

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**Spirit Filled Living in a Broken and Fallen World: Glory, Hair and Mutual Respect**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer - February 26, 2017**

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is responsible for more than its fair share of column-inches in commentaries and text books. I have a few here this morning that have been helpful to me. This week I have read 9 scholarly journal articles and probably looked at 6 sermons on this passage to get an idea of what others thought was the guiding thought for this passage. Frankly, I'm still a bit overwhelmed. However, I think by the time our lesson is over we will find a way through it, but we will have to journey together to do it. It is a tough one.

When we finished Chapter 10, we should have included the first verse of chapter 11. Chapter 11:1 says ***"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."*** That sentiment wraps up the section we previously studied beginning in chapter 7 and running through this verse and found Paul confronting the bad theology and back actions of the congregation that were stealing the glory from God. And in conclusion last week we all said together:

**I am no longer a slave to fear**  
**I am a child of God**  
**I give up my rights**  
**For the glory of my Savior**

We remember that whatever we do, even in the smallest things like eating and drinking, we do it for the glory of God. We remember that our lives – all things – are about the glory of God.

**Remember it is all about God's glory!**

By believing this and having faith that God will bless my intentions, now every part of our life matters. There is no compartmentalization of secular and sacred. What happens at noon on Tuesday at school is as important as what happens on Saturday at work and as important as what happens on Sunday at church. It's all important because our God is the God of all things! Every task and every conversation has the potential for the Kingdom of God to break loose right before our eyes.

But now in 11 verse 2 through 14:40 we have a focus on how the church is to behave in public worship. Paul is hitting the hot spots of the early church and he has heard that they have been behaving poorly at church so as to distract from worshipping Christ well. So Paul first teaches them some theology and then gives them some practical tidbits to help them move forward. Let's read this and then we will start wading into it!

**1 Corinthians - 11:2-16 English Standard Version**

Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. <sup>3</sup> But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

<sup>4</sup> Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, <sup>5</sup> but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. <sup>6</sup> For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. <sup>7</sup> For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. <sup>8</sup> For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. <sup>9</sup> Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. <sup>10</sup> That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; <sup>12</sup> for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. <sup>13</sup> Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? <sup>14</sup> Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, <sup>15</sup> but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given

to her for a covering. <sup>16</sup> If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.

### **1 Corinthians 11:2-16 The Message**

<sup>1-2</sup> It pleases me that you continue to remember and honor me by keeping up the traditions of the faith I taught you. All actual authority stems from Christ.

<sup>3-9</sup> In a marriage relationship, there is authority from Christ to husband, and from husband to wife. The authority of Christ is the authority of God. Any man who speaks with God or about God in a way that shows a lack of respect for the authority of Christ, dishonors Christ. In the same way, a wife who speaks with God in a way that shows a lack of respect for the authority of her husband, dishonors her husband. Worse, she dishonors herself—an ugly sight, like a woman with her head shaved. This is basically the origin of these customs we have of women wearing head coverings in worship, while men take their hats off. By these symbolic acts, men and women, who far too often butt heads with each other, submit their “heads” to the Head: God.

<sup>10-12</sup> Don't, by the way, read too much into the differences here between men and women. Neither man nor woman can go it alone or claim priority. Man was created first, as a beautiful shining reflection of God—that is true. But the head on a woman's body clearly outshines in beauty the head of her “head,” her husband. The first woman came from man, true—but ever since then, every man comes from a woman! And since virtually everything comes from God anyway, let's quit going through these “who's first” routines.

<sup>13-16</sup> Don't you agree there is something naturally powerful in the symbolism—a woman, her beautiful hair reminiscent of angels, praying in adoration; a man, his head bared in reverence, praying in submission? I hope you're not going to be argumentative about this. All God's churches see it this way; I don't want you standing out as an exception.

***Can I have a show of hands of how many of you have perhaps one question or more after the reading of this passage?***

### **The difficulties in the text**

There are many difficult aspects to this particular passage. The reason for this is that Paul is appealing to some customs and cultural habits and mores which he does not fully explain and explore in the text because the citizens of Corinth would have known them so he doesn't have to go into them. Now these cultural idiosyncrasies are lost to our understanding. So it is confusing to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some have accused Paul of being unclear, confused, or mistaken and tend to explain away this passage. Some have even suggested that this paragraph is an add-on by another author sometime later. But given the large body of material which makes up the Pauline corpus and the reputation that it establishes for Paul as a clear thinker and an excellent developer of ideas, it doesn't make sense that Paul has just lapsed so severely only here! It is wiser to suppose that the misunderstanding lies with us readers. We have to put our thinking caps on and we tend to skip passages rather than dig deeper.

What we do know from this morning is that the first reading and even the second reading do not come easy in interpreting this section. Mark Finney, who is a noted theologian and author of a very good article published in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, said this . . .

“The preponderance of commentators, although ranging widely in their opinions about key aspects of the passage, all agree on one thing about 1 Corinthians 11:3-12: We do not have sufficient information to definitively interpret all of Paul's thoughts.” ~ Mark Finney, “Honour, Head-Coverings and Headship: 1 Corinthians 11.2-16 in Its Social Context,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, no. 1 (2010): 31

That being said, we do have hopes. Let me set the stage for where I hope to end up later this hour, having lingered over this passage for dozens of hours in my study for this morning has led me to an application for *either* gender. . .

“Pray and preach in a contemporarily appropriate manner, noting that Jesus Himself is present, and that God must be glorified in all we do.”

Let's break it down a bit where the speed bumps are in this passage. The primary areas of confusion include: the range of meanings for the Greek term Kaphale, the issue of head coverings and the length of the hair of both men and women and then there is that funny bit about the angels. I'm not going to go into it this morning but there is an important challenge regarding a modern interpreter of the possible range of understanding between the explicit subordination of women on one hand and their complete liberation on the other. Finally there is the idea of what the purpose of corporate worship is and how do we all fit in. Here is how it looks in summary:

The issue of “Kaphale” meaning “Head,” or “Topmost” or “Source”  
Regarding gender authority and gender submission

The issue of head covering . . . “Because of the angels”

The issue of “What is the purpose of corporate worship?”

Look confusing enough? Let's look at it one at a time before we just boil it down to one big idea. The first of these we want to explore is the idea of ‘Kaphale’ or headship.

## Headship

We find it mentioned a couple time in this passage . . .

**1 Corinthians 11:3** But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

**1 Corinthians 11:11** Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; <sup>12</sup> for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all [things] are from God.

Head as in authority, head as in the lead representative, and then there is head as in source, like the source of a river. The two most persuasive arguments refer to head and authority and also as source. I then to think Paul meant to use the idea of source, as in other portions of this letter - that is what makes the most sense. It is also what Dr. Gordon Fee thinks, and he writes very big books. What you make of this topic has some pretty big implications on how we as men and women respond to each other in both the church and at home. It would not be fair to get into this all right now, but if you are interested, start digging in and I can lead you to some books and sermons that may help you in your studies of gender and authority. Then there is the issue of hair and the curious reference to angels . . .

## Hair and Angels

Men in this passage are instructed to wear their hair short and to leave their heads uncovered at church - out of respect. Women on the other hand are instructed to wear their hair long and to cover their heads in church - out of respect. There are cultural norms at play here and the big idea of this passage is to show respect to others in the congregation and to dress and act in such a way that does not bring attention and glory to yourself so that God can be glorified in our worship undistracted. Regarding the angels oddity in verse 10 about women covering themselves, Thiselton lists ideas that have been offered, including fallen angels gazing lustfully upon women, holy angels guard the created order, the sense in which the angelic host participate in worship, and Jesus' description of angelic ministry of Matthew 18:10. In addition, Paul has been talking about angels already, in 4:9, 6:3, and 10:10. We could simply conclude that the expression “because of the angels” could evoke any or all of these motifs for the original hearers, any one of which would be sufficient to make the point: “*because this is fitting*”.

[Illustration: young man wearing a hat on worship team and the parishioner that didn't like it]

Finally the big picture for Paul is the desire to respect and submit one to another and to honor each gender as made in the image of God. That men and women, **each separately** are individuals made as God's image-bearers and then **together** in compliment with each other are also made in the image of God as co-carriers of the image of God and co-completers.

**Men and Women – 'Both' and 'Together' are made in the image of God**

Look again at verses 8 and following from this passage and see how Paul is making his point of mutual respect one gender for another honoring and respecting each other . . .

**1 Corinthians 11:8, 9 and 11-12**

<sup>8</sup> For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. <sup>9</sup> Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; <sup>12</sup> for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.

We gather to glorify God. By joining in corporate worship the light of Christ is broken through the prisms of our lives into hundreds of beautiful shade of his brilliant white light. But to do that we are to contribute in worship, in our dress and haircuts and behavior in ways that are not self-seeking but are sacrificial and God Centered.

**We are to be contributing in worship in ways that are not self-seeking but sacrificial and God-centered.**

We must remember that Christ is present at our worship.

**Christ is present at our worship.**

He is our King and we are his audience before His throne. So as I noted earlier in this message – we have come full circle back to the point I made earlier – we must each . . .

**“Pray and preach in a contemporarily appropriate manner, noting that Jesus Himself is present, and that God must be glorified in all we do.”**