

The Gospel Herald

“As the truth is in Jesus” (Ephesians 4:21)

For The LORD’S PILGRIMS, STRANGERS & SOJOURNERS

by

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Decent and Appropriate Apparel

Some statements from those regarded as spiritual brethren of the past:

“Women walked about with neck bared all the way to the middle of the back. This was immodest dress, so they can show off their bodies” (Martin Luther, 16th Century).

John Calvin expressed, “See, there cometh a woman like a painted idol. We may well judge and think that she is at defiance with shame, ready to say on this wise, ‘I will be impudent and shameless and show my filthiness to all the world.’”

Thomas Watson said, “A wanton dress is a provocation to lust. Where the sign is hung out, people will go in and taste the liquor.”

Charles Spurgeon proclaimed, “The children of God cannot now be told by outward appearance from the children of the devil! Some will say, ‘I wish you would leave that alone!’ Of course you do, because it applies to you. But, we let nothing alone that we believe to be in the scriptures. Honesty to every man’s conscience and honesty to myself demands that I should always speak of that which I see to be an evil breaking out in the Church!” (1855)

The Pulpits in modern America are virtually silent on this subject. Few Pastors faithfully instruct God’s people about modest apparel.

(What is DECENT, APPROPRIATE and RESPECTABLE apparel in God’s Assembly?)

“God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the Saints, and to be had in REVERENCE of all them that are about him” (Psalm 89: 7).

“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with REVERENCE and Godly fear” (Hebrews 12: 28).

Upon one occasion I was visiting around on Sunday evenings at different church meetings in the county where I am a resident. I saw this little Baptist church in my travels and thought I'd make a visit there some Sunday evening.

Well, I went to the meeting on this given Sunday, and it was traditionally the "run of the mill" stereotype Southern Baptist Church meeting. Well, it came time for the evening offering to be taken and down the aisle walk these couple fellows; one, an elderly gent with dress slacks and a long sleeved shirt, and the other was a younger fellow (maybe 40s) with SHORTS, a TEE SHIRT (with a beach scene) and FLIP-FLOPS on.

I thought what in the world (yes WORLD with a capital "W") was going through this guy's mind? And then I saw another fellow with similar apparel with a lady in shorts and a tank top. I thought, I have heard about and seen marquee signs in front of meeting houses saying, "Come as you are, just come." But, this was a first for me. I had pastored for years and been ministering for thirty-five years, but had not seen folks come to worship The Almighty God of the Holy Scriptures in such INAPPROPRIATE and DISRESPECTFUL attire.

This whole "COME AS YOU ARE" mindset stems from the evangelical zeal to get ANY and ALL in the church house, to get them under the sound of the gospel and get them SAVED. God's house is the gathering place of those called out of this world into a realm of spiritual worship, fellowship and scriptural exhortation, NOT A BEACH OUTING!

What is DECENT and APPROPRIATE apparel to wear to a worship meeting? I would most assuredly think that our bodies should be respectfully covered as to not appear as if God's house is a BEACH HOUSE!! Especially women, to come into a church building dressed in shorts, a tank top and flip-flops does nothing but draw attention to the scantily-dressed female physical body, even possibly to the temptation of some into lustful thought. And, for a man, as the supposed respectful head over the woman, should have the decency to set the example of what APPROPRIATE and DECENT apparel should be in the assembly of God's people.

What would you, dear reader, think of walking in a church meeting on a given Sunday and the minister was dressed in shorts, flip-flops and a tee shirt, preaching?

Would you think it odd? Indecent? Inappropriate? Out of order? As God's children each are given gifts for the use in the local body of believers, what makes all who attend any different than the example set before them by their pastor? Are we not ALL Kings and Priest in Christ's church? Should we ALL not testify by our lives of the blessed hope that is within us by our speech, actions and APPEARANCE?

This attitude and nonchalant appearance and, "it doesn't matter," is the result of this independent, free-spirit, individualistic, worldliness that has crept into Christendom.

I recall that the Catholics began Saturday evening Mass to accommodate those who were busy with recreation activities on Sundays, and so they did their Church thing on Saturday evenings with folk singing and “come as you are” attire. This began back in the 70s.

Of course, there is an extreme to everything, such as the Amish who wear flannel pants, cotton long sleeved shirts with suspenders and broad-brim hats to meeting, while the woman wear their long (ankle length) dresses, long sleeved blouses and head coverings. I am NOT going to criticize the Amish style, for in my mind by their appearance there is NO question as to who they are, and their apparel reflects their desire to NOT be identified with the fashions of worldliness. They have my respect, although their tradition may seem a bit radical and out of balance for ME.

Yet, there is a BALANCE as to how God’s people should appear in the place of gathering and worship. I am persuaded that God’s people should appear as those who are respectful enough to wear clothing that covers their bodies in such a manner as to NOT draw attention unto themselves by being scantily dressed, as if church was just another social, “come as you are beach gathering.”

How would you clothe the Temple of God to cause it to look like a place which God would inhabit? I would think that those indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God would want to clothe their bodily temples with adornment by which God would be glorified, not with fancy, flashy, worldly fashion per say, but with APPROPRIATE apparel in simplicity, demonstrating solemn REVERENCE in the assembly among God’s people.

I have heard it said that many years back, there were some Baptists who said, “The gospel surely can’t come through a necktie.” On the other side of the coin, I could say, “It would be questionable if the true gospel would come from one dressed in shorts, tank top, and flip-flops in the house of God.”

The Holy character of God (in my humble opinion), in those sought and saved by sovereign, elective grace, will be reflected in their conversation, lifestyle and their desire to be appropriately attired to fellowship with others of like faith and belief; giving in ALL appearances the character of godliness and holiness, as the SPIRIT leads us and directs our every step. May our temples be covered as we cherish that precious possession within these vessels of clay till HE call us home to that eternal realm.

Respectfully submitted,

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