

# Modesty

MAY 29, 2014 / TEACHER

## Modesty

It's nothing to be ashamed of

Summer time is approaching and people will be wearing less and less clothes. In the June issue of the Old Paths Advocate Doug Hawkins discusses the idea of Modest Apparel. I hope you enjoy reading this article on a very critical and needed subject.

### Modest Apparel

Paul writes, “in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly array, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.” As evidenced here, the Bible teaches Christian women (and men too) to adorn themselves in modest apparel, which simply means the Christian should wear appropriate attire; attire that professes godliness.

Peter writes a similar message in 1 Peter 3:1-4: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

As indicated in both passages, “modesty” and “modest apparel” first involves the human heart. Both writers emphasize what is within over what is without – by saying, as Paul did “not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly array, or as Peter did “...not that outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of wearing of gold or of putting on of apparel.” In those statements, the Bible is not forbidding, as some mistakenly think, the wearing of any gold or the putting on of any makeup or fixing the hair to any extent. Such positions become extreme. However, the inwardness overshadows the outwardness and our appearance reflects the heart. Paul and Peter show us not to put the emphasis on the outward man but on the inward man. How we dress, therefore, reflects either a heart of godliness

and shamefacedness or a heart devoid of such an attitude. Godliness and shamefacedness create in the Lord's people a keen sense of moral purity, holiness, and reverential fear. Broadly stated, this attitude of holiness overlays our heart and our clothes and appearance outwardly reflect this inward sense.

Shamefacedness stands in contrast to shamelessness and godliness to worldliness. Both can be seen in how we dress. The prophet Jeremiah asked, "were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not ashamed and neither could they blush" (Jeremiah 6:15). Without shamefacedness and godliness a person has no ability to blush. Paul also tells us, "...be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:1,2)

Going back to the initial readings in I Timothy and 1 Peter, notice the language used by both Paul and Peter. Paul says, "...with shamefacedness and sobriety and Peter writes, "...chaste conduct coupled with fear [reverence]" Peter continues by saying, "Whose adorning ...[should be] the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price." Again, these words describe the inward grace, reverence, and beauty that adorn the Christian's soul, particularly the Christian woman's soul. The Christian woman projects this grace outwardly by..."adorning herself in modest apparel."

From the very outset, the gospel cultivates among the Saints a spirit of godliness and holiness. Titus 2:11,12 says, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly righteously and godly in the present world." Peter also says, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:14-16) First, when we deny worldly lust and ungodliness and second, when we affirm godliness and holiness in our hearts (truly, fully, and sincerely), the gospel builds in us the divine nature of which all saints partake. (2 Peter 1:4) Again, Paul, writing in contrast to the adulterer, the fornicator, the drunkard and the like, says, "...And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6:11)

Conversion involves transformation – something is put off (Col. 3:8) that something else might be put on (Rom. 13:14); something dies that something else might live (Romans 6); we flee lust to follow after faith righteousness and charity with them that call on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Tim. 2:22)

Contemplate this very serious point. What mostly influences our lives and our thinking? If television, magazines, the internet and other forms of modern culture have greater sway with us than the gospel, then chances are we may lack the moral strength to be transformed from the world and are more likely conforming to it. We may be found adopting its trends, sporting its fashions, and accepting its standards. Friends, we must take the Scripture's admonition very seriously. When Paul says, "Come out from among them and be separate says the Lord... and touch not the unclean thing" (2 Cor. 6:17), he is not merely suggesting a way to live. He is admonishing us to avoid the evil in the world. With so much talk and so many images involving lust, sin, and immorality, do we deny the effects of the world on our hearts and minds?

With this as our premise, I want to discuss briefly the Biblical principles of our clothes and how we dress. Our clothes should: 1. Honor The Lord 2. Adequately cover our bodies 3. Distinguish our gender.

Honor The Lord: The ornament of a quiet and meek spirit is of great price in the sight of God. The Christian woman (and man) professes godliness adorning herself (or himself) in modest apparel. Do we really need to sketch a mental image of what's appropriate and what's not? Are our senses so dull of hearing and our consciences so seared that we fail to recognize immodesty? Paul would say, "...present your bodies as living sacrifices holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1) I have been told of people making the argument that if you were in a public place where everyone is dressed in bathing suits (like the lake or the ocean) and you stand out because you are not dressed as they are that you are immodest and "drawing attention to yourself." In response to such a silly notion, Paul would say, "Come out from among them and be separate says the Lord ...and touch not the unclean thing." (2 Cor.6:17) and Peter would write, "wherefore they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot..." (1 Peter 4:4).

Brother Ronny Wade referred to the following passage once in a sermon a number of years ago and that reference has stuck with me through the years. He quoted Paul saying, "whose glory is their shame" (Phil. 3:19) and then made appropriate application. Just think of how men glory in shame. That statement aptly summarizes the thinking of the modern world. The more seductive, provocative, and salacious the appearance, the more celebrated, recognized and noted that look or that person becomes. The world glories in its thin bodies, its muscled abdominals, its tanned skin, and its nakedness ...Again, their glory is their shame. Is the church unaffected? Hardly friends. May God's Grace teach us and may we keep ourselves from evil.

Covers The Body: Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and their eyes "were opened." (Genesis 3) Suddenly, they felt a strong sense of shame and with "opened eyes" saw that they were naked. Notice the correlation between their shame and their nakedness. Adam and Eve attempted to cover themselves by sewing fig leaves together. I can hardly imagine that their apron of leaves looked more scant than what some are willing to go into public wearing today. God deemed them inadequately clothed and instead made them coats of skin and "clothed them." (Gen.3:21) Scholars suggest that the clothes that God made covered them from their shoulders to below their knees. You see friend, we can have clothes on, but still be naked and expose our shame. We may not feel ashamed, but we expose our shame even still.

The prophet Isaiah writes, "Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; Sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans! For you shall no more be called Tender and delicate. 2 Take the millstones and grind meal. Remove your veil, Take off the skirt, Uncover the thigh, Pass through the rivers. 3 Your nakedness shall be uncovered, Yes, your shame will be seen I will take vengeance, And I will not arbitrate with a man." (Isa. 47:1-4)

Distinguishes Our Gender: "Have you not read that He which made them at the beginning made them MALE and FEMALE?" (Matt. 19:4) You couldn't tell by listening to modern thought in western civilization. Through concerted effort over the last fifty years, academia and progressive social thinking has largely removed all distinctions between men and women, especially with the help of television. Consequently, West Coast States have now opened "unisex bathrooms" for "transgender" children. Shocking? Why? Isn't it only the natural progression within a society that has removed all specific gender identities from its conscience and mores? Moses commanded, "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do

so are an abomination to the Lord your God.” (Duet. 22:5) This unmistakable principle of gender distinction remains in the New Testament too. For example, Paul condemned “the effeminate” (1 Cor. 6:9), that is, men who act and dress as women. Now if it’s wrong for a man to dress and act like a woman, is it right for a woman to dress and act like a man?

REPORT THIS AD

Beloved, dress, clothes, fads, and fashions reflect a culture, its beliefs, and values. That’s true for the Kingdom of Heaven too. I pray this discussion helps someone, somewhere in the world to be more resolved and dedicated to be all that our Heavenly Father desires us to be. “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Cor. 7: 1)

Doug Hawkins

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