

BEAUTIFUL HOUSE CHURCH

1 Peter 3:1-22

Key Verse: 3:15

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect....”

In chapter 2, we studied that Jesus is the living Stone. He is the Sovereign Ruler of history, and the destiny of all men is determined by how they see Jesus. Jesus is the cornerstone and the rock of salvation. Those who trust and obey him will have eternal life. In chapter 3, St. Peter teaches the flock of God more specifically how to establish beautiful house churches between husbands and wives. He also teaches them how to live in society as Christians. Most importantly, Peter teaches them how to be the defenders of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

First, wives, be submissive to your husbands (1-2). Read verse 1.

"Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives..." When we study this part, Peter proportions six long verses to wives, and only one verse to husbands. This indicates that, from God's point of view, the role of a woman in the family is more important than that of a man. At that time, a woman's human situation made it difficult for her to submit to her husband. At that time, a woman was a possession of her husband, and, according to Jewish law, women could not come into the synagogue during the worship service. They could hear sermons only behind the back room of the synagogue. At that time, men could divorce their wives according to their caprice. So women could have been very rebellious to their husbands or obeyed them unhappily.

But in verse 1, Peter sees women with respect and love and talks to them as if talking to the daughters of God. He implies that they should not divorce their unbelieving husbands. Peter also implies that women should not preach to or argue with their husbands about their faith, in order to beat them up verbally. Peter said, "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands..." In this verse, "in the same way," refers to Jesus in 2:24. It says, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." Peter encouraged the Christian

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women to be like Jesus. They must be submissive to their husbands. It is not a cringing and a spineless submission. It is a voluntary selflessness. It is the abasing of self and instinctive desire to serve their husbands in order to win them over to Christ with their beautiful behavior. In this case, submission of Christian women is like becoming a mother to her husband, as a mother nurses a baby. When a baby cries in the middle of the night, most husbands keep on sleeping. But mothers get up immediately and take care of the baby's needs, such as changing diapers or giving bottles of milk. At that time, women were regarded as possessions or living tools. But Peter recognized women as the mothers of the universe. If a woman submits herself to her non-Christian husband in order to win him over to God, it may be the most beautiful starting point in building a beautiful house church (2).

Second, a gentle and quiet spirit of a woman (3-6). Read verses 3,4.

"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. 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." At that time, women had no part in public life. They were allowed to devote themselves to spend hours braiding their hair and adorning their bodies with gold jewelry and fine clothes so that men could brag about their wives. This was a very strong social consensus. So all the women tried to make themselves beautiful by braiding their hair or wearing gold jewelry and fine clothes. Some tried to make their outward appearance better by heavily making up their faces.

What did Peter say to them about women's beauty? Peter said that a woman's beauty comes from her gentle and quiet spirit. A gentle and quiet spirit may be the unfading womanliness which gives forth the mysterious beauty of a woman. There was one woman who wanted to be president of the United States and her husband vice-president. She was once very talkative. But since Jesus came into her heart she became a woman of gentle and quiet spirit. Now she wants her husband to be president of the United States. And many people like her. Another woman was crying and talking endlessly, caused by Satan's injury. Then she studied the Bible and accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Savior. She was healed and she grew spiritually and could study with great concentration. She never missed any Christian fellowship meeting, but she earned a Ph.D. When this crying woman was converted into a woman of

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gentle and quiet spirit, her husband was most blessed. Her husband smiles from ear to ear every day, partly because of the grace of Jesus, but mainly because he is happy with his wife. Many people around her have been abundantly comforted and encouraged by her gentle and quiet spirit. There is another woman who is a medical doctor. She never worries about her hair or wears expensive clothes. Her clothes are the same before marriage and after marriage. But she never missed testimony sharing on Friday during four years of medical studies. Everybody likes her and wants to be around her even though she speaks very seldom. We don't know if these three women were outwardly beautiful or not. But they are known as truly beautiful women because of their gentle and quiet spirits.

The woman with a gentle and quiet spirit is as beautiful as an angel. Look at verses 5-6. The holy women of the past became beautiful because they saw their husbands in the hope of God. Sarah, the wife of Abraham, is known as a most beautiful woman in the Bible. It is not because she was young and outwardly beautiful, but because she had a gentle, quiet spirit. One day her husband Abraham, who was 75 years old and still childless, came to his wife and said, "I heard God's voice. He said to me, 'Leave your country and your people and your father's household, and go to the land I will show you.'" Then he said to his wife again, "Hurry, hurry! Pack up and let's move to another country." At that time, Sarah was 65 years old. She must have had back pain and all kinds of physical discomforts due to her age. In addition, to migrate to another country was not an easy task because each town was a foreign country and they were enemies of each other. Sarah had endured enough of Abraham's absurdness. Again, her husband attempted something impossible. But Sarah just listened to him and followed him. Because of her gentle and quiet spirit, Sarah remains forever as a beautiful woman in the Bible.

They say that Winston Churchill's wife, Clementine, was always willing to cook breakfast for her husband and to feed him breakfast in bed in order to give him a little more rest. She never used her maidservants to take care of her husband. She always took care of him personally. Winston Churchill was the father of England. But she was the mother of Winston Churchill. There was a famous minister in a certain country. This minister would attend a 5:30 a.m. early morning prayer meeting and would take care of so many visitors. His talking for

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long hours consumed all his strength since his body was weak; one of his lungs was removed after he contracted T.B. from an orphan while caring for an orphanage. Knowing her husband's physical condition, his wife helped him have a regular 30-minute siesta every day. While he was resting, she was keeping the neighbor children on the street away from her husband's room. The minister's wife was like Sarah. She had a gentle and quiet spirit. Because of her care, her husband is still living, even in his 90's. How happy are those who have wives with a gentle and quiet spirit. Here we learn that a woman's true beauty does not come from outward adornment but from her inner person, from a gentle and quiet spirit.

Third, husbands be considerate (7). Read verse 7. "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." Ungodly husbands are apt to see their wives as subordinate beings. One young man who calls himself a great servant of God would call his wife, "you dog." When his wife's mother visited the house and heard the way her son-in-law spoke to her daughter, the mother got sick and never recovered. Most ungodly husbands use their tongues at random before their wives. They frequently demonstrate their wretchedness before their wives. In doing so, they lose their wives' respect and love. These wives live with no joy because of their wretched husbands.

But a Christian husband must respect his wife because she is the most suitable helper given by God, and their marriage was established and ordained by God. A Christian husband must love his wife as Christ loved his church (Eph 5:25). A Christian husband must love his wife for the sake of their children. If a Christian husband does not love his wife, children cannot grow in a happy family. Moreover, a Christian husband must love his wife because both are saved and heirs together of God's gracious gift of life through Jesus Christ (7b). Most of all, a Christian husband must love his wife so that he is right with God.

Fourth, Christian community (8-13). Look at verse 8. "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble." At the beginning of verse 8, "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another," describes how to establish a Christian community. In the Christian community there

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are spiritual order, love, joy, peace, and the joy of living, even in this world. Peter tells us how to establish the Christian community. We must be sympathetic. Sympathetic is the same as compassionate. According to Paul, to be sympathetic means that we rejoice with others when they are honored and promoted. We are sympathetic if, when someone is weeping, we can weep together with him (Ro 12:15). One woman was very distressed when her neighbor's son was highly honored at school. She was not sympathetic. When we are sympathetic, we can love our brothers. When we are sympathetic, we can take care of God's flock of sheep entrusted to us. The sympathy and compassion of Christ comes when we are humble. Jesus had compassion on those who were following him until Jesus and his disciples had no time to eat. But Jesus did not say, "They are annoying us too much." He said in Mark 6:34, "They are like sheep without a shepherd." This one sentence depicts the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ sufficiently.

In establishing a Christian community, we should not do any evil, no matter what righteous reasons we may have. Read verse 9. "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." In a Christian community, if each person has enough faith to bless those who wrong him, it is a Christian community pleasing to God. It is easy for us to say with our mouths, "I bless those who insult me." In fact, it is one of the hardest things for anyone to do.

In establishing a Christian community, we must keep our tongues from evil. In order to keep our tongues from evil, we must cleanse our hearts by keeping the living word of God in our hearts daily, for the words of our mouth come from the heart (Mt 12:34). This is a very difficult part of spiritual life. But Peter quoted David's psalm in verse 10, "For, whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech." In establishing a Christian community, we must seek peace and practice it. We must not offend or grieve others because of our self-righteousness. It is very difficult for us to practice this. But if we do so, God blesses us. Look at verse 12. "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

In establishing a Christian community, we must overcome fear. Look

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at verse 14b. Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened. Peter knew that the flock of God faces all kinds of people, both good and bad. There is always a certain kind of peer pressure or social consensus and ignorance and blindness of the times. Usually ordinary people just follow other people, like dead fish floating down the stream. The most distinctive phenomenon is that they are full of fear. They are full of fear of other people and of an uncertain future. Ungodly people are all sick with fear. Therefore, in order to establish a Christian community, we have to overcome fear, which is the attribute of the devil.

Fifth, set apart Christ as Lord (15-22). Peter encourages the flock of God to set apart Christ as Lord. Read verse 15. "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect..." Here, "set apart Christ as Lord," means we must give Jesus the first place in our hearts. Moreover, we must know why Jesus is our Lord and Savior. We must always be ready to defend the gospel of Jesus Christ systematically. We must teach people that Jesus is the living Stone, the Sovereign Ruler of history and the cornerstone, the rock of salvation, by whom our destiny is determined.

When we live just as churchgoing Christians there is no attack of Satan at all. But when we set apart Christ as Lord and live for Jesus' name's sake, Satan's poisonous darts target us. Many sufferings follow. So Peter said, "It is better to suffer to do the will of God." Peter also gives us the example of Jesus in verse 18b. It says, "He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit..." Verses 19-21 seem to be sophisticated theology. But their meaning is very clear. They tell us Jesus' obedience to God's world salvation purpose. Many scholars say that between the time of his death and resurrection Jesus went to preach to the antediluvians, imprisoned spirits of Noah's day. In light of Jesus, our defense of the gospel should be as urgent as Jesus' prison ministry. For this we must cleanse ourselves by the blood of Jesus. We must pledge a good conscience toward God. Then our Lord Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him can use us as his people in this generation.

In this passage we learn the way of establishing a house church.

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Both wives and husbands must set apart Christ as Lord in their hearts. A house is a unit of society. A society is a unit of a nation. When we establish beautiful house churches and Christian community and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ systematically, God will surely change the course of history of this nation to make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.