Modesty

08 May 2005

The society we live in can pervert anything. Swimming is healthy and fun; however, our society perverts it with immodest apparel. Cheering for your favorite sports team is a blast; yet, throw in a couple of scantly clothed cheerleaders and they ruin it. Those who sell products for a living using a clean approach are often outsold by those who have a "sex appeal" to their sell. With the summer months in front of us we must be reminded of this Bible topic. The lesson this morning shall examine the issue of modesty. How can the Christian today avoid being guilty of the sin of immodesty?

I. Lets identify what modest and immodest dress is using the Bible:

A. The apostle Peter gives us the authority to identify what immodesty is by turning to the OT (cf. I Pet. 3:3-5).

1. Consider the fact that before sin came into the world, Adam and Eve were naked and were not ashamed (Gen. 2:23-25). After sin entered the world, Adam and Eve were ashamed of their nakedness and so covered themselves (Gen. 3:6-7). There were clearly parts of the body that God demanded to be covered. The connecting word is "naked." Immodesty is associated with the word naked. The idea of being naked is to have something revealed (Heb. 4:12-13). Apparently there were areas of the body that God intended for man to conceal rather than expose and so He covered Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21; cf. Ex. 20:26).

2. God's instructions to Moses, regarding the priests apparel, reveal what being naked is. The Lord said, "*And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach*:" (Ex. 28:42). Verse 43 compares the idea of immodesty to iniquity which caries the penalty of death.

a. Loins = "The loins designate that general area of the body between the ribs and the thighs, the midsection between the upper and lower body that includes the hips, the small of the back, the waist, and the reproductive organs" (ISBE; V. 3, pp. 154). Isaiah defines nakedness as having the "*buttocks uncovered*" (Isa. 20:4).

b. Thigh = "Yarek (Heb.) That portion of the leg that extends from the hip to the knee" (ISBE; V. 1, pp. 838).

B. Consider the NT on nakedness (immodesty):

1. To have the flesh uncovered is to promote lust (cf. I Jn. 2:15-16).

2. Consider John 21:7-8; "*That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his coat about him (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits off), dragging the net [full] of fishes*" (21:7-8).

a. Peter is said to be "*naked*" (*gumnos*) while on the boat fishing. *Gumnos* is found 15 times in the NT. The word indicates the idea of being exposed or without proper clothing.

b. The word *gumnos* is defined as "naked, stripped, bare... without an outer garment, without which a decent person did not appear in public... uncovered, bare" (AG 167-68). "In common language it meant lightly clad, i.e. in the tunic only, without the mantle... exposed" (LS 170). "Naked, without clothing, without the upper garment, and clad only with an inner garment or tunic... poorly or meanly clad, destitute of proper and sufficient clothing... not covered, uncovered" (Moulton 83). The tunic "was the simplest of all the garments worn, corresponding to an ordinary shirt or nightgown. It was probably made of two pieces sewn together at the sides, or else formed of one piece, with a place cut for the head to pass through. It afforded so slight a covering that persons who had on nothing else were called naked (I Sam. 19:24; II Sam. 6:20; Jn. 21:7)" (Unger's Bible Dictionary pg. 319).

c. Peter was in the presence of other men and so no sin of immodesty occurred. The point is identifying what being naked is. John identified nakedness in Peter in that he was not wearing some sort of undershirt without his outer clothing.

3. The apostle Paul states, "*In like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but (which becomes women professing godliness) through good works*" (I Tim. 2:8-10).

a. To "*adorn*" (*kosmeo*) = "order, arrange, to deck, adorn, equip, furnish, dress, esp. of women... to adorn their heads" (LS 446).

b. Modest (*kosmios*) = "well-ordered, regular, moderate.... of persons, orderly, well-behaved, regular, discreet, quiet: decorum, decency, order" (LS 446). "Orderly" (Nestle Marshall 823). "Quiet and humble in appearance; unpretentious" (AHD 806).

c. Shamefastness (*aidos*) = "a since of shame, shame, modesty, self-respect" (LS 19).

d. Sobriety (sophrosune) = "soundness of mind, moderation, discretion... moderation in desires, self-control, temperance, chastity, sobriety" (LS 789).

e. The conclusion to these verses is simple. What a woman (or man for that matter) puts on or does not put on reveals what his spiritual state of mind is. Each should dress with forethought and soundness of mind. The woman (or man) is not to dress in such a way that brings attention to her physical beauty. There should be one man that she is trying to impress and that is her husband (no need to look provocative in the presence of other men). An immodestly dressed women will draw sexual attention to herself and cause others to sin through lust (cf. I Cor. 7:1ff). Consider what Peter said at I Pet. 3:3-5, "*Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner aforetime the holy women also, who hoped in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands*:"

II. The Bible Associates Nakedness (immodesty) with Shame:

A. Ezek. 16:35ff; 22:6-12; 23:11ff; 23:28ff; Lam. 1:4-9; Jer. 1:4-9; Rev. 16:15.

B. A lack of shame indicates serious spiritual deficiencies (Isa. 3:9; Jer. 6:15-19).

C. When Christian men and women understand what immodesty and nakedness they will have a since of shame about them in this area.

III. Nakedness in its proper Locality:

A. Marriage (Heb. 13:4) otherwise the attire of a harlot seduces those "*void of understanding*" (Prov. 7:7-27).

B. The Pslamist concluded that man should put no base thing before his eyes (Ps. 101:3).

IV. Covered by not Modest:

A. There is clothing today that covers the chest, hips, and thighs; however, they are skin tight. Skin tight clothing leaves nothing to the imagination of others.

B. Again, some clothing may cover; however, the moment one sits or bends over to pick something up the apparel is no more sufficient for covering the nakedness (Ex. 20:26).

C. Let the husband, wife, and children help each other in these areas.

Conclusion:

Attitude toward the word of God and my love for others is at the heart of a study on modesty. When I consider the fact that the lust of the flesh destroys my soul and the souls of others, the issue of modesty will be serious (I Jn. 2:15-16; James 1:14). Popular attire today exposes the breast, naval, and thigh. The Christian; however, ought to seek popularity with God and thereby cover their nakedness.