

20. The order of authority

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The chapter and verse divisions in the Bible were accomplished by Robert Stephanus for the Latin Bible, that is also known as the Vulgate in 1551. A tremendous work by him. Though the entire Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit and there is absolutely no error, there are many errors in chapter divisions in the Bible.

One of those cases in point is here in chapter 11:1 in 1 Corinthians. It should have been v34 of chapter 10. So, as we study chapter 11, we get to go over 2 topics today. How about that, 2 for 1 deal?

A. FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE

1 Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

There was a man who desperately wanted to get married. He found a girl he was in love with, and he took her home to meet his parents. But his mother didn't like her. So he went out and found another girl and brought her home. Still, his mother didn't like her. Then he found a girl who looked like his mother, talked like her, and dressed like her. In every way, this girl was just like his mother. Then his father didn't like her.

Like it or not, people are making evaluations about God according to the way we live as followers of Christ. The apostle Paul knew he was following Jesus, so he did not hesitate to tell the Corinthian Christians to imitate his walk with the Lord. He knew the Corinthian Christians needed examples, and he was willing to be such an example. That is a very bold statement, but the apostle has an exceptional godly track record to show others that he has been faithful in following the Lord Jesus.

The word "imitate" means that they were to be like him in all good things and also to take God as an example. To get the true meaning of "imitate", we must understand the word of "example." "Example" comes from the Greek word "tupos." It derives from a root meaning "strike" or "hit." It means an impression left by a blow. In other words, the leader should make such impressions for the followers to follow his leads.

It puts responsibilities to both parties. The leader to make fine examples for the followers to follow, and the followers to take lessons from their leader to follow. One way another, we are all leaders in this world. Especially as Christians, we are supposed to lead and make good examples of true Christian living that honors our Lord and Savior, so that other unbelievers see our examples and desire the same things.

Here are important questions for you:

Would our church be a Bible studying church, if the rest of the congregation is like you in reading the Bible and having daily devotion? Would our church be a praying church, if everyone here prays like you? Would it be a Jesus worshipping church, if they follow your example of worshipping Jesus? Would it be a financially stable church, if they follow the way you give to the church? Would our church be a church that spreads the Gospel to unbelievers, if they talk about Jesus to others like you? You answer that.

As believers, we should be living godly lives in such a way that we could say, as the apostle Paul did, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."

B. THE PRINCIPLE OF HEADSHIP

1 Corinthians 11:2-3 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. 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.

Since Paul had some negative things to say to the church later in this section, he opened it on a positive note by praising the church.

Keeping the traditions is a scary thing for many Christians. It brings forth the idea that Christians are to be bound by ancient, outdated man-made traditions in their conduct and worship. Paul was not talking about ceremonies and rituals, but about the basic teaching and doctrine from God's Word. The traditions of men should be avoided, but the traditions that are given in the Word of God must be observed.

Paul makes it clear that God has established the principles of order, authority, and accountability. "Head" is an important word in this chapter. In its full sense, the head has the idea of headship and authority. It means to have the appropriate responsibility to lead and matching accountability.

1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

The idea of headship and authority is important to God. What the Lord looks for from man is voluntary submission. This is what Jesus showed in His life over and over again, and this is exactly what God looks for from both men and women, though it will be expressed in different ways.

It is essential to understand that being under authority does not mean inferiority. Jesus was totally under the authority of God the Father, yet He is equally God. When God calls women in the church to recognize the headship of men, it is not because women are unequal or inferior, but because there is a God-ordained order of authority to be respected.

C. THE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF HEADSHIP

1 Corinthians 11:4-6 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.

The Christian faith brought freedom and hope to women, children, and slaves during Paul's days in the 1st century. It taught that all people, regardless of race or sex, were equal before their Creator, and that all believers were one in Jesus Christ. As we have noted before, the local church was perhaps the only fellowship in the Roman Empire that welcomed all people, regardless of nationality, social status, sex, or economic position.

There are 2 aspects we must notice:

1) Theological aspect

To wear the head covering – veil in some translations, was a public symbol of being under the authority and protection of another. So, for a man praying or prophesying, having his head covered was for the man to say, "I am not in authority here. I am under the authority of others." Because God has established that the head of the

woman is man, it would be dishonoring to Jesus for a man to say this with the wearing of a head covering.

On the same principle, for a woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered is saying, "I am not under authority here." And because God has established that the head of the woman is man, it would be dishonoring to men for a woman to say this with the refusal to wear a head covering.

Under these words of Paul, women are free to pray or prophesy, but only when as they demonstrate that they are under the authority of the male leadership of the church

2) Cultural aspect

One of the very important things we must keep in mind when we study the Bible is that the Bible authors were using their terms that were familiar with their own cultural background. If we ignore this, we may not be able to comprehend some of the scriptural contexts fully.

In some ancient cultures, the shaving of a woman's head was the punishment given to an adulteress. In Jewish law, it was the mark of adultery according to Numbers 5:11-31. In the Greek world, it could be the mark of a temple prostitute of Aphrodite who wore provocative clothings with shaved or short hair while the rest of women in the city had long hair and coverings.

The apostle Paul was using this portion of the Scripture to point out two things for the Corinthian Christian women: being under the authority of Christ and their husbands, and not to be considered as temple prostitutes or lesbians by others.

By the way, if you ladies want to have a short hairstyle, go to town and get a buzz cut. If you ladies want to have long hair because you like it, have at it. You are no longer bound by the ancient cultural aspect, but you are by the theological aspect.

D. THE REASON FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF HEADSHIP

1 Corinthians 11:7-16 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. 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. 16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

God has established an order of authority, the principle of male headship, both in the church and the home in here and Ephesians 5:23. God created Adam first, and gave him responsibility over Eve. Since one reason for male headship is the order and manner in which God created man and woman, God has ordained there be a difference in the roles between genders, even in the church.

It also does not mean that every woman in the church is under the authority of every man – that would be ridiculous. Instead, it means that those who lead the church – pastors, elders, and deacons – must be men, and women must respect their authority whether they like or not. Don't insist that this is the 21st century and it should be different. Do you find it anywhere in the Bible? You absolutely don't.

Listen, since the Bible is not politically correct without any apologies, nor am I. When the Lord created a man and a woman, He made clear distinctions. Grant that there are some gals who are stronger than many men and there are many guys who can cook better than the majority of ladies. But the bottom line is the bottom line – Chromosomes. It is a DNA molecule with part or all of the genetic material of an organism. While women have two X chromosomes, men have a single X and the male-specific Y.

Bruce Jenner could change all he wanted to make himself look like a woman and caked make-up on his face and have done all the plastic surgeries, but he is still a man. Ellen Degeneres and Rosie O'Donnell can take the roles of husbands in their minds, Elton John can act like a woman. No matter what they do, their chromosomes are still the same as when they were born. I feel sorry for them.

Paul sought to restore order by reminding the Corinthians that God had made a difference between men and women, that each had a proper place in God's hierarchy. If there is to be peace in the church, then there must be some kind of order; and order of necessity involves rank. However, rank and quality are two different things. The general in the army has a much higher rank than the private, but the private may be a better man.

Another reason God has established male headship in the church is the presence of angels in corporate worship. Angels are present at any assembly of Christians for worship and note any departure from reverent order; and apparently, angels are offended by any violation from godly standards according to the Bible.

People say that there is no moral authority in our culture. When it comes to morality, the only thing that matters to the general population of the 21st century is what one wants to do. We must see the broader attack on authority as a direct satanic strategy to destroy our society and millions of individual lives. The devil is accomplishing this with two main attacks: first, the corruption of authority; second, the rejection of authority. He is doing a bang up job.

This idea of authority and submission to authority are so important to God that they are part of His very being. The First Person of the Holy Trinity is called the Father; the Second Person of the Holy Trinity is called the Son. Inherent in those titles is a relationship of authority and submission to authority. The Father exercises authority over the Son, and the Son submits to the Father's authority – and this is in the very nature and being of God. Our failure to exercise Biblical authority, and our failure to submit to Biblical authority, isn't just wrong and sad – it sins against the very nature of God

1 Samuel 15:23a For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft

The woman is an essential, invaluable part of God's plan. In His plan, men and women are equal – possessing different roles, but equal.

It is wrong to go against God's order. Man is born as man, not man with female touch, or woman with masculine aspect. Anyone pushes their own way to discard their natural God-given gender is going against God's way. That is another reason why homosexuality and transgender issues are detestable to God.

E. APPLICATIONS

- 1) When God calls women in the church to recognize the headship of men, it is not because women are unequal or inferior, but because there is a God-ordained order of authority to be respected.
- 2) Do not concern yourself about other person's outward appearance. Because God doesn't care about your appearance, either.