

What is a Woman? The Marks of Biblical Womanhood, Part 4

Titus 2:3–5 and Selected Scriptures

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Introduction

Well, we come this morning to our final message in a series that I began at the beginning of the year called *Confronting the Culture*. I wanted to take aim at some of the lies that our present culture seems most eager to promote—lies which attack the most foundational truths of the Christian worldview—of reality itself.

We confronted our culture's rejection of the very concept of truth, and demonstrated that truth exists, and that it is objective, an expression of the mind and character of God rather than derived from the consensus of human societies. We confronted our culture's lie that we are virtually self-creators who fashion our own identities the way we see fit, with no accountability to anyone but our sense of authenticity to our inner selves. We demonstrated instead that we are creatures, created by God to be His image, and thus to be visible reflections of Him to the world, and therefore that we *receive* our identity from Him. That led us to confront the culture's most absurd lie yet: transgenderism, and we showed how God has designed mankind to glorify Him in our distinctiveness as male and female.

And if that's true—if men glorify God when they look and speak and behave like men and not women, and if women glorify God when they look and speak and behave like women and not men—that means that we must answer the questions of biblical masculinity and femininity. What does the Bible say men behave like? What does it say women behave like?

And to answer those questions, we embarked on a study of biblical manhood and womanhood, and we discovered at least **nine marks** of each. The nine marks of manhood were that a man is a leader, a lover, a provider, and a protector. He is strong, sensible, dignified, sound in doctrine, and sound in speech. And we worked through those nine marks of manhood in a series of three sermons.

Then we turned to the nine marks of biblical womanhood. And we've taken three sermons to cover four of those nine marks, which, again, I'll only state here; if you've missed those messages, you can download them from our website. But so far, we've found that a biblical woman is a helper, is beautifully modest, has a gentle and quiet spirit, and is a worker at home.

This morning, we'll consider **five more marks of biblical womanhood**, in the hopes of describing the kind of woman each sister in Christ ought to aspire to be in order to conduct her life to the glory of God in accordance with His design.

V. A Learner

And so, not only is the woman a helper, not only is she beautifully modest, not only is she possessed of a quiet spirit, and not only is she a homemaker, but a **fifth mark of biblical womanhood** is that she is, number five, a **learner**. And we see that from a passage we've visited a couple times already: 1 Timothy chapter 2, and specifically verse 11. Paul is addressing the woman's role in the corporate assembly—in the local church gathering—and he says, 1 Timothy 2:11, “A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.” And, of course, the emphasis there is on the submissive manner in which the woman is to attend public worship. In that context, she is to be a learner rather than a teacher, as the next verse makes abundantly clear.

But, embedded in this instruction from the Apostle Paul is an imperative—a command—for the biblical woman to be a **learner**. “A woman *must* receive instruction.” That's a third-person imperative from the verb *manthanō*, which means “to learn.” Literally, the verse says, “Let the woman learn.” And so you see what Paul is saying: even though women are not to be teaching men in the context of the corporate assembly, “neither are they to be shut out of the learning process,” as was often the case in the world of the first century (MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 82). The Babylonian Talmud speaks of the Jewish worship service and says, “The men came to *learn*, the women came to *hear*” (*Hagiga* 3a, as in Knight, 139). But Paul says, “No, let the woman learn!” She is to be a **learner**.

And this seems to be especially relevant in our conservative evangelical circles today, because there are some, who are so disgusted by the rampant feminism and egalitarianism in the church today—so disillusioned by the horrific state of so-called “women's ministries”—that they swing the pendulum. Since so many self-appointed female teachers are drifting into error and leading many astray, some are suggesting that women ought not to teach other women theology at all, and that, therefore, they ought not to concern themselves with *learning* the depths of systematic theology and church history. Instead, they should focus on devotional reflections and passages which they can apply to their domestic responsibilities.

Now, I acknowledge that feminism has ravaged so many of the “ministries” of popular female “preachers” and authors. And it does grieve me to see women's book clubs and Bible studies turn into little more than emotion-driven group therapy sessions. But the remedy for that is not less theology! It's not less of a focus on the deep things of God, on the meaty truths of sound

doctrine, on the proper interpretation and application of Scripture. It's more Bible, more doctrine, more discernment.

Paul says, "Let the woman learn." And the term *manthanō* is just the verb form of the cognate noun *mathētēs*, which is the word the New Testament uses for "disciple." And at the heart of that term is the concept of being a learner. A disciple is one who learns by following a teacher. And insofar as a woman is a disciple, a follower of Jesus Christ, she is to be a **learner**—a disciplined studier and applier of the Word of her God. Her soul is to pant after knowing her God, as the deer pants for the water brooks, Psalm 42:1. And that longing must resolve itself in studying all she can of what God has revealed of Himself in the Scriptures.

We need to have done with the vapid, saccharine women's ministry pabulum—the sappy, syrupy, "God-thinks-you're-beautiful-just-the-way-you-are" shtick that strokes women's egos, but that puts no steel in their spines. We need women of conviction, who are steadfast in the truth of Scripture, and who are ready to pass on those convictions and that truth both to her children and to her younger sisters in the body of Christ. And the theological malnourishment that results from saying, "Let the men worry about theology; just keep telling me how beautiful God thinks I am," produces spiritual twigs that snap under the slightest of pressure. We need women who are oaks—solid and steadfast, who can bear the spiritual weight of discipleship, who are examples of patient perseverance under trials, who are composed of a gentle and quiet spirit and not ruled by emotions, who can be a source of wisdom and encouragement for her children and for her church.

We spoke last time about how there is no one in the world who exerts a greater influence on a child's life than his mother. The sheer amount of time that a mother gets to spend modeling a life of faithfulness with her children guarantees that. The most influential people on the planet are those who shape the thinking and the worldview of the next generation. And God's design is for that influence to be mediated primarily through mothers. And so I would hope, then, ladies, that you know the Scriptures at least as well as your husbands do. Those who spend the most time evangelizing our children ought to be full of the Word that makes them wise unto salvation. Those who are responsible for equipping our children to live wisely and skillfully under the Lordship of Jesus ought to be drenched in the Proverbs, which teach us how to walk in the fear of Yahweh, which is the beginning of wisdom. Moms need to be able to explain the dynamics of spiritual change to children—how the heart is tempted by sin because it's promised a satisfaction that never comes, but how the sweetest satisfaction that the heart can know comes from communion with Christ on the path of obedience! Insofar as a woman is to teach her children how to live well in this world, there is an *immense* need for her to be a **learner**, a disciple of what the God of the world has said, and how it maps onto day-to-day living.

And it's not just her own children; it's her sisters in Christ. It's being a good friend. It's being an instrument of sanctification in the lives of fellow church members. Someone to whom younger women in the faith can come, and say, "You've walked with Christ longer than I have. Why can't I find the motivation to be in the Word or in prayer? Why can't I subdue this particular sin in my life? What strategies have you found helpful in rising up against temptation and putting off sin and putting on righteousness?" These are questions that only a **learner** can answer—only a student of the Word can answer.

"Let the women learn!" Let them learn bibliology—not only the contents of Scripture, but the character of Scripture: that it's inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative, and sufficient—and all that those terms mean. Let them learn theology proper—not just the Word but the God *of* the Word: that He is sovereign, immutable, impassible, self-sufficient, eternal, and infinite; that He is Triune—one essence subsisting in three co-equal, coeternal persons. Let them learn the person and work of Christ and the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Let them learn the doctrines of man and sin, so they're able to answer the questions, "Who am I, and what has gone wrong with me?" Let them learn of the great work of atonement—of what really happened on the cross when our Savior died for sinners. Let them learn of the Spirit's work of regeneration—"What does it mean to be born of God?"—and sanctification—"How do we put off sin and put on righteousness?" Let them learn the doctrine of the church: "Why do we do this on Sundays, and what is it supposed to look like?" And let them learn even eschatology: "What is the hope that anchors my soul? What do I look forward to receive from God in the future?"

Dear sisters: You must be a faithful master of the home. But you can't just study the recipe book and be a sound, mature, Christian woman. You must be a woman of the Word. And so you must be a **learner**.

VI. A Teacher

And not only a learner, but a **teacher** as well. We've sort of anticipated this point in the last one, but it deserves its own billing. A **sixth mark** of biblical womanhood is that she is a **teacher**. And perhaps the primary application of that for most women is that, alongside her husband, she is to train her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Proverbs 6:20 says, "My son, observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the *teaching* of your *mother*." We saw last time how the exalted "Proverbs 31 Woman," Proverbs 31:26, "opens her mouth in wisdom, and the *teaching* of kindness is on her tongue." Again, just from the sheer amount of hours spent together, there is no one more influential on a child's education than her mother. And therefore, she is to give herself to being a **teacher** of her children in the ways of the Lord, so that they grow up to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

We see the effect a mother's influence had on Timothy himself—the protégé of the Apostle Paul, one of the most influential figures in Christian history. In 2 Timothy 3:14, Paul charges Timothy to “continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing *from whom* you have learned them,”—from whom did Timothy learn them? We get a clue in verse 15: “and that *from childhood* you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Timothy knew the saving Scriptures since he was a child. But how was that? Acts 16:1 says his father was a Gentile, so it wasn't from him. Second Timothy 1:5: Paul says, “For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.” You see, even when this young man's father was unavailable to provide him with the spiritual leadership he needed, his grandmother and his mother were the means God used to bring Timothy to saving faith.

And so, moms, I plead with you: be **teachers** of your children. Don't leave the totality of spiritual instruction for your husband to do. It won't look the same, surely. But that day-to-day, life-on-life, when-you-lie-down-and-when-you-rise-up instruction is so significant. It literally impacts eternity. It shapes your children's souls, because it is the means by which He does His miraculous work of regeneration and sanctification.

You say, “But what if the Lord hasn't given me children of my own? What if I'm unable to have them?” Or, “What if I'm not married? I might love to be, but the Lord simply hasn't given that good gift to me yet, and I'm not sure He will.” And I love how Elizabeth Elliot answers that. She says, the single woman “can have children! She may be a spiritual mother...by the very offering of her singleness, transformed for the good of far more children than a natural mother may produce. All is received and made holy by the One to whom it is offered” (as in *RBMW*, xxv). To those sweet sisters in the Lord who grieve over not having your own biological children, take heart in the fact that you can be the mother to spiritual children in the Lord—those younger women who need and long for the very discipleship that Scripture prescribes for us all to engage in.

And we see that in Titus chapter 2, another text that we've returned to again and again in this series. In Titus 2, and verse 3, Paul says, “Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, *teaching what is good*,” verse 4, “so that they may [*train*] the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.”

Mature Christian women are to be teaching what is good. That might be somewhat of a striking comment to some, because of how, in 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul has so forcefully restricted the role of teaching in the local church to men. There he says, “But I do not allow a woman to teach or

exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.” But this call to teach in Titus 2 comes in the context of the older women’s discipleship of the younger women in the church. You see that even in the word that Paul chooses in verse 4. Why ought older women be teaching what is good? “So that they may”—and the NAS has “encourage” here, but the term is *sōphronizō*: to cause one to be *sōphrōn*, or *sōphronismos*, which means to be *sensible, sober, or of sound mind*. The word literally means “to cause someone to be of sound mind” and “refers to helping others cultivate good judgment and sensibilities” (MacArthur, 78).

And so a good translation of this term, rather than “encourage,” is the word *train*: “so that they may *train* the young women [in the church] to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure,” and so on. It refers to a kind of instruction that results in holy and godly living, which brings honor to Christ and His Word. In his recent book, *Let the Women Be Women*, Pastor Chris Mueller explains that *sōphronizō* speaks of “teaching by example so that others will learn *beautiful* virtues, good habits, godly behavior, and right attitudes” (56). He goes on, “The true biblical training described in Titus 2 is not a seminar or a sermon—it is a life-on-life personal relationship and conversation. It’s a discussion about how to apply God’s Word in a small group of people or even one on one. It usually means a regular time of prayer together, asking for God to work in your life over specific issues like sins you are dealing with and character qualities you are hoping to develop. It is pursuing the goals in Titus 2 with a person or persons holding you accountable to live biblically and Christlike each day” (60). Eventually, he summarizes that this kind of training “speaks of more than dumping content; it is sharing a life in order to change a life” (61).

And all of that is so excellently said. This is what life in the body of Christ is about. It’s these relationships, where younger Christians can live life right alongside more mature believers, and see examples of faithfulness lived out in real time before them. It is so easy to let Christianity become a spectator sport—to just come to church, and go through the motions, and really never open your hearts and your homes to your fellow-believers; to make it so that you just blend in with the crowd, and remain anonymous, so that no one really knows what things are like at home, between you and the Lord.

But the result of that kind of disjointed, disconnected living is perpetual immaturity. It’s a congregation that may be well-taught, or well-informed, but who are spiritually stunted in their growth in Christ, because they’ve never really learned to put the truths they’ve learned into practice. Women learn how to be sound, mature, biblical Christian women not only from hearing biblical femininity preached from the pulpit or explained in books, but from watching sound, mature, biblical Christian women! from seeking their counsel, from inviting their correction. And so, ladies: devote yourselves to this life together. Younger women: devote yourselves to seeking out this kind of discipleship from your elder sisters. And older women: devote

yourselves to being a resource—to being a **teacher** of what is good to the next generation of Christian women in this place.

And just briefly—to put a bow on what I said earlier—the focus of the teaching called for in this context isn't necessarily academic doctrinal instruction. It certainly involves teaching younger women in the church about their duties and responsibilities to their families, as verses 4 and 5 make plain. But all of that practical instruction is grounded in the great doctrines of the faith, in the principles of Scripture. All sound living is rooted in and flows out from sound doctrine. Orthopraxy is the product of orthodoxy. You can't live right unless you believe right. And so all those doctrines of the faith that we spoke about in the previous point—all those disciplines of theology that the biblical woman must be a learner of—they all form the only solid foundation upon which practically valuable, life-on-life training can be sustained. Which means, ladies, that no area of biblical truth is off-limits for your study. You are to be a learner of all of them, so that you can be a **teacher**—both to your children, and to your fellow sisters in Christ.

VII. Eminent in Good Works

Well, there's a **seventh mark** of biblical womanhood that we come to next. And that is, number seven, the biblical woman is **eminent in good works**. And this is somewhat of an obvious point. Every Christian should be eminent in good works! But Scripture does seem to single out this exhortation to **good works** in a couple of key passages which give instruction to Christian women.

The first is 1 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 10. Paul has just said in verse 9 that he wants women to adorn themselves modestly and discreetly. And he says their beauty, their adornment, is not to consist in their hairstyle or their jewelry or in their designer clothing, “but rather,” verse 10, “by means of **good works**, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.” If you are a woman who makes a claim to godliness—who professes to follow after Jesus Christ—then it *must* be that your reputation for good works precedes you, that you are **eminent in good works**, that the people of God would recognize your own proven record of practical service to the saints just as readily as we recognize someone's clothing. Not because you're bragging to others about all the wonderful ways you serve, but because the natural tenor of your life is to be serving God's people.

And then, turn over just a few chapters to 1 Timothy chapter 5. We've been to this text in this series as well, where Paul instructs Timothy about how the church is to serve widows. He gives guidelines for the church to evaluate whether a widow should be financially supported by that local body of believers. And one of the criteria for such support is that such a woman be **eminent in good works**. Look at 1 Timothy 5, verses 9 and 10: “A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man, *having a reputation for*

good works.” Now, I know none of us sets out to be a widow or a widower, and, in God’s kindness, due to diligent planning, not every widow needs to be supported by the church. But it’s safe to say, ladies, that if you found yourself in that situation, you ought to have conducted your life in such a way that—even if you didn’t need it—you would qualify for this kind of assistance. And “having a reputation for good works” figures very prominently in that list of qualifications.

You say, “What kind of good works?” Well, a list of several of them follow: “and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work.” First is: raising children as disciples of Jesus. And we addressed this in the previous sermon on homemaking—on being the *oikodespotēs*, the master of the house—and also a bit in the previous points, so I won’t belabor it. But it is so important, moms, if the Lord has given you children, that you see raising them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord as the primary and most meaningful calling on your life.

Second: showing hospitality. In the day that Paul was writing, the early Christians were always traveling from city to city, bringing the Word of the Gospel throughout the known world. And of course, there were no planes, trains, and automobiles back then. Travel was much more laborious and dangerous. And so these missionaries, evangelists, and other Christian workers would need places to stay and be refreshed as a respite during their travels. Paul says: a Christian woman ought to have a reputation for opening her home to facilitate that kind of ministry. And while it might not look exactly the same today, the principle still applies. A godly woman uses her home as the ground-zero of her ministry labors, whereby she helps to refresh and meet the needs of the saints. Hospitality is keeping such an orderly, welcoming, functioning home that it becomes a home-base or a hub for service to the body of Christ. The text doesn’t say anything about the home being spotless, or spacious, or outfitted with the most fashionable décor. It just had to be hospitable—an orderly, functioning, and welcoming house; a place where the saints’ needs could be met.

Third, Paul speaks of washing the saints’ feet. In that day, people often walked around barefoot or with open sandals along the dusty roads of the Ancient Near East. And that meant that foot-washing was no pleasant endeavor; it was a task that was given to the slaves. There was no more humble of a service than washing another person’s feet, which is why it was such an astonishing display of humility for the Lord Jesus to wash His disciples’ feet in John chapter 13. Eventually, “washing the saints’ feet” became a euphemism for someone with a humble spirit of service after the pattern of the Lord Jesus—someone willing to devote themselves to the most menial, dishonorable, personally-inconvenient works of service.

Fourth, Paul speaks of assisting those in distress. This is a woman, when she learns of a brother or sister in the midst of affliction, who feels that affliction as if it were her own, who enters into

that affliction herself, and senses the responsibility to do all she can to relieve the pressure it causes. Whether that's by just being a good listener to the burdens of a fellow-sister's heart, or bringing the Word of God to bear in encouragement and exhortation, or even meeting a financial need if it's within her means. Not long ago, a member of our church contacted us and said she was fearful for the safety of herself and her two children and needed to get out of her house for the night. I called one of our other members who I knew lived close to this woman, and who had space for a few guests. The couple I called has young kids, and the wife was six or seven months pregnant. But when she heard of the distress this other sister was in, she bore the inconvenience, and opened her home to these three fellow-believers, and assisted them in their distress—for an entire weekend, until they were able to make other arrangements.

That's the kind of thing Paul is talking about. Are you that kind of woman? who devotes herself to her family? who bears with great inconveniences? who welcomes the most difficult and humble service? who manages a home that's ready to become a haven to others when the need arises? who feels the needs of the saints as her own? That's the **mark** of biblical womanhood.

VIII. Sound in Speech

An **eighth mark** of biblical womanhood is drawn from both this passage in 1 Timothy 5 and also back in Titus 2. And that is, number eight, she is to be **sound in speech**. Titus chapter 2 and verse 3 says, "Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, *not malicious gossips* nor enslaved to much wine."

We spoke about this when we dealt with biblical manhood—because Paul also urges the young men to be "sound in speech which is beyond reproach" in Titus 2:8. And I'll repeat a little bit of what I said then: No wild beast upon the earth is more difficult to tame than the unglorified human tongue. James 3 says that "no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison." He calls the tongue "a fire, the very world of iniquity." And Jesus Himself says in Matthew 12:36–37 that we will give account for every careless word we speak. Just as young men can tend to be careless with our words, Paul recognizes that, oftentimes, women are beset by the temptation to gossip.

The phrase, "not malicious gossips" in Titus 2:3 is literally translated, "not devils." It's the word *diabolos*, which is used more than 30 times in the New Testament to refer to Satan. The term literally means *slanderer*. And that's fitting for Satan, who is a liar and the father of lies, John 8:44—the "accuser of [the] brethren], ... he who accuses them before our God day and night." *Diabolos* is a term that characterizes Satan, and it's the term Scripture uses for those who engage in the sin of gossip.

And as Paul discusses widows in 1 Timothy 5, he warns against putting a widow on the list for church assistance who engages in this kind of behavior. He says in 1 Timothy 5:13, “At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also *gossips and busybodies*, talking about things not proper to mention.” The thought seems to be that the older women in Crete and perhaps the younger widows in Ephesus would have had more time on their hands than they knew what to do with. And so rather than being productive and using their time constructively, they would be idle, and would pass the time concerned with and talking about issues that were absolutely none of their business. And it’s a short walk from that kind of busybodyism to gossip, and a short walk from gossip to the kind of slander—the defamation of character and reputation—that characterizes Satan, the enemy of our souls.

I don’t know if that sounds familiar to you, but I think that may be the dictionary definition for some forms of social media. Scrolling through everyone’s business, remarking about their pictures, envying their vacations, complaining about their tweets. That kind of thing can even mask itself with the cloak of righteousness. “I’m just using social media to refute false doctrine!” But before you know it, that kind of keyboard-warrior-busybodyism has a woman in her own little world, rebuking all sorts of people she’s never met and has no responsibility for, all the while neglecting the responsibilities she does have to care for her husband, her children, her home, and her church. Do you really have time, my dear discernment divas, to police evangelicalism’s errors on the internet, while there are *so* many needs, so much discipleship to be done, in your own home, and in your own church, and in your own heart? And eventually that kind of thing can’t help but descend into gossip and slander: “Can you believe what so-and-so said about such-and-such? He used to be so sound! Oh, he’s dangerous!” And all kinds of defamatory remarks are spread, many times about sound brothers and sisters in Christ.

It ought not to be. Paul says that the biblical woman recognizes that “a good name is to be more desired than great wealth,” Proverbs 22:1, and that therefore “death and life are in the power of the tongue,” Proverbs 18:21, because a loose tongue can destroy a good name with great ease. That’s why Proverbs 11:9 says, “With his mouth the godless man destroys his neighbor,” and it’s why Leviticus 19:16 identifies slander as acting against the life of your neighbor. I preached a message a few years ago on the sins of gossip and slander, and I titled it, “How to Kill Your Neighbor.” I’d commend that to you if you haven’t heard it. But a godly woman refuses even to *listen* to—let alone participate in and perpetuate—the demeaning of others. No, as Proverbs 31:26 says, she “opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.” Her mouth is filled with the praises of her Savior, so much that she has no time for dragging her brothers and sisters through the mud. And her gentle and quiet spirit restrains her from using her tongue to tear down rather than build up.

IX. Fearer of God Rather than the Future

And though we could say so much more about that, we must hasten on, finally, to the **ninth mark** of biblical womanhood—the last we’ll study in this series. And that is: the biblical woman is marked by **the fear of God, rather than the fear of the future**. The biblical woman is a **fearer of God, rather than the future**.

Turn with me, briefly, back to Proverbs 31—that famous tribute to the virtuous woman. Proverbs 31, and verse 30, says about the biblical woman, “Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who **fears Yahweh**, she shall be praised.” The biblical woman is a God-fearer> She worships and reveres God above all else. His Word is the rule of her life. His will is the mandate for her ministry. His glory is the great preoccupation of her soul. And one result of that fear of God, we see just a few verses earlier in Proverbs 31:25, that “strength and dignity are her clothing, and *she smiles at the future*.” Other translations say, “She *laughs* at the time to come” (ESV). Because her faith and her hope are in God, and in the promises of God, she looks forward even to what is by definition uncertain with a calm and settled joy.

And that really steadies the home, doesn’t it? When Mom is frazzled and anxious and frenetic about the uncertainties of days to come, the rest of the house tends to follow suit. Why? Because, one, the children spend most of their time with their mother, and so they tend to imitate her affect and demeanor; and two, because Dad often spends his time anxiously trying to ease his wife’s anxiety. But when Mom is calm, and happy, and joyful—when she smiles at the future, not fearful of anything because of her trust in her sovereign God—the children tend to imitate that settled and happy confidence, and Dad delights in his virtuous wife whose worth is far above jewels.

Turn with me to one more text: back to 1 Peter chapter 3. It’s there that you have Peter’s call for wives to be submissive to their own husbands, *even* when those husbands are disobedient to the word. It’s where he urges them to be chaste and respectful, and to have a gentle and quiet spirit. And then in verses 5 and 6, Peter says, “For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right *without being frightened by any fear*.”

Now, what sense does that make? Well, we all understand that the call for a woman to be submissive to her own husband as an expression of her womanhood—especially in this context, where the husband is an unbeliever—we understand that that can be scary. It can cause even godly women to be tempted to become fearful. “But if I submit myself to this man, who’s not even obedient to Christ, he’ll run right over me! He’ll make me a doormat! I’ll be miserable!” “If I really give myself to this unfettered pursuit of biblical femininity—in being a helper, in pursuing a modest beauty, in cultivating a gentle and quiet spirit, in being a worker at home,” and all we’ve talked about today, “if I really surrender my own identity and who I’ve always

thought of myself to be, I'll lose myself! I'll be so vulnerable! And what if I don't find it fulfilling and pleasant and all the things you say it is, Pastor?"

And Peter says, "Dear sisters: there is no reason to fear the future if you fear the Lord." If obedience to the Lord's command to embrace your womanhood leads you to difficult submission—even difficult submission to an unbelieving husband—you trust the Lord enough to let the fear be banished from your heart. You trust in your God—that His Word will never lead you away from His blessing—and you concern yourself with doing what is right. Don't fear; trust God.

John Piper put it this way. He wrote, "The presence of hope in the invincible sovereignty of God drives out fear. Or to say it more carefully and realistically, the daughters of Sarah fight the anxiety that rises in their hearts. They wage war on fear, and they defeat it with hope in the promises of God" (*This Momentary Marriage*, 97). He goes on: "A Christian woman does not put her hope in her husband, or in getting a husband. She does not put her hope in her looks or her intelligence or her creativity. She puts her hope in the promises of God. ... She laughs at everything the future could bring because she hopes in God. She looks away from the troubles and miseries and obstacles of life that seem to make the future bleak, and she focuses her attention on the sovereign power and love of God who rules in heaven and does on earth whatever he pleases (Ps 115:3). She knows her Bible, and she knows her theology of the sovereignty of God, and she knows his promise that he will be with her and will help her and strengthen her no matter what. This is the deep, unshakable root of Christian womanhood" (*This Momentary Marriage*, 97). Amen!

Conclusion

The path of obedience will not always be easy. It will not always bring comfort and ease and worldly prosperity. But the path of obedience—the path of faithfulness to God's design in your femininity—*will* bring fellowship with Jesus, who knew what it was to suffer for righteousness' sake, and to subject Himself even to wicked men for the sake of faith-filled obedience to His Father's plan.

And though it meant Gethsemane, and though it meant Golgotha, and though it meant being forsaken by His Father, He set His face like flint to go to Jerusalem, determined to accomplish your redemption. "For the joy set before Him He endured the cross" (Heb 12:2)! He feared the Lord His God above all else, and He *smiled* at the future—a future that He could see by the eye of faith, a future that would restore to Him the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5). "For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, *despising* the shame"! "Oh? There will be shame for the faithful follower of Christ on the path of obedience? Well then, we will despise that shame, just as He did! We'll think nothing of that shame! We'll look ahead

to the glory to be revealed in us that the sufferings of this present time can't *compare* to (Rom 8:18), and we will smile at *our* future, because our future is with Him.

And if there is anyone here today who is uncertain as to whether your future is with Him—or anyone who *is* certain that unless something changes your future is not with Him, but is apart from Him in that fearful place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth—I urge you this morning to repent and trust in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. You, my unbelieving friend—man, woman, boy, or girl—you have broken the law of Almighty God. And as a result of that you sit here this morning a *debtor* to His justice. Scripture says the wages of sin is death. The penalty for disobeying infinite holiness is infinite punishment: the eternal death of everlasting fire in hell. And because God is good and holy and just, He will insist that lawbreakers who deserve death receive their just punishment, which means you will go there unless you can offer something to satisfy the infinite justice of this righteously offended God.

But there's nothing you *can* offer. His righteous standard is so out of reach, and your sinfulness is so pervasive in you, that nothing you could offer Him could satisfy to pay this debt you owe. Scripture says the best of our righteous deeds are nothing but filthy rags to a God who is this holy (Isa 64:6). But the Good News that I preach to you this morning is that a sufficient ransom payment has been made. The Lord Jesus Christ—fully man, and so able to stand in your place, and fully God, and so able to bear your curse—has stood in the place of sinners and has become a curse for us, by dying upon the cross of Calvary, and bearing in His own person all the fullness of God's wrath against the sins of His people: the very wrath that stands ready to break over your head, unbeliever, the moment you pass from this life. He bore the fury of the punishment you deserved to experience for eternity in hell, and satisfied the justice of God in those three terrible hours.

Dear sinner, He died for sinners—just like you and me. And because they weren't His own sins, and because His righteousness is infinite, and because His sacrifice was perfectly acceptable, on the third day, He rose from the grave in victory over sin and death! certifying that eternal life now lay in His hands to dispense as He wishes. And His promise is that everyone who turns from their sins and puts their trust in His righteousness alone to avail with them before the bar of God's justice will be saved, will have their sins forgiven, their stains washed away, their eternity changed from death to life, from hell to heaven. Dear sinner, don't wait another day. Confess your sins, come to Christ in faith, and lay hold of eternal life. And then: smile at the future.

{Refer to audio for closing remarks}