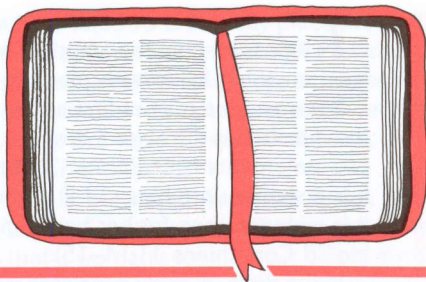


The



SCRIPTURAL

TEACHING

on HAIR

Is it possible that the length of a person's hair could have anything to do with pleasing God?

Such an idea may at first seem strange. But before the question is dismissed, it would be wise to consider two statements of Scripture: "If a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him. . . . If a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering" (I Corinthians 11:14–15).

In the Bible, divinely appointed symbols represent holy things. The night Jesus was betrayed, for example, He gave His disciples bread to eat and a cup to drink. The bread, He said, represented His body, and the cup, His blood (I Corinthians 11:23–25). While the bread and cup are symbols only, the things they represent are so holy that those who do not properly respect them are "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (I Corinthians 11:27).

God has chosen for the length of people's hair to symbolize their relationship to Him and to the authority He has placed over them. This truth is presented in I Corinthians 11:3–16.

The Principle of Authority

The subject of I Corinthians 11:3–16 is authority: "The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (verse 3). This verse introduces and provides the basis for the following discussion about covering the head.

"Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head" (verse 4). Christ is man's head. It is therefore Christ who is dishonored if a man prays or prophesies with a covered head.

"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" (verse 5). The man (husband or father) is the head of the woman (wife or daughter). It is therefore the man who is dishonored if a woman prays or prophesies with an uncovered head. This dishonor is the same as if her head were shaven.

Not only is it a shame if the woman is shaven, but it is equally a shame if she is shorn. "For if the 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" (verse 6). The word "shorn" is simply the past participle of "shear," which means "to cut." This is the meaning of the Greek word *keiro*, from which "shorn" is translated.

Spiritual Significance

What is the theological basis of this teaching? "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). God has chosen that a man's uncovered head reflects His image and glory in man; woman's covered head reflects the glory of the man.

This reflected glory is based on the order at creation. "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (verse 8–9).

That these things are important even in the spiritual realm is revealed in the next statement: "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels" (verse 10). Angels are spirits. It is not just in the physical realm that the authority represented by

the length of hair is important; even angels take note of a person's obedience or disobedience in this matter.

After establishing the divine order of creation and of authority, this passage affirms that the man and the woman are equally important to each other and of equal value in the kingdom of God (verses 11–12).

The Covering

The inspired Apostle Paul believed the church at Corinth would naturally understand the validity of his teaching on this subject: "Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?" (verse 13). He did not think this should be a surprise to Christians, for the lesson of a clear distinction between male and female in this matter is deeply rooted even in nature: "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: for her hair is given her for a covering" (verses 14–15).

The words "have long hair" in these verses are translated from the Greek word *komao*, which means "to let the hair grow." The word "hair" in verse 15 in the phrase "her hair is given her for a covering" is translated from the Greek *kome*, which refers to uncut hair. This further explains verse 6, which declares it to be a shame if a woman's hair is shorn (cut) or shaven. Her long, uncut hair is a glory to her, for it illustrates her loving submission to her husband or father.

On the other hand, it is a shame for a man if he allows his hair to grow uncut. For a man to cut his hair reflects his submission to Christ; uncut hair on a man symbolizes rebellion against Christ.

The covering mentioned in this passage is the

woman's uncut hair. Verse 15 is the only place the word "covering," a noun, appears in the passage. Previously, the words "uncovered" and "covered" appear. These two words are adjectives; they do not specifically declare what is the covering. But verse 15 specifically says, "Her hair is given her for a covering."

The word "for" is translated from the Greek *anti*, which means "against" or "instead of." Here the Bible itself declares that a woman's long, uncut hair is given to her instead of (for) a covering, and this is the inspired explanation of verses 5 and 6.

Thus, if a woman cuts or shaves the hair on her head, it is in the eyes of God a shameful dishonor of her father or husband. If a man allows his hair to grow long, it is a shameful dishonor of Christ.

Contention

The passage concludes, "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (verse 16).

Contention is always the result of pride (Proverbs 13:10). If any man proudly argued against this teaching, he needed to realize that none of the churches of God had a custom of allowing men to pray or prophesy with their heads covered with long, uncut hair. Nor did they permit women to pray or prophesy unless their heads were covered with long, uncut hair.

Conclusion

The sincere person who wishes to please God will want to obey His Word in every respect. He will partake of the bread and cup of the Lord's Supper with the great-

est of reverence, because these symbols represent the body and blood of Christ (verse 20). And a man will cut his hair, while a woman will allow hers to grow, because these symbols represent their relationship to God and to God-given authority.

DLS



Pastors' Keith & Donna Walker

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