

Commentary on First Corinthians chapter 11 by Chuck Smith 9.24.23

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September memory verse **Isaiah 40:8 (NKJV)** The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."

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Paul here in the first verse said,

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ ([1Cr 11:1](#)).

In the previous verse he spoke about how he was not seeking his own profit, his own glory, but the profit of the whole body of Christ. And then he said, "Be followers of me." The word *followers* in the Greek is *mimetes*, in which we get our word *mimic*. Be mimickers, or be imitators of me. Follow the example that I have set. That is, don't seek for your own profit, but seek for the profit of the whole body. Don't just be looking out for yourself, but look out for one another. Be sensitive to one another's needs, and be looking out for each other.

Now [he said] I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and you keep the ordinances, as I delivered them unto you ([1Cr 11:2](#)).

So Paul is giving them praise for the fact that they did remember him, that they were keeping ordinances that he had established among them.

But I would have you to know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of every woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head ([1Cr 11:3-4](#)).

Now, Paul is establishing here sort of a chain of command. The word *head* here being the idea of authority. And so the husband the authority over the wife. Christ is the authority over the husband. And God is the authority over Christ. This, of course, gets into issues which are being debated today in our society.

I do not believe that the Bible has ever taught that God favors the man over the woman. The Bible does teach that God made man first, and then from man formed the woman. When God looked at man and said, "It is not good that man should live alone," and so He made the woman from man that she might be a helpmeet for him.

Now, some people misinterpret that. The helpmeet, the word *meet* is an old English word *fit*, a help that is fit for him, created for him. No way does it signify a subservient

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position. God saw that man by himself could never make it, and thus, the woman created, as God said, "for the man."

He is establishing the chain of command. However, I do think that there is something worth noting here. The authority over the man is Christ, even as the authority over the woman is the man. And I feel that if the man, the husband, is not under the authority of Christ, then the woman has to jump the missing link. I do not believe that God intends that a godly woman be under the authority of an ungodly man. Under the authority of man only as he is under the authority of Jesus Christ. God never meant marriage to be a slavery kind of a situation, or a tyranny kind of a situation, where some big oaf rules over his wife with force, or whatever. And I am totally opposed to that kind of an interpretation or understanding of the scripture that a woman thinks, "Well, he is my husband. I have got to be in submission to him." Yes, as he is in submission to Christ.

Now, we are dealing with an Eastern culture. In this Eastern culture the women wore veils, and the veils, many times, were across the bridge of their nose tied in the back and went all the way to the ground. Now, in some of the Eastern areas it was even more than that. The veils covered their head and they had just slits for their eyes. And of course, they wore these bulky clothes, and how can you know you were really in love when all you can see is just the eyes? When you got married it was really an interesting thing, I suppose. However, this veil was a protection to the woman. It was a covering for her, which was a covering of protection, and no man would approach a woman, accost a woman, or flirt with a woman who was covered with a veil. It was almost death for the man to touch a woman or to approach her in an overt way when she was covered with her veil. For a woman to go out without a veil was an open invitation for the men. It was sort of a declaration, "I am available." But for a veiled woman, no man would dare to approach her. Thus, it was a covering.

Today it is still this way in Eastern cultures, especially in the Moslem world. You see, these orthodox Moslem women now with the black covers, and all you can see are the eyes again. Many times on our tours to the Middle East, the liberated ladies from America, not understanding the mindset of the Oriental, would go over there with sleeveless dresses or things of this nature, and they don't know what it does to some of these men who are used to not seeing a woman except she be totally veiled.

So, Paul is dealing with a cultural situation when he addresses the subject here of head coverings, or of veils.

Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head ([1Cr 11:4](#)).

The idea here is that man was made in the glory of God and it would be dishonoring to God for him to cover his head while he prayed or prophesied. Now that is interesting coming from Paul considering that in Orthodox Jewry today, they all wear their little hats whenever they come into any sacred place of prayer. You can wear any kind of a hat, but they won't let the men into the Western Wall, or those areas, unless you do have

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your head covered. Coming from Paul, it is an interesting thing that he would speak of the men with their heads uncovered and it would be a dishonoring thing to pray with his head covered.

But every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head: for that is even as one if she were shaven ([1Cr 11:5-6](#)).

So Paul, then, speaking of the woman is saying it is dishonoring in a sense to her husband, her head, if she would go unveiled.

Now evidently, the women in Corinth were feeling that liberty that was theirs in Christ. "We are no longer under a yoke of bondage, for in Christ we are all one, neither male nor female, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free." So they were beginning to come without veils and it, no doubt, created some problems. Paul said that it was dishonoring to your husbands, because living there in Corinth they were living in the center of pagan licentiousness. The temple of Aphrodite was on the Acropolis above Corinth. The priestesses within the temple of Aphrodite, some one thousand of them, would nightly come down into the city of Corinth. They were prostitutes, and the temple was supported by their prostitution. And they could be recognized in that they didn't wear veils. So the women in Corinth who were then beginning to feel liberty in Christ, not wanting to wear their veils, not being understood by the world, were opening themselves to be misidentified as a prostitute, and thus, dishonoring their husbands. So Paul is encouraging them to continue with the customs of wearing the veils there in Corinth.

For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is in the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of man ([1Cr 11:7](#)).

That is, God created man in His own image, and from the man He took the woman.

For the man is not of the woman; but the woman is of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power [or the authority, the veil] upon her head [then he said] because of the angels ([1Cr 11:8-10](#)).

Now, I wish he hadn't of said that, because I was able to follow him pretty well up to this point. But what he meant by "because of the angels" is something that theologians have discussed through the years. One suggestion... now, we know that when we gather together, the angels of the Lord gather with us. And it has been suggested that the angels, being creatures of rank and order, respect the order of God, and they like to see the orders and the rankings of God followed.

Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord ([1Cr 11:11](#)).

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In other words, as far as the Lord is concerned we are all on an equal footing. And the woman is not without the man and the man is not without the woman. We are both necessary for each other.

For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God ([1Cr 11:12](#)).

I was born by my mother is what Paul is saying. My mother was necessary for my existence being here. The woman was taken out of the man, but yet, it is reversed now. God has established them male and female and they are all a part of God's divine order.

Now judging yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? ([1Cr 11:13](#))

Is it proper? Is it the right thing to do?

One thing that we should definitely note here in light of [1 Corinthians 14](#), where Paul said, "Let the women keep silent in the church, and if they would learn, let them ask their husbands when they get home," Paul evidently is not at all assigning her to total silence in the church. Here she is recognized as having a right to pray. Here she is recognized as having a right to exercise the gift of prophecy within the church. He is not saying anything contrary or against her praying and prophesying, only should she be doing it without a veil in the church of Corinth.

So he said,

Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? ([1Cr 11:14](#))

Now, during the hippie movement when a lot of the fellows decided to let their hair grow, this was a scripture that was brought up quite a bit by the Bible thumpers down in the south who were so opposed to these young men having long hair.

I, in traveling around the country, was a guest on some of the radio talk shows, and some of these irate people would call in. And the thing that was really bothering them were these young people with long hair, because they had pictures of our baptisms and a lot of young men with long hair and all were being baptized, and it really bothered these people for these young men to have long hair. They would call in and they would make their crude remarks and then quote this verse of scripture.

So, the Lord did a very interesting thing. He called me to defend these young men, their right to have long hair. I always figured the Lord had a sense of humor. And I would point out to these irate callers that, first of all, Paul said, "Does not nature itself." It doesn't say that God is teaching this. It said that nature is teaching it. "Does not nature itself teach you that it is a shame?" It doesn't teach you that it is a sin. They were trying

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to make a sin out of this thing. But it doesn't say God says it is a sin. It says nature says it is a shame.

If you look at some of the presidents of the United States, they had long hair compared to the forties and fifties looks where the guys had the crew cuts and all. So long is a relative term.

But if a woman have long hair ([1Cr 11:15](#)),

Hey, that is another matter.

it is a glory to her: for her hair is given to her for her covering. But if any man seems to be contentious ([1Cr 11:15-16](#)),

Now, if you got a big deal over this, Paul says,

we don't have any such custom, in all of the churches ([1Cr 11:16](#)).

Thus, it was not intended to be a universal rule for the church as some of the churches sought to make it a universal rule. For years the women have had to wear hats and all when they went to church. But Paul said that we don't have any such custom in all the churches. If you want to argue about it and all, there is no such custom in all the churches. It was something that did relate more to the church in Corinth.

I praise you that you kept my ordinances and all, but there is something I don't praise you for, what I am going to talk to you about now.

For when you gather together sometimes it is for the worse, not for the better. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I really partly believe this. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one takes before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken ([1Cr 11:17-21](#)).

Now, in the early church they had a beautiful fellowship that seemed that it happened every week. And in this beautiful fellowship they had what they called the agape feast. Today, we call it a potluck. We have got a crude name for it. They had a beautiful name, an agape feast. Our various fellowship groups in the church that have their potlucks, it would probably be a good idea to start calling them agape feasts. That is much better, a love feast.

In these love feasts, which were like a potluck, everybody would bring their dishes and they'd pool it all together and all would eat. But there were some piggish fellows who would make their way to the front of the line and they would just take more than their share. So oftentimes there would not be enough food to go around. And so some

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people were left hungry, while others had more than they could handle. It seemed that the wealthier people were those that were just sort of pushing their way ahead. And the poor people who really were needing it... actually, you see, the church in those days had many slaves, and a lot of them never did have a decent meal, except for the agape feast. That is the only time they really had a decent meal. And yet, these people were not really sensitive to the needs of the poor and they were going in and filling their plates and the poor were being left hungry. So Paul said, "That is not good."

Don't you have your own house to feast in and to drink in? Do you despise the church of God, and do you shame those [that are poor] that have not? ([1Cr 11:22](#))

Actually became embarrassed and ashamed. And these people were sort of making it that way.

I do remember when we used to have our church picnic and we had our houses where a lot of the young people were living. You remember those days of the Mansion Messiah and the Lord's House and the House of Psalms and these various houses that we had. This one time at our picnic out at Orange County Park, one of the houses brought to the picnic a large pan of beans. You know, put it in the potluck. And then the kids headed for the steaks. That's good that we ate beans that year, because a lot of them hadn't had a steak in a long time.

Paul said, "Look, a lot of you have your own homes. You can eat and drink in your own homes. You shouldn't really make these people feel embarrassed or ashamed because of their financial plights."

What shall I say to you? I don't praise you in this matter ([1Cr 11:22](#)).

He is actually rebuking them for this.

Now, in talking about the Lord's supper, this agape feast, they would always end the agape feast with the Lord's supper, or taking together of the bread and the cup. And so Paul said,

As I received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread ([1Cr 11:23](#)):

This phrase, "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you," this should be a phrase that every minister of Jesus Christ should be able to use every time he stands up to talk to the church. "I have received of the Lord that which I have delivered unto you." That should always be the origin of the message that we bring. God having spoken to our hearts and now we impart that which God has spoken to us.

As we mentioned this morning, the first work of the Spirit in our lives is subjective. The second is objective. God works in me that He might work through me. I must partake in order that I might impart. That which I have received from the Lord I also delivered. That

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is always the true order in which God works. And that should always be the concern of every man of God who stands before the people of God as he talks to them of the things of God. That which I received of the Lord I also delivered unto you.

That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me ([1Cr 11:23-24](#)).

There are those who interpret the bread to be transubstantiated into the actual body of Christ by some miracle. However, it is important to note that when Jesus said this He was still in His body. And thus, it had to be a spiritualization, so that the bread becomes representative of the body of Christ. To me it represents the body of Christ. But it is not changed by some miracle into the actual physical body of Jesus. And the same is true of the cup. That is, it becomes to me a very poignant reminder of the body of Jesus broken for me and the blood of Jesus shed for my sins. I am to do it in remembrance of Him.

After the same manner also he took the cup, after their supper, and he said, This cup is a new covenant in my blood: this do ye, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he comes ([1Cr 11:25-26](#)).

Notice he did not tell us how often we were to do it. In the early church, it seems that in some of them they did it once a week. These agape feasts were usually a weekly affair. Some churches today observe it once a week. It doesn't really matter how often you do it. It just does matter that every time you do it, that you do it in remembrance of Him, showing the Lord's death until He comes.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord ([1Cr 11:27](#)).

Now, he is talking about their coming together and they were getting drunk at these feasts. They were gorging themselves at the agape feasts and getting drunk, and then going right in and partaking of the body and the blood of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of communion.

A person when he is drunk oftentimes loses a lot of his inhibitions. He is not fully aware of what is going on. And to partake of the Holy Communion in this condition would be to do it in an unworthy fashion. This is what Paul is warning against.

When I was a child they interpreted this as saying that you have to be worthy to partake of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and if you are taking it unworthily, you are drinking damnation to your own soul. There was more than once that I let the cup go by. I was really afraid to drink, because I thought, "Man, I'm not worthy." The problem was they usually served it Sunday morning and I didn't get saved till Sunday night...again, every Sunday night. I really did well for the statistics of those pastors. I was always

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concerned about my unworthiness. And when I really stopped to think about it, I would think, "Man, I am not worthy to partake of the body and blood of Jesus." So many times I would pass on communion. But my worthiness is not something that is predicated upon my goodness, my works or my efforts, but it is on the grace of God and my believing in Jesus Christ. Thus, I partake freely today, because I believe in Him and I rest in His grace. You talk about truly being worthy, in that sense, I never have been, but by the grace of God I stand through faith in Jesus Christ.

What Paul is referring to here is the manner in which they were eating and drinking. It was disgraceful. Paul is rebuking them for it.

Therefore whosoever shall eat the bread, and drink the cup of the Lord, in an unworthily fashion [or an unworthy way], shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. So let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and some have even died ([1Cr 11:27-30](#)).

Now Paul told us to examine ourselves when we eat the bread. Take a look at yourself.

For if we would judge ourselves, [he said] we would not be judged of God ([1Cr 11:31](#)).

It is a very serious thing the partaking of the body of Jesus Christ and of the blood of Jesus Christ. We should really examine our hearts before we do so and always do it in a very reverent and worshipful manner.

But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord ([1Cr 11:32](#)),

So Paul is probably talking about some of the sicknesses and the weaknesses that people have as they have eaten and drunk in an unworthy manner. So when we are judged, God chastens us for what purpose?

that we would not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait one for another ([1Cr 11:32-33](#)).

Don't rush to the head of the table to fill your plate and disregard others that are there. Wait for each other.

And if any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that you come not together unto condemnation [to just gorge yourselves]. And the rest I will take care of when I get there ([1Cr 11:34](#)).