

THE COMMUNION: EXAMINATION

Happy New Year, everyone! I want to pick up where we left off in our November newsletter and discuss how we can inadvertently open the door for Satan to influence our lives. I've always been deeply moved by the verses in **Hebrews 12:1-2**:

1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2** looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Notice in **verse 2** how it says Jesus endured the cross because of the joy set before Him—to fulfill His mission and establish the foundation of our faith. In 48 years of ministry, I have witnessed many instances where people's faith (what they were believing for) became shipwrecked. **In most cases, the root cause is an unwillingness to allow God to bring conviction and judgment to their hearts.**

The passage in Hebrews urges us to lay aside sin, which hinders us and weighs us down, preventing us from finishing our race. There is specific sin that the enemy uses to ensnare us if we are not vigilant and fail to exercise proper discernment.

In prior newsletters, I've emphasized the importance of communion and maintaining fellowship with the body of Christ. This month, I want to focus on the church—the one body of Christ on earth. Despite the many denominations and divisions that exist today, **Ephesians 1:22-23** introduces us to the head of the body, the one church:

22 And He put all things under His feet and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, **23** which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The final act of Jesus' exaltation was the resurrection of "His body on earth," over which He became the head. When Jesus described the church as a body, He gave us a clear representation: just as the head directs the growth and movement of the physical body, Christ, as the head, governs the spiritual body—the church. This relationship mirrors the dynamic between Adam and Eve: as Eve was Adam's counterpart, so is the church to Christ. Without the church, Christ's purpose in suffering, dying, and rising again would be incomplete.

Where Adam failed to be a proper covering for Eve, Jesus, the second Adam (**1 Corinthians 15:45**), succeeded. He became the new head for His church. **Ephesians 4:4-6** emphasizes the unity and interconnected nature of this body:

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called

in one hope of your calling; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism; **6** one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

This unity brings the potential for maturity to all members of the body, as described in **Ephesians 4:13**:

13 Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Paul continues in **verse 14**, cautioning us against remaining immature, like children who are unsure of where they belong or what to believe, leaving themselves vulnerable.

Ephesians 4 shows how we can, through sin and negligence, fall into the enemy's trap—a game rigged against us by the god of this world. Yet, despite his schemes, God provides a way for us to escape these snares. **Verse 15** says:

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.

This is where the significance of communion comes into play. In **1 Corinthians 11:24, 25, 27-32**, we are reminded to recognize the proper value of communion and the body of Christ. The Greek text gives us insight, so let's look at these verses with this in mind.

Verse 24: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." (The word broken does not appear in the original text.) **Verse 25:** "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." **Verse 27:** Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner (failing to recognize its proper value) brings guilt upon themselves. **Verse 28:** Let each person examine themselves before eating the bread and drinking the cup. **Verse 29:** Anyone who partakes without discerning the body (the church) eats and drinks judgment upon themselves. **Verse 30:** For this reason, many are weak and sick, and some have even died. **Verse 31-32:** If we judge ourselves, we would not be judged. When we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we are not condemned with the world.

This brings us back to **Hebrews 12:1-2** and the importance of identifying and laying aside the sin that so easily ensnares us. In the next newsletter, I will focus on how we can practice self-judgment to avoid being entangled by the enemy and falling into the traps of this fallen world.

God bless,

JANN T. BUTLER

Living by His word
a publication of By His Word Christian Center

