CHRISTIAN WIVES AND HUSBANDS

1 Peter 3:1-22

Key Verse: 4

“Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”

Before looking into today’s passage, let’s recall the context of 1 Peter. Apostle Peter is writing to encourage Christians to persevere suffering and persecution, and to live as foreigners and exiles to bring glory to God in a hostile world. He counsels them not to disengage from society, but to live godly lives among the pagans who may then see their good deeds and glorify God. He advices them to submit themselves to governing authorities and to their masters. In today’s passage, Peter first addresses wives and husbands about the godly conduct and mandate in the home. Then he urges all Christians to suffer for doing good in the world.

I. Wives and husbands (1-7)

First, wives are to be adorned with inner beauty (1-6). In the ancient Roman world, women had no rights like slaves. Before marriage, they were under their fathers’ power, and after marriage, under their husbands’ power. They were subject to their husbands and completely at the mercy of their husbands. Jesus, however, honored women equally with men, including them in his ministry. His gospel message broke barriers between gender, races, social status and culture. The Christian church was born and build up on this gospel message. So we can see in the book of Acts that there was a significant number of women in the first Jerusalem church meetings that Peter served as the leader. Peter understood the greatness as well as the importance of women at home, in the church and in the society at large.

Look at verses 1-2. **“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.”** Peter exhorts Christian wives to submit to their husbands. The word, “submission” may sound alien to many people today. Submission is hard for everyone. We like to be in control of ourselves. Like a singer who sang, “I did it my way” years ago, we want to do things in our own way. What does it mean to “submit yourselves to your own husbands?” The word, submit means to accept or yield to the will of another person. It implies a person’s willingness and voluntary choice, different from the word, “obey.” To be submissive is an attitude of heart that accepts the husband as the leader of the family and yield to his will and leading. It is not spineless and mindless obedience but voluntary humility and service.

According to the scriptures, God blesses and ordains marriage for the union between a man and a woman so that they can both serve God and his holy mission and love each other. And it is God’s order that the husband is tobe the head of the family and Christ, the head of man. So the wife’s submission to her husband is overall submitting to Christ. We know that where there is disorder, there is no unity. Peter urges Christian women to submit even to their unbelieving husbands so that they might win their souls over to God.

Look at verses 3-4. **“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewellery or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”**Generally, women desire to be beautiful forever. So they are attracted to feminine adornment. They are interested in cosmetics, fine clothes, hairstyles, jewellery and accessories. It is known that women in Rome spent most of their time in seeking new fad in their hairdos, dresses and jewellery. But their inner corruption brought the fall of the Roman Empire. Physical beauty fades like the flowers of the field. Besides, physical beauty cannot keep a happy marriage and happy family. The unfading true beauty is inner beauty which keeps their homes godly and happy. Women of inner beauty are women of blessings to their husbands and children and neighbors.

Women of inner beauty are adorned with a gentle and quiet spirit. They don’t stir up arguments for their own gain or fight anger with anger. They have gentle and patient tongue which extinguishes flames of anger and argument. Instead, they come to the living God quietly and pray to God even when they face troubles and problems. They become God’s blessings to their husband, children and neighbors. And because these women radiate godly beauty, they appear indescribably pure, lovely and mysteriously beautiful even on the outside.

In verses 5-6, Peter illustrates Abraham’s wife Sarah as an example. From migrating to Canaan to becoming a family of blessing, Sarah submitted herself to her husband Abraham, except the matters of Abraham’s concubine Hagar and her son Ishmael in which God was on her side, not Abraham’s. She left her hometown and moved to a foreign land, Canaan, not arguing with Abraham or holding him back. When Abraham told her to lie in Egypt, that she was Abraham’s sister, she didn’t call him a coward. She put her hope in God and became submissive. When Abraham invited three visitors to his tent without giving Sarah a notice, Sarah didn’t complain, but prepared food diligently and served the guests warmly. Even when God told Abraham to offer their only son Isaac, she didn’t go mad but listened to her husband with her faith and hope in God. She is a model of faith for all women in Christ. She put her hope in God and was submissive to her husband so that Abraham could become the ancestor of faith. She patiently and quietly waited for Abraham to grow spiritually through even mistakes plus successes, putting her hope in God. God honored her faith and hope, and made her mother of many nations.

Second, husbands are to be considerate (7). Verse 7 says, **“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”**What does it mean to be considerate? It means to be caring about and respectful of others. NKJV and many other versions of the Bible translate the phrase, “be considerate” as “with understanding” or “according to knowledge.” Peter urged Christian husbands to know their wife properly as they live with their wives. Some husbands seem clueless with regard to their wife’s needs and say, “I don’t know her,” or “I don’t understand her.” I read a man’ honestly opinion about women that I agree with. He said, “Women are a mystery, illogical, emotional, mushy and complex.” The homework to husbands, therefore, is to understand the mystery to have a happy family. The most basic understanding husbands should have is that wives are different. In many ways, women are different from men. God created women weaker than men physically and emotionally. But God endowed women better intuition and senses than men. In this way, God created man and woman differently so that they can be united as one through marriage and form and function as completed one. So husbands must know differences between man and woman and honor God’s gifts in their wives. My wife and I are very different in many ways. I am quick and hot-tempered. So I make easy and silly mistakes. But my wife is very thoughtful, sensitive and caring. I forget both good and bad memories quickly, and look forward to what is ahead, but she never forgets them. Sometimes she talks about a few decade old events vividly and so whenever I need to know an old event to see the current issues in a broad perspective, I ask her to tell the event in detail. In finding the solution of a problem, I am thinking within a box, but she has another eye to see it out of the box. She keeps old and worn out stuff like an antique stuff collector. I want to throw them out and say to her, “I don’t understand you.” So when I look at her from my view, I cannot understand her. I should be in her shoes to understand her. God joined us together as a team to serve God and people. So to be considerate husbands should submit themselves to understanding their wives and their real needs and build a family of care and love.

Verse 7b says, **“…and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”**Husbands’ understanding is important but that is not enough. They must treat their wives with respect as the weaker partner and heirs together of the gift of life. Here the word “partner” implies a relationship of mutual respect and care. As life partners, they share privileges and responsibilities equally as they walk their pilgrimage to heaven.

In our times, we see many broken and disintegrated families which beget broken children and families. The remedy is Christian wives of inner beauty and Christian husbands with understanding and respect for their weaker partners. Let’s pray that God may raise may Christian families among us and in this country and the whole world.

II. Suffering for doing good (8-22)

In this part, Peter encourages them how to live as Christians. Verse 8 says, **“Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.”** This verse teaches about Christian mindset to build up the community of Christ. By God’s grace and mercy, we have become God’s people who will share eternal inheritance. Now we are building up God’s holy and invisible temple together. Unbelievers don’t understand our calling, lifestyle, suffering for Christ and his gospel. Only we Christians know the preciousness of these things. So we can be like-minded, living in harmony with one another, cheering and encouraging one another, and praying for one another. We can be sympathetic and compassionate toward fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who are struggling with difficulties and troubles in life. In this way, we can live in beautiful harmony with one another and establish the beautiful community of Christ.

Look at verse 9; **“Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”**This verse reminds us of Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. It is man’s instinct to get even when oppressed or falsely accused. Not getting even looks weak and cowardly. Repaying evil with good is, in fact, the power and courage. Victory over evil does not come from fighting back. Fighting back only calls the disastrous cycle of evils. Victory over evil comes from moral superiority. By human nature, no one can exercise moral superiority over evil people. But Christians can do by the help of the Holy Spirit when we submit. Peter encourages Christians under fiery persecution to be victors and conquerors over the power of darkness of the world by following our Lord’s teaching and example.

Peter quotes from David’s psalm to emphasize the importance of keeping inner purity in spiritual battle. Look verses 10-12; **“For ‘Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.’”** David wrote this psalm when he was a fugitive because of King Saul’s jealousy. Many political people arose against him to accuse him falsely and kill him taking advantage of the king’s hatred toward him. His suffering and agony due to the wickedness of men was beyond description. But David did not fight with men; he only struggled with himself not to sin and keep his heart pure before God. Why could he do so? Because he believed that everything was under God’s control and God sees all men’s hearts and repays them according to their deeds. He finally won spiritual victory and God made him King and shepherd over his people because he trusted in God.

In verse 14a, Peter says, **“But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.”** Surely the Lord’s words for the last and greatest blessedness of the eight blessedness in the Sermon on the Mount were in his heart when Peter encouraged the suffering saints; "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Mt 5:11-12) In verses 15-17, Peter exhorts the saints to be ready to witness to Jesus Christ in the midst of persecutions. In verses 18-22, he again reminds them of the example of Jesus our Lord. Christ the righteous died for the unrighteous to bring us to God. He was put to death in the body by evil men but made alive by the Spirit. After his humble suffering, he was ascended into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. Through his death and resurrection, we have been cleansed from sin and exalted to be a holy priesthood with him. We will share in his glory when we suffer with him for righteousness and for the sins of the world. May we suffer for Christ joyfully living in this godless and hostile world and share Chirist’s glory in his kingdom.