

Biblical Headship

Corinthians Explained

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Dear congregation, this life is often chaotic, sometimes very chaotic but it would even be more chaotic if there was no guidance, if there was no government, if there were no school boards and no consistories and no police officers, so we need an authority to regulate, to govern, to assist each other. That's why the Apostle Paul is so clear about it in Romans 13, you may remember that, "Let every soul," every soul, nobody excepted, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." Many types of higher powers but we must be subjected to them. "For there is no power but of God," all power and authority is God-given, "the powers that be are ordained of God," it says therefore, "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power," the authority, "resisteth the ordinance of God." Do you see how clear it is? All authority by God-given and with a purpose and without it we are resisting the power of God.

So the Apostle Paul does not only speak of submission in the chapter we just read, but he's also talking about God-given authority and loving authority. You also may remember, children, that example of the Lord Jesus about authority. You know, some people wanted to corner him and ask him what about paying taxes to the Roman government, and the Lord Jesus asked them to give a coin, right, a coin, money? And he said, "Look at it, whose picture, whose image is on there?" And they said, "Well, Caesar's, of course." And the Lord Jesus said, "Give unto God that's God's and unto Caesar which is Caesar's. Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's."

The basics of authority are given already in Genesis in Genesis 2. Do you know Adam, the first man, was alone at first and the Lord made for him a woman and the question is what her relationship was to her husband. Is it a type of authority? I would say so. It says, "She will be a help meet to Adam." Not a helpmate, it doesn't say that. "A help," space, "meet to Adam," fitting because she was called, Adam was called to love her and to care for her and to respect her, and it was also her duty to look up to him and be a helper to him. We also read about it in the law of Moses, right? "Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Well, the chapter we have read this morning, 1 Corinthians 11, the first 16 verses, are about authority and especially the third verse we'd like to focus on. So 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 especially verse 3.

3 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.

So far.

"Biblical Headship." Biblical headship. Four thoughts and application. In the first place, Christ is the head, right, of the church. Secondly, God is the head, right, of Christ. In the third place, a husband is the head of his wife. And in the fourth place, covering your head as an example, as a testimony of that submission. And finally an application. So biblical headship: Christ the head, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ."; secondly, God is the head at the end of verse 3, "and the head of Christ is God," do you see that, "the head of Christ is God," it's kind of unfamiliar territory; and then in the third place, the husband is the head in the middle part of verse 3, "and the head of the woman is the man"; and in the fourth place, cover your head in verse 4 and 5, "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head."

Congregation, the Apostle Paul, you know him, we have preached on 1 Corinthians before, you know him, he's now very practical this morning and he needs to talk to us, he needs to write about authority but he does it in a very kind, loving, pastoral way. Look at verse 1, "Be ye followers," followers, be followers, you know when you follow, don't you? Yes. "Be ye followers of me. Follow me," he says, the Apostle Paul, "even as I also am of Christ." So the Apostle Paul says, "I am a follower of the Lord Jesus." Do you see the Lord Jesus walking through Canaan with quite a few disciples, followers of him, the Apostle Paul says, "I followed the Lord Jesus and I hope you follow me." So we are one flock, the Lord Jesus being the shepherd, and I'm an under-shepherd, and you are all sheep, "followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." May I ask are you a follower of God's people? But more importantly are you followers of Christ? He has said, he has spoken so often in the Bible, "Follow me. Follow me." Have you heard that voice, "Follow me," like Levi was called out of the receipt of custom, "Follow me"? You know, if you are not following him yet, just listen to that voice today. Follow him. Follow me.

But then he also continues, "Now I praise you, brethren," see the kind voice, "brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you." So the Apostle Paul is almost saying, "Thank you for the respect, for the obedience, for the cooperation. I praise you." He praises the congregation and says thank you to the congregation. "I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things. You remember me and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you." So he's not mad or something, he is thankful and he has a good relationship with the people.

But then in verse 3 he writes very concise, very dense, he writes about a desire. He has a hope, a real deep wish, "I would have you know, and of course, not only know where

your head, I would like you to practice this as well but I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ." You know, think about that. Is that true? Is that true that the head of every man is Christ? All men on the whole earth and Christ is their head? No, that's not what he means. He means here the living church. They are the "man." They are the people. They are the people of God's pleasure, "But I would have you know that the head of the church is Christ," and he focuses especially on men for a reason as we'll see later but he means all God's people. All God's people are the body of the Lord Jesus and he is the head.

You know, what does that mean Christ being the head of the church? Could you help me, young people? I don't have a Bible here but you could write it down, right? In what sense is Christ the head? That's a metaphor, that's a comparison. So let me ask you what is the head for? The head is, in the first place, very connected to your body, to your neck, right? You can't separate your head. I can miss a hand, I can miss a finger, I can miss a leg, I can miss two of them, but I can't miss a head. So the head is the example of something that is absolutely necessary to be really connected with and, of course, so the Lord Jesus is connected to the church. The church of God, all the true believers are his body and they are one with him.

So I would have you know that the head of every child of God is Christ. He is connected to you, people of God. He is united with us in the deepest sense. Unity. It also means to love. My head loves my body because nobody has ever hated his own flesh, nobody has ever hated his own body. So if you have a head, that head cares, deeply cares for the body. It regulates everything. It's the center of the nervous system and so the Lord Jesus Christ is connected with his church and he loves that church. How much? As his own body. Isn't that amazing? You know, you can appreciate people and love people and you may feel a bond with people, be so connected that they are you, that you identify with them, that there is one, a unity, and then to love your own body. You know your body is not a machine, your body is an organism and in an organism things work together, and the head loves the body and so the Lord loves the church, the living church as his own body like Adam did when he said, "This is now flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones."

And in the third place, the head nourishes the body because my mouth is not in my body, my mouth is not in my hand, my mouth is in my head. And so Christ nourishes his church as his own body. He really cares. He loves, he nourishes, he cares so belonging to the church is so crucial and so precious, you're united with the Lord Jesus and he loves you as his own body and he nourishes you as his own body. Let me prove it with Ephesians 5:28, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church," even as the Lord the church. Do you see that? Nourishing and loving and united.

Oh, that head is also the wise head, the governing head, and what a mystery, what an inconceivable blessing to belong to the body of Christ and to benefit of having such a head. This head is in heaven where he keeps feeding, he remains united, and the church walks in his footsteps and obey him like the body obeys the head, right? My brain says,

"moves that hand," that hand is moving, the hand obeys, and so the church is supposed to obey the head. So everyone of God's children have such a head, everyone of them is also wired by the Lord to be united with him, to be close to him, to obey him, to walk with him, to follow him.

So I hope you cannot be content without a head. Secondly, God the head. I skipped the middle part of verse 3 for a second and I'd first like to talk about the last piece of verse 3, "and the head of Christ is God." The head of Christ is God so Christ has a head? So like Christ is the head of the church, so he has a head himself? So the Lord Jesus has someone to respect, and someone to look up to, and someone to honor, and someone to follow his footsteps and to obey him? I would say so. That's what it says, right? A little unfamiliar maybe but if I explain it, I am sure you will understand and I'm sure you will agree.

God himself is the head. We have heard that Christ is the head of the church and the husbands the head of the wives, but have you heard of God being the head of Christ? It's important to understand it. God the Father is the head of Christ and although Christ is also the vine, although Christ is not less than the Father, the Lord Christ is equal with God, right? Keep that in mind, equal with God and yet obedient. This might help us later on in the sermon, equal with God and yet obedient. So the Lord Jesus is not ranked lower. It's not so that the Father is higher. They are co-eternal and the Triune God together and yet the Lord Jesus took upon himself the form of a servant, right, and he became a man of no reputation. He lowered himself. He humbled himself to the dust and he became in subjection. He didn't only wash the feet of his disciples, that's something else, but he was willing to be subjected to the will of God and he learned obedience already in eternity. The Lord Jesus spoke, "Here I am to do thy will, O God, and thy law is in my inner parts."

So the Lord Jesus expressed his will to be united with his Father, to be respectful of him. So was the Father more than Christ? No. Was he more God? Had he more power? Had he more to say? Certainly not, however, the Son took voluntarily that position in the state of his humiliation. So consider, for example, the prayer of the Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, "If possible let this cup pass by but not my will," you see, not my will, "but thy will be done." Even when Christ suffered intense pain, he surrendered and he looked upon that head and said, "I am willing to do thy will." So he respected kind of authority, kind of authority. He went away again the second time in the garden of Gethsemane and prayed saying, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done."

So God is the head of Christ and therefore in Isaiah the Messiah is often called the servant. So 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. So Christ practiced, Christ practiced to be respectful of his Father and to do his will. Not his own will, although they were the same, but he was willing to do his will and that's the point the Apostle Paul wants to make here, right? In subjection to do his will although he was equal to God, although he was not less God, although he was not ranked lower but he yet respected him and did his will.

John 5:30, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." So apparently there is nothing wrong with having a head over you, right? What's the problem having a head over you? Christ is the head of the church and God is the head of the Lord Jesus, so why think so negative about headship and submission and doing his will? The Lord Jesus was exactly the same. He did his will.

So a head is not, per se, more important or someone higher ranked. Is a police officer ranked higher because he can write us a ticket? No, he has a responsibility but he is not higher. God the Father is not higher. Husbands are not higher. Yes, Christ is higher in church. So that brings us to the third thought: the husband being the head. So that's the middle part of verse 3, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man," right? The head of the woman is the man. I hope by now you have a different feeling about the word "head"; that you don't frown at the word "headship," but you say, "How beautiful, what a beautiful theme of Christ being the head of the church and of God being the head of Christ."

So what does that mean that husband and wife are head and body? Well, in the first place, that there is unity, right? Head and body united. You can't believe it, what a connection is husband and wife and they twain shall be one, the Bible says. And biblical marriage is that husband and wife are one single organism. They're not one piece of wood. They are not one piece of metal. Not one piece of stone. They are one piece of flesh. They're an organism working together. That unity is not a sentiment, not just how they feel. They feel like united, it's not a feeling, hopefully it is also but that's not the real thing. The real thing is it's a fact by God's design.

So let me give you two examples, children, about unity of husband and wife, of your father and mother if you may have them. What about the violin? You've seen people playing a violin, how many pieces? The violin and the bow, right? Without the bow, you cannot make any good music, so they are together, they have to play together in order to make music. Or think of a lock and a key. They are two things but you need both otherwise that whole lock is worthless and what do you do with a key without a lock?

So the Creator of us humans told us that the two halves were made to be combined, to be together in pairs, united not simply on a sexual level but totally combined. The head of the woman is the man and therefore divorce is something like cutting up a body, right? Not just two pieces of metal that you unscrew and you take a part out of your car with your wrenches. No, it is cutting up a body. Divorce is a kind of surgical operation. Divorce is very serious. Divorcing your spouse is not ending a business partnership but it is close to having both your legs cut off. So do not cut off the head, and the head loves the body. Not being in love is the reason for remaining married but the contract, the vow, the promise. Do you realize that this is different than breaking a business contract or something? That's fraud and you can go to jail for that, right. If you put a signature down in business with a huge amount of money and you just cook the books, you are going to

jail, right? So it is not too long ago, I forgot about looking it up, it's not too long ago that divorcing was a criminal offense in Canada.

Now you cannot promise in a marriage, you cannot promise the other that we'll always be in love. You know, can you promise that you will never have a headache? Can you promise that you will never have COVID? You know, so being in love is something else but to love is more than that, to love is to be faithful, is to respect. Why should husbands and wives need to stay together even when they do not love the other? Even if they are not in love anymore? Because of the sanctity of marriage. Because marriage is an example of the unity between Christ and the church and Christ and God. Marriage is not based upon feelings, you know, but upon the facts.

So being in love when you start dating, being in love is called the explosion that starts the love but then there is also a calmer love of respect and attention. So falling in love is never something irresistible like getting COVID. Nobody is forced to give into that. Marriage is to love in obedience to God. For that reason, we should not only marry with a justice of the peace but in the church, to promise to stay together until death be parted because marriage is so holy as God has given this as an institution and marriage is meant to be permanent, for life.

The man is the head of the body and you may wonder why we need a head. Why did God organize it like that? Why did the Lord not say in marriage, you're married together now and you have equal say; you're partners and the one has no more authority than other. Why has the Lord not said just talk it over and come to a conclusion and do it together? Because the Lord wants marriage to be permanent. You know, two captains on a ship, would it work? Two CEO's in a company with the same responsibilities, would it work? You're asking for problems and that's also here.

So for that reason the Apostle Peter also wrote about it, "For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." So it's not only about subjection in this chapter, about acknowledging him as the head, it is also about to love the body, to nourish the body, to guide the body.

So we have no doubt with the main theme of this portion of the Bible, those three parts in verse 3, "I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ," Christ the head of the church, "and the head of the woman is the man," we just spoke about that, "and the head of Christ is God." But then the next thought: covering the head.

Congregation, the following verses following verse 3 are talking about the head covering. It's the only time the Bible speaks about that so some say, "Don't talk about it. It's way too controversial and it's only once in the Bible so who cares?" But you know, although it's only once in the Bible, it is in the Bible and there are more things not so often in the

Bible like the virgin birth of Christ also not too often in the Bible, and there are many more things only once in the Bible. So does the Bible not say that every jot and tittle is important and that we may not add and subtract anything from the Bible? So we have to leave it in, and I think I probably would have not preached about it if it would not have done that in this series. So I have to deal with it.

So what is this about? Well, the main thing that authority, the main thing is that Christ is the head of the church and God is the head of Christ and the husband is the head of the woman. That's the main issue and wants to have a sign of that, a token of that like at the Lord's Supper Table we have bread and wine, and in baptism we have water. If you don't know we have baptism and the Lord's Supper, we also have our ladies wearing a hat. That's a message. So there are probably not too many ladies when they put on their hats on Sunday morning that they think, "Now when I put my hat on, that is because I like to be submissive to my husband." Probably not too many think about that but that's the thing. That's something the Lord wants to just gently express and emphasize that the body obeys the head.

So that refers especially to the worship services, prophesying and praying, "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head." So although there are many different opinions on this piece, and I'm not saying that I have the last word of it, what to understand is that this refers especially to the worship service, not to house visitation, not to Catechism classes, not to Bible studies, not to singalongs, not when you're in the church sanctuary but it's for the worship service.

So during the worship service the Lord wants to have a special attention to that single fact, and he writes, "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head." So if someone is in church, a male in church, and he puts his cap on or his hat on, he is dishonoring, he is dishonoring his own head and that's not right. It's a shame because he is the man and he should have his head uncovered acknowledging his responsibility, acknowledging that he has to care, acknowledging that he has to guide, acknowledging that he has to comfort, acknowledging that he has to nourish, acknowledging his responsibilities.

Also for his wife, "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head." So wives and girls are called to have their heads covered in church to make clear that there is a difference in gender, to make clear there are only two genders, male and female, to make clear that we have to respect the creation order. "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered," uncovered, "dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven." So if she has no head covering it's the same as if she was shaven, as if she would have short hair, same length as the husband.

So what? Well, "if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn." If you don't care for your head covering, then you can cut your hair off as well. "Let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn," your hair cut off, let her also be covered with a hat.

"For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man." Now the apostle goes back to creation, back to creation, that the man is made in God's image in the glory of God, and the woman in the glory of the man. So Adam was first made, then Eve.

"Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels." Because of the angels? Well, don't we read in the Bible that when a sinner repents in church, I hope that may be given this morning that someone is repenting in church, so he's repenting and there is that deep feeling of being lost, there is a deep feeling of not being yourself anymore but they also begin to realize what verse 10 says, "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels," because the angels rejoice, rejoice when a sinner repents. There is joy in heaven and so there is joy in heaven because of the angels. Look on, I would say, "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels," because of the Lord.

So the Apostle Paul and the congregation viewed having your head covered is a symbol of having a head over you therefore men when prophesying were not allowed to cover their heads but women were supposed to, to show their willingness to be submissive. So wearing a hat or a shawl or a veil, we don't know exactly what the shape was, was a message, a message of, "I'm in service. I'm serving." So that was the Lord's will. Look at verse 10 as well again, "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head." So because he is her head, she should have something on her head. That's the connection.

Especially important is verse 14, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her." Does not even nature itself teach you? Nature. There are three explanations on that. Some say, "Yes, nature tells us that. Nature just let's you feel it in the animal world like male lions and those manes, right? And many other birds and animals, you can see that the male is kind of empowered and rich in hair growth." So is it not the same with men that can grow a beard and that have long hair? Or does the Bible teach that women have long hair, is that not what nature teaches? Well, I don't think nature does, does it? Is it so that the growth, the hair growth of men is less or more?

I don't think the Apostle Paul means that so others have said it means culture, habit, tradition. Does not the tradition, does not our culture explain that? So in that case, wearing a head covering would be right in those years but not per se now because you live in a different culture, and in our culture that hat is not understood as a token of submission. And there's another problem when you go back into Romans, the Apostle Paul talks about homosexuality and that homosexuality is against nature. Same word. So if nature here means culture, then homosexuality was against the culture of that day but not per se wrong. Same word, *autē he physis*. So it can't be that either. So it is not nature because if it will be nature, you cannot even clip your nails anymore. You must have a beard then because when you have to let nature go. That's not what it is. It's not culture.

What is it then? It is creation order and in the Greek literature the word "physis" often means that, how we were created, and that's why the Apostle Paul in this piece talks about creation. So in creation the Lord has said to the male that he is the head and that she is the body. So "Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering."

So we need to always go back to creation and if you don't believe in creation, if Adam and Eve were not really the first people, then the whole biblical truth is ruined, then also the difference between husband and wife are out the window and not important anymore. So, yes, I think personally, although the last word has not been said about it, that it's also important today to respect this because it's not just nature and just culture, it's creation order. God has created us male and female and he has chosen those signs for that. It is God's decision to use bread and wine as tokens. It's the Lord's decision to use that head covering as a means to underline the truth.

So enough about that. Application. God is the head of Christ. Christ obeyed his Father. Not his will but the Father's will that called so he could become a Savior. He respected the head, never sinned against the head, loved his Father, let us as disobedient ones flee to him who acknowledged his Father as the head. He said, "Always his will. His will." That's a Savior, that's the Lord Jesus Christ always doing the will of his Father. The church is united to Christ as the head and the body. They are one organism and Christ will never forsake his body. What he has begun, he will continue. He's holding onto the church because he cares as the head cares for the body.

Let all men realize what biblical manhood is about, it's loving your wife as your own body, honoring the weaker vessel, treating her as a queen, even if you're not in love, yet love her. Wives, when you put on your head covering, be reminded of your honorable responsibilities and don't forget that the Lord Jesus is called the helper as well, and that Ebenezer and so far as this has helped us hitherto, it's the same word, it's an honor to be the help meet for him. Even the Lord Jesus was acknowledging a head, so if the Lord Jesus acknowledged the head of his Father although he was equal, what's the problem with honoring your head?

Eve was made as a helper for him but that's nothing inferior. In order to have a good marriage there must be lots of love and when the wife is not so lovable, it's important to keep loving, and if he is not so respectful, it's still the calling to respect him. To make a marriage better there must also be more submission even if it is undeserved. And you know, when people go for counseling, for marriage counseling, one of the things that should also happen at Christian counseling is that the Bible is opened. And also this chapter is talking about that.

So back to verse 1, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." We need to be followers of him and being a follower of the Lord Jesus is to know your sins, right, to confess your sins, and to follow him in his word, and to be interested in him, and to walk in his footsteps. To follow also means follow him in those things as he has talked about.

Christ followed and surrendered willingly, not forced but he knew it was fair, it was needed, it was good.

So the Apostle Paul ends with verse 16, "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." There are two explanations for that. Some say the Apostle Paul in verse 16 says, "Now this was my meaning, this was my opinion. If you don't agree, that's fine. I'm not going to fight about it. It's up to you. I don't want to be contentious about that. It's not worth the fight," some say, and others say, "No, the Apostle Paul doesn't want to talk about it anymore because it's so clear, because it is found in creation." And I have to admit that makes more sense to me. He has talked not only about the head covering, that was not the issue, just wear your hat, he's talking about body and head cooperating and that's the issue, and for that reason this makes perfect sense and we should not fight about it.

Congregation, "Be ye followers of me." Someday we have to die, right, and give account for everything, even for something like this, and what a blessing it will be if we will see the footsteps of the Lord Jesus in front of us, and the Lord Jesus would say, "Follow me. Come closer. Come die, die with me, die in peace." So "be followers of me even also I am of Christ because the Lord Jesus, he fulfilled the law by being the body and honoring the head." Amen.