

# (Through the Bible) 1 Corinthians 11

by Chuck Smith

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*In this sermon, Chuck Smith explores the teachings of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11, addressing authority, cultural practices, and the significance of communion within the church community.*

**Duration:** 47:03

**Topics:** "Through The Bible"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of waiting for one another when coming together to eat. He advises against rushing to the head of the table and disregarding others. The speaker also highlights the purpose of God's chastening, which is to prevent condemnation with the world. Additionally, the sermon discusses the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, both subjectively and objectively. The objective work involves imparting what we have received from the Lord to others. The sermon concludes with a reference to Jesus taking bread and giving thanks, possibly alluding to the Last Supper.

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## Transcript

Shall we turn in our Bibles now to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Paul here in the first verse said, Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. In the previous verse, he spoke about how he was not seeking his own prophet, his own glory, but the prophet of the whole body of Christ.

And then he said, be followers of me. The word followers in the Greek is mimiktai, which we get our word mimic. Be mimickers or be imitators of me.

Follow the example that I have set. That is, don't seek for your own prophet. Don't.

But seek for the prophet of the whole body. Don't just be looking out for yourself, but look out for one another. Be sensitive to one another's needs and be looking out for each other.

Now he said, I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and you keep the ordinances as I delivered them unto you. So Paul is giving them praise for the fact that they did remember him, that they were keeping ordinances that he had established among them. But I would have you to know that the head of every man is Christ and the head of every woman is the man and the head of Christ is God.

And every man praying or prophesying having his head covered dishonors his head. Now, Paul is establishing here sort of a chain of command. The word head here being the idea of authority.

And so the husband, the authority over the wife, Christ, the authority over the husband, and God, the authority over Christ. This, of course, gets into issues which are being debated today in our society as we find all of these ERA type of movements. I do not believe that the Bible has ever taught that God favors the man over the woman.

The Bible does teach that God made man first and then from man formed the woman. When God looked at man and said, it is not good that man should live alone. And so He made then the woman from man that she might be a helpmeet for him.

Now, some people misinterpret that. The helpmeet, the word meet is an old English word fit, a help that is fit for him. Created for him.

No way does it signify a subservient position. But just God saw that man by himself could never make it. And thus the woman created, as God said, for the man.

Now, the woman is weaker than the man in a physical sense. I had a mental picture of these women and, of course, I guess it's become quite a thing for women to get involved now in bodybuilding programs. And I personally think that men involved in bodybuilding programs get to the place where they look grotesque.

You know, those bulges and all. They're just, they get grotesque. But for a woman to be bulging in the wrong areas is also grotesque.

And I think it's rather sad that to develop an identity of sorts, to try and show that they are capable and all, that they, you know, get involved in this bodybuilding kind of a thing. That isn't really, to me, the best use of a person's time. He is establishing the chain of command.

However, I do think that there is something worth noting here. The authority over the man is Christ, even as the authority over the woman is the man. And I feel that if the man, the husband, is not under the authority of Christ, then the woman has to jump the missing link.

I do not believe that God intends that a godly woman be under the authority of an ungodly man. Under the authority of the man only as he is under the authority of Jesus Christ. God never meant marriage to be a slavery kind of a situation or a tyranny kind of a situation where some big oaf rules over his wife.

With force or whatever. And I am totally opposed to that kind of a interpretation or understanding of the scripture that a woman thinks, well, he's my husband, I've got to be in submission to him. Yes, as he is in submission to Christ.

Now, we are dealing with an eastern culture. And in this eastern culture, the women wore veils. And the veils many times were across the bridge of their nose, tied in the back and went all the way to the ground.

Now, in some of the eastern areas, it was even more than that. The veils covered their head and they had just slits for their eyes. And of course, they wore these bulky clothes.

And how could you know you're really in love when all you can see is just the eyes, you know. I mean, when you got married, it was really an interesting thing, I suppose. However, this veil was a protection to the woman.

It was a covering for her, which was a covering of protection. And no man would approach a woman, accost a woman, flirt with a woman who was covered with a veil. I mean, that was almost death for the

man, to touch a woman or to approach her in an overt way when she was covered with her veil.

For a woman to go out without a veil was an open invitation for the men. It was sort of a declaration, I'm available. But for a veiled woman, no man would dare to approach her.

And thus, it was a covering. Today, still in Eastern cultures, especially in the Muslim world, of course, the women in Iran are really, a lot of the more liberalized women are really chafing under Khomeini because he went back to the old veils. And you see these Orthodox Muslim women now with the black covered, you know, all you can see are the eyes again.

And many times on our tours to the Middle East, the liberated ladies from America, not understanding the mindset of the Oriental, will go over there with sleeveless dresses or things of this nature, and they don't know what it does to some of these men who are used to not seeing a woman except she be totally veiled and have many times been accosted by these men because it's just a part of their whole cultural background and thinking. So, Paul is dealing definitely with a cultural situation when he addresses the subject here of head coverings or veils. And every man who prays or prophesies having his head covered dishonors his head.

That is, a man was the idea made in the glory of God, and it would be dishonoring to God for him to cover his head while he prayed or prophesied. Now, that's interesting coming from Paul, considering that in Orthodox jewelry today, they all wear their little hats whenever they come into any sacred place of prayer. Those little or any kind, you don't have to wear one of the little hats, you can any kind of a hat, any kind of a covering, but they won't let you into the, they won't let the men in, say, to the Western Wall or those areas unless you do have your head covered.

So, coming from Paul, it's an interesting thing that he would speak of the men with their heads uncovered, and it would be a dishonoring thing to pray with his head covered. But every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is even as one as if she were shaven. So, Paul then speaking of the woman, it's dishonoring, in a sense, to her husband, her head, if she would go unveiled.

Now, evidently, the women in Corinth were feeling that liberty that was theirs in Christ. We are no longer under a yoke of bondage, for in Christ we are all one, neither male nor female. Barbarians, Scythian, bond are free.

So, they were beginning to come without veils, and it no doubt created some problems. And Paul said, you know, it's dishonoring to your husband, because living there in Corinth, they were living in the center of pagan licentiousness. The temple of Aphrodite was on the Acropolis above Corinth.

The priestess within the temple of Aphrodite, some 1,000 of them, would nightly come down into the city of Corinth. They were prostitutes, and the temple was supported by their prostitution. And they could be recognized in that they didn't wear veils.

So, the women in Corinth, who were then beginning to feel liberty in Christ, I don't have to wear that dumb veil anymore, not being understood by the world, were opening themselves to be misidentified as a prostitute, and thus dishonoring their husbands. And so, Paul is encouraging them to continue with the customs of wearing the veils there in Corinth. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head for as much as he is in the image and the glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man.

That is, God created man in his own image, and from the man he took the woman. For the man is not of the woman, but the woman is of the man. Neither was man created for the woman, but the woman for the man.

For this cause ought the woman to have power or the authority, the veil upon her head. And then he said, because of the angels. Now, I wish he hadn't have said that.

Because I was able to follow him pretty well up to this point. But what he meant, because of the angels, is something that the theologians have discussed through the years. One suggestion.

Now, we know that when we gather together, the angels of the Lord gather with us. And it has been suggested that the angels, being creatures of rank and order, respect the order of God, and they like to see the orders and the rankings of God followed. The second suggestion is that there are also evil angels present, and a woman without a veil is attractive to them.

Now, I sort of reject the second idea. Because nowhere in the New Testament were angels are mentioned in this sense. Are they fallen angels? So, I would prefer the former, but I'm not satisfied with it.

I really don't know what he's referring to, to tell you the truth. Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. In other words, as far as the Lord is concerned, we're all on an equal par.

And the woman is not without the man, the man is not without the woman. We are both necessary for each other. For as the woman is of the man, even so the man also by the woman.

But all things of God. So, I was born by my mother, is what Paul is saying. My mother was necessary for my existence being here.

So, the woman was taken out of the man, but yet it's reversed now. And God is established then, male and female. And they're all a part of God's divine order.

Now, judge in yourselves, is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Is it proper? Is it the right thing? One thing we should definitely note here, in light of 1 Corinthians 14, where Paul said, let the women keep silent in the church. And if they would learn, let them ask their husbands when they get home. Paul evidently is not at all prohibiting the woman to, I mean, assigning her to total silence in the church.

Here she is recognized as having a right to pray. Here she is recognized as having a right to exercise the gift of prophecy within the church. He's not saying anything contrary or against her praying and prophesying.

Only, should she be doing it without avail in the church of Corinth. So, he said, doth not even nature itself teach you that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him. Now, during the hippie movement, when a lot of the fellows decided to let their hair grow, this was a scripture that was brought up quite a bit by the Bible thumpers down in the South, who were so opposed to these young men having long hair.

And I, in traveling around the country, was a guest on some of the radio talk shows. And some of these irate people would call in. And the thing that was really bothering them were these young people with long hair, because they had pictures of our baptisms and a lot of young men with long hair and all being

baptized.

And it really bothered these people for these young men to have long hair. And so, they would call in and, you know, they would make their crude remarks and then quote this verse of scripture. And so, the Lord did a very interesting thing.

He called me to defend these young men, their right to have long hair. I always figured the Lord had a sense of humor. And I would point out to these irate callers that, first of all, Paul said, does not nature itself.

It doesn't say that God is teaching this. It said that nature is teaching it. Does not nature itself teach you that it is a shame? It doesn't teach you that it's a sin.

See, they were trying to make a sin out of this thing. But it doesn't say God says it's a sin. It says nature said it's a shame.

Now, long hair is a relative term. My barber this morning signaled me in service and, you know, I do go to the barber. And it's coming over my collar in the back and it's time.

But long is a relative term. And if you look at some of the presidents of the United States, they had long hair compared to, you know, the 40s and 50s looks where the guys had the crew cuts and all. So, long is a relative term.

And I have seen some fellows whose hair, I would say, was indeed a shame. You know, flowing hair down to their waist. And nature tells you, hey, what a shame.

And I see them with their long locks, you know, and I just sort of say, what a shame. But in reality, when I try to comb what I have, I also say, what a shame. So, nature teaches you to have long hair.

If you don't have any hair, it's all a shame. So, that's all it is. But if a woman have long hair, hey, that's another matter.

It's a glory to her, for her hair is given to her for her covering. But if any man seems to be contentious. Now, have you got a big deal over this? Paul said, hey, we don't have any such custom in all the churches.

Thus, it was not intended to be a universal rule for the church, as some of the churches sought to make it a universal rule. And for years, the women had to wear hats and all when they went to church. But Paul says, we don't have any such custom in all the churches.

If you want to argue about it at all, no big deal. There's no such custom in all the churches. It was something that did relate more to the church in Corinth.

Now, I praise you that you, you know, kept my ordinances and all, but there's something I don't praise you for. What I'm going to talk to you about now. For when you gather together, sometimes it's for the worse, not for the better.

For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I really partly believe this. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

So when you come together, therefore, in one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating, everyone takes before the other his own. And one is hungry while the other is drunk.

Now, in the early church, they had a beautiful fellowship. It seemed that it happened every week. And in this beautiful fellowship, they had what they called the agape feast.

Today, we call it a potluck. We've got a crude name for it. They added a beautiful name of an agape feast.

And our various fellowship groups in the church that have their potlucks, probably a good idea to start calling it an agape feast. That's much better. A love feast.

In these love feasts, which were like a potluck, everybody would bring their dishes, and then they'd pool it all together and all would eat. But there were some piggish fellows who would make their way to the front of the line, and they would just take more than their share. So oftentimes, there would not be enough food to go around.

And so some people were left hungry, while others had more than they could handle. And it seemed that the wealthier people were those that were just sort of pushing their way ahead, and the poor people who really were needing it. Actually, you see, the church in those days had many slaves, and a lot of them never did have a decent meal, except for the agape feast.

That's the only time they really had a decent meal. And yet, these people were not really sensitive to the needs of the poor, and they were going in and just filling their plates, and the poor were being left hungry. And so Paul said, that's not good.

Don't you have your own house to feast in and to drink in? Do you despise the church of God? And do you shame those that are poor? Those that have not actually become embarrassed and ashamed. And these people were sort of making it that way. I do remember when we used to have our church picnics, and we had our houses where a lot of the young people were living.

You remember those days of the mansion Messiah and the Lord's house? And house of Psalms and these various houses we had. This one time at our picnic out at Orange County Park, one of the houses brought to the picnic a large pan of beans. You know, put it in the potluck, and then the kids all headed for the steaks.

That's good that we ate beans that year. Because a lot of them hadn't had a steak in a long time. And so, Paul said, look, a lot of you have your own homes.

You can eat and drink in your own homes. You shouldn't really make these people feel embarrassed or ashamed because of their financial plights. What shall I say to you? Hey, I don't praise you in this manner.

He's actually rebuking them for this. Now, in talking about the Lord's Supper, this agape feast, and they would always end the agape feast with the Lord's Supper, partaking together of the bread and the cup. And so, Paul said, as I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread.

Now, this phrase here, for I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you. This should be a phrase that every minister of Jesus Christ should be able to use every time he stands up to talk to the church. I have received of the Lord that which I have delivered unto you.

That should always be the origin of the message that we bring. God having spoken to our hearts, and now we impart that which God has spoken to us. As we mentioned this morning, the first work of the Spirit in our lives is subjective.

The second is objective. God works in me that he might work through me. I must partake in order that I might impart.

That which I have received from the Lord, I also delivered. That is always the true order in which God works. And that should always be the concern of every man of God who stands before the people of God as he talks to them of the things of God.

That which I have received of the Lord, I also delivered unto you. That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, Take, eat.

This is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me. There are those who interpret the bread to be transubstantiated into the actual body of Christ by some miracle.

However, it is important to note that when Jesus said this, he was still in his body. And thus, it had to be a spiritualization so that the bread becomes representative of the body of Christ. To me, it represents the body of Christ.

But it is not changed by some miracle into the actual physical body of Jesus. And the same is true of the cup. That it becomes to me a very poignant reminder of the body of Jesus broken for me and the blood of Jesus shed for my sins.

I'm to do it in remembrance of him. After the same manner also he took the cup after their supper and he said, This cup is a new covenant in my blood. This do ye as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he comes. Note he did not tell us how often we were to do it. In the early church, it seems that in some of them, they did it once a week.

These agape feasts were usually a weekly affair. Some churches today observe it once a week. It doesn't really matter how often you do it.

It just does matter that every time you do it, that you do it in remembrance of him. Showing the Lord's death until he comes. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

Now, he's talking about they're coming together and they were getting drunk at these feasts. They were gorging themselves at the agape feast getting drunk and then going right in and partaking of the body and the blood of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of communion. A person when he is drunk oftentimes loses a lot of his inhibitions.

He's not fully aware of what's going on. And to partake of the Holy Communion in this condition would be to do it in an unworthy fashion. And this is what Paul is warning against.

When I was a child, they interpreted this as, you know, you've got to be worthy to partake of the blood and body of Jesus Christ. And if you take of it unworthily, hey, you're drinking damnation to your own soul. And there was more than once, boy, I let the cup go by.

You know, I was really afraid to drink because I thought, man, I'm not worthy. Because the problem was they usually served at Sunday morning and I didn't get saved until Sunday night. Again, every Sunday night.

I really did well for the statistics of those pastors. But I was always concerned about my unworthiness. And when I really stopped to think about it, I think, man, I'm not worthy to partake of the body and the blood of Jesus.

And so many times I would pass on communion. But my worthiness is not something that is predicated upon my goodness, my works, my efforts. But it's on the grace of God and my believing in Jesus Christ.

And thus I partake freely today because I believe in him and I rest in his grace. If you talk about truly being worthy, in that sense, never. I never have been.

But by the grace of God, I stand through faith in Jesus Christ. But what Paul is referring to here is the manner in which they were eating and drinking. And it was disgraceful.

Paul is rebuking them for it. Therefore, whosoever shall eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy fashion or unworthy way shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. So let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and some have even died. There is another possible interpretation for this that I have heard suggested and it does have merit.

And that is partaking of the Lord's body without discerning the Lord's body. And because people partake of it not discerning the Lord's body many are weak and sickly and some have even died. The suggestion has been made.

What does the broken bread truly symbolize? Jesus said, this is my body broken for you. What was meant by that? When was the body of Christ broken? We read that because it was the preparation for the Sabbath the Jews came to Pilate that they might have permission to break the legs of the prisoners that their bodies would not be hanging on the Sabbath day. And so Pilate gave them permission.

And they broke the legs of both of those thieves on either side of Jesus. But when they came to Jesus they saw that He was already dead so they did not break His legs in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, not a bone of Him shall be broken. You see under the law you could not offer to God a lamb for a sacrifice that had any broken bones.

And so in keeping with the type of the Lamb of God for the sin of the world He could not have broken bones. So one of the soldiers of course took his spear and thrust it in his side then into his heart to make sure that he was dead. And when he pulled the spear out there came out blood and water.

Now if they did not break His legs that the Scriptures might be fulfilled not a bone of Him was broken then what did he mean? This is my body broken for you. When was the body of Jesus broken and how was it broken? And there is one event related to the cross that the Scripture in the New Testament only refers to in the Gospels. And Pilate took Him and scourged Him.

The scourging was a method of interrogation by the Roman government. And those that were to be crucified were usually scourged before their crucifixion. They were tied to a post where they were leaning over so that their back was exposed and stretched out.

And a Roman soldier would take a whip in which were embedded little bits of glass and lead and he would lay the whip across the back of the prisoner. And the idea in interrogation was that the prisoner would then call out a crime that he had committed. And every time they'd lay a stripe on his back, if he would cry out a crime, they would lay it a little softer and a little softer.

But if he would not confess to a crime, then each time they would lay the whip across his back, they would lay it on harder and harder until the back was completely ripped to shreds. It looked like hamburger. By this method of interrogation, the Roman government was able to solve a lot of their unsolved crimes.

It was a common practice. You remember when Paul the Apostle was caught in the temple by the Jews and they were trying to kill him when the captain of the guard, Lysias, came down with a bunch of Roman soldiers and rescued Paul. And when they got back up to the steps of the Antonio Fortress, Paul said, can I speak to these guys? And he said, do you speak Greek? And he said, of course I do.

He said, aren't you that Egyptian? He said, no, I'm a Roman. Or he said, I gave his background. And he started talking to the people in Hebrew, which the captain Lysias could not understand.

And as Paul was talking to the people, suddenly they went into a rage. They started throwing dirt in the air. They started calling out.

They started ripping off their clothes. And Lysias said to the soldiers, get him inside quickly. And then sort of turning in a matter-of-fact way, said, scourge him to find out what he said.

Interrogate him with the scourging process. And so as the guys started to tie Paul to scourge him, he said, is it lawful to scourge a Roman citizen who has not been condemned? The guy said, are you a Roman citizen? Paul said, yes. So he ran and he told the captain Lysias, he said, hey, that fellow is a Roman citizen.

And so he came to Paul and he said, are you a Roman citizen? And Paul said, you bet I am. He said, hey, I bought my citizenship. Cost me quite a bit of money.

How much you have to pay? Paul said, I was free born. And so he was fearful and he untied Paul and did not scourge him because there was a law that no Roman citizens could be scourged without charges first having been filed against him. But it was the third degree, the Roman method of interrogation.

Now Jesus, according to Isaiah, as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Pilate scourged him. He had laid upon him 39 lashes or stripes.

This was no accident. This was something that was prophesied in the book of Isaiah. When Isaiah prophesied of his death, he said he was wounded for our transgressions.

He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace is upon him. And with his stripes, ye are healed.

So through the broken body of Christ, we were healed. He suffered for us. So that he who eats and of the body of Christ, not discerning the Lord's body, does not take and receive that healing provided for through

the suffering of Jesus.

And for this cause, a lot of people are sick. A lot of people are weak. Some have even died.

You could have been healed if you'd only appropriated the work of Jesus Christ. But they have not discerned the Lord's body when they took the broken bread. I think that there is a lot of validity to this position.

There are those that object to it, but I really feel that an honest evaluation of the Scriptures does lend a lot of validity to that position. I personally take it. I believe that there are a lot of people who could be healed if they would just appropriate that work of Jesus Christ.

Now, Paul told us to examine ourselves when we eat the bread. Take a look at yourself. For if we would judge ourselves, he said, we would not be judged of God.

It's a very serious thing, the partaking of the body of Jesus Christ and of the blood of Jesus Christ. We should really examine our hearts before we do so and always do it in a very reverent and worshipful manner. When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord.

So, Paul is probably talking about some of the sicknesses and the weaknesses that people have as they have eaten and drunk in an unworthy manner. And so, when we are judged, God chastens us for what purpose? That we would not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.

Don't rush to the head of the table and fill your plate and disregard others that are there. Wait for each other. And if any man is hungry, then let him eat at home.

That you come not together under condemnation to just, you know, gorge yourselves. And the rest, he said, I'll take care of when I get there.

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