



DRESSES ONLY?



Before I get started I would like to make it clear that I am not speaking for any group nor anyone else for that matter but am simply attempting to put forth what I believe the Lord has revealed to me and hopefully continuing to reveal to me. Please do as scripture exhorts and prove (*test*) all things but I implore you that your test be kept strictly with what scripture says and not according to what other men say or have said or what any tradition says. Please see Acts 17:10-12, 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and 1 John 4:1. – Tom



I would like to do a little study on the subject of Dresses only. This subject seems to come up all to often. We as humans have such a works mentality that we tend to look at scripture and try and figure out how we can squeeze works into it. This subject is one that is used quite frequently. Let's look at one of the section of verses that is used to promote this view that women can only wear dresses.

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived

was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety. (**I Timothy 2:9-15***)

The very first words of this passage are “In like manner”. These three words are the result of one word in the Greek which is “hōsaútōs” and means “*thus i.e., in the same way*”. So, Paul’s telling us that what he is going to say next has reference to what was said previously. Which I believe points us back to the previous verse:

I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. (**I Timothy 2:8**)

The phrase “without wrath and doubting” in this verse points to aspect of the inward part of man. Then in verse 9, the phrase “in like manner” is continuing this thought. The whole of this verse shows the differences between the outward and the inward. It shows that women are not to draw attention to themselves, they are not to stand out, but they are to blend in. They are not to go around with “broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;”. They are to “adorn themselves in modest apparel”. Before we go any further, let’s look at three words in the section of this verse. Starting with the word “adorn”, it means “*to put in order, arrange, make ready and prepare*”. In other words, women are to put themselves in order, to make ready and prepare themselves with modest apparel, shamefacedness and sobriety. When I think of the word modest and how it is used in our culture, it makes me think of someone who is covered up with clothes that are not revealing nor too tight. The Webster’s College Dictionary says: “1. *Having or displaying a moderate estimation of one’s own talents, abilities and value.* 2. *Shy and retiring in disposition.* 3. *Observing conventional properties in speech, behavior or dress.* 4. *Quiet and humble in appearance, unpretentious.* 5. *Not extreme.*” But, when you look at the Greek it does not hold any of these definitions. The Greek word is “kósmios” and it means “*well arranged and seemly*” and is only twice in Scripture. It comes from the greek word “kósmos” which is translated “world” and means “*orderly arrangement*” in John 3:6. I believe that “kósmios” is only in the Bible two times. It is translated “modest” in our verse here and “of good behavior” in:

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; (**I Timothy 3:2**)

This term “modest” or “of good behavior” is obviously a very important term. In this verse above it is a “qualification” for a Bishop. And it is equally as important for a woman. And, when a woman is dressed modestly, that means she is well arranged, neat and tidy.

Next, we get to the word “apparel” which is “katastolé” in the Greek. Here is where I believe the controversy begins. According to the OnLine Bible Greek help** it means,

“1. A lowering, letting down. 2. A garment let down, dress, attire.”

According to the Strongs definition it means,

“a deposit, i.e. (specially) costume: -apparel.”

And then in Kittel’s book it says,

“1. This verb (katastellō) means “to put in its right place,” “to arrange,” “to restore order,” “to pacify,” while the noun (katastolē) means “propriety,” “ordered conduct,” “action with a view to such conduct,” and then “clothing” (as a visible expression of decorum). 2.... The noun occurs in the advice to women believers in 1 Tim. 2:9, where Timothy is told to exhort them to adopt either a seemly demeanor or seemly apparel. The context of worship perhaps supports the former rendering, but the use of stōlē for “garment” in the Apologists favors the latter.”

And lastly when we look to the Easton’s Bible Dictionary, it says this regarding the apparel that men and women wore at this time:

In Old Testament times the distinction between male and female attire was not very marked. The statute forbidding men to wear female apparel # De 22:5 referred especially to ornaments and head-dresses. Both men and women wore:

1. an under garment or tunic, which was bound by a girdle. One who had only this tunic on was spoken of as “naked” #1Sa 19:24 #Job 24:10 Isa 20:2 Those in high stations sometimes wore two tunics, the outer being called the “upper garment” #1Sa 15:27 18:4 24:5 Job 1:20

2. They wore in common an over-garment # Isa 3:22 1Ki 19:13 2Ki 2:13 a loose and flowing robe. The folds of this upper garment could be formed into a lap # Ru 3:15 Ps 79:12 Pr 17:23 Lu 6:38 Generals of armies usually wore scarlet robes # Jud 8:26 Na 2:3 A form of conspicuous raiment is mentioned in # Lu 20:46 comp. # Mt 23:5 Priests alone wore trousers. Both men and women wore turbans. Kings and nobles usually had a store of costly garments for festive occasions # Isa 3:22 Zec 3:4 and for presents # Ge 45:22 Es 4:4 6:8,11 1Sa 18:4 2Ki 5:5 10:22 Prophets and ascetics wore coarse garments # Isa 20:2 Zec 13:4 Mt 3:4

(Easton’s Bible Dictionary on Apparel)

Now let’s take a little time and think about this logically. Nowhere in Scripture does it specify for a woman to wear only dresses. The OnLine Bible Greek lexicon mentions “a garment let down” but a robe also fits that description. And then take into consideration of what we read in the Easton’s Bible Dictionary that the main apparel for the day was a robe so it makes sense that it is “a garment let down” but not just for women but also men. So, we can safely assess that the word here is for clothing in general.

Now we can't stop here. Not only are women to adorn themselves with well arranged clothing, but also with shamefacedness and sobriety. Shamefacedness means, "*a sense of shame or honour, modesty, bashfulness, reverence, regard for others and respect.*" And sobriety means, "*soundness of mind and self control.*" So, here is what this verse is saying, "In like manner also, that women ought to be well arranged in their dress (clothing, attire) and should have regard for others, respect, a sense of shame and be in control of themselves."

Then looking at the next few verses it completes the Apostle's thought. "But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Notice that these verses have nothing to do with outward appearance but with how a woman acts and deals with her behavior.

Our outward behavior is only a manifestation of our inward life and well being. We really can't help it. We can try to fake it, and that is my point with this article. Look with me at the sheep and goats. When Jesus refers to the goats, he very clearly says that they were doing works, but they were not doing it to God's glory and with wrong motives. In other words, they were trying to fake a righteous attitude. Now look at the sheep. They had no idea that what they were doing was for God. That is because it was the Spirit moving them and working in them to do it. They were not doing it in the flesh, therefore they were not looking down on others or trying to get others to do it also. It is just something that they did and didn't give it too much thought. When the Holy Spirit prompts us to do something, it is **ALL** for Christ's glory and none for us. Those that make wearing dresses an issue are in a real sense heaping condemnation on those that do not. Even though scripture says that there is now **NO** condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Our spirituality is solely from God and not from what we do or do not do. We cannot put on or take off our righteousness or spirituality. Look at what Paul wrote to the Galatian brethren.

This only would I learn of you. Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? (**Galatians 3:2-3**)

How dare us attempt to think that we can **DO** anything that will make us more righteous or more spiritual than the next child of God. We will be perfected, yes, but only by the Spirit of God, in **HIS** time and in **HIS** way.

Another verse that is used quite frequently is in the Old Testament.

The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God. (**Deuteronomy 22:5**)

The words, "shall not wear that which pertaineth" is just one Hebrew word. It is rendered "vessel, instrument, weapon, jewel, armourbearer, thing, armour, furniture, carriage and bag" in the KJV. It means "*article, vessel, implement or utensil.*" The word "implement" has three different aspects to it. It is of hunting or war, of music and of labor. Then next we need to look at the meaning of "man" in this verse. It is not the general use of man, but has a specific meaning of "*a strong man or warrior (emphasizing strength or ability to fight).*" Now, when you take these two words and their meanings, we have to conclude that what is referred to here is not about women wearing a t-shirt or even jeans for that matter. (*For if this meant what they say that it means then women could not wear a coat, a jacket, a t-shirt or long sleeve shirt, etc., because men wear them.*) But it has specific reference to wearing the armor or uniform of a warrior. To put it in modern thinking, it has reference to women being in the military service, police or any jobs of that sort. What gets me also about this verse is that it is located in the Old Testament and yet that doesn't seem to bother those that push the dresses issue. We are not under the Old Covenant anymore but I do have to say that it is an excellent guideline. The qualifying verses for this verse in Deuteronomy are first our original text stressing order, self-control, reverence, regard for others and proper clothing. And secondly in Titus where Paul is instructing Titus to stress that the aged women that have proved themselves by their behavior may

"teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands."
(**Titus 2:4-5**)

Again, notice that all these are cultivated from within and shown by outward actions. Just because a woman has a dress on, doesn't make her any more spiritual than a woman that doesn't. What women need to focus on is if these actions here in Titus are being cultivated in their lives. This is definitely much more important than who is wearing a dress and who is not. Don't get me wrong, I am not saying for one minute that there is anything wrong with a woman wearing a dress. I am just saying that if a woman does prefer a dress or has a dress on, it is by no means a way of judging her spirituality or righteousness. Wearing a dress or not wearing a dress should simply be a preference. Let's turn to another Apostle and hear what he has to say on the subject. Look with me to 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 1 through 4.

Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the

wives; While they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. (**I Peter 3:1-4**)”

Peter is even more forthright here that the adorning is to be inward.

One of the arguments that I have read over and over again in some of the forums on this topic is that wearing a dress makes some women feel more feminine. That is great! I don't have a problem with that. But, what you have to remember is that not all women are the same. What makes one feel more feminine is different from woman to woman. In fact, some women feel more feminine when they put make up on, or perfume on. I know, I know, that starts another whole topic!

Just remember this. Our spirituality is who we are before God. It is who He has made us to be. Yes, that spiritual life manifests itself in our natural life but not all of us manifest it the same way. Who are we to look at someone and judge them just because they are not wearing a dress or on the men's side of it not wearing a suit. God looks on the inside not on the outer.

But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the Lord seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. (**I Samuel 16:7**)

And also as a little side note. What was the first reference to clothes? It was back in Genesis when God slew as the first sacrifice an animal and then covered up Adam and Eve because of their sin and no where in scripture does it say that Eve had a dress on. That is all that clothes are. They are simply a covering of our sin, and when we look at our clothes, they should be a reminder of that very fact.

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* ALL Scripture is copied from the KJV

** The OnLine bible Greek help is a combination of the Strongs and Thayers Lexicons.