

THE SIN OF NAKEDNESS

By Pastor Ronald W. Williams

When I was in Berlin a few years ago, I was traveling on the underground commuter train with American missionary Paul Hooper who was my host. I was startled and grieved as we entered and exited various trains to see little shops by the tracks with gross pornography being displayed. Some of this was full frontal nudity prominently positioned to catch the eye of every traveler.

As social mores change more and more toward Hedonism and moral degradation, we ought not be surprised to see more and more nakedness. Pornography has now made it to the world-wide web. Sales of x-rated materials and movies are exceedingly popular. Purveyors of filth sell millions of their so-called magazines to an insatiable public with a voracious appetite for more. One wonders what shocking sights lie ahead in a world that seems to be in a moral free fall.

Regardless of how the world undresses and exhibits flesh, a committed believer must be aware of the shame of nakedness, and seek to dress modestly. Our dress, demeanor, and deportment must be holy and different from our world.

OUR APPEARANCE SENDS A MESSAGE

Even as a member of the armed forces is immediately recognized by his distinctive uniform, anyone is sending a message or making a statement about who they are by how they wear clothing. Even in the days of the Old Testament, a harlot was known by her distinctive dress which set her apart from women who dressed modestly. "...there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot..." (Proverbs 7:10). When Tamar conspired to lie with her father-in-law Judah, she put her widow's garments off from her. (Genesis 38:14) Because of her distinctive dress and actions, Judah took her to be a harlot and treated her accordingly.

In the above instance, Scripture presents a woman whose flesh was covered, but was distinctively seductive, and whose attire told the world around her she was of wrong moral character. On this basis, how can we condone our wives and daughters wearing clothing that may well cover their bodies, but by its fashion, cut or material used, the outline of portions of the body are so highlighted and accentuated as to cause a seductive, alluring appearance.

IGNORANCE OR DELIBERATE ACTIONS?

Tamar knew what she was doing when she appeared in such a distinctive way. She intended to tempt and allure Judah to compromise his morals.

Because men and young men are tempted through what they see (Proverbs 27:20; Job 31:1), Tamar's plan was eminently successful. If you do not believe men are drawn to look at seductive and alluring women, start watching their eyes in the presence of such women.

A question that begs to be asked is, "Why would any woman who professes to know Christ as her Saviour dress in such a way as to be seductive and alluring? She may protest her clothing covers her body and the hem is below her knee; but does it highlight or accentuate parts of her body that only ought to be seen by her husband? Slit skirts are specifically designed to tease a man's eyes and appeal to his lower nature; tight, form-fitting designs shamelessly publicize body parts and contours that ought to be private; clinging or translucent materials also are specifically designed to be provocative and revealing. If a sister is honestly unaware of how her dress is defrauding every man who views her, she ought to listen to a godly, older woman (Titus 2:3) in the flock, or the Pastor's wife concerning her dress. But from what most women tell me, this type of seductive fashion is usually not accidental or ignorant. How tragic! Many, like Tamar, set out to deliberately catch the carnal eyes of men and tempt them to wrong desires even though they could technically say their bodies are "covered."

AN OVERWHELMING TEMPTATION

A godly David was compromised by viewing a young woman in a state of nakedness (2nd Samuel 12:2). The powerful impact of nakedness on a man's libido and carnal nature is so compelling, wise men will take steps to avoid such sights if at all possible. Our Lord categorically told Satan it was unlawful to tempt God (Luke 4:12); that is, put Him to the test. Any man purposely viewing pornography, x-rated materials, racy novels, or looking on wrongly-dressed women to lust after them is tempting the Lord. He is putting himself deliberately in the pathway of temptation. No man can lightly face this temptation. As the Scripture says, "many strong men have been slain by her" (Proverbs 7:27), wherein does this leave ordinary and weak men?

COVERING: A SYMBOL OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

For fallen man, nakedness is a moral problem, and God provided coats of skins to cover his nakedness (Genesis 3:21). This act necessitated the shedding of blood of an innocent victim, and provided "robes of righteousness" for man. Note, what God provided was a "coat," not a bikini or skimpy dress. According to Genesis 37:3, a "coat" is just what the name implies: a large outer covering for the whole body.

It seems plain that God wants most of our flesh covered! Leviticus abounds with warnings against uncovering "nakedness" of people (Leviticus 18), because this sign of intimacy was only for legitimate, lawful marriage partners.

WITH WHAT IS NAKEDNESS ASSOCIATED?

Habakkuk 2:15 implies that drunkenness and nakedness are associated. When under control of a wrong spirit (intoxicating liquors), one will do shameful things that the Holy Spirit would never prompt us to do (Ephesians 5:18). Noah did the same (Genesis 9).

It is also of note that the Gadarene demoniac was naked (“wore no clothes” Luke 8:27). When however, he was delivered of evil spirits he was “clothed and in his right mind” (Luke 8:35).

Nakedness was also a sign of degradation and debauchery the people of God learned from the world (Egypt). While Moses was communing with the Lord, several fell to idolatry and evil actions which included various stages of undress: “Moses saw that the people were naked” (Exodus 32:25), and this nakedness was a shame, “...for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame” (Exodus 32:25).

Such shame concerning nakedness is of great concern to God if not to us. It was important enough for Ham to be cursed over seeing his father’s nakedness (Genesis 9:22).

As if to add to their humiliation, prisoners in the Biblical world were sometimes marched away naked so their “shame would be public and magnified” (Isaiah 20:4). Again and again, the Scripture portrays nakedness as a shame: Revelation 3:18; 16:15. Note, it was the Laodiceans who were naked (perhaps in both the spiritual and physical sense), and did not realize how shameful they were (Revelation 3:18). It was obvious to God, but not to them. Carnal, lukewarm professors are capable of various stages of nakedness! It is no compliment to a person’s spirituality that they wear revealing fashions, go mixed swimming, or in other ways flaunt their nakedness. Modesty is always in style (1st Timothy 2:9).

COVER THE OUTER MAN DEVELOP THE INNER MAN

Godly, modest clothing, that covers a person’s body sends a message about godly inner character (1st Peter 3:4). “The King’s daughter is all gracious within” (Psalm 45:13). Conversely, form-fitting clothing, and various forms of nakedness as “swim suits,” shorts, sun suits, bare chests, slit skirts, short skirts, unbuttoned shirts and blouses, etc., send a message about wrong inner character. Why would anyone professing Christ appear in a state of dress that Scripture associates with a fallen nature, drunkenness, demon possession, debauchery, degradation, idolatry, loose morals, being a prisoner, being carnal and shameful?

POPULARITY VS. HOLINESS

My friend, you may be fashionable, but you are not spiritual in your nakedness. You may be in the majority, but you are not a part of the remnant. You may have the world’s smile of approval, but you are not holy. You may get many to see your thigh (hip to knee: Isaiah 47:2-3), but God’s Word calls it nakedness and shameful!

The Lord Jesus has counsel for those in various stages of nakedness: “That thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear... be zealous therefore and repent” (Revelation 3:18-19).

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