

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Revealing attire for worship

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Clothing may cover our bodies, but it reveals much about ourselves. Through our attire, we send messages to others before we speak. A man receives an impression about the character of a woman when she dresses herself “with the attire of a harlot” (Proverbs 7:10). By being “clothed”, a man communicated a message consistent with being in his “right mind” (Luke 8:35). Wearing “no clothes” had communicated the opposite message (Luke 8:27).

The dynamic of clothing sending revealing messages is strong when people come together for worship. A poor man communicated to others in the synagogue his circumstance in life through his “vile” or shabby “clothing” (James 2:2). Women communicated ungodly ostentatious spirits through their “braided hair, and gold or pearls and costly raiment” (I Timothy 2:9). Are we to look down on the shabbily clothed person and show a respect of persons to the one in “fine cothing”? James characterizes such judgments as “evil thoughts” (James 2:4). Should we then, in honor of the poor man, make laws that no one in fine

clothing, or costly raiment will be welcomed in our assemblies? God demands a woman adorn herself in “modest apparel” reflecting “shamefastness” and “sobriety” in the heart (I Timothy 2:9). Modest apparel, well arranged for the occasion, is what God demands, regardless of its price tag. And “modest apparel” will reveal the character of a godly heart. Modest attire will be consistent with a woman “professing godliness through good works” instead of placing the emphasis merely upon one’s outward appearance (I Timothy 2:10).

If clothing does not reveal anything important about ourselves why has God revealed his mind to the contrary? While we are not to show respect of persons due to their attire, or emphasize our outward appearance above good works, we cannot ignore the fact that our clothing is saying some things about ourselves.

In visiting men in the county jail, I have been told by the authorities that I must wear a “shirt and tie”. It communicates to the inmates the message: “I take seriously the work I do”. If it is important to me to “dress up” to talk to you, you will be more inclined

to listen to my counsel. “Dressing down” has an opposite effect.

We communicate decorum through proper dress. Though in haste, Joseph took the time and “shaved himself and changed his raiment” to appear before Pharaoh (Genesis 41:14). The wedding guest who did not wear the “wedding garment” had no excuse for not honoring the occasion and host with appropriate dress (Matthew 22:11-12).

What are we saying by our dress when we assemble for worship? When people see us in casual or sloppy attire, will they receive the message that we consider being in the presence of God as more august than appearing before a prospective employer? When people see us “dressed up” in our best attire, will they receive the message that coming to worship is a most important occasion in our lives? A casual, lackadaisical, or sloppy approach to serving God will often be communicated through in-temperate dress. May we dress our best when we come to worship God. God indeed looks at the heart, but the heart is often revealed in how we dress.