

## Message #39

## I Corinthians 11:17-22

It is not uncommon to see people who actually expect to be patted on the back, who are content with their spiritual mediocrity, who are complacent in their sin.

**NO BELIEVER OR CHURCH WILL EVER BE PRAISED, WHOSE PRIMARY FOCUS IS ON SELF.**

You will notice that the word “praise” is a word that shows up three times in these verses (11:17, 22-twice). This word literally suggests that in spite of the carnality, in spite of the rebellion many people actually expected to be lifted up or raised up.

It is possible to come to church and participate in the activities.

It is possible to come to church and participate in the ordinances.

It is possible to come to church and sing hymns and pray and give.

It is possible to come to church and listen to the Word of God.

It is possible to do all of these things and still have a life that does not please God, to still have a life that will not earn His praise. In fact, in the mind of God and in the mind of Paul, the tragic reality of the Corinthian church was that when they met together, it WAS NOT for the better; it WAS for the worse (**11:17**).

That word “better” means it is possible to gather together as believers and have it be advantageous, have it be something that is useful in the mind of God and have it make others stronger. But the word “worse” is a word that means it is also possible to gather together as believers and have it be something inferior, something less, something that is for the worse.

In the mind of God, it is possible to make a mockery of worship. The tragedy of the Corinthian church is that there was so much hate and self-centeredness that when they left a worship service they were not better for it; they were worse off.

**REASON #1 – Many of the believers were divisive. 11:18-19**

The first reason why neither Paul nor God would praise this Corinthian church is because many of the people in it were divisive.

The word practically means that there were divisions and dissensions in the fellowship.

This church externally looked good, but internally it was being torn apart by dissension. In the context, many of the people refused to submit to God, they refused to submit to authority and consequently they refused to submit to each other.

Many of the people were looking out for their own self and trying to promote their own causes. They were not really interested in the will or Word of God; they were interested in their own views, opinions and crusades.

One of the most amazing verses of this text is **verse 19**, which is a verse that proves that even divisions in a church have a purpose. In other words, divisive people will never earn the praise of God; but they do fulfill a purpose of God.

The word “faction” is a word that refers to a chosen opinion which forms a sect or party (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 13). It refers to those in the church who are highly opinionated, not in accordance with the truth of God, who gets a following, who form a sect within the church. As amazing as it may seem, God has a purpose for people like this in His church. It is not to earn His praise; it is to surface who IS spiritual and who ISN'T spiritual.

In other words, God manifests or makes evident those whom He approves through problems in the church.

**REASON #2** – Many of the believers were distorted. **11:20-21**

The N.T. churches were more social than most churches today. The church was a critical life force and life support system to the early church members.

Church services were times of special fellowship. Believers would study doctrine and books of the Bible. They would sing, pray, give, and partake of the Lord's Supper. The believers would eat meals together. It was truly a “Love Feast” and time of Christian love and unity.

This was a true church. These were true believers. This church would not be praised. The people were so carnal that they couldn't even determine the decency and orderliness that belonged in the church of the living God.

**Question #1** - What is going on? **11:22a**

**Question #2** - What is the purpose of your homes? **11:22b**

Church is to be a place that focuses on God, not self. A person's home is a place for self.

**Question #3** - Do you despise the church of God? **11:22c**

The word “despise” is one that means to think little of. It is possible to come to church and think little of it.

**Question #4** - Is the church a place to shame those who have nothing? **11:22d**

That word “shame” means to dishonor or disgrace someone. Obviously the Corinthian church had become a place of partiality. Some people looked down upon other people because they didn’t have a whole lot. They looked at others as if they were a disgrace.

**Question #5** - Do you really expect to be praised? **11:22e**

Some people in the church actually expected God to praise them when they were divisive and self-centered.

God WILL NEVER praise one who lives life this way; He will rebuke him.

People who will not receive God’s praise are people who go to church, participate in church activities and they even partake of the ordinances; but they are too self-centered to change. They do, at times, get their own way in the church, but they will NEVER get or earn the praise of God.