

**“The Customs and Symbols of Worship”, Session # 23 in the series on the
2nd Commandment, presented in the Adult Sunday School
on February 9th, 2014, by Pastor Paul Rendall.**

**Outline of Men and Women in Worship -
1st Corinthians 11: 4-16, 1 Timothy 2: 8-15, and 1st Corinthians 14: 34-38**

- 1. The Abiding Apostolic Traditions and Principles of humility and submission** – This respect for and obedience to the hierarchy which God has established, exemplified by the Trinity Themselves applies all during the Church Age. These holy traditions were rules established by the Apostles for godly order in family and in the Church. Since there is hierarchy and submission within the Divine Trinity themselves, in regard to the outworking of redemption and our salvation, men and women ought to be able to receive their own role responsibilities with joy.
- 2. The Customs and Symbols** which show humility and submission in the worship of that day, and how they apply to us. This has regard to the outworking of these unchanging principles in regard to various cultural situations of that day and this, in relation to what men and women need to do to show forth their submission to God in worship in family, society, and church.
- 3. The Commands of the Lord** which are unchanging and how they apply to the worship of our day as well as that day - Women being silent in the public corporate worship of God, and men speaking and taking the lead as they are called by God and recognized by the existing leadership and congregation of the local church.

2nd – We have here the customs and symbols of the culture which may apply at any time during this Church Age if needed.

Let's consider 1 Corinthians 11: 4-16 once again – “Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.” “But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.” “For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn.” “But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.” “For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man.” “For man is not from woman, but woman from man.” Now remembering what we have asserted in our past study; that if within the Divine Trinity itself there is headship and subordination, then it is perfectly reasonable to expect that in the roles of Christian men and women that headship and submission to that headship be shown forth by appropriate customs and symbols. The symbol for the man was, and I believe is to this day, that the man uncover his head when he prays or prophesies, for he is the image and glory of God. The symbol for the woman was, and I believe it still is to this day, to be covered. The woman was also created in the image of God, but in verse 7 she is said to be “the glory of man”.

The abiding tradition that Paul was inculcating here for the church at Corinth, was that observing the appropriate God-given and apostle-taught traditions would lead them further to consider when the symbols of headship and submission would need to be observed by both the men and the women in various situations which might require it. For men, since they would be speaking in the church, this would mean that they would not pray or prophesy with their head covered in the public worship, or in any other place where they might pray or prophesy outside of the gathered worship of the church. For the woman, since she would not be speaking in the public assembly of the church, she would not in that case be required by way of commandment to wear a Headcovering in the public assembly

under normal circumstances. For she would be silent, and her longer hair (which was given to her for a covering, it says in verse 15) coupled with her humble silence in the public worship of the church gathered, normally would be enough of an indication to men and to angels that she was submissive. **Verse 15 says:** “But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering.” “But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.” If a woman was contentious or defiant about these role responsibilities, Paul instructs that she be shorn (Verse 6); or that her hair be cut off, because this was the same kind of attitude and outward display shown forth by the prostitutes and other rebellious, defiant women of the society of that day. They would deliberately cut their hair very short, or in their wearing their long hair they would wear it in a disheveled way, shaking their heads and acting in a way which they hoped to show others that they thought they were free of any authority. Notice that Paul in verse six recognizes that there were different customs used in different societies. He says, “But **if** it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.” He knew and was recognizing that for some people in some societies, it might not seem to be shameful. And in **verse 16** he says, “But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.” He is saying if anyone wishes to be contentious about this custom of Headcoverings, their lack of submission would be evident, to every church of Christians who were trying to live godly.

Let us consider our need to recognize God’s good order in the creation of man and woman.

1st Corinthians 11: 8 – “For man is not from woman, but woman from man.” “Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.” “For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.”

John Gill says here of this word “power” on her head, the “symbol of authority” as it is translated in the NKJV, the ESV, and the NAS – “For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head,.... The generality of interpreters, by power, understand the veil, or covering on the woman's head, as a sign of the man's power over her, and her subjection to him; which Dr. Hammond endeavors to confirm, by observing that the Hebrew word כִּסְיָהּ, which signifies a woman's veil, or hood, comes from a root which signifies power and dominion; but in that he is mistaken, for the word is derived not from כָּסָה, to rule, govern, or exercise power and authority, but from כָּסָה, to expand, stretch out, or draw over, as a woman's veil is drawn over her head and face. The Greek word ἐξουσία more properly signifies the power she had of putting on and off her covering as she pleased, according as times, places, and persons; made it necessary.” (End of quote)

I personally think that this is the truth of the matter. A woman who is going to be silent in the public worship of the church does not need a head covering, but there may be times outside of the public worship when she might have good reason to believe that others whom she is ministering to, do not understand whether she understands this very important principal of the headship of men and the subordination of the woman. Therefore, “as she is pleased, according as times, places and persons make it necessary,” she may indeed want to wear a Headcovering to show forth her submission. But let her not be forced to wear one in the public worship where she does not need to wear one because of her silence.

So, with these observations being made, I think that we can now proceed to draw certain conclusions.

Applications of this 2nd Point

1. Both outside and inside of the public gathered worship, Paul is saying, a woman needs to show forth her submission to her husband, or her father if she is single and lives at home, and also to her pastor, as he is the one who preaches the word in the public assembly. She will not interrupt him or try to correct him. In the public assembly she deliberately participates by listening carefully and praying in her heart during all of the public worship. Truly, this shows forth her humility and submission to all gathered. Outside the church, she will still show forth her humility and submission to her husband, or father, if she is single and under his roof. She will especially be careful to do this in the presence of others who might not understand. She will hopefully be instructed by her husband or father concerning these customs, and understand why, in some situations, the symbol of submission; the Headcovering, might need to be worn. I think that this especially applied for the women of that day, who had revelatory speaking gifts just like the men. A woman would want to wear a Headcovering in that day, if she was praying or prophesying, to show forth her submission to her husband and all the godly authorities in her life if she, or others in authority over her in the Lord, thought that there was any question about this. And I believe that a woman would also want to wear a Headcovering, even in this day, if in the situation that she is in, praying or teaching, outside of the public gathered church, it is evident that the people whom she is with do not understand her submission.

2. Paul also says in verse 10 that a woman would want to wear this symbol of her being under authority on her head, “because of the angels”. There are angels who do watch over us, whether we recognize this reality or not. They are the heavenly watchers and they do the bidding of God in relation to those who are humble and submissive, to help them; but also to do God’s bidding in relation to those who are arrogant and proud.

We have an example of this in **Acts Chapter 12, verse 20**, where it says: “Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord and having made Blastus the king’s personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king’s country.” “So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them.” “And the people kept shouting, ‘The voice of a god and not of a man!’” “Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God.” “And he was eaten by worms and died.”

Now I did not read this to scare you dear ladies, or men for that matter. I read this to you to show you that the angels who do the bidding of God watch over us to guard us in all of our ways. And what must it be to them, if they see confusion of men’s and women’s roles in worship; either in the gathered assembly of the saints, or outside it when we have occasion to pray or teach? What a grief to both God and them when a woman tries to assume the man’s role, and the man allows himself to become sinfully passive in regard to leading in prayer and family devotions, and praying in the church. What do the angels have to report back to our Christ and our God? Is this a submissive assembly? Are the men and women exercising their God-given roles in the family and in society in their praying and their speaking? What do you think I as your pastor would I say if one of you men was covering his head with a hood or a wearing a hat when he stood to pray? I would take you to this passage and show you your role and the custom of 1st Corinthians 11. And I would expect you to change your ways and observe this good custom. But the issue here in 1st Corinthians 11 is headship and submission to that headship. And that is shown forth by adopting these customs.

There is one Biblical example which is given for us over in **Acts Chapter 21, verse 7**; which may have been a situation in which the Headcovering was used according to the 1

Corinthians 11 custom. “And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day.” “On the next day we who were Paul’s companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.” “Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.”

Now, you can see here that this is the very kind of situation which 1 Corinthians 11: 5 is speaking about. These young ladies, these virgin daughters of Philip, all had the gift of prophecy. And the Apostle Paul staying in the house of Philip was there as well. A couple of these men were over these young ladies, in their spiritual authority, in the Lord; their father Philip and the Apostle Paul. And yet here, they were not silent; for they were not at that time in the gathered assembly of the saints. It says that they prophesied at that time. It does not say what they prophesied, but I think that it was probably the same thing that Agabus, the prophet who showed up a few days later, said to Paul; warning him of what was coming for him if he went up to Jerusalem. Verse 10 says this: “And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.” “When he had come to us, he took Paul’s belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” “Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.” But what I want to bring to your attention here is that even though there is no mention that these young ladies actually wore Headcoverings, I think that they did. It is very certain that with their father there, and an apostle there, they showed forth their submission in their praying for the apostle and in their prophesying before him, concerning what would befall the apostle if he went to Jerusalem.