

Chapter 10

The Rich and the Poor in Corinth

One cannot write on the topic of Paul and money without dealing with the complex issue of the rich and the poor and, in particular, what attitudes these groups express toward each other through their wealth (or lack of it). In the next chapter, we will examine some of Paul's more general comments on the rich and the poor. But before we do so, we will examine *a specific situation in the church at Corinth* where a significant conflict developed between the different economic classes. This conflict becomes apparent in how the members of the church celebrated the Lord's Supper—or, more specifically, how they interacted with each other in a common meal (commonly called an ἀγάπη feast) that apparently preceded the actual event of the Eucharist.¹ We read about this in 1 Cor 11:17–34. We now turn to examine those verses.²

The Cause of the Social Divisions in Corinth (1 Cor 11:17–22)³

It is evident from the force of Paul's rhetoric (11:17, 22) and his repeated warnings of judgment (11:29–32) that he is alarmed about divisions within the Corinthian church (11:18–19), which are linked to the community's partaking of the Lord's Supper. Paul Barnett suggests that 11:17–34 are “amongst Paul's most severe words to any congregation.”⁴ This declaration is confirmed by divine discipline, which results in weakness, sickness, and death (11:30).

¹ Such a practice fits the pattern of the Jewish Passover meal and seems likely in light of Paul's reference to Passover motifs (1 Cor 5:6–8 and 10:16–17).

² Many of the insights in this chapter are from Krell, *Temporal Judgment and the Church*, 185–215.

³ Harvey, *Listening to the Text*, 168, points out that 11:17–22 is framed by an inclusio (ἐπαινῶ):

(11:17) τοῦτο δὲ παραγγέλλων οὐκ ἐπαινῶ ὅτι ...
(11:22) ἐπαινέσω ὑμᾶς; ἐν τούτῳ οὐκ ἐπαινῶ.

⁴ Barnett, *1 Corinthians*, 210.

There have been various proposals as to the cause of the Corinthian divisions. It was formerly assumed that the schisms stemmed primarily from theological disputes.⁵ It is now, however, more generally agreed that socioeconomic factors (see 1:26–31; 6:1–8; 8:1–11:1), rather than theological ones, are responsible for the Corinthians' fractured fellowship.⁶ Presumably, some of the wealthier and socially superior members have been dishonoring the poor.⁷ What is not so clear is what exactly transpired during the Lord's Supper (and the Love Feast that preceded it) that led to the humiliation of the poorer members who were present.⁸ Thus, a reconstruction of the Lord's Supper and the events surrounding it will be considered as the text unfolds.⁹

⁵ See Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 238.

⁶ See Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (trans. John H. Schütz; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 145–74; Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 67–68; Stephen C. Barton, "Paul's Sense of Place: An Anthropological Approach to Community Formation in Corinth," *NTS* 32 (1986): 225–46; Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 241–52; Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 850–53; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 533–37. A challenge to the socioeconomic view has been mounted by Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty, and Survival*, 4–99, who holds that the social and economic differences in antiquity were larger than has usually been assumed (see also comments in ch. 4). The lot of the Christians was poverty; all of them lived at or near the subsistence level and none of them belonged to a "middle class." Meggitt is too simplistic in his description of poverty. For detailed critiques, see Dale B. Martin, "Review Essay: Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*," *JSNT* 84 (2001): 51–64; and Gerd Theissen, "Social Conflicts in the Corinthian Community: Further Remarks on J. J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*," *JSNT* 25 (2003): 371–91.

⁷ Lyle D. Vander Broek, *Breaking Barriers: The Possibilities of Christian Community in a Lonely World* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2002), 114–15, 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 indicate 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."

⁸ There is scholarly disagreement on nearly every issue in 11:17–34; therefore, it can be rather difficult to argue definitively.

⁹ Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 243–47, provides a helpful excursus that delineates association rules and teaching at meals.

Paul begins this section with sobering words: “Now in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse” (11:17). The conjunction δέ marks the introduction of a new topic. If a contrast is implied, the apostle is merely stating that in 11:2–16 he could praise the Corinthians, while in 11:17–34 he cannot.¹⁰ In 11:2 Paul praises the Corinthians because they remember him in everything and maintained the traditions he passed on to them. But in 11:17 (cf. 11:22) he does not praise them, on account of their divisions (cf. 11:18). Instead, he declares that they “come together not for the better but for the worse” (11:17b).

Sadly, the gathering¹¹ of the Corinthian community is a blatant contradiction of the gospel. Hence, with more than a sprinkling of irony, he repeatedly describes the Corinthians as “coming together” while knowing full well that their eating is anything but “together” as a unified body. The very ritual that is intended to celebrate the gospel and symbolically act out their oneness in Christ has become an occasion for splitting the church on the basis of status.¹²

¹⁰ William R. Baker, *1 Corinthians* (CBC; Wheaton: Tyndale, 2009), 167.

¹¹ The verb συνέρχομαι is used five times in 11:17–34 (11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34) and only used two other times by Paul (14:23, 26), where it is used of “coming together” for the purpose of corporate worship (see BDAG s.v. συνέρχομαι 1). It is generally recognized that the Corinthian believers would have gathered in the homes of their three or four wealthiest members, whose homes could have accommodated approximately thirty people on a regular basis, whether daily or weekly (see Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 536; Baker, *1 Corinthians*, 166).

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

Paul continues his rebuke: “For, chiefly,¹³ when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I believe it” (11:18).¹⁴ First and last on the apostle’s mind are the *σχίσματα*¹⁵ that are taking place in Corinth. Instead of treating one another with brotherly love and acting as the family of God,¹⁶ those who have more than enough to eat and drink at the Lord’s Supper are treating shamefully those who have insufficient quantities. He contrasts *ὃς μὲν πεινᾷ* with *ὃς δὲ μεθύει* (11:21), identifying a group within the church as the *τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας* (11:22), whose members are humiliated by the actions of their wealthy counterparts.¹⁷ These divisions are not to be taken lightly. Jerome Neyrey argues that the *σχίσματα* in 11:18 threaten not only the wholeness but also the holiness of the body, just as in Lev 21:16–20 the wholeness of the animal determined its holiness. Lack of control at the Lord’s Supper manifests a serious disregard of the social body’s integrity and purity.¹⁸

¹³ Collins, *First Corinthians*, 421, points out that the phrase *πρῶτον μὲν γάρ* is emphatic since no “second” follows.

¹⁴ Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 159–63, argues convincingly that *μέρος* refers here to a “matter” (2 Cor 9:3) or “report” and should not be translated adverbially. 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 suggests that the phrase *μέρος τι πιστεύω* be translated, “I believe a certain report.”

¹⁵ There are two primary views on the nature of *σχίσματα* in 11:18: (1) Paul uses the exact term *σχίσματα* that he used in 1:10, which suggests he is connecting Chloe’s report of *σχίσματα* (1:10–11) with what is taking place in 11:18 (see Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 850; Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 162). This may be further confirmed by Paul’s final use of *σχίσμα* (12:25), where he again expresses concern regarding preferential treatment within the church at Corinth. (2) Paul does not seem to be addressing the same groups. 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 pit one house church against another. In 11:22 the divisions pit poor against rich and probably happen within house churches, the basic unit for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper (see Barnett, *I Corinthians*, 211; Baker, *I Corinthians*, 168). Either view is possible, but the latter seems preferable.

¹⁶ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *I Corinthians* (Pillar; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 543, rightly note that “the community is to ‘come together as a church’ to represent the coming together of one body (10:17) of people who together participate in the body and blood of Christ (10:16).”

¹⁷ Barry D. Smith, *Paul’s Seven Explanations of the Suffering of the Righteous* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 89.

¹⁸ Jerome H. Neyrey, *Paul: In Other Words* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 123.

In 11:19 Paul now states, “for there must also be factions among you,” which is rather surprising in light of his condemnation of factiousness (cf. 1:10–17).¹⁹ Does he now tolerate Christ being divided? Certainly not! Contextually, he is concerned about the socioeconomic divisions. The ἵνα clause states that factions are necessary to identify οἱ δόκιμοι. Most commentators and EVV translate οἱ δόκιμοι as “the approved.” It is postulated that the apostle is discussing an eschatological necessity that distinguishes the saved (i.e., “approved”) from the unsaved (i.e., “unapproved”).²⁰ Yet, Paul’s concern here is not to separate genuine believers from the false.²¹ Rather, he is demonstrating that the socially elite among the Corinthian community are denying the message of the cross by failing to honor selflessly the less fortunate members of the church (cf. 11:23–26).²² Paul seems to be using οἱ δόκιμοι with reference to those who have God’s approval.²³ “The approved,” then, are those who are “the tried and true Christian(s),”²⁴

¹⁹ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 538, calls 11:19 “one of the true puzzles in the letter.” However, we would suggest that there is no mystery unless it’s introduced.

²⁰ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 537–39; Baker, *1 Corinthians*, 168–69.

²¹ In Paul’s other usages of δόκιμος (Rom 14:18; 16:10; 2 Cor 10:18; 13:7; cf. 2 Tim 2:15) it does not appear that there is any distinguishing between the saved and unsaved.

²² David W. J. Gill, “1 Corinthians” (ZIBBC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 160. Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 544, allow for the possibility of irony. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 539, suggests that Paul is using οἱ δόκιμοι sarcastically to denote the “dignitaries” who are causing factions in the church. These individuals are perceived as doing so for the purposes of distinguishing themselves as genuine or elite members of the group. Another possibility is that Paul concedes that social distinctions are a fact of life and will be reflected, in one way or another, at the meal. Nevertheless, that is no excuse for letting the poor go hungry. See BDAG s.v. δόκιμος 2: “pert. to being considered worthy of high regard, *respected, esteemed*.”

²³ Michael Eaton, *1 Corinthians 10–16* (PTB; Tonbridge: Sovereign World, 2000), 34; Frank Thielman, “1 Corinthians,” in *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 2207.

²⁴ BDAG s.v. δόκιμος 1; see also Barnett, *1 Corinthians*, 211.

who “pass the test” of behaving well in the midst of socioeconomic factions. These divisions are necessary, sad to say, to separate those faithful to God’s Word from the rest.²⁵

Verses 20–22 make possible a more detailed reconstruction of the situation at Corinth.

Paul writes:

Therefore [οὖν] when you come together at the same place, it is not to eat the *Lord’s* Supper, for each devours his or her own supper during the meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk. Do you not have homes in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame the ‘have-nots’? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this [matter] I will not praise you.

The phrase συνέρχομαι ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, which is repeated in 14:23, is usually translated, “to come together at the same place,” thus synonymously with, “to come together as a church” in 11:18.

The entire phrase may be a double entendre. The prepositional phrase ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό literally means “to the same place,” but metaphorically, “together.”²⁶ The dual meaning of the phrase seems to stress the irony of the Corinthians’ factionalism—when they come together “in the same place” they are not “together.”²⁷ This elucidates the language that follows.

Paul’s concern in 11:21 is for individual members who are violating the principle of unity. Each one takes τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον. The adjective ἴδιον provides a sharp antithesis with κυριακόν (11:20). It is important to note that ἕκαστος is fronted for focus in 11:21. In 1

²⁵ This view finds support in the apostle’s use of δοκιμή where he tests the Corinthians to determine their attitude (2 Cor 2:9). Paul also uses δοκιμάζω to encourage the Corinthians to test themselves by a different measure (11:28). In this context, those who examine themselves, and are thus tested and approved by God, preserve their physical well-being (cf. 11:30).

²⁶ BDAG s.v. ἐπὶ 1β.

²⁷ Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 240; Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 153–54. It is not possible to know whether Paul consciously intended the ambiguity, but it is certainly present in what he wrote.

Corinthians, ἕκαστος always stresses the individual as opposed to the community.²⁸ The apostle's point is that individual members of the Corinthian community are sinning against God and each other.²⁹ The sharing of food, a thing appropriate for the Corinthians when they come together, does not happen.³⁰ Rather than serving to build up the church in love (cf. 8:1), which would be for the better, their meetings served to tear down and humiliate some members in the presence of others.

Furthermore, it appears that some of the Corinthians are eating too much and too greedily. The meaning of the verb προλαμβάνω (11:21) becomes crucial for determining the situational context.³¹ Many underscore the temporal force of the prefix προ- to render it, “to take beforehand.”³² However, Winter argues persuasively that in this context the προ- prefix is not temporal, but intensive,³³ and that προλαμβάνω does not require the consumption of food *before*

²⁸ E.g., 1:12; 3:13; 7:2, 24; 12:7; 14:26. It is no coincidence that ἕκαστος appears twenty-three times in 1 Corinthians, more than any other NT letter.

²⁹ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 541, argues that ἕκαστος refers specifically to the rich who are abusing the Lord's Supper.

³⁰ Bruce W. Winter, “The Lord's Supper at Corinth: An Alternative Reconstruction,” *RTR* 37 (1978): 73–78; Brad B. Blue, “The House Church at Corinth and the Lord's Supper: Famine, Food Supply, and the Present Distress,” *CTR* 5.2 (1991): 234–37; David W. J. Gill, “In Search of the Social Elite in the Corinthian Church,” *TynBul* 44 (1993): 323–37, point out that it is likely that there was a famine in Corinth (1 Cor 7:26). This adversely affected the church, especially the “have-nots.” This makes the insensitivity of the wealthy even worse as they would be gorging themselves in front of hungry brothers and sisters during a time of food shortage.

³¹ Christopher L. Carter, *The Great Sermon Tradition as a Fiscal Framework in 1 Corinthians: Towards a Pauline Theology of Material Possessions* (LNTS; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 173, calls 11:21–22 the *crux interpretum* for 11:17–34 because the verses “define the eucharistic malfunction to which Paul is responding throughout 11:17–34.”

³² BDAG s.v. προλαμβάνω 1 c; Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 241; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 422–23; Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians* (IVPNTCS; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 204–5; Craig S. Keener, *1–2 Corinthians* (NCBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 98; Nigel M. Watson, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (EC; London: Epworth, [1992], 2005), 116–17.

³³ There are only two other NT uses of προλαμβάνω. In Gal 6:1 προλαμβάνω means “detect” or “overtake” (BDAG s.v. προλαμβάνω 2); in Mark 14:8, it conveys the sense of “to anticipate.” The only LXX use of προλαμβάνω bears this meaning in Wis 17:16. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 542, claims “there is no clear evidence of the verb προλαμβάνω being used this way [temporal priority] in the context of eating.”

the arrival of others; it means, “to eat or drink, to devour.”³⁴ Contextually, this view seems preferable. Paul is not pleased with the behavior of the Corinthians (11:17), so he uses a verb that can have a pejorative nuance to condemn their selfish and greedy behavior.

Winter also makes a compelling case that the aorist articular infinitive τῷ φαγεῖν (11:21) indicates that the sinful “devouring” took place *during* the meal itself.³⁵ This is convincing and stands in contrast with the less specific anarthrous aorist infinitives in 11:20.³⁶ Thus, the wealthy members of the Corinthian church are guilty of gluttony and drunkenness *while* the poor go without. This reconstruction can also be supported from the customary practice at Greco-Roman banquets where wealthy patrons—those with homes large enough to host the communal meal—would have assigned the biggest and best portions of food to the more privileged (including themselves), while the household slaves would have normally been expected to serve the dinner guests and eat leftovers.³⁷

Social geography may also have played a role in how the meals were conducted.³⁸ The host apparently invited socially elite church members to join him or her in the dining room (*triclinium*), creating a private supper. The rest were left outside in the larger entry courtyard

³⁴ Winter, “The Lord’s Supper at Corinth,” 75–77. See also Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 542; Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Interpretation; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1997), 197; Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 864; BAGD s.v. προλαμβάνω 2 a.

³⁵ Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 149–51. The temporal view does not seem to solve the dilemma of the text since it only affects the time of eating and not the manner. Therefore, some would remain hungry. Winter’s reconstruction, however, does not suffer from this problem.

³⁶ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 863.

³⁷ Ciampa and Rosner, *I Corinthians*, 545.

³⁸ See Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 247–52; Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 860–66; Garland, *I Corinthians*, 535–44.

(*atrium*) with the lesser quality fare.³⁹ Superior food and a dining position near to the host were visible symbols of favor in an honor-driven society like Roman Corinth.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the use of separate tables seating nine to twelve persons (though caused by space limitations) would have led to further complications of who would sit where—sometimes potentially a socially divisive decision.⁴¹ The result of these practices was a portioning of the community between the “haves” and the “have-nots” (11:22).⁴² No doubt this kind of discriminatory behavior against the poor and social “nobodies” would have seemed quite natural within the stratified world of Paul’s readers.⁴³ Yet, Paul does not tolerate what is socially expected in Corinth. In 11:22 he closes out this subsection with five rhetorical questions (the second and third are joined by καί), creating a strong appeal. His words are punctuated with a righteous indignation. Paul will not tolerate a σχίσμα between the rich and the poor in the church.

Whatever the precise circumstances, a meal designed to express unity is being so abused as to highlight the disunity of the Corinthian congregation. The cliquish behavior of the

³⁹ Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *St. Paul’s Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 1983), 153–61; Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 542; Jeffery S. Lamp, “The Corinthian Eucharistic Dinner Party: Exegesis of a Cultural Context (1 Cor 11:17–34),” *Affirmation* 4 (Fall 1991): 5; Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 860–64. Barnett, *1 Corinthians*, 213, argues that this is speculation and states, “It is equally possible that all ate in Gaius’s *atrium*.”

⁴⁰ Lamp, “The Corinthian Eucharistic Dinner Party,” 1–15; Stephen M. Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians* (SBLDS 134; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 237–71.

⁴¹ Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 239. Cf. Luke 14:7–11; Jas 2:1–4.

⁴² Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, 151–53; Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 159; Susan Watts Henderson, “If Anyone Is Hungry: An Integrated Reading of 1 Cor 11:17–34,” *NTS* 48 (2002): 203; John Inziku, *Overcoming Divisive Behaviour: An Attempt to Interpret 1 Cor 11, 17–34 from Another Perspective* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), 283.

⁴³ David Horrell, “The Lord’s Supper at Corinth and in the Church Today,” *Theology* 98.783 (1995): 198; D. E. Smith and H. E. Taussig, *Many Tables: The Eucharist in the New Testament and Liturgy Today* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 21–35. Oster, *1 Corinthians*, 266, remarks: “The potentially divisive character of Greek and Roman meals is well documented in ancient literary testimony from authors such as Plutarch, Juvenal, Pliny, Lucian.”

community reflects significant social and economic divisions. Thus, members who bring nothing with them to the meal are being humiliated and going hungry.⁴⁴ What should be an inclusive community meal has become an occasion for simultaneously private meals.⁴⁵ This is an affront to Christ and his gospel. He lived a life of servanthood and died a sacrificial death (cf. 11:23–24). Paul wants no socioeconomic class consciousness in his churches, and the Lord's Supper must reflect unity and concern for others.⁴⁶

The Motivation to Avoid the Social Divisions in Corinth (1 Cor 11:23–26)

To address the divisions between the “haves” and the “have-nots,” Paul recalls for the Corinthians the apostolic tradition⁴⁷ and the theology of the Lord's Supper (11:23–26).⁴⁸ His aim is to make clear the holiness of the meal in the face of the selfish practice of the elite who are destroying this holiness.⁴⁹ In doing so, he emphasizes that in the Lord's Supper the Corinthians commemorate Christ's self-giving on behalf of his people.⁵⁰ The wealthy Corinthians are hardly remembering Christ's example if they oppress the poor at the very time the Supper is celebrated.

The apostle reminds the community of the word of institution and expresses two realities. (1)

⁴⁴ Paul does not explicitly say what it is that the “have-nots” do not have. The nearest referent, however, is οἰκία. Thus, οἰκία more likely refers to “household” (i.e., a patron's client group) than a house.

⁴⁵ Victor Paul Furnish, *The Theology of the First Letter to the Corinthians* (NTT; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 79.

⁴⁶ Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 547.

⁴⁷ The Corinthians are familiar with the Lord's Supper tradition (11:23a). See David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1995), 144–47; Anders Eriksson, *Traditions as Rhetorical Proof: Pauline Argumentation in 1 Corinthians* (CBNT 29; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1998), 180.

⁴⁸ Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians,” 359.

⁴⁹ Luise Schottroff and Brian McNeil, trans., “Holiness and Justice: Exegetical Comments on 1 Corinthians 11.17–34,” *JSNT* 79 (Spring 2000): 57.

⁵⁰ According to Peter Lamp, “The Eucharist: Identifying with Christ on the Cross,” *Int* 48.1 (1994): 45: “our love for others represents Christ's death to other human beings.” 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).

The purpose of the institution of Supper is to remember Jesus' body and his blood (11:23–25).⁵¹

(2) The proclamation of the Supper is to show forth Christ's death until he comes (11:26). The result should be that the Corinthians will not overindulge themselves, despise and shame others, or allow brothers and sisters to go hungry. Unfortunately, their conduct at the Lord's Supper "proclaimed a culture of selfishness and status mongering."⁵² Thus, Paul's accusation: "you are not really eating the Lord's Supper" (11:20b, NET).

The Judgment for the Social Divisions in Corinth (1 Cor 11:27–34)

Those Corinthians who abuse the Lord's Supper are guilty of a most heinous sin. By dividing the church through rank and status, the community is bringing shame to the Lord and themselves. Paul expounds, "Therefore,⁵³ whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in a way that is not fitting⁵⁴ [ἀναξίως] will be held accountable⁵⁵ for so treating the body and blood of the Lord" (11:27). In this context, to eat or drink the Lord's Supper ἀναξίως is to violate its purpose to proclaim Christ's death. The result is that the perpetrator becomes "liable

⁵¹ The words of the tradition call the Corinthians twice to "remember" Christ's death (11:24, 25). Anthony C. Thiselton, *First Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical & Pastoral Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 185, remarks: This "denotes more than merely mental recollection, but less than any notion of 'repeating' the once-for-all death of Christ ... the remembrance is a dramatic *involvement* or *actualization* of placing ourselves 'there' at the foot of the cross, just as to eat the Passover was not simply to think about it but to be 'there' as one who *took part* in the remembered events. In this sense Christian believers proclaim the death of Christ as (a) an *event*; and (b) an event '*for me, that involves me*'" (his emphasis).

⁵² Hays, *First Corinthians*, 200.

⁵³ The conjunction ὥστε (cf. 11:33; 10:12) indicates that the apostle now resumes his main discussion from 11:17–22 since the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of Christ's death, eating and drinking in an unfitting fashion is unconscionable.

⁵⁴ BDAG s.v. ἀναξίως. See also Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 889, who notes: "Paul's primary point is that attitude and conduct should fit the message and solemnity of what is proclaimed." This is also in keeping with the corresponding adjectival form of ἀναξίως in 6:2, which according to Thiselton (889) "conveys the sense of incompetency or being not good enough for a task." The gloss "not fitting" is preferred over the prevalent "in an unworthy manner/way" or "unworthily."

⁵⁵ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 889; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 200–201; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 438 = "answerable for."

[ἔνοχος]⁵⁶ of sinning against” the death of the Lord.⁵⁷ The punishment, however, does not appear to be described. While some argue that the future tense of ἔνοχος ἔσται requires eschatological judgment,⁵⁸ such an interpretation does not fit the immediate context. Given the lack of clear temporal indicators that it is guilt assessed at the eschatological judgment (e.g., “on the day of the Lord”), most likely we have liability assessed at the moment of transgression (11:30). It is a charge incurred in real time after doing the wrong that fulfills the condition.⁵⁹

In light of the dire threat of being liable of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord Paul warns, “But let a person examine [δοκιμάζτω] himself or herself and in this manner eat the bread and drink from the cup” (11:28).⁶⁰ Presumably, self-examination serves to reveal whether an individual stands “accountable” for the behavior described in 11:21–22.⁶¹ Most likely the apostle is speaking directly to the “haves.”⁶² The present imperatives δοκιμάζτω, ἐσθιέτω, and πινέτω are clearly iterative: whenever the Lord’s Supper is observed, there is an ongoing responsibility to carefully examine one’s attitude in relation to 11:21–22.⁶³ It is also worth noting

⁵⁶ This is Paul’s only use of ἔνοχος; however, it is used elsewhere in the NT primarily as a judicial word denoting guilt before the law (Matt 5:21–22; 26:66; Mark 3:29; 14:64; Heb 2:15; Jas 2:10).

⁵⁷ BDAG s.v. ἔνοχος 2 bγ.

⁵⁸ F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 274; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistles to the Corinthians* (NTC; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 401.

⁵⁹ Judith M. Gundry-Volf, *Paul and Perseverance: Staying In and Falling Away* (WUNT 2.37; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1990), 101, who rightly argues that the future tense here refers to temporal judgment subsequent to the action.

⁶⁰ BDAG s.v. δοκιμάζω 1: “to make a critical examination of something, to determine genuineness, put to the test, examine.” Cf. δόκιμος in 11:19.

⁶¹ Stephen Anthony Cummins, *Paul and the Crucified Christ in Antioch: Maccabean Martyrdom and Galatians 1 and 2* (SNTSM 114; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 171; Carter, *The Great Sermon Tradition as a Fiscal Framework in 1 Corinthians*, 175.

⁶² Inziku, *Overcoming Divisive Behaviour*, 217–19.

⁶³ Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 722.

that the adverb οὕτως implies that the eating and drinking is to be done only after the examining has been done and the person is not liable of partaking in an unfitting manner.⁶⁴ When this directive is followed, one can have confidence to participate in the Lord's Supper.

The theme of judgment intensifies in 11:29–34.⁶⁵ The forensic emphasis of the text is unmistakable and suggests that a judicial event is now taking place in the congregation, all because of how the rich are treating the poor.⁶⁶ Furthermore, Paul declares that God will continue to render a verdict of judgment unless the Corinthians repent of mistreating one another. He writes, “For the one who eats and drinks,⁶⁷ by failing to discern the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself or herself” (11:29). The reason (γάρ) that each Corinthian must examine himself or herself is to avoid eating and drinking judgment on oneself by failing to discern the body. In this case, διακρίνω could mean either “to differentiate by separating”⁶⁸ or “judge correctly.”⁶⁹ In this context the latter, forensic sense may probably be ruled out.⁷⁰ Thus, διακρίνω

⁶⁴ In the context of the Lord's Supper, the *Didache* 14.2 says, “But every Lord's day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one who is at odds with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned.”

⁶⁵ Paul's use of paranomasia with words related to judgment is striking and gets lost in translation: κρίμα (11:29, 34); διακρίνων (11:29); διεκρίνομεν (11:31); ἐκρινόμεθα (11:31); κρινόμενοι (11:32); and κατακριθώμεν (11:32). These words aid the ear and eye to pick up the dominant theme on the apostle's mind and heart.

⁶⁶ Calvin Roetzel, *Judgment in the Community* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 137.

⁶⁷ There is a textual variant here. The UBS⁴ and NA²⁷ omit τοῦ κυρίου, which was probably included by an early copyist to help explain τὸ σῶμα. The Robinson-Pierpont reading is: Ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων ἀναζήτως, κρίμα ἑαυτῷ ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει, μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα τοῦ κυρίου (words in italics omitted in UBS⁴ and NA²⁷). Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 562–63, argues for the “shorter reading” saying that “there appears to be no good reason to account for the omission if the words had been present originally.”

⁶⁸ BDAG s.v. διακρίνω1. See also Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1958] 1985), 162.

⁶⁹ Barrett, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 274, points out that Paul's use of διακρίνων varies (see 4:7; 6:5; 14:29; Rom 4:20; 14:23), so that one cannot ascertain its meaning in 11:29 from Paul's previous uses.

⁷⁰ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 564, sees the meaning here as, “to discern, distinguish as distinct and different.”

could refer to distinguishing the holy from the unholy or having the right estimate of Christ's body. But it can also mean "to recognize."⁷¹

The phrase τὸ σῶμα is disputed; however, it seems that this phrase refers both to the eucharistic elements and to the Corinthian church.⁷² There is likely a double-entendre here with the reference to the "Lord's body," referring literally to Jesus' physical body "which is for you" (cf. 11:24), and the church as the Lord's corporate body, which is being divided by the Corinthians' attitude (cf. 11:17–22).⁷³ If so, this represents an example of Paul fluidly moving between individual and corporate dimensions of τὸ σῶμα with the individual body in this case being Christ's (cf. 6:12–20). In other words, one who treats fellow believers poorly fails to discern that they are members of Christ's body.⁷⁴ 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.⁷⁵ Consequently, just as the meal itself is both social and eschatological, so also the bread represents the social and eschatological significance of Christ's death.

⁷¹ See BDAG s.v. διακρίνω 3 a. The participle may have conditional force ("if they fail to discern the body"), or this may be a causal clause ("because they do not discern the body"). See Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 633.

⁷² Collins, *First Corinthians*, 439; Barnett, *1 Corinthians*, 220; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Leicester: Apollos; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 381; Verbrugge, "1 Corinthians," 361.

⁷³ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998), 616–18; Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 263–65, rightly deny any antithesis between "body" as congregation and as the eucharistic body of the Lord. On the contrary, because eating and drinking the symbols is a communal act of unity, both ideas are inextricably intertwined.

⁷⁴ Inziku, *Overcoming Divisive Behaviour*, 235, observes: "The Corinthians had apparently no difficulties with the actual eucharistic action, but rather with divisive and greedy behavior by some at the common meal, spoiling it or, in the words of the text, making it (spiritually and morally) impossible to eat the Lord's food."

⁷⁵ Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ*, 381.

The strength of this position is that it does not require the interpreter to choose between two valid positions. Instead, this view balances the two themes that seem to color Paul's language and emphasis.⁷⁶ The ambiguity in the phrase *μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα* may be deliberate, because one cannot separate the physical body of Christ and the spiritual body of Christ.⁷⁷ Moreover, the balance between the vertical and horizontal relationships of *τὸ σῶμα* also serves to remind the Corinthians that even though it is terrible to sin "against the body and blood of the Lord" (11:27), it is equally sinful to sin against fellow believers by making a distinction between the rich and the poor (11:29). Christ, after all, died for all. Paul admonishes those who flaunt their so-called "freedom" in Christ in a way that offends or scandalizes weaker Christians: "When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ" (8:12). A relationship with Christ demands loving those who make up his body.

Paul now applies the general truths of 11:27–29 specifically to the situation at Corinth: "On account of this [*μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα*, 11:29], many among you are weak and sick, and quite a few⁷⁸ are dead" (11:30). The apostle has probably heard of these repercussions from those who told him of their divisions (1:10–12), and he connects (*διὰ τοῦτο*) these events to their improper handling of the Lord's Supper and to God's judgment. The terms *ἀσθενεῖς*, *ἄρρωστοι*, and *κοιμῶνται* refer to literal, physical suffering. Specifically, some of the Corinthians have received degrees of chastisement, possibly in proportion to the severity of their sins. Paul does not identify who or how many have become sick or have died. However, for his arguments to

⁷⁶ If this suggestion is correct, then 11:29 is a case of single meaning and multiple referents, allowing a seamless transition into Paul's use of *σῶμα* in ch. 12.

⁷⁷ Horrell, "The Lord's Supper at Corinth," 199.

⁷⁸ BDAG s.v. *ἱκανός* 4 a.

have force as a warning, one would assume that the Corinthians could readily identify those who are sick or have died as liable of despising and humiliating their brothers and sisters at the Lord's Supper.⁷⁹ Regardless, God's hand plays a role in the judgment of the Corinthian community.⁸⁰

The means by which the Corinthians can avoid God's judgment is by judging themselves. Paul writes, "But if we were examining ourselves, we would not be judged" (11:31). The word *δέ* links 11:31 with some contrast implied to 11:30. The apostle's logic seems to be: judge yourselves so that the Lord will not have to judge you (11:31–32a).⁸¹ His use of *διακρίνω* in 11:31 refers to self-judgment, whereby one becomes aware of selfish behavior toward less fortunate believers at the Eucharist or any other carelessness in observing the Lord's Supper.

The ultimate purpose behind God's temporal judgment is to correct the errant attitude and behavior of certain Corinthians. Paul explains, "But when we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we may not be condemned with the world" (11:32). Here, he clearly states that God's judgment on believers is discipline, not condemnation. The apostle explicitly juxtaposes the two forms of judgment: *παιδευόμεθα, ἵνα μὴ ... κατακριθῶμεν*. The contrasting objects of the two judgments reinforce their juxtaposition: present temporal judgment has fallen

⁷⁹ Barton, "Paul's Sense of Place," 241; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 553.

⁸⁰ Many scholars link God's judgment in 11:30 to the theology of Deuteronomy. See Hays, *First Corinthians*, 205–6; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (2nd ed.; New York: Crossroad, 2002), 99–100; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 553.

⁸¹ An example of this principle is found in Ex 15:26 where Moses prophesied, "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."

on certain members of the church,⁸² whereas the world is destined for eternal condemnation.⁸³

The Corinthians could have avoided the present experience of judgment (11:31); nevertheless, it is disciplinary and will allow them to be spared God's ultimate judgment (11:32).⁸⁴ Moreover, παιδευόμεθα and κρινόμενοι act contemporaneously, which suggests that παιδεύω is remedial chastening.⁸⁵ The apostle's goal is to motivate certain socially elite Corinthians to repent and stop dishonoring the poor within the community, but a failure to do so does not revoke their salvation.⁸⁶

Paul's assurance of God's grace concludes the central unit of the exposition (11:23–32). The repetition of the phrase τοῦ κυρίου makes an important contribution to the semantic coherence of 11:23–32. τοῦ κυρίου appears thrice in each of the subunits of 11:23–26 and 11:27–32, twice in the opening sentences (11:23, 27), and once in the closing sentences (11:26, 32). It forms an inclusio marking the beginning and end of each subunit. The first subunit explains (γάρ, 11:23) what the Lord's Supper is, thereby clarifying why it is that what the Corinthians are doing is not eating the Lord's Supper (11:20). The second subunit gives the result explains what

⁸² Gundry-Volf, *Paul and Perseverance*, 100. See also Richard A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 162–63; W. Baker, *1 Corinthians*, 173.

⁸³ Contra James M. Hamilton Jr., "The Lord's Supper in Paul: An Identity-Forming Proclamation of the Gospel," in *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ Until He Comes* (ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Matthew R. Crawford; Nashville: Broadman, 2010), 93, who argues that the sinful Corinthians are unbelievers. In support of his view, he claims Rev 2:20–23 is a parallel text.

⁸⁴ C. F. D. Moule, "The Judgment Theme in the Sacraments," in *The Background of the NT and Its Eschatology: Studies in Honour of C. H. Dodd* (eds. W. D. Davies and D. Daube; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 477, states, "If these words [11:31–32] are to be pressed, they must mean that 'the world' is destined to be 'condemned'; but Christians, however culpable they may be, will only fall under remedial, educative judgment destined to rescue them from ultimate condemnation."

⁸⁵ This is further supported by Paul's only other use of παιδεύω in the Corinthian correspondence (2 Cor 6:9). He knows from fulfilling his apostolic commission that chastening [παιδεύω] is not a contradiction of God's love, but is rather to be understood on the basis of it.

⁸⁶ E.g., Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 161; Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 231; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 436.

obedience to Christ should look like when the church gathers to celebrate the Lord's Supper (11:28, 31).⁸⁷

Paul concludes this passage by laying out specific instructions to evade God's judgment (11:33–34). The proper course of action from the Corinthians should be to honor and respect one another. Paul writes, “So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, welcome one another” (11:33). The conjunction ὥστε (cf. 11:27) and the vocative ἀδελφοί indicates that the apostle is concluding his argument (11:17–32). The use of ἀδελφοί adds a touch of affection to a stern scolding and serves to mitigate the severity of his admonition. It also opens the hearts of his listeners to the counsel he is about to give. Finally, it implies that abusing the Lord's Supper does not eliminate one from God's family. συνερχόμενοι links back to συνέρχεσθε and συνερχομένων (11:17, 18) 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, the wealthy should eat at home. In this way, the Corinthians are to reflect the unity of the body and avert God's judgment.

The phrase ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχεσθε is generally translated “wait for one another.”⁸⁸ This rendering is in keeping with the common meaning of ἐκδέχομαι in the NT.⁸⁹ However, the obstacle to this rendering is that if the Corinthians merely “wait for one another,” the problem at

⁸⁷ Collins, *First Corinthians*, 437.

⁸⁸ See all major EVV (e.g., NET, NAU, ESV, HCSB, NRSV, NIV, NKJV, KJV). BDAG s.v. ἐκδέχομαι and L&N s.v. ἐκδέχομαι define 11:33 as “wait for one another.” See also Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 162; Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistles to the Corinthians*, 405; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 440; Barnett, *1 Corinthians*, 221; Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 898–99; Vander Broek, *Breaking Barriers*, 114; Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, 212; Watson, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 124.

⁸⁹ See John 5:3; Acts 17:16; 1 Cor 16:11; Heb 10:13; 11:10; Jas 5:7.

hand is not corrected.⁹⁰ The scandal in Corinth is that the rich are humiliating the poor by feasting in their presence. Hence, another possible translation for ἐκδέχομαι is “welcome” or “receive.”⁹¹ Three arguments seem to support this translation: (1) When ἐκδέχομαι is used of persons or in the context of a dinner, it means “to take or receive from another” or “to entertain.”⁹² (2) In the papyri, ἐκδέχομαι relates to hospitality with explicit references to the provision of food. (3) Paul generally uses ἀπεκδέχομαι when he means “wait,” not ἐκδέχομαι (e.g., 1:7; Rom 8:19, 23, 25). Therefore, the imperative ἐκδέχεσθε demands that the affluent Corinthians “receive” or “welcome” the less fortunate to the full dinner and thus avoid humiliating them.⁹³ This use of ἐκδέχεσθε is closely analogous to προσλαμβάνεσθε ἀλλήλους in Rom 15:7, the notable difference being that Paul is speaking more generally there, whereas in 1 Cor 11:33 he is focusing specifically on the Lord’s Supper.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Winter, “The Lord’s Supper at Corinth,” 79; *After Paul Left Corinth*, 151–52; Blue, “The House Church at Corinth and the Lord’s Supper,” 231; Lamp, “The Eucharist: Identifying with Christ on the Cross,” 42.

⁹¹ See Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 151–52 for the following arguments.

⁹² MM s.v. ἐκδέχομαι call this the “primary meaning”; similarly *EDNT*, s.v. ἐκδέχομαι 1:407. See 3 Mac 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.

⁹³ See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 567–68; Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 232; Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 252; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 202–3; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 163; Eaton, *1 Corinthians 10–16*, 41. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 898–99 and others still prefer the translation “wait” because they see the lexical argument for “receive” as weak, but none of these commentators seems to explain the glaring difficulty of the failure to “wait” to solve the eucharistic problem. It should be noted, however, that the eucharistic problem could be solved in the “wait” reading if the Eucharist takes place after the meal, in which case Paul solves the problem by eliminating the “Love Feast” aspect of the rite. See Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 195.

⁹⁴ See Inziku, *Overcoming Divisive Behaviour*, 322, who proposes an echo in Isa 58:6–7, 10 LXX where the prophet has YHWH ask: “Is not this the fast that I choose? Is it not to share your bread [τὸν ἄρτον] with the hungry [πεινῶντι], and bring the homeless poor into your house [τὸν οἶκον]? If you give your food to the hungry [δῶς πεινῶντι τὸν ἄρτον] and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be the noonday.”

The apostle concludes this text with these words: “If anyone is hungry, let him or her eat at home, so that you do not come together for your judgment” (11:34a).⁹⁵ εἴ τις πεινᾷ refers not to the “have-nots,” but to those who are wealthy,⁹⁶ who were gorging themselves on their delicacies in front of the poor. Paul’s goal is that the Corinthians might truly proclaim Christ’s death until he comes (11:26). To do so, in the midst of the materialism of Corinth, the rich need to show uncommon concern for the poor, just as the “strong” are to show concern for the weak (8:1–11:1). God has shown equal mercy toward each class in their salvation, and they must now reflect Christ’s love and compassion in their relationship with each other.

The command to “eat at home” (ἐν οἴκῳ ἐσθιέτω) restates (as a command) 11:22a and 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, they should stay at home or at least eat enough at home to curb their bodily appetites. If the church’s gathering is to be meaningful, it has to be an expression of real fellowship, which includes sharing.⁹⁷ Again, the apostle wishes to

⁹⁵ Verses 17 and 34 form an inclusio with συνέρχησθε. Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians* (NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 249–50, writes: “Paul’s words in 11:33–34 and 11:17–22 form an inclusio 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.”

⁹⁶ See 16:19; Rom 16:5; Phlm 2; Col 4:15 for the elite in whose houses the early church met.

⁹⁷ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 555.

prevent the Corinthians from coming together for discipline, which goes back to κρίμα in

11:29.⁹⁸ The implication is that their gathering brings judgment on them rather than blessing.⁹⁹

Paul concludes this section with the vague phrase: “As for the remaining matters, I will direct you when I come” (11:34b). He has discussed two critical issues in connection with worship: the wearing of veils by women (11:2–16) and the abuses taking place at the Lord’s Supper (11:17–34). Apparently, there are other worship issues that need his input, but they are not so urgent that he has to write about them at this time. Rather, these instructions can wait a few months until he arrives in Corinth (cf. 16:5–7). One can only surmise what other issues these are.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

Instead of the Lord’s Supper being a symbol of unity and spirituality, in accordance with what the meal was intended to represent—the gospel—the Corinthians made a sinful meal out of the celebration (11:17–22). In doing so, they painted a terribly depraved picture of the community partaking in a meal centering on the death of the Lord Jesus (11:23–26). The purpose

⁹⁸ Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 276, has suggested that in 11:34 “judgment” may be a double entendre—signifying both divine discipline and human-class-based stratification. Peter Oakes, “Urban Structure and Patronage: Christ Followers in Corinth,” in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament* (ed. Dietmar Neufeld and Roger DeMaris; London: Routledge 2009), 192, reconstructs the scene: “The group of Christ-followers from across the city comes to a single place. The host of this meal clearly has accommodation of some size. This makes it rather likely that he or she will be patron of a local network. If that is the case, then the behavior that Paul criticizes becomes quite easily explicable. Although patronage involved transfer of benefits—such as provision of a meal—between patron and clients, the relationship was founded on structural inequality. If a patron participated in a meal with clients we would expect the meal to reflect the structural inequality. Patrons stop being patrons if they do not generally eat more food, and more expensive food, than clients. This is sharpened by the fact that the patron’s need to project his or her status goes beyond the people gathered at the meal.” For more on the patron-client relationship and its inherent inequality, see ch. 3. Paul will not stand for such inequality in the church.

⁹⁹ Inziku, *Overcoming Divisive Behaviour*, 324 n. 74: “Because of the use of μή plus the subjunctive, the ἵνα clause construction best serves as a warning or suggests caution.”

¹⁰⁰ Winter, “The Lord’s Supper at Corinth,” 80, suggests that these matters are difficult and “perhaps touch the very special structure of Corinthian society.” Winter guesses that this instruction serves as an interim ethic. What the wealthy need to do for the poor, he will deal with later.

of the meal was: (1) to remember the suffering and death of Christ, and (2) to bring a unified, healthy body together as a testimony. Instead, the affluent members of the Corinthian church refused to share with those who were poor.

Consequently, they were participating in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner by demonstrating a complete lack of unity and concern for their brothers and sisters (11:29). The solution to the problem of discrimination against the poor Corinthians at the Lord's Supper is for rich Corinthians to share everything in the common meal and to save their own feasts for the privacy of their homes (11:33–34). The result of failing to exhibit the unity of the body in the observance of the Lord's Supper was divine judgment designed to restore oneness (11:30).