

Aprons and Coats

Written by Frank Garner

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At the end of Genesis chapter 2, we read a verse that seems oddly disconnected with anything previously recorded in Genesis. “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” Without knowing what events are coming, we might have to think about this statement for a while. There was an obvious innocence to Adam and Eve concerning nakedness. When we realize that they were forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we see that they had no knowledge concerning nakedness. There was no prohibition, no knowledge of good or evil, therefore there was no shame.

Next, in Genesis chapter 3, comes the temptation and disobedience of Adam and Eve. They ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We see that some of what Satan said became true. Satan told Eve their eyes would be opened, and they would know what was good and evil.

There is no doubt that Adam and Eve knew immediately that they had committed sin by violating a clear command of God. We must also realize that their knowledge of good and evil opened a whole myriad of actions and consequences to them. Their eyes were opened, and they viewed the whole realm of their actions as right and wrong, good and evil. They knew what was evil. They knew what was good.

Aside from knowing they had violated God's command concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, what was the first thing they knew was evil? Verse 7 says, “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.” Without direct command, without written law, without any obvious inspiration, they knew that they were naked. Now, they were ashamed as opposed to Genesis 2:25.

Their awareness of the evil of nakedness was so strong that they immediately went about correcting the problem. “They sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” This event was before the Law of Moses and before the New Testament. Yet, Adam and Eve knew good and evil. Adam and Eve knew that they were naked and were ashamed.

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Adam used his nakedness as an excuse for hiding from the Lord. The real problem was he knew God would be aware of their violation of His command. In verse 21 of chapter 3, we see the end of the nakedness issue. "Unto Adam and his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them."

Observations

What observations can we make from these events? First, God's people know the difference between good and evil. Nakedness was then and still is an evil. Adam and Eve were ashamed be-cause they were naked. God's people today should be as well.

Second, both the man and the woman were subject to this prohibition and shame. Adam and Eve were equally ashamed, and God clothed them both in animal skin coats. The New Testament speaks to the modest apparel of women more than men. But, it is clear from the beginning that God considers it imperative that both men and women be clothed appropriately.

Later, Moses would condemn God's people for their nakedness before the nations around them. In Exodus 32:25 we read, "And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies)..." It was shameful for God's people to be naked before pagan, worldly people. The pagan peoples may have practiced this sin, but God's people were to be different. Nakedness was a shame. God's people were not to display their nakedness before the world.

Third, Adam and Eve's concept of clothing was not the same as God's concept. Adam and Eve sewed together fig leaves to make aprons (things to gird about or wrap about half the body). That was not acceptable to "clothe" them. Perhaps their aprons were too thin, too revealing, too low, too high, too short, too open, too loose, or too tight. The word "apron" tells us a lot about the insufficiency of the garment.

God made coats (garments, tunics, outer garments) of animal skins to clothe them. I am not a linguist, but I know the difference between an apron and a coat. So do you. The coats clothed them.

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The aprons did not. What was the purpose of the coats? The purpose was to cover, hide, and shroud nakedness for man and woman. That is what God wanted, and He made the garments to show and model what was appropriate.

Modest, Shamefastness, and Sobriety

In 1 Timothy 2:9, Paul addresses women and their apparel. He says, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety..." Modest apparel is "orderly, well arranged, decent." To dress modestly means to dress with "reserve and propriety." Propriety is the "quality of being proper and appropriate." Christian women are to dress orderly, decently, properly, and appropriately.

The antonym is "immodest." Immodest denotes that which is morally offensive. Immodest dress can take several forms. First, immodest dress can provoke the lusts in others or show inclinations to lust in the wearer. Second, immodesty can be a richness, order, or arrangement of apparel that shows pride. Both of these conditions are intended to attract the eyes, hearts, and passions of those around the wearer. Immodest and prideful attire has no place in the Christian woman's wardrobe.

Our next word is "shamefastness." The KJV uses the word "shamefaced-ness." The ASV uses the word "shamefastness." This old word is characterized by a modesty of appearance and manner. The "shamefast" person, male or female, will avoid all that is indelicate, inappropriate, and unbecoming. The shamefast person will display modesty that is "fast" or rooted firmly in sound Christian character. His or her apparel will not be worn to merely attract attention or gain admiration and flattery.

Our third word here is "sobriety." Sobriety is defined as "that sound judgment that has constant control on all the passions and desires." We can see that sobriety when applied to adornment will "display self restraint, self control over the vain impulses of inappropriate dress or adornment." If we, male and female, adorn ourselves with sobriety we will "oppose all that is frivolous and designed to excite the passions."

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(All of the above quotes come from the Power Bible CD by Phil Under, Online Publishing, Inc.)

Conclusion

You and I, males and females, know what is appropriate for Christians to wear. We know by reading the verses above. We have these guidelines that do not address current fashion, style, or custom. Fashion, style, and custom change with each season. They are directed by the whims of men.

We have not found that our apparel must be ugly, dull, or radically different. We are not commanded to wear Greco-Roman tunics. We have not been commanded to wear full length robes and veils. God does not expect us to wear animal skins. We are to wear more than fig leaves! He does expect us to cover our nakedness and wear modest apparel. (Apparel means clothing as well as accessories; see 1 Timothy 2:9.)

God in His wisdom has given us standards to judge our dress and apparel that will last the ages. We have found that our clothing is to cover or hide our nakedness (not reveal it). Our apparel is to be orderly, well arranged, and decent. We are to exercise self restraint in choosing our apparel, and we are to avoid all that is indelicate and unbecoming of a Christian.

The honest Christian, male or female, can put on a garment, stand before the mirror and make the correct determination of modesty if he/she wants.

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