

The Christian a Hostile World Excelling in marriage

Intro: Peter's theme in this section of his letter was stated in 1 Pet 2:12:

Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. (1 Pet. 2:12)

The challenge for Christians in a world of unbelievers is to live so well as to neutralize the uninformed criticism of unbelievers and to lead them to glorify God instead. He applies that principle by showing how Christians respect the order of the society in which they live. He begins with all disciples who are told to submit to the governing authorities, then to servants who must submit to masters. Now he extends the principle to wives who are instructed to submit to their husbands; but not without a word also for the husbands as well.

Keep in mind that it is not only the theme of submission but also excellence in the presence of the unbeliever that binds these sections together. God's people should be noted for their excellent home lives or marriages. Peter teaches both wives and husbands they should respond to one another.

To the Wives (exhortation, illustration, motivation)

IN the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. And let not your adornment be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. 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. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right ^bwithout being frightened by any fear. (1 Pet. 3:1-6)

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands

Note "in the same way..." A charge for a woman to be submissive to her husband does not demean her any more than the previous exhortations to everyone to be submissive to government and to their masters demeans them. It is just another sphere where the principle of social order should be acknowledged.

We tend to think of the first century as a time when women were culturally expected to show this kind of respect; but actually in the Greco-roman world there is considerable evidence to suggest that many women held quite liberal views about their role and relationship with their husbands, being influenced by the rich and powerful women who threw off traditional roles. Peter then is not merely reinforcing a

cultural norm; but stating the constitution of marriage as it existed from the beginning.

In this case, the woman's submission has a powerful effect in the life of her unbelieving husband. One might even wonder who has the greater power, the man who exercises the right of leadership over his family or the woman whose example is so powerful that she without words leads her husband to the Lord!!!

Her conduct can result in the conversion of her unbelieving husband without formal discourse (without a word, not without "the" word).

The word of the gospel is being displayed daily in the Christian woman's life. Her behavior is:

Chaste--morally pure

Respectful

And let not your adornment be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

Adornment is "kosmos", arrangement or order of a thing. Cf. cosmos, the whole order of things. Or, cosmetics (the thing used in arranging a woman's appearance)

The emphasis of her adornment is not external: braiding hair, gold jewelry, putting on dresses. That is, emphasis is not there. This is a Hebraistic see-saw, not an absolute prohibition against jewelry, fashionable clothing, etc.

But internal:

Meek--tranquil, calm, spirit; self-possessed not anxious and on the verge of hysteria or given to outburst.

Quiet--sober not giddy, controlled not boisterous

A thing God values.

And they are lasting (incorruptible).

The thought is that the real lasting beauty is inside not outside.

Sarah illustrated these qualities:

She obeyed Abraham—submissive.

Calling him lord--Respected him--calling him "lord." (Deut. 18:12). In the Hebrew text Sarah use "adoni" a word meaning "lord" or "master." Her use of it does make her a slave, but it does express her intention to do the will of her husband.

Why? Because she placed her hope in God and wanted to be holy. To hope in God is to live the life of trust in His provision and His rewards.

Godly women are the daughters of this noble woman when they emulate her character.

Just as Abraham is the "father of the faithful" in view of the promise that in his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed, so Sarah his wife and also partaker in that promise is the "mother" of those women who do right with the courage of their convictions.

Christian women who advocate subjection and purity may be hooted at, and even criticized for acquiescing to what they call "male domination." But when they do right they have the same hope as Sarah; and they should not be intimidated by those women who insult or characterize them as weak for so doing

To the Husbands

You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Pet. 3:7)

You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way...

Men jokingly talk about the impossibility of understanding a woman; but God not only says we can understand them, we must do so. The godly husband treats his wife with an informed love.

There is first a forthright commitment to the concept that a man's wife, as a woman, is the weaker vessel. Her husband then does not ever use his greater power to harm her or to exploit her emotionally.

It is upon this basis that a man should:

Care for her and provide for her.

Refrain from burdening her with physical and emotional burdens beyond her strength.

Grant her honor as fellow-heir of the grace of life.

Grant her honor

I can hear here echoes of Prov. 31. It extols the value of a godly woman. It rehearses her many contributions to her family; but it is sandwiched by two important value statements: *An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. (Proverbs 31:10)*

Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her, saying: "Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all." (Proverbs 31:28-29)

In addition, a man demonstrates by his life the value he places upon his wife. The time he is willing to commit to her, to serve her, to help her, the expressions of endearment he gives are all a part of the honor he grants her, of the support he shares with her.

Fellow-heir of the grace of life

I see here first the idea that wives are to be equal recipients of the joys of living. The wife of this Christian may be an unbeliever, just as the woman addressed has an unbelieving husband. That fits the theme of this section.

Second, if they are Christians they may also be said to be fellow-heirs of the grace of life in the spiritual sense, heirs of the blessings of God.

Though there are different roles for men and women in the kingdom, women are not second-class citizens. Indeed, "you

are all one in Christ". Paul said that in the context of the reception of the blessing of eternal life promised to Abraham and his seed.

It is the realization of both facts that causes the man to "honor" his wife.

People applaud today liberated concepts of woman. They contend that the Bible is sexist and demeans women; but here is the most exalted view of a woman. It makes provision for her care and protection in view of her nature.

Conclusion: Beginning a marriage as a Christian couple definitely gives one an advantage. But it also leads others to the Lord. Let the world see in you an excellent partner.