

That's Embarrassing...Or Not

By John R. Gibson

“ ‘Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination?
No! They were not at all ashamed;
Nor did they know how to blush.
Therefore they shall fall among those who fall;
At the time I punish them,
They shall be cast down,’ says the Lord.”

Jeremiah 6:15

It is not uncommon today to see people out in public exposing as much or more of their bodies as would be seen if they went out in nothing but their underwear. Women wearing low-cut tops. Men going shirtless. Both men and women often expose most or all of their thighs. Skin-tight does not seem like a strong enough description of how tight some clothing is.

People openly speak of living together and will post on social media pictures of unwed mother and dad with their new baby. Divorce is spoken of with no more concern than getting a flu shot.

I'm not saying these things to state the obvious, but to raise a question. Why aren't people embarrassed? Shouldn't people feel some sense of shame to be exposing their bodies the way they do (1 Tim. 2:9-10)? Shouldn't there be an embarrassment to know people are staring and often having lewd thoughts because of their clothing (Matt. 5:27-28; 18:6-7; Gal. 5:19-21)? Unwed pregnancies once caused embarrassment to every-one involved and people who lived together outside of marriage often tried to keep it a secret from friends and family (Heb. 13:4). What has changed? Why aren't people today embarrassed by these kinds of things?

The answer is really quite simple when we realize embarrassment re-quires a recognition some standard of conduct has been breached. It might be no more than a social faux pas such as using the wrong fork, but we are embarrassed when we know we have crossed some line. Morally, our society has no embarrassment because it recognizes no standard beyond, "God (or is it god?) wants us to be happy." Most will not be embarrassed by actions that violate the Scriptures listed above because they have rejected the Lord's moral authority over their lives. As far as they are concerned, there are no lines to cross, hence no reason to be embarrassed.

It's not difficult for me to understand why the world in general has no sense of shame, but I must admit to struggling to understand why some Christians who claim to reverence God and His word do not blush at some of the things they wear and do. How can I explain people who are seeking to "perfect... holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1), be bright lights which lead others to God (Matt. 5:14-16), and live so as not to be a cause of stumbling to others (Matt. 18:6-9) dressing the way they too often do?

I can get on Facebook and see Christians giving their "likes" to the celebration of out-of-wedlock births to mothers who have never demonstrated any godly sorrow or repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-11). When a woman or a man (and men share equally in the

guilt) has repented, it is important that we give them support and encouragement (2 Cor. 2:6-8). And regardless of what the parents do, every child is deserving of our love and help, for, despite the sins of the parents, no child is “illegitimate.” I don’t want anyone, with myself at the head of the list, to do anything but encourage the penitent, but it’s not rare to see Christians giving their endorsement to the impenitent engaged in that which should bring shame.

So what is the explanation for Christians doing these things without embarrassment, with no sense of shame? While I was able to explain why it happened in the world, frankly I have no good explanation for this kind of conduct by God’s people. I may have some theories, but all I really know with certainty is that the words of James 3:10 apply here: “My brethren, these things ought not to be so.”

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Calloused By Our Culture

“It doesn’t fit my hand!” That was the excuse an old friend would always offer whenever there was a job that required a shovel, rake, or hoe. Well, in reality, such tools don’t fit anyone’s hand. The evidence of this fact is seen in the soreness and blisters that appear when these implements are first employed. But, if you stick with it, you can get over the irritation. In fact, seasoned workers develop calluses from their prolonged exposure. They no longer feel the pain. Calluses, you see, result in a reduced sensitivity to the things that would normally cause an unpleasant reaction.

There is a spiritual parallel to the scenario we have just described. However, in this realm it is a hurtful rather than helpful phenomenon. It goes like this: A Christian is in repeated contact with the elements of this world. The immorality, violence, vulgarity, immodesty, sensuality and wickedness of society are an affront to his spiritual sensitivities. He is troubled by what he sees -- it hurts him. But, little by little, he begins to grow hardened to this irritation. Oh, yes, he still recognizes sin, but somehow it just does not torture him quite so much when he sees it. At first, for instance, he would turn off a TV program in disgust when sex or bad language was aired. But now, because of his prolonged exposure to such things, he can sit right through it -- taking it all in -- and in the process growing even more calloused to the wickedness he sees. Gradually, he demonstrates less and less discretion about the things he sees and hears, about the places he goes, the things he does, the way he talks, the clothes he wears. You see, his very spiritual being has been altered. He has become calloused by the evil culture.

Let us all remain sensitive to the evils around us, and join the Psalmist in saying: “From thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way” (Ps. 119:104).

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