

THE DRESS QUESTION AND THE WEARING OF JEWELRY

BIBLE TEXT : Isaiah 3:16-24; 55:2; I Peter 3:3-5; I Corinthians 6:19, 20; 9:25 ; 10:31

LESSON 266 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:20).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Isaiah 3:16-24

¹⁶ Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing *as they go*, and making a tinkling with their feet:

¹⁷ Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts.

¹⁸ In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of *their* tinkling ornaments *about their feet*, and *their* cauls, and *their* round tires like the moon,

¹⁹ The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers,

²⁰ The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings,

²¹ The rings, and nose jewels,

²² The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins,

²³ The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils.

²⁴ And it shall come to pass, *that* instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; *and* burning instead of beauty.

Isaiah 55:2

² Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is* not bread? and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which is* good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Judgment of the Pride of Women

- 1 Because the daughters of Zion were haughty, the Lord said He would smite them with a scab, Isaiah 3:16,17
- 2 Their ornaments will be taken and their sweet smell and beauty iremoved, Isaiah 3:18-24
- 3 Money should be spent for that which nourishes the body and edifies the soul, Isaiah 55:2

II The Adornment of a Christian

- 1 Inward, and not outward, adornment is precious in God's sight, I Peter 3:3-5
- 2 God should be glorified in our body and in our spirit, I Corinthians 6:19, 20; 10:31
- 3 We should be temperate in all things, I Corinthians 9:25

NOTES:

A Clean Heart

The old saying that "dress does not make the man" is quite true today and has been all through the years. No matter what one does to polish up the exterior, his inward condition remains the same. Jesus told the Pharisees of His day that they appeared beautiful outwardly but within they were "full of dead men's bones." He said, "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matthew 23:26, 27).

Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks upon the heart. No outward adornment can adorn the heart. Therefore, the first step that must be taken by everyone who desires to be at peace with God and pleasing to Him is the cleansing of the heart by the Blood of Jesus, the adorning of the spiritual nature by the work of the Holy Spirit. When even the first steps of this work are done, the outward life will be changed, for the outward life and actions are regulated by the inward condition. When one is made a "new creature" the "old things are passed away." He no longer loves the questionable things he once loved. He no longer is dominated by the pride that governs the worldling. His desires are different and his affections are set on things in Heaven.

In teaching on this important subject, the founder of our church often used a very striking illustration. She told of a vision she had received in which she saw a large mound covered with flowers. As she looked at it from a distance it was beautiful, but as she came closer she saw it was only a rubbish heap of tin cans and junk with a little soil here and there from which flowers were growing. She used to point out the similarity between that heap of rubbish and the false religions of today, which put a thin veneer on the outside but do nothing to change the heart.

The men of Jericho told Elisha that the situation of their city was beautiful, but that the water they had was impure, and because of that their ground was barren. Elisha took a new container, put salt in it, and cast salt into the source of the stream, and the waters were healed. He went to the spring, the source of the trouble. Likewise, we should examine our hearts to see that the source of all our outward actions is clean. The Bible

1 Peter 3:3-5

³ Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

⁴ 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.

⁵ For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹⁹ What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

²⁰ For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Corinthians 9:25

²⁵ And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

1 Corinthians 10:31

³¹ Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

commands: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). If our hearts are cleansed we will find that our lives will be quickly brought into conformity with the spirit of the Word of God and the Gospel.

Extremes

There is not a great deal written in Scripture about the proper way to dress, but enough is given to enable us to keep in the middle of the road and not err by going to extremes either way. Our best advisers on the question of dress have always stood for neatness and cleanliness, together with a style of dress that is not in the height of fashion nor is yet outstanding because it has long been out of date.

Some Gospel workers were walking down the street in a certain city when they passed a young woman dressed in the very latest style. People were turning their heads to look at her the second time. About two blocks away the workers passed another young woman who wore her skirt several inches longer than the accustomed styles, stockings that were outmoded, and who was in every way conspicuously old-fashioned in appearance. People were giving her the second look, too! Here was shown the two possible extremes. It can be said that one manner of dress was as bad as the other. Neither of these women was dressed in modest apparel in the scriptural sense. In summing up the matter, then, we see that the style of dress that is proper for a Christian man or woman is that style that is modest, but is attractively modest; the manner of dress which is neat, well kept, and clean. The combined result of all is that both the style and manner of the dress is neither extreme in being excessively modern nor of an old-fashioned, outdated character. It has been well said: "Be not the first by whom the new are tried nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

Whatever we do, we should do to the honor and glory of God (**1 Corinthians 10:31** ³¹ **Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God**). The Gospel should be respected and thought well of by the people of the world because of the manner of our dress as well as by our other outward actions. We must "abstain from all appearance of evil" in all things (**1 Thessalonians 5:22** ²² **Abstain from all appearance of evil**). Our dress should not cause us to feel humiliated in a crowd of correctly dressed people, and, on the other hand, there must not be in our hearts the desire to attract attention in a crowd.

Pride

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Pride is a work of the flesh and is an abomination unto God. It is the cause of much of the world's sin. It was pride that caused Lucifer to desire a place of exaltation "above the stars of God" (Isaiah 14:13). Pride is completely opposite to humility. The humble soul never looks for the applause of the world. That soul desires, more than anything else, the approval of God. It is when sin enters the heart of either men or women that pride and foolishness arise to power.

It was pride in the hearts of the backslidden daughters of Zion that brought the pronouncement of God's wrath upon their heads, through the Prophet Isaiah. Sin was ruining the nation, and Isaiah cried out against it. When sin reigns, every evil work follows. *The* daughters of Zion were haughty. They decked themselves with chains, bracelets, mufflers, and bonnets; with earrings, rings, and nose jewels, with hoods and veils and changeable suits of apparel — everything the fashions of their day called for. They were "tripping nicely" as they walked. Their dress and ornaments were for show. They wanted to appear beautiful to

men. There is an old adage, "Pretty is that pretty does." But this was not true of the daughters of Israel. They had an outward adornment, but it was not the genuine beauty they should have had — the inward adornment of virtue and godliness.

Immodest

Immodest apparel has always followed in the steps of a backslidden nation. When people forget God, pride comes in and they become brazen and bold. The people of our so-called civilized world today seem not so much interested in how to dress, as how to undress. Slacks, shorts, sleeveless dresses, dresses low at the neck, immodestly tight garments, and the generally scanty dress with which women appear on the streets are a disgrace and an abomination in the sight of God.

The Lord slew animals and took their skins to clothe Adam and Eve when they sinned, and He is not any more tolerant of sin these days. "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).

When our souls are clothed in the robes of righteousness we will see that the manner of our outward dress conforms to that of the inward man. It is those of the "mixed multitude," or those who desire to walk near the world's border line, who want to dress in the attire that is akin to the world. The soul who is hungry for God — the one who is reaching out for righteousness and true holiness — is not concerned so much about the style of her outward dress, to see that it is of the latest style, as she is of her inward dress and adornment. The spiritually hungry do not desire the show and style of the world. They are not so much concerned about pleasing those who are around them; they want to please God.

Commendable Adornment

The Holy Spirit, through Peter, spoke of our adorning and said: "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 3:3, 4). Here, in this passage of Scripture, is the keynote of the whole matter. It is the inner man that shines out through the countenance that makes for real beauty. The clothes on the body of a person who has a meek and quiet spirit may be of the poorest kind, and no special adornment may bedeck the dress, but a humble, godly spirit will shine out with a glory so resplendent that it will transcend the glitter of the most precious jewels that could be placed there instead.

Plaiting of the hair, as spoken of in the Scripture, refers to the extreme method used in the dressing of the hair that is sponsored by pride in the heart and a desire to be attractive to a degree that is contrary to true Christian spirit. The Scripture clearly tells us that it is a shame for a woman to cut her hair (**1 Corinthians 11:6** ⁶ **For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.**). God has said that He would send baldness and other judgments upon those who refuse to obey and honor His Word and who deliberately walk in the pathway of pride and modesty. The holiness that shines out through the countenance of a meek and humble servant of the Cross, causing her to dress carefully and modestly, in keeping with the spirit of the Gospel of Christ and in a manner that will not bring reproach upon the name of Christ, will also reflect itself in the way her hair is dressed.

Since man looks only on the outward appearance, even the

most careful of us may judge wrongfully. In Scripture, we have an account of this human limitation, when the Lord told Samuel to anoint one of the sons of Jesse to be king over Israel. When the eldest appeared before Samuel, his outward appearance and fine physique so impressed Samuel that he said, "Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him" (I Samuel 16:6). Samuel lived close enough to the Lord to enable God to speak to him. The Lord said, "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." The Lord had chosen a ruddy youth who was brought in to Samuel from the sheep pasture. In the breast of that youth beat a heart that was true to God.

A very simple pin, a clasp, or a tie, worn for utility's sake or to finish one's attire, often gives a necessary completeness to the suit or dress worn; but superfluous or gaudy ornaments are never becoming to a saint and lend nothing to beauty or value of character. The purpose behind the wearing of a thing is usually enough to determine if that particular thing should be worn or not. Is it purely for adornment, or is there a need for it that cannot be met in any other way, consistent with the principles of godliness and holiness? This applies to both men and women, for pride in the heart of a man is just as condemning and damning to his soul as is pride in the heart of a woman. Gaudy jewelry is just as improper for men as it is for women. The Bible tells us: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:15-17).

Some religious orders wear special uniforms to designate who they are. The early Christians were known by what they preached, how they lived, and whom they followed — and not by the peculiar garb they wore. We have a standard, and that standard teaches us not to dress so as to be like the world, but to dress as becometh a child of God — not in an extreme manner, but rather in a conservative way.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the greatest adornment the child of God can have?
- 2 What regulates a Christian's outward adornment?
- 3 What was the condition of the women of Israel at the time of Isaiah's prophecy?
- 4 What is our standard of today for dress and the wearing of jewelry?
- 5 How is the Bride of Christ to be arrayed?
- 6 Why should we be temperate in all things?