

Submission and Honor in the Family

Let us hear the Word of the Lord as we ask for his blessing on its reading and instruction:

3 Likewise, wives, ^(A)be subject to your own husbands, so that ^(B)even if some do not obey the word, ^(C)they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, ² when they see your ^(D)respectful and pure conduct. ³ ^(E)Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— ⁴ but let your adorning be ^(F)the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. ⁵ For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands,⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, ^(G)calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and ^(H)do not fear anything that is frightening.

⁷ Likewise, ^(I)husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker ^(J)vessel, since they are heirs with you^(K) of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, you exercise great care over all of your sheep in the sheepfold of the Lord Jesus Christ; they are your children and you have provided holy instruction for them in many areas of common life. Today we ask you to instruct us in some of the important ways that Christian husbands and wives should interact with one another, and, in addition, how all of us should relate to one another. Open up your Word to our understanding and incorporation into our lives. In Jesus' precious name we pray.

The two apostles who wrote about marriage counseling in the New Testament were Paul and Peter. Paul, as far as we know, was single, but Peter was married. We know that because on one occasion Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law of a fever. Paul also wrote on one occasion about he and Barnabas: *Do we not have the right to take along a **believing wife**, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?*

So Paul mentions these other servants of the Lord who took their wives with them as they traveled about in their ministries and Cephas, which is Peter, was one of them.

Yet Peter's writing about Christian marriage is not more authoritative or insightful than Paul's – they are both equally inspired by the same Holy Spirit and equally important for understanding how Christian spouses should interact and relate to one another.

We need to remember the context in which Peter is writing to these Christians who had been living in various places in Asia in what is now the country of Turkey.

He is writing to those people he calls "exiles" or "sojourners" or "strangers here on earth". These people are really citizens of another kingdom – the kingdom of God and of Christ – they have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. So when this happened everything began to change for them, including the relationship between husbands and wives. We would expect this to happen because when the Holy Spirit came into their lives he began a great sanctifying work – setting aside these people, marking them off as his special people, people who were to reflect his nature and his values.

In the world back then and now we may see wives disrespecting their husbands, doing their own things in opposition to their husbands' desires, rebelling against their husband's authority, causing their husbands grief by rebellious, uncooperative spirits.

Likewise we may see husbands impatient and inconsiderate of their wives' needs and situations. They don't make accommodations to the special needs of women, who though humans, have a somewhat different mentality and outlook on things than men do. There can be some serious problems resulting from the husband's sinful or fleshy behavior – to their wives they may be harsh or abusive or inconsiderate and selfish towards them.

So what we often see is a couple who are fighting and arguing – each one more concerned with their own needs and interests than the other's. The marriage relationship is, in fact, one which throws two people together in the closest relationship who have different interests and needs and different personalities and different physical/emotional make-ups, and different family backgrounds and different expectations of the marriage relationship. Marriage is, in fact, the perfect testing ground, the perfect crucible, to work sanctification in two people's lives, to bring two rough stones together that by the friction of rubbing against one another, both become smoother than they were before.

One of the common Christian wedding vows states it like this:

I, _____, take you _____, to be my (wedded) wife/husband. To have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live.

Couples who take this vow discover that carrying it out is often not easy. But life-long commitment to one's spouse is the norm of Scripture and the expectation of God.

So how can two people who often are very diverse in personalities and their ways of interacting with other people, find common ground so they can live together, and in living together, experience some of the harmony and peace that should characterize the Christian marriage?

Our text today leads in the right direction for reaching this goal.

Sermon Goal

To firm up believers' understanding of the submissive role Christian wives should have to their husbands and, likewise, the honor that should be given them by their husbands. All believers, in fact, should be marked by similar virtues.

Before we dive into it, let's consider the context of Peter's instructions in this portion of his letter. In the first two chapters of this letter Peter stresses the overall mindset and attitude that Christians should have who lives under the Lordship of the Lord Jesus.

Their conduct was to be holy as their Lord is holy. That is, as the Lord Jesus himself was set apart to accomplish God's will as the promised Messiah, so Christian people have been set aside from the world to be special people – a holy nations belonging to God.

Their conduct was to be good and righteous and noble so that those who accused them of wrongdoing would be silenced.

These Christians were to conduct their lives in the fear of God, remembering Christ's great sacrifice and the fact they were redeemed by his precious blood.

They were to be a holy priesthood, offering up spiritual sacrifices (2:5).

Everything was to be done "for the Lord's sake" – 2:13

They were to be "mindful of God" (2:18) in their human relationships.

They were to live their lives in their relationships with others "in the sight of God" (2:20).

They were to live their lives following the example of Christ.

Their blessed hope was indeed the Second coming of Christ. (1:13).

1 Pet. 1:17 says "...conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile." The fear of God, the respect for God, the honoring of God as creator and sustainer and Sender of the Lord Jesus was to be the mark of the Christian.

In this whole section Peter is exhorting these Christian exiles, as 2:12 says, to "12 ⓂKeep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, Ⓜthey may see your good deeds and glorify God on Ⓜthe day of visitation."

And so Peter has talked about Christians being subject to human institutions such as the emperor of Rome and the various governors he appointed to uphold law and justice throughout the empire. So this whole idea of **submission** is introduced. This is godly submission for the sake of Christ. Then that merges into the need for Christian slaves to be submissive to their masters.

And so in this whole theme of submission Peter moves on to another key human institution – that of marriage. So he says,

3 Likewise, wives, Ⓜbe subject to your own husbands,

The word "likewise" here means, "in the same way" or "in the same vein of thought" or "in a similar way...." wives should be subject to your own husbands."

Someone may ask, "Why do wives have to be submissive to their husbands? Why can't it be the other way around?"

There are, I think, several reasons for this. First of all, man was created first, and then woman was created to provide a "helpmeet" for man – a companion and helper. But man, the husband, had the priority of having a certain authority over the woman in their roles as husband and wife. In addition, God spoke to the woman in Gen. 3:16 and said, Ⓜ**Your desire shall be contrary toⓂ your husband,**

but he shall Ⓜrule over you." So, to put it simply, God ordained that the husband should rule over the woman.

Rom. 13 :1 - For there is no **authority** except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

Paul, in the beginning of his own discussion of the relationship of husbands and wives in Eph. 5:21-24 begins the discussion with the statement...

²¹ ^(AO) **submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.** So there is an underlying principle of mutual submission in the marriage relationship; it is not absolute – where the wife is absolutely and all the time to be in submission to her husband. Sometimes he may need to submit to her. If she says, for example, “you’d better take an extra bottle of water in this hot weather” he should listen to her advice.

Ephesians 5 goes on to say...

²² ^(AB) *Wives, ^(AS)submit to your own husbands, ^(AD)as to the Lord.* ²³ *For ^(AU)the husband is the head of the wife even as ^(AV)Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is ^(AW)himself its Savior.* ²⁴ *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit ^(AX)in everything to their husbands.*

So you see, the wife has a great privilege in her submission to her husband she is demonstrating and illustrating the submission of the church to the Lord Jesus.

In the Trinity, for example, the eternal relationship within the one God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – there are different functions of each person. The Father sends the Son and Spirit, the Son is incarnated as a human being, and the HS indwells believers and glorifies the Son and Father. All three persons are equal in power and glory but they serve different functions or roles in the provision of salvation to us humans.

But the Spirit is not jealous of the Son because he stays in the background and brings glory to the Son. He is happy that the Son is glorified.

So it is in the marriage relationship, both husband and wife have different functions or roles for the mutual good of the family.

So the first major point here is that

I. Christian wives should be submissive to their husbands.

The marriage we are talking about is a marriage of Christian exiles, so their mutual relationship will be different from the people in the world around them. We should expect that the partners in a Christian marriage would relate to one another differently than their non-Christian neighbors do.

Peter now gives a reason as to why wives just submit to their husbands:

so that ^(B)even if some do not obey the word, ^(C)they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives,

He is speaking of the situation where the wife has become a Christian and her husband has not, he does not **"obey the word."** How can she win him to Christ? How can she bring him to the point where he does **"obey the word,"** where he does submit to Christ's Lordship? Does she need to constantly badger him, exhorting him to repent and believe the Gospel? No, that is not the right approach. She should do that once or so in the beginning but then she just needs to demonstrate the reality of her Christian faith by her conduct.

Paul also addresses this situation in 1 Cor. 7:16 when he says to the wives, ¹⁶ **For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?** In other words, don't divorce your spouse, you may be the very instrument that God uses to bring him or her to faith.

Peter goes on to describe in more detail the kind of conduct he is talking about:

² **when they see your respectful and pure conduct.**

They should be wives who demonstrate great respect for their husbands. Even if their husband is not a Christian, by God's ordination he has been placed as the head of the family and she should respect his role and respect the decisions he makes.

In Tit. 2:3-5 Paul gives further advice to Christian wives: ³ **Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good,⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children,⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.**

You see, when a Christian wife is not submissive to her husband, it "reviles" the Word of God – it does not speak well of the authority of the Word of God in her life. She is lacking in her submission to the Word.

Peter goes on to describe the kind of conduct he has in mind: "she needs to be dressed right." She should not be improperly clothed.

³ **Do not let your adorning (the way you are dressed) be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart**

Peter is talking about the heart, the attitude of the heart – that which cannot be seen but which becomes manifest in her attitude and behavior.

This whole issue of the heart is of crucial importance in the relationship of human beings to God. We see this brought out in 1 Sam. 16:7 when the Lord is designating which of the 7 sons of Jesse would be anointed king: ***For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.***

This matter of the heart before God is seen in other places in the NT, such as in

Rom. 2:29 - ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Peter says that the heart of the Christian wife should be...

with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

Now, outward beauty will perish – like the flowers in the field, which last for awhile, then they dry up and fade away. But inward beauty does not fade away – in fact, it gets stronger and more beautiful as the wife is constantly renewed in the Word of God.

In another place, Paul gives advice on how all women, not such wives should dress:

1 Tim. 2:9-12 - ⁹ likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰ but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. ¹¹ Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness.

Another reason Christian wives should be submissive to their husbands is because of

B. The modeling and examples of other godly women in the Scriptures, i.e., in the OT:

⁵ For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.

These women were called "holy," that is, they were set apart for God – to be in relationship to him, and to be separated from the sinfulness of the world.

When the 3 messengers from God came to Abe and Sarah and told them that she would become pregnant when she was about 89...

Gen. 18:12 - ¹² ^(A) So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, ^(B) "After I am worn out, and ^(C) my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?"

So Sarah really did call Abraham "lord." This is a degree of respect and honor that is unheard of in our day, at least in American culture. But Peter holds Sarah up as a model of the way in which a wife should submit to her husband. Did Peter's own wife call him "lord?" We don't know, but it's possible she did.

So Christian wives who follow Sarah's example are...

[And you are] her children, if you do good and ^(B) do not fear anything that is frightening.

What kind of fear is Peter talking about? Alan Stibbs suggests that it may mean being committed to the God- assigned role in life that God has placed us in, and fulfilling that, no matter what criticism we might get from people around us – not being afraid of what people say or think.

It could also have the meaning seen in...

Prov. 3:25 - ^(A) Do not be afraid of sudden terror
or of ^(B) the ruin^(B) of the wicked, when it comes,

In other words, the Christian wife trusts in God in all the distresses and dangers and hazards of life. There are things we could be afraid of – but we can't let fear rule our lives – we must press forward in the will of God for our lives.

So we have seen the first major section of our text:

I. Christian wives should be submissive to their husbands.

The second major section is verse 7:

II. Christian husbands should honor their wives.

What is the Christian husband's obligation to his wife?

A. He should live with her in an understanding way.

He needs to understand that she is a different human creature – different physically and emotionally. She is usually weaker physically. So he needs to be

aware of these differences and accommodate her as needed, help her as needed, be considerate of her special needs as a woman.

B. He needs to honor her as the weaker vessel.

The woman needs to respect her husband, but the husband also needs to honor his wife – to show her respect and consideration – maybe to ask her opinion on certain matters – perhaps follow her advice. To listen respectfully to her matters of concern.

And Peter gives two reasons for the husband honoring his wife:

a) they are heirs with you¹⁹ of the grace of life

They are equal with the man in their standing before God. Both are recipients of the same grace. Both were in need of mercy because of their sins. Both have been immeasurably blessed to have been redeemed by Christ's shed blood on the cross. So the woman is not inferior to the man in her position and standing and relationship before God – she is equal with him. Both have been given grace that they did not deserve. Both are never-ending debtors to Christ for what he did for them.

b) so that your prayers may not be hindered...

1. We see 2 truths here: the Christian husband should be a praying man.

Secondly, if he doesn't honor and respect his wife, his prayers before God will be hindered. If his relationship with his wife is not right, his relationship with God will not be right.

2. Sin in our human relationships affects our relationship with God.

Examples: Matt. 5 :23-24 - ²³ So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Mark 11:25 - ²⁵ And whenever ¹⁹you stand praying, ²⁰forgive, ²¹if you have anything against anyone, so that ²²your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

So we have seen these two great emphases in this passage:

I. Christian wives should be submissive to their husbands.

II. Christian husbands should honor their wives.

But there is a third here in verse 8:

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

III. All Christians Should exemplify similar virtues in their own lives.

V. 8: **⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.**

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind,

¹⁶ ^(A)Live in harmony with one another. ^(B)Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. ^(C)Never be wise in your own sight. Rom. 12:16

sympathy, brotherly love,

Rom. 12:10 - ¹⁰ ^(A)Love one another with brotherly affection. ^(B)Outdo one another in showing honor.

Heb. 13:1 - Let ^(A)brotherly love continue.

1 Pet. 1:22 - ²² Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for ^(A)a sincere brotherly love, ^(B)love one another earnestly from a pure heart,

1 John 4:7 - ⁷ Beloved, ^(A)let us love one another, for love is from God, and ^(B)whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

a tender heart,

Eph. 4:32 - ³² ^(A)Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, ^(B)forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

and a humble mind.

Eph. 4:2 - ² with all ^(A)humility and ^(B)gentleness, with ^(C)patience, ^(D)bearing with one another in love,

Christian wives have a great calling in life – to be submissive to their husbands; and Christian husbands have a great responsibility – to honor their wives. And all of us have the obligation to be people of sincere love, tender hearted toward one another, people of humility – acknowledging the greatness of God and our own indebtedness to him, so that we don't think of ourselves too highly, but know it is only God who has made a difference in our lives.

What great lives God has laid out for us. Let us enter into the roles he had ordained for us with enthusiasm and commitment – and see how he will use us to glorify his name, and be a blessing to others.

Prayer:

Holy Father, in your great wisdom you have forged mutual responsibilities for Christian wives and husbands and for all of us. Help us grow in all these graces that your name will be honored through our lives. We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who as our great example, submitted himself fully to your will. Amen.

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