

When the Bible talks about things, it sometimes speaks very specifically about a specific situation or about a specific group of people. And for that reason, we can sometimes tune it out as being something that just doesn't apply to us. And I think that's something that we have going on here, isn't it? Because we have a passage in Peter which is speaking to Christian wives, and especially to Christian wives who may not have a believing husband. It seems too specific, something that we could just simply ignore, something that we can just move on as if it doesn't have anything to do with us. But in reality, Christians, when God speaks to us in the Scriptures, he always gives us things that apply to us in every case. Because what is going on here is that there is a deeper truth that we need to dig down to. And when we see that truth that this passage is based on, we will see how this passage in 1 Peter speaks to all of us, male or female, married or unmarried, because God wants to teach us what it means to be a Christian.

So this is what Peter says. He says, "Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands." Now with those words, Peter is continuing what he's been doing in the previous couple of sections. Remember in the first part he said, "Be subject to the governing authorities," and then in the section right before this one, he had said, "Be subject to your masters." Now Peter is saying, "Be subject to your husbands." The reason why he says these things is because God, as I've said before, has established an order within his creation. And this order in his creation is something that also applies within the family. And just because we get uncomfortable with this subject doesn't mean that this isn't what God intends. He wants us to have this order within our households as well. This is why in a passage like Ephesians chapter 5, for example, where Paul says the husband is called to be the head of his wife, and the wife is called to be the body of her husband. Now, that's not demeaning. That's not something that is crushing us down or making us into something less, because as Paul goes on to say in Ephesians, the head takes care of the body. The head is called to love the body the same way that Christ loves his body, the church. And in the same way, wives are called to be subject to their own husbands, as the church is subject to Christ, not in a demeaning way, but in a way that builds up, a way that lifts us up, a way that purifies and makes us something more than what we were. And so when we follow this order within God's creation, things just go better. In fact, I would even argue that a lot of the problems we are seeing within our culture are because we have lost this order also within our households. That the broken households that we see and the disturbances and the poverty and all of those things that come with it would be something that we could fix if we first started at home. Because when we live the way that God wants us to live, then everything is just going to go better.

But what do you do, Peter asks, when you have an unbelieving husband? What are you supposed to do in that situation? He goes on to say this: "So that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct." So in other words, we're called to be the best Christians that we can be. And that's not just something that applies to wives here. This is something that applies to us in every case. Because when we become Christians, people notice. They're gonna start paying attention. You claim to be a Christian, but are you living like one? Do your words and your actions line up with one another? Because when they don't, when they're separated from each other, we hinder the gospel. People are going to look at you and say, "Well if that's how Christians act, I don't want anything to do with Jesus." But when we live as Christians, especially in difficult circumstances,

that becomes a great witness for the truth of the gospel. So we are called to live as the best Christians that we can be, even in these situations.

I think that's something worth pointing out too, because we have All Saints Day coming up this coming weekend. We talk about the example of the saints who have gone before us. And if you think about all the things which those saints have done, they often gave a good witness even in the midst of very terrible circumstances. As they were being tortured, they still bore witness to the truth of Christ within them. And when they did that, people came to believe. They saw how they acted, and they trusted in Christ, so that in some cases their persecutors actually became the ones who died right along with them for the sake of Jesus. What you do matters, because people notice. Let me use just one other real concrete example of martyrs in the year 250. There was a plague in the city of Alexandria, which is in northern Egypt, and a lot of the pagans of the city were all leaving. They were all just going out of the city, because they wanted nothing to do with it. They said, "We're going to get sick. We need to just leave." But as the pagans were leaving, all the Christians were coming in to care for the sick, to care for those who used to be their enemies. And because they showed such love by their actions, even in the midst of that plague where a lot of them died as a result, many people came to believe in Jesus. How we act as Christians, especially in difficult circumstances, has a great impact on people.

So Peter goes on to say, "Do not let your adorning be external, the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear." Now we have to understand what Peter is doing here. He's not saying that all of these things are bad, and you can never do them. That's not his point. His point is that when you are a Christian, you are a kind of walking advertisement for Jesus. And the question we have to ask ourselves is, is that advertisement for Jesus something that is external and only external? Or is it something that comes from within? The reason he uses this example here to talk about this kind of external only kind of Christianity is because of a temptation that I think that women struggle with perhaps more than men, especially when they're much younger. Women like to be pretty. They like to be noticed, and that's fine. That's a good gift of God. But we all know women who go too far, who put on so much makeup, who dress up their hair and put on these very revealing clothes, all in this attempt to be noticed, but they don't have anything else going for them. They're empty inside. We sometimes say that they're ugly inside. And Peter is asking us, are we like that kind of woman? Are we empty inside, so that our Christianity is only painted, is only something that we see on the Internet or something we see on Instagram? Is it only a matter of show and not a matter of the heart?

Because when it's only something outside, Christians, that becomes a real problem, doesn't it? It becomes something that doesn't really mean anything when it finally comes down to it. But what God is looking for in all of this is an inward beauty, the beauty of holiness. As Peter goes on to say in verse four, "But let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious." When we have that inward beauty as Christians, when we have the beauty of holiness within, we become the people that God has created us to be. We bear a good witness to the world through that inward beauty. So that in all of our actions, we become a testament to what God has done. This is why Peter goes on to say in giving the example of Sarah for women and saying we can imitate her example if we want to know what it means to live as a Christian, especially for wives. And also with husbands, it's in the same way. With that inward beauty of the heart, the beauty that comes from

within, we can live with our wives in an understanding way, because we are showing what it means to be a Christian from what comes from the inside.

And above all, Christians, too, we become imitators of Christ. Isaiah says he was nothing special to look at on the outside. There was nothing about him that we should desire. But because he had that inward beauty, the inward beauty of holiness, he was obedient to the Father, submitting himself for our sakes so that we might be inwardly beautiful too. In all of these things, when we imitate Christ and become like him in all of this, we show what it means to be a Christian, especially in difficult circumstances.

So we might ask ourselves, as a closing thought, what does that look like specifically? How can I find ways to know that I have that inward beauty and not just an outward show? Well, listen to the Word. Go to a place like the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus says, when you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who pray on the street corners to be noticed. Go home and pray in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. When you fast, don't disfigure your faces, put on an external show like the hypocrites, but oil your head and wash your face, so that you're doing it in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. When you give to the poor, don't blow a trumpet, so that people take notice. But don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Do these things in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Wives, be the best Christian wife that you can be, just as Jesus submitted to the Father. And husbands, be the best Christian husband that you can be, just as Christ submitted to the Father. In all of these things because of that inward beauty of holiness, we are becoming more and more like Jesus in everything, which in God's sight is indeed very precious.

To him be the glory, now and forever. Amen.