

1 Corinthians 11

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We've learned in our study of 1 Corinthians on Wednesday night several things about the church at Corinth: 1) it was a divided church; 2) it was a disgraced church; 3) it was a defiled church; and tonight we come to 4) it is a disorderly church. We begin a new section in the book of 1 Corinthians which runs from 1 Corinthians 11:2-14:40, the end of the chapter where Paul is seeking to correct disorder in the church. The church was meeting corporately, but they were all disorderly. They weren't following proper order.

The rule of thumb in the Scriptures is that all things should be done decently and in order. God's not a God of chaos, God's not a God of disorder, so when we gather corporately...have you ever been in a church meeting where everything's just kind of, what's going on? What are the people doing? What's that mean? What's this? I have, because I grew up in a really pretty wild Pentecostal environment, not that I'm anti-Pentecostal, I love them as my brothers and sisters in Christ, but I know that much of what was going on was breaking even Scripture or a violation of Scripture. It wasn't done decently and in order, and there wasn't mutual edification or glorification of God. It was kind of like a time to show off your spirituality. So, we want to pattern ourselves after the Word of God; and He is a God of order.

I'll begin with the first 16 verses. Look at verse 1 with me. We find in the first 16 verses instruction regarding modesty in women. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Now, if you were with me last Wednesday night, you know that I actually believe that verse 1 of chapter 11 belongs in the end of chapter 10—that it should be verse 34 of chapter 10. You know that the chapter divisions, and the verse divisions, were not in the original writings. They're not given by inspiration of God; and a lot of times they didn't get the breaks right, but we need to make note of that. Sometimes when you're studying a chapter, pay attention to how the chapter ahead of it concludes and what the topic was in the previous chapter because many times it carries over into the next chapter.

Go back with me to 1 Corinthians 10:32. Paul was wrapping up the subject of Christian liberty and he said, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." Notice, don't offend, don't stumble Jews, don't stumble Gentiles, don't stumble Christians in the church of God; and then he said, "Here's the rule," verse 33, "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit"—note that—"but the profit of many, that they may be saved." That's the principle, ". . . not seeking"—our own will or our—"own profit, but the profit of many"—others—"that they may be saved."

Here's the problem. Some of the women in Corinth, and we don't know how many women... remember, too, Corinth was a Greek city. It had Greek culture. It had the Greco-Roman influence. It was very, very licentious and very, very immoral. Some of the women that were in the church at Corinth, seeing the new liberty, the new-found liberty that they found in Christ, felt that it was okay for them to go out in public and do which was really kind of unkosher for them, and that's to appear without their heads covered or to come to the church gatherings without

their heads covered. You say, "Well, what's the big deal whether your head is covered or your head is not covered? It doesn't matter as long as the heart is right with God." But the custom in that time and the custom in that day was a woman that was in public without her head covered was a badge of an immoral woman. She was, most likely, a prostitute. So, he's saying that what you're doing is against modesty. You are going to stumble somebody or offend somebody or cause somebody to be offended. Again, in light of chapters 8-10, we don't want to do that. We don't want to stumble anybody that they may be saved. So, the problem was these women that no doubt thought, I'm free in Christ. I don't have to cover my head, and I can go do whatever I want.

The problem with this is that customs today are different. One of the challenges in interpreting Scripture is trying to determine whether or not a situation is cultural and just pertains to the situation in the Bible days—the first century, or a church, or a certain city—or whether it's a universal demand or requirement for women today for them to wear coverings. A little rule in interpreting Scripture is that we approach the Scripture with what's called literal historical-grammatical method of interpreting. We want to take a text in context.

But it also means even though we're going to literally interpret the Bible, that we take into consideration the genre or the type of literature that we're in—is it poetic, is it prophetic, is it historical, is it a narrative passage, is it something that's being demanded of us or commanded of us, is it just descriptive historically about what was going on, but it's not commanded us? You need to take all that into consideration; and when we do that, we need to be careful that we don't write off Scripture with the excuse, "Oh, that was just for the day in Corinth that Paul was writing to. It doesn't apply today." Or that we go the other way and have what I call a strict, wooden literalness to where we just take everything as absolutely literal, even though it was meant to be an allegory or a parable or figurative or whatever it might be.

I do believe that this was a situation historically that was taking place at the church in Corinth in the first century that we don't really wrestle with today. It's obvious here we don't require women to put a cover over their head when they come to church or whenever they go out to the grocery store, that's not what we do. Now, there are cultures today that still demand that or require that, and it does go back to this first century issue there in the city of Corinth, but we need to be careful to draw principles that apply. We're going to seek to do that to our relationship to women, men, in the church today and according to this issue of modesty.

As a rule, because it deals with women, and I'm trying to be as very tactful and careful as I can, the outward attire, and this goes for men, should reflect the inward beauty of Christ. Your outward attire should reflect the inward beauty of Christ. So many styles and trends which come and go today, for women especially, are meant to be sexually kind of conveying sexual overtones or sensual many times. If you're a woman of God, you want to dress...it doesn't mean you have to put a sack on or that you can't wear makeup, you can't comb your hair, you can't have a nice dress, it just means that you should be reflecting the beauty of Jesus.

Remember Proverbs 31, it says, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that

feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.” That’s the great beauty that grows more beautiful as time goes on—the beauty of Jesus radiating out from our lives. But we need to be sensitive to standards and culture—what is acceptable, what is not acceptable. We don’t have a dress code here at Revival, and we don’t plan on having a dress code, but it’s important that we think about, Am I stumbling someone? Am I offending someone? Am I dressed in such a way to draw attention to myself? Does it dishonor my husband or dishonor Christ and not glorify Him.

Paul begins in verse 2. He says, “Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things,”—and, by the way, he says—“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” Very few Christians today can say that. You hear a lot of Christians today saying, “Don’t follow me, follow Jesus. Don’t look at me, look at Jesus.” That’s true, but we ought to be walking with the Lord in such a way that we could say, “Follow me, even as I follow,” and the word “follow” means imitate, “Christ.” So, in verse 1, we have Paul’s example.

Then, Paul says, “You follow my teaching.” Some feel that Paul is using sarcasm in verse 2, and I’m not sure that’s true or not, but if it is, that’s interesting. Paul says, “Now I praise you, brethren,”—he’s not really had a lot of praise for the believers in Corinth, so it is a little odd that when he begins to rebuke them in verse 3 that he says, “Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the”—traditions, or the teachings, actually. In my King James Bible it’s “ . . . ordinances, as I delivered them to you.” If he’s not being sarcastic, he’s sincerely trying to say, “Look, I’m glad that you listened to my teaching, and what I’ve taught you, you’ve generally obeyed.”

Which is an interesting thing about the church at Corinth. It had a lot of problems as we’ve seen, but most of them weren’t theological or doctrinal problems. There’s only one clear theological or doctrinal problem in the church at Corinth, and it’s the chapter quite different than this one—I can’t wait to get to, it’s chapter 15. Chapter 15 is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible on the resurrection of the body. It’s going to talk about the resurrection of the body, and they were all kind of whacked out about that, so Paul had to make that clear. But he says, “I’m glad that you have listened to my teaching, “ . . . as I delivered them to you.”

Now, Paul jumps right into it, verse 3, “But I would have you know” He doesn’t say concerning the things you wrote to me, but most likely Paul had heard by word of mouth what was going on with some of the ladies in the church, so Paul says, “I’ve got to deal with it.” A good pastor will deal with problems in the congregation. He says, “I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” You can understand, in light of our culture today, how just that verse could freak people out. “What is that doing in the Bible, ‘ . . . the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God?’”

Let me tell you what it’s not saying, teaching, or implying. It’s not saying, teaching, or implying that women are in any way, shape, or form inferior intrinsically to men. That’s not what it’s saying. It’s no different than the Scriptures on marriage, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your . . . husbands,”—that’s another verse that a lot of people love to read in our modern

culture. That's not conveying inferiority. That's not conveying a lack of intelligence or value. It has nothing to do with value or intelligence. It has everything to do with function and authority. All of our culture has authority that we must submit to, even men have to submit to other men who are in authority over them. So, I'm driving too fast down the highway, and a police officer turns his red light on behind me. I must submit to his authority. You might say, "Well, I'm smarter than he is," or "I'm a more important person than he is," or "I have more value." No, no, no, no. You must submit to his authority—or hers, maybe it's a female police officer. You must submit to their authority. That's what's being conveyed in this principle in verse 3, “. . . the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man”

I want to make mention of the fact, and I'm preaching without notes tonight so bear with me, I don't want to go on any rabbit trails; but the context of verse 3 especially and primarily as we carry through these verses, when it talks about that “. . . the head of the woman is the man,” is marriage. It doesn't mean that just flat out in general, if you're a single woman, and you go out into society, you don't look at men as, “They're all my head, men are over me.” That's not what it's saying. It's talking about in a relationship of marriage and in the relationship of the church and their corporate gathering and their corporate fellowship.

By the way, marriage and the church do not contradict each other. If there's submission in the home from the wife to the husband, there should be submission in the church from the wife to the husband to the leadership of that church, which I'm going to spill the beans tonight, I believe is intended by God to be male, men leadership. Elders, which are pastors, and deacons are to be men, not women. Does it mean that women aren't as spiritual? No. Does it mean that women aren't as valuable? No. It has no meaning of that at all. It conveys the idea of order—order in the church, order in our culture, order in our home, order in society. We're going to see how Paul argues for that.

It's conveyed as well in the teaching of the Bible that God is three Persons. There's only one God, but He's one God, three Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Now, the Father is not more divine than the Son; the Father is not more divine than the Spirit. All three of them or coequal—listen to me carefully—and coeternal, yet Christ submits to the Father, and the Holy Spirit seeks to glorify Jesus. There is a kind of chain of order even in the Trinity, which again is reflected in the marriage relationship, the two, husband and wife, become one, and what God joins together let no man put asunder. So, we have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and we have order in the Godhead—the Father sent the Son, Christ obeyed, came, and gave His life on the cross. We see Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane praying, “Father . . . let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt,” submitting to the will of the Father.

We love the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, how He's come to glorify Jesus Christ. Where the Holy Spirit is working and moving, and we'll see this clearly in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ is glorified and honored. Anytime someone's exercising a gift of the Holy Spirit and it's pulling the attention away from Christ to the individual, it's not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's come to glorify Jesus Christ and no one else. So, it's conveyed in the image of the triune God.

Again, I want you to notice here that every man has a head, it's Christ, and every woman has a head, it's the man, and the head of Christ is God. If you want to write something down next to this verse, I would write down "function, not value," and put down a note that this in the context of marriage.

Now, Paul deals with the violation of authority, beginning in verse 4, and he talks about the abuse by the men. He says, "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head." It's interesting he says that the men are not to cover their heads. If they do that, they'll dishonor their head, which is a reference to Jesus Christ. Then, in verses 5-6, he speaks about the women, "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth,"—which, by the way, they can do in the church—"with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head,"—who is her head? Her husband—"for that is even all one as if she were shaven." It would be the same again, as an immoral woman in Corinth not only not veiling her head, but shaving very short her hair, which again was the badge of an immoral woman in the wicked, licentious city of Corinth.

Verse 6, "For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered." Again, it speaks of the bases of this authority.

Verse 7, "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man." What he's going to do in these next few verses, you've got to have mercy on me as I'm trying to teach this, okay? He's going back to the book of Genesis. You can't properly interpret these verses without understanding Paul's drawing from Genesis 2. When he talks about "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God," that doesn't mean that a woman was not made in the image of God, she is. But it's going to go on to say that in the order of creation, Paul uses this argument in 1 Timothy when he argues that women should not usurp authority over the man or to teach men, but they should be in subjection, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not . . . in the transgression,"—but the woman was. He goes back to the book of beginning of Genesis.

Paul's talking about the order of creation, " . . . but the woman is the glory of the man." It's conveying the idea that the woman was created out of man and for man. Look at verse 8, "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man." You say, "What in the world is that talking about?" Genesis 2:21 where it says, "And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam,"—right? God made Adam first, and He put Adam to sleep. Then, He performed a surgery. He took from Adam's rib and made the woman. So, Adam woke up and found out he was married. He took a nap and woke up a married man. But he was pretty stoked when he saw Eve. He said, "Wow! Man! She should be called woman because she was taken from man." The first woman came out of man, and again, in the pastoral epistles, which is interesting, when he talks about women not teaching men in the church, he says, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve." Adam was not in transgression, but Eve was. So, there's a creation order there. That's 1 Timothy 2:12-14, which, by the way, is interesting. There's a verse there that perplexes people where it says, " . . . she shall be saved in childbearing."

I've studied that verse for many, many years. I've read so many commentaries it's insane on that verse, and so many of them have not a clue about what it's talking about. My interpretation, and some disagree with it, is that her greatest fulfillment and purpose will be found in having children. Some say it means that it's through the seed of the woman the Saviour, the Messiah, would come, and that's a good and valid interpretation. My interpretation is objected to because it says, "Well, some women are barren. They can't have children." That's understandable. I know that, but that's not the norm, and I understand that and God's given purpose in other areas for women to serve and to have ministry. You ask any mother what one of their greatest joys in life is, is actually having children.

By the way, we just had our 11th grandchild born Monday night, and what a blessing it was. We have another little granddaughter, so what a joy.

Anyway, I didn't need to quote that. I'm actually making things more difficult for myself. But look at verse 9, "Neither was the man created for the woman,"—man, this is awesome. You women are getting real excited as we read these verses. "Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man," Genesis 2:18, purpose in creation.

Verse 10, "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels." This is to me the most difficult verse in these 16 verses to interpret. What does he mean by, ". . . because of the angels." It's interesting that J. Vernon McGee, a through-the-Bible teacher that I love so dearly, said in his commentary, "I have no idea what this means." Well, thank you, Dr. McGee. You've helped me tremendously. Very simply stated, the Bible indicates that when we gather corporately, like we have tonight, guess who's observing us; guess who's watching us—angels. Angels are watching how we worship, how we study the Bible, how we relate to one another, how we worship God. Angels are gathered here with us watching, so it could be that it would be grieving the heart of angels when a woman comes to the church without having a cover over her head, which is the honorable thing for her to do in that time and in that culture.

Verse 11, "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman,"—so, you ladies can breathe a sigh of relief there. Men need women. We've all had to have a woman to be born. We've all had to have a mother. Thank God for our mothers. He says, ". . . neither the woman without the man, in the Lord." We are interdependent on one another. Amen? We need one another.

Verse 12, "For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. 13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely"—is it right—"that a woman pray unto God uncovered?" The inference there is, "No, it is not." Verse 14, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" He's just basically drawing from what seems to be conveyed in nature.

Verse 15, "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering." It serves the purpose of what a covering would serve over her head. Verse 16 is the end, "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God."

I got saved in 1971. When I got saved, I had shoulder-length hair. I had a big beard. I looked like I just came from Duck Dynasty. Now, don't think about this too much, but that's what I looked like. It's amazing that my wife's parents let me in the house when I went over to see her. "Grizzly" Adams is on the front porch. When I got saved in the early 70s, we had long hair. That was the style. I went back to my Pentecostal church. Everyone in the church was over 60 years old. They were so excited to see a hippie come to church, "Wow! We've got a hippie in our church. Praise God! But, when's he going to get saved? When's he going to look like a Christian?" I used to think, I look more like Jesus than you do. I've seen His pictures in the Bible. It's not the hair on the head, it's the heart, right? God doesn't look on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart.

Even back then, it's funny, when hippies were getting saved during the Jesus Movement, people were freaking out like, "When they gonna cut their hair and look like a Christian?" That's why I joke sometimes about my Christian haircut. I'm joking. There is no such thing as a Christian haircut.

And, Paul doesn't say how short or how long. He doesn't give us any measurements—how long is too long; how short is too short. He's just saying that it's kind of a shame. It's not according to nature to see a man with long hair. That's to be expected on a woman and not on a man. He just said, "It's a shame."

Another verse challenging to interpret is verse 16. He says, "But if any man seem to be contentious,"—or argumentative and wants to strive about this—"we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." There's two ways I see to interpret this, and the first, which I've done many times over the years, is to say it seems as though Paul's saying at the end of this section, "None of it matters anyway. There's no rule in the church, so let's not fight over it, let's not argue over it, and let's not bicker over it." Now, if that's the way to interpret that verse, then I do admit that it would seem kind of strange that Paul would go to all the effort to lay out these truths from Genesis in the Scriptures and then wrap it up by saying, "On, never mind anyway. It doesn't matter. We don't have any rules." Well, then why did you waste our time in these previous verses?

Here's another interpretation, and I think the New Living Translation actually sheds some light and other translations as well; that is, "But if any man seem to be contentious,"—in other words, if you want to argue and debate about what Paul just taught, if you don't like what we just read and you want to argue with Paul, then we have no such custom, that is, we have no custom of arguing and debating and striving over the Word of God and neither in any of the churches of God. Paul's basically saying, "If you want to be argumentative about this, if you want to take issue with this, then you're out of bounds. You're arguing against the Scriptures, the clear teaching of the Word of God," which seems to make more sense to me.

Here's what the New Living Translation does with this verse. It reads, "But if anyone wants to argue about this, I simply say that we have no other custom than this, and neither do God's other churches." So, there's nowhere else to go. You're wasting your time by arguing with this.

This is the Word of the Lord. You must obey.

Let me put a bow on all these 16 verses, and then we'll move on—principles for today. Let me give you three principles to draw from what we just read in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. The first is the key point of the passage is that as cultural customs change, the expression of subordination, whatever that is within the church must remain consistent. We must be consistently following the cultural norms and not endangering, stumbling, or hindering someone from coming to Christ. Be sensitive to others.

Secondly, the root problem in Corinth was the pursuit of self-interest which was unwilling to subordinate itself to the needs of others to the glory of God. In other words, these women who were refusing to cover their heads weren't thinking about others. They weren't thinking about the glory of God, like we read at the end of chapter 10. They were doing what they wanted to do, how they wanted to do it, when they wanted to do it. They were wanting to please themselves. They weren't wanting to be submissive in order to win others to Christ.

Here's the third principle to draw from, we must seek to honor Christ and others in our worship by submission to Christ's headship over our lives. Everything about our Christianity and our corporate worship should be that Christ be glorified, that Christ be magnified. Amen? So, let's not quibble over some of these issues, let's just all seek to glorify Jesus Christ.

Now, a really important section, verses 17-34. This is the second main division of this chapter. It's instruction regarding the Lord's Supper. Verse 17, "Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not,"—Paul is changing the subject, and he's going to talk about their disorder in Communion or the Lord's supper. I talked about this on Sunday morning and shared some of my concerns in the trends that I see in some churches. He says, "I want you to know I'm not going to praise you because you're out of bounds—what you're doing is wrong." He says, ". . . that ye come together,"—notice that phrase, this is corporate worship—"ye come together"—as we have tonight—"not for the better, but for the worse." It's pretty sad when we get together as a church and we're doing it for our detriment or doing it for the worse rather than the better. When we come to church it should be mutual edification and the glorification of God—mutual edification, instruction, and the glorification of God.

Notice verse 18. He says, "For first of all,"—that means of first order. He heard about their disorder in the Communion service. He says, ". . . when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it." That does sound kind of tongue and cheek and it's probably sarcastic, ". . . I partly believe it."

Verse 19, "For there must be also heresies among you,"—the word "heresies" there could also be translated schisms or factions. He's not so much talking about false teaching here, he's talking about their conduct causing division in the church. It's not a doctrinal issue, it is to some degree as Paul clarifies here, but it's more of an issue of how they were celebrating the Lord's supper. They were causing division and schisms and factions, ". . . among you, that they which are approved"—those that which are the uppity ups, the high ups, the important people in the

church—"may be made manifest among you." The purpose of corporate worship in a church is not to show off how awesome you are or how important you are. When you come to church, the ground is level at the foot of the cross.

Paul says, verse 20, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper." You're getting together and you're not coming for the right purpose. You're not coming to celebrate the Lord's supper. "For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken." Yes, that's what it says, they were getting gluttonous and some were going hungry and others were getting drunk when they were taking Communion.

Verse 22, "What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not?"—in other words, they were shaming the poor people in the church, the poor believers. They were shaming them because they didn't have any food to bring to the "love feasts." I'll explain that in just a moment. "What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." Paul is really laying into them in these verses, and he's going to give us some instructions about Communion.

Here's what's happening. In the church at this time they would combine with their gathering to worship what was called a "love feast." It was known as agape feasts. We call it, the closest thing we would call it, a potluck; where you bring your pot, and if you're lucky, you get to eat some of it. The former church that I pastored in San Bernardino for 9 years, before we had our own building we met in a rented facility at a WMCA, kind of a multipurpose auditorium. It was pretty cool. After services, we could actually take down the folding chairs, put up tables, and the WMCA had a swimming pool, so we would have a potluck and a baptism right there on the property. We'd worship, have Sunday morning church, then everybody would pop up the chairs and put up the tables and we'd all eat together, then we'd go have a baptism. It was an awesome time.

I found it interesting, and this always brings something back to my mind, is when the food is laid out, I noticed that the bachelors headed for the front of the line. They'd put heaping amounts of food on their plate of all the best casseroles and dishes, and all they brought was a bag of potato chips. Now, what am I supposed to do? Say, "Hey, what'd you bring? What'd you bring? No, you got to go back and get more than that." I kid you not, they would get to the front of the line, and I felt kind of weird as the pastor getting to the front of the line and loading up my plate, so I kind of like did the cool, humble thing, you know, "I'll just sit back in the end of the line." I tell you, potluck after potluck, I'd go up and have one little bean on my plate, and I'd see this dude over here who's got this pot roast, and steak, and casserole, spaghetti, and it's like, "Lord, I thought You loved me. What's the problem?" I would always kind of go to the end of the line so they wouldn't see the pastor taking cuts. People would say, "Pastor John, come up front." "No, no, no. That's cool. I'll wait in the back." It's so hard to keep it even that everybody gets to eat. You don't want to put a little sign by the casserole, "Only one serving for dudes," you know. How do you control that?

This is what was actually happening in Corinth. The rich people were bringing these big, beautiful dishes of food, plates of food, and then they were eating it themselves and not sharing it with the other people. Those who were poor were going hungry; those who were wealthy, were eating too much. They were getting gorged on their own food. Then, in the agape feasts before the Communion service of the Lord's supper, they would drink wine and actually get drunk! They actually hogged their own food and did Communion intoxicated. I'm so glad God didn't call me to be the pastor at the church at Corinth. That would've been no fun.

Paul's upset with them. He's uptight with them. That's not right. He says, verse 22, “. . . shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.” Now, he gives them instruction, and we won't tarry on this, but I want to give you four facets, four looks, that we're to have when we have the Lord's supper or Communion. The first is we look back, verses 23-25, “For I have received of the Lord,”—which indicates Paul got this by direct revelation from the Lord—“that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread,”—we just read this Sunday morning in Luke 22—“And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament”—new covenant—“in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Verses 23-25 basically means that when we gather together to celebrate the Lord's supper, Communion, we all look back together at the cross and remember what Jesus did for us on the cross. It involves a look backwards at the cross. And what do we do? Verse 24, give thanks. We start with the bread, and the bread is broken. It's a symbol of the body of Christ.

I don't believe in what's known as transubstantiation. I don't believe the bread or the wine literally become the body of Jesus Christ. I believe that they're representative or a picture or a type. The bread symbolizes His body broken for us. The cup symbolizes His blood shed for us and the new covenant which is established. So, we are looking back, giving thanks, verse 24, and remembering what Jesus did for us on the cross.

Some people have questions about how often we should have Communion. The Bible doesn't say. It just says, “. . . as oft as ye drink it” It doesn't tell us how often. Some churches have it every day, every Sunday. We have it once a month, sometimes more. But the Bible doesn't designate how often we should have Communion.

The second look is in verse 26, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew”—you display, you demonstrate, you picture—“the Lord's death till he come.” That's the look forward or ahead. So, we're demonstrating the Lord's death on the cross until He comes back. I pointed that out Sunday morning that Jesus said, “I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come,”—and drink it with you in My Father's Kingdom. I believe that in the Millennial reign of Christ that the Passover will be reinstated, and it will now go back to the cross of Calvary. So, we look ahead, and we look back. Remember that as you're taking Communion.

The third look is the look within, verses 27-32. We look within and ask God to search our hearts and to forgive our sins. He says, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily,"—now, very, very important, and I'll explain why. That phrase "unworthily" literally means in an unworthy manner. In other words, you're getting drunk, you're getting gluttoned, you're not doing it in a worthy manner of the Lord's supper. It doesn't mean that you're not worthy because you're not perfect. No one's perfect. No one's good enough to take Communion. Communion is for sinners, so don't not take Communion because you're not perfect. But it's talking about doing it in an unworthy manner.

Verse 28, "But let a man examine himself,"—there it is, look within—"and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation"—or literally judgment or chastisement—"to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." Those who were involved with the Lord's supper and were doing it in an unworthy manner were being chastened by God, and part of that chastisement was actually sickness. They became weak and sick, and many of them actually died. This is the chastening hand of God—because they weren't dealing with their sin, God was dealing with them.

Verse 31, He says, "For if we would judge ourselves,"—this is what we should do when we take Communion—"we should not be judged." If God forgives us and cleanses us, then we're not going to be chastened. Verse 32, "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." The reason God chastens us is He doesn't want us to be condemned with the world.

The fourth, and last look, verses 33-34, is when we have Communion, we not only look back, not only look ahead, not only look within, but we should look around at our brothers and sisters in our fellowship. "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another." That "brethren" includes sistren as well. We're talking about the body of Christ. " . . . tarry one for another,"—be committed to looking to other's needs. " . . . tarry one for another,"—wait for one another, be patient.

Verse 34, "And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come." This is a great text for educating yourself on the Lord's supper—that I look back at the cross, I look forward to Christ coming again, I look within my heart and say, "God, search me, know me, try me. See if there be any wicked way in me." And, fourthly, I look around, and I look at how I should treat my brothers, treat my sisters, and that I should be loving them, forgiving them, serving them, and bearing, " . . . one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

I believe that having Communion together in the church is a healthy experience, and it's done out of obedience to Christ. When we celebrate Communion in the church, if you can be here, you should be here. I know that some cannot drive at night or come out on Wednesday nights, and Lord willing, we'll start trying to schedule more Communions on Sunday morning. But whenever we do have Communion, make it a priority, make it a commitment. It's one of the

ordinances of the church. It's so important that we do that. Let's pray.