

Lesson 18 – 1 Peter:

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Submission and respect toward others: 2:11 – 3:12:

5) The Duties of Wives and Husbands, 3:1-7:

“In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives.

Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They put their trust in God and accepted the authority of their husbands. For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, and called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do.

In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.”

As we have seen in the previous lessons in this section, Peter is giving instructions to Christians about submission and respect of others. To date we have studied the instructions of Peter regarding:

- Reasons for self-discipline
- Respecting People in Authority
- Duty of Servants to Masters
- Example of Christ our Redeemer

Now we will study the Duties of Wives and Husbands.

Marriage is another of God's ordinances for human society bringing individuals into mutual relationships of responsibility. In these seven verses, Peter deals with the duties of married couples (Man and Woman).

It is interesting to note that in the day in which we live, everyone wants to assert their rights and to demand from others what they think is due to them, that in this passage of Scripture, Peter emphasizes the duties that should be discharged to others.

Becoming a Christian should radically influence a person's behavior in every social relationship, and not the least in the family dynamic. Peter points out that God's eye is on the individual and that the individual should value what is valued in God's sight and should determine how he acts. So, as we will see, this applies to the woman and the to the man in the marriage relationship.

v. 1 – “In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words.”

The words “in the same way or likewise or similarly” links the new section (verses 1-7) to the preceding section. Thus, Peter's exhortations concerning Christian living in relation to one's fellowmen in which the same principle of dutiful submission or rendering proper honor and respect is enforced.

Wives are told to “accept the authority of” or “to submit” to their husbands.

This does not imply the sexual inferiority of women. The submission that is instructed here is one of function as a wife, mother, hostess, etc., within the home. Every family, if it is to be united and run happily, must have a head, just as a team must have a captain. Peter is saying that the proper head of the home is the man or the husband. So, what Peter is implying is that the good wife is ready to comply with responsible decisions and the consequent requests of her husband.

This passage and context suggest that just as some husbands or masters may be cruel (see 2:18) because they may not be Christians, they may be difficult to please. In that context or circumstance that the Christian's wife's faith and devotion should help and inspire her to be submissively co-operative as a good wife.

It is noted here that there may be a family where the wife is the only Christian. Peter recognizes the possibility that some non-Christian husbands may even be actively hostile to the gospel. This is noted by the use of the verb “apeithein” which is translated “obey not,” and is a strong word meaning to “disobey.” It is probably intended to describe husbands who have not been won from hearing the gospel, have deliberately set themselves against the truth of the gospel.

Peter notes that even a non-Christian husband may be won to Christ and accept faith in Him. So, Peter, suggests that the wife be a silent witness of Christ, through her Christian conduct.

The phrase “**without any words**” in contrast to the previous phrase “obey the good news” (the Word) the noun “word” is the Greek word ‘logos’ does not have an article with it. So, “**the word**” refers to the Gospel – meaning the Christian message preached about Christ. However, “without any words” simply means without speaking or explaining.

So, what is implied here is that the wife gives her distinctive Christian witness to her husband, by not preaching at him, but by living before him and especially by being a good wife in her relation to him.

v. 2 – “**They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives.**”

The meaning here is that because the non-Christian husband has ‘seen’ their wife’s pure and simple lifestyle is inspired by and determined by her reverence for God. The participle used here is used with the sense of “because they have seen” or to watch attentively, or to see for oneself.” The non-Christian husband has had plenty of opportunity to see and observe his Christian wife’s pure and reverent life.

vv. 3 & 4 – “**Don’t be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.**”

Peter here notes that a Christian wife should seek to please God and be a witness for Him, by her distinctive interest in conduct (following Christ and His teachings) rather than in clothes. She should cultivate and express a calm and stable spirit in relation to people and circumstances. That will reveal that her conduct (behavior) is governed by new standards, by a deliberate choice and the cultivation of characteristics that highly esteemed in God’s eye rather than in the eyes of others. The Christian woman should remember that ‘man looks on the outward appearance; the Lord looks on the heart.’ What matters to God is the condition or attitude of one’s inner disposition.

Peter describes the process (time-taking) of outward adorning. The Greek words used here refer to hair braiding, putting jewels around one’s neck and putting on expensive clothing. This is contrast to the statement “**you should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within**” which in the Greek means and refers to the human personality or person, the inner character. The contrast that Peter develops between ‘outward’ and ‘inward/hidden,’ and between the visible to

man and seen by God, along with the deeper spiritual values emphasized, is a direct parallel to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:1-18. **Read this passage in class.**

In Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus teaches on:

- 1) Giving to the Needy, vv. 1-4.
- 2) Prayer and Fasting, vv. 5-18.

The basic premise of Jesus in this passage is on the inward spiritual development, not on the outward / visible actions.

Peter describes the wife's co-operation with her husband as **"a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God."** The wife should be "meek" or "gentle." This does not imply "weakness" but "strength in control" as directed by the Word of God, the Spirit of God that resides within her. She is not showing signs of rebellion, resentment but rather the characteristics of Christ within her.

vv. 5-6 – **"This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They put their trust in God and accepted the authority of their husbands. For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, and called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do."**

Peter notes the Old Testament example of an outstanding wife – Sarah, Abraham's wife, as an example to inspire Christian wives. Sarah and other Old Testament women learned to make the God of Israel their confidence and hope. They displayed holiness in their conduct and they were adorned with gentleness and trust in God. They displayed the three virtues presented in verse 3 and 4:

- 1) Submissiveness
- 2) Well-doing
- 3) Freedom from panic

These are the same virtues that Peter says Christian wives should possess and exhibit.

Sarah **"called him her master,"** this means that she acknowledged Abraham as her husband and head of the home. This phraseology is similar to and comparable with the description of the believer as one who confesses Christ as Lord. This confession of relationship is completed by obedience or dutiful submission.

Peter calls the Christian wives **"you are her daughters"** – meaning Sarah's offspring or true descendants. Just as Abraham is called the father of the faithful, so Sarah, may be called the mother of the obedient. When doing what is right (the virtues listed above) Christian wives they can do so without fear – Greek word – ptosis-

which means alarm or agitation. So, the Christian wives can be without fear, alarm, or agitation from what their husband might do.

Peter is encouraging Christians, whatever their circumstances and experience to fulfill before God their obligations of their position in society in relation to their fellowmen. Thus, they continue to do good without fear or alarm at threats or ill-treatment, because of their quiet confidence and steadfast hope in God.

These verses echo the passage in Proverbs 3:25-27:

“You need not be afraid of sudden disaster or the destruction that comes upon the wicked, for the Lord is your security. He will keep your foot from being caught in a trap. Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it’s in your power to help them.”

v. 7 – “In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God’s gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.”

Now Peter deals with the Christian husband’s corresponding duty to his wife.

There is no suggestion here that the wife might be a non-Christian. We can contrast the reference in verse one to the non-Christian husband of a believing wife.

The Christian husband should lead his wife in the proper awareness of her relation to him in grace and the virtues mentioned.

On the one hand, the Christian husband should recognize her more limited physical powers as a woman and should give her proper consideration and protection. By doing that he gives her – her due honor and then be worthy of her marital confidence and devotion.

On the other hand, spiritually, he should also recognize their full equality as fellow-believers/sharers in the grace of God, and in His gift to them both of eternal life.

The Christian husband should live with his wife as a man fully aware that, in addition to the natural enjoyment of each other, they are, as Christians, called together to a spiritual fellowship with God and Christ, which is a sphere in which his wife is not weaker or inferior, but a joint heir!!

This union of husband and wife can only be properly maintained if the fellowship between husband and wife is balanced. This partnership is meant to be fruitful, not only physically in having children, but also spiritually in praying together and in

seeing prayer answered. So, care should be taken that their prayers are not “hindered” or “cut into.”

Peter encourages the Husband to live with his wife in such a way as to not just pursue the physical life (relationship) but to grow together in God. See 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 and John 17:3:

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 – “God’s will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor – not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and his ways.”

John 17:3 – “and this is the way to eternal life – to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.”