

Exiles of the Dispersion Pt 3

Last week we discussed how we are to be the Good News if we are resident aliens in this world. We talked about modeling Christ to this world by submitting to governmental authorities as well as work authorities. By doing so, we demonstrate how different we really are. We show that we are holy, set apart for His Kingdom to do His good work.

1. Mutual Submission as a Blessing

1 Peter 3

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives— 2 when they see your respectful and pure conduct. 3 Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing— 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 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.

Last week we talked about how we are to study scripture in context. We need to know the historical and cultural context of who these words were originally written to.

The churches that he is addressing these letters to are what was then known as Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey. These were cities with many temples that were serviced by temple prostitutes. Also, they were located on many trade routes and close to many Mediterranean ports. The women in those areas were used to rich silks and woven materials from the east and a lot of gold jewelry and other jewelry adorned with exotic jewels. They dressed up and adorned themselves in order to attract men to the temples and to themselves.

Peter is not saying that a woman cannot dress nicely or ever wear jewelry. What he is saying is that a Christian woman should be identifiable by her modesty, by her inner beauty which is in Christ.

Dress and adorn yourselves not to be seen as sexually available, but as a woman whose first love is Christ and then her husband.

If you are married, model Christ, ***"though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant," Phil 2:6-7***

7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

The same thing applies to men.

Do you want your prayers answered?

Then love and respect your wife. Act and talk in a way that honors her.

Model Christ who sacrificed Himself for His bride.

Many men complain that their wives won't submit to them. I contend that if she is not submitting to you it's because you are submitting and walking with Christ the way you should.

There is nothing that a woman admires and respects more in a man than if he is a praying man, a Bible reading man, a spiritual leader in his home to his family. A man that honors and puts his wife on a pedestal.

I've never met a woman who would not submit to man who follows God and sacrifices himself for his bride.

A husband and wife who mutually submit to each other in this way by modeling Christ to each other have a truly blessed marriage.

2. Live to please God and model His love.

8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. 10 For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; 11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

Peter is basically saying what I alluded to a few weeks ago. As resident aliens you need to have a tender, compassionate heart, but also a thick skin. As brothers and sisters in Christ, put aside any differences and disagreements and come together in Christ. That way you will be an effective witness to an increasingly splintered and divided world.

If you want to be blessed, then don't live as the people of this world do.

- Don't give in to the ways of this world no matter how attractive it might be to "go along to get along".
- Don't get even, don't seek revenge, don't curse.
- Don't see yourselves as being above the sinners around you.
- Don't badmouth the people that do you harm.

Again, if you want God to hear your prayers, then humble yourselves, submit to one another and treat everyone as Christ would. If you want a blessing, then bless the people in your sphere of influence

3. Becoming an effective witness

13 Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; 16 yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

There have been times in my life where I have been attacked with falsehoods. I have been tempted to get mad and lash out, defend myself, be offended, and try to make my accusers look bad.

Thankfully, most of the time, I go by the 23-hour rule. I try not to ever take action or make major decisions in the heat of the moment. I wait 24 hours, and then I pray about it and ask God for direction. By then, I have mostly cooled down and I am able to think more clearly. Over time, I have learned that the Lord is my defense. I try not to justify myself or my actions. Instead, I try to let people measure the accusation lobbed at me against who they know me to be and how I have acted over time. Most of the time this works out and the accusations fall away as false.

But sometimes, people persist in their accusations, and I just have to learn to live with the fact that there is someone out there who doesn't care what anyone thinks and is going to continue to attack me and try to make my life miserable.

As this point I have to rely on God's grace to get me through because I know that there is nothing that I can do to change the way these people look at me. I endure it for His sake. Even Jesus, had His detractors. In spite of how He lived, what He preached and all the miracles He performed, there were always going to be those who hated Him, reviled Him and accused Him. Ultimately, they drove Him to the cross. Who am I to think that I should be treated better or differently than the way they treated Jesus.

No, I have to humble myself, take it, and consider myself blessed to be sharing in His suffering.

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, 19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. 21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

I am blessed, because once all I deserved was death and eternal separation from God. There was a time that, because of my sin, God couldn't even look at me. And yet, in His love He provided a way through His son and His death on a cross, to be atoned for and have intimacy with Him.

Conclusion

In light of all this, how then shall we live?

Peter is telling us that as resident aliens we are to live by being obedient to the commandments of His Kingdom.

This means living in opposite world and doing things the opposite of the way that this world does them.

- It means mutual submission.
- It means not repaying evil for evil, attack for attack.
- It means living in such a way that even our most virulent enemies won't be able to point to our lives and say that we are being wicked or evil.
- It means becoming a living stone, a living witness.
- It means sharing the Good News of the Kingdom of God.