

But before we move on to verses 11 and 12 in our second point of the sermon, let's unpack Paul's phrase at the end of verse 10 "*because of the angels.*" When men and women approach God in worship, the angels are watching. And this is the test - what do the angels see? The angels see the external display of honor from the women with the choice of their hair and clothing in relationship to Christ the head of the church and their husband as the head of their marriages. The angels see externally what God sees when God looks at the heart. Paul has shown that the woman's hair reveals her heart! Does she want to be independent? God sees hearts of men and women who are gladly yielded to Christ's good order in the church. Consequently, the angels would see the heads of the women showing honor and respect for God, for their husbands, and for any church visitors. The heads of the women reflect their spiritual condition. Both men and women accepted their roles in the worship of God, and the angels could witness what a good job Christ had done in the hearts of the worshippers. The church brought honor to Christ, and the angels could rejoice. Jesus told a fitting story to express this same truth, about a woman searching for her lost coin. Luke 15:9-10, "*when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.'* Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents." When the angels see the repenting sinners gathered, the angels rejoice. The angels see godly men and godly women in the worship of God, each taking their respective places under Christ the head. The angels see men and women following God the way that God wants to be followed, and serving the church in the way that Christ wants them to serve the church, and gathering to worship God the way God wants to be worshipped.

## **2. God-glorifying worship includes both eternally valid principles (headship, image/glory of God, modesty) and culturally time-stamped principles (our customs, choice of clothing, type of greetings). (v.11-12)**

The best roles for men and women is whatever God says it is. So, whether we agree with the gender roles in church and in the home, reveals how much trust we have in God Himself. Does Christ have your trust? What about when Christ died in your place on the cross? The gospel shows that since Christ can be trusted, then the gift of the placement of each gender within a role in the worshipping community is something to be rejoiced in, not something to be endured or resented.

The best relationship is that Christ the Son of God has to God the Father. All other relationships are an effort to imitate what is happening there. That inner-Trinitarian relationship is a beautiful expression of two-way love. Christ is head of the church, and he laid down his life for us.

The pastor, elder and deacon are leaders in the church, but they lay down their lives for the people of the church. Self-giving and love. Commitment and

service. Dedication and understanding. Compassion and reasonableness. This is not a difficult set of people to follow! This is not a set of people who will boss you around. This is not a prison for women. This is not regressive or heavy-handed.

When a woman is placed in this environment, she relaxes and feels safe. Deep in the soul of that woman, she knows that this is all from God, and she gives him glory. She is motivated to use all her gifts to bless and serve others. God the Father gets glory, and Christ the Head gets glory in the churches of God. Men and women in the church are a mystery to the watching world. The mystery is what Christ has given – the gospel of grace to change our hearts from seeking to honor ourselves, to instead seeking to honor God.

Christ's gospel and Paul the missionary brought dramatic change to places like the Jewish synagogue in Corinth. In Judaism, women had a very minor place; they were not even counted in the number required for establishing a synagogue. It had to be 10 males. It is only in a Christian church that the women were full congregational participants in the worship service. Because of the entrance of the gospel of Christ, women could be found sitting with their husbands and children, and joining in the singing, praying, giving and group readings. Christ gave women a new and significant place.

Human culture swings wildly from the city of Corinth denigrating women to modern America pushing to put women in positions over men. While the culture swings from one extreme to the other, the church remains constant. The Biblical church in Corinth was organized the same way as the Biblical church today.

In the Lord, have principles true since the original creation, and we find that they are sweetly fulfilled in the redemption of sinners. The church is filled with sinners who are redeemed and changed. So, in verse 11, Paul wrote, "*in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor man of woman (v.12) for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.*"

This understanding of interdependence of man and woman, and this understanding of equality of men and women would have been scandalous and unheard of in those days in Corinth where women were considered inferior.

Women who were held down by society, when they came to worship, were afforded a type of freedom that they did not have in their day to day lives.

Once she finds this, she would never want to do anything to harm the atmosphere. She would not draw attention to herself by a lack of modesty. She would not usurp power. She would not rail against the male leadership in the church, for she agrees wholeheartedly that it is God's design. Here she throws herself into loving others, using her gifts, enjoying her brothers and father in the Lord as well as enjoying her sisters and mothers in the Lord. Here she has found her church home and here she truly worships God with a grateful heart. She cannot wait to come, and she invites all of her friends here. She knows in her experience

what Paul wrote here in verse 12, that “...*all things are from God.*”

### **3. Reasonable and spiritual worship requires that we use our minds to discern and distinguish what is proper from what is immoral, finding unity in our worship practices in the churches of God. (v.13-16)**

What about you? What do you think about all of this?

In verse 13, Paul wrote to the believers, “*Judge for yourselves...*”

How will this be received? Paul did not want the Corinthians to do anything to unnecessarily scandalize the church within their city. Honor to God, honor to husbands, honor to the surrounding community. Is it seen as proper to have a head covering?

Verse 14 – proper for a man to have long hair?

Paul knows that as an exception, certain godly men have had long hair. Samson took a Nazirite vow never to cut his hair. Paul’s concern here is that men not adopt hairstyles of women and that men not dress themselves as women and present themselves as women. Especially not in worship presenting themselves to their Creator as the wrong gender. That is the disgrace – to confuse gender and to dress inappropriately for your God-given gender. Paul is against androgynous confusion and crossdressing.

Paul here is showing that we have to get to the principle of how things work within the order that God created, and then determine how that applies in our present cultural time and place.

Verse 15 – proper for a woman to have long hair? Yes, but Paul’s basic point is not the length of hair, but about the peace and unity of the church in the worship of God. Appropriate clothing and gender-matched fashion is needed in order avoid a disruption in worship.

Verse 16 – no such practice in the churches of God. Paul shows that both men and women in all the churches of God are careful to dress in such a way for worship services that it does not interrupt God receiving glory from worshippers. Christians today ought to similarly avoid clothing that identifies with radical groups, false religions or cults, anarchists or other commotion-causing elements of their clothes. To wear the uniform of those whose conduct rejects the teaching of Scripture is not appropriate while we are worshipping the author of Scripture.

This is true not just in Corinth, as Paul makes clear. It is the universal Christian custom in worship services everywhere. The church in Corinth needs to fall in line. Later in chapter 14:40, Paul gives the specific exhortation that “*all things should be done decently and in order.*”

In the last 3 chapters, Paul showed that we cannot allow food to get in the way of the gospel, or divide the body of Christ. Same here with clothes. We cannot allow customs or fashions to divide us or to cause commotion when we

have a worship service.

We don't use The Lord's day to wear clothes that advertise our favorite sports team, rock band or beverage. It too quickly becomes us and them, or else a big joke, instead of keeping our focus on the worship of God.

**Conclusion: 1) No head coverings. 2) Ladies are not inferior. 3) Men are not superior. 4) All glory to God.**

1) No head coverings. Should modern American women who are Reformed in faith, still wear headcoverings, just to be safe? No. Because head-coverings don't mean in our day what they meant in Paul's day. Paul shows us how to be honest enough to admit that it would seem odd for a woman today to wear a head covering, shawl, veil, or some such thing in a public worship service in church here. It would be the first thing that visitors notice, and universally their reaction would be "That's weird."

As Paul wrote in chapter 9, we are to become all things to all people in our time and in our place in order to win some - which means that as a church, we do NOT wear head coverings. Obedience to the Word of God means that we follow the underlying principle – we avoid any immodest and distracting impact of how we dress and behave in worship.

2) Ladies are not inferior. Women are equal to men in value and worth. The church needs you! The family needs you! Then why not the same positions in the church and in the family? The two roles are different. Your partnership with men is like Christ's partnership to God the Father - a voluntary subordination of an equal, in order to accomplish beauty of function in the church and in the home.

The headship of God the Father does not mean that Christ is inferior.

The headship of the man does not mean that his wife is inferior.

3) Men are not superior. The error of superiority and over-emphasis on headship leads to pride and mistreatment of women. Paul gives no room for this. Since men and women are equal in value and equal in worth, you men have no right to interpret your role of headship in the home or leadership in the church to mean that you are better than women or that you can ignore women in the home or in the church. You will give account to Christ for how you treated the women in your home and in your church. What does Christ expect of you in your role of head or leader? We follow how Christ fulfilled His role as head of the church. Ephesians 5:25, "*Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.*" And verse 28, "*In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies...*" Men are not superior.

4) All glory to God. The Creator God whom we gather to worship is the one who created the gender differences. Part of our worship is to accept, express, and appreciate those differences. Not with suggestive dress or suggestive posture,

but rather with both masculinity and femininity presented decently and modestly.

In our hearts in worship, we are eagerly and gladly submitted to God the Father, Christ the Savior, and the leaders of our church, by being modest and undistracting in how we dress for church. We are not in worship service to glorify ourselves, but rather to glorify Christ. “Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”