

Renewed and Fruitful Marriages

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Bible Text: 1 Peter 3:1-7

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...probably their own families or people that they know. And so marriage is not looked upon as something that is a blessing today, something that is sacred. It is something they said, "Well, we don't want to do that. We will just live with somebody and that is kind of the equivalent," going against the Creation ordinance.

And so then I thought to myself, ok, this is the way the younger generation is starting to thinking, or has been thinking for some time. All right, well, what has Christ's Church being doing to uphold the blessing of marriage, to uphold it as a sacred institution established by God?

So I began to think about that and I was like, "Wow. What does marriage look like in the Church today?" Not just this church because we have a few married couples, but the Church in a broader sense. And I started to think of... look at the divorce rate. Now, I guess you can look at statistics out there and out of those people that are polled we don't know exactly who the genuine Christians are. Only God knows the heart. But any such divorce is too high, isn't it? There should be no divorce in Christ's Church. And when the world sees the Church being divided amongst itself in this institution what do you think they say about the Church and their own actions?

It is a shame of Christ's Church and on his institution. But only that, what about the roles that God designed for marriage? You know, some people, yes, they are faithful and being faithful husbands and faithful wives. But that is not necessarily always the case, is it? And so what are we saying to the world?

And what Peter is saying here in his text is not speaking only directly to that issue, but he is saying that in your marriage this is a relationship that God established and redeemed you to show forth his grace because marriage has fallen on times because of sin. And he is saying through this relationship, through the roles that you fulfill in it, you are witnessing to the culture. That is what Peter is saying. And that is what we are to do today as married couples or as children who long to be married some day. That is very important.

Yeah, you might think that is a thought that is something that is going to take place in the future, but you need to be thinking about it now, how we are to live as a married couple as God defines it.

And so the point that we want to drive at today is as you submit to Christ, his gracious love transforms your marriage to bear it fruitful witness before the world. As you submit to Christ his gracious law transforms your marriage to bear a fruitful witness of his grace before the world.

That is what we are going to be driving at this morning. For the first thing we want to look at in order to see that point is from the beginning God created marriage between male and female to serve him. That is what we want to look at first. And as we examine that point, obviously, we need to go back to the beginning which we have read about already.

You know, God created Adam and then out of Adam he created Eve. And he created Adam to be his image bearers. Not that they become God, but they reflect in some of his characteristics, not in an infinite sense, but in a finite sense. And obviously God called these image bearers to be married and to serve him and being fruitful, multiplying and filling the earth and ruling over it according to his will.

So God call them into this institution to give glory to his name. And it is interesting. They both by doing this, if they obeyed the commandment that he gave them... Remember that commandment? What was the commandment by which he tested their love and obedience?

He says, "Don't eat of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil lest you die."

And there was a blessing and then there was a curse. The curse was obviously already stated. You die. That is not just physical death. That is the severance of a relationship with God and from his gracious presence.

But the blessing was there symbolized and pictured in the tree of life, that life which would be eternal with God where if mankind obeyed and kept his law it would be not a chance to sin because if they passed the test they would have had this life with God. And they were perfectly capable of doing it.

And so that was the blessing. You see, they were both image bearers and they both had the same promise. But there was also a differentiation of roles, wasn't there, in marriage. As God gave them the task to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, there is obviously a distinction or setting up of roles within this marital union. And we want to note those different roles that God had given to Adam and to Eve.

And we think about them first. Think about Adam. He was given the command. God placed him in the garden to work, to till the land, to cultivate the earth. But what else was he to do? He was to guard the earth and protect it because something was out there that was evil and that was Satan. We don't know exactly when he fell, but there was evil out there that man was to protect his family and guard the garden. And not only was he to do that, obviously being created first he was to lovingly lead and instruct his family in the

Word of God. God spoke to Adam. God gave him direct revelation and he was to instruct his family in a loving manner in the ways of righteousness and he was obviously to rule over the earth for God's glory as God ruled over him.

So then we come to Eve. Eve was obviously in a subordinate position to Adam. She was created out of Adam, out of his rib. But it is not that she was inferior—and we are going to talk about that a little later—but she was there, as the Bible tells us, to be his helper.

Remember Genesis says that mankind had no suitable helper so God in his goodness to man gave him a wife, created one from his side that she would help him. And he was to love her and to protect her and to care for her and to care about her desires, but she was to labor with helping him to fulfill his calling, to be a life giver to his seed in ruling over the earth.

The way that I look at this relationship is in an illustrative way. It captures some of the idea here. You think about construction workers or think about mechanics for a moment. You know, in the old apprenticeship model or even today they are sometimes given helpers, aren't they? And sometimes you have other jobs where people are just helpers. Obviously the mechanic or the construction worker knows the field. He knows his trade. And here is this one that's given to him not for him to lord it over, but to train this man, to tell this man how he can learn, but also to help and assist him in his labor.

That is how I see this relationships somewhat. It catches just a little picture of God's design.

But something happened to this harmonious picture of marriage. This was harmonious where a man would love his wife, would lead her into the ways of righteousness and she would help him, devoted to him and his calling as his help mate. Something happened.

You don't have to read too far in the Bible to find out what happened, right? We know what happened. It was sin. That's what happened. And sin is the breaking of God's law. Remember, that commandment was given not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That was the law given to mankind at the very beginning. And as he taught that law, think about it. Remember the summary of the law? "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself." Well, by keeping that law Adam and Eve obeyed and loved their God. By keeping that law Adam loved his fellow helper and Eve her fellow helper. There is the law given.

But they broke that law and therefore sin entered the world. And obviously there was a severance from God and obviously we see as a result of that the dissolution of a great harmonious relationship.

But you might say, "Ok, I know exactly what took place, how the sin happened. Here is the serpent who tempted Eve and then Eve gave the fruit to Adam."

But wait a second. Let's back up for a second. Let's see exactly what led to this because there is a process here. And we have already talked about there is a neglect of the marriage roles that God had set up.

Think about those roles that we just set. How were they neglected? How were they forsaken by Adam and Eve? Well, let's take a look at Adam first. Remember, he was the one who was to lead his wife, to lead his family in the way of righteousness by telling them the commandment that God had given. He was also to protect his wife, wasn't he? He was to guard the garden, to protect his wife, to keep her from the evil one.

And if you go look in Genesis three it is very interesting as the serpent came to the woman who wasn't given the direct commandment of God. Because I think that is why he wanted to attack her.

In the text this idea that Adam was with his wife. Here is the who is to lead and protect his wife. He abdicated his responsibility, didn't he? He gave it up. If he was there with her, he should have basically rebuked Satan. He should have probably stomped on him and basically told her, "This is a direct violation of the law of God." And he should have guarded her from the evil one and his deceptions.

But he totally failed. And so what happens when man abdicates his responsibility as a gracious loving leader to his wife? He failed and she assumes leadership which is a vulnerable role for her to be in. So she assumes the leadership here and she winds up being deceived and then she obviously takes the fruit to her husband and he eats and sins against God.

Well, what is the result of the forsaking of these roles now? You could probably imagine what happened. It tells you right there in the Bible.

Here comes God. "Where are you, Adam? Where are you?"

Like God didn't know. He knew exactly where they were. They were hiding. But he was about to come and confront them with their sin and they were hiding because, you know, just... think about normal people, some children. Sometimes, you know, when you are children, right, you definitely want to cover up things. So do adults. You don't want to admit it.

So Adam and Eve go and hide because of their sin and God eventually confronts them and what happens?

Eve said, "The serpent made me do it."

But then we also see what about the man? What was his response when God confronted him?

"This woman you gave me told me to do it. She is the one."

There is the blame game. He passed the potato in her lap. That is exactly what happened.

And so we see division that is created because of sin. The roles that God had set up have been severed, have been destroyed. And we see that even further. You can go down the list not only about the curses that God pronounced, but think about even later on in chapter three where there is this idea of saying, “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

There is a picture there of a tyrannical, overbearing husband. It is one who doesn't love his wife. But now demands his headship, not in a loving manner because if in a loving manner a woman would willingly submit because she knows her love and cares for her and she will listen to him when there is a slight disagreement.

But that is what happened. Not only is there a severing of the relationship, there is tyrannical leadership, but then on the other flip side we see that Adam neglects leadership and his wife becomes the leader. And that is so prevalent in today's society. Both of those scenarios, we see it all over society, even within the Church because we are all sinners.

That is bad news, isn't it? That is really a nasty picture. But remember God gave Adam and Eve a promise, didn't he, that the seed of the woman shall come, that picture of a descendant of Adam and Eve who would come and crush the serpent, winning the victory over sin and death. And not just for salvation, but to redeem all aspects of life, to once again restore mankind to be able to fulfill the roles of the institution of marriage according to the Scripture.

And so we want to take a look at that. What happens as a result of the gospel and its renewal of the institution of marriage?

So, secondly, we want to see redeemed marriages testify to God's grace. And so now that we took a little detour into Genesis, let's now come back to 1 Peter. In 1 Peter we see... we need to understand exactly what is the context around marriage. How does Peter bring up this idea of marriage?

Well, let's make sure we understand the context so that we can understand how redeemed marriage testify to God's grace.

You think about it, 1 Peter chapter two, when you look at the first 10 verses we see that Peter discusses the nature of the Church. He tells the people, people like you and me, “Now you are the temple of the living God. You have become living stones in the structure that God is building up, where God dwells,” where you and I worship and praise him, this spiritual building that is laid upon the lively stone, the cornerstone Jesus Christ. And we enter into that relationship as you go on by not rejecting the stone, by being disobedient to the Word, but accepting the Word and then being united to that living stone.

And then we see in verse nine and following he shows you that not only are you the temple of the living God, but part of the nature of the Church is now that you are God's specific people, he gives the people here commands that were spoken of Israel of old. Remember, Israel was chosen out of the nations. They were a kingdom of priests. They were a particular people, a holy nation belonging to God so they might declare the grace of God as people came to see them through those trading routes.

So he said, "Now you people of God, you Gentiles, you are his peculiar people. You are the new Israel." And what follows here he says, "As the new Israel you are to proclaim the praises of God who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." That is who you are. That is exactly what you are to do.

And then from out there of the nature of the Church he says, "Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul."

Remember, you are aliens and strangers. You are part of a particular kingdom, a kingdom that is in this world, but not of this world. And so you must live according to your new citizenship. Live such lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits. Live good lives so that you don't give ammunition for people to point the gun at Christ's church saying, "Ha, ha, look at your marriages. Why should we do anything different?"

Live good lives. Live consistent with your new nature, with your new citizenship in doing good so that people will take a look and say, "Yeah, we accuse him, but, man, our arguments just fall apart. We have no ammunition. Our gun... we are shooting blanks."

And maybe by the grace of God they might come to glorify God in his day of visitation.

And so Peter proceeds out from there to get more specific. He tells us how we are to live in relation to the civil government, when we are to submit, when we are not to submit. He tells people how they are to live in relationship to their employers starting in verse 18, how they are to endure harsh treatment for the Lord's sake because Christ, remember, suffered and gave them an example and we are to walk in his footsteps.

Think about, also, now we come then to part of the section which says, "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands," and so now Peter opens up and applies doing good to the marital relationship in order to show the world what is good is so let those who speak evil against the Church will be shut up because of what we do in living out our true citizenship as part of the people of God, his precious people.

And so you see here that Peter shows you that redeemed marriages, as we come to it, testify to the grace of God. This is a specific application for you and for me.

But then, thirdly, we want to see that the redeemed wife—because Peter starts with the wife—and we want to see her witness, the redeemed wife and her witness.

Let's take a look back and our text for a moment, chapter three verse one. "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 behaviour of their wives."

One of the things that connects and clearly shows that this is connected with everything before is the word "submission." Now, obviously, when a lot of people hear that word they cringe. But, you know what? The Scriptures teach it. This is what God has ordained. And so we want to understand exactly what does Peter mean by, "Wives are to be submission to their husbands"? And notice it is submissive to their husbands, not to all men, submissive to their husbands. They are to submit to their husbands in the Lord, remember, as their helper to help them in their callings.

So what is this submission? Is this one that this woman is to submit because she is inferior? Well, no. She willingly places herself under the authority or leadership of her husband because she fears the Lord. And the Lord tells her that this is how I set up marriage to be harmonious. And so she submits to her husband in the Lord willingly because this is God's design for marriage.

And we see that this submission is not to be taken in the light of that she is inferior. Think about what we talked about in Genesis. Remember the woman was the inheritor of the same promise, wasn't she, of Adam. They both, as Peter will go on to say later on, that she is an heir of the gracious life. But also what else is the woman? What else are you young ladies? You are also image bearers, aren't you, image bearers of God himself, to reflect his glory. You have the same promise. You are image bearers. So women are not inferior by having to submit to mankind or to man.

But you might say to me, "Ok, well I am still not sure about this whole thing. Can you help me understand this idea of submission?"

One of the great ways I think that this could be illustrated is thinking about God himself in his being. Remember we look at our creeds and we see that there is one God? There is three persons, right? There is three persons—the Father, Son and Holy Ghost—and these three are equal in power and glory. They are the same.

But then there is something that is also distinct. There is a distinction within the trinity, not that there are three separate persons, because they are one God. They are one essence. But how they actually go about their work in salvation, we can see clearly that there is a distinction, that the Father has a will and that the Son submits to the will of the Father.

Because, remember Jesus Christ himself said, "I have come to do the will of my Father. I have left my throne in heaven to be incarnated so that I might redeem the people that my Father loves." He submits to the will of the Father willingly. Remember, he is not

inferior, he is God. He is the same in substance, equal in power and glory. And so that helps us, I think, a little bit in understanding this idea of submission.

So you might say, “Well, Jim, ok, a woman is to submit, but is she to submit in every way to her husband, in every single thing that he commands her to do?”

What happens if a husband asks a woman to do something that is in clear violation of the law of God? He is sinning, isn't he? Is a wife to follow her husband in his sin if it is a clear violation?

I would suggest to you that the Scriptures... well, not even suggest. I will tell you the Scriptures, just like the governing authorities, you are not to obey them. That is very clear because Peter eventually will go on to talk about the idea that, you know, the women of old submitted to their husbands, but he is... the whole knowledge we are going to talk about in a second is a certain situation that women might be under which could cause them to fear. And he says, “Don't fear. Do what is right,” even in this circumstance which we are going to talk about in just a second now.

This idea of submitting to unbelieving spouses, those who don't share your world view, those who are not united to Christ. In fact, in the text here it tells them that here, right here. Peter says, “If any of them,” speaking of husbands, “do not believe the Word.” In fact, I think that is a poor translation. It is “do not obey the Word.” They don't obey the Word. They don't submit to Christ. He says, “That they might be won over without words, by the behavior of their wives.”

So Peter is here saying that you as a wife, if you have come to faith in Jesus Christ, it has probably happened during this day as the gospel went forth women believed. But men didn't. There is a problem here, isn't there? But Peter still says that you are to submit to them, that you are to lovingly place yourself under their authority, to live with them and to bear witness to your husband in a godly way that he might turn to Jesus Christ and be saved on his day that he visits us. That is what that woman is to do in that situation.

And notice how she is to bear witness to him. We often think of bearing witness as just what we say, isn't it? And we all seem to think it is all just about talking and that is how we bear witness. But notice this. “If any of them do not believe or disobey the Word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives.”

Those who disobey the Word will be won over without a word, wow. That's a shock, isn't it? But listen. Think about this for a moment. Doesn't action speak louder than words sometimes? A lot of people say a lot of great things, don't they, but they don't follow through in actions. And that is what Peter is saying that you are to witness by your lifestyle, by showing forth godliness in your submission to your husband and helping him in his calling and he will be possibly won over by the grace of God.

Let's think about it for a moment. Even if you were in that situation or maybe it could be applied to somebody that you are reaching out to, somebody in your family. If you constantly nag them do you think they are going to want to listen to you?

I mean, in fact, most people get turned off by it if you keep belting them over the head. You know, sometimes you have just got to be quiet and live your life before them in a quiet and meek manner. And, you know what? Then they are going to start to see. Whoa. Wait a second. There is something different about these people. There is something different about my wife. She loves me and I am not the most gracious guy on the block, but she continues to love me and care for me and help me in my calling. You might look and be won by her actions and then be open to hear the gospel of grace and peace.

That is what Peter is getting at.

But what does this lifestyle look like? What does this wisdom lifestyle look like in these wives? Well, Peter says that this lifestyle flows from the fear of God and an inward beauty of the heart. Notice this. Let's read back into our text here. Let's just see how this comes from the text.

Verse two. "When they see the purity and reverence of their lives..." That is the first thing we want to see because we said it stems and flows from the fear of God.

Now this word is a little weird. The Greek is... I think it could be translated a little bit different. It actually, "When they see your chastity and fear." That is how it could be rendered in the Greek. And the way I take this is and the way I think it could be meant is that the fact that because of the fear of God, because she loves God, because she has become a believer in Jesus Christ she is devoted to her husband. She shows respect to her husband because of that fear of God. And that is not fear because, you know, just in the sense that I am scared. It just out of fear and reverence and respect for God that she is devoted to her husband, not to any other man.

And what is this chastity? I mean... and fear of God flow from in this individual? Well, it flows from her heart, doesn't it?

Look back at our text. Verse three. "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." And that could be translated "meek and quiet spirit of the inward person's heart." That is the way it could be taken in the Greek, not word for word, but a general sense.

So you see that this chastity, this fear flows from something inward in the wife herself.

Now notice this that Paul, to set this up to explain to you that if the inward heart that this flows from, he sets up a contrast here. he says that your beauty on one hand shouldn't... should not just be from the outward externals, the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold

and the putting on of fine clothes. That is not where your beauty comes from because, remember, beauty is fleeting, isn't it? We are all going to become like a prune someday and wind of dying and put into a casket. I hate to burst your bubble if you didn't think that was going to happen, but it is going to happen even if we try to stay fit. It is going to happen. My muscles are going to deteriorate.

But think about this. I just want to put this out there as Peter sets up this contrast to show where this chastity and fear comes from, from the heart, he is not saying in these outward things that a wife shouldn't look decent. He is not saying that. You can't get that from the text. He is just saying that is not where your beauty should be ultimately seen. What he is saying here is that either beauty should be coming from the inward, but it doesn't mean that a woman shouldn't look presentable in a modest manner, modestly, not flashy.

And it could... sometimes people could take this literally in a literal way says, you know, if you take this in a literal way your beauty should not come from outward... actually the word is κοσμος (kos'-mos) and we get our word cosmetics, you know, what you use to beautify yourself shouldn't be the braiding of hair, wearing of gold jewelry or we should take out the adjective fine clothes because it is actually not even there in the text. It says, "Wearing of gold and clothes." If you take that literally then your wife should be naked. That is the way the Greek is rendered. But what he is saying is, "Don't be this flashy person going after this great appeal by what you are wearing."

Dress, as we see in the New Testament, dress modestly and presentable. But that is not where your... your beauty should be seen because those things are going to perish. Now look... because look at what we see in the next verse. And we see that they will perish.

"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." Notice that. Unfading. This is one of Peter's favorite words. He uses this word in the chapter one about our inheritance.

We are receiving an inheritance that can't fade away. It is not perishable like things of this earth like food. This is because as woman, the beauty he is talking about here is something given by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is connected with that age to come that has been brought into the life of the believer now, by the power of the Spirit. And now they are those who are gentle or who are meek and who have a quiet spirit, those who realize their sin, confess their sin and acknowledge God and are humbled throughout this world. Yes, the humbling continues on, but now they are humbled and they are quiet, those who don't complain, those who don't grumble, but trust in God because he is in control over all things.

This is where this chastity and this fear flow from, the inward beauty of the heart. What a wonderful thing. And Peter goes on to boost up his argument by saying, "This is how the holy women of old, Sarah, Abraham's wife, were." Those who hope in the grace that was to come to them obviously submitted to their husbands in this manner in the Lord because the Lord has designed marriage this way. And Abraham, yes, although he was an imperfect husband, loved his wife.

But he says to them, "This is who you are to be." And he is like, "If you are following Sarah's footsteps, guess what? You are an inheritor of the promise of faith because she is the mother of

faith just as Abraham is the father of all the faithful. And you should continue and persist in cultivating this quiet and gentle spirit.”

And he specifically says to the people that he is speaking to, those who have unbelieving spouses, “Continue on in this. You are daughters of Sarah. Do what is right. Don’t fear things that could happen to you because of your unbelieving spouse. Fear and trust God. You are a daughter of Sarah.”

And some of you might be saying at this point, “Well, Jim, I am not married.”

But these are characteristics that should be in all of our lives, shouldn’t it? Shouldn’t we all be meek? Remember, Christ himself came meek riding on a donkey, He didn’t come on a big horse with a conquering sword. He came meek and gentle to his people and they rejected him.

Even in his crucifixion, even on the way up to the crucifixion in his trial, how did he act? Meek, humble, he submitted to his Father’s will.

And that is what each of us should be doing. We should be meek. “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.” Those who mourn, realize their sin and are humbled low and have that quiet and gentle spirit because they know that God is in control of all things. That should not be just the characteristics of a married woman, but that should be the characteristics of me, of you, of us all in the household of God. So that applies to every one of us.

But now let’s turn to the husband. We have looked at the redeemed wife and her witness, but now we want to turn to the godly husband and his care for his wife, fourthly.

Let’s take a look back at verse seven of our texts. “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.” “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.”

Notice what he says here. He says to be considerate or to dwell with your wife with knowledge. What does that mean to dwell with knowledge or to be considerate with living with your wives? It means that as a redeemed man you are to know God’s thoughts. You are to look at his will just as he... God gave his will to, remember, Adam. A godly man should know God’s will and how that applies to his marital relationships and he should understand what God has to say and apply it to his marital relationship.

So what is it that a man...? We have talked a little bit about it. What is the knowledge that he is to have? Well, let’s take a look at Ephesians chapter five. One of Paul’s letters, Ephesians chapter five. These are tough words, men. These are not easy words. This shouldn’t make you comfortable as you hear these words.

Starting in verse 25. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no-one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body.”

These are tough words, aren't they? This is sacrificial leadership, men. You are to love your wife even to the point of giving yourself up for her. You are to lead her just as Christ seeks to sanctify us, we are to be those who are leading our wives in the way of righteousness.

Remember Adam himself. He was to instruct his family, to instruct his wife in telling her the Word of God, that she might live righteously. That is a tough task when we are sinners, isn't it? We are put in comparison with Christ as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, men are to love their wives and give themselves up for them.

That is not easy, but that... when a man does that, when Christ has got a hold of his life and he does that and loves his wife the wife is in a bit of a great position, a very safe position and she says, "I know my husband loves me. I am willing to submit because he cares for me. He wants to know my desires. He seeks to cultivate my gifts. He seeks to create conversation with me that I feel needed that he knows my desires and seeks to work to the best of his ability with understanding those desires."

And sometimes it might be by saying no. But he does it in a gracious manner.

And so I ask you, husbands, even elders, because you are given charge over the body of Christ. Do you love your wives? Are you loving them as Christ loved the Church? Yes, you are going to fail, but do you strive to love your wives? Or do you lord it over them and demand your headship?

You don't have to do that. Love your wife as Christ loved the Church and she will willingly submit to you. Are you doing that? Are you loving her? Or are you neglecting your responsibility as Adam did in the garden? Are you letting her take the lead? Are you letting her make decisions?

Now, yes, you are to listen to your wife and sometimes she can give you some good counsel. Yes, you are the head, but are you just abdicating your responsibility? That is not what Christ calls you to do. Take the example of Christ and love and care for your wife with knowledge. And then give honor to your wife.

Look at what it says here. It says, "Treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life."

You are to respect your wife. You are to show honor to her. You are to respect her gifts. You are to help her to cultivate these gifts and you are to create an attitude of respect in your home.

Think about this, the importance of this. How many times... I mean I have been to... worked in a Walmart and you see that the child disrespects the wife. How many men will let that go.

Now, just as you are to respect your wife, your children are. We are to create that and respecting our wives as an example to the children and seek that to be cultivated in the lives of our children. And we are to do that... think about Proverbs 31. Boy, I was really just kind of listening to this all week in my mind as I read it and kind of... and just kind of mulled over it.

Listen to what the man does who has a great, godly wife. Listen to what he does. "Her children rise up and call her blessed." Now it comes to the husband. "Her husband also, and he praises her. Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all. Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised."

Are you praising your wife? Are you respecting her and praising her, telling her how good she is to you? Are you seeking to do special things for her to show your love for her? And then are you protecting your wife as well? Because Peter says she is the weaker vessel.

That doesn't mean that some men are a little bit weaker than women sometimes. But generally men are typically stronger than women physically. You are to protect your wife physically and emotionally. And I am not for women certainly in the military, but think about even the military recognizes that women need to have separate standards. You know what I mean? They don't have the standards on a physical fitness test as men do. Generally speaking, men are physically more capable and so we are the ones who are to protect our wives, to care for them physically and emotionally.

But if we fail in this task, men, there is consequences and it is really rough. Listen to what Peter has to say. "Respect as weaker partners and heirs with you of the gracious gift of life so that nothing will hinder your prayers."

Your prayers will be hindered if you are not loving and respecting your wife, your personal prayer life. God will not hear you.

"Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her."

Are you doing the same? If not, if you are a tyrant, God is not going to hear your prayers. But also think about this. If you are a tyrant, do you think your wife is going to want to pray with you? I mean that is... it is the breakdown of the marriage.

And what are we saying to the world when we act in such a manner?

So that is what Christ says. That is the warning to us through the apostle Peter if we neglect our duty as husbands and carers of our wife. It is not an easy word to hear. But think about this. If we do what God says, there is perfect harmony again. Well, maybe not perfect, but it is being restored. And we bear witness to the world of the sanctity, of the preciousness of marriage that Christ has come to restore so that we might bear witness to the world of his grace.

So as you submit to Christ, his gracious love transforms your marriage to bear fruitful witness before the world. This is a high and mighty charge, but the grace of God transforms us so that those opinions might change out there and people might not say people get married just because they got pregnant. People not say, "Well, marriage is not that good. So I am not going to do it. I am just going to shack up with somebody."

We bear a mighty testimony to the world of the grace of God. So let us submit to the Lord and carry out our duties faithfully as men and women either married or aspiring to be married.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we come before you this day. We thank you for your mercy to us. It is a blessing, Lord.