

# Modesty

*Biblical, Historical, Societal*



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## Biblical, Historical, Societal

From time to time I get asked for my opinion on the Biblical teaching of modesty, and in the course of the discussion, I've come to the conclusion that some of the things pertaining to modesty have been taught as part of the definition of truth, or spirituality, or holiness.

So the first thing we must do is understand the definition of eternal truth. I have learned never to discuss "the issues" without first understanding that the definition of eternal truth is Jesus Christ Himself. HE is the chief Cornerstone of the church.

The fact that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church leads me to these statements: my faith is not built on man. It's not built on traditions. It's not built on opinions or belief systems and it isn't built on a time period. The acceptance of the truth of God's Word in my heart is built upon the faith that Jesus Himself is eternal truth, and that I will be judged according to the Word of God in the end. I will not be judged according to rumors, I will not be judged according to what a counsel of ministers has decided, I will not be judged according to what a church leader thinks, I will not be judged according to your acceptance of my testimony, nor will I be judged according to my definition or your definition of modesty; I will be judged according to the eternal Word of God. And no matter what anyone says about me, I will be able to smile with the grace of God in my heart, and I will be able to say as did the martyrs of old, "You can't take away my testimony. You can't take away the presence of God in my heart. On Christ the solid rock I stand."

I have learned to measure everything I believe against the Word. Not a time period. Not D.S. Warner (though I can respect who and what he was). I don't measure the definition of modesty to the 1880s or other time period; no, I go back to the Word. I don't measure the outward observances to a group or a movement. I measure it to the Word. That's why the issue on the definition of truth causes such a stir: too many people have been measuring the definition of "truth" to a time period. Frankly, God's truth is eternal. It's true forever. Societies change. Cultures and traditions evolve. But God's truth is eternal. It applies to every society in every age of time, regardless of custom, tradition or societal teaching.

I think that some churches have taken their definition of modesty from the culture and society of the 1880s (or other ages) and they're still trying to fit it into the society of today. Unsuccessfully, I might add, basically because we don't have scripture for what they taught as pertinent to the issues of their society and time.

Does that mean that the biblical doctrine of modesty does not exist? Of course it does not mean that! The fact is, there IS a biblical doctrine of modesty, and the principle of that applies to our society today, too! The 1880s definition may not necessarily apply to our society and time period, but the BIBLICAL principle DOES apply to every society and time period.

While modesty is certainly in the Bible and I believe in it with all my heart, it was never intended to become the cornerstone of the Church (CHRIST is the chief cornerstone), nor was

it intended to be the “identification” of the Church (“by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” -- John 13:35), nor was it ever intended to be divisive (“The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The LORD knoweth them that are his” -- 2 Tim. 2:19). The fact that modesty has become these things to certain people, regardless of their own testimony or self image, refocuses the most important issue, which is CHRIST. He is to be “our all and in all.” We are to talk mostly about Him. We are to be witnesses of Him. Our primary duty is not to be witnesses of the Church; we are to be witnesses of Christ. The entire New Testament points to Christ, the Savior of our souls. Issues cause division. They always have and always will, but all those who are saved are one in Christ, because it is Christ who saves. That’s why we extend the hand of fellowship to every blood-washed one, regardless of affiliation, regardless of custom, regardless of opinion. If he/she is saved and I am saved, the blood of Jesus Christ unites us into one family: His own.

Well, now let’s talk about the issue of modesty. A grand total of two scriptures in the New Testament specifically talk about modesty (well, except for the one in Luke 20:26, where Jesus condemns the self righteous robes of the Pharisees, which, somehow, you never hear about). Why, then, are people and movements focusing so much time on those two scriptures?

If we mention the scriptures on modesty in context and with proper study and historical value, and if we measure them proportionately to their position and value in the Bible, we might preach on those subjects ... what? Once every five or six years? If as much time were spent on the Great Commission as were spent on “measuring to the standard” (unspoken: “of a certain age or time period”), we would see the Kingdom increasing as God intended.

The fact that these two scriptures are mentioned so much, the fact that they are used in conjunction with the definition of previous societies rather than a historical study of Bible times and the fact that they are used as “measurements” of spirituality, shows a lack of biblical and historical understanding of the definition of eternal truth.

I’ve had some questions of my own regarding the modesty standard of the 1880s and so I’ve studied the history of it both in the Bible times and in the 1880s ... and the years in between. Please note that I mention the 1880s because that seems to be the most recent age from which people choose the “modesty” standard. 1930s is another time period to which people point. Really, any historical date can be used for the following discussion.

The knowledge of history alone tells me that while the definition of modesty in the 1880s may have applied to the time period of the 1880s, it is certainly not an eternally true definition of modesty. It can’t be. Women wore their hair down in Jesus’ day (how else could the woman dry His feet with her hair? She may not have been saved, but it proves it was a custom back then, at the very least). Men wore robes. The palla and stola (the Roman dress of the day) sometimes had sleeves, and sometimes they didn’t ... and both were “modest.” Adam Clarke calls the palla and stola the most modest garments ever made! Makeup was worn. Jewelry was worn. Jesus saw these clothes every day. That’s not my interpretation of a scripture; that’s history.

Remember the Roman centurion, Cornelius in Acts 12? Go look at the clothes a Roman centurion wore in those days. Goodness ... look at his job requirements! And the Bible has this



## The Stola and Palla

“A more modest and becoming dress than the Grecian was never invented.” - Adam Clarke

At the time of her marriage, the Roman woman donned the *stola*, a long, sleeveless tunic (some had sleeves -- gm), frequently if not always suspended at the shoulders from short straps, which was worn on top of another tunic. It is probable that the stola was typically made of undyed wool. The stola was a symbol of marriage, and by the late Republic all women married according to Roman law were entitled to wear it. Not all did, of course, since it was not a particularly fashionable or flattering garment, but wearing the stola was a way for a woman to publicly proclaim her respectability and adherence to tradition.

Respectable women also wore a long cloak, called a *palla*, over their tunic and stola when they went outside. This was rectangular in shape and was typically draped over the left shoulder, under the right arm and back across the body, carried by the left arm or thrown back again over the left shoulder. The palla could also be pulled up to cover the head.

to say about him: “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house...” And an angel of GOD said to him, “Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.” And because of this man, Peter received the vision of clean and unclean foods that expanded the gospel to include the Gentiles. This man ~ attired as he was and with the job requirements of a Roman centurion (equivalent perhaps to the rank of captain in our day) ~ this man, the Bible says, was a devout man who found favor in the sight of God. Notice the length of the sleeves and the length of the skirt. Notice the weapons and job description. Notwithstanding all of this, the Word of God called him a devout man and one who feared God.

Some folks believe that for a woman to wear sandals is immodest because they say it entices men. However, we read the account where the angel told Peter to “bind on” his sandals (Acts 12:8). Folks, there’s just no biblical way around that. It’s ridiculous and unbiblical to make not wearing sandals a testimony of spirituality. Reason, logic, history and the Bible tell us that man is very interested in the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. People who are looking and critiquing each other on the basis of outward



observances have missed the spiritual essence of the gospel - and refocused the primary purpose of the gospel away from the Christ they were commanded to preach.

Eternal truth: no man can live the Christian life without the living, breathing presence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in his heart. Let that be accepted as eternal truth to everyone who reads this. If you have Christ in your heart, you are saved. If you are saved, you are in the Church. Whatever your customs, wherever you live, however you've been taught - if you have named the name of Christ and departed from iniquity, you are His child. The knowledge of that is foundational to your faith.

And let me say this too: some will say that God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). That's scripture. But what has become very clear to me and what has simplified the matter for me very much is the knowledge that (and this is most important):

While God most assuredly is NOT the author of confusion, He alone IS the author of truth!

Jesus' words were defined as "life and truth" and He told us that the Holy Spirit will lead and guide us into all truth. (John 16:13).

Therefore, if there is confusion in people's minds, I think they should look to WHY they are confused. Are they confused because they can't find certain present-day doctrines or "teachings of truth" in the Bible? Ah ... then my answer is that God alone is the divine author of truth! If the confusion is coming about because someone is defining truth for them as something other than the properly applied, rightly divided Word of truth, they should know the source of their confusion is not God.

It's not fair for someone to say, "You are questioning truth," when that person does not have specific scripture to back up what they define as truth. And then to capitalize on the ensuing confusion that they have caused ... without apology, I say that's a blatant misuse of what too many define as spiritual authority. Confusion happens when folks don't have specific scripture for what they teach as truth; not when people question the teaching. God is not the author of confusion, but He IS the author of truth. Stick with the truth, and there won't BE confusion!

Jesus alone is the "author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2) - which, by God's own definition, is solidly based on nothing other than His truth. Doesn't that just clear the matter up wonderfully?

God is the author of truth. He is the ONLY author of truth. His Holy Spirit will only guide and lead into truth, which is defined by the Bible as Christ. The Holy Spirit will never work outside the parameters of the Bible; He can't, because of His very nature. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost ... all of truth ... never working independently or outside the parameters of each other. The Holy Spirit will never lead any man, regardless of his stature or position in the Church, outside the parameters of the Word of God. The scripture says very clearly that He leads and guides us into all truth. It's heresy for anyone to say otherwise. One of His NAMES is "the Spirit of truth". What that means to me is that the Holy Spirit is the Truth's Spirit. It's Christ's Spirit, working in His physical absence, and they are one.

D.S. Warner was not the author of truth. C.E. Orr was not the author of truth (insert any church leader's name in here, with the exception of Christ's name, and the sentences will still make sense). A counsel of ministers is not the author of truth. Even God's Church, biblically defined, is not the author of truth. She is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), which means she is the support of the truth and she is built on truth. Everything about her is truth ... as she rests on Christ the solid foundation of the truth. Her chief corner stone is Christ (Eph. 2:20). Her walls are built on truth. But she is not the author of it. The scriptures teach us very clearly that Christ is the truth. Christ built the church. I can't build on any foundation other than Christ. HE is the truth. He is the foundation of my faith. See how all the scriptures dovetail? See how they all work together when properly applied?

This knowledge leads me inescapably to the conclusion that a time period does not define truth, unless it defines it according to the Bible. It seems that there is a "list" that we all must adhere to today, doesn't it? The list is so clear and you can hear certain ministers go down "the list." They might start with, "Saints don't...." and they fill the blanks in as they go. "Holy men of God taught...." "The older ministers taught...." And somehow, they always get into the outward observances of a time period; isn't that interesting? As if to say that true holiness and spirituality are actually defined by those things in that time period!

With all due respect and consideration to their sincerity, that's just not Bible. The scripture on "old paths" (Jer. 6:16) was written long before D.S. Warner (or any other church leader since the time of Bible collation) was ever born; the scripture, then, correctly applied, goes back to the definition of truth. THAT is the old path we must follow. Don't redefine it. Don't take away from it, and don't add to it. "Earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints," (Jude 1:3) is not referring to the 1880s, or a time period since the Bible - because it was written long before those times! "The faith once delivered to the saints" is the gospel of Jesus Christ, period.

I don't think it's right to come up with a certain teaching and then find a scripture to prove your point ~ I think we should study the scriptures to discover the teaching! To do otherwise is to come at it backwards, to build on the wrong foundation as it were, and this could very possibly lead to "having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5). It's not our job to justify or defend the teachings of the time period of our choosing; it's our job to study the scriptures and discover the definition of eternal truth.

Tell me what the Bible teaches, give to me the words of eternal truth, preach to me like Jesus preached, and revival fires will burn. Preach to me the necessity of not wearing sandals, and you're not ministering to my spirit. By no stretch of the imagination can this be defined as spirituality and holiness. Wearing certain things or not wearing certain things for a church's benefit in adherence to an obedience or a creed or a time period is not a gauge of spirituality; it's a gauge of bondage. Let's just put it where it's at.

We are counseled in the Word not to use our liberty as an occasion to the flesh (Gal. 5:13) and we are not to use it as a cloke of maliciousness (1. Pet. 2:16), but it's also fair to say that "rightly divided" with those scriptures is the one that says to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath set us free" (Gal. 5:1). If we balance these scriptures properly, we will find peace in that area. We'll find that it goes to the attitude of heart. Christ ALWAYS addresses the heart.

It would just be safer all the way around, wouldn't it, for us just to use the eternal truth found in the Word of God? No other foundation carries with it the eternal promise and unchangeableness of the definition of God. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). It's so very crystal clear to me when I look at these scriptures. The foundation has already been laid. It's eternal. It never changes. The truth does not adjust itself to fit the time period or society of any age ... truth is ageless. There are Christians living in this age who have never heard of D.S. Warner, and have no concept of the 1880s or 1930s or whatever time period you choose to address.

And if I wanted to use the statement, I could say, "The OLDER ministers taught us that everyone who is saved is in the Church, whether or not we know them." But somehow, you never hear that statement much anymore, do we?

I must confess to having difficulty with some folks wanting to define a 100-year-old definition of modesty down to the "jots and tittles of the law." They will hammer in every nail. They will dot every i and cross every t, to the point of telling you what kind and color of shoes to wear and how long to wear your sleeves and "down to HERE" should this be ... but many times some of the same people refuse to discuss 2000-year-old scriptures on the eternal definition of truth. Many times they will not discuss history other than the window of time in which they define their doctrine. And if they had to choose between a tradition handed down 120 years ago, and a scripture in red, they will choose the tradition and make it their definition of "truth." The danger element of this attitude is not in the individual's choice to believe and dress as they wish, but in the incorrect definition of God's Truth. We MUST have scriptures for what we believe if we are to rest in the safety of His Word.

To me, the definition of God's Truth is Basic Theology 101. That's the point of unity. If holy people can't agree on that definition, there's no constructive reason to discuss the issues of a time period because the most basic definition of eternal truth is different. To discuss the "issues" without a common understanding of God's Truth will only divide and damage people's faith, especially if their faith is built on a time period or a custom or anything other than rightly divided, specific scriptural references.

And I have come to this conclusion: I refuse to be sidetracked into divisive issues. I want to talk about unity in truth, when others would prefer to talk about division. I want to talk about Christ and the eternal definition of God's Truth, and somehow, the subject always gets redirected to something outward or traditional, by definition.

Now then, with the knowledge that I now have, I have to say that modesty is a very positive aspect of Christianity. Understand me clearly, AS IT WAS PORTRAYED IN THE BIBLE (not by a time period, not by a church leader and certainly not by any church), the concept of modesty is beautiful. It's inspiring. It's uplifting and encouraging, and it can help to point questing people to Christ.

There are two scriptures in the New Testament that deal specifically with modesty.

**1 Pet. 3:1-6** talks to husbands and wives, and says basically that a wife, being in subjection to her husband can win him by her chaste, modest conduct. And he says of those women living

with unsaved husbands, “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

If we take away all the negative connotation of what we’ve heard misapplied in the past, isn’t that a beautiful picture? It’s like Peter is saying to the women who lived with unsaved husbands: “Oh, if you only knew how to REALLY win your husbands! I gotta tell ya, ladies, if you’re going to win your husbands to the Lord, let it be known that he won’t be won because you do your hair extravagantly, because of the finery of your clothing, or because you look extraordinarily attractive in gold. No, if he’s going to be won at all, it’ll be because of the spirit of CHRIST living within you. That spirit of Christ, compared to the other, is truly ornamental. It’s better than the price and appearance of pearls! It’ll soften his heart. Your chastity, your devotion to him alone, the modesty with which you treat all other men; by these things your husband will know that your heart is to win him. He will see something different about you. He will see a quietness, he will see the meekness of Christ, he will come to prize those qualities above all the other ornaments of trifling measure, and as we read in another place, he may come to the place where ‘the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her’ (Prov. 31:11).

The term “modesty” in this scripture is applied to the situation of a woman winning an unsaved husband to Christ. “Decorous in manner and conduct,” is the definition. “Appropriate to the occasion,” goes right along with it. It has to do with the marital contentment between a husband and wife.

And somehow, we’ve refocused that scripture away from the graces of Christ within, and made that scripture our biblical proof of a strict, rigid rule of modesty. What a shame. I wonder if God grieves over the way we’ve used these scriptures as clubs to prove this point or that point. The FOCUS of it all is the meekness and quietness of the spirit of Christ and winning the unsaved to God. The sad thing is that the people who should be proving that point by the meekness of their own spirits are instead using it to gauge levels of spirituality, and denying fellowship even to those who possess that meek and quiet spirit which, in the eyes of God, is of the greatest price!

If we were to be legalistic about that scripture, we would have to say we can’t braid our hair (we’ve learned to explain that with our knowledge of history, haven’t we?), we can’t wear gold (we seem to have that one down pat, too), and we can’t even wear apparel!

You see? We seem to understand half of it just fine. Why, we KNOW Peter can’t be saying, “Don’t wear clothes!” Obviously it doesn’t mean that ... shame, I say. Shame on getting the part we want and “omitting the weightier matters of the law” (Matt. 23:23). Tithing the very spices, as it were, to the “nth” degree. Give 1/10 of your cinnamon to God. Measure the “doctrine of modesty” out carefully, drop by drop, grain by grain, and all the time, we’re omitting the “ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price.”

The point of the entire first part of this chapter isn’t about modesty as the main focus. It’s about wives winning unsaved husbands! The first verse makes that very clear. I like the part of the first verse that says the husbands may “WITHOUT THE WORD be won by the conversation



of the wives.” And the conduct that wins them???? It’s NOT what they wear, he says (“NOT the putting on of apparel, NOT the plaiting of the hair, NOT the wearing of gold or other ornaments”), no, no, what wins these unsaved men is the meek and quiet SPIRIT OF CHRIST!

It’s so clear. How can there be any doubt that he is comparing the two concepts? It’s so positive. It’s so encouraging and inspiring. Doesn’t it appeal to the heart strings and cause you to want to seek for that meek and quiet spirit? THAT’S the whole point of that passage of scripture. You see? That’s the “eternal truth” of the matter! Eternal truth changes the heart. This reminds me a little of the scripture that says something about the dead letter killing, but the Spirit giving life. The SPIRIT of this scripture points to the meek and quiet presence of Christ. But those adhering to the letter of the thing will pounce on the method that refocuses the primary meaning and say, “There, you see! By hook or by crook, no matter your heart’s condition, you can’t wear gold and be considered spiritual.” After all, doesn’t the scripture say very plainly, “Whose adorning let it not be...?”

And the fact that the scripture, two out of three points, says, “not the putting on of apparel” (hmmmmm), and “not the plaiting of the hair” (it doesn’t SAY right here in this passage that it’s talking about braiding in ornamentation; it just says “not the plaiting,” without qualification). But we pounce on the wearing of gold and use it to prove our point. Legalistically and logically, I say, you can’t have it both ways. Either it’s legalistic and logical all the way, or you read the history behind it ALL. Either you don’t get to braid your hair AND not wear gold AND not put on clothes, or you understand the spirit and history of the meaning behind it all. One or the other. You don’t get to use history for one while omitting the historical significance of the other.

Let’s look at the other scripture most commonly used. **1 Tim. 2:8-12** says, “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting, In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with broided hair, or gold or pearls, or costly array, But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence....”

Wow. You read the concept of THAT one, and you either accept it all as eternal truth applying to every society, or you look up the historical application for it all. It’s all one paragraph. And we know for certain that the thoughts are linked, because it says, “LIKEWISE....”

So when men pray, they’re supposed to pray everywhere raising their hands. If we’re going to accept that as eternal truth, that’s as much applicable to today’s society as women not wearing pearls or gold. Isn’t it? And women (it’s written here as a flat statement without qualification or explanation), women are not to teach. It’s inconsistent for us to explain one or two of the parts of that paragraph according to historical fact, and not look up the other.

If you explain ONE part of that scripture to the custom of the times, shouldn’t you explain the WHOLE paragraph as that?

Or you might say that the apostle here is discussing proper decorum for public worship services, because it talks about women learning in subjection, not usurping authority, etc., and



men are to pray with uplifted hands. Women were to adorn themselves in those places appropriate to the occasion. The custom of course was that they were to be in silence. That's an argument I've heard, and I think it has merit according to the tradition of the day.

But CONSISTENTLY, folks, either Christian men need to start literally lifting their hands when they pray, or else they need to stop preaching the modesty issue as literally as it says here. Either lifting your hands when you pray was a custom of the day, and therefore so was the modesty issue, or you take BOTH parts of the paragraph literally.

History, I think, tells us what we need to know concerning the things mentioned about women's apparel.



Paul says clearly, "not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." And we just can't get around it. We shouldn't even want to, if it's eternal truth that applies to every society and fits every generation. And if it's eternal truth, everything else will fit and dovetail. History will bear it out.

Therefore, in our quest for eternal truth, let's go to history, and we'll discover that women in those days literally spent HOURS getting ready for functions and social events. They had a maid specifically for the purpose of dressing their hair in elaborate coifs and curls and braids with decorations and jewels woven in them. Their hairstyles alone took hours to prepare. The pomp and circumstance of the day truly was lavish and excessive. Hair was PILED on the head, in several cases several inches high, as evidenced by the Flavian hairstyle to the left.



I think anyone would say that was excessive. I think anyone would say that was not "shamefaced." Their hairdos alone screamed, "Look at me!" They were intended to draw attention to the skill of the hairdresser and the time spent in preparation. It reminds me a little of the Victorian age, as well, and in Roman times hairdos were truly lavish.

And when the women went out the evenings to social gatherings of note, they used to literally bedeck themselves with jewelry. Their dresses and bodies could be covered with glittering gold and pearls (a very popular jewel in those days). The amount of jewelry you wore in those days exhibited your husband's wealth and social standing and rank, and vain women being vain women and society being what it was in those days ... well, you can guess the rest. The extravagance of the day was a social statement.

“Costly array,” indeed! Paul literally meant what he said when he used this phrase. Their “costly array” wasn’t just an expensive dress that they couldn’t easily afford, as some have heard preached; it was a lavish exhibition of wealth and social standing.

And I think anyone could reasonably say that that kind of extravagant exhibition of wealth and social standing was excessive.

But again, it seems to me that we overlook one of the points that Paul is making here, and that is that women professing godliness should adorn themselves, not with the excessive, lavish display of expensive jewelry or extravagant hairdos or decorated top to bottom with gold and pearls, but with good works! In other words, it’s almost like Paul is saying, “If you’ve got so much money, don’t wear it; do something GOOD with it. Give to the needy.”

See how Paul took something lacking in vain, silly women and turned it into a positive suggestion for women professing godliness to make a change in the society around them?

Now, this still doesn’t QUITE answer the question as to why the same men preaching such a strict standard of modesty don’t pray everywhere “lifting up holy hands,” but it certainly answers my question about what modesty meant to Paul and Peter and the women of their time, and I suppose that’s what’s important, because now I know how to apply the eternal principle of truth in my own life.

Going by the Bible and what we know to be historical fact, we haven’t yet addressed the question of women wearing pants (a question often asked by different people in certain religions). And we’ve used both the scriptures commonly used to address those questions, but somehow, those scriptures didn’t answer them!

The fact is, according to my understanding, neither one of these scriptures addresses the subject of women wearing pants. If I were going to answer the question logically, I’d have to look at history again. And my answer to the question has to be found in posing a question in return: why is it considered right for men to wear pants? When did they start wearing pants, and when did it become acceptable? When did pants become defined as “clothing pertaining to a man”? Because the Bible just doesn’t address pants that way.

Nope. It really doesn’t. Don’t quote to me the Old Testament scripture that says a woman isn’t supposed to wear “that which pertaineth unto a man” (Deut. 22:5). The men and women both wore robes in those days and there was very little difference between the attire of a man and the attire of a woman. That’s just historical fact.

But if you look at the literal translation from the Hebrew on that, that scripture says that a woman isn’t supposed to wear the armor of a soldier! Frankly, I don’t have a problem with that, because I think that might have something to do with the God-created difference between a man and a woman, which, in my opinion, makes sense.

But even if I DIDN’T think that, it’s Old Testament. And unless we’re willing to reinstitute all of the Old Testament rites and rituals for every topic we choose to address, we’re going to have to agree to use New Testament scriptures for New Testament situations. I think we all

understand that the Old Testament is used as a “type” for the New, but we no longer live under the law of Moses. We now live under the institution of grace, where Hebrews 8:11 says it’s not necessary for every man to teach his neighbor, because they will all have His Word written in their hearts and in their minds. Use the Old Testament to explain, at least in part, the doctrine of salvation. Use the types to beautifully illustrate the prophecies of Christ, but don’t use the Old Testament to apply specifically to New Testament teachings. Don’t misuse Old Testament scriptures and teach them as eternal truth. Because if we did that, we’re going to have a problem every time Christ breaks one of the traditions of the Pharisees.

Back to women wearing pants. I have to say that I cannot condemn with scripture those women who choose to wear pants. That statement right there is going to offend some folks, but I just can’t see how I can condemn with scripture what scripture doesn’t address.

The traditional definition of what some have defined as modesty goes back to what some have taught since the 1880s or other time periods. And in this case their teaching was based on the society of their time. Women didn’t WEAR pants in those days! It most certainly was considered by society to be immodest. That’s historical fact. I can’t argue with it. I’m bound by the same rules of logic that I apply to someone else’s argument.

BUT, and here’s where folks are going to differ: we have already established that eternal truth is defined by Christ in the Word of God. It’s not defined by the folks in the 1880s ... not in an eternal sense, anyway. We’re no longer studying or defending traditions in that time period; rather, we’re studying scripture and history. See the difference? We are to be rooted and grounded and settled in the truth - not custom. Not traditions. Not in a time period.

Both men and women wore robes in Bible times. If there is no biblical injunction against a man wearing pants, then I can’t logically find one for the women either. To say that pants define the legs, well, we have to say that pants define the legs for both genders. To say that wearing pants outlines the body, then my logic says that it would be WORSE for a man to wear them than a woman. To say that women wearing pants causes men to think ungodly thoughts, then I have to say again that the problem is with the man thinking ungodly thoughts. Do women not think ungodly thoughts? See how illogical the premise is?

Because men already wear pants, don’t they? And they wore them in the 1880s. BUT they didn’t wear them in Bible times! The question becomes: when did they start wearing them, and why did it become acceptable?

Well, I looked up the history. Men started wearing pants around the end of the Roman empire, what was called the Byzantine era, which was about 400 AD. The practice of men wearing pants started with the peasants of that era, which actually makes sense. They were the ones working in the fields, and so it just made sense that instead of “girding up the loins” as you bent over, since you were doing that all day every day, why not just invent a garment that had a split already? (When you wore a robe that came to the ground, if you wanted to really work physically hard, you would bend over, grab the BACK of the robe, bring it up through your legs and tuck the extra fabric in the front at the waistband ... thus actually bringing the robe up above your knees - try it with a bathrobe - the 1880s and 1930s definition of modesty would all be violated by this practice).

The practice of men wearing pants was first considered lower class and poor because it was done by the peasants, but I declare if that very practical solution didn't catch on soon with even the upper class, and soon all men started wearing pants even when they weren't working in the fields. And somehow, over time, the "custom" of robes changed into the "custom" of pants.

And we've gotten so used to this "custom" of men wearing pants, that we now call it modest. Note that wearing pants started out as a fad, and it was frowned upon and maybe even considered by some as indecent or fashionable. Over the course of time, that definition of modesty has done a complete 180! A completely opposite perception and definition of modesty exists in the society in which we live, in complete contrast to the society of Bible times. And now we define pants for men as modest. That is so much a part of our definition that we call men effeminate who wear dresses, and we say that is "wrong" and "immodest".

Now if you look at the history of fashion in clothing, oh, my. We would call some of the Victorian pants that men wore VERY immodest, wouldn't we? The pants of their day defined every muscle and sinew. Somehow, you never hear preaching on that. It's very applicable, in my opinion, because it belongs to the history of what different societies and times define as modest.

If we are going to define as "worldly" in today's society for a woman to wear pants, applying the same consistency of logic, scripture, tradition, history and principle, it is just as worldly for a man to wear them. Actually, using the logic of the legalist, it's probably WORSE for a man, given the body forms of both genders. Further, I have difficulty with the statement that says that if women wear pants, "there's just no difference between us and the world!"

Shame on us for even thinking that's logical or spiritual! Since when is the *weaker vessel* supposed to be the symbol of outward holiness to the world? There's *already* no difference between saved men and "worldly" men, and hasn't been for over a thousand years! Men have been wearing pants for so long, we've forgotten that in Bible times they didn't.

And if you look at pictures of Charles or James Wesley, acclaimed revivalists, you would discover shoulder length, curled hair. Again, certain time periods would be shocked.

And if I broaden my thinking even more, I would have to say that they define modesty differently in Africa than they do in America. Is the Western definition of modesty correct? How can that be, according to Bible times? Does an age in time define modesty? If so, we have a problem, because the Bible times defined modest as men wearing robes. See the logical difficulties we're having now? All because the Bible doesn't spell out any more than it does.

And so, well-meaning men, living within the spiritual understanding and framed in time by the societies in which they lived, defined it for us. The problem of course, is that such definitions are not "eternal" - they can't be, or godly men would still be wearing the robes of the Bible times!

Did such definitions apply in their time ... yes, according to the dictionary definition of modesty, I think so. I can see where the society of the 1880s, given their present-day situation

and the hypocrisies of the lingering Victorian era, would be shocked and refuse to consider such women wearing pants “godly.” (Given our knowledge of history, it seemed a little shortsighted to allow men to wear pants without addressing the subject or studying the history, but again, they were limited to the perception of their society). To me, it’s a very similar situation as when Paul told the women of Corinth that, given the society in which they lived, it might be wiser for married women to wear veils, because otherwise they would be mistaken for the prostitutes and worshippers of pagan gods who were freely walking the streets with no shame or modesty. “But,” he hastened to add, “We have no such custom...” (1 Cor. 11:16).

All that to say that we have to come to the conclusion that at least to a certain degree, the society in which we live defines modesty! I can prove that logically with the variance of dress length. In the 1880s the dresses went to the floor. In the 1930s they came to the knee, both time periods claiming modesty. Nowadays we’re somewhere in between, every named holiness group busily guesstimating lengths and widths and defining proper and acceptable standards of acceptable modesty in their subcultures with the judgment of their eyes. In the 1880s the hose women wear today were considered very immodest and seductive. My parents’ generation remembers when silk stockings were preached against as too near the appearance of bare legs. Nowadays it’s considered modest. In Bible times, nobody wore hose, and bare feet in sandals were modest.

Now then, if I carry that logic out ~ without looking for a cop-out, without looking for an occasion to the flesh or misusing my liberty in Christ ~ I have to come to the conclusion that first of all, how society looks at the definition of Christianity has something to do with the definition of modesty within that society. Let’s prove again the point that the biblical doctrine of modesty MUST apply to the society in which it lives, regardless of where that society finds itself.

Paul said, “Unto the Jews I became as a Jew ... and to them that are without law ... that I might gain them that are without law,” and it seems to me that he was alluding to the different customs and traditions of each, “that I might by all means save some.” (1 Cor. 9:20). The Greeks and Romans and Jews were VERY different people. When 5000 people got saved in one day from a crowd filled with Romans and Jews and Greeks and Gentiles, do you know what their test of fellowship was? Their testimony that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and by no other name could men be saved. You just don’t read anywhere in the book of Acts, or in any of the messages Jesus preached where a particular mode of dress was enjoined, other than what Paul and Peter call modest (and we’ve already shown the history of what they were addressing).

And if I were to personally comment on some church groups I’ve seen of the day, I have to say I’ve never seen anyone more obsessed about possible attraction to the opposite gender! It’s the people professing holiness gasping with horror at short sleeves or women wearing pants or skirts that are not quite long enough. Frankly, the world doesn’t care, and the end result of this is that we have refocused the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ to busily writing report cards, rating each other’s level of spirituality based on issues admittedly not even spiritual in nature.

Back to modesty. I looked up the word “modest” in the dictionary. The fact is that the dictionary definition of modest is absolutely wonderful. It means so much more than covered.

It also means not excessive or exaggerated. It means decorous in manner and conduct. It means not lavish or showy (this takes care of the “costly array” scripture, beautifully, doesn’t it?). It means having a humble or moderate estimation of oneself. It means appropriate for the occasion.

Now put that definition into the society in which we live (not the “subculture” of the church living with the 1880s definition with which we have surrounded ourselves in the past) ... but the SOCIETY in which we live. Come on. Fair is fair and logic applies. Just like Bible times had its society and measured the definition of modesty and the 1880s time had its society and measured the definition of modesty. Let’s do that with the year 2005. And let’s be careful in all of this to maintain the dictionary definition.

Look at the clothes of the Bible times. Generally speaking, they all wore the same thing, and Christians were part of that society. There were excesses, but modesty meant not extreme on either end.

Look at the clothes of the 1880s; the same logic applies. Generally speaking, they all wore the same thing (I looked at the fashion magazines of the day – they all wore their dresses to the floor and were covered from top to bottom!) Again, there were excesses. In their day, it was yards and yards of lace and ruffles all up and down, and modesty meant “not extreme.”

Now apply the logic and the principle to our day, and this is where we balk every time. And the REASON we balk is because the definition of modesty is ingrained in us as the 1880s or other time period’s definition. Isn’t it interesting that the definition of modesty is NOT ingrained in us as defined by the Bible times? We’ve been taught so long that the definition of modesty is no ruffles and lace, that we’ve forgotten that REALLY what was being said was “NO EXCESS.” Not lavish. Not extravagant -- which is the dictionary definition!

Let me state very clearly that I have no difficulty with the Bible standard and definition of modesty, but I do have a difficulty with the application of an 1880 (or any other specific year’s) standard in a 2005 society. Why? On the same premise that men wear pants today when they most certainly did not in Bible times. Same logic. Same reason. Same Bible principle. Same definition of the same word: MODESTY.

I say, let’s apply the same logic, the same reasoning, and the same Bible principle right alongside the history. Look at society today. Don’t quote to me the extremes because I agree that extremes are not modest. But generally speaking, apply the scripture and the logic and the history, and the conclusion we come to is inescapable.

Wow. So ... to have a modest house means that compared to all the other houses in the neighborhood in which I live, my house is about the middle in size and decoration. It means that I don’t live in the biggest and best, and I don’t live in the poorest and meanest ... see? It’s modest. Take that definition and principle to the clothing Christians are to wear within the society they find themselves.

Modesty, by definition, then is comparative to the society in which it exists!!! It means that compared to others, it’s not the grandest and most expensive, and conversely, it’s not the worst and most slovenly.

HOLINESS is not comparative; I understand that very well. Holiness is defined by the scriptures. We don't compare ourselves among ourselves, for those who do that are not wise (2 Cor. 10:12). And I understand that ungodly men and women do not define what is modest and what is not, because their natures have not been changed and so they don't have the Word and law of God inside their hearts and minds. BUT within the heart of a Christian, modesty can be defined by the Christ within and the proper application of the scriptures mentioned in a way that does not draw attention to either extreme and yet is pleasing to God within their society.

That's why the definition of modesty in the Bible can fit right inside the definition of "eternal truth." What Paul was describing to Timothy about the extravagance of the riches in society in his day ... those excesses just didn't fit the definition of modesty. What Peter describes concerning the very proper and behavioral decorum of a married woman trying to win her unsaved husband describes modesty and the meekness and spirit of Christ very well.

Those two scriptures, in that sense, apply in exactly the same way today, in my opinion. I can get my kernel of eternal truth out of those scriptures and be edified thereby, actively pursuing the meekness of the spirit of Christ and cultivating all such womanly attributes as will please Him.

I do not subscribe to the theory that women are supposed to be ugly to be modest. There's something very godly that rises up inside me at the abuse and misuse of that concept. When God made woman, He saw that His creation was good. Woman in her created state is pure and beautiful and she was designed by the Creator to have the form that she does. God put into woman something that loves beauty and causes her to be feminine and graceful. He MADE her that way. That's God's definition of womanhood! Women should never feel as if they have to apologize for what God put into womanhood at the time of creation. Granted, pride can take anything to excess and warp the purity of what God intended, but in the same way and to the opposite extreme, a wrong definition of modesty can damage or totally destroy something that was defined by God Himself! My point is that BOTH extremes are wrong; both extremes are immodest by definition.

It's the presence of evil and sin and the base nature of man that snickers and makes ribald remarks at the beauty of God's creation. Let women never be ashamed of the way they are formed and the beauty of womanhood. GOD created woman that way. They have no apologies to make for it. In my opinion, it's wrong to degrade or deliberately shame the beauty of a woman just because a man is not able to withstand temptation. Let us not forget the very pertinent fact that SIN perverted the purity of no clothing and was the cause for the institution of what we know as modesty.

Women will never be able to dress in a way that does not attract some man somewhere. Just as some men like very short skirts, some men like long skirts. Women don't adjust their standard of modesty to fit what man likes or doesn't like, because there will always be someone who likes what they've adjusted ourselves to! So since women can't win THAT battle, the thing to do is not dress in a way that deliberately entices and seduces, and yet retain the natural, very God-given beauty of the creation that God made. Modesty is not extreme either way.



It's so simple. To say that HOLINESS is what originally instituted a covering up really isn't as true as to say that it was because of SIN that modesty was instituted. Hmmmmm ... see how we've gone at it backwards again? So since we now DO have to deal with the sinful nature of mankind, let's certainly conform to the properly applied standard of modesty established in the Bible. But let's not add to it and let's not take away from it. I say give no place to the devil by either extreme.

In my opinion, some have evolved the definition of modest to be synonymous with voluntary ugliness. By definition, that's not modest. Modesty means not extreme or excessive. Modesty means appropriate for the occasion. Modesty means covered. Modesty means decorous. Modesty means not drawing attention to oneself. That fits, spiritually, doesn't it? We are, by meek and quiet spirit, to draw attention to the graces of Christ within! Does that mean that physical ugliness draws people to Christ? Of course not. It's "of the flesh" to think that. It's like reverse pride, or what some people call a pride in humility. And if we're going to absolutely objective, we'd have to realize that some have taken that to the "nth" degree as well. The plainest, ugliest woman among us? She's obviously the most spiritual, the most humble, the most respected. Let HER teach the younger women; she is such a good example of humility! I say that's ridiculous and spiritually immature judgment.

The opposite of spiritual pride is not ugliness. The opposite of spiritual pride is spiritual humility. They are spiritual traits of the inner man, not to be confused with the outward manifestation of a false humility. The spiritually humble will have a "modest" opinion of him/herself and will therefore not be extreme in either direction - not in clothing, not in practical application, not in spirit, not in HEART.

Remember, modesty means "not excessive". If our clothing screams, "Look at my holiness!" sorry, it's not modest, by definition. That's not "bearing the reproach for Christ," that's BEING a reproach! If it leaves a bad taste in the mouth rather than a pleasantness and good character, sorry, it's not modest. If it causes people to categorize you as "excessive" in the society in which you live, I don't see anything other than: sorry, it's just not modest. Apply the biblical, historical and logical argument to the society of today just like they did in Bible times. Very few people were attracted to the "zealots" of the day, but multitudes followed after the preaching of Christ.

By the way, how DID they tell who was a Christian in those days? By their clothes? Nope. They could define the *prostitutes* by their clothes ... yep. That was extreme. That was "immodest." But not the Christians! Apply the same logic. Apply the same definition. Christians ought not to be "defined" by their clothes; rather, Christians ought to define their clothes by the character of Christ! And every Christian will do that ... every single one of them. In every culture of the present world. If Christ is in the heart, He will address every part of your life.

Where we've gone wrong, in my opinion, is to define that dress code for everyone, which is not only arrogant and outside the parameters of the Bible definition, it's divisive because we're defining it according to our favorite specific time period. And I can prove that with the simple understanding that they had a different code in Bible times. We've gone at it backwards for so many years, we've forgotten the basic principle and definition of biblical modesty. We'll

take PRIDE in our humility nowadays, if we're not careful. We'll start defining the very essence of Christianity by a certain mode of dress. I say again, sorry, that's not biblical OR modest, by definition.

Can you wear makeup? Well, let's put it this way: if you're going to wear makeup to look like what even the world would call excessive, I think that might fit into the realm of what Paul was writing in 1 Timothy. Remember that modesty means "not excessive." It begs the question then; can you wear makeup in moderation? (there's an interesting word). I can say that it's not my business to go around with a microscope, making sure everyone's faces are clean and clear and all blemishes are clearly showing to prove your spirituality. Perhaps you will hear someone say, "Well, if no one can tell, why even bother to wear it?"

That I can answer. The answer to that is very simple: we're not discussing whether or not a person chooses to wear makeup. We don't take a rule of the a time period and prove or disprove it. No, we start at the foundation of scripture and build on THAT. We're not discussing spiritual authority and whether or not we give or withhold permission to wear makeup. That's the wrong premise. That's backwards. We're not defending or advocating the issue of makeup; rather, we're starting at the scriptures to find the application ... not the other way around. See how it works?

We're discussing the scriptural doctrine of modesty! The point is this: in my opinion I don't have the right to dictate to you whether or not women can wear makeup. Jesus didn't address it, and women wore makeup in His day. There's no way around the historical fact and knowledge of that.

What we DO have the right to do is discuss the scriptures on modesty. Let's not allow the discussion to be refocused. The refocus starts with the premise of whatever time period you choose: "Thou shalt not wear makeup," and then finds the scripture to prove its point. It's at these times that you hear, "The older ministers taught...." or "Holy women professing godliness don't...."

To me, that's the wrong foundation. Tell me what the SCRIPTURES say and build your argument from that point. My point is: study the scriptures to find the truth. Start at the foundation and build thereupon. Don't justify a structure that's already built.

History tells us that people wore makeup in Jesus' day. History does not tell us whether or not Jesus addressed this issue, but we do know that it was not important enough to write down for us to read if He did address it. History tells us men did not wear pants in Jesus' day. History tells us that it was customary attire for men and women to wear short sleeves or no sleeves in Jesus' day, and that was considered modest in that society. History tells us that it was customary for Roman men to wear one or two rings in public. The parable of the prodigal son that Jesus told tells us that the father put a ring on his son's hand when he returned home. JESUS told that story. That means that something about it has to do with the definition of eternal truth, which cannot be changed.

In my opinion, we have taken Paul's writings and the traditions of a time period to the "nth degree," making doctrines and tests of fellowship and judging levels of spirituality, excluding

those with the spiritual nature of Christ ... and I say that I am no longer willing to be a part of such a judgment, specifically for this reason: I haven't found scripture to support the issues I've already disproven with historical fact.

I believe the Bible is a safe guide. I believe I will be judged according to the Word of God, and the knowledge of that causes me to busily apply myself to the study and correct application thereof.

My testimony to you is this: I have the presence of Christ in my heart and my life. Regardless of what anyone thinks about my present level of spirituality, I cannot resist sin and temptation without Christ. That's a foundational truth to me. God helping me, I will never let it go.

Further, I will fellowship anyone with the same testimony. If they are saved and if there is the presence of Christ in their hearts and lives, I am biblically compelled to rejoice at the blessing of what I see God doing. Regardless of custom. Regardless of tradition. Regardless of opinion differences. Regardless of dress code. Regardless of people's definition of "worldliness" (that's a whole other subject that I have found fascinating to study - did you know that "worldliness" is defined very explicitly in the Bible? It is defined in 1 John 2:16 as "the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, and the lust of the flesh." Take yourself to the logical, historical and scriptural conclusion of that; it's a fascinating journey).

I am aware that this document is very long and that it applies itself only the scriptural and logical and historical studies of only a small part of the questions some folks have asked.

Now let me minister just for a little bit to some folks emotionally. I think I can imagine very well the turmoil and questions and confusion that must come with a willingness to objectively study truth as stated in the Bible, especially from the standpoint of one to whom the definition of truth has been misused. Once you question one part of the definition, and find out it's been misrepresented, it HAS to call into question everything else that it has been associated with. It has to. If you tell me that not wearing sandals is part of the definition of eternal truth, and I discover by the Bible that you are wrong, it causes me to question everything you have defined for me as truth ~ and in my opinion, rightly so.

See, this is what happens in cases like that: folks then have the right to question the dress code, because one part of it was clearly shown to not be Bible-based. They have the right to question someone's definition of spirituality. They have the right to question anything ever taught to them, and if they discover that any part of that is not true, then they start questioning the things that they've always thought were eternally true. What is "spiritual" then? But more than that, they question every time someone has ever preached to them. See? They're to the point of questioning every interpretation someone has put on anything in the Bible. Because they don't trust that person's or that church's motives anymore. Because they're not sure they can trust that person's "truthfulness" anymore. Because when someone said to them that not wearing sandals was part of the definition of "truth," basically, they were saying that came from God. And they've looked in God's Word and found that not to be so!

And if they despair enough, they might even ultimately question if God Himself exists anymore. It's not rebellion, I say; sometimes, it's *despair* for those folks to be asking the

questions they're asking. And sometimes they ask the questions just because they genuinely want to know what truth is.

There are answers to those kinds of questions; I say, go back to the truth you know. Go back to the basics. Study what Jesus actually came to do. Reaffirm to your heart the fact that you do indeed have Christ living within. Re-study the biblical definitions of sin. Go back to the comforting words of Jesus. Learn that all those who are heavily laden may freely come to Him and He will take away their burdens and their cares, and if you feel His presence blessing on any one of those lines, hang on to that.

Some folks' faith has been damaged. That means that it will be very spiritually healthy for them to discover just what their faith has been built on. You see, the problem was ALWAYS people. It NEVER was God. Forget the people, for a while, I say ... and concentrate on essence of the gospel ... which is Christ Himself.

Religious people have this problem, and their problem is that any religious discussion brings with it the unspoken "right" and "wrong" of any topic.

Let's just say that some folks have been abused. Everything they're telling me is like it was custom-built for the definition of spiritual abuse. It's exactly the same symptoms as an abused or molested child. Think about those symptoms. A reluctance to trust. An inability to relax and be comfortable in anyone resembling the presence of the abusers. In some people it manifests itself in an excessive desire to please and gain the approval of those perceived to be in authority. Hunger for love and friendship, and yet an awful fear of getting too close to someone because of suspicion and mistrust. A low self esteem that requires answers that they're afraid to trust themselves to come to the knowledge of without input.

And what they're doing right now is recovering from that. Let me say this: take your time and recuperate as long as you need to. Don't let anyone put guilt on you with a specific, rightly divided scripture. Go back to the Word and find your healing ONLY in Christ. Not in my acceptance of you. Not in anyone's definition of you. Not in anyone withholding or giving you permission to do ANYthing for which they don't have rightly divided scripture.

Some will say that they are tired of even the name of their church because of the affiliation and memories now associated with that. Let me help you with that ... I know you know that the name "Church of God" is in the Bible. Frankly, I also like the name Church of Christ, Christian Church, Assembly of God, and names very similar, but I don't necessarily like all the doctrines associated with those names. See?

And I've got to say that I understand the disillusionment and inevitable distaste that goes along with seeing someone highly professing the name of a church because it puts the label GOD right on top of everything they teach, and it indicates His ownership, etc. But you know what I really think? I think certain groups should more accurately call themselves "Church of D.S. Warner," or "Church of C.E.Orr" (fill in whatever name is appropriate for your situation), because it's those men's teachings and time periods that they're actually basing their definition of "truth" on. Everyone admits that we are not living by the Bible time's standard of modesty, or we would all still be wearing robes. We don't even live by Bible customs. But we hang on

tooth and toenail to every custom and standard of modesty that we can of the 1880s or the 1930s and call it “reformation truth.” While I understand the concept, what I really want is BIBLE truth.

The scriptures are safe. Everything else is changeable. The song says, “on Christ the solid rock I stand ... ALL OTHER GROUND is sinking sand.” Someone else’s definition of holiness is sinking sand. The arm of flesh - either yours or someone else’s is sinking sand. A counsel of ministry cannot take you through the judgment shock. Only the Word of God is the solid rock. It’s not wrong to want truth. It’s not wrong to insist on scripture. It’s not wrong to study and correctly apply and rightly divide the Word.

The Pharisees, when presented with the clear choice between Christ and the traditions, chose their traditions. If it comes down to a choice between a scripture and a tradition, **choose the scripture**. Follow and dig for the pearl of great price. You may find out as never before that you have to sell everything you have, but the pearl is worth it. CHRIST is worth it.

Given some folks’ history, I think it’s perfectly normal for them to feel more comfortable around people not professing anything, or people whom we called “sectarian” in the past. I have discovered they still have a hunger and thirst for God, but they have difficulty swallowing the self righteousness that comes along with some people professing godliness, but showing a lack of love. It makes perfect sense to me. You would be surprised at how many times I’ve heard the same sentiments expressed by sincere people all over the country. The one thing I have found in common with all of them is this: if indeed they were spiritually abused, they are so turned OFF by the hypocrisy that they want nothing to do with anything resembling that abuse ever again. I say that every single one of them needs to know this: you are not alone. And you need to know that God wants more than anything to give you the desire of your heart.

Find yourself in Christ. You know the story of Jesus going and getting the one lost lamb? That “lost”-ness doesn’t just have to be limited to the definition of sin, you know. I’ve felt “lost” without ever sinning. I’ve been so at the bottom that no one else could find me there, but along came Jesus, right down to the bottom of the pit where I was, and He lifted me out. Men will fail you, institutions and religions will let you down; that’s why we preach CHRIST. I have discovered that to put my faith in people is to be disappointed. Churches and organizations might not wish to discuss eternal definitions of truth. Friends or family members may not understand.

Ah, but Christ? His voice I know and a stranger’s I will not follow. That comforts me. He promised He would not leave nor forsake me. He told me that He would guide and lead me into all truth and only truth. He told me that if I sought Him with all my heart, He would be found of me. He told me that it doesn’t matter if all men say evil against me falsely for His name’s sake; His grace would be sufficient for me. And He told me that He would love me forever and that He would never disappoint my soul. He told me that He is faithful. He promised to take me to heaven, no matter what anyone else thought, so long as I was careful to follow only Him.

Now THAT I can do. I can leave all the theological differences behind as I follow Christ. I can make sure they don’t affect my relationship with HIM, and that’s the whole crux of the matter right there. No church worship for me; Christ is too big in my vision. I won’t give up because

of what people say. I refuse to lay down my testimony of salvation because some people have difficulty with my understanding of the truth. CHRIST in me is the hope of glory. My salvation comes from Him. My deliverance comes from Him. My calling comes from Him. He loves me and I love Him and without apology, that's the foundation of my faith. It took me a while to get there, but once I found that understanding, and I'm satisfied that the presence of God is in that understanding, I can stand in the knowledge of that "blessed assurance."

I've been singing a song the last day or two: "I've had many tears and sorrows. I've had questions for tomorrow. There've been times I didn't know right from wrong. But in every situation, God gives blessed consolation: That my trials only come to make me strong...."

Oh, and listen to the chorus like you've never heard it before:

"Through it all. Through it all, I've learned to trust in Jesus, I've learned to trust in God. Through it all, through it all, I've learned to **DEPEND UPON HIS WORD.**"

That, after all, is where God's Truth is found.

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