. S. (2010). *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (p. 632). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

By One Spirit We Were All Baptized

1 Corinthians 12:12–20

We seem to have a natural tendency to gravitate to people that are like us. In fact, I believe God understands this tribal nature and acknowledged it with the children of Israel. We may understand these differences as ways for us to separate ourselves, to create divisions between us and others based on race or gender or social standing or ethnicity. But Paul puts forward a different model, not one of distinctive separation but of unity and utility. Who can deny the wonder of our bodies and who would change any part to have more of another? This is the example Paul uses to represent the diversity in the body of Christ. Just as our bodies have many different parts that each have their own function, yet all work together, so is it with the Church, the one body of Christ in

1 Corinthians 12:12–13 LEB

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body, *although they* are many, are one body, thus also Christ.

¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free *persons*, and all were made to drink one Spirit.

The context is spiritual gifts but Paul's use of "whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free" is not to limit our thinking to this list, but to prompt our thinking to extend his comments to include every nationality, every language, every culture, every level of social standing.

There is one more important point here, he does not intend that these all bring their characteristics into the body of Christ to make it an amalgamation of every kind. Instead, he says, "all were made to drink one spirit" and by this, there is a connecting effect. Now, every person can become, not what the world says, you can be anything you want to be, but now they can become uniquely what God made them to be in

1 Corinthians 12:18 LEB

¹⁸ But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body just as he wanted.

In Christ, there is great value in diversity. God is big enough to hear and understand and manage all of our thoughts and perceptions without being conflicted. Are you able to listen, to hear, to value what your fellow believers have to say?

Now You Are the Body of Christ

1 Corinthians 12:21–31

Paul goes on to describe the importance of each body part, that every one has a valuable contribution to the whole. It would be absurd for us to think of an eye rolling around on its own, and just as absurd for a prophet to be wandering around on his own. What Paul says in

1 Corinthians 12:24–25 LEB

²⁴ but our presentable *parts* do not have need *of this*. Yet God composed the body by giving more abundant honor to the part which lacked *it*,

²⁵ in order that there not be a division in the body, but the members would have the same concern for one another.

is that "God composed the body ... that there not be a division in the body, but the members would have the same concern for one another".

The message is that we should value every member for who and what God made them to be and not, as the world does, seek to be the head. Paul does go on to describe the way God intended leadership in the Church and I think something about their value and distribution.

1 Corinthians 12:27–28 LEB

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members of it individually,

²⁸ and whom God has appointed in the church: first, apostles, second, prophets, third, teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, administrations, kinds of tongues.

Paul does not mention evangelists and pastors here where he is talking about the whole body of Christ unified by the Holy Spirit. He does include evangelists and pastors where the subject is more doctrinal building up and strengthening the body of Christ in

Ephesians 4:11–12 LEB

¹¹ And he himself gave some *as* apostles and some *as* prophets and some *as* evangelists and some *as* pastors and teachers

¹² for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the

body of Christ,

Even here though Paul closes with a comment about the whole body together in

Ephesians 4:16 LEB

¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined together and held together by every supporting ligament, according to the working by measure of each single part, the growth of the body makes for the building up of itself in love.

These Three Remain: Faith, Hope, and Love

1 Corinthians 13:1–13

Paul has dealt with the natural diversity that tends to cause division between people and has told them to operate as one body with many members. Using the example of our bodied, he describes each part of the Church with their own distinctive function. This same natural thinking that separates people has carried over into their understanding of spiritual gifts so the focus has turned to the power of the gift rather than the blessing it is meant to be to the body of believers.

Paul corrects them and explaining the use of the gifts of the Spirit. These gifts are important, but they are secondary in their value. It is like offering someone a cup to drink but without any water as he says in

1 Corinthians 13:2 LEB

² And if I have *the gift of* prophecy and I know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that *I can* remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

There is something more important than these gifts. Our focus, our intention should first be on the giver of the gifts, the one that has shown us love. This is the greatest gift, and it comes to us as we have faith in God and a hope for a good future rises and we experience his love. As he says in

1 Corinthians 13:12–13 LEB

¹² For now we see through a mirror indirectly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know completely, just as I have also been completely known.

¹³ And now these three *things* remain: faith, hope, *and* love. But the greatest of these *is* love.

Seek for the Edification of the Church

1 Corinthians 14:1–12

However we view these gifts, whatever gifts we have or not, whatever we do should be for this purpose, in

1 Corinthians 14:5 LEB

⁵ Now I want you all to speak with tongues, but even more that you may prophesy. The one who prophesies *is* greater than the one who speaks with tongues, unless he interprets, in order that the church may receive edification.

"that the church may receive edification"

And for the end goal in

1 Corinthians 14:12 LEB

¹² In this way also you, since you are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek for the edification of the church, in order that you may abound.

"in order that you may abound"

Paul also explains a key difference between prophecy and tongues, in

1 Corinthians 14:3–4 LEB

³ But the one who prophesies speaks to people edification and encouragement and consolation.

⁴ The one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.

Prophecy is for "edification, encouragement and consolation" or in the King James, "edification, exhortation, and comfort".

Speaking in tongues is to edify yourself. And I believe that we speak out wisdom from God for ourselves in a language we don't understand because our mind has not yet comprehended what God is intending for us. The important point here though, is that there is a personal edification that comes from speaking in tongues. There is also a spiritual gift of speaking in tongues with interpretation. This gift may be used in public without confusion.

Tongues Are for a Sign

1 Corinthians 14:13–25

Because God spoke to the children of Israel through the prophets in their own language and they refused and rebelled against them, God pronounced this as a sign. Yes, when people hear it, they are confused

"Here the quotation is from

Isaiah 28:11–12 **LEB**

¹¹ For he will speak with stammering and another tongue to this people,

¹² to whom he has said, "This *is* rest; give rest to the weary; and this *is* repose"; yet they were not willing to hear.

where God virtually says of Israel, This people hear Me not, though I speak to them in the language with which they are familiar; I will therefore speak to them in other tongues, namely, those of the foes whom I will send against them; but even then they will not hearken to Me; which Paul thus applies, Ye see that it is a penalty to be associated with men of a strange tongue, yet ye impose this on the Church [GROTIUS];".

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (Vol. 2, p. 290). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Let All Things be Done Decently

1 Corinthians 14:26–40

Paul comes to describes what the operation of the gifts of the spirit look like in a Church where love is flowing. As he says in

1 Corinthians 14:26 **LEB**

²⁶ Therefore what should you do, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. All *things* must be *done* for edification.

Some have said that when the unction of the Holy Spirit comes on them, they must speak out, but that isn't what Paul says in

1 Corinthians 14:32 **LEB**

³² and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.

The Holy Spirit is the power of God, but God doesn't override our will. As Paul goes on to say in

1 Corinthians 14:33 LEB

³³ For God is not a *God of* disorder but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints,

There is a good flow, a good order, a loving preference for one another that is exercised by mature believers in

1 Corinthians 14:39–40 LEB

³⁹ So then, my brothers, desire to prophesy, and do not prevent speaking with tongues.

⁴⁰ But let all *things* be *done* decently and according to proper procedure.

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