

Cultural factors may lead us to wear MORE clothes (as the veil in Corinth) or a different kind of clothes (tunics vs. long pants) but these cultural factors can never be used to justify wearing LESS than God expects and demands.

by Greg Gwin

There'll be no micro bursts up in heaven
The weather there will be calm
and we'll join with the heavenly chorus
In singing the 23rd Psalm

By Grant Clothier

Please clear your schedules for April 29 thru May 2 for our Gospel Meeting with Wayne Goff from the Roan Ridge church of Christ.

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MARCH 4, 2012

BECOMING A DOER OF THE WORD Jim Stauffer

When James gives the instruction that will save our souls, he says, **James 1:21** *Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.* He follows that in verse 22 by saying we should be “doers of the word” and not “hearers only.” He says the one who hears the word and does not obey it is deluded. That delusion plays out in our lives when we “know to do good and do it not.” (**Jas. 4:17**)

The parallels we find with the teaching of Christ in the book of James, written by the brother of the Lord, are striking. Jesus, himself, said in **Luke 6:46**, *And why call ye me Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say.*

There are so many fundamental characteristics of the word of God that elevate its value. From the very beginning the power of His word has been evident. In the beginning He said, “Let there be light and there was light.” The Psalmist says, **Psalm 33:9** *For he spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.* We further know His word was true when He promised Moses that Pharaoh would release the children of Israel after God had put forth His hand to smite Egypt. (**Ex. 3:19,20**) Knowing God’s word is backed by His complete authority over the worlds He created is a great incentive to be a “doer of the word.”

There is power in His word to accomplish what He intends for it. (**Isa. 55:10,11**) **2 Peter 1:3** says, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* So God commands the natural powers of the universe to obey Him. As He did when Jesus calmed the storms on Galilee, He did also in the

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resurrection of the Christ from the grave. Peter then tells us we are born of incorruptible seed, the word of God that abides forever. **(1 Peter 1:23-25)** In order then to receive that living hope presented to us by the resurrection of Christ, we must obey His word. We are promised a spiritual burial of our spiritual man and a resurrection of our spirit to walk in newness of life by submitting to the command to be baptized. **(Mark 16:15,16; Romans 6:4-6)** This is how receiving the implanted word is able to save our souls. We become "doers of the word". That is what is meant by receiving the word. And that is how the power of God's word works for the salvation of our souls. We do what it says.

When the logical progression of our understanding of both the power of God's word and the teaching of it reaches this point, many say, "I will be saved by my faith without works." We have with that statement, become the poster child of a "hearer only." By staking that claim, we have also deluded ourselves.

Hebrews 11 is filled with stories of faithful men of whom it can be said they obeyed the commands of God because of their faith. As James says in chapter 2, they "showed their faith by their works". Do you believe Abraham was saved by faith alone when he took Isaac and bound him to the altar ready to be offered? Was it faith alone when Noah preached righteousness for 120 years while building the ark? Was it faith alone when Moses declined the riches of the household of Pharaoh to stand against Egypt in order to deliver God's people from that bondage? Certainly not! Had these men taken the position they would be saved by their faith alone, the promise to Abraham could not have been consummated. Who knows what God's plan for man would have been without Noah and his faithful obedience. The children of Israel would have needed another deliverer if Moses had not acted out his faith in God. These men were instructed by God and obeyed the commands given so they could be "doers of the word" and not "hearers only."

It is interesting that God revealed His word by way of the Holy Spirit to men chosen by the Lord to be "ambassadors on behalf of Christ". **(2 Cor. 5:20)** Those men then wrote the books of the New Testament and dispersed them initially to the disciples of Christ. It then by the commands contained in those books became incumbent upon those disciples to go about preaching the word.

The word then works for us in two ways. It teaches us what to do in order to be saved. **(Acts 16:30-33)** It also teaches us how to conduct ourselves obediently before the "author of our salvation." **(Hebrews 5:8,9)** That then would meet the definition of one who was a "doer of the word."

To those who have obeyed the gospel, the mandate to you is to teach others that same gospel. To those who have yet to submit to the Lord's word of salvation, it is your responsibility to listen and learn and obey. Otherwise you will be deluding yourselves as

"hearers only."

Clothes and Culture

Everyone realizes that cultural factors DO influence our decisions about the clothes that we wear. For instance, a person living in America today would look odd wearing the kind of clothes that Jesus and the apostles wore - and vice versa. Cultural "norms" have clearly changed.

The Scriptures show us that two elements ought to be considered as we make choices about our clothes. First, we have the absolutes of God's law. Throughout the Bible we find that something called "nakedness" is condemned. This is not complete nudity. The term is used to describe the display of certain parts of the body such as the thigh **(Ex. 28:40-43)** or breast **(Ezek 23:18-21)**. "Nakedness" has been associated with sin and shame in every dispensation of time. Beyond this, the Christian has the stricter command to maintain "modesty" **(1 Tim. 2:9,10)**. This requires MORE than simply avoiding "nakedness." A modest individual will certainly stay far away from the limits of "nakedness." Other New Testament instructions order us to abstain from "uncleaness" (moral impurity - Thayer) and "lasciviousness" (unbridled lust, wanton acts or manners - Thayer) **(Gal. 5:19-21)**. These Biblical absolutes must be carefully observed.

As a secondary consideration, we should observe the dictates of our culture to the degree that we can without violating God's absolutes. For example, a man in America would look completely out of place wearing a (modest) skirt. But, not so in Scotland! God's word suggests that we ought to be mindful of such factors and honor them so that we do not diminish our ability to influence others with the truth. In **1 Cor. 11:1-16** Paul taught that the Corinthian custom of women wearing a veil should be observed by the Christians who lived in that place at that time.

Some have mistakenly argued that if a certain manner of dress becomes an accepted "norm," that it is therefore approved by God. Such reasoning has given rise to the wide-spread wearing of shorts by Christians. Others wear swimming suits, tennis outfits, athletic uniforms and similar scanty attire. The argument is made that swimming suits are "accepted" as normal on the beaches of Florida, incredibly short skirts are "accepted" as normal for women playing tennis, etc.

These folks fail to take their 'logic' to its full limit. Reasoning after this fashion would lead one to conclude that full nudity would be alright - so long as all members of society 'accepted' this as the norm. (By the way, there are some places in this world where such IS the "norm!")

We must remember that - when it comes to the clothes we wear - the dictates of culture are secondary and subordinate to the clear limits that are taught in God's word.