

GLAD TIDINGS

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

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“Shamefastness” and Dress

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In the context of holiness, Paul instructs women to “...adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works” (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

We communicate many things about our selves through dress. It should not be surprising that the woman of a “wily” heart is dressed “with the attire of a harlot” (Proverbs 7:10). The disposition of heart not only finds expression in word but often it manifests its character in dress. The ostentatious or showy spirit often finds an outlet through extravagant hair styles, expensive jewelry and costly raiment. Paul is warning women readers to guard against inappropriate dress.

How does he combat the problem? Fight fire with fire. An unbecoming spirit is behind inappropriate dress, so if we concentrate on having a right spirit when we dress, our adornment should be appropriate.

One characteristic of a holy and godly heart is “shamefastness”. According to

Vine, this “*is that modesty which is ‘fast’ or rooted in the character.*” Like “bedfast” is describing one confined to bed, “shamefast” is modesty firmly imbedded in character. This godly heart understands the limits or boundaries of propriety and shrinks back from ever crossing the line instead of seeing how close one can come to the line.

Shamefastness is that character of heart that is concerned with how certain actions will affect others. We see this clearly when Jesus speaks of the “importunity” or “shameless persistence” (the opposite of shamefastness) of one who approaches the door of a friend at midnight. He is persistent in asking for bread, but shamelessly so. He does not care if his friend is in bed at midnight with his children or what the friend will have to do to accommodate his request. He has no shame regarding how his actions are affecting his friend (Luke 11:5-8).

Our dress has an effect upon others. “Shamefastness” factors this in and makes sure the dress for the occasion will be fitting within the limits of propriety, therefore not adversely affecting others.

Our purpose in assembling this morning is to worship and honor God, not put on a show with the new Spring fashions. Shamefastness does not keep women from new things, it keeps her within the limits of modest dress, that manifests sobriety. Her dress never distracts other worshippers from the lofty purpose of honoring God by bringing undue attention to herself, or attracting the envious or even lustful gaze of the distracted.

Spring and summer seasons also tempt the ostentatious and showy spirit to show off more of the body rather than keep it modestly covered. Shamefastness will not allow an ostentatious spirit to take root and find expression in skimpy clothing. The woman with shamefastness considers how shorts exposing the thighs; halter tops, attracting eyes to the bare midriff; or swimsuits boldly revealing the female form will attract the wrong kind of response from men. So, she avoids such attire before the public’s eye.

The woman wanting to dress becomingly as one who is manifesting godliness can do so in any society. Developing shamefastness will help tremendously in dressing for all occasions.