



Dress with Good Works

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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AM Assembly



Introduction:

We've spent a lot of time the past few years looking at **Ephesians 2:8-10**. We've talked about God's grace, our faith that gives access to His grace, and now being His workmanship created to walk in good works. The New Testament talks about good works in several places. However, one of the most interesting to me is **I Timothy 2:9-10**.

"Likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works" (ESV).

We've heard all kinds of sermons through our lifetimes on modest dress. I've presented my fair share of them. But one of the things I have to admit is that the Bible is actually pretty limited on lines. How short is too short? How tight is too tight? How much flesh is too much flesh? How low is too low? Despite this lack of lines, I'll also admit that most of my preaching on this topic is spent trying to convince you to draw the same lines I do. Regrettably, I know I sometimes get pretty manipulative and controlling. I use all the tools of the trade: shame, guilt, sarcasm, etc. I shouldn't do that. Paul apparently didn't feel the need to do that. He gave some heart-guiding principles and expected that to guide us to make wise and godly decisions.

With that in mind, I'd like to take a look at this paramount passage on modest dress. I'm not going to try to establish any rules or regulations. I just want us to notice that if we are going to walk in good works as we are striving to learn from **Ephesians 2:10**, then it means we are going to learn to dress with good works as it says in **I Timothy 2:10**. But what will that look like? What principles will govern our dress?

Discussion:

I. Professing godliness

- A. The first thing we need to grasp is that this is talking about dress for those who are professing godliness. It is not just for those who "go to church." It is not just for those who claim to be Christian. It is for those who profess godliness.
 1. To profess is to announce or promise. Interestingly, it was often used to mean a profession of one's skill in something. Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich say it is to "give oneself out as an expert."
 2. Godliness translates a word that literally means "God worship." It meant reverence, piety, devotion.
 3. In **John 4:23-24**, Jesus said God is looking for worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and truth. This dress is for people who proclaim to be answering that call.
- B. The key we need to see is that our dress is a profession, a proclamation, a declaration of something. What we wear says something about us, proclaims it to everyone who sees us. The question is does the profession of our dress correspond with the profession of our Sunday mornings?

II. Good works

- A. Paul wrote that the dress that is appropriate for one who claims to worship God is good works. Obviously, he is speaking accommodatingly, but what on earth could he mean? Interestingly, Paul later addresses the sisters about good works again. In **I Timothy 5:9-14**, Paul talks about widowed sisters who could be placed on a congregation's role of supported servants. Here is what the text says:
- B. For some reason, when we think of good works today, we often think about the patternistic ideas of taking the Lord's Supper properly, how we sing, will we have a fellowship hall. But when Paul talked about good works, it was usually in the context of personal life actions. Paul talked about widows who throughout their lives had been dressed in good works. What did they do? They refrained from idleness, gossip, busybodying. Instead, they raised children, they showed hospitality (which is not the same as the generosity of taking someone a meal, but the receiving or hosting of someone, often a stranger), they washed the saints' feet (which is an example of sacrificial service), they cared for the afflicted (a picture of what Jesus presented in **Matthew 25:31-46** and what James taught in **James 1:27**). In **Titus 3:14**, Paul talked about people who were devoted to good works saying they would be ready "to help cases of urgent need" (ESV). A great example of this kind of good worker is Tabitha/Dorcas of **Acts 9:36**. "She was full of good works and acts of charity" (ESV).

- C. A couple of other passages that focus us on good works come to mind. In **Titus 2:7**, Paul told Titus to be a model of good works. He was encouraging Titus to model the works he had just been told to teach the men and women of his congregation in the preceding verses: being sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, love and steadfastness, reverent, pure, kind, workers (**Titus 2:1-6**). Also, in **Colossians 3:12-14**, Paul putting on certain works. It is obviously a picture of being dressed in certain good works. He mentioned compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, and love.

III. Dressed with good works

- A. With the ideas of professing godliness and good works in mind, what would dressing like this mean? Perhaps **Matthew 5:16** helps. Jesus said we need to shine our light so that people see our good works and glorify God. Who are you glorifying in your dress? Yourself? In the way you dress, are you reflecting the glory, goodness, holiness, and purity of God? Or are you focusing them on your wealth, your sexuality, your fashion sense, your popularity, your style. No doubt, the point of dressing with good works is not that you have to make yourself as hideously unattractive as possible. This doesn't mean you need to wear mismatched clothes or retro fashions. The point is who does your dress focus people on. By the way, this can even apply to dressing in a way to focus people on your religiosity. Consider Jesus's rebuke against the scribes and Pharisees in **Matthew 6:16-18**. They presented themselves in a way that everyone would know their religious activities. Their dress and deportment may have focused people on religion, but it was on their religion not on God. Who does your dress focus people on?
- B. In **II Timothy 2:21-22**, Paul talked about cleansing ourselves from what is dishonorable so that we may be honorable vessels ready for every good work. He said we should flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, and purity? Wouldn't you say that dressing with good works would look like cleansing yourself from what is dishonorable and being ready for every good work? Does your dress pursue passions, lusts, fleshly desires? Or does it pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, and purity? What about when you are at the beach or the swimming pool? What about when you are out on a date? What about when you are at work? What about when you are in the church's assembly?
- C. Perhaps **Romans 13:12-14** presents the coup de grâce on what dressing with good works might look like. It tells us to cast off works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Does your dress promote works of darkness or light? Look at what it tells us to get rid of: drunkenness, orgies, sexual immorality, sensuality, quarreling, and jealousy. Does your dress promote any of these activities? The last thing Paul says in these verses is to make no provision for the lust of the flesh. Does your dress make provision for pursuing fleshly desires? Does it do so in someone else? But the great key is when Jesus says in the middle of this to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Does the way you dress say that you are wearing Jesus? As I said above, we are not supposed to dress in a way that focuses people on our religiosity. So acting like we should have a certain hairstyle or clothing style like the Amish or even the Oneness Pentecostals misses the mark. But when people look at you and your dress do they see Jesus? Do they see something that might cause them to think, "I bet that person is a follower of Jesus?" Or would they be surprised to find out you are a Christian?

Conclusion:

I have no desire to go through your closet and control what you wear. But I do want us to be a group of God-glorifying Christians that shine the light of Jesus in everything we do from the way we speak, to the way we walk, to the way we act, and even to the way we dress. Sadly, I know there have been times in my life that I've lived, acted, talked, and dressed based on keeping the world at arm's length. That meant, as the world moved, so did I. I wasn't as bad as the worst in the world, so I was alright. Right? Wrong. The world is not our standard, Jesus Christ is. Too many times I've been like the Laodiceans of **Revelation 3:17-18**. I thought I was rich, prosperous, and needing nothing. But instead, I was wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I needed to ask God for His white garments to dress me and cover my shame. Here's the question. What does your dress profess?