

# UNWORTHILY

1

**1 Corinthians 11:29,30** – “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”

Sailors used to suffer from a disease called scurvy.

Scurvy leads to the formation of livid spots on the skin, spongy gums, and bleeding from almost all mucous membranes.

Scurvy is what’s known as a “deficiency” disease – a disease that results from a lack of something vital to the body. Scurvy results from not having enough vitamin C, which is required for correct collagen synthesis in humans.

Weak and sickly in the body isn’t good – especially for one who has to work as a sailor.

We can understand that, that’s why the Lord used those words.

But the Lord isn’t as concerned with our fleshly bodies as He is our spiritual souls.

The Lord wants us to understand that we can be weak and sickly **spiritually** also.

Just as God has provided vitamin C and other things to maintain our bodies,

He has provided things we must take and do on a regular basis to maintain and grow our spiritual bodies.

The Lord’s Supper is one of those things.

It was given for that purpose – to make us stronger.

But some don’t partake of the Lord’s supper when they should and as a result they are weak and sickly and can even die as a result.

The Holy Spirit never intended this passage of scripture to **deter** serious Christians from doing that which is necessary to their life.

The devil though has taken advantage of this, and robbed good Christians of a very important necessity to their spiritual life – The Lord’s Supper.

The Lord gave us the Word to build us up, not condemn us.

Just saying “Don’t do this, don’t do that” doesn’t make us stronger.

The Lord intends we DO things, in the way He intended, so we will grow stronger.

The Lord’s Supper is NECESSARY! We MUST take of it just as He told us to.

It is a communion we have with our Lord – to be reminded of him, to discern his body.

Not just a body on the cross – but more importantly his body – the church

**Ephesians 1:22,23** – “And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

The church is important to Christ – he came and established it – he bought it with his blood

**Acts 20:28** – “to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”

# UNWORTHILY

2

If we don't partake of the Lord's supper – remembering our Lord has he said we should do, – we will be weak and sickly, and some will sleep – die!

Why don't people partake that should? Probably biggest impediment “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily”

**Unworthily. This is often made an excuse for not making a profession of religion. The excuse is, "I am unworthy to partake of this holy ordinance. I shall only expose myself to condemnation. I must therefore wait until I become more worthy, and better prepared to celebrate it."**

That's like saying, I won't eat till I become strong enough to work. You need to eat in order to be strong to work. We need to take of the Lord's supper as he has commanded so we **can** make it to the end. We need to correctly understand this passage. Most persons interpret it as if it were **unworthy**, and not **unworthily**;

They think it refers to their **personal** qualifications, to their *fitness* or unfitness to partake of it, rather than to the **manner** in which it is done.

Ok, Grammar time: The word “unworthily” is an **adverb**, not an **adjective**.

An adverb modifies or refers to a VERB – an action.

An adjective modifies a noun – a person, place or thing.

EXAMPLE: That man is unworthy – man the noun.

That man is acting unworthily – acting the verb. An important distinction:

**Rev 2:6 – “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”**

Christ didn't hate the Nicolaitans – but he did hate their actions.

“Unworthily” refers to the **manner**, the action, of our observing the ordinance, and **not** to a person's qualifications or fitness to partake of it.

Really! Which of us is **worthy** to approach the Lord's Table?

Consider John the Baptist and how he thought of himself in relation to Christ:

**Mark 1:7 – “And John preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.”**

True! But Jesus testified of John saying:

**Luke 7:8 - “For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist:”**

What if John had refused to baptize Christ as was his first inclination? – Bad!

**In Matthew 8:8** we read of the Centurion who told Jesus he wasn't worthy for Jesus to come under his roof.

The centurion didn't feel worthy, yet Jesus testified in Verse 10 He had great faith.

**Matthew 8:10** – “When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, **no, not in Israel.**”

What if the Centurion had **not** gone to Jesus?

It is not **wrong** for us to feel unworthy. We have some pretty good company.

But we should **not** let that keep us from doing what we should.

We may think ourselves *unworthy* to approach the table of the Lord; *unworthy* to be regarded as his followers; unworthy of a title to everlasting life, to be known by God as His children.

The thought does us credit, BUT! Despite all that, it does not follow that we may not partake of this ordinance in a worthy, i.e., a proper **manner**, with a deep sense of our sinfulness, our need of a Saviour, and looking to Jesus as our Redeemer.

But it is **wrong** for us to **not** take of the Lord's supper merely because we think we are unworthy.

Yes, we've sinned but remember what God did for us in that estate:

**Romans 5:8** – “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Do you want to **reject** His love? Do we want to turn him away? Did John or the Centurion do that? What state had the Corinthians been in that God wanted them to take of the Lord's supper?

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11** – “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, <sup>10</sup>Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

We are sanctified, we are cleansed – don't you believe that? Faithful **believers** should not be discouraged from taking of the Lord's Supper, a holy thing ordained by God for our good, by the sound of these words.

Whatever may be our consciousness of personal unworthiness and unfitness, **yet** we may have such love to Christ, and such a desire to be saved by him, and such a sense of **his** worthiness, as to make it **proper** for us to approach and partake of this ordinance. This is a **necessary** part of our salvation – to help us **continue faithfully**.

The term *unworthily* means, properly, *in an unworthy or improper MANNER; in a manner unsuitable to the purposes for which it was designed or instituted;*

**Yes, we can take of the Lord's supper unworthily, the Corinthian Christians were doing so. Let's see why – It has to do with our unity:**

**1 Corinthians 10:15-17** – “I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”

Who was Christ’s blood shed for? All men. How many bodies or churches are there? One – Christ’s.

He said in verse 27. “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily,” So that; or it follows from what has been said. What was mentioned prior to this verse were what made them take unworthily, in an improper fashion.

**1 Corinthians 11:17-21** – “Now in this that I declare *unto you* I praise *you* not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. ... When ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

There were **divisions** among them. They had a meal, supposedly to be together with the church, but some were eating before others – some were filled, some were not. They were **divided** in the church. It was like Annanias and Sapphira holding back a part of they had sold, giving the rest to the church, with the result we know.

But Christ died for our unity that we would all be one in Him – in the church:

**1 Corinthians 1:10** – “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

We can not have this mind of division **and** take of the Lord’s Supper. Because they are contrary – 1 blood 1 loaf does **not** go along with division and respect of persons:

**V21** – “For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

**V33** – “Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

The Lord does describe HOW we should do it, that we all come together for this common purpose:

**V26** – “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.

This is why we must ALL take of it, united in spirit, in Christ.

WE need to show the Lord’s death. How so?

Where did Jesus die? On the cross.

We should remember and regard Jesus’ death on cross. Why? Take up our cross.

**Matthew 16:24** – “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

To put aside things of this world – the world we live in every day.  
We need to SHOW this in our lives – our taking of the Lord's Supper REMINDS us of this!

**James 4:3** – “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

We adulterate ourselves by mixing in the things of the world.  
Going back to 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul tied this in with the Lord's supper:

**1 Cor 10:20-21** – “But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.”

The table of the world is the table of devils – we can not mix them.  
WE need to be HOLY, separate from the world, but **together** with one another in Christ.  
We need to SEE the Lord's body on that cross, and the blood he shed for OUR SINS, Out of LOVE for us and obedience – and we must see that he has CALLED us OUT of the world to follow him. This is how we take of the Lord's supper in a WORTHY MANNER! In humility, as Christ had humility – dying for us on the cross:

**Philippians 2:2,3** – “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*”

We must esteem, think of others, as better than ourselves. We must remember this:

**Heb. 10:29** – “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”

The world has divisions, but we must have none in the church. Jesus blood by which we are sanctified, that we have called on, we can consider Unholy if we who are sanctified are **NOT** separate from things of world.  
We MUST be this way ALL the time. The Lord's Supper helps us do that!

However **unworthy** we may be, if we **examine** ourselves so as to find that we penitently believe in Christ's Gospel, if our desire is to SHOW FORTH HIS DEATH, we **may worthily** communicate – partake of the communion – this communication we have with the Lord – He is SPEAKING to us through His body and blood.

That is the examination we make of ourselves – do we SEE Him on that Cross.  
Do we see his body the church for which he shed that blood.  
Do we know that He died for ALL, everyone's sins.  
Do we want to live for Him and not ourselves.  
Do we want to show HIS DEATH by **OUR** death to the things of this world.

That is the state of mind we must have to partake WORTHILY – in a worthy Fashion.

Yes, we have sinned and WILL SIN, but thinking of Christ will help deliver us from the temptation to SIN. AND IF WE DO NOT DO THIS – WE WILL SIN AND BE SICK AND DIE!

The self-examination is not in order that we **stay away**, but that we **may** eat, that is, to take communion with OUR LORD! To communicate with HIM and HIM TO US that we might grow stronger. We must think of the POSITIVE – Christ, not the negative – us.

This weekly communion makes perfect sense for those who call themselves Christians, for those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, to **participate** in.

**Hebrews 5:8,9** – “**Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;**”

We think of Him, and all he suffered, out of obedience to God and Love for us.

He is the **author** of eternal salvation.

By taking of the Lord’s supper we are **reading** the book he wrote.

We are looking at the **example** Christ set for us.

But the Lord’s Supper is only for His disciples – those that want to be like Him. To those who look to Him for SALVATION!

And, as the scripture says, for salvation it is necessary to OBEY HIM!

It’s not enough just to believe, repentance is necessary. The devils believe and tremble, **James 2:19**, yet haven’t repented.

It’s not enough just to repent, to turn from our old life of sin and to instead live for God, confession is necessary.

**Romans 10:9** – “**That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.**”

It’s not enough just to confess before men, baptism is necessary.

**Mark 16:16** – “**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned**”

If you want to argue about obedience, you’re not arguing with me. You’re arguing with the man that wrote the book.

Do you think you love Jesus - if you don’t keep his commandments?

Don’t fool yourself, humble yourself, obey God.

- By Ed Kelleher at the West Columbia church of Christ, SC, 4/24/2011
- Note: All scriptures are projected on screen and read