

enjoyed by the saints prior to the actual Communion and was called a "love feast" (cf. Jude 12). It was an attempt to reproduce as faithfully as possible the feast at which our Lord instituted the original Lord's Supper.

b. Practiced. v. 21. At the "love feast" each one was to bring his own portion and share with others. It was to be a common meal. However, sensuality, selfishness, and vanity prevailed so that the whole thing was corrupted. Indeed, each took his "own" and as a result an offensive inequality appeared among the people. The words "drunken" and "hungry" accent the form of the problem. It was all a grab-game and not the dinner of the Lord!

c. Probed. v. 22. Three questions are raised: 1) The first one contains a double negative and expresses irony in asking: "I suppose you act thus because you are houseless, and must satisfy your appetites at church?" 2) The second suggests that their action is deliberate and that intended scorn is being heaped upon the church of God (a phrase of awful dignity!). 3) The third concerns bringing shame upon the "have nots." The verb used with the church connotes mental attitude while the one used with the poor levels against feelings. Both are compounds with a Greek preposition which points to derogation.

Conclusion It is clear from these few verses that Corinth was riddled with abuses. There were furtive divisions. There were doctrinal aberrations. There were practical inequities. All of these soured the gathering together in the Name of our Lord at His Table! No wonder Paul drops any sort of commendation and strikes with force. He declares (one of the many compound verbs meaning to announce) that he cannot praise them (vv. 17, 22). Furthermore, they come together with a purpose of worsening themselves rather than bettering themselves. Paul is bewildered at such a state. What occurred then causes many more to sorrow in these last days for similar abuses still persist. Horrors! How is it with you? Amen.

## THE BOOK OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

### "Abuses At Communion"

1 Corinthians 11:17-22

#### Introduction

1. It is always possible to find some place for praise in an assembly of those who truly love the Lord. This is true even for Paul at Corinth where there were multitudes of problems (cf. 1:1-9; 11:2). It would be well for those who practice the art of complaint to take note of this matter.

2. When there are abuses, it is necessary for the apostle Paul to bring them to the attention of the saints. This should serve as an example for all true ministers of the Gospel. What is detestable to the Lord must be called to the attention of the saints. Let none feel that this is meddling or not the concern of the Pastor!

3. This is the second disorderly item within the assembly in public worship which the apostle mentions in this chapter. The first one pertained to the practice of women and this one relates to the Lord's Supper. Here is a time of intimate Christian fellowship amongst the believers. Yet, right here there were abuses which destroyed the sanctity of the entire situation! With vigor, Paul attacks the problem. Here are his reasons for rebuke:-

#### i. DIVISIONS v. 18

These divisions are:-

- a. Primary. The word "first" is a superlative form and is used in the sense of "first in order." Before Paul would talk about other abuses, he went to one core issue. Because no "second" is specifically mentioned, some feel this is actually the basic problem of the entire section. In either case, it is certain that here is a priority item and needs to be mentioned.
- b. Peculiar. The Greek construction here is a genitive absolute with the present participle and

this points to repeated occurrences. The thought is that the problem is raised repeatedly when the saints come together as an assembly of "called out ones" (so Greek for "church"). The problem is made acute by the contradiction in terms! It just doesn't make sense to gather as an "assembly" and yet have "divisions." Hence, Paul is writing more about the "manner of worship" than he is the "place of worship."

- c. Particular The word employed for "divisions" is from the Greek root meaning "cleft" or "rent." The papyri utilize it of "splinters of wood." The English "schism" is a transliteration of the Greek. On the basis of its use earlier (1:10), it appears that the term has reference to the partisan spirit which obtained at Corinth. There were no open cleavages, but the furtive splinter existed. Indeed, the Greek verb "are" specifically connotes the existence and at handedness of the divisions!
- d. Present. Perhaps the most treacherous item is this: Paul keeps hearing (present tense) about these matters. There is persistent rumor of strife. Mind you, he doesn't believe all he hears, but what he does hear is not appreciated!

NOTE: Believers who participate in "assembly" around the Table of the Lord who are divided surreptitiously are wrong! It is a prime matter of abuse and God abhors it.

## 2. DISRUPTIONS v. 19.

They are:-

- a. Described. As pointed out earlier, there may well be but one single challenge to the Corinthian church--the problem of divisions. This item of a disruption therefore is either a separate one or an extension of the previous one. The truth of the matter is--something dreadful existed! Paul's argument is that if schisms were present, then heresies also were there! The moral condition led to a more fearful situation. The term "heresies" is a sharp word. Some have tried to soften its

implications as being a "choice or preference," but in the N.T. it is always a forceful word. The use of the word in the N.T. is significant. It is placed after seditions (Gal. 5:20), in relation to opposing parties of Sadducees and Pharisees (Acts 5:17; 15:5), and in connection with Christians as compared with Jews (Acts 24:5, 14). In all of these instances, the external divisions rest on internal oppositions, i.e. on profound and doctrinal differences. The moral necessity of these "heresies" being present is indicated by the verb "must." It might be stated, therefore, that Paul partly believed the divisions because he suspected the doctrinal perversions.

- b. Designed. A true purpose of God is fulfilled in these unhappy arrangements. It is that "they which are approved might be made manifest among you." Doctrinal heresies serve as a magnet attracting unsound and unsettled minds. The noun "approved" comes from a root which means to "test and find approved as of metal." Hence, those who truly are of the Lord and have sound wisdom and mature judgment "become manifest" (so Greek) by this means. This may sound like a strange reason for allowing disturbances, but God has His purposes and they can never be restrained (Job 42:2 RV). The final prepositional phrase "among you" is additional proof that the local assembly at Corinth was diluted with chaff as is true of all churches until the end (Matt. 13:30, 39).

## 3. DISTINCTIONS vv. 20, 21, 22.

These are:-

- a. Placed. v. 10 For the third time in this section Paul mentions the idea of "coming together" (vv. 17, 18, 20). The gathering was in one place and referred to the manner of assembly rather than the building per se. (cf. v. 18). Nonetheless, the gathering was at the common meal and not the Table of the Lord. This was a dinner