

# The Christian Woman's Veiling

We are often asked the question: "What is that cap you wear on your head? What's the significance of a sort of veiling worn over your hair?" This little tract will be an attempt to answer such questions.

The woman's veiling is something that is taught in the Bible. If you have a copy of the New Testament, you will find God's teaching about the woman's veiling in 1 Corinthians 11. Verse 6 of that chapter says that if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off, or her head shaved, let her cover her head.

But what is the background for this commandment? Why does God say to the women, "Let her cover her head"? The answer is that the veiling worn by the woman is a symbol. It is a symbol of at least three things: (1) The woman's acceptance of man's leadership. (2) The purity that characterizes Christian living. (3) The prayer-life of one who is serving Christ.

## 1. The Woman's Acceptance of Man's Leadership

God has an orderly arrangement for all creatures—kings and subjects, teachers and pupils, husbands and wives, parents and children, and so forth. And wherever two or more parties are interdependent upon each other, one must have authority and the other must be submissive.

In God's order of things (according to the Bible) the basic unit of society is not the individual, but the family. God says that the captain of the family team is the man. In the New Testament letter to the Christians at Corinth (in Greece), the Bible says that Christ is the head of the man and that the man is the head of the woman (1 Corinthians 11:3). This New Testament letter was addressed to all Christians everywhere (1 Corinthians 1:2).

The man (according to God's order) is to respect the woman, to show her kindness, to treat her with love, to listen to her counsel (Ephesians 5:25; 28-29)—but final responsibility for decision-making should rest upon the man—and the woman should graciously accept this place of leadership on the part of the man (whether he be the husband in the home, the father in the family, or an elder in the church). The veiling on the woman's head is a symbol of her acceptance of the place of subjection to man's leadership. The veiling acknowledges the authority of the man, and symbolizes the fact that the woman is taking her rightful place in God's divine order. The woman who follows Jesus Christ and seeks to obey Him, rejoices because she is *liberated* from the responsibility of lots of final decision making.

## **2. The Purity That Characterizes Christian Living**

One who serves God and represents Jesus Christ, is different from the majority of people who live in the present wicked world. This is evident in the way we live, the kind of company we keep, what we eat and drink, our manner of speech, and even in our outward appearance.

The woman's veiling symbolizes purity. In the forest regions of northern Europe there lives a small weasel-like animal called the ermine. Instinctively, the ermine protects his fur against anything that would soil it. Fur hunters take advantage of this instinct. The ermine lives in the hollow part of an old tree and in order to catch the ermine, hunters smear the entrance to the animal's home with garbage and filth. And then when the dogs start to chase, the animal flees toward his home—but when he finds the entrance covered with garbage and dirt, he faces the yelping dogs (and even meets death), rather than soil his beautiful fur.

The ermine instinctively preserves his purity—and just so the Lord wants His followers to be a people who keep themselves from the filth of the world. God's people reject immodesty of dress (1 Timothy 2:9), immorality in conduct (Titus 2:5), and frivolous vanity in appearance (1 Peter 3:3). The veiling symbolizes a pure, devoted, submissive Christian life—and the woman who wears the veiling tries to be careful *not* to bring reproach upon its meaning.

## **3. The Prayer-Life of One Who is Serving Christ**

The Christian woman is one whose life is marked by prayer. Nearly all persons pray at some time or another, but the true follower of Jesus makes prayer one of the sources of his daily strength. Prayer does not necessarily deliver a person from some terrible situation, but it enables the believer to face and master the situation.

For the Christian woman, God has become the Friend of all friends. The Bible says we should pray often and continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The perfect friend is the friend to whom we can go at any time without ever feeling a nuisance. Since God is the Friend in the believer's life, we find ourselves often speaking with Him. God is omnipresent, and does not merely dwell in temples made by human hands (Acts 7:48), and so we can pray in the quiet of our own rooms, while on the street, while riding a public conveyance—anywhere and at all times.

The Christian woman is "a praying woman" (1 Corinthians 11:5). She prays for her family, relatives, neighbors, friends, enemies, and world conditions. The veiling on her head is a symbol of her communion with God through prayer. She believes the God of the Bible is real and that He is infinite in power, and that there are needs in life which cannot be met in one's own strength. The woman who prays, daily puts herself in touch with the God of the universe, and thus is given wisdom and discernment, and is refreshed for the duties of life.

The Bible says that short uncovered hair for men, and long veiled hair for women, are symbols which God expects His children to observe—and in this way show their acceptance of His divine chain of authority—God, Christ, man, woman. In the early days of the history of the church (and in the early days of the Protestant Reformation), nearly all Christian women wore the sign of respect for authority taught in 1 Corinthians 11. The Council of Gangra (in the Fourth Century A.D.) strictly forbade women to cut off their hair. Rembrandt's painting of Preacher Anslo giving a message of comfort to a woman (from God's Word), was completed in 1641—and in that painting, the woman is wearing a veiling.

If the message of John 3:16 is true (and it is), then the message in 1 Corinthians 11:6 is equally true, and calls for our obedience. It is out of simple obedience to the teachings of the Bible, that Christian women wear a veiling on the head. There is a real blessing in recognizing God's order, and in accepting one's proper place in that order.

-Harold S. Martin

---

**BIBLE HELPS**

*Robert Lehigh, Editor*

PO Box 391

Hanover, PA 17331

United States of America