**BEING THE CHURCH**

**“Unworthy Manner”**

**1st Corinthians 11**

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**Last Week:**

Temptation

**13**No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

### Never believe the lie that you are tempted beyond what you can handle, there is always a way of escape if you are willing.

*When* you are tempted;

**First:** You have to believe that sin is not something that you should desire. It’s not something that is good, that you don’t “get” to partake in.

**Second**: As you’re being tempted, pray as Jesus taught us in the Lord’s prayer. The sixth request; “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

**Third:** Find the “Exit Sign”. “But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out.”

**In chapter 11, Paul address two specific things in the church, head coverings (including hair) and The Lord’s Supper (Communion).**

Once again, he is addressing conflicts and problems within the Corinthian church,

The first part has to do with cultural distinctives for men and women (hair and head coverings). The second part is written to help non-Jews understand the significance of the Lord’s Supper (Passover) as something that is a sacred meal, not an “all-you-can-eat feast”.

Some of the words he uses to identify current culture are;

Traditions, dishonor, proper vs. disgrace, practice and directives.

***Note: All the spiritual lessons of this chapter apply to every church in every age, other more cultural directives apply specifically to the culture to whom they are written.***

**1st Corinthians 11**

**“1**Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. **2**I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the *traditions* just as I passed them on to you. **3**But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. **4**Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. **5**But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. **6**For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.”

This whole section is what Paul calls: v.2 “holding to the *traditions”.*

This means that there are pre-existing traditions in culture that the church can either discard and disregard, or continue to practice. Paul’s preference is that continue to practice these traditions and to discover the meaning in them as relates to their respect for one another and for God.

The people of Corinth, to whom this is addressed were primarily married couples. In fact the early church was generally made up of a collection of households. There were no church buildings, with church offices, with receptionists and Pastor’s studies. Most people single or otherwise lived in someone’s household that usually centered around a married couple and their family. The leader of the household was the husband and father, who was often times an elder in the church. Paul affirms that just as God is the head of Christ, The husband is the head of the household, including the wife.

The symbol of marriage and commitment in this culture, was not a wedding ring as it is now, but a head covering. In fact Orthodox Jewish women today, once they are married will always have their head covered in public, *even if it is a wig*. It is a disgrace for a married Orthodox Jewish woman to be seen without her head covered.

*(Interestingly, Orthodox Jewish men also cover their heads with a Kippa at all times, and a Tallit when they are praying.)*

These are similar to the cultural traditions that Paul was dealing with in Corinth.

In our culture we have *wedding rings* as a symbol of our marital status. In most Christian traditions men and women exchange rings at their wedding ceremony.

This tradition has been around in some cultures for about 1200 years, though not all cultures practice it, even today. For instance the Amish don’t wear wedding rings, but they change their hair and clothing style after they become married people.

The rings are very important however in our culture and they are usually different. Men usually have a wider wedding “band”, and their wives usually have a smaller more delicate band that goes with their engagement ring.

In our culture, it would be a dishonor for a husband to not wear his wedding ring in public. The same with his wife. This may not be true in other cultures.

If I chose to stop wearing my ring in public, it probably means that there is something wrong with my marriage, and should probably not be preaching. If my wife stopped wearing her ring, it would likely mean that she no longer agrees to be under my covering and should probably not be praying or prophesying.

**“7**A man 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 did not come from woman, but woman from man; **9**neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. **10**It is for this reason that a *woman ought to have authority over her ownhead, because of the angels.”*

*“woman ought to have authority over her ownhead, because of the angels.” ???*

I have heard many explanations of this verse and none seem to satisfy my curiosity.

* The fallen angels who have sinned did so because they rebelled against God.
* The Holy Angels in God’s presence covered their face before God’s throne.
* Visiting angels who might be offended if they came to Corinth and saw the women with uncovered heads.
* Angels understand the authority of God.

It could be any of these or something else. It’s OK for us, even teachers to not be Bible “know-it-alls” even Paul says in 1st Cor. 13:12 “ Now I know in part; then I shall know fully.”

*[ Last verse of Ch. 11: “And when I come I will give further directions.” ] ???*

**“11**Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. **12**For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

**13**Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? **14**Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, **15**but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. **16**If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.”

The long hair that Paul is talking about is very long hair. Not just hair that has creeps down below the collar, that would be considered short in those days. Hair that is practically waist-length required a lot of care (combing and grooming) otherwise it would become disgraceful. This, according to tradition was only proper for women, not men.

There are many traditions in the cultures of the Bible that are different than they are today. For instance both 1st Tim. 2 and 1st Peter 3 speak against wearing gold jewelry, or having braided hair because it made a cultural statement that is different than it would today.

***Remember: All the spiritual lessons of this chapter apply to every church in every age, however some of the cultural directives apply specifically to the culture to whom they are written.***

Paul concludes this section with;

“But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor *do* the churches of God. (V.16 NKJV)

In other words, These customs and practices should not be argued over in this church or the others he ministers to.

**The Lord’s Supper**

**17**In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. **18**In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. **19**No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God’s approval. **20**So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat, **21**for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. **22**Don’t you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

Apparently the Lord’s Supper was an extended form of communion. Perhaps with prayer over the bread and the wine along with other food items in the meal. Some of the people would come and take as much food as they can, and go off by themselves and eat it. As a result some would miss out on the food and remain hungry and still others would drink all the wine and get drunk. Paul is saying that this is not what this is about.

It's about sharing The Lord’s Supper and doing it in remembrance of his death on the cross. We call it communion which in many churches is considered a “sacrament” (a sacred ceremony).

He then tells them what he received from the Lord regarding the Lord’s Supper and he shares the following;

**23**For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, **24**and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” **25**In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “*This cup is the new covenant in my blood;*do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **26**For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Paul either got this detailed account from Luke, one of the Apostles or perhaps Jesus himself. He tells the Corinthian church about the Last Supper that happened on the night Jesus was betrayed. He told them step-by-step how Jesus infused the message of his sacrifice into the elements of that Passover Seder.

He then admonishes them that the Lord told them that whenever they eat this bread and drink this cup, don’t do it selfishly only thinking of yourself, *do it in remembrance of me.*

Paul quotes Jesus’ words: “*This cup is the new covenant in my blood.”* Which Matthew writes as:

Matt 26:28 “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

A covenant is an agreement or a contract. Jesus is saying, and Paul is affirming that the Old Covenant is being replaced with a new agreement because of Jesus’ blood, his sacrifice on the cross. Jesus paid the ultimate price through his body and blood - death on the cross, so that we can be forgiven of our sins and given the opportunity to be children of God.

His suffering was horrific, his death was excruciatingly painful. Paul is reminding them that by disrespecting each other or the supper they are celebrating, they are “guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.”

**“27**So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. **28**Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. **29**For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. **30**That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. **31**But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. **32**Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

**33**So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. **34**Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.”

Much has been written about Paul’s warning against “eating the bread or drinking the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner.” Apparently there were those who were harboring a heart of sin against in these Holy Moments and it had obvious physical consequences. Some were sick, others even died.

What exactly is; “eating the bread or drinking the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner?”

He may have been talking about 1. **unconfessed sin**, which is why we should always take a moment to confess our sins and ask for God’s forgiveness and cleansing before taking communion.

He may have been talking about 2. **unforgiveness** because after all, Jesus’ blood on the cross was *“poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”* How could we in observe this sacrificial act of forgiveness while still holding unforgiveness in our hearts toward others.

It may have simply been about 3. **selfishness**. He just got though rebuking them about the selfishness, divisions and disregard they have for one another. Jude 1:12 calls them “love feasts” or “agape feasts”, which means they are supposed to be a celebration of Jesus’ sacrificial love for us and an opportunity for us to “love one another as He has loved us”. Selfishness is the opposite of love.

Any of these could be a way of taking communion in an “unworthy manner”.

The good news about communion, is that it is all about forgiveness, especially us being forgiven for any sin. That’s why it’s important to reflect on your life, see if there is any *unconfessed sin*, *unforgiveness* or *selfishness*, and ask God to “forgive your sins as you forgive others”, which He is eager to do.

The most important message of the Bible with regard to communion or anything else, is to love God and also love each other as he has loved us. He showed his love for us, by giving His life as a sacrifice for our sins. That’s what we remember in communion.

Let’s give our lives to *Him* and being willing to sacrifice for others in our love for *them*.