

# **“But I Would Have You to Know”**

## **1 Corinthians 11:2-16**

This passage is one of, if not the most difficult passage in the Pauline Epistles (and, to some extent, in the New Testament as a whole). Part of the difficulty is that it seems to contradict other portions of the New Testament, and it is clearly contrary to much of what is seen in society today – influence that has permeated every facet of the modern church.

One of the truths that this text teaches is that just because someone does something in the name of the Lord, or in the name of the church, doesn't make it right – no matter who they are and no matter where they are. In fact, that seems to be the underlying purpose of this text. The church in Corinth had a lot of good things going for it, but it had adopted a lot of things that were not scriptural and were not being done to the glory of God – 10:31. Remember that the final portion of verse 33 reads, “that they might be saved.” And then this text immediately follows – that is not coincidental. A lot of what the church has done in the age's past, and especially what is being done today in the name of “the church,” is being done outside of clear scriptural mandates and ordinances.

Whether we like this or not, whether it fits our political correctness or not, whether it fits our personal opinions or views or not – this is truth, nonetheless, and will be taught as truth regardless of the consequences.

Keep in mind, the Bible does not, cannot, contradict itself, so if portions of this seem to contradict other portions of Scripture, understand that it does not.

One basic principle of Bible interpretation (hermeneutics) is that for any seeming contradiction, the overwhelmingly clear mandate of Scripture is the foundation – the more obscure are to be interpreted within that light.

Because I am a biblicist, and I believe the Bible is to be taken as literally as possible unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, this portion of this letter will be viewed in that light. What it says is what it means.

Verse two serves as an introduction to this portion – as a verse of transition, if you would. It maintains that same principle of doing all things for the glory of God, but transitions to another area of ministry than what is dealt with previously.

The Apostle was praising the church (the leadership in particular) for considering all that he had taught them, both in person and in writings, and that they had kept most of those “ordinances” that he had taught as he had “delivered them.” What he gives in the verses that follow are areas in which they were still lacking.

What follows is dealing with public worship – a church service, if you would – and there was a certain way in which things were to be done so “that [others] may be saved.” The whole point of this text is to make sure we, as a church body, and as individuals members of that body, don’t do anything that would cause unbelievers not to come to Christ, nor do anything that would cause a believer to stumble.

There are certain things that are “right” that the Apostle Paul wanted them to know that they needed to correct.

## **I. THE RIGHT ORDER – VS. 3**

**A. "The word [for 'head'] κεφαλή in each case means the head next above. This must be borne in mind, for Christ is THE HEAD of the Christian woman, as well as of the Christian man. God is the Head of Christ, not only according to His human Nature: the Son is, in his Sonship, necessarily subordinate to the Father: ... From χριστός [Christ], the order descends first: then, in order to complete the whole, ascends up to God." (Alford).**

Ephesians 1:22

<sup>22</sup> And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

**B. "The head of every man is Christ"**

1. The word for "head" is used 76 times, and the overwhelming majority of those times it is speaking of the physical head of the body. When it is speaking metaphorically is where the debate is found.
2. Considering its use in ancient Greek writings of the Apostle Paul's day will help us with an understanding of its use in this text. "[The] linguistic evidence, which suggests that the idea of 'authority over' was not native to the Greek κεφαλή [head], has led numerous scholars to see behind Paul's use of the 'head' either the meaning 'source, origin' or 'to, crown, completion.'" (See "Hard Sayings of the Bible," page 600-601 for a more in-depth study of this usage.)
3. Not only is Christ the supreme authority

(as seen in other texts of the Bible), he is the source of man because we are made by Him. It was He that formed Adam out of the dust of the ground with His hands.

#### Colossians 1:16–18

<sup>16</sup> For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

<sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

<sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

#### Genesis 2:7

<sup>7</sup> And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

### ***C. "And the head of the woman is the man"***

1. If the word for "head" does, in fact, mean source or origin, then this verse fits better with the rest of this text – especially vs. 8-9.
2. This is not to say that there is not an order of the sexes taught in Scripture, but this is dealing with more than that.

#### 1 Peter 3:7

<sup>7</sup> 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.

3. This is not to show authority as much as it is to simply state a biblical, creational fact – woman was taken from man; man was the “source” for the woman.

#### Genesis 2:22

<sup>22</sup> And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

#### 1 Timothy 2:13

<sup>13</sup> For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

4. Some versions of the Bible, and some very gifted scholars have this, as well as Ephesians 5, speaking of husbands being the head of the wife, but that analogy doesn't fit in the entirety of the passage as well as does the meaning of “head” being source or origin. And, making the “man” here the husband, and “woman” the wife, also seems to be outside the confines of the usage of those two words in the rest of the passage. Although the Greek word used here for both “man” (άνήρ) and “woman” (γυνή) are translated in places as “husband” and “wife,” respectively, the times they are used in that way it is abundantly clear from the context that it is referring to husband and/or wife.

#### Ephesians 5:22–23

<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

<sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

#### **D. "And the head of Christ is God"**

1. The analogy of supreme authority or even general authority breaks down if used here. This is speaking of subordination of position rather than power or authority of one over another.
2. When God the Son came to earth to become a man, He subjugated Himself as such and became subordinate to the Father, in that He had to follow the same rules and physical laws as mortal man (except in those occasions where those laws were rescinded to demonstrate that He was God – miracles, for instance).
3. That said, He never stopped being God – equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit.
4. The only definition of the Greek word for "head" that fits here is that of source or origin. The Father was the source of Christ's being and work on earth.

##### **John 1:1-4**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

<sup>2</sup> The same was in the beginning with God.

<sup>3</sup> All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

<sup>4</sup> In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

##### **John 1:14**

<sup>14</sup> And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,)

full of grace and truth.

John 8:42

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said unto them, **If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.**

John 13:3

<sup>3</sup> Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

John 16:27

<sup>27</sup> **For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.**

***E. "It would therefore seem best to translate 1 Corinthians 11:3 as 'I want you to understand that Christ is the source of man's being; the man is the source of woman's being; and God is the source of Christ's being.' When read like this, it lays a solid foundation for, and sheds light on, the rest of the passage..." (Hard Sayings of the Bible).***

## **II. THE RIGHT DECORUM – VS. 4-7**

***A. These verses have as their foundation the word "dishonoureth."***

1. The word for "dishonoureth" (καταισχύνω), in this context means "to offend against decorum" (Zodhiates). In its general use, it means to shame, make ashamed, confound, dishonor, or disgrace.
2. Suffice it to say, there is a right way and a

wrong way to look and act in the worship of our Lord. There may be a lot of history and background for this text but the basic principle is still the same today. The culture of dress and look is what's in view, and that should be the standard today as well. What is considered to be the decorum for worship today? Do we dishonor ourselves, and, more importantly, do we dishonor our Lord?

***B. The next point to consider in these verses is the issue of "praying and prophesying."***

1. This seems, without much debate, to be dealing with public worship, especially if one takes the second portion of the chapter into context.
2. Within that public worship, it is seen as containing two parts – public prayer and public "prophesying." The issue of prayer is self-explanatory.
3. For the New Testament church today, the term "prophesy" would point to the preaching and teaching that is done in a public forum. Although there were still those prophets that were still receiving revelation of future events from the Lord, when John finished the book of Revelation, that particular part of the ministry of a prophet ceased, and the ministry of proclaiming the Word of the Lord became the principle use of the word.

Matthew 7:22

**22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord,**

have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

Acts 13:1

<sup>1</sup> Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Acts 15:32

<sup>32</sup> And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

1 Thessalonians 5:20

<sup>20</sup> Despise not prophesyings.

***C. Next, we come to the most difficult and controversial point in these verses – the issue of “man” and “woman” praying and prophesying in public worship.***

1. Don't forget – the Bible cannot contradict itself, and the clearest of the texts is where we should draw our understanding from, and use them as a light on the more difficult ones.
2. There are two other relevant texts to this one – one just three chapters later in this letter to the Corinthian believers, and one in First Timothy – a letter written to “Pastor Timothy” on how women ought to behave in a worship service. There is no ambiguity, no vagueness in either one of those texts, so this one before us must mean something other than allowing

women to preach in a worship service. What has happened in theology today (and for many decades in the past, for that matter) is that many have used THIS text as the litmus test, and made the other two read something different because this one fits their theology better. Interpreting Scripture like that is poor, at best.

#### 1 Timothy 2:12

<sup>12</sup> But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

#### 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

<sup>34</sup> 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.

<sup>35</sup> 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.

3.

### **III. THE RIGHT VIEW – VS. 8-12**

### **IV. THE RIGHT ATTITUDE – VS. 13-16**