

THE CHRISTIAN WOMAN'S VEILING.

A condensation of a message given at the Cedarvale Conservative Mennonite Church in 2005.

This evening our message is on the Christian woman's veiling.

We realise that it is under test and many groups in the world today have rejected this teaching.

The Christian Woman's veiling is often termed the devotional covering or the prayer veiling but I believe it has a lot more in its meaning and that. I like the way the title says the Christian Woman's Veiling and we want to see tonight how that fits for the child of God and how to preserve this ordinance.

The Christian woman's veiling is an ordinance of the scriptures and as we understand the ordinance it is an outward sign or symbol that points to a spiritual truth and we want to see that tonight as well.

We do know that just going through a religious ceremonial or rituals without heart commitment is of very little value, it is futile and we believe that God has given us ordinances, the external things, we think of the ordinance of baptism, communion, feet washing and the Christian woman's veiling, they represent something, there is something deeper, some message that goes deeper than what we see, there is a spiritual or a heavenly meaning and God has given us these ordinances so that we can maintain a proper relationship with Him and so that we can understand His desire for us. As a church tonight we want to hold and maintain the ordinances of the scriptures and in order to do that we must teach the principles of those ordinances.

Like I said just going through the motions and maintaining the outward the outward doing of that alone won't do it. I said maintaining, it is very hard to maintain when we do not go to the core of the doctrine, if we would just focus on the externals, it doesn't last long and I think many groups in the world today have shown that to us.

As I said we are not here this evening to convince you of that doctrine rather we are here to enforce it and help us to appreciate and maintain it. We want to make sure that we don't follow the course of apostasy that many groups have taken.

I want to consider three main points tonight when we consider this subject.

First of all: The Principle.

Second: The Purpose and

Thirdly: The Practise.

And I believe that this is a pattern that we need to follow for all of the ordinances if we wish to maintain a right understanding and a right practice before God.

1] So we come to The Principle first of all.

What is the principle that is being taught when we come to the Christian woman's veiling? What does it signify all what does it mean?

Let's we turn to first Corinthians chapter 11, which is the only scripture that really commands this practice that I'm aware of, the principle is in the scriptures, but as far as relating to the Christian woman's veiling we find it in first Corinthians chapter 11.

The principle, Paul comes right to the point in verse three, God's divine order of headship.

1 Cor. 11:3: "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."

That is very simple and you would read this and think how can someone misunderstand that? I don't know. I don't know how many church groups in the world deny this today, it so clear on this matter.

But you know the principle that the Christian woman's veiling is portraying and showing is a recognition of God's order of headship.

You know people will say: "You men are just dictators."

Well no, in our groups we don't want to portray that and we don't suggest that and yet we do not need to apologize to say that God has given this order and we want to hold and maintain it. These are not our words, this is not our doctrine, it is God's, God's words: "The head of every man is Christ." And that puts a lot of emphasis on us as men and brethren tonight. Are we taking our place and are we recognizing our responsibility in that order that God has placed? The head of the man is Christ and the head of the woman is the man.

And just briefly thinking about that, that does not mean order of importance or anything like that, no it is strictly order of responsibility and so we know that God and Christ are equal and yet God is supreme and He is the ruler, and on this earth man and woman are equal, I think that is portrayed in this passage as well but man is given the responsibility to lead out.

1 Cor. 11:4-15

"Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. [5] 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. [6] 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. [7] 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. [8] For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. [9] Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. [10] For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. [11] Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. [12] For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of god. [13] Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? [14] Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? [15] But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering."

Obviously the principle of divine headship was being tested in the time of this writing.

If we would backtrack and take a little history lesson on this city of Corinth at the time of this writing. Corinth was a city of some 700,000 people, a big city, and it was located on a narrow neck of land between northern Greece and southern Greece and all the traffic that went from the southern part of Greece to the North all the other way needed to come through the city of Corinth. Not only that even the East and West traffic we travel through the city of Corinth because of the southern tip of Greece that was a very dangerous Cape and it wasn't very nice to travel that way, so most of the traffic we travel through the city of Corinth.

I am bringing that out because when we think of a city in that kind of a position and location, it was one of the greatest trading and commercial centers of the ancient world and with that it was the largest and most wealthy city in Greece, one of luxury, prosperity and ease. And you think of a church in the middle of that kind of setting, can you imagine the pressures and influences that the believers encountered. And I, this is my own feeling, that is why the Apostle Paul needed to address this issue with the Corinthians. We know the principles are found in scriptures but people will argue that it was only Paul's ideas to the Corinthians because that is the only place where it is commanded. We do know that in first Corinthians 4:17 he says: "... as I teach every where in every church." So we understand that this doctrine was not for the Corinthians alone that it was being tested and challenged in the city of Corinth and the headship principle is what Paul is reaching at here.

N.B. Also at the beginning of his letter to the Corinthians Apostle Paul addresses it not only: Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints," but also he specifically says: "... *with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord*, both theirs and ours:" (1 Cor. 1:2). It is intended for all believers in all ages and in all places.

There are people, Christians and Bible scholars, or so called Christians and Bible scholars today that say that Paul was teaching an ancient oriental custom here.

Friends tonight, it was not a Jewish tradition either that was just being carried over into Christianity. The veiling for the woman was a practice that was different from any previously existing practice. It was a practice intended to symbolise a great principle of the Christian faith and it is a distinctive practice designed especially for Christian people, God's order of headship. We as the people of God need to consider that principle and display it by our lifestyle and show that we believe it by the way we practice it.

If the principle is lost we will suffer, and when we consider this order of headship it is the only way for the home, for the church and for society to function smoothly. We have seen, I am sure most of us have seen, where this principle is not taught the home suffers and the church suffers and our society today is suffering because of that. When we hear these words of Women's Lib and equal rights, many women taking men's place in the world today, again I am not suggesting that men are more important but they are more responsible and we as men in God's order we need to take our place in that.

Just a few scripture is quickly to highlight that:

[1 Corinthians 14:34-35](#)

“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.”

[1 Timothy 2:12-14](#)

“But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. [13] For Adam was first formed, then Eve. [14] And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.”

That is a very plain teaching and may we hold to that.

2] Now on to The Purpose.

You will find people sisters that will ask you: “Why do you wear that thing on your head or they might say why do you wear that religious sign?”

What is your answer?

“Because that's the way our church does it.”

How is that for an answer, is that good? Not good enough. We must be convinced of the purpose

a) The first purpose I have is that God's word demands it. We must obey God's word and God's word is the authority that rules our lives and the Bible teaches it and if someone asks you and tells you: I'm a Christian I don't have to practice it! You don't need to judge them, we don't need to point fingers and judge them. All you need to say is that the Bible teaches it and I believe it.

This passage is literal not figurative, it is literal for us, we must do it, it is for Christians the world over, not just in Canada in 2005, we have to believe that friends if we want to maintain this practice. It is just not for the people of the Corinth 2000 years ago. No! As I said it was taught in every church, and it must be taught in our church.

b) Secondly when we think of a purpose I see in verse 14 that nature itself teaches you that.

Paul says does not even nature it self teach you that if a man has long hair, remember we are talking principle here so it goes to both sides of the house this order of headship, if a man has 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, to be covered, to be veiled.

The practice of the Christian woman's veiling I believe is only effective when we as men in the faith and in the church as we uphold our part of that order and Paul here speaks to the men of short hair, it would not be fitting for the men to all have long hair and a women to be nicely veiled. It just doesn't make sense and I am glad that I don't know of anybody that believes that, nature teaches us that that is not the way it works. Paul said it is a shame to do other than what he is teaching here.

c) Thirdly in the purpose verse 10 at the end of the verse it says: Because of the angels.

I have often wondered what that means and I am not claiming to totally understand that, but you know the Bible says that the angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner that repents. And don't you think that the angels in heaven rejoice when a sinner repents and goes on and lives on in victory and obedience to God and finally gets ushered into the presence of God, that is what the angels rejoice over. The angels want us to prosper and I believe that there is a sense in which the angels rejoice tonight when our sisters are obeying this command. Furthermore I believe it helps them to do their job, there is a sense in which it is a protection from the wickedness of the world.

d) Fourth purpose I have here is that it is or was a universal apostolic practice.

The architects and those that have studied history have found in the catacombs at Rome carvings of the early Christians and always on them the women were veiled. It was always the practice, it was a universal practice for all churches everywhere and again we will find people that will argue that it was strictly tradition part but I don't think so. The carvings on the walls of buildings, the early historical records prove to us the fact that the veiling was observed in every early church and so we want to preserve this practice as well.

Now the last main point when we think of the practice we get to the practical and the outworking of it.

And again I go back to that statement I made about an ordinance not being meaningful if the principle was not there. I was suggesting that I believe it is right that this passage in one Corinthians 11 speaks of divine headship, the headship order that God has placed.

I think that there are some other principles that apply to the Christian woman's veiling but they fall under that umbrella, the primary focus is God's order of headship but these other principles, when we get into the practice we want to consider a few of them, they are a part of that order and they need to fit in with that.

It is possible for a woman to wear the veiling when her life is not consistent with the very thing it symbolises, that is possible. It is possible for a woman to wear a veiling and in her heart not be submitted to God. It is possible for a sister to do what the church requires but in her heart she is not submitted to God's order. That is possible and we want to guard against that, we must be faithful in teaching this and these principles.

When a Christian woman wears a veiling she is saying that she wants to take her place in God's order and that is a beautiful picture, a woman that is veiled and understands it is saying to others: I recognise why God has done this and I want to fit into God's program.

3] Thirdly we come to The Practise.

We have a few principles that I want to look at in the practice, in the literal practice of wearing the veiling there are some things that, some principles that we reveal.

The first one we must understand is that it is the veiled head and not the covering that is the sign.

I am not sure that this is always understood. There are groups that have said that the veiling is only a sign, they have made it whatever shape they wanted it to fit with their hairstyles, it has got smaller and I have seen, and you have seen, where it has been only a small little doily, it is only a sign, if it were only a sign maybe it would be all right but we understand it talks a lot here about the hair and I believe that the veiled head is the symbol, it is the sign not just the covering. If as I said if the covering was the sign the size wouldn't matter so much.

Friends we must believe that the veiling size is important and if we understand that the veiled head is the sign then we will understand that the size means something and when we talk about the size we believe that the veiling should be more prominent than the hair. If the hair is more prominent then it is not fitting this principle and submission is lacking. So in the practice it must represent submission and subjection, we remember that the sign is the veiled head. And also I believe that this is one reason that the veiling should be worn continuously and not just the public worship. The groups that have stated that women should wear the veiling for public worship or when they are praying they have maintained that for a little while but pretty soon it is gone, it doesn't last.

You see the principle of headship is for always, it doesn't just apply during worship service, it doesn't just apply when we are praying, it applies all the time and that is one reason I believe that the wearing of the veiling should be continuous all the time everywhere. And I am not so sure if it is a practice or a great temptation in our circles but I have heard of it where the young sisters, especially where travelling in a car for quite a long distance they find it more comfortable to just take it off, you don't want to wrinkle it or crush it, you take it off for travelling and I have strong feelings about that because if we can take it off for convenience sake we are in a dangerous position. It is a dangerous thing to do and so let's maintain the principle of submitting to God's order and be willing to show by our practice that we believe it.

The second thing that the practice of the veiling represents is devotion.

Devotion to God. And that is why, how should I say it, a kerchief (scarf) that is worn for weather protection, you know it is not enough, I am not saying that that it is not good enough to wear a kerchief (scarf), we do leave room for that for weather protection in our Church Constitution, but you know some women they feel justified that it can be some weather protection on, a hat or something in worship service and they feel justified in doing that, it is not that.

The wearing of the veiling, the practice must represent or symbolise devotion. It is a scriptural practice, it stands out as a religious sign, it is not just because the weather is cold, no, it is a religious sign, if it doesn't portray that it is not effective, it should not be mistaken for weather protection because many in the world wear weather protection on their head and it has nothing to do with devotion to God.

Friends if we are devoted to God we will be willing to let it show not be afraid when others recognise it for what it is.

Again I want to speak to the brethren. When our sisters go to town there is not a doubt in anyone's mind what the veiling represents at least in part. It represents devotion and at a glance our sisters they stand out. Brethren how do we dress? How do we cut our hair? What sort of clothing do we put on? Do we stand out and do people recognise that here is a person obedient to God and devoted to God. When a brother is very casual in his dress and standing beside his sister (wife) that is modestly dressed, well covered, I think the principle is slipping then. We as brethren need to take our place in that we must fit together when we are in public.

May we as a church continue to express literally our devotion to God.

Thirdly the practice of the veiling, the practical practice of it represents modesty.

You know the worldling cuts her hair, paints her face and dresses accordingly and sadly many so called Christians are doing this. The definition of modesty is the absence of self assertion or arrogance or we could say the absence of pride, not wanting to show off.

If the hair is cut and styled it is styled to attract attention that is not modest. Also we have seen, I don't know if you have seen it but I have, so many women in the world today, so-called Christian women have styled their hair and placed the covering on top, people that does not work. It does not work, it doesn't fit together. And Paul is saying here: judge in yourselves it doesn't make sense (verse 13).

First Timothy two verse nine we have some admonition given here:

[1 Tim. 2:9](#)

“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;”

Now that word “modest apparel” is followed by “with shamefacedness and sobriety” I believe that fits with the absence of self assertion, the absence of pride and what stands out, the hair or the covering?

Sisters I want to challenge you that when you're standing beside the mirror arranging your covering on your head that you remember that. How much time do you spend with the arranging of the hair? It is to be covered and that carries this thought of modesty, it carries the thought of humility and submission to God's order.

The clothing must complement the covering and I have seen where some women wear pants and wear the veiling and it doesn't fit. Nature teaches us that it doesn't fit, it is an eyesore.

Number four the practice of the veiling represents purity.

In Bible Times, this is my understanding, in Bible Times it was the harlots that cut their hair. The godly women practiced the veiling, they understood what it represented and longed to live the pure, the holy and obedient life, and in the world you will find people that will respect you for it. It represents purity. And I have seen where vulgar men of the world have shaped up when a woman with a veiled head has come in, it is obvious that she is devoted to God and there is a sense of purity and maybe that is part of the angels work in that, but you know men will respect that, people in the world today display a sense of respect in that. It is a symbol of purity.

I just want to look into our Church Constitution a little bit.

I think we as a church must give guidelines and we do not need to apologise for doing so. We have some things written here in our Constitution concerning the veiling.

“According to the teachings of [1 Corinthians 11:1-6](#), [1 Timothy 2:12](#) and [1 Corinthians 14:34-38](#), she should wear the veil at all times for worship, prayer, teaching and as a constant testimony that she accepts her position as a Christian woman. We insist on uncut hair for the sisters simply and modestly arranged. Then for brethren [1 Corinthians 11:14-15](#).

“Likewise the brethren are to have their hair cut and combed consistent with the nonconformed life”

Dropping down a little further: “A sister’s uncut hair simply and modestly arranged will express a desire to be covered, (notice the principle again) Sisters shall avoid combing their hair in front of the natural hairline, looseness of hair arrangement, a noticeable swoop down over the ears or any extra arranging. As a minimum the lower half of the ear will be exposed. The veiling size shall be guided by the hairline at the neck and will come close the ear and forward to the crown of the head.”

This is how the head is to be covered I believe and you can't call me old-fashioned because I am not that old but I have convictions on the size of the veiling and the weight of the material.

Let’s remember the principles when we are practising the veiling. Does size does it cover? And the shiny clips that attract attention do they need to be there?

Remember it is the veiling and not the hair or the arrangement that should be prominent.

May God help us to preserve this ordinance so that we will continue to be doers of the word and not hearers only. ([James 1:22](#))

May the Lord bless.