

Thoughts:**Many questions arise from this passage:**

What does verse 2 have to do with the rest of the passage?

What does the word “head” mean throughout the passage?

Can we even identify the custom regarding the physical head of women?

What is the role of cultural norm vs. universal divine principle here?

In what sense is woman “the glory” of man? (v7)

What do angels have to do with all of this? (v10)

Gender roles of authority and submission (and their equivocal culturally contextual symbols) are rooted in “image-bearing” God’s very triune nature.

The Father, Son, and Spirit are equal in essence, being, significance, value, and honor.

The Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct in role and function in regards to authority and submission in all acts of God: Creation, Revelation, Redemption, Recreation, Judgment, etc.

This is what it means to ask the question in 10:31, “do it all to the glory of God” and the reality of imitating Christ from v1 – Christ submits to the Father, Paul submits to Christ, Christ seeks to honor the Father, Paul seeks to honor Christ: all to the glory of God – this is true freedom

Men and women are equal in essence, significance, value, and honor

Men and women are distinct in role and function in regards to authority and submission as such image-bearers.

Thus, both authority and submission are equal in honor, significance, glory as revelatory of God’s very nature as both Authority and Submitter.

What is the significance of the contextual limitations of “pray and prophesy”?

It is expected of both men and women to pray and prophesy in the church.

Women are to submit themselves to men in this public order of worship together, as men submit to Christ (“as to the Lord”, Eph 6:5-8).

This is difficult because we value power and authority and connect (erroneously) to intrinsic value and significance.

Yet, because Christ is a submitter, it is a virtue of equal value with authority and power, and does not imply an inferior intrinsic value to the one in authority (The Father and Son are equal in intrinsic value, essence, and significance as eternal God).

1. Commendation (v2): The Word of God is Your Foundation for ALL Things
 - a. "You have been remembering all things concerning me"
 - i. Their attitude seems to be one of submission to the apostle's teaching
 - ii. They were looking for Truth, desiring to know and heed God's Word
 1. Thus, their hearts were not hardened towards the Word
 2. In fact, they had to be reprimanded in 2 Corinthians for responding so zealously to Paul's admonition concerning the man in 1 Corinthians 5 that they weren't allowing him back into the community when he had repented!
 - iii. There is great commendation in being devoted to the apostle's teaching
 1. Acts 2 – it is indicative of the Spirit's presence and power when God's people are *devoted* to God's Word
 2. This is also true of the other "devoted" aspects of Acts 2: the breaking of bread (remembering propitiation/resurrection in the Lord's Supper), the fellowship, and to prayer
 - iv. Many times we approach the Bible merely as an intellectual exercise, something that we functionally feel doesn't have a lot to say about "real life"
 1. Like you can take it up like you would any other kind of study
 - a. Literature, poetry, music
 - b. Plug in, unplug, reading it as hobby or mere discipline
 2. You read it, observe it, search it, evaluate it, parse it, judge it
 - a. But the Bible is God's very Word!
 - i. "This is what the LORD says..." (Isa 43:1, 417 other times)
 - ii. 2 Tim 3:16-17, "All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in the way things are supposed to be, that the man of God might be equipped, prepared for every good work."
 - b. It reads you! It observes you! It searches you! It evaluates you! It parses you! And it judges you.
 - i. Isaiah 55:11 – God's Word always returns to Him having accomplished its purpose for which He set it forth
 - ii. Psalm 19:8; John 12:48; Heb 4:12; Heb 1:3
 3. The Scripture is not a detached book of history or anemic proverbs from ancient mythology that has nothing to do with the experience of our current situation of soul and body.
 - a. It is highly practical!
 - b. It is a very human book, in this sense, for it is written for human life and flourishing
 - i. From beginning to end it deals with humanity, with men and women, conflict within and without, fears, anxiety, virtue, meaning, significance.
 - ii. Though it does have massive thoughts, exquisite philosophy, exceptional teaching, you cannot read the Bible without being confronted immediately with people and our stories of sorrow and joy, constraint and redemptions, virtue and vice, shame and glory, etc.
 - b. The apostolic Word confronts us where we are
 - i. It isn't a textbook of philosophy, it is a textbook of the human soul and its dealing with God, nature, each other, and oneself.
 1. Why am I unhappy? Why can't I live in perpetual vacation? Why must I work by the sweat of my brow? What is ideal? What is my hope? Why should I get up in the morning?
 2. These are the major problems of life, with which the Word of God deals
 - ii. The Word has to do with what you are going through at this very moment, as God says through it, "I am interested in you, and I want to talk to you about yourself and all your heart's sorrows and joys, trusts and fears."

1. There is no detached theoretical discussion in it. It will not allow it. It will confront your very view of Reality and force you to deal with yourself and with it.
 2. It deals with human life and death and suffering and sorrow and joy and pleasure and you and me.
 - a. We either seek the answer to these human problems from the Word of God or from somewhere else.
 - b. Paul commends the Corinthians for seeking the answer from God's Word...for that is a commendable thing
2. The Word Reveals What is Necessary to Understand Reality
- a. It starts with God, "In the beginning God created"
 - i. God made the world. God designed it. God maintains it. God designed humanity. God made life.
 - ii. In this we find human significance, made in His image, precious and valued by God.
 - iii. The only way to begin to understand yourself, the world, and your circumstances, is to begin with God.
 - b. God created man in His image
 - i. There is an ideal. There is a right. There is a perfect, a whole, a complete life.
 1. Human nature was made by God, through God, and for God, and our perfection is found in this truth, our happiness is bound to this truth.
 - ii. This means that all human life has value and significance and glory because of being made in God's image.
 1. It means that we are supposed to have flourishing vital relationships with God, with each other, with the rest of Creation, and with our own souls.
 2. This judging worldview of Scripture instructs us to use our power for the glory of God, the sake of one another, the tending of Creation, and the peace of the soul.
 - iii. We are made to exist, male and female, in His image, reflection of His character, values, and joy.
 1. This truth will help us as we talk about gender, for if we were made for His glory in His image, then our gender is a created part of this reality
 2. The Word of God gives us reasoning and resolution for this equality of value and the distinction of roles in one purpose of using our power to govern and steward God's Creation.
 - c. Man fell through Satan's schemes
 - i. While all of humanity has significance and value and is crowned with glory and honor, it is also true that all of humanity has fallen into sin by the deception of the Enemy and is now deeply and hideously depraved, suppressing Truth and loving wickedness, denying the Light and embracing the darkness, become futile in thinking and clouded in darkness in our affections and desires. (Rom 1:18-2:4)
 - ii. All of our problems come from this reality: we have an enemy dedicated to destroying God's image and ruining human flourishing
 - iii. We have sinned, rejecting God's glory as preeminent rejecting His image as our highest virtue
 1. Why is there misery and wretchedness, violence and vitriol, desire for harm and lack of self-understanding?
 2. The Word of God tells us, right where we are, right where we wonder, of why evil exists and why we know ruin within our souls and in our relationships with God, with each other, with Nature.
 - d. You see, God's Word has something to say about ALL of real life
 - i. The Scripture tells us why love is good, creativity is beautiful and fulfilling, work is valuable, contingency is expected, submission is good, abuse of power is evil, and why fear dominates the hearts of men.

- ii. There is an explanation for the deepest and most practical questions of life in the Bible. It is not a theoretical discourse on possibility. It is a theological flashlight on the human soul and the invisible world of principalities and powers which confront us daily.
 - 1. Haven't you experienced that? The first thoughts of your morning come to you seemingly uncaused, and they are dark, brooding, ugly, foul, or unworthy thoughts?
 - 2. They assault you, drag you down, even when you are praying or reading your Bible.
 - 3. Satan and evil. Original sin and the Fall. We are at war, and our relationships are the trenches of this battle.
 - iii. Therefore, our gender distinctions become battlegrounds for power to wield and power to gain and power to keep, because we are deceived and self-deceived that God's image is inadequate.
 - iv. When our fears, anxieties, or anger come to the surface regarding our gender, we must ask ourselves the question, "What am I *functionally* and *emotionally* depending upon to define what is True, Needed, and Sufficient for me?"
 - 1. Is it the Word of God? Or, is it something else?
3. Traditions are Good: "You hold fast the traditions"
- a. Traditions = walk based upon foundational beliefs
 - i. 2 Thess 3:6-8 – the walk of life includes hard work based upon gospel principles of love and other-centered giving
 - ii. 2 Thess 2:15 – the walk of life includes righteous living based upon gratitude for the gospel
 - iii. Col 2:8 (negative) – modified by "human", thus tradition based upon human precepts and teachings (2:22) and valuations, that "do not handle, do not taste, do not touch" have soul significance
 - iv. Gal 1:14 (negative) – "tradition of my fathers", walk of life based upon Pharisee precepts and teaching, devoid of grace
 - b. Cling – dependence with zeal
 - i. Clearly the Corinthians, though immoral in many ways, did *want* to know what God had said about how they were to walk
 - ii. They were seeking to walk rightly, even if they had gotten off course through ignorance, deception, or foolishness
 - iii.
 - c. just as I handed [them] down to you
 - i. Thus, the walk of life which Paul praises here are those things which were passed down from him and were based upon God's revelation of the gospel of grace in Christ Jesus
 - ii. All of revelation of God is the foundation for the traditions which he passed down as the manner in which they should walk
 - 1. "walk in a manner worthy...
 - a. ...of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility, gentleness with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity fo the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph 4:1-3)
 - b. ...of the Lord, fully pleasing ot him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Col 1:10)
 - c. ...of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. (2 Thess 2:12-13)
 - 2. That is, we are called to traditions, precepts and practices, which are based upon the gospel of Christ Jesus as proclaimed in His Word, the way things are supposed to be...namely, humbly accepting His Word as Life-giving.
 - a. "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance." (Matt 3:8)

- b. That is, in humble, dependent, powerlessness before the Lord and His revelation.
- iii. The Apostles based their commands to walk rightly wholly upon the gospel of Christ Jesus' superiority, sufficiency, and supremacy for all needs of human life and flourishing
 - 1. Ephesians 1-3 precede 4:1-3
 - 2. This pattern gives us indication that:
 - a. We SHOULD establish traditions in-line with the gospel
 - b. These patterns must be grounded upon and flexible according to the gospel
 - i. Flexible in that as our culture changes, the forms of our traditions must change, but the reasons and functions behind them must not
 - ii. This is called "contextualization" – bring the function of the gospel into contextual language of the surrounding culture
 - 3. Therefore, the tradition which Paul is referring to are grounded in gospel principles which do not change, but take the form of Greco-Roman or Jewish cultural language
 - a. "Head coverings" were culturally appropriate symbols of humility and submission for the purpose of honor
 - b. "Nature" was a culturally appropriate term for the unconsciously apprehended norms of daily life
 - i. For a man to have long hair in Rome was to act womanly, to deny his glory
 - ii. For a woman to have short in Rome was to act manly or to be shamed, to lose her glory
 - c. The "holy kiss" greeting commanded to the Corinthians (1 Cor 16:33; 2 Cor 13:12), the Romans (Rom 16:16), and the Thessalonians (1 Th 5:26) showed that it was a filial greeting commonly understood over a wide geographical area.
 - i. What did it mean?

“So when God commands people to rend their clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, are these precise actions so much of the essence of repentance that there is no true repentance without them? When Paul tells us to greet one another with a holy kiss, does he mean that there is no true Christian greeting without such a kiss? When we examine the rationale for these actions, and ask whether or not ashes and kissing are integratively related to God’s revelation, we see the way forward. There is no theology of kissing; there is a theology of mutual love and committed fellowship among the members of the church. There is no theology of sackcloth and ashes; there is a theology of repentance that demands both radical sorrow and profound change. If this reasoning is right, it has a bearing on both footwashing and on head-coverings. Apart from the fact that footwashing appears only once in the New Testament as something commanded by the Lord, the act itself is theologically tied, in John 13, to the urgent need for humility among God’s people, and to the cross. Similarly, there is no theology of head-coverings, but there is a profound and recurrent theology of that of which the head-coverings were a first-century Corinthian expression: the proper relationships between men and women, between husbands and wives.” (D.A. Carson, *Must I Learn How to Interpret the Bible?*)

Conclusion: Approaching the difficult issue of gender functions must begin with the commendable attitude that God’s Word is our definer of virtue and of human flourishing. James asks us, “What is it that causes quarrels and fights among you? Is it not your passions at war within you?” We want our passions to be peaceful, in-line with the zeal for God’s glory and mutual honor, according to God’s Word. As we approach the following passage of God’s Word, may we be reminded by Paul’s commendation, that our flourishing is found in God’s Word, and let us reject all other claims of human good. For, when we all come to speak with this as our heartbeat, we will find the wrestling productive and not destructive, fruitful and not facile, gloriously good for all His beloved Church to the glory of God.