

1 Corinthian Series #27
"GOD'S ORDER FOR MEN AND WOMEN" – 1 Cor. 11:1-12

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Martin Luther

1. 500 years ago - monk in Catholic monastery
2. Teaching at college in Whittenburg, Germany
3. Realized Bible & practices didn't square
 - a. counted up 95 major deviations
 - b. wrote them out
 - c. nailed them to cathedral door
4. Didn't realize firestorm that would result
5. But when he drove that nail into the door, the Protestant Reformation was born & history of the world was radically transformed.
6. All because 1 man dared to challenge the un-Biblical practices of the Church!

B. Today

1. Our passage takes us into dangerous territory
2. Challenges much of our modern culture as it speaks to relationship between men & women
3. To be blunt - what we will look at today is shockingly politically incorrect.
 - a. some of us may get angry, or take exception to what we read here
 - b. others may be tempted to disregard it by saying that it is merely an out-dated and old-fashioned morality coming from a backward age of history
4. While some of what Paul says here is limited in scope to ancient Corinth, the principles he bases his teaching on are timeless.
5. It is those principles we are interested in discovering & applying today.

C. Accommodation

1. God calls the church to be a holy people
 - a. separate, distinct
 - b. pure, unstained by the world
2. But the church has shown an amazing tendency to want to copy the world rather than be a holy people
 - a. structures, programs, music, dress
 - b. in so many ways it seems to be entirely too accommodating to the world
3. Arabic Proverb: If you let the camel stick just it's nose

- in the tent, it won't be long till it is in bed with you
4. Point is - accommodating the world in even the smallest thing, opens a door that cannot be shut.
 5. One of the ways that Satan opposes the work of God is by trying to destroy the order of creation
 - a. see this in Garden with temptation to distort relationship between God & men
 - b. see it a well in the way he tries to distort God's order for men & women in their relationship
 6. Let's see what Paul says about God's order for men and women

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 2

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered *them* to you.

1. Paul is responding to a letter they hand written
2. Had asked about a number of concerns & disputes in Corinth
3. Apparently, they had said that they remembered his teaching on a number of issues & were faithful
4. He commends them for that
5. But there were three problems in their public worship that he wanted to correct
 - a. deals with them from here to end of chap. 14
 - b. 1) relationship between men & women within context of their public worship
2) abuses of the Lord's Supper
3) misuse of spiritual gifts.
6. Today - 1st one

B. Vs. 3

3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God.

1. Before he gets in to specifics - he lays down the basic principle that underlies relationship between men & women
2. And with this one statement we jump into the troubled waters of our culture

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| 3. Now - before we go on & examine this without compromise, back-pedaling or explaining it away; let me say this . . . |
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| a. we must not allow the feminist movement, |
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male chauvinism, nor liberal, & conservative rhetoric to cloud our thinking about this important subject of relationship between men & women

- b. we must not let feminists nor their opponents frame the issue for us
- c. it really is not about equality but about recognizing, appreciating, and being faithful to the God-ordained distinctions between men & women

- 4. Paul says "*the head of every man is Christ*"
 - a. by *head*, Paul means authority
 - b. **Eph 1:22-23** And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.
Col 1:18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.
 - c. because Christ is the authority, man's ordained role is submission to Him
- 5. "*the head of the woman is man*"
 - a. just as Christ is the head of the man, who submits to Him
 - b. so the man is head of the woman, and her ordained role is submission to him
- 6. The last part of V. 3 gives us a very important insight into what Paul is & is not saying

and the head of Christ *is* God.

- a. Christ is God, but in his incarnation he became subject to the Father & humbled Himself to the point of death
 - b. but Christ is God - equal in essence to the Father
 - c. his submission to the Father did not affect his essential equality with Him
 - d. it merely marked a difference of roles & identified the relationship between them
- 7. Even so - before God, men & women are equals in status & standing as human beings

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor

female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

8. But God ordains a difference in roles with woman being in subjection to man
 - a. this subjection does not mean inferiority
 - b. it is simply the means of keeping peace & order in creation
 - c. & when it is followed, there is!
 - d. it is only when it is rejected that problems arise.
9. Think of it: If Jesus had not willingly & faithfully subjected Himself to the Father - we would be lost and all creation would eternally be dominated by the devil
10. Because Christ submitted ; we are saved, creation has been redeemed, & history is moving rapidly to the climax where Jesus comes again & evicts the devil.
11. The same is true for relationship between men & women
 - a. when men exercise loving & faithful authority
 - b. & women submit, relationships between them are fulfilling & peaceful
 - c. it is only when they neglect their responsibilities that there is trouble & life is thrown into chaos
12. Now Paul applies this general principle to the situation in Corinth -

C. Vs. 4-12

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonors his head.

5 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.

6 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.

7 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.

8 For man is not from woman, but woman from man.

9 Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.

10 For this reason the woman ought to have *a symbol of* authority on *her* head, because of the angels.

11 Nevertheless, neither *is* man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.

12 For as woman *came* from man, even so man also *comes* through woman; but all things are from God.

1. A lot here
2. Mixes cultural issues that fit only Corinth together with timeless truths from Scripture

3. Let me try to sort it out . . .
4. In Corinth and most of ancient world, women wore a veil to cover their heads
 - a. it was a mark of chastity and purity & keeping themselves for husbands
 - b. showed that they were under the authority of either their husband - or if single, their father
 - c. it was also a thing of protection
 - as a symbol of being under authority
 - it meant to mess with them would mean the wrath & anger of their man
 - d. so the veil was a symbol of being under authority and enjoying the benefits of that authority
5. In church, some of the women had misunderstood their equality in Christ to mean that God's order for men & women had been abolished
 - a. so they had cast off their veils
 - b. & even more, were attempting to take authority in the church
6. Paul says "No - God's order for men & women still stands"

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonors his head.
 5 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.

7. It may come as a shock to us in our modern day with its constant blurring of the line between the sexes - but it is true: Men & women are different
8. God ordains that those differences be maintained and appreciated
9. In Corinth, because of the culture, when it came to worship, one difference was that men were not to cover their heads while women were
 - a. for men - declaration that their head was Christ
 - b. for women - declaration that their head was man
10. If a woman refused to cover her head, it was a sign of her rejection of God's order of authority
11. And Paul says she might as well go all the way & shave her head.
12. May seem severe till we realize that it was the temple prostitutes in Corinth who shaved their heads or cut their hair real short.
 - a. both male & female
 - b. calculated attempt to blur distinctions between

- male & female
- c. in their perverted sexual practices, they practiced both homo & heterosexual prostitution.

6 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.

- 13. To the Christians, prostitution was shameful
- 14. Paul is saying, "If prostitution is worldly & shameful - why are you willing to practice the worldly push to throw off God's order for men & women? That is just as shameful"
- 15. You see - we know from history that there have been several feminist movements in the church
 - a. women have abused their freedom & equality in Christ
 - b. & twisted it into thinking that meant God had done away with all distinction between men & women.
 - c. nothing could be further from the truth!
- 16. Paul says that men should not have his head covered
 - a. not talking about wearing hats
 - b. in worship - as a sign of his place in authority
 - c. caused me a problem: Jews & Yamaka
 - d. turns out, that was not done till 4th Century AD. & for a different reason

10 For this reason the woman ought to have *a symbol of authority on her head*, because of the angels.

- 17. What does that mean?
- 18. Church place where God works out His redemptive purposes - where the action is; where His attention is focused
- 19. The angels are watching it all & learning about God as they do
 - a. 1 Peter 1:12 " . . . things which angels desire to look into"
 - b. Revelation, angels in constant worship of God - see what He does - worship Him for it
 - c. so - they are here, now; watching & learning as God works in our lives
 - d. when we willingly & joyfully submit to His plan & His order, it teaches them about God's love & the character of true obedience

20. We do not realize what an awesome thing it is when a man or woman, being made in the image of God, who has been given a free will takes that will & submits it to God & to those He has ordained to be in authority

11 Nevertheless, neither *is* man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.

12 For as woman *came* from man, even so man also *comes* through woman; but all things are from God.

21. A balance point
22. Because man is the head of woman does not mean he is independent of her
23. It is God's plan that there is a mutual dependence on each other

D. Vs. 13-15

13 Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?

15 But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for *her* hair is given to her for a covering.

1. Paul was a sharp student of history
2. He knew that there is evidence in both history & nature that God intends for women to maintain their feminine distinctive.
3. As you look at cultures around the world, and over the long scope of history, you discover that there has always been a recognition that women are to maintain the distinctives that make them as women & not men
 - a. whenever there is a blurring of that distinction it is always in cultures which have consciously abandoned God
 - b. cultures in decay & headed toward oblivion
4. As well, it seems God has built into the physiology of the woman the capacity to keep a symbol of her submission with her at all times - her hair
5. 3 stages to hair growth
 - a. growth - resting - fall out
 - b. male testosterone speeds up the cycle so that they reach the 3rd stage earlier than women
 - c. female estrogen causes 1st phase to last longer - which allows hair to grow faster & longer than man

6. Does this mean that women should wear a veil to church?
 - a. or not cut their hair?
 - b. what is too long for a man's hair?
 - c. do we stand at door with a ruler & do a hair check each Sunday?
7. No! Paul's point is this: God has an ordained order for men & women & we must faithfully follow that order
8. Part of that order is that men & women are different
 - a. we must be careful to maintain that distinction in practical ways
 - in Corinth, the culture defined that distinction in length of hair and the wearing of a veil to show being under authority.
 - while the veil is not a culturally relevant issue, there are plenty of things that are
 - b. things as obvious as our hair, clothes, & manner
9. A look at the world of fashion shows how there is an obvious movement in clothing toward unisex clothing
10. Hair fashions are the same
 - a. yesterday at lunch break
 - b. talk show on radio:
 - woman host decrying the difference in standards between men and women
 - guys can take their shirt off in public and there is little comment
 - but a woman can't
 - why not? double standard
 - c. then, at restaurant, two gals in front of me with hair so short and dress so common, couldn't tell at first if male or female
11. We were not made for this
 - a. we were made male & female
 - b. true contentment will only come when we embrace what we are & live obediently before God

III. CONCLUSION

A. V. 16

16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor *do* the churches of God.

1. The word "custom" is the key for understanding what Paul means here

2. The custom he refers to is head coverings
3. Paul knew there might be some who would want to debate the custom of head coverings
 - a. and even after explaining the custom they are still contentious
 - b. they are argumentative, hostile
4. So Paul says, "We will not debate head coverings. For the issue is not customs but obedience to God."
5. In Russia: Magadan
 - a. asked about head coverings
 - b. our team criticized for not wearing the babushka
 - c. took them to this passage
 - d. asked them what it meant to wear it
 - e. didn't know - tradition!
6. God looks on our hearts & knows what's there
7. What is most important is that we are obedient to His order in our relationship with others.

B. Finally

1. God's order applies in our homes & in His church
2. Homes: Eph. 5:24-25 (Turn there)
 - a. husband's - exercise your leadership with sacrificial love
 - b. wives - great reward in true heart-submission to your husband
3. Church: God has called men to lead and for women to follow
 - a. only men will pastor and serve as elders here
 - b. women may minister, serve as deacons, teachers, & all kinds of areas
 - many women much better and gifted than men
 - not the point
 - c. God's order is for men to lead
 - d. single women - you don't submit to 1 man
 - rather, to the leadership of the fellowship
 - that means you look to them to lead & guide you in spiritual things
 - also, if in trouble, we are responsible to protect you
 - for we are your brothers in Christ, and as your family, we care deeply about you