

# Dressed to Kill

by Bob Pulliam

"Dressed to Kill"... It was the title of a Sherlock Holmes movie. But it's also a common phrase. A phrase used of a woman dressed in such a way as to catch a man's attention and get him to fall for her (or lust for her). At one time such would refer simply to a matter of dressing in one's best clothes. In today's society it is commonly used of dressing in one's least amount of clothing... immodest apparel. As temperatures rise, we see an increase in this practice. We are told that the person has trouble staying cool. But then they wear the same clothes before and after any extreme heat. Even a moderate temperatures they will dress this way. We need to see the danger and error in this practice, and avoid such.

"Dressed to kill", in this article, refers to a murder of another person's spirit. Murder in the spiritual degree, one might say. Let's consider immodest apparel from a Biblical point of view. Both men and women are asked to take this to heart; although men are more "sight oriented", and thus more prone to lustful inclinations. We will not be considering mankind's opinion of right and wrong, or Victorian values held by way of tradition or upbringing. We do want to know if God has anything to say about the way we ought to dress, and then use such whenever we go to the closet.

## **The Bible Mentions "Modest Apparel"...**

"...in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel..." (I Tim 2:9). The Bible does talk about the way women dress. This would indicate to me that God is concerned about what we do with our wardrobe. The "modest apparel" of our passage, however, has to do with show-off fashion. A woman drawing attention to herself by the way she dresses. A woman using costly clothing, gold, pearls, etc... She is to use moderation in her appearance; and certainly some today need to learn this.

The problem in Paul's day was over-dressing, and this is what he urges against in our passage. Peter addressed this as well: "Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel; but let it be the hidden person of the heart..." (I Pt 3:3). If it was wrong for a woman to draw attention to herself by overdressing, then would it not be wrong to draw attention by under-dressing (over exposure of the body and it's curves)? Such a display is not "modest" in comparison with what Paul addresses in I Timothy 2:9? It actually swings to the opposite extreme, and perhaps a worse error (from vanity to lasciviousness).

## **The Bible Does Condemn Immodest Apparel...**

Does the Bible have to specifically mention LSD, heroin, crack, or other drugs, for them to be wrong? We know they are wrong because they cause a drunken stupor which is condemned in the Bible. Does the Bible have to specifically set a dress code before we sit up and take note of error in immodest apparel? We **should** know that such enters the realm of lasciviousness, and is therefore condemned in the Bible.

The word "Lascivious" (translated "sensuality" or "Licentiousness" in some other versions) means:

"shamelessness, insolence: ... wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females..."<sup>1</sup>

The adverb form of the word "lascivious" (lasciviously) quickly includes the thought of doing or saying something in such a way as to create lustful feelings in others. Exciting this emotion in others is an obvious facet of the sin of lasciviousness. The condemnation of those guilty of this sin is very clearly expressed in the following passages:

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,... and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal 5:19 - 21)

"What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thought, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man." (Mk 7:20 - 23)

Would it be wrong for a person to go out in public naked? Aside from laws that prohibit such, what would be wrong with it? Would it not be wrong because of those who might see? And why would that make it wrong? We seem to have deceived ourselves into thinking that lust caused by immodest dress is the problem of a few perverted people. We had better open our eyes and see what the world itself knows to be true! The fashion designers tell us that their revealing designs have but one purpose: "sex-appeal". The lyrics of the songs our young people listen to tell us the purpose in modern fashion. "Summer Girls", a song from several years ago, sang a tribute to summer fashions that revealed as much as the law would allow. In the song they sang, "I love to see them soaking wet". People who know no need of justifying their dress tell you that revealing clothes are intended to stir the opposite sex. Excuses for such dress are given **only** by "Christians". Everyone else will readily admit the truth on the matter!

### **"Am I Really Responsible?"...**

We all recall the condemnation of the man who looks at a woman to lust after her (Mt 5:28). Such is a blatant violation of God's word. But is one really responsible for the thoughts of others? Obviously some people are so sick they would lust after most anyone in anything. But we are responsible when we are careless in our dress. Either by exposing the body (short dresses, halter tops, muscle shirts, swim suits...), or by wearing painted on clothes (skin tight jeans, no under garments...). We become guilty of spiritual negligence when we cause one to lust who otherwise wouldn't if we had dressed properly. Surely the one who lusts is guilty, but woe unto the one who causes such:

"It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown in the sea..." (Lk 17:1 & 2)

Let's be careful not to dress to kill. Let's keep our consciences clear of spiritual homicide.

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<sup>1</sup> Thayer, Joseph Henry, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Zondervan; Grand Rapids, MI), 1978, p79.