

1 Corinthians 11:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

Analysis

For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it—Πρῶτον μέν (first of all) signals the first of multiple charges. Σχίσματα (schismata, divisions) recalls 1:10—the same word for factions plaguing Corinth. Paul had hoped chapter 1-4's discussion resolved this; apparently it persisted, now manifesting at the Table.

I partly believe it (καὶ μέρος τι πιστεύω)—Paul's measured response. He's heard reports (11:18, 1:11) but withholds full judgment. Yet meros ti (in part) suggests the reports are substantially true, even if exaggerated. Paul's pastoral wisdom: believe credible reports enough to address them, but avoid assuming the worst. The divisions were evident in the social stratification at the Table (v. 21)—rich and poor, honored and shamed, divided by economic class rather than united in Christ.

Historical Context

Roman meals were hierarchically structured: the triclinium (dining room) hosted the elite, while lower-status guests ate in courtyards or received inferior food. Banquet invitations specified food quality by social rank. The Corinthian church, meeting in wealthy patrons' homes, replicated pagan social stratification rather than embodying gospel equality. Paul's earlier rebuke (1:26-29) noted that "not many wise, mighty, or noble" were called—the church was largely poor and enslaved, making wealthy members' dominance especially offensive.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How do economic and social divisions manifest in modern churches despite gospel proclamations of equality?
2. What does it mean practically to 'come together' as church—how should unity be visible?
3. How can church leaders address credible reports of division without being judgmental or dismissive?

Interlinear Text

πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ συνερχομένων ὑμῶν ἐν τῇ
first of all G3303 For come together when ye among G3588
G4412 G1063 G4905 G5216 G1722

ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀκούω σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν ὑπάρχειν καὶ
the church I hear divisions among you that there be and G2532
G1577 G191 G4978 G1722 G5213 G5225

μέρος τι πιστεύω
I partly it believe
G3313 G5100 G4100

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 3:3 (Parallel theme): For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?