

Sunday, September 25, 2022 am

**CLOSER TO GOD 2022 (27)**  
**Pursuing Holiness (6)**  
**Does It Matter What I Wear?**

As we continue our study of drawing closer to God, we are in the midst of addressing various aspects of our lives and how we need to pursue holiness in these. Up to this point we have addressed our disposition, attitudes, speech, actions. Today, we want to notice another specific area which serves as an example of “every area” – Our appearance – specifically, what we wear.

NOTE: This is not a comfortable subject, but it is addressed in scripture and needs to be examined. I will attempt to address this issue as discretely as possible, but still reveal what God’s word has to say about this subject.

**I. Modesty**

- a. Modesty is a subject that needs to be addressed from time to time. It is a Biblical topic and one related to our holiness.
- b. Modesty defined – Oxford Languages (Microsoft Bing search) defines the term, “1. *The quality or state of being unassuming or moderate in the estimation of one’s abilities; 2. The quality of being relatively moderate, limited, or small in amount, rate or level; 3. Behavior, manner or appearance intended to avoid impropriety or indecency.*”
- c. We are living in a society that is often touts immodesty –
  - i. It is seen everywhere in media, advertising, and many of the places we go. Living in our climate there are plenty of places saturated with immodest apparel – beaches, pools, water theme parks, city parks, and even when you go shopping. At times, in our society, some are even touting outright nudity.
  - ii. We live in a society where many are driven by their lusts – 1 John 2:15-16 – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. ALL of these can factor into the question of modesty.
  - iii. We also live in a society filled with self-promotion (see pride above). So many today live their lives seeking to be noticed by as many as possible. This is one of the BIG concerns with social media, which is why so many put virtually every detail of their life on some internet platform(s). This often includes what they wear – people post to DRAW ATTENTION to themselves.
  - iv. The sad reality is that such has become the accepted, or even expected, norm. It is a subject that is often “off-limits”, even though there are standards in place however loose they might be. And anyone of age knows that while we have never had perfect moral standards during our lives, the past few decades have seen a substantial loosening of what standards were there before.
- d. It is a problem in many churches as well. This is a subject that elders and preachers often struggle dealing with. Because the Bible does not give exact guidelines (e.g. how short can a dress be), there is a degree of subjectiveness to it (but not as much as some would like to think – TT). Many people take this very personal and become upset/offended if one even dare to question their standards.
- e. BUT, if we are pursuing holiness, we need to think about what we wear as well.

**II. The Bible and modesty**

- a. **1 Timothy 2:8-10** – the foremost text in the NT addressing this.
  - i. Paul begins by addressing that men are to pray everywhere. Contextually, this is a reminder of their responsibility to lead (as we have noted in times past).

- ii. Vs. 9, Paul begins addressing women and how they are to adorn themselves. Notice the text begins with, “in like manner” appealing to vs. 8. What is in that verse that applies to what Paul talks about? 1) *everywhere* – this is about who you are; 2) *holy hands* – pursuing holiness, & 3) *without wrath and doubting* – proper disposition and faith.
  - iii. **Adorn** – a word meaning to decorate or cause something to be beautiful. Paul is here going to address how women ought to dress. Several terms bear this out.
  - iv. **Modest apparel – modest** is a word that mean appropriate or proper, becoming. It is a word associated with orderliness.
  - v. With **Propriety** – this would be closest to our English word for modesty.
    - 1. It is a word in indicates a sense of shame or respect. (KJV – shamefacedness, NASB, ESV – modesty). The idea is that of one adorned in such a way that they are not embarrassed or blush. Have we forgotten how to blush?
    - 2. Jeremiah 6:15, *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush. Therefore, they shall fall among those who fall; At the time I punish them, They shall be cast down,” says the Lord.* This passage is a condemnation of Northern Israel because there was no shame in their idolatrous and immoral practices. Note that this indicates people who OUGHT TO have been ashamed at what they were doing, but they were so far gone, they were not ashamed at all.
    - 3. Many today have become so desensitized to immodesty that they have no shame in what they wear. In fact, many flaunt their immodesty.
  - vi. **Moderation** – (KJV – sobriety, NASB – discreetly, ESV – self-control). BDAG says of this word that it describes soundness of mind, rational; being prudent and using good judgment, moderation. We know what moderation is – you are not “out of control” or unduly drawing attention to yourself EITHER WAY (either not enough clothing or too much – as in flamboyant in dress).
  - vii. **Not with braided hair or pearls or costly clothing** – this is an elaboration on *moderation*. Notice the text focuses on the overdressing to draw undue attention to one’s status (often to show superiority). Whether in the assembly or in society in general, these descriptions indicated wealth and status and often implied superiority (e.g. looking down on others as inferior). I think of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:5-6 where they enlarge the borders of their garments and broaden their phylacteries. They were drawing attention to who they were. We often see their arrogant attitude described (cf. Matthew 6:1-2, 16-18, Luke 18:9, etc.).
  - viii. **Proper for women professing godliness** – godliness indicates reverence. Being proper means that you are suitable or acceptable. In this case it is toward God and as you live in society. A study of Roman culture indicates they had serious moral degradation both in action and appearances. It was a very promiscuous society where men were expected to be part of that. But scripture teaches a very different standard – fidelity for both the man and woman. This would be expressed both in their actions, faithfulness, and appearance.
  - ix. Paul in this text is clearly setting a standard that was DIFFERENT from society and demonstrated a more reserved and less revealing appearance.
- b. **1 Peter 3:1-6** – Wives, being examples to their husbands (even unbelievers)
- i. Peter reminds women of their responsibility to submit to their husbands. The goal is to win (or strengthen) them spiritually. When anyone acts with proper conduct, it can produce positive results, sometimes over a long period of time.
  - ii. Vs. 2 – **When they observe you chaste conduct** – the word “chaste” means to be pure, free from moral defects (cf. **2 Corinthians 11:2** – Paul speaks of a “chaste virgin” betrothed to one husband – Christ; **Titus 2:5** – older women are to teach younger women to be discreet,

- chaste, homemakers, etc.). Also found in Philippians 4:8, 1 Timothy 5:22, James 3:17, 1 John 3:3, etc. – pure.
- iii. Vs. 3 – ***Do not let your adornment be merely outward – arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel.*** Peter is talking about the way she dresses and beautifies herself.
  - iv. Vs. 4 – ***Rather, let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible gentle and quiet spirit.*** As with 1 Timothy, the emphasis is again placed on the inner person. Vs. 5-6 give examples of this.
  - v. The point – again, a standard DIFFERENT from society – in a more pure way is described.
- c. Are Paul and Peter saying that it is wrong to “dress up” and look your best? No. In 1 Timothy 2, the very idea of modesty and propriety means you seek to blend in as best you can, BUT with standards of holiness. Peter is emphasizing, let it be about who you are inside. Being unkempt and filthy can draw just as much attention as being gaudy and flashy. And clearly, such is the case when one chooses to overly expose themselves by wearing too little or too revealing clothing.
- d. Modesty is about the heart!
- i. When the heart is right, it will govern everything else including what you wear – Proverbs 3:23 – Keep your heart with all diligence.
  - ii. Both 1 Timothy and 1 Peter appeal to the heart as noted.
  - iii. Modesty ought to be a defining disposition in our lives. Recall how we have already discussed our disposition and attitudes. How we dress needs to reflect our humility.
- e. Consider these passages that addressed standards.
- i. Genesis 3 – Adam and Even after they sinned realized they were naked and sowed fig leaves to cover themselves. Even then, they still knew they were “naked” and hid themselves (3:10). God considered their “fig leaves” (3:7) inadequate and provide them tunics (vs. 21) – garments that covered front and back, from shoulder to knee or more. NOTE: There is a difference between being “naked” and “nude”. Naked can be descriptive of one with inadequate clothing.
  - ii. Priests had a standard – cover the thigh.
    - 1. Exodus 28:42-43 gave instructions for priestly garments. They were instructed to make linen trousers that covered their nakedness. THEN the standard was given – from the waist to the thighs.
    - 2. Exodus 20:26 – not to go up steps that their nakedness be exposed.
  - iii. The “attire of a harlot” – Proverbs 7:10 indicating there is clothing that is considered seductive and improper for society. She revealed who she was by what she was wearing.
  - iv. Isaiah 47:2-3, portraying the picture of Babylon facing the judgment of God, nakedness was associated with removing the veil, taking off the skirt and uncovering the thigh.
  - v. NOTE: I mention these examples just to observe there are standards of dress mentioned in scripture.
- f. What about men?
- i. For whatever reason, the Bible directs most of its instructions about modesty toward women.
  - ii. It very likely has to do with the way men and women view each other. And like today, it is likely Rome dealt with the same desires. Men are more visually driven than women in these matters, hence the warnings to women so as to consider how they are perceived (and the warnings against sensual lust directed toward men – Matthew 5:27-28).
  - iii. But I believe standards apply to men as well. Consider:
    - 1. Some words of 1 Timothy 2:9-10 are found in the qualifications of elders (1 Timothy 3:1-6)
      - a. Sober-minded (3:2) is based on the same root word as moderation (2:9)
      - b. Good behavior (3:2) is based on the same word as “modest” in 2:9.

c. NOTE: In times past, we have observed that MOST qualifications of elders apply to every Christian. He has just demonstrated a mature development of these qualities as he leads. 1 Peter 2:11-12 calls for all to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul... Romans 13:13, *Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*

2. Consider Genesis 3:7, 21 - God's response applied to BOTH Adam and Eve

3. Also the above mentioned instructions to priests.

**III. What should I consider when I think about what I wear?**

a. What are some standards we ought to consider today?

i. I need to ask questions: Does it show too much or draw undue attention to me? Is it too short or too little clothing, exposing part of the sexual organs (both men and women), too tight – outlining your shape and leaving little to the imagination, sheer – see through – exposing under garments, etc.

ii. Understand, that I am not saying one cannot be fashionable. There are alternatives if one is willing to look. They may be more difficult to find, but they are there.

b. Am I really pursuing holiness? Am I more interested in being LIKE the world and accepted by the world, or is God my priority? I need to ask myself, is this promoting godliness or worldliness? This really ought to solve the issue.

c. Consider my influence on others. Are you by your dress provoking others to lust? NOTE: Do not just blame it on the other person (they may have a problem, but that is not justification for one to do whatever they want). 1 Corinthians 8:9-13 notes that we must be aware of the conscience of our brethren. IF my conduct leads to a brother or sister stumbling, will I give it up for their sake?

d. Final thought? Are you offended if the leadership expresses concern about our appearance becoming more worldly and sultry. Appreciate that they want to keep the church as pure as possible.

In conclusion: So much more can be said about modesty. We must understand that what we wear says something about who we are. I want us to understand that if we are pursuing holiness, it will be reflected in how we dress. Does your appearance reflect holiness? Think about it!