

# Head Covering

by Watchman Nee

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*God's government is an independent principle that complements the system of grace, and understanding it is essential for living a life of submission to God's authority.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 11:2

**Topics:** "Submission to Authority", "God's Order"

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## Description

Watchman Nee discusses the significance of head covering in the context of God's order in creation, emphasizing that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. He explains that head covering is not merely a cultural practice but a representation of submission to God's governmental authority, highlighting the importance of recognizing one's position within this divine order. Nee stresses that grace does not nullify God's government, and that women covering their heads serves as a testimony to both God and the angels, affirming their acceptance of God's appointed order. He concludes that understanding and practicing head covering is essential for maintaining the testimony of God's government in the church.

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## Transcript

Now I praise you that ye remember me I things, and hold fast the traditions, as I delivered them to you. But I'd have you know, that the head of man is Christ; and the head of the an is the man; and the head of Christ ng or prophesying, having his head head. But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoreth her head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled. For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man: for this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God. Judge ye in yourselves: is it seemly that a woman pray unto God unveiled? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

We are going to consider now the important subject of covering the head.

In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, the word "brother" or "sister" is never used. Rather, the subject, head covering, is related to "man" or "woman." Hence, what we have here does not touch upon our position in Christ but on God's order in creation.

Moreover, this same passage does not assert that "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30); it simply declares that "the head of Christ is God" (v. 3). So the relationship here described is not that of Father and Son, but that of God and Christ or God and His Anointed One. It does not deal with those things which happened in the Godhead between God the Father and God the Son. Instead, it refers to the relationship of God with the Christ of God, Him who was sent and anointed by God. Head covering has nothing to do with the Godhead; it is related exclusively to the relationship between God and His Anointed. Further, head covering here is not considered as between Christ and His church. It is not because Christ is the head of the church and the church is the body of Christ that there must be head covering. No, this is not the fact here. What is said here is, "the head of every man is Christ" (v. 3). Though there are many people, Christ is the head to everyone. The headship here does not refer to the church; rather, it shows that Christ is the head to each man. So the relationship defined here points not to Christ and the church, but to Christ and every man. It does not deal with the relationships among God's children, between brothers and sisters; it does not tell what brothers and sisters in the church must do. It merely says that "the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man." This relationship must be understood before we can know what head covering is.

## God's Two Universal Systems

I would like to view this matter of head covering from far off; otherwise, it will not be easy to understand 1 Corinthians 11. To comprehend this chapter in 1 Corinthians requires that we know God and His Word. First of all we need to know that God has set up two systems in the universe: the system of grace and the system of government.

### 1. THE SYSTEM OF GRACE

All that concerns the church, salvation, brothers and sisters, and God's children is included in God's system of grace. Everything which pertains to the Holy Spirit and to redemption belongs to this system of grace. Within the proceedings of grace, the relationship of man and woman is such that the Syro-Phoenician woman received grace from God as much as the centurion. So did Mary as much as Peter. So, too, might Martha and Mary have been raised from the dead as well as Lazarus.

### 2. THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

But there is another system in the Bible which we will call the government of God. This system is entirely different from that of grace. God's government is an independent system under which God does whatever pleases Him.

When God created man, He created male and female. This belongs to God's government. He created male first and female next--also a matter of His government. He does what pleases Him. He has a sovereign and independent will. When He decided that the Lord Jesus should be the seed of the woman, this too was God's government. He does not take man into His counsel.

In the garden of Eden, God gave fruit to man for food. This was God's government; He did as He pleased. After the flood, God gave the flesh of animals to men as food. It also was a governmental act.

In the beginning men spoke the same language. But then men joined together to build the tower of Babel in defiance of God. As a result, their tongues were confused so that they could no longer understand one another. This is God's governmental hand upon men. Afterward, during the time of Pentecost, God poured down His Spirit and caused people to speak in tongues. This also was the governmental hand of God.

After the tower of Babel, God scattered the people over all the earth. They became many races. This was the result of God's government. From these many races, God chose a people that dwelt alone, the race of Israel, to belong to Him--and this is grace. But to divide the people into races is government.

After a while, these many races became many kingdoms. According to Biblical history, kingdoms began later than races. First the races, and then the nations. Each kingdom had a king over its people. This also was permitted in God's governmental ordering.

During the time of the judges the Israelites were only a race, not a kingdom. Even during Samuel's time they were still a race like other races, for they did not yet have a king to reign over them. But one day the people of Israel asked for a king, as the other nations had. In choosing this way, they brought themselves out of grace and under government. They said, "Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5). God answered them through Samuel, saying, "Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit thou shalt protest solemnly unto them, and shalt show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them" (v. 9).

So, God chose Saul to be their king. As soon as Saul was chosen, God's governmental system commenced in Israel. This does not mean that God's grace no longer existed, but it does indicate that the Israelites had put themselves irrevocably under government. Thereafter they were not free to resist their anointed because he was their king. Although later on, as pertaining to grace, Saul left God, he nonetheless was still king according to government. If we trace these two different courses, we shall see two different situations. According to grace Saul failed, but according to government he still was king. Thus it was that David could not resist God's established authority.

#### Grace and Government Joined and Completed

These two systems of grace and government continued side by side until the coming of the Lord Jesus. Quite evidently there are two sides to God's work: the system of God's grace and the system of God's providence proceed together in the world. The priests and the prophets stand on the side of grace, maintaining the system of grace; the kings and leaders of Israel stand on the side of God's government, maintaining the system of His government.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, on the one hand He came to be the Savior of the world, to deliver men from sin. This is according to the system of grace. On the other hand, God sent Him to the world that through the work of the cross He might establish His own authority and set up His kingdom so that the heavens might rule on the earth. This is the system of government. Its work will continue until the power of the devil is destroyed and the kingdom and the new heaven and the new earth are brought in. On that day, the two systems of grace and government will be joined into one. That is to say, that during the time of the new heavens and the new earth, these two systems will become one in the Lord Jesus. He does both sides of God's work. He works under the system of government as well as under the system of grace.

The government of God does not commence with the creation of man, but, rather, at the creation of the angels. This is quite clear in the Bible. When Satan was yet a morning star, while he was still ruling, God's governmental system had already begun. Following the creation of man, basic institutions such as marriage, husband and wife, family, and the relationship between parents and children all came within the realm of God's government.

The basic lesson that all brothers and sisters need to learn is that we should never allow grace to interfere with God's government. I say most emphatically that never in our lives should we permit grace to intervene in what God has decided in government. God wants men to respect His government, not to overthrow it. If we are ignorant of God's government, we are lawless people in the sight of God. Since we have never seen the kingdom except as it is seen in the church, it is imperative for us to see the system of government. As a matter of fact, the system of grace is for the sake of completing the system of government. The system of government is not for the system of grace, but grace is for the completion of government.

Many hold to a fundamental error: they foolishly maintain that grace can set government aside. The truth is that what God does in grace never alters God's government. The forgiveness of grace that we receive from God does not change His governmental forgiveness. No matter how much we receive forgiveness in grace, still it does not affect governmental forgiveness.

God's government is an independent principle. From beginning to end, God brings in His governmental system. Grace only complements government. The system of grace was added because of man's insubordination and rebellion under the system of government. Grace is for the purpose of redeeming and restoring those who are insubordinate and rebellious, so that they may be subject to God's governmental system. Hence, grace actually gives an assist to God's system of government.

## Examples of God's Government

### 1. ADAM

You remember the tragic story of Adam's fall. After God created Adam, He planted a garden and put man in charge of it. God literally gave this garden to Adam and Eve. "Eden" means "pleasure." So this first couple lived in a garden of pleasure. Then they sinned against God. Even though God gave them the promise of redemption, saying that a Savior would come as the seed of the women, yet He drove them out of the Garden of Eden. It is God's grace to save, but that did not change God's government in driving out Adam and Eve.

Not only was Adam thrown out of Eden, but also God set cherubim to guard the garden so that Adam could not again enter. This too is God's government. Thus we can see that God's government and God's grace are two separate matters. Grace gives man the promise of a Savior, but God's government drives that same man out of the Garden of Eden.

### 2. THE ISRAELITES

Having arrived at Kadesh-Barnea, the Israelites refused to enter into Canaan; consequently, God denied them that privilege. Though they repented and then tried to enter, many of them were killed by the Canaanites, for God had barred the way. Their cries did not change God's decision (Num. 13 and 14). God has His governmental act; He will not allow men to interfere with His government.

### 3. MOSES

Moses did not sanctify the Lord before the eyes of the people when he smote the rock twice; as a consequence he could not enter into Canaan (Num. 20:7-12). Though God had mercy on him by bringing him to the top of Pisgah, He did not allow him to enter Canaan with His people. Moses could view the land with God on Pisgah, but he could not enter in (see Deut. 34). For Moses to see the boundaries of the land of Canaan from the mountaintop was God's grace; for him not to be allowed to enter in was God's government.

### 4. DAVID

After David sinned, God was gracious and merciful to him in forgiving his sin. God even gave him special grace after that incident by permitting David to have unusual fellowship with Him. Yet the sword never left his house (2 Sam. 12:7-14). This is God's government.

### 5. PAUL AND BARNABAS

Paul and Barnabas separated from each other because of Mark (Acts 15:37-39). Mark was Barnabas' relative (Col. 4:10). He deserted Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary trip, but Barnabas was willing to take him again on the next trip. Clearly this was due to their relationship in the flesh. After Barnabas was separated from Paul, he took Mark to Cyprus, their native place, indicating that they worked together according to the fleshly relationship. Though it may be that Barnabas was still used of God and still did a good work, nevertheless the Holy Spirit took his name out of the Bible thereafter. No doubt his name is in the book of life, but it is no longer recorded in the book of Acts. This is God's government. Under the government of God, man is not free to walk in his own way.

#### Submission to God's Government

So, the system of grace and the system of government are two separate matters. The humbler a person is, the more he progresses in God's governmental system. Never think that because you have entered into the system of God's grace you can therefore escape the system of God's government.

Grace can never nullify government; rather, grace enables people to obey government. May I say with all seriousness that grace gives us the strength to be subject to government. It does not make us rebellious and desirous of overthrowing government. These two systems complement each other. Grace never abolishes government. Only a fool would say that since he has received grace, he can afford to be loose and careless. What a foolish thing that would be.

The clearer a person understands grace, the better he will be as a servant or a master. The more a person knows grace, the better he is as a husband, a parent, a child, or a citizen, for he is more capable of submitting to authority. He who receives more of the grace of God knows more of how to maintain the government of God. I have yet to see one who truly knows God's grace destroy God's government.

#### Head Covering and God's Government

The matter of head covering belongs to God's government. For those who do not know God's government, it is impossible to exhort them to have their heads covered. They will not be able to understand how much is involved in this matter. But those who have seen God's government in God's revealed Word are able to appreciate the tremendous connection between head covering and God's government. "Now I praise you

that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:2-3). What we find here concerns the government of God.

The relationship here described is not that of the Father and the Son but that of God and Christ. To use a modern expression, Christ is God's representative. The relationship between Father and Son pertains to the Godhead, but Christ sent of God touches upon God's arrangement, God's government. "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). God is God, and Christ is One sent by God. This is their relationship in God's government. The Son, originally equal with God, was willing to be sent by God as the Christ. God remained on high as God, but Christ was sent down to do His work. This is the first order of events in the government of God.

In God's purpose, Christ is set up to be the head of every man; therefore, all people must obey Him. He is the firstborn of all creation and its firstfruit. He is the head of every man; every man should be in subjection to Him. This is a basic principle under God's government. Christ being the head of every man is related, not to the system of grace, but to the system of God's government. Likewise, man being the head of woman also belongs to God's governmental system. God in His government establishes man as head just as He sets up Christ as head and also Himself as head. Thus the system is completed.

God is Himself the head; He sets up Christ as head; and He further makes man to be head. These are the three great principles in God's government.

For God to be Christ's head does not touch upon the matter of who is greater; rather, it is simply an arrangement in the government of God. Likewise, under God's government Christ is the head of every man, and man is the head of woman. Such are God's arrangements; such are His appointments.

Philippians 2 is clear enough: the Lord Jesus in His eternal essence is equal with God; but in God's government He became Christ, and as Christ, God became His head. Christ Himself acknowledges in the Gospel of John that: "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner" (5:19); "For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (6:38); "I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you: howbeit he that sent me is true; and the things which I heard from him, these speak I unto the world" (8:26); and "I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things" (8:28). Today Christ takes His place in the government of God. According to God's counsel, He is Christ and as Christ He needs to listen to God. God the Son has no need to listen to God the Father, for God the Father and God the Son are equal in honor and glory in the Godhead. But, in God's government Christ does not stand in the place of God the Son; rather, He stands in the position of Christ, the One sent of God.

Some day the whole world will know that Christ is the head of all men, for this is God's governmental decision. Today this is known only in the church; the world has no knowledge of it. But the day will come when all the people of the world will realize that Christ is the head. He will have the preeminence in all the creation. He is the firstborn of all creation and the firstfruit. Everyone must be in subjection to the authority of Christ. Likewise, God's appointment of man as head of woman is also known only in the church today. Do you get the point? Today the church alone knows that Christ is the head of man and that man is the head of woman.

We have already seen how grace can never overthrow God's government. I trust our lesson will become clearer as we learn that grace is to support God's government, not to destroy it. How can anyone be so foolish as to attempt to use grace to interfere with God's government? The government of God is inviolable; His hand always sustains it. No one, just because he has believed in the Lord, can overthrow the Father's authority, or even undermine the authority of any government. We must not say that because we are Christians we do not need to pay taxes. No, nothing of the sort! The better Christian you are, the more you will maintain the government of God.

We are here today to maintain God's testimony in the world. God has shown us that there are three different heads: God is head, Christ is head, and man is head. This is not a matter of being brothers and sisters; it is basically a governmental arrangement. Grace is concerned with brothers and sisters, but government is different. God has sovereignly willed that the head of Christ is God Himself, so Christ must obey; the head of man is Christ, so man must obey; and the head of woman is man, and so woman should have the sign of obedience on her head.

### The Meaning of Head Covering

"Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoreth her head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven" (1 Cor. 11:4-5).

The meaning of head covering is: I submit myself to God's government; I accept God's appointed position; I dare not nullify His government by the grace I have received; I do not even dare to think about it; on the contrary, I accept God's government. As Christ accepts God as His head, so should every man accept Christ as his head. Likewise, woman should representatively accept man as her head. In covering the head, the woman signifies that she is not head, that she is as if she has no head--for it is covered.

Let us remember that although in practice it is only the woman who has her head covered, yet, in reality, Christ has His head covered before God and every man has his head covered before Christ. Why, then, is it that God only requires woman to have the practice of having her head covered? This indeed is marvelous, for it involves a very deep principle.

I often feel that it is impossible to talk with some brothers and sisters about head covering because they have no knowledge of God's government. Before anyone can understand head covering, he or she must first know God's government. The whole question is settled once one sees that Christ has His head covered before God. How much more ought I to cover my head before Him! I must cover it so that it is no longer seen or exposed, for God is my head. As a matter of fact, everyone's head must be covered before God. Since Christ is my head, I cannot have my own head seen or exposed.

Here I would like to tell Christian women that God has appointed man to be woman's head. In these days when God's authority is unknown in the world, the Lord demands this order only in the church. It therefore affects the very fact of our being Christians. God requires us in the church to accept what He has appointed governmentally.

### The Sisters' Responsibility

When a sister covers her head, she is standing before God on the basis of Christ's position before God and man's position before Christ. God wants the woman to cover her head in order to manifest His

government on earth. This privilege falls only to woman. She does not cover her head merely for her own self; she does it representatively. For her own self, it is because she is a woman; representatively, it is because she represents man before Christ and Christ before God. So when woman covers her head before God, it is just the same as if Christ covered His head before God. Likewise, when woman covers her head before man, it is just the same as if man covered his head before Christ. Man or woman should have no head since Christ is the head. If one's head is not covered, there will be two heads. Between God and Christ one head must be covered; so too must it be between man and woman and so between Christ and every man. If one head is not covered, the result will be that there are two heads, and God's government does not allow two heads. If God is head, then Christ is not; if Christ is head, then man is not; and if man is head, then woman is not.

God calls upon the sisters to show this arrangement. It is through the sisters that God's governmental system is to be displayed. It is the sisters who are responsible to have the sign of obedience upon their heads. God specifically requires women to have their head covered when praying or prophesying. Why? Because they ought to know God's government when they come before Him. In going before God to pray for people or in going before people to prophesy for God, whether in praying or in prophesying, whether in that which goes to God or in that which comes from God, in whatever is related to God, head covering is demanded. The purpose is to manifest the government of God.

Man ought not to cover his head. It is a shame to his head if a man covers his head before woman, for the man represents Christ.

#### How to Cover the Head

"For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled" (1 Cor. 11:6). In other words, God tells the sisters to be thorough.

No woman can keep her hair and not have her head covered. If she is not covered, she should have her hair either shorn or shaven. If she feels shameful to have her hair shorn or shaven, then she should be covered. Everything must be done thoroughly, not in half measure.

"For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man" (v. 7). Since man represents the image and glory of God, he should not cover his head. But woman is the glory of man, so she should cover her head. If a woman does not cover her head, she cannot demonstrate that man is the head. "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (vv. 8-9). These two verses make it very clear that the matter before us is concerned with government. "For the man is not of the woman"--this is God's doing. In God's creation man did not come by woman, but woman from the rib taken out of man. Hence, the head was Adam, not Eve. Furthermore, "neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." Just by God's ordering in creation, woman should be in submission to man.

"For this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels" (v. 10). The Bible does not specify what is to be used for the covering; it only states that the head, where the hair grows, should be covered. Why should the head be covered? Because of the angels.

I often am amazed at this marvelous teaching that the sisters should have on their heads the sign of authority for the sake of the angels. We know the tragic history of how some of the angels sinned. Satan

rebelled against God. Why? Because he desired to make himself equal with God. In other words, the angel Lucifer attempted to expose his own head before God and refused to submit to His authority. In Isaiah 14, Satan constantly reiterated, "I will." "And thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God and I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the uttermost parts of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High" (vv. 13-14). Right in this passage we see an archangel falling to become Satan. Revelation 12 further shows us that when Satan fell, one-third of the angelic force fell with him (Rev. 12:4). Why did the angels fall? Because of their not being subject to the authority of God the head but trying instead to expose their own heads

Today woman has a sign of authority on her head because of the angels, that is, as a testimony to the angels. Only the sisters in the church can testify to this, for the women of the world know nothing of it. Today when the sisters have the sign of authority on their heads, they bear the testimony that, "I have covered my head so that I do not have my own head, for I do not seek to be head. My head is veiled and I have accepted man as head, and to accept man as head means that I have accepted Christ as head and God as head. But some of you angels have rebelled against God." This is what is meant by "because of the angels."

I have on my head a sign of authority. I am a woman with my head covered. This is a most excellent testimony to the angels, to the fallen and to the unfallen ones. No wonder Satan persistently opposes the matter of head covering. It really puts him to shame. We are doing what he has failed to do. What God did not receive from the angels, He now has from the church. Because some of the angels do not submit themselves to the authority of God and of His Christ, the world is subject to great confusion. The fall of Satan has caused much more trouble than the fall of man. But, thank God, what He failed to get from the fallen angels, He has obtained from the church.

When many of the sisters in the church take the place given to woman and learn to cover their heads, they send out an unspoken word of testimony to the angels in the air, to the effect that God has obtained in the church what He desires. Because of this, woman must have on her head a sign of authority, a testimony to the angels.

### The Extremes

People, however, may go to extremes, thinking that since the man is the head and the woman is to obey the authority of man, then woman should take the attitude of blind submission. It is a human tendency to go to extremes--to either not move a step or move to the opposite extreme. So Paul warns us with a "however," for things are not that simple. Indeed, this is the outward testimony, but what about the inward fact? "Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord" (v. 11). Why is it so? "For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God" (v. 12).

In the Garden of Eden, woman was taken out of man. But after the Garden of Eden, man needs to come out of woman. No man is born without woman. As a matter of fact, man cannot do without woman nor can woman do without man. Neither can say he or she is special, for all things are of God. So the order to cover the head means no more than to have a sign of authority on the head. Since all things are of God, there is no place either for boasting or for depreciation.

"Judge ye in yourselves: is it seemly that a woman pray unto God unveiled?" (v. 13). Paul directs this question especially to the sisters. After you know that in the government of God the head of Christ is God, the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and that God has appointed woman to represent every man and also to represent Christ before God--after you know all this, is it proper for a woman to pray to God unveiled?

"Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him?" (v. 14). Paul here uses the feeling of the church to judge this matter. "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering" (v. 15). Women all over the world treasure their hair for it is their glory. They like to keep their hair. I have yet to see a woman casually throw her hair into the trash can! Hair is too precious. It seems that God gave long hair to woman for a covering. Paul explains that, since God did give long hair to woman for a covering, woman ought to add another covering onto that natural covering. Woman should voluntarily put another covering over her head. This is clear if you read verses 15 and 6 together. "For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled"; "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering." God has covered a woman's head with hair, therefore she who accepts God's authority ought to use something to cover her hair. Otherwise she should shear the hair which God has given her. In other words, if you accept God's covering, you must add on your own. If you reject God's, then you should take off what God has given you. The Bible indicates that long hair itself is insufficient; another head covering must be added.

Today people keep neither of these two commands of the Bible. If a sister will not cover her hair but shears or shaves it, she may yet be reckoned as hearkening to the word of the Bible. But today woman neither shaves nor covers her hair--a double disobedience.

What should the obedient do? Since God has covered my head, I too will cover it. God covers me with natural hair, and I will cover it with a sign. Those who know God must add their sign to God's sign.

#### Regarding the Contentious

"But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (v. 16). I think Paul speaks quite seriously. He well knew those Corinthians--and there are many such people, not only in Corinth of old, but in every place yet today.

"If any man seemeth to be contentious." What is he being contentious about? What is the problem that is discussed from verses 1-15, for verse 16 surely refers back to the topic of verses 1-15? Paul here is simply pointing out that it is wrong to argue against what is laid down in verses 1-15.

"If any man seemeth to be contentious." There are many who like to argue that it is not necessary for woman to have her head covered. They argue that God being Christ's head, Christ being the head of every man, and man being woman's head are matters which concern the Corinthians, not the universe. But, thank God, to be a Christian is a universal, not a Corinthian, concern. Thank God, God being the head of Christ is also a universal, not a Corinthian, affair. And I too, the least of all God's servants, say likewise: being the head of woman is a universal matter, not just a Corinthian matter.

"If any man seemeth to be contentious." Some seem to imagine that the sisters need not have their heads covered. They withstand Paul's word and oppose what he has received from the Lord and delivered to them. What does Paul reply? "We have no such custom." The "we" points to Paul and the apostles. There

is no such custom among the apostles that the sisters are not covered. This is a matter which is non-negotiable. If any still wish to contend, the answer is "neither the churches of God." It is therefore beyond contention.

Paul shows us what the churches of God had decided to do. According to the custom of that time, when the Jews entered into the synagogue, they covered their heads. Both the men and the women covered their heads. They both used a veil called "tallith" to cover their heads when they went into the synagogue. Otherwise they could not get in. The Greeks of that time, however, had different customs (and Corinth, incidentally, was a Greek city). Neither men nor women covered their heads when they entered into the temples. There was no Gentile nation or race in Paul's day that required the woman to be veiled and the man unveiled. Either both men and women were veiled--as with the Jews, or no one was veiled--as with the Gentiles. Only among the Christians did the man have his head uncovered and the woman have her head covered.

So, for the man to be uncovered and the woman covered is a charge that only Christian apostles have given. It is a practice the churches of God alone hold, for it is different from both the Jewish and the Gentile customs. It is something new, and it is from God.

All the apostles believed that woman should have her head covered. If anyone today professes to be an apostle and yet does not believe in the head covering of woman, he cannot be counted as one of the apostles. He must be taken as an outsider. There is no such practice among the apostles of not believing this. If any church does not believe, Paul's answer is, "We have no such custom, neither the churches of God." None of the local churches which the apostles had visited had any such custom of arguing about woman's head covering. So the answer to any who argue is that there is no such practice as arguing about it. In verses 1-15, Paul is willing to reason, but after that he reasons no more. If any seems to be contentious, Paul says no apostle will approve of that one's opinion. If anyone wants to argue, no church will agree with his view. You are outside the fellowship of the churches as well as of the apostles.

Therefore, let our sisters cover their heads in the church when praying or prophesying. Why? To manifest that in the church God has obtained that which He has failed to get in the world, in the universe, and among the angels.

#### The Principle of Representation

We Christians live under two different principles: the personal and the representative. We live not only personally but also representatively before God. If I am not mistaken, in the future we shall be judged both for our own sake and in the capacity of representation.

#### 1. ILLUSTRATED BY THE MASTERS

For example, here is a master under whom are several servants. This master is a brother in the Lord, yet he treats his servants unfairly, unrighteously, unreasonably, and harshly. In the future, he shall indeed be judged by God for his unfairness, unrighteousness, unreasonableness, and harshness. But he shall also receive an added judgment, because not only does our brother have a relationship with his servants, but also he represents our Lord as master before God. Each time he acts as a master, he represents the Lord. The way he treats his servants reflects how the Lord would treat His own. Thus, if he sins, he sins in representation as well as in personal conduct. He shall be judged for his own sins and also for the sin of misrepresenting the Lord.

## 2. ILLUSTRATED BY THE SERVANTS

Suppose I am a Christian servant instead of a master. If I steal, am idle, lie, cheat, or give only lip service, I will be judged for these sins. But my judgment will not stop there, for as a servant I represent all servants who serve the Lord who is in heaven. If it were only a matter of service before men, I might be able to cheat, to steal, and to be idle. Yet, whenever the Bible talks about being a servant, we are reminded that we have a Lord in heaven. So, I am not just a servant; I also represent all servants. I am a servant both as a person and as a representative.

## 3. ILLUSTRATED BY MOSES

Moses lost his temper in front of the people of Israel at Meribah because they tempted God. He smote the rock twice with the rod. Immediately God chided him. If, in losing his temper, Moses was wrong only as an individual even though he was also a leader of the people, he might yet be forgiven. Was it not that once before, when he saw the people of Israel worshiping the golden calf on the plain, he exhibited even greater wrath by smashing the two tables of law inscribed personally by God's hand? But God did not reprove him, for on that occasion his wrath represented God's wrath; so it was righteous. But this time when he smote the rock twice, what did God say? God said, "Because ye believed not in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (Num. 20:12). In other words, Moses misrepresented God. The people of Israel thought God was angry, though in fact He was not.

### Personal Position and Representative Position

Thus we see personal sin and representative sin are two different things. In reading 1 Corinthians 11:3, every sister, every woman (though you cannot find such a woman in the world) should understand that she not only has her personal position but a representative position as well. God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of every man, and man is the head of woman. For this reason, woman should have her head covered.

In having her head veiled while praying or prophesying, the sister proclaims before God that no one in the whole world should expose his head before Christ. Indeed, no one should expose his head before God, nor should anyone have his own opinion or idea before Christ. In the presence of Christ, all heads must be covered, all our opinions and judgments must be denied. Let us confess to the Lord, "You are my head." As a sister, your head is covered because you are in a representative position. Indeed, you represent the whole universe. You declare to the world what everyone should do before Christ.

Head covering in itself is a small matter, but it constitutes a very great testimony.

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