

## Chapter 11

*v1 Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.*

### Problems about worship 11:2-34

#### 1. Men and women in worship 11:2-16

*v2 I praise you because you remember me in everything. And you are holding firmly to the things that I taught you. You kept them just as I taught them to you. v3 Now I want you to realise that Christ is the head of every man. And the man is the head of the woman. And God is the head of Christ. v4 Every man who prays or preaches with a cover on his head brings shame on his head. v5 And every woman who prays or preaches with no cover on her head shames her head. It is just as if her head were shaved. v6 If a woman does not cover her head, she should cut her hair off. People do not respect a woman with her hair cut off or shaved. So she should cover her head.*

*v7 A man ought not to have long hair because he is the image and glory of God. But woman is the glory of man. v8 Because man did not come from woman. But woman came from man. v9 And God did not create man for woman, but woman for man. v10 For this reason and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head. v11 However, for those who belong to the Lord, woman cannot live apart from man. And man cannot exist apart from woman. v12 Because, as woman came from man, so also man is born from woman. But everything comes from God.*

*v13 Decide for yourselves. Surely, it is not right for a woman to pray with her head not*

*covered. v14 The very nature of things teaches you that it is shame for a man to have long hair. v15 If a woman has long hair, it is her glory. This is because she has received long hair as a cover. v16 But if anyone wants to argue about this, we have no such custom. Nor do the churches of God.*

There were problems when the Christians at Corinth met for worship. Paul probably learned that from Chloe's servants. First of all, they did not agree on the way that men and women showed their respect to God.

Verse 2 Paul praised the Christians at Corinth because they were keeping the basic facts of the Christian faith. He had taught them and they remembered him. Then he went on to deal with the first problem.

Verse 3 'Head' means a part of the body. But here it has two possible meanings:

1. authority or superior, for example, the head man in a village has authority over the people.
2. source, for example, the head of the river is where the river begins.

So, writers explain Paul's words in one of these two ways:

1. Christ has authority over every person. The man has authority over the woman. God as Father has authority over Christ the Son.
2. Christ is the source of new life for the believer. Man was the source of woman (Genesis 2:22-23). God was the source of Christ's body when he came to earth.

Verse 4 In Paul's time, people thought that a man with long hair was trying to look more

like a woman. This is because he wanted to behave like a woman. He wanted to have sex with other men. So to pray or preach with his head 'covered' would be shameful.

Verses 5-6 It is not certain what 'cover' means. It could be a piece of clothing. Many bibles use the word 'veil'. It could have been the usual way for a woman to arrange her hair. This was to make a kind of 'hair cap' on the top of her head. People would not understand if a woman removed her veil. They would have the wrong idea if she let her hair down in public. They would think that she was imitating women who worshipped pagan gods. Or they would think that she was a woman with bad moral behaviour.

Paul said that if she removed her 'cover', she might as well cut off her hair. And she might as well shave her head. She would then become more like women who had wrong sexual relations with other women. So, a woman should avoid public shame; she should keep her head covered.

Verse 7 God created man in his own image (Genesis 1:26-28). Man exists to give praise and honour to God (Revelation 4:11). Woman is the glory of man, because God created her as the one suitable companion for man (Genesis 2:18-23).

Verses 8-9 Paul refers to the way that God created people. Man did not come from woman, because God created him first. Woman came from man, as part of him (Genesis 2:21-22).

Verse 10 Because God created her from man, the woman should keep her head covered to show man's authority over her.

'because of the angels'. Writers have suggested several different reasons for these words:

1. Some people think that the story in Genesis 6:1-2 is about angels who sinned with human women. In Paul's days, there was a tradition that the beauty of women's long hair attracted these angels. Paul might have been thinking about this story.

2. Paul believed that his Christian life was on display in front of angels (1 Corinthians 4:9). So he thought about angels as present at public worship. Women should not offend them. They would offend them if they had no cover on their head.

3. Paul said that Christians would judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). So Christians ought to be able to decide the right way to show respect when they worshipped.

Verse 11-12 The Jews believed that men are superior to women. God created man first and woman second. But every man is born from a woman. So, the argument about who is more important has no meaning. God created everything. So, it was a part of his plan for people that men and women should be equal.

'For those who belong to the Lord' suggests a contrast between believers and other people. In the world, people may have thought that women should take second place to men. But in the Christian church, women have equal value.

Verses 14-15 Paul appeals to the way that they felt about things in their society. Paintings and statues from Paul's time show that it was normal for men to have short hair. People thought that it was shameful for men to have long hair. It was not natural. For a woman, it was the opposite. Long hair was not shameful. It was a cover that God had given to her. And it gave her honour. Paul was comparing the natural appearance of a woman with that of a man. He was not

thinking here about the way that women should appear in public.

Verse 16 For anyone who wanted to argue about the matter, Paul did not give a command. He just told them that, where he was (at Ephesus), women did not pray without a cover on the head. This was true in other churches as well.

The problem that Paul talked about was important for the church in Corinth in his time. But it is still true that for both men and women there are ways to show respect in public worship. These ways will vary with local customs in different countries.

## **2. The wrong way to carry out the Lord's supper 11:17-22**

*v17 In the following instructions, I do not praise you. This is because your meetings do not make things better. They make them worse. v18 First, people tell me that there are divisions among you. There are divisions when you meet as a church. And I partly believe it. v19 No doubt there are differences among you to show which of you God agrees with! v20 You do come together. But it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. v21 As you meet, each of you starts to eat. You do not wait for anyone else. One remains hungry and another person drinks too much wine. v22 You have homes to eat and drink in. Do not cause shame for those who have nothing. If you do, you insult God's church. I will say this to you. Perhaps you expect me to praise you for this. I certainly will not praise you!*

Verses 17-18 Chloe's servants had given Paul news that disgusted him. He could hardly believe the news about the behaviour of some people at their meetings. In those days, Christians shared a meal before they

carried out the Lord's Supper. They brought food and wine to share with each other.

Christ removed social differences between rich and poor people. But some Christians were selfish. They did not care about the poorer people. So, the meeting was not a sign of Christian love and unity. Instead, it had no value.

Verse 19 The differences among them showed that some were living as God wanted. But other people were not.

Verses 20-21 The Christians who arrived first had the most comfortable seats. They did not wait for the Christian slaves who came later, after their work. Instead, they started their own meal. They ate and drank more than their fair share. So there was little or nothing left when the poor Christians arrived later.

Verse 22 Their attitude showed that they did not care about the unity of God's church. So, they might as well stay at home for their meals. Paul's severe words show what he thought about their greedy and selfish behaviour. He had to go on to remind them about the meaning of the Lord's supper.

## **3. The meaning of the Lord's Supper 11:23-26**

*v23 I passed on to you what I received from the Lord. On the night that Judas handed Jesus over to his enemies, Jesus took bread. v24 When he had given thanks, he broke the bread. He said, 'This is my body, which I give for you. Do this in memory of me.' v25 In the same way, after supper, he took the cup of wine. He said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink the wine, do it in memory of me.' v26 You eat the bread and you drink the wine. Whenever you do that, you are*

*telling everyone about the Lord's death. You will do this until he comes again.*

Verse 23 Paul's account of the Last Supper is the earliest record of this event. He wrote it before the gospel records. 'Received' and 'passed on' were special words for Jews, which meant to give instructions in religious matters. 'Received from the Lord' means that Jesus himself had told this to Paul. The night was the night of the Passover Meal. Jesus had warned his disciples that one of them would hand him over to his enemies. Later, in the garden of Gethsemane, Judas showed the soldiers which person was Jesus.

Verses 23-24 Jesus said that the bread that he had broken was a sign for his body. He would die for their salvation. Then, whenever they ate the bread in a meeting for worship, they would remember him. They would remember that he died for their salvation.

Verse 25 The Israelites promised that they would obey God's Law. Moses signed the covenant by putting the blood of an animal on the altar and on the people (Exodus 24:8). Jeremiah spoke about a new covenant that was necessary. The people had not obeyed the one that they made in the time of Moses. This new covenant would mean that God would forgive their sins. They would want to obey God because he loved them (Jeremiah 31:31). The blood of Jesus would be the sacrifice that made the new covenant final.

'Whenever you drink it' shows that Jesus intended believers to have a regular time to remember his sacrifice. The Passover took place once a year. But Christians need more than an annual event to remind them about Jesus' death. 'Whenever' could refer to a daily meal. Every supper that Christians

share can be called 'the Lord's supper'. Jesus was the Lord's servant who 'took the sin of many' (Isaiah 53:12).

Verse 26 The meal would be a sign of the Lord's death. A person should accept what Jesus has done for him. His death brings salvation to any person who accepts that. Jesus' death also brings a new unity of people. There is now nothing between Jew and Greek, men and women, free people and slaves. But the Christians at Corinth were not showing this unity. At every meal, Christians should remember Christ's death until he comes again. That meal could be in a special religious service or it could be an ordinary meal.

#### **4. Preparation for the Lord's Supper 11:27-34**

*v27 Therefore it is wrong to eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord without proper respect. Anyone who does so will be sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. v28 A person should check his spiritual health before he shares the bread and the wine. v29 Anyone who eats and drinks must recognise the meaning of the Lord's body. If he does not, God will judge him. v30 That is why many of you are weak and ill. That is why some of you have died. v31 We should examine ourselves. Then we would avoid God's judgement. v32 When the Lord judges us, he corrects us. Then we will not receive the same judgement as the rest of the world. v33 So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. v34 If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home. Then when you come together, God will not judge you. When I come, I will give you more instructions.*

Verse 27 We should remember what the Lord's Supper means. It is wrong to eat it if we do not remember that. The bread and wine are signs of the death of Christ. To eat and drink carelessly is to be guilty of Christ's death. A careless person is as much to blame as those who crucified Jesus.

Verses 28-29 A Christian eats the bread and drinks the wine. He must prepare himself before he does that. He must not forget that he is part of the body of Christ. The body of Christ is the church. Christ's death was an act of love. Therefore, the members of his body, the church, must show love to each other. If they do not, God will judge them.

Verse 30 Paul understood the illnesses and even deaths at Corinth as God's judgement on the whole church.

Verses 31-32 They should decide whether they have right relations with other Christians. Paul had already told them that they were 'one body' (10:17). God will judge them if they have the wrong attitude to each other. God is like a father who corrects his children. God judges in order to correct his Christian children. Then they will not have to face the final judgement like non-Christians.

Verses 33-34 They must wait for each other and welcome each other. Those who cannot wait to eat should do so at home.

Paul does not say what instructions he will give them. He may mean more teaching about the Lord's supper. He may mean other matters that affect their progress in the Christian life.

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