

1 Corinthians 11:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

Analysis

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse—Sharp pivot from head coverings to the Lord's Supper. Οὐκ ἐπαινῶ (I praise not) contrasts with 11:2 ("I praise you"). Paul's tone hardens because the Corinthians' abuse of the Table is more severe than head-covering confusion. Συνέρχομαι (synerchomai, come together) repeats five times (vv. 17, 18, 20, 33, 34)—corporate gathering is central to Paul's concern.

Not for the better, but for the worse (οὐκ εἰς τὸ κρεῖττον ἀλλὰ εἰς τὸ ἥττον)—their assemblies were spiritually harmful, not edifying. This is devastating—worship should build up the body (14:26), but Corinthian practice was tearing it down. The comparative (better/worse) implies worship has directionality: it either forms Christlikeness or deforms it. Neutral worship doesn't exist. The Corinthian abuse of the Table—class divisions, drunkenness, gluttony (vv. 21-22)—made gatherings occasions for sin, not sanctification.

Historical Context

The early church celebrated the Lord's Supper within a communal meal called the agape feast (love feast, Jude 12). Wealthier members brought abundant food and wine; poorer members (slaves, laborers) arrived late and hungry. Instead of sharing resources, the rich ate and drank luxuriously while the poor went hungry—blatant class discrimination. This violated the gospel's leveling power (Galatians

3:28, James 2:1-9) and profaned the Table, which symbolizes Christ's broken body given for all equally.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How can corporate worship become spiritually harmful rather than edifying?
2. What modern parallels exist to Corinthian class divisions at the Table (segregated services, exclusive membership, economic stratification)?
3. How should churches examine whether their gatherings are 'for the better' or 'for the worse'?

Interlinear Text

Τοῦτο	δὲ	παραγγέλλων	οὐκ	ἐπαινῶ	ὅτι	οὐκ	εἰς
in this	Now	that I declare	not	unto you I praise	that	not	for
G5124	G1161	G3853	G3756	G1867	G3754	G3756	G1519
τὸ	κρεῖττον	ἀλλ'	εἰς	τὸ	ἥττον	συνέρχεσθε	
the better	but	for	the worse	ye come together			
G3588	G2909	G235	G1519	G3588	G2276	G4905	

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 10:25 (Parallel theme): Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

1 Corinthians 11:22 (Resurrection): What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

1 Corinthians 14:23 (Parallel theme): If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

1 Peter 2:14 (Resurrection): Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

1 Corinthians 11:2 (Resurrection): Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

Leviticus 19:17 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.