

Validating the Gospel in Modesty

Modesty in Dress

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The following message was delivered on Sunday morning, February 24, 2008 in the adult Sunday school class at Trinity Baptist Church in Montville, New Jersey.

Now, I want to begin by saying that during my 45—this July will be 46—years among you as one of your pastors, it has been my joy to pastor a people who both in their individual lives and in their corporate life have both validated and illustrated the gospel that is preached from this pulpit, that was preached from pulpits set up in several different schools, from the pulpit that is now in the multi-purpose room that used to be in what we affectionately called the cracker box.

Now let me explain what I mean by the statement that you have individually and corporately both illustrated and validated the gospel that has been preached. Over the years visitors would come among us and after they had been among us would speak to one of us in leadership and say, “Pastor Martin or pastor so and so, I was tremendously impressed as I came to worship among you to see how your people came in quietly, prepared their hearts, entered in whole heartedly to the worship.”

You were validating what was preached from the pulpit that the gospel creates earnest, passionate, serious worshippers. They would also comment on the behavior of your children. One woman, a very well-known leader in evangelical circles worshipped with us here one Lord’s Day a number of years ago and was so impressed with the way the children behaved themselves. And she inquired of one of our people, “How is it done?”

And she was told, “Well, we believe it can be done. We start early and we stick with it.”

You were validating what was preached from this pulpit that the gospel creates men and women committed to godly family life and to parental guidance and government of the children.

Pastors have come for our pastor’s conference and stayed in your homes. And some of them have said they never saw gospel ordered homes until they came into some of your homes. They didn’t see regular family worship. And they went away challenged. Why? Because you as a people have both validated and illustrated the gospel that is preached from this pulpit.

Another area that has marked our life together which has also both validated and illustrated the power of the gospel in days gone by has been the decided modesty and the

distinctive femininity of the dress and the demeanor of the women in this church, the decided modesty and the distinctive femininity.

However, in the past year or two there has been a marked erosion among us in both of these areas. We, as pastors, have seen it with our own eyes. We have had men come to us vexed in their hearts and in their minds as they struggle to maintain mental purity before God, eyes that do not become the inlet of lust on the basis of what they see.

Furthermore, there have been members of the church who have expressed their sense of vexation and concern that we have lost ground in this area of the decided modesty and the distinctive femininity of our women. And, as your pastors, we have spent much time discussing, praying, wrestling with such questions as: How should this be addressed? What forum should it be addressed in? How explicit shall we be without crossing the line of good taste and holy discretion?

Well, a couple of weeks ago we called you as a church to pray that God would guide us. And I believe that my standing here this morning is a direct answer to your prayers, that God gave us a sense of an answer to our wrestlings, how to address it, what forum within which to address it, how explicit to be. And I stand before you with a good conscience this morning convinced that it is God's time to address it in this forum and to be as explicit as I purpose to be in the unfolding of this matter.

Now let me begin with three introductory concerns that will kind of set the field, clear the field of misconception as I then come to the heart of these issues.

The first introductory concern is this. In all that I say this morning I am addressing the members of this congregation and their families. Should God be pleased in the next hour to bring among us 20 raw 21st century pagan women dressed with miniskirts, cleavage almost down to their belly buttons or with slacks of stretch material that hug their thighs and their buttocks and their crotch, we are not about to meet them out in the foyer and say, "You can't come in here and listen to our gospel in that way," and then hand them a shawl and say, "Wrap this around you before we welcome you into this place." We would welcome them exactly as they show up among us unless they showed up naked. We would welcome them to come and sit under the ministry of the Word of God, to sit under the gospel.

However, as they sit among us and as they look around and as they interact with the people of God in this place whom we are confident would be lovingly aggressive to interact with them, to introduce yourself, to show a genuine interest in them as image bearers of God, sinners, yes, but image bearers of God with the dignity and nobility of an image bearer, that it wouldn't take long for them to draw this conclusion. If I begin to believe what is preached in this place, if I begin to internalize this gospel that is preached from that pulpit, I will begin to dress like the women in this place who are marked by decided modesty and by distinctive femininity.

In other words, we take them as they are with a view to seeing them become what God says the gospel will make them.

So I want to make that very clear, lest anyone go out and say, "Well, the elders, they don't want sinners to come and..."

No, no, my friends. Don't go there. Please, don't go there because that is not where we are.

The second introductory concern is this. In addressing the members and their families—please listen carefully—I am not saying that we as elders believe that the women

members of this church are deliberately seeking to be seductive or sexually provocative to the men who sit among us or that the women who are members of this church are willfully, deliberately and defiantly seeking to blur male and female distinctions in your dress.

Now I have kept my eyes on my notes because I worked out the wording of that statement very carefully and purposefully. We, as your elders, do not believe that there are women members of Trinity Baptist Church deliberately seeking to be seductive or sexually provocative to the men among us or that you are willfully and deliberately and defiantly seeking to blur male and female distinctions in your dress.

However, without in any way taking back one word of that statement, we do believe that society has so degenerated in these two areas of decided modesty and distinctive femininity and is presently squeezing some of you into its mold contrary to the will of God revealed in Romans 12 and verse two, being not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

We believe that the world's pressure is being evidenced in this place in the dress of some of you. Therefore, I come to you this morning with a burdened heart and with a bent knee seeking under God to sensitize your consciences in this area of gospel fruit.

You will notice how from my opening statements I will continually use the terminology, validating and illustrating the power of the gospel. And that is the issue that is at stake. It is the gospel that is at stake.

Yes, the men among us need to take seriously Matthew 5:28 which says, "Whoso looks to lust upon a woman, whoso looks with a view to lust after her, has committed adultery already in his heart." Any man that willfully goes from what he sees to what he would desire to have will answer to God for his sin. That is clear from the Scriptures.

However, my dear sisters in Christ, there are two other passages that need to be brought into the orbit of your deepest concern as a woman.

The first one is Luke 17:1-2. "And Jesus said to his disciples, 'It is impossible but that occasions of stumbling should come.'"

In other words, the world being what it is, the human heart being what it is, occasions of stumbling are going to come. "But woe unto him, woe unto her through whom they come. It were well for him, for her, if a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were thrown into the sea rather than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble." The little ones are those who believe in him.

And, my dear sisters, I beg of you to listen to this passage. Any man that lusts after you will answer to God for his mental adultery. But you will answer to God if you have provoked it by the manner in which you are dressed.

Second text of Scripture is Romans 14 and verse 13. "Let us not, therefore, judge one another anymore, but judge this rather, that no man, no woman, put a stumbling block in his brother's way or an occasion of falling."

That is what we are to judge. Am I in any way in the manner of my dress putting an occasion of stumbling before one of my brothers in Christ.

Here, ladies, get hold of this principle. Purity of motive does not cancel the effects of your appearance. Purity of motive... You may have a heart as pure as the untouched new fallen snow on a hillside out there this morning, no desire whatsoever to provoke a man to lust, to seduce a man. But the purity of your motive does not cancel the affect of your appearance.

You may have a heart as pure as the new fallen snow, but a bared thigh with a long slit

up to here will provoke the lustful thoughts of a man. And God says to you, members of Trinity Church, I said you are the ones whom I am addressing primarily, God says, “Judge this rather, that no woman, no man put a stumbling block in his brother’s way, or an occasion of falling.”

Mrs. Al Mohler, wife of a man to whom God has given literally national prominence with his syndicated radio broadcast and his blogs, she said this and I want you to listen to her. “Don’t blame the men around you who happen to be unfortunate enough to be within sight and say, ‘They need to get their minds out of the gutter.’ Proverbs 30 and verse 20 says, ‘This is the way of an adulterous woman. She eats and wipes her mouth and says, ‘I have done no wrong.’” Ladies must remember what battles men face to stay pure as they are stimulated visually by women. They should never have it flaunted in their faces.

And to have it done at church is an abomination.”

That is a woman speaking to her sisters in Christ.

Then the third introductory concern is this. I am speaking for your pastors, including pastor Chanski. This material has been run by pastor Chanski and he, with pastor Smith and pastor Carlson share this burden. I am speaking as your pastors, as those responsible for this local assembly and concerned only with this local assembly. You may go to other churches and you may find expressions of dress that are contrary to the things that I am going to articulate this morning and my response to that is the words of Jesus in John 21. “What is that to you? Follow thou me.”

We leave to other pastors to answer to God what they do in the sphere of their responsibility. We are concerned with what we do in this sphere of our responsibility. And if you find that some of the things you hear this morning are not going down smoothly, we plead with you. Don’t seek out others who share your reservations and form a little grouching club. Come to us with an open Bible and show us where we have gone beyond the Scripture and we will stand in this pulpit and make alterations or retractions whichever are necessary.

Well, those are my three areas of introductory concern. Now I come, first of all, time permitting, to an appeal for decided modesty of dress.

If you were to look up the word “decided” you would find that it is defined as, “Definite and unmistakable and clear cut.” In other words, I am making a pastoral appeal not for pressing the edge of the envelope, but for dress in the house of God on the Lord’s Day that is marked by decided modesty. In other words, no rational man or woman would be able to say anything other than, “That woman is dressed modestly.”

Now, open your Bibles with me, please, as we look, first of all, at the biblical basis for our concern. 1 Timothy and we start in chapter three verses 14 and 15. We are going to come to 1 Timothy chapter two and verse nine and 10, but we start with 3:14-15 because here Paul tells Timothy why he wrote and what he wrote and when he wrote it.

“These things I write unto you hoping to come unto you shortly.”

Paul is desirous that he might very quickly be able to return to Ephesus.

“But if I tarry long, here are the burdens on my heart. These are the things that I would address were I with you now, if I come shortly. But if I don’t, Timothy, be my alter ego. Address them for me. But if I tarry long that you may know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. Timothy, I am writing specific directives concerning behavior in God’s house, God’s church which he has constituted both the foundation and the support

of the truth.”

In other words, the Church is pillar and support of the truth. She is to confess the truth of God. She is to embody and be shaped by the truth of God. Both element are absolutely crucial, that the Church must confess the pure gospel of the grace of God and the Church must validate and illustrate that gospel in its life and in its conduct. And only then is the Church the pillar and the ground of the truth.

Now, what are the things, then, that pertain to behavior in God’s house? Well, after chapter one where he says in verse three that he left Timothy behind to sort out some doctrinal aberrations, he starts his list of church concerns in chapter two and verse one. “I exhort, therefore, first of all. Here is my first concern and that first concern is that the Church be marked by this world encompassing gospel framed life of prayer. That is Paul’s great burden in verses one to seven. And then in verse eight he is concerned that the male members of the Church take the lead in that prayer concern and prayer perspective.

“I desire, therefore, that the men pray in every place lifting up holy hands without wrath and disputing.”

Then he goes on to address women. We are going to pause for a woman and pass over verses nine through 15. And then in chapter three he takes up the biblical standard for elders and for deacons and says, “These are the character traits that must mark those who are to be set apart in those offices.”

And nestled down in the midst of this behavior which Paul says ought to be the mark of the people of God, go back to verse 15. “If I tarry long that you may know how men ought...” And that little particle of necessity, the Greek word *dei* (die), there is an element of ought-ness. “And, Timothy, you are responsible to make sure that these standards are implemented in the Church at Ephesus, that the Church at Ephesus be marked by world encompassing, gospel shaped prayer, that elders and deacons be marked by these requirements and also, Timothy,” now we come to verse nine, “in like manner, that is, I desire,” the pressure of that verb *boulomai* (boo’-lom-ahee), “I desire, in like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel.”

Let me read four translations of that verse.

The NIV. “I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety.”

ESV. “Likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control.”

New King James Version. “Like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation.”

New American Standard Bible, “I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly.”

Now, I want to read a very simple summary of what the words in the original mean and what they point to and here I quote John Stott in his excellent commentary on 1 Timothy. First he tells women to dress modestly with decency and propriety. It is not possible to distinguish these words from one another in a clear cut way. That is why you have these various translations, but the general impression is clear, that women are to be discreet in modest in their dress and not to wear any garment which is suggestive or seductive. This establishes a universal principle.”

Then in the following verse where he gets very specific about hairdos, et cetera, what Paul is emphasizing there is that they should not be neither seductive nor in any way suggestive, nor should they be ostentatious. Dress in a way that immediately when they

walk by every head turns and you look at the hair piled up on their head in a certain way or their garment adorned in such a way that they are ostentatious, showy so that when you come to the house of God occupied with God this woman walks by and you become occupied with her.

And after commenting on those verses, then Mr. Stott summarizes by saying, “What Paul is emphasizing is that Christian women should adorn themselves with clothing, hairstyles and jewelry which in their culture are inexpensive, not extravagant, modest, not vain and chaste, not suggestive.

So, for us as your pastors to be upfront and graciously confrontational and proactive concerning the matter of modesty, does not put us off the charts of our duty. What would you think of us if we gave up the centrality of world encompassing prayer shaped by the gospel in our life together as a church, gave it up in our prayer meetings, gave it up in our worship services here? What would you think of us? When the text says, “I will first of all that prayer, supplication, intercession, giving of thanks be made for all men,” what would you think of us if we no longer insisted on the biblical standard for elders from chapter three? What would you think of us if we gave up what Paul says about the teaching, ruling ministry in the Church and that women are not to teach the mixed assembly, women are not to govern and we began to entertain the thought of women elders? I ask you. In Christ’s name, what would you think of us if we permitted this?

It is going on in many churches. What would you think of us? Well, in the same way, nestled in these same directives is the apostolic mandate that women must dress modestly in the house of God. And we are not going to avoid the insistence that that will be true in this house of God.

Do we carry your conscience? I hope we do.

So that is the biblical basis for our appeal. We have no alternative.

Now, then, secondly, I want to identify the 10 things that most frequently tempt men to think unclean thoughts. This is not an exhaustive list, but I have run it by my fellow elders. I have run it by some others and I believe I am accurate in saying these are 10 triggers to lustful thoughts.

Let me use this image. These are like magnets in a women’s dress, magnets that draw men’s eyes to parts of their bodies that if they are to maintain purity of mind they don’t want their minds drawn to these parts of a woman’s body. Here are the 10 magnets to men’s eyes.

Number one, dresses or skirts with lengthy slits. When a man’s eye sees a slit that comes up to the knee or above, he thinks, “Oh, a few more inches and what would I see?” That is the way a man’s mind works. If your fathers have not told you this, daughters, it is true. If you husbands have not told your wives this, shame on you. You know it is true. This is a magnet to men’s eyes, dresses or skirts with lengthy slits.

Secondly, dresses or skirts which hug the buttocks. I don’t know a better word to use. I asked my brethren. What do I mean? My shirt is not hugging any part of my body except, perhaps, this is hugging my wrist. A skirt that hugs the buttocks is a skirt that not only comes down over the buttocks, but back in to the back of the thighs.

When you see pictures of hookers one of the marks of a hooker, she always has her buttocks hugged, whether it is a mini skirt, whether it is jeans, whether it is tight slacks, her butt is always hugged because that is what she is selling. And that is what she wants me to buy. It is a magnet to men’s eyes.

Thirdly, any upper garment that hugs the breast. And I don't know a better way to describe it. It is one thing for your garment to come down over and hang loosely upon the breast, but to hug the breast, to shape and isolate your breasts becomes a magnet to men's eyes. People should not receive an anatomy lesson in mammary glands when they look at you women. It is a magnet to men's eyes.

Fourthly, unbuttoned blouses, low neck lines or cleavage on any upper body garment. You know what I mean by the buttons. You have got a blouse that buttons up to here. You not only unbutton here and here and here and here, but you unbutton down to one button away from bearing your bra. And when a man sees only one button to go his mind goes, I wonder what is under that one more button.

I am looking down right now at a young woman who has everything up to the last button. It opens the collar, that's all. And a man's mind only sees that is an open collar. Come two buttons down and what he sees and what he thinks is an occasion of stumbling to him.

John Piper, ministering to thousands out in Minneapolis, he is burdened about this issue and he has posted an article on the internet, *Is Modesty an Issue in the Church Today?* Listen to Mr. Piper.

"Necklines are an issue these days. Everywhere I turn, at the airport, at the church the necklines are plunging. Some fashion designers in the world are communicating to women today that the thing to do is to have your neckline split extend too low. Unbuttoned blouses, low neck lines on the shirts that may be under your jacket, cleavage of any kind on any upper body garment. And also, women, remember. In the church setting you are found at times bending over, picking up a child. Bend over and look at yourself in the mirror before you leave the home. What may seem to cover you well standing, bending over does not cover you sufficiently to be dressed modestly."

Number five, another magnet to men's eyes. Sleeveless blouses or dresses with large arm holes. You look down on your sleeveless dress and you see nothing but your shoulder. But if it is a large arm hole, a man sitting behind you looks up at the pulpit, sees through to your bra. And his mind goes where he doesn't want it to go. It is immodest to appear in the house of God with sleeveless blouses and dresses with large arm holes. If the arm holes are tight enough that no one can see in, then that is your liberty before God.

Number six, low rise skirts or pants. This is the style made popular by Christine [?], Brittany Spears, Jennifer Lopez, these sex pots, sex pots, flaunting their bodies in their gyrations with their so called music. They have made this style popular with the skirts that barely hang on the hip bones and with the jeans that barely come up and cover the crack of the buttocks.

I have been in situations with Christian women where I have had to look at the crack of their buttocks because of the low rise jeans, skirts or pants.

Number seven, see through clothing of any kind, clothing that does not cover your under garments to the point where no one can see them. Some of you need to know the function of a camisole.

Number eight. Skirts and dresses that are just plain too short. Difficult when you are seated to adequately cover yourself. And then you get engrossed in something in a public setting and you are not keeping your knees locked together and before long the legs are spread a bit and anyone just happening to glance can see clean-up to your pants. That is not modest. It is immodest. It becomes a magnet to men's eyes.

Listen to Mrs. Mohler again. She says, “If you arrive at church dressed in such a way that by the end of the service the people around you by no fault of their own know the color of your underwear and they have watched you do a shimmy dance as you try to get your too short, too tight skirt to go under you, there is a big problem.”

I like her humor. You have to do a shimmy dance.

But seriously, women, that does not meet the biblical standard, “I will that the women dress modestly.”

Number one. Slacks or pants or jeans—hear me carefully, women—that hug the buttocks, the thighs and the crotch. And crotch is not a course word. The dictionary defines it as the place where the legs fork from the human body, the seam or place where the legs of a pair of pants meet.

And here I speak from a deeply burdened heart. This is one of the areas, dear women, where the immodesty has taken over in Trinity Baptist Church. Some of you showing up with slacks that I have never asked you what the material was, but they either have spandex in them or they are a kind of material that is a stretch material that hugs the buttocks, comes around and hugs the thigh and presses up on your crotch and the crack of your buttocks and you have no idea what that does to many a man when he sees it. You draws the eye to the most erotic part of your body. That whole area becomes a magnet for men’s eyes.

And the apostle says, “I will that the women dress modestly.”

And then, number 10, a bared midriff and back. This whole present style where tops come down and just barely, if at all, meet the low rise jeans. You may look in the mirror and say, “Well, I am fully covered,” but all you need to do is to reach here a couple of inches of your belly are showing. All you need to is bend over and people can see your back and usually the top of your underwear and it has happened right in this assembly.

I have seen it Wednesday nights in the prayer meeting to my embarrassment. Thank God, not to my lust, but to my disgust that this would be tolerated in Trinity Baptist Church.

One man said to one of his elders, “I saw a woman bend over. I could see the top of her panties and I wondered what it would be like to put my hand down her back,” a godly young man, passionate to be a holy young man and caused to stumble in this place.

Now am I saying that I negated what I said earlier? No. I am loathe to believe that the women involved in the two incident I have just cited are deliberately seeking to cause men to stumble. But, my dear sisters, the purity of your motive does not cancel the effect of your dress.

And I am going to do something right now. I am going to stick my neck out. I am going to ask the men seated here this morning and the boys, if you find any one or more of these things that I have called magnets for your eyes an occasion of struggling with purity of mind, I want you to raise your hand. Keep them up, men. Keep them up, please, high.

Now, my sisters, look around. Come on, 360 degrees. Keep them up, men. Women, turn around. Girls, I am not looking at you. I won’t embarrass you. Get a good look at how many.

Put your hands down now, men, of your dear brother are struggling with these issues. I am not a dirty minded old man trying to rob you of your Christian liberty. I am a pastor determined that in this place, women shall appear modestly to the glory of God and

to the good of their precious brothers.

So, then, having laid out the biblical basis of our concern, secondly, having identified the 10 magnets to men's eyes, what are you to do as a woman?

Well, here is my counsel. Let me work down through my notes. Number one, repent. Repent of the ways in which you have unwittingly and carelessly allowed yourself to be sucked in by the world's standards and have caused occasion of stumbling to your brothers. Ask God's forgiveness. Go to the Lord Jesus Christ and say, "Lord Jesus, wash me in your precious blood. I had no idea that those tight slacks that are so comfortable caused my brothers to sin. Oh, Lord Jesus, forgive me."

I trust that many of you will have dealings with God today in the way of repentance.

"Lord Jesus, I had no idea that that shirt that hugged my breasts and shaped them was an occasion of stumbling. Lord Jesus, forgive me. Cleanse me. Wash me in your precious blood."

Repent. Go to Christ in faith. Find the purging of his own precious blood.

"If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"And then bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."

Go to your dresser drawers, go to your closet and remove anything and everything that has one of these 10 magnets embedded in it.

You say, "Pastor, I will show up in the same outfit for the next five weeks." Hallelujah! It is modest. We will rejoice.

And if anybody comes up and says, "Hey, don't you have another...?" You come and tell us and we will get on their case. We will find some reason to get in their face.

I am serious, dear women. Have dealings with God in the way of repentance.

Secondly, pray for and labor to cultivate a sensitive and well instructed conscience before God on this issue. Pray for and labor to cultivate a sensitive and well instructed conscience before God concerning this issue.

I would be willing if I asked for a show of hands, I am 99 and 44/100ths percent certain that there are not a few of you women... As I have gone down these 10 things you say, "I have never realized. I have never realized. I never realized."

But now you have gotten instruction. To him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin. You can't claim ignorance after this morning.

And I am looking out now and I find one or two women's faces hidden from mine and I don't like that. I like to see your eyeballs. So if you have got a head in front of you, I am looking over here so nobody will know who I am talking about. If you just move a little bit, I want to see your eyeballs, women. I want to know am I striking home to your conscience this morning?

You pray and ask God to help you to cultivate a sensitive, well instructed conscience before him concerning this issue. Pray in the Luke 17 passage. Pray in the Romans 14:13 passage. Listen to the words of John Piper.

"I plead with the Christian women of the world that they take into consideration the things they are saying by what they are wearing. Dress to please the Lord. And you can still dress beautifully. You don't have to look stupid or out of style to be modest. I know this is the case because there are hundreds of very attractive women at our church — excuse me—who dress modestly and don't cause men to stumble. And they don't look out of style."

That is my plea to you. Repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Pray for and labor to cultivate a sensitive, well instructed conscience before God concerning this issue.

Thirdly, welcome the quality control of husband, father, mother, the people of God and your pastors. Welcome the quality control upon your modesty that should come from your husband, from your father, from your mother, from the people of God and from your pastors. You may judge something to be modest because you look at yourself through your own eyes. Someone else is looking at you through a different set of eyes.

Now, if there are some men who will only believe you are modest if you show up like a Muslim women, we will take those men aside and deal with them. We are not advocating you all go out and get a black gunny sack, cut a hole in it and stick it on your head, not at all. But we need the quality control. You men, you know what are the magnets to your eyes. Monitor what your wife wears. It hurts me at time when my wife comes up into my study and says

“Well, Al, what do you think about this?”

“No, dear. It looks nice on you, but it looks too nice on you.”

You be the quality control over your wife. She is not a man. She doesn't think like a man. You can't expect her to think like a man. But you are a man, aren't you? Well, begin to act like one. Quit yourself like a man and say it sweetly. Say,

“Dear, the slit goes up to high.”

“Oh, but honey...”

“Dear, the slit goes up too high.”

“Oh, but honey.”

“The slit is too high.”

In other words, you start out nice and sweet. If she resists you, you meet her head on and say, “You will not leave this house with that skirt as long as I am your husband. End of discussion.”

Now, let me ask you men if you have got that kind of holy testosterone. If not, go to God and ask him to give you a good shot of it. Be sweet. Be gentle. Be kind. Be sensitive. But if she meets with you whining and starts to wear you down, stand your ground. Quality control of husband, father for the daughters and mother. You have every right while your children are under your roof, not only do you have the right, you have the responsibility that they dress modestly. It is your responsibility.

Now I want you to listen to another one of your sisters in Christ. This is Mrs. Mohler. I love this woman. I have never met her, but I hope to meet her some time. She has got moxy.

“Mothers of sons have often asked me, ‘What can we do? We don't have daughters we can influence, but we have sons that are looking at how your daughters dress.’ Men of all ages struggle with this. It is our job as mothers of daughters to make sure our daughters' appearance are not causing males to stumble or causing females to point to them as examples in order to make their case.”

Richard Baxter, the great Puritan preacher said to women, quote, “And you must not lay a stumbling block in the way of men nor blow up the fire of their lust, nor make your ornament snares. But you must walk among sinful persons as you would do with a candle among straw or gunpowder or else you may see the flame which you would not foresee when it is too late to quench it,” end of quote.

And what do you do with respect to your daughter that pushes you and pushes you with regard to a certain standard? Well, she has, again, some very helpful counsel. Time is going so we will have to skip it, but basically what she says is, “You are the mother. You are the father. You stand the ground and you tell your daughter, ‘In this house, this is off base. This is off base. No discussion. End of the issue.’”

But then we need the quality control of one another. Some of you don’t have husband. You don’t have father. But the Scripture says in Hebrews 3:13, “Exhort one another while it is called today lest any of you be hardened through the what? Deceitfulness of sin.”

Sin is deceitful. You can think, “Oh, I am dressed perfectly modestly.” But sin has deceived you. You are not dressed modestly. You need the quality control of God’s people to draw aside lovingly and say, “My dear sister, I know the last thing in the world you would want to do is cause any man to think unclean thoughts. Isn’t that true?”

“Well, of course.”

“Well, I think maybe you ought to maybe reconsider this or that which you are wearing,” in the light of “graciously exhort one another.”

And then if there is any pattern of immodestly—notice what said—a pattern of immodestly that does not yield to husband, to mother, to father, to the people of God, then, your elders are going to deal with it. And we are going to confront you and say, “Our Bibles say that behavior in the house of God mandates modestly of dress among the women. You have a pattern of immodesty. It must stop.”

That is our responsibility. The text that has been haunting me for months as we have wrestled with this. And my wife will tell you and my fellow elders. I have been vexed. I think it has contributed to some of this headiness over the past months, been vexed. Lord, I see what is happening. I know something must be done, but how, in what forum, in what way? Lord, give wisdom.

And the text that keeps thundering in my ear, the prophet Isaiah spoke of the false prophet and he said these words. “They are dumb dogs that cannot bark.”

Dumb dogs, a watch dog that when the thief comes he sits there and licks his hand and he doesn’t bark.

I said, “Oh, God, don’t let us be charged with being dumb dogs that cannot bark,” that cannot bark and stand against the tremendous pressure that the world is bringing upon your dear women to get you to compromise or to be insensitive to the biblical standard with respect to the matter of your modesty.

Well, I have just dealt with modesty. I haven’t given my appeal for distinctive femininity of dress. That will have to wait. It is already 10:30 and I don’t want to squeeze the other material so that it is not dealt with adequately. So we will have to leave that for another forum and trust that God will guide us and, perhaps, as my thinking on the matter ripens and matures I will do a better job than I would have had I covered the material this morning.

So what have we done? I gave you three disclaimers. We are not saying that if God brings raw sinners among us dressed like sinners we are going to reject them till they change their clothing. That has never been our posture. It will not be as long as Christ rules in this Church. I have said I don’t believe that the women in membership in this church—I am not speaking for some of you who are not members—I believe there are some of you young women who are seeking to be cutesy seductive. In other words, if one

of the men of this church propositioned you, you wouldn't like that, but you like being cutesy seductive. You know what the tight skirt does to the eyes of men and you like it.

But I don't believe that is true of any of the members. I trust I am not being overly optimistic. But I am seriously, pastorally saying we do not believe that is true. And, thirdly, by way of that introductory concern that we laid before you, I can't remember what it was and I don't have my notes in front of me, so I will have to leave it.

But then I gave you the biblical basis for our concern, 1 Timothy. I gave you the 10 magnets for men's eyes. You saw in many, many hands of your brothers, I am not barking up a tree with no coons up in the tree. And then I sought to lay before you what you ought to do in the light of what you have heard this morning. Repent, pray for a sensitized conscience and then plead with God to be sensitive to the quality control of husband, father, mother, the people of God and your pastors.

God grant that it will not be long before any one coming back into Trinity Church or coming for the first time will see the gospel validated in the decided modesty of the women of this church. The gospel is at stake, my dear sisters. Let's preserve it in its substance, in its doctrinal purity and in its powerful application to take women out of the society where immodesty is the order of the day and make them attractive, tasteful, modest, Christian women to the glory and to the praise of our God.

Let's pray.

Father, we are so thankful we have your Word as a lamp to our feet and a light to our pathway. And we pray that that Word will powerfully work among us in the issues that we have addressed this morning. Hear our cry and answer us for Jesus' sake. Amen.