

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Modesty

By Bobby Witherington

“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But which becometh women professing godliness with good works” (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

It seems that we seldom read articles dealing with modesty, or hear sermons on that subject. However, it is probable that, since the fall of man (Genesis 3), no society has ever been more given to gross immodesty than our modern society. Lessons on modesty versus immodesty are regarded as both controversial and unpopular. However, this is a biblical issue, and one cannot ignore this subject and at the same time *“declare...the whole counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27).

But **what** constitutes modesty? Suffice it to say, modesty is not simply an issue of outward attire, or the clothing one wears on his, or her body. It is primarily an issue of the heart! With this in mind, let us first closely examine our opening text:

1 Timothy 2:9-10

“That women adorn themselves” - The word *“adorn”* is from *kosmeo* (Greek), a verb which means “to put in order, arrange, make ready.” The noun form of the word is from *kosmos* (Greek), which basically meant *“a harmonious arrangement or order,” Vine*. We use the word “cosmos,” which is defined as *“the world or universe as an embodiment of order and harmony.”* It is the opposite of chaos. In like manner, the adornment of a godly lady should be one in which order (not disorder) exists. This orderliness must extend, not merely to the relationship of the different articles of her apparel to each other, but also the relationship of her apparel to her **character!**

“In modest” - This word is from *komios*, which means *“respectable, honorable, well arranged, seemly,” Thayer*.

“Apparel” - This word is from *katastole* (Greek), which is defined as *“primarily a garment let down; hence, dress, attire in general,” Vine*.

“With shamefacedness” or *“propriety”* (NKJV) - As used here, this word denotes a sense of shame; it involves a blend of modesty and humility. In Jeremiah’s day, apostate Judah did not even *“know how to blush”* (Jer. 6:15). To *“blush”* is to become red in the face from shame or embarrassment, but they were too sin-hardened to feel shame, regardless of the deplorableness of their conduct!

“And sobriety” - This word is from *sophrosune* (Greek), and means *“soundness of mind, soberness, sound judgment, self-control,” Thayer*. One’s dress should reflect *“soundness of mind!”* A person possessing *“sobriety”* will ask such questions as: “would Christ be ashamed of me in this outfit,” or “what effect will this swim suit, this see-through blouse, this low-cut dress, these tight pants have on the opposite sex?”

“Not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array” - This is analogous to 1 Peter 3:3, where such language serves as a contrast to that *“gentle and quiet spirit,”* which is very precious in *“the sight of God,”* (1 Pet. 3:4). It is referring to the regular “clothes horse,” one who is trying to make a stunning display of herself. One can be immodestly over-dressed, or immodestly under-dressed!

“Which becometh women professing godliness, with good works.” - The word *“godliness”* is from *theosebeia* (Greek), a word denoting *“the fear or reverence of God,” Thayer*. *“Good works”* are *“works”* which are ordained of God, and *“in”* which one ought to *“walk”* (Eph. 2:10; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Observation: From these verses it seems obvious that “*modest apparel*,” at least in part, is apparel that covers the “nakedness of the body!” But what, from God’s perspective, constitutes “*nakedness*”?

“*Nakedness*”

1. This word includes total nudity. Adam and Eve, when first created and before sin entered the world, “*were both naked...and were not ashamed*” (Gen. 2:25). “*Naked*” as used in this verse described two people who were completely unclothed. After they sinned, they recognized their nakedness, so they “*sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings*” (Gen. 3:7).

2. “*Nakedness*” also refers to inadequate clothing. That this is true is confirmed by reading the instructions God gave to the priests under the law of Moses. Their attire and what it included is set forth in detail in Exodus 28:1-43. In addition to the “*robe*” the priests were to wear (Ex. 28:5), they were also required to wear “*linen trousers to cover their nakedness*” and these “*linen trousers*” were to “*reach from the waist to the thighs*” (Ex. 28:42). They were so instructed because, as they ministered to the Lord, others were not to be exposed to their “*nakedness*.” And, as noted, these linen trousers were to “*reach from the waist to the thighs*.” Nelson’s Bible Dictionary describes the “*thighs*” as “*the part of the body between the knees and the hips*.” Hence, based upon that definition, exposed flesh above the knee would constitute “*nakedness*” from God’s view point. We might also observe that the linen garments worn by the priests were actually their under garments. But now-a-days many people’s outer garments do not cover as much of the body as did the under garments of the priests under Moses’ law! We might further observe that portions of the priests’ attire were designed for “*glory and for beauty*” (Ex. 28:2), whereas the linen trousers were for *decency*; they were worn to “*cover their nakedness*.”

I recognize that we are not under the law of Moses. However, God’s definition of “*nakedness*” has not changed. Many would have us to believe that “*modesty*” is simply a cultural issue, and that the definition of the word changes as society changes, but “*nakedness*” has never been a synonym for “*modesty*”; hence, whatever constitutes “*nakedness*” is the opposite of modesty.

It is a fact that some parts of the body are not intended to be publicly exposed! That this is true is indicated in 1 Corinthians 12:23, wherein an inspired apostle said “*those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor, and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty*.” Yes, certain “*parts*” of the body are “*unpresentable*” and must therefore be covered! That would certainly include the reproductive organs. Moreover, in Ezekiel 16:7, 8, the covering of the “*breasts*” included a covering of one’s “*nakedness*.” The “*breasts*” were intended to be covered!

Two Women Contrasted

1. **The immoral woman of Proverbs Chapter 7:** (a) She wears “*the attire of a harlot*” (b) she has a “*crafty heart*,” v. 10, (c) she has an “*impudent face*,” v. 13, (d) she “*seduces*,” v. 21, (e) her house is the “*way to hell*,” v. 27.

2. **The Godly Woman of 1 Timothy Chapter 2:** (a) She wears “*modest apparel*,” v. 9, (b) she is characterized by “*godliness*,” vs. 10, (c) she professes “*shamefacedness*” or a sense of shame, v. 10, (d) she engages in “*good works*” v. 10, and (e) her goal is heaven.

Conclusion: In view of the truths set forth in this article, we simply ask, “what about today’s modern swim suit, what about much of the attire worn by many in today’s shopping centers, what about those who wear ‘see-through’ clothing, what about those who wear ‘low-cut blouses,’ etc., etc.?” Over exposure of the body invites lust on the part of the opposite sex. No God-fearing woman wants others to commit “*adultery with her*” in his heart (Matt. 5:28). No God-fearing man wants to be a stumbling block for others (Matt. 18:6-9). One way to avoid this occurring is for both men and women to be modestly attired. – *Seffner Church of Christ Bulletin*, November 13, 2016. ■

Editor’s Note: It is “Bare Season”! No, I’m not referring to the season when hunters go out into the woods to hunt four-legged, furry creatures such as black bears, brown bears or grizzly bears. I am referring to the season when the weather is hot and people start baring their bodies to keep cool or “look cool,” wearing hot-weather “Bare” styles. Brethren, don’t be one of the devil’s prize trophies during “Bare Season” as brother Witherington so ably instructs us in the article above (1 Pet. 5:8). — *tgmc*

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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