

LESSONS FOR THE SISTERS

Lesson 12

The Adorning of the Hidden Man of the Heart in a Meek and Quiet Spirit

Scripture Reading: 1 Pet. 3:3-4; Lev. 13:47-59

I. First Peter 3:3 says, “Whose adorning, let it not be the outward plaiting of hair, and putting on of gold, or clothing with garments”:

- A. Women's hair was intended by God for their glory and a sign of their submission—1 Cor. 11:15; S. S. 4:1; 6:5; 7:5.
- B. But it was abused by many, especially by those who lived in the luxurious and corrupt life of the Roman Empire at the time of this Epistle, to beautify their lustful flesh by its extravagant adornment with gold and other costly things.
- C. Christian wives, as holy women, should absolutely abstain from this God-condemned matter.

II. In 1 Peter 3:4 Peter goes on to say, “But the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, which is very costly in the sight of God”:

- A. Our heart is composed of all the parts of our soul—mind, emotion, and will—and of the main part of our spirit, the conscience—Heb. 4:12:
 - 1. Among all these, our spirit is the center; hence, our spirit is the hidden man of the heart.
 - 2. The hidden man is in contrast to the outward plaiting, putting on, and clothing in 1 Peter 3:3; and a meek and quiet spirit, in contrast to hair, gold, and garments.
 - 3. The wives’ adornment before God should be their inner being—the hidden man of their heart, which is their spirit, in meekness and quietness.
 - 4. This is the incorruptible adornment in contrast to the corruptible hair, gold, and garments; this spiritual adornment is costly in the sight of God—v. 4.
 - 5. A spirit that has become meek and quiet is the kind of adornment that should be possessed by all Christian wives.
- B. According to 1 Peter 3, the most beautiful part of our being, the prettiest adornment, in the sight of God is a meek and quiet spirit:
 - 1. This is the hidden man of the heart; this point shows that our spirit is the deepest part of our being.
 - 2. So if we are going to be pretty in the eyes of God, we have to be pretty from the depths of our being; we should not be pretty just outwardly, in a physical way.
 - 3. We have to be pretty inwardly, in the hidden man; this man is hidden from the eyes of man, but it is not hidden from the eyes of God, because such a hidden man, that is, a meek and quiet spirit, is pretty in the eyes of God.
- C. One serious lesson for wives to learn is not to argue, not to exchange words, with their husbands; the sisters need to realize that when they exchange words with their husbands, they do not have a meek and quiet spirit.
 - 1. But if as a Christian wife a sister maintains a meek and quiet spirit, she will not lose her temper, and she will not even exchange words with her husband.
 - 2. Knowing the situation of married life from experience and observation, Peter charges the wives to adorn themselves with a meek and quiet spirit.

III. Peter's word indicates that many sisters tended to adorn themselves with plaiting of hair, gold, and apparel; he did not feel happy about the way they dressed—v. 3:

- A. The plaiting of hair and ornaments of jewelry are not suitable, nor is beautiful apparel.
- B. We are not saying that sisters should be careless in their clothing; if a sister dresses herself in a careless, untidy, and unclean way, it means that she is a careless and loose person; this is not what Peter meant.
- C. Peter's emphasis is that sisters should not adorn themselves with the plaiting of hair and the putting on of gold and costly garments; instead, they should adorn themselves with a meek and quiet spirit.
- D. This must also be the result of man having been dealt with by God.

IV. We need to see the principles concerning clothing:

- A. The principle of clothing is for covering; Christians should not wear any clothing which does not cover them—cf. Gen. 3:21.
- B. There should be a clear distinction between males and females; the Bible forbids men to wear women's clothing and vice versa; anything which confuses the distinction in gender does not glorify God—Deut. 22:5.
- C. Our clothing must be sealed with the mark of holiness; there should be the seal of the Holy Spirit, the seal of the anointing oil, on our clothing—Lev. 8:30.
- D. There is one basic principle of Christian clothing—God has given everyone the freedom to wear what they like; we are free to choose the materials we like and to pick the style we prefer.
- E. However, we should take note of one thing: no one should wear anything that draws attention to their clothes rather than to their person.
- F. Another matter needs special attention: a person's clothes should match their status; do not dress too poorly and do not dress too well; others should not feel that we are too much or too poor in our attire; our clothing must glorify the Lord.
- G. Furthermore, our clothing should not arouse our own consciousness; some people are always conscious of what they wear; this means that something is wrong with their attire.

V. While God does not give specific instructions on how to dress, two principles are presented: our clothing must be proper, and our clothing must not be extravagant:

- A. We dare not say that there is a specific standard for what is proper, but regardless of where we are or what we are doing, we have an inward sense of whether or not our clothing is proper.
- B. While it may be more difficult in determining whether or not a particular garment is extravagant, we each have an inward sense of what is extravagant and what is not.
- C. Under the new covenant God does not give us dead ordinance after dead ordinance concerning every matter; instead, He imparts His living law of life inside of us so that we know what to do with respect to every matter (Heb. 8:10); may we be willing to follow His inward leading in the matter of clothing and adornment.

VI. We need to bring our clothes to the Lord and deal with them one by one—Lev. 13:47-59:

- A. If you have any doubt about any of your clothes, you should bring them to the priest for examination; the Lord is the High Priest today; you must ask Him whether or not you can wear this clothing.
- B. Do not expect others to come and tell you what is good and what is not; you must bring everything to the Lord yourself and let the Lord judge you; you must ask the Lord, "I have become a believer now. Is this clothing all right?"

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE SISTERS' ADORNING

[First Peter 3:3] says, “Whose adorning, let it not be the outward plaiting of hair, and putting on of gold, or clothing with garments.” Women's hair was intended by God for their glory and a sign of their submission (1 Cor. 11:15; S. S. 4:1; 6:5; 7:5). But it was abused by many, especially by those who lived in the luxurious and corrupt life of the Roman Empire at the time of this Epistle, to beautify their lustful flesh by its extravagant adornment with gold and other costly things. Christian wives, as holy women, should absolutely abstain from this God-condemned matter.

Many years ago, a young woman began to attend the meetings of the church in Chefoo. She was intelligent and modern, a student of law. When she first came to a meeting, her hair was arranged like a high tower. I noticed that as she continued coming to the meetings, this tower became lower and lower. Eventually, after she attended more meetings, the tower was completely gone. She repented and was saved, and the Lord touched her concerning the way she styled her hair.

THE HIDDEN MAN OF THE HEART— A MEEK AND QUIET SPIRIT

In verse 4 Peter goes on to say, “But the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is costly.” The hidden man of the heart is the meek and quiet spirit. Our heart is composed of all the parts of our soul—mind, emotion, and will—and of the main part of our spirit, the conscience (Heb. 4:12). Among all these, our spirit is the center. Hence, our spirit is the hidden man of the heart. The hidden man is in contrast to the outward plaiting, putting on, and clothing in verse 3; and a meek and quiet spirit, in contrast to hair, gold, and garments. The wives' adornment before God should be their inner being—the hidden man of their heart, which is their spirit, in meekness and quietness. This is the incorruptible adornment in contrast to the corruptible hair, gold, and garments. This spiritual adornment is costly in the sight of God.

In his writings Paul does not use the expression, “the hidden man of the heart.” What is this hidden man of the heart? It is a meek and quiet spirit. A spirit that has become meek and quiet is the kind of adornment that should be possessed by all Christian wives.

I believe that Peter wrote this Epistle according to his experiences and also according to his observations. He may have used the words “meek” and “quiet” because he knew that often the spirit of Christian wives is not meek and quiet.

Many times the spirit of a Christian wife is not meek. Sisters, when you exchange words with your husband, do you have a meek and quiet spirit? It is a common, even universal, phenomenon for wives to exchange words with their husbands. For example, a husband may make a proposal regarding a certain matter, but the wife will disagree. The husband may want to go in one direction, but the wife wants to go in the opposite direction. The result of this disagreement is an argument.

As an elderly man with much experience in human life, I can testify that a wife's exchanging words with her husband is a sign of rebellion. Unconsciously and subconsciously, she has deep within her a rebellious spirit. Because she has a spirit of rebellion, she does not want to subject herself to her husband. If a wife were willing to be in subjection to her husband, why would she argue with him? Perhaps she thinks that she has a better knowledge of the situation and is able to foresee problems. Nevertheless, it is still not necessary for her to argue.

One serious lesson for wives to learn is not to argue, not to exchange words, with their husbands. The sisters need to realize that when they exchange words with their husbands, they do

not have a meek and quiet spirit. But if as a Christian wife a sister maintains a meek and quiet spirit, she will not lose her temper, and she will not even exchange words with her husband. Knowing the situation of married life from experience and observation, Peter charges the wives to adorn themselves with a meek and quiet spirit.

As we have pointed out, this meek and quiet spirit is the hidden man of the heart. We believers actually have two men. The first is in our soul with our body. This is the outward man. The other is the hidden man in the center of our heart. The fact that the hidden man of the heart is a meek and quiet spirit indicates that our spirit is the kernel of our being, hidden in the midst of our heart, which is composed of the mind, emotion, will, and conscience. Our spirit, therefore, is surrounded by the mind, emotion, and will. If our spirit is meek and quiet, this will influence our mind, emotion, and will. To be sure, if our spirit is meek, our mind, emotion, and will also will be meek. When we are meek, we are quiet. Meekness and quietness of spirit is a beautiful adornment in the sight of God. (*Life-study of 1 Peter*, msg. 22, pp. 200-204)

First Peter 3:4, "The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit" (KJV). This kind of spirit is not only meek, but also quiet, and is therefore a most valuable ornament in the sight of God. This must also be the result of man having been dealt with by God. (*The Experience of Life*, ch. 13, p. 283)

OUR SPIRIT BEING THE HIDDEN MAN OF THE HEART

First Peter 3:4 reveals that our spirit is the hidden man of our heart. The hidden man is a meek and quiet spirit. When our spirit is meek and quiet, it is hidden. First Peter 3:4 indicates that every part of our being may be considered as a man. Our physical body is our outward man, our soul is our expressed, manifested man, and our spirit is our hidden man.

According to 1 Peter 3, the most beautiful part of our being, the prettiest adornment, in the sight of God is a meek and quiet spirit. This is the hidden man of the heart. This point shows that our spirit is the deepest part of our being. So if we are going to be pretty in the eyes of God, we have to be pretty from the depths of our being. We should not be pretty just outwardly, in a physical way. We have to be pretty inwardly, in the hidden man. This man is hidden from the eyes of man, but it is not hidden from the eyes of God, because such a hidden man, that is, a meek and quiet spirit, is pretty in the eyes of God.

We have to point out that 1 Peter 3:4, on the one hand, says something about the hidden man but, on the other hand, refers to it as being in the sight of God. This means that this meek and quiet spirit is hidden in our heart from human eyes, but it is not hidden in the sight of God. God sees it. So this is the real beauty a godly person should have. (*Basic Lessons on Life*, lesson 17, pp. 134-135)

COSTLY APPAREL AND MEEKNESS

First Peter 3:3-5 says, "Let your adorning not be the outward plaiting of hair and putting on of gold or clothing with garments, but the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptible adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, which is very costly in the sight of God. For in this manner formerly the holy women also, who hoped in God, adorned themselves."

This is the only passage in the Bible that contains the phrase holy women. The phrase holy men is found in many portions of the Word. But this is the only place that speaks of "holy women." For in this manner the holy women adorned themselves, subjecting themselves to their own husbands. The holy women adorned themselves with a meek and quiet spirit.

Peter's word indicates that many sisters tended to adorn themselves with plaiting of hair, gold, and apparel. He did not feel happy about the way they dressed. The plaiting of hair and ornaments of jewelry are not suitable, nor is beautiful apparel. We are not saying that sisters should be

careless in their clothing. If they are careless, it means that there is something wrong with their character. If a sister dresses herself in a careless, untidy, and unclean way, it means that she is a careless and loose person. This is not what Peter meant.

Peter was saying that it is wrong for women to plait their hair in the manner he described. The phrase plaiting of hair in the original text means to fashion the hair in many styles. Throughout history, many styles have been designed to plait the hair. Putting on of gold means to wear jewelry. Christians cannot do this. Clothing with garments may refer to colorful and stylish dresses. Peter's emphasis is that sisters should not adorn themselves with the plaiting of hair and the putting on of gold and costly garments. Instead, they should adorn themselves with a meek and quiet spirit. (*Messages for Building Up New Believers*, vol. 3, ch. 37, pp. 608-610)

CLOTHING

In the Dispensation of Grace

The verses from 1 Timothy and 1 Peter clearly show that in the dispensation of grace, God wants us to pay attention to inward spiritual virtues rather than outward beauty and costly ornamentation. These verses are specifically directed toward the sisters because they pay more attention to matters of adornment.

While God does not give specific instructions on how to dress, two principles are presented: our clothing must be proper, and our clothing must not be extravagant. I dare not say that there is a specific standard for what is proper, but I believe that we each have a sense of whether or not our clothing is proper. This is marvelous! Regardless of where we are or what we are doing, we have an inward sense of whether or not our clothing is proper. With regard to the matter of extravagance, God is a little more specific. He counts gold, jewelry, and costly items as extravagant and does not allow us to wear them. While it may be more difficult in determining whether or not a particular garment is extravagant, we each have an inward sense of what is extravagant and what is not. Under the new covenant God does not give us dead ordinance after dead ordinance concerning every matter. Instead, He imparts His living law of life inside of us so that we know what to do with respect to every matter (Heb. 8:10). May we be willing to follow His inward leading in the matter of clothing and adornment.-(*Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures*, vol. 3, ch. 7, pp. 562-564)

PRINCIPLES CONCERNING CLOTHING

Personal Freedom

I would like to say a general word according to my personal opinion on clothing. I am not saying that every child of God should dress the same way. I have no intention to ask all the sisters to ignore outward beauty altogether. I am not saying that all the brothers and sisters should use the cheapest fabric and the worst materials for their clothing. The Bible has no such commandment. When John came, he was clothed with camel's skin. But when the Lord Jesus came, His undergarment was a seamless garment, the best of the time. There is one basic principle of Christian clothing—God has given everyone the freedom to wear what he likes. We are free to choose the materials we like and to pick the style we prefer.

Not Attracting Attention

However, we should take note of one thing: No one should wear anything that draws attention to his clothes rather than to his person. No Christian should do this. If our clothing always draws others' attention to us, there is something wrong with it. What we wear should express our being. If I put a bouquet of flowers into a vase and others only pay attention to the vase, something is wrong with the vase. Clothing is meant to express the person. Our clothing should not usurp who

we are. The worst thing would be for us to wear clothing that draws attention away from our person to our appearance. This is a great mistake.

Clothing Needing to Match One's Status

Another matter needs special attention: A person's clothes should match his status. Do not dress too poorly and do not dress too well. Please bear in mind that poor clothing attracts attention in the same way that fancy clothing does. We should not pay that much attention to our clothing, neither should we draw the attention of others to it. It is wrong to give others the impression that we are particularly well dressed. However, it is also wrong to be so poorly dressed that others begin to feel uneasy about us. Our clothing must match our status. Others should not feel that we are too much or too poor in our attire. Our clothing must glorify the Lord.

Clothing Not Arousing Self-consciousness

Furthermore, our clothing should not arouse our own consciousness. Some people are always conscious of what they wear. This means that something is wrong with their attire. They have become a coat hanger to their clothes, and their clothes have become more important than they are. They are not wearing their clothes. Instead, their clothes are wearing them. They are always conscious of what they are wearing. They pay too much attention to their appearance. This means that their dress is either too good or too poor. When a person is poorly dressed, he becomes conscious of his clothes in the company of others. When he wears fancy attire, he becomes conscious of his clothes as well. Both are wrong.

It is best to wear something which does not arouse your attention or the attention of others. Your clothes should be very ordinary. At the same time, it should match your status and should be worthy of Christ. Anything that goes beyond this limit is improper. It is a great thing to present a Christian testimony in our attire today. This means that others can identify us as Christians by our appearance. (*Messages for Building Up New Believers*, vol. 3, pp. 607-613)

Bringing Clothes to the Lord and Dealing with Them One by One

A new believer must pay attention to the matter of clothing. If you have any doubt about any of your clothes, you should bring them to the priest for examination. The Lord is the High Priest today. You must ask Him whether or not you can wear this clothing. Do not think that this is a small matter. Clothing is a big issue to a new believer. If you do not know which clothes are plagued with leprosy, you should bring them to the Priest and let the Lord tell you whether they are plagued.

Remember that a person has to separate himself from a leper. A house plagued with leprosy had to be torn down and a garment plagued with leprosy had to be burned. Of course, today you do not need to burn your clothing. But at least you must not wear those things anymore. There are many garments which are plagued with leprosy. Many of them can be worn again after the sleeves are lengthened and the dress dyed to a different color or changed to a different style. Some clothing can be kept after it is examined by the priest and altered a little. Some clothing has the nature of leprosy even after it is examined and altered. It must be thrown away. As soon as a person believes in the Lord, he has to present his clothes piece by piece to the Lord and allow Him to examine each one in detail. He should let the Lord tell him whether or not the clothing is appropriate for him. All of it must be dealt with piece by piece.

I hope new believers will behave as Christians when they present themselves before men. I do not want to see anyone doubting a Christian's genuineness because of the kind of clothes he or she wears. Others will say whether or not we are Christians by the kind of clothes we wear. A cleansed

person would never wear plagued clothing. Our leprosy has been cleansed and our sins are forgiven. From now on, we should not wear any leprosy-infested garments.

New believers must present everything in their wardrobe piece by piece to the Lord and pray over each item. Do not expect others to come and tell you what is good and what is not. You must bring everything to the Lord yourself and let the Lord judge you. You must ask the Lord, "I have become a believer now. Is this clothing all right? Is this clothing right?" Some items of clothing have to be thrown away, while others must be altered. Let the Lord teach you what to do. Some garments cannot be altered at all. You must decide for yourself whether sin is involved in a certain garment. Your clothing has much to do with you. This matter must be dealt with soberly. (*Messages for Building Up New Believers*, vol. 3, pp. 607-608)

Study Questions:

1. What is the hidden man of the heart?
2. How can the sisters be pretty in the eyes of God?
3. Explain how, on the one hand, the Scriptures give us principles concerning clothing adornment and, on the other hand, we must apply these principles according to the inward leading of the law of life.

References and Further Reading:

1. *Life-study of 1 Peter*, msg. 22.
2. *Basic Lessons on Life*, lesson 17.
3. *Messages for Building Up New Believers*, volume 3, ch. 37.
4. *Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures*, vol. 3, ch.7