

## A Woman's Position, Power and Glory

### Sermon notes

Objective: To help each woman of God to understand and rejoice in God's divine plan and provision for women.

Scripture: 1 Cor. 11:2-15

We live in an evil, dysfunctional world. This state of affairs came into being as a result of human sin. God was forced to react to the sin committed by Adam and Eve, and what we read in the Bible is His written response.

Facts to remember:

- God created humans in His own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27).
- Woman was specifically created to be man's companion and helper (Gen. 2:18).

### **HOWEVER**

- The woman sinned and led the man into sin.
- Thus Adam and Eve became the prototype and example for all humans who would follow, in that ALL have sinned (Rom. 3:23).
- The woman received two punishments for sinning: pain in childbirth and subservience to man (Gen. 3:16). She now had to obey man and live under his 'lordship' (1 Pet. 3:6).
- In a marriage relationship, the woman is instructed to submit herself to her own husband (Eph. 5:22, 24).
- The law of Moses even gave power to fathers and husbands over vows their daughters and wives made to the Lord (Num 30:3-16).
- God cursed the ground and punished man by giving him hard labour in extracting food from it (Gen. 3:17-19)

**ALL of these situations and regulations came about as a result of SIN!! This was NOT the way God intended things to be!**

Since the fall, humankind has tried, and succeeded, in overcoming many of the negative effects of sin. We have ways of reducing the pain of childbirth, and our agricultural advances have made it much easier for man to produce food from the earth. (God also helped man by removing His curse from the earth (Gen. 8:21)). Human rights legislation has improved the status of women around the world and they are much freer today to pursue their personal goals and aspirations than ever before.

The basic conditions however have NOT changed, because we still live in a corrupt and sinful world. The curses and punishments for sin are still in place and will continue until

we enter the new heaven and new earth. It is foolish for us to pretend that everything has changed and that now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the genders are equal in every way. Sin is still bearing its awful fruit and the punishments God put in place are still in effect.

How then should a woman respond to this situation?

She must live with an understanding and acceptance of what IS, not what she would like it to be. It may be fruitful to fight against the laws, customs and traditions of man, but it is totally futile to fight against the judgments of God. Whatever He has said will stand.

With the preceding background in mind, let us now consider our main text, which has caused many arguments, discussions and disagreements over the last 2,000 years. Let's try to understand it a little better.

- References to the "head" in this passage are primarily speaking of authority.
- God the Father is the supreme head (i.e. supreme authority).
- The man Christ Jesus was under the headship and authority of His Father.
- Man, the male gender, is under the headship and authority of Christ, made in the image of God, to show forth His glory. The glory of God must never be concealed, therefore the man should not cover his head as he ministers before God and the people of God.
- The woman is the glory of the man (v7). The glory of the man is in no way equivalent to the glory of God, so when the woman, (who is the glory of man) is ministering in the presence of God, the glory of man must be concealed. This is accomplished symbolically by the woman having her physical head covered.

HOW is her head to be covered? In the time of the early church, it was by a veil – the cultural norm of the time. In fact, a woman was expected to use BOTH a veil AND uncut hair as her covering. Later in the passage however, Paul stated that the woman's hair was given to her for a covering - "anti peribolaïou", which literally means "instead of a veil". Thus, it is totally permissible and godly for a woman to pray and minister wherever she may be as long as she is covered by her uncut hair. This fits with Paul's injunction in 1Thes. 5:17 that we should "pray without ceasing". For a woman to obey this command, she must be covered at all times. She may not always have a veil with her, but she can always be covered!

### **The symbolism of the hair:**

Paul appeals to the order of nature that causes women's hair to grow longer than men's and for women to glory in their hair. In addition, he appeals to culture and tradition to state that it is a shameful act for a woman to cut her hair or shave her head. (In scripture, cutting the hair and shaving the head are symbols of mourning, shame, cleansing (lepers), or the ending of a time of

consecration (Lev. 14:8, Num. 6:18, Ezra 9:3, Is. 50:6, Acts 21:24, etc). With very few historical exceptions, long hair has always been associated with women and short hair with men.

By nature, the length of women's hair varies according to their ethnic background. In light of this, what is considered to be 'long' hair (v15)? The principle of Paul's teaching is that a woman's hair is considered 'long' if she does not shear it or shave it. In other words, a woman should not cut her hair or shave her head. A woman who cuts her hair not only dishonors her 'head' – man, but also cuts off her own glory.

How is the woman glorified? By accepting God's decrees and by submitting to authority. Her uncut hair symbolizes the fact that she is under the authority of her husband or father. Single women, widows or divorced women also maintain uncut hair as a sign that they are under the 'headship' of the man, Christ Jesus.

Paul also says a woman should have this symbol of authority on her head 'because of the angels' (v10). When Satan first deceived the woman to sin, he appealed to her pride and human desire for self-glorification (Gen.3:5-7). She stepped out from under the covering and protection of God's law and suffered spiritual defeat and later, physical death. Since it worked the first time, Satan and his evil angels continue to use the same tactic on women – an appeal to their pride. When enemy spirits observe a woman who has a symbol of authority on her head, they are forced to consider that this is not likely to be a woman consumed with pride. Thus her hair becomes her glory and protection – the sign of her submission to God, the word of God and her male 'head'. She is covered.

Good angels, working on God's behalf, also see the woman with the symbol of authority on her head and deem her to be submitted to her 'head'. In light of this, they should help, protect and minister to her.