

1 Timothy 2:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

Analysis

But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Paul contrasts external adornment (v. 9) with internal character expressed through action. The true adornment for "women professing godliness" (gynaixin epangellomenais theosebeian, γυναιξὶν ἐπαγγελλομέναις θεοσεβείαν) is "good works" (ergōn agathōn, ἔργων ἀγαθῶν). "Professing" (epangellomai, ἐπαγγέλλομαι) means to announce publicly or proclaim—these women claim to be godly. "Godliness" (theosebeia, θεοσεβεία) combines theos (God) and sebeia (worship, reverence)—practical devotion to God.

"Good works" provides the authentic adornment befitting godly women. While Paul consistently teaches salvation by grace through faith apart from works (Ephesians 2:8-9), he equally insists that genuine faith produces good works (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:14; 3:8). Works don't earn salvation but demonstrate its reality. For women professing godliness, character demonstrated through service, kindness, and righteousness adorns more beautifully than any jewelry or clothing.

The contrast is instructive: worldly women adorn themselves externally to attract attention and display status; godly women adorn themselves through character and service that honors God and blesses others. External beauty fades (1 Peter 3:4; Proverbs 31:30), but character formed through good works has eternal value. This doesn't mean believers should neglect appearance entirely but that priorities must be properly ordered—character before cosmetics, godliness before fashion.

Historical Context

The emphasis on good works as women's true adornment reflects both Jewish wisdom tradition (Proverbs 31:10-31 celebrates a woman's character and industry) and Jesus' teaching that disciples are known by their fruit (Matthew 7:16-20). Early Christianity distinguished itself partly through believers' changed behavior—practical love, sexual purity, care for vulnerable people, honesty in business, and faithfulness in marriage.

In Greco-Roman society, many wealthy women focused on leisure, entertainment, and self-adornment while neglecting productive work or charitable service. Christian teaching that godly women should be characterized by good works represented a counter-cultural emphasis on substance over appearance, service over leisure, others-centeredness over self-indulgence.

The specific mention of "professing godliness" suggests that some women in Ephesian churches claimed to be godly while their behavior contradicted this profession. Perhaps they focused on external religious observance or doctrinal precision while neglecting practical service. Paul insists that authentic godliness produces visible good works—faith and works are inseparable (James 2:14-26).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What specific good works characterize your life, demonstrating the authenticity of your profession of godliness?
2. How do you balance appropriate attention to appearance with proper priority on character and service?
3. In what ways might your church culture emphasize religious activity or doctrinal precision while neglecting practical good works?

Interlinear Text

ἀλλ'	ὃ	πρέπει	γυναιξὶν	ἐπαγγελλομέναις	θεοσεβειαν
But	(which	becometh	women	professing	godliness
G235	G3739	G4241	G1135	G1861	G2317
δι'	ἔργων	ἀγαθῶν			
) with	works	good			
G1223	G2041	G18			

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 2:12 (Good): Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Revelation 2:19 (Parallel theme): I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

Acts 9:36 (Good): Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

Proverbs 31:31 (Parallel theme): Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.