



LESSON NINE

Sanctifying Christ as Lord in Our Hearts and Caring for Our Conscience

Scripture Reading:

1 Peter 3:1-22

- 3:1** In like manner, wives, be subject to your own husbands, that even if any disobey the word, they will be gained without the word through the manner of life of their wives,
- 3:2** Seeing with their own eyes your pure manner of life in fear.
- 3:3** Let your adorning not be the outward plaiting of hair and putting on of gold or clothing with garments,
- 3:4** But the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptible adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, which is very costly in the sight of God.
- 3:5** For in this manner formerly the holy women also, who hoped in God, adorned themselves, being subject to their own husbands,
- 3:6** As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord; whose children you have become, if you do good and do not fear any terror.
- 3:7** Husbands, in like manner dwell together with them according to knowledge, as with the weaker, female vessel, assigning honor to them as also to fellow heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.
- 3:8** And finally be all of the same mind, sympathetic, loving the brothers, tenderhearted, humble-minded;
- 3:9** Not rendering evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing one another, because you were called to this, that you might inherit blessing.
- 3:10** For "he who desires to love life and see good days, let him cause his tongue to cease from evil and his lips to speak no guile.
- 3:11** And let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it;
- 3:12** For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears incline to their petition; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."
- 3:13** And who will harm you if you become zealous for what is good?
- 3:14** But even if you suffer because of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not be afraid with fear from them, nor be troubled,
- 3:15** But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, being always ready for a defense to everyone who asks of you an account concerning the hope which is in you,
- 3:16** Yet with meekness and fear, having a good conscience, so that in the matter in which you are spoken against, those who revile your good manner of life in Christ may be put to shame.
- 3:17** For it is better, if the will of God should will it, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.
- 3:18** For Christ also has suffered once for sins, the Righteous on behalf of the unrighteous, that He might bring you to God, on the one hand being put to death in the flesh, but on the other, made alive in the Spirit;
- 3:19** In which also He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,
- 3:20** Who had formerly disobeyed when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared; entering into which, a few, that is, eight souls, were brought safely through by water.

- 3:21** Which water, as the antitype, also now saves you, that is, baptism, not a putting away of the filth of the flesh but the appeal of a good conscience unto God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
- 3:22** Who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being subjected to Him.

QUESTIONS:

Section 1:

1. What is Peter's view of wives' attitude towards their husbands and how can wives gain their husbands through their living?
2. What does it mean that sisters need a meek and quiet spirit? How does it apply to our daily living?

Section 2:

1. What does it mean that husbands should dwell together with their wives according to knowledge?
2. What should our attitude be towards suffering with respect to common life?

Section 3:

1. What does it mean to sanctify Christ as the Lord in your hearts? Please use some examples to explain.
2. How do we take care of our conscience? Please share some of your own experiences.

Section 4:

1. How did both the ark and the water save Noah and his family? How does it relate to the New Testament believers?
2. Why is it wrong to say that baptism puts away the filth of our flesh? What does baptism do to us?

-----[SECTION 1]-----

First Peter 3:1-13 is still in the section concerned with a life in an excellent manner toward all men in all concerns (2:11—3:13). In 3:1-7 Peter is concerned with marriage life, and in 3:8-13, with common life.

WIVES TO BE SUBJECT TO THEIR HUSBANDS

Let us now go on to consider 3:1-7 verse by verse. Verse 1 says, “In like manner, wives, subject yourselves to your own husbands, that even if any disobey the word, they will be gained without a word through the manner of life of their wives.” The phrase “in like manner” refers to the subjection of the household servants to their masters, as described in 2:18. Therefore, as a household servant submits himself to his master, so the wives should subject themselves to their own husbands. This kind of word is certainly contrary to the emphasis of the so-called women’s liberation movement. That movement is against the Bible, for it is against God’s ordination in His creation with respect to male and female. Using Peter’s expression (3:7), God created the females weaker vessels. What country would use women as the main fighting force in the army? Females are weaker physically and psychologically. For this reason, it is easy for women to shed tears, which are often a sign of weakness. Furthermore, it is easy for a female to be troubled in her mind or emotion. All these are signs that the female is a weaker vessel.

Like Peter, Paul teaches the submission of wives to their husbands. However, unlike Peter, he does not tell us that females are weaker vessels. Concerning this matter, once again Peter uses a particular expression in pointing out that the females are weaker vessels.

In verse 1 Peter charges the wives to be subject to their *own* husbands. Paul also did this. Some women may find it easier to submit to someone else’s husband instead of to their own husbands. Also, they may appreciate another’s husband more than they appreciate their own husband. Even in the church life sisters may find it easier to subject themselves to a brother other than their own husband. The reason for this is that the wives know all the defects and shortcomings of their husbands, having lived with them in married life. But they do not know so much

about the defects and shortcomings of others. This is the reason they may appreciate other brothers more than their own husbands.

Paul says that the husbands should love their own wives. However, in his word concerning married life, Peter does not tell the husbands to love their own wives. First he charges the wives to be subject to their own husbands. Then he charges the husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge (v. 7).

AN INSPIRING MANNER OF LIFE

In verse 1 Peter tells the wives that if they subject themselves to their own husbands, the husbands will be gained without a word through the manner of life of their wives. The “word” here refers to the word of God (1 Pet. 1:23, 25; Rom. 10:8; Eph. 1:13). A husband can be gained through the wife’s inspiring manner of life. Sisters, no one can inspire your husband as much as you can. You need to have such a manner of life that your husband will be inspired by it. If he disobeys the word, he will be gained by your manner of life, not through preaching.

In verse 2 Peter goes on to say, “Observing your pure manner of life in fear.” The Greek word rendered “pure” here also means chaste. The Greek word is a derivation from the word meaning holy, as in verse 5 and 1:15. The pure and chaste manner of life must be the holy manner of life, the excellent manner of life (2:12), and the good manner of life (3:16). Here Peter is saying that the husbands will observe the pure manner of life of their wives.

THE SISTERS’ ADORNING

Verse 3 says, “Whose adorning, let it not be the outward plaiting of hair, and putting on of gold, or clothing with garments.” Women’s hair was intended by God for their glory and a sign of their submission (1 Cor. 11:15; S. S. 4:1; 6:5; 7:5). But it was abused by many, especially by those who lived in the luxurious and corrupt life of the Roman Empire at the time of this Epistle, to beautify their lustful flesh by its extravagant adornment with gold and other costly things. Christian wives, as holy women, should absolutely abstain from this God-condemned matter.

Many years ago, a young woman began to attend the meetings of the church. She was intelligent

and modern, a student of law. When she first came to a meeting, her hair was arranged like a high tower. I noticed that as she continued coming to the meetings, this tower became lower and lower. Eventually, after she attended more meetings, the tower was completely gone. She repented and was saved, and the Lord touched her concerning the way she styled her hair.

THE HIDDEN MAN OF THE HEART— A MEEK AND QUIET SPIRIT

In verse 4 Peter goes on to say, “But the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is costly.” The hidden man of the heart is the meek and quiet spirit. Our heart is composed of all the parts of our soul—mind, emotion, and will—and of the main part of our spirit, the conscience (Heb. 4:12). Among all these, our spirit is the center. Hence, our spirit is the hidden man of the heart. The hidden man is in contrast to the outward plaiting, putting on, and clothing in verse 3; and a meek and quiet spirit, in contrast to hair, gold, and garments. The wives’ adornment before God should be their inner being—the hidden man of their heart, which is their spirit, in meekness and quietness. This is the incorruptible adornment in contrast to the corruptible hair, gold, and garments. This spiritual adornment is costly in the sight of God.

In his writings Paul does not use the expression, “the hidden man of the heart.” What is this hidden man of the heart? It is a meek and quiet spirit. A spirit that has become meek and quiet is the kind of adornment that should be possessed by all Christian wives.

Whenever we become angry and lose our temper, our emotion is upset. But that kind of upset in our emotion affects our spirit. This is the reason it is easy for us to release our spirit when we lose our temper. When a person loses his temper, he will have a genuine release of the spirit. Much of what we call the release of the spirit is not genuine. The genuine release of the spirit can easily be seen when a person loses his temper in full. At such a time, his spirit comes forth. However, this may not be a release of a meek and quiet spirit.

Many times the spirit of a Christian wife is not meek. Sisters, when you exchange words with your husband, do you have a meek and quiet spirit? It is a common, even universal,

phenomenon for wives to exchange words with their husbands. For example, a husband may make a proposal regarding a certain matter, but the wife will disagree. The husband may want to go in one direction, but the wife wants to go in the opposite direction. The result of this disagreement is an argument.

One serious lesson for wives to learn is not to argue, not to exchange words, with their husbands. The sisters need to realize that when they exchange words with their husbands, they do not have a meek and quiet spirit. But if as a Christian wife a sister maintains a meek and quiet spirit, she will not lose her temper, and she will not even exchange words with her husband. Knowing the situation of married life from experience and observation, Peter charges the wives to adorn themselves with a meek and quiet spirit.

As we have pointed out, this meek and quiet spirit is the hidden man of the heart. We believers actually have two men. The first is in our soul with our body. This is the outward man. The other is the hidden man in the center of our heart. The fact that the hidden man of the heart is a meek and quiet spirit indicates that our spirit is the kernel of our being, hidden in the midst of our heart, which is composed of the mind, emotion, will, and conscience. Our spirit, therefore, is surrounded by the mind, emotion, and will. If our spirit is meek and quiet, this will influence our mind, emotion, and will. To be sure, if our spirit is meek, our mind, emotion, and will also will be meek. When we are meek, we are quiet. Meekness and quietness of spirit is a beautiful adornment in the sight of God.

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A BALANCING WORD

Verse 7 says, “The husbands, in like manner, dwelling together with them according to knowledge, assigning honor as to the weaker, female vessel, as also joint-heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” Peter’s word to husbands is quite different from Paul’s word in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3. Peter uses the phrase “in like manner,” a phrase that has bothered me. This phrase seems to indicate that as servants are subject to their masters, and wives to their husbands, so the husbands, in like manner, should be subject to their wives. I believe that Peter intends this

phrase to mean that not only are wives to be in subjection to their husbands, but also husbands to their wives. (As we shall see, Peter's word about husbands honoring their wives implies at least a certain amount of subjection to them.)

Some readers of this book may think that in 3:1-7 we have two extremes. They may think that the first extreme is Peter's word about wives being in subjection to their husbands, and the second, the indication that, in like manner, the husbands should be in subjection to their wives. Actually, what we have here is a word of balance. If our married life is to be balanced, we need to have two poles, or, if you prefer to say it this way, two extremes. One pole should be the wife's subjection to the husband, and the other pole, the husband's subjection to the wife. If we have these two poles in our married life, we shall be balanced, and we shall live our married life in a "temperate zone." I enjoy living in a place where the climate is temperate, neither too hot nor too cold. The "climate" of our married life should also be temperate, moderate. In order to have such a climate, we need the two poles indicated clearly in 3:1 and implied in 3:7.

DWELLING TOGETHER ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGE

In verse 7 Peter says that the husbands should dwell together with their wives according to knowledge. The phrase "according to knowledge" can easily be misinterpreted. Men who have more knowledge or education than their wives may fail to respect their wives. Peter is not referring to the knowledge of human education. For a husband to dwell together with his wife according to knowledge is to live with her in an intelligent and reasonable way. It is to be governed by spiritual knowledge that recognizes the nature of the marriage relationship and the weakness of the female, not governed by any passion or emotion.

In married life, husbands need to have a spiritual knowledge that recognizes the weakness of the female. If we have this knowledge, we shall know that God created woman the weaker vessel simply for the nature of the marriage relationship. If there is to be a proper marriage relationship, both parties should not be equally strong. One party should be stronger than the other. Therefore, the brothers should not think that the weakness of their wives is something to be despised. No, we must realize that our wives'

weakness was created by God specifically for the purpose of the marriage relationship. Therefore, we need to understand the reason for the weakness of the female, and we need to understand the nature of the marriage relationship. This is to have our married life governed not by the knowledge from human education but by spiritual knowledge.

This means that in married life a husband should be governed neither by worldly knowledge nor by fleshly emotion. Instead, he must be governed by spiritual knowledge that recognizes that the weakness of the female was designed by God to fit in with the nature of the marriage relationship.

ASSIGNING HONOR

In verse 7 Peter also says that the husbands should assign honor to their wives as to the weaker, female vessel. The Greek word rendered "assigning," *aponemo*, means to apportion, to portion out; hence, to assign to. The Greek word for honor is *time* and means preciousness, valuable worth. The husbands should appreciate the preciousness, the valuable worth, of the wives, and apportion it, assign it, as honor to them duly and reasonably as to the weaker, female vessel.

Man, including woman, was made a vessel to contain God (Rom. 9:21, 23), and believers in Christ are vessels to contain Christ as the treasure (2 Cor. 4:7). The female, according to nature in God's creation, is weaker than the male physically and psychologically. Although the wives, as female vessels, are weaker, they are still vessels of the Lord and can be vessels unto honor (2 Tim. 2:21), deserving a certain honor.

Peter tells the husbands to assign honor to their wives. A husband must give at least a certain measure of honor to his wife. If we see that a husband should honor his wife, we should realize that this implies some kind of submission to her. Submission always goes with honor. If you do not submit to a particular person, how can you honor that one? This would be impossible. Honoring someone always implies a certain degree of submission. As we have already pointed out, this is a word of balance. Husbands must honor their wives, and, no doubt, the wives must also honor their husbands.

JOINT-HEIRS OF THE GRACE OF LIFE

In verse 7 Peter says that husbands and wives are “joint-heirs of the grace of life.” Grace of life is God as life and life supply to us in His Trinity—the Father as the source of life, the Son as the course of life, and the Spirit as the flow of life, flowing within us with the Son and the Father (1 John 5:11-12; John 7:38-39; Rev. 22:1). All believers are heirs of this grace.

In brief, the grace of life is the Triune God processed to become the all-inclusive, life-giving, indwelling Spirit. The Triune God is now within us as the grace of life. Both husbands and wives are joint-heirs of this grace of life. We inherit the grace of life together.

This inheritance is part of the “inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled and unfading” (1:4). All the items of our eternal inheritance are related to the divine life which we received through regeneration and which we are experiencing and enjoying throughout our entire Christian life. All husbands and wives need to see that in their married life the husband and wife are co-heirs of such an inheritance, in particular, of the grace of life.

IN COMMON LIFE

In 3:8-13 Peter speaks of the Christian life and its sufferings with respect to common life. Verse 8 says, “And finally, be all of the same mind, sympathetic, loving the brothers, tenderhearted, humbleminded.” This verse is filled with good terms. Paul also uses such terms, but he does not put them together the way Peter does.

Verse 9 continues, “Not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, because to this you were called that you might inherit blessing.” In the first part of this verse “blessing” is not a noun as the object of “rendering”; instead, it is a participle, meaning “be blessing.” When others revile us, we should not revile them in return. On the contrary, we should bless them. Peter’s word here corresponds to what the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 5:44 and to what Paul says in Romans 12:14.

In verse 9 we are told that we have been called that we might inherit blessing. We have been called to bless others, so we, as a blessed people, should always bless others that we might inherit blessing. What we bless others with, we shall

inherit ourselves (Matt. 10:13). Of course, the blessing here is not material. According to the context, the blessing refers to life, indicating that we shall inherit more life.

In verse 10 Peter continues, “For he who is desiring to love life and see good days, let him cause his tongue to cease from evil and his lips to speak no guile.” Good days are days of good, referring to good things as blessing. If we would see such good days, we should cause our tongue to cease from evil and our lips to speak no guile. Concerning this, Christ is a pattern for us to follow. In 2:22 Peter tells us that Christ “did no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth.” But our lips and tongue cause much trouble. Many negative things have resulted from the improper use of our tongue and lips.

In verse 11 Peter speaks of turning from evil, doing good, and seeking and pursuing peace. In verse 12 he says that the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are unto their petition, but His face is against those who do evil. Then in verse 13 Peter says, “And who will harm you if you become zealots of good?” According to this verse, we should not only be zealous of good; we should become zealots of good. The word “zealots” denotes a particular kind of person. We all should become zealots of good.

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SANCTIFYING THE LORD IN OUR HEARTS

Verses 14 and 15 say, “But even if you suffer because of righteousness, you are blessed; and do not be afraid with fear from them, nor be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, being always ready for a defense to everyone who asks of you an account concerning the hope in you, but with meekness and fear.” If we are terrified and troubled by persecutors, it will appear that we do not have the Lord in our hearts. Therefore, in suffering persecution we should show others that we have Christ within us as Lord. This is to sanctify Him, to separate Him, from the false gods, not degrading Him to be as the lifeless idols.

The hope spoken of in verse 15 is the living hope of the inheritance of eternal life. This is a hope in our pilgrimage today for the future, not a hope of objective things, but a hope of life, even eternal life, with all the endless divine blessings.

The fear mentioned by Peter in verse 15 is a pious fear, a holy fear. Peter speaks of fear a number of times in this Epistle because the teaching of this book concerns the government of God.

In sufferings that come from opposition and persecution, we should sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts. The word “sanctify” in Greek means to set apart, to separate from things that are common. This is to make something particular and even outstanding. In our suffering of persecution, we should make Christ particular; we should show that He is magnificent, absolutely different from idols. Sanctifying Christ as Lord in our hearts is not a matter of outward activity to set Him apart from what is common. It is an inward matter. To sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts means that when we are under persecution, we have the Lord in our hearts. If we allow the Lord to be the Lord in our hearts when we suffer persecution, we shall express Him. This expression spontaneously will sanctify Christ and set Him apart from idols.

If we are timid and fearful when suffering persecution, the Lord will not be sanctified in us. What a shame that would be to Him! It will appear as if we do not have the Lord in our hearts. Whenever we suffer persecution, others must realize that we have Christ within us as Lord. But if we are timid and fearful, others will think that we do not have anything within us. They will have the impression that we do not have the living Lord in us. But if we are bold, sanctifying the Lord in our hearts and expressing Him in our faces, others will realize that we do have something within us. This is to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts.

I have told you before of a story I heard concerning a young woman who was martyred during the Boxer Rebellion in China. This particular incident took place in Peking. Because of the Boxer movement, all the businesses in the city were closed. A young man who was learning a certain business did not dare to open the door of the building where he was. Peeking through a crack in the door, he saw the Boxers parading down the street. He heard the crying and shouting. He saw some of the Boxers, with swords in their hands, threatening a young woman. She was a Christian. She was sitting in a wagon that was carrying her to the place where she would be martyred. Although the Boxers

surrounded her, shouting, crying, and threatening, she was not afraid. Her face was glowing, and she was rejoicing in the Lord and praising Him. That young man was deeply impressed by what he saw. An unbeliever at the time, he decided then that he would learn about the Christian faith. He thought to himself, “If this is nothing more than a Western religion, why is this young woman not frightened by the threatening and the shouting? Why is she not afraid of death? Why is her face glowing, and why is she rejoicing?” This young man did not then realize that she was praising the Lord. Later he believed in the Lord and became a preacher.

That young woman who was martyred during the Boxer Rebellion truly sanctified Christ as Lord in her heart. The glow on her face, the rejoicing, the praising—all this was an expression that the Lord was in her heart. Spontaneously, she sanctified Christ as Lord. Her sanctifying Christ in this way influenced that young man to believe in the Lord.

CARING FOR OUR CONSCIENCE

In verse 16 Peter goes on to say, “Having a good conscience, that wherein you are spoken against as evil-doers, those who revile your good manner of life in Christ may be put to shame.” Since the conscience is a part of our human spirit (Rom. 9:1; 8:16), to care for our conscience is to care for our spirit before God.

The Christian good manner of life should be one that is in Christ. It is a living, a daily life, in our spirit. This is higher than a life which is merely ethical and moral.

If we would have a good manner of life and sanctify the Lord in our daily life, we must take care of our conscience. It is not sufficient for us to be justified by others. We need to be justified by our own conscience. We should not be satisfied that we are justified by the community, by the brothers, or even by the entire church. No one knows us as thoroughly as our conscience does. This is especially true of the enlightened conscience of the regenerated spirit. A renewed conscience enlightened by the indwelling Spirit is trustworthy in its testimony and accurate in its judgment. The judgment of our enlightened conscience is more accurate than someone else’s judgment of us.

The enlightened conscience of our regenerated spirit is an inner judge. This inner judge, our conscience, cooperates with the indwelling God. The reason the enlightened conscience of the regenerated spirit can be an inner judge is that it cooperates with the indwelling God. For this reason, the judgment of the enlightened conscience is thorough and accurate. Therefore, we must take care of our conscience.

A brother, for example, should take care of his conscience in his relationship with his wife. In the sight of man, it may appear that he is not wrong with his wife in any way. But his enlightened conscience may tell him that he has been wrong with her in many ways. Likewise, in the church life apparently we may be honest and faithful. However, our conscience may know that in certain things we have not been altogether honest and faithful to the church. Therefore, it is very important that we take care of our conscience.

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THE ARK AND THE WATER

Verse 20 says, “To those once disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were brought safely through by water.” According to verses 19 and 20, Christ made a proclamation to “those once disobedient.” These disobedient ones are different from the eight souls spoken of in this verse. The disobedient ones are angelic beings, not human beings.

In verse 20 Peter says that in the ark prepared by Noah eight souls “were brought safely through by water.” The Greek means to “arrive safe into a place of security through difficulty or danger,” as in Acts 27:44 (Darby). The Greek words rendered “by water” literally mean through water. Water was the medium through which the saving was accomplished. The ark saved Noah and his family from God’s judgment, the destruction of the world by the flood. But the water saved them from the corrupted generation and separated them unto a new age, just as the water of the Red Sea did to the children of Israel (Exo. 14:22, 29; 1 Cor. 10:1-2) and the water of baptism to the New Testament believers (1 Pet. 3:21).

In the Old Testament the waters of the flood at the time of Noah and the waters of the Red Sea both typify baptism. The ark saved Noah and his family from God’s judgment, from the punishment of God’s condemnation that came by the flood. But the water saved them and separated them from that corrupted age and brought them into a new age to begin a new life on a new earth.

In the book of Exodus the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea. The waters of the Red Sea were a judgment upon Pharaoh and his Egyptian army. Pharaoh and his armies were drowned in that water of judgment. But that same water separated the children of Israel from Egypt, separated them from the corrupted world. As Noah and his family were separated from their corrupted generation by the waters of the flood, so the children of Israel were separated from the corrupted world, typified by Egypt, by the waters of the Red Sea.

In the New Testament we also have water, the water of baptism. Baptism saves us from the world and separates us from it.

In verse 21 Peter says, “Which figure also now saves you, baptism, not a putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the appeal of a good conscience unto God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” As we shall see, this verse does not teach baptismal salvation. Therefore, we do not hold the belief that the waters of baptism put away the filth of the flesh. But, according to this verse, baptism is the appeal of a good conscience unto God.

The words “which figure” refer to water in the preceding verse, which is a figure of the water of baptism. This indicates that Noah and his family’s being in the ark and passing through the flood was a type of our going through baptism. The water of the flood delivered them out of the old manner of life into a new environment. In like manner, the water of baptism delivers us out of the inherited vain manner of life into a manner of life in resurrection. This is the main emphasis of this book. Christ’s redemption for us was for this (1:18-19). This was accomplished by His death and accepted and applied to us in baptism by the Spirit through His resurrection. Now our daily walk should be in the Spirit of the resurrected Christ, a walk that lives Christ in resurrection through the life power of His Spirit

(Rom. 6:4-5). This is a new and excellent manner of life that glorifies God (1 Pet. 2:12).

Baptism itself does not and cannot put away the filth of our flesh—the dirt of our fallen nature and defilement of fleshly lust. The erroneous teaching concerning baptismal salvation based upon this verse and Mark 16:16 and Acts 22:16 is corrected here. Baptism is only a figure. Its reality is Christ in resurrection as the life-giving Spirit, who applies to us all that Christ has passed through in His crucifixion and resurrection, making these things real in our daily life.

THE APPEAL OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE

In this verse we see that baptism is first our appeal, the appeal of the baptized ones, to God for a conscience that is both good and pure. A proper baptism will always bring the baptized one into such a situation. Before we believed in the Lord and were baptized, we were sinners. But when we were enlightened through the preaching of the gospel, we came to realize that we are very sinful. Both before God and toward man we have had many transgressions, trespasses, and offenses, and we had a great deal of guilt. Then we repented, believed in the Lord, received His forgiveness, and were saved. But our repentance and believing need an outward expression. This expression is baptism. Therefore, baptism and our believing, our faith, are two aspects of one thing. For this reason the New Testament speaks of believing and being baptized (Mark 16:16). Believing and being baptized can be compared to using our two feet to take a single step. First we believe, and our believing can be compared to the half-step forward of one foot. Then we are baptized. Our baptism can be compared to the completion of the step with the other foot. Together, believing and baptism make one complete step.

As we have pointed out elsewhere, believing is our reflection of all that Christ has accomplished. First, what Christ has accomplished for our salvation is preached to us as the gospel. As we listen to this preaching, the Spirit works upon us and within us to cause us to reflect what we have heard in the gospel, a reflection of what we have heard regarding Christ's accomplishment.

This experience of reflecting Christ's accomplishment can be compared to taking a picture with a camera. A camera is focused on a certain scene, and then a reflection of the scene

is impressed on the film. We may compare Christ's accomplishments to a scene to be photographed with a camera. The proper preaching of the gospel brings the view of this "scenery" into us, and the Holy Spirit enlightens us. Then the scenery is imprinted on the "film" of our spirit. The result is that, from within, we believe in Christ. Therefore, in our being there is a reflection of Christ's accomplishments, and this reflection is our believing in Christ.

We have pointed out that believing in Christ requires an expression, and that this expression is baptism. Baptism, therefore, is the counterpart to our believing in Christ.

Furthermore, when we are baptized, we, as baptized ones, appeal to God for a good and pure conscience. After we have been baptized and rise up out of the water, we have a conscience that is good and pure, a conscience without condemnation. All our sins, offenses, transgressions, and trespasses have been forgiven, and all the problems that have entangled our life and our being have been buried in the water. This means that through baptism we have a clearance of our sinful past. Because of this clearance, we can have a good and pure conscience.

We would emphasize the fact that baptism itself does not put away the filth of the flesh. But baptism does enable us to have the assurance and the testimony that we appeal to God for a good and pure conscience. Then, after we are baptized, God answers us by indicating that we now have a conscience that is good and pure.