

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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What Will You Do When Others "Take Off"?

by Ted J. Clarke

Introduction

Last year a sister in Christ asked me to write on this important topic, but circumstances did not work out as I planned and I missed the "take off" season. This year I determined to beat the season and hopefully help some decide not to "take off" in any wicked sense as discussed below.

When the weather warms up many people decide to "take off" in various ways which are not quite as common in cooler weather. We all delight to "take off" on a vacation. Perhaps many of us need to "take off" a few pounds. Certainly, from a Christian perspective we would pray that all would become Christians and "take off" the old person of sin (and keep him/her off), putting on "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24). Unfortunately, too many "take off" in a number of inappropriate ways.

Some "Take Off" From God

Warmer weather signals a time when many "take off" from worship to God. However, one cannot ever really "take off" from God. Psalm 139 states that we cannot escape from God's omnipresence, for He is everywhere and knows everything. If we are on land, water, or in the sky, God knows where we are and what we are doing. In light or in darkness, with God it is all the same. In heaven or hell, God is aware of all. We cannot escape from His ever present, all knowing sight.

To "take off" for the beach, lake, mountains, or traveling on the road for a visit is great - unless we are "taking off" from God to do it! We are commanded in God's word "not [to be] forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as [we] see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). When one willfully absents oneself from the Bible study periods and worship of the Lord's church, where we are supposed

to be "assembling ourselves together," such "taking off" is sinful!

Our first priority is to be "seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). We will not "take off" from services if our priorities are in order! One should always plan ahead in order to put God first, either doing these things between times of worship, or locating places of worship when you are away from your home congregation so that you can assemble with the saints where you are visiting or vacationing. We are to be good stewards of the time God gives us, wisely using our time to understand and do the will of the Lord (Ephesians 5:15-17). Do you really believe that God will overlook our **stealing time** that should be devoted to worshipping Him and learning more about Him?

You may deceive your brethren about what you do when you "take off" from God, but you will never deceive God. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13).

Christian Strippers

Of course, the two words above are contradictory to each other. Those who are truly following Christ do not "take off" their clothes and dress immodestly before the world because of warmer weather. Nudity or partial nudity are not suddenly approved of God just because the temperature rises outdoors or indoors.

Swimming, water skiing, sitting in the sun or playing volleyball and other sports are not wrong in and of themselves. We miss the important spiritual point when we imply such. **However, it is sinful to "take off" one's clothes to the point of being immodest to do any of those things!** While these activities are not sinful in themselves, not many people engage in them without getting

partially nude. Most swimwear, even one piece swimsuits, expose the flesh right up to the beginning of one's private parts. Two piece swimsuits expose even more, to say nothing of bikinis (which are next to nothing)! Short shorts, halter tops, cut-off tops, v-necked tops or blouses with plunging necklines, see-through fabrics, tight or clingy fabrics, and going without proper undergarments such as bras and panties are all according to the ways of the world, which true Christians will avoid.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. **And be not conformed to this world:** but ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)

Immodest dress, whether semi or total nudity, sounds exactly like the ways of the world which the apostle John described, saying-

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. (1 John 2:15--17)

Notice, the sexual lusts of the flesh are stirred by immodest dress; the eyes of others are tempted to lust at the sight of exposed flesh; and one's pride about one's own body is involved by alluring others to view your physical attributes. These things are of **the world**, and are not the attitudes and actions of those who follow Christ.

Yes, ladies, it is true that men, young or old, can dress immodestly, too! Short, tight-fitting shorts on males and shirtless males in public settings are also immodest. (A public setting is anywhere that others may see you and be tempted to lust or otherwise sin as a result of your immodest apparel.) While it is usually

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the males who are aroused sensuously by sight, men can be guilty of causing women to lust by dressing inappropriately. The following quote from a gospel tract entitled, "Illicit Sex," by Ed Sanders, plainly notes the problems with immodesty from either sex.

It is not always true that the person guilty of immoral sexual conduct deliberately sets out to commit [sin]. Many are victims of enticement by the opposite sex. [Please note that this does not excuse any type of illicit sexual activity, nor does it give any excuse to rapists. This simply notes that there may be contributing factors in creating lust by one's immodest dress. -tjc] Males are aroused by the sight and thought of the female form. Therefore, when women dress in brief, transparent, or clinging clothing they are contributing to the seduction of the men who see them. This is **not** because men have dirty minds. It is because they are normal. Every mature woman understands this. Females are aroused sexually and primarily by touch. The man who touches, handles, or embraces a woman to whom he is not married can therefore contribute to the downfall of that woman. Women need to realize that clothing can be attractive without being seductive. And men need to be discreet with their hands. Both men and women have a very real need to police their own thoughts. (Star Publications, "The Habits Series," pp. 10-11)

Good Christian males and females do not dress in ways which will provoke lust or call attention to one's exposed flesh

and invite a closer look at what little is not exposed. Isaiah 3:16-26 condemns the women of Israel for dressing to attract the attention of men, both by what they wore and their alluring actions. Christ has warned us not to look upon another to lust after her/him (Matthew 5:28). This kind of warning implies that one sins if one dresses in such a way to entice lust, whether it is intentional or not. Young ladies soon learn what attracts the attention of men and they cannot excuse themselves under the guise of being stylish.

Husbands and both parents are either a major solution to the problem of immodest dress, or they are part of the problem. Husbands should insist, as head of the house, that wives and children dress modestly. "Women [must] adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation... which is proper for women professing godliness" (1 Timothy 2:9-10, NKJV). If men do not want other men looking at their wives and daughters with lustful eyes and thoughts, they must insist that their women dress and conduct themselves in ways which will not attract such attention. This is a husband and father's responsibility as head of his home. Wives and children who rebel at such rules are guilty of a double sin (Ephesians 5:23-24; 6:1-4).

Parents should teach their sons and daughters to attract members of the opposite sex by their Christian character, not by outward and physical appearance. Marriages would last much longer if those getting married were not doing so because of their commitment to worldly standards. Males and females should attract one another by exposing their love for God, not their naked flesh. Both mothers and fathers should set the example for their children. Preteens and teens should be told plainly the reasons why they are not allowed to wear the sinful fashions which are so popular with the worldly. Even when children work and earn their own money to buy clothes, parents should have the oversight of what is purchased. Compromise in this area may well lead to heartaches and trouble in sexual activities. It is God's will that parents provide spiritual guidance for their children in these areas. Whether young people like it or not, or whether or not they understand it, parents are in charge in the home and will answer for how they raise their children when we face the Lord in judgment. Children will be held accountable on whether or not they obeyed their

parents (Colossians 3:20). Also note "disobedient to parents" as being among some of the sins which are most abominable to God in Romans 1:28-32.

Conclusion

When one "takes off" from God in worship, or "takes off" modesty and wears indecent clothing, that person robs God of the love and obedience due to Him. We are not our own, we were bought with the price of Christ's precious blood (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Members of our own families, our friends, neighbors, employers, and people of the world in general may not understand why we do not "take off" with them in living a carefree life with little or no concern for what God says or wants. They may think you are "strange" for not thinking and doing as they do, especially if you once lived as the world lives (1 Peter 4:1-5). So be it. God's ways have always seemed strange to worldly people. Christians are to be a "special... people of God" and to "proclaim the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Christ and Christianity cannot be "taken off" and set aside as one might do with an unwanted garment. The Lord will return some day, perhaps soon, or maybe later (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). What will you be doing if He comes on Sunday or on Wednesday night? What if you chose to "take off" from God on the day Jesus chose to return? How will you be attired when He comes? What if you decided to "take off" your modesty the very hour Christ decided to come again? Would you be as bold in His very presence as you are when you forget (or do not care) that He sees you at all times? What we "take off" in this life, whether it is our service to Him or our modest dress, may well determine whether we "take off" to meet Him in the air upon His return, or whether we will be turned into hell with the other unbelievers and sexual immoral (Revelation 21:8; 22:14-15). Yes, dear friend, this is a matter as serious as our eternal destiny. What will you do when others "take off"?

THINK ABOUT IT...

He who is too busy to study God's Word and pray is busier than God ever intended him to be.

The heart is the happiest when it beats for others.

*The best angle to use to approach any problem is the **try-angle**.*

BY THY WORDS

by Robin W. Haley

In Matthew 12 we find our Lord healing many (v. 22-24). The question came up as to how He was able to do such (v. 25-32). He then gives this warning to those who were careless with their accusations, "Ye offspring of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. (35) The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things: and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. (36) And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. (37) For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:34-37). We must learn from this that what we say will affect ourselves and others. Our speech can influence people to think poorly of us and of others, sometimes without really meaning to so influence them. Most importantly, our language will affect how God thinks of us and what He will do with us in eternity.

Our "hearts" are the source of good and evil. Being Christians, our hearts have been made clean. The record says, "let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22). Thus, it is our duty to keep our hearts with all diligence. Paul says, "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear" (Ephesians 4:39).

Our "hearts" reveal what kind of person we really are. Our Master taught us that "by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). We must be cautious then what and how we speak. Our mouths ought not to produce both "sweet" words and "bitter" (See James 3:5-11). Jesus teaches that our words will finally come to our aid in justification (being declared free from guilt). Knowing this, our prayers ought to include the thoughts of King David when he said, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Jehovah, my rock, and my redeemer" (Psalms 19:14).

Words of anger can get us into trouble. Not all anger is sinful, but it can lead to sin. "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: (27) neither give place to the

devil" (Ephesians 4:26-27). Paul said that we need always to be aware of the devil's devices, thus beware not to fall for his tricks (2 Cor. 4:4).

Words of criticism are non-productive of anything good. This is not to say that some things need not be critiqued. There is a difference. (One is an examination of whether a thing or action is good and right (a critique). The other is ridicule that is poured upon something or someone we deem unworthy of our support or interest. "Criticism" is what Paul referred to when he wrote, "My defense to them that *examine* me is this" (1 Corinthians 9:3). Some were just being cruel to Paul, telling lies and causing trouble for him. The Lord critiqued the works of the Pharisees and Sadducees. We must be very careful with these tools of language.

Let us rather use **words of kindness, encouragement, and the words of God** (2 Peter 1:7; Ephesians 4:32; Hebrews 10:24, 25; John 6:33; Ephesians 4:15). These have drawing power (John 6:44, 45)! Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (John 12:32). This signified His crucifixion, which is a vital and necessary part of the Gospel. Remember, "Now I make known unto you brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, (2) by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. (3) For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; (4) and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). This Gospel is very powerful, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). This is how God calls us today, "whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Words are important and influential. Let us be careful how we use our words and those of the Lord.

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DID JESUS CLAIM TO BE DIVINE?

by Marvin Rickett

Recently, there has been a flurry of activity among some scholars who call themselves revisionists. They are on a renewed quest for the historical Jesus. They have taken it upon themselves to strip away the "myth" of the Bible and find out who Jesus really was and what he really said. They have many pernicious ideas, but one of their favorite charges is: "He never claimed he was divine." Many have swallowed this statement and are constantly repeating it. It is just simply not true that Jesus never claimed to be divine! He claimed in a direct manner to be the Son of God (which is the same as claiming to be divine or to be Deity) several times.

(1) After Jesus had healed the blind man in John 9, and the man had gone through the grilling ordeal with the unbelieving Pharisees, Jesus asked him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God." The blind man said, "Who is he, that I might believe on him?" Jesus said, "Thou hast both seen him, and it is **he that talketh with the**" (John 9:35-37, emphasis mine, MR). Jesus plainly makes the claim that he is the Son of God (divine).

(2) In a later dispute between Jesus and the unbelieving Jews, they were so incensed that they actually took up stones to kill him. When Jesus asked them why, they said "because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." They had correctly understood his claim! He admitted that he had said, "I am the Son of God" (John 10:36).

(3) When Jesus was put on trial before the Jewish hierarchy, the high priest placed him under oath to tell them if he was divine: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus answered affirmatively, "Thou hast said" (Matthew 26:63, 64). This is a way of saying "yes." The high priest certainly understood Jesus to be saying "yes," for he tore his clothes and declared Jesus guilty of blasphemy! (If one made the claim to be the Son of God, and really was not, then it was blasphemy.

(4) At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked his disciples who the people were saying he was. He was concerned that they correctly identify him. Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Now if Jesus hadn't been the Son of God, it would

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have been necessary for him to have corrected his disciple. Instead, he blessed him for making the correct identification, thus lending his endorsement to Peter's claim.

It is time to stop this ridiculous charge that Jesus never said he was divine. He didn't often make the claim as plainly as the scholars demand. He wanted folks to discover for themselves by examining the evidence (miracles, prophecies, teachings, etc.). They would be more likely to accept him and retain a stronger faith if they came to their own conclusion that he was divine. Jesus was a master at directing people to examine the evidence, reasoning correctly upon it and then coming to their own, and the truthful, conclusion. It is notable that whenever others concluded that he was divine, he never repudiated it nor in any way discouraged them from believing it. That was because it was the truth! On many occasions, he indirectly claimed he was divine:

(1) When the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he prefaced his temptations with, "If thou be the Son of God..." (Matthew 4:1-10). Had Jesus not been the Son of God, the temptation would have been pointless. Jesus could have said, "So what? I am not the Son of God anyway." But he didn't. He resisted and overcame the temptations, thus defending his claim to be divine.

(2) Jesus never repudiated others who made the claim that he was the Son of God, but allowed their remarks to pass unchallenged. After Jesus rescued his disciples at sea from a violent storm, they "came and worshipped him, saying, of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33). Only Deity may receive worship and Jesus did not refuse it. Nathanael said to Jesus, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God" (John 1:49). Jesus never refuted him, but rather replied to him as though he had spoken the truth. He had. Simon Peter said, "We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69). Jesus never contested his statement.

(3) His enemies understood him to be making the claim to be divine. Jesus' accusers at his trial were trying to get Pilate to pass the death sentence. They said, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7). If Jesus had never made the claim to be divine, they could not have appealed to this law

for his execution. The chief priests, with the elders were at the cross hurling insults at Jesus. Then they said, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God: (Matthew 27:43). Surely, they had **heard** him make the claim to be divine. Is it reasonable to think that all these people misunderstood what Jesus had been saying for these three years?

This article cites only a part of the evidence that Jesus did indeed claim to be divine. We are tired of hearing this baseless charge (that Jesus never claimed to be divine). He made the claim. The real test that confronts men is whether they will accept this claim. Their salvation and eternal destiny rests upon that decision.

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GIFTS FOR MY FRIEND

IT COMES TO YOU AS:

A SMILE:

A WINK:

A HUG:

A CLASP OF MY HAND!

AND AS ONLY A TRUE FRIEND
WOULD GIVE UNTO YOU:

MY TRUST:

MY SUPPORT:

MY LOVE:

MY PRAYERS:

AND YES, EVEN ON OCCASION:

A GENTLE REPRIMAND!

by Martha Manley

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**GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP
- COLOSSIANS 3:17**

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philipplians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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