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1 Corinthians 11

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

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The previous chapter: in the previous chapter Paul spoke about God not allowing us to be tempted beyond what we are able, temptations that are common to all mankind and food offered to idols. The chapter ended with Paul saying "All things are lawful" but not all things are helpful" and "Why should his liberty be determined by someone else's conscience?"

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

- In certain chapters this letter is written as though Paul is having a conversation with the Corinthians (i.e., he asks them a question and then answers it etc.).
- Though Paul's letter is directed to the Corinthian Church the content applies to any church or believer in the same situations.

SECTION ONE

1 CORINTHIANS 11:1-3

The Head of a Wife is Her Husband.

- **1 Corinthians 11:1-3:** Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. ²Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. ³But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

It should be mentioned that headship is not about a husband dominating his wife we know this by looking at Christ when he was on earth, he came as the head of God's Kingdom yet he did not rule by dominating authority but by serving, loving and self-sacrifice added to this Paul in the book of Ephesians says:

- Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Ephes. 5:25)

And in the book of Colossians he states:

- Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them (be not bitter against them in the KJV) (Col. 3:19).

NOTE: bitter means unpleasant, nasty, vicious, hostile, resentful, sulky and angry.

It is in this context that Paul says, "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord" (Col. 3:18) so caring for each other is what underpins the marriage relationship i.e., living as Christ did which was to put other people's needs before his own. Since the words "The husband is the head of his wife and wives are to submit to their husbands" (Ephes. 5:22-24) have caused much controversy throughout history it should be explained that the words, "The husband is the head of his wife" means he is to, nourishes and cherish her and love her as his own body as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. It means the husband is held responsible and accountable for his wives well-being and explained that the word submission i.e., "Wives are to submit to their husband" in this context is not referring to submitting to a dominant, controlling authority figure, but a loving caring protecting man since the context both these statements are made in is love, caring and self-sacrifice (Ephes. 5:21-33).

The head not only refers to the person who has the authority, but also the one who is accountable and held responsible for those they are the head over. Paul's words, "The head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband" (v3) means Christ expects the husband to care for his wife as he cares for the church and died for it, being the head is not about dominating authority but caring responsibility it means the man carries the ultimate responsibility for the well-being, physically, emotionally and financially of his wife. Christ as the head of God's Kingdom served mankind with kindness, gentleness and self-sacrifice likewise man being head of the wife is to serve her in the same way and as Christ does the Church with grace mercy and love.

NOTE: Paul in these verses is not teaching a dogmatic legalistic formula, but a principle of caring and mutual respect, he is not saying the husband who is skilled with his hands in building has to take over the financial budget of their home simply because he is the head, especially if his wife is a highly trained accountant. Neither is he saying that a man should never cook or clean the house because he is above his wife and she is the servant beneath him, rather the principal is about the husband doing whatever is needed for the protection and well-being of his wife and her responding in kind accordingly.

SECTION TWO

HEAD COVERINGS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Introduction: a great aid in helping to understanding some topics in the New Testament is to look at the same topic in the Old Testament. Understanding a topic in the Old Testament often gives insight into the mind of the writer of the same topic in the New Testament. With this in mind we will look at what a bald head and shaved head meant in the Old Testament, before trying to understand what Paul was saying regarding head coverings in the New Testament.

The Nazirite Vow.

- **Numbers 6:1-2:** the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²"Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, when either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself (or herself) to the LORD.

This verse clearly shows that both a man and woman could make a Nazirite Vow and that the purpose of the vow was to separate themselves to the Lord.

NOTE: for simplicity of understanding the (*he*) in the following verses has been changed to (*they*) since the laws of a Nazirite vow apply to whoever makes the vow whether it is a man or a woman.

- **Numbers 6:5:** "All the days of their vow of separation, no razor shall touch their head. Until the time is completed for which they vowed to separate themselves to the LORD, they shall be holy. They shall let the locks of their hair of their head grow long.

From these verses we learn that during the days of the vow no razor was to touch their heads meaning their hair could not be cut in any way until the days of their vow was completed.

- **Numbers 6:6-13:** "All the days that they separate themselves to the LORD they shall not go near a dead body. ⁷Not even for their father or for their mother, for brother or sister, if they die, shall they make themselves unclean, because their separation to God is on their head. ⁸All the days of their separation they are holy to the LORD. ⁹"And if anyone dies very suddenly beside them and they defile their consecrated head, then they shall shave their head on the day of their cleansing. ¹¹and the priest shall offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because they sinned by reason of the dead body. And they shall consecrate their head that same day ¹²and separate themselves to the LORD for the days of their separation and bring a male lamb a year old for a guilt offering. But the previous period shall be void, because their separation was defiled. ¹³"And this is the law for the Nazirite.

Consecrate: comes from the Hebrew word (*qadash*) and means something set apart, for sacred purposes. To make, pronounce or observe as clean (ceremonial or moral).

No one who had made a Nazirite vow was to touch a dead body even if it was a member of their own family who had died. This is because touching a dead body under the Levitical Law made a person unclean. If they did touch a dead body, they had to cleanse themselves that very day and start the days of the vow again. During the time of a Nazirite vow a person's head was the symbol of their holiness to God or their uncleanness

before Him. The head was a symbol of a person being separated to God or separated from God. An unshaved head (a head full of hair) was a symbol of being holy and separated to God while a bald head or shorn head was a symbol of becoming unclean and therefore separated from God. If a man or woman, who had made a Nazirite vow become unclean during the time of the vow they were to shave their heads on the very day they became unclean and on the same day go to a priest and perform the ceremonial rite of cleansing and then start the days of their vow from the beginning. From these verses we learn that under the law and during a Nazirite vow an unshaved head (a head full of hair) was a symbol that a person was clean while a shaved head (bald head) was a sign that a person had become unclean. The only reason a person was required to shave their head bald was because they had become unclean so a shaved head (bald head) was a symbol of uncleanness or at least that the person had become unclean at some moment in time. Whoever saw a person who had made a Nazirite vow with a shaved head knew two things:

1. Sometime during the days of their vow, they had become unclean.
2. They were prepared to sacrifice their hair to begin their vow again.

In the book of judges, we read that Samson's mother:

- Will conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. (Judges 13:5).

Some people may make a vow for a few days, a week, a year and maybe even a lifetime as Samson's vow was.

Taking a razor to the head and shaving the head is not about never cutting the hair, that would mean that Samson as a grown man would have been walking on his hair rather the idea is that they were never to shave their head bald this is what it means to never take a razor to the head.

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- **Numbers 6:18:** And the Nazirite shall shave their consecrated head at the entrance of the tent of meeting and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offering.

This verse clearly shows that shaving the head is about shaving it bald whoever had become unclean during a vow period was to shave their head bald and then take all their hair and burn it on the fire. This act of putting the hair on the fire (no doubt on the altar) symbolized the judgment, purging and cleansing of God upon the person who had sinned and become unclean.

Conclusion: during a Nazrite vow:

- An unshaved head (a head full of hair) was a symbol of being holy and separated to God.
- A shorn head (bald head) was a symbol of being unclean and separated from God.

No Razor shall come upon Samson's Head.

- **Judges 13:5:** God told Manoah's wife for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son (Samson). No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines."

Now God to verse seventeen:

- **Judges 16:17:** Samson told her (Deliah his wife) all his heart, and said to her , "A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man."

Shaved: in this verse comes from the Hebrew word (galach) and means to be bald to shave off. This shines a brilliant spotlight on the truth that the words, "No razor shall come upon his head" and the words, a shaved head is not about cutting the hair, but about shaving the head totally bald. If Samson could never cut his hair from the time of his birth to the time, he became an adult man how could he fight in battle since he would not only be tripping over his hair, but he would also have looked ridiculous. The primary focus is not trimming the hair for practical purposes, but shaving the head bald.

Gentile women Taken Captive in War were to Shave their Head.

- **Deuteronomy 21:10-14:** "When you (Israel) go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God gives them into your hand and you take them captive, ¹¹and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you desire to take her to be your wife, ¹²and you bring her home to your house, she shall shave her head and pare her nails. ¹³And she shall take off the clothes in which she was captured and shall remain in your house and lament her father and her mother a full month. After that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife.

Shaved: in this verse comes from the Hebrew word (galach) and means to be bald to shave off. For a Gentile woman to be clean and accepted into Israel she was to shave her head. This symbolised that she was cleansed from her uncleanness and made acceptable to God and the people of Israel.

Hannah and Samuel.

- **1 Samuel 1:10-11:** She (Hannah) was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. ¹¹And she vowed a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head."

Hannah makes a vow to God saying if He will give her a Son she will never shave his head. Never shave his head in this context, means she will never shave him bald and she will separate the child to God all the days of his life, God gave Hannah a son and she named him Samuel and he faithfully served the LORD all the days of his life. The phrase "No razor shall touch his head" does not mean Hannah will never trim his hair, but that she will never shave his head bald or extremely short (i.e., shaved) added to this is the fact there is no recorded in the Bible of any man who had hair down to his waist and common sense dictates if Hannah never trimmed Samuel's hair he would be tripping over it in his later years.

Summary of head coverings in the Old Testament

Under a Nazirite vow long hair on a man or woman was a symbol of them being clean and separated unto God while a bald head or a head with the hair shaved extremely short (i.e. shorn) was a symbol of being separated from God and of having become unclean. The phrase "No razor shall touch his head" does not mean the man or woman was never to trim their hair, but that they were never shave their heads bald or extremely short (i.e., shaved).

SECTION THREE

HEAD COVERINGS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

To understand this chapter, it helps to know beforehand that at the end of this topic Paul states:

- Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering (1 Cor. 11:13-15).

1 CORINTHIANS 11:4-6

Covered and Uncovered Heads.

- **1 Corinthians 11:4-6:** Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his head ⁵but every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head—it is the same as if her head were shaven ⁶For if a woman will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a woman to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head.

NOTE: the King James Bible uses the word woman in these verses, while in some modern translations' wife is used instead of woman, but since the following principle Paul teaches applies to all women this study will use the word woman rather than wife.

Covered: comes from Hebrew word (Kata) and means to cover wholly as with veil, it carries the idea of something being hidden and being godly.

Uncovered: comes from the Greek word (akatakaluptos) and carries the idea of being unveiled and uncovered.

Shaven: comes from the Greek word (xurao) and means to shave or shear the hair with a razor. In verse one Paul says:

- I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you (1 Cor. 11:2).

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This means that what Paul is saying is not a commandment of God nor does it have any bearing on eternal salvation since it is in the context of church behaviour and custom (i.e., headship, authority, and head coverings etc.). As we progress through the following Scriptures it becomes very clear that the focus is upon hair, (i.e., long hair, shaved hair and a bald head) which means Paul is teaching the custom in the body of Christ concerning men and their hair and the custom concerning woman especially woman whose hair has been shaved or whose head is bald. Paul's statement:

- Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his head.

Refers to a man growing his hair long like a woman, naturally what is considered long is going to vary according to the culture of the country and nation that a person is living in, but the general principal carries the idea of a man appearing feminine. The words:

- Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head—it is the same as if her head were shaven.

Are in contrast to the man with excessively long hair, (i.e., he dishonours his authority and power), whereas for a woman to have long hair she honours her authority and power. This is the reason Paul says:

- It is disgraceful for a woman to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head.

This is not a condemnation rather Paul is simply saying that woman who have a bald head can cover their heads while in church to save them embarrassment (and perhaps others from mocking them). Remember during Paul's generation a bald head was not only a sign of uncleanness under the Levitical law, but also considered by many (especially the

woman themselves) to be a shameful and embarrassing thing. Even today many women who have cancer fear losing their hair as much as they fear the cancer (the cancer foundation supplies wigs for this reason). The natural covering for a woman's head is her hair we know this because verse fifteen states:

- A woman's long hair is given to her for a covering.

This verse shines a brilliant spotlight on the truth that when Paul was talking about a woman's head being uncovered, he had in mind a woman with a bald head or her hair shaved or shorn extremely short. Paul is simply teaching what the custom was for the churches he had visited regarding woman who for whatever reason had a bald head. The words:

- It is the same as if her head were shaven.

Simply mean the same rules and principals that he has just taught concerning a bald head also apply to a head that is shaven (i.e., the hair is extremely short). It is not about short hair on a woman, but hair that is shaved extremely short (i.e. shorn). A shaved head means the same as shorn head, i.e., shorn suggests extremely short hair and an uncovered head would be no hair at all, a woman with her head uncovered (bald) is considered the same as a woman with her head shaven since shaven simply means cut extremely short (i.e., almost bald). Paul realises that many women feel that a bald or shorn head is a shame and are embarrassed when in a public assembly (this would especially apply to women in Paul's time) thus verse five could read:

- But every woman that prays or prophesies with a bald head dishonours her head: it is the same as a woman that prays or prophesies that has had her head shaved or shorn extremely short.

It would naturally be an embarrassment for a woman with a bald head or a head with extremely short hair (i.e., shaved) to enter a church to worship without covering her head. Because of this verse six could read:

- If a woman does not want to have long hair then she should at least wear her hair short because it is a disgrace for a woman to be bald or have her hair shaved.

In this verse Paul is saying that a woman who does not want to grow her hair long should at least keep it short in contrast to shaving it almost bald. During Paul's generation many women would have worked in the dusty fields and vineyards (especially those who worked as servants) perhaps many of these women for practical purposes chose to cut their hair extremely short since long hair would be very impractical, as it would need washing every day and they did not have hot and cold running water as we do therefore some working women may have preferred to wear their hair excessively short for practical purposes. We know women worked because the book of proverbs states:

- An excellent wife is far more precious than jewels she seeks wool and flax, works with her own hands and brings her food from afar, she rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and considers a field and buys it and with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard (Proverbs 31:10-16).

There are many other reasons a woman may have had excessively short hair or even been bald, (i.e., illness or previous involvement in pagan faiths where it was a custom to shave the head) added to these it was the custom to shame a woman whose society considered immoral by shaving her hair.

Later in history: in later years the church in power at the time of the inquisition continued the practice of shaving a woman's hair not only on those they considered immoral, but also those who they considered a heretic (meaning those who had an opinion or belief that contradicted the churches established religious teaching) thus a bald head on a woman or one whose hair was shaved or shorn extremely short was used as a

practise to embarrass shame and disgrace woman. This idea also fits in with what nature itself teaches since it appears that there is a natural law in the nature of woman that greatly affects and hurts them when they lose their hair. I have known women who had long hair who were challenged to have it shaved off to raise money for a particular charity. These women were happy to give money to help others, but having their hair cut off was for most too high a price to pay they could not do it no-matter how much money it might raise. Added to this the cancer society has councillors and volunteers to supply wigs and hats to help woman through the emotional shock of losing their hair as they begin their chemotherapy and radioactive treatment since the overwhelming trauma and anxiety of being in public with a bald head is an embarrassment for most woman, thus the reason a woman naturally covers her shaved or baldhead when she goes out shopping or is going to be seen in public. This is because a woman's hair is a symbol of her femininity and her glory (meaning her beauty). Paul is basically saying to woman of all ages, "Hey if you feel embarrassed to come to church and worship the Lord with a bald head simply put some sort of covering on." It is OK with all the churches and is the custom and tradition I teach to them.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:7-12

- **1 Corinthians 11:7-12:** For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. ⁸Man was not made from woman, but woman from man ⁹Man was not created for woman, but woman for man ¹⁰That is why a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels ¹²for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.

The words, "A man ought not to cover his head" in the context of this chapter means men should not grow their hair long like a woman and the words, "Since he is the image and glory of God" most likely carries the idea that he is masculine and should not appear feminine by growing his hair like a woman while the words, "The woman is the glory of man" carry the idea that the woman's femininity, her beauty and her long hair glorifies the man she is with (i.e., enhances his appearance) which in simple terms means both the man's masculinity and the woman's femininity complement each other.

A woman should have a Symbol on her Head, because of the Angels.

Symbol: (Power in KJV) in this context carries the following two thoughts:

1. The idea of ability and being right or lawful in public.
2. The idea of holding a delegated and privileged place of influence and authority (note authority here has the same meaning as power).

Angels: means messenger, it can refer to a supernatural angel or a human messenger (i.e., a prophet, man of God, a pastor or minister etc.).

The words, "A woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels" refers to her long hair we know this because verse fifteen says, "A woman's long hair is her glory and her covering" meaning her beauty and a natural covering for her head. Since angels can refer to God's angels or human messengers the woman's hair as a symbol of authority (or power) can refer to the following two things:

1. Her hair as a covering of her head gives her the authority and power (meaning the right) to stand before God in prayer, whereas if a woman for whatever reason happened to be bald or has had her hair cut extremely short then the custom of the churches was for her to cover her head when she enters God's holy presence as a sign of respect toward God.

2. A woman has the authority and power (meaning the right) to join the congregation in worship and prayer because of her head covering (i.e., her hair).

An earthly example: the symbol of authority in this context is like a soldier in an army who is promoted to lieutenant of the squad, and as such is given officers' strips to wear on the shoulder pads of his uniform which symbolises the authority he has been given. Now he has full right (i.e. power and authority) to enter the officers' quarters and no-one can question his right to be there in a similar fashion Paul is saying a woman's hair covers her head and gives her full rights (power and authority) to go before God in prayer and enter into His Holy presence and join the assembly of brothers and sister in worship and prayer. The words:

- All things are from God.

In this context primarily means both man and women are from God and by extension the entire human race is from a man and a woman. Paul begins to bring this topic of man being the head over the woman to a beautiful and brilliant end by firstly saying:

- Man was not made from woman, but woman from man (v8).

Referring to Adam the earthly father of us all and then stating that:

- Man is born of woman (v12).

This means that neither the man nor the woman can boast that one is greater than the other since both men and women are from God. Paul by stating that a woman is not independent of a man, but neither is a man independent of a woman since without one or the other mankind would not exist is now making both the man and the woman equal. He appears to be making sure that men do not misunderstand what he has said regarding headship and use it to dominate and control woman (especially their wives) by showing us all that neither the man nor the woman can claim greater importance over each other since we need both the man and the woman for the human race to exist. Headship is not about dominate control, but carrying the responsibility and the emotional pressure and stress of life, it is about protecting and watching out for the wellbeing of those you have headship over.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:13-16

A Woman's Long Hair is her Glory and Her Covering.

- **1 Corinthians 11:13-16:** Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him ¹⁵but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering ¹⁶If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God

Paul is saying that long hair (like a woman's) on a man is a disgrace, but even nature teaches that a woman's long hair is her glory (meaning her beauty), then he clearly states that a woman's hair is also her covering thus the context of head coverings is about a woman's long hair being her covering and her glory meaning her beauty contrasted to a woman with a bald head or her hair shaved extremely short (almost bald) (see v14-15). The words:

- If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God" (v16)

Means if anyone is inclined to argue that it is right and decent for a woman with no hair to pray to God without covering it, neither Paul, nor those with him or the churches of God have any other custom other than the custom he has been teaching concerning this matter.

Various reasons woman may have had shaved or bald heads: there may have been certain Jewish woman who had taken vows who after shaving their hair had become converted to Christ.

- Many women, who worked in the dusty fields and vineyards most likely chose to wear their hair excessively short since they did not have running hot and cold water as we do today
- Women's head were shaved to shame those who had been caught in some form of immorality or because they were considered heretics by the religious leaders of the time.
- Some who had belonged to pagan faiths would have shaved their heads especially if they had been priestess.
- It is certain some lost their hair through serious illnesses and bad diets.

Paul in this discourse is teaching what the custom of the churches was for woman in these circumstances he is basically saying to these women there is no shame if your head is shorn or even worse bald, but to show respect to God and save embarrassment to yourself and the assembly simply cover it. Paul is teaching what the custom and tradition of the churches was so that the women in these circumstances would know what to do when they attended a church meeting or prayed before God.

Summary of head coverings in the New Testament

Some churches have taken the obscure verses in this chapter at the expense of the very clear verse (i.e., a woman's hair is her covering) (v15) and taught them almost as a commandment of God Himself, they have made it a law of God in their churches that all woman must wear hats or veils rather than seeing that Paul is giving caring advice for woman who for whatever reason are bald. Paul is simply teaching what the general custom or tradition of the church was in regards to a woman's shaved or bald head, and this custom was to protect her and others from embarrassment that a bald head represented in the days of Paul. Scripture is so clear that a woman's hair is her covering, it makes it difficult to understand why some religious leaders would dogmatically hold to the obscure verses of this chapter that are difficult to interpret, rather than accept Paul's very clear statement that says, "A women's hair is her covering" (v15). Sadly, a small number of churches have made head coverings a commanded law of God, this results in younger women of our generation who enter their services feeling like a lessor or rebellious Christian unless they wear a scarf or hat. This is especially sad when one realises Paul was only teaching it as a custom or tradition primarily to save women embarrassment. These churches may be creating a stumbling block to young women of this generation, by imposing on them a tradition or custom that only applied to women who had a bald or shaved head

NOTE: this does not mean that women who cover their head with a hat or scarf are sinning, they are doing it in faith as unto the Lord and he will accept and delight in it as such. It only becomes wrong when they judge others as lessor Christians who with a clear conscience do not cover their head with a covering, but If those who find it unnecessary to cover their heads judge those who do as lessor in the faith they themselves then become the one that is sinning before the Lord. As Christian we need to learn to allow each individual to grow and be free to live according to their own conscience before the Lord and not be judged for it.

The KEY to having harmony and unity in the body of Christ is to allow each other to do all things in faith with a pure conscience before the Lord. All things in this context, means all things that are not sinful and are not hurtful to others.

- If a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering (1 Cor. 11:13-15).

There must be Factions so that the Genuine Maybe Recognized.

- **1 Corinthians 11:17-19:** But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, ¹⁹for there must be factions (heresies in KJV) among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

Paul is not saying that God has deliberately designed the Christian faith so that it is impossible for a church to be without divisions, but fully understanding the present state of human nature Paul is reasoning that divisions amongst the church are to be expected and that out of them it will be revealed who are true friends of Christ and who are not thus the reason he says:

- There must be factions (heresies in KJV) among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized (v19).

The problem of the divisions and contentious is not in the Christian teachings themselves for they are pure but rather the passions of people i.e., their pride, ego and selfish ambition, the love of power or the love of popularity. They can be a result of people's intolerance and their bias narrow-mindedness or by those exalting a religious teacher more than Christ and by others who have zeal for God but without proper understanding all of which result in causing contentious and schisms in the church (there are many more). Paul's statement:

- There must be factions (v19).

simply means divisions are to be expected because of the sinful dysfunctions and aberrations (self, ego, pride, greed etc.,) of mankind's fallen and corrupted nature, nevertheless the divisions will not only serve to show who are gentle and peaceful and disposed to pursue love and order without contention and strife but will manifest who are the true friends of unity, humility, peace and of Christ and who is approved or disapproved of by God.

It should be noted: unity does not mean bringing every brother and sister under control so that they all think and act in the same way. Within unity an honest difference of opinion can be maintained and even allowed, since the bonds of Christian love secure union of heart in all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and union of effort in the Lord's calling in which we can all unite i.e., doing whatever we are able to establish God's Kingdom and doing good wherever possible, helping the poor, testifying to the Good News of the Gospel and delivering the lost from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of light etc.

Mark them who cause divisions and avoid them: Paul in the book of Romans tells the brothers and sisters to:

- Avoid those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that he has taught them (Rom 16:17).

Since the Bible was written in an entirely different culture to ours and the body of Christ is a global family filled with people from different nations, countries, cultures, backgrounds, knowledge, levels of education, hurts and troubled pasts there is always going to be certain amount of Scripture we will all understand differently. Paul in the book of Romans tells us to avoid those who cause divisions contrary to the doctrine that he taught the brothers and sisters in Rome, but in the context of his letter the three doctrines he has in mind are:

1. Doctrines that are contrary to the teaching that salvation is by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ contrasted to works of the law, self-effort and keeping traditions etc.

2. Doctrines that are contrary to the truth that Jews and Gentiles are now one in Christ, contrasted to them being two separate nations.
3. Doctrines that are contrary to godly behaviour and lead people away from the Lord Jesus Christ.

These are the three major topics Paul has focused on in his letter to the brothers and sisters in Rome and the doctrines he has in his mind when he says be careful of those who cause divisions and create obstacles. Naturally within the global family of Christ there are many varied understandings of many Scripture, but not all teachings are important to know to be saved to eternal life nor does one have to have perfect understanding of every teaching of the Bible. No-one has to be a walking Bible encyclopaedia to be in the family of Christ and saved to eternal life, but should any teacher proclaim a message of works and self-effort to be saved or teach that Jews and Gentiles are two separate groups in Christ, or teach doctrines that lead people away from godly behaviour and from Christ Paul says they should be avoided (Rom 16:17-19).

SECTION FOUR

1 CORINTHIANS 11:20-22

The Lord's Supper.

- **1 Corinthians 11:20-22:** When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. ²¹For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. ²²What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

Supper: from Strong's Concordance means dinner, the chief meal (usually in the evening) it carries the idea of having a feast. It should never be forgotten:

- The Passover meal was always a feast i.e., a meal that the faithful in God shared together
- During Paul's generation and the early church communion (also called the Lord's Supper) was never a small piece of wafer bread and a thimble size glass of wine, these were introduced by churches of later generations most likely for practical purposes since church moved from people's homes to opulent buildings and large congregations.

This means that how most churches practise communion (or the Lord's Supper) today was not how it was originally practised by the early church. For further information concerning the Passover see:

- Passover, in Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Paul rebukes the Corinthian brothers and sisters for the way they were behaving while partaking of the Lord's Supper. He basically tells them that the manner in which they were eating the Lord's Supper was not only completely against the Spirit of love but also against the Spirit of Christ. What they were doing is hard for our minds today to comprehend since their behaviour was an extremely shocking testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They had class distinction amongst the congregation since the rich who had food and wine were eating what they had without sharing it with the poor and those who had nothing. Added to this they were drinking to excess and getting drunk and in this way those who had plenty were humiliating those who had little or nothing i.e., the poor and hungry were sitting in their beggarly cloths at the table watching the rich feasting, celebrating and drinking to excess while they remained hungry. I have been amongst churches for over forty-five years and never seen a scenario like this. Is it any wonder Paul says, "I do not commend you." (v17).

This is my Body Given for you; this Cup is the New Covenant in my Blood.

- **1 Corinthians 11:23-27:** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, 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. ²⁷Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.

Jesus said:

- This is my body, which is for you, *do this* in remembrance of me (v25).

And then breaks the bread and SHARES it with all those at the table he then takes the cup and says

- This cup is the new covenant in my blood *do this* as often as you drink it in remembrance of me (v25).

And then shares the cup with all who were at the table thus Jesus is presenting the following two ideas:

1. We should share our food and drink with each other in contrast to the Corinthian church who was keeping it for themselves.
2. When eating a meal with brothers and sisters we should do it (meaning eat it) in remembrance of Christ and his death.

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The idea behind this is that Christ died not for himself, but for others, thus the words, "You proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (v26) also carry two thoughts: -

1. Christ died and rose again.
2. Christ lived and died for others and therefore those who belong to his family are to live with this same attitude, meaning we are to live for others and not be selfish with what we have, which in the context of the Lord's Supper means we are to share our food and drink.

Eating the bread and drinking the cup unworthy: the words:

- Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord (v27).

Are not referring to our personal dysfunctions and aberrations that dwell within us, nor to the sinful things we may have personally done (sorrow for these does not wait until the next Lord's supper since repentance is instant the moment the heart is convicted. Rather the context these words are spoken in is about brothers and sisters in Christ not sharing their food and drink with their poorer brothers and sisters, it is in this way they are guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord, since his life and his message is all about dying to self and living for others (i.e., doing-good when able). When the Lord told his disciple to, do this as often as they drink it he was telling them to share their food and drink with each other contrasted to being selfish and uncaring especially since the poor amongst the church of Paul's generation had most likely never had the luxury of tasting wine or eating good food thus Jesus is saying, when you come together in my name share what you have with each other. The concept of the Lord's Supper is about brothers and sisters sharing a meal together

in the Lord's name. The noble, wealthy and rich in the Corinthian church were not doing this. They did not understand that Jesus when telling the twelve at the last meal he had with them was not only teaching those at the table by saying, do this but actually showing them by his actions in passing the bread and wine to all at the table so that when they did come together (after he had ascended to heaven) to have a meal they would know what the Lord expected of them i.e., to give thanks to God, remember the Lord and then share what they have with each other.

NOTE: doing something in the Lord's name does not just mean mentally remembering Christ, the name in Hebrew culture embraces everything about who is given that name it means remembering that Jesus gave freely of himself, he sacrificed his own leisure time and time with his family, he subjected his body to hardship to bless others and ultimately gave his life so that others could benefit thus the Lords motives were all about putting others before himself so when he was telling his disciples, "Do this in remembrance of me" he was saying the following two things:

1. Remember all the Lord has spoken and done.
2. Put others before yourselves and share what you have as he did.

The noble, wealthy and rich in the Corinthian church who were eating to themselves instead of sharing their wine or food with the less fortunate had totally missed what the Spirit of the Lord and having a meal in his name was all about.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:28-32

Let a Person Examine Themselves.

- **1 Corinthians 11:28-32:** Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹Anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body (the Lord's Body in KJV) eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹If we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³²When we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

In this context Paul is not saying take a deep look inside yourself to see what sinful aberration or dysfunction maybe dwelling in the heart or the mind neither is it about meditating on what sin we may have done during the week (these are things we do at any time), rather the focus is about examining ourselves to see if we are being selfish in our eating and drinking a meal in the Lord's name. It is about examining ourselves to see if we are being selfish or giving i.e., are we eating to ourselves or gladly sharing what we have with others especially the poor and the less fortunate thus the words: -

- Whoever eats and drinks without discerning the body (v29).

Means whoever eats and drinks to themselves without sharing what they have do not understand what the body (Christ' body and the church) is all about.

NOTE: the body not only embraces Christs physical body but also every brother and sister in Christ (i.e., the body of Christ the church).

Many of you are weak and ill and some have died: (v30), these words have been grossly misunderstood, since in many religious circles it has been taught that if we eat or drink of the Lord's Supper with sin in us we are drinking it unworthily and are in danger of becoming sick or even worse dying, but if that was the correct interpretation not one of us could ever eat or drink of the Lord's Supper since we are never fully free of sinful aberrations and dysfunctions. This is a perfect example of isolating a verse by lifting it out of its context and twisting it to mean something it

doesn't. The context is in the framework of eating the Lord's Supper (v20), Paul is telling the brothers and sisters of the Corinthian church that many amongst them are sick and even dying because those who have abundance of food are not sharing it with those who are hungry and have none thus the reason they are sick and dying.

NOTE: The Lord's Supper here is not about a once a week partaking of a piece of wafer bread and a thimble of grape juice rather it is referring to brothers and sisters in Christ gathering together to eat a meal in the Lord's name. Though it was most likely eaten when they gathered together in their homes, it is not limited to this many times it was no doubt simply sharing their evening meal with other brothers and sisters and at other times eating outdoors (i.e., a pic-nick etc.). The practical concept of eating, the Lord's Supper was that brothers and sisters in Christ who had abundance would share their food and drink in the name of the Lord with those who lacked so that no-one would go hungry. Remember there was no secular social security in the days of the early Christians.

If we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged: judgment in the following verse:

- If we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged (v31).

Refers to the Lord's judgment coming upon the Corinthian brothers and sisters in Christ through Paul's teaching i.e., those that are eating to themselves and not sharing their food with their less fortunate brothers and sisters are being judged by Paul since he in the Lord's name is rebuking the Corinthians for not eating in a worthy manner. Paul is literally bringing the Lord's judgment on them and disciplining them. This is often how the Lord's judgment comes in this present age, i.e., when a brother or sister is doing something that dishonours Christ's name another brother or sister may take them aside and in love shine a spotlight on that error as Paul is doing here so that they will not continue in that error and after death stand before the Lord and be judged because of it. In the context of this chapter for the Corinthian brothers and sisters to avoid the Lord's judgment Paul is telling them to stop being selfish and share their food (i.e., be a giving and sharing person).

1 CORINTHIANS 11:33-34

When you come together to Eat, wait for one Another.

- **1 Corinthians 11:33-34:** When you come together to eat, wait for one another ³⁴if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

Waiting for one another is common manners and shows courtesy (even the secular world know this), that is why Paul is saying don't eat until everyone is gathered together and the words, "If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home" (v34) simply mean if a brother or sister is starving before they come together to eat a meal in the Lord's name they should eat something at home so that they are willing to share what they have when they come together. The statement, "When you come together it will not be for judgment" (v34) implies a positive and negative idea. The negative idea states:

- If they do not share their food and drink then their feasting together will lead to judgment not only in this present age by other Christians who see their selfishness, but also later by the Lord when he returns.

The positive idea states:

- If they do change their selfish habits and share their food and drink with the poor and less fortunate then their feasting together will not lead to rebuke in this present age by other Christians nor by the Lord when he returns.

Summary of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11

The picture presented in this chapter of the Lord's Supper is not of a group of brothers and sister eating a small piece of wafer biscuit and a thimble size glass of wine, but of a group of brothers and sisters in Christ eating a proper meal and drinking glasses of wine, but not sharing what they have with the poor and those that had nothing. Paul is not rebuking them for having a proper meal in the Lord's name, but because the noble, wealthy and rich were only there to celebrate and get drunk they did not understand that the Lord's Supper is about fellowship in Christ's name over a meal and sharing what one has with each other.

NOTE: drinking alcohol is not a sin, certainly the Bible clearly warns against drinking an excess of alcohol for obvious reasons, too much alcohol lowers a persons will, morals and inhibitions and therefore can lead to behaviour that one will regret the next day and even worse for the rest of their life (i.e. drunk driving etc.), but a man and woman who have a glass of wine over a romantic meal are not sinning neither is a man who has a couple of beers after a hard day's work. Rather the real danger is in the wrongful behaviour that results after drinking an excess of alcohol thus the Bible in many verses clearly warns:

- Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise (Prov. 20:1) AND, Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess (Ephes. 5:18)

The Bibles focus throughout Scripture concerning alcohol is upon excess and drunkenness (1 Cor. 11:21) (1 Thess. 5:7).

THE LORD'S SUPPER IN MATTHEW

- **Matthew 26:20-28:** When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. ²¹And as they were eating --- NOW GO TO VERSE --- ²⁶Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." (Lk 22:19 says Which is given for you, ²⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Matt 26:20-30) (Mark 14:20-26) (Luke 22:18-25) are the same.

The apostles were eating a proper meal we know this because Jesus had previously sent two disciples out to prepare a room ready for him and the apostles to eat the Last Supper. It is hardly likely Jesus would send two men to prepare a table with one glass of wine and one bread bun for thirteen men to eat after a day's work. Added to this it was the Passover meal they were eating.

NOTICE: Jesus *gave* the bread, symbolising his body, which was *given* for them and he *gave* the cup, which was poured out *for many* thus the principal being presented here is one of sharing and giving to others. No-doubt they had a Passover lamb since it was the Passover meal, but it is deliberately not mentioned because Jesus was about to become the true Passover Lamb without blemish which brilliantly shines a floodlight on the majestic wonder and beauty of Scripture.

THE LORD'S SUPPER IN LUKE

- **Luke 22:18-20:** Jesus said For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

Jesus broke the bread and *gave* it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is *given* for you do this in remembrance of me and this cup is poured out *for you* in my blood." The words, "Do this in remembrance of me" means do what he is doing, but someone may ask, "What is he doing?" of course the simple answer is that he is giving and sharing his food and his drink. This is what he is referring to when he says, "Do this in remembrance of me." It is doing what he was doing which was sharing what he had with those who were with him. The Spirit of Christ puts others before self. Christ constantly gave of himself and ultimately gave his life for others, it is this giving and sharing aspect that Jesus is saying those who belong to him are to remember.

No Christian is going to forget the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ since that is the foundation of their faith, but we all too soon forget to look after our brothers and sisters in need. Certainly the Lord's Supper is about remembering Christ's death and celebrating his resurrection, but we are told to do this by eating a meal in Christ's name and sharing our food and drink with each other and especially with those who lack which is one of the greatest testimonies of God's love the church can present to the unsaved world.

THE LORD'S SUPPER IN ACTS

- **Acts 2:44-46:** And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶day by day, attended the temple together and broke bread in their homes and they received their food with glad and generous hearts.

The expression breaking bread was the common language of that era it does not always refer to the Passover meal. The events in focus in these verses take place just after the gift of tongues had been poured out and Peter preached his message to the multitude and three thousand were saved.

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NOTICE: these brothers and sisters were daily attending the temple service and then going home and breaking bread together which means brothers and sisters in Christ were having a meal together in their own homes after the temple service was over. Breaking bread together in this context is clearly about fellowship in Christ's name over a meal and sharing food with each other.

They were Gathered Together to Break Bread.

- **Acts 20:7-11:** On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. ⁸There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. ⁹And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." ¹¹And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed.

To isolate this verse and turn it into a legalistic and dogmatic doctrine that teaches eating the Lord's Supper is only valid if it is done on the first day of the week is most likely reading into the verse much more than is actually intended for the following two reason:

1. Because it does not say this is the Lord's Supper and therefore could refer to any meal brothers and sisters in Christ were eating since breaking bread was the common language for having a meal together.
2. Even if it was the Lord's Supper it is interesting to notice that they are eating it in a home not at the temple.

Summary of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament

The Lord's Supper has the same concept as that of the church meaning whenever two or more brothers or sisters in Christ come together to share the word of the God and fellowship in Christ's name, whether it is in a house, at a coffee bar, under a tree at a river or in a building it is a church since the word church refers to people who are called out and separated unto God and not to a building. This same principal applies to the Lord's Supper i.e., whenever two or more brothers or sisters in Christ come together to fellowship in Christ's name over a meal giving thanks to the Lord and sharing their food and drink with each other celebrating the goodness of God and the Lord Jesus Christ that meal can be called, the Lord's Supper.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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