

Women In The Assembly

With notes on 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, 1 Peter 3:1-7, and 1 Timothy 2:9-15

By Ron Canner

1 Corinthians 11:1-16

New Topic, Created Roles. (Verse one of chapter 11 seems more like a final exhortation connected to the subject of chapter 10 than an introduction to the next subject which taken up in the first part of chapter 11.)

The subject of headship and appropriate head covering is a response to either a question or a report from someone among the Corinthians. Paul take the opportunity to carefully lay out the majestic, basic principle of order. **Headship!** The creation itself, even though fallen, reflects the very nature of the Godhead Itself. While the Three divine Persons are indeed One God there appears to be an intrinsic order there. The title “the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” suggests an order, not of superiority/inferiority but of equals with differing roles, the Father being the initiator, the Son the executive and the Spirit the implementer. Other scriptures including 1Corinthians 12 also suggest these differing roles for the different Persons of the Godhead.

Paul describes here God’s order of headship for us. Some have described it as the “chain of command”. He takes us back to the creation to demonstrate the order that God established as a model of order to be restored among believers today. Headship begins with God himself and flows downward into humanity through the relationships God established. What is amazing is that authority flows directly to mankind from God, not through angels as many presume. Although angels are superior in nature to mankind (Heb 2:7) they do not have authority over men. Instead God has deigned these wonderful spirit beings to be His servants that minister to us (Hebrews 1:13-14). How like Him! The superior in nature serves the inferior. God highly values the virtue of serving others. It is an aspect of love many among mankind disregard, if not despise. Yet we see God the Son, Himself taking the form of a servant and becoming a man (Philippians 2:7). Then He becomes obedient unto death. Even as King, He serves the God that made Him Christ (“anointed”) the King (1Cor 15:24-28).

The line of headship God has decreed is this:

God
Christ
Man,(male)
Woman
Household

Other scriptures show us that the Man with the Woman were set up to be **co-regents** over the earth, Gen 1:26. They forfeited this position when they sinned and disobeyed the God who had created them and had brought them together into this relationship. The dominion will be restored to mankind in the person of the Man Christ Jesus and His Bride who will reign together over the earth.

Now Paul declares that we are to illustrate and demonstrate God’s order through the way we dress our heads when we pray or prophesy. First note there is here no gender distinction as to the basic principle that both men and women are at liberty and spiritually qualified and empowered to pray or prophesy. But God limits our practice under this liberty several ways. Here Paul prescribes a gender distinction in head covering when praying or prophesying. Later in chapter 14 he further limits a woman from speaking in the gathered Assembly (church). He also limits the women from teaching or usurping authority over a man, 1Tim 2:11-12. So spiritual men and women are both qualified and at liberty to pray or prophesy in the Lord, but the woman is limited to some extent by God.

Paul now explains the reasons for the gender specific head covering/head uncovering. It is simply because of the order God had originally established. **A man is the image and glory of God.** Therefore

he is to exhibit that position by simply uncovering his head when he speaks to God or speaks on behalf of God. Similarly since the **woman is the glory of the man**, when she speaks to God or speaks on behalf of God she is to exhibit the appropriate place the glory of man has when compared to the glory of God. John, while Jesus was here on earth, lay in His bosom communing with Him. But he falls at His feet as dead when he sees Him in glory, Rev. 1:17. The glory of man (the woman) is to be covered when before God.

Mankind is declared to be the glory of God, for in mankind God united the spiritual being (as are angels) and the soul being (as are animals) into one unique creature. Likewise, Woman is declared indeed to be the glory of Mankind. Obviously then she is not an inferior being and this is not an inferior place. Just in case these facts are not obvious to perceptive, intelligent people God affirms them to us in no uncertain terms. The Corinthians needed this reminder. We do too.

As is customary in God's ways, the greater serves the lesser. Matthew _____. Jesus Himself although God the Eternal Son voluntarily became a servant subjecting Himself to God the Father and became a man and as a man obedient unto death even the death of the cross. Philippians 2:1-10. The principle holds throughout scripture the older and stronger serving the younger or weaker and God consistently choosing the younger or weaker to carry out His purposes. Abel, Shem, Abram, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and ultimately Jesus (instead of Adam), Romans 5; 1Corinthians 15. Likewise, the woman, the female gender of the Man's Race, being God's final masterpiece of physical creation is therefore the glory of the race of Man. She, suitably in God's order of things, voluntarily takes a place of submission and service in relation to her head, her man, whoever he is, her husband, or if unmarried her father, brother, uncle or other male guardian.

Clearly defined gender distinctions are a critical part of God's intended, and later prescribed, order in the Creation. Male and female are not only made (wonderfully and attractively) different physically, but spiritual gender differences in interests and responses to everyday life become obvious shortly after birth. This, despite the attempts of women's liberation groups and "politically correct" idealists to deny, and to squelch gender differences that naturally arise in youngsters. There is little wonder that young people grow up confused about their gender orientation and gender roles in this atmosphere. Believers, parents and children, need desperately to be alert and to avoid being taken in with this deception of Satan. God has given a simple custom to observe, **gender specific head covering for specific occasions**, that helps keep things straight in our minds and establishes His order early in the hearts of even the very young.

But you may say "this is out of date. No one covers her head anymore." Or "that head covering stuff was for the Corinthian culture because only women of ill repute went bare headed." Well, certainly we should not dress as a whore, but that is not the issue in this passage of scripture at all. Scripture is not location-bound, not limited to any particular locale. Likewise many try to evade clear and simple statements of God's will by deciding the scriptures are time-bound or culture-bound. That is, they say the scripture was for the time and circumstances when it was written but doesn't apply now. Or, that it was written for the culture of the land that received it, not for here. Paul's presentation destroys that kind of reasoning for he takes us back to the **creation** to establish the basis for what he prescribes here. More on that below.

God is earnest about this issue. For **the present** as much as for then. So earnest, the apostle uses a sharp comparison of a woman having her head shorn if she doesn't want to cover when praying or prophesying. The allusion is, she would forfeit **her** glory (her hair, v 15) to be like a man. That is as disgraceful for her as being shorn bald. Why is this issue so important? To knowingly continue to uncover her head when praying or prophesying is to symbolically usurp a man's authority and place before God. She is also symbolically despising the headship of her husband if she is married, or her father, if single.

But it seems such a simple thing. Why is it so important? Because God says so. It seems so trivial. Then why is it so hard for some to simply do? This simple request is in many ways similar to God's first

command made in the garden of Eden. Essentially it was a single command symbolically establishing God's authority. Simply avoid eating fruit from a certain tree! Eve couldn't handle that. Furthermore she took the lead and acted independently of her God-given husband and head. Now in these days following the crucifixion, death and resurrection of the Second Man, the Last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ we have been blessed with a second chance to honor the Creator by obeying a simple command respecting created gender roles. The believer now has the new nature's desire to please God and the power of the indwelling Spirit to carry through. And here is the simplest of tests of that liberty and submissive spirit which we have been given by the blood of Christ shed on the cross. Let's not flunk it this time around. Attend to appropriate gender specific head covering for specific occasions spelled out by our Lord.

There could be more discussion on when and where to cover (women) and uncover (man) the head and perhaps, Lord willing, we will attempt to discuss this later. For now, **be aware** that there are occasions when covering, or uncovering your head, depending upon your gender, is appropriate. (No, not just when the flag is passing by.) **Be alert** to these occasions and prayerfully seek to determine yourself what the will of the Lord is in various situations. For instance, a continuous covering for a woman is obviously not envisioned because praying and prophesying are specifically given as the occasion for her covering her head. I sense that women today in this country have the greater difficulty accepting this scripture and complying. But a man who has converted from Islam may experience considerable reproach, if not persecution, for simply removing his head covering when praying or prophesying in his native country.

When in doubt, go back to the previous chapter which, as it concludes, both sums up chapters 8 through 10 and sets up this discussion.

1Corinthians 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: 33 Even as I please all [men] in all [things], not seeking mine own profit, but the [profit] of many, that they may be saved. 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also [am] of Christ.

And consider:

Colossians 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Ch. 11:8 Now Paul continues his lesson for the “deep thinkers” among the Corinthian believers who were questioning the distinguishing gender roles God has ordained from the beginning. Instead of human tradition or custom, all of his instruction is founded upon the **created order** revealed in Genesis (“so says the Law”) or from commonly known “facts of life.” Paul introduces two provoking attention getting thoughts that add credence to his argument. One, the angels are watching! Two, even nature teaches a discerning heart what hair length suits each gender. The Corinthians in their natural reasoning and self exaltation had drifted away from these two basic realities. Even today we easily think our own thoughts and reason that hair length is not only not important but it is a person's own business. Even as believers we tend to lose touch with our own God created human nature and lose touch with the Creator's revealed mind for us. He uses Paul to gently remind us of what we ought to know instinctively regarding gender appropriate hair length and head covering.

Paul reminds us of the proximity of the invisible angelic host, onlookers. They not only are rejoicing in the salvation of one sinner (Luke _____) but are delighting to see the **return** of that one to their God given gender role. These angels are those who remained faithful to God when Satan rebelled. Other angels, now known as demons, fell with him. When man sinned in the garden through disobedience Eve ignored her God given role and preempted Adam. Adam acquiesced in her having usurped his place as head and accepted her offer leading him to sin as well. BUT Christ's death on the cross has conquered Satan redeemed us to Him to obey and serve Him and abolished the dominion of sin over the believer. He has regained for us the position in His Creation that Adam and Eve lost through their disobedience.

Now we return to God to learn and carry forward the order He created originally. We gladly array ourselves in our gender specific order of headship, cover and uncover our heads in a gender specific way when praying or prophesying, and wear our hair an appropriate length suited to our gender. These are signs of the delivering victory of the His cross.

The **angels** see and rejoice while the **demons** see and fume. (Remember the demons, referred to in chapter 10, behind the idols to which the pagans sacrifice.) The **people** that see us behaving this way have a witness of how things should really be. They should see how well the assembly, our marriages and our households function in a loving atmosphere because we have adopted God's created order. Best of all, **God sees and is glorified and refreshed**. Seeing this order, alive today, is a token **for Him**. It is a wonderful foretaste of the glorious order that will be established in the thousand year reign of Christ. And after that, this same created order will be seen perfectly, voluntarily, eternally in the New Earth. But **we** have been given the privilege of carrying it out even **now**, in the midst of the selfish and rebellious age we live in. Let's LIVE to glorify God! And LIVE to bless others. LIVE the best way possible, **in God's given order!**

In verses 9-11, Paul reviews the created order of the man and the woman. Note:

- the reason God gives for the creation of the woman (for the man);
- the source of the first woman (man, Adam's rib);
- the source of every man and woman since then (the woman);
- the inherent difference in the male and female roles in reproduction (. . . of the man, by the woman);
- their mutual interdependence for existence and continuation of the race and specifically of themselves in their progeny.

So we are all equal and have equal access to God (Galatians ____; Colossians ____) but we are blessed with differing roles and responsibilities depending upon our gender. Does God discriminate? Yes, He very wonderfully does. Learn the roles He has decreed eagerly, accept them gladly, and live them joyously.

But why does he have to devote space in scripture tell us all this? Shouldn't we just know this? He tells us because, sadly, we otherwise would ignore the obvious both from nature and God's word. Man's history has adequately demonstrated that we cannot be relied upon to see and know God's will and order simply from the Creation, much less keep it. That is clear from the record in Genesis of the first 1600 years of history from the fall to the flood. Consider that man then was far more intelligent than we because the degeneration due to sin had not yet reached it's full extent. They were much more experienced and wiser than we because they were much longer lived. (Read Job and various human interactions recorded in Genesis for examples of early man's sophistication in reasoning and their dignity in expressing themselves, even after the flood.) They were responsible to see Creation's order and to pass on God's pronouncements to later generations, yet only eight were preserved through the flood in the ark. Mankind has been proven incapable of retaining the knowledge of the Creator in their culture, Romans 1. Therefore God has given His written word to us to go by now. And He has given His indwelling Spirit to move and empower us to love Him and to do His will and carry out His mind and purposes. **We can now be men and women after His own heart**. Do we dare to be contentious about these revelations given from God through Paul? He grants no latitude to ignore them, verse ____.

Does God hate women? That is the charge that is implied when people today say Paul was demeaning to women and was a woman hater. Is God? How dare they! Was God picking on the Corinthians? No, He gives the same truths to all of the churches (assemblies), _____. Is it for today? Amen brother. Amen sister.

Who says a woman's hair is her glory? God does. And the care and concern most every woman has about her hair is witness enough that He is correct. Not to mention universal marketing and sales of woman's hair care and hair care products in the world today.

Isn't a woman's lovely, long hair enough covering when she is praying or prophesying? Why is a

head covering sometimes needed over the hair? God gives the answer here. Because she is to cover her glory, her hair, because she herself is the glory of mankind. Mankind's glory is to be, at least symbolically, covered in the presence of God. The Greek word for her covering in verse 15 likens her long hair to a mantle, shawl or wrap. A different word is used in vv 4-6 for head coverings. There it denotes a something that "covers up." So her long hair is sufficient for an everyday **covering, or wrap**, and a "**covering up**" of her head is needed only when praying or prophesying. Finally, note the strong statement to us guys. God says it is a **shame** for us to have **long hair**. It is a shame, even if it is the style in our country. Apparently, despite 1Corinthians 10:32, hair length is an exception to Paul's practice of conforming to those about us, in order that some might be saved. Long hair is clearly out of keeping with the position God has chosen to give men in His creation. There are several Biblical examples of men with long hair that are of interest.

- The **Nazarite vow** required a man who wished to dedicate himself to God to avoid cutting his hair, avoid partaking of any wine or grapes, and avoid touching a dead person, Numbers 6.
- **Samson**, a Nazarite dedicated from birth at God's direct command, (and in Hebrews 11 named a man of faith) lost his prodigious supernatural strength when he divulged the secret of it to Delilah who cut his hair, Judges ch 13 - 16. (His strength wasn't due to a natural strong muscular build, for his enemies wouldn't have sought the secret of his strength if it was obvious.)
- **Absalom**, David's spoiled, rebellious son, was noted for his long and beautiful hair, but it was caught by a tree he when riding through a forest so he was mercilessly killed by Joab defending David's throne, 2Samuel 14:26; 18:9.
- Watch for others cases.

On the other hand, consider the Lord Jesus, whom many artists have portrayed as having long hair, often long and flowing locks. This is a mistake. Jesus was NOT a Nazarite. He was simply a Nazarene, a native resident of the village of Nazareth. There is not a word in scripture of Him being a Nazarite, much less having long hair. Would He, being God the Son incarnate, have long hair? He states thorough His Apostle Paul, only a couple of decades after His resurrection, "it is a shame to a man to have long hair!" **The Lord didn't!** And we men shouldn't! Was He a shameful representation of God? Preposterous! Then we shouldn't be either.

Nevertheless, Jesus is often pictured as a long haired, somewhat effeminate man. But wasn't He a strong (carpenter), masculine, shorthaired, bearded man? Satan desires to corrupt our ideas of Jesus' masculinity and of what Jesus may have looked like. He tirelessly works to deceive us about Jesus, the Man he so hates. If we develop a distorted image of the Man Christ Jesus in our minds and before our eyes, are we not in danger of worshiping an "idol" rather than the real Jesus? Beware of artist's renditions of the Lord, whether in masterwork painting, movies and videos or in children's Sunday school graphic aids, videos, storybooks, and coloring books, etc.

10:14 Wherefore my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

1John 5:21 Little children keep ourselves from idols.

And brothers, keep your hair short, like Jesus.

Meanwhile sisters note, value, encourage and rejoice in the masculinity of your husband, father, brothers, and sons. (We saw masculinity re-emerge as a favorable virtue in the 9-11 attack.) Guard against attempts of the world to promote unisex. Brothers, note, cherish, encourage and rejoice in the femininity of your wife, mother, sisters and daughters. But be sure our ideas of what masculinity and femininity are correspond with scripture.

6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [which is] in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

By Ron Canner, 2003

1 Peter 3:1-7

Peter moves to another area of a believer's life where subjection is called for, marriage. These admonitions are not just for those married to believers, but those who are married to unbelievers. Paul has spoken about this in 1Corinthians 7 and reminds us that believers should only marry another believer. Yet through various circumstances a believer might have an unbelieving spouse. Becoming saved while married, or marrying while away from the Lord, etc., will lead to difficult times. There is no guarantee the unsaved spouse will eventually be saved. First the wife is to be subject to her husband, whether he is a believer or not. A husband is primarily to be won by the silent witness of his wife's chaste manner of life and her fear (unfeigned respect) and love for him. This is the same principle as given in chapter 2:15. The Christ filled life, a meek and quiet spirit as He had is "in the sight of God of great price." While referring specifically to women here the principle is universal. The inward person is what counts with God, and with most other humans

Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

We, male and female, are to be as meek and lowly at heart as was the Lord Jesus. There is nothing wimpy about Him. Machismo has no merit before God. Men are to be masculine, neither machismo or effeminate. Peter was a hard working fisherman. He was strong and courageous, ready to fight with his sword for his Lord in the garden. But as the Lord's disciple he was not aggressive or domineering. He was the most obviously masculine of the disciples yet he knew and respected women. Unlike some of the disciples he was a married man. (The Lord healed his sick mother in law.) Later, as an apostle, he took his wife with him while traveling, 1Corinthians 9. He warns women against trivializing their lives by being preoccupied with outward appearances, hair, clothes, jewelry. This has been the way of the world since before Noah. Brothers, our attitude toward women has a great influence upon how our sisters in Christ adorn themselves. Fathers who ignore or down rate their daughters as compared to sons, unwittingly move them to dress and act to attract men. Men of the world tend to choose a wife primarily by her looks, sometimes an object of his lust or his desire to gratify his pride displaying this showpiece. This is not according to the knowledge given godly men. Is she to dress like a showpiece, a trophy wife, displaying his prowess? See Esther 1___which documents an all too common (bad) example). Doing this denigrates her and undermines her integrity and responsibility to walk becomingly before the Lord. This practice stumbles younger girls, tempts other men, and impedes other women from seeking Christ. On the other hand, there is no merit in lack of care for the body, shabby or dirty clothing and unkempt hair. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy spirit, 1Corinthians 6:19, and we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God, Romans 12:1-2. Simple, neat, becoming and modest clothing that does not attract undue attention but conducts interest to the face, not the body, is appropriate.

As our example, Peter cites Sarah the mother of us all spiritually whether of Jewish or Gentile descent, for there were no Jews yet. Did Sarah obey Abraham? When did she refer to him as "my lord?" It was a very significant occasion. When the Lord and two angels appeared to Abram and he served them a meal He promised Abraham Sarah would bear him a son in about a year.

*Genesis 18:12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, **my lord** being old also?*

She was reacting in disbelief to what was to her a preposterous promise, but in doing so she, almost incidentally, referred to Abraham as her lord. The spontaneous words just came out, out of her heart. Nothing hypocritical, just a genuine respect. It was not putting up a godly front. She was out of sight and just mumbled it to herself but the Lord heard it and called her on her quiet laugh. She had little reason to respect her husband. He had denied her twice to save his skin, jeopardizing her and God's promise.

Meanwhile she had failed her husband once in coaxing him, against faith in God's promise, to take matters regarding a son into his own hands. Ishmael was born to her handmaiden, to Sarah's later shame and chagrin. But now, thirteen years later, she is found to be in the proper humble spiritual condition to miraculously conceive. She was to bear the promised son who was to father God's chosen earthly people from whom the Jewish saints, to whom Peter was writing, descended. He would be called Isaac ("laughter") because of her laugh of disbelief when she overheard the Lord's promise, and their laugh for joy when he was born. She is referred to as one of the "holy women" of old time. They adorned themselves with a wonderful meek and quiet spirit. Who are some others? Jochebed, Ruth, Abigail, ... **There is more to the story of Sarah. See "The Story Behind Verses 6 and 7" below.**

Now we husbands have a "likewise" to heed. Our demeanor and conduct is to adorn the doctrine and honor the name of the Lord as well. Our attitude and treatment of our wives speaks much of Christ to the observing world.

The husband is to dwell with his wife. Simply put, to ordinarily come home after work. Dwell with her as your companion. This is according to our knowledge of why Adam was given Eve. Plan recreational activities around the family's needs. The traditional domineering, self serving, worldly man is to be set aside. She is not a slave, though she may indeed be totally devoted to you. She is not a servant, though she in her deep love for you uses her energy and many talents to serve you. See Proverbs 31 for the description of the woman of excellence you have been blessed with, or if single to look for in the Lord.

Proverbs 18:22 Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the LORD.

31:28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Her husband rises up in honor to her.

So we men are to honor our wife. Honor her as a weaker vessel, under the care and protection of her man. (It doesn't say she is weaker.) As a weaker vessel, but really a coequal in the marriage, in the home, over the family. And serve her. Even if she is strong and capable, open doors for her. Carry the groceries in from the car. Walk together, let her be ahead of you when going into or out of a building or room. Be courteous with her and in her presence. Be respectful of her when with her and when alone with the guys. Help her with her coat, or her boots. Or the baby. All that little stuff that marks a real man, and marks her as a woman of worth. Never stop courting her. After all you are partners together, not only now but heirs together of something. The grace of life! What is that? You will be together, as close or closer to each other for eternity with the Lord in glory. Meanwhile in the here and now, our prayers may be hindered to the extent that we do not respect and honor her.

By Ron Canner, 2005

The Story Behind Verses 6 and 7

While Peter barely mentions Sarah he clearly was thinking of Abraham and Sarah's mutual plan for an intentional denial of each other, and of their marriage. This was carried out at least twice. Sarah was so beautiful that they had **fearfully** agreed early on in their marriage to claim Sarah was his sister when in the presence of men who might kill Abram to get her. Despite her willing part in the deception, how **frightened** and forsaken she must have felt when they carried it out. But all this was based upon **unfounded fear** due to their faltering faith in the God who had called Abram, and promised him an heir through Sarah. Peter admonishes women as her daughters to emulate her faith and respect for her husband but to not copy the **fearfulness** that led Sarah and her husband to deny each other twice (v.6). Husband and wife are to live together in faith despite perceived threats to one or the other.

1 Timothy 2:9 - 15

After the general instruction for brothers and sisters to pray for all men and especially those in authority, men and women are now distinguished by God's established gender roles. **Men** are to pray **publically**. All men. Women aren't to pray publically. **Public prayer** is a priestly function to be exercised by every man. It is not to be left to the "gifted," to the older men, to the naturally eloquent or to some other humanly contrived distinction. If a brother has holy hands (is blameless and has a clear conscience), he ought not to be silent in the assembly or elsewhere when prayer is in order. On the other hand sisters are to be publically retiring and modest. Not merely avoiding immodest dress, but avoiding calling attention to themselves in behavior, conduct and demeanor. A manner described by a Greek word referring to downcast eyes. Downcast eyes displaying an intrinsic modesty, (not shame, as the KJV "shamfacedness" implies). A humble, almost instinctive, modesty against public exposure of any kind. But not from a sense of a shamefulness for being a woman, or of supposed inferiority to men. Not imposed by belittling or overbearing attitudes and conduct by males as is common in many societies. Not an awkward diffidence, such as we sometimes call sheepishness, or a natural shyness which may be based more upon inward pride not humility. Nevertheless a manner that is publically becoming to her Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ. She is here a type of His Bride, in awe, preparing Herself for marriage to the Lamb. She has a demeanor that does not divert attention from His glory, but glorifies Him before all. As Rebekah covered her face when first meeting Isaac. Woman is the glory of Man, 1Corinthians 11:7, therefore properly not to be a public figure when approaching God in assembly.

Some of these passages might move some to characterize God's order as making sister's place inferior to that of brother's. Or perhaps demeaning. God doesn't say that. Neither does Paul, Peter or any other man of God in the scriptures. As men are to pray publically lifting up holy hands the women are to present themselves publically in the same way, the same manner. What does that mean? Doing all the things a man does? No. If that were so, gender would not be need to be mentioned here. (If there were to be no differences God would probably have specified there is no difference in order to counter worldly ideas of male supremacy.) But God has established different gender roles, just as He has created wonderful natural differences between women and men. If we are godly we will note and value both natural and scriptural gender based differences and joyfully take heed to live them in our daily lives.

These differences are underscored when one remembers the wonderful lack of such differences between those said to be in Christ.

*Galatians 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is **neither male nor female**: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Colossians 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

The basic relationship of every believer to God the Father and to Christ is the same, male or female. All believers are saved by grace through faith. Saved by the blood of the Lamb. All are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. All have access to God, through prayer and study and meditation over the scriptures. All are members of the Assembly, the Church, the Body of Christ. But God in His wisdom desires to maintain some clear gender differences among believers while we are still here on earth. In fact He takes special care to restore the gender relationships He originally established by Creation, and also some subsequently necessitated (sorrowfully) by Man's sin. We glorify Christ before His whole Creation when we observe these.

Think of all of the examples of interactions with women Jesus had, all positive affirmations of women's equal status with men whether as a sinner or saint, the various Mary's, the woman at the well, the Syro-Phoenician woman Martha. Yet never compromising the appropriate place she has in God's

order of headship and subjection.

God
Christ
man
woman
household

Subjection and service to another is not demeaning but highly honorable before God. Christ is our example.

*Philippians 2:6 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and **took upon him the form of a servant**, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him,...*

What is said here to be most becoming to women professing godliness? **Good works!** She is to be industriously active in good deeds. These outshine all put-on beauty and they long outlast any natural beauty a woman may have. Not elaborate hairdos, expensive jewelry or clothes. Not accessories or make-overs. But to adorn herself so as to not call attention to herself. Neither elegantly arrayed or unkempt, but alert, attentive, well groomed, neat and clean.

What are the good works meant here? Scripture is full of examples of faithful, godly women such as Miriam, Rahab, Deborah, Ruth, Abigail, the Mary's that followed Jesus, Martha, Dorcas, Phoebe, Priscilla, Phillip's four daughters, accomplishing what no man could do alone. Not to mention mothers [see the last paragraph below]. See also Proverbs 31:10-31 describing the woman of excellence.

Next Paul marks out the boundaries God placed upon women at Creation and later at the Fall of Man. In brief, learn in silence. Can she ask questions in private settings? Mary of Bethany did. In general, a sister is instructed to ask her husband or her father, the man who is her male head, at home. Men, please avoid interposing yourself between a sister and her husband. Don't answer the questions "her man" is to be answering. If he asks your help, by all means help.

1Corinthians 14:34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. 35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. 36 What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? 37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

The call for silence applies in public, especially in an assembly meeting. But she does best to avoid anything that might seem like lack of subjection, in public and in private settings or at home. Her call to subjection is a blessing that places her under the tender, loving care of a brother in Christ, for her spiritual, emotional and physical well being. Her's is a voluntary and knowledgeable subjection and silence. It acts as a reminder to him to treat her as the "weaker (not inferior) vessel" although she is to be at least as strong as a man spiritually, and stronger in the many special ways for which her female nature and body equips her.

Paul then masterfully sets forth becoming conduct, the reasons and the benefits.

- * To be adorned with good works becoming to godly women, who seriously continue in faith, love and holiness. Such receive promised "salvation" in childbearing.
- * To learn, not teach. Why? Because Adam was not deceived, but Eve was.
- * Silent subjection, not competing for headship
Why? Because Adam was first formed then Eve.

While this last promise given in verse_____is puzzling, it cannot mean salvation from the Second Death. That would be salvation by works. So it must indicate an earthly deliverance or preservation. It could be taken to mean:

- * Relief from the dangers associated with birthing and from the curse of painful childbirth which Eve dumped upon all women for her lack of subjection to Adam, her man and her head by creation.
- * “Child bearing” may have a broader sense than pregnancy and labor. It may include the whole of child rearing as well. Many great and godly men are the product of their mother’s faith. (Also many wicked men have been raised or urged onward by ambitious, wicked women, mothers or wives.) Timothy had greatly benefitted from the faithful motherhood of his mother and grandmother. Later in this epistle the younger widows are exhorted remarry and raise families and manage a household. See Titus 2 also. The sobriety, faith, love and holiness needed to do this become her salvation in child bearing. That is, she has a meaningful, fruitful life for God despite the limitations placed upon her by her created gender role, and her recognition of the first woman’s in-subjection to her husband.

Mothers, women of God, such as Sarah (Isaac), Rachel(Joseph), Jochebed (Moses), Hannah (Samuel), and Lois & Eunice (Timothy) accomplished what no man could do alone. They bore and raised men of God used by God to bring about momentous changes and blessings here on earth.

Mary, mother of Jesus, raised Him as well. There is here a mystery that is beyond us but it illustrates the good works of a woman of God Paul commends here.

By Ron Canner, 2006

NOTE: Some apply Titus 2:3-5 to the woman’s role in teaching, limiting it to teaching women and not men. However, when looked at closer that passage seems to be even more limiting.

*Titus 2:3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, **teachers of good things [of what is right,]; That they may teach [teach, admonish, encourage, train, school] the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, {sober: or, wise} 5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.**]*

The original Greek word translated “**teach**” in this verse is **sophronizo** (Strong’s number 4994) It means to make of sound mind, i.e. (figuratively) to discipline or correct:–teach, train, to be sober. This is the only place in the Bible where this word is used. It is derived from 4998 **sophron**, which means: safe (sound) in mind, i.e. self-controlled (moderate as to opinion or passion):–discreet, sober, temperate. In short, Titus 2:3- 5 could be read: older women **be teachers of right and good, that they may put in a sound [sober] mind, [informally train]** the younger women **to be of a sound [sober] mind**, to love their husbands, etc. This is an entirely different word than that used in 1Timothy 2 for “teach.” That word is **didasko**, (found 91 times in the NT,) used generally for formal teaching, particularly of doctrinal teaching and exposition of the scriptures. **The whole context of Titus 2 3-5 is of home life, not moral or doctrinal teaching.**

On the other hand, the Apostle encourages women to both **pray and prophesy**, covering her head, 1Corinthians 11. Therefore the restriction in 1Timothy 2 is focused on **teaching** and does not exclude a women from prayer with others or prophesying to others, although she is to remain silent in the assembly, 1Corinthians 14:34.

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