

You Are Wearing That? **10-31-21**

The Bible has a lot to say about clothing. In the Old Testament, the story of Adam and Eve tells us that they, having sinned and partaken of the fruit, made clothing from leaves. However God did not approve and made them clothing from the skin of animals (Gen. 3:7,21). A bit further on, we read about Joseph's coat of many colors and the response that the brothers of Joseph had to it (Gen. 37:3). In the law of Moses, the priests were given special garments (Ex. 28:40-43) that reflected their holiness. Finally, the Israelites were forbidden to mix linen and wool in their garments (Lev. 19:19).

We do not live under the Old Testament, and many of these laws were symbolic of issue pertaining to holiness and sin. But one truth is clear from the Old Testament: clothing matters. It elicits carnal responses and often frames the mindsets of the seerers and the wearers. How do we transfer these ideas into our New Testament lives? By understanding ideas like modesty and decency, honor and respect, and judgment and discernment.

What is modest? In 1 Timothy 2:9 the term is used as follows: *"In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing"*. A parallel passage is in 1 Peter 3:3, and this says: *"Do not let your adornment be merely outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel-- rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God"*. Modesty then could be described as making character the emphasis of importance. It is a desire for humility and contentment, and the absence of seeking to make an impression by appearances.

Often times we use the word "modesty" to describe the issue of sexual propriety. What we really mean when we describe this is decency, or the issue of indecency. This is the matter of wearing clothing that is sexually revealing or reasonably intent on inciting lust. The issue here is not entirely modesty, but the matter of causing others to stumble (Mt. 18:7). One difficult issue is that decency and indecency is often a matter of cultural application. For many, it is their ignorance of the issue of lust as well. No Christian would dress in a way that sought to provoke lust; but often we do so in ignorance.

Clothing reflects our respect for others. Just consider what people wear to a wedding or funeral. We often apply that principle to our worship assembly, which is part wedding (Mt. 22:1-12) and part funeral (1 Cor. 11:24). But the respect is also for others. Consider even when we go to the grocery store; our clothing reflects a respect for those around us. In romans 12:17 we are told that we are to *"Respect what is right in the sight of all men."*

While we need to be mindful of what we wear, we also need to be careful on making bad judgments on what others wear. James 2:1-4 speaks of the danger of being judges with evil thoughts when it comes to seeing what others wear. While there are certainly times when it is not a matter of personal discernment, often our reaction to what others wear is an opinion, and needs to be handled as such.

Christians are mindful of what they wear. They understand that clothing reflects who we are to others, and that we seek both to avoid causing others to sin as well as to show respect. We are seeking to reveal a humble heart by our attire. As well, Christians are careful in their judgments on these matters, being able to discern the difference between an opinion and a matter of faith.