

Who Is Your Covering?

By Michael Clark

In this present hour of leadership gone bad, rebellion on every front, civil unrest and ethnic warfare, the issue of being under a man's cover for safety often is taught by Church leaders as our only hope. I would like to share what I feel the Lord has shown me along this line in hopes that some of you might be set free from your different bondage's in relationships and reactions to other men.

The Greek word *hilasterion* was translated in the New Testament two different ways, propitiation, atonement and mercy seat. The verses where it was translated "atonement" refer to Jesus as our only atonement for sin. But in the letter to the Hebrews, the same word was translated mercy seat, that is, the lid on the Ark of the Covenant, the place of God's presence. Jesus is our mercy seat, our propitiation. He only is the one who has provided an atonement for our sins, and finally He is our mercy seat, the one who covers the "ark" of the New Covenant, the Church. The three verses that I refer to are as follows:

...whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed. (Romans 3:25, NKJV).

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10, NKJV).

...and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. (Hebrews 9:5, NKJV).

The Mercy Seat

The mercy seat over the ark is a type of Jesus over the church. God has put Him in the highest place over our covenant of mercy with Him.

"And you shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. And you shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends. And the cherubim shall have their wings spread upward, covering the

mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be turned toward the mercy seat. And you shall put the mercy seat on top of the Ark, and in the Ark [the Church] you shall put the testimony which I shall give you. And there I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel. (Exodus 25:17-22, NASB).

God has put Jesus above all else. He is over the whole Church! He has put His testimony in each of our hearts, and it is there that He meets with each of us. We are His temple and it is that temple made of "living stones" where he chooses to abide, not in some building made of sticks and rocks. We are His place of meeting whenever two or more of us are gathered together in His name.

God Alone was Moses' Covering

When dealing with Pharaoh's rebellion and that of the Hebrews, all but once Moses turned to God as His covering and let God deal with them. He trusted in God only and not in men. His personal walk with God as a man who spoke with God "face to face" was established by faith in the creator and not faith in his own abilities or that of mere men.

And he (Moses) said, "Please, show me Your glory." Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."

God was Israel's Covering

God promised to be Israel's covering. If He had not they would have burned up under the hot sun of the desert in their forty years of wanderings there.

So they departed from the mountain of the LORD on a journey of three days; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them for the three days' journey, to

search out a resting place for them. And the [glory] cloud of the LORD was above them by day when they went out from the camp. (Numbers 10:33-34, NKJV)

He also brought them out with silver and gold, And there was none feeble among His tribes. Egypt was glad when they departed, For the fear of them had fallen upon them. He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light in the night. (Psalms 105:37-39, NKJV)

...then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the dining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering. (Isaiah 4:5, NKJV)

"When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread my wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became mine," says the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 16:8, NKJV)

Only Jesus through His own blood sacrifice in righteousness can cover our own nakedness as we trust in His covering and in Him alone.

Christ is the Church's Only Headship

Just as your physical body only has one head, so the Body of Christ only has one Head. All the members of the church are members of His body i.e., arms, hands, feet, legs, torso, etc., but only one head. Paul in 1 Cor. 12: 12 and following, stresses that there can be ears and eyes among men who are members of the body, but never any head other than Christ.

As we enter into God's rest and cease from our own labors, He has promised to be our covering. When we rebel against Him we lose our covering and fall victim to all sorts of troubles. Germany was "in submission" to a rebellious man named Hitler and it caused them great pain, sorrow and destruction. Blindly following a leader is no guarantee of being under God's covering. Even the great Apostle Paul was conditional about telling men following him. He wrote to the Church:

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1, KJV)

Each of us are to maintain our individual obedience and connection to Jesus and as we do we will be in agreement with the Head and one another, each doing our part as a whole.

I believe that it is because of men insisting on being the head of the body and giving the orders, that we have this spastic, self-destructing, and disobedient manifestation of His body which is so damaging to our testimony of the reality of Jesus to the world. The denominational Church of today appears more like Rocky and Bullwinkle's "fractured fairy tales" than that unified body over which Jesus prayed in John chapter seventeen. Consider these words of Paul:

And God placed all things under His [Jesus'] feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of Him Who fills everything in every way. (Ephesians 1:22,23, NIV)

...but, (you) speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him Who is the head--Christ. (Ephesians 4:15)

For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ so [let] the wives [be] to their own husbands in everything. (Ephesians 5:23-24)

And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. (Colossians 1:18)

Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:28)
For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you all are one in Christ (Galatians 3: 26-28)

So Who Is Your Covering?

Jesus is the only one who has paid the price to be your covering! He bought your freedom with the price of his own blood. No one else has paid the price of have you

follow them as your head! I have met many a pastor and Church leader and have yet to find one who is a spotless lamb with nail holes in his hands.

For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:20)

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His blood. (Acts 20:28)

The more idolatrous America becomes, the more we sell ourselves to be slaves to our idols. We worship football and basketball players, and pay extortionist fees to get a shirt with their number or name on it. We allow men to abuse us because they have a superior intellect or more money than us. Paul wrote of this sin when he said,

For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. (2 Corinthians 11:20, NKJV).

For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freed man. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. (1 Corinthians 7:22,23, NKJV)

This includes men who call themselves leaders in the Church.

Jesus said, "All those who came [come - who place themselves ahead of Him] before me are thieves and robbers." These types of leaders are stealing the attention and affections of the sheep away from Jesus and unto themselves. Paul continues this theme when He says:

For [there is] one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5)

Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come--all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. (1 Corinthians 3:21-23, NKJV)

Jesus was very explicit about this when He taught:

"But you, do not be called `Rabbi'; for one is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for one is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for one is your Teacher, the Christ. (Matthew 23:8-10, NKJV).

So the next time someone asks you, "Who is your covering?" or "Who is your pastor?" tell them that He is the same one who has purchased you with His blood.

The ground is more level at the foot of the cross than certain Church teachers would have us believe!

Men are Never Our Covering in Christ

We who are Christ's are to be free as His bound servants and no one else's. Men in leadership are not to dominate Jesus' flock. They can guide but never coerce or control any more than a good tour guide does in a foreign land. The apostles wrote:

Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand. (2 Corinthians 1:24)

Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock... (1 Peter 5:3)

...and you are complete in Him, Who is the head of all principality and power. (Colossians 2:10)

Yes, with Jesus alone you are complete! In Christ you lack nothing! So where is the need to be under the covering of a mere man? Is it possible that seeking to be under the covering of a man, rather than that of Jesus could be a form of idolatry?

The Type of Head Coverings

Paul continues on this thought.

But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head

covered, dishonors his head. 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.

Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things [both man and woman] are from God. (1 Corinthians 11:3,4,7,11,12, NKJV).

It is clear from this passage that in the Church, men and women are under covering when they are in submission to Jesus. He is our covering and our glory. We have no need of any other covering. To have another man be our cover dishonors our Head, even Jesus. It is as wrong for a man to submit to another man as his covering as it is for a woman to submit to any man other than her own husband. Is it any wonder that the Church is in such confusion? We don't know Who our Head is!

Jesus is our only true spiritual covering. Spiritually speaking, in Christ there is no difference between any of us, and we have perfect liberty as long as our heart motive is not based in rebellion. He covers us with His love and so should we love one another.

He has brought me to [his] banquet hall, And His banner over me is love. (Song of Songs 2:4)

We are accountable to Jesus! Only Jesus is our Master. He is the only one who can make us stand upright in His righteousness.

Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. (Romans 14:3-4, NASB)

There is no man who can boast that he can cover you like this. Only God has put over us His covering of love. Only Jesus can boast, "...no one shall snatch them out of My hand." (John 10:28, NASB).

God's Delegated Authorities

God has placed in the earth delegated authority to govern us. Paul speaks of this in the book of Romans.

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. (Romans 13: 1-7 NKJV)

It is obvious from the context that this passage is referring to civil authority, i.e. swords, wrath , taxes, etc. It is better to obey them for your conscience' sake, so that you don't have a guilty conscience and are always looking over your shoulder in fear.

Many who lead in the Church are always harping on submission to their authority. Paul wrote:

I urge you, brethren--you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints--that you submit to such, and to everyone who labors with us. 1 Corinthians 16:15,16, NKJV)

The word in verse sixteen that was translated "submit" is *hupotasso* {hoop-ot-as'-so}. It is a "reek military term meaning "to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader." In non-military use, it was "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden."

Obey [be persuaded by] those who rule over you [who go before you and lead by example], and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

The above phrase, "Obey those who rule over you..." literally means, " Be persuaded by those who have gone before you." It is my understanding that when the ecclesiastical translators of the King James Version "translated" the Bible, they copied the Tyndale version 83% of the time. The other 17% deviated from that first English version on verses such as these, where they translated them to give the Church of England and the monarchy absolute power. When you see a verse that implies power given to men in authority in the Church, it is good to check the Greek meaning on that translation.

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:5, NKJV)

Let me emphasize that our submission in the Church is "a voluntary attitude of cooperation and assuming responsibility," not being forced into subordination by a strong, over bearing, militaristic leader who says, "It is my way or the high way!" May God purge His house of all abusive and authoritarian attitudes toward His sheep. When a leader in the Church forgets that the flock belongs to Jesus, or forgets that he too is a sheep, the sheep are in trouble.

Remember Jesus' words well,

"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd." (John 10:16, NKJV)

May we all seek to please the Chief Shepherd above all else.