

“A Feeding Frenzy” (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)

The most powerful title or position I'll ever hold is “Dad.” I absolutely love being a dad to my three children. It is a privilege and a joy. I concur with Bill Cosby who said, “Nothing I've ever done has given me more joys and rewards than being a father to my children.”¹ As a father, the greatest gift I can receive is when another person blesses one of my children. Similarly, the most hurtful thing anyone can do to me is to hurt one of my children. If there is anything that is capable of bringing out my wrath, it is this. What is especially hurtful is when one of my children hurts another one of my children. Worse yet, when one of my boys hurts his little sister.

Did you know that God the Father feels the same way I do? He absolutely loves being a dad. He cares about each of His children in the deepest way imaginable. But what grieves Him is when one of His children hurts another one of His children. Worse yet, when one of His children who has been given much dishonors one who has little.

We will discover that God will not tolerate divisions and distinctions within His body—the church.² The reason is simple: *God is dead serious about His body*. In 1 Cor 11:17-34,³ Paul provides three exhortations for us to follow.

1. Include the entire body of Christ in worship (11:17-22). In these first six verses, Paul rebukes the church at Corinth for being divided. Paul begins this section in 11:17 with sobering words: **“But in giving this⁴ instruction,⁵ I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse.”** The conjunction “but” serves to contrast the worship events of 11:17-34 with 11:2-16. Ironically, the very equality the Corinthians were misusing in 11:2-16 was resolutely denied when it came to the observance of the Lord's Supper. This is confirmed by the use of the verb “praise.”⁶ In 11:2, Paul praised the Corinthians because they remembered him in everything and maintained the teachings he passed on to them. But in 11:17 (cf. 11:22) he does not praise them on account of their class divisions (see 11:18).⁷ Instead, he declares that they “come together not for the better but for the worse.”

The verb translated here “come together” (*sunercomai*) is used five times in this passage (11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34).⁸ Elsewhere, the verb refers to either coming or going with one or more persons (i.e., to travel together with someone).⁹ Additionally, *sunercomai* is used in sexual contexts to describe coming together to unite in an intimate relationship.¹⁰ Hence, with more than a sprinkling of irony, Paul repeatedly describes the Corinthians as coming together in one location, knowing full well that their eating was anything but “together” as a unified body.¹¹ Thus, the very ritual that was intended to celebrate the gospel and symbolically act out their oneness in Christ had become an occasion for splitting the church on the basis of status.¹² This explains why Paul stated that the Corinthians “come together not for the better but for the worse.”

Paul now explains this problem further in 11:18: **“For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions¹³ exist among you; and in part¹⁴ I believe it.”** The phrase “in the first place” is emphatic since no “second” follows.¹⁵ First and last on Paul's mind are the “divisions” that are taking place in Corinth.¹⁶ It is for this reason that Paul cannot praise the Corinthians.¹⁷ Instead of treating one another with brotherly love and acting as the family of God, there are divisions among them.¹⁸ What Paul has in mind is a division between those who have more than enough to eat and drink at the Lord's Supper and those who have insufficient quantities. This is evident from the contrast in 11:21-22 between “one who is hungry” and “one who is drunk.” In 11:22, Paul identifies a group within the church as the “have-nots,” whose members are humiliated by the actions of their counterparts.¹⁹ This deeply grieves the heart of God for *God is dead serious about His body*.

As in 11:18, Paul explains himself further in 11:19: **“For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.”**²⁰ “Factions”²¹ or “divisions” can have a positive side. They serve to clarify whom God approves as faithful and who are not.²² God’s approval (*dokimoi*) contrasts with what Paul had written earlier about being disapproved (*adokimos*; 9:27) by God.²³ Thus, “the approved” are those who behave in a Christian manner and thus stand out from the ones who do not. Mature Christians will become evident in times of crisis.

The indictment of 11:17-19 is expanded in 11:20-22. Yet, before we read these verses we need to make sure we understand how the Corinthians are abusing the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper was usually part of a meal the early Christians shared together—the “love feast.” In Corinth, instead of sharing their food and drinks, each family was bringing its own and eating what it had brought. The result was that the rich had plenty but the poor had little and suffered embarrassment as well. This was hardly the picture of Christian love and unity.²⁴ They were eating their own private meals rather than sharing a meal consecrated to the Lord.²⁵ Furthermore, some with plenty of wine to drink were evidently drinking too heavily.

Now with this scenario in mind, read Paul’s words in 11:20-21: **“Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper,²⁶ for in your eating each²⁷ one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.”** Paul provides a glaring contrast in these verses. Instead of partaking of the Lord’s Supper, the Corinthians devour their food while the poor go hungry.²⁸ The idea here is not eating first, but refusing to share food and drink. Furthermore, the grammar suggests that the “devouring” took place during the meal itself.²⁹ Thus, the wealthy members of the Corinthian church were guilty of gluttony and drunkenness *while* the poor went without (11:21). This notion can also be supported from the customary practice at Greco-Roman banquets where wealthy hosts—those with homes large enough to host the communal meal—would have assigned the biggest and best portions of food to the more privileged.

Nevertheless, Paul did not tolerate what was socially acceptable in ancient Corinth. He closes out this section in 11:22 with a series of rhetorical questions, creating a strong rhetorical appeal. Paul exclaims, **“What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.”** Paul is grieved at the behavior of the church; therefore, his words are flavored with a righteous indignant anger. The response of the Corinthians should be repentance. Whatever the precise circumstances, a meal designed to express unity was being so abused as to highlight the disunity of this church. The cliquish behavior of the Corinthians reflected significant social and economic differences; thus, members who brought nothing with them to the meal were being humiliated and going hungry, while those who could bring plenty to eat and drink, enjoyed their own food without sharing it.³⁰ What should have been an inclusive community meal had become an occasion for simultaneously private meals.³¹ This was an affront to Christ and His gospel.

I wish divisions and partiality were problems only in first-century Corinth, but I am sure they are alive and well in the 21st century at Emmanuel. Do we prefer certain people over others? Do we gravitate toward those who have money or are successful by the world’s standards? Do we only want to socialize with those who are like us? Why do we struggle so to reach out to those who are different than we are? Our prayer must be that we will not allow any kind of prejudice, whether social, racial, generational, or cultural, to control our attitudes toward anyone in the body of Christ. We must always remember that *God is dead serious about His body*.

[As a loving and impartial Father, God calls us to include all of His children in worship.]

2. Recapture the significance of the Lord's Supper (11:23-26). In 11:23-26, Paul gives a brief theology of the Lord's Supper. In doing so, he reminds us to remember that the Lord's Supper pictures Christ's self-sacrifice on behalf of His people.³² Paul writes, **"For I received³³ from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'"** Twice in these verses, Paul urges the Corinthians to remember the death of Christ. By partaking of the bread and the cup, we remember that Jesus Christ took our hell that we might have His heaven. It is His "body on our behalf." The Lord's Supper is God's way of getting us to keep the cross of Christ central in the life of the church. We use the Lord's Supper to draw close to Jesus in gratitude for what He has done for the entire church through His cross. As we draw near to Him through His Supper, He will draw near to us.³⁴

Many couples renew their marriage vows on an anniversary of their wedding. Some couples plan large celebrations; others simply renew their vows before each other. Either way, this act declares a confirmation of original vows and a commitment to continued faithfulness. But we can also think of the new covenant with the tenderness and devotion of renewed marriage vows. Unlike a human marriage, however, the new covenant represents God's declaration of His devotion and commitment, even though the other covenant partner, His people, had not remained faithful. When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we remember what Jesus has done for us in spite of ourselves.

Paul closes this section by stating, **"For as often³⁵ as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes"** (11:26). The proclamation³⁶ of the Lord's Supper is to show forth the Lord's death until He comes. By means of the Lord's Supper the Corinthians are to show in a physical way the death of Jesus and what it accomplished for their salvation and corporate fellowship. The result should be that the Corinthians will not overindulge themselves, despise and shame others, or allow brothers and sisters to go hungry. To do less is the epitome of selfishness.

A well-known painting of the Vietnam Wall depicts a young widow and her daughter standing at the wall, reaching up and touching the name of the husband and father who died. The reflection in the polished granite is not of the mother and daughter but of the husband and father reaching out his hand to touch theirs. That is the Lord's Supper. We arrive at the table and reach out our hands to take the bread and the cup. In response to our act of faith, Jesus touches us.³⁷ The significance of the Lord's Supper is this: We remember Christ and proclaim Him because He laid down His life for us. If you have never believed in Jesus Christ's person and work, please do so today.

[Our loving and impartial Father wants us to remember and proclaim the great sacrifice of His Son.]

3. Judge yourself to avoid God's judgment (11:27-32). In this section, Paul warns us against abusing the Lord's Supper. In 11:27-29 he writes, **"Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy³⁸ manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge³⁹ the body rightly."** The opening word "therefore" (cf. 10:12; 11:33) indicates that Paul is now resuming his main discussion from 11:22. Furthermore, he is drawing a conclusion from what he has said and giving an explanation to his teaching. Since the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of Christ's death (11:23-26), eating and drinking "unworthily" is unconscionable. The word rendered "unworthily" (KJV) or "unworthy manner" (NASB, NIV, NKJV) is not an adjective describing the condition of the one partaking of communion, but an adverb, describing the manner in which one partakes of the Lord's Supper.⁴⁰ The sin of the Corinthians, for which divine discipline was imposed, was related to the manner in which the Lord's Supper was observed.⁴¹

The Corinthians are not commanded to examine themselves to see whether or not they are Christians, or even to see if they have sin in their lives, but to see if they are properly discerning the body of Christ.⁴² There is likely a *double-entendre* in 11:29 with the reference to “the body,” referring literally to Jesus’ physical body “which is for you” (cf. 11:24), and the church as the Lord’s corporate body, which was being divided by the Corinthian attitude (cf. 11:17-22).⁴³ In other words, one who treats fellow believers poorly fails to discern that they are members of Christ’s church, His body. One may also fail to discern the significance of Christ’s death since by His death He created a people; and therefore one who mistreats fellow believers at the Lord’s Supper reveals that he or she has little understanding of why Christ died.⁴⁴

Practically speaking, this means that if you are not in fellowship with another believer strive to resolve the schism in your relationship before you partake of the Lord’s Supper. In Matt 5:23-24, Jesus told His disciples not to worship God until you have first reconciled with your brother. Fortunately, Paul provides a supplementary note when he writes, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” (Rom 12:18). It’s not always possible to attain this, but God’s goal is that there not be any outstanding balance in your fellowship bank account. Instead, we are to pursue peace.

Paul now applies the general truths of 11:27-29 specifically to the situation at Corinth. In 11:30 Paul writes, **“For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number⁴⁵ sleep.”**⁴⁶ The judgment here is physical and it is progressive: weakness, sickness, death.⁴⁷ The word “weak” refers to illness of any kind (depression, anxiety?) while the term “sick” refers to weakness and on-going poor health.⁴⁸ The verb “sleep” refers to the death of a believer.⁴⁹ Paul is dealing with illness as a physical divine judgment; but not all illness is.⁵⁰ These verses apply only if and when the problems of weakness, sickness, and death are problems resulting from divine discipline because of unconfessed sin.

It has been said, “God has been known to give ‘dishonorable discharges.’” In other words, eventually, God says, “Enough is enough. Your time is up!” Why does God do this? For the simple reason that He loves us and wants to ensure that we are in fellowship with Him. Since pain gets our attention, He uses pain. “Sometimes Christ sees that we need sickness for the good of our souls more than healing for the good of our bodies.”⁵¹ But even when He resorts to this form of discipline, He does so because He loves us. *God is dead serious about His body.*

Paul continues his argument in 11:31-32 with two powerful truths. First, in 11:31 Paul writes, **“But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.”** Paul clearly states that the Corinthians will not be judged *if* they judge themselves. His logic here seems to be: Judge yourselves so that the Lord will not have to.⁵² Our goal must be to judge the sin in our own lives before God has to expose it. We must humble ourselves before we are humbled or humiliated. I don’t know about you, but I have enough issues in my life to keep me busy.

Yet, we are so good at judging others. Some of us look down on people who listen to worldly music, watch R-rated movies, drink alcohol, dance, play cards, spend money on things we wouldn’t buy, etc. The ability to see sin in others and ignore it in your own heart is one of the distinguishing characteristics of a Pharisee, and being a Pharisee is so easy. It’s great to make rules to guide our own behavior, but when we extend those rules to everyone around us, we’re in danger of becoming pharisaical.

A second truth is found in 11:32 where Paul writes, **“But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.”** The verbs “judged” and “disciplined” are both present tense verbs indicating on-going activity. This suggests that the goal of God’s discipline is remedial.⁵³ This is the difference between discipline and punishment. Discipline is for the good of another; punishment is to extract a pound of flesh. God disciplines us because He is a loving Father (Heb 12:5-11). He desperately wants our good.

One evening, I was asking my middle child, Justin, how he knew I loved him. He shocked me with his response. He said, “Dad, I know that you love me because you always discipline me.” This is the fruit of fatherhood. God knows our biological children will never mature apart from biblical discipline. Likewise, God disciplines us so that we will mature spiritually. Apart from His discipline we will never mature. And if we are not disciplined, the Bible indicates that we are illegitimate children (Heb 12:8). Hence, we should welcome discipline as a sign that a loving Father cares about us.

Scripture speaks of three levels⁵⁴ of God’s chastening, or discipline:

- *Plan A—Internal Chastening.* In this level, God deals with us in our hearts and nobody knows it is happening except us. If God is disciplining you at this moment, that is the best way to have your problem solved. One of my daily prayers is, “Lord, humble me so that you don’t have to humble me.” If you and I can come to the place that God puts his finger on something, and you can say, “Thank you, Lord, for loving me this much,” you are judging yourself. If this level of discipline is not effective, God moves to...
- *Plan B—External Chastening.* In this level the consequences of our sin become obvious because God’s discipline goes public. This is where Jonah ran from the Lord, and God chastened him. He was not weak or sick. Plan B led to being swallowed by the fish. Had Jonah not surrendered to God’s will the second time, God had another plan. If this second level of discipline fails, God will up the ante.
- *Plan C—Terminal Chastening.* In this level, God calls the believer home prematurely.⁵⁵

The proper course of action from the Corinthians should be to honor and respect their fellow believers. Paul concludes this passage in 11:33-34 with these words: **“So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.”**⁵⁶ The verb “come together” harkens back to 11:17 and serves to bracket this unit. Paul then provides a direct answer to the issues raised in 11:21. Instead of some gorging themselves while others go hungry, each should share what they have, and all should eat together. In this way the Corinthians reflect the unity of the body (“they judge rightly,” 11:29), and avert the judgment of God.

The phrase translated “wait for one another”⁵⁷ more likely means “welcome one another.” If the Corinthians merely “wait for one another” the problem at hand is not corrected. The crisis in Corinth is that the poor are without food. The rich “waiting” for the poor to arrive and then partaking together will not remedy this difficulty. Fortunately, this translation issue is ironed out when it is recognized that when *ekdechomai* (“wait for”) is used of persons, it usually means “to take or receive from another” or “to entertain.”⁵⁸ In this specific context, it seems appropriate that Paul’s command should be translated, “Care for one another!” “Receive one another warmly!” “Grant one another table fellowship!” “Show hospitality to one another!”⁵⁹ Thus, in this context Paul is perhaps instructing the Corinthians, as his summary statement, to receive each other as equal members of the body of Christ.

The command to “eat at home” connects to Paul’s first warning that the Corinthians are worse off for having gathered together (11:17). If they are intent only on indulging their appetites, then they should stay at home. If the church’s gathering is to be meaningful it has to be an expression of real fellowship, which includes sharing.⁶⁰

Paul’s words in Rom 12:10 sum up this entire passage: “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.” *God is dead serious about His body*, so may we live out the Scriptures in obedience to Him.

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Scripture Reference

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Leviticus 21:16-20

Luke 14:7-11

James 2:1-4

Luke 22:17-20

Hebrews 12:5-11

Revelation 3:19

Study Questions

1. Paul thoroughly rebukes the Corinthian church (11:17, 22). How do you think the church responded to these words? How would I respond to this type of pastoral rebuke? Would I strive to be humble and teachable? Do I value the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11)? Am I willing to speak the truth in love to brothers and sisters in the body of Christ? Read Ephesians 4:11-16.
2. The primary “division” in the church at Corinth was the favoritism of the rich over the poor (11:17-22). What divisions exist in my church? How have I participated in these schisms? Do I need to confess sins such as favoritism, slander, gossip, or disrespect? Will I begin to earnestly pray that the Lord will help me not to be a respecter of persons? Read James 2:1-13.
3. Do I truly love God’s church? Do I prioritize other brothers and sisters in Christ over myself? How have I accomplished this lofty goal? Read Philippians 2:11. How can I be more Christlike in my interaction with other believers? What concrete steps can I take this week that will demonstrate that I am putting others before myself?
4. What does the Lord’s Supper mean to me (11:23-26)? Before I partake of the bread and the cup, do I first ensure that I am in fellowship with God and others? Read 1 John 1:9; Matthew 5:23-24; Romans 12:18. How can I prepare my family and me for a meaningful remembrance of the Lord’s Supper?
5. Have I made a consistent commitment to judge myself so that the Lord does not have to judge me (11:31)? Do I welcome the discipline of the Lord (11:32)? If so, have I ever stopped to ask the Lord if any of the physical maladies (11:30) I am experiencing are His discipline?
6. God takes relationships in the body of Christ very seriously. Why is it so difficult to have deep and meaningful relationships? How can I take one or two of my relationships to the next level of friendship and community? Will I model what it means to have healthy relationships in the body of Christ? Read John 13:34-35 and 1 John 4:7-21.

Notes

¹ See http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/b/bill_cosby.html.

² Vander Broek 2002:114-115 writes, “Historical evidence suggests that the city of Corinth itself was no stranger to class-consciousness. We know that when Corinth was refounded by the Romans in 44 B.C.E. (it had been destroyed in 146 B.C.E.), it was settled primarily by ‘freedmen,’ former slaves who had earned or had been given their freedom. Many of them became the new rich, the entrepreneurs and wealthy business people of this prosperous trade city...Archeological discoveries and the literature of the period indicates that Corinth was as hierarchical as any other Greco-Roman city of the period, and was unusual only in that status was defined more by wealth than by family name.”

³ Murphy O’Connor 1998:114 sees a chiasmic structure in 11:17-34:

A 11:17-22 The situation at Corinth (Problem)

B 11:23-26 Eucharist and appeal to tradition

A’ 11:27-34 The situation at Corinth (Solution)

⁴ The word “this” (*toutou*) could either refer to 11:3-16 (Barrett 1968:260; Bruce 1971:108) or 11:17-34 (Findlay 1910:876). Garland 2003:536 settles the matter by correctly noting that its connection to the statement that they are not better off for having gathered suggests that it applies entirely to 11:17-34.

⁵ The word “instruction” (*paraggello*) means to enjoin, give a charge *or* order. This is a military word for a commander giving a command to his subordinates. Paul’s instructions are not good advice but apostolic order.

⁶ Talbert 1987:73 and Harvey 1998:168 point out that 11:17-22 is framed by an inclusio using “praise.” (*epaino*).

⁷ These tensions between social classes are not new. Paul has already alluded to them several times (1:26-31; 6:1-8; chps. 8-10).

⁸ The word is only used two other times by Paul (1 Cor 14:23, 26), where it is used of “coming together” for the purpose of corporate worship.

⁹ See Luke 23:55; John 11:33; Acts 1:21; 9:39; 10:23, 45; 11:12; 21:16; 25:17. BDAG s.v. *sunercomai* 2.

¹⁰ See 1 Cor 7:5 v.1 *epi to auto s*; Matt 1:18. BDAG s.v. *sunercomai* 3.

¹¹ The verb *sunerchomai* is the last word in 11:17 for emphasis. Furthermore, Paul seems to make an emphatic point with his use of both *sunercomai* (“come together, assemble”) and *ekkllesia* (“church, assembly”). This provides a double emphasis and constitutes an astute wordplay. Collins 199:421 writes, “The consequences to follow (11:29-32) are appropriate due to the “outrageousness of the Christians coming together in a way that is inconsistent with being the ‘church of God’ (11:16, 22).”

¹² In other passages Paul acknowledges that different classes exist in the church. He often names high status people: Gaius, who hosts Paul and has a house large enough for the entire Corinthian Church (1:14; Rom 16:23), Erastus, a city treasurer (Rom 16:23), who may be the public official and patron named in an inscription found in Corinth; Crispus (1:14), a former synagogue ruler (Acts 18:8); Stephanas, the leader of a household (1:16), who was free to travel in the service of Paul (16:15); and Aquila and Prisca, leaders of the house church.

¹³ The word “divisions” (*schismata*) is the word from which we get the English word “schism.” It carries the ideas of split, rift, tear.

¹⁴ Winter 2001:159-163 argues convincingly that *meros* (“a part”) carries a wide range of meaning in the NT and in literary and nonliterary sources and that it refers here to a “matter” (2 Cor 9:3) or “report” and should not be translated adverbially (“partly”). Rather, Paul means that he is convinced of the report he has received from Chloe’s people about their factions (1:10), which included reports of their divisions during the Lord’s Supper. Thus, Winter rightly suggests that the phrase *meros ti pisteuo* be translated, “I believe a certain report.”

¹⁵ See also Collins 1999:421.

¹⁶ Paul uses the exact term *schisma* (“divisions”) that he used in 1:10, which suggests he is connecting Chloe’s report of divisions (1:10-11) with what is taking place in 11:18. This is further confirmed by noting Paul’s final use of divisions in 12:25 where he again expresses concern with preferential treatment among the church at Corinth. See Lietzmann 1969:252-253 and Stuhlmacher 1987:22-23, 1993:86-87; Winter 2001:162 who argue that the *schismata* in 11:18 are the same as those in 1:10-12. *Contra* Bruce 1971:108; Thiselton 2000:857; and Vander Broek 2002:112 who state that Paul does not seem to be addressing the same group here. In 1:10, the issue is divisions generated by loyalty to rhetorically gifted leaders, by a desire for wisdom that occurs across class lines (see 1:26-31) and that may well put one house church against another. Here the divisions pit poor against rich (11:22) and probably happen within house churches, the basic unit for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. However, this does not seem warranted.

¹⁷ These *schismata* are not to be taken lightly. Any *schismata* of a body constitutes a violent threat to its wholeness and hence to its holiness. It is critical to recognize the perception of uncleanness that is associated with bodily deficiencies or mutilation (Lev 21:16-20). Wholeness is a prerequisite for holiness. Lack of control at the Lord's Supper manifests a serious disregard of the social body's integrity and purity. Neyrey 1990:123.

¹⁸ Paul had confronted church divisions before. Once he rebuked Peter who had eaten with Gentiles in Antioch, but separated himself from them when Jewish Christians came from Jerusalem, trying to show them that he was a good Jew who didn't eat with Gentiles (Gal 2:11-14).

¹⁹ See Smith 2002:89. Winter 1978:81 qualifies "rich and poor" here as "the secure, i.e., those who are guaranteed security by reason of membership of a household, and the insecure, i.e., those who had no protection from a patron."

²⁰ Paul mentions a theological purpose (*hina*) and necessity (*dei*) for the presence of these differing groups.

²¹ Orr 1976:266 argues it is likely that these *haireisis* ("factions") are the outward manifestations of the *schismata* ("divisions") in 11:18. It is also possible that Paul is using the terms *haireisis* and *schismata* synonymously. See Barrett 1968:261; Bruce 1971:109; Conzelmann 1975:194; Wolff 1996:79. See also the decision of the NET and NLT to translate both *schismata* and *haireisis* as "divisions." The only other place Paul uses the word *haireisis* is in Gal 5:20, where it is one of the works of the flesh in contrast to the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23). We get our English word heresy from the Greek word *haireisis*.

²² Most commentators postulate that Paul is discussing an eschatological necessity that distinguishes the "approved" (i.e., saved) from the "unapproved" (i.e., unsaved). E.g., Bruce 1971:109; Conzelmann 1975:194; Fee 1987:537-39; Kistemaker 1993:387; Horrell 1996:150-151. However, Paul's purpose is not to separate true believers from the false. *Contra* Schreiner 2001:382 who argues that the Corinthians who are not labeled *dokimoi* are not "genuine believers." Instead, Paul is demonstrating that the Corinthian church has failed to take to heart the message of the cross (see chps. 1-4 along with 11:23-26). Furthermore, in Paul's other usages of *dokimos* (Rom 14:18; 16:10; 2 Cor 10:18; 13:7; cf. 2 Tim 2:15; Jas 1:12) it does not appear that there is any distinguishing between the saved and unsaved. BDAG s.v. *dokimos* 1-3 provides three different definitions for *dokimos*: (1) "pertaining to being genuine on the basis of testing, approved (by test), tried and true, genuine"; (2) "pertaining to being considered worthy of high regard, respected, esteemed"; and (3) "pertaining to being valuable, precious." Although BDAG classifies 1 Cor 11:19 under category 1, they could have just as easily chosen category 2 as they did for Rom 14:18.

²³ See also David K. Lowery, "The Head Covering and the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:2-34," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143:570 (April 1986): 160; Thomas L. Constable: *Notes on 1 Corinthians*: 2007 edition: <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1corinthians.pdf>, 119. Lowery makes this helpful comment, "In the nation of Israel, freed from bondage in Egypt and bound for the Promised Land of Canaan, only two of that vast company gained God's approval and entered the land (cf. 10:5). Many in the Corinthian assembly did not have this approval, which His discipline of them demonstrated (cf. 11:30-32). If the Corinthians thought the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and baptism somehow communicated magical protection to the participants (cf. 10:12; 15:24), Paul's exhortation must have been doubly painful, since their behavior at this rite was directly linked to their chastisement (11:30-32)—the very thing they sought to avoid." Lowery, "The Head Covering..." 160.

²⁴ Cf. Acts 2:44-46; 4:32, 34-35.

²⁵ Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians*, 120.

²⁶ This is the only occurrence of the phrase "Lord's Supper" in the NT. However, the worship event goes by several other names: "the table of the Lord (1 Cor 10:21); "breaking bread" (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16; 11:24); and thanksgiving (*eucharist*) or blessing (*eulogia*; Matt 26:26-27; 1 Cor 10:16; 11:24).

²⁷ It may be important to note that the adjective "each" is the first word in 11:21 for emphasis. The word "each" always stresses the individual and not the community.

²⁸ The meaning of the verb *prolambano* (1 Cor 11:21) becomes crucial for determining the historical context. Many underscore the temporal force of the prefix *pro-* to render it "to take beforehand." (BDAG s.v. *prolambano* 1c; Robertson and Plummer 1914:241; Barrett 1968:262; Bruce 1971:110; Murphy-O'Connor 1983:160-161; Morris 1990:156-157; Clark 1991:181; Lampe 1991:2-6; 1994:198-203; Pogoloff 1992:267-271; Osiek and Balch 1997:199-200; Collins 1999:422-23; Johnson 2004:204-205; Keener 2005:98; Watson 2005:116-117. Translating the command *ekdechesthe* in 11:33 as "wait for one another" [as all English versions do] provides further support for this view.) However, this does not seem to be the best lexical option. There are only two other uses of *prolambano* in the NT. In Gal 6:1, the verb has the meaning "to be overtaken by a fault." The only LXX use of *prolambano* bears this meaning in Wis. 17:16. In Mark 14:8 the verb conveys the sense of "to anticipate." Hence, Bruce Winter (1978:75-77) argues that *prolambano* does not require the consumption of food before the arrival of others; it means, "to eat or drink," "to devour." See also Fee 1987:542; Blue 1991:230-231; Hofius 1993:89-91; Hays 1997:197 Eriksson 1998:176; Horsley 1998:159; Thiselton 2000:864.

Winter (2001:144-148) convincingly justifies this rendering from ancient Greek literature and then concludes by suggesting that the prefix *pro-* is used to strengthen the meaning of the verb *lambano*. Lexically and contextually, this view is to be preferred. Paul is not pleased with the behavior of the Corinthians (11:17) so he uses a word that can have a pejorative sense to condemn their selfish and greedy behavior.

²⁹ See Winter 2001:149-151.

³⁰ Deffinbaugh writes, "How could one commemorate Christ's equalizing work of atonement by eating the meal in a way that exhibited inequality? How could the saints worship Him who said, 'Blessed are you who are poor' (Luke 6:20) by shaming the poor? How could those who proclaimed their unity with their fellow believers ignore the physical needs of those who came with little or no food? How could a church which was one body begin to celebrate the Lord's Supper with only a partial 'body' present? What the Corinthians were doing at the Lord's Supper denied the things the Supper was intended to symbolize. No wonder Paul said that when they gathered as a church, they were not celebrating the "Lord's Supper." They most certainly were not." Bob Deffinbaugh, "Corrections for Communion" (1 Cor 11:17-34): http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=803.

³¹ Furnish 1999:79.

³² Throughout his letter, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to imitate Christ's sacrificial humility by having an unselfish attitude and love for one another (1:18-2:2; 8:1, 11; 10:31-11:1; 13:1-14:1; 15:1-3; 16:14, 22).

³³ Verbrugge 2007:220 writes, "The two verbs Paul uses here *paralambano* and *paradidomi* are words the apostle sometimes uses as technical words for receiving and passing on church traditions and teachings (for the former, see 1 Cor 15:1, 3; Gal 1:9; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 2:13; 4:1; 2 Thess 3:6; for the latter, see 1 Cor 11:2; 15:3, plus the related noun *paradosis*, 'teaching,' in 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6). Because the teaching of the apostles derived from Jesus himself, Paul is able to say that ultimately he received it 'from the Lord.'"

³⁴ Michael Eaton, *Preaching Through the Bible: 1 Corinthians 10-16* (Kent, England, 1998), 38.

³⁵ Oropeza 2004:65 make these helpful comments, "The phrase ('as often') may indicate a weekly basis when compared with 1 Cor 16:2 and Acts 20:7. The latter mentions the first day of the week as a time for breaking bread. Differently, breaking bread occurs daily in the earliest days of the church (Acts 2:42-47). If the amount of times one celebrates the Lord's Supper were an important issue for Jesus, Paul, or the Synoptic writers, perhaps they would have instituted a more structured schedule. The words 'as often' do suggest a repetitive celebration was expected."

³⁶ "Proclaim" (*katangelo*) is a present active indicative, not an imperative. Paul uses this verb in Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 2:1; 9:14; Phil 1:17, 18; and Col 1:28; cf. 2 Mac 8:36; 9:17; Acts 3:24; 4:2; 13:5, 38; 15:36; 16:17, 21; 17:3, 13, 23; and 26:23.

³⁷ Preaching Today citation: Rich Bersett, Belleville, IL.

³⁸ Most English versions render the adverb *anaxios* as "in an unworthy manner [or way]" (e.g., NET, NASB, ESV, HSB, NRSV, NKJV, NIV). The KJV and NLT opt for the preferred rendering "unworthily." Fee 1987:560 n.10 does not agree with the translation "in an unworthy manner" because this rendering would more appropriately apply to a person than to what is being done. Fee argues, "[There is a dangerous misconception that] People are 'unworthy' if they have any sin in their lives, or have committed sins during the past week. This in turn resulted in reading v. 28 personally and introspectively, so that the purpose of one's self examination was to become worthy of the Table, lest one come under judgment. The tragedy of such an interpretation for countless thousands, both in terms of a foreboding of the Table and guilt for perhaps having partaken unworthily, is incalculable." Hays 1997:200 shares Fee's pastoral concern.

³⁹ Its essence, *krima* is a neutral word that means "judgment" or "sentence," not "condemnation" or "damnation" (KJV). Context determines the precise nuance of *krima*. Paul's use of *krima* in 11:29 is often taken to refer to eternal judgment (see Kistemaker 1993:404). Typically, it is argued that Paul uses *krima* for the last judgment in Rom 2:2, 3; 3:8. While this may be true, Paul's other uses of *krima* for the last judgment are arthrous, whereas 1 Cor 11:29, 34 has an anarthrous *krima*. Furthermore, the only other uses of *krima* in 1 Corinthians are found in 11:34 and 6:7. The judgment in 11:34 parallels 11:29 while the context of 6:7 involves Corinthian believers suing one another in a court of law. Paul issues his judgment, "The fact that you have lawsuits among yourselves demonstrates that you have already been judged [*krimata*]." Clearly, the *krima* that is being spoken of here is in reference to a temporal judgment. See BDAG categorizes 1 Cor 6:7 under "Legal action taken against someone, dispute, lawsuit (cf. Exod 18:22).

⁴⁰ The adverb "unworthily" refers to doing something that does not square with the character or nature of something. Garland 2003:550. BDAG defines *anaxios* as "unworthy, careless manner." Robertson and Plummer 1914:250 write, "Paul's primary point is that the attitude and conduct should fit the message and solemnity of what is proclaimed...In this context, *anaxios* refers not only to external behavior but an inward attitude of soul is included."

⁴¹ The Lord's Supper should be a time of self-examination, not so much for past sins, though confession from them is always appropriate. Rather, Christians should consider their present attitudes toward those needier than themselves. We must remember that no one is ever worthy to partake. If someone thinks he is, he is not. We are only worthy because Christ has made us worthy. We need to partake feeling unworthy to do so. This attitude is part of what it means to partake in a worthy manner.

⁴² Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle, 1992), 301. Fee agrees, "Most often this is understood as being a sin against the Lord in terms of his Table, as though they were 'desecrating' (NEB) or 'profaning' (Godspeed) it by their actions. In a sense that may be true, but in light of the whole context and v.26 in particular—to which the verse responds—it is doubtful whether this is Paul's intent. That seems to place far more emphasis on the sacred nature of the elements than Paul himself does. His concern is not with the bread and cup themselves, but with how through these the participants 'remember' Christ." Gordon D. Fee. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 561.

⁴³ Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians*, 126; Verbrugge, "1 Corinthians."

This represents another example of Paul fluidly moving between individual and corporate dimensions of *to soma* with the individual body in this case being Christ's (cf. 6:12-20).

⁴⁴ Brauch writes, "The thrust of Paul is then that those who eat and drink unworthily are guilty of Christ's sacrificial death. They oppose and contradict in their loveless behavior the purpose of Christ's death, namely, to create a new covenant community which will model, in the midst of a fragmented, broken world, a new way of servanthood which seeks the good of others." Manfred T. Brauch, *Hard Sayings of Paul* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1989), 158.

⁴⁵ Deffinbaugh, 245 notes, "The Greek term is rendered 'a number' only here, and elsewhere in the NASB it is translated 'many' (9 times) and 'considerable' (4 times), with 'good many,' 'great,' 'large sum,' and 'sizeable' all occurring once. Not only were many people weak and sick in Corinth, but a 'good many' died. The discipline of the Lord was intense and extensive. There was a very serious problem at Corinth, which resulted in drastic disciplinary measures on God's part."

⁴⁶ Kuck 1992:251 notes that there are parallels between 10:1-13 and 11:17-34. The sickness and deaths referred to in 11:30 are parallel to the punishments of Israel in the wilderness.

⁴⁷ Several English versions render the word as "dead" or "died" (e.g., NET, ESV, NRSV, NLT) instead of "sleep" (e.g., NASB, HSB, NIV, KJV, NKJV).

⁴⁸ See also Trail 1999:114.

⁴⁹ This notion finds support in the verb *koimao* ("sleep" or "dead"), which refers to the body as sleeping, not the soul. It is used to depict the death of a believer in anticipation of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess 4:13, 14, 15; cf. Matt 27:52; John 11:11, 12; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 2 Pet 3:4). See also Robertson and Plummer 1914:253 and Bruce 1971:116. It is never used in the NT of an unbeliever.

⁵⁰ Sickness can be associated with sin (John 9:2-3; Jas 5:15). However, this does not mean that all sickness is the result of sin in a believer's life.

⁵¹ Preaching Today citation: Matthew Henry, Bible commentator.

⁵² An example of this principle is found in Exod 15:26 where Moses said, "If you will diligently obey the LORD your God, and do what is right in his sight, and pay attention to his commandments, and give ear to his statutes, then I will not bring on you all the diseases that I brought on the Egyptians, for I, the LORD, am your healer."

⁵³ This possibility is confirmed by the use of *paideuo* in Paul's letters and in the rest of its NT uses: 2 Cor 6:9; Titus 2:11; 1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:25; Heb 12:6, 7, 10; and Rev 3:19. The use of *paideuo* ("divine chastisement") is also replete throughout the OT. Originally it was Israel as a whole, as a nation, that was seen as being subject to God's discipline (Deut 4:36; 8:5; Hos 7:12; 10:10); but later, in proverbial wisdom, it is more a matter of God's education of the individual (Prov 3:11-12; 15:33; Sir 18:14). The Psalmist declares, "Blessed is the one whom you chasten, O Lord" (Ps 94:12; cf. Job 5:17). See also BDAG s.v. *paideuo* "to bring up, train, instruct, correct, give guidance."

⁵⁴ See R.T. Kendall, "Judgment at the Lord's Table," in *Come to the Banquet* edited by Richard Allen Bodey and Robert Leslie Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 49-50.

⁵⁵ There are numerous biblical examples: Moses, Nadab and Abihu, Achan, Uzzah, Ananias and Saphira, etc.

⁵⁶ The above exegesis has led to the conclusion that 11:17 and 34 form an inclusio with the verb *sunerchesthe*. Soards 1999:249-250 suggests, "Paul's words in 11:33-34 and 11:17-22 form an inclusion around his reflections on the Lord's Supper in the material found in 11:23-32. The nature of repetition is to create emphasis, both by repeating the information itself (11:17-22, 33-34) and by highlighting the material that is surrounded by the repetitive two parts (11:23-32). Thus, 11:33-34 both bring the final segment of Paul's discussion (11:27-34) to a conclusion and help focus and hold the entire reflection from 11:17-34 together."

⁵⁷ The normal use of the verb *ekdechomai* in the NT is “to wait” (John 5:3; Acts 17:16; 1 Cor 16:11; Heb 10:13; 11:10; Jas 5:7). See also all major English translations (e.g., NET, NASB, ESV, HSB, NRSV, NIV, NKJV, KJV). Even BDAG s.v. *ekdechomai* defines 1 Cor 11:33 as “wait for one another.” Several commentators adhere to this view: Orr 1976:268, Kistemaker 1993:405, and Johnson 2004:212.

⁵⁸ Winter 2001:151-152 argues that one should look at words within their semantic domain. The other uses of *ekdechomai* in the NT occur in a different social context. In the context of a dinner, *ekdechomai* means “to welcome” (see 3 Macc 5:26; Josephus, *J.W.* 2.14.7§297; 3.2.4§ 32; *Ant.* 7.14.5 §351; 11.8.6 §340; 12.3.3 §138; 13.4.5. §104; 13.5.5. §148)

⁵⁹ See Hofius 1993:94 who also cites a case from Philo (*Post. Cain* 41 §146) where ἐκδέχομαι means “receive as a host.” So Fee 1987:568; Blomberg 1994:232; Witherington 1995:252; Hays 1997:202-203; Horsley 1998:163; Verbrugge 2007:224.

⁶⁰ Garland 2003:555.