

In an Unjust World, Part 3

Early Christianity

By Bob Vincent

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Bible Text: 1 Peter 3:1-7; Ephesians 5:18-25
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Robert Benn Vincent
80 Hickory Hill Drive
Boyce, LA 71409

Website: www.rbvincent.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/rbvincent

Now I want us to stop and think for a moment about the words that we have just read and that is noticing at the top of page 1,890 so that nothing will hinder your prayers. I submit to you that the prayers of the Christian church in America are currently being hindered. The greatest single need of America is for prayer warriors whose prayers are not hindered because if we can seek God's face in brokenness, in repentance, in submission to him, our prayers will not be hindered. But I believe as I look out across our land that our prayers aren't really being answered very much. I'm talking about as the church as a whole in America, and by the church as a whole, I'm talking about churches like one particular denomination that signed up and got approximately \$3.8 billion dollars of your good tax money in these forgivable loans. Thank God this church did not yield to that temptation because I've learned one thing over the years, there are a lot of people you can trust but the fine line when it can change from one point in time to another point in time, you can't trust that lender. America's need is prayer because without prayer, we're stuck in this mess and my prayer is that Trinity will be able to continue to meet next Lord's day and on and on and on because what I'm concerned about is the state that I served the year before I served here, Mississippi, where they've gone now to limiting gatherings to 10 people. We need to beg God with unhindered prayers that we can continue to gather as we're doing. Spacing and protecting and showing proper respect to government, nothing will hinder your prayers.

Now you have needs? I look at the amazing miracles that my wife and I have seen even in the past week, being able to find the only washing machine available in central Louisiana and being able to call somebody with a pick-up truck to come get it, and installing it at our home on Friday. And then on Saturday when my daughter woke up, their refrigerator was dead and we went and checked everything and we prayed again, "Lord, we're asking for a miracle, that they will be able to get a refrigerator and get it delivered today on Saturday." And do you know what? They found at a different store a refrigerator that had been dented that normally sold for over \$2,000, they were able to get it for about right at \$800 and we borrowed that friend's trailer and they got it and we installed it yesterday. Prayers.

Do you believe God for miracles? You see, that's what we've gotta do. Do you know the traditional Presbyterian church, I was looking at this just this week because when my

wife and I were married, we were married in the Hartness-Thornwest Memorial Presbyterian Church of Clinton, SC. Do you know the man that founded Thornwell Orphanage in 1875 also founded Presbyterian College in 1880? And I graduated from that college, not in 1880, and Sandy and I were house parents at Thornwell Orphanage beginning one week after we got married. We were house parents to 13 just before teenage girls. That was a lesson. I grew up in a home without sisters. It was an amazing orphanage. William Plumer Jacobs took a call to a small church of 60 people in Clinton, SC and he began to be burdened and they had prayer meeting in the manse, that's where preachers live if they're Presbyterians, and he shared the burden and they prayed and they were united. The whole congregation united and said, "We need to start an orphanage," and he began to pray for things to be met. And one day a man came to see him, a businessman and he said, "Dr. Plumer, I don't know why this is but God laid it on my heart to bring you this money this morning." And things like that happened over and over again because it's said of William Plumer Jacobs, that he was not a pulpiteer, he was not a great orator, nobody wanted him but that 60 member church but he did have one thing going for him, he was a Presbyterian who prayed.

Do you know why praying Presbyterians get what they ask for? Because they believe in a God who can do anything. Absolutely anything. And do you know that William Plumer Jacobs started that orphanage, Thornwell Orphanage, in 1875 and they decided to open their cottage and they couldn't find a house mother. They didn't have a Sandy back then and so Mrs. Plumer decided to be the first house mother. And when they had been having a few orphans come in, and this was a model orphanage, it was very different, he wanted orphans to be treated not like what you see in a Charles Dickens novel, which is the way orphans were treated, but to be raised in a home just like his own children were raised. And then he became burdened, "We have to have a college for them to go to." So he started that college five years later but it was started by faith because he believed he had a call from God to do it and his congregation united with him in prayer to do it, and one day a man named McCormick heard about it and started giving him money. That was the McCormick that invented the horse-drawn harvesting machine. And so this orphanage and this college were started on prayer.

You see, there are two things that are important about prayer: you've got to believe that God's hearing you, that he wants to answer your prayer, and you've got to believe he can do absolutely anything. Absolutely anything, including giving you a washing machine in central Louisiana when there are no washing machines available anywhere and we were told repeatedly, "We won't have any in for at least a month." And I said, "Our washing machine caught on fire. We've got mildewing clothes. We're desperate." "I'm sorry, sir." And I was gonna offer him a bribe to sell me something off the floor and the man said, "We don't own those. Those are owned by the people that we sell for." Oh. But then exactly what we wanted, we had. You've got to believe God. You've got to believe that God can stop rain. You've got to believe that God can start rain. And you've got to believe that God will supply and meet all of your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

And William Plumer Jacobs believed it and that's how he started Thornwell Orphanage and Presbyterian College, and that is an amazing story and I want you to know this, that Presbyterians began to change around the turn of the century. In the beginning of the 20th century, they began to reject the supernatural and they went in two directions, they went in a fundamentalist, legalistic, "conservative" direction that said all of this stuff ended with the close of the New Testament canon and we don't have miracles today. So that was the fundamentalist conservative wing, and then there was the liberal wing that said, "Ha, well, the Bible's not really true anyhow." And that's the sad sordid saga of the Presbyterian Church in the mainstream and even in the more conservative streams. I am very grateful that I am part of the best Presbyterian denomination in the United States because it has a balance between rigid commitment to the truth of the Bible and gentleness and toleration of the things that people disagree on, and I know no better denomination than the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

What matters most? I'll tell you what matters most: it is a praying American church whether it's Baptist or Presbyterian or Lutheran or Episcopalian, Catholic, whatever, it's a praying church whose prayers are not hindered. Do I have your attention? Do you want your prayers to pierce through the ceiling and touch the heart of God so that God moves and intervenes? Well, then let's look at what he says. He says at verse 7 of 1 Peter 3, "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and co-heirs really with you of the gracious gift of life." What's he saying? There is a fundamental equality of men and women in the Gospel though there are different roles.

Now let's get over this idea of the weaker partner. What does that mean? What that means is that men are those clay pots and women are those exquisite vases. A clay pot you can put in the coals of a fire and you can let your beans simmer all day long on those coals, and that clay pot is not harmed. And as you're pouring the beans out carefully so that everyone has some delicious, wonderful, Esau said to Jacob, "Give me some of that good red beans. I'll sell you my birthright," so that those good beans are good and tender and flavorful having been slowly seeped on a coal fire in a clay pot that's thick, and then at the table where there's an exquisite vase. What St. Peter is saying and he was a married man, he and his wife traveled throughout the old Roman Empire serving Christ in church after church, and he said, "My wife is a delicate vase. She is beautiful. She is exquisite. She is of wonderful service to God but if I try to put her in the fire and heat beans in her, it ain't gonna go well."

I want us to see something in this text in 1 Peter 3:7. God made human beings male and female, and he made them distinct with distinct attributes, and when you try to make a woman into a man, it doesn't work. Now I'm gonna say this. As I was reading in my English Bible this morning in Ezekiel 3, God says, "I will require their blood at your hands if you don't declare to them the truth." God called me to be a watchman. I have to tell the church the truth and the truth is this: in modern America we have gone completely insane because we are saying there's no fundamental difference in a male and a female. I'm sorry if that's offensive to you. If God is offended with this, may he strike me dead now. There is a huge difference between males and females not only in plumbing but in

wiring and that's what this is saying. Women are designed to do a different role in life than men are, and when women are thrust into a role they're not designed for, it harms them greatly.

So he says that husbands need to live with their wives in an understanding way. Why? Why didn't Peter say to the women, "Live with your husbands in an understanding way"? May I let you in on a secret? Because men are dumb. Because we're stupid. Because we're insensitive. Because we tend to ignore things that women see as totally obvious. We're clods. We're old clay pots. And so men need to be told, "Hey, guys, you need to become sensitive." "Sensitivity, me?" "Yes, be sensitive."

How can you be a good husband? There's no way except to seek God's face because only God's Spirit can show a man what the real needs of his wife are, and so he says in verse 7, "Husbands, in the same way." Notice verse 1, "Wives, in the same way." You see, there's an equality of submission in the home here that Paul talks about if we will keep our hand here, we're coming back here in a moment, but we're gonna turn over to Paul's words in Ephesians 5 where there is a passage that is grossly misunderstood. Ephesians 5, and that you will find on page 1,822, excuse me, page 1,823. Page 1,823. And I've spoken about this when we were having our services televised. If you look here at verse 21, this is the key verse to understand this passage. Ephesians 5:21.

First of all, it's in a context of verse 18, "Don't get drunk with wine. Instead, be drunk with the Spirit." What does that mean? Somebody's drunk with wine, they're under the influence of alcohol, driving under the influence, but in Louisiana we don't have that, it's driving while intoxicated. That's because you can drink and drive in Louisiana. It is a crazy state. Anyhow. But driving under the influence. He's saying don't be drunk with wine. You're under the influence of alcohol. Instead, be under the influence of the Holy Spirit and that is manifested in five ways which we won't go into because I went into it many weeks ago, but notice the fifth one, "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Now here's the interesting thing. We begin in verse 22 with wives submitting to their husbands but then we jump down in verse 25 for, "Husbands, love your wives," he says.

Now I want you to understand something. The problem in the American home is we don't have enough submissive husbands. What? No. Because when a husband's not submissive, what's already hard for a woman becomes exacerbated, amplified, aggravated, and just tears and grates on her. You see, the calling of a husband is to be submissive to his wife. How? You see, verse 21, the Spirit filled believer is one who is submitting to others out of reverence or fear of Christ. It's just the way that a husband submits is different than the way that a wife submits.

So let's look at how the wife submits. If we want to give a Readers Digest synopsis of verses 22 to 24, he's saying, wives, what does your husband want? What does he desire? And unless it's contrary to Scripture, unless it's a commandment to sin, he's saying, do it. So the wife's job in one way is simple and relatively easy to know. I didn't say it was easy to do. It's easy to know. What does he want? Not always what he says because never

forget this, all men and all women lie. "Do you really want me to fix the leaky faucet?" "Oh no." Oh yes. Now what people say and what they really mean, all a wife has to figure out is what does he really want, and unless it's condemned in Scripture as sin, a wife should do it by the grace of God.

But I want you to notice the husband has a harder job, verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives," uh-oh, look at this. Why did he put this in here? "Just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." So the wife might have to give up a lot of things out of respect, but what does a husband have to give up? Does he have to give up golf? Maybe. How about football? Maybe. How about sitting in an E-Z-Boy recliner with an ice cold drink when the favored game is on? Maybe. But that's not what it says. Look at what the husband has to give up. The husband has to give up himself. Himself. Give himself up and, you see, the role-model here is Christ. Who is the Lord Jesus? The Lord Jesus is the eternal Son of the eternal God who loved you and me so much that he gave up everything for you and for me.

So the calling of a man to submit to his wife is to give up everything. It's for a man to say to God, "O God, I don't know how to love my wife because I'm stupid, boorish, insensitive and a clod, and as she is, I'm selfish, self-centered, self-absorbed, and maybe not a personality disorder but I am narcissistic. It's all about me. So Lord, I'm asking You," the husband should say, "to make me like the Lord Jesus," who did not look at the glory of heaven, streets of gold, gates of pearl, the adoration and wonder of the angels for many many ages, an eternal fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus let go of it all to come down to earth and to make himself of no account for you and for me, for the church, and the calling of a man to love his wife is to do it like Jesus because Jesus laid down his life. Let me say it again: the Lord Jesus Christ made himself a doormat for you and me and the only way you and I are ever gonna get to heaven is to wipe our feet on that doormat because the Lord Jesus Christ and he alone can take away our sins. And he took away our sins by making himself of no account, of no reputation.

So let me sum up what I've said. What I've said should be agreeable to every Christian who takes the Bible at face value: males and females are different because God created them to be different. The role of a man and the role of a woman are somewhat different but they're equal heirs of the grace of life. Equal heirs of the grace of life. There's an absolute equality between men and women that is taught in the New Testament but roles are different and the responsibility of a wife to a husband is saying, "What does the old boy want? And unless it's a sin, I need to pray for grace to do what he wants." But the role of the husband is to find out not what his wife wants but what his wife needs. What did you and I want in a fallen world before Jesus came? We wanted pleasure. We wanted unending life free from pain and trouble. But that's not what God gave us. As a result of the fall, what God gave us was his one and only, his unique, his only begotten Son. God gave up what he could never replace. Do you know there are things God can't do? God could never replace Jesus because Jesus was God's only begotten Son. But he gave him up for you and me and the Lord Jesus gave up his rights, his prerogatives and privileges because he loves you and that's the call that I've got on my life as a husband and a father, to lay down my life just like Jesus. It's interesting as I read this comparison, wives are not

called upon to be doormats for their husbands. Well, that's good. But husbands are called to model Jesus and that's something I don't want to do. I want to protect myself but Jesus let it all go for you and me and we'll continue this, God willing, next week.

Let us pray.

Lord, I thank You that You created us in the beginning male and female, and You established that difference down through time and even though sin has gotten into the picture and radically disrupted things, yet it is Your design that we have happiness and eternal life that come only in yielding our lives 100% to You. We thank You, Lord, that even when we only yield our lives 25%, even when we rebel and say, "No way, God!" that if we have ever come to that point of casting ourselves on Your mercy in Jesus Christ, You will protect us, preserve us, and keep us until You by the Holy Spirit restore us to full surrender. I pray Your blessings on each person here today. May we all know You, may we all love You, may we all live for You, and may we live for You in a particular way in our homes as we delight to serve one another for the sake of Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.