

PERFECTING OUR WORSHIP

1CORINTHIANS 11

INTRODUCTION:

This entire section deals with problems connected with church worship--matters concerning the veiling of women (11:2-16), observing the Lord's Supper (11:17-34), and the granting and use of spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40).

1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." Galatians 2:20

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.

Most likely Paul is taking up some of these subjects (women & men's head coverings), which had more to do with maintaining a proper perspective on the role of men and women in worship.

3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

Verses 3-16 have evoked considerable difference of opinion about the nature of the head covering and about the place of women both in public worship and in their relationship to men. The head covering has been interpreted as either a veil or shawl, or else hair--either long or short. As to the use of veils, women in the ancient Orient were veiled in public or among strangers, but otherwise they were unveiled.

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. 5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. 6 For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.

Verses 4-6. Whichever view is held as to the nature of the head covering, the same basic principles emerge from the passage. In vv.3-10 Paul emphasizes the order of authority and administration in the divine structure of things. As every man is to be under Christ's authority and Christ is under God's authority, so the woman is under her husband's authority. (Paul does not mean by this analogy that subordination in each case is of the same completeness.) Therefore, the woman should not demonstrate her authority by having her head uncovered, as the man did when he was praying and prophesying. Evidently at Corinth women were coming to church with their heads improperly covered, thus causing disorder and disrespect in the services. Paul is not necessarily giving his opinion on the propriety of women praying or prophesying in the church, which he later observes was being done (cf. 14:34), though some feel that since he mentions women praying and prophesying here, he approves of the practice. Paul's point is that if a woman is in the public worship with her head uncovered, it is as if she had her head shaved (v.5).

7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man is not from woman, but woman from man. 9 Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.

Verses 7-9 In stating that a man should not have his head covered in church, Paul argues that this follows from the principle that man was prior to woman and is the "image" and "glory" of God--meaning that he is to be subject to and represent God in authority.

The woman, however, is the glory of the man--i.e., she is to be subject to man and to represent him in authority. The woman, however, is the glory of the man--i.e., she is to be subject to man and to represent him in authority. Although God created Adam and Eve and gave both dominion over the creation (Ge 1:26), Paul argues for man's exercise of authority over woman on the basis of man's prior creation to woman. The argument goes like this: Woman was made from man's body and she was made for man's sake and not the reverse (Ge 2:7). Although it was not proper for a first-century Jewish man to cover his head for prayer (a custom originally meant to indicate sorrow), yet the act seems to have been innovative and tried in the Jewish synagogues of Paul's time.

10 For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

Perhaps angels are mentioned in this discussion about the place of women in the church to remind Christians that angels are present at the time of worship and that they are interested in the salvation of God's people (1Pe 1:10-12 ; cf. Gal 3:10) and sensitive to the conduct of Christians at worship.

1 Peter 1:10-12

10 Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

11 Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. 12 For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.

Verses 11-12 But lest he be misunderstood as wanting to demote women, Paul now argues that men and women are equal in the Lord and mutually dependent.

13 Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? 15 But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering.

Verses 13-15 The final point in the passage is that man is to be distinguished from woman. Thus the Corinthians are to see

16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

The principles Paul presents here that are to govern the church and individual Christians in their life and conduct are as follows:

(1) Christians should live as individuals and in corporate worship in the light of the perfect unity and interrelatedness of the persons of the Godhead. The Father and the Son are perfectly united. ***John 10:30 I and My Father are one.***”

- (2) Christians must remember that God first created man, then woman (Ge 2:21-23), and placed the man as administrative head over the woman and the woman as his helper-companion (Ge 2:18). So in the Christian community, the man is to conduct himself as a man (1Co 11:4) and as the head of the woman (v.3), while the woman is to conduct herself as a woman with dignity, without doing anything that would bring dishonor to her (v.5).
- (3) Since Christians live in the Christian community of the home and the church, they must remember that God has established the man and the woman as equal human beings (v.12). So in the Christian community believers should treat one another with mutual respect and admiration as they realize each other's God-given special functions and positions.
- (4) Christian men and women should remember that, though God has made them equal human beings, yet he has made them distinct sexes. That distinction is not to be blurred in their realization that they are mutually dependent (v.11)--the man on the woman and the woman on the man. It is also to be observed in their physical appearance (vv.13-15), so that in worship the woman can be recognized as woman and the man as man.
- (5) God is a God of order. This means order in worship and peaceful decorum in the church (v.16). Therefore Christian men and women should conduct themselves in a respectful, orderly way not only in worship but also in daily life.

Conduct at the Lord's Supper

In dealing with the Lord's Supper, Paul discusses three matters:

1. **first**, the problem of believers making a mockery of the Supper because of abuses practiced at the agape (cf. Jude 12)--the love feast or dinner accompanying the Supper (vv.17-22);

17 Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. **18** For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. **19** For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. **20** Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.

21 For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. **22** What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.

1. **second**, the necessity of taking the Lord's Supper seriously through rehearsing its institution as given by the Lord (**vv.23-26**);

Institution of the Lord's Supper

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; **24** and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “ Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” **25** In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “ This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”**26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

1. and **third**, the warning about partaking of the Supper unworthily examine yourself (**vv.27-34**).

27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. 33 Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.

CONCLUSION:

Paul now deals positively with the agape meal. In eating it, the Corinthians should show respect for their fellow believers' physical as well as spiritual needs by waiting for each other and eating together. If they come only to satisfy their physical craving and not for communion with the Lord and his people, then they should eat their meal at home, for otherwise God will judge them in some way. Paul's final comment suggests that there were other irregularities regarding worship and the Lord's Supper, but they were not sufficiently urgent for him to deal with at this time.