

1 COR. 10:11 – 11:34

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7. Those attending cultic meals with a sense of security must wake up to the danger (10:11-13) – **¹¹Now these things happened to those men as examples and were written down as a warning for us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹²So then, let the one who thinks he is standing firm watch out lest he fall. ¹³No testing has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tested beyond what you are able [to bear], but with the testing, he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure.**

a. Paul reiterates that the O.T. episodes to which he has referred serve as negative examples for them and were written down as a warning for us, for those in the time following Christ's incarnation.

b. That being so, those who think they are standing firm, i.e., those who attend the cultic meals with a sense of security, must become aware of the danger they are in or they too will fall.

c. Verse 13 reassures the church that the danger of their falling is not posed by overpowering external circumstances, by testing that falls upon them; God is faithful and will not allow such tests to be inescapable. Rather, the danger lies in their *choosing* to test Christ via idolatry (see, 10:22), in their voluntarily seeking out what is contrary to his will. There is no escape from what one actively seeks.

8. They must stop attending the temple meals (10:14-22) – **¹⁴Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵I speak as to wise men: judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a sharing of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a sharing of the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we, the many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸Consider Israel according to the flesh: Are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers of the altar? ¹⁹What, then, am I saying? That things sacrificed to idols are anything or that an idol is anything? ²⁰To the contrary, [I am saying] that the things which they sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to a god. And I do not want you to be sharers of demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. ²²Or should we try to provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?**

a. The conclusion (v. 14) is that they must flee from idolatry. They cannot continue to pursue it, to attend the temple meals, and expect to avoid God's judgment. Their baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper will not protect them.

b. Paul uses their knowledge of the nature of the Lord's Supper and O.T. sacred meals to show how sensible his prohibition is.

(1) The Lord's Supper has profound spiritual meaning; participating in it is an act of worship, not simply the eating of a meal.

(a) The cup of blessing, the fruit of the vine, for which we give thanks and the bread which we break in taking the Lord's Supper is a sharing with one another of the God-given symbols of the blood and body of Jesus Christ. It is an affirmation of our being bound together in the atoning death of Christ, of our being the one community of redeemed people, the one body of Christ. Our corporate taking of the one bread, which is the body of Christ, says that we together comprise that one body.

(b) The implication is that cultic meals in pagan temples also carry religious significance in the sense of devotion to the idol and are therefore totally incompatible with the membership in the body of Christ that is proclaimed in the Lord's Supper.

(2) Paul adds a further analogy of the sacred meals in Israel, probably because the Lord's Supper did not involve eating food that had first been offered in sacrifice (as did the temple meals). Those who shared in the meal following the sacrifice were in that act sharing together in the sacrificial worship of Yahweh. The implication is that eating the cultic meals in pagan temples is also a sharing in the worship of the idol.

c. In vv. 19-20 Paul clarifies his argument to make clear that he is not implying that the idols to whom sacrifices are offered in the pagan temples are actually gods. He and the Corinthians are in complete agreement that there is only one God. Rather, his point is that, though idols are not gods, they do represent demonic powers. Paul does not want them to be sharers in sacrificial offerings to demons.

d. In v. 21 Paul both warns and prohibits them: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons."

e. In v. 22 he asks, "Or should we try to provoke the Lord to jealousy?" meaning "Will you continue eating at both meals and thus arouse the Lord's jealousy, as Israel did in the desert?" They will not win that battle because surely they are not stronger than God!

9. Sacrificed meat that is later sold in the marketplace for home consumption (10:23-11:1) – ²³"All things are lawful," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. ²⁴Let no one seek his own [good] but the [good] of the other. ²⁵Eat everything sold in the meat market, questioning nothing on account of conscience, ²⁶for "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness of it." ²⁷If one of the unbelievers invites you, and you want to go, eat everything that is set before you, questioning nothing on account of conscience. ²⁸But if anyone says to you, "This is meat offered in sacrifice," do not eat, on account of that person who pointed [it] out and on account of conscience - ²⁹I mean not one's own conscience but the [conscience]

of the other. For why is my freedom being judged by the conscience of another? ³⁰If I partake with gratitude, why am I reviled because of that for which I give thanks?

³¹Therefore, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all things to the glory of God. ³²Be not a stumbling-block to Jews, to Greeks, or to the church of God, ³³even as I also try to please all men in all things, not seeking my own advantage but the [advantage] of many, so that they may be saved. 11 Be imitators of me, as I also [am] of Christ.

a. Having finished his discussion of eating the temple meals with a strong reiteration of his prohibition, Paul now addresses the subject of sacrificed meat that is later sold in the marketplace for home consumption. Paul spoke about this in more general terms in 9:19-23 in the context of defending himself against the charge of hypocrisy for abstaining from eating such meat when with Jews but gobbling it down when with Gentiles.

b. He returns to the subject here in more detail, not simply to explain his own conduct but to provide guidance for the behavior of others. He spells out the Christian's freedom and responsibility regarding sacrificed meat in a non-temple setting and, in the process, provides further explanation for his own actions.

c. The rule in such cases is indeed freedom, just as their quoted slogan indicated, but Paul reminds them that this freedom is not absolute; it must be qualified by concern for the welfare of others. The principle of freedom is clearly declared in vv. 25-27.

(1) The Christian is free to eat everything sold in the meat market. Before buying it he is not to investigate the meat's history for possible religious contamination because, as suggested by Ps. 24:1, God is the ultimate source of all food, even food that was previously offered in sacrifice. The implication is that nothing that is done to food makes the food itself taboo (as opposed to the context of the eating).

(2) Likewise, the Christian who accepts an unbeliever's invitation to dinner is free to eat whatever is served without conducting any kind of investigation into the food's origin. All food is acceptable for eating, regardless of what someone may have done to it along the way. So food *per se* is not to be a matter of Christian conscience.

d. *But* if someone attending the dinner at the unbeliever's house privately (implied in the word) informs the Christian that the meat was offered in sacrifice, then the qualification of freedom comes into play; in that case, the Christian is to abstain.

(1) It is probable that Paul's hypothetical informant is himself an unbelieving fellow guest.

(a) It is unlikely that a Christian who objected to eating sacrificed meat would accept an invitation to a pagan dinner, but more importantly,

Paul has the informant describing the meat to the Christian in pagan terminology ("offered in sacrifice") rather than in Jewish-Christian terminology ("sacrificed to idols").

(b) Verses 32-33 suggest that the emphasis here, as in 9:19-23 to which he alludes, is on not hindering an unbeliever's path to salvation.

(c) The unbeliever may be trying to help the Christian out in the mistaken belief that Christians had the same view of sacrificed meat as Jews. In other words, the unbeliever would tip him off to prevent his Christian fellow guest from unwittingly violating the dietary scruples that the unbeliever mistakenly ascribed to him. If, for example, you thought a fellow dinner guest was religiously opposed to consuming alcohol in any form, you might warn him that the punch was spiked. .

(2) Paul says that in such a situation, the Christian is to abstain on account of the informant and conscience, and then he immediately clarifies that he means the conscience of the informant, not the Christian.

(a) He adds the clarification because he does not want someone to conclude that the actual knowledge imparted by the informant changes what he has twice said about food not being a matter of Christian conscience. He wants it clear that the Christian is to abstain as a matter of freedom, as an *entitlement* he is giving up, not as a matter of conscience, not because he believes that eating such meat is inherently wrong.

(b) The Christian is to abstain for the good of the informant who will potentially be harmed by the Christian eating something which the informant, for whatever reason, thinks he should not be eating ("conscience" in the broad sense of moral consciousness or moral expectations, a sense of ought). This dissonance between the informant's expectations and the Christian's practice may negatively taint the informant's view of Christianity. Given that eating sacrificed food is completely optional for the Christian, the risk of such alienation is totally unnecessary.

(c) It's similar to Paul's decision in Acts 16:1-2 to circumcise Timothy so as not to create an unnecessary obstacle to his evangelism among the Jews (see, 1 Cor. 7:19). If, on the other hand, some had been insisting that abstaining from sacrificed meat was necessary for salvation, then I suspect that the welfare of others would demand that the Christian stand for the truth of freedom by eating the food, just as when Paul refused to circumcise Titus when some insisted that circumcision was necessary for salvation (Gal 2:1-5).

e. Having made the point that abstaining in such situations is not a matter of the *Christian's* conscience, Paul in vv. 29b-30 turns the discussion to his own situation with the rhetorical question, "For why should my freedom be determined by the conscience of another?"

(1) The understood answer is that it should not, but that is precisely what they were doing in holding him to the limits of the person's conscience to

whom he had deferred. He abstained at some pagan dinners purely as an accommodation for the good of another person, a concept they could not seem to grasp, not because he had any moral qualms about eating such food. His abstaining was not an expression of his own conscience on the matter.

(2) That being so, there was no justification for their charge of hypocrisy, their reviling of him, for his eating sacrificed meat on other occasions. When properly understood, his actions were perfectly consistent. He always believed it was permissible to eat the meat; he simply decided that on occasions it was not expedient to do so. As he asks in v. 30, "If I partake with gratitude (i.e., with a conviction that it has been provided by God for his eating), why am I reviled because of that for which I give thanks?"

f. The conclusion in 10:31-11:1 is that whatever optional conduct in which a Christian might engage, whether eating, drinking, or anything else, it must be done to the glory of God, meaning in a way that brings him glory, honor, and praise. An important aspect of this is to avoid being a "stumbling block" to Jews, Greeks or the church of God. A Christian is not to use his freedom in such a way that it hinders someone else from hearing the gospel or alienates someone who is already a brother or sister. As with Paul, our concern for the salvation of others is to control our exercise of freedom. In that, we are to imitate him as he imitates Christ!

V. Conduct in the Assembly (11:2 – 14:40)

A. Maintaining cultural sexual distinctions in attire (11:2-16)

Preliminary remarks

1. The impropriety involved in 11:2-16 is not women praying and prophesying but their doing so uncovered. Paul doesn't suggest that they shouldn't pray or prophesy; he says only that they must be covered when they engage in those activities. So it is clear to me and to virtually all commentators that Christian women were indeed authorized to pray and prophesy publicly in some setting.
2. That makes it easier to understand how removing the head covering, which I take to be a culturally expected piece of female attire, had become an issue. Public speaking in that day and age was largely a male activity. If women in Christ were authorized to pray and prophesy publicly, you can see how that authorization would feed the notion we've already seen in Corinth that sex distinctions were no longer relevant to Christians. They've entered the new age of the Spirit and are now "like the angels." They easily could interpret the fact that as Christians they were authorized to engage in the traditionally male activity of public speaking as supporting their view that sex distinctions were obsolete.
3. For those women who believed that male-female differences were indeed irrelevant in the church, it would make sense to discard cultural symbols of sex distinction. Since sex distinctions were no longer relevant, neither were items of apparel that marked those

differences. In Christ they were free to pray and prophesy *as men*, which meant without the covering that distinguished them.

4. A question we wish Paul had answered clearly is *where* the women were authorized to pray and prophesy. More specifically, we want to know whether either or both of those activities were authorized in the worship assembly. But Paul is not concerned here with the issue of what public forums were appropriate for women to pray and prophesy. His point is that wherever such speech is appropriate, something he previously would have passed on to them, it is appropriate only if done with the covering, that cultural mark of femaleness. So we are left to do some detective work, and people come to different conclusions in that process.

5. Rather than go through all the possibilities, I'm just going to tell you how I see things. Please let me finish these preliminary comments before you decide to stone me. You'll see at the end that the practical implication of what I'm saying is not as radical as it may sound. If you think my understanding is flawed, which it may be, then by all means reject it. I'm a limited human being giving it his best shot.

6. It seems to me that at least some of the female speech Paul is addressing in 11:2-16 took place in the worship assembly. This is suggested by several lines of evidence.

- 11:17-34 deals with an assembly in which the Lord's Supper is shared, so that is clearly a reference to the gathering of the church for worship on the Lord's Day. Not only is there no hint of a change in setting between 11:2-16 and 11:17-34, but the parallel language in 11:2 and 11:17 ("Now I praise you"; "But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you") is a rhetorical clue that there is some connection between the two discussions.
- The phrase "on account of the angels" in 11:10 is best understood as a reference to angelic oversight of the worship assembly of the people of God. Angels were said to be present at the community gatherings at Qumran, and certain people (those with a bodily defect) were excluded from the assembly "out of reverence for the angels."
- When Paul appeals to the practice of "the churches" in 14:33b, he clearly does so with reference to the gathering of the whole church for worship. He makes a similar appeal in 11:16.

7. So I am convinced that at least some of the female speech Paul is addressing in 11:2-16 took place in the worship assembly. You say, now wait a minute, 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 forbids any kind of female speaking in the assembly. Paul there commands the women to be silent. So neither female praying nor prophesying could have taken place in the worship assembly.

8. But as you'll hear when we get to 1 Corinthians 14, I don't believe 14:33b-36 is a blanket prohibition of female speech in the assembly. In context, I believe Paul there says

that women are forbidden from participating in the prophetic process in the assembly, meaning they can neither prophesy nor challenge (weigh) the prophecies delivered by others. The rationale for the prohibition is the same as in 1 Tim. 2:11-14: women in the assembly are to express their divinely ordered submissiveness to men by refraining from *authoritative* speech. In other words, in the assembly women are not to direct the men, not to set them straight, by delivering God's authoritative message to them. Women are forbidden from doing that either directly, by prophesying or teaching, or indirectly, by challenging the prophecies or teaching of others.

9. I know this difference in roles rankles some, but it is not because women are less intelligent, less capable, or less moral than men. It is because God in his sovereignty chose to place the leadership responsibility on men, and that choice is to be acknowledged and honored in this way in the assembly. You say, well why limit prophesying and teaching in the assembly to males given that some women are capable of doing it? Why not open those roles to all who are capable of performing them regardless of their sex? You just as well could ask why God gave the tribe of Levi the exclusive responsibility to care for the Tabernacle, or why he gave the family of Aaron the exclusive responsibility of serving as priests. Why limit those roles to people who happen to be born in a certain lineage rather than allowing everyone equal access to the roles based on ability? Certainly there were people from other tribes who could carry the tabernacle furnishings as well as Levites.

10. The answer is that it was God's sovereign choice to do so. And the refusal to accept God's right to restrict roles to specific groups is precisely what led to Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16. Korah, a Levite, and 250 community leaders opposed Moses and Aaron on the basis that they should have equal access to God. All Israel was holy, so no one family line should be exalted to the priestly function. It was a challenge to God's right to choose select groups for specific roles. And, as you know, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed by the earth, and the 250 community leaders were incinerated by God.

11. Now, if I am correct in thinking that at least some of the female speech addressed in 11:2-16 took place in the worship assembly and if I also am correct in thinking that 14:33b-36 precludes female prophesying in the assembly, then the female speech that took place in the worship assembly was prayer. In other words, my understanding is that women in Christ were authorized to *pray* publicly both in and outside of the worship assembly but were authorized to *prophesy* publicly *only* outside the assembly.

12. Prayer, being a noninstructive expression of devotion to God, is not a way of directing men, and therefore, in my understanding, it is not inconsistent with the submission a woman is required to manifest in the assembly. I think Acts 1:14 and 4:23-24 probably are examples of women praying publicly with the gathered church, but that conclusion is not certain.

13. I am aware that some believe that 1 Tim. 2:8, where Paul says he wants "the *men* in every place to pray," means that women are not to pray in the assembly, but I don't think that follows. He does not say he wants the men to pray; he says he wants the men to pray

without anger and argument. He assumes they will be praying and urges them to do so with the proper attitude so that their prayers will not be hindered (e.g., 1 Pet. 3:7). If on the brink of recess a teacher said, "I want the boys to play without fighting," no one would think the teacher was thereby excluding girls from playing. Rather, they would conclude that the boys had a problem with fighting that the teacher did not want carried over into recess.

14. I think the issue Paul is addressing arose with regard to women in the assembly who were seeking *to pray* without the covering. Paul in 11:13 identifies the specific focus of his concern: "Judge for yourselves: Is it proper that a woman *pray* to God uncovered?" Though the immediate issue is covering during prayer in the assembly, Paul mentions women prophesying because the argument being made to justify women praying in the assembly uncovered also would justify women prophesying outside the assembly uncovered. If the right to engage in the traditionally male activity of public speech justifies doing so "as men," meaning without the culture's distinctive mark of femaleness, then it would justify doing so whether that public speech was in or out of the assembly. Any ruling on the assembly situation would by logic also be a ruling on the non-assembly situation, so for this purpose, Paul treats the two situations as indistinguishable.

15. If, as I have suggested, the rationale for jettisoning the covering was that in Christ women were authorized to speak publicly as men, who did so without a covering, why were not women also pushing to *prophesy* in the assembly as men did? In other words, why focus only on the head covering rather than also challenge the restriction against prophesying in the assembly? Would not prophesying "as men" include doing so in the assembly? My response is that I can imagine challenges to ongoing practice being presented incrementally, proceeding one step at a time. Perhaps the advocates of the view that distinctions between men and women were *passee* in the age of Christ wanted to downplay the impact of that view on the assembly by first seeking only to discard the covering as a test case of the principle. Or perhaps, less calculatingly, an individual had raised the specific question of the covering in the assembly and that put that particular question front and center. The fact Paul, in my judgment, makes clear in 14:33b-36 that women may not prophesy in the assembly indicates he is aware that the propriety of women prophesying in the assembly is related to the questions being raised.

16. Now, before anyone gets too upset with me, if I am correct in thinking that women prayed publicly in the assemblies of the early church, it doesn't necessarily follow that women are permitted to "lead" prayers in a church gathering. Whether that's acceptable boils down, in my judgment, to whether female participation in that role would violate the biblical principle of male leadership. I'm inclined to think that it would because that role has a sense of leadership that is not present in some other contexts. The person who "leads" prayer in our assemblies is not merely praying personally; rather, that person is appointed to speak to God on behalf of the assembly. I don't believe that is the kind of public praying women did.

17. But in a context like "open praying" (i.e., where all are invited to pray personally without any appointment or designation to speak for the assembly), which I suspect was

more common in the house churches of the early church, that concern wouldn't seem to apply. Of course, even in a congregation that utilized "open praying" in its assemblies, the potential impact on congregational unity would have to factor into any shift in practice from all men to both men and women.

18. Wherever the women were praying and prophesying, the problem here is that some women were pressing to do so without the customary female covering.

1. Given continuing relevance of sexual distinctions for those in Christ, it is inappropriate to reject cultural sex distinctions in attire when speaking publicly to or on behalf of God (11:2-6) – **²Now I praise you because you have remembered me in all things and hold fast the traditions, just as I delivered [them] to you. ³And I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴Every man who prays or prophesies having [a covering] upon the head disgraces his head, ⁵and every woman who prays or prophesies uncovered as to the head disgraces her head, for she is one and the same thing with the woman who has been shaved. ⁶For if a woman does not cover herself, let her also have her hair cut short; and if it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut short or to be shaved, let her cover herself.**

a. After praising the leaders for following the practice he had passed on to them, Paul proceeds to give them reasons for the practice, something they could surely use in defending their position against the current challenge.

b. He begins by denying the notion that sex is completely irrelevant in the church. He does so by asserting that the relationship between men and women in Christ is not identical or reciprocal with regard to leadership. Rather, men are given the leadership responsibility in the church. Man is the head of woman but woman is not the head of man, and Christ is the head of man in a distinctive way, presumably because of man's leadership responsibility. Paul phrases the difference in these terms because "head" plays into the issue of head coverings. Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner state (p. 510):

If some Corinthians were arguing that Christ, as head of the church, was head over men and women in the same way (since in the new creation there is no longer any "male and female") Paul seems to be affirming that the creation pattern is still significant and cannot be shrugged off. While there is tension between creation and new creation (esp. *fallen* creation and new creation), creation is the context in which Christians live out their lives and it cannot be passed off as irrelevant.

(1) I am aware of the claim that "head" does not here connote leadership authority and the claim that "man" and "woman" should instead be rendered "husband" and "wife," but I am in broad scholarly company in concluding that those claims do not stand up. Regarding the meaning of "head," one can consult the standard Greek lexicons and theological dictionaries. Regarding the translation "man" and "woman,"

Anthony Thiselton notes (p. 822), "A few commentators defend *husband*, but the overwhelming majority of writers convincingly argue that the issue concerns gender relations as a whole, not simply those within the more restricted family circle." This is why the vast majority of English translations render the words "man" and "woman."

(2) As I have said, the fact man has been given the leadership role does not mean men are superior to women in character, intellect, or capabilities. They simply have been given different roles or functions. The man is to lead and the woman is to be a helping partner in the joint enterprise of glorifying God.

(3) That being "head of" need not include intrinsic superiority or greater worth is evident in the statement that "the head of Christ is God." A basic confession of the Christian faith is that the Son is one with the Father in nature; he is in no way less worthy or inferior in being. The difference between the Father and the Son is merely one of role or function. The Son freely embraces the leadership of the Father.

(4) I think James Hurley has captured the spirit of male leadership in his book *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*. Though his comments deal with a husband and wife, I think they are applicable to male leadership in general (p. 151):

The manner in which such decisions are handled is crucial. The husband may not be high-handed and stubborn, knowing that she will finally have to give way. That is not the model of Christ's headship. Neither may the wife be grudging and resentful. That is not the manner of our response to Christ. In the last analysis, when the two can devote no more time to individual and joint seeking of the grace of God to permit them to come to one mind or to be willing to yield to the other, an exchange along the following lines is in order:

Husband: "Not because I am inherently wiser or more righteous, nor because I am right (although I do believe I am or I would not stand firm), but because it is finally my responsibility before God, we will take the course which I believe is right. If I am being sinfully stubborn, may God forgive me and give me the grace to yield to you."

Wife: "Not because I believe you are wiser in this matter (I don't) or more righteous, nor because I accept that you are right (because I don't or I would not oppose you), but because I am a servant of God who has called me to honour your headship, I willingly yield to your decision. If I am wrong, may God show me. If you are wrong, may he give you grace to acknowledge it and to change."

c. Given the continuing relevance of sex for those who are in Christ, it is inappropriate to reject cultural sex distinctions in attire, to engage in a kind of "cross dressing," when publicly speaking to or on behalf of God.

(1) The cultural expectation regarding female head coverings in Greek and Roman society of the mid-first century is debated, but such a covering for women appearing in public certainly was the traditional practice. Ben Witherington concludes in *Women in the Earliest Churches*, rev. ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 82: "How do we assess this evidence? It seems sufficient to show that the wearing of a head-covering by an adult woman in public (especially in a ritual context) was a traditional practice known to Jews, Greeks, and Romans."

(2) The practice continued during and after the time of Paul, but as a cultural norm it seems it was being "chipped at" (rebelled against) by certain classes of women in certain social contexts. That does not mean, however, that it had been displaced as a norm, especially in a public assembly in which men and women mixed together. If, for example, Hollywood rejects or rebels against some cultural norm that does not mean doing so is no longer viewed as shameful in the larger culture (though in our age of celebrity worship and mass communication it often does not take them long to displace cultural norms).

(a) David Garland (p. 520) notes it was widely regarded as a disgrace for a Hebrew woman to go out uncovered and then states: "Paul is not imposing Palestinian customs on the Corinthians, however. The Corinthian culture also looked askance at women going out in public without a head covering."

(b) Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner state (p. 514) write:

Perhaps more central to Paul's thinking is the need to maintain a strict distinction between the sexes, one that was traditionally associated with some type of antithetical manifestation (e.g., men were associated with public life, women with the privacy of the household, men were to be in the open and women covered, etc.). . . . In Paul's context, men and women were expected to have contrasting head styles, especially in public. Women were more commonly expected to have their heads covered while in public.

(c) William Baker writes in "1 Corinthians" in Philip W. Comfort, ed., *Cornerstone Bible Commentary, 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2009), 157: "Covering the head with a hood or veil outside the home was standard practice for women in Roman, Greek, and Jewish culture (3 Macc. 4:6; *b. Nedarim* 30b; *m. Bava Qamma* 8:6; *m. Ketubbot* 7:6; Plutarch *Moralia* 232C, 267A)."

(3) Just as it would be disgraceful for any man to pray or prophesy with a female covering on his head,¹ so it would be disgraceful for a woman to do

¹ Oster has shown that Roman men pulled a toga over their head in the context of prayer and prophecy, but that covering must be distinct from the covering under discussion, as the covering under discussion is *required* for women and *forbidden* for men. Men praying covered is not an actual problem Paul seeks to correct (Garland, 517) but something that would be recognized as inappropriate. Garland's suggestion that

so without it. It is disgraceful because it is an act of rebellion against the created order and as such it brings shame both on the rebel and the rebel's leader/head.

(4) The sexual nature of the shame is evident in vv. 5b-6. The woman who prays or prophesies without the cover disgraces her head, "for she is one and the same thing as the woman who has been shaved." Verse 6 emphasizes the closeness of the parallel.

(a) The shame of the woman who had been shaved was the shame of appearing as a man, appearing contrary to her sex. A couple of passages in the writings of Lucian, a second-century Greek satirist, clearly show that short hair on a woman was considered mannish.² New Testament scholar James B. De Young comments in *Women in Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 26, "The shame seems related to a woman's becoming like a man in her style of hair, becoming 'mannish.' This suggests that the women at Corinth were blurring distinctions between men and women, especially sexual distinctions." (There's no contemporary evidence for the view that short hair or a shaved head was the mark of Corinthian prostitutes.)

(b) Her shame was not from the short hair itself but from the fact short hair was culturally defined as the hair of a man. In the same way, the shame of going uncovered was not from the attire itself but from the fact the lack of a cover was culturally defined as the attire of a man.

2. Further reason why a man should not wear the covering but a woman should and a word on mutual dependence (11:7-12) – **⁷For a man ought not to cover [his] head, being the image and glory of God; the woman, on the other hand, is the glory of man. ⁸For man is not from woman but woman from man; ⁹for neither was the man created on account of the woman but the woman on account of the man. ¹⁰For this reason, the woman ought to have authority on [her] head, on account of the angels. ¹¹Nevertheless, neither is woman apart from man nor man apart from woman, in the Lord. ¹²For just as the woman is from the man, so also the man is by the woman, and all things are from God.**

a. Verses 7-10 provide a further reason why a man should not wear the cover *about which he is speaking* (v. 7 begins with "For") but a woman should. This kind of sex-inappropriate dressing contradicts or rebels against God's creation of mankind as two distinct sexes and therefore is contrary to the fact woman's existence glorifies man (in addition to God) whereas man's existence glorifies only God. In other words, this difference in the object of glorification has implications for who is a suitable candidate for wearing female clothing. This requires some unpacking.

men pulling togas over their heads would be recognized as inappropriate because of its connection to pagan devotional practices stumbles on the fact women are commanded to wear the covering.

² There also is evidence that a shaved head marked a woman as an adulteress (see, Garland, 520), but that seems less relevant than the sex angle.

(1) Woman's existence glorifies man because man "gave birth" to woman and because woman was made to help the man, to be a nonleading partner. According to Gen. 2:20-23, God made Eve from part of Adam's body, not independently from the ground, and he did so that she might be a helper for Adam. So woman's existence redounds to the glory of man, but man's existence does not redound to the glory of woman because he was not created from her nor created to be a helper for her.

(2) Given that woman is the *glory of man*, it is fitting that she be under a sign of authority when publicly speaking to or on behalf of God, that is, when praying or prophesying. Paul does not explain why her being the glory of man means she needs "*authority on her head*," but I think the reason is that however glorious *man* may be, he remains under the authority of God. And as the glory of *man*, the woman needs to reflect that truth – the fact man is still under the authority of God – when speaking publicly to or on behalf of God. Since man, on the other hand, is the *glory of God*, a sign of authority over him would not be appropriate because there is no authority over God.

(3) The head cover about which Paul is speaking functions as a sign of authority precisely because it was a distinctly female piece of attire. Notice Paul does not impose that significance; he assumes it. Given that women were assigned a subordinate or nonleading role by both culture and God, clothing that was distinctly female naturally symbolized being under the leadership (authority) of another. (Paul does not address how or why certain items of apparel came to be distinctly female; he simply accepts that some did.)

b. The end of verse 10 gives yet *another reason* (e.g., Ciampa and Rosner, 529) that a woman should have a sign of authority on her head, meaning the female covering. She should do so "on account of the angels." As I have already mentioned, the best way to understand this is to recognize that angels observe the worship assembly and are concerned that the creation order be honored in that forum.

(1) Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner state (p. 530), "Paul may well be referring to the angels as divinely appointed auditors of the community's worship who, like God, would be offended by any shameful displays during the worship."

(2) Larry Hurtado writes in *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 50-51:

[Christians] experienced their assemblies as not merely human events but as having a transcendent dimension. They sensed God as directly and really present in their meetings through his Spirit. . . . In 1 Corinthians 11:10, the curious passing reference to the angels present in the worship assembly shows how familiar the idea was. Paul's Corinthian readers apparently needed no further explanation (though we could wish for one!). As the 'holy ones' (saints) of God, believers saw their worship gatherings as attended by

heavenly 'holy ones', angels, whose presence signified the heavenly significance of their humble house-church assemblies.

c. Vv. 11-12 make clear that the sex differences about which he has been speaking and which must continue to be honored in dress are not a matter of superiority/inferiority. Men and women in Christ are mutually dependent, each needing the other that mankind may be what God intended it to be (v. 11). Evidence of this mutual dependence is that, whereas womankind initially came from Adam, all subsequent men have come from women, and all things (men and women) come from the one God.

3. Appeal to cultural analogy of long hair (11:13-16) – ¹³**Judge among yourselves: Is it proper that a woman pray to God uncovered? ¹⁴Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a dishonor to him ¹⁵but if a woman wears long hair it is a glory to her? For long hair has been given [to her] as a covering. ¹⁶But if anyone is disposed to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor [do] the churches of God.**

a. Paul appeals to what they already recognized about long hair to make his point that women should not pray uncovered. (The fact he mentions only prayer lends support to the notion that the two practices of praying and prophesying were in some way distinguished.)

b. "Nature itself" taught them that long hair was a dishonor to men but a glory to women in that the distinction of mankind into two sexes is a fundamental aspect of the creation order. People have a natural sense from creation that "gender bending," confusing or masking sexual differentiation, is wrong. Given that sense of sexual distinction that is rooted in creation, the Corinthians would agree that if a man wore long hair it dishonored him but if a woman wore long hair it honored or exalted her. They would do so because long hair had been *culturally assigned* as a kind of female covering; it was therefore inappropriate on a man (in that cultural context).

c. Paul is well aware that male hair has the same capacity to grow long as female hair and he knows from Scripture that Nazirites were forbidden from cutting their hair, so he certainly is not suggesting that long hair is universally or transculturally contrary to sex distinctions. David Garland remarks (p. 531), "Long hair for men is unnatural for Paul because in his cultural context it conveys sexual ambiguity and hints of moral perversion." S. Donald Fortson III and Rollin G. Grams state in *Unchanging Witness* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 327:

Paul is saying there is a natural distinction between men and women; if a man crosses this barrier and dons the appearance of a woman by growing his hair long, he is degrading himself. . . . Paul's point is not that long hair is impossible for a man to grow but that an effeminate appearance for a man is unnatural. In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Paul is saying that men should be men and women should be women, according to nature. While hairstyles are a matter of custom, in Paul's day long hair on men suggested effeminacy in

Greek and Roman culture. For a man to have long hair, then, was like cross-dressing – purposefully appearing contrary to his nature.

d. Paul's point is that the head covering in question functions like long hair. It too was culturally assigned as a female covering and is therefore inappropriate on a man.

e. Regardless of whether some want to argue the point, Paul says that neither his group nor other churches of God engage in the practice of women praying or prophesying uncovered.

B. The Lord's Supper (11:17-34)

1. The problem of maintaining social divisions (11:17-22) – **¹⁷But in giving this instruction, I do not praise [you] because you gather together not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For, in the first place, when you gather together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you, and in part I believe [it]. ¹⁹For [you say] it is indeed necessary for factions to be among you, in order that [also] the approved ones may become apparent among you. ²⁰Therefore, when you gather together in the same place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, ²¹for each one consumes his own supper when eating, and so one is hungry, but another is drunk. ²²For it certainly cannot be that you do not have houses to eat and drink in, can it? Or do you have contempt for the church of God, and so humiliate those who do not have? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this [matter], I do not praise [you].**

a. Paul had praise for the way the leaders handled the matter of women praying (and prophesying) uncovered, but he had no praise for the way the church assembled to eat the Lord's Supper. He had heard that when they came together there were divisions among them.

(1) He is not referring here to "horizontal divisions" where understood equals divide over different practices or beliefs but to "vertical divisions" where the body is being stratified by the maintenance of social rankings. He is referring to socioeconomic segregation in the assembly.

(2) Paul says he believes the report "in part," to some extent, probably meaning that though he takes the report as credible he assumes that not all of the members of higher social rank were acting that way. It is a diplomatic way of giving some of them the benefit of the doubt.

(3) Verse 19 is notoriously difficult, but I think Paul is saying he readily gives credence to what he heard about the segregation at their gatherings because (For) he is aware that at least some in Corinth were claiming that such factions were necessary in order that the approved ones, the higher-status people they presumed were the tried and true of God, might stand out in the gathering.

(a) Anthony Thiselton renders the verse (p. 848), "For 'dissensions are unavoidable,' it is claimed among you, in order that those who are tried and true among you may be visibly revealed."

(b) Others, like David Garland and Ciampa and Rosner, agree that Paul is referring to a Corinthian sentiment, but they think Paul is doing so with bitter irony or sarcasm – mentioning their claim with a rebuking tone – rather than merely noting the sentiment as an explanation for why he readily gives credence to the report about the factions. I think the latter makes better sense, but both views share the important point of seeing the sentiment as the Corinthians' rather than Paul's. Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner write (p. 544):

Paul most likely is referring to a view that was reported to him as being held by some Corinthians. They thought the differences among them were a reflection of those who had God's special approval. The following verses make it clear, however, that the divisions were provoked by the insensitive behavior of some of the social elites within the Corinthian church and that that behavior most certainly did not meet with God's approval. If anyone could be said to have God's approval in the Corinthian church, it would not be any of those wealthier and more socially advanced Christians who were snubbing their brothers and sisters!

(c) If, on the other hand, this is a declaration by Paul and not a sentiment of the Corinthians, then Paul is saying factions were necessary in Corinth in order that the genuine believers may be set apart or distinguished from the imitators. In that case, Paul's view is that differences need to exist between genuine and imitation believers, that mixed congregations such as Corinth, should be "factious" in that sense.

b. The fact they maintained social divisions in their gatherings meant they had missed an essential aspect of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper simply cannot be eaten in a segregated, class-conscious assembly; it denies the very oneness that the Supper symbolizes (1 Cor. 10:17). Our fellowship in Christ transcends social divisions, and maintaining them when assembling for the Supper contradicts that truth.

c. The social nature of the division is clear from vv. 21-22.

(1) The Corinthians, along with other first century Christians often, if not always, celebrated the Lord's Supper in conjunction with a larger fellowship meal. This is the "love feast" mentioned in Jude 12 (see also 2 Pet. 2:13). The Supper proper, meaning the bread and fruit of the vine, probably was eaten at the end of the meal. (The fellowship meal was an optional act of benevolence and fellowship that early on was separated from the Lord's Supper, which is a remembrance and proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus. It eventually was dropped, at least as a regular practice.)

(2) When the Corinthians gathered, the wealthier Christians, who no doubt supplied most of the food for the fellowship meal, somehow were taking a disproportionate share of it, eating their "own supper" (v. 21). The haves had more than enough, as indicated by the excess of wine they consumed, but the have-nots were left hungry, treated as step-brothers, and were humiliated in the process

d. In doing this, Paul suggests that the wealthy were showing contempt for the church of God and repeats that he has no praise for them in this matter.

2. Their keeping of the Supper was inconsistent with its original intent (11:23-26) – **²³For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread ²⁴and, after giving thanks, broke [it] and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way, after supper [he took] the cup also, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

a. Paul cannot praise them for keeping the tradition of the Supper because (For) they did so in a manner that was inconsistent with the Supper's original intent. He points that out by reminding them of what he had previously taught them about the Supper.

b. As instituted by Christ himself, the Supper is a memorial of the salvation that he has effected through his death and resurrection. By the wealthy discriminating against the poor in the fellowship meal, they were negating the very point of Christ's death -- to create a new people for his name, a redeemed community in which the old distinctions of human fallenness no longer hold sway.

3. The seriousness of their sin regarding the Supper (11:27-32) – **²⁷So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸But let a man test himself and in that way eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For the one who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰For this reason, many among you are weak and sick and enough are sleeping. ³¹But if we were discerning ourselves, we would not be coming under judgment. ³²But in being judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined, that we may not be condemned with the world.**

a. Given the significance of the Lord's Supper, whoever participates in it in an unworthy manner, meaning those who eat it while maintaining socioeconomic divisions, "shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

(1) This probably means that by thus missing the point of the Supper, which is to honor and proclaim Christ's sacrificial work by which "one new man" (Eph. 2:15) is created from people of all different groups, they place themselves under the same liability as those responsible for that death.

(2) David Garland states (p. 550):

Paul's logic is this: The Lord's Supper proclaims the Lord's death. Those whose behavior at the Lord's Supper does not conform to what that death entails effectively shift sides. They leave the Lord's side and align themselves with the rulers of this present age who crucified the Lord (1 Cor. 2:8; cf. Heb. 6:5). This explains how they make themselves so vulnerable to God's judgment.

b. To avoid that guilt, each person needs to examine himself in terms of his attitude toward the members of the body before participating in the Supper. If he fails to do that, if he eats without recognizing the reality and oneness of the body of Christ, as some of them were doing, that person will incur God's judgment. Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner write (p. 555):

To examine oneself and to *discern the body of Christ* do not merely mean, in this context, to solemnly recognize that the bread and cup represent Christ's body and blood rather than being mundane food and drink. *To examine oneself* means to examine one's compliance with the covenant as reflected in their ways of relating to other members of the community and to *discern the body of Christ* must include recognizing that those other members of the community represent Christ himself (since they have been united with him) and must be treated as people for whom Christ chose to give up his life and to shed his blood.

c. My brother John tells of his experience at a small church in Georgia nearly forty years ago. He worked there one summer and was fired after blistering the congregation for its racism. It pains me to say that one member of the congregation confided in John before he left that he had persuaded her it was wrong not to allow black men and women to be members, but then she added, "But I don't want them sitting up front with us." Do you think the Supper they were eating every Sunday was the *Lord's Supper*? No way.

d. Because some in Corinth were participating in the Supper without appreciating the body, because they had not been examining themselves in that regard, God had permitted sickness and death to come upon the community, but he had done so as a form of discipline. He was trying to bring them to repentance for their sin.

4. The solution (11:33-34) – ³³**So then, my brothers, when gathering together to eat, receive one another.** ³⁴**If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you not gather together with the result of judgment. And the remaining matters I will set straight whenever I come.**

a. Paul here gives the solution to their problem: When gathering to eat they need to "receive" or "welcome" [*ekdechomai*] one another in the sense of

demonstrating normal Christian hospitality. (This meaning is preferable to "wait for," especially if the verb in v. 21 [*prolambano*] is translated "devours" or "consumes" rather than "eats beforehand.") The haves cannot continue to discriminate against the have-nots in the distribution of the food.

b. If one of the well-to-do is hungry, he should satisfy that hunger at home rather than seeking to satisfy it in the fellowship meal at the expense of the have-nots. As Paul has already indicated, maintaining such a social division when assembling to eat the Lord's Supper will result in judgment.