

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 9 February 2020. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Christian Wife's Wardrobe

1 Peter 3:1-6

In your sojourn through this life, you have probably noticed, along the way, that there are some big differences between men and women! (Yes, I know—in this modern world, it shocking to make such a politically incorrect statement; but it's true!) You may also have noticed that one of the ways in which men and women are different is the way that they feel about clothing. There certainly are men who like to wear smart clothing; yet, most men tend to place clothes farther down on their priority list than women do. Women tend to care much more about what they wear, and about what their family wears. They say, "We've got to match just right. We've all got to blend together. I can't wear that: I wore it yesterday!"

Is there anything wrong with a woman's wearing nice clothing? No—not if it be kept in its right place. However, as we shall see this morning, there are some particular "garments" that God commands *His* daughters to wear. What kind of garments are they? Well, here's a hint: They aren't made of cloth!

Throughout the Scriptures, we often read about "putting on" garments, in the figurative and spiritual sense. In both the Old and New Testaments, the Jewish writers often speak about "putting on" godly virtues—*spiritual* garments such as "bowels of mercies," charity, kindness, humility, meekness, and longsuffering. *These* are the kinds of garments that God commands Christian ladies to wear. In this morning's message, we will learn about some of these garments. The passage that we'll be reading addresses *married* women who have *unsaved* husbands; however, the instructions that God gives in this passage apply to *all* saved wives. The title of this message is *The Christian Wife's Wardrobe*.

Read 1 Peter 3:1-6.

I. Garments that should *not* be in the Christian wife's wardrobe (vv. 1-4)

In **verses 1-4**, Peter gives a list of garments with which women should *not* adorn themselves. He also gives a list of garments with which women *should* adorn themselves. Paul often used this metaphor in his letters, as well. In the Christian life, there are garments that we should "put off"; and there are garments that we should "put on."

First, let's look at the clothing that needs to be put off. (**Read verse 3 again.**) In this verse, Peter instructs Christian wives to "put on" the garments of **spiritual** virtues. However, he also instructs ladies *not* to make **actual, physical garments**, nor hairstyles, nor jewellery, their adornment. Now, what does Peter mean by this? Is he saying that wives should go around with unkempt hair and raggedy clothes, and that they should never wear any necklaces or earrings? No, that is not what Peter is saying. If this *were* what Peter meant, then Abraham was in the wrong. Remember when he sent his servant Eliezer to Mesopotamia to find a wife for his son Isaac? What did he send with Eliezer, to give as a gift to the young lady who would become his daughter-in-law? He sent fine clothing, and jewels of gold and silver!

Read Genesis 24:10-22, 28-30, 50-53.

Obviously, Peter's point is *not* that it is wrong for a woman to wear a little makeup, or some modest jewellery, or to wear a pretty dress. The point is that women should not *covet things*. Women should not *value themselves* according to what clothing and jewellery they have.

Now, make no mistake about it: God created women with a sense of refinement and beauty. There is nothing wrong with a woman's wearing nice clothing, or a little jewellery. However, sin often warps that natural, God-given desire into a sinful, covetous desire to have things that feed **pride** and **self**. Women whose hearts are set on spending all their extra money (or *not-so-extra* money) on clothing and jewellery are not adorning themselves God's way.

Read 1 Timothy 2:9-10 and 5:9-10.

What was Paul talking about in that last Scripture? He was setting down the requirements in order for a widow to receive monetary assistance from her local church. First of all, in order for a widow to receive regular financial support from her church, she has to be 60 years of age or older, with no family to support her. Secondly, she has to be known for her good works. You'll notice, though, that these good works were to have been her way of living when her husband was still alive, and when she was still bringing up children. In other words, the "good works" listed in these verses are not merely for Christian *widows*, but for Christian *wives*.

Ladies, *this* is the kind of adornment that God loves to see you wear! It is God's will for you to serve others. God wants you to have the attitude that "I want to sacrifice for others. I want to find a way to serve." Christian wife, are you willing to deny yourself, roll up your sleeves, and wash a few "saints' feet"? Paul wrote, "**Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.**" That is a beautiful fashion, ladies. The world may not recognise it as such; but in the sight of God, it is "**of great price.**"

Lavishly expensive hairstyles, jewellery, and clothing are not the "adornments" that a wife (or *any* woman) should seek after. However, Peter's instruction goes far beyond the matter of physical clothing. A wife may dress very modestly and appropriately, wear no jewellery *at all*, and buy all her clothing from the thrift stores, yet not be "dressed" appropriately. You see, there is a *principle* here which goes beyond the material. In order for you to wear the *right kind* of spiritual garments, there are certain spiritual garments that need to be *put off*. The love of **money**, or of earthly **possessions** is an adornment that needs to be put off. (Beware, ladies! Even the smallest earthly possessions can take the place of your love for God.) **Anger and bitterness** are garments that need to be put off. The desire for **a sense of fulfilment** in someone or something other than God is a garment that needs to be put off. Pride in one's **intellectual knowledge**, or pride in a **career**, or preoccupation with a **hobby** to the point of neglecting God's Word, are "garments" which Christian wives should throw into the bin.

Wives, are there some "garments" that you need to discard from *your* wardrobe? Maybe there are some *literal* garments that you need to get rid of. (We'll talk more about that in a few moments.) Maybe there are some *spiritual* garments that you need to get rid of—such as pride, anger, or covetousness. If so, put off these garments!

II. The purpose of the Christian wife's wardrobe

What is the purpose of the Christian wife’s spiritual “wardrobe”? What is the ultimate *reason* for “putting on” the spiritual garments that we read about in these verses, ladies? Should you wear these spiritual virtues in order to have a good marriage, or to find maximum fulfilment in your relationship with your husband? Actually, no. You see, as much as God desires for you to have a happy marriage, a happy marriage is not the *reason* why you should wear these spiritual garments. What *is* the real reason? Let’s look again. **(Read verse 1 again.)**

What does Peter mean when he says that “*they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives*”? He’s saying that the wife’s godly lifestyle can win her husband to the **Lord**. Many unsaved husbands will not listen to the Word of God until they begin to see the change that God is making in their wives.

With this in mind, let’s look again at **verses 3-4**. **(Read verses 3-4.)** *This* is what these garments are all about, my friends! The purpose of the Christian wife’s wardrobe is to serve, honour, and glorify *the Lord* by wearing them. These righteous virtues are precious to *the Lord*. Because *the Lord* is precious to you, you should desire to wear them. Your passion, ladies, should be to love and serve God, and to do the things that please Him!

In a few moments, we will talk about the garments that the Christian wife *should* wear. First, though, I would like to talk more on the *purpose* of wearing the garments. You must understand *why* these garments should be worn. As I’ve mentioned in the other messages from **1 Peter** on Christian relationships, **you must love God above all else** if you want your *earthly* relationships to be right. Ladies, if you are going to have the right attitude about your role as wife, **you must maintain a right relationship with God**. Remember what *Jesus* said about your relationship with Him? For one thing, He said, “*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*” Having a happy marriage is a *benefit* of obedience; but it is not the *reason* for obedience. Obeying Christ’s commands is about showing your *love for Christ*.

What else did Jesus say about your relationship with Him? Let’s take a look.

Read Luke 17:7-10.

Christian wife, God has some *duties* for you to perform in your role as wife. These duties aren’t optional. The issue isn’t “How fair is my husband to me?” The issue isn’t “How do I think or feel about this?” It is not, “What do my friends think?” The issue is, “God is my Master: I am His servant; and these things are what He has commanded me to do.” As a wife, you obey these commands out of *duty*, as a servant; but it is also out of *love* for your Saviour.

Now, the world views Peter’s instructions to wives as out-dated and unenlightened. The world considers these admonitions to be the conceited opinions of men who lived in a patriarchal, male-dominated age. The world looks at Paul as a chauvinistic old bachelor, who thought himself superior to women, and who just wanted to “keep women down,” so that they couldn’t reach their potential. Sadly, though, many Christian women have bought into this worldly thinking to some degree, without even realising it. Ladies, should such a thought be even remotely in your mind, you need to delve into God’s Word and develop a biblical understanding of womanhood and wifeness. Seek to have a right understanding of why God created you as a woman, and what His desire is for you!

Every role that God gives to women is part of their duty to Him. It's not about *you*: it's about the Lord. God has a set of responsibilities for those women whom He wills to remain single. He has a set of responsibilities for widowed ladies. He has a set of responsibilities for those married women whom He has *not* enabled to have children. He has a set of responsibilities for those married women whom He *has* blessed with children. None of these roles is more or less important in God's eyes than any other: they are all meant to bring honour and glory to Him. God has given you *your* role (no matter what your marital status may be) because it is the way in which God is pleased for you to serve Him!

Wives, are you fulfilling the commands that He has given *you*? Are you wearing the virtues that the Lord has commanded you to "put on"? Your life is not your own. ***"Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."***

III. Styles of Christian "dress" that need to be adopted (vv. 1-4)

In **verses 1-4**, Peter mentions some of the styles of dress that a Christian wife should wear. First of all, Christian wives should wear the garment of **subjection to their husbands**. (Read **verse 1 again**.) You'll notice that **verse 1** begins with the word "*likewise*." This word "*likewise*" reminds us of what Peter had just been talking about. In **chapter 2**, Peter wrote that Christians should *submit themselves* to governments, to kings, and to their masters, as though they were submitting to the Lord Himself. Then, to show the importance of our submission to human authorities, Peter points out that Christ Himself submitted Himself to His Father's will—even though it meant suffering wrongfully at the hands of wicked human authorities, and being nailed to a cross.

As you can see, "*likewise*" is an important word! It harkens back to everything that Peter had just said about submission to human authority. Just as Christians are to submit to kings, rulers, and masters (or employees), and just as Christ submitted to His Father, and to human authorities, so Christian wives should submit to their husbands.

Now, what if the husband isn't the leader he should be? What if he refuse to take spiritual responsibility (either because he is unsaved, or because he is saved, but not walking closely with the Lord)? Should the wife still submit to her husband? The answer is: "Yes!" Why so? **Because God has put the man in the position of leadership**. You see, God is a God of order: and there is a structure and link of authority that He has established. To step *outside* the structure that God has ordained (whether in regard to one's place in the family, in the church, at work, or in society) is to be without divine approval. In short, a wife who does *not* submit sweetly to her husband, and who instead tries to be the ruler of the home, when God has said that *the husband* is to be the leader, is asking for trouble.

Read 1 Corinthians 14:33-35.

When Paul says that women are to "keep silence" in the church, he does not mean that they are to zip their lips, and not to utter a word until they get back home. What he means is that they are not to be in the position of *teacher* over men. There is no such thing as a "woman pastor" in a true, biblical church. In **1 Timothy 2:11-12** Paul said, ***"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man,***

but to be in silence.” By the way, husbands, before you say “amen,” please remember what Paul said. He said that *you* have the responsibility to teach *your* wife at home if all her questions weren’t answered at church. Obviously, an unsaved husband can’t do this: but a *saved* husband can and *should* become equipped to answer his wife’s questions. You won’t always have the answers, men; but you’d better be studying God’s Word to *find* the answers! Years ago, while I was working my way through college, I worked with a lady who was a Christian, and a member of another Baptist church in the area. Her husband had studied at their church’s small seminary; and he believed that God had called him to a particular mission field. She was totally on board with this. However, after he had graduated from seminary, he found a good-paying job, and forgot about God’s call to the mission field. So, what did his wife do? Did she pray that God would bring him to repentance? I’m sure she did. However, she went *beyond* praying, and took matters into her own hands. She decided to go to the mission field without him! Of course, no independent Baptist mission board would consider her as a candidate, since she was not submitting to her husband. So, she went to a doctrinally loose, wishy-washy, new evangelical mission board, which wasn’t concerned about such things. She ignored the clear teaching of Scripture, and decided to try to do “God’s will” in her own way. I tried to tell her that God would not sanction this: but she would not hear of it. I have no idea where she is today, or what became of her relationship with her husband; but I fear that unless repentance was forthcoming from *both* of them, their marriage probably hit the rocks. You can’t go against the authority that God has established and succeed. “Maverick Christians” who will not submit to biblical authority cannot have God’s blessings!

Now, there is one more thing I would point out about **verse 1**. Peter says that the Christian wife should wear this garment so that her husband may ***“without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.”*** Now, please understand that Peter is *not* downplaying the power of the Scriptures to bring a soul to salvation. The Bible clearly teaches that ***“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17)***. Every soul *must* hear and place his faith in the Word of God in order to be saved. Peter is not denying this truth. He is merely saying that unsaved husbands need to see that this “Jesus” whom their wives keep telling them about is *real*. The only way that an unsaved husband can “see” Christ is to see the change that Christ has made in his wife. Submission to one’s husband is a beautiful garment which Christ commands *all* His daughters to wear. Are you wearing this garment, wives?

The second garment that Christian wives should wear is ***“chaste conversation coupled with fear.” (Read verse 2 again.)*** Here is another “style” that *never* goes out of style. This garment was fashioned by the Master Designer, Jesus Christ. But what does it mean, exactly? Well, the word ***“chaste”*** is translated from the Greek word *hagnos*. This word means “holy, set apart, or consecrated.” It has the idea of being “innocent, modest, perfect, clean, or pure.” “Holiness” means “being set apart” unto God. Holiness is a permanent *position* which every Christian has before God. Holiness should also be Christians’ daily *practice*. In everyday life, holiness will manifest itself in innocence, modesty, cleanness, and purity.

Is your daily way of living characterised by purity, wives? Let’s get practical. First of all, **does your tongue speak things that it shouldn’t speak?** James said that the tongue is an ***“unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:8)***. Do you tell lies (even small ones)? Do you gossip? **Do you watch things on the telly that are not glorifying to the Lord?** Would you hang your head in shame if Christ Himself were to appear in the room while you were watching “Coronation Street,” or some other soap or worldly talk show, which glorifies sin?

How about your *literal* dress? **Do you dress modestly?** By “modestly,” I’m talking about wearing clothing that covers the body. What *is* “the line” of modesty? Well, let’s put it this way: Would you want to take the slightest chance of wearing something that has even the remotest potential of stirring up wrong thoughts in another man? Sit down with your husband and ask some honest questions about which kinds of women’s clothing cause him to notice the physique of the woman. (You might be shocked at what you find out!) Keep the standard high, ladies! Keep the skirt long, the neckline high, and the clothing loose (not tight)! Make sure that your clothing brings glory to Christ, and not attention to your body.

Now, not only are wives to have “*chaste conversation*”: but their “*chaste conversation*” should be coupled with “*fear*.” The word “fear” is *phobos*. It is the same word that is translated as “*sore afraid*” in **Luke 2**, when the shepherds suddenly were confronted by thousands of angels! It is also the word that was used several times back in **1 Peter 2**, when Peter exhorted Christians to “*fear God*,” and to fear their earthly masters. Does God actually expect wives to *fear*? Should they actually *tremble*, and be “*sore afraid*”? Yes. It is not the *husband himself* whom a wife should fear: it is *God* whom she should fear. A Christian wife should fear to undermine or usurp her husbands’ authority, because to do so would be to *fight against God*, who *gave* the authority to her husband. Cutting remarks such as “Well, if your *father* would only do this or that” should not be spoken in front of your children, wives! Uphold his authority! Even in private, do not attack him (even if he be in the wrong). Rather, kindly petition him. You should *fear* to do anything else: not because your husband is a dictator, but because Christ is your Lord and Master. *Fear Him!*

The next garment that Peter mentions is the “*hidden man of the heart*.” (Read verse 4 again.) What does Peter mean by “*the hidden man of the heart*”? Well, let’s look at some other Scriptures and see what we can learn.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16.

The “*hidden man of the heart*” is the *inner being* of the Christian, which is empowered by the Holy Spirit. The “*inward man*” (which is also called the “*new man*”) has the power to respond to the Holy Spirit, and to the Scriptures. We who are saved still have the old sin nature (which is called the “old man”): but we also have the power to “*put off* the old man.” Why? Because the Holy Spirit indwells us. He has all the power that we need to overcome sin. It is this “*hidden man of the heart*”—this “*inward man*,” or “*new man*”—that Peter is talking about. *This* is the garment that Christian wives should “put on” every day.

Now, please notice what Peter says about the “*hidden man of the heart*.” He says that this “*hidden man*” is “*the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*.” You know, this garment of “meekness” is greatly misunderstood by most people. Jesus said, “*Take my yoke upon me, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart*.” If *the Son of God* was “meek,” then to be “meek” certainly does *not* mean to be a scared, whimpering, pathetic coward. Meekness is not “weakness”: rather, it is “waiving one’s rights.” To be “meek” means to show self-control, even when others have wronged you. Christ had every right to smite His persecutors; yet, He was meek. What does this mean for *us*, then? Well, Jesus said, “*The servant is not above his lord*.” If being meek wasn’t “below” our Lord, then it shouldn’t be “below” us, either. “Meekness” is being submissive even when your authority isn’t being reasonable, and even when your flesh wants to *buck* against the authority. Wives, this means that when your

husband isn't being "Mr. Wonderful," you need to submit sweetly to him, anyway. **Proverbs 15:1** says, "*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*"

Paul says that wives should have a "*quiet spirit.*" A "quiet" spirit is....well, quiet! "Quiet" means "not loud, harsh, or nagging: not offensive, and not easily offended: peaceable." And where does this "peace" come from? Well, it is made *possible* by being made at "peace with God" (being saved). *Practically*, peace comes from submission to God's Word. **Psalm 119:165** says, "*Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.*"

IV. The Christian wife's fashion model (vv. 5-6)

(Read 1 Peter 3:5-6.) In these verses, Peter mentions some notable "fashion models" from the past. These fashion models are the "holy women" of whom we read in the Old Testament. These women trusted in God, and were submissive to their husbands. Countless names could be mentioned—women such as Hannah, Ruth, Abigail, and Esther. However, Peter takes time to mention one particular woman. This remarkable woman was Sarah, the wife of Abraham.

Read Genesis 18:1-12.

As you can see, Peter is harking back to a day in Sarah's life when she was not exactly demonstrating the greatest faith. In this verse, we find Sarah inwardly laughing in disbelief at what the LORD had just promised. God had said that she was going to have a son in her old age; and she didn't believe it. Yet, at that same moment, Sarah also demonstrated a spirit of submission to Abraham, by calling him "lord" (in her *own heart*). Despite her failures, Sarah was a godly woman. When God commanded her husband to leave their home country of Ur, and to live as nomads in a foreign land, she was totally on board with that. She patiently waited 25 years for God to perform the miracle of giving her a son. She believed God's promises. For this reason, God treats Sarah as a sort of "matriarch" for all believing women. In fact, in **Galatians 4**, Sarah is called the "mother" of *all* who believe in Christ. She is allegorically portrayed as a symbol of salvation by faith. This doesn't mean that Sarah is to be worshipped: it simply means that she is a role model to all godly women.

By the way, you'll notice that Sarah called Abraham "my *lord*" (with a small "l"). This is the Hebrew word *adonay*. It is the same word that is translated as "my Lord" (with a *capital* "L") when referring to God. It is also the word that is used when speaking of earthly kings and rulers. Now, what should we make of this? Does this mean that husbands have the right to sit around as though they were kings, barking out orders at their wives? Does it mean that husbands perform *only* the "bread-winning" duties, and that they aren't obliged to help their wives with their house duties? Does it mean that the husband doesn't have to listen to his wife, or consult with her? No, it does not! Being "lord" simply means that the husband is the leader of the home, and that the wife should submit to his leadership with a sweet spirit. And what is the result? Blessing. There is nothing as attractive to a husband as when his wife has a sweet, submissive spirit; and he *will*, most likely, respond in kind. Sarah was a fashion model of faith and submission, ladies. Study her, and follow her example in your marriage.

Conclusion: How about it, wives? Are you wearing these garments? Are you reading God's Word to find how you should carry out your role as your husband's help meet? Are you following the examples of godly women in Scripture, and learning from their faith—and failures? Faithfulness to God in your

role as a wife will give you a wonderful relationship with your husband. However, God wants you to wear these garments because you love *Him*. *Do* you love Him with all your heart? In closing, I would also ask this: **Are you saved?** Have you followed Sarah's example by repenting of your sin and trusting in the Messiah to save you from your sins? If not, I urge you to do so today!