

1st Corinthians Chapter 11

Chapter 11

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Verse 1

Be you followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

The base word for follower is imitate or copy. Paul led such a Christian walk that he not only preached such a doctrine as the Corinthian church ought to believe, but lived such a life as they ought to imitate. Paul followed Christ who did not please himself but even went to the cross having laid aside His divine glory, dying as a man to bring man back to God.

Verse 2.

Now I praise you brethren that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered to you.

Paul had just given the church a long discourse about idol worship which was a very important subject and it appeared that some in the Church had paid strict attention to him and others had not. Paul asks them all to remember what he taught them but the contentions and divisions they were experiencing were the consequence of their disobedience.

Verse 3

But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.

Paul lays out the divine order in the moral government of the universe. He tells them Christ is the head and author of their new found faith called Christianity. He says the head, the Creator, Preserver and Lord of every man is Christ. The man is the head and protector of the woman. The Head of Christ is God the Father. God sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross to redeem man back to God after the fall in Eden where sin separated man from God, and Jesus was willing to lay down His life for the world. (John 3;16) so that this divine order could be manifest here on earth.

Every Christian woman believer in the Bible accepts that in Genesis chapter 3; verse 16 and as a result of the fall, God placed the woman in subjection to and dependence on her husband.

Verse 4

Every man praying or prophesying having his head covered dishonours his head. (Christ)

All men praying or prophesying with his head covered dishonours his head which, as Paul tells us is Christ. It was also a Greek custom for a man to preach or pray with his head uncovered and the church at Corinth followed this custom. The Jewish custom is to wear the tallit which in the Hebrew means 'little covering' a rectangular 'prayer shawl' worn during morning prayers on weekdays and Shabbat. The tassels round the tallit have special meanings some of which were to remind oneself to observe the commandments of the Lord. The tallit was worn round the shoulders and when in prayer was lifted up over the head to 'shut oneself in' with the Lord acting as a temple. I like that - and the tallit I have been given on my 80th birthday by my family is very special to me.

Verse 5

But every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

It was the custom among Jews, Greeks and Romans that no woman should be seen out without a veil. The only women seen without veils were prostitutes, hence to pray or prophesy without a veil would identify Christianity with harlotry and Paul would not tolerate such within his church.

It is clear from these verses that Godly women have their place in the church ministry if they are properly dressed. Joel 2:28 confirms that God has a place for sons, daughters, old men, young men all with an active part in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days. The only difference was that the man had his head uncovered because he was in the image of Christ; the woman had her head covered because, by order of God, she was in a state of subjection to her husband. If a woman was seen without a veil she would dishonour her head which was her husband (v3). It would be the same as a woman having her hair cut off because she was found in adultery and whoredom (5-6; Numbers 5:18). The man was not to wear a veil because he was made in the image of God; the women needed a veil to show her submission to her husband who was her head (v 8, 9).

Verse 6

For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

If a woman wants to wear her hair short like a man then why not go all the way and have it shorn, but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn like an adulteress then let her be covered. Should the woman wish she could let her hair grow long and use that as a covering she would then become a woman in the tradition of a Nazarite as were Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist. (Numbers 6). But there were a number of conditions that went with such a decision many of which were not popular.

Verse 7/8/9.

For the man indeed ought not to cover his head (while preaching or praying) for as much as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.8. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.9. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

The order of the creation of man and woman is found in Genesis chapter2 verse 21-24.

Verse 10

For this cause ought the women to have power on her head because of the angels.

Paul briefly refers to the fact that what the church does is known to the angels. According to *Ephesians 3:10*

To the intent that now unto the Principalities and Powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

The woman needed to wear a veil over her head as a sign of coming under her husband's protection, thereby setting an example of her humbleness and submission to her husband. Thus she would come in line with heaven's order, whereby the angels were to submit to God. (1. Timothy 5:21. Ecclesiastes 5:6). Mathew 18:10 tells us Angels always behold the face of God in heaven. The submission of the church to the principles of God and Jesus Christ are examples shown to the Angels, good and evil to teach them the eternal purposes of God.

Verse 11

Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

Neither sex is independent of each other. The verse ends with 'in the Lord' in other words in the life of the true Christian the model of the marriage of a man and a woman where the woman follows God's principles as laid out in this chapter, the Lord will bless the couple. Today's woman wants to do her own thing and because of divorce, separation, independence and the like, she knows nothing of the commands of God to live in the order He laid down to attract His blessings. In the Christian life the man and the woman depend on each other. There is no doubt the woman's intuition is valuable to a man, particularly in ministry and she can bring valuable insight that can save a man a lot of trouble if they are in true partnership and with Christ at the helm.

Verse 13

Judge in yourselves is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?

I remember not too long ago seeing most women stop and put a scarf round their heads before entering a church or cathedral when sightseeing on holiday. Somehow they all had respect for God and instinctively knew they were to cover their head before entering His house. They didn't do that when going into a museum or library. When I was a young boy all the ladies had a hat on in church and those who did not had long hair as their covering. This respect has gone over the years but the point I am making is that all ladies stopped, and shared scarfs and items of dress so they felt comfortable going into the house of God. In Paul's day this custom was more prevalent and their submission to their husband was not a dictatorial kind they had great respect for one another and to God.

Verse 14

Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair it is a shame unto him?

My! Haven't things changed over the years? Today it is difficult to tell men and women apart sometimes!

Verse 15

But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her for her hair is given her for a covering.

Long hair can be used as a veil or covering if the woman insists on her new found freedom of deliverance from the custom of wearing a veil.

Verse 16

But if any man seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

It appeared that some women fought for equality with the men. All races, classes, and sexes are one in Christ and equal in rights and privileges regarding gospel benefits. They make one body with Christ at the head. Eph.1:20-23. Col. 3:11. The gulf between Jews and Gentiles, masters and slaves, male and female has been bridged by Christ Jesus and the gospel.

The women at Corinth overstepped their authority in praying unveiled and this is what the apostle is addressing in these verses.

There is no doubt that there is a great change in the churches of today. Women seldom wear hats at any time and most ladies in church do not have a hat or scarf on their head, or their head covered at

all. As we have seen in this chapter that is not what God intended, how you deal with this issue is up to you.

Paul goes on to deal with 7 other disorders in the Corinthian church which are

1. Divisions (v18)
2. Heresies (v19)
3. Selfishness (v21)
4. Misuse of the church (v22)
5. Shaming the poor (v22)
6. Partaking of the Lord's supper unworthily (v27-30)
7. Failure to judge themselves (v 31-34)

Verse 17

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that you come together not for the better, but for the worse.

At the beginning of the Book of Corinthians Paul did praise them for their attention to the rules he had laid down, but now he is obliged to condemn them for certain irregularities that had crept in that hindered their walk with God particularly to the celebration of the Lord's supper.

Verse 18

For first of all, when you come together in the church I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

It would appear that as soon as the congregation assembled at church gossip, arguments and infighting started, possibly also division in marriages, and this upset some who knew this was not Godly. Paul says in the next verse;

Verse 19

For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

The word heresies refer to a doctrinal view or belief at variance to the recognised and accepted rules or tenets of a system, church, or party. A person who is a heretic, this word is used only once in the Bible (Tit.3:10) holds a heresy and is a dissenter, nonconformist and rejects sound doctrine and truth.

Verses 18 and 19 show how Satan had influenced the church using divisions and heresies, no doubt brought about by those false prophets and teachers we spoke about at the beginning of the book of Corinthians. Their difference in opinion led to a difference in church practice and thus the Church of God that was taught to be one body in Christ, was now split into sects and different parties.

Verse 20

When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper.

This refers to social meals of the early church where the members of the church got together and they brought their own food. According to the Greek custom each would bring his own provisions. The rich would eat sumptuously and often the poor had little to eat.

Verse 21/22

For in eating every one eats before the other his own supper: and one is hungry and another is drunken. 22. What? Have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise you the church of God and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you shall praise you in this? I praise you not.

It would appear that the congregation met at the church to eat and fellowship, taking their own food which was plentiful for the rich but scarce for the poor. It appeared they did not share the food so some went hungry. They used these grand feasts to eat drink and be merry and at the end of their party they took the Lord's Supper. This greatly upset Paul and he told them 'haven't you got houses to eat and drink in?' There was no respect from these church members who tagged the Lord's Supper on the end of their party. They could have put the food on a common table so all could partake, instead the rich ate in groups by themselves and the poor were forced to eat alone. Their conduct carried contempt for God's house and they commemorated the Lord's death on the cross in a drunken state. These things disqualified them from the Lord's Supper and consequently sickness and death had come upon some of them.

Verse 23

For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus same night in which He was betrayed took bread: 24 And when He had given thanks He brake it and said 'Take eat, this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

Paul was not in attendance when Jesus and His disciples were in the upper room, Paul was busy collecting Christians and persecuting them for following Christ. Now he is directing the Church in the breaking of bread and the Lord's Supper. But he knew what to do and what to say because it was given to him by direct revelation from the Lord. The congregation was not aware of the events that took place that night at Christ's last supper and as Paul acted out the scene by breaking the bread the church were able to take part in the ceremony, and it became real to them.

Alexander Maclaren in his Holy Scripture Expositions puts this much better than I so I will borrow what he says;

'Do this' is the true meaning of the *words*, *not* 'in remembrance of me', but something far more sweet and sympathetic 'do this for the remembering of me'. The former expression is equal to: 'Do this because you remember.' The meaning of the words is 'Do this in case you forget' do this in order that you may recall to memory what the slippery memory is so apt to lose, the impression of even the sweetest sweetness, of the most loving love, and the most self-abnegating sacrifice, which He offered for us.

There is something to me infinitely sympathetic and beautiful in looking at these words not only as the commandment of the Lord, but as the appeal of a friend, who wishes, as we all do, not to be utterly forgotten by those whom He cared for and loved; and who, not only because their remembrance was their salvation, but because their forgetfulness pained His heart, brings to their hearts the plaintive appeal: 'Do not forget me when I am gone away from you; and even if you have no better way of remembering me, take these poor symbols, to which I am not too proud to entrust the care of my memory and do this lest you forget me'

'In remembrance of me' Jesus Christ then takes up an altogether unique and solitary position here, and into the most sacred hours of devotion and the loftiest moments of communion with God,

intrudes His personality and says, ‘When you are most religious, remember me; and let the highest act of your devout life be a thought turned to myself.’

The creator of the universe, the creator of man and woman, the One who parted the red sea, turned water into wine, went to the cross to redeem mankind back to God His Father, the King of kings and Lord of lords wishes us to remember Him at this point. He did not ask to be remembered for healing the blind man or feeding the multitude, for walking on the water or calming the raging sea. No! He wants us to remember His suffering, remember His pain, His loneliness in the garden when even His disciples went to sleep when He asked them to pray with Him. At His weakest point Jesus wants us to remember Him in the breaking of bread which is His body broken for us. We will never know the true cost of the cross or how heavy the sin of the world was, but we can begin to appreciate His pain and torment as our sin is nailed to the cross with Him. It is the cross experience that Jesus tells us when we break bread to ‘do this’ in remembrance of me.

Verse 24

And when he had given thanks he brake it and said ‘take eat this is my body which was broken for you: this do in remembrance of me’ 25. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do, as oft as you drink it in remembrance of me.

With a traitor at the table and death present before his eyes, he left this ordinance as his last gift to mankind to commemorate his death. Jesus knew His fate, He knew what horrific injury He was to receive from those He created and those He would die for but still He gave this pledge of His amazing love for mankind.

Verse 25

After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood this do, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.

The cup is the parchment deed on which the Lord’s new covenant or last will is written and sealed, making over to us, His true believers, all the blessings here and hereafter, ratified by the shedding of His blood. (Heb. 9:12)

The old sacrifices, of lambs and goats (which simply covered sin without dealing with it) brought sins continually to remembrance (Heb. 10:1-3) The Lord’s Supper brings to remembrance Christ and His sacrifice once for all the full and final forgiveness for sins.

Verse 26

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord’s death until He come.

We can remember the Lord’s sacrificial death, partake of His body and blood, and partake of the redemption from sin derived from it. We can do this as often as *we like and when we do we show publicly the death of Jesus for us individually. Until He comes – when there will no longer be the need for symbols of His body, the body itself will be manifested.*

Verse 27

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.

There are at least 8 ways the Corinthian church took the communion disrespectfully and displeased the Lord.

1. Take the Lord's supper whilst in envying and in strife (v18)
2. Take it to commemorate a mere historical fact as did the Jews celebrating the Passover (v19)
3. Take it in drunkenness (v21-22)
4. Take it in irreverence to God and His Church (v22)
5. Take it in disrespect to the poor and needy (v22)
6. Take it in unbelief, not realising its true significance and not discerning the Lord's body and blood to receive God's benefits by faith (v27-30)
7. Take it as an unsaved man with sin in the life without making proper confession of faith and accepting Christ as Lord of your life (v27-30)
8. Take it without examining one's self so as to escape chastening from God (v31-32)

How do we take communion? What are our thoughts as we partake of His body and blood? In most churches this part of the service is tagged on the end just before we rush for the coffee queue. But while the emblems are taken round what do we think about? The Lord's death ought always to be fresh in our minds. Our verse says if we eat and drink unworthily we are to sit on the naughty step!

No! it is far more important than that, if we are guilty and find ourselves unworthy we shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. If we behave in this manner, we actually take the Lord's death in vain judging it as having no real power to redeem us. Hence the very strong words from the Lord.

Do you remember the cries of the Jews when Jesus was being tried? How Pilate would have released Jesus but the Jews cried out crucify Him crucify Him. Pilate again said Jesus was innocent but the Jews cried out the more saying 'His blood be on us and upon our children' (Matthew 27:25.)

What a judgement they brought upon themselves and their children and we bring that same judgement upon us when we do not examine ourselves before we take the Lords supper.

Are we sure we have a clean bill of health when reading the 8 disrespectful ways we can approach the Lord's Table? It appeared the Jews celebrated their deliverance from Egypt with joy, singing and feasting and as a kind of historical commemoration. The Church at Corinth used the Lord's Supper in much the same way; there was little or no respect for the suffering the Lord took to redeem us from sin. That's why Paul tells the church who wish to partake of the Lord's Supper in his day and in ours that we must examine ourselves before we eat or drink. Instead of being cleaned by His blood, we will be guilty of His blood. Not a confession to or even an examination by a Priest is what the Lord is looking for, *for self-examination is necessary to a right attendance at this Holy ordinance.*

Verse 29

For he who eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Each person should examine himself to see if he is in the faith and it is his responsibility to decide his fitness to partake of the Lord's Supper. It is better not to partake if he is not fit or there is any doubt. My father was very strict on this point, he would tell his congregation not to take the bread and wine unless we were very sure we were right with God because he taught us the consequences. It is all to do with the Cross which is seldom mentioned in church today. A lack of understanding of the Cross is the reason of verse 30.

Because of sin and separation from God brought about by Satan and his temptation of Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden, the fellowship with the trinity became sinful and man was separated from God, and the world became corrupt. In God's plan to redeem mankind back to himself he gave up His only Son to die on the Cross. If you want to know how God felt about this put your own son in the place of Jesus, offer your son to redeem the world from sin. We could never really know the cost of such a sacrifice. But it had to be Jesus, a perfect sinless sacrifice to replace all the lambs and goats offered throughout the many years of history until Jesus offered Himself and on His death and the shedding of His precious blood that Satan was defeated. Do we think of that when we are at the Lord's Table, or do we think of what we are going to have for dinner?

God is saying unless we remember His Son we bring damnation upon ourselves. The word damnation is believed to be a mistranslation and the right word is 'judgement'. Even so this word is one to be avoided; none of us want the judgement of the Lord on us because we approach the Lord's Table with disrespect. We literally bring judgement on ourselves, because we do not reverently discern (judge) or trust in the redemption power of the blood of Jesus. Partaking of this covenant meal with that mind-set will separate us from its power to cleanse from sin and to bring healing wholeness to our whole being.

Verse 30

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep.

Weak and sickly, weak is when we just feel naturally unable to go on, sometimes we feel exhausted, everything is too much effort, not that we are lazy but our bodies just cannot cope. Sickly is when our bodies are taken in an illness that may confine us to bed. We understand that God will not send sickness upon us but may allow the enemy to do his work in our bodies under strict control by the Lord to bring our minds to a right state before God. If a person does not want to be sickly or die prematurely let Him have faith, let him approach the Lord's Table respecting the Lord and with forgiveness in his heart.

Verse 31/32

For if we judge ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

It is the Lord's body one must discern. It is by His stripes we are healed (Isa.53: 4-5. Mat. 8:17. 1Pet. 2:24). If we will judge ourselves and have faith in the work of Christ on the Cross we shall not have to suffer or go without the benefits provided for us. If we will not do this we shall have to reap what we sow. If we judge any sin we commit and ask forgiveness and put it far from us we are then not chastened by God. If we refuse to judge ourselves then God judges and chastens us.

But I thought God was a God of love, why all this chastening? Those of us who have children know only too well that it is natural to correct them when they misbehave. Whichever way you choose to do that in this 'political correct' world we live in; we chastise our children when it is needed because we love them and want to see them grow up well behaved, well-mannered people. God feels the same about you, He loves you enough not to leave you as you are but *He wants you to read His Word, listen to His voice that you might show forth His glory.*

Verse 33

Wherefore my Brethren, when you come together to eat, tarry one for the another 34. And if a man hunger let him eat at home; that you come not together unto condemnation.

At the Church at Corinth the congregation brought food and combined their carnal eating with the Lord's Supper in a disrespectful manner. Paul condemned this as improper and dishonouring to the Lord. Paul instructed them to wait for each other and eat and drink of the Lord's Table together. If they wanted to eat and drink socially they were do that at home.

These instructions were given by Paul to bring into line those who were led astray by the false teachers we started reading about in chapter 1. It is so easy to slip away from the truth of God's Word and bring in ways and methods of man. We must to get back to the Word of God and sometimes that means a change. People don't like change, but change is sometimes necessary to measure up to what God wants from us. We forget that to avoid the curse that must curb such disobedience and to keep ourselves under the blood of the Lamb, we must follow hard after the Lord and obey His instructions so we may get the blessings that the Lord promises to those He loves.

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Be blessed

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