

The apostle Paul continues to write to the church in Corinth about their church conduct. In 11:3-15, he dealt with the instructions in public worship. Now he addresses more divisions that have surfaced in the church. The letter to this church was not to show us a model of doctrine, but it is an epistle that deals with reproof. Paul deals with their failures in which our passage today brings to light. This church forgot who they were in Christ; that is, they had died and risen with him.

Verse 17—

Stern rebuke is in order as Paul declares, **I praise you not**. Moments ago, in verse 2 of this same chapter, Paul praised the Corinthians for two things: 1) they remembered Paul in all things. 2) They kept the ordinances (or teachings). But he judges them on how they put the instructions into practice. They evidently could recite Paul's instructions, but they were not practicing what they preached. So that when the church gathers, Paul said, **ye come together not for the better, but for the worse**. A gathering of Christians is not to be praised, no matter how large, if they are not putting Christ first in all things.

Verse 18—

When ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you. The Greek word for **divisions** is *schisma*. Paul had already rebuked them similarly in chapter 1:11. There he called it *contentions*. Instead of recognizing they were *of one body in Christ* and "*every one members one of another*" (Romans 12:5), they were forming separate *bodies* of their own. This is the *mystery* revealed to the apostle Paul that, "*The Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body...*" as the Jews (Ephesians 3:6), and there is "*one body...one Spirit...one Lord...one faith...one baptism, one God and Father of all...*" (Ephesians 4:4-6). The context will be coming together to eat a fellowship meal.

And I partly believe it. Having already received notice in chapter 1 regarding the contentions, he can understand there are divisions too.

Verse 19—

For there must be also heresies among you, There will always be heresies creeping into the church. Paul warned about them in Galatians 5:20 and called heresies one of the *works of the flesh*. For the Corinthians, the heresies could be idolatry or paganism that they brought with them from their old lives. We have to be on the lookout for these things and *prove* them so that they **be made manifest** (come to light) by those who are spiritual. It takes those who are spiritual to bring heresies to light.

Verse 20—

Because of the divisions, the church was coming together and acting like the world. There was no spiritual meaning to taking the Lord's Supper. They had forgotten Christ. They were neglecting anything spiritual. True fellowship is always putting the Lord first, or **not covering Christ** as we saw in previous verses.

Verse 21—

The ancient church had the practice of the *Agape Feast* in conjunction with the Lord's Supper. It appears that the Corinthian church, at this pre-Lord's Supper feast, was so schismatic that some were able to fill their plates and indulge to the point of drunkenness, while others were left **hungry** altogether.

Verse 22—

Paul calls them out as those who **despise the church of God and shame** the less fortunate in the body. There is no **praise** from Paul for this pagan like practice. They were acting just like the world and not being separate.

Paul is not prohibiting eating in a church, but they were not allowing the poor to join in the meal with them. This is not praiseworthy, and Paul will not allow them to **despise...the church of God** in this way. It was supposed to be an *Agape* (love) feast, not a selfish-gorging feast.

Verse 23—

Paul tells them the true reason to come together. It's not something he made up, for he says, **I have received of the Lord**. Everything Paul taught was given to him by the Lord himself. 1 Corinthians 15:3; Galatians 1:1, 11, 12; 1 Thessalonians 4:2. This is why Paul instructs the Corinthians to "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1; see also 4:16, and Philippians 3:17; 4:9). **Took bread**, this is the Greek word *artos* for leavened bread. This is not the Passover meal Paul is describing.

Verse 24—

This fellowship ceremony is to be a **remembrance** of Christ. The bread is not the actual **body**, as some religions teach.

Verse 25—

Likewise, the **cup** is to be a **remembrance** of the **blood** which Christ shed. It does not become, nor is it the blood of Christ.

Verse 26—

We partake of the *communion* or *fellowship* meal to *remember Christ*. There is no instruction on how often to do it or when, or even how. Paul says **as often as ye eat...and drink, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come**.

Verse 27-29—

We can see in a transition here of the former dispensation and the new dispensation of grace. There is a grave warning given for the one who **eateth and drinketh unworthily**...that he or she is **guilty of the body and blood of the Lord**. And in verse 29, Paul uses the word **damnation**.

Is Paul stating that we will be damned to Hell if we eat the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner? Does this fit with the message of grace? We have to look for another meaning. **Damnation** (*krima*) is translated as **condemnation** in verse 34. Darby translates it **judgment** (as does the marginal note in KJV). **Judgment** conveys the thought more clearly for our 21st ears. The point seems to be when someone took part in the Lord's Supper unworthily, he or she was making a poor judgment which had consequences in the early church.

Verse 30—

For this cause many are weak and sickly....and many sleep. God was judging believers with sickness and even death if they took part of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. Clearly this was unique to the early church and not today. This same kind of judgment took place about 25 years earlier in Acts 5 with the account of Ananias and Sapphira. During the transition period from circumcision to uncircumcision, God apparently pronounced and executed physical judgment for sin—The Corinthian church, as we will see, were still experiencing the sign gifts as well. So long as the Kingdom offer was being presented to the Jewish nation there were still personal and national judgments, which would ultimately end in AD 70 with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem

Today we do not live under personal or national judgments from God, and yet there are natural consequences for sin. There is no **damnation** because of sin because the sins of the world were taken care of on the cross. Eternal consequences come from unbelief or lack of faith in the operation of God, which is his death, burial, and resurrection.

Verses 31, 32—

Judge yourselves. This is a good practice for all believers today to ensure we are in line with the will, or the character of God in our lives. The Lord **chastened** the Corinthians, but did not damn them to Hell for their behavior.

Verses 33,34—

What was the problem in this church? They were coming to the fellowship meal to get drunk, and fill their bellies. They were divided by rich and poor, and did not put others above themselves. The ultimate purpose was fellowship with the Lord, not satisfying hunger. Paul has more to discuss with them on this subject but tells them **the rest I will set in order when I come**.

These things are not to be directly applied to the dispensation of grace.