

## Preacher's Pen points

# “Dress” in Worship



Last year while walking through the British Museum I came across this interesting artifact from first-century Rome. I thought immediately of Paul's words to Timothy concerning how men and women should conduct themselves in their worship meetings. *“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.”* (1 Tim. 2:8-10)

The woman in the photo might give us a representation of the kind of thing Paul was forbidding in his directions to Christian women. The elaborate braiding pictured here along with jewelry and expensive robes would have drawn considerable attention from those attending the worship service, both men and women. Instead Paul urges the women to dress in “modest apparel”, a phrase suggesting clothing that is “well-ordered, decent, modest” (Vine). This adornment is to be accompanied with “propriety” and “moderation” (NKJV), attitudes that issue from a sense of shame and soberness. Hence the woman's public dress was to reflect a desire to beautify herself by “good works” rather than expensive clothes.

### Noting the Principle

I have been impressed with the way Paul handled this delicate situation. He appealed to his sisters in Christ to let their godly heart dictate how they appeared among their Christian brothers. And though forbidding the most elaborate dress, he left room for the women to use their best judgment on what to wear within the framework of

godly principles.

Second I have been impressed with the fact that Paul's exhortation is not “to wear the best we have” as it is sometimes suggested. Instead, Paul, if anything, seems to have encouraged the women to “dress down” a bit for the worship service, to avoid calling undue attention to themselves and to show a desire to make God the center of attention, not themselves.

### Applying the principle

Recently someone asked me how I might respond to a situation in another congregation where a woman appears regularly in what is provocative and seductive clothing. Through the years, not a few men serving the Lord's Supper have commented on the difficulty of passing the communion trays from aisle to aisle and keeping their thoughts pure due to the revealing dress of women sitting in the audience. If Paul forbade “braided hair” what would he say to these women? Such situations move even beyond the issue of modesty to the issue of sexual purity. A woman who dresses in a way that draws all male eyes to her body may be “sexy” by the world's standards, but sinful by God's (Gal. 5:19). Such a woman needs the wise guidance of other godly women to steer them in a better direction.

### A word of commendation

I would like to express appreciation to the ladies here at Perry Heights for showing consideration to God and to the male members by dressing with regard for the principles Paul taught. With rare exception, the attire of those who worship here regularly reflects godly thought and planning. This is commendable. —Johnny Felker