Glad Tidings

"And we bring you good of the promise made unto the fathers…" (Acts 13:32)

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"Shamefastness" Before Dressing

(Jerry Fite)

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

We communicate many things about ourselves 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 the heart not only finds expression in words, but often 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 exhorting women readers to guard against inappropriate dress.

How does the apostle Paul combat the outward apparel issue? He addresses the spirit of the inward woman. An inappropriate spirit is behind improper attire. So, if we concentrate on having a godly spirit when we dress, our outward adornment should be appropriate.

One characteristic of a holy and godly heart is "shamefastness." (Gk. "aidos"). Vine defines the word as "...the modesty which is "fast" or rooted in the character." Like "bedfast" is describing one confined to bed, "shamefast" is modesty firmly imbedded in character."

Trench, in his study of "Synonyms of the New Testament" comments : "adios" is the shame or sense of honor which hinders one form doing an unworthy act" (p. 67). "shamefastness" is that "which shrinks from overpassing the limits of womanly reserve and modesty, as well as from the dishonour which would justly attach thereto" (p. 71-72). Engaging the heart with shamefastness, should occur first in determining what to wear, shrinking back from crossing the line of impropriety.

Thayer defines "aidos" as "as sense of shame, modesty: I Tim. 2:9; reverence, Heb. 12:28" p.14). He then adds this comment: "It is often said 'aid. (aidos- jf) precedes and prevents the shameful act, aisch. (aischune- shame jf) reflects upon its consequence and the shame it brings with it (Cope, Aristot. rhet. 5, 6, 1).

Our dress affects others. "Shamfastness" factors this in, making sure the attire for the occasion will be fitting within the limits of propriety, therefore not adversely affecting others. Dress should never distract other worshippers from the lofty purpose of honoring God by bringing undue attention to oneself, 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, laying bear the 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 godly for all occasions.