

No.

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"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

GOD'S TEACHING AS TO ADORNMENT.

An Address (revised) at

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GOD'S TEACHING AS TO ADORNMENT.

The words of God deal with EVERY circumstance in which a child of God is found. We cannot but remember and rejoice in our spiritual clothing, - the glorious robe of the righteousness of God, through the finished work of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ; but our subject now concerns earthly clothing, and should be very simple and practical, that we may adorn HIS doctrine. Our every day life and ordinary things of nature are full of teaching. All things are parable if we only have the eyes and ears to see and hear. Included therein is "clothing". Shall we go right back to Genesis? How real the contrast between man's "pretty", though flimsy, aprons of the green leaves, and God's provision of plain, though serviceable, coats of skin. But we do find gorgeous colors, and animal sacrifices, and outward display in connection with tabernacle service, even as grand music in temple worship. God had dispensation lessons to teach, and thus the priest was beautifully clothed; but the prophet, thy type of rejected ones, wandered about "in sheepskins and goatskins", - of such the world was manifestly not worthy. When we come to REVELATION we find that together with beautiful music restored, the beautiful colors, and whiteness, and the magnificence of the tabernacle and temple again adorn the bride in the future. The woman of Babylon has these IN THE WORLD now, and God's people must gladly be a contrast with those of this age. How solemn is the CRAVING for Babylonian garments and gold, as in Joshua 7:21. (There are no dull colors in the Tabernacle. Mal. 3:14 is striking as to the present: the ATTITUDE which complains shows where the heart is, beloved readers).

And now shall we approach the verses in the epistles where God uses the word "adorn". Titus 2:10 - a saved one is to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. He is to deny "worldly lusts", or, as we may remarkably render verse 12 "adornment desires". How strange, yet not strange, that God employed such a word! Do we DENY anything in this way? Are we plainer than we should NATURALLY choose? 1 Tim. 2:8-9, means all it says, and something more than we may notice at first: i.e. it contains PRINCIPLES, e.g. "Bright things" are condemned, and surely the Lord also has instructions here for believing men as well as women. If no bright and brilliant

things are to be displayed on the persons of brethren or sisters, shall we complain, or gladly accept God's arrangement? This is the important point. Are we THANKFUL to obey? Do we enter into the pilgrim nature of this dispensation? Are we full of praise if we can help to keep others from stumbling? or do we feel annoyed at giving up? Do we advance as near the border line as possible? Does the temptation to Eve "pleasant to the eyes" attract us, or not? 1 Tim. 2 forbids any adorning with gold, - a "mere" chain and eyeglass rims are NOT excluded from the prohibition. How CAREFUL and PRAYERFUL we should be! It is noteworthy that just as the passage appoints brethren to pray, so it APPOINTS sisters to dress to God's glory: here is a contribution to worship. Do sisters realize the privilege, - the privilege not the bondage! Any error in this may hinder the whole assembly. Here is one great ~~why~~ sphere of service often overlooked. A brother's prayer, without wrath and doubting, was a TEST in days of persecution. A sister's dress is still a comprehensive test which has few parallels. (See also 1 Peter 3). But why should plainness of attire bring blessing? 'Tis not the action, AS AN ACTION, but the attitude of heart, the expressed obedience which is resultful. Let us not cavil at this. A fruit wrongly taken lost Eden, and a sister's mistake in head apparel may be the opportunity for Satan's angels (1 Cor. 11:10). Why does God mention the thought of dress TWICE in meeting arrangements if it is UNimportant? We might notice also that 1 Cor. 11, warrants an argument from "nature" itself, (14), which has given the dazzling colors to the male, and in the tabernacle priesthood this was illustrated. An alteration is usurpation, (1 Tim. 2:12), as well as undispensational. Though no brother should now seek colors, even in a necktie, it is even more definite that sisters should be as plain or plainer still. Their very GLORY AND BEAUTY are to be covered (1 Cor. 11:15). God says so. Shall His people ask "Why"? Do we love His will or not? As soon as a hat, by its size, manner, variation, or color, becomes more than a covering, IT IS SINFUL. How easy it is to sin. We must be willing to be thought "narrow" and peculiar, and not merely to sing of our strangership. And this idea of a COVERING and nothing to please the flesh is emphasized as to males and all garments in 1 Tim. 6:8, where the word "RAIMENT" is another term with the same simple idea - only a covering: Why do we want

to show off? If these things are so TRIVIAL, why object to giving up? ~~How~~ How often, alas, we have become "Gentilish" (Matt. 6:31-32). The clothes of the later Scriptures are very striking. "Soft clothing" is no more for saved ones now than for John the Baptist, even though they have not his experiences in all things. There is no Scripture for decorations today. The rich Pharisee was in purple and fine linen (Luke 16). Should we not seek to live outside the worldliness of today, (Rev. 18:16). White is the color of our Lord in glory; of the angels and of His redeemed in the future (Rev. 3:4; 6:11; 19:14), 'tis not linked with His redeemed now. When Christ was transfigured His raiment BECAME dazzling white; it was not dazzling in the days of the humiliation of the One Who became a Man of sorrows. Let not our clothing suggest that we would wrongly anticipate the kingdom before the time (1 Cor. 4). In love to the Lord let me repeat that we should not seek to be as near the precipice as possible in these matters. In LOVE to our brethren let us not cause others to stumble or grieve, though we may not at first SEE WHY they should be offended or wounded. (Note how we COME TO SEE in Rom. 12:1-2). If we expect God will graciously save sinners, let us prepare for this, otherwise young believers will be wrongly trained, or when guided aright by another, they will say, "But so and so does this, or dresses thus", and so evident unity in the Holy Spirit will be hindered, and the Lord will be dishonored. May it not be that we have hindered blessing already in this way? We realize loss through the failure of brethren to use the privilege of united prayer; may there not be similar loss through the failure of sisters also to use their great opportunity for manifestly pleasing God, in holy contrast with a CHANGING world, as to these matters?

FURTHER THOUGHTS ON ADORNMENT.

I hope, if the Lord will, soon to speak on this solemn subject again. A measure of seeking from God for His will does NOT diminish concern that believers might spiritually "adorn" the doctrine of God in this matter. May I add that it does NOT diminish a realization that there IS real failure in this respect? I do not wish that our minds should be occupied with things instead of Christ, but "little things" FOR CHRIST

are a definite test, whereas many limit their stand to larger, or seemingly larger parts of godly obedience. We must not choose; 1 Tim. 2 and 1 Pet. 3 are as definite as other chapters. Moreover, if the things are so "little" those who feel this are Divinely called to give up for the conscience of others (1 Cor. 10:29), in Christian love (Cf. Rom. 14:15). But I fear we are all more worldly than we acknowledge, or even know. Job had no idea of his hidden pride. Can you tell a man's character till you point out "differences", and his acts which pain you?

I am writing with personal frankness, giving advice, "as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful" (1 Cor. 7:25). Unity and unanimity are in accord with the revealed will of God, and if, in the Holy Spirit, we are drawn consciously toward ONE Lord, the things of earth will be held much more lightly (1 Cor. 7:31), and we shall be much more manifestly and happily "strangers and pilgrims".

My desire for myself and for you is that we should seek more grace (K James 4:6) to ask ourselves, without excusing self's wishes, "WHY do I act thus?" Let each article which seems a "decoration" be brought before the Lord. "Why do I wear this?" Sorrowfully aware that this principle in ALL things reproves MYSELF, I would earnestly bring it before myself as well as you, dear fellow believers.

We do WANT more simplicity with a view to Christ α (2 Cor. 10:3). We do WANT to be more devoted to Him, and to spend less time on the fading things of earth. Particularly I have felt that Satan is using the trivial matter of "buttons" as an adornment, when other things are put ~~at~~ aside. Buttons are for USE not SHOW. Yet the attire of both brethren and sisters overlooks this in such an UNNECESSARY display of "buttons", to say little of an UNNECESSARILY impressive size. Oh how God-dishonoring these "little things" often are. They help others to be broader, hinder us from rebuking (Matt. 7:3-5), obscure the united witness of the company of God's dear people, and cause grief to some, among whom I would reckon myself. I know that believers have no wish to pain or grieve others. I recollect past actions of Christian love, and yielding to love's advice. I do not want to encourage an outward, uncheerful giving up. These important "details" do not involve a basis of FELLOWSHIP, but they do help its ENJOYMENT, if there is ready devotedness "unto the Lord", which will not resent plainness, but rather delight to encourage, that our Heavenly Father

may be more glorified, and have all the glory, by our UNITED progress IN the Holy Spirit. May it be so!

FURTHER THOUGHTS -- 17th August, 1924.

Years have passed since these words were written and sent forth, with a desire to please the Lord. This age has not improved. Dress is much more unsatisfactory today, and every change seems to produce a MEASURE of change among those who bear Christ's name. WHY is this? The root-cause should be searched out. Is there a carelessness? or is there even a fear of man, and unwillingness to be unlike others. It may be thought that demoralizing changes are avoided, and yet a "HALF-WAY" step may cause others to yield. Will none raise a standard for the Lord? How many young and weak Christians would be thankful. Alas, we often fail to realize that Satan's FIRST attempt with Eve was in connection with "prettiness". No thoughtful child of God can avoid the lesson hinted in precious pages. Where the Holy Spirit mentions ASSEMBLING in connection with Christian WOMEN, He makes dress one of the most important things. Satan is trying to deceive still by His subtlety (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14) , hence - the statement "I cannot see it" is wide of the mark. Are not fellow believers willing to be PROTECTED? Is Christian love so weak a power. If you or I would cling to anything that causes others grief, we should have strong Scriptural warrant, but if we have not, how shall we stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ? If I can wear that which brings pain to others, and thank God that I do this, where is sensitiveness? If I cannot thank God for wearing it, am I doing it to His glory? ~~W~~ We have not prayed enough about this. We have acted "naturally" like others, only with a measure of obedience, and a measure of worldliness.

And children ~~children~~ are often made Satan's opportunity. Parents go down to Egypt for their children. Often they say, "Little ones do not understand", and the seeds of worldliness are unwisely sown in adorned babyhood, and a tendency to avoid appointed and suitable "coverings", and the parent is awakened too late to see the fruit, but even then is often misled to ignore the root, and to blame something else. And let father and mother be of one mind to trust the Lord from the first whatever others say. Days like the days of Noah will be marked by EVIL ANGELS WISHING TO REMOVE "COVERINGS" (1 Cor. 11:10, This is NOT the word of a man, NOT the suggestion

of Paul, BUT the witness of the Holy Spirit through Paul.) (with Gen. 6:2) Shall we yield to this? There may be difficulties to obtain what we want but 'tis worth an effort to please the Lord. God has forewarned us. t us not hastily say some irritated word, but pray about this, until we are WILLING--willing to give up anything - ANYTHING, ANYTHING for our Lord Who gave Himself for us.

(Further literature on this subject gladly sent that God may be glorified in daily life).