

LESSONS FOR THE SISTERS

Lesson 10

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”:**¹
 - 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”:**²
 - 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.³
 - 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:⁴
 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.⁵

¹ Life-study of 1 Peter, Message 22, p. 201.

² Life-study of 1 Peter, Message 22, p. 201.

³ Life-study of 1 Peter, Message 22, p. 202.

⁴ Basic Lessons on Life, Lesson 17, pp. 134-135.

⁵ Life-study of 1 Peter, Message 22, p. 202.

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.⁶
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. **We need to see the principles concerning a Christian's attitude toward clothing:**⁷

- 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. 22:5.⁸
- 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. 8:30.⁹
- 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.¹⁰
- 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.¹¹
- 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.¹²

IV. **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—cf. 1 Pet. 3:3:**¹³

- 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.

⁶ Life-study of 1 Peter, Message 22, p. 203.

⁷ Nee, Messages for Building Up New Believers, Vol. 3, pp. 612-613. Added “a Christian's attitude toward” for clarity.

⁸ Nee, Messages for Building Up New Believers, Vol. 3, p. 608.

⁹ Nee, Messages for Building Up New Believers, Vol. 3, p. 611.

¹⁰ Nee, Messages for Building Up New Believers, Vol. 3, p. 612.

¹¹ Nee, Messages for Building Up New Believers, Vol. 3, pp. 612-613.

¹² Nee, Messages for Building Up New Believers, Vol. 3, pp. 612-613.

¹³ Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 3, Chapter 7, p. 562.

- V. **Christ is our beauty given by God to us to be put on us as our clothing, our glorious dress—Exo. 28:2, and notes 1 and 2; Psa. 45:14; Matt. 9:16, and note 1; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 13:14; Rev. 19:8; *Hymns*, #295:**¹⁴
- A. The Lord Jesus is the genuine beauty—Isa. 3:18-4:2; cf. 60:19; *Hymns*, #169, #171:¹⁵
1. We should take Christ as our beauty—S.S. 1:14; Isa. 4:2.¹⁶
 2. Our only beauty is the shining out of Christ from within us; what Christ appreciates in us is the expression of Himself—Psa. 50:2; 90:16.¹⁷
- B. When we live Christ for His magnification by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Christ becomes our expression, our “holy garments,” to be our glory and our beauty—Phil. 1:19-21a; 4:22; Exo. 28:2; Gal. 6:17-18:¹⁸
1. To have Christ as our glory means to express Christ’s divinity with the divine attributes—John 1:14; Heb. 1:3; John 17:22; 2 Cor. 3:18.
 2. To have Christ as our beauty means to express Christ’s humanity with the human virtues—Luke 24:19; Acts 16:7; Psa. 27:4.

¹⁴ CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 1, “Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans,” ch. 5, p. 259.

¹⁵ CWWL, 1983, vol. 1, “The Subjective Experience of the Indwelling Christ,” ch. 5, p. 255.

¹⁶ CWWL, 1989, vol. 3, “The Experience and Growth in Life,” ch. 31, p. 196.

¹⁷ The Ministry of the Word, vol. 15, no. 1, January 2011, “Crystallization-study of Isaiah (2),” ch. 11, p. 282.

¹⁸ The Ministry of the Word, vol. 14, no. 7, July 2010, “Crystallization-study of Isaiah (1),” msg. 10, pp. 271-272.

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. (*CWWL*, 1953, vol. 3, "The Experience of Life," ch. 13, p. 447)

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. (*CWWL*, 1979, vol. 1, "Basic Lessons on Life," ch. 17, pp. 590-591)

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. (CWWN, vol. 50, "Messages for Building Up New Believers, vol. 3," ch. 37, pp. 609-610)

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. (CWWL, 1932-1949, vol. 3, "Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, vol. 3," ch. 33, pp. 630-631)

FOR GLORY AND BEAUTY

There are three main reasons for wearing clothes. In other words, the garments we wear serve three purposes. Before the fall, man did not wear any clothes. But after the fall, Adam and Eve realized they were naked, and they made something to cover their nakedness. Then God provided coats of skins to cover them. Thus, the first reason for wearing clothing is to cover our nakedness. People who are moral will want to cover themselves properly. They will not want to expose their nakedness. Immorality, on the contrary, encourages nakedness. It is both a sin and a shame to be naked. The priests in the Old Testament were fully covered from head to toe. The first purpose of clothing, therefore, is to cover our nakedness.

The second reason for wearing clothing is related to our health. By wearing the proper garments we are protected from the cold, the wind, and the rain. We are also protected from excessive heat. Some of us are very sensitive to the temperature and need to wear the right clothing to keep us from being too warm or too cold. If we do not wear suitable clothing in every situation, our health will be affected. Thus, clothing also serves the purpose of preserving our health.

Third, people wear clothes to beautify themselves. According to Exodus 28, the priestly garments were for glory and for beauty. The purpose of these garments was not mainly to cover

nakedness or to protect the body from the cold. Rather, these garments were for glory and for beauty. The ephod, in particular, was not used to cover the high priest's nakedness or to protect him from cold; it was altogether for glory and beauty.

It is significant that Exodus 28 mentions glory first and beauty second. This indicates that we should first consider glory and then beauty. When we choose our clothes, we should not consider beauty first. Our first consideration should be glory.

We have pointed out that glory here refers to the divine expression, the divine attributes, and that beauty refers to the human virtues. In our dressing we must first take care of God's glory. For example, a sister should ask if a certain garment can be worn for God's glory. If the sisters consider their clothing from this point of view, the style of clothes they wear may be somewhat different. However, most people today care only for their beauty; they do not care at all for God's glory. But the ephod was first for the divine glory and then for human beauty. This piece of clothing used for fastening was composed of the divine glory and the human beauty. (*Life-study of Exodus*, msg. 119, pp. 1348-1350)

CHRIST BEING OUR REAL CLOTHING FOR BEAUTY AND FOR GLORY

In typology garments signify expression (cf. Isa. 64:6; Rev. 19:8). The priestly garments signify the serving priests' expression of Christ. The priests were also sanctified, separated to God, by their holy garments. (*Holy Bible Recovery Version*, Exo. 28:2, note 1)

The priestly garments, being mainly for glory and for beauty, signify the expression of Christ's divine glory and human beauty. Glory is related to Christ's divinity, His divine attributes (John 1:14; Heb. 1:3), and beauty, to Christ's humanity, His human virtues. Christ's divinity, typified by the gold of the priestly garments, is for glory, and His humanity, typified by the blue, purple, and scarlet strands and the fine linen, is for beauty. A life that expresses Christ with the divine glory and the human beauty sanctifies us and qualifies us to be the priesthood. (*Holy Bible Recovery Version*, Exo. 28:2, note 2)

As you put on your clothing, you should be reminded that Christ is the real clothing, and you should experience Him as such. As you put on your material clothing, you should also put on Christ. It is easy to enjoy Christ in this way. Whatever we do day by day should remind us of Christ as the reality of that thing. (*Life-study of Colossians*, msg. 55, p. 485)

Study Questions:

1. What is the hidden man of the heart?
2. How can the sisters be pretty in the eyes of God?
3. How can we take Christ as our real beauty, our real clothing, our glorious dress?

References and Further Reading:

1. *Life-study of 1 Peter*, msg. 22.
2. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1979*, vol. 1, "Basic Lessons on Life," ch. 17.
3. *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 50, "Messages for Building Up New Believers (3)," ch. 37.

4. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1932-1949*, vol. 3, “Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, vol. 3,” ch. 33.