

1st Corinthians Chapter 11

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(1) And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.

- Belongs with previous chapter and is commented on there.
- 1 Corinthians was written before Matthew, Mark, Luke or John so there was little written yet to show the example of Christ. Paul's next choice is to use his own example of Christian living.
- Paul moves now *from questions about individuals* to items *about church meeting conduct*. The outline:
 1. Women worshiping with their heads uncovered. 2-16
 2. The abuse of the Lord's Supper event. 17-34

THERE IS PRIORITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

(2) I am so glad that you always keep me in your thoughts, and that you are following the teachings I passed on to you.

- There's a piece missing here and some scholars believe Paul is referring to an earlier letter that we do not have. If the Lord had wanted the letter in the canon, it would be there.
- Paul's **teachings** did not originate with him, they were **passed on**. He received them from the Lord. This is what the Lord expects of His people throughout the generations.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20 NLT)

What the Lord wants to have taught is what has been written down -- the New Testament Scriptures.

(3) But there is one thing I want you to know: The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

- Paul states the authority/subjection relationship. It is maintaining this relationship in the church that allows the church to function. When we lose sight of the relationships in the universe, we can no longer operate smoothly as a church.

- **Christ** is the **head** of **every man**. Elsewhere:

Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of His body, the church. (Ephesians 4:15 NLT)

- The **head** of **the woman is man**. Elsewhere:

Women should learn quietly and submissively. I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly. (1 Timothy 2:11-12 NLT)

This is the security and source of honor for the **woman**. These verses are not based in being a married lady but in being a female, whether married, widowed or single. It must be noticed that Paul was aware of only two sexes. The present day fad of identifying many sexes is not based on reality.

- The **head of Christ is God**. Consider the prayer of Jesus in John 17 where He speaks of Himself in the third person:

For You have given Him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one You have given Him. (John 17:2 NLT)

Also remember Paul earlier in 1st Corinthians:

... and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God. (1 Corinthians 3:23 NLT)

(4) A man dishonors his head if he covers his head while praying or prophesying.

- Paul points out that when **a man** speaks (in the church assembly) by way of **praying or prophesying** (in its broader sense of delivering a discourse), he **dishonors his head if it is covered**. It is difficult to know if it means the speaker's own **head** or **dishonors** Christ as his **head**. The translators differ. The *Amplified Version* says "and the one who is his head.") Verse 7 includes the speaker's own head.

Paul Butler addresses this difficult subject:

While the primary focus of the apostle's discussion is on woman's subordination to man, the issue is not simply a wife's obedience to her husband's loving authority. It is much broader than that and covers attitudes of all women and men -- married or unmarried. The broader issue is that women (and men, too) must not rebel against the divine order of femininity and masculinity!

(5) But a woman dishonors her head if she prays or prophesies without a covering on her head, for this is the same as shaving her head.

- It is clear that Paul is drawing his comments from what goes on in the community. His comments are based in their culture.
- **William Barclay** gives this insight:

We must remember the place of the veil in the East. To this day eastern women wear the *yashmak* which is a long veil leaving the forehead and the eyes uncovered

but reaching down almost to the feet. In Paul's time the eastern veil was even more concealing. It came right over the head with only an opening for the eyes and reached right down to the feet. A respectable eastern woman would never have dreamed of appearing without it. Writing in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, T. W. Davies says,

"No respectable woman in an eastern village or city goes out without it, and, if she does, she is in danger of being misjudged. Indeed English and American missionaries in Egypt told the present writer that their own wives and daughters when going about find it often best to wear the veil."

(6) Yes, if she refuses to wear a head covering, she should cut off all her hair! But since it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut or her head shaved, she should wear a covering.

● **Sir William Ramsay** explains it this way --

"In Oriental lands the veil is the power and honour and dignity of the woman. With the veil on her head she can go anywhere in security and profound respect. She is not seen; it is a mark of thoroughly bad manners to observe a veiled woman in the street. She is alone. The rest of the people around are non-existent to her, as she is to them. She is supreme in the crowd.... But without the veil the woman is a thing of nought, whom anyone may insult.... A woman's authority and dignity vanish along with the all-covering veil that she discards."

In the East, then, the veil is all-important. It does not only mark the inferior status of a woman; it is the inviolable protection of her modesty and chastity. (End of Ramsay)

(7) A man should not wear anything on his head when worshiping, for man is made in God's image and reflects God's glory. And woman reflects man's glory.

- Custom had it that a man's head should be uncovered at the church assembly. In American custom, men always uncovered their head in the church assembly, but as baseball caps have become popular because they can be worn in automobiles, baseball caps are frequently seen in the church assembly. They are worn by a younger generation who do not see them as disrespectful.

(8) For the first man didn't come from woman, but the first woman came from man. (9) And man was not made for woman, but woman was made for man.

- Who was here first enters the picture. Adam was created before Eve. Further, Eve was created as a companion to Adam.
- Paul took the Genesis account of the creation of mankind very literally. He didn't use words like *myth*, *tradition*, or *folklore*.

(10) For this reason, and because the angels are watching, a woman should wear a covering on her head to show she is under authority.

- We learn that worshipers are being observed by angels. That's new information!
- A woman must demonstrate her submission by wearing a head covering. This must refer to what was understood locally in Corinth because it is not true in our culture. Wearing a hat among us does not show that a woman is under anyone's authority. It merely shows that she chose to wear a hat.

(11) But among the Lord's people, women are not independent of men, and men are not independent of women. (12) For although the first woman came from man, every other man was born from a woman, and everything comes from God.

- **Men** and **women** are *interdependent* in that Eve came from Adam, but **every man** is **born** from a **woman**.

(13) Judge for yourselves. Is it right for a woman to pray to God in public without covering her head? (14) Isn't it obvious that it's disgraceful for a man to have long hair?



Painting of the signing of the U.S. Constitution in 1787.
Notice the length of men's hair.

(15) And isn't long hair a woman's pride and joy? For it has been given to her as a covering. (16) But if anyone wants to argue about this, I simply say that we have no other custom than this, and neither do God's other churches.

- Rather than state the Lord's will, Paul appeals to what his readers already understand. So he is drawing his reasons based on *their* customs.
 - Our Western culture **does not find** a problem with a woman praying in public with her head uncovered.

- It is **not disgraceful** for a man to have long hair. Note the painting.)
- A woman's hair length is **her own choice**.
So we conclude that verses 13-16 are based on local customs and are **not** universal commands for the church.

DIFFICULTIES IN CHURCH MEETINGS

(17) But in the following instructions, I cannot praise you. For it sounds as if more harm than good is done when you meet together.

- Offering **praise** for right conduct was part of Paul's encouragement for churches. He didn't find something wrong and then focus on that to the exclusion of encouragement. I recall inviting a guest speaker for a Sunday morning sermon and he *scolded* the church from 11:30 to 1:20. While I can't recall what the scolding was about, needless to say that was the last time he was invited to encourage the saints. I'm certain there was **more harm than good**.

(18) First, I hear that there are divisions among you when you meet as a church, and to some extent I believe it. (19) But, of course, there must be divisions among you so that you who have God's approval will be recognized!

- Paul was upset about the **divisions** in the **church** as the Lord's Supper was observed, but there was also a useful side to their **divisions** also. The **divisions** allowed **God's** true people to be **recognized**.

(20) When you meet together, you are not really interested in the Lord's Supper. (21) For some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk.

- When they **met** for the **Lord's Supper**, they had other **interests**. They brought **their own meal** but did not share it with **others**. Some were left **hungry** while some brought alcoholic beverages and became **drunk**. Divisions were very obvious.

(22) What? Don't you have your own homes for eating and drinking? Or do you really want to disgrace God's church and shame the poor? What am I supposed to say? Do you want me to praise you? Well, I certainly will not praise you for this!

- They had **homes** for their meals. The Lord's Supper is a *token meal to remind us*, not to meet our needs for food and drink. Paul takes his readers back to the original Lord's Supper next:

THE ORIGINAL SUPPER

(23) For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord Himself. On the night when He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread (24) and gave thanks to God for it. Then He broke it in pieces and said, "This is My body, which is given for you. Do this to remember Me."

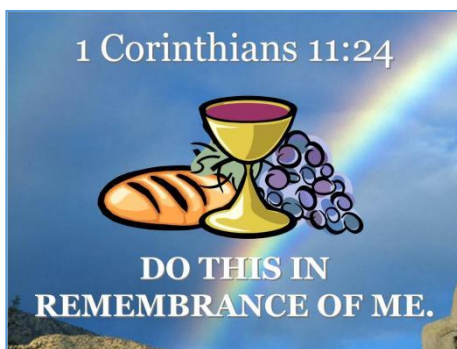
- Paul knowledge of the **Lord's** Supper was not from the other apostles, but *firsthand*:

If I wanted to boast, I would be no fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I won't do it, because I don't want anyone to give me credit beyond what they can see in my life or hear in my message, even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.

(2 Corinthians 12:6-7 NLT)

So Paul got his version of the Last Supper by revelation directly from **the Lord**.

- **The Lord took some bread** (from the table of the Passover) and **gave thanks** for it. He **broke** the token amount in **pieces**. It is clear that it was not a real meal but a coming **reminder**.



(25) In the same way, He took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and His people -- an agreement confirmed with My blood. Do this to remember Me as often as you drink it." (26) For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until He comes again.

- Following the Passover **Supper**, He took a **cup of wine** and it was a symbol of the **new covenant between God and His people**. It pictured the **blood** of Christ. It was to be repeated and the emerging church in Acts chapter two observed the memorial *every day*. As the churches grew and met *weekly*, the Lord's Supper was observed weekly since that's the day they were together anyway.
- Doctor Luke mentions this weekly event in Acts:

On the first day of the week, we gathered with the local believers to share in the Lord's Supper. Paul was preaching to them, and since he was leaving the next day, he kept talking until midnight. (Acts 20:7 NLT)

From the *Teaching of the Apostles* (about A.D. 100), also known as the *Didache*, we read:

14:1 And on the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give

thanks, first confessing your sins, that your sacrifice may be pure.

*Justin: [A.D. 100 - 165; Christian teacher/author;
Wrote after A.D. 150]*

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.

(The **water** was to dilute the **wine**,
which was preserved as a syrup)

While these writings are not inspired, we can still see that the Lord's Supper was observed weekly.

(27) So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. (28) That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup.

- Paul has chided his readers for bring their own lunches while allowing some believers to be hungry. The **Lord** does not want that. It is **sinning against** the **body and blood** of the **Lord**.

- He is talking about how the token memorial meal is handled. Some have thought the comment is to be applied to our personal worth. Not so. But partakers do need to examine their lives, not just gobble the symbols.

HOW GOD JUDGES THE CARELESS

(29) For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself.

- Careless partaking brings **God's judgment** on the partaker. The punishment is mentioned next.

(30) That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died.

- **Weakness, sickness** and early **death** are all possibilities. Checking the different translations, it is clear that not all of them viewed the final word as *physical death*. Commentator **J.W. McGarvey** see it as "peaceful repose" like sleepiness rather than physical **death**.

(31) But if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way. (32) Yet when we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned along with the world. (33) So, my dear brothers and sisters, when you gather for the Lord's Supper, wait for each other.

- The solution is for us to **examine ourselves** to avoid **God's judgment**. Take the token memorial meal *together*.

(34) If you are really hungry, eat at home so you won't bring judgment upon yourselves when you meet together. I'll give you instructions about the other matters after I arrive.

- Eat your physical body's nourishment at **home** to avoid **judgment on yourselves**.
- Paul planned to visit the Corinthian church. There is a question as to when that may have happened.