

Plain Words about Dress (Or Lack Thereof)

By John R. Gibson

Few bulletin articles begin with a warning, but I feel compelled to provide advance notice that this article will contain some quite explicit, though not vulgar, language. One would not be far off the mark if he said that the Bible begins and ends with references to the shame of nakedness (Genesis 3:7-10; Revelation 3:18), yet few today seem to have a sense of shame or modesty when it comes to the display of their bodies. No, complete public nakedness is still uncommon, but when Adam hid because he was naked, could his fig leaves have covered much less than the swimsuits of some Christians as they lounge by the pool, lay out at the beach, or hang out at the water park.

The description of Jeremiah seems appropriate for our generation and, sadly, an increasing number of Christians. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush" (Jeremiah 6:15). Rather than being ashamed, our generation celebrates the unclothed as sex symbols and makes entertainment icons of them. But you don't have to go to the movies or read People magazine to see those who should be ashamed unashamedly revealing far more than should be seen publicly. Sadly, you can log on to social networking sites such as Facebook and view Christians who post pictures of themselves in bikinis. And rather than blushing at the exposure of their bodies, some Christians have taken to posting their swimsuit pictures on their blogs.

Do you remember the surprise, even perhaps shock, the first time you read the following passages? "Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother. They committed harlotry in Egypt, they committed harlotry in their youth; their breasts were there embraced, their virgin bosom was there pressed....She has never given up her harlotry brought from Egypt, for in her youth they had lain with her, pressed her virgin bosom, and poured out their immorality upon her....Thus you called to remembrance the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians pressed your bosom because of your youthful breasts" (Ezekiel 23:2, 3, 8, 21). "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love. For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, and be embraced in the arms of a seductress" (Proverbs 5:18-20)?

Though I have simply quoted seven verses from the inspired word of God, I am uncomfortable including such plain language in this article, and I suspect many will be uncomfortable reading it, but I believe it is time we deal frankly with this. Both Ezekiel and Solomon are acknowledging that the female breasts are objects of sexual attraction and as such should not be for the viewing pleasure of anyone other than a woman's lawful husband (Hebrews 13:4). I have written articles and mentioned in sermons that we need to avoid clothing that is too low, too tight, and too sheer, but let's be blunt. Ladies, cover your breasts and cover them with clothing that is not so sheer or so tight as to still draw attention to that which should be off-limits to the general public.

There may be little we can do about the degradation of our society and its inability to blush, but as Christians we can heed the words of 1 Peter 1:13-16 and again be the holy people God wants us to be. "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope

fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your con-duct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’ ” Rather than following along with a generation that lacks a sense of shame, we can renew our minds so as to be transformed, rather than conformed. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1, 2).