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1 Corinthians 11 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

1 Corinthians 11 Paraphrased

Introduction

† Paul now addresses conduct within the gatherings of believers in Corinth where disorder had begun to appear.

† The instructions focus on honor, order, and the proper observance of the Lord's Supper among the saints.

† Early Christian writers such as Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian confirm that the earliest churches treated worship gatherings with reverence and discipline.

1 Corinthians 11:1

Follow my example just as I follow Christ.

† Paul calls believers to imitate the life he modeled which was shaped by obedience to Christ.

† Apostolic authority came through faithful imitation of the Lord's teaching and conduct (Philippians 3:17).

† Ignatius taught that believers should imitate Christ through the pattern handed down by the apostles.

1 Corinthians 11:2

I praise you because you remember the teachings I gave you and you hold firmly to the traditions that were passed on to you.

† The traditions refer to apostolic teaching delivered to the churches.

† Paul commends them for remembering the instructions he had already given.

† Irenaeus later wrote that the churches preserved the teachings handed down from the apostles.

1 Corinthians 11:3

I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

† This explains the order of responsibility established by God.

† The passage speaks of structured authority rather than inequality (John 5:19).

† Tertullian wrote that church order reflects the divine order established by God.

1 Corinthians 11:4

Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head.

† In Corinthian culture covering the head could reflect pagan religious practice.

† Paul corrects behavior that could blur the distinction between Christian worship and pagan customs.

† Clement of Alexandria urged believers to distinguish their worship from pagan rituals.

1 Corinthians 11:5

Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head because it is the same as if her head were shaved.

† In that society an uncovered head could signal shame or rebellion.

† Paul instructs believers to maintain honorable conduct within their cultural setting.

† Early Christian writings confirm modest appearance during worship gatherings.

1 Corinthians 11:6

If a woman does not cover her head she might as well have her hair cut off, but since it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved she should cover her head.

† Paul reasons from social customs understood in Corinth.

† The instruction focuses on preserving dignity in the assembly.

† Tertullian wrote that Christian modesty should reflect reverence toward God.

1 Corinthians 11:7

A man should not cover his head because he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man.

† Paul connects his argument to the creation account.

† The statement reflects relational origin within God's design (Genesis 2:21-23).

† Early Christian teachers consistently referenced Genesis when explaining this passage.

1 Corinthians 11:8

Man did not come from woman, but woman came from man.

† This refers to the creation of Eve from Adam.

† Paul grounds his reasoning in the beginning of human history.
† Irenaeus often appealed to Genesis when explaining apostolic teaching.

1 Corinthians 11:9

Man was not created for the woman, but woman was created for the man.

† The statement refers to companionship described in the creation narrative.

† It reflects complementary roles within God's design.

† Clement of Alexandria described marriage as a partnership ordered by God.

1 Corinthians 11:10

For this reason the woman should have authority on her head because of the angels.

† Angels were understood to observe the worship of believers.

† The instruction emphasizes reverence during worship in the presence of heavenly witnesses.

† Early Christian teaching often spoke of angels present during gatherings of believers.

1 Corinthians 11:11

However in the Lord woman is not independent of man and man is not independent of woman.

† Paul balances his earlier statements by stressing mutual dependence.

† In Christ both men and women share equal value and purpose.

† The unity of believers reflects God's design for the church.

1 Corinthians 11:12

Just as the woman came from the man so the man is born through the woman and all things come from God.

† Both men and women depend on one another in God's

design.

† Ultimately all life and order come from God.

† Early Christian teachers emphasized this mutual dependence.

1 Corinthians 11:13

Judge for yourselves, is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered.

† Paul invites them to consider the cultural understanding of honor.

† The Corinthians could recognize what conduct appeared shameful in their society.

† This shows that some instructions addressed the customs of that culture.

1 Corinthians 11:14

Does not nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair it is a dishonor to him.

† In the Greco Roman world long hair on men often carried negative social meaning.

† Paul appeals to commonly recognized cultural norms.

† Early Christian writers acknowledged this cultural context.

1 Corinthians 11:15

But if a woman has long hair it is her glory because her hair is given to her as a covering.

† Long hair symbolized beauty and honor for women in that society.

† Paul uses this distinction to reinforce visible order during worship.

† Clement of Alexandria described modest appearance as reflecting inward reverence.

1 Corinthians 11:16

If anyone wants to argue about this we have no other practice nor do the churches of God.

- † Paul states that the churches shared a consistent practice.
- † Unity among congregations preserved peace and order.
- † Early Christian writings repeatedly emphasize unity among the churches.

1 Corinthians 11:17

In the following instructions I cannot praise you because your gatherings are doing more harm than good.

- † Paul now turns to the disorder that had developed during the Lord's Supper.
- † Their meetings were harming the church rather than strengthening it.
- † Worship gatherings were meant to build unity and faith.

1 Corinthians 11:18

When you come together as a church I hear that divisions exist among you and I partly believe it.

- † Reports had reached Paul about factions within the church.
- † Division had already been addressed earlier in the letter (1 Corinthians 1:10).
- † Unity was essential for the testimony of the church.

1 Corinthians 11:19

There must also be factions among you so that those who are genuine may become evident.

- † Conflict often reveals who remains faithful to truth.
- † Trials expose sincere faith among believers.
- † Early Christian writers observed that persecution revealed genuine disciples.

1 Corinthians 11:20

When you gather together it is not really to eat the Lord's Supper.

- † Their behavior had corrupted the sacred memorial.
- † The gathering had become a selfish meal rather than

remembrance of Christ.

† The early church treated the Lord's Supper with reverence.

1 Corinthians 11:21

When you eat each one goes ahead with his own meal and one person is hungry while another becomes drunk.

† Wealthy members were indulging themselves while poorer believers were neglected.

† This behavior contradicted the unity symbolized by the Lord's Supper.

† Tertullian wrote that Christian meals were meant to reflect charity and equality.

1 Corinthians 11:22

Do you not have houses to eat and drink in or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing, what should I say to you should I praise you, I do not praise you.

† Paul rebukes their disregard for poorer believers.

† Church gatherings were not meant to become displays of wealth.

† Early Christians emphasized sharing resources with those in need.

1 Corinthians 11:23

I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread.

† Paul reminds them that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ himself.

† The memorial was handed down as an apostolic tradition.

† Early Christian writings repeat this same account.

1 Corinthians 11:24

After giving thanks he broke it and said this is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.

† The bread represents Christ's body given in sacrifice.

† The meal keeps the memory of Christ's death central to the church.

† Early believers regularly observed this memorial during gatherings.

1 Corinthians 11:25

In the same way he took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood, do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me.

† The cup represents the covenant established through Christ's sacrifice.

† This covenant fulfilled the promises spoken by the prophets.

† The early church proclaimed the covenant through this memorial meal.

1 Corinthians 11:26

Whenever you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

† The supper publicly declares the saving work of Christ.

† In the fulfilled perspective this proclamation pointed toward the covenant transition completed in the first century.

† The early church saw the supper as proclamation of redemption.

1 Corinthians 11:27

Anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner becomes guilty of dishonoring the body and blood of the Lord.

† Careless participation treats Christ's sacrifice with disrespect.

† The issue is approaching the memorial without reverence.

† Early church writers warned believers to approach the table seriously.

1 Corinthians 11:28

Each person must examine himself before eating the bread and

drinking the cup.

† Self examination protects the heart from hypocrisy.

† Believers reflect on faith, repentance, and unity.

† Early Christian gatherings practiced confession before communion.

1 Corinthians 11:29

Anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

† Recognizing the body includes understanding the meaning of Christ's sacrifice.

† It also includes respecting the unity of believers.

† Ignoring this unity brought consequences in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 11:30

Because of this many among you are weak and sick and some have fallen asleep.

† Paul explains that divine discipline had already affected the church.

† Fallen asleep was a common way to describe death among believers.

† The discipline served as correction rather than destruction.

1 Corinthians 11:31

But if we judged ourselves properly we would not be judged.

† Honest self examination prevents divine discipline.

† Repentance removes the need for correction.

† This principle emphasizes humility within the church.

1 Corinthians 11:32

When we are judged we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned with the world.

† God's discipline protects believers from final condemnation.

† Correction demonstrates God's care for his people.

† Early Christian teachers described discipline as mercy.

1 Corinthians 11:33

So then my brothers and sisters when you come together to eat wait for one another.

† Paul calls the church to patience and unity.

† The gathering should reflect love and mutual respect.

† Waiting prevented the selfish behavior seen earlier.

1 Corinthians 11:34

If anyone is hungry he should eat at home so that when you gather it will not result in judgment, and I will give further instructions when I come.

† The Lord's Supper was not meant to satisfy hunger but to remember Christ.

† Paul planned to address further issues when he visited Corinth.

† The instruction restores the sacred purpose of the gathering.

Historical References

† Clement of Alexandria wrote that Christian worship should be conducted with reverence and modesty.

† Tertullian described the Lord's Supper as a sacred memorial observed with seriousness.

† Irenaeus affirmed that the churches preserved the teachings handed down from the apostles.

How it applies to us today

† Worship should be approached with reverence and humility.

† Christian gatherings should demonstrate unity rather than division.

† The Lord's Supper reminds believers of Christ's sacrifice and covenant.

† Self examination remains essential before sacred acts.

† Believers must treat one another with equality and love.

Q & A Appendix

Q Why did Paul rebuke the Corinthian church in this chapter

A Because their gatherings had become selfish and divided which dishonored the purpose of the Lord's Supper

Q What does the bread represent in the supper

A It represents the body of Christ given in sacrifice for believers

Q What does the cup represent

A It represents the new covenant established through the blood of Christ

Q Why is self examination important

A Because believers must approach the memorial with humility and reverence

Q What lesson does the chapter teach about church gatherings

A That worship must be conducted with order unity and respect

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† 1 Corinthians 11

† Clement of Alexandria, Stromata

† Tertullian, Apology

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies

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