

Paul's First Letter to The Corinthians
Lesson 4

After addressing the subject of "eating meat that has been offered to idols" and the effect that would have on unbelievers and those who are weaker in the Lord, Paul continues by addressing proper worship within the church. This is a natural transition since the city of Corinth, as well as the entire Greek and Roman area were plagued with idol temples involving worship and customs and traditions that were not proper for worship of the one true and living God.

1 Cor. 11:²Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you. ³But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. ⁴Every man who has *something* on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head. ⁵But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved. ⁶For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head. ⁷For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. ⁸For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; ⁹for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. ¹⁰Therefore the woman ought to have *a symbol of* authority on her head, because of the angels.

The Symbol of Authority and the Head – There is a proper order of authority within the church and within the family. Here, Paul is addressing the tradition that he set for the church in Corinth with the proper order being that man has authority over the woman within the church. However, Paul wanted to make sure that the Corinthians understood that that was not the full line of authority. The authority began with God, over Christ, over man, who was over the woman.

When a man stands to "prophecy" and "pray," he is to do so with no covering on his head. This is where the common practice comes from of a man removing his hat or cap during a prayer. Sadly this is a practice that has in many cases gone by the wayside in churches; however, at the ball games all across the states non-church going men will remove their hats in respect during the prayer. Isn't it interesting how the pagans know the traditions of God and Christians dare to dismiss them to be more approachable to the lost man. Christians, remove your hats when you stand to prophecy or pray! If a man stands to pray or prophecy with his head covered, it is a disgrace!

We understand the term "pray." Yet the word "prophecy" can cause difficulty for us. In the definitions of our day, "to prophecy" means to "tell the future," yet this is not the definition of this word. This "prophecy" means to "forth-tell" not "foretell." A "foreteller" tells the future before it happens, like unto Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah. But in this case it is the "forth-teller" who simply repeats the message of the gospel, repeating it over and over to generation after generation so that each new group of people can hear the old, old, story of Jesus and His love again and again. Just as I am offering the bread of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, I am a "forth-teller." I can tell you all that is in the Scripture, but that is the limit of my abilities. I can reveal nothing more than what is written in the Holy Writ of God.

Yet, if a woman stands to “prophecy” or “pray” without her head covered, it is a disgrace to her! Why? Women of the Lord were to be different than women who worshipped dumb idols. In the temples in the Greek and Roman world the women shaved their heads in worship to the dumb idols. Many of these idol temples were ruled by women. In these same temples, women were used as temple prostitutes for the purpose of sexual rituals before the dumb idols. These women paraded in the streets, bringing men and their money into the false temples and there they were seduced by the feminine leadership to pilfer their pocket books to the false gods. Within the Church, women were never to appear in this light. When they stood to pray, their head was to be covered. When they stood to read the scripture their head was to be covered.

Make sure you understand the structure of creation. Man was created first and then the woman was created for the sake of the man and not the other way around. So too the man has the authority to stand without the covering but the woman must be covered as a symbol of authority on her head that she is under man, under Christ, under God.

1 Cor. 11:11 However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man *has his birth* through the woman; and all things originate from God. 13 Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God *with 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. 16 But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.

The Woman’s Covering – As the first part of this chapter progressed it seemed that Paul was asking the woman to cover her head with some article of material; however, in this passage we see his intent is much simpler than expected. Man and woman are not independent of each other. It takes both to procreate and reproduce after their kind. Yet even in Paul’s day it was a disgrace for a man to have long hair. We often think of Jesus with long hair, but this was not the case. Jesus’ hair was cut in long strands, close to the head at the top of the neck. His hair never went down his back as we have been lead to believe because of the romanticized portraits that were created in the last few hundred years. Long hair was a dishonor to the man. However, long hair was of great honor to the woman. Long hair was the glory of the woman. Hair that was never cut above the neck was seen as the covering of the women; yes, even when she was in church. When a woman stood to read the scripture or pray, her long hair was her covering and she needed nothing else. She was different from the rest of the women of the world and the idol worshippers.

As stated in verse 2 of this chapter, Paul was proud to give this instruction to the Corinthian church, for this was not an issue with them. They had kept the tradition of place of women well. On the other hand, with his next instruction he is not so happy with the church.

1 Cor. 11:17 But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it. 19 For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you.

Divisions and Factions – The church was divided. The church in Corinth where not only divided over the leader they wanted to follow, there were factions of the congregation making a mockery of one of the highest ordinances of the church.

1 Cor. 11:20 Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, 21 for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? 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 will not praise you.

The Mockery of the Ordinance – The Lord's supper was not to be used as a time of filling your stomach or drinking to drunkenness as was the case in Corinth. While we use grape juice in our Lord's Supper in our services, wine was used in first century churches. Disgracefully, some would drink at the Lord's Supper until they were drunk. Others would consume the bread until they were filled, missing the meaning of the Lord's Supper. When Paul states that the Corinthians "shame those who have nothing" he is giving us a clue that these were people of the church who had the means to eat well at home and should not have been gluttons at the church. This mockery of the ordinance did not please Paul.

1 Cor. 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which 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 He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

The Lord's Supper, In Remembrance, The New Covenant - Then Jesus took the cup and blessed it. "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." This is personal! It is all about Jesus. What is the New Covenant about?

In the midst of Jeremiah's agony over the sin and exile of the Southern Kingdom, Jeremiah begged the Lord for a point of hope for the Jews. In Jeremiah 31 the Lord God revealed the idea of a new covenant that would come to the Jews. The Passover was from the Old Covenant. Jeremiah knew all about that.

In that evening, in that upper room, the Passover was becoming the Lord's Supper, and it was the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Lord to Jeremiah. It was the beginning, the inauguration, the birth of the New Covenant. The 12 apostles had no idea that this incredible transition was taking place!

All over the world Jews still set down at Passover to observe the Old Covenant, yet we observe the New Covenant. Permit me to compare the different characteristics of the two. I want you to capture just a glimpse of the incredible finished work of the Lord in these two covenants and the meaning of each for you and me today.

Just listen as I quickly compare the two. For most of you, this is biblical territory that you have never traveled before.

In the Old Covenant	In the New Covenant	What is the meaning of this for you?
<i>Gifts and sacrifices were made by those who were guilty of sin.</i>	<i>The guiltless Christ sacrificed himself for your sin.</i>	<i>It means that Christ Dies for you!</i>
<i>The focus was on a physical building where a person goes to worship.</i>	<i>The focus is on the reign of Christ in the hearts of each individual believer.</i>	<i>It means that God is directly involved in your life!</i>
<i>The forgiveness of sin and hope of glory was just a shadow.</i>	<i>The forgiveness of sin and hope of glory is now a reality.</i>	<i>It means that forgiveness and hope is not temporal, but eternal!</i>
<i>There were only limited promises.</i>	<i>There are limitless promises.</i>	<i>It means that We can trust God's promises to us!</i>
<i>The people failed to keep the agreement with God.</i>	<i>Christ keeps the agreement faithfully no matter what we do.</i>	<i>It means that Christ has kept the agreement where people couldn't.</i>
<i>There were external standards and rules.</i>	<i>There are internal standards and a new heart.</i>	<i>It means that God sees both actions and motives and we are accountable to God, not rules.</i>
<i>The people had limited access to God.</i>	<i>The people have unlimited access to God.</i>	<i>It means that God is personally available to you!</i>
<i>Everything was based on fear.</i>	<i>Everything is based on love and forgiveness..</i>	<i>It means that Forgiveness keeps our failures from destroying the agreement!</i>
<i>There was a legal cleansing.</i>	<i>There is a personal cleansing.</i>	<i>It means that God's cleansing is complete!</i>
<i>There is a continual sacrifice.</i>	<i>Christ death was a conclusive sacrifice.</i>	<i>It means that Christ's sacrifice was perfect and final!</i>
<i>You had to obey the rules.</i>	<i>You have to serve the living God.</i>	<i>It means that We have a relationship, not regulations!</i>
<i>Forgiveness is earned.</i>	<i>Forgiveness is freely given.</i>	<i>It means that We have true and complete forgiveness!</i>
<i>The ceremony was repeated yearly.</i>	<i>The ceremony is completed by Christ's death.</i>	<i>It means that Christ's death can be applied to your sin!</i>
<i>The requirement was by human effort.</i>	<i>The requirement is by God's grace.</i>	<i>It means that It is initiated by God's love for you.</i>
<i>Was only available to some, the Jews.</i>	<i>Is available to all – the entire world.</i>	<i>It means that it is available to you!</i>

From the Passover to the Lord's Supper, from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, it was all for you and me.

²⁷Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. ²⁸But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. ³⁰For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. ³¹But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. ³²But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world. ³³So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment. And the remaining matters I shall arrange when I come.

In an Unworthy Manner - You might ask, what does "an unworthy manner" mean? The word "unworthy" in the 27th verse is translated wrong in the English language. It should be the word "*irreverently*." Remember, the context of Paul's warning to the Corinthians was because of their gluttonness and drunkenness at the Lord tables. The Lord's Supper was not a time to fill your stomach and thirst. It was a time to remember what the Lord had done for them on the cross for their salvation. If someone eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an irreverent manner, they are guilty of nailing the Lord to the cross.

The manner, attitude, and heart of each person must carefully partake in the Lord's Supper in reverence. The eating of the bread and drinking of the cup should probe our very being to the deepest depths. We must judge our actions and motives and keep them in check, mastering them to conform to the correct and proper behavior necessary to partake of the remembrance ceremony. This is something we should do to ourselves. If we judge ourselves and act properly, others will not judge us.

Paul knew that this had been a great problem in the Corinth church, even though it was a young church. In its short existence there were members who had been guilty of irreverently taking the Lord's Supper which had already died and their bodies had gone to sleep. Others who were guilty were still alive yet weak and sick. These would once again have the opportunity to partake of the Lord's Supper in a proper manner.

Paul's instruction is that the church members should eat their meals at home. The hunger should be filled at home and not at the table of the Lord. But when you are at the table of the Lord, you should wait until everyone is served before you partake. This is not all that Paul's wants to say about this subject, but it is all that he wanted to place in the Scripture. Therefore, when he arrived for his next visit to Corinth, he would handle the other matters.