

The Sin of Bathsheba

THE SIN OF BATHSHEBA

And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. II Samuel 11:2

We hear a great deal about the sin of David, but seldom does anyone mention the sin of Bath-sheba. And it is true enough that David's sin was very great, and Bath-sheba's very small. David's sin was deliberate and presumptuous; Bath-sheba's only a sin of carelessness. David committed deliberate adultery and murder; Bath-sheba only carelessly and undesignedly exposed herself before David's eyes. We have no doubt that David's sin was great, and Bath-sheba's small.

Yet it remains a fact that Bath-sheba's little sin was the cause of David's great sin. Her little sin of ignorance, her little thoughtless and careless exposure of herself, was the spark that kindled a great devouring flame. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" (James 3:5) On the one side, it was only a little carelessness—only a little thoughtless, unintentional exposure of herself before the eyes of David. But on the other side, adultery and guilt of conscience; murder and the loss of a husband, besides the death in battle of other innocent men; great occasion for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; the shame of an illegitimate pregnancy, and the death of the child; the uprising and death of Absalom; and the defiling of David's wives in the sight of all Israel; and the sword never departing from David's house. (II Sam. 12:11-18) Again I say, "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" None of this great evil would ever have taken place if Bath-sheba had only been careful not to display her body in the sight of a man. Observe: she neither designed nor foresaw any of this evil, yet she was the occasion of it all. She did not display herself purposefully or wantonly: she only did it ignorantly and thoughtlessly. Yet the results of her little sin of ignorance were just the same as if it had been purposeful wantonness.

Now the reason for my writing all of the above is this: there are many Christian women today who are guilty of the same carelessness as Bath-sheba was. Godly women, who would recoil with horror from the very thought of wantonly displaying their bodies, do nevertheless carelessly and thoughtlessly display themselves habitually by the manner in which they dress. I do not write to accuse them of intentional wantonness. I believe they are as innocent of that as Bath-sheba was. But neither can I altogether excuse them from blame in the matter. The whole world is well aware that certain kinds of feminine dress are provocative and tempting to the eyes and heart of a man—and are Christian women alone altogether naïve and ignorant? This can hardly be; and yet I do not write to blame them, but to instruct them—provoke them to love and good works, to make them thoughtful where they have been thoughtless before, to make them careful for the spiritual welfare of the weakest of their brethren, where they were careless about it before, to make them wise where before they were simple.

The first thing which must be understood is that nakedness before the eyes of others is wrong. It is wrong in a man, and it is wrong in a woman. When Adam and Eve sinned, God made "coats of skins, and clothed them." (Gen.3:21) The sole reason for His clothing them was to cover their nakedness, as the Genesis account makes plain. Observe, he clothed them with coats. They were already wearing aprons, which probably covered as much as, or more than, much of the clothing which is worn today, yet in spite of their aprons they were still naked in their own eyes, and in God's. And God did not clothe them with shorts, or swimming suits, or "tank tops", or "halter tops", or anything of the sort—nor with jackets either, but with coats. He did not clothe Eve with a coat, and Adam with a pair of shorts. He clothed them both with coats—whence we may assuredly gather that nakedness is just as wrong in a man as it is in a woman.

But if it is equally wrong for a man to expose his nakedness as it is for a woman, it is not equally dangerous, for men are much more susceptible to be tempted through the "eye-gate" in this particular, than are women. But when a woman exposes herself only a little, she becomes a fiery dart to tempt the heart of every man who sees her. Like it or not, this is the plain fact. And because this is a fact, you are not at liberty to dress any way you please.

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body...as well as in your spirit."
I Cor. 6:19-20

But if you dress in such a way as to expose your body, or parts of it, to the lustful gaze of every man who chooses to look at you, you certainly do not glorify God in your body. And if you fear God and love your neighbor, you dare not dress so. You dare not thus use your body as an instrument of unrighteousness to allure the eyes, and tempt the hearts of men.

Many men are wicked, and will lust after you in spite of anything you can do to prevent it. They have "eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin". (I Peter 2:14) Should you therefore help them to sin? Should you put further temptation in their way? Will God excuse you if you do?

Other men, godly men, are not wicked, but only weak. David was not wicked. He was a man after God's own heart. But in the presence of an unclothed woman, he was weak—and it would be a rare man who was not. Though the brethren in Christ are not wicked, yet they may be weak. And the devil does all he can do to weaken them further. They are forced to live in a world where they are continually bombarded with sights which are designed by the enemy of their souls to weaken their morals and destroy their purity of heart. And must Christian women help the devil to do his work? Must they make themselves a temptation to their brethren even in the congregation of God? O that you could understand the fierce and bitter conflict in the souls of your brethren, when you provoke them by the careless display of your body. Oh, that you could hear their pleadings with God for help and deliverance from the power of those temptations. Oh that you could see their tears of shame and

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repentance when the temptation has overcome them, and they have sinned with eyes and heart and mind. Never again would you plead for your right to dress as you please.

The fact is, you have no such right. You have no right to destroy, by your careless dress, the brother for whom Christ died. You are bought with a price, and are not your own. You are duty-bound to glorify God in your body—to clothe that body, not as you will, but as God wills. And a little of real love for the souls of your brethren would remove for ever from your heart the desire to dress as you please. For, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities, (that is, the weakness), of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." (Rom. 15:1-3) Christ was willing to deny Himself all of the glories of heaven, and bear the reproaches of ungodly men in order to save your souls, and will you plead for your right to please yourself in your dress? Can you not deny yourself a little of comfort to save another man's soul? Can you not bear a little reproach for being "old-fashioned" or "out of style", in order to help another in his battle against sin?

You may think that I am making too much of too little. You may suppose the case is not so serious as I have represented it to be. But consider: you are a woman, and cannot experience the passions of a man. You have your own passions, but they are not the same as a man's. They are, (generally speaking), not so strong as a man's. Neither are they so easily inflamed as a man's. Nor are they excited in the same manner as a man's. If you are ever to understand the masculine side of this question you must simply take a man's word for it. You cannot experience it yourself. And the plain fact is, a man's passions are easily provoked by the sight of a careless woman, as was plainly the case with David and Bath-sheba, when he beheld her washing herself. Most men, 'tis true, will be better able to resist your allurements than David did Bath-sheba's. They will not go so far as David did. But how do you know that they can resist the thought and desire of it? How do you know that they do not sin with their eyes and heart and imagination? There is great pleasure to a man in merely looking, even though he goes no farther. You know very well that the Bible says, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart", (Mat. 5:28), and will you say that this is not a serious matter? It is serious, for it is sin, and sin is serious. Sin blights and deforms and ruins and destroys and damns. And if you would know just how serious a matter this is, you need only read the very next verse, which says, "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." Here is a most solemn statement in the Bible concerning the seriousness of sin, and it is spoken with reference to the very sin which you may so lightly and thoughtlessly occasion by your careless dress. This is not a light matter, and you dare not treat it lightly.

At this point you may say, "Amen, all true; but I do not need to hear it, for I dress modestly." Are you quite sure of it? If you follow the fashions and practices of this age, you assuredly do not dress modestly, for modesty is ignored by many of them, and purposefully thrown to the winds by many others. And it may be that you, being a woman, and not able to see yourself through a man's eye, are unable to perceive that which may really be tempting and provocative in your own dress. God would have you to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves". (Mat. 10:16) But if you unthinkingly dress as the rest of the world does, you are assuredly neither wise nor harmless. Not wise, for however ignorant and innocent you may be, you are following a system of fashion which is designed by wicked men to break down and destroy the morals of men. Not harmless, for however little you may intend in it, you thus make yourself a fiery dart in the hands of the wicked one to tempt every man who sees you. You will pardon my plain speaking, then, if I give you some specific instructions in order to make you wise. That being done, I have confidence that the godliness of your own heart will make you harmless.

As said before, the obvious design of God in making clothing for Adam and Eve was to cover their nakedness, and any clothing which fails to do so cannot be right. Bare backs, bare midriffs, bare legs and thighs, are wrong—wrong in the sight of that God Who clothed Adam and Eve with coats to cover their bare bodies. Shorts, halter tops, swimming suits, and anything and everything else which intentionally leaves you partially exposed, have no place in the dress of a woman professing godliness. Whatever the rest of the world may do, you are bound to do right. And what ever the rest of the church may do, you are bound to do right. And the things that I have just mentioned are so obvious and so flagrant a violation of the purposes of God in clothing you, that there ought not to be a moment's question as to what is right. But, (alas), the standards of the church are sunk so low in our day that there are actually Christians and preachers who will defend such things. They will actually defend what they call "mixed bathing"—that is, men and women freely mixing together in a state of almost nudity. Have they no shame? Have they no sense? I do not believe they will defend such things when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ. If they have no shame now, they will have some then. Meanwhile we need say no more about forms of dress which so obviously thwart the purposes of God. Let us turn our thoughts to some things which, while less flagrant, nevertheless violate the evident purpose of clothing.

Short Dresses

You need no one to tell you that these are wrong. The whole world knows that they are provocative to a man's eyes. But women who profess godliness, women who ought to know better, will simply follow the current fashions of the world, whether long or short, without any reference to what is right. Others will quibble about how short is too short. Rather than making very sure their dresses are plenty long, they will make them as short as they dare, while still persuading themselves that they are long enough. You may stand at attention in front of your mirror, and persuade yourself that your too-short dress reveals nothing, but only let you sit down, only let

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you bend over, only let you get in or out of a car, and what a spectacle of indecency you present. And whether you design it or not, and whether you like it or not, exposed legs and thighs are a provocation to lust in the eyes of men.

For the same reason you ought to have nothing to do with those skirts which are slit half way up the sides. Who cannot see that the design of such a fashion is to expose your thighs to view? Or is it to enable you to walk? So much the worse if it is. If your skirt is so tight that you cannot walk without cutting the sides, by all means throw it away, and get something with a little more material. We shall have more to say about tight clothing further along. Do you ask how long your dresses ought to be? See that your legs are covered below the knee, front and back, while you are bending over or sitting down, and you will be safe enough. But be careful here: it is not enough that your legs should be covered only from the vantage point of your own eyeballs. When you bend over or sit down, the front of your dress will naturally hang lower, so as to cover more of your legs, but the back will be drawn up so as to cover the less. Very often I have seen women sit down and carefully arrange the front of their skirt so as to cover the topside of their thighs from their own view, while leaving the sides and undersides of their thighs exposed to the view of anyone sitting across from them. And this will be unavoidable if your dresses are so short that they only cover you down to the knees while you are standing erect. If you would be safe, your dresses should cover you well below the knee in all postures.

Low Necklines

Again, the whole world knows very well that these are a great temptation to the eyes of a man. And if you are a godly woman, no doubt you would never dream of purposely wearing a neckline too low. But you may be doing it nevertheless, through thoughtlessness or ignorance. It is not only low necklines which offend, but also large or loose ones. You may stand erect in front of your mirror wearing a large or loose neckline, and think it perfectly modest. But only bend over a little, so that the material of your blouse falls away from your body, and immediately the most provocative and tempting part of your anatomy is exposed to the view of any man who happens to be standing in front of you. The same is true, of course, when you dress with the top two or three buttons of your blouse unbuttoned. This looks provocative, even if nothing were actually exposed by it. It looks seductive. It looks to a man as though you must design to expose yourself and tantalize his passions. What else can he think? For what other purpose could you leave two or three buttons of your blouse unbuttoned? Do you say it is for comfort? Because you cannot bear a tight choking collar? I believe you could learn to bear it, as the men of the world do in order to display their stylish neckties. But waive that. It may be legitimate to leave your blouse open at the neck for comfort's sake, and it may even be modest, (depending upon the garment), provided you unbutton one button only. There can be no possible reason or excuse for leaving two or three buttons open. It will add nothing to your comfort. It is simply following a wicked fashion of a wicked world. Your collar will no more choke you with one button open than it will with three. One button open will always be a great plenty for comfort's

sake, and with some blouses it will be too much. If you can leave your top button open, yet not expose yourself when you bend over and the material of your blouse falls away from you, very well. This may depend upon the nature of the blouse, as well as upon your own build. But if there is any danger of exposing yourself, you had better button all your buttons. You might set the top button down an inch or so, and make another button hole for it, and thus provide for both comfort and modesty. You can scarcely be too careful here, because it only takes little matter to provoke a great fire, and when a man sees a woman with the top two or three buttons of her blouse open, he will probably conclude that it is her intention to tempt and tantalize men. Is this the impression you wish to give? If not, button your buttons, snap your snaps, and zip your zippers. And if you happen to bend over a little in front of a man, and he sees you exposed because of your large, loose, low, or open necklines, unless he is a very rare man, he will be tantalized by the sight, whatever you may think or intend. Therefore you cannot do as the rest of the world does. Let your neckline be high enough and small enough to be in fact a neckline, and not a chest or shoulder line, and you will be safe. Note well: this means that if the neck hole of your garment is large enough to slip over your head, it is probably too large. Your necklines should be of the sort that you can close up with buttons or snaps after you put the garment on.

Sleeveless Blouses

Sleeveless blouses always reveal too much. Little as you may be able to understand it, the area beneath your arms, and the parts of your chest or your back which immediately adjoin them, are very attractive to a man; and a sleeveless blouse cannot help but display these parts. You must also bear in mind that others will see you from all angles and in all positions, and the armholes of a sleeveless blouse will often allow a man to see inside the blouse, especially when your arms are uplifted or outstretched, thus displaying part of your chest. The same is true of a short sleeved blouse which has very large or loose sleeves. This may be perfectly modest as long as you keep your elbows at your sides, but as soon as you raise your arms you create an opening through which a man may see inside your blouse, and this is a great snare to his heart. Remember you are a woman, and cannot see yourself as a man sees you. And if only the weakest of your brethren might be tempted by your sleeveless or loose-sleeved blouses, ought you not to deny yourself a little comfort or fashion, and conceal your body a little better for his good?

Sheer Clothing

It ought to be unnecessary to say anything about clothing which is so light or so sheer that a man may see through it. The obvious and undeniable design of such clothing is to thwart the purposes of clothing, and expose your body rather than covering it. This you cannot help but realize. Everyone else knows it also, and when a man sees such attire, what can he think but that it is your intention to display your body to his sight? And yet so low are the standards in the church today that it is not uncommon to see Christian women wearing see-through clothing. If you have been

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guilty of this, your first business is to repent—to reject at once everything which is obviously and purposefully sheer. You ought to be careful also not to wear any material which is so light or so thin that it may be seen through when you are in direct light, such as in front of a window. Finally, reject any material of a very coarse or loose weave; wear clothing not netting.

Tight Clothing

Dress which explicitly reveals your form is as bad as that which reveals your nakedness. The whole world knows that such dress is provocative—notoriously and proverbially so—and when a man sees a woman dressed in tight clothing that reveals and displays every curve of her form, you will cause him trouble of soul that would only be exceeded by sheer nakedness. The world calls tight clothing "revealing", which is exactly what it is—and as such it is an obvious violation of the purpose of God in clothing you. Every woman who professes godliness, therefore, ought religiously to refuse every form of dress which reveals and displays her figure.

Specifically she should avoid sweaters, sweat shirts, tee shirts, and anything made of knit, stretchy, or soft clinging material, unless perhaps the fit is very loose. Woven material, with some stiffness and body to it, will conceal your form much better. This matter is of the utmost importance, especially for a woman who is large in the bust. A woman's indiscretion in this area is one of the surest ways to provoke a man's unlawful interest, and that is true whether she is actually exposed, or only exposed by virtue of wearing thin or clinging material to cover her top. This is a fact which the world knows very well. Twenty-five years ago the world was singing a popular song about the pleasure of seeing a woman in a sweater and a tight skirt. Now the natures of man and woman have not changed in twenty-five years.

When a man looks at you he should see your clothing, and not the shape and form of everything which is inside it. Sweaters, tee shirts, and knit blouses in their vary nature cling to your body and reveal and display the shape and form of it. And you must take a man's word for it that the shape and form of a woman's body, even though it is somewhat covered with clothing, will draw his eyes, and kindle unlawful thoughts, just about as quickly and surely as the sight of her actual skin. I do not say that it is impossible for a woman to wear a sweater or knit top which is not too revealing. What I do say is that the sweaters and knit tops which American women usually wear are almost always too tight. They might do better if they would wear their sweater several sizes larger than they usually do. A woman who is very small in the bust may fairly easily wear sweaters which are loose enough to conceal her form, but the larger her bust, the more difficult this will become. A woman who is large in the bust had best avoid knit clothing altogether. She will have a hard enough time of it to conceal her form without wearing sweaters. I cannot emphasize this too much or insist upon it too strongly. A woman—especially a woman who is large in the bust—must take a man's word for it, that the sight her bust may take away a man's heart in a moment. If she would please God and walk in benevolence toward men in this fight against sin, she must dress in such a way as to hide and conceal her womanly

form in this particular. She must therefore wear loose-fitting blouses of woven, (not knit or stretchy), material. If she wishes to wear a sweater for warmth, she can easily wear a loose cotton blouse over, (not under), it, and be warmer yet. True, this will not be stylish, but no matter about that. I am writing for godly women, who would rather please God than the world.

Understand also that you will accomplish little by exchanging tight sweaters for tight blouses. A blouse of woven material in its very nature will conceal your form better than a sweater, but it may still be provocative enough if it is too tight. You ladies who are overweight often offend in this, by wearing the same clothes you would if you were twenty or thirty pounds lighter. And it is nothing but foolish pride which keeps you from wearing a larger size. Your blouse should never be stretched tight across your bosom, but should have slack enough in the fit that when a man looks at you he sees the blouse, not the form of what is inside of it. For this reason you should also learn to avoid provocative positions and postures. By this I mean any position which makes your bust prominent, or stretches your clothing tightly over it—such as standing with your hands on your hips and your elbows thrown back, or yawning and stretching with your back arched. You should likewise refuse dresses with what is called an "empire waistline" which girds the garment around your body immediately below the bust, instead of at the waist. The unavoidable effect of this is to prominently display your bust. Again I tell you that any man knows very well what it is to be tempted by such sights—and it may take only a moment's involuntary sight to turn a man's heart or imagination into unlawful channels.

Slacks

Here we have come to a bone of contention which divides churches, families, and friends. The background is this: historically in our culture, the men have worn pants, and the women dresses. This is an undisputed fact, which is embodied in the proverbial expression that a wife who runs the house "wears the pants in the family". The woman's "liberation" movement, which is more than a century old, has sought to put the pants on all the women, figuratively speaking. It has sought to "liberate" the woman from her God appointed place of subjection to the man, and to give her "equal rights" to do whatever the man may do. The spirit of this movement has also put upon the woman's body the man's clothing—namely, slacks. And the church has followed the world in so doing. Many of the older and stricter men of God, less influenced by the world themselves, take a strong stand against women wearing pants. The younger set, most of whom have grown up wearing slacks themselves, and who probably know nothing of the historical background of the question, can see no point in the stand which their elders take, and so regard it as narrow-minded and petty. "The slacks which I wear", they say, "were made for women and are not men's clothing".

On the other side it may be urged that God made neither slacks for Adam, nor a dress for Eve, but coats for both of them. Yet Deuteronomy 22:5 certainly assumes that the same clothing is not to be worn by both men and women, and it is also certain that

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historically in our country the slacks have been the men's clothing. It may be urged that the culture has changed, so that slacks are now acceptable clothing for women also. Yet when we consider the sinister forces which have wrought to change the culture, we may plead that the change is no way recognized by God, but is an abomination to Him. "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto, (or resembles), a man... for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God." I say no more than this, for it is outside the purpose of this article to settle this controversy. I do not ask here, is it wrong in the eyes of God for a woman to wear slacks? I ask, what effect are her slacks likely to have on the eyes of men?

And first, in their very nature slacks are apt to reveal and display the form of a woman. Women contend for modest slacks, but who wears them? In the very nature of the case, it is difficult to make a pair of modest slacks, (especially for a woman who has a full figure), and as a matter of fact, it is an extremely rare thing to see a woman in slacks which are not too tight. Why is this? Why may men wear slacks which fit loosely, while the slacks of women must cling to every inch of their legs and loins? Verily because it is the god of this world who inspires these styles, and he knows his business only too well. He knows only too well that it is a snare to a man's heart to have displayed before his eyes the form of a woman's legs and loins. These a woman ought to keep carefully concealed at all times, and there is nothing that will do it so well as a dress. A loose-fitting skirt or dress, provided it is not too short, is also the best possible clothing with which to conceal the form of the woman's lower anatomy.

But some women suppose that because their slacks are not skin tight, they are therefore modest. Well, now, suppose that your slacks are loose enough that they leave a little space between the material and your body. Still they basically display the form of your legs and loins. That is the nature of the garment, and can hardly be avoided. And further, as soon as you bend over, those "modest" slacks of yours will be stretched just as tight over your form as the skin tight slacks which other women wear. So unless you are so thin that you have no form with which to attract a man, or so fat that your form will only disgust him, (and you are no competent judge of this), you had best leave slacks alone. Though you may not be able to understand it, (for the sight of a man will probably not effect you in the same way), it is the sight of the form which will provoke temptation in a man. What a man's touch is to a woman, the sight of a woman is to a man. This is plain enough in the Bible account of David and Bath-sheba, and every honest man will tell you the same thing. You must believe it on the word of a man, though you may not be able to understand it. The sight of the form of your legs and loins will tempt the heart of man, and it is the nature of slacks to display the form of those parts.

Some, who believe it is wrong for a woman to wear slacks, but who wish to accommodate their ladies for engagement in the more masculine type of activities, recommend the wearing of culottes, which are sort of a cross between a skirt and slacks. Our only question concerning them is, Are they modest or immodest? They may be either, depending upon several things. If they are fashioned so as to look like

a loose-fitting skirt, and are long enough, they may be as modest as a skirt. Unfortunately, many of them more nearly resemble slacks, or even shorts, than a skirt. If yours are long enough and loose enough to keep you well covered and concealed in all postures, they may be acceptable as a modest skirt.

Objections

Enough for specific instructions. We must next answer some objections.

First: "What right has this fellow to prescribe all of these legalistic rules for women?" I answer, If we lived without sin in the garden of Eden, you could dress just as you please, or not dress at all, and hurt no one by it. But in this world you cannot; and if you do you will only be contributing to swell the tide of sin. I write for godly women, who want to do what is right, but who are not likely to know how to do right without some instruction from a man. I seek only to give you some instruction, which only a man can give, concerning the effects which your dress will have on the men who see you. And I suppose that truly godly women will be happy to receive such instruction. It is usually the worldly, who are not willing to do right at any cost, who raise the cry of legalism.

But "This is a small matter, and not worthy of so much ado. We ought to be occupied with the weightier matters of the law, the matter of the heart, and not make such a fuss over little outward things." This may be an outward thing, but it is not a little one. Can you read Mat. 5:28-29, and yet contend that this is a little matter? But suppose it is a little matter; can you therefore lightly pass over it, or ignore it? Not so, for "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." (Lk.16:10) The Lord does not rebuke the Jews for attending to the small matters, but only because they did so to the neglect of the weightier matters. "These (the weightier matters) ought ye to have done, not to leave the other (the small matters) undone." (Lk.11:42)

But, "any man who views women so must be perverted" Yes: be it known unto you that men are perverted. All men. We are sinners. Our pristine purity is lost, and our hearts are natural and strongly inclined to sin, and especially to the sin of lust. Sin easily besets us. (Heb.12:1) But understand, though all men are perverted from their original purity, and though the passions of all men, (except those perverted in a worse way), are alike in this matter, I would not want to leave you with the impression that the practices of all men are alike, or with the feelings of uneasiness in the presence of men. If you but dress right, and act right, and associate with the right kind of men, in the right kind of situations, there will be little occasion for you to be uneasy or uncomfortable. But there will be great plenty of occasion for you to be careful, even in the presence of the best men. Why? Because though the godly "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts", (Gal.5:24), and have renounced the unlawful indulgence of those desires —yet the desires themselves remain. It is in the godly that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit". (vs.17) Men may strive hard to mortify those passions, but it is a matter of plain historical fact, attested

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also by virtually universal experience, that the most sincere and diligent endeavors to mortify those passions are usually not very successful. The most of men, even the best of men, are likely to be overcome by those passions. (Job. 1:8, Job.31:1) It was a man of God who was overcome by the allurements of Bath-sheba. And since those passions are usually not to be subdued by mortification God's way of order is thus; "To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband". (1Cor.7:2) And history and experience unite to prove that many of the godliest of men—including men who are godly and married—have a very hard struggle against the unlawful indulgence of those passions, in look or in thought. If we go through life with our eyes open it must be evident that this desirable end in marriage is widely frustrated, both in the godly and the ungodly. Some couples have been led to marry without the need specified in this passage, (vs.9). Others have found the providence of this design in marriage granted them, but only for a time. Now whether you wish to pity such persons, or blame them, or both, the fact will remain that there are many marriages which fall short in this way. And it is another fact that a man who finds himself in such a position, however he may have gotten there, will have a very bitter struggle to try to subdue those passions.

The battle is a hard one, and a man who is very strong spiritually, but who lacks this fulfillment, may in fact fare worse in the struggle than a much weaker man who has found the fulfillment which every man desires. David, we know, was a man of God, and through out the Old Testament histories he is held up as a standard of godliness by which all of his successors are judged. But the fact that he took many wives is a pretty sure indication that he had never found that complete satisfaction in ONE, which every man desires, and which is the strength of every man who possesses it. For this cause David was weak.

To return to the original question: Whether men are "perverted" or not, is really beside the point. How far his desires are normal and right, or how far they are the result of his sinfulness, may be difficult to determine. But what difference does it make? You must deal with the facts as they are, not as you wish they were. The real facts are: many men are thus weak and easily provoked by the sight of the feminine form. Suppose that some men are so strong, or so fully fulfilled in their own marriages, that you could not tempt them if you would. What then? Even were that a possibility the fact would remain that many men are weak and easily provoked to sin. With a man insusceptible to temptation you need not concern yourself, but you are bound by duty, (as you ought to be moved by love), to "bear the weaknesses of the weak" yes, even of the weakest and not to put stumbling blocks in their way. (Rom.15:1, 14:13)

But: "If a man looks upon me to lust, that is his sin, not mine." Nay, "Now walkest not thou charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, (or thy dress), for whom Christ died. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." (Rom.14:15, 21) David was made weak, David was made to stumble, by Bath-sheba's careless exposure of herself, and your display of your feminine beauty will have the same effect upon

your brethren. After reading this article, you can hardly plead that you do not know this, and "...to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (Jas.4:17) If you were completely ignorant of the effects which your dress might have upon a man, you might dress as you please without sin, but not otherwise. Every man is fully responsible for his own sin, but you will certainly be held in some sense responsible for another man's sin, if you willfully provoke him to it. To Ezekiel God said, "When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou doest not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." (Eze.33:8) The wicked is fully responsible for his own sin, and shall surely die for it. But the watchman is held accountable also, merely because he failed to do what he could have done to turn the other man from his sin. How much more will you be held accountable if you put stumbling blocks in another man's way, and actually provoke him to sin?

But: "If I were to follow all of these instructions, I would have to buy a whole new wardrobe, and that I cannot afford." My friend, you cannot afford to sin. If you are a real Christian, you came to Christ resolving to forsake every sin, and do the whole will of God, at any cost. If you have a will to do right, you will find a way—or cry to God to provide one. You can afford to change the way you dress. You cannot afford to sin, or to provoke others to sin.

But: "I am not attractive or shapely. No man is likely to be tempted by a sight of me. Therefore I may dress as I please." In the first place, you are no proper judge of what is attractive to a man. It is of course true that a shapely and beautiful woman is more likely to be a temptation to a man than a plain woman, but it is also true that a woman who is not attractive to one man probably will be to another, and even the homeliest will be attractive to somebody. But just suppose that you are actually so unattractive that no man would be thus tempted by you. What about your example to other women? What about your example to those who have dressed improperly through all their ungodly life, and who may be looking to you to teach them and lead them in the right way? Do you want them to look at you, and excuse their own improper dress on the basis of your example?

Finally, some women are so naive, so ignorant of the nature of men, that they suppose that because no men are actually making advances or propositions to them, they must not be a temptation to any man. Let them understand that a man derives great pleasure—sinful pleasure—from looking at women, from looking at any and every attractive woman. Why do you suppose that men spend millions of dollars every year for pornographic pictures? Let these pictures be left out of pornographic magazines, and see how many copies they would sell! What pleasure is it which men continually purchase at so great an expense? what pleasure can pictures afford them, except the pleasure of looking? It is looking at a woman's body which provokes a man's passions and regales his imagination, and there is great pleasure in that looking. Most men will freely indulge in that pleasure, with little or no restraint. They will feast their eyes upon the feminine form wherever they may find it, and this of course will include your form if you dress so as to expose and display it. Godly

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men will recognize that such pleasure is sinful except when it is confined to their own wife, and they will fight hard to resist the temptation and conquer the sin. But because of the extreme strength and intensity of the male passions, they find this to be a very hard fight. The spirit is willing, but in the face of strong temptations, the flesh is weak. To will is present with them, but sometimes how to perform they find not. (Rom.7:18) In spite of all of their determination and praying and striving, they may find their eyes seemingly involuntarily drawn to the sight of a beautiful and shapely woman, and a moment's involuntary sight away be enough to take the heart away. A man who has gained some mastery over this kind of temptation may easily resist the initial onslaught, but constant exposure to such allurements may weaken and break down even the strongest. Therefore we are told to "flee youthful lusts", (II Tim.2:22) —to flee from the very presence of such temptations. But wither shall we flee in this wicked world? Must we flee from the very congregation of God in order to keep our hearts pure? Shame! Shame! if we cannot find a safe asylum there!

To conclude: there is nothing at all wrong or evil about your physical beauty. It is the creation of God, and is, like all that God created, "very good". It was designed by God for a specific purpose: the woman was made "for the man". (ICor.11:9) The perfectly obvious design of your beauty is to ravish and satisfy the heart of a man — but a man —not every man. If God has joined you to that one man, then by all means, give that beauty to him, and he will be the less susceptible to the beauty and charms of other women. Thus used, the beauty of your body will glorify the God who gave it to you, and serve the man for whom it was given. But if you put it on display, and prostitute it to the gaze of the whole world, you only glorify yourself and serve the devil.

~Author Unknown