

Sunday, July 16, 2017—I Corinthians 11:5-6 Addressing Questions About Head Coverings

Introduction/Review

- Two weeks ago, before I was gone for vacation, we had continued our study of I Corinthians 11 by looking at verses 3 through 6. Given the fact that it has been two weeks since our last study in this chapter a bit of review seems prudent at the outset.
- *Verse 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.
- *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.
- Recall our discussion of the following “chain of command” established in 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 “ordnances” that Paul “delivered” unto them.
 - When the Corinthians follow Paul by keeping the “ordinances” he “delivered” unto them they are in fact following Christ.
- The “ordinances” (“A rule established by authority; a permanent rule of action.”) that Paul “delivered” unto the Corinthians were for their “orderly” functioning as an assembly both personally and collectively.
 - 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.
- *Verse 3*—Paul wants the Corinthians to “know” the three things identified in verse 3. These three statements elaborate on the “ordinances” that Paul “delivered” unto the Corinthians for their “orderly” functioning.

- Paul is establishing three headships that the Corinthians need to know about.
 - “The head of every man is Christ”
 - “The head of the woman is the man.”
 - “The head of Christ is God.”
- A failure to understand verse 3 will result in a failure to understand verses 4 through 12. Paul is not saying the men are better than woman or that women are inferior to men. Rather he is establishing a spiritual chain of command like what we observed in verses 1 and 2.
 - Verses 1-2—Christ, Paul, the Corinthians
 - Verse 3—God the Father, Christ, Man, Woman
- When the Corinthians didn’t follow Paul, they weren’t following Christ. The same is true for men and woman when they don’t honor their prescribed spiritual head.
- *Verse 4*—how would a man cover his head in this context? It would be to place anything or anyone between him and his head the Lord Jesus Christ. More specify, given the totality of the context when men allow woman to usurp the authority that God has given them they dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - I Timothy 2:12
 - I Timothy 3:1—in keeping with I Cor. 11:3 men are given the responsibility of running the local church.
- When a man **does function** in the role/headship that God has ordained he brings honor to his head i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ.
- *Verse 5*—according to verse 3, who is the “head of the woman?” The Man. So how would a woman pray with her head “uncovered?” She would be seeking to usurp the authority and headship that God has placed in “the man.” She would be stepping out from underneath the God ordained headship/covering of verse 3 and seeking to replace it with her own headship.
- *for that is even all one as if she were shaven*—this part of the verse makes it clear that Paul is not simply talking about a woman’s physical hair. Notice carefully that the woman is not ACTUALLY shaven in this verse. Rather it says that when she seeks to act in an “uncovered” manner it is as “if she were shaven.”
- Therefore, Paul is using the woman’s hair as a physical illustration of a spiritual truth. Think about how women are about their hair? They will touch and braid each other’s hair.

- Verse 6—following the illustration, if a woman is going to refuse to walk according to verse 3 Paul says, “let her also be shorn” i.e., have all her hair cut off.
- *but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered*—if a woman would be shamed by being shaven in a physical sense she needs to make sure she is covered in a spiritual sense.
- Ladies, Paul is using your hair as a tangible spiritual illustration. What are you more concerned with? Your physical headship/covering or your spiritual headship/covering?

Addressing Some Questions

- Two weeks ago, in seeking to explain this passage I went to many passages dealing with marriage (Eph. 5:21-25, Gen. 2:18-25, 3:16-19, and I Cor. 14:34-36) to try and communicate/illustrate the issue of headship. I did this for the following reasons:
 - To Biblically illustrate/explain to concept of headship.
 - To demonstrate that Biblical headship is not chauvinist or dictatorial in nature but is primarily about service.
- In doing so this generated some questions regarding, “What does a woman do when he husband’s head is not Christ?” I received this question from saints within this assembly as well as from those who are without. These are reasonable and natural questions given the nature of what I preached two weeks ago.
- I Corinthians 11:17-18—the context of I Corinthians 11 is not primarily about marriage. Rather it is about the orderly functioning of the local church. The Corinthians were walking in a disorderly manner thus Paul’s admonition to them in verse 2 to keep the ordinances/traditions that he delivered unto them.
- Order is maintained in the local assembly when the three headships outlined in verse 3 are observed within the context of the local church. Ideally these realities manifest themselves in the local church through marriages or husband and wife teams that are seeking to follow Paul’s instructions regarding marriage.
 - I Corinthians 14:34-35
- Practically, the following realities complicate the spiritual lives of many women.
 - Death—widows
 - I Timothy 5:11-13

- Divorce
 - Unsaved Spouse
 - Spiritually Disinterested Husband—who doesn't attend church or offers no spiritual leadership.
 - Unmarried
- These realities complicate the orderly functioning of the local church. How does a woman in any of these five circumstances follow I Cor. 14:35 and ask her “husband at home” when she either doesn't have one or he is not interested in the things of the Lord and therefore has no capacity to help her with her questions?
 - I Timothy 2:11-12—in the local church a woman's covering is the duly appointed eldership of the assembly.
 - I Timothy 3:1-11
 - I Corinthians 11:3—the issue in these passages is that the men not allow the woman to “usurp” the authority i.e. headship that God has given them.
 - There is an old joke about women that I am going to repeat for the purposes of making an important point.
 - If you give a woman an inch she will think she is a ruler.
 - Men we need to be more concerned about providing loving Christ like headship for the women in our lives than anything else.
 - Genesis 3:16—the sin nature in a wife is going to be to rebel against authority that God has placed in her husband.
 - I Timothy 2:11-15—how is woman saved in childbearing? Does this mean that all a woman needs to do to go to heaven is have children? No! This entire chapter is about authority. Children provide a Biblical outlet for the need a woman feels for authority.
 - Does this mean that woman have no place in the local church? No! Certainly not! Paul could not have done the work of the ministry without the assistance of women who labored with him.
 - Phebe (Rom. 16:1-2)
 - Pricilla (Rom. 16:3)

- Mary (Rom. 16:6)
 - Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (Rom. 16:12)
 - Julia & Nereus' Sister (Rom. 16:15)
 - Chloe (I Cor. 1:11)
 - Euodias & Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3)
- Titus 2:3-5—women have a ministry and play a vital role in the local church especially as it pertains to the children and other women.
 - I Corinthians 11:5-6—God has charged women with a vitally important role within the local church. There is grace, latitude, and opportunity for ministry so long as a woman doesn't seek to step out from underneath the covering of her spiritual head identified in verse 3.
 - Men are to be providing loving Christ-like headship and women are not to seek to usurp the authority God has placed in man.