

BIBLICAL ROLE OF GODLY WOMEN

By Stanley C. Phillips

(Writer's Postscript: After having written this, I was somewhat in the mind to forebear printing it because I realized that in the household of faith there is little conviction on this subject. Yet we have had request that it be printed, and hope that others can see the beauty of Zion set forth in the symbolic and spiritual application of this Biblical subject. I have little expectation of any more attention to it now, than in our immediate past, for the age has now come to a close.)

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. - I Timothy 2:9-10

From the beginning of creation, God created man and "*male and female created He them.*" (Gen. 1:27) In specifically creating them differently, He gave them different forms and roles. This is made plain in that He called man "male," which by translation means "remembered" as being noteworthy. Noah, as a type of Christ, was "remembered"— "*And God remembered Noah.*" (Gen. 8:1) "In like manner, when He made the covenant with Abraham, it is recorded He "remembered Abraham." (Gen. 19:29) While our Blessed Lord was in the grave, it is written: "*Thou shalt not leave (or forget) My soul in hell, neither shalt Thy Holy One see corruption.*" (Acts 2:27) The woman He called "female" which is interpreted from her form or anatomy. This difference is shown again in their respective curses upon having eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam's was to earn his bread by the sweat of his face —working under a continual curse of

the earth; and Eve's was to bring forth in travail and whose desire was to her own husband.

In nature, the created forms of the two bodies that make up Man are designed for the roles assigned to each and the temperament of mind of each is adapted to its role. In the church, they symbolize the precious and intimate relationship between Christ and His espoused Bride — the Church.

It is the male whom God has made His servant in the church, and thus through him the church is "remembered" because Christ is the Head of the church and the Head of every man. It is the female, representing the church, which brings forth in travail and whose desire is unto her own Husband. This desire unto her own husband is the desire to be in subjection "in everything" and which motivates a Gospel church to live, believe, and perform "all things" according to a "Thus saith the Lord." It is this desire which keeps the wife faithful and virtuous towards her own husband; and preserves the church of Christ as a chaste virgin espoused unto Christ.

Our specific text sets forth a portion of Biblical doctrine for godly women consistent with the pattern of heavenly things. Briefly, let her not adorn (or decorate — as the word means) herself as the world. The word "adorn" is in the Greek text "*Kosmeo*" which is derived from the word '*kosmos*' translated "world" throughout the New Testament. Verse 9 of our text has several specifics mentioned for clarity.

First, let her adorn herself in "modest" apparel, or apparel which is "orderly arranged;" with shamefacedness. Shamefacedness is reticence (bashful) toward men and awe toward God. She is to adorn herself with "sobriety." In doing so, she demonstrates publicly the characteristics of the true church: humility, meekness, and solemnity in the presence of Christ as His chaste virgin. Interestingly, the Greek word not only means self-control, but even sanity! That is, being of sound mind.

In contrast, they are not to adorn themselves with “broided” (braided or plaited) hair, gold, pearls, or costly array.” These are representative of carnal adornments of the harlot daughters of Mystery Babylon — stained glass windows, pagan symbols, golden altars, candle-sticks, steeples, crucifixes, etc., which are of fleshly pride. Rather, their adorning is to be that of good works which manifests the incorruptible “inner man of the heart” — the riches of a vital, changed heart.

What, basically, is the text saying? Let the godly woman adorn herself in works which glorify God, and not in fleshly carnal appearances.

Paul was not alone in giving this interpretation. When Peter addressed the believing wives in I Peter 3:1-5, he commanded them to be in subjection to “*your own husbands*” with “*chaste conversation*” and “*whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting of hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.*” Surely one who has seen the beauty of the church can relate this verse in its symbolic significance to those who make up the kingdom of God in truth.

Our text gives instructions relative to Gospel church order. Verse 11, “*Let the woman learn with all subjection.*” This is consistent with shamefacedness, sobriety, and the “meek and quiet spirit.” “*But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.*”

Two things the Scriptures forbid godly women: (1) to teach or speak out in the church (unless requested or required by the church — to be thus in subjection), and (2) to usurp authority over the man. The word “usurp” means “to act of oneself; to dominate.”

As Paul instructed Timothy, so also, he instructed the wayward church at Corinth: *"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. 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."*

The true beauty of God's order has almost become lost from sight, yet it is still found in true churches. God has exalted Christ above all: *"And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is HIS BODY, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."* (Eph. 1:22-23)

In the church, His body, the "wives are to submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 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. Therefore AS THE CHURCH is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands IN EVERYTHING. Husbands, LOVE YOUR WIVES, even AS Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.... 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 nourished and cherisheth it, even AS the Lord the church."*

The Holy Ghost did not have to use the word "own" in order to make a clear sentence; nor did He use it to fill up the page. Rather, just as the church has but one Husband, so too, a woman can have but one husband — her own, and not another's — so long as he liveth. Otherwise, "she shall be called an adulteress," which certainly the true church can never be. It should be clear from the above that husband and wife role-positions are to set forth the glorious doctrine of free grace in the union of Christ and His church. Just as Christ is head of the church, the church is to be subject to Him IN ALL THINGS: in purity of doctrine; in purity of practices as He has commanded in His church; and in public and private deportment before those within and

without the church. In like manner, as the representative of Christ before the church and world, the godly man is to love, nourish, and cherish his wife in such manner as to commend the glory of Christ's love to His Bride. And, the woman, even as the church and bride of Christ, is to be in subjection to her own (and not another's) husband in all.

This view is seen in as simple a manner as how one dresses. The godly women in the church are to adorn themselves in meekness and sobriety. Christ's order and His church are to be visibly displayed in the male and female members of His body.

Christ is the glory of His Father, and thus is *uncovered* or unveiled before His Father's face when He makes intercession for His church. Thus, too, the man is to pray with his head uncovered: *"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. Every man praying or prophesying, HAVING HIS HEAD COVERED, dishonoreth his head."* (I Cor. 11:34)

If this be so of the Headship of Christ over the man, what of the woman's adornment? The church is covered by the precious blood of Christ and His imputed righteousness. The church still has a veil over her so long as it remains in the fleshly tabernacle of this present evil world. *"But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head UNCOVERED dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were SHAVEN."* (I Cor. 11:5)

Would it be embarrassing for a woman to go into public bald-headed? Has not God ordained EVEN IN NATURE that while the woman carries the genes for baldness, only her sons can inherit it? Why? Perhaps because it is not necessary to holy consistency for the man to be covered, seeing Christ is not. But, even nature gives the woman the veiled glory of God! *"For if a woman be NOT covered, let her also be SHORN: but if it BE A SHAME for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered."* (I Cor. 11 :6)

This same relationship is confirmed in the next verse: "*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.*" (verse 7)

Only two objections can be had to the above, and they are: (1) it doesn't really matter, and (2) verse 15 clearly says the woman's hair is given for a covering. The first is unworthy of any true believer, and we reply to the second thus: When verse 6 says "let her be covered", the Greek word translated "covered" is *Katakalypto* — to cover fully; whereas in verse 15 relative to her hair, the Greek word is *Peribolaion* —something thrown around. Her hair is God's own confirmation in nature of His reflected glory in the church and thus He has done two things: (1) He has by nature covered the woman, but not necessarily the man, and (2) He has given her natural vanity to cause her shame if she be found bald or shaven! We know there are bald women due to various illnesses and medical treatments, but we never see their head bald in public! But we do the men. Thus the covering in verse 6 has an additional meaning, and that is to veil the head of hair, for the hair is the man's glory, not the glory of God! And MAN is not to have preeminence in His church! Only Christ has that.

In the church, the same parallel is found as in the beginning of creation. The man must do the work of the ministry, for he is the servant of God. He bears the thorns and thistles of nominal believers and infidels in the church who creep in; the problems seasonally sent upon the churches to try and purge them; and the periodic seasons of dryness and dullness which accompany salvation in the church. He is the image and glory of God to the church and loves the church even as his Head, Christ Jesus.

The women, in sobriety, shamefacedness, and modesty of the inner man of the heart, adorn the church in a way that all the costly array of the world can never attain. They are the glory of the men when adorned so as to display the salvation of the church to God.

APPLICATION

These doctrinal points are almost lost today. In fact, the whole body of truth is almost lost. Perhaps "women professing godliness" have lost their profession in their wild pursuit to appear outwardly adorned. One thing important is surely lost in such cases. The vital truth that true beauty is not in the outward adorning of the carnal flesh; but in the hidden riches of the godly woman's heart. If the inward is missing, the outward facade will sooner or later decay with the passage of time.

Brethren, love your wives even as Christ loves His church. Sisters, be in subjection to Christ and to your OWN husbands as your heads, Thus the "twain", the "one flesh," will declare the doctrine of revealed truth in daily devotion.

Is this new and strange doctrine? Many of our older members can remember when no sister would enter divine worship uncovered, or be so brazen and bold as to speak out in the church. Only in the United States can one find women worshipping with heads uncovered. Indeed, even the heathen are covered in their public worship! Nature does, it seem, teach that it is a shame for a woman to pray or worship uncovered except where the conscience has been seared through the fashions of the wealthy worldings. In all candor, it is a puzzle to me that whereas women by nature, in nature, and for carnal fleshly pride, will rush to purchase a wig if their hair gets thin, yet in the spiritual and true usefulness of the covering, they do not now possess any embarrassment in worshipping bareheaded! The light of nature is still there, but only for carnal lust; not for the glory of God. I can't understand it; yet I know it is true. One thing none can deny is, our God has said: "*To obey is better than sacrifice,*" and it is the expressed will of God that His children follow Him in all things revealed.

To conclude this article, may I honestly ask a few question? Does the Scripture teach that women are to have their heads covered when they go

before God in public worship? Is not the TRUE church in absolute subjection to Christ her Head? And, did not our churches formerly insist upon such subjection? Does the Scripture repeatedly forbid the women both to teach and usurp authority over the men in His church? Did not our church hold such violations as disorder in the past? Has God changed His word, mind, will, and purpose relative to these (or any other such) things?

Today we can compare and contrast the new order and the old order with the new society and old society. When women were in devoted subjection to their OWN husbands, the women in the church demonstrated the modesty and virtue becoming of the church's subjection to Christ. Not only was this so, but the churches remained strict in their subjection to Christ in doctrine, practice, and deportment. The churches were indeed adorned in the righteousness of Christ, and were the beauty of the whole earth.

The sisters were meek, sober, and chaste, and so were the churches. They both were characterized by unfeigned humility. Peace, as a mighty river flowed in Zion. The husbands loved, cherished, and honored their wives; and Christ manifested the same towards His churches. But alas, how this has changed now!

As "knowledge increased, the love of many waxed cold," men lost their humility and became boastful and arrogant. In the churches, man's work increased with their arrogance, and duty-faith, duty-works, and conditional meritorious salvation swelled as a raging sea. In the homes, peace was replaced by anger, wrath, and strife. As the homes broke asunder, so did the churches. The wars at home were followed by wars within the churches.

As women boldly symbolized carnal rebellion by uncovering their heads in worship, so too, the churches rebelled against Gospel order — and neither seemed to care or even imagine they were guilty of rebellion worse than witchcraft. As the uncovered heads symbolized the women's and

churches rebellion, immediately women became as arrogant as men and clamored for leadership in the world of work, politics, and the church. Few churches now remain where the lamp stand has not been utterly removed. The gospel light is flickering out all over the land. The sun is set.

As men failed to love their own wives as themselves, wives lost respect for their own husbands; and alas, both sought the carnal and filthy companionship of other mates, and broken marriages were the result. And the reaction of the churches? God forbid, (yet we know it) — churches took it lightly at first, then approved it, and finally ordained men to set forth the new order by example! The communion of almost all churches by now has been adulterated with adulterers and fornicators.

If God spares the rod from any of His churches, it will be another great display of the attributes and works of Christ: free and amazing grace, long-suffering, and tender mercies.

All the above is a very serious indictment of our times — but not the most serious. The most serious must follow: from sea to sea, from the tundra to the gulf waters of our great land, few dare speak or cry out for Zion's peace and chastity. The spirit of mourning for Zion's glory, or prayers of intercession and supplication are dried up as a potsherd. And when one dares to proclaim these forsaken Gospel commandments, the most precious saints are embarrassed in the presence of their kinsmen mixed in the assemblies who are guilty of the wickedness, and the man called to speak out is considered the "troubler in Israel"!

But God shall honor His word and preserve His name and holiness in His church in the world — though few they may ultimately be. *"Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it,"* says the Bridegroom. And He also asked this question: *"When the Son of man cometh, will He find faith on the earth?"* (Luke 18:8) By implication, the answer is, "not many — but some".

To those that love the Lord and Zion indeed, may the Eternal Spirit move mightily in all our hearts to do as the noble Bereans and "*Search the Scriptures daily to see if these things be true;*" and then give individuals hearts to abide therein. I say individuals — for only isolated individuals are left to restore the walls of Zion and mend the breaches that have violently torn down the walls.

I am fully aware that the above will not be received but by a precious few. I honestly doubt whether there are many that even care about such things today. And if there are any left who mourn over our demise, I doubt I'll ever know of them; though surely I can expect to hear from the others more. But I love the things that accompany salvation, and if God so enable me, shall stand even alone if necessary for that which I am persuaded is the "old order;" or the order of God's building. I know there is not another institution left that offers any stability or godly morality in our land. In this, we are indeed alone in this world; but ah, what a host we sojourn with through the ages untold!

"Come, Lord Jesus, Come"