

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Peter 3:3-6 (NIV based)

TITLE: God Greatly Values The Gentle, Quiet, And Un-frightened Submissive Spirit Of Wives

BACKGROUND:

- - The topic of 'enduring unjust suffering for doing good is commendable to God' (1 Peter 2:18ff) applies to 'wives', in relation to their 'husbands' (vv.3:1ff).
 - - When wives live in purity and reverence as they endure being consistently and appropriately submissive to the authority of their non-believing husband, he will become more open to her religious beliefs. (vv.3:1-2)
 - - God wants to use this godliness of believing wives to effectively reach their non-believing husband, in order for the husband to become a believer. (vv.3:1-2)
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READ: 1 Peter 3:3-4, with vv.1-2 for context

[Lesson Question: For the concept in each of verse 3 and verse 4, discuss, analyze, determine, and then explain why those 2 concepts are cited here, in relation to the concepts in verses 1 and 2.]

SECTION POINT: Wives are to have a "quiet and gentle spirit" as they submit to the authority of their husband, which God determines as being of "great worth in [His] sight".

v.3 "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes." (cf. 1 Timothy 2:9)

- - God addresses and confronts the natural humanistic thinking of true believer wives, saying that their priority, efforts, and time should not be consumed by enhancing and servicing their "outward adornment".
- - In diametric contrast to the valued spiritual "purity and reverence of [their] lives" that is cited in previous verse 2, their "braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes" (v.3) are not of value in "God's sight" (v.4).
- - This pronouncement by God implies that the 'outward adornment' of wives are not commendable nor worthy to be recognized or praised by God as credible for earning blessings and eternal rewards from God.
- - And like her use of words as referred to in verse 1, the wife's 'outward adornment' is essentially ineffective in spiritually reaching and winning over her husband to becoming a believer.
- - God's assessment of virtues here is, in a sense, supported by the perspective of most husbands, who from experience know that the outer beauty of their wife certainly is enjoyable for them, but it is not enough to produce a happy marriage for them if their wife is very unpleasant and unbearable to live with.
- - For husbands who live under this very unbearable reality, subsequently and consequently they either contemplate marital separation and divorce, or they henceforth 'clam up' and refuse to be conversational with their wife, or they find other ways to minimize the amount of contact and interaction that they have with their wife, which is known as 'distancing', that can be physical, and/or emotional, and/or relational.

v.4 "Instead, 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." (cf. 1 Timothy 2:10-12)

- - "Instead" of striving for "outward adornment" (v.3), God wants wives to focus on and excel at their 'adornment' or "beauty" (so to speak) being established and fully developed on the inside - their "inner self", their personality, who and what they are as a person, and as a true believer, and as a wife.
- - God identifies what He determines as being "beauty" in believer wives - a "spirit", personality, and demeanor that are "gentle", "meek, mild, and humble", and that are "quiet", "keeping one's place, and not disturbing". (Strong's #4239; #2272)
- - Having an "inner" "gentle and quiet spirit" exudes true "beauty" - a beauty of personality that is "unfading", "incorruptible, and un-decaying". (Strong's #0862)
- - Physical beauty diminishes and deteriorates with age, so "outward adornment" such as "braided hair, gold jewelry, and fine clothes" can be utilized to try to cover up the diminishing of the obviously-temporal physical beauty.
- - But "in God's sight", the value of the characteristics and qualities of a "gentle and quiet spirit" does not diminish or deteriorate over time.
- - Matter of fact, this 'gentle and quiet spirit' "is" and remains "of great worth", even to the extent of being and remaining of "extreme value" "in the presence of God". (Strong's #4185, #1799)

- - This inner beauty of the wives has potential to greatly impact their husband in moving him toward becoming a true believer in God.
- - Husbands can readily see, ascertain, and make the connection that the 'gentle and quiet spirit' of their wife comes from her godliness that is produced by her faith as a true believer in God.
- - So over time, the consistent 'gentle and quiet spirit' of the wife produces the effect of dispelling the husband's resistance or opposition to the godliness that she possesses because her 'gentle and quiet spirit' is so beneficial to him.

vv.5-6 - READ

[Lesson Question: For the concepts in verses 5 and 6a, discuss, analyze, determine, and then explain how those concepts support the concept in verse 6b and how they tie in with select concepts in the section of previous verses starting in verse 2:18 through verse 3:2.]

SECTION POINT: God instructs that wives are to follow and emulate how the "holy women of the past" "submitted to their own husbands".

v.5 "For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands,"

- - To substantiate the imperatives in verses 1-4, now in verse 5 is cited the conduct of "the holy women of the past", and how they "made themselves beautiful".
- - Theses cited 'women of the past' were "holy", godly, and consecrated to God.

- - In their devoutness to God, and being "conscious of God" (v.2:19), they "put their hope in God" - having, walking, and living by faith and confident hope that God would bless them and reward them some day in the future for their obedience to God.
- - These 'holy women' consistently were appropriately "submissive to their own husbands", while simultaneously genuinely possessing "purity and reverence" (v.3:2) with a 'gentle and quiet spirit' (v.3:4).
- - This comprehensive godliness in wives is considered by God to be the nature of their true beauty.
- - Centuries and millennia later, the godly life of these 'holy women' and their subordinate and respectful conduct to their husband are still "commendable before God" (v.2:20), and still retain "great worth in [His] sight" (v.3:4), as proven by being cited in the Scriptures of the New Testament here in verse 5.

v.6a "like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master."

- - As a specific example of a 'holy woman of the past', "Sarah" is cited as worthy to be featured here because she submitted even to the extreme of respectfully "calling" her husband Abraham "her master", which was probably taken from the quote in Genesis 18:12.
- - Her 'obedience to Abraham' is implied in Genesis 18:6 and 18:8 in that narrated account, wherein as state here in 1 Peter 3:6 that she "obeyed", or from the Greek word she "listened attentively, heeded, and then conformed to the authority" directive that was given to her by her husband Abraham. (Strong's #5219 in 1 Peter 3:6)
- - The attitude and behaviors of Sarah, in response to the directive given to her by her husband Abraham, is the example that all true believer wives are to follow and emulate in response to their husband.

v.6b "You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

- - True believer wives, who follow Sarah's example, in a sense become "her daughters", heirs to the same renown, honor, and acclaim that Sarah enjoys millennia later.
- - Notice though, that a newly-stated "if" condition is added here, with the first part of the condition being that the godly and submissive wife is to "do what is right"- "doing good". (Strong's #0015)
- - God considers the wives as 'doing good' when they are godly and are submissive to their husband.
- - And therefore, the wives doing anything less than this 'good' is considered by God as being deficient in 'doing this good' that He approves of.
- - By implication therefore, the wives responding in any non-biblically prescribed ways (or in the flesh) are not 'doing what is good', and are running the risk of actually doing what is sinful and counterproductive to God's approach in winning over the non-believing husband.
- - The second part of this "if" condition is that the wives are to "not give way to fear", not be "frightened" by fear. (Strong's #5399)
- - Reasonably, the wife giving up authority and control over her own life to her husband would be 'frightening', and even more so if her husband has a history of making poor, or foolish, or disastrous decisions.

- - Surely, there would be fear for her of what will happen under her husband's sole authority, what adversities could or will happen, how their finances, marriage, employment, and children will be affected, and etcetera.
 - - In reality, the wife is willfully relinquishing the prerogative and ability to object and to enforce stopping her husband from doing something that she does not like.
 - - Here in verse 6, God is exhorting her to do this relinquishing while simultaneously overriding her own legitimate fears.
 - - In order to exercise such strength of character, she will need to heavily rely on her strength of faith and devotion to God, "entrusting herself [and her situation] to Him who judges justly", like Jesus did to God the Father when Jesus was crucified. (v.2:23)
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BIG IDEA: God gives wives the assignment to do the good of submitting to their husband, without succumbing to fear.

APPLICATIONS:

- - For those of you who are a wife, which is more important to you: an outward physical beauty, or an inner godly beauty?
 - - Which of these two kinds of beauty do you spend more time, effort, and expense on developing and maintaining?
 - - When you proceed in eternity in the next life, which of these two kinds of beauty do you think would have been more wise for you to pursue now in this life?
 - - Typically, how do you respond when you learn of an assignment that God gives you?
 - - Can God be trusted "that in all things [He] works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose", as stated in Romans 8:28?
 - - Can God be trusted to ultimately bring good upon you - even though you may be suffering in the midst of you submitting to your husband in this God-prescribed manner in verses 1-6?
 - - If you say, "Yes, God can be trusted.", then what does that mean for whether or not you accept this assignment from God?
 - - If you say, "Yes, God can be trusted." and you accept this assignment from God, then what does that mean for whether or not you later "give way to fear" and then terminate your fulfilling of this assignment?
 - - Are you saying, "Yes, God can be trusted.", but then saying "No, God cannot be trusted" because you encountered fear, hardship, and perhaps some suffering as you were working on fulfilling this assignment that God gave you personally?
 - - What are you going to do with this assignment that God has given you?
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[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - List some fears that probably would stop the wife from fulfilling this assignment and mission from God.
- - What does this section of verses 1-6 imply about God's activities in this kind of marriage situation? Would He be active, and if so, how, and under what circumstances?

- - What conduct or behaviors of the wife would hinder, thwart, stall, or stop God's activities in this marriage, essentially rendering God a passive bystander?
 - - What does this passage imply about the wife compromising her godly values and/or this God-approved approach in order to bring relief to her misery or suffering from the sole authority of her husband?
 - - Is it reasonable to assume that this approach will be easy for the wife? ANSWER: No!! Like Christ (see 1 Peter 2:19-25), she is taking the long tough road of suffering and hard work - for the benefit of an undeserving person who at the initial point would care less about getting close to God. NOTE: All of us humans are undeserving of God's grace - Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:10-12,18.
 - - As a side-topic of interest, what would women in our society today think about emulating Sarah's approach? What would their solution approach be to authority in their marriages?]
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Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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File name: 1peter3_3-6-sermonorlesson.____ (.htm, .rtf, .doc, .pdf)

Translation used: NIV, quoted or referred to in various places within this document

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