

## **The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians**

### **Divisions at Supper**

1 Corinthians 11:17-22

1. **A Worse Gathering** (v.17)

After commending the Corinthians for holding fast to the teaching that he gave to them (v.2), he now moves to another area where they are failing miserably in their application of what they have been taught. In fact, their gatherings were not functioning so as to benefit the congregation and bring them together but rather to continually separate them (cf. Ja. 2:1ff).

2. **A Divided Gathering** (vs.18-19)

Paul is very aware of the factional divisions in the church (1 Cor. 1:11ff), and he does not indicate that there is any benefit to them. It is possible that Paul is noting the beneficial nature of strife and divisions in the church because one of the results often is a purifying of the local body (1 Jn. 2:19; cf. Mt. 13:1ff; John 15:1ff). However, it is better to see Paul's comment about who is "approved" not in the sense of a faithful servant, but rather wealthy or privileged member of the church (cf. 1 Cor. 4:8ff).

3. **A Different Meal** (vs.20-21)

The intentional divisions in their fellowship served to give the exact opposite message from what the Lord's Supper was to show (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 12:13; Gal. 3:28). In coming together, each person would have the meal that he would be able to provide, and the disparity between the meals of the wealthy and the slave left one over-filled and the other in great hunger.

4. **A Pointed Rebuke** (v.22)

Paul is asking the questions of this verse in seeming exasperation. It is as if to say that only possible explanations for why the Corinthians had been acting in this way was because they didn't have homes of their own in which to eat their own meals, or that they were somehow intending to treat one another in a way that was shameful.