

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Introduction

There has been much confusion and thus much controversy over the years with regard to this section of Scripture.

The controversial point is whether or not the subject being discussed in this section is binding today.

The answer is, yes!

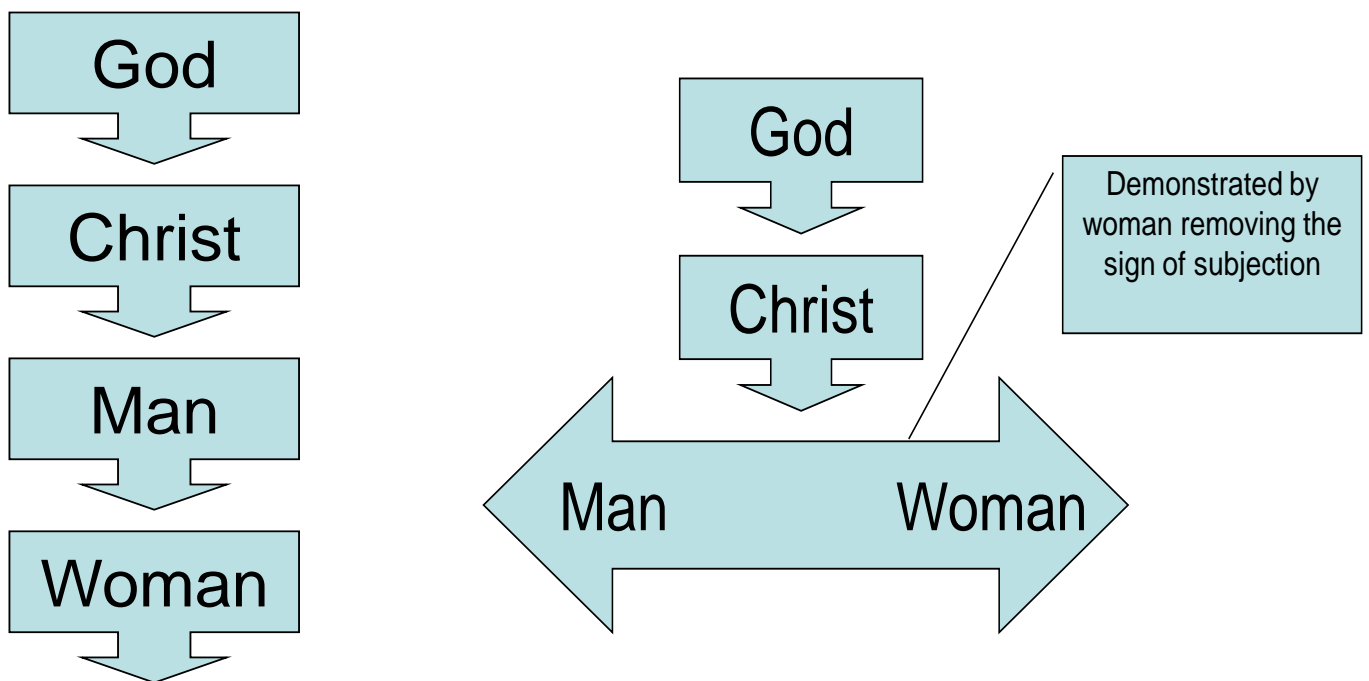
However, let us understand what the true subject of the section is.

The subject of the section, as we will see, is that men and women are not to transgress the roles God has put in place. Each has a role and that role must be honored and respected.

It seems that the backdrop to the situation was something like an ancient women's liberation movement.

It seems that some women had cast aside the sign of their subjection to the man – their covering – whatever that may have been.

The problem illustrated:



Paul wrote this section in response to the issue.

Exposition

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

- Now – serves as a transition – not a contrast (*8:1; 12:1; 16:1*).
- Paul **praises** (commends or applauds) them for two things:
 - **Remembering** him:
 - Perhaps a quotation from the letter they had sent him (*7:1*).
 - Perhaps because they appealed to the apostle for answers.
 - **Keeping** (holding fast) the **ordinances**.
 - May just be part of the quotation from the letter.
 - Might be that Corinthians stopped the rebellion, or trying to stop the rebellion and holding fast Paul's teaching on headship.
 - This is very likely the idea – Paul is writing to commend them for their stand or to help the faithful in their stand – makes the sections break better (*vs 17-18*).
 - Ordinances is from the Greek word – Paradosis (13x), here is the only time not translated as tradition or traditions.
 - Here we learn that not all tradition is bad (*cf. 2 Thess. 2:15 (13); 3:6; Gal. 1:11-12*).
 - Some traditions are to be avoided: (*Col. 2:8; Matt. 15:3; Galatians 1:14*).

3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

- **I would have you know (understand)** – The idea is “*listen up, do I have your attention?!?*”
- **Head** = Kephale – 9 x in this section:

- Can mean the literal head (anatomy).
- Can symbolically mean ruler, superior in terms of authority, not ability.
- It is up to the student to determine which each time. Which here?
- Here the subject of section introduced – keeping proper roles; respecting headship.
- **The head of every man is...** Paul tells them of God's plan:
 - Christ over man – *Matthew 17:5; 28:18; Colossians 3:17*.
 - Man over woman – *2 Timothy 2:11-15; Genesis 3:16; Eph. 5:22-24*.
 - Father over Christ – *John 6:38; 1 Corinthians 15:27-28* – did the Father's will – did not give up deity – subordination in function.
 - So you see, Paul used Christ's relationship to the Father to teach woman's relationship to man.
 - As Christ was subject to the Father, so the woman is to be subject to the man.
 - But as subjection of Christ to the Father did not mean inferiority in nature (*John 10:30*), so woman's subjection to man does not mean that she is inferior to man in nature or Christian privileges and blessings. Do not miss this point.
 - She just has a different role to carry out.
 - Father & Christ = in Nature but =/ in roles.
 - Men & Women = in nature but =/ in roles.
 - Again, they apparently misunderstood this or disregarded this, possibly due to *Galatians 3:27, 28; 1 Corinthians 4:6?*
 - Servant – master relationship – Prisoner, etc.
 - Not roles or stations in life, but eligibility to participate in gospel.
- Paul is writing them saying: “*Hey wait a minute folks, God's divine plan has not changed.*”

- He is saying “*by casting off the covering (whatever it is) you are casting off the sign of your subjection to man and thereby violating God’s will; the divine order of headship.*”

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.

- **Every man** – Aner not anthropos.
- **Praying** = “proseuchomai”
 - Communicating with the heavenly Father.
 - Can be public and inspired (*14:13-17*).
 - Does not always have to be (*James 5:13*).
- **Prophesying** = “propheteuo”
 - Defined:
 - To speak forth by divine inspiration (Thayer).
 - To proclaim an inspired revelation (BDAG).
 - To speak inspired utterances (LN).
 - To speak or teach under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit (LS).
 - The declaration of that which cannot be known by natural means (Vine).
 - To bring to light through divine inspiration something previously hidden (TDNT).
 - This is not a reference to uninspired teaching.
 - We know there were prophets in the early church (*Acts 2:14-17*).
 - We know that there were prophets in Corinth (*1 Cor. 12:1, 10; 14:23-33*).
 - We know that prophecy passed away with the completion of Scripture (*1 Corinthians 13:8-10*).

- Assembly is not mentioned – although could be the assembly (*1 Cor. 14:4 - masculine*).

- **Head** = anatomy.
- **Head covered** = Kata kephalē “Hanging down from head.” – what must be determined from elsewhere.
 - What is the covering here?
 - Don’t know yet, let’s let the context define the covering the man is NOT to have.
- **Dishonors** – disgraces, shames, puts to blush
- **His head** = Christ

5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

- **Praying and prophesying** - same stuff as in *verse 4*.
 - It is true that what the men were doing the women were also doing, but the verse, nor the section, denotes where.
 - Again, the assembly (mixed) not mentioned.
 - The assembly is assumed.
 - Paul cannot be giving instructions on something he later forbids! (*1 Tim. 2:8-12; 1 Cor. 14:34*)
- **Her head** (anatomy)
- **“Uncovered”** is akatakaluptos “not covered, unveiled.”
 - A “alpha” thus “un”.
 - Kata “down from” thus whatever covering we are talking of would hang down (cannot be a napkin on the head, fashion cap, short hair, etc.).
 - Kalupto is “to cover,” “to veil”

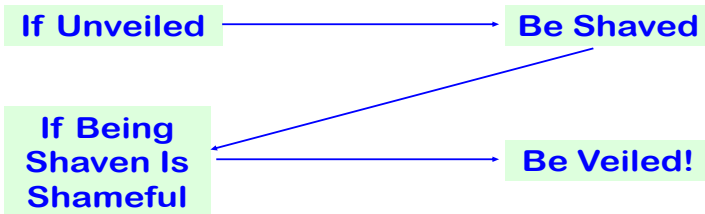
- **Dishonors** – same as *verse 4*.
- **Her head** – Man (*v3*):
 - Idea is she brings disgrace by failing to demonstrate her subjection to the male.
 - This of course ultimately shows no respect for deity for in removing her covering she would be acting out of step with the divine order.
- **For that is even all as one as if she were shaven** - The point is if you discard the covering then you will be just like the woman who shaves her head.
 - Adulteress? (*Numbers 5:11-18*)
 - Some say shameless women who engaged in base behavior in Corinth (prostitutes).
 - The point is one who does not respect God's proper role for women.
- Obviously the apostle commands women to be covered:
- What is the covering? Let's let the context define it (*Matthew 8:24*).

6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

- Here Paul will throw down some logic that would be obvious.
- **Covered** - katakaluptō - to cover up; to veil"
- **Let her also be shorn** or shaven (*understood from rest of verse*) – hair cut really, really short – a Manish haircut, or hair shaved off.
 - Paul's point is that those who discard the covering may as well go all the way and make your insult complete (**SINCE YOU WEAR A BIKINI GO YOU MAY AS WELL GO ALL THE WAY AND BE NAKED**).
- **But if it be a shame** – which it was (this is his point) – **shame** = something base, dishonorable.
- **Let her be covered**: Same as previous.

- Verse illustrated:

The “Shaved” Head – vs. 5-6



- Covered with what?
 - Hair has entered into the discussion, but let the rest of the context better determine the covering.

7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

- Paul will now offer another line of argumentation.
- He will show that women must keep the roles straight because of the order of creation.
- **Man** - Aner not anthropos
- **Indeed** - i.e. being a man.
- **Ought not** – must not; bound not to; imperative
- **Cover** - katakaluptō - “to cover up; to veil”
- **His head** – Anatomy.
- Cover it with what?
 - Let’s wait for the context to tell us clearly.
- **Image and glory of God:**
 - Both in image of God (*Genesis 1:27*) (immortal soul).
 - But man is the glory of God – he has no created superior.
 - Paul is simply showing again proper headship (God – man – woman).
 - Why would man want to cover himself and denounce his God given authority?

- **The woman is the glory of man** (*therefore she should cover her head - understood*):
 - She is not invested with same authority as man; she does not share God's glory in this way. That glory is something man only has.
 - Since she has not been given the same authority as man, she must not discard her covering and assume to take an authoritative role that is not hers to take.
 - Paul will go on to elaborate on this in **vs. 8-9** and show why men have headship over the women.

8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.

- Here Paul continues to base his argument for women to be covered and men uncovered based on the order of creation.
- Man came first and came directly from God (he did not originate from woman and thus she shall not have authority over him).
- Woman came second (she is "out of" the man) (thus he shall have authority over her).
 - Again, does not stress inequality, just different roles.
 - He will hit on this very clearly in a few verses.
- When man or woman cross the lines God made, they are out of step with God's divine plan for His creation.

9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

- Paul has shown God's order of creation to make the point about headship.
- He will now show God's purpose of creation.
- Woman was created for the man – thus his headship ought to be apparent.

10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.

- **For this cause:**
 - This begin a new argument.

- **Ought** – must, is bound.
- **Power on her head**
 - Authority is a metonymy for the covering. Thus the NASB.
 - The point is that women may not hope to approach God or take part in God’s work (in the context – P & P) by rebelling against God’s plan for headship.
- **Because of the angels** –
 - How does this fit in to the argument? I think it gives a new argument.
 - For this reason, **and because of the angels**, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head (**NIV**).
 - Why would the angels serve as an argument to keep the issue of headship straight?
 - Many different choices have been offered.
 - The best conclusion I can draw has to do with **Jude 6** – fits the context.
 - Paul is saying – “*don’t forget that there is a penalty to pay for getting out of line with God’s intended order.*”
- In the **next 2 verses** Paul takes a quick break from arguing for proper headship and pauses to remind the men of a vital lesson.

11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

- **Nevertheless**
 - “Hold your horses” men, let’s not get arrogant; just because you have been given headship over the woman does not make her dirt.”
 - While it is true that a woman is subordinate to man, she is not inferior.
 - We are all one in the Lord, even though not in authority or creation (**Gal. 3:28**).
- **Neither is the man without the woman** – Man needs woman.
- **Neither is the woman without the man** – Woman needs man.

- **In the Lord**
 - According to God's divine plan.
 - In accordance with His Will.
 - *Eph.4:17; 6:1.*
- Paul is showing that males and females are mutually dependent upon one another.
 - It is not God's plan for either to act totally independent of the other.
 - Man cannot get along fine without woman... so saith God (*Genesis 2:18*).
- Paul is reminding the men that if you properly respect God you will properly respect woman.
- With the next verse Paul shows from history one very clear way in which men and women need each other and at the same time reaches back to the issue of headship.

12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman;
but all things of God.

- Woman originated from man true enough.
 - However, ever since then man has come through woman.
 - Though each have different roles – in connection with God's will – each is of great value to the other.
- **All things are of God:**
 - With this Paul heads back to the point of headship.
 - They both would be nothing without God thus they better keep straight the roles of headship when praying and prophesying and beyond!

13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God
uncovered?

- **Judge in yourselves:**
 - Basing a decision by taking various factors into account (BDAG).
 - What factors has Paul presented:
 - Clearly stated proper headship (vs 3).
 - Showed a failure to respect proper headship brings dishonor to all (vs. 4-5).
 - It is shameful not to be covered (v 6).
 - Creation shows proper headship must be adhered to (vs 7-9).
 - One can suffer eternal punishment for failing to keep roles straight (10).
- **Is it comely** – Is it proper?
- **Pray** - is synecode (part for whole – prophesy and approaching God in general).
- **Uncovered** - akatakaluptos “not covered, unveiled.” Something not hanging down.
- What answer must be given based on the arguments given?
- What must she be covered with? What must be hanging down?
 - The only thing that has been hinted at in the context is hair, but let’s wait and let the context clearly determine it.

14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?

- **Nature**
 - Conditions or circumstances that accompany birth; natural endowments, natural characteristics (BDAG).
 - The regular order of things as given by God.
 - Can have the idea of instinct (*Romans 2:14*).
- **Teach you** - Give a lesson; instruct
- **Man** – Aner not Anthropos.

- **Long Hair** – Komao – wear long hair
 - Bible nowhere specifies hair length, but the point is that there ought to be a noticeable difference between men and women.
 - If the hair is the covering then it must not hang down.
- **Shame**
 - Disgrace, something vile or degrading (*Romans 1:26*)
 - A man is to avoid the appearance of femininity (*Deut. 22:5; 1 Cor. 6:9*).
- The question demands a yes answer – man is not to have long hair.
 - This is the covering man is not to have (*v 4, 7*).
 - Paul now looks at it from the other side of the coin.

15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.

- **Long hair** – wear long hair- this has generally been the case throughout history.
- **Glory to her** – (something praiseworthy as opposed to shameful in *vs. 14*).
- **Covering**
 - Finally, the covering is clearly defined for us.
 - Peribolaion
 - That which is thrown around – something that covers up; a veil that hangs down; something thrown around (*Heb. 1:12; Ps. 120:26; Ex. 22:27*).
 - This fits the fact that the covering she is to wear is to “be down from, a covering hanging down” (*v. 5, 6, 13*).
- It seems Paul’s point is that to cut her hair in a Manish way is not something to glory about, but a shame which is what is taught in *vs. 4, 6*.
- The context has defined the covering.

- Women are not to wear their hair like men and men not to wear their hair like women.
- To do so is to rebel against God's divine order of things; it is merely a symptom of being dissatisfied with his divinely arranged order of headship.

16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

- Here is Paul's final word on the matter before moving on to other matters.
- **If any man**- not gender based – if anyone
- **Seem to be contentious** - Those who are fond of quarrel.
- **We** – The apostles as God's ambassadors.
- **Have no such custom:**
 - This does not have reference to the issue as a custom – the issue is headship and it is binding.
 - Paul is not saying, "*Hey if any want to argue just ignore what I have said.*"
 - Paul is not saying that what he has just finished saying for 13 verses is optional.
 - Quite the opposite.
 - Custom comes from a word that mean "use for" or "usual practice."
 - What Paul is saying is one of two things:
 - If anyone is contentious about this we have no use for such a person, nor the churches of God.
 - Such quarrels are totally out of line with God and thus with us.
 - Discipline is implied for the contentious.
 - Or it could be (and I think is)...
 - If any man be contentious know this that we teach no other practice in any of the other churches of God.
 - This plan is God's not ours.

- Think long and hard before kicking against it.
- Discipline is implied for the contentious.
- Certainly the issue would have extended beyond just praying and prophesying.

What we have learned:

- There was or had been a problem in Corinth with regard to headship.
- Some women it seems were casting aside their covering and thereby working against God's intended order.
- Paul wrote to either help with the correction or to reinforce the teaching the faithful stood for.
- The subject is headship and is binding – not just with reference to church work either.
 - A woman cannot accept headship part time.
 - A man cannot be the head part time.
- The circumstance in which the abuse is not the point (praying and prophesying).
- If the covering is artificial is it binding today, but I just don't see it there.
- If the covering is the hair – the concept is binding, although the exact length is not clear (hang down).
- Men are not dictators and women are not slaves.
- Men and women need each other.
- Men have certain functions and so do women – and neither is to replace the other.