

I Timothy 2.9-10

16 May 2010

Sermon notes by Pastor Paul Goh

Beloved in the Lord, the subject of this text is modesty. Beginning at verse 8, you will notice the verb, "I will". This is the will of a wish but it is the will of purpose or the will of command. The apostle says, "I command". His commands carry with it divine authority. What is the apostle commanding? He is commanding that men pray and also women adorn themselves in modest apparel.

And the overriding concern of the apostle Paul is that their dress, behaviour and attitudes are consistent with the profession of godly women. And specifically, this godliness is in the area of good works. Let us now come to the words of the text "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".

The theme is dressing modestly. First, we consider the meaning. Secondly, the profession and thirdly, the means.

First, the meaning. The word, "apparel" means not only clothing but also attitude of behaviour. The idea is then total preparation. She is to be totally prepared. That is she is to be adorned inside out by wearing of proper apparel. And we saw that the right heart attitude is shamefacedness and sobriety. The Christian woman is to put on modest apparel. The word, "modest" means to arrange in a way that is orderly. The noun that comes from that same root is the word, "cosmos" from which we get the word, "world". It means order or system. And the opposite of order is chaos. Therefore, to adorn with modest apparel means the spiritual preparedness to come to worship God. First, it is to realise that we come to worship the almighty God, the sovereign God, the creator of heaven and earth. To know to whom we are coming helps us to be dressed in a manner appropriate for worship. If you are playing futsal, and if you wear a white shirt and tie, your friends will mock you because you are surely dressed not for playing futsal unless you want your white shirt to become black. But you wear shorts and tees to play, which is appropriate clothing that fits the game of futsal. And if you are going for a job interview, you dress appropriately – a shirt and tie or a nice blouse with an executive jacket and a nice long skirt. And thus, when you come before God in worship, you must be dressed appropriately for worship. Your dressing must be orderly or that fits the God intended purpose of gathering his people for worship with the people of God. Your clothing should reflect a worshipful heart that focuses on God with reverence for the glory of God. This means that great care must be taken in deciding what you wear on the Lord's Day. This is especially so when deciding your dress can be a complicated decision. Already on Saturday night, you ought to pick out what to wear on the Lord's Day. And as you look at your dresses, you have to ask yourself, "is this dress appropriate for worship? If I wear this, is this showing reverence for God or am I mocking God and shame God". And you mothers can be of great help in

this regard. You are to give guidance on what is appropriate dressing for the Lord's Day. Young people, do you ask your mothers what is appropriate to wear on the Lord's Day? And if after searching your wardrobe and you cannot find anything appropriate, then go and buy appropriate clothing. Once I was in the home of a minister of the Protestant Reformed Church. And then came his daughter with two pieces of dresses and the mother picked one, which is modest, and the other was rejected and was returned to the store. Fathers, you will need to approve each dress your daughter brings home which is added to her wardrobe. If it fails the modesty test, then that dress ought to be returned for a more modest one. This is because you are the head of the home and you are to see to it that your home is a godly home and each member of your family conducts himself in way that fears God from the heart. And you are responsible for what your daughter, wife and even your son wear to church. Ask them to go back and change their clothes if it does not meet the modesty test. Mothers, if you are disappointed with your daughter's dress because it is immodest then ask whether you have been setting a bad example. Often, our daughters follow the example of their mothers. Have a good hard look at yourself at the mirror and do a thorough inventory of your ever-expanding wardrobe. You will need the valuable input of your husband especially when you have a strong desire to look very young for your age.

Modest apparel comes with the right heart attitude of shamefacedness and sobriety. We said that shamefacedness is a heart attitude of a moral feeling, reverence, awe and respect for the feelings of others. It is also for one's conscience, a sense of self-respect and honour. It is the unwillingness to trespass the boundaries of propriety and to stay within that boundary. One author explained it in this way: the opposite of shamefacedness is to make others feel embarrassed and uncomfortable by your dressing. This embarrassment is clearly seen when they dare not look at you or your dressing but they turn away their eyes from you.

Sobriety refers to self-control or self-mastery in the area of passions and sexual appetites. This word has a sexual sense to it when you look at extra biblical literature which has the idea of controlling passion and desire. Plato, the Greek philosopher says that sobriety is one of the four cardinal virtues and when it is applied women and it has to do with their sexual desires being totally in control. In fact, at the Ephesus church, the women there have this specific problem. In I Tim. 5.6, speaking of the widows, that she who lives in pleasure in dead while she liveth. This idea of this word is that she is living luxuriously in sensual pleasure. And in verse 11, he says refuse younger widows when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry. Here the word, "wanton" refers to firstly, indulging in sensual appetites to the point of giving up spiritual commitment. Secondly, to burn with sensual desire.

And the apostle goes on to say that, not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls or costly array. The point of the apostle is he is not forbidding wearing all ornaments and you must not think that if you avoid wearing these ornaments then you are fine. The apostle is interested in a more serious matter – the matter of the heart: that the godly women are not to put on ornaments with the motive of drawing attention to themselves and to be the talk of the town. For

this is not fitting for godly women who come to worship God. And to dress in this way is to dress immodestly. And now we come to verse 10, which read, "But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

What is godliness? In the first place, a godly woman is one who reverences God. She knows God in a personal way. She knows in her heart that God is sovereign and that He is the one and only God of heaven and earth. And towards this God, she must give an account one day. She worships this God and acknowledges that she is the creature to this Creator. She offers herself as the living sacrifice unto God, as a life completely devoted to him and as a life to be spent for Christ. She reverences God in Christ. Christ who is the mystery of godliness. Christ who was once hidden but now fully revealed. He is God who came and lived in the flesh amongst men, died and rose again and is now received into glory into heaven. She believes in the doctrine of Christ which is after godliness. Being the truth of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit makes us godly; deny it and we become ungodly. And therefore, she is given all the spiritual virtues that are necessary to live a godly life. love, joy peace and longsuffering so that others can see the life of God in her.

Secondly, a godly woman desires to live a life pleasing in the sight of God. She dare not offend this God by living a life of disobedience and in continued sin. She wants to obey the Lord and wants to be a faithful witness for Christ. Beloved, a Christian testifies not only in her speech and conduct but also in her (huh) dress that she is godly. Did you ever think of that? Your modest apparel testifies that you are a godly Christian. And only the Christian can adorn the ornament of godliness because she has been transformed inside out by the power and grace of God. A non-believer is unable to be godly and so she uses the outward adornment and ornaments and all the cosmetics to make up for the lack. But godly women, you do not need at those for you have the ornament of godliness with good works.

And women adorning godliness is indeed fitting for Christian women. But, the wearing of broided hair, gold and expensive clothing is unbecoming of a godly woman. Why? Wearing all these by itself is not wrong or sinful. It is sin when your motive is to draw attention to yourself and you want others to admire you or to be popular to be prominent in order to exercise power over others. Wearing of gold or pearls is unbecoming of a godly women because you deny the work of grace in your heart! Before the Lord saved you, by your sins you were very ugly. Sin has marred your beauty and the beauty of the image of God was so marred that you took on the image of the devil with all his wickedness, deceitfulness and cunning. And all the ugliness of sin is seen in you. Instead of sweet obedience to the Lord, there was pride, rebellion and self-centredness. And instead of giving all glory to God, there was vainglory; there was vainglory and giving glory to self. And when the Lord in his great mercy for you, worked the great work of grace in your heart. Remember that grace is not only God's unmerited favour but grace is also beauty. God by the supernatural work of his grace removed all the spiritual ugliness in you and replaced it with the beauty of his grace, which is according to the image of God, which God delights in. And by this grace, God makes you a lover of God, and put in you a new desire to be pleasing in the sight of God and to

walk in obedience to God. Remember now, that the apostle is addressing godly women. He is not addressing the women of the world who dresses according to their carnal pleasures but he is addressing you, godly ladies and mothers who gathers every Lord's Day for worship.

The apostle's overriding concern is that the adornment of godly women will be consistent with their Christian testimony. By your dress, what are you professing? The word, "profess" is to communicate loudly, to make a public announcement about yourself. As a godly woman, the only message you want to communicate loudly and clearly is that you are a worshipper of God, you are committed to Christ and to God and you are a woman after God's own heart – which is obedience to God. Then, you must be conducting yourself in a way that is consistent with your adornment with a right heart attitude. Your profession must be seen in the context of the gospel. You have a strong desire to witness for Christ, whom you greatly love. And you use your speech and behaviour to witness for him. And let us not forget that by your dress you are witnessing for the Lord. How can I convince you that this is an important matter? All your efforts in witnessing for others are wasted when your dress is inconsistent with your Christian testimony. An immodest dress will destroy your Christian testimony and you will have lost your opportunity to witness for Christ, maybe forever. They will say in their heart, "you say that you are a Christian but look at her dress". Mothers and ladies, your dress, behaviour, posture, how you sit, walk and stand either draws attention to yourself (which ought not to be) or you will bring attention to the transforming power of God in your life in holiness and godliness. The modest woman is concerned about the lost and her dress will reflect that concern, not to cause a stumbling block but to lead others to Christ. So, make this your aim, will you: that there be no contradiction between your gospel message and the clothes that you wear of your behaviour. And this applies not only at the public worship service but all your life. Whether you are at school, at play, at the church camp, bible studies, and at weddings. Church Camp is just round the corner and it is appropriate for the camp committee to come out with rules for dressing in their meetings. May your modest dress be a humble witness to the one who gave himself as a ransom for all. Your adornment ought to be professing godliness with good works.

The godly woman does good works out of gratitude to God who has saved her from her sins. She acknowledges that she does not deserve the grace of God. She is a sinner and constantly grieves the heart of God. And she is filled with thankfulness to God for saving her and giving her a place in the kingdom of God. And so she does good works, not according to her own imaginations but according to the law of God. Scripture presents a Christian woman who is characterised by good works. In general, God redeemed us from all iniquity in order to purify us as a peculiar people, zealous of good works. And so those who believe in God must be careful to maintain good works, There are many examples of godly women of good works. Firstly, Tabitha, also called Dorcas (Acts 9.3) is known for her good works and giving of alms. Secondly, a true widow is one who trusts in God and offers supplications and prayer to God night and day (I Tim. 3.5) and she is well-reported of good works (I Tim. 5.10-11). If she has brought up children, lodged strangers, washed the feet of the

saints and met the physical needs of those who suffer. Thirdly, the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 is a woman one thing: looking after the needs of her household and that is good works. She looks for fabric to sew garments for her family. She ensures that there is food on the table by waking up while it is still dark and feeds all her members for the household including the servant. She buys a field in order to have a vineyard in order have grapes and wine to drink. And she also takes care of the poor outside her home. And so, she deserves praise: her children will rise and call her blessed and her husband will also praise her. Fourthly, Sarah, wife to Abraham subjected herself to Abraham, not lording over him, or bossing him around but brought her under his living authority and obeyed his every command, calling him, "lord". Young ladies, it is by your godliness with good works that you will find your future husband in the church. With your godliness, you will attract godly men. After all, godly men are on the lookout for godly women to marry, guide the house and bring up children in the covenant home.

Godliness with good works is the spiritual adornment of the believer in the public worship of God. The question is how can you worship God if you are pre-occupied with your dress or your hairdo. In fact, your thoughts must be drawn to the worship of God: His attributes and the great works He has done for you in Christ Jesus. And our concentration must be the giving of praise and thanksgiving to God and the diligent hearing of His Word. A girl in the year 1892 wrote: "resolved, not to talk about myself or feelings. To think before speaking. To work seriously. To be self-restrained on conversations and actions. Not to let my thoughts wander. To be dignified". A teenager in 1990s wrote: "I will try to make myself better in anyway I possibly can with the help of my budget and baby-sitting money. I will lose weight, get new lenses, already got a new haircut, good make-up, new clothes and accessories". The point is that godly women professing godliness must be discerning resist and reject this shift from modesty to worldliness.

Dear people of God do not draw attention to yourself but attract others to God by your inward spiritual qualities of godliness and good works in modest dressing with shamefacedness and sobriety. For this is pleasing in the sight of God who by his abundant love and grace has implanted these spiritual qualities in your heart, through the death of Christ on the cross for us. Amen