

# THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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## **The Christian's Apparel -- Inside and Out**

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The real measure of a Christian lies on the inside. Jesus repeatedly warned those who admired the hypocrites of that day that it was “out of the heart” that one’s actions arise (**Mt 12:34-35, 15:18-19**). Later, our Lord confronted these men with the plainest and strongest words of His ministry. “For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also” (**Mt 23:25-26**). In every application we make of God’s word we must first start with the heart.

### **Does it Matter What a Christian Wears?**

The subject of clothing is a highly personal one and one that commonly provokes great emotion. Many who claim to be Christians place this subject as off-limits to the Lord and especially to those who teach His word. How many times have I heard someone say: “It doesn’t matter what you wear, but what is inside your heart is all that matters!” Is that really what the scriptures teach?

The scriptures plainly address the relationship of our hearts to what we wear. “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in **modest** apparel, with **shamefacedness** and **sobriety**; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works” (**1 Timothy 2:9-10 KJV**). What is the condition of the heart described in this verse, and what is the kind of dress that *will* follow?

### **Essential Elements in the Heart of the Christian**

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Modest apparel is a product of **shamefacedness** and **sobriety**, qualities that ought to be in the heart of every Christian. The English word “shamefacedness” is a good translation of the Greek word “aidos.” Greek lexicons define this word as meaning “the idea of downcast eyes; a sense of shame or honor, modesty, bashfulness, reverence, regard for others, respect.” The word “sobriety” indicates “soundness of mind, self-control.” In essence, the Christian will not seek to draw the attention of others to themselves through their clothing. They will not be trend setters, seeking the latest fashions regardless of the message conveyed to others by those fashions.

Consider the importance of shame. Shame comes from previous instruction concerning right and wrong. For shame to profit you, there are two things you must possess: proper teaching and a good conscience. Someone has likened the conscience to an alarm clock. If you heed its alarm and then act, then you will be “awakened” and thus helped to fight sin. However, if you chose to ignore it, by “going back to sleep,” or in other words, by continuing in your sin, then you will, in time, no longer hear the alarm of your conscience. Paul described the terrible consequences of those who reject sound teaching as “speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron” (**1 Timothy 4:2**).

### **Too Much Clothing or Too Little**

Shame will keep a Christian from seeking attention by distinctive displays involving “broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array” (**1 Timothy 2:10 KJV**). It also will avoid attention by having too little clothing, which is a great problem in our culture.

The scriptures teach that public nakedness should always produce shame. When Christians had given in to a practice of sin, God likened the shame that they should have felt as being like the expected shame found in physical nakedness. God described them as being: “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.” He then urged them to “buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see” (**Rev 3:17-18**).

In the scriptures, nakedness is insufficient clothing, not a complete absence of clothing. The priest, while clothed, could still reveal his “nakedness” by not properly covering from “the waist to the thighs” (**Ex 28:41-42**). In the Garden of Eden, after the first sin, Adam and Eve were **still naked** when they made the equivalent of men’s swimming trunks (**Gen 3:7, 10-11**)! God provided sufficient clothing when he had made them “tunics of skin”. This tunic is defined in lexicons as being: "generally with sleeves, coming down to the knees." If you want to be sure to avoid nakedness, then this example ought to provide us a safe guide to follow.

### **You Clothes Convey a Message**

The Old Testament describes the “attire of a harlot” (**Prov 7:10; Gen 38:13-15**). A woman can dress in such a way as to encourage men to pursue immorality with her. Here is where many women fail to understand how their dress can affect men. The scriptures give emphasis towards the woman concerning her dress (**1 Tim 2:9-10**) and give emphasis towards the man in how he looks at a woman and thinks (**Mt 5:27-30**). As a rule, men are more susceptible to visual stimulation, and as a result, the modern day pornographic industry has geared its primary attention to men. Ladies, please do not judge your clothing on “how it looks to me,” but also be open to teaching concerning how it affects others.

### **Clothing during Worship**

It ought to go without saying that men and women should always dress modestly in public settings and especially when gathering together to worship God. In recent years, with the advent of the “non-traditional” services, has come the philosophy of “come as you are.” It is common in these gatherings to see an open display of immodesty by those who claim to be Christians. I understand that for the new Christian, and certainly for the visitor from the community, that they may not yet have received the proper teaching to guide their consciences. But when a gathering of Christians has become a demonstration of a people that no longer “know how to blush,” then a serious examination of hearts needs to take place (**Jer 6:15; 8:12**).

Should we then have a dress code? When we have shamefacedness and sobriety in our hearts, along with a

willingness to talk with mature Christians about these things, then I am sure our clothing will reflect it. When we come to worship with the people of God with a heart of reverence and love, with a desire to pursue holiness, then our clothing will reflect it (**Heb 10:23-29**).

Be honest, what message does your clothing reveal about your heart?