



February 2024

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Finally, brethren

WHATEVER THINGS

are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE
IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

"Selfishness is the fountain of a multitude of sins. Selfish people have no awareness of God, and no concern for others, Jesus made plain that denial of self is a prerequisite to discipleship (Matthew 16:24)" (Marshall Patton, **Truth Commentaries: The Books of 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon**, 206)

It's Not About You!

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Too many Christians, just liek their unsaved counterparts, are impressed by appearances rather than structure; are seeking thrills and excitement rather than substance; are more apt to respond to emotional manipulation rather than to rational discourse... The problem is that the main business of entertainment is to please the crowd, but the main purpose of authentic Christianity is to please the Lord (Gary Gilley, This Little Church Went to Market. 31, emphasis mine, KS).

The Lord's church is not in the entertainment business. It's a spiritual relationship (John 18:36; Romans 14:17; Ephesians 1:3,22-23). It is not wrong to enjoy worshipping the Lord and hearing the message of Christ proclaimed, but the goals of our public assemblies are to glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31) and to edify one another (1 Corinthians 14:26) not to entertain.

If you don't find the worship assembly to be fun, just get over it. That's not our purpose. It's not about pleasing you or me. It's about pleasing the Lord. "For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of

Christ" (Galatians 1:10b).

"We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him" (2 Corinthians 5:8-9).

"In Modest Apparel"

Greg Gwin | Columbia, Tennessee, USA

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety . . ." (1 Timothy 2:9). In studying this verse, and considering its truth as it applies to daily living, we encourage you to look at the meaning of these key words:

Adorn: "to put in order, arrange, make ready . . . this orderliness must not extend merely to the relationship of the various articles of wearing apparel to one another, but also to the relationship of that apparel to her Christian character and testimony. In other words, the apparel must be congruous with, fitting to, and consistent with what she is, a child of God" (Wuest).

Modest: "orderly, well arranged, decent" (Vine)

Shamefacedness: "a sense of shame" (Vine) . . . "respectful timidity . . . as the feeling of an unfortunate (one) in the presence of those from whom he seeks aid, (or) of a younger toward an older . . . a blend of modesty and humility" (Wuest).

Sobriety: "it is that habitual inner self-government, with its constant rein on all the passions and desires, which would hinder the temptation to these from arising . . ." (Trench).

With these definitions understood, we wonder how some Christians can attempt to justify swimming suits and short shorts (and these on women or men), split skirts, low cut dresses, etc. If such are right, then they are always right, regardless if one be an elder, deacon, preacher, or the wife or child of one of these. If they are right, then they are always right, whether one is in Florida or Maine, among close friends or total strangers. Consistency demands that these conclusions follow. Decisions about the clothes we wear must be made in view of judgment and eternity. Think!

Paul in a Postmodern World

Bruce Reeves | Conway, Arkansas, USA

The apostle Paul stands in stark contradiction to the post-modern world in which we live, and which has influenced both those in the pew and in the pulpit. We are encouraged to be "transformed by the renewing of our mind" rather than "conformed to this age" (Romans 12:2). We do not read that we should adapt the gospel message to the world, go with our gut, make decisions based on our feelings, or attribute our desires to the Spirit.

Rather, Paul writes, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 16:24).

When we refuse to listen to those who are faithful to the Lord, when we put our own desires before His will, when we fashion our teaching to maintain popularity with those who have allowed their thinking to be shaped by a self-promoting, self-centered, and self-gratifying society we must ask ourselves important questions, "Have I been crucified with Christ?" "Is Christ truly living in me?" Or am I just focused on being "me," when Paul focuses on me being like Jesus.

Pen Knife Religion

Jefferson David Tant | Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA

“And it came to pass that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the pen knife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth” (Jeremiah 36:23).

Words that the Lord has spoken against Israel and Judah through Jeremiah have been recorded in a scroll (Jeremiah 36:1). These words are read to the people in Jeremiah 36:10-19. King Jehoiakim hears about this and now commands Jehudi to get the scroll and read the words to him. As Jehudi reads, the king becomes furious at what he is hearing and with a pen knife begins to cut up the scroll, tossing it into the fire. King Jehoiakim must have foolishly thought he could take a knife and just cut out of God's word anything he didn't like or disagreed with so he practiced pen knife religion.

Tragically, penknife religion is the curse of our day. Countless numbers of people think they can simply cut out of God's word anything they don't like or disagree with. All those people who practice pen knife religion would do well to consider diligently Luke 6:46. “Why do you call me. ‘Lord, Lord’, and do not do what I say?” And how about the words of Jesus spoken in Matthew 7:21, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father who is heaven will enter.” Many are the people who say they are followers of Christ when in reality they only follow his steps when those steps go where they want to go. Encountering a commandment they don't like or one they disagree with or one they just don't want to follow, they grab that knife and begin cutting away. God says but I believe, is a phrase many people are living by, all the while expecting to be saved eternally—it won't happen. Practicing pen knife religion will only lead to one day hearing, “I never knew you; Depart From Me, You Who Practice Lawlessness” (Matthew 7:23).

I do not want to be known as an extremist or a fanatic but neither do I want to be known as a spineless creature standing for nothing. Having said that, I do not believe you can stand fast in the faith and have some kind of pen knife religion accepting what you like and cutting out what you don't like (Jeremiah 36:23). Those who dare do this show nothing but contempt for God's word.

Standing fast in the faith means to embrace, believe and put into practice with zeal and enthusiasm everything that God has said whether it be his plan for saving us or his plan for remaining saved. This rules out adding to or taking from his word. It rules out compromising any of his word. It rules out substituting man's word for his word (Proverbs 30:5-6, Revelation 22:18-19, Galatians 1:6-9, 2 John 9).

Standing fast in the faith means being unmovable when it comes to the word of God. You either believe it or you don't. You accept all that is said in the inspired word as truth (2 Timothy 3:16-17, John 8:32, 17:17) and do not attempt to insert your own feelings, thoughts or philosophies into it (Romans 10:1-3, Matthew 7:21-23, Luke 6:46-49). My friends, it does not matter what I think. What matters is what God says. If God says it, I believe it and that settles the matter for me. To God be the glory forever and ever! -- Charles Hicks, Gallatin Tennessee

Addendum – I know of a literal case of “pen knife religion.” Many years ago, when my father, Yater Tant, was preaching in Denver, he closed the sermon by quoting Mark 16:16: ““He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.” At the close of the service, as my father was talking to various people, a woman who was visiting told my father that that verse was not in her Bible. He insisted that it was. She then opened her Bible and turned to Mark 16, and sure enough, verse 16 was not there. She had cut it out. So, I guess in her mind the problem was solved. But I have some serious doubts that God is going to accept any version of “pen knife religion.”

Methodist Compromises On Divorce

Patrick Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

Matthew 19:9 says “... **whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another,**

commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery” (NKJV). Isn't Jesus saying here that if a man divorces his wife for any reason other than “fornication” (KJV) and marries another, the second marriage is an adulterous one? And wouldn't repentance (always essential to forgiveness – Luke 13:3) require such person to terminate said marriage, stopping the adultery?

Let's **illustrate** this point with an Old Testament era second marriage. Mark 6:17-18 reads *“For Herod himself had ... laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.”* Secular history tells us Herod had divorced his wife and Herodias had divorced her husband, and now they are married to each other. John (speaking for God) is demanding they terminate their adulterous (and possibly incestual) marriage, am I right? Isn't that implied by John's assertion that it was unlawful for Herod to “have” Herodias?

Anthony Dunnavant in the Orange County (California) Register, made this astute observation – *“Some conservative groups believe that divorced people who marry another spouse are living in sin. However, **the number of divorces in the United States has led most denominations away from that teaching.**”* Most likely Mr. Dunnavant is a flaming liberal, but he was right on in his assessment, wasn't he? Most churches have changed on this issue, not because they restudied the Bible and made needed correction, but because divorce became so rampant they just threw up their hands and gave up on opposing it.

Let's notice some quotes from the Methodist Creed Book (copied from Wes Brown's or David Tant's material) showing their progression of compromise on this Divorce And Remarriage issue

...

1896 Methodist Creed Book: *“No divorce, except for adultery, shall be regarded by the Church as lawful; and no Minister shall solemnize marriage in any case where there is a divorced wife or husband living; but this rule shall not be applied to the innocent party to a divorce for the cause of adultery”* (**The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church**)

That looks just like what Jesus said in Matthew 19:9; correct?

1914 Methodist Creed Book: *“... Ministers shall be prohibited from solemnizing ... matrimony between divorced persons, except ... innocent parties who have been **divorced for the one scriptural cause.**”*

Aren't the Methodists are still holding to the truth on divorce at this point? But then look what happens.

1940 Methodist Creed Book: *“No Minister shall solemnize the marriage of a divorced person whose wife or husband is living and unmarried; but this rule shall not apply ... to the innocent person when it is clearly established by competent testimony that the true cause for divorce was adultery or **other vicious conditions** which through mental or physical cruelty or physical peril invalidated the marriage vow ...”*

At this point these Methodist have changed their stance to include just one other acceptable cause for divorce. But what usually happens whenever a church compromises just a little? Boy, did the floodgates start to open.

1960 Methodist Creed Book: *“In view of the seriousness with which the Scriptures ... regard divorce, a minister may solemnize the marriage of a divorced person only when he has satisfied himself by careful counseling that (a) the divorced person is sufficiently **aware of the factors leading to the failure** of the previous marriage, (b) the divorced person is **sincerely preparing** to make the proposed marriage truly Christian, and (c) **sufficient time has elapsed** for adequate ... counseling.”*

Notice by 1960 no mention is made of the cause for the previous divorce anymore. Remarriage is going to be allowed regardless of what the cause was (even fingernail biting <grin>), as long as the couple presenting themselves to be married are willing to go through counseling.

1984 Methodist Creed Book: *"Where marriage partners, even after thoughtful consideration and counsel, are estranged beyond reconciliation, we recognize divorce **as regrettable** but **recognize the right of divorced persons to remarry**. ... We encourage an active, **accepting**, and enabling commitment of the church and our society to minister to the members of divorced families."*

Compare this last quote with the very first quote. In 1896 divorce other than for fornication was considered unlawful; now just "regrettable." In 1896 Methodist ministers were forbidden from solemnizing couples into an adulterous marriage (per Matthew 19:9). Now the Methodist Church is willing to perform a wedding ceremony for any divorced person. And notice from the last sentence in the quote: old codgers who might remember that the Methodist Church once stood against all this moral compromise were going to be encouraged to keep their mouth shut so as not to cause trouble.

2015 *"United Methodist Church ... leadership voted to submit ... a ... legislative proposal ... that removes "prohibitive" language from The United Methodist Book of Discipline concerning homosexuality. ... the proposal would allow United Methodist pastors to perform same-sex marriages in United Methodist churches. ... this proposal does not consider homosexuality incompatible with Christian teachings even though Methodists have historically recognized the practice ... as sinful."*

I am thinking the Methodist switch to allowing gay marriage stemmed from their longtime compromise on adulterous marriage. Inevitably compromise on adulterous marriages leads to compromise on gay marriage. "Pastor" Ken Wilson writes: *"I have proposed a path for these pastors that allows them to embrace people who are gay, lesbian, and transgender and to accept them fully — welcome and wanted — into the company of Jesus. I wrote A Letter To My Congregation when I realized my views had changed and I needed to communicate the intense theological, biblical, pastoral, and spiritual process that I had been through to get to this new place. It began with a burr beneath the saddle of my conscience: why was I willing to let so many divorced and remarried couples know that they are welcome and wanted while refusing that same welcome to gay and lesbian couples? How could I say to the remarried couples, whose **second marriage was clearly condemned by the plain meaning of scripture**, 'You are welcome and wanted,' while saying to the two (lesbian, ptd) mothers raising their adopted child together, 'I love you, but I hate your sin'?"*

Do you see the gradual, but drastic change from 1896 to 2015? Remember the old preacher's illustration? - If you stick a frog into a hot frying pan, he will immediately jump out; he feels the burn. But if you stick a frog into a cool frying pan, place the pan on the stove, and heat it up very gradually, many times the frog will not notice the gradual change in temperature, and will stay in that pan until he cooks to death. The point of the illustration? If you bring in sin very gradually, most won't notice the change over time. What do you think would have happened if in 1896 the Methodist Church leadership had come out with their official position for the church as accepting divorce for any cause, subsequent adulterous marriages would be sanctioned, and even gay marriages would be performed? A mass exodus; right?

Now I ask brethren, haven't we made our own compromises, just on other issues? Email and ask me for a list of such. And ask me for details of a public debate I have coming up with a Christian Church preacher on whether or not adulterous marriages (per Matt 19:9) must be terminated to be pleasing to God.

The Sick Lady

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

"Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, 'Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.' And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God" (Luke 13:10-13).

This woman is nameless to you and me, but one I think we can learn some valuable lessons from. Whatever her infirmity was, it had caused her to be unable to straighten up and had afflicted her for eighteen years. Notice with me at least three things we can learn from the life of this sick woman.

Her illness did not stop her from serving God. In verse 10, the text says that Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. This is where He met her. Though she couldn't raise herself up, she was still present on the Sabbath in the Jewish house of worship to serve her God. Don't you suppose she could have offered an excuse such as, "I'm just not able to get around very good, my back is hurting and so I think I'll stay home today"? Yet, she did not do that! Do we sometimes let an ache or pain keep us from attending worship service? Would that same sickness keep us from going to work on Monday? I have seen on numerous occasions a child sick on Sunday and both parents stays home, missing both worship services on the Lord's Day. Then on Monday, if the child is still sick, only one parent will attend to his/her needs, the other will be off to work. How devoted are we to serving our Lord? This woman did not let this illness stop her from serving the One whom she loved.

Her example of faith led to her healing. On a number of occasions in the gospels, we see people approaching our Lord, asking Him to heal them. In this instance, she did not ask to be healed, but the Lord looked and spoke to her, saying "you are loosed from your infirmity." If we will put the Lord first, He will supply the things that we need in this life (Matthew 6:33). Not only will our needs be supplied, but often great blessings, above and beyond our necessities, flow from His bountiful hands. The greatest need for mankind is healing from sin. He is always ready and willing to cure, but we must approach Him to be forgiven. Not by grace only (Ephesians 2:8). Not by faith only (James 2:24). Not by baptism only (Acts 2:38). It is a combination of grace, faith, and obedience to the will of God that through His mercy we can be saved. If you have the kind of faith this woman had, you will be obedient to your Creator, and He will heal you as well.

Once healed, she glorified God. The word "glorified" is defined as, "to praise, extol, magnify, celebrate" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 157). Here was a lady who was extremely thankful to her Lord for what He had done for her. Ingratitude is a grave sin.

When Jesus healed the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19), only one returned to glorify God (verses 15-16). He asked, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?" (verse 17). Only the one lowly Samaritan returned to bow and give thanks to the One that made him whole. How many times have you and I been healed? Are we truly thankful to the Lord for all His blessings? Do we show it by our actions? May we never be guilty of ingratitude! Let each of us follow the example of this sick lady.

There are only three verses in the entire Bible that mention this nameless sick woman, but what a powerful example she is to all who will read this account. May we live our lives in such a way, even if others do not know our names, by crossing their paths we can be such an example to them. You never know who is watching.

Mount Sinai And The Wilderness Wanderings

CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

William Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

RECEIVING THE LAW AT SINAI

Having come out of Egypt, the children of Israel arrived at the base of Horeb, the same place where God had appeared to Moses when He sent him to Egypt. Moses recorded:

...the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. And the LORD said to Moses, 'Go down and warn the people, lest they break through and gaze at the LORD, and many of them perish. (Exodus 19:20)

The text does not say this is the Christ, at least not outright. But, it is inferred that the LORD was visible to Moses, and would be to any who might "break through" from the base of the mountain. This would indicate that it is indeed the pre-incarnate Christ at the top of Mount Sinai with Moses (as per our previous article concerning "No one has seen God at any time").

In Exodus 20:2, the LORD revealed Himself as the One "...who brought you out of the land of Egypt..." Who was it that brought Moses and the people of Israel out of Egypt? Recall, 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 revealed that the LORD spoken of in Exodus 13-14 was indeed the Christ. Now, the Christ atop Mount Sinai revealed to Moses that it is again He who had appeared to him.

Later, still atop Sinai, the LORD revealed that He would send His Angel with them. Notice, Behold, I sent an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him. But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. (Exodus 20:20-23)

At first glance, this might cause us to think it was the Father rather than the Son who spoke to Moses. It is also possible that the Christ is speaking of Himself in the third person. I suggest this is more likely the case, given what Stephen says about the encounter atop Mount Sinai. Notice,

This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us. (Acts 7:38)

It was the Christ, the Angel of the LORD, who met with Moses atop Mount Sinai, and revealed the Law to him there.

WANDERING IN THE WILDERNESS

The Angel of the LORD was promised to accompany the people of Israel in Exodus 23. As we continue to consider the LORD's discourse with Moses, Exodus 33 also affirms that the Angel of the LORD would go with them. Notice:

Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Depart and go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.' And I will send My Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people. (Exodus 33:1-3)

As Moses heard this, he apparently thought the Angel of the LORD who had accompanied them thus far would be replaced by another angel (Exodus 33:12). The LORD affirmed the Angel of the LORD would continue with them:

And He said, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.' Then he said to Him, 'If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here.' (Exodus 33:14-15)

What is the "Presence" spoken of here? In Deuteronomy 4:37, from the NIV, we read, "...He brought you out of Egypt by His Presence and His great strength." Likewise, Isaiah 63:9 speaks of "...the Angel of His Presence..." who saved them. The Presence is a reference to the LORD Himself.

The book of Numbers records a lot of details about their wanderings in the wilderness. In Numbers 21:5-6, it is recorded:

...the people spoke against God and against Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.' So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit

the people and many of the people died.

In 1 Corinthians 10:9, Paul reveals it was the Christ in Numbers 21:5-6. Paul wrote, "...nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents..." The people of Israel in Moses' day spoke against the LORD - again, Jesus, the Christ - the Angel of the LORD.

TAKEAWAY POINTS

It was from the Christ that Moses received the Law. When He saw Jehovah face to face at Mount Sinai, it was Jesus Christ whom he saw.

When Israel wandered in the wilderness, the very same One who led them from Egypt led them through the wilderness. It was the pre-incarnate Christ, the Angel of the LORD.

Study

Chizuru Lowell Odoemelam | Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria

"Study to show thyself approved" is a Bible phrase from the second book of Timothy by Paul the Apostle. This letter was written from Rome (2 Timothy 1:17) when Paul was chained, suffering, and near his execution. The word "study" meant strive, or be diligent. We can understand this Bible phrase to mean more than simply the studying of God's Word, though that is essential for Christian lives. The Apostle Paul meant this phrase as the full workload for ministers of the faith in serving their churches.

The objective of being an approved workman should be the pursuit of all of God's children. Timothy was to instruct his flock of believers about Christ's sacrifice, the necessity for serving Him, and the importance to work diligently to be approved workmen before God. Education, learning is a great tool for life, and as a Christian, studying God's word is the way to save one's soul.

God's word is life-changing, but as Christians, we must allow God's word, the Bible, to direct our path.

Without continually getting the word of God into you, your soul, the mental- emotional part of a person, can be flesh ruled.

The word of God shows for us to walk in love, prefer the other person, be a doer of the word. The word of God says to walk in love. Yes, when a person is born again the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. But we still have to let God's love work in our daily walk. Walking in strife, serving only one's self, is overcome if we get the word of God in us, His word is life-changing. Walk in love and do what God shows us in His word and all the blessings of God will come our way.

Yes, we have to have faith, but faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. 2 Timothy 2:15 is not just a command to study the Bible. Being an approved workman involves much more. Paul wanted Timothy to understand that to be a workman that God could approve, he would have to be diligent in his service to God. God is not the kind of Master that accepts shoddy work! By earnestly applying himself in service, Timothy would not need to be ashamed as he stood before God in the day of judgment. To be that diligent, approved workman, he would have to correctly handle the word of truth, what the **King James Version** renders, rightly dividing the word of truth. Of necessity, correctly handling the Bible, the word of truth will involve much study, contemplation, and prayer. It will involve bringing an open mind, an open heart, and a faithful life to the word of truth. Implied in the correct handling is the proper understanding of the divisions between the Old and the New Covenants, understanding that the New Testament is the rule of faith and practice for Christians today.

The goal of being an approved workman should be the goal of all of God's children. In the verses immediately before 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul stressed the importance of living faithfully before God, even to the point of suffering. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us (2 Timothy 2:12). He then told Timothy, Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the

Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers .

Here are some practical steps for how we can study and show ourselves approved unto God:

1. Prayer is essential for Bible study because it helps us to approach the Word of God with a humble and teachable spirit.

Additionally, prayer deepens our relationship with God. As we study the Bible, we can use what we learn to inform our prayers to give praise and glory to God for who He is and what He has done for us.

2. To interpret the Bible correctly, we should consider the literal, grammatical, historical, and synthetic contexts of the passage in question. The literal context is what the passage plainly says. The grammatical context is the immediate sentence and paragraph within which a word or phrase is found. The historical context is the events narrated, to whom the passage is addressed, and how it was understood at that time. The synthetic context involves comparing the passage being studied with other parts of Scripture.
3. We should set aside a time each day to read, study, and meditate on the Word of God. This could be in the morning, afternoon, or evening. The key is to be intentional and consistent. That way, we demonstrate that knowing and learning more about God is our top priority (Psalm 1:2).

When we approach the Bible, we should ask God to speak to us through His Word. We should also be open-minded and willing to learn and be challenged by what we read. This is how we grow and mature in our understanding of spiritual things.

Regular Bible reading, studying, and meditation helps us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content of Scripture.

Bible study is essential for our spiritual growth and maturation. It requires consistent reading, prayer, understanding context, using reliable resources, and application. As we study the Bible, we will discover more about God and how we can better serve Him and others. It also helps us to distinguish truth from error, overcome trials, deepen our relationship with God, and become better servants for Christ in the world. By following these steps, we can study to show ourselves approved before God.

Factions

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

"Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you" (1 Corinthians 11:17-19).

Christians need to assemble together as a church to mutually strengthen one another.

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

But conditions had arisen in the church in Corinth that actually made their assemblies spiritually destructive rather than edifying.

"Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same"

mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you"

(1 Corinthians 1:10-11, New American Standard Bible).

If our meeting together as a church is characterized by "quarrels," our assemblies are spiritually destructive rather than edifying. The term in verse ten translated "divisions" is the Greek word "schisma," meaning a "split, division" (Arndt & Gingrich, 805). It is the term translated "tear" in Mark 2:21, where the Master used a rip in an old, leather wine bottle as an illustration. Divisions between brothers and sisters in Christ are as painful to Him as a rip in your flesh is to you.

Paul feared that when he came to Corinth, for his third visit, he would find this situation.

"For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, gossip, slander, conceit, and disorder

"(2 Corinthians 12:20, English Standard Version).

The result of this sinful situation is that some will split the church and leave. "For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you" (1 Corinthians 11:19). "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us" (1 John 2:19).

Those who cause these factions are sinners and are to be rejected. "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned" (Titus 3:10-11).

If brethren form a friendly swarm from a local congregation for legitimate reasons and maintain friendly relations with the congregation they left, that is well and good. Years ago when I preached in Conway, Arkansas, brethren sometimes came to me and complained that the congregation was getting too big and a new congregation needed to be started. I would reply, "I agree; go ahead and start one." No one did while I was there.

But when brethren argue and leave in anger, they form a sinful faction. Those who are divisive are sinners, and we must reject them.

When people leave the local church, the responsibility of each of us is to reach out to them in loving concern (Galatians 6:1-2). If we are in sin, we need to know it, and they need to love us enough to show us our wrong (James 5:19-20). When people angrily leave without even giving a reason, they are sinning against the Lord and those they left (1 John 2:19).

If they have something against one person, they must go to that person (Matthew 18:15-17). If you contact someone who has left, and they indicate a grievance against a member, remind him of this passage and asked if he has obeyed it. Offer to be a mediator, if he has already talked to the one he is grieved with (Matthew 5:9).

If they refuse to discuss differences, they are self-condemned (Titus 3:10-11). We will welcome them back if they confess their sin (James 5:16).

Let us love one another as Christ loves us (John 13:34-35).

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1)

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Modest Dress

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"Therefore I desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works" (1 Timothy 2:8-10).

Introduction

All right thinking people understand we have a serious problem in our permissive society with indecent dress. All mature Christians realize this problem has invaded the church of the Lord. When I was a boy, I heard Dad lament, "Some women don't wear enough clothing to wad a .22 caliber rifle!" I wonder what he would say now.

God has a standard for our dress that is not dictated by Paris, New York, or Hollywood and does not change with current styles. What is the divine rule for proper clothing?

Modest

Paul instructs, "in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel." The primary meaning of the term "modest" is "orderly, well-arranged" (Vine. 3:79). Thus, some argue that the apostle is simply instructing the women to dress neatly. I cannot comprehend that the Lord would condemn a woman who would wear a baggy, though decent, dress but would exonerate a woman who parades through town in a well-fitting bikini! The simple fact is, He does no such thing. Vine gives a secondary meaning of the term "modest" as "decent," and Thayer notes that in 1 Timothy 2:9 it denotes "decently" (356). Actually, Paul describes modest apparel in the remainder of the passage, and his description is of decent dress, not simply neat clothing.

But what is "decent" dress? Rather than giving a detailed description of such clothing, the inspired writer reveals four criteria of proper dress, each of which pertains to the heart, i.e., to attitudes. To do otherwise would be to limit the application of this portion of the universal gospel to societies in which clothing was identical or essentially parallel to that worn in the first century Roman Empire. But, since Paul addresses himself to attitudes, it is apparent the application is universal.

Thus, the kind of clothing we wear is important because it reflects our hearts. It is also important in that it affects the salvation of others.

With Propriety

Modest dress is "with propriety." The **American Standard Version** correctly renders this "shamefastness." Both Vine (4:17) and Thayer (14) define it as "a sense of shame." Trench explains it to be that sense of shame "which shrinks from overpassing the limits of womanly reserve and modesty, as well as from the dishonour which would justly attach thereto" (71-72). A woman who dresses "with propriety" is directed by a sense of shame rooted "fast" in her character that prevents her from dressing shamefully.

What, then, is "shameful" dress? Nakedness! (Revelation 3:18) But, who would go naked, other than nudists? Let's see.

When Adam and Eve ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, "they knew that they were naked" (Genesis 3:7). They "sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings" (Ibid). This term "coverings" means a "girdle, loin-covering" (Brown. 292). They had on something like a modern, man's swim suit. When God came walking in the garden, Adam hid, for he was afraid, since he "was naked" (Genesis 3:10). While scantily clothed, the man was still naked, both in his own eyes and in God's (Genesis 3:11).

God “clothed them” by giving them “tunics of skin” (Genesis 3:21). Such garments are “generally with sleeves, to the knees, but seldom to the ankles (sic)” (Wilson. 81). While scantily clothed, the first pair was still naked. That was shameful, immodest. God clothed both the man and the woman with garments that covered them. They were no longer naked. Thus, the Lord revealed a divine standard for decent dress.

This conclusion is confirmed by another Old Testament passage about seven centuries later. In a prophecy of Babylon’s destruction, Isaiah pictures the ancient city as a “virgin daughter” who would be forced to “Uncover the thigh.” Thus, he warns:

*“Your nakedness shall be uncovered,
Yes, your shame shall be seen”* (Isaiah 47:1-3).

The Lord’s laws spring from his nature and are designed to bring mankind into conformity to His holiness (Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 20:26; 1 Peter 1:15-16). In times past He has relaxed His divine standards because of the hardness of men’s hearts (cf. Matthew 19:3-9) but now He calls all mankind to repentance (Acts 17:30-31). New Testament moral requirements may be more stringent than under Moses but not less so (cf. Matthew 5:31-32).

Does this mean one must wear a garment all the way to the knees, completely covering the thigh, to be modest? Not necessarily, although it’s not a bad idea, but it certainly indicates that modern swimsuits, short shorts, short skirts, see-through clothing, skin-tight clothing, and whatever else indecently exposes the body are shameful.

Too low at the top is as much a problem as too high at the bottom. In one congregation where I preached some young women had low cut blouses that made it embarrassing for the men who passed the Lord’s Supper.

But “licentiousness” (Galatians 5:19), one of the “works of the flesh” which will bar one from heaven (verses 19-21), is “unbridled lust, excess ... outrageousness, shamelessness” (Thayer. 79).

This principle applies to men as well as to women. Thus, for a man to dress shamelessly is licentious and sinful. Godly men will not display their scantily clothed bodies before the public either. Men, put on your shirts!

Moderation

The second term descriptive of modest dress is “moderation.” Trench explains the term thus:

“... it is properly the condition of an entire command over the passions and desires, so that they receive no further allowance than that which the law and right reason admit and approve.... that habitual inner self-government, with its constant rein on all the passions and desires” (70,72).

Arndt and Gingrich define the word, “**good judgment, moderation, self control**.... Esp. as a feminine virtue **decency, chastity**” (810). Vine simply renders it “sound judgment” (4:44). The apostle instructs the aged women to teach the younger “to be discreet” (Titus 2:5). This is from the same root as the word “moderation” in First Timothy 2:9. Girls and young women, if you want to exhibit sound judgment and decency in your dress, consult with godly, older women in the church. Older women, teach the younger, by both example and word, what such dress is.

Not With Braided Hair or Gold or Pearls or Costly Clothing

The third description of proper dress is negative: “not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing.” Does the inspired apostle forbid women to wear braids in their hair, jewelry, or costly clothing? The “virtuous wife” (Proverbs 31:10) dressed in “fine linen and purple” (Proverbs 31:22). The apostle Peter, in language parallel to Paul’s, exhorts women, “Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel” (1 Peter 3:3). “Fine” is italicized, an addition of the translators. If we take Simon Peter literally, it is a sin for a woman to put on any clothes! Obviously Peter

is using a common Jewish figure of speech, the denial of the lesser to emphasize the greater (cf. John 6:27). Women of Roman society were prone to wear elaborate and expensive hairdos, even to the point of braiding the hair with gold or silver strands or lacing it with gold, silver, or jewels; to dress in outlandish, expensive clothing in order to draw attention to themselves and to their wealth; and to wear expensive jewelry. Sounds like Hollywood, doesn't it? The apostles simply teach women to place the emphasis where it belongs, on "the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God" (1 Peter 3:4).

One financially struggling young couple dear to us left a congregation partly because they felt out of place in their drab clothing compared to the expensive clothing and fancy furs sported by others. Some are so conscious of wearing the latest styles with the right labels that they spend exorbitant sums of money, money that could be better used, on unneeded clothing. This excess leads to covetousness (the greedy desire for gain), shames those who cannot afford to so dress, and advertises the vanity of those decked out in such a fashion. Don't place the emphasis on fancy coiffures, designer labels, and costly jewelry that just manifest carnality. Spend your time (and save your money) developing godly character, true inward beauty, which is beautiful to God and godly people and which grows more lovely rather than less so with advancing age. The "hidden person of the heart" doesn't develop wrinkles, age spots, crows feet, and saggy skin!

Proper for Women Professing Godliness

The term "godliness" in 1 Timothy 2:10 is from a term which denotes "the fear or reverence of God" (Vine. 2:162). The Scriptures mention two types of dress for women. Paul admonishes women to wear clothing "which is proper for women professing godliness." Solomon describes the "immoral woman," "the seductress," who wears "the attire of a harlot" (Proverbs 7:5,10). Mary Quant, the London fashion designer who introduced the mini-skirt, brazenly admitted, "Mini-skirts are symbolic of those girls who want to seduce a man." Interestingly, the mini-skirt was introduced in 1964, and the rate of rape rose 90 percent in our country between 1963 and 1968. Do you think there might be a connection? When I was in South Africa, Brother Les Maydell pointed out to me some young women standing by the road dressed in tight fitting, revealing clothing. He said they were prostitutes. Other women were standing nearby waiting for public transportation. They were dressed very modestly in long, loose fitting clothing. At one glance a passerby could tell which were advertising their availability and which were concerned about their reputation. Women, girls, is your clothing "proper for women professing godliness" or "the attire of a harlot"?

Allow me to suggest some questions which should help you answer.

1. Would you want Christ to see you so dressed? By the way, if you don't want the elders or preacher to see you that way, you ought to know the answer.
2. Does your clothing cause good men to be tempted to lust? (cf. Matthew 5:27-28; 18:6-7; 2 Samuel 11)
3. Does the way you dress hinder your influence? (Matthew 5:16)
4. Could you talk to someone else about immodest clothing dressed the way you are? (Romans 2:21)

Please be honest with yourself in answering these questions.

Conclusion

Christians do not have to dress as the Amish in order to please God. In fact, we are not to show off our religion in our clothing (Matthew 23:5). But, God does have a standard for our clothing. He wants us to exercise a sense of shame that shrinks from exposing our nakedness; to show sound judgment and decency; to avoid an over emphasis on the outward person shown by gaudy, expensive clothing, hairdos, and jewelry; and to dress in such a way that we exhibit godly character, not immorality. He does not want women or men to tempt the opposite sex to lust by their clothing or lack thereof.

Does your clothing reflect godly character, or does it cause others to stumble and bring shame upon the church? So dress that the reflection of godliness will draw others to Christ.

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