

Sunday, June 25, 2017—I Corinthians 11:1-2 The Question of Pauline Ordinances

### Introduction

- This morning we are going to begin our consideration of Romans 11, the chapter every preacher wishes wasn't in the Bible.
  - Read verses 1 through 16
- What is going on in these verses? If you ask 10 different pastors or you will get 15 different answers. These verses are hard to follow.
  - *Head Covering Movement*—says that woman must wear head coverings according to this passage.
  - *Temple Prostitution Argument*—argues that the temple prostitutes in Corinth shaved their heads as means of visually signaling their sexual availability. Therefore, Paul's instructions in this chapter are culturally specific and were never intended to be literally applied by those outside of Corinth.
- Are either of these arguments true? What is going on in this chapter? It will be our task over the next couple of weeks to try and get to bottom of the matter.
- In order to ascertain the meaning of the passage we are going to employ a very systemic/methodical approach of working our way through these verses one at a time.

### I Corinthians 11:1

- **Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ.**
- *Be*—the verb “be” is the present tense and imperative mood. Remember the following regarding the imperative mood, “The imperative mood corresponds to the English imperative, and expresses a command to the hearer to perform a certain action by the order and authority of the one commanding.”
- Paul is commanding the Corinthians to be followers of him i.e., the Apostle Paul.
- *Even as*—Paul is not arbitrary in this command. In following Paul, the Corinthians will be following Christ.
  - I Corinthians 4:16
  - Philippians 3:17

- I Thessalonians 1:6
- II Thessalonians 3:9
- Galatians 1:11-12—Paul received his gospel by the “revelation of Jesus Christ.” Paul literally saw the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Ephesians 3:1-8—the Lord Jesus Christ gave the revelation of the mystery to Paul first.
- Romans 16:25—for a believer to be established in this dispensation of grace they need to understand the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery. Who was this first made known to? Paul.
- Romans 11:13—Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles during the current dispensation of grace.
- I Corinthians 11:1—believers follow Christ today when they follow the instructions given by Christ to Paul for the church. We do not follow Christ today according Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John. Rather we follow Christ according to information he revealed from heaven’s glory to the apostle Paul.
  - WWJD or WWPD?

### **I Corinthians 11:2**

- **Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered *them* to you.**
- First, note that verse 2 is the beginning of a paragraph that runs through the end of verse 12. In my opinion, this is an important first step to making sense out of the first half of chapter 11. Verse 2 serves as the topic sentence for this paragraph. Verses 3 through 12 are Paul’s elaboration of the topic.
- Paul wants the Corinthians to remember him in all things and keep the ordinances as he delivered them unto the Corinthians. This verse follows from verse 1. How are the Corinthians going to follow Christ? By following Paul. How are the Corinthians going to “remember” Paul in “all things?” By keeping the “ordinances” that Paul “delivered” unto them.
- At this point it is important to note the chain of command established by verses 1 and 2.
  - Paul follows Christ.
  - Christ “delivered” “ordinances” unto Paul for the body of Christ to follow.

- Paul “delivered” the “ordinances” to the Corinthians.
- The Corinthians “remember” Paul by keeping the “ordinances” that Paul “delivered” unto them.
- When the Corinthians follow Paul by keeping the “ordinances” he “delivered” unto them they are in fact following Christ.
- *Ordinances*—is a word that many grace people are uncomfortable with. Therefore, we need to make sure we take some time to understand its meaning and usage.
- Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines an “ordinance” as follows:
  - A rule established by authority; a permanent rule of action. An *ordinance* may be a law or statute of sovereign power. In this sense it is often used in the Scriptures. Exodus 15:25. Numbers 10:8. Ezra 3:10. It may also signify a decree, edict or rescript, and the word has sometimes been applied to the statutes of Parliament, but these are usually called acts or laws. In the United States, it is never applied to the acts of Congress, or of a state legislature.
  - Observance commanded.
  - Appointment.
  - Established rite or ceremony. Hebrews 9:1. In this sense, baptism and the Lord's supper are denominated ordinances.
- Of the many definitions provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary* one of them includes the following:
  - “An authoritative instruction as to how to proceed or act; an established set of principles; a system of government; authority; discipline. *Obs.*”
- In the New Testament, the word translated “ordinances” (*paradosis*) in I Cor. 11:2 occurs 13 times in 13 verses. Of these 13 occurrences, it is translated “tradition” 12 times and “ordinances” 1 time by the King James translators.
  - Matthew 15:1-6—in this context, the Lord Jesus Christ is using the word to describe the manmade traditions that the Jews had added to the Law.
  - Mark 7:3-13
  - Galatians 1:14

- Colossians 2:8
- II Thessalonians 2:15—in this verse Paul uses the word “traditions” to refer to what he had taught the Thessalonians.
- II Thessalonians 3:6—when Paul uses the word “traditions” he is referring to the set of instructions he gave to the churches for their “orderly” functioning. Where did Paul get these instructions from? He got them from Christ.
- I Corinthians 11:2—the “ordinances” that Paul “delivered” unto the Corinthians were for their “orderly” functioning as an assembly both personally and collectively.
- This is all necessary preparatory work for understanding the rest of the passage.