



**Deuteronomy 22:5**  
**“No, it’s not ok”**

5 A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.

In this verse we cross from the relatively safe confines of Moses’ expositions of the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment to the more dangerous (to the preacher at least) grounds of his expositions of the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment.

I wish I could say that those warnings of Moses were discussing archaic issues that were not of much concern to our particular society. *“Men dressing as women, and women dressing as men may have been a problem in Moses time, but it certainly isn’t in ours.”* But unfortunately that isn’t the case, these expositions are more relevant than ever. In fact, in Moses’ day, unless they were involved an abominable pagan religious practice it is unlikely that a child in the covenant community would ever see a man dressed as a woman in public, and certainly it would have been viewed as a shame and a scandal and something to be dealt with by the civil magistrate. Today, I’m sad to say that I can already think of two occasions when I’ve had to explain to my children “why that man is dressed as a lady.” And as far as the civil magistrate is concerned, we live in age that insists that he not only protect this behavior, but actively *promote* it.

This month, for instance has been officially declared to be “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month” by the President Obama, and in the text of his degree he affirms *“My Administration has partnered with the LGBT community to advance a wide range of initiatives”* These initiatives include of course educating children, all the way down to the kindergarten level, that these behaviors are perfectly normal.

Well, As Proverbs warns us “Every man's way is right in his own eyes” but that doesn’t make what he does right in reality, and the definitely something that the Lord has declared is NOT right, it is in fact an **abomination**, which is the strongest word of condemnation that the Bible uses for a practice.

But before we get into discussing these verses I want to note that it is often possible for evangelicals to miss the forest for the trees in regard to these verses. For instance I can’t tell you how often I have seen these verses used merely as a proof text for the notion that women should never wear anything that looks like pants, or in other ways that attempt to make American Christian 20<sup>th</sup> century practice the norm for clothing and apparel for all time.

I’ll give you a few examples of why we must avoid misusing the text in that way. I remember a conversation with a Baptist minister on this issue that started with his declaration that a woman must never wear anything that looked like pants and that a man must never wear anything that looked like a

skirt or a dress. I asked him “so your saying that if a man puts on anything that looks like a skirt its effeminate and blurs the difference between the sexes?” He answered yes, and I said “***well I wouldn't recommend that you attempt to make that argument to a large Khyber throwing, hammer tossing Scotsman clad in a kilt***” I then went on to point out that in Christ's day, and to this day in much of Africa and the middle east, the men wore open robes and not pants and yet no one thought them to be cross-dressing by doing so. Similarly if I were to attempt to put on a pair of my wife's silk slacks, aside from the fact that they wouldn't fit me, I'd look hopelessly effeminate in them.

The verses are not attempting to norm certain kinds of clothing or appearance for all time, what is being prohibited is deliberate cross-dressing and removing of the distinctions between men and women. The garments themselves are in essence a sign either of our desire to keep the distinctions that the Lord has created between the sexes or to sinfully pervert, blur, or destroy them. And it is not only clothing in which this can happen but in a host of other ways, for instance in these verses themselves, the phrase “A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man” does not only include clothing, but also ornaments, armor, weapons, etc., and yes, I know this will be unpopular, that does indicate that the idea of a woman taking up the weapons of a male warrior and assuming the role assigned to his sex is not good, but I'll wait until we get to applications to make myself really unpopular with that.

Getting back to the main point, God created man male and female, and it is his desire that this created difference be maintained. The devil, on the other hand, who desires to twist and corrupt everything that the Lord has created, wants those differences obscured. He wants men acting, looking, and dressing as women and vice versa, he wants a root and branch rebellion against all of God's created order, and that obviously is something that we as the Lord's people must resist.

The Lord for instance, himself built men and women so that they look different. I'll give you an example we don't often think of, men grow beards, women don't. So in Israelite society, for a man to be without a beard was a shame and a dishonor, that is why, for instance, in the reading from 2 Samuel 10 from this morning, when Hanun the Ammonite king wished to dishonor David's servants, he shaved off half their beards, and why David commanded “***Wait at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return.***” These men were going to hide themselves away until they looked normal manly men again. Now here again, many conservative Christians have frowned on beards, beards are hippyish! But at one time, beards were considered a basic distinction, and I managed to further upset the Baptist Pastor who was arguing against any form of pants by pointing out that he was beardless.

Another way that the Lord distinguishes between the man and the woman is by hair length. In 1 Cor. 11 Paul is dealing with Corinthian women who are throwing off all the distinguishing marks of their sex in that culture and pursuing an egalitarian agenda both in their appearance and their roles, taking on male roles in worship, no longer wearing the peplum on their heads and deliberately shaving off their hair. Paul in rebuking this practice brings the created order to bear: ***11:4 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?***

***15 But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering.***

But there again, please do not miss the forest for the trees. If you go through the church and look at the pictures of the Reformed ministers and theologians you will notice that many of them, particularly from the 15<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> century had relatively long hair. A lot of the founding fathers of this nation had hair so long they could comfortably tie it into a pigtail. The issue is not merely how long or how short the hair is, but why? Are you seeking to look like a member of the other sex? Are you rebelling against God's created order?

So here are a few applications for us:

**First** the issue of maintaining the distinctions between the sexes is of great importance to the Lord, and therefore it must be of importance to us as well. Today many people will say that Transvestism and virtually any deviant sexual practice is just fine, we must not assent. If you are tempted, for instance, to say *“well, I’m not going to cross-dress myself, but why should I be concerned with what others do? I’ll just remain quiet about it.”* I would say stop for a moment and ask yourself, to what other kinds of sins would you apply that standard? Murder, Adultery, Lying, Blasphemy?

Please understand also that like it or not we are all together in this nation, and in this society, and this kind of practice will affect all of us and inevitably result in national judgment: ***Proverbs 14:34 Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.***

It also opens the door for a host of other sins, they are never by themselves - JFB – ***“for the adoption of the habiliments of the one sex by the other is an outrage on decency, obliterates the distinctions of nature by fostering softness and effeminacy in the man, impudence and boldness in the woman as well as levity and hypocrisy in both; and, in short, it opens the door to an influx of so many evils that all who wear the dress of another sex are pronounced "an abomination unto the Lord."***

**Second** this goes well beyond clothing to the issue of roles: Matthew Henry notes that this verse, *“forbids the confounding of the dispositions and affairs of the sexes: men must not be effeminate, nor do the women's work in the house, nor must women be viragos, pretend to teach, or usurp authority, 1 Tim. 2:11, 12.”*

We certainly see this in the public square as men attempt to take on roles specifically given to women and women take on roles given to men. I mentioned the military, for instance (unpack this, also mention that whereas military CLOTHING attempted to maintain the differences in sexes, that is less and less the case)

Nowhere though is this worse than in the church: PCA, egalitarianism, Reagan example (“Those scriptures don’t witness with our spirits”)

**Third** – if we are going to err let us err on the side of caution in these matters, I seriously asked myself here, should I be growing a beard, and if it was the recognized male norm in our society, I have to tell you I would do so, if I were a missionary in the middle-east, for instance, I’d grow a beard and that despite the fact that my wife doesn’t like my beard.

*Also*, watch out for this in you deportment, and behavior. As Calvin points out – ***“Garments are not in themselves of so much importance; but as it is disgraceful for men to become effeminate, and also for women to affect manliness in their dress and gestures, propriety and modesty are prescribed, not only for decency’s sake, but lest one kind of liberty should at length lead to something worse.”***

And not just yours, but that of your children, Men raise godly masculine sons, mothers raise godly feminine daughters.

**Fourth** – this is of a piece, if we deny the teaching of the Lord here, we will inevitably deny his teaching elsewhere, believe it or not eventually we make inroads on every other doctrine.

We are building up a sissyfied church – “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, **quit you like men**, be strong.” (1 Cor. 16:13)