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CLOTHING, ATTITUDES, AND OUR ASSEMBLIES

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Does how we dress say anything about our attitude toward ourselves, others, or what we are doing? I believe that deep down we all know it does. It is difficult to argue with the fact that both young and old spend billions of dollars every year trying to get the right look to impress their business associates, dates, friends, or just the world in general. Clothes have always made a statement. We can try and convince ourselves otherwise, but each of us knows that there are certain styles that we would not be “caught dead in,” while there are others that we will pay a premium to wear. Why? Because we know that our clothes say something about us.

Clothing and the Scriptures

That clothing can make a statement about who we are is seen in scripture. In the O.T. the song of Deborah and Barak speaks of men who “sit in judges’ attire” (Judges 5:10). In Proverbs 7:10 Solomon spoke of a woman with a crafty heart who wore the “attire of a harlot.” And, 2 Samuel 14:2 speaks of those who put on “mourning apparel.” What do these verses say except that clothing can express who we are and what our desires might be.

In the New Testament we read of how clothing can be an expression of wealth or poverty (James 2:2-3). King Herod was said to have adorned himself with “royal apparel”—apparel that expressed his kingly position (Acts 12:21). More importantly, Paul taught that women are to adorn themselves in “modest apparel...which is proper for women professing godliness...” (1 Tim. 2:9-10). In other words, Paul is teaching that women’s dress (and men’s) should be chosen in light of the fact that they are attempting to “profess godliness” to

those who see them. Dress, therefore, can either enhance or detract from whether people view us as being godly. That means that clothing makes a statement and Christians need to be concerned about that statement.

Clothing and the Assemblies of the Church

Because our clothing makes a statement, it is important to consider how our clothing relates to our assemblies. Although we may not be aware of it, our dress at the assemblies does say something about us. It expresses our thoughts and attitudes toward self, our brethren, and most importantly, God and our worship before Him. If you disagree, then be honest with yourself and consider how you would feel if you walked into a place of worship only to find the preacher preaching in an old tee shirt, jeans, and flip flops, as well as everyone else being dressed in extremely casual attire? Can you tell me it would have zero effect on you? Maybe. But if not, then we must admit that worship to God is different from other occasions and we must take care to dress appropriately for it.

In addressing this subject, I know that there are certain factors at work here that must be considered. First of all, I know that we live in a much more casual world than we did some 30-40 years ago. That is not all bad. Yet, it is unfortunate that we have become all too casual about almost everything, including God. And with this influence constantly upon us, it is all too easy to develop a very casual attitude about our worship. Second, I realize that we are often guilty of just not thinking about these matters. It is not that we intend to

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show disrespect; it is just that we are byproducts of our society. Yet despite all of this, we must not forget that each and every time we come together we are assembling before the very God of heaven and earth. In doing this, our purpose must always be to worship the Creator and Judge of all with “reverence and godly fear,” realizing that our God is a “consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28-29). This purpose must never change. When and if it does, our worship will be rejected by God and will be useless to our souls (Matt. 15:8-9).

Therefore, as we prepare ourselves to attend the assemblies of the saints, it is important that we take time to ask ourselves **what our clothing will express to others and especially to God.** For instance, if we choose to dress with the extreme casualness characteristic of our day, will our clothing express to God and others that we get it, that we know why we are here, that this time of worship and study is different from all others? When we choose our clothing, are we doing so to express the reverence and fear deserving of the Almighty God of heaven that we come to bow before? Or, does it say, “I treat worship no different from any other occasion of my week”? Also, if you choose to overdress with expensive clothing and/or gaudiness, is this done to give glory to God or to draw attention to yourself?

In addition to this, it is important that the ladies in the assemblies acknowledged that what is fashionable is not always acceptable. The short skirts, tight pants, tight shirts, showing of cleavage, etc., so common today are both immodest and inappropriate for the assemblies of the saints where reverence and godly fear are to be the focus (1 Tim. 2:9).

Clothing and Leading the Assemblies

One final point that needs to be addressed concerns those who are called upon to lead the assemblies. Because we are leading the worship of God, it is very important that we take care to dress in a fashion that does not detract from that goal. This, again, necessitates that we determine beforehand to dress appropriately for the occasion. Although I do not believe that appropriateness demands a “coat and tie,” it does mean that someone standing before the congregation should be neatly and properly dressed so as not to detract from the goal of directing people toward reverent worship. Here are a couple of ideas that should be helpful. First, it is difficult to go

wrong with dress pants, dress shirts, and dress shoes. These are considered by all to be appropriate attire for worship and will not likely distract the minds of the worshippers in any way. If you do not have any, you should do your best to buy some. Every man should have dress clothes because there are so many occasions where they are needed. Second, avoid shirts and ties with messages, logos, cartoon characters, etc., seeing that they tend to draw attention to you and away from God. Never forget how serious your position as a leader of the congregation in worship truly is.

In Conclusion

How we dress expresses to others and God certain things about our attitude and desires. To understand the importance of this, I believe the example of David is applicable here. When seeking to obtain a threshing floor to build an altar to God from a man named Araunah, who then offered the oxen, wood, and the threshing floor free of charge, David stated, “...No, but I will surely buy *it* from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing” (2 Sam. 24:24). The point I am making is that although wearing proper clothing to the assemblies may be more of a hassle, may not be as comfortable, may cost more money, etc., than the clothing we wear on a daily basis, the expression of the proper attitude before the God of heaven is worth the sacrifice. Therefore, I hope that you will take a step back and consider what the clothing you choose to wear at the assemblies (and elsewhere) is expressing to others and to God. If you are unsure of how you should dress, consider what those around you whom you know to be godly examples and spiritually mature choose to wear (or refuse to wear) and follow their lead. Remember, it is a serious mistake to become too casual with God who holds our eternal destiny within the palm of His hand. ■

Practice Hospitality!

Much has been said of late concerning our need to improve our relationships with one another. Now is not the time to slide back into the old habits of our comfort zones. If you haven't invited someone new to your home for dinner, now is the time to do so. If you haven't talked to others outside of your “circle,” do so. If we are going to grow, all must do their part. And, don't forget to come to or host a hospitality night!