

Let us see the shame in these ways of the world, and strive to live above them. Remember, the summer may get hot; but hell will be infinitely hotter!

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THINGS ARE WARMING UP

by Bob Pulliam

It's getting warm again. Summer is winding up to knock people down and pull their clothes off of them. Well, perhaps it doesn't happen just like that; but it seems that some excuse is in order. After all, some who profess to be Christians end up in public with their clothes off. Halter and string tops; short shorts and tight shorts; see through shirts and not shirts at all; and we won't even mention the swimwear; all excused by the heat, but the result can not be excused.

Attire that exposes the body provides a view that others should not be seeing. In the case of some, it is an eyesore. In the case of others, it is fertile opportunity for lust. Jesus



said, “whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Mt 5:28) Are we to believe that one who provokes such lust would be guiltless? Jesus also said, “whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Mt 18:6) Think about that the next time you go to your closet to dress.

Guilt on Both Sides...

We usually speak of this problem as immodesty. Such was not a public problem in Jesus’ day. When people expect Jesus to legislate on such, they expect Him to spell out every little detail that they should be able to discern for themselves. Does the Bible have to specifically mention something for it to be wrong? The Bible does not mention cocaine, crack, or heroin; and yet we know that these are wrong because they *cause* a drunken stupor which the Bible condemns.

Does the Bible have to specifically offer a “Christian wardrobe” before we sit up and pay attention to our attire? What if our attire *causes* something we know to be wrong? Can’t we see the error in that?

To become a little more technical, the sin of immodest apparel falls in to the category of lasciviousness. The word “lascivious” means: “wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females...”¹ The adverb form of the word (*i.e.* lasciviously) quickly includes the thought of doing or saying something in such a way as to create lustful feelings in others (note the word “acts” in the definition above). *Causing* this emotion in others is an obvious facet of the sin of lasciviousness. The condemnation of those guilty of this sin is clearly expressed in the following passages:

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

(Galatians 5:19-21)

“And He said, ‘What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.’ “
(Mark 7:20-23)

Society Knows...

Society around us knows why the indecent attire is donned. They recognize the sex appeal. The fashion industry openly acknowledges their attempts to get the lusts excited. The songs on the radio openly admit that wandering eyes are on the prowl, and that fashions fuel their passions. The people on the beach will tell you that their attire is designed to attract attention, not to swim. And with the dangers of skin cancer sounded ever louder, more and more people expose themselves to it.

What amazes me is the “justification” of the Christian in the face of all this. They offer excuses of staying cool or even swimming better; but such excuses are only offered by those who wish to salve their consciences. My friend, if you would be a Christian, would you please cease your excuses? If the world can see, then surely your brethren can see. And don’t look now, but your shame is showing.

Conclusion...

There is no dress code to offer. There have been fashions of recent years that could not be foreseen ten years ago. To dress decently in public should be a matter of common sense for the Christian. Avoiding the indecency that causes lust in others is a goal to attain with pride. How one dresses when alone, or with a spouse, is irrelevant here. Knowing that *others are looking when you venture forth* is of paramount importance when you dress.

It is true that men are more likely to lust than women. Men are more sight oriented in such matters, where women are more emotionally moved. This does not excuse the attire of men. but does ward the women to be even more diligent in their care for these matters. Be careful, not only of how much flesh you are offering, but also how tight your clothing fits. “Style” is not always appropriate. Several years ago the “in” style included lacy borders sewn at the hem to make it appear that an undergarment was showing. Would a Christian really do well to wear such a garment? In many cases the garment itself was fashioned to look like an undergarment or negligé.

¹ Joseph Henry Thayer, “A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament”, Zondervan (1978), pg 79.