

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Head Covering And Romans 14

(Jerry Fite)

The only place in the New Testament where the Christian is instructed to veil or not cover the head is I Corinthians 11:1-16. Men, when praying and prophesying, were to have their heads uncovered. Women, praying and prophesying, were to have their heads veiled. The apostolic instruction from the Lord is clear. The context ties the principle of man's headship to the woman veiling her head by making sure she is wearing the “sign of authority on her head” when exercising her spiritual gifts.

After reflecting on these verses, it is difficult to walk away believing the man was to pray and prophesy with his head covered, or that the woman was to be uncovered when exercising like gifts. However clear and distinct the instruction regarding the head covering may seem, there are contradictory views among brethren regarding the woman having her head covered today. Some say “yes”; some say “no”; and others are “indifferent” for various reasons.

Wanting to have unity, some look to Romans 14 for allowing the contradictory views while maintaining fellowship in the local church.

We must be careful to not give up trying to understand the

unifying truth of Paul's directives here in I Corinthians 11, and just say we will consider it a Romans 14 issue. Romans 14 deals with matters that are indifferent to God – you can do them, or not do them and still be in fellowship with God (*Rom. 14:3, 6*). To wear the veil when praying or prophesying, or not wear it when praying or prophesying is not communicated by Paul as being indifferent with God. When people bind where God has not bound, Paul gives us instruction to not give in - “*no, not for an hour.*” Why? So “*the truth of the gospel might continue with you*” (*Gal. 2:5*).

In Corinth, the covering of the head of the woman was apparently a custom which denoted modesty, and recognition of man's headship. It appears that women exercising their spiritual gifts of prophesying and praying were doing so with their head uncovered, just like the men who were prophesying. The women were not conveying respect for man's headship when they did not wear a sign of authority on their heads as they exercised these miraculous gifts.

To bind today that women must wear a veil in worship is to bind where God has not bound. Paul referred to a custom anchored already in society (women being veiled) that manifested honor to the headship of man. Honoring man's headship by being veiled was manifested in daily life, and must therefore continue to be honored by those exercising their miraculous gifts. Wearing the veil in honoring man's headship has never been a custom in our society, creating a moral distraction when not worn in worship.

No men or women exercise miraculous gifts today. Paul specified such to either not be covered or be veiled. To bind women to wear a veil when carrying out the various acts of worship as they listen to preaching by uninspired men, or pray silently with uninspired men is to bind where God has not bound.

While the woman's head covering is not a Romans 14 issue, because in application it is not indifferent with God; one who doubts that she is right before God by not wearing it today must not sin by violating her conscience (Romans 14:23). We must all keep studying to instruct our consciences with revealed Truth.