

## Session 11: Public Worship Controversy

1 Corinthians 11 through 14 are amongst the most difficult in the whole epistle for a modern person in the Western world to understand....but they are some of the most interesting. They deal with the problems which had arisen in the Corinthian Church in connection with public worship.

### Chapter 11....

- **11:2 - 16 deals with the problem of whether or not women should worship with their heads uncovered.**
- **11:17 – 22 deals with problems that had arisen in connection with the Agape or Love Feast, the weekly common meal that the Christian congregation held.**
- **11:24 – 34 deals with the correct observance of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.**

**11:1–16**, *“I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. <sup>5</sup> But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. <sup>8</sup> For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; <sup>9</sup> neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. <sup>10</sup> It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own<sup>u</sup> head, because of the angels. <sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. <sup>12</sup> For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. <sup>13</sup> Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? <sup>14</sup> Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, <sup>15</sup> but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. <sup>16</sup> If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.”*

### The Problem:

**Whether or not in the Christian Church a woman had the right to take part in the service unveiled.**

## **Paul's answer:**

The veil is always a sign of subjection, worn by an inferior in the presence of a superior. Then...woman was inferior to man only in the sense that man is head of the household; therefore it is wrong for a man to appear at public worship veiled and equally wrong for a woman to appear unveiled.

(It is very improbable that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century we are likely to accept this view of the inferiority and subordination of women).

But....we must read this chapter in light of the 1<sup>st</sup> century...not the 20<sup>th</sup>.

## **As we read it...we must remember three (3) things:**

### **1. The place of the veil in the East.**

***A respectable eastern woman would never have dreamed of appearing without it.***

#### **The veil was two things:**

- ❑ A sign of inferiority,  
Inferiority in that she could not do, say, or have the authority like a man.
- ❑ A great protection.  
Protection in that with the veil on, she was not observed, looked at, or even thought to be in the room....street, etc.  
Without it, she was open game, a wayward woman who will be taken advantage of.

### **2. The status of the woman in Jewish eyes...at that time.**

Under Jewish law, woman was vastly inferior to man. She had been created to serve...to be a helper of man.

Old Rabbinical proverb:

“God did not form woman out of the head lest she should become proud; nor out of the eye lest she should lust; nor out of the ear lest she should be curious; nor out of the mouth lest she should be talkative; nor out of the heart lest she should be jealous; nor out of the hand lest she should be covetous; nor out of the foot lest she be a wandering busybody; but out of a rib which was always covered; therefore modesty should be her primary quality.”

### **3. In Jewish law a woman was a thing and was part of the property of her husband over which he had complete rights of disposal.**

In the synagogue, they had no share whatsoever in the worship....but were segregated from the men.

**Note: It was far better to err on the side of being too modest and too strict in that the heathen were always watching the Christian criticize their waywardness....or their yielding to sin.**

## **There are three (3) permanent truths Paul points out:**

1. It is always better to err on the side of being too strict than on the side of being too lax....

You must abandon rights that might be a stumbling block.

2. The partnership of man and woman is essential. Neither can live without the other.

3. The man that argues for the sake of argument is to be rebuked.

There is a time to stand on principle; but there is never a time to be contentiously argumentative.

**1 Corinthians 11:17-22**, *"In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. <sup>20</sup> So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> 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!"*

**The early church came together quite often and shared their food and thought. The more wealthy members in the church were in many ways, helping the poor that did not have much to eat. It was called an "Agape Meal" or a "Love Feast." This was supposed to be a time when there was fellowship and prayer. However, their sharing became a time of feasting in lieu of fellow-shiping....and partaking of the Lord' Supper. The Lord's Supper was not being honored...It was becoming a traditional habit that did not mean anything.**

**Understand—The Lord's supper was not to feed the poor or to be a time of partaking of food and drink. The Lord's Supper was being grossly misused!**

**Why?**

- **The Lord's House or...where we are to worship, is to be held in great reverence.....a place showing respect for God, others, and ourselves.  
Some of the members of the Church at Corinth were using the ordinance of the Lord's Supper to feast (eat) to keep from getting hungry...and to indulge in drink to the point of being drunk.**
- **The home is where you are to satisfy your hunger and thirst for drink... Not the church! Not the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.**
- **Some of those in the city... were seeing the abuse and saying that the church attendees were having "love feasts." Some were carrying the lie to the extent that they were saying, "these people were having drunken orgies in the church house."**
- **Fellowshipping with others is important. Laughing, rejoicing, crying with each other... This is fellowship in the Lord.**

- **There is nothing wrong with having Bible studies in the home...It was necessary then because of persecution...it is necessary now in order to make available Bible Study for those that might not attend church.**

**1 Corinthians 11:23–34**, “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> 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.” <sup>25</sup> 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.” <sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. <sup>29</sup> For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. <sup>30</sup> That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. <sup>31</sup> But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. <sup>34</sup> 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.”

**This a very important scripture that gives us our warrant for one of the most sacred acts of worship in the Church, the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.**

**The Sacrament can never mean the same for every person; but we do not need to understand it to benefit from it. “We do not need to understand the chemistry of bread in order to digest it and to be nourished by it.”**

- **The broken bread.....stands for the body of Christ (the broken body of Christ...broken for you).  
To him who takes it into his hands and upon his lips with faith and love, it is a means not only of memory but understanding Jesus’ body was like ours. It really suffered as we would and do suffer.**
- **The cup... “This cup is the new covenant in my blood,” said Jesus. The real translation is, “This cup is the new covenant and it cost my blood.” The Greek preposition “en” most commonly means in...but it can, and regularly does, mean “at the cost or price of.”**

***We can come to God through Jesus as a child comes to his father....love vs. fear as it was under the Old Covenant. But....always remember, it cost the precious life of Jesus to make this new relationship possible.***

**What about taking the Communion Cup unworthily?**

**It can mean:**

- **People might take it and not know what the bread and the cup symbolizes and does not take it reverently and with the understanding that we are sinners saved by the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, God’s Son.**

- **People might take it and not take its importance to the Church seriously....as a whole body of Christ with no contentious, unholy ways.  
*Like people with their hearts full of hatred, bitterness, and contempt against his fellow brother in Christ.***
- **Sin in the camp....fellow believers having secret sins that they don't give to the Lord and ask for forgiveness.  
Paul goes on to say that the misfortunes which have fallen upon the Church at Corinth may be due to nothing else than the fact that they come to this sacrament while they are divided among themselves....or their hearts hold sinful acts.  
Note: These misfortunes are sent not to destroy them but to discipline them and to bring them back to the right way.**

**Do we hold a grudge against a brother or sister?**

**Do we have unconfessed sins that haunt us...or worse, not haunt us and we revel in our acts that nobody knows?**

**We need to confess our sins today...and He is faithful to forgive those sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**