

## MOST class on 1 Corinthians

### II. The Doctrinal Section, 1:10-15:58;

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- 3. Matters pertaining to idols, 8:1-11:1;
- 4. Problems in the worship at Corinth, 11:2-11:34;
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Most commentators suggest that this chapter through the 14th deal with matters concerning worship. There are basically two things dealt with in this chapter: (1) instructions on hair and the veil, verses 1-16, and (2) instructions on eating food and the Lord's supper, verses 17-34. The first sixteen verses address God's disapproval of the manner of dress of men and women in the worship assemblies at Corinth. Reese divides this section into five parts:

- (1) The principle stated, verses 1-3
- (2) The principle applied, verses 4-6;
- (3) The principle defended, verses 7-10;
- (4) The principle clarified, verses 11-12;
- (5) The principle agreed to, verses 13-16

Let's take a closer look:

*11:1 - "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ"*

Verse 1 properly belongs to the close of chapter ten. Having encouraged them to do only those things that are lawful, Paul tells them to be "imitators" of himself, he in turn imitating Christ. We are to imitate men, only insofar as they imitate the Master.

### **Instructions On Hair And The Veil 11:2-16**

In these verses Paul...

- 1) Admonishes the brethren to imitate himself, even as he imitates Christ, vs 1;
- 2) Admonishes them to hold fast the traditions that he had delivered unto them, vs 2;
- 3) Sets forth the principle of headship, vs 3;
- 4) Points out that it is a dishonor to one's head to deviate from the prescribed pattern, vs 4-5;
- 5) Discusses the relationship of men and women insofar as the matter of the veil or covering was concerned, vs 6-13;
- 6) Points out that long hair is a dishonor to the man, and an honor to the woman, vs 14-15;
- 7) Stresses that the churches of God have no contention about being contentious in this matter, vs 16;

One of the difficulties the student faces is a precise definition of such terms as "having down from the head" (vs. 4), "uncovered" (vs. 5, 13), "authority on her head" (vs. 10), "because of the angels" (vs. 10), "for a covering" (vs. 15), and "no such custom" (vs. 15). Extra-biblical literature is scarce when it comes to a determination of the prevailing customs of the time.

### **The Corinthians and the Veil**

These verses (4-16) have been a subject of no little discussion, and much controversy, among brethren. Whether these verses can apply to any present day situation, or whether there are any regulations that women of today must respect, is certainly a matter of contention among scholars. As to whether or not a woman is instructed to wear some sort of "hat," Coffman has pointed out that "if Paul really meant that women should be veiled, then no fancy little hat will do it" (Coffman, 165). Paul Marsh, in his comments on this passage has noted that "the modern hat cannot be said to compare with the veil, either in appearance, function, or purpose" (Marsh, *A New Commentary*, 397). J.W. McGarvey has also observed that "a woman's hat has never had any symbolism whatever" (McGarvey, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, page 113).

Eldred Echols noted that any conclusion on this verse in which women are required to wear hats in worship “is linguistically and historically impossible” (as quoted per Coffman, page 166).

If the passage does not deal with hats, what then, is the message for us today? This, I hope will become clear as we proceed through the passage.

*11:2-3 “Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God”*

There is really nothing difficult in these two verses. Evidently there were some who were trying to bring in different practices in the worship assembly of the church. Paul tells them to hold fast the traditions. The Greek word means “a handing down,” or “a delivery by word of mouth or writing.” While the word might refer to traditions of men, these traditions would appear to be the divine ordinances previously given to the church at Corinth. By keeping this verse in the context, those wishing to depart from the traditions were evidently wanting to inject something into the worship of the church which ignored, or in some way, diminished the proper position of the woman’s relationship to the man.

*“as I delivered them to you”* - The original word here is a “technical term in Judaism for the oral transmission of religious instruction” (Reese, 369). The message from Paul did not originate in the minds of men, but were revealed by God through the Spirit (cf. Eph. 3:3-5, 2 Peter 1:19-21).

So, in verse three the apostle sets forth the PRINCIPLE which the apostle wishes to address in this section of the epistle. *God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, and man is the head of woman*. This is a divine relationship which all the feminist movements in the world cannot change.

It is significant that these Divine arrangements are set forth by God. None of these roles is intended to demean any one person or class of persons, or suggest inferiority. Certainly none would suggest that Christ is inferior to God. Why, then, do some suggest that man’s being head over the woman in some way makes her inferior? “The subordination of woman to her husband does not set aside the equality of both male and female ‘in Christ,’ but it is for the purpose of making the family a viable and successful unit” (Coffman, 169).

*“But I would have you know”* - He invites them to listen carefully to what he was about to set forth, and then to come to the proper conclusion regarding these matters. The instructions that follow suggest that this issue was not addressed while Paul was in Corinth.

*“the head of every man is Christ”* - One will notice that Paul begins with MAN, proceeds to the woman, and then turns his attention to Christ and His subordination to the Father. It is possible that he began with the MAN in order to show first that MAN is also in submission to someone, namely Christ. The word “head” appears nine times in this paragraph. Sometimes the word is used literally (referring to a part of the body) and sometimes metaphorically (referring to something other than a part of the body). It seems clear that in this verse it is being used metaphorically to refer to the authority of Christ over man, the authority of man over woman, and the authority of God over Christ.

*“the head of the woman is the man”* - This is a general rule set forth from the beginning of time, and emphasized throughout the New Testament. It is possible that Paul reminded the Corinthian women of this principle for the simple reason that those women who had spiritual gifts (and especially the gift of prophecy) might assume that it was acceptable to cast off this submission and occupy a rank equal to that of the man. One difficulty here is determining the *extent* of a man’s authority over women. It is not likely that Paul was saying that every man is head over every woman. The original words, ‘*aner*’ and ‘*gune*’ could refer to husband and wife. The NRSV translates this, “The husband is the head of his wife.” A careful study of 1 Timothy 2 will show that the subordination indicated here is grounded in the creation and the fall.

*“the head of Christ is God”* - The reason why Paul would include the relationship of God and Christ was to teach the brethren what he meant by the headship of man over woman. Headship is not degrading. Jesus voluntarily submitted to the Father, and the woman’s responsibility is to voluntarily submit to her husband

in all things. Jesus submitted to the Father but His subordination to the Father's will did not lessen His deity. He did not become what Reese calls "a shriveled up deity."

Notice the hierarchy of descending authority: God, Christ, husband (man), wife (woman). By keeping this authority principle in view one will see that none of the subordinates are to act in such a way as to reflect badly on his/her "head."

*11:4 - "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head"*

With this verse Paul makes the application. The particulars are these: (1) it is the role of the man to pray or prophesy. This is supported by 1 Timothy 2:8 ff. (2) When the man prays or prophesies he must not have his "head covered." This would be contrary to the Jewish law wherein a man leading prayer DID have his head covered.

The "head" here is obviously a part of the body. The literal rendering is, "having down from the head." The question is "what" down on the head? Long hair? a cap? some kind of shawl or skull cap? In view of the entire passage it would appear that any of these would be a violation of what Paul is discussing here. It is interesting that in many customs removing the hat or a covering a man might have on his head is a sign of respect for a superior when in his presence. Reese had this interesting bit of information:

Roman men worshipped with their head covered, and the Roman covering was called a '*pileus*.' The Greek men's custom was to worship with the head uncovered...The fact that Paul sometimes follows local custom, and sometimes does not, shows that it is not the custom as a custom that is vital, but *the significance* of the custom" (Reese, 373).

The "*praying or prophesying*" shows that Paul was discussing matters relative to public worship. In the context it would mean speaking publically, likely using the spiritual gift of prophecy given to certain individuals in the congregation. "Prophecy was the inspired proclamation of a message given by God to a Christian speaker for the benefit of the whole congregation" (Reese, 375). To pray or prophecy with the head '*covered*' would mean the man "*dishonoreth his head*." Here the word "head" is being used metaphorically to refer to Christ, Who is the head of man.

Coffman makes repeated reference to Eldred Echols' manuscript on this passage. He (Coffman) believes that the problem with this passage actually begins with this verse. Echols would translate the phrase, "having his head covered," as "having something down from his head" (Coffman, 169). In a treatise prepared by the students and faculty at South Africa Bible School, the word "covered" was described thusly:

Turning to the text, we have in verse 4, 'Every man prophesying *having down* from his head, shames his head.' The KJV rendition is a commentary not a translation. Lenski translates the sense correctly: 'having something down from his head.' What the 'something' is which is to hang down from the man's head is neither stated nor implied in verse 4 (page 2 of that paper).

The question needing to be answered is, "Of what does the covering consist?"

Whatever the passage may mean, we can safely conclude that there were circumstances when a man might pray or prophesy and such actions actually "dishonor" his head. The "head" which he dishonors in such circumstances is Christ. This much is certain from verses 3 and 4.

And what is the "covering" referred to in this verse? ANY COVERING! A hat; a turban, and even LONG HAIR! Barnes leans in this direction, though never actually stating that the "covering" throughout this chapter is that of the hair. He comments:

Long hair is, by the custom of the times, and of nearly all countries, a mark of the sex, an ornament of the female...To remove that is to appear, in this respect, like the other sex, and to lay aside the badge of her own" (Barnes, 203).

Now, if the “covering” or “badge” of the woman is her hair, what else could the “covering” be for the man, but his hair? And it is precisely that kind of “covering” that identifies the woman, that is forbidden upon the man! At least when he prays!

Coffman’s conclusion on this verse is that it is an “admonition that it was a disgrace for any long haired Christian male to participate in praying and prophesying” (Coffman, 170).

*11:5 - “But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoreth her head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven”*

Just as there were situations in which the man might “dishonor” his head (Christ), so Paul says there are situations in which the woman might “dishonor” her head. It is certain that her “head” referred to here is her husband.

“But” - This indicates that what is said about “wives” is in contrast to what was just said about men. This verse, therefore, makes the next application to the principle set forth in verses 2 and 3.

*“every woman praying or prophecying with her head unveiled”* - What is the meaning, then, of “unveiled”? It would seem that whatever the meaning of “unveiled” or “uncovered” might be in this passage, the thought must be carried through the entire section of scripture. The man cannot “cover” his head; the woman cannot “unveil” her head. What the man CANNOT do, the woman MUST do! But what if the woman SHOULD “unveil” her head? What if she should “uncover” her head while she is praying or prophesying? The context would suggest that by such action, she would be demonstrating her rebellion and her bravado - her desire to break away from her husband’s authority and control. This removal of the “covering” or “veil” in public would actually be the same as if she were shaven. Shaving of the head, according to reliable authorities, was a sign that a woman was not in subjection to her husband. If she had committed adultery, or in some way demonstrated this loose attitude, the social custom was to shave the woman so that all might know she was this TYPE of woman. Here Paul says that if she appears in public worship WITHOUT the veil, without her “covering,” it is the same as if she had shaven herself. BOTH of these acts (removal of the “veil” or the shaving of the head) would demonstrate that the woman was disobeying this divine injunction of submission to her husband.

Reese points out three options to answer the question as to the meaning of this “covering. First, the traditional view has the woman discarding some kind of external covering. This view is supported by the use of the word “covering” in verse 15. The word there means literally “a wrap around,” or something like a shawl. Exactly WHY casting off that covering would be disgraceful to her husband will be explained later. Reese concluded that “there was something about being uncovered that would give bystanders a wrong impression about the wife’s morals.”

A second explanation for the “covering” is that Paul has reference to the “long hair.” This would mean that the problem at Corinth was that the women were uncovering their head by having their hair cut short.

A third explanation is that on the basis of the LXX, the adjective “uncovered” refers to “loosed hair,” that is, letting the hair down in public. But this explanation presents some difficulty when we come to the man’s long hair. If the “uncovering” means to let the hair hang loose, then does that mean the man has to have his hair up in some kind of permanent arrangement? Or, as Reese put it, “What are we to do with verse 15 which implies long hair, not piled up hair, serves in place of a shawl?” Of the three positions, this one is the most untenable; we reject it outright because it produces more difficulties than it solves.

It is interesting that this word “unveiled” is from *‘akatakaluptos,’* and is a general term meaning simply “uncovered.” Coffman has this comment:

To suppose that Paul here meant ‘mantle’ or ‘veil’ or any such thing is to import into this text what is not in it. We have seen that he was speaking of ‘hair’ in verse 4; and that is exactly what he is speaking of here. ‘Not completely covered’ would then refer to the disgraceful conduct of the Corinthian women in **cropping their hair** [emphasis mine, TW], after the manner of the notorious

Corinthian prostitutes; which, if they did it, was exactly the same kind of disgrace as if they had shaved their heads (Coffman, 171).

The idea that Paul was NOT referring to some artificial garment is supported by verse 15 where he says “her hair is given her instead of a covering.” The word normally translated “garment” is *peribolaion* and Paul plainly says that her “hair” serves as her “covering.” If these facts be considered it would appear that Paul was simply forbidding the Christian women at Corinth to adapt the “*hair style*” of the Corinthian prostitute priestesses of Aphrodite. To do so would associate them with such unholy women, and thus bring shame upon their husbands, and upon the church.

*“for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven”* - Reese’s comments are helpful:

To go unveiled was as disgraceful as it would be for the woman to have her head shaved, or her hair shorn. The wife who removes her veil in public shows a lack of proper respect to her husband. The veil is a token of modesty and subordination. A woman appearing abroad so shamelessly and exposing herself to the gaze of other men would bring disgrace upon her husband... [T]he chief idea is that the woman is acting in such a way as to show she is disregarding the divine order of subordination. Greek women in pagan worship settings laid aside their veils. By removing their veils, they were offering themselves for sexual relations to any man who came along. The sexual relations were part of the worship of the ‘god.’ In Greek worship, when women laid aside their veil, it was an indication that for the moment when ‘in worship’ she belonged to ‘the god’ and not to the husband. Christian wives were not to embrace any behavior that would say they belonged to God, but not their husbands, while they were worshipping. An unveiled woman in the congregation at Corinth would have been a shocking thing. She would have been considered an immoral woman (Reese, 379).

I came across this interesting bit of information regarding shaving the head of women: In France, during WWII, when the French underground caught a woman who had collaborated with the Germans, the punishment for the woman was that they would cut all her hair off. Then for months (till her hair grew back) all her neighbors would know that she had betrayed France by bestowing her favors on the hated Germans.

What was the significance of the “shaven” head? Some have suggested that the shaven head was a mark of a disreputable woman. When people saw a woman with a shaven head they would identify her as a tramp, or one who had been disgraced and punished for some scandalous thing.

*11:6 - “For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled”*

The argument of the apostle seems to be as follows. IF the woman is going to enter into public without the veil, or without her “covering” as it should be, she might as well be shorn or shaven. She demonstrates her rebellion in either case. BUT, since it **IS** a shame for the woman to shave herself (such being an act of rebellion), and since the Corinthians were not to so demonstrate in ANY FORM OR FASHION such a rebellious spirit, then by all means, **LET THE WOMEN WEAR THE VEIL**, or make sure their **HAIR STYLE** is as becometh Christian women respecting their husbands. This I take to be the meaning of the text in keeping with the customs of the times as well as the principle earlier stated.

Roy Deaver has these thoughts:

Often, dress involves the matter of symbolism. Something is worn as a symbol - to call attention to some happening, in memory of some person or event, to give information, to reflect a certain attitude. Probably all these factors were involved in the woman’s wearing of the veil, in Paul’s day, at Corinth. Corinth was a corrupt city...There was in the city the temple of Aphrodite Pandemos, which had one thousand priestesses devoted to its service. These were nothing but harlots. They brazenly identified themselves by appearing in public without their veils. Also, it should be remembered that the punishment for harlotry was the shaving of the head. For a Christian woman to appear on the street or in a gathering in Corinth without her veil would have been for her to have thus identified herself with the ordinary harlots of

Aphrodite Pandemos. Such would have brought shame and reproach upon the church. Furthermore, the veil - in Corinth - symbolized the fact that the woman wearing it recognized and respected the principle of subjection to man. The failure to wear the veil would have indicated failure to recognize this principle, and there would have been reproach upon the church. The woman's veil in Corinth, meant: (1) that she was concerned about decency and wanted to be regarded as a pure woman; (2) that she recognized and respected the sacred principle of woman's being in subjection to man - that this was a relationship divinely established; (3) that she dressed to be in harmony with an inherently right, meaningful custom; she did not desire to be unnecessarily offensive to others; (4) that she did not want to bring reproach upon the church of the Lord; and (5) that she did not want to be offensive to God or to his angels.

By the same token, the women of our time do not ordinarily wear the veil. The absence of the veil would not, therefore, indicate a violation of the principle set forth in verse 3, and would not be sinful. Some have used the verses under consideration to demand that Christian women wear a hat or some other kind of covering. See comments at the beginning of this chapter on this matter of "hats." But at the same time, it seems to this student that the woman in any age should give due consideration to that which serves as a distinctive mark between the woman and the man, and given TO the woman by God; i.e. that which is "given to her" instead of the "covering," namely her hair. Reese made application of the principle in a little different way; something I deemed worthy of copying into my notes:

It has been pointed out that the "masculine" partners in a lesbian relationship cut their hair as short as a man would. Homosexuality was a shameful relationship, and no decent woman would want to act or dress in such a way that folk looking at her might accuse her of being a lesbian. Why then should the Christian women want to discard the head covering? With a mannish hairstyle, a woman has lost her "glory" (Reese, 380).

*"let her be veiled"* - Literally, "let her be covered," for such is the meaning of *'katakalupto.'* "The verb *'katakalupto'* ordinarily implies an external covering of some kind - like a shawl or a scarf" (Reese, 380-381), but later the apostle would clearly state that *"her hair is given her for a covering"* (verse 15). The word that is translated "covering" in verse 15 is a different word and will be studied under that verse.

11:7 - *"For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man"*

*"For a man...ought not to have his head veiled"* - Literally, "the man ought not to have his head covered." Our English translations use the words "covered" and "veiled" interchangeably, and in my estimation that has led to some of the confusion on this passage. Whatever the "veil" is, or whatever the "covering" that would cause the man to dishonor Christ might be, the man "ought not" to wear such. It is suggested that to do so would in some way affect his "image and glory of God." And the woman, in respect of her being "the glory of man" MUST wear her covering, or veil.

The order here is the same as previously. In verses 4 and 5 the apostle stated what the man is *not* to do, and then what the wife is to do. What the man is *not* to do is have his head "covered" or "veiled." Here he goes further and provides some reasons why this is to be the case; reasons rooted in Biblical history.

*"forasmuch as he is the image of and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man"* - Paul's use of the word "image" refers, no doubt, to Genesis 1:27 where it is said man is made in the image of God. While both men and women are created in God's image, the apostle seeks to focus on the order of creation; man being made in the image of God from the dust of the earth; the woman being created from a rib taken from Adam's side.

*"but the woman is the glory of the man"* - Paul never loses sight of the hierarchy of authority set forth in verse 3.

None of the subordinates may behave in such a way as to bring dishonor on their immediate superior. Not the husband (be covering his head while worshipping). Not the wife (by uncovering her head)

while worshipping. A simple remembrance of woman's original creation (she was created to be the man's help meet) will serve to recall that the woman was intended by God to help and bring honor to the man. It would be improper and wrong for the wife to unveil, if that act was a denial of her subordinate position to her husband or would be a denial of the "glory" of her husband (Reese, 382).

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11:8 - *"For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man:"*

This verse, thru verse 10, gives a basis for the Divine injunction, based upon the original creation order. The *"man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man."* Simply, the man was not made from the woman, he did not come from her. Instead, the woman is "of the man," having been taken from his side, created from Adam's rib. Paul's reference to this well-established fact implies that there is some permanent principle that is at stake here. Compare our Lord's reference to the "beginning" and the Divine arrangement at that time pertaining to marriage and divorce (Matt. 19:5-10). "He does not owe his origin to woman, but woman owes her origin to him" seems to be the sense of this verse. Feminists might argue that man *does* in fact owe his existence to woman seeing that man is now born of a woman. The argument fails to realize that the principle of authority of the man was established in the beginning and there is no indication that that particular order was abrogated at any time.

11:9 - *"for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man:"*

In addition, the man was not created "for the woman; but the woman for the man." This, of course, refers to Gen 2:18-24. "The man was not created upon the woman's account" (Clarke, 251). The woman was created to be a "help meet" for man; not the reverse. An unknown author put it this way:

The woman, was made for the comfort and happiness of the man.  
Not to be a slave, but a help meet.  
Not to be a minister of his pleasures, but to be his aid and comforter in life;  
Not to be regarded as of inferior nature and rank, but to be his friend,  
To share his sorrows, and to multiply his joys;  
Yet still to be in a station subordinate to him.

Reese concluded:

Man is to be the head; the ruler; the leader in the family circle; and woman was created to aid him in his duties, to comfort him in his afflictions. Neither the man or the woman is complete without the other. The two together make a whole, doing together what one could not do alone (Reese, 383).

11:10 - *"for this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels"*

*"For this cause..."* - For **what** cause? Does this refer back to the immediate verse, or all the way back to the injunction in verses 4-5? I confess that I am not certain at this point in my study. Whatever it might refer to, what Paul is about to write is a conclusion based on what was written previously.

*"ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head"* - The words *"a sign of"* are supplied by the translators in order to make the meaning smoother and clearer. Without the supplied words the verse would read, "for this cause ought the woman to have authority on her head, because of the angels." The word translated "sign of authority" is *'exousia,'* and has the following meaning:

[I]n the sense of *ability; privilege*, that is, (subjectively) *force, capacity, competency, freedom*, or (objectively) *mastery* (concretely *magistrate, superhuman, potentate, token of control*), *delegated influence*: - authority, jurisdiction, liberty, power, right, strength (Strong)

Thayer was a little more detailed:

- 1) power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases
  - 1a) leave or permission
- 2) physical and mental power
  - 2a) the ability or strength with which one is endued, which he either possesses or exercises
- 3) the power of authority (influence) and of right (privilege)
- 4) the power of rule or government (the power of him whose will and commands must be submitted to by others and obeyed)
  - 4a) universally
    - 4a1) authority over mankind
  - 4b) specifically
    - 4b1) the power of judicial decisions
    - 4b2) of authority to manage domestic affairs
  - 4c) metonymically
    - 4c1) a thing subject to authority or rule
      - 4c1a) jurisdiction
    - 4c2) one who possesses authority
      - 4c2a) a ruler, a human magistrate
      - 4c2b) the leading and more powerful among created beings superior to man, spiritual potentates
  - 4d) a sign of the husband

*“because of the angels”* - I must confess my inability to come to any certain conclusion on this phrase. Albert Barnes thinks this passage is “one of the very few passages in the Bible whose meaning as yet is wholly inexplicable” (Barnes, Electronic Edition). Barnes then paraphrased:

The most natural interpretation seems to me to be this: “A woman in the public assemblies, and in speaking in the presence of people, should wear a veil - the usual symbol of modesty and subordination - because the angels of God are witnesses of your public worship (Heb. 1:13), and because they know and appreciate the propriety of subordination and order in public assemblies.”

Another possible explanation focuses upon those “angels” that had left their proper in their rebellion against God (Jude 6). This would have Paul saying, “The woman ought to have this authority on her head in view of the angels, who did NOT submit to the proper authority.”

*11:11-12 - “Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God”*

Lest there be some misunderstanding about the type of subordination of which Paul was speaking, he is quick to point out that both the man and woman are mutually dependent one upon the other. Every man today owes his existence upon some woman and every woman owes her existence upon some man. This verse, and the next, warn against either the man or the woman assuming a position of arrogance or haughtiness in his/her relationship to the other.

*11:13 - “Judge ye in yourselves: is it seemly that a woman pray unto God unveiled?”*

*“Judge ye in yourselves”* - This would seem to have the meaning of “use some common sense.” Here is an appeal to their instinctive sense of propriety. There was something within the Corinthians which said the **covering** of the woman was natural, generally accepted, and respected.

*11:14 - “Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him?”*

Coffman refers to this verse to prove that the whole context has reference, not to some clothing, but to the hair. Johnson leaned in this direction: “The fact of short hair for men and long hair for women is a divine suggestion in nature itself” (Johnson, 624). The word “nature” suggests a sense of propriety common among men, expressed in universal, prevailing customs. The hair has, through the ages, been a distinguishing mark between men and women. Barnes concludes that “nature demands that the sexes should wear different



kinds of dress.” Or as Clarke pointed out, “It is truly ‘womanish’ to have long hair, and it is a shame to the man who affects it” (Clarke, 253).

McClintock and Strong have this note:

To the Corinthians the letter of Paul was intended to administer a timely reproof for allowing themselves to fall in with a style of manners which, by confounding the distinctions of the sexes, threatened a baneful influence on good morals; and that not only the Christian converts in that city, but the primitive Church generally, were led by this admonition to adopt simpler habits, is evident from the remarkable fact that a criminal, who came to trial under the assumed character of a Christian, was proved to the satisfaction of the judge to be an impostor by the luxuriant and frizzled appearance of his hair [Tertullian, *Apol.*; Fleury, *Les Mœurs des Chrétiennes*] (McClintock and Strong, ESword under ‘hair’)

*“Doth not even nature itself teach you”* - While the word “nature” can refer to something practiced over and over until it become the norm, we think the context will not allow that meaning here. In view of Paul’s reference to the creation of man and woman in the beginning, it is more likely that “nature” refers to the order of things as God made them. Throughout history, and in almost every civilized society, men have had short hair and women long hair. Why this is the case can only be explained by the natural order of things as God originally designed. “Even if your own sense of good taste (verse 13) does not so dictate, does not nature show you that man being short-haired is by Divine order unveiled, and woman, being long-haired, is by divine order veiled?” (Reese, 389).

11:15 - *“But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.”*

On the other hand, the long hair on a woman is her glory. It is this long hair on the woman that is the “covering” or “veil” to which Paul referred throughout this passage.

It is interesting that the Emphatic Diglot has interpreted this verse thus: “Her hair is given her instead of a veil” (per Coffman, 176). Echols [as quoted by Burton Coffman] has this note: “The idea conveyed by ‘instead of’ is that if the noun preceding this preposition is available, the noun following the preposition is not required. Therefore, the conclusion is quite inescapable that, if a woman’s hair conforms to apostolic standards of propriety, she requires no artificial covering” (Coffman’s quote, 176). Danta and Mantey had this note: “There is conclusive proof now that the dominant meaning of *anti* in the first century was **instead of**” (page 100 in their book). Hence, Paul was saying that the woman’s hair is given her instead of a covering.

The Greek word here translated “covering” is *‘paribolaion,’* it being “the one noun in the whole passage that unmistakably refers to a head covering” (Coffman, 176). The previous references to the “veil” (as per the English) are, therefore, inaccurate. This is “Paul’s first reference to anything of the kind; and, significantly, it is mentioned in the same breath with woman’s hair which is given her ‘instead of’ any such covering” (Coffman, 176). Echols thought that the words “instead of” in this verse “forces us to accept the alternative that, if a woman’s hair does not fulfill its proper function, then she should wear a mantle or hood” (page 177, Coffman).

Reese had this interesting, and we think sobering comment:

The second time the word “for” appears, it translates the Greek word *‘anti,’* sometimes translated “against” and sometimes “instead of.” It probably has the meaning of “instead of” at this place. If so, then the Christian woman’s long hair is considered to be a proper substitute for a cloth mantle or veil. God gave long hair to the woman as a sort of natural covering. Before the arts of dress were invented, it served the purposes of a veil, when it was allowed to grow long, and to spread over the shoulders. Wiersby has explained the teaching here on this wise: “In other words, if local custom does not dictate a head covering, her long hair can be that covering. I do not think that Paul meant for all women in every culture to wear a shawl for a head covering; but he did expect them to use their long hair as a covering and as a symbol of their submission to God’s order. This is something that every woman can do.” The fact that woman’s hair grows quite long by nature, much longer than man’s even if he never cuts it, and that thus there is bestowed on woman the gift of a “covering,” is nature’s own indication

that, when it comes to significant customs, she and not man is to have her head covered in the presence of God during worship (Reese, 390).

*11:16 - "But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God."*

Coffman offers this paraphrase: "Look, we do not intend to argue this question endlessly: the whole matter is already solved by the type of behavior which marks God's churches everywhere" (Coffman, 177). Whatever the WORLD may do in this matter of discarding the "covering," Paul points out that the churches DO NOT FOLLOW SUIT! Therefore, rather than be contentious about this matter, let us simply accept God's teaching on the same and submit!

There are two interpretations of this passage that seem reasonable to this student. First, Paul was saying that none of the other churches, whether in Judea, Asia or Greece, have the practice or custom of allowing women to pray in public with their heads uncovered. Second, there has been a principle stated (verse 3). The principle is of permanent validity, but the application of it to the contemporary scene need not yield the same result in every place. Any custom that violates the principle set forth in verses 2 and 3 is a custom that must be disapproved and rejected by every faithful child of God. The manner of dress or behavior in public worship is to be such that the principle of verses 2-3 are respected and followed, regardless of what human custom might dictate. "This whole passage affirms the necessity for Christians to have a decent respect for the opinions of mankind, and not to flaunt social customs of any kind merely for the sake of being different" (Coffman, 177).

Concluding remarks on this passage: see attachment from Coffman's commentary, pages 177-179. See also the paper I received from Al Horne, filed in 'File: 1 Corinthians.' Also scanned in PDF under digital notes on 1 Corinthians.

### **Instructions On Eating Food And The Lord's Supper 17-34**

In the remainder of this chapter Paul...

- 1) Points out that their gathering was not for the better, but the worse, vs 17;
- 2) Reproves them for the divisions that existed among them, vs 18-19;
- 3) Reproves them for their abuse of the Lord's supper, vss 20-22;
- 4) Sets forth the proper teaching regarding the Lord's Supper, vss 23-29;
- 5) Presents some closing admonitions regarding their gathering to partake of the Supper, vss 30-34;

*11:17 - "But in giving you this charge, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better but for the worse"*

*"this charge"* - This obviously has reference to what is to follow. Paul was about to discuss some things relative to the public assembly of the church.

*"I praise you not"* - Paul had no word of commendation for them. In this matter of their worship assembly there was something horribly wrong.

*"that ye come together"* - This has reference to the corporate assembly; that assembly in which the congregation gathers together for the purpose of worship, partaking of the Supper, singing, prayer, preaching and contribution.

*"not for the better but for the worse"* - Not only were their assemblies failing to participate in that which was good, but they were actually doing things that were harmful to the body of believers as a whole. "Those attending were actually worse off for having participated" (Coffman, 179).

*11:18 - "For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it"*

*“first of all”* has reference to matters of discussion, not necessarily importance.

*“there are divisions”* - The marginal reading is *“schisms,”* the Greek word meaning a “rent, such as is made in cloth” (Barnes, 210). Paul had received the report from others, although he did not have firsthand knowledge. Having discussed the divisive spirit that existed at Corinth, he points out that this party spirit had actually entered into the worship period itself.

*“I partly believe it”* - Is it possible that Paul did NOT want to believe what he was hearing about the brethren at Corinth, but that the evidence was so overwhelming that he simply could not dismiss it as some rumor? This was probably the case.

*11:19 - “For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you”*

The Greek word here translated “factions” appears in the ASV footnote as “heresies.” The same word is translated “sect” in Act 5:17. Were these factions caused by doctrinal differences, or personality conflicts? Likely it was a little of both, seeing that the church was aligning itself with various individuals (cf. 1:10-12).

Coffman points out that there is here a “glimpse of the divine mind in this. Christians who become upset and discouraged because of schisms, factions and other disorders in the church make a tragic mistake...Church difficulties provide an opportunity for Christians to demonstrate that they are genuine followers of the Lord” (Coffman, 180). It is not, however, that God desired, or approved of, divisions within the body of Christ. That much has already been made clear in 1:10-12. The idea is that the existence of false teachers inevitably leads to factions within the body. Christians, both individually and collectively, should do all within their power to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Unfortunately, every generation has had its share of those who simply do not love the truth and trouble the congregations of which they are members. There comes a time when we must sorrowfully let them go out from us. Barnes has this interesting note:

It seems to have been assumed by Paul, that they who made divisions could not be regarded as the friends of order and truth; or that their course could not be approved by God...So in all divisions, and all splitting into factions, where the great truths of Christianity are held, and where the corruption of the mass does not require separation, such divisions show who are the restless, ambitious, and dissatisfied spirits; who they are that are indisposed to follow the things that make for peace, and the laws of Christ enjoining union; and who they are who are gentle and peaceful, and disposed to pursue the way of truth, and love, and order, without contentions and strifes (Barnes, page 211).

*11:20 - “When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord’s supper:”*

With this verse Paul enters into a discussion of the abuses of the Lord’s Supper taking place in the church at Corinth.

*“assemble yourselves together”* - The KJV has “come together in the church.” - It has reference to the gathering together as a body to partake of the Lord’s Supper.

*“it is not possible to eat the Lord’s supper”* - Paul did not mean to say that it was physically *impossible* to do so. He simply pointed out that it was not possible to do so *with God’s approval*, or in the proper frame of mind or setting. Something they were doing was disrupting the assembly and making it impossible to continue in that situation and partake acceptably at the same time. Barnes paraphrases thusly: “Though you come together professedly to worship God, and to partake of the Lord’s supper, yet this cannot be the real design which you have in view. It cannot be that such practices as are allowed among you can be a part of the celebration of that supper, or consistent with it” (Barnes, 211).

The words *“Lord’s supper”* appear only here in the New Testament. Terms such as “Eucharist,” or “sacraments” should be abandoned in favor of Biblical designations. As to WHEN the Lord’s Supper should be observed, it is to be upon the first day of the week (Act 20:7).

*11:21 - "for in your eating each one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken."*

This verse isolates the problem at Corinth. In "*eating*" the Lord's Supper there were evidently some actually partaking of a common meal either simultaneously with the supper, or in close proximity thereto. It is generally accepted among scholars that the early century "love feasts" were being abused, and somehow mixed with the Lord's Supper. There was, in fact, a mixing of the holy and profane. "It seems necessary to suppose that they had in some way made the Lord's supper either connected with a common feast, or that they regarded it as a mere common festival to be observed in a way similar to the festivals among the Greeks" (Barnes, 212). I have some doubts, however, that the well-known "love feasts" were a part of the problem here. There is no suggestion that such a feast had taken place either before, or after, the partaking of the Lord's supper. I am more inclined to believe that the problem at Corinth was one of a mistaken concept of the NATURE of the Lord's supper. It had become an ordinary feast in honor of the Savior. Evidently a certain degree of intemperance had entered into the practice as well, and some were becoming "drunken." In addition, there were separations during the partaking. They were not eating at a "common table," one evidently separating himself from another, one eating, another going "hungry." So, there were two fundamental errors centered around the Lord's supper. (1) They failed to recognize the NATURE of the Lord's supper; that it was something different than a common meal, a common festivity; and (2) that the Supper was to be eaten together, at a common table so to speak.

Albert Barnes points out three important lessons to be learned from the situation at Corinth: (1) People converted from paganism do not immediately attain unto perfection; (2) Men are prone to abuse even the most holy rites of religion; (3) Christians, recently converted, need constant guidance, and that when left to themselves they tend to "fall into gross and scandalous offenses" (Barnes, 213).

*11:22 - "What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you? In this I praise you not."*

The "houses" is a metaphor to refer to the setting, or atmosphere, and not the location. In the first century the assemblies were, by in large, in the homes of the members. We can only conclude, therefore, that this admonition to eat in their "houses" could NOT have referred to the location. Otherwise, those members whose "houses" they met in could never again eat a meal in that location. "What he condemned was their intemperance, disregard of the need of others, and their shameless mixing of the Lord's Supper with a common meal" (Coffman, 183).

To "*despise the church of God*" is used in a much broader sense than at Corinth only. By their actions "they had held in contempt the whole church of God, in all places, with all their views of the sacredness and purity of the Lord's supper" (Barnes, 213). The implication being that the actions of a single congregation often depicts their attitude toward the church as a whole. Our present day problems with those liberal brethren who criticize the church, its leaders, and its great preachers and teachers of years gone by, is nothing more than a despising of the church as a whole. It would benefit the church no little bit if they would hasten their move and depart from us.

*11:23 - "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread"*

The institution of the Lord's Supper is recorded in Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, and Luke 22:15-20. Paul's words that he "*received of the Lord*" imply direct revelation of this matter. Paul, therefore, was made aware of the Lord's procedure in instituting the Supper, though he himself was not present. This information was given to him, no doubt, while he was in Arabia for an undisclosed amount of time. At this point in his epistle the Apostle turns his attention to the seriousness and soberness of the institution of the Lord's supper.

*"the night in which he was betrayed"* - These words add a sense of soberness to the occasion. "He wished to bring before their minds the deeply affecting circumstances of his death; and thus to show them the utter impropriety of their celebrating the ordinance with riot and disorder" (Barnes, 214).

*11:24 - "and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me"*

*"when he had given thanks"* - This is equivalent to the gospel accounts where it is said "having blessed it."

*"he brake it"* - While visiting a congregation in Oklahoma, we noticed that the bread consisted of small wafers, and when passed there was no breaking taking place. F.W. Farrar has correctly noted that "the breaking of the bread ought not to be abandoned, as in the case when wafers are used" (Pulpit Commentary, 365). Whether or not there must be an actual "breaking" when we eat of the bread should not become a cause for division within the body.

*"this do in remembrance of me"* - Here is the purpose for partaking of the Supper. It is to be a memorial.

Note the simple order of our Lord: (1) He took bread; (2) He gave thanks; (3) He brake it; (4) He set forth the purpose and nature of the Supper, "This is my body...this do in remembrance of me." Men would do well to follow this same order when it comes to this sacred memorial.

*11:25 - "In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me"*

*"after supper"* - This shows the separation our Lord made of the Lord's Supper and the common meal.

The *"cup"* is the contents, not the container. This is seen from the simple fact that one cannot DRINK a cup, but he can drink the contents. This, too, was to be done "in remembrance" of our Lord. Coffman quotes Hodge with regard to the doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation: "It is only by denying all distinctions between matter and spirit, and confounding all our ideas of substance and qualities, that we can believe that wine is blood, or bread flesh" (Coffman, 185). It is astonishing that those who hold to the doctrine of transubstantiation simply do not see what the passages say. Here it is expressly called BREAD, both BEFORE it was blessed, and AFTER! Notice he blessed the "bread" (vs 23), and then it clearly said "as often as ye eat this bread." As Barnes noted, "And what an amazing and astonishing absurdity it is to believe that the bread is changed into the flesh and blood of Jesus" (Barnes, 216).

*"after supper"* - This shows that the Lord's supper occurred after the observance of the paschal supper. As Barnes noted, "the apostle introduces this evidently to show them that it could not be, as they seemed to have supposed, an occasion of feasting. It was AFTER the supper, and was therefore to be observed in a distinct manner" (Barnes, 215).

*11:26 - "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come"*

*"As often as ye eat ... and drink..."* - Some have used these words to suggest that we are at liberty to take as often, or as seldom, as we may choose. Barnes is among that number: "Not prescribing any time; and not even specifying the frequency with which it was to be done; but leaving it to themselves to determine how often they would partake" (Barnes, 216). One must keep in mind that Jesus was not setting forth the TIME frame of partaking of the Supper, but the PURPOSE. There are several reasons for observing the Lord's supper. First, it is to serve as a reminder, "do this in memory." Second, in partaking we "proclaim the Lord's death till he come." But when it comes to establishing the exact "time frame" in which the supper is to be served and eaten, we must take other passages into consideration. Act 20:7 is our divine pattern for taking the communion on the first day of the week. If we were to take Mr. Barnes reasoning to its logical conclusion, one would never have to partake at all, for if it is permissible to partake once a month at the whim or desire of some, and if it is permissible to partake once a year at the desire of another, why not once every four years? Why not once every ten years? Why not only once a century?

*"as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup"* - This would imply that Christians partake of BOTH the bread, and the fruit of the vine. To partake of one without the other is a gross abuse of the Supper, and without Divine authority.

*“till he come”* - There are actually three directions in which the Christian looks during the Lord’s Supper (the third in the next few verses). We look BACK to the cross, FORWARD to the coming of our Savior, and INWARD to our own motives, emotions, and life application of the same.

*11:27 - “Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord”*

Caution must be exercised lest we assume that we must somehow be “worthy” of partaking. It is not the ‘worthiness’ of the participant, but the ‘worthiness’ of his manner of partaking it. What we have here is an *adverb*, not an adjective. To partake in an unworthy manner will make us guilty of the body and the blood, a most sobering thought to consider. When we approach the Lord’s Supper we must do so with reverence for our God, and for the sacrifice that Jesus made upon the cross. It is astounding that so many partake of the Supper with little, if any, consideration for what it means. The indifferent, flippant attitude that is sometimes manifested during the Supper on the part of some who claim to be members of the Lord’s church, is absolutely reprehensible and without excuse. All such individuals would do well to study seriously the implications of this verse.

*“shall be guilty...”* - “The word properly means obnoxious to punishment for personal crime. It always includes the idea of ill-desert, and of exposure to punishment on account of crime” (Barnes, 218).

*“of the body and the blood of the Lord”* - There is some question among commentators as to the meaning of these words. Some have suggested that the improper partaking of the emblems causes one to be a partaker in the destruction of the body and blood of the Lord. Barnes has this: “They show that they have the spirit of his murderers; they evince it in the most awful way possible; and they who would thus join in a profane celebration of the Lord’s supper would have joined in the cry, ‘Crucify him, crucify him.’ For it is a most fearful and solemn act to trifle with sacred things; and especially to hold up to derision and scorn, the bitter sorrows by which the Son of God accomplished the redemption of the world” (Barnes, 219).

*11:28 - “But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup”*

*“prove himself”* - Here is the INWARD look. Coffman quotes Morris: “Before taking part in such a service, the very least we can do is to conduct a rigorous self-examination” (Coffman, 186). But why the need to look inward? “If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matt. 5:24). A life tainted with unrepentant and unforgiven sin will render our worship null and void.

*11:29 - “For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body”*

A RESPONSIBILITY is now set forth: we are to partake, and while partaking, we are to discern the body. The “body” could have reference to (1) the body of the Lord, or (2) the body, the church. In either case the result is the same. After all, how can we even begin to separate respect for the church from respect for our Lord. If we love Him, we will love the brethren. Anything else is hypocritical.

*“eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself”* - The KJV has “damnation unto himself.” These words are most forceful and thought provoking. An improper attitude while partaking of the Lord’s Supper will bring judgment upon an individual. Such improper participation will expose one to the Divine displeasure, and ultimately to punishment of the most severe nature.

*11:30 - “For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep”*

There is some question, and no little disagreement among commentators as to the meaning of the word “sickly.” Some have interpreted this to mean that some sort of physical illness had been inflicted upon the brethren at Corinth as a punitive measure against them. But the most logical meaning is that this refers to the *spiritual* weakness demonstrated by the Corinthians. Indeed, some had even gone so far as to DIE spiritually, the word “sleep” often used simultaneously with death. Could it be possible that some at Corinth

had fallen away, even to the point of not being capable of recovery. This certainly seems to be possible. Notice such passages as 1 Thessalonians 5:19, 1 Timothy 5:6, 2 Peter 2:20, Hebrews 6:1-6, and 1 John 5:16, etc.

*11:31-32 - "But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world"*

Is this verse a glance back at what MIGHT HAVE BEEN had these brethren been somewhat more discerning? Had they so "discerned" they may not have been so judged! Or was Paul referring to the Corinthians who now had the opportunity to observe what the spiritual weakness of some had led to - namely their complete apostasy. Paul's words were simply pointing out that should THEY continue in the same vein of sinful living with regard to the Lord's Supper, they would find themselves in the same situation. Hence, their being "chastened of the Lord" was to prevent them from being "condemned with the world." And this is precisely the case with regard to ALL chastening that comes from God.

There is some room for other possible meanings of these verses, but as Coffman noted, "One thing may be definitely learned from it; THAT is the dreadful consequences of unfaithfulness at the Lord's table" (Coffman, 188).

*11:33 - "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait one for another"*

It is implied by the apostle that the church would have its habitual members who are late to the assembly. Every effort should be made to accommodate those who are tardy, or who otherwise miss the assemblies, in order to provide opportunity for them to "eat." The question is, to what does the "eat" refer? It would seem to me that reference is to the Lord's Supper. Why would Paul even begin to admonish us to wait for one another to eat of a common meal?

*11:34 - "If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment. And the rest will I set in order whensoever I come"*

As to the common meal? Let it be done at HOME, i.e. in the home setting, not that of worship. These words of Paul forever separate the Lord's Supper from that of a common meal. One was to be observed at "home," in a setting that is more common; the other in worship, where the setting is one of praise, reverence, and spirituality. And never shall the twain meet!

*"the rest will I set in order whensoever I come"* - Evidently Paul was planning to make another visit to the city of Corinth, and to the brethren there.

Coffman has an excellent homiletic outline on the Lord's Supper. It is.... (1) Retrospective, (2) Prospective, (3) Introspective, (4) Commemorative, (5) Instructive, (6) Corrective, and (7) Separative. See pages 189-192 in his commentary on 1 Corinthians for additional thoughts.

### *What About Eating In The Church?*

Some years ago I was asked to provide my thoughts on eating in the church building. I answered the letter with the following. I have changed the name to whom the letter was addressed.

John, it sounds like you do indeed have a brother who is from the "non-cooperation" persuasion. Whether or not he likes the label of "anti" does not remove the fact that he is one, in the strict sense of the word. An "anti" is someone who is opposed to something on which God has not legislated, or in some area where God has given us some leeway. Now to your questions:

I Cor. 11:20,22. You wrote: "Addressing the parody that the Lord's supper had become, Paul definitely makes a distinction between "coming together" (verse 20) and "houses" (verse 22). It's obvious that he's referring to two different places. I guess my question is: What were those two different places? Is he speaking figuratively or was there a place especially for the Christians to meet? (I don't think they had

church buildings either, but is there any archeological evidence or anything that helps answer it that you know of?)

My Answer: I am not certain that he is speaking of two different PLACES so much as two different OCCASIONS. You will note in Philemon 1 that Paul makes reference to “the church in thy house.” This is substantial proof that indeed the early church DID meet in “houses” owned by brethren. That is not the ONLY place they met, but at least it was a practice to conduct their worship and study assemblies in the homes of some of the brethren. Eusebius and other Christian historical writers affirm this to be the case. Now watch the passage in 1 Corinthians carefully. Paul told them in verse 18 that when they were come together “in the church.” He was not speaking of some “church edifice,” but their *assembly*. How do I know this? Because in verse 20 he refers to the same “coming together” and he says “when therefore ye assemble.” Next, Paul says that when they did assemble, there was something wrong, some defect, that prohibited them from eating the Lord’s supper. We can only conclude from the context that the problem with their “assembly” [particularly with regard to the Lord’s Supper] was for the wrong purpose. They were making a common meal out of the Lord’s supper, and Paul’s admonition was that the proper TYPE of assembly for eating the COMMON meal was in your “homes” - i.e. the “home setting, not the worship setting. WHERE all this took place is totally irrelevant. It is the CONDUCT and ATTITUDE and ACTION at the time they were supposed to be gathered together for worship. IF it is the case that the passage being studied (especially verse 34) is a prohibition against eating in the same BUILDING where you worship, then it would, by implication, PROHIBIT conducting worship in a home. You would HAVE to either BUILD a building, or RENT a space in which to worship. Herein is the fallacy of their reasoning, placed in a simple syllogism with explanation of the fallacy to follow

Major Premise: IT IS A SIN TO EAT IN WHERE YOU WORSHIP

Minor Premise: THE CHURCH WORSHIPS IN THE CHURCH BUILDING

Conclusion: THEREFORE IT IS A SIN TO EAT IN THE CHURCH BUILDING

The fallacy of the syllogism is in the Major Premise. They seek to establish the major premise by appealing to 1 Cor. 11:34. But they fail to realize that the “home” under consideration is NOT literally a “house” where they lived, but a type of SETTING, the proper ATMOSPHERE where they come together for the purpose of eating. It is a truth that a position, when it implies a false position, is false in and of itself. So let us take their reasoning and apply it to Philemon. Here is what you would have:

Major Premise: IT IS A SIN TO EAT WHERE YOU WORSHIP

Minor Premise: THE CHURCH IN COLOSSIA WORSHIPPED AT PHILEMON’S HOUSE

Conclusion: THE CHURCH IN COLOSSIA SINS WHEN IT EATS AT PHILEMON’S HOUSE

Next question. You ask: Acts 2:42 “...in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Am I correct in assuming that the “breaking of bread is referring to the Lord’s supper? ANSWER: You are correct. The context shows this to be the case. Every item associated with “breaking of bread” is a spiritual activity, hence likewise the “breaking of bread.”

Next question: Acts 2:44-46 Both the temple AND “breaking of bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart” are mentioned here. This may not be the best example since most had probably traveled in for the Passover, but is the “breaking of bread” different here from other passages, i.e., is it still referring to the Lord’s supper? Is there anything in the Greek or Hebrew that helps? Or, from today’s perspective, were they meeting at the temple for “church services” and then head back to the homes for “lunch”?

ANSWER: The “breaking of bread” in this passage is likewise explained by the words and phrases in that same verse. They evidently went from “house to house” and enjoyed the fellowship one with another and “ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.”

I hope this helps in these matters.

Brotherly, Tom