

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Verse 2:

--Paul had just finished exhorting these Corinthians believers to follow his example in following after Christ.

--In line with that, he then praises them for keeping the *traditions* that he had passed on to them. *Traditions* is a Greek word used some 12 times in Scripture and most often for the Jewish religious traditions.

--It seems to more directly refer to ordinances on how to live out God's commands and so traditions could be either bad or good based on how they were emphasized. Bad: **(Mark 7:8-13; Col. 2:8)**. Good: **(1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Thess. 3:6)**.

--We really don't know much about the specific details of early church worship but they knew what Paul was talking about.

--It seems like the Corinthians had kept most of the methods Paul had passed on to them, but this chapter on head coverings seems to be a topic either Paul had not elaborated on (seems from **16** that he might have not thought he needed to) or they had asked him about in their letter (ladies saying they wanted to stop using the veil)?

Verse 3:

--This verse lays out the theological basis for the rest of what Paul is going to say. This is the foundational truth that directs the whole passage. So how we see this verse will determine the rest of the structure for us.

--I would notice as well that Paul doesn't feel like he needs to explain this or defend this to them. What he is saying is very clear.

--The main distinction here in this passage will revolve around the word *head*. There are two major views here.

--One being that *head* simply means the *source* of something. This will cause the arguments in the passage to be about relationships.

--The other being that *head* means *governmental authority*. This will of course create a hierarchy in command and authority will be in view.

--The first, is argued by those who want men and women to have equal authority in their relationships. The second, is those who see that God created a governmental authority in the home and church.

--As always, the Scriptures must to be our guide. The Bible clearly connects the headship of Christ and the man to a positional authority in the church and the home.

****Ephesians 5:22-24: Wives submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.****

--So Paul begins by laying out a structure of authority. And where does he begin? With God! In the Trinity, we have a community of unity and diversity that flows down into creation.

--***The head of Christ is God.*** What an amazing statement! The submission and cooperation in the Godhead is a revelation from God Himself to man.

****John 10:18: No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.****

****John 10:30: I and My Father are one.****

****John 14:28: You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I.****

--So Christ, as the Son of God and Son of Man, submitted to the governmental authority of His Father, which was truly His own will, and lived out obedience to His Father's command. What this shows us is that the most pleasing life that was ever lived on the face of the earth was lived in respect to the created order of God.

--So if Christ honored His head, so too man and woman are to honor their head.

--***The head of every man is Christ!*** Every man is under the governmental authority of God Almighty. Man is not free to abuse his God-given authority or to do whatever he wants to those under his delegated position.

--***The head of the woman is man.*** When man was made, where did he get his orders? Directly from God. When woman was made, where did she get her orders? From Adam. God made Adam first, there was a period of time where Adam and God communed alone, and then God made Eve from Adam and he passed on to Eve what was from God.

--So Paul establishes that God has set up an order in all of creation.

Verses 4-6:

--**(4)** Having laid a theological foundation Paul begins to address the issue. He gives two commands here: 1) Men are not to pray and prophesy with their heads covered. 2) Women are to pray and prophesy with their heads covered.

--As a side issue it is clear that both men and women prayed and prophesied in Christian gatherings even though we do not have many details of what that looked like. The fact of it is Biblically clear. **(Acts 2:17 {Joel 2:28} + Acts 21:9)**

--Both of these commands were countercultural in some ways as Jewish men typically covered their heads and so did some but not all Greek or Roman cultures.

--Interestingly, we don't really have the head covering fault totally spelled out for us. Were men being an issue too? Was it just married women or all the women? Were they arguing that now that they were "spiritual" and not fleshly it didn't matter? Were they arguing that cultural norms didn't matter? Were they are arguing that men and women were now the same in Christ?

--We don't know any of those details because the Holy Spirit doesn't need to give us those details. Any argument built off these details is not the point. The Bible is always clear about what is necessary and unclear about things that are unnecessary.

--The point is that whatever these woman were doing or wanted to do in relation to head coverings was blurring the male and female lines of *headship* that God established from the very beginning.

--So men were not to cover their heads and project a subordination to anyone else because God did not make them to do so. They were to take their created place before Him directly!

--Also, women were not to uncover their heads and project an independence from the headship that God had created for them. They too were to take their created place before Him!

--These are arguments for obedience and submission to God.

--(5) Why would this be dishonoring? (Really for men or women but as it seems the women were the real problem here as Paul addresses their situation specifically.)

--No man or women can speak to God (praying) or for God (prophesying) while also ignoring the proper place in His created order without dishonoring themselves. *Done in ignorance it is wrong—done in rebellion it is doubly wrong!*

--In our culture I could say this in regards to trans issues. I could easily say no man should wear a dress and no woman should dress as a man. To try to serve or approach God in such a state is a direct affront to Him and a dishonor to the individual.

--(6) Here Paul goes with the old If-your-friend-jumped-off-a-bridge type of reasoning. . . If it was okay for a woman not to cover her head, well then, why not go all the way and just cut all her hair off? Why does hair matter at all? Why are we not all just androgynous humans? To shave a woman's head would have been an obvious shame in the culture (synonymous with prostitutes or adultery) and I think Paul's comment infers that none of the Corinthians actually wanted to go that far or had done so.

Verses 7-10:

--(7) Here Paul adds further reasoning to his argument. Man is meant to reflect God's glory as a source of authority and rule differently than a woman. He was created to interact with God and then mediate dominion to all of creation with no intermediary between them—no covering.

--(8-9) This was seen again in the created order. God made man first on purpose and then made woman. He made *two* different things on purpose and for *two* different functions: Fork and Knife, Hammer and Screwdriver, etc. Each are obviously made as tools for projects with different designs and with different functions in mind.

Jeremiah 30:6: Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with a child?

--So what does it mean: ***Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man?*** How does that work?

Genesis 2:18: And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make a helper comparable to him."

--What kind of *helper* to man did God have in mind? A helper that does whatever he wants? No! A corresponding partner in the purpose that God (man's head) had already passed down to Adam. Eve was made to help Adam in God's good purposes for humanity.

--God's purposes are clearly reflected in how He made us!

--(Just as an aside Paul obviously sees the Genesis record as true and inspired. The whole Bible is the Word of God and it is infallible and any man or woman that tells you otherwise is a wolf and a false teacher. The Genesis record is *actual & factual!*)

--(10) Obviously, this is a weird verse. Though, I think Paul's point is simple. He had just told them to think about the demon spirits they were interacting with in pagan temples. Now he is telling them to think about the angels they were interacting with in God's house.

--Everyone is to take their proper place before God in creation just as the angels do. The angels are not up there complaining about ministering spirits sent to help us and they are sinless beings!

--Heaven is supposed to learn something by observing the work of Christ in the church on earth.

Ephesians 3:10: To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

Verses 11-12:

--Here Paul is tempering any abuse of what he is saying. Led by the Spirit, Paul was faithful to hold truth in balance.

--He reminds them that in God's design we are interdependent. God may have made woman from man—but every other man came from a woman! Neither can claim independence from the other or the Lord's designed relationship between them.

--This is all *in the Lord + all things are from God*. Why do things have to be this way? God made it like that. It isn't just the way things should be. It is the way things are. It is the mind of God.

Verses 13-16:

--Here Paul gives another observation from the general nature of things. This is similar to his arguments used in **9:7** and **10:24-25**. Of course there are exceptions in our world of sin, but this is the typical nature of things as God made them.

--In light of that, the question is what is *proper* or *fitting* practice in light of these truths?

--Men have shorter hair as an aspect of their unique created being. Women have longer hair as an aspect of the unique created being.

--So, if nature has given a woman her covering, why then does she need another one? Why does the cultural one matter to Paul or anyone else? Because the individual's will and faith is to play its personal part and not our nature only.

--Not only are we to recognize the truth that God is speaking here. We are in fact to personally embrace it and celebrate it.

--We must never argue from the abuses. We must reason from the reality. What I mean is, I cannot judge God's system based off of the abuses. I can only truly see the value of God's system when it is done in God's way. God's system of headship may be abused at times but that doesn't mean that another system can actually be better.

--Also, it is important to remember that this is not all that God has to say about the subject:

Ephesians 5:25: *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.*

Colossians 3:19: *Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter towards them.*

1 Peter 3:7: *Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.*

--Both men *and* women must take their appointed roles from God and seek to please Him.

--(16) Here Paul is basically saying that it is only contentiousness that would oppose these things as no other churches had an issue seeing this principle.

In Closing: Is Paul commanding all women today to wear a head covering to respect their God-given roles and their husbands particularly? Is that why the Holy Spirit has inspired this chapter for the church ***upon whom the ends of the ages have come***? No!

1) Paul has been arguing from the greater principle to the lesser symptoms this entire letter: Wisdom of God and human wisdom; Human stewards and divisions in the church; Love and liberties in foods or support; Created headship and head coverings, etc.

--The Biblical teaching on clothing can be largely summed up by saying God cares about what we wear because of the heart behind the way we dress! To say God doesn't care about our clothing at all is a step too far. God made the first clothes and He still cares about them now *because* they are an expression of our individual hearts.

--We see this in the OT, in the teachings of Jesus Christ, and in the teachings of the apostles:

Deuteronomy 22:5: *A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.*

Matthew 23:5: *But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.*

1 Timothy 2:9-10: *In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.*

--To make head coverings a physical ordinance for all the church in every age goes much too far. We only have two of those (Communion and Baptism) and to add another would be quite a leap with no clear command from Christ, and no example in the book of Acts (especially in **Acts 15**) and no direct teaching on the meaning and symbolism of head coverings from the apostles. *If it is your personal conviction to wear one that is fine but we cannot force that upon others.*

--Also, it is important to note that Paul is still clearly speaking with and fellowshiping with this church despite their issues with the practice of head coverings. His language is much different than what we have seen in **5:1-5; 6:1; 8:11-12; etc.** where the warnings and clear references to sin are much more direct.

--The larger point being: The symptom of head coverings is a bit hazy because it is not what the Holy Spirit wanted to give the church for every age. The principle of created order and headship is clear because that is universal and meant to guide all our practice because God knew that the cultures of the Gentile world are all so different! The practice conforms to the principle.

--So does our clothing and speech and practice declare God's distinctive reality for redeemed men and redeemed women in Christ Jesus?

--Again, I could say to our culture: Woman should wear dresses and men should not. I could also clearly say that both sexes should always wear their wedding rings.

--In a day of so much confusion, it is important that both men and women should clearly *act* and *speak* in a way that ratifies the governmental authority passed down from God the Father, to God the Son, to the man made in His image, to the woman made from man. *No one should like or promote other causes because it is a dishonor to yourself!*

--Why? Because God made it so and there is no other philosophy or reality of life that can be better.