

# 1 Timothy 2:8-10

by St. John Chrysostom

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*St. John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of sincere prayer and modesty in appearance, urging believers to focus on inner virtue over external adornment.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:5, Matthew 7:11, Matthew 21:22, Mark 11:25, 1 Timothy 2:8

**Topics:** "Sincere Prayer", "Modest Worship"

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## Description

John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of sincere and modest prayer, contrasting the hypocritical prayers of the Pharisees with the genuine prayers that should be offered in private to God. He highlights the significance of praying everywhere with holy hands, free from wrath and doubt, focusing on the purity of heart and faith in God's provision. Chrysostom also addresses the modesty and behavior of women in worship, urging them to adorn themselves with good works rather than extravagant attire, emphasizing the inward beauty of modesty, chastity, and sobriety over outward adornments.

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## Transcript

I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becomes women professing godliness) with good works.

When you pray, says Christ, you shall not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father, which is in secret; and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly. Matthew 6:5-6 What then says Paul? I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

This is not contrary to the other, God forbid, but quite in harmony with it. But how, and in what way? We must first consider what means, enter into your closet, and why Christ commands this, if we are to pray in every place? Or whether we may not pray in the church, nor in any other part of the house, but the closet? What then means that saying? Christ is recommending us to avoid ostentation, when He bids us offer our prayers not only privately, but secretly. For, when He says, Let not your left hand know what your right hand does Matthew 6:3, it is not the hands that He considers, but He is bidding them use the utmost caution against ostentation: and He is doing the like here; He did not limit prayer to one place, but required

one thing alone, the absence of vainglory.

The object of Paul is to distinguish the Christian from the Jewish prayers, therefore observe what he says: In every place lifting up holy hands, which was not permitted the Jews, for they were not allowed to approach God, to sacrifice and perform their services, elsewhere, but assembling from all parts of the world in one place, they were bound to perform all their worship in the temple. In opposition to this he introduces his precept, and freeing them from this necessity, he says in effect, Our ways are not like the Jewish; for as Christ commanded us to pray for all men because He died for all men, and I preach these things for all men, so it is good to pray everywhere.

Henceforth the consideration is not of the place but of the manner of the prayer; pray everywhere, but everywhere lift up holy hands. That is the thing required. And what is holy? Pure. And what is pure? Not washed with water, but free from covetousness, murder, rapacity, violence, without wrath and doubting. What means this? Who is angry when he prays? It means, without bearing malice. Let the mind of him that prays be pure, freed from all passion. Let no one approach God in enmity, or in an unamiable temper, or with doubting.

What is without doubting? Let us hear. It implies that we should have no misgiving but that we shall be heard. For it is said, whatever you ask believing you shall receive. Matthew 21:22 And again, when you stand praying forgive, if you have anything against any one. Mark 11:25 This is to pray without wrath and doubting. But how can I believe that I shall obtain my request? By asking nothing opposed to that which He is ready to grant, nothing unworthy of the great King, nothing worldly, but all spiritual blessings; if you approach Him without wrath, having pure hands, holy hands: hands employed in almsgiving are holy.

Approach Him thus, and you will certainly obtain your request. For if you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him? Matthew 7:11 By doubting he means misgiving. In like manner he says, I will that women approach God without wrath and doubting, lifting up holy hands: that they should not follow their own desires, nor be covetous or rapacious. For what if a woman does not rob or steal herself, but does it through means of her husband?

Paul however requires something more of women, that they adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with brodered hair or gold or pearls or costly array; But (which becomes women professing godliness) with good works. But what is this modest apparel? Such attire as covers them completely, and decently, not with superfluous ornaments, for the one is becoming, the other is not.

Moral. What? Do you approach God to pray, with brodered hair and ornaments of gold? Have you come to a dance? To a marriage? To a gay procession? There such a broidery, such costly garments, had been seasonable, here not one of them is wanted. You have come to pray, to supplicate for pardon of your sins, to plead for your offenses, beseeching the Lord, and hoping to render Him propitious to you. Why do you adorn yourself? This is not the dress of a suppliant. How can you groan? How can you weep? How pray with fervency, when thus attired? Should thou weep, your tears will be the ridicule of the beholders. She that weeps ought not to be wearing gold. It were but acting, and hypocrisy. For is it not acting to pour forth tears from a soul so overgrown with extravagance and ambition? Away with such hypocrisy! God is not mocked! This is the attire of actors and dancers, that live upon the stage. Nothing of this sort becomes a modest woman, who should be adorned with shamefacedness and sobriety.

Imitate not therefore the courtesans. For by such a dress they allure their many lovers; and hence many have incurred a disgraceful suspicion, and, instead of gaining any advantage from their ornaments, have injured many by bearing this character. For as the adulteress, though she may have a character for modesty, derives no benefit from that character, in the Day, when He who judges the secrets of men shall make all things manifest; so the modest woman, if she contrive by this dress to pass for an adulteress, will lose the advantage of her chastity. For many have suffered harm by this opinion. What can I do, you say, if another suspects me? But you give the occasion by your dress, your looks, your gestures. It is for this reason that Paul discourses much of dress and much of modesty. And if he would remove those things which are only the indications of wealth, as gold, and pearls, and costly array; how much more those things which imply studied ornament, as painting, coloring the eyes, a mincing gait, the affected voice, a languishing and wanton look; the exquisite care in putting on the cloak and bodice, the nicely wrought girdle, and the closely-fitted shoes? For he glances at all these things, in speaking of modest apparel and shamefacedness. For such things are shameless and indecent.

Bear with me, I beseech you, for it is not my aim by this plain reproof to wound or pain you, but to remove from my flock all that is unbecoming to them. But if these prohibitions are addressed to those who have husbands, who are rich, and live luxuriously; much more to those who have professed virginity. But what virgin, you say, wears gold, or brodered hair? Yet there may be such a studied nicety in a simple dress, as that these are nothing to it. You may study appearance in a common garment more than those who wear gold. For when a very dark colored robe is drawn closely round the breast with the girdle (as dancers on the stage are attired), with such nicety that it may neither spread into breadth nor shrink into scantiness, but be between both; and when the bosom is set off with many folds, is not this more alluring than any silken robes? And when the shoe, shining through its blackness, ends in a sharp point, and imitates the elegance of painting, so that even the breadth of the sole is scarce visible -- or when, though you do not indeed paint the face, you spend much time and pains on washing it, and spread a veil across the forehead, whiter than the face itself -- and above that put on a hood, of which the blackness may set off the white by contrast -- is there not in all this the vanity of dress? What can one say to the perpetual rolling of the eyes? To the putting on of the stomacher; so artfully as sometimes to conceal, sometimes to disclose, the fastening? For this too they sometimes expose, so as to show the exquisiteness of the cincture, winding the hood entirely round the head. Then like the players, they wear gloves so closely fitted, that they seem to grow upon the hands: and we might speak of their walk, and other artifices more alluring than any ornament of gold. Let us fear, beloved, lest we also hear what the Prophet said to the Hebrew women who were so studious of outward ornament; Instead of a girdle, you shall be girded with a halter, instead of well-set hair, baldness. Isaiah 3:24, Septuagint These things and many others, invented only to be seen and to attract beholders, are more alluring than golden ornaments. These are no trifling faults, but displeasing to God, and enough to mar all the self-denial of virginity.

You have Christ for your Bridegroom, O virgin, why do you seek to attract human lovers? He will judge you as an adulteress. Why do you not wear the ornament that is pleasing to Him; modesty, chastity, orderliness, and sober apparel? This is meretricious, and disgraceful. We can no longer distinguish harlots and virgins, to such indecency have they advanced. A virgin's dress should not be studied, but plain, and without labor; but now they have many artifices to make their dress conspicuous. O woman, cease from this folly. Transfer this care to your soul, to the inward adorning. For the outward ornament that invests you, suffers not that within to become beautiful. He that is concerned for that which is without, despises that which is within, even as he that is unconcerned about the exterior, bestows all his care upon the interior. Say not, Alas! I wear a threadbare garment, mean shoes, a worthless veil; what is there of

ornament in these? Do not deceive yourself. It is impossible, as I said, to study appearance more by these than by costlier dresses; especially when they are close-fitted to the body, fashioned to an immodest show, and of shining neatness. You excuse yourself to me, but what can you say to God, who knows the heart and the spirit with which you do these things? It is not done for fornication! Perhaps not, but for admiration; and do you not blush for shame to be admired for such things? But you say, It is but chance I am so dressed, and for no motive of this kind. God knows what you say to me: is it to me you must give account? Nay, it is to Him who is present at your actions, and will one day inquire into them, to whom all things are naked and open. It is on this account that we now urge these things, that we may not let you be amenable to those severe judgments. Let us fear, therefore, lest He reprove you in the words of the Prophet to the Jewish women. They come to be seen of me wantoning and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet. Isaiah 3:16

You have taken upon you a great contest, where wrestling, not ornament is required; where the battle awaits you, not sloth and ease. Observe the combatants and wrestlers in the games. Do they concern themselves about their walk or their dress? No, but scorning all these, and throwing about them a garment dripping with oil, they look only to one thing, to wound, and not be wounded. The devil stands grinding his teeth, watching to destroy you every way, and you remain unconcerned, or concerned only about this satanic ornament. I say nothing about the voice, though much affectation is shown in this also, nor about perfumes, and other such luxuries. It is for these things we are ridiculed by the women of the world. The respect for virginity is lost. No one honors a virgin as she ought to be honored. They have given occasion to their own dishonor. Ought not they to be looked up to in the Church of God, as women coming from heaven? But now they are despised, and deservedly, though not those among them who are discreet. But when one who has a husband and children, and presides over a household, sees you, who ought to be crucified to the world, more devoted to the world than herself, will she not ridicule and despise you? See what care! What pains! In your humble dress, you exceed her who wears the costliest ornament, and art more studious of appearance than she who is arrayed in gold. What is becoming to you you seek not; that which misbecomes you you pursue, when you ought to be occupied in good works. On this account virgins are less honored than women of the world. For they do not perform works worthy of their virgin profession. This is not said to all; or rather it is said to all; to those who are in fault, that they may learn modesty; to those who are free from blame, that they may teach modesty to others. But beware lest this rebuke be verified in deed. For we have not said these things that we may grieve, but that we may correct you, that we may glory in you. And may we all do those things which are acceptable to God, and live to His glory, that we may obtain the blessings promised by the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom, etc.

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