

1 Corinthians 11:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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—Paul uses reductio ad absurdum argumentation. If a Corinthian woman insists on praying unveiled, she should go all the way and shave her head—fully embrace the shame her action already implies. The Greek conditional structure (εἰ γάρ + imperative) presses the logic: uncovered = shaven in symbolic meaning.

The second clause assumes universal agreement: **if it be a shame** (εἰ δὲ αἰσχρὸν)—and it obviously was in that culture. Since no respectable woman would willingly shave her head, why symbolically do the equivalent by removing the covering? Paul argues from shame to propriety: the cultural revulsion against shaved heads should extend to uncovered heads in worship. The covering preserves a woman's honor and signifies her embrace of created order while exercising spiritual gifts.

Historical Context

Public shaming of women through forced head-shaving was practiced in Greco-Roman society for adultery, prostitution, or collaboration with enemies. The psychological and social impact was devastating—loss of beauty, femininity, and social standing. Paul's argument assumes shared cultural values about women's appearance and modesty. He doesn't merely impose arbitrary rules but appeals to

the Corinthians' own sense of shame and honor, redirecting it toward worship practices that honor God's design.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Paul use cultural shame constructively to reinforce biblical values rather than imposing arbitrary legalism?
2. What practices in your cultural context communicate honor versus dishonor toward God and others?
3. How should Christians navigate cases where cultural norms and biblical principles intersect?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	γὰρ	οὐ	κατακαλυπτέσθω	γυναικὶ	καὶ	κείρασθαι
if	For	not	be	for a woman	also	be shorn
G1487	G1063	G3756	G2619	G1135	G2532	G2751

εἰ	δὲ	αἰσχρὸν	γυναικὶ	τὸ	κείρασθαι	ἢ	ξυρᾶσθαι
if	but	it be a shame	for a woman	G3588	be shorn	or	shaven
G1487	G1161	G149	G1135		G2751	G2228	G3587

κατακαλυπτέσθω

be
G2619

