

Lesson Eight

Christian Modesty in an Immodest World

Introduction

A. Challenge to first century Christians:

"For the average Roman girl watching those were golden years, but the moralists raised a fearful outcry. 'I see clothes of silk, if clothes they can be called' wrote the philosopher Seneca (4 B.C. - 64 A.D), 'affording protection neither to the body nor to the modesty of the wearer, and which are purchased for enormous sums...' Pliny told of garments that 'render a woman naked.' Others waggishly referred to clothes 'made of glass.'"

- Robert Collins, *East to Cathay: The Silk Road*, pp. 44-46.

"Roman women now moved about almost as freely as men. They dressed in diaphanous silks from India and China, and ransacked Asia for perfumes and jewelry."

- Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, Vol. III, p 134.

"The decay of the ancient faith among the upper classes had washed away the supernatural supports of marriage, fidelity.... women wished to be sexually rather than maternally beautiful..."

Ibid, p. 222.

B. Question: Does God care about the kind of clothing we wear?

If He cares, what, if any, are the guidelines He gives to direct us?

I. The Whole of Life is Influenced by Becoming a Christian

A. The old man must die and a new man be brought to birth: Col. 3:1-10 Rom. 6:4-6 Gal. 2:19,20

B. We now belong entirely to the Lord. 1 Cor. 6:19,20

C. All things are made new. 2 Cor. 5:17

D. Christians do everything with Christ in mind. 2 Cor. 10:3-5 Col. 3:17 Phil. 1:20,21.

E. All this because the mind of the Christian has been completely transformed. Rom. 12:1,2

II. The Change in Our Hearts is Reflected in the Way We Live

A. "To the pure all things are pure" (Tit. 1:5). But how do you know the heart is pure?

1. Matt. 7:16-21

2. Matt. 12:34

3. Jn. 14:15 1 Jn. 2:4,5

B. The way a man or woman dresses reveals what is in the heart. 1 Tim. 2:9-10 1 Pet. 3:1-5

III. God Cares About Modesty in Clothing

A. Made clothes for Adam and Eve. Gen. 3:7,21.

B. Concerned about the modesty of the priests. Ex. 20:26 28:42

C. Nakedness considered a symbol of:

1. Shame - Isa. 20:4 47:1-3 Jer. 13:25-27 Nah. 3:5 Rev. 3:17,18 16:15
2. Insanity - Luke 8:27,35

IV. Principles to Guide Us in Our Choice of Clothing

A. 1 Tim. 2:8-10

1. "in modest apparel" "Orderly, well arranged, decent" (Vine's Diet, of NT Words)

a. In a manner becoming one's character.

Other translations:

- "becoming apparel" (Broadus)
- "seemly attire" (Rotherham)
- "in proper clothes" (Goodspeed)
- "in becoming manner" (NEB)
- "with appropriate dress" (TCNT)

b. Context reveals character she is to dress consistently with:

- 1) One who professes godliness - v. 10
- 2) One who seeks the beauty achieved by good works - v. 10
- 3) One who is quiet and submissive - v. 11
- 4) One who delights in motherhood - v. 15
- 5) One who continues in faith, love, and sanctification with sobriety - v. 15.

2. "With shamefastness" - "a sense of shame..... Shamefastness is that modesty which is 'fast' or rooted in the character" - (Vine's Diet, of NT Words)

a. Contrast "ashamed" and "shame"

- 1) Ashamed - "a sense of guilt following an immoral act."
- 2) Shame - "a sense of propriety that prevents an immoral act" Trench says, "an innate moral repugnance to the doing of the dishonorable act."

b. The Christian woman wears her clothes so as to suggest that the doing of an dishonorable act would be repulsive to her.

c. Young girls need to be taught this sense of shame (propriety) even before they are able to fully understand all the reasons.

3. "With sobriety" - "sound judgment" (Vine's Diet, of NT Words)

"It is that habitual inner self-government with its constant rein on all the passions and desires, which would hinder the temptation to those from arising, or at all events from arising in such strength as would overbear the checks and barriers which shamefastness opposed to it." (Trench)

- B. 1 Peter 3:1-5. Compare carefully with 1 Tim. 2:8-10. *List the guidelines to appropriate dress for the Christian woman which Peter gives:*
- C. Note that God is also concerned about the modesty of men in dress, i.e. the OT priests. *What are some of the things which Christian men ought to consider in their dress? Ostentation? Sensuality?
No distinction in sexes? (Dt. 22:5,6; 1 Cor. 11:1-16)
Consistent with one professing godliness? Others?*
- D. "Be not conformed to this world" Rom. 12:2
1. World's ideal of womanhood today is in contrast to God's. Solomon's description of a worldly woman:
 - a. wily of heart Prov. 7:10
 - b. clamorous (loud) v. 11
 - c. willful (stubborn) v. 11
 - d. a gadabout v. 11
 - e. aggressive v. 13
 - f. promiscuous v. 13
 - g. impudent face (lacking modesty, shameless) v. 13
 - h. having "the attire of a harlot".
 2. Christian woman must decide which kind of person she will be and dress accordingly.
- E. Do nothing to cause another to sin - 1 Cor. 10:32
1. Open purpose of so much modern fashion is sex appeal.
 2. Jesus warned men against what fashion invites (Mt. 5:28)
 3. The woman is guilty who causes it. Bathsheba shared David's guilt (1 Sam. 11:2)
- F. Follow the example of the best people you know (Heb. 13:7).
- G. Do not violate your conscience (Rom. 14:23). If uncertain about clothing, don't wear it.
- H. Do nothing that will compromise your influence as a Christian on others. (2 Cor. 6:3, 1 Cor. 9:19-23)

V. Modest Dress and Judgment

Judgment must be used in determining what dress is suitable for the Christian because we have principles not descriptive rules to go by. Compare to length of hair in 1 Cor. 11:14,15.

But not just any judgment is acceptable.

A. Must be judgment based on mature spiritual discernment. Phil. 1:9-11 Heb. 5:11-14

B. Soundness of judgment varies with maturity and experience in godliness. Forces that can distort judgment:

1. lust of the flesh
2. lust of the eye
3. pride of life
4. love of money
5. desire for social acceptance - desire not to be seen as different

The mature, experienced disciple can detect when these influences have begun to operate. The young disciple may not be able to do so.

Objection: "But we cannot define modesty. Its all a matter of personal judgment and one person's judgment is as good as another's"

Question: Why did the Holy Spirit give such instruction then? Clearly one person's judgment is not as good as another's.

C. Modesty is foremost an attitude of heart.

It functions by means of principles, not yardsticks. No woman is modest simply by applying static rules to dress length and cost. She is modest because the spirit of Christ is in her.

1. Begins with loving God with all the heart. Mt. 22:37
2. Expresses itself in obedience to all God's word. Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 5:3
3. Involves a life totally committed to Christ. Rom. 12:1,2 Mt. 10:37-39
4. The uncommitted or half-committed cannot understand modesty, much less practice it.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Make a list of the guidelines you use in selecting clothing to wear. Which are the most important to you? Be prepared to discuss in class.

2. Are you ever resentful of teaching on this subject? Why? Do you discuss your disagreements with the teacher? Why not?