

Men's Sunday Night
The Book of 1 Corinthians
Christian Conduct
Lesson 9 - 1 Corinthians 11:1-22
"Priorities and the Church"

Since Paul had some negative things to say to the church later in this section, he opened on a positive note by praising the church. Two matters in particular received praise: the church remembered Paul and appreciated him, and the church was faithful to keep the teaching that had been given them. The traditions of men should be avoided (Matt. 15:2-3; Col. 2:8), but the traditions that are given in the Word of God must be observed.

One of the biggest problems in the Corinthian church was disorder in the public meetings. Some of the women were assuming more freedom than they should have, there was disorder at the Lord's Supper, and there was confusion in the use of the spiritual gifts. The church had been greatly enriched with spiritual gifts, but they were sadly lacking in spiritual graces.

Paul could have tried to solve these problems in the power of his flesh, but instead he patiently explained the spiritual principles that supported the teachings he had given the church. He founded his arguments on and in the Word of God.

Paul is often accused of being critical of women and placing them in an inferior position, but this is not true. He realized that God is a God of order, and that when anything is out of order, there is confusion and loss of power. Paul nowhere teaches that women are inferior to men in the eyes of God, but rather that God has laid down the principle of headship (not dictatorship) that makes Christ the Head of man and man the head of woman. At Corinth, this important principle was being violated. Women were competing with men for public leadership in the church. Furthermore, in the observance of the Lord's Supper, women were not keeping their proper place and were coming with their heads uncovered, it is this matter that Paul now discusses.

When there are divisions and heresies in the church, even though they seem hidden, they will show up in the public meetings. The Lord's Supper speaks of the unity of believers; divisions in the church would contradict this wonderful message.

Read 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1. Pray and answer the following questions:

Pride was a real problem in the church of Corinth. Some of the Corinthians boasted of the eloquence or wisdom of their favorite leaders. Some were arrogant about their liberation from old-fashioned morality. Others were proud of their ability to remain celibate. Still others were puffed up about their knowledge and freedom to eat anything and attend any pagan function without defilement or temptation. In the middle of all this, they even wrote proudly to Paul that they were “*remembering him in everything and holding to the teaching just as he passed on to them.*”

Paul never lost a chance to praise his readers for anything he honestly could, especially when he had to go on with more criticism. This section of our study deals with the issue of disorder in public worship, and the root of that disorder being pride.

1. Whose example should all Christians follow? Why?
2. What is one way you can follow the example of someone who is following Christ?
3. What can you learn from a fellow Christian who is following Christ?
4. What two motivations should characterize everything you do in daily life?
5. What are some examples of areas in your own life where you could apply verse 31? What would that look like?

Read 1 Cor. 11:2-16. Pray and answer the following questions:

The Corinthians brought their problems to worship with them. Some of these problems such as the matter of head covering, involved disagreement over how they were being perceived by outsiders. Other problems, such as their abuse of the Lord's Supper, resulted in broken relationships, pride, and self-centeredness. Paul wanted them to know that the attitudes they brought to worship and the way they acted during worship had great importance. In worship we come into God's presence and declare that we are His people, united together by faith. We cannot do that if we are divided, or fighting for the best seats. We must come into God's presence focused on Him and united as one in Him. We must worship with respect toward one another and toward God. Otherwise, we miss the purpose of coming together in the first place.

6. What seems to be Paul's major concern for the church in this section?

7. The Corinthians had to be careful about head coverings because of what these coverings meant to some people in their culture. What cultural practices should Christians be careful about today because of what they mean to others?

8. What matters most to God about worship in the church?

9. Read Galatians 3:28. What does this verse say about the equality of men and women under God?

Read 1 Cor. 11:17-22. Pray and answer the following questions:

The early church held a full meal along with the Lord's Supper. It was called the *agape* (Love feast). It was supposed to be like a potluck dinner, with each member bringing something to share. However, it seems that in

Corinth, the rich were arriving early with the fine meats and wines they were use to, and going ahead without the rest. The poorer members arrived later when they had gotten off work. They had to make do with the little food they were able to bring. When pagan aristocrats gave feasts, it was customary for them to invite their entire households. The slaves and servants received smaller portions and cheaper wine than the higher-class guests. Evidently, the rich members of the church considered this acceptable in the Christian love feast as well.

10. In New Testament times, Communion was celebrated during a common meal or “love feast.” What abuses had crept into this celebration?

11. What examples of insensitivity and impoliteness do we find in the church today? How can we recognize these problems and correct them?

12. Think back over your own experience. What is the most meaningful celebration of the Lord’s Supper you have ever been part of? What steps can we take to ensure we are observing the Lord’s Supper in a worthy manner?

13. What does self-examination look like in a practical sense before partaking in the Lord’s Supper?

Life Application

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. Write your insights down for review and group discussion.