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## 1 Corinthians 11:27

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*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.*

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**Note 6 at 1 Cor. 11:27:** The Lord's Supper is symbolic and its real power is in the fact that it keeps us in remembrance of the most basic truths of our salvation (see [note 2 at vv. 24-25](#), p. 923). However, just because it is symbolic doesn't mean it is unimportant. Here Paul describes the severe effects of partaking of Communion unworthily (see note 7 at this verse).

**Note 7 at 1 Cor. 11:27:** There have been many interpretations of just what qualifies as "unworthily" in this verse. A severe interpretation would suggest that any deed or thought in a person's life which has not been confessed and repented of would make an individual unworthy. Since the scripture says, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23), very few people would ever qualify as worthy to partake of Communion. Plus, this would make our relationship with the Lord in Communion dependent on our performance, which is contrary to the very act of atonement of which the Lord's Supper reminds us of.

It is most likely that what makes a person worthy or unworthy is whether or not he has been born again (see [note 2 at Jn. 3:3](#), p. 92). This would also be totally consistent with the doctrine of grace which Paul constantly preached (see [note 2 at Rom. 3:22](#), p. 759; see [note 11 at Rom. 4:8](#), p. 762). There were unbelievers among the true Christians just as Jesus prophesied (see [note 1 at Mt. 13:37](#), p. 200) and this still exists today. It is a dangerous offense for an unbeliever to take the Lord's Supper (see [note 2 at Lk. 22:19](#), p. 474).

A person who professes salvation through partaking of Communion and yet does not possess it, because there is not true faith present, becomes guilty of the body and blood of the Lord (v. 27). That person will not be able to claim ignorance when he stands before God. The Lord's Supper clearly preaches the gospel.

Therefore, when taking Communion, each person should examine himself (see [note 9 at v. 28](#)) to see whether or not he is in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5). It is an individual evaluation which a minister is not authorized to make for others, but ministers should make the warnings of Paul here in 1 Corinthians 11 known to others when administering Communion.

**Note 8 at 1 Cor. 11:27:** This warning about being "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" has caused fear in the hearts of many believers. They fear that if they aren't just right when they partake of Communion, they may be damned (v. 29). This is inconsistent with all the other teachings of Paul about relationship with the Lord through grace (see [notes 2-3 at Rom. 5:1](#), p. 768; see [notes 15-16 at Rom. 5:8-10](#), p. 772). A Christian does not partake of the Lord's Supper unworthily even if he has sin in his life (see [note 7 at v. 27](#)). If we truly worship the Lord through Communion, we have to do that in Spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24), and our born-again spirit is perfect (see [note 3 at Mt. 26:41](#), p. 507; see [note 11 at Rom. 4:8](#), p. 762) regardless of how our flesh is (see [note 3 at Rom. 7:18](#), p. 790). The apparent problems with this verse are removed when you interpret "unworthily" as referring to those who are not born again (see [note 2 at Jn. 3:3](#), p. 92).

Paul is saying that anyone who is not saved and yet partakes of Communion is professing a lie (see [note 5 at v. 26](#), p. 924). As Jesus said, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (Jn. 9:41). Judgment is easier on those who are ignorant (see [note 5 at Lk. 12:48](#), p. 331) and anyone who takes Communion cannot claim ignorance. If an individual partakes of the Lord's Supper "unworthily" (i.e. not born again), that person becomes without excuse. He is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

**Note 12 at 1 Cor. 11:31:** This verse is very problematic for those who think Paul is speaking of Christians who have some unworthiness as they take Communion and are therefore being judged by the Lord with sickness and death. However, if you interpret the unworthiness mentioned in verses 27 and 29 as referring to a non-Christian taking Communion (see [note 7 8 10 at vv. 27](#) and 29, p. 924-925), then this is very simple. Anyone who judges his or herself a sinner and puts faith in Jesus experiences salvation and will not be judged. That judgment was placed on Jesus. Then the next verse says that when we (Christians) are judged, we are chastened but never condemned (or damned-v. 29) as a non-Christian will be (see [note 13 at v. 32](#), below).

