

CHAPTER 11



The first verse in 1 Corinthians 11 concludes the main theme of chapter ten: the Corinthian Christians should imitate St. Paul, just as he imitates Jesus Christ (11:1). Here St. Paul reminds the Corinthians that he has authority over them, and that Christ has authority over him.

St. Paul gives a simple hierarchy for the life of the Corinthian church: God the Father is the head of Jesus Christ; Christ is the head of every man; and the man is the head of the woman (11:3). He uses this hierarchical subordination as the basis for his approach to the issue of head coverings during worship. He concludes that, when praying, men should leave their heads uncovered, but women should wear a veil (11:4, 6). St. Paul asserts that the creation of Adam and Eve (see Genesis 2) influences the relationships between men, women and God. Adam, a man, was the crown or glory of creation, and therefore does not cover his head (1 Corinthians 11:7); since a woman is the glory of man (11:7) - because Eve was created by God from Adam (11:8,9) - she wears a head covering as a symbol of her submission (11:10).

With this hierarchy, we must remember that neither men nor women are independent of each other in the Lord (11:11-12).

After concluding this point, St. Paul refers to how divisiveness has corrupted the way in which they celebrated the Holy Eucharist (11:18-20). First, certain people or factions would receive more food and drink than others (11:21-22). Second, the Corinthians adopted the practices of the pagans and turned the meal into a riot of gluttony and drunkenness (11:21).

St. Paul relates to the the Corinthians the works that he received directly from Christ: the order to "take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you" and "This cup is the new

covenant in My blood" (11:23-24). The apostle continues that receiving the Holy Eucharist is a proclamation of the Lord's death (11:26), and therefore eating or drinking in the unworthy manner practiced by the Corinthians is be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord (11:27).

God has punished the Corinthians' divisiveness by allowing them to become sickly and weak, and even allowed many to "sleep" (meaning that they died) due to their attitudes (11:30)! The Corinthian Christians should therefore examine their attitudes to avoid God's judgment (11:31); but, if they find themselves being judged now by God, they can at least know that they are being chastened by Him now in order to avoid ultimate condemnation later (11:32).



TODAY'S SPECIAL: EXAMINE YOURSELF

A vital practice for experiencing true repentance is regularly engaging in thorough self-examination. Elder Amphilochios Makris advises, "It is necessary and beneficial for a general self-examination to take place from time to time, remembering all former sins."

As with repentance itself, effective self-examination is initiated by God: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24). While we must engage in self-examination, we are only able to acknowledge our sins because of the work of God; we otherwise would blind ourselves to our failings.

Metropolitan Antony Bashir outlines the basic process of self-examination:

- 1) the desire for self-examination;
- 2) self-conviction (admitting one's sins); and
- 3) self-realization (realizing that we are self-absorbed, and need to return to God).

Panayiotis Christou notes that monastics engage in daily self-examination to discover if they are engaged in the "eight mortal thoughts:" gluttony, fornication, avarice, anger, sorrow, despondency, vanity and pride.

One of the most notable practices utilized by Orthodox Christians that exhibit the most profound insight into the Orthodox understanding of self-examination and repentance is the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner."

