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Egalitarian Views of the World

French President Nicolas Sarkozy says, *the veils are a threat to French values*. Obama in the past said, *it is a woman's right to wear it if she so chooses*. So across the Atlantic there are different ideas. The controversy is that the veil represents repressive subjugation of women, discrimination against women. On the other side, defense of a woman's modesty against the assault of modern society. On one hand modern society, you have got woman barely dressed, so therefore on the other hand we got reaction to it being overdressed as it was. So these are the issues that come up to boil and we look at this passage. We got various approaches. On one hand, there is a cultural approach that says, this only happen among the Corinthian women. It was at that time so therefore it will not apply to us. We will just have a look to see how interesting it applies to you if you are a Corinthian, if you are not you live in KL, it does not matter anymore we will forget about it. If that is the case then it is very difficult because you can read many parts of scripture and say, they are all cultural. Then which ones you are going to apply and which ones do you not apply. So that is the problem.

On the other hand, you have got direct application. You go to some churches and I remember in my early church where I went to, a brethren church, the women will all wear veils and if they don't wear a veil or head covering you will be considered unholy or lose woman or you are not going to be a deaconess. So those are people with direct application.

We will look at the timeless principles. This passage gives us a good way in which we could start to teach all of us, how you actually read scripture and what we try to do is to understand what Paul has to say to women and men at that time. When you understand what he wants to say to them at that time then you take out a principle, why do they wear head veils and transpose this 2000 years later on to our society and see whether that applies what are the underlying principles that we can learn from.

Background of Greek Society

Let's go to AD 55. This is the time where Paul wrote this. The background of the Greek society. So unless you understand the Greek society you won't understand this passage at all.

Greek society was a very patriarchal society where everything revolves around the man. Athenian women for example in Greece were hidden at home, you never saw them out. They rarely went out. Their job was to supervise slaves. They would only attend certain events, weddings and funerals going out and perhaps if they were to visit female friends, it has to be a very short visit. They cannot own property, they cannot take position in governments, they cannot choose the husband their

father will chose a husband for them, and they will always choose a wealthy husband and if nobody wanted you then you become a prostitute that's how bad it was in those days. Often children who were female were born the father in the society had a decision to make, you either expose the child or you keep the child. Exposing the child means throw it out, it was very-very common. Some parts of China do that as well. So this is not uncommon. Limited education starting at the age of 7, learn how to cook and the final aspects of education like mathematics and all that were denied to these women. So the women were largely uneducated in those days.

Spartan Women

They were different, they can own property whilst the other women cannot. They have military training, they had athletic training, they can mix freely, they were educated, simple life no jewelry, expected to look after property in husband's absence and they had short hair. In fact, on their wedding day they would be shaved bald so that they would look like young boys, setting the husband because the husband usually lives in the barracks and they have got homosexual sex. So they want to look more like a boy so that they can attract the man. They lived often apart, husband is in the army until about 60 years of age. They were very tough women, in fact there was Queen Gorgo who is basically the wife of Leonidus. She quoted, *"Why are the Spartan women the only ones who can rule men? Because we are the only ones who give birth to real men."*

Patriarchal Society

It was a patriarchal society which revolves around an **Honor-Shame** system. So whatever you do you cannot shame the head of the household. Now if you were to not wear anything, only two kind of people don't wear hair dress, prostitute and divorced woman. So if they catch anyone looking like that then they will say, this one is divorced and the other is a prostitute. So that is the problem, that is a stereotype picture of women. So the breach of the norms is that the whole trouble is that women are now prophesying in public alongside with men. Now here we live in a society where women keep quiet, women never talk. They only see in the kitchen, at home. Here we have for the first time they are coming out to church and they are prophesying and they are not wearing head veils and this will cause shame both to the head of the household. If the people will see them like that they would think that either these are Spartan women or this society has gone mad and so the gospel would have a very-very bad name, this is crazy the gospel is only for prostitutes as it were. So it brings shame to men. So that's a big problem at that time. So here we actually have Paul struggling with two issues, one is basically men and women are actually filled with a spirit and equal. This is what we called the eschatological realities which is basically end time reality versus social norms. These are two things, on one hand you are equal and on the other hand the society says you are not. How do you bring the two together in such a way that you preserve the truth and not disrupt society and that is the same argument that we have today. How do we bring biblical truth in a society in such a way that it will not buck the trend so much that it will bring the gospel in disrepute. So therefore it requires us to look into the practice a bit more.

Principles of Living

We looked in chapter 8-10, we have got two issues, we seek to build people up and to seek the good of others.

How do we take these two principles and apply in this difficult situation?

Paul's decision was, *let them speak but keep the head coverings*. Now if you would go all the way he would say let them speak, let them prophesy and not head coverings but he did half way. Let's look at some of the reasons

2 Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you.

So he is now commending them because you remembered Paul and follow what Paul wanted them to do which is basically wear the head veils. Then he gives the biblical principle; why do you wear the head veils at that time.

3 But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

That is the underlying principle whereby he justifies them wearing a head veil. So the issue is head.

What does the head mean?

There are three possibilities.

- Authority, which implies supremacy, leadership
- Source
- Pre-eminence that means the representative

Authority we all know, that means you are better than the person. There is a hierarchy, man first woman second because somehow they created defective.

Source means this is where you come from, the origin. It is like the source of the river is that particular lake.

The third possibility is that the pre-eminence that means the representative.

So *kephale* in Greek can be represented in three possibilities. So you have got God, Christ and this issue is headship of authority, is it hierarchy where women are inferior. Wayne Grudem looked at 36 Greek authors in 8th century BC to 4th century AD and the uses for the head, physical head is basically 2000 times, the metaphorical use of the head is about 302 but very-very small minority use this, for authority it is actually 49. Most of us we read it straightaway we interpret as authority in terms of supremacy, somebody is greater than somebody else, but in Greek use of the word authority it is actually quite small. It is quite limited. The other role is more common is the metaphorical word which is basically he pre-eminence or the representative role. This is far by common the most commonly used in first century Greek text which means the head is the most prominent part of the body, it represents the body, it represents the husband and wife. There is a representative, there is a leader as it were and basically it is the faith.

1. Absence of head covering causes shame to the man

4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. 5 but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head,

So basically for a man you shouldn't cover your head, for a woman you pray without your head uncovered it dishonors the head, so therefore the absence of a head covering in a woman dishonors her husband. It is like you go to worship with your wife who is having no head veil, that means you are like worshiping next to a prostitute, so it brings shame on one hand. So we got an **Honor-Shame** system, gender differentiation.

since it is the same as if her head were shaven. 6 For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head.

So basically if you are a woman not covering your head in public, it is like shaving it. So if you look at Job

23:7—25:8 Job's wife is reduced to having her hair cut off in exchange for food. It is done "disgracefully in the market, while the crowd stood by and marveled" (24:10).

If you were taken a female captive in those days you would have your head shaved to humiliate you.

2. The head covering reflects creation order

For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. 9 Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

Creation order implies purpose. Now you go to Genesis chapter 2 and there is something not good about a man. He is alone and when he got a woman then he became good. The word I will make you a helper, that means you got a very-very powerful helper. The word used for helper is used for God. That means you have got a very-very powerful helper. It is like you have a clever person helping you. So that is the idea, a person who is good, who is skilled and who complements you.

Order but Equality

1 Corinthians 11:8-12 (ESV) For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. 9 Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

So woman's role was created to complement and to help man. So that is the created order. The head covering reflects this created order. So it is sign of glory which woman should be proud of. The function of an image is to bring honor. So when God created us in His image, the purpose was to bring honor.

11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; 12 for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.

So on one hand he says women is the glory of man, women was created because of men and on the other hand man born of woman. On one had you got created order which seem to imply women are not quite so independent, they are created for man, derive their value from man, on the other hand it man you only come from woman and without woman you got no existence. So that is how he tries to bring. So therefore the idea here is that you are equal but there is an order. So therefore the order is somewhat like God to Christ which he mentions, Christ to the church as a woman to the husband. A lot of women are unhappy about this because they want to be equal to men, but let's look at Jesus Christ and God.

John 12:49 (ESV) For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak.

Which means the speech of Jesus is directly ordered by God. You cannot independently say it all. He only says what God tells him to say.

John 14:10 (ESV) Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

That means he is a vehicle for the father to do. That means son is subject to the father, that means son cannot say the things which father does not want to say. If you are a wife means you cannot say things that your husband don't want you to say. Then it is written

Colossians 1:15-19 (ESV) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. **19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

John 10:30 (ESV) 30 I and the Father are one."

Is Jesus inferior to God? Absolutely not. So you are equal and yet different. Our idea is that if we are different one must be better than the other. Our ideas of equality have been disrupted by the fall. When sin comes this idea of different but equal becomes distorted. So that man subjugates women instead of leading her, so that is the problem there.

3. It pleases the Angels

10 That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

Who are the angels?

Some people think is priests, some people think horny angels because if the angel see you without the veil they get very excited. The other one is the holy or guardian angels which actually if you look at the dead sea scrolls, Qumran community, they have a tradition that when you are worshipping the angels are there, dancing along with you. So if they see the head not covered they get upset, so that is a possibility but we don't really know what it is.

So the struggle is assertive autonomy or self-control or the ethic of moderation.

4. Nature teaches us it is dignified for a woman to wear a head covering

13 Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, 15 but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering.

The word nature got several meanings

- Inborn sense of what is fitting
- The way humans were created
- Physical reality of how world was ordered
- What was accepted by common consent and usage at the time in his culture

If you come today we won't believe that because in our convention today a lot of man had long hair. So it is different now but at that time he is arguing from common convention or societal norms at that time. So that is the fourth reason why you should wear your veils. Long hair is her glory.

Why do the women have to cover their head?

When you have worship time you actually want the glory of God being exposed and exhibited. Glory of God is man, not woman, so therefore you cover, because if you don't cover the head everyone is looking at her rather than looking at the glory of God which is basically man. So absence of head covering.

SUMMARY

1. Absence of head covering brings shame to the husband as it breaches the headship of man.
2. The absence of head coverings breaches the symbols of created order.
3. The culture teaches us it is dignified for a woman to wear a head covering.

How do we apply this today?

Do we have veils today, why and why not?

Our society today is not like that anymore. At that time having short hairs and not wearing a veil brings shame, but now it is a norm in our society. It is not undignified for a woman not to wear a veil nowadays. Head covering does not convey dignity to the woman nor shame to the man, it is the behavior. Now people look deeper than veils nowadays in society. It is your attitude towards your husband which is reflective.

Applications:

- 1) Maintain and even celebrate the gender distinctions;
- 2) We need a respect for culturally specific approaches to guarding moral and sexual purity;

3) We need a commitment to fully integrating women and their gifts into the experience of the worshipping community.

(1) We need to maintain and even celebrate the gender distinctions with which we have been created.

We have got this movement by the woman, Women's Lib. They are against any distinction of gender and society. They are against the headship or leadership of man in society, women can do everything. But the whole trouble is, there is interdependence.

11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; 12 for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.

So at the foot of the cross we look at this passage

Galatians 3:26-28 (ESV) for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Even women in this passage are called sons, because sons are the one who get the heirship. This is a spiritual reality. At the foot of the cross we are all equal and this is a spiritual reality.

We live in a society where there are gender differences and basically the basis of subjugation of woman. We as a church needs to come in the society and reverse such stereotypes.

In Christian circles we have got Egalitarian versus Complementarian. Women want to be equal but we believe the bible says you are complementary and the whole thing comes with this issue of stereotyping. We always like to stereotype people.

Rachel Held Evans is an egalitarian but yet look at her views

I do not believe those differences to be universal, prescriptive, or indicative of hierarchy.

Even though she is a radical feminist but she makes sense. The differences between male and female are not universal. For example, it is not universal for every man to be stronger, there are some man half the size of a woman. It is common and general but it is not universal. Most of the societies think that man must exert his pressure, these are the social norms, so it does not have to be stereotype. It doesn't mean that you are superior. You don't have to be stronger to please God.

As an egalitarian I believe that a truly complementary relationship is one in which differences are celebrated, but not forced.

Therefore, in a marriage you celebrate each other differences. You don't force the differences which is correct too.

I don't believe God requires women to assume "traditional" gender roles in order to please Him.

The traditional gender roles for women are; stay at home, bear fruit, get pregnant, be available for the man to have sex and then produce the babies, but they are actually stereotypical roles and they don't account for the diversity of which woman are.

Kathy Keller, wife of Tim Keller, is a complementarian and this is what she says in her book "The Meaning of Marriage";

The basic roles—of leader and helper—are binding, but every couple must work out how that will be expressed within their marriage."

So the Bible doesn't tell you what roles women do in terms of the principles, you got the traditions but you are actually free in your marriage to decide depending on your gifting and your temperament how those roles may be paid off, because your wife might have got strength in areas where you don't have.

The stereotypical role is other way around. So the trouble is that you cannot be guided by stereotypes. It depends on who you marry. If you marry an amazon it is different, if you marry a very petite young lady who loves to sew than it is a different case.

There is no biblical paradigm that all women must talk a lot and all man must be less emotional. It is free for us to look at. So here is another stereotype, *motherhood is the woman's highest calling*. Rachel Held Evans rejects this as an egalitarian and she says,

A woman's highest calling is to follow Jesus Christ. End of story. And she can do that if she is married, single, divorced, widowed, a mother, or childless.

That is the only biblical principle that you must have.

So you have got male roles, leader in the family, leader in a church by Genesis design but the leadership is one of empowering and responsibility to see if entire family engaged in activities that promote mutual spiritual growth in harmony.

Kelli Trujillo is editor of Today's Christian Woman and she describes this idea of egalitarian versus being complementary. She looks at her own life; both are present in her marriage. She says,

"If we have a disagreement and can't come to terms with each other, basically one of us will just cede to the other person. We'll let the person who it impacts the most make the decision, or the one who cares most deeply about it,"

Ephesians 5 says to submit to one another and what she is practicing here in her marriage is that it is a very difficult decision and you basically submit to each other will, let the other person impacts the most. A lot of times man actually have to give into the ladies. It is a fact of life.

The truth is, I love my husband and I also respect him. If any human is a leader in my life, it's him. I look up to him. I covet his insights and trust his wisdom. And, if we were to face a tough decision, ultimately I think I'd defer to him (even if it was hard to do so).

That's what complementarian is where the wife submits to the husband and yet the husband gives his life for the wife. This is what it looks like. If it would be nice if you were like Jesus Christ and God. Everything that Jesus does God tells him to do but that is exactly what Jesus wants to do anyway. God and Jesus are one. So moving in the family is to express the oneness but in different ways. That's how your family should workout.

(2) We need a respect for culturally specific approaches to guarding moral and sexual purity;

So whenever you go to any society, you have to be sensitive to the social values. You cannot say just because I am a Christian I am equal to therefore I will not wear the veil. When you go in a situation where the veil is important like Paul he will then ask them to wear the veil.

(3) We need a commitment to fully integrating women and their gifts into the experience of the worshipping community.

We are going to limit ourselves if we limit the role of women. We need to integrate them into society with all the special gifts that God has given them. if we subjugate women we are going to basically deprive ourselves of all the value.

New Redemptive Community

Acts 2

'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; **18** even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

There is equality. There is a moving towards an equal society in the last day, which got Holy Spirit comes on everybody regardless of gender. We need to be as a redeem community reflect that in our society and yet be careful there is a tension, we are redeemed, we are equal and yet on the other hand we have got to be careful about society. There is a tension, so therefore how you apply this will be different in your family and also different in this church in a different country. So you got to have a lot of wisdom to be able to do that.

Can women preach? Can women teach? Can women be pastors?

If we look

1 Corinthians 11:5 (ESV) but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven.

1 Cor 14:3 On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

On one hand Paul says they can, trouble in on the other hand he says

1 Timothy 2:12 (ESV) I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.

So there are two different situations. An egalitarian would translate 1 Timothy 2:12 as a text applied to Ephesian women only and this shows the authorities negative exercise of authority. There is basically a cult of Amazonian woman like the Wonder Woman, so therefore they were domineering over the man, so perhaps what Paul was saying that. So he is actually saying,

I do not permit a woman to teach [understood pejoratively] or to domineer over a man,”

Actually if we look at it there is very little evidence there was an Amazonian cult at that time and basically the teaching is

“I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man

So that is basically something you cannot run away from. So exercising authority is the broad concept and teaching is one of the ways in which authorities exercise. So therefore the issue is authority. When you teach you exercise authority. Paul allows you to prophesize but he does not allow you to have authority or teach authoritatively to man. So what is prophesy versus teaching.

Prophesy addresses issues of the moment –bringing gospel truth and teaching to bear on the present...

That means he is taking a biblical truth and applies it to particular moment in time. For example, we are preaching on a Sunday and you bring a particular truth of scripture, “I know some of you here are in pain, some of you have lost husbands, or whatever” and you are applying it directly that is prophesy. Teaching is like what I am doing here. I am teaching you broad principles. Again there is a lot of overlap over all the things there.

Women have made great impact in teaching. Just because Paul said that women cannot speak in public does not mean that you cannot teach in private, in a Bible study setting and all that under the authority of your leaders, but it is quite clear that you can't have authority which means in the leadership structure of the church you are not going to see Paul appointing leaders and elders who are actually female because again you want to reflect created order and there is a leadership role which the church will have.