

# Divisions: Are They Justifiable?

by H.J. Vine

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*We must avoid divisions and division-makers by being separated from unrighteousness to the Lord and holding to the one Head and one body.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 11:19

**Topics:** "Church Unity", "Spiritual Gifts"

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## Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the importance of being 'in Christ,' emphasizing how the surpassing power and love of God brings believers closer to Him through His blood, leading to unity among the saints and a rejection of divisions and party spirit. The Scripture in 1 Corinthians 11:19 does not justify division but rather highlights that divisions among believers reveal a wrong state and the need for the approved to stand out by holding firmly to the one Head, Jesus Christ, and refusing divisions. The approved saints, separated from unrighteousness to the Lord, will cleave to Him, recognizing that all saints belong to Christ and that spiritual gifts are given for the edification of all believers, not for the promotion of parties or sects.

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## Transcript

Through the grace of God we have been set "in Christ" in the place where we reside. The Holy Spirit so addresses the saints of God, "in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi," "in Christ . . . in Colosse," etc. The surpassing power and love of God have so wrought that, no longer afar off, we have become nigh in Christ Jesus through His blood. This is true of all the saints; and where it is rightly apprehended, divisions and division-makers will be studiously avoided (Rom. 16:17), and all glorying in parties and party leaders, in sects or schools of opinion, will be considered shameful, and of the flesh. Where righteousness, faith, love, and peace are pursued by those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart, there will be no allowance of these things. Those who are marked merely by a cold, rigid, negative position, simply "separated from unrighteousness," as they say, are always in danger of falling into these evils; and, indeed, they do, for they have nothing to preserve them from them. But with those who are truly separated to the Lord it will be otherwise, for as cleaving to the Lord, abiding with Him, they will be approved of God.

Does not the Scripture: "For there must be also heresies among you" (1 Cor. 11:19) justify division?

No. It has been often taught that 1 Corinthians 11 shows that divisions are necessary. Pamphlets have been issued basing their arguments upon this false supposition. This is one of the scriptures by Paul which men have twisted, perverted, and wrested to their own undoing (2 Peter 3:15-16). But it teaches the very opposite. There are no outward dividings supposed in this scripture at all; for no less than three times

in the two verses (18:19) the Apostle says the trouble in question is "among you:" they still came "together in assembly" (v. 18), and they still met "in one place." What wilful perversion then it is to use this scripture to justify the heartless and dishonouring dividings of the beloved saints of God all over the world! This certainly is not following righteousness.

No. That is not what 1 Corinthians 11:19 says. The passage reads, "There must also be sects [or 'schools'] among you, that the approved may become manifest among you." We are simply told what must be the condition of things amongst believers WHERE THE STATE IS WRONG, as mentioned in verse 18. Paul was never ready to believe bad reports about the saints; he cultivated confidence in them rather, through the Lord; but here he says, "I partly give credit" to the report, that "when ye come together in assembly . . . divisions exist among you." The divisions were the evidence of their bad state when they came together. Jealousies existed between rich and poor; therefore these divisions in their midst. Consequently the Apostle says in the next verse, sects or schools must also be amongst them as the outcome of their bad state, that "the approved," who would have none of these things, might become manifest among them.

The word used in this verse is altogether different to that used in verse 18. There we have the word "division" (σχίσματα). In verse 19 it is ἄρσεις, meaning "schools," or "parties," after some men's own opinions; and where there is a bad state in a gathering, such as is described in verse 18 these "schools" spoken of in verse 19 must also appear in that gathering. The bad state fosters such, though they still come together "in one place" of meeting. The approved are manifest amongst them. But mark, not by going out from amongst them. Note again, particularly, the important words, so often repeated, "amongst you."

Since there is no justification in 1 Corinthians 11 for the wilfulness and violence done by the makers of division, what are the saints of God to do amidst such conditions?

Separated from unrighteousness TO THE LORD, the approved will hold to the one Head, and therefore to the one body. They will refuse divisions. They will not say "I of Christ," but hold all the saints as His. Cleaving to the Lord, abiding with Him, they will hold firmly in faith and affection all His own. There is one Head and one body. There is one Shepherd and one flock. There is one Father and one family. They will also look at the gifts as given in view of all. The evangelist, as well as the double gift of pastor and teacher, is given with a view to the perfecting of all the saints, for building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13). The gifts are not given for parties or sects. Christ who gave the gifts is the Head of the assembly, not of a party; He is the Beginning, Firstborn from among the dead. The first place must be His in all things.

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