

PREFACE

Last week we read the passage from Chapter Eight that included v6. I would like for us to read that verse again, as it—aside from being profound theology—plays into our study today.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:5-6.

In all this about covering and not covering, man and woman, anatomical heads and corporate or spiritual heads it is easy to lose what should be our proper perspective. From time to time Paul reminds us, as he does in 8:6:

In all this about food sacrificed to false gods—gods in heaven, gods on earth—remember, for us there is but one God, our Father. Everything there is—everything we know, everything we don't know—is from Him. Our lives and our living is from Him and for Him. And for us there is but one Lord, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Everything there is came into being by His agency, and our lives and living, as believers—as well as our life in the Father—are because of Him.

We must, from time to time, deal with the vagaries of living on this earth—even *important* details like how to properly, earnestly worship the Lord. But we should never forget, as Paul points out in v12 of our text in the context of balancing the roles of the sexes, that *all* things are from God: man, woman—even our worship and praise—are from Him. That is, we are to think and live “other-worldly,” as people who think and live in a manner different from those who do not know the Lord.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:8-12.

v11

However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.

From our previous session our conclusion was that v10 speaks of a woman's fundamental authority over her own anatomical head (NIV2011). Her ultimate *priority*, however, is not the exercise of her personal rights (as in 8:9), but that she should do whatever is necessary in her dress to facilitate orderly and undistracted worship of the Lord. It goes without saying that this would apply to everyone in attendance—not just the women. *All* in attendance should be focused on the glory of the Lord, and not on each other.

One gets the impression in v11 that Paul anticipates the many ways some people and some sects will run wild with this passage—and perhaps already were in Corinth. It seems that just about every time we are at the local grocery store I notice some woman in the aisles dressed all in black, a shapeless dress down to her ankles with a white cap pinned to her hair. She wears no makeup and, frankly, looks a bit whipped. If there are young children with her, as there usually are, they will be dressed much the same. What is striking is that on those rare occasions when the husband accompanies one of these dowdy women, he is dressed in a more normal, contemporary fashion—much like any Midwestern farmer. And one is left with the unmistakable impression that in their belief system the woman must adhere to strict, even demeaning regulations, while the man is free to do whatever he likes.

Here once again we have a passage and verse that turns this temporal society on its head. Let's take v11 in order. The “however,” or “nevertheless” (*plen*) that opens the verse means that what follows is a caveat to, or qualification of the discussion that preceded regarding women's head covering. It emphasizes that that discussion was just about head coverings in worship, and not setting down a larger principle regarding women's submission to men. What follows is introduced to *balance* the previous statements. And what follows is truly radical when compared to the common philosophies of this fallen, groaning world. But first Paul qualifies the qualification.

in the Lord

By this he means “in the sphere of” life in Christ. What he is about to say does not pertain to those outside of Christ Jesus. And now, according to the lights of our present culture, the apostle really goes off the rails.

...neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman

The KJV translates this more literally: “without.”

independent, without^{kiv} = *choris* = adverb from <G5561> (*chora*); **at a space, i.e.**

separately or apart from (often as preposition) :- beside, by itself, **without**.

chora = feminine of a derivative of the base of <G5490> (*chasma*)

through **the idea of empty expanse**; room, **i.e. a space of**

territory (more or less extensive; often including its

inhabitant) :- coast, county, fields, ground, land, region.

Paul is *not* declaring that everyone must be married, but that in a union of man and woman they are interdependent of each other. One might even extend this beyond marriage to men and women in the church: each has a role, each is important (which Paul will address in Chapter Twelve). Even with their different roles, whether in marriage or the church, man and woman each need the other to make a whole. I believe this statement, again, hearkens back to Creation.

Read Genesis 2:22-25.

Sidebar: Out of the commentators at my disposal, it was David Garland who made the best case for our interpretation of v10—as the NIV2011 has it, “It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels.” But it is Gordon Fee who points out how v11 substantiates that interpretation.

If v10 was speaking about man having authority over the woman, we would expect v11 to begin (to qualify that statement in v10), “However, man is not independent of woman...” But he qualifies v10 by beginning with the *woman* in v11: “However, woman is not independent of man...” In fact, the sequence “woman/man” makes almost impossible the view that what has preceded has to do with the man’s having authority over the woman... The fact that he says, ‘woman is not independent of man’ indicates that he is qualifying *her* use of *exousia* in some way. (Fee)

In Christ, man and woman are inextricably bound to each other, each playing different roles, but needing the other, and neither superior to the other.

v12

For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.

I favor the lean clarity of the KJV for this verse, which reflects better the sparseness of the original text. In fact, my typically favorite NASB is my *least* favorite translation of v12.

KJV: For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

Paul has based much of his argument for man being the “head” of the woman in this chapter, on the Creation epic that man was created first, and that woman was then made from the man. Here he balances that out by offering as equivalents the Creation order and the birthing order. Man was created first but once, but every man since has been “created” *out of* woman.

...and all things originate from God.

I’ve said it before: Prepositions are important, and this is one of the reasons I favor the KJV for this verse. Not only does it keep it lean, like the original Greek, but its prepositions are best. Others may consider it nitpicking, but even small, two-letter words can offer important shades of meaning.

It is easy to read “originate from God” (NASB), and the more common “come from God” as a one-time receipt. By that I mean, if I get a package in the mail, it might be something I ordered from a company in Kalamazoo. It came *from* them, so, as far as I am concerned, that company is the source. But I have no relationship with that company; that company in Kalamazoo has no bearing on my life in general. I just got a box and its contents from them.

The two-letter word “of,” however, speaks volumes—just like its close cousin, “in,” as in “in Christ.” All things are not just *from* God, they are *of* God. This gives us a far more expansive picture. The Lord God does not just deliver things to us, then turn away, disinterested in the results. Nor is he simply a delivery boy; God inculcates Himself in all those who are “in the Lord” (v10). What He delivers is not just things, but Himself.

God in His genius has given woman to man, and man to woman, and when these two are “in” Him through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus, Father God then gives Himself, comprising a perfect union—a perfect “one” bound together in Him. They are not just from Him; they are *of* Him. Fee concludes:

Both man and woman, not just the man, are from [of] God. The one was created from dust, the other through the man, and now finally both through woman. This seems clearly designed to keep the earlier argument from being read in a way that would subordinate women to men.

The implementation of God’s genius for male/female relationships has repeatedly been corrupted by, predominantly, the male of the species. In Christian homes and Christian churches throughout history men have interpreted NT teachings as license to subordinate—even abuse—women. As a result, some women are placed in a position where they are taught to exalt the man, rather than to exalt the Lord God. And very often when the woman tries to rectify the situation, her efforts lead not to balance, but to her rebellion—not just against the husband, but against God’s true order. David Guzik quotes (Alan?) Redpath:

Redpath: A man who can only rule by stamping his foot had better remain single. But a man who knows how to govern his house by the love of the Lord, through sacrificial submission to the Lord, is the man who is going to make a perfect husband. The woman who cannot submit to an authority like that had better remain single.

As always, the answer for both man and woman—the answer for the home family and the church family—lies in a thorough understanding of God’s word, and an unabashed obedience to its teaching.

We dwell in a world that does not acknowledge biblical authority in such matters. Thus we are left with the confusion, resentment, and bizarre relationships common today. The apostle teaches God’s *balance* in male/female relationships—a mutually respectful balance that recognizes the presence and exaltation of Creator God in both sexes.

Read Romans 11:33-36.