

Holy Women

1 Peter 3:3-6

3 Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— 4 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. 5 For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. (1 Peter 3:3-6 (ESV))

These words in verse 5, “holy women” are very compelling words and they should prompt a question within each of us, asking, “What does God mean and what does He intend by them?” . . . “Holy women who hoped in God”!

“Holiness” seems often to be a very “subjective” thought within the minds of most, with differing thoughts and ideas about what it means; with some people seeking with all their hearts to know “holiness” and to live it out in their daily lives, but while others seem to stay nearer to the surface in their understanding and in their obedience, declaring that no one can really be holy except God alone.

And when the human sinful nature that is born within each of us is factored into the equation, then too often, convenience becomes the chosen path, saying that surely these things that God is saying to us are not as demanding as they seem, but are instead intended to be more on the order of suggestions, guiding principles, point of philosophy, given for our help in those times when our logical minds can’t figure out acceptable solutions to our daily dilemmas.

And as those people who choose to take that “softer stand” observe the behavior of the other people who choose their “stronger stand” for holiness, they often defend their position by crying “legalism”. And they chide, even scold those other people for their “rigidity”.

I can recall a strong debate on the matter of “legalism” that took place some years ago among some of the leaders in the ministry there at French Camp. Some of them chose the stronger path of strict adherence to the principles of scripture, while others chose instead to try to soften the handling of scriptures such as these.

Those who chose the “stronger”, more “legal” approach to a matter could oftentimes appear harsh and rigid. And that seemed to cause those who chose the “softer” side to

all the more emphasize their need to follow the “Spirit of the law” rather than the “letter of the law”.

And yes, while following the “Spirit of the law” really is a very excellent position to hold, it too can be fraught with possible error, because then each person is left to determine exactly what the “spirit” of a particular law was dictating to them.

And may I emphasize that on both sides of that debate were some of the most devout bible-believing Christians you will ever encounter. And I mention that because, we must remember that these words penned here by the Apostle Peter are being addressed to solid Christian believers.

And as we consider these instructions to women regarding their response about submission to their husbands, and also concerning the manner in which they “adorn” themselves with hairstyles, clothing and jewelry, these instructions are intended for women that really do want to be in obedience to God.

But, as we have been saying here, such choices and such behaviors regarding “true holiness” are not easy ones to make and to carry out, especially because “holiness” really is not a “subjective” expression of our faith, as so many do hold it to be. “Holiness” really is very specific and well defined and well explained within these scriptures. And it has some very strict boundaries.

And may I pause here for a moment and remind us that while these particular words are addressing the ladies, such “holiness” is intended just as much for us men. And we men, we husbands, must make the same kinds of choices that our wives are here being commanded to make.

But because God is addressing women with the words in this particular passage, calling them “holy women”, we will confine our words and thoughts today to addressing you ladies.

Again, what is “holiness”? And what does God intend for women, yea all people, men and women alike, when He commands us to “Be Holy”. We studied those words just recently in 1 Peter chapter 1. There we read!

15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:15-16 (ESV))

“Holiness” is a very special attribute of God, an attribute that first resides within Him and Him alone, within His character and within His being. But here, because we are His

sons and His daughters, He is calling each of us to join with Him, to become “one” with Him, and to let His attribute of holiness become an attribute of ours also.

But how is that to be? How can God’s holiness flow into us and become a part of who we are?

Note again in the words of 1 Peter 1, that while yes, holiness is something that we must “do”, a manner of behavior, the words first command us to “be” holy.

15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, “You shall **be** holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:15-16 (ESV))

We must first “be holy” before we can ever hope to “do holy” things. For that reason, holiness must be a fundamental part of our very “being”, who we “are”.

But again, because “Holiness” has its beginning within the Person of God, how does His holiness become a part of you and me, of who we are? How does His holiness flow from Him into us? May I say that that answer is given to us all throughout these scriptures! But just one of the many, many passages and one that I like best is given in 1 Corinthians 1 verse 30. There we are told that,

30 It is of God that Christ Jesus has become in you wisdom, holiness, righteousness and redemption. (1 Corinthians 1:30)

When you and I pray to “receive” Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, that causes a very, very big change to take place within our souls! And no, it is not enough just to believe in Christ. We are told in James 2 that even the demons believe, and it causes them to tremble. No, it is never enough to just believe in Christ or believe about Christ, we must also “receive” Him into our heart, our soul and our spirit. John 1,

12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12 (ESV))

What does it mean, to say that we have “received” Christ? It is as clear and as plain as it seems. God has put these words in common language so that we will not get them wrong. When we “receive” something, it becomes ours. And just as food and drink are of no benefit to us if we only receive them into our hands, we must also take them into our being, into who we are, so also, must we receive Christ deep into our being, into who we are.

I recall a communion message that I heard one time that gave a wonderful explanation concerning the bread and wine, the body and the blood of Christ. It is a simple, but profound and eternal thing that takes place. As we “receive” the bread and the wine by

eating and drinking them, as soon as we swallow them, they become a forever part of who we are. The bread and the wine are digested and then passed along into our bloodstream, going out into every part of our body, into every cell, every bone and every fiber, forever and always to be a part of who we are, never again to be able to be separated.

So also it is with the Lord Jesus. As we receive Him as Savior and Lord, He comes into our heart, soul, mind, spirit and body and becomes a forever part of who we are. And as we receive Him, as these words of 1 Corinthians 1 tell us, He becomes in us wisdom, holiness, righteousness and redemption. With His presence within us, we have His wisdom, wisdom that we never had before. We have His holiness, His purity and His perfection. We have His righteousness, real and true knowledge of right and wrong. And we have the redemption that He bought for us by His shed blood on the cross. Praise be to God!

And so then, as God was reminding the women in these churches, they are to “be holy” as He is holy. And He is also saying to them that because they have the “Holiest” of “Holies” living within them, enabling all that they do, those women can now conduct themselves with holy behavior.

And again, it takes the “being” to be able to do the “doing”. And yes, as those women then and all the women of our day open the door of their closet each morning, wondering what they will wear today, the holiness of the Spirit of Christ who lives within them will help them to make right choices regarding each item of their clothing.

And then, as they begin to comb and brush their hair, they will know what hairstyle is modest and appropriate. And also for the jewelry they own, they will know which pieces to wear that will glorify God.

And as to the activities these “holy women” will involve themselves in, there is all sorts of advice and counsel spread throughout these scriptures, some expressed especially well in Proverbs 31, those precious words that so well describe a “Godly woman”. Turn with me please to Proverbs 31 and listen as I read! These are beautifully adorning words that will make any woman look absolutely lovely. Verse 10 . . .

10 An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. 11 The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. 12 She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. 13 She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. 14 She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar. 15 She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens. 16 She considers a field and buys it;

with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. 17 She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong. 18 She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. 19 She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. 20 She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy. 21 She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet. 22 She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. 23 Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land. 24 She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant. 25 Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. 26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. 27 She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. 28 Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: 29 "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all." 30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. 31 Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates. (Proverbs 31:10-31 (ESV))

What a treasure of a wife the "virtuous Proverbs 31 woman" is to her husband. He and his children and all of the other people that know her do rise up and praise her.

Yes, she is well-dressed, and her hairstyle and makeup accentuate the beauty of her face, but her real beauty is within her "secret heart", making her countenance glow with every breath she takes. What a beautiful woman she is! And what a "holy woman" she is!

And may I add, she has no need for such contrivances as pride and vain-glory. Her beauty and her daily accomplishments speak her wisdom and her worth for her. So she then can have the humblest of hearts, calling her husband "lord" as did Sarah, the matriarch of all "holy women".

Before we close these thoughts, may I encourage you blessed women concerning these words of Proverbs 31? Too often, as these words are being studied, I have observed that you become discouraged at even the thought of attaining to the lofty standards set forth within these words. And yes, they are high and lofty goals to reach for. But may I assure you that God does not intend for you to read these words and then go out and attempt to emulate each one of them. That is not the point!

As you put all of these words and instructions together, what God is saying to you is that as the Spirit of Christ abides within you and as you pursue after His holiness, then you

will “be holy”, and then, out from that nature will begin to flow works of righteousness. You may never work with a weaving loom, as this woman did, and you may never buy and plant a field. But you will still be the holy and virtuous woman that God wants you to be. And you will do many “Godly” things, things that befit your special individual personality and abilities.

And then yes, your husband and your children and your friends will all rise up and they will praise you. So then . . .

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