

1 Corinthians 11:1-16 “Authority and Glory”

1. Paul begins his chain of hierarchical instruction – Christians should follow the Apostle Paul's example, who follows Christ's example, who follows God's example.

2. He commends the Corinthian church for remembering Paul in what he delivered to them, namely the Gospel and apostolic traditions. The Corinthian church did well with the basic instruction and Gospel message they had received. In this letter Paul addresses issues of which they were ignorant and in need of his correction.

3. He continues his chain of hierarchical instruction - God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, man is the head of woman.

4. Very significantly he uses word play with “head” to instruct them on the use of a physical sign pointing to a greater spiritual reality. In the special place of corporate Christian worship (where prayer and prophecy were prominent [corporate = 11:17 which is very much tied to this passage]) if a man has something “down against” (kata in the genitive) his own physical head, he dishonors his head = his authority = Christ. He's symbolically concealing God's glory (11:7).

5. Every woman who does not have a covering (akataluptw) for her own physical head, in the context of prayer and prophecy disgraces her head = her authority = man. If this is merely having long hair, why the mention of “while praying or prophesying?” - He's referring to something removable, something that is not necessary in other contexts. Paul says the woman who doesn't cover her own physical head in this context is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved. Why? Because she disgraces man and authority, acting as if she has nothing over her. She is symbolically revealing the glory of man (her hair is a glory to her 11:15), which in this context is supposed to be concealed so that God will be the focus of the prayers and prophecy. Just as it is disgraceful for a woman to lack her glory (her hair) in the context of life (shaved head), it is also disgraceful for a woman to show her glory (her hair) and man's glory (woman) in the context where it is to be covered.

6. If a woman is going to disgrace man in the church by disregarding authority, then let her be disgraced in life by having her hair cut short or shaved. But if/since this is a disgrace, let her head be covered. This verse is a logical problem for those who hold that Paul keeps using “covering” to refer to long hair. This is how it would read: “For if a woman does not have long hair on her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her have long hair on her head.” If she doesn't have long hair then her hair is cut off, which means it's short. But why would it be a meaningful statement for Paul to say: “If her hair is cut off, let her also have her hair cut off?” Another problem is how does one determine what constitutes long hair? Should a woman who has shoulder length hair be considered insubordinate when she is in the assembly?

7. In the church assembly, man's head (which symbolizes Christ) should be uncovered, for he is the glory of God. In this setting, most especially, God's glory should be magnified. The woman being the glory of man and her head (which symbolizes man) should be covered. In this setting, man's glory should be subverted and concealed.

8-9. Paul roots this argument in creation (cf 1 Ti 2:9-15) [Note: Against the consistent translations of the KJV, NIV, NAS, and HCS, the ESV seems to arbitrarily and inconsistently translate Paul's interchangeable use of *gunh* and *gunaikos*, as wife in vv 3, 5, 6, 10, 13 and woman in vv 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15 - the other translations properly use "woman" throughout]. This is not merely a husband and wife issue, but rather a male and female issue. Women are universally ordained by God to be under the authority of men. Furthermore, they ARE the weaker sex (1 Pt 3:7) in need of man's understanding, love, and protection. Woman was created FROM man and FOR man.

10. He ties this next verse to what he has just been talking about related to the created order of authority. The woman needs to be reminded of her place by a special symbol on her head (if this is merely long hair, how is that special and how will it be a reminder?), lest she rebel against God's order and manifest her own glory (part of the curse would be woman's power struggle with man Gn 3:16b), just as the fallen angels did. This whole exercise of head coverings while praying and prophesying has such a great spiritual significance that even the angels are aware and ought to see the people of God submitting to His order (contrary to Adam and Eve when they fell).

11-12. Though the authority chain is true, Paul doesn't want to ignore the fact that men and women need each other physically and as members in the body of Christ. But most of all, men and women, and all things have God as their source.

13. Paul tells them to examine themselves to see as a church, if what he is saying is true. In other words, "Can't you see where this insubordination and disorder leads?" It not only messes up the church, it messes up families and therefore society.

14-15. He shifts to a supplemental argument related to nature. Does not even the nature of things with men and women in general show that it is disgraceful for a man to have long hair coming down as a covering from his head, whereas it is a glory for a woman to have this? Here Paul is reminding them of a clear line of distinction between the sexes in their physical appearance. Naturally, it is a sign of masculinity for a man to have more hair in particular places (testosterone causes facial hair, chest hair, and back hair, which is far more common in men). It should be considered a beautiful thing for a woman to express her femininity with long hair, but disgraceful for a man to share the same appearance. Though in the case of Samson it was his and his parents' sign of submission to God (as humbling as it may have been for him to have long hair). It was very uncommon for Jewish and Greek men to have long hair (though supposedly not uncommon among some of the pagan nations). Those that did in Scripture are given special mention (Absalom was a total disgrace even aside from his hair). If men and woman are different in this way naturally, then how much more should believers be when seeking to humble themselves and glorify the Lord in worship when they come together. Paul was admonishing the Corinthian church to show the proper respect for authority and glory in the Church.

15. The question arises, "What about when Paul says 'her hair is given to her for a covering'?" This is certainly the most emphasized phrase among those who see Paul referring to long hair as a covering throughout the passage. It is certainly possible to translate this word *anti* "as" (which would be the interpretation of the long hair only proponents). This word *anti* has quite a range of

meaning, so it's hard to give a definitive interpretation as to how Paul is using it here. He could be saying, that her hair is given to her as a natural covering for her head to show her glory. But then the long hair only proponents have a problem. How is it, that while praying or prophesying a woman can have her glory (long hair) being shown (if the long hair is the covering he refers to), when Paul has already said the glory of man is to be covered (v7)? Hence, another logical problem. Furthermore, the word for "covering" in verse 15 (peribolaïou) is a completely different word than those used by Paul in the main part of the passage (akatakaluptw v5, katakaluptetai v6, katakaluptesthw v6, katakaluptesthai v7, akatakalupton v13) all from the word katakaluptw: "Outside the NT the word is found in the sense of 'to veil' or 'to veil oneself' from Homer, esp. in the poets... and in Plato... The veiling of women is a custom in Israel. A disgraced woman comes veiled to judgment (katakekalummenh Sus. 32). Yet one may also suspect that a woman muffled up (katekalupsato to proswnon) and lurking by the wayside is a harlot (Gn. 38:15). This opens up the way for an understanding of the relevant NT passage." (Albrecht Oepke, "Katakaluptw," The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Vol. III, G. Kittel ed. G. Bromiley trans. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965, 1979, p 561).

This word was historically connected with the idea of a fabric covering or veil (for further study look at Brian Schwertley's "Head Coverings in Public Worship"

<http://www.gracealone.com/files/HeadcoveringsinPublicWorship.htm>).

The word peribolaïou in 11:15 likely comes from the words peri a preposition translated "around," and Ballo, which is translated "to throw." Combined they would connote the idea, "to throw around" which can easily be envisioned with a woman's long hair or a fabric veil. The real question is how is Paul using anti here? John Gill maintains that the word is used in the sense of "for" (<http://www.freegrace.net/gill/>). Her hair is given to her "for" or to be used "against" the other covering (the fabric covering). Meaning, her hair is a glory to her and it is given with the purpose of being covered in the public worship by a fabric covering, to conceal the glory of man. Even if verse 15 is referring to the woman's hair "as" a natural "thrown around" covering, this should not be looked at as undermining what the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write earlier in the passage.

16. If someone doesn't like this whole practice of head coverings, they should know that they are going not only against Paul but all the other churches, since they have no other practice. This is what was done. Head coverings were the norm. For the contemporary church of our day it might startle some to see that head coverings were universally practiced in the church from the time of the early church until the infiltration of the Women's Liberation movement. It's tragic how much we have let the culture dictate the Church. God help us get back to His Word no matter how radical we are perceived to be.