

6.29.20 - Purdah

The following article is our comments and viewpoints regarding Purdah and quotes from Aaron Frost's book "Christian Body"

In each culture, their own version of purdah seems glaringly self-evident internally, but to the outsider it is arbitrary and irrational. In our own culture, these subconscious ideas influence the way we perceive things, and they invariably color the way we understand the Bible. This is from the introduction of Aaron Frost's book entitled Christian Body - Modesty and the Bible. The book is an excellent treatment of the topic suggested by the title. This is a long quote and not very catchy, but the idea needs to be understood by everyone looking at how a Christian should view non-sexual social nakedness, even those who take a textile position.

The concept of "purdah" needs to be understood to make any sense of the quote. Aaron gives some explanation when he first uses the word in the introduction, and more later in the book. Dictionary definitions are similar to this, *Purdah definition is - seclusion of women from public observation among Muslims and some Hindus especially in India.* Aaron is using the word to define the parts of the woman's body that some say need seclusion from public view. He does this to avoid the easily misunderstood word "modesty" which is usually used in Christian dialog as the word "modesty" is properly defined as "humility" or "humble" when used in the Bible. We will continue to use "purdah" for what some suppose needs to be covered on a woman's body for the same reason.

Let's deal with the chest first. Some supposed that a woman needs to cover her chest in public, but a man can appear with an uncovered chest in many locations. Yes, stores require a shirt for both genders, but that is to avoid discrimination charges. We can probably thank some clever lawyer for this rule applying to both genders because of a lawsuit award. In our culture, women are supposed to cover their chest...at least the breasts, to meet part of the purdish requirements, Why? Is it not

possible for women to lust if they see a muscular chest on a man? Or is it that only a woman can be objectified? Is it that a woman can control her lusts, but a man cannot? Is it that men are too lazy to control themselves? Does he need someone to blame for his lack of control? Is it that men are so weak that any woman can control a man with her breasts? What we are speaking of here is lust and as my wife and I were discussing the topic this morning, the fact is that lust is a heart condition not a condition of the flesh. The heart condition needs altered not the state of dressed or undressed. Unless the heart condition is changed a person, man or woman can lust even if someone is fully clothed. Rape in the Muslim society, where a woman is covered from head to toe with barely an eye slit proves this to be true.

Maybe the breasts need to be covered because they provide sexual pleasure. We will consider a number of questions about that idea. First question...is sexual pleasure wrong? Within a marriage it is blessed by God. He commanded us to "be fruitful and multiply". God knew that would not happen without sexual activity which would not happen without it being a pleasant experience. God Himself said **Gen 2:18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.** We believe that the sexual pleasure is God's way of keeping the husband and wife together and care for the children as a team. **In Sng 5:1 I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.** Starting with "O friends..." is often claimed to be God's voice by commentators who do not make the whole book an allegory. If they are right, then God wants us to enjoy sexual pleasures to the maximum. Sexual pleasures outside of marriage are always wrong.

Second question...are the breasts the only part of the body that can provide sexual pleasure? Obviously not!! Can you get sexual pleasure from the hands? Can you get sexual pleasure from the lips? Can you get sexual pleasure from the feet, the legs, the back, the neck, etc.? The

truth of the matter is that all parts of the body can provide sexual pleasure. If sexual pleasure is the reason for covering the breasts, then the whole entire body needs to be covered. Why single out a few parts like the breasts and the genitals? The main purpose for breasts is to provide nourishment for an infant. Do mouths need to be covered because they take in nourishment?

Does clothing nullify sexual desire or sexual pleasure? Do rapists only target naked women? So, if covering the breasts does not stop someone from lusting and uncovering them does not cause someone to lust then we must conclude that lust is indeed a heart condition and not based on the condition of the one being lusted after.

How about a little different take on this...babies are not born with sexual lusts? They learn to lust at the sight of breasts only after being conditioned to do so. That means they could have learned to lust at the sight of a woman's face, her feet, her hands, her hair or you pick anything else on a woman. There is also then the possibility that they would not learn to lust if the conditioning or training was proper. If lust is a conditioned response then the converse is accurate that a person can be reconditioned to not lust. All that is necessary is the proper conditioning and the help of the Holy Spirit...with these two things it is actually possible to eliminate the condition of lust entirely from one's heart. Does covering the breasts prevent lust? No, in fact we believe that covering makes it worse. Now the person is lusting after what he imagines is under the covering which has more appeal than the real naked breast. Still no logical reason to cover the breasts. Could Aaron be right, is purdah *arbitrary and irrational*.

We have concentrated on a woman's breasts in the article, but Aaron makes the point that in some cultures the breasts are not the area of focus, it might be the ankle. So, women in that culture spend the day with the breasts uncovered, but make sure that the ankle is hidden from the view of any man not her husband. In that culture any glimpse of a woman's ankle sends a man into sexual thoughts. You see this idea of

purdah can apply to any part of anyone's body. It is not a biblical thing it is very much a cultural thing. This is why making societal rules to cover only exacerbate the problem. The issue isn't the breast or the ankle...once again, the problem is with the heart. Could it be that since God's desire was for man and woman to be naked and not ashamed that Satan could have come up with this conditioning to get people to hide the image of God inside coverings that do not fix the problem of lust in the heart, but actually make it worse?

Could it be that if humans were naked and not ashamed whenever possible...going about their daily lives, working and cleaning and gardening and landscaping, etc. that people would become conditioned to seeing the naked body as commonplace and no longer of a sexual nature? It not only could be, but it is in some cultures! There are cultures where being naked is an everyday, all day occurrence and guess what, the naked body is not viewed as sexual. We spend most of our time at home naked and neither one of us walks around sexually motivated. We work naked, we landscape naked, we garden naked, we run the tractor naked, we prep meals naked, we watch tv naked and the nakedness has conditioned us to not see nudity as sexual, but every day and commonplace. We vacation at family friendly naturist resorts with others who view the body the same way and there is nothing sexual about any of it. We visit nude beaches and we have found them to be way less sexually charged then textile beaches.

Let's get back on track for a minute and take a look at how the second part of Aaron's quote applies? *In our own culture, these subconscious ideas influence the way we perceive things, and they invariably color the way we understand the Bible.* Basically, if what needs to be covered is obvious to our society or culture, then we assume the same purdah applies to the Bible and can even be taken so far that we then assume literally all the way back to the Garden of Eden. If our culture dictates how we view the Bible then nakedness in the Bible cannot be tolerated so we change the definitions to what we want not what was originally there. The verse could not possibly be saying they were naked. So, the

person changes the interpretation of the verse to fit his purdah. They miss what the verse is saying at the very least or add to the scriptures at worst to keep the purdah of their society. If you want proof you need look no further than the commentaries for Isaiah 20. You will find very few that do not put undergarments on Isaiah when the Hebrew word clearly means naked as a baby coming out of the womb. Of the commentators on Blue Letter Bible site that comment on Isaiah 20 only one did not put undergarments on Isaiah so he would fit western purdah. What he did instead is simply avoided making any comment at all on that section. I did not check what was done with King Saul or Peter and the disciples or Jesus washing the disciple's feet, but I would expect the same treatment.

1Ti 2:9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; This is the favorite verse for proving the textile position on nakedness. If you substitute "purdah" for "modest" you will get a better idea how they read the verse. Remember that purdah is obvious to those within the group and arbitrary and irrational to those without. This is the only verse that uses the word "modesty" in the KJV. In **1Ti 3:2** the same Greek word is translated "of good behavior". These are the only two places that Greek word is used. The Greek word would be better translated orderly or appropriate since there was very little purdah in the age and society it was written for. Prudah requirements also help us understand why "modest apparel" differs so much from one Christian group to another. Different purdah requirements cause unnecessary divisions among Christians. These requirements also cause the end of the verse to be overlooked. The examples are not about purdah, which could mean the whole verse is not about purdah. The verse is teaching humility amongst the women of the church so that the poor didn't feel like they couldn't come to church. The verse is teaching that women should dress in "humble" apparel and when you read it that way the rest of the verse in context makes sense.

Try it for yourself... **1Ti 2:9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in “humble” apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;** When you take the modern purdah out of the verse you now get the teaching that Paul through the power of the Holy Spirit was trying to convey. It's tough, but we need to learn to place God's Word above what we “know” to be right based on the society we live in. God's Word is above society. Society needs to change to follow God's Word, God's Word should not conform to society!

Bible study is a complete waste of time if you are not willing to admit that some or many of your beliefs could be wrong. You only accept the ideas suggested by the study that agree with your current beliefs and miss or rationalize away those that disagree with your current beliefs. The "still small voice" will not be heard if what it says disagrees with your tradition. This seems to be most obvious with purdah and nakedness to those willing to accept the textile tradition as wrong.

Our recommendation is to not allow purdah to override Scripture. We know from the Bible that God created us naked and not ashamed. We know that we were created as God's most prized creation. We know that we were created in His image. We know that God called His naked creations “very good.” We conclude then that the condition of being naked is not sinful. We can then surmise that God intended for us to live in the naked and not ashamed condition that He created us in. Since we know that, according to the Word of God, God is the same yesterday, today and forever that He didn't change His mind on us living that way. We can safely conclude then that it is Satan that is promoting covering His image and that Satan has been so successful at his lie that it is now the norm to live not as God intended, but under the lie of God's sworn enemy.

We recommend that you choose to live under the intentions of the One who created you and find a way to overcome society's purdah!