

1 Corinthians 11:2-3

READ THRU.

Where we left off - Deferring our own satisfaction and liberty for the sake of others.

Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ. - the nature of discipleship, who are we following? who are we imitating? does that person resemble Christ? do we resemble Christ? Can we say this to others, imitate me? If not, why? Is our imperfection an excuse for disobedience?

Moving into the next several chapters Paul is going to address some tricky topics - things that people tend to shy away from OR things people think they have buttoned up. While in fact there is quite a bit of confusion.

Contextually I find it interesting that Paul moves into this realm of instruction following on the heels of an exhortation to "[1Co 10:32-33 NKJV] 32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, 33 just as I also please all [men] in all [things], not seeking my own profit, but the [profit] of many, that they may be saved." Consider carefully, loved one, that hill you are willing to die on - or that hill we will cause others to die on.

If we think about it: the first century church - closer in proximity to the resurrection, closer in time to our Lord. Yet, had a problem wrapping their head around these things and putting them into practice in an orderly

manner then we must ask, "how have time and distance affected us?" For the better or worse?

Certainly it's given us time for reflection and time to sharpen our arguments either for/against to a lethal point - to the extent that we are willing to wound others about these issues that Paul addresses in the next several chapters - gender roles, gifts of the Holy Spirit, how to conduct public worship, the resurrection, the return of Christ.

But that's not God's heart and our only measuring stick for what is RIGHT is God's word - AND it is simpler than we have made it. It does however require obedience - either we believe God's word is true and we suspend our flawed opinions in deference to God's holy word OR anything goes. Which is what we have found over time in regards to these controversial topics - which wouldn't be all that controversial if we are taking God's word at face value.

v.2 - Now I praise you brethren - Paul isn't ONLY accusatory and rough with the Corinthian church. BUT he has had a monumental task offering godly correction and counsel to a group of apparently fractured, partisan, and unreasonably self-assured believers. They're still believers though! That's the beauty of the church! There's grace. Paul calls them brethren, and he praises them. Some bible teachers believe that Paul is offering this statement sarcastically given what we know about their conduct. All we can do is take Paul at his word. Certainly, any church that has issues also has some commendable attributes as well.

that you remember me in all things - one commendable attribute was that they were mindful of Paul and apparently placed some value on his instruction, though it appears there were certainly those in the Body who denigrated and talked poorly of Paul's ministry - as there will always be in every church. There's always somebody who thinks they can do it better, or that they are smarter, etc. That's just the nature of getting a group of people together. The hope is that by sitting under God's word and receiving instruction those hearts will be softened as those people are transformed more and more into the image of Christ. I've been there.

and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you - another commendable attribute, keeping the traditions

the word (paradosis) which could be translated ordinance or precept literally means - "a handing down" or "to hand over, deliver." objectively, that which is delivered, the substance of a teaching - Vine's -the Apostle's use of the word constitutes a denial that what he preached originated with himself, and a claim for its Divine authority. The inference is that Paul received this himself from others, and being an Apostle, received much of it from Christ directly, to be handed down to the churches.

But that word "traditions" hasn't gotten tarnished over the ages.

1. people inherently place a premium on tradition - because "that's the way we've always done it." It's comfortable and accepted and not challenging at all.

2. physical traditions - the traditions of men that Christ addressed in Mark 7:8 [Mar 7:8-9 NKJV] 8 ...laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men--the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do...you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. -- those things are measurable, easy to display, easy for others to see, easy to fake.

All types of people are fabricating all types traditions of **MEN**, apart from God. They sure sound good, even well thought out. Paul warns the Colossian church to beware - be aware! Be on the look out.

[Col 2:8 NKJV] 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

Now, God has a legacy and a tradition all His own! One that is captured for us in the Bible, a tradition marked by GRACE. He implemented many traditions for the Jewish community to observe, to serve as a reminder of His love and grace toward them.

AND Christ, points out that they became a problem when they supplanted the commandment of God. Whereas, Paul's commendation is because the tradition that the church received **ALIGNED WITH** God's commandment. Bear in mind, oral tradition was the first way that the Apostle's doctrine was passed on to the churches.

[1Th 4:1-2 NKJV] 1 Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; 2 for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

[2Th 2:15 NKJV] 15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

There's a place for receiving and keeping tradition - aligned with and supported by God's word. **AND WE MUST BE ABLE TO DISTINGUISH** between the essentials of the faith (apostle's doctrine) and matters of conscience or personal liberty - which can also be traditions.

Bearing that in mind, we move into a discussion on gender roles. And God's design for public worship and the administration of the church. An understanding of the Bible as a whole and God's heart towards us is necessary to understand this fully. Context matters. We will take it slow so as to give a well studied understanding of these controversial issues - we are only covering 1 verse today!

Some unbelievers, or partially informed believers, contrarians, think that Paul had something against women.

Here's why:

[1Co 11:3 NKJV] 3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman [is] man, and the head of Christ [is] God.

They say, see...Paul hated women.

That is not the case. This is **ONE** of the building blocks for the doctrine of male leadership within the universal church and informs our opinions and thinking in regard to gender roles within the Body of Christ. It gives us the basic structure for authority and headship - note, headship is more than authority, it is the source of authority.

First and most obviously is this: gender matters to God. Not in the sense that one is better than the other or vice versa - that much is not stated.

In fact, the opposite is true: [Gal 3:28 NKJV] ...there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

While we are equal - each woefully under qualified to fulfill any ministerial role - there is a divinely appointed order and to that end there are special, and specific roles that we each must fulfill as God has ordained in the churches.

Why? Because we all bare the visible AND invisible attributes of our almighty creator, we all work those characteristics out individually as God has called and equipped.

When we each fulfill our distinct, special roles then we collectively present a high definition picture of the true nature and character of the relationship between Christ and His church to the world.

Sandy Adams on Male Leadership: When God created mankind, He did so male and female. The man and the woman were equal in value and status...However, "equal" does not mean "same." God made us with distinction. He gave diverse roles to men and women...they speak vital truths about God's very nature...Throughout the Bible, God consistently uses gender to display His relationship with His people. Israel was God's wife. The Church is the bride of Christ. This is why any violation of gender roles – any confusion between male and female – doesn't just effect the individual and families involved, it mars the picture that God is painting of salvation. Marriage is a sacred snapshot. And God is serious about His wedding photos!...God has a role for women to play, and a role for men to play. By each gender's faithfulness we spell out heavy, eternal, spiritual truths...Male leadership is a creation principle, not a cultural accommodation. Gender transcends culture. Here is the issue, are we truly Bible-driven, or do we just use the Bible at our own convenience, and to support our own agenda...In the days ahead, I am sure our biblical convictions regarding gender will be questioned, and criticized, and tested.

Now, our natural inclination is to view this through the lens of me v. you. Man v. woman. BUT! Re-read - the head of every man is Christ, the head of every woman, man. and the head of Christ is God. None of us are "in charge!" What is God's nature and character toward us? Are we men, resembling Christ? Ladies, you too.

Illustration next page.

To use a simple illustration about God's great care toward us and His intentional creation of each soul: My daughter isn't less my child because she's a girl. The other day I swore I was looking right in my own face. Sometimes people will say to her - "you look just like you Dad." Isn't that what people should be saying of God's sons and daughters? We all have different roles, we are each one of us unique, but we should all look like Dad.