**Reflections on Modesty**

*1 Timothy 2:9-10*

**Introduction**

1. God calls His children to modesty – **1 Timothy 2:9-10** – this orderliness of mind and heart that professes godliness must be congruent with our attire.
2. It is important that the Christian remains faithful to Christ in all things in a world that is given to ungodliness, lust, and sin, even in what they profess by their outward attire.
3. It is important that we speak where the bible speaks and that we are silent where the bible is silent. This is true for the subject of modesty.
4. God’s Call to Modesty
5. God Calls His Children to Modesty
   1. **1 Timothy 2:9-10** – instruction concerning behavior that is proper for women professing godliness.
   2. **Modest** – *kosmios –* orderly, i.e. decorous: — of good behavior, modest. (Strong) ***(“proper clothing,” NASB)***
      1. Apparel – i.e. a Christian’s clothing needs to be proper, or modest in relation to his profession.
   3. ***“which is proper for women professing godliness”***
      1. ***“professing”*** – ***“making a claim” (NASB)*** – the whole concept of being a Christian is being devoted to living to honor God in Christ.
      2. ***“godliness”*** – *theosebeia* – “reverence for God or set of beliefs and practices relating to interest in God, piety, godliness” (BDAG).
   4. The context is with focus on women, but applies to all Christians, male or female.
      1. Elder’s qualification – **1 Timothy 3:2** – ***“good behavior”*** (*kosmios)*
6. Modesty is Orderliness of the Heart Expressed Outwardly
   1. Modesty is a microcosm of the whole Christian life – it is an inward matter of the heart which will show itself outwardly in daily life.
   2. **Romans 12:1-2** – our life as a living sacrifice involves outward expressions in daily life, but this transformation comes from an inward renewal of the mind by God’s word.
   3. **John 3:3-8** – God’s children are born spiritually by the Spirit of God, but this shows itself – example of the wind.
   4. **1 Timothy 2:9-10** – modest, propriety, moderation.
      1. ***“modesty”***
         1. “The well ordering is not of dress and demeanor only, but of the inner life; uttering indeed and expressing itself in the outward conversation.” (R.C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*)
         2. “They no longer needed the former splendor of outward adornment, because [they were] clothed with the beauty and simplicity of Christ-like character…Their modesty and simplicity were a rebuke to and reaction from the shameless extravagances and immoralities of heathenism.” (ISBE, 1915 Edition, ed. James Orr (Seattle, WA: BibleSoft, 1996.), s.v. “Woman.”)
      2. ***“propriety” (“modestly,” NASB***) ***(“with modesty,” ESV***) – a sense of honorable shame ***(“shamefastness,” ASV)***
         1. **“’modesty which is ‘fast’ or rooted in the character…’** (Davies; Bible English, p. 12)” (VINE)
      3. ***“moderation”*** ***(“discreetly,” NASB***) ***(“self-control,” ESV) – “sobriety,” (ASV)*** – the inward governing principle which acts in ways appropriate to ***“propriety.”***
      4. All the terminology emphasizes the renewed inward man (heart) anchored in the principles of God’s will that translates into the outward orderliness of conduct in submission to it.
         1. Not only dress, but everything – language, treatment of others, various activities, etc.
         2. Hence, ***“good behavior” (1 Timothy 3:2).***
7. The Terminology of Identified Lines in Modest Attire
8. Identified Lines?
   1. The language of **Exodus 28:42** and **Isaiah 47:2-3** has commonly and consistently been used (by me, JC) to identify specific anatomical boundaries regarding what must be covered to dress modestly.
   2. Argumentation:
      1. Nakedness must be covered to dress modestly.
      2. The passages show the “thigh” is nakedness.
      3. The “thigh” must be covered to dress modestly. (The thigh is that part of the leg ranging from the hip down to the knee.)
   3. The question of the validity of the conclusion that the covering of the “thigh” (from hip to knee) is necessary for modest attire rests on whether the Hebrew word translated “thigh” means the area from the hip to the knee – the thigh as we would understand it in the English language.
      1. The language must have the same precision as the line that is bound.
      2. If it is determined that the Hebrew word translated “thigh” is not as precise as the application, then the application cannot be bound.
      3. I.e. if the Hebrew word translated “thigh” does not precisely have reference to the “thigh” in the sense that our English word does then we cannot bind that line by faith (**cf. Romans 10:17**).
9. Testing the Terminology
   1. **Exodus 28:42** – ***“thigh”*** – יָרֵךְ *yârêḵ* (34x in 32 verses)
      1. “thigh, loin, side, base; (1) thigh (1a) outside of thigh, where sword was worn; (1b) thigh = loins, as seat of procreative power” (Brown-Driver-Briggs)
      2. “(1) the fleshy part of the upper thigh” (Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament)
      3. “Thigh, loin, side, base…The thigh stands for man's foundation…and for the source of life.” (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament)
      4. “in respect of the parts of the body usually clothed…and especially of the position where a sword is worn…also of the locality of the genital organs, and so by figure of speech to one’s offspring.” (New Bible Dictionary)
      5. Loins, seat of procreative power, man’s foundation and source of life:
         1. **Genesis 46:26; Exodus 1:5; Judges 8:30** – ***“body,” “descendants,” “offspring”*** – “also of the locality of the genital organs, and so by figure of speech to one’s offspring.” (New Bible Dictionary)
         2. **Genesis 24:2, 9; 47:29** – ***“thigh”*** – Abraham and Joseph – “area of genitals, touched during uttering an oath” (HALOT)
            1. Abraham preserving the seed (**cf. Genesis 12:3**) – making servant swear he would select a wife for Isaac from his family.
            2. Joseph emphasizing seed – making them swear he would be buried with his fathers.
      6. Hip, place where the sword is worn:
         1. **Genesis 32:25, 31, 32** – *yârêḵ i*s translated “hip” here – ***“socket of his hip” (v. 25).***
         2. **Judges 3:16** – ***“thigh”*** – could very well be translated “hip.”
            1. ***“fastened” (“girded,” ASV)*** *– ḥâg̱ar;* a primitive root; to gird on (as a belt, armor, etc.) (STRONG)
            2. Related to ***“coverings”*** (**Genesis 3:7**) – made by Adam and Eve when they discovered their nakedness.

*ḥăg̱ôr*; or חֲגֹר *ḥagor;* and (feminine) חֲגוֹרָה ḥagôrah; or חֲגֹרָה *ḥagorah*; from 2296; a belt (for the waist) (STRONG); “1. girdle, belt 2. girdle, loin-covering, belt, loin-cloth, armour” (BDB)

* + - * 1. Idea – fastened on the right side of his waist where the sword was normally girded, as on a belt.
    1. Base:
       1. “base (loins) of candlestick” (BDB) – **Exodus 25:31** – ***“shaft” (NKJV); “base” (ASV, ESV, NASB)***
       2. “The thigh stands for man's foundation” (TWOT)
  1. **Isaiah 47:2** – ***“thigh” (NKJV)*** – שׁוֹק *šôq* (19x in 19 verses)
     1. “(1) of man, specifically lower leg, calf, distinguished from thigh; (2) of sacrificial animal, specifically upper leg, thigh, hind leg” (Brown-Driver-Briggs)
     2. “(1a) thigh, fibula, of a person; (2) shank of an animal” (Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament)
     3. “When שׁוֹק (šôq) refers to a man's body it designates the lower part of the leg, the shank from the knees downward. When שׁוֹק (šôq) refers to part of an animal's body it designates the upper, thicker part of the leg, The distinction is maintained rigidly by the KJV which translates man's שׁוֹק (šôq) as ‘leg’ and an animal's שׁוֹק (šôq) as ‘shoulder.’” (Theological Workbook of the Old Testament)
     4. **Isaiah 47:2** – ***“uncover the leg” (NASB, LSB, YLT, ASV); “uncover your legs” (ESV); “make bare the leg” (KJV)***
        1. The verse is not talking about the “thigh,” but the lower part of the leg – “fibula” (HALOT)

1. Following Conclusions
   1. General principles of bible study and application:
      1. God binds and looses – ***“whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:19, NASB)***
      2. We must not think beyond what is written – **1 Corinthians 4:6**
      3. We must only speak as the oracles of God – **1 Peter 4:11**
      4. We must speak by faith, which only comes from God’s word – **Romans 10:17**
   2. The question of the validity of the conclusion that the covering of the “thigh” (from hip to knee) is necessary for modest attire rests on whether the Hebrew word translated “thigh” means the area from the hip to the knee – the thigh as we would understand it in the English language.
      1. The Hebrew word *yârêḵ* does not definitively mean the “thigh,” as the area from the hip to the knee.
         1. ***Exodus 28:42*** – could translate the word hip, loins, or could refer to the area of the reproductive organs.
      2. The Hebrew word *šôq* most definitely does not refer to the “thigh,” as the area from the hip to the knee.
         1. “of man, specifically lower leg” (Brown-Driver-Briggs)
         2. Should be translated “leg” in **Isaiah 47:2** in the NKJV.
      3. When binding only what God binds, not thinking beyond what is written, speaking only as the oracles of God, and speaking only by faith which comes from hearing God’s word, we cannot bind the specific boundary line of the knee (as the place the thigh ends) as a distinct line for modest attire.
2. The Scriptural Standard of Modesty
3. The need for modest apparel is not changed by the correction made above – the realization that *yârêḵ* does not have definite reference to the section of the leg from the hip to the knee.
   1. The attitude of the Christian – ***“professing godliness” (1 Timothy 2:10)*** – does not align with an attitude which seeks to conform to the world.
   2. We are not free to wear whatever we wish, or what is simply in style or accepted by the world.
   3. Our dress, as well as our attitude and behavior must still be governed by the principles established in holy scripture (**cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17**).
   4. **EX: filthy language applied by principle.**
4. Holiness
   1. **1 Peter 1:15-16** – separation from sin – God is the standard.
   2. **Romans 12:1-2** – countercultural – not conformed to the world.
      1. Renewal of the mind by God’s will.
      2. ***“and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” (Ephesians 4:24, NASB***).
5. Brotherly Love
   1. **Matthew 5:27-30; 18:6-7** – lust is a powerful temptation which must be combatted with full strength, but while we cannot be responsible for what another thinks in their mind, we will be responsible if we have been a direct cause.
      1. Even applied in areas of liberty – **1 Corinthians 8:1-3, 13**
   2. **Romans 13:8-14** – we owe each other love – not to harm each other – put on Christ and don’t provide for the flesh – in yourself or others.
6. Honoring Marriage
   1. ***“Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” (Hebrews 13:4, NASB***)
   2. **1 Corinthians 7:3-4** – sexual intimacy and everything involved with it is confined only to the marriage relationship – sharing our body is not a privilege or responsibility we have with anyone other than our spouse.
7. Purity
   1. **1 Peter 3:1-4** – the Christian (woman) is to be emphasizing relationship and fidelity to God.
      1. ***“chaste conduct”*** – *hagnos* – “pure from carnality, chaste, modest” (THAYER)
      2. This would involve using our bodies, and dressing our bodies in a pure way.
   2. Negative – **Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:19; 1 Peter 4:3**
      1. **Lewdness** – *aselgeia* – “unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence” (THAYER)
         1. “as living without any moral restraint licentiousness, sensuality, lustful indulgence (2C 12.21); especially as indecent and outrageous sexual behavior debauchery, indecency, flagrant immorality (RO 13.13)” (ALGNT)
      2. A Christian’s attire cannot be like the world – lustful, shameless, indecently and outrageously sexual, immoral, etc.
   3. Negative – **Colossians 3:5-7** – Fornication (greatest) down to evil desire (least) and covetousness (basis for all – wanting more than your due).

**Conclusion**

1. God calls His children to a modest heart which manifests itself in modest behavior, as well as dress.
2. It is important that we adhere to God’s standard on this subject.