

1 Corinthians 11:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper:
and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

Analysis

For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken—Paul specifies the abuse. Ἐκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον προλαμβάνει (each one takes beforehand his own supper)—prolambanei means to take beforehand, eat ahead of others. Instead of waiting and sharing, the wealthy consumed their private meals immediately, ignoring latecomers.

And one is hungry, and another is drunken (καὶ ὃς μὲν πεινᾷ, ὃς δὲ μεθύει)—the devastating result. Peinao (is hungry) describes literal physical hunger; methyō (is drunken) means intoxication from wine. The contrast is stark: poverty and wealth, deprivation and excess, shame and indulgence—all at the Table meant to proclaim unity in Christ's death. This wasn't merely bad manners but covenant violation. The Lord's Supper signifies Christ's body broken for all equally; Corinthian practice signaled that some mattered more than others. Economic injustice desecrated the gospel.

Historical Context

Roman convivium (banquet) practices included heavy drinking, with social elites consuming superior wine while lower-status guests received inferior or watered wine. Drunkenness at pagan feasts was common, even celebrated. Slaves and poor laborers worked long hours, arriving at evening gatherings exhausted and hungry, only to find the wealthy had already eaten. Paul's outrage reflects both Jewish

sobriety (drunkenness is shameful, Proverbs 23:20-21, Ephesians 5:18) and Christian egalitarianism (the Table erases social hierarchy, Galatians 3:28).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the Corinthian abuse of the Table violate the gospel's core message of grace for all equally?
2. What modern expressions of economic injustice in churches parallel the Corinthian situation?
3. How should congregations practicing the Lord's Supper ensure it reflects Christ's inclusive, self-giving love?

Interlinear Text

ἕκαστος	γὰρ	τὸ	ἴδιον	δεῖπνον	προλαμβάνει	ἐν	τῷ
every one	For	G3588	other his own	supper	taketh before	in	G3588
G1538	G1063		G2398	G1173	G4301	G1722	
φαγεῖν	καὶ	ὃς	μὲν	πεινᾷ	ὃς	δὲ	μεθύει
eating	and	another	one	is hungry	another	and	is drunken
G5315	G2532	G3739	G3303	G3983	G3739	G1161	G3184

Additional Cross-References

2 Peter 2:13 (Parallel theme): And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;

Jude 1:12 (Parallel theme): These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water,

carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead,
plucked up by the roots;

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