

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Jesus' Example Applied to Life: Wives

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. (1 Peter 3:1–6, KJV 1900)

"Likewise" in our study passage refers us back to Peter's admonitions in the second chapter. Peter closed the chapter with his teaching that faithful believers are commanded to respect their liberty in the Lord Jesus Christ, but not to misuse it, "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God." (1 Peter 2:16) From that foundational principle, Peter develops a list of specific commandments for godly, God-honoring conduct that applies to all believers. He begins to focus these universal Christian behaviors on servants in 2:18. To add emphasis to his instructions, Peter introduces Jesus' example and commands us to follow that example in all areas of our lives.

As we begin the third chapter, Peter applies these behavioral principles to wives. Starting with Jesus' example as the pattern for godly living, how do we interpret and apply that example to our individual situation in life? What is the weight of Peter's "Likewise..."? Based on his teachings later in this letter, Peter does not advocate that wives strive to content themselves as slaves to their husbands. In his next application, to husbands, Peter instructs them to build a relationship with the wife that does not hinder their mutual prayers, "...as heirs together of the grace of life." (1 Peter 3:8)

Peter's instructions to the wives appeal to Jesus' example, as do all of his commandments in this context. Jesus did not submit to the Father and trust Him in a slavish manner. He willingly submitted to the Father in all that He did. His will and the Father's will were identical. Demanded or forced submission is slavish. Willing, trusting, and joyful submission is an amazing thing to behold. The husband who demands that his wife submit shall never know the joys of a godly marriage; for he acknowledges by his demands that he either does not respect and trust his wife or that he doesn't conduct himself as husband so as to deserve his wife's willing submission. If a husband desires that his wife honor the Lord by her submission, he must act out his love for her as fully as Christ showed His love for His "Bride" in His

actions. (Ephesians 5:25) I am convinced that, if more men showed this kind of love to their wives in their daily interactions, more wives would discover the joys of a Biblical marriage.

While Scripture holds the husband to this high standard, it equally holds the wife to a similar high standard. Peter leaves no stone unturned in this goal. Think of the marital dynamic in a marriage where the wife is a believer, but the husband is not. Peter teaches the wife in such a marriage to be so Christ-like in her conduct with her husband that, even though he may not believe the testimony of Scripture and the harmonious teachings of the gospel, he will be compelled to respect his wife's faithful "Conversation," a word in Scripture that, though it includes what the person says, typically refers to far more than the words that the person speaks. It covers a person's whole lifestyle. Think of a common situation in such a marriage. Perhaps the unbelieving husband has been around hypocritical Christians, so he concludes that all Christians are cheap hypocrites. He may blast away at them, but every time he charges that all Christians are hypocrites, he must swallow hard and think about his wife. He knows her better than he knows any other person living, and he, above all men, knows that she is genuine through and through. There is not a hypocritical spot in her life. If he thinks about his attitude, he must eventually come to the conclusion that there are indeed some believers who are authentic and wholly sincere in their faith. I cherish the blessing of knowing more than one family that demonstrated this exact situation. The wife's godly, gracious, and loving life quietly accomplished what a house full of preachers failed to do. She eventually won her husband by her godly, Christ-like example.

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.... Various Christian cultures that emphasize a particular woman's dress and hairstyle often appeal to this verse as their Biblical authority. They excessively emphasize hair style and jewelry, but they conveniently ignore

Peter's last point, "...putting on of apparel." If their interpretation is correct, are they really interested in being so literal in this point? Simply stated, do they believe that they should go out in public without apparel? I think not.

Peter's point, interpreted in context, is obvious. While worldly women will put more emphasis on how they look than how they act, Peter reminds these godly women that their conduct should always display their chief "Adornment." God pays more attention to how they act than how they dress or style their hair. Any form of hairstyle or wardrobe that calls attention to itself will thereby detract attention from the conduct of the woman. It is this attitude and behavior that Peter addresses in his warning. A woman can easily wear her hair so out of contemporary style that her ultra-conservative hairstyle attracts attention. She may wear such "Plain-Jane" out-of-style clothes that she calls attention to them and distracts from her conduct. I do not in any way advocate blind acceptance of every hairstyle or clothing fad that comes along. Human behaviors, including hair and clothing styles, go through bizarre and extreme cycles. Godly women should take note of such carnal trends and avoid them, but avoid them in such a way as to call attention to their godly, Jesus-example kind of conduct, not their hair or their wardrobe. A godly woman should definitely avoid dresses that dip too low at the top or that stop too high from their ankles. Such dress attracts attention to the woman in a sinful manner, while extremely conservative hairstyle or wardrobe calls attention to the woman in the opposite extreme manner. Peter's point calls for balance between these two extremes. Dress with conservative and godly grace. Dress in such a way that you do not call attention to yourself. Make the memorable part of you your godly, Christ-example conduct.

But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. Now we see Peter's purpose. Think of the various people whom you saw at some recent public gathering. How many of these people do you recall? What about each of these people caused them to remain in your memory, while you can't be sure that others were present or not? In some cases, you will recall an individual because of their unusual wardrobe or hairstyle. In other cases, you will recall an individual because he/she was excessively loud and demanding in conversation. As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, how should you want to be remembered? Your goal should be the "...hidden man of the heart." Instead of being remembered because you made doubly sure to shout your personal demands or wishes about the topic of conversation, you exemplified the "ornament," the godly jewelry of "...a meek and quiet spirit." Quite often, people are more honored and respectfully remembered by their quietness when others were clamoring and engaging in loud

bickering than by their joining with the mega-phone personalities present.

Jesus teaches a similar truth that applies to all believers in all settings of life.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16 KJVP)

Jesus spoke these words in His "Magnum Opus" of godly Christian living, the Sermon on the Mount. Our attitude will evoke others to remember us for one reason or another. When we remember someone because of his/her carnal loudness or abrasiveness, or even for their good deeds, trumpeted in a theatrical manner for others to see, that person utterly failed Jesus' commandment in this verse. The godly believer will prompt a memory that urges those who remember him/her to "...glorify your Father which is in heaven," not praise or despise the individual.

For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands. A thorough study of Scripture will enrich us with both good and bad examples for living. Peter nudges us to focus on the central truth that serves as a foundation for the whole lesson. "...**who trusted in God**..." Perhaps the loud, abrasive person, man or woman, doesn't trust God as much as they should, so they feel constrained to take charge and push for "What I want." The God-trusting attitude mirrors Peter's description of Jesus' example in the closing verses of the second chapter. How did Jesus face His darkest hour? He "...committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (1 Peter 2:23b) Whether we are a man or woman, the more fully we trust God and commit our lives to Him in godly conduct, the more we obey Peter's—and all of Scripture's—inspired teaching.

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. (1 Peter 4:19 KJVP)

If committing the keeping of our souls to the Lord is the right thing to do when we suffer "...according to the will of God," it is surely the right thing to do in all circumstances. Suffering according to the will of God means that we suffer while obeying His will, not suffering as a murderer, thief, evildoer (of any kind), or busybody. (1 Peter 4:15)

Man, woman, boy, girl, employer, employee; whatever position we face in life, the bedrock for a gracious, God-honoring life must begin with this profound trust in the Lord. And while we trust in Him fully, we busy ourselves, not in these sinful behaviors, but in "...well doing..." Trust God and keep on the good way. Trust God and actively manifest Jesus' example in all things.

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor