

# The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,  
holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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## Clothes and Cultures

Greg Gwin

Everyone realizes that cultural factors DO influence our decisions about the clothes that we wear. For instance, a person living in America today would look odd wearing the kind of clothes that Jesus and the apostles wore – and vice versa. Cultural “norms” have clearly changed.

The Scriptures show us that two elements ought to be considered as we make choices about our clothes. First, we have the absolutes of God’s law. Throughout the Bible we find that something called “nakedness” is condemned. This is not complete nudity. The term is used to describe the display of certain parts of the body such as the thigh (Ex. 28:40-43) or breast (Ezek. 23:18-21). “Nakedness” has been associated with sin and shame in every dispensation of time. Beyond this, the Christian has the stricter command to maintain “modesty” (1 Tim. 2:9,10). This requires MORE than simply avoiding “nakedness.” A modest individual will certainly stay far away from the limits of “nakedness.” Other New Testament instructions order us to abstain from “uncleanness” (moral impurity – Thayer) and “lasciviousness” (unbridled lust, wanton acts or manners – Thayer) (Gal. 5:19-21). These Biblical absolutes must be carefully observed.

As a secondary consideration, we should observe the dictates of our culture to the degree that we can without violating God’s absolutes. For example, a man in America would look completely out of place wearing a (modest) skirt. But, not so in Scotland! God’s word suggests that we ought to be mindful of such factors and honor them so that we do not diminish our ability to influence others with the truth. In 1 Cor. 11:1-16 Paul taught that the Corinthian custom of women wearing a veil should be observed by the Christians who lived in that place at that time.

Some have mistakenly argued that if a certain manner of dress becomes an accepted “norm,” that it is therefore approved by God. Such reasoning has given rise to the wide-spread wearing of shorts by Christians. Others wear swimming suits, tennis outfits, athletic uniforms and similar scanty attire. The argument is made that swimming suits are “accepted” as normal on the beaches of Florida, incredibly short skirts are “accepted” as normal for women playing tennis, etc.

These folks fail to take their ‘logic’ to its full limit. Reasoning after this fashion would lead one to conclude that full nudity would be alright – so long as all members of society ‘accepted’ this as the norm. (By the way, there are some places in this world where such IS the “norm!”)

We must remember that – when it comes to the clothes we wear – the dictates of culture are secondary and subordinate to the clear limits that are taught in God’s word. Cultural factors may lead us

to wear MORE clothes (as the veil in Corinth) or a different KIND of clothes (tunics vs. long pants), but these cultural factors can never be used to justify wearing LESS than God expects and demands.

## Have Too Much "Positive" Preaching?

Greg Gwin

**W**e readily acknowledge the importance of positive preaching. Brethren need the "comfort of the Scriptures" (Romans 15:4). Paul sent Tychicus to the Ephesians so that he could "comfort your hearts." Timothy was dispatched to Philippi (Philippians 2:9) and Thessalonica (I Thessalonians 3:2) in order to comfort the brethren. Clearly, this kind of positive encouragement is essential. The Bible has much to say about it. No one denies this.

There are, however, some among us who are determined to only preach positive things. They want to specialize in positive preaching and to emphasize only those things which (they claim) are designed to "build up" the hearers. They will not deal with controversial topics, and they refuse to spend time rebuking the sins and weaknesses that exist in men's lives.

This "positive" approach fails to present the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), and at least two serious consequences will follow:

Christians will not be admonished to root out the evil that is in their lives. We must "put off the old man" (Colossians 3:9). We will never become the "new man" that we ought to be (Colossians 3:10) until we have been instructed adequately in this regard.

Christians will become conditioned to only want this sort of teaching and preaching. After having a steady diet of positive emphasis, brethren will lose all tolerance for forceful preaching on important doctrinal and moral issues. The apostle Paul anticipated such a scenario: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (II Timothy 4:3).