

Standing Fast in the Grace of God

"Likewise..."

The Gospel in the Home

1 Peter 3:1-7

It has often been said that the true test of a Christian's character is not how he acts in the church house on Sunday, but how he acts in his own house on Monday. It is one thing to have a "good conversation" among the brethren; it is another thing entirely to maintain that testimony within the four walls of your own home, especially when things are not going your way.

In our last study, we stood at the foot of the Cross in chapter 2. We saw the Lord Jesus Christ, not as a conquering King, but as a Suffering Servant. We read in verse 21 that He left us an *"example, that ye should follow his steps"*. We saw Him reviled, yet reviling not again; we saw Him suffer, yet threatening not.

It seems that the Holy Spirit gave us the picture of the suffering of Christ right before talking to wives and husbands because the behavior required of us in the home is impossible without the power that was demonstrated on the Cross.

I. THE CONVERSATION THAT CONVICTS (vs. 1-2)

A. The connection

1. The first word of verse 1 – "likewise" (ὁμοίως), "in like manner" ties marriage directly to the previous chapter:
 - a) Verse 13 – submission to authority
 - b) Verses 18-20 – endurance under unjust treatment

c) Verses 21-13 – Christ’s suffering and trust in the Father

2. Marriage is not to be treated as an exception to Christian discipleship, but as one of its most demanding areas of life.

B. The command – “Be in subjection”

In the first century, a woman adopting a religion different from her husband (the *paterfamilias* – head of household) was considered subversive to the state and the household gods. These women were in a precarious, dangerous position.

1. This is the same word (ὑποτασσόμεναι) in the same form (present middle or passive participle) as found in 2:18 relating to servants.
2. As was noted in that study, wives are to put themselves in subjection to their “own husbands,” willingly and without compulsion.
3. This is not a statement of inferiority but of functional order, consistent with the “ordinances of man” in 2:13.

“Subordinate, not as inferior, but out of respect for the responsibilities entrusted to husbands and their accountability to God, and so partnering with them” (from the Amplified Bible notes).

C. The condition – “if any [husband] obey not the word”

1. This is speaking of the word of the gospel message where the husband is an unbeliever that has no regard for the Word of God.
2. This text addresses the difficult reality of what is

considered a spiritually mixed marriage.

3. In these cases, and they would have been common in that day, it is most likely that the wife came to Christ separate from her husband and Peter is addressing how they should live when the husband is an unbeliever.

D. The conquest – “won by the conversation of the wives”

1. The phrase “without the word” (ἄνευ λόγου) is showing that the husband can be won to Christ:
 - a) Apart from formal gospel argument
 - b) Apart from verbal insistence
 - c) Apart from repeated preaching that has already been resisted.

Peter is not saying the Word is unnecessary, but that when the Word has been resisted, godly conduct may succeed where continued argument has failed.

NOTE: Although the second use of λόγος in 1 Peter 3:1 lacks the definite article in Greek, its first use (the referent) is contextually definite, and the KJV’s translation “without the word” reflects both idiomatic Greek usage and necessary English clarity rather than interpretive addition.

2. The term “won” (κερδαίνω) is a commercial term meaning to gain or profit. In a missionary sense, as used here, it means to gain a soul for Christ.
3. “By the conversation” – same term and usage as in 2:12, meaning behavior or conduct. Just as the Gentiles “behold” (ἐποπτεύω) the good works of believers in 2:12, the husband “beholds” (ἐποπτεύω - vs. 2) the “chaste

conversation" of the wife.

4. Her life is to be "chaste" (pure) and "coupled with fear" (reverence toward God and her husband) – vs. 2.

Titus 2:4-5

⁴ That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

We see a powerful example of this in church history with Monica, the mother of the great theologian Augustine (4th Century). She was a devout Christian married to a man named Patricius, a pagan official who was known for his violent temper and immoral life.

For years, Monica did not preach *at* him, for he would not listen to the Word. Instead, she determined to *live* the Word before him. She served him with such patience, "chaste conversation," and "fear" (respect) that he was eventually baffled by her kindness. She literally loved him into the Kingdom. Patricius was converted to Christ shortly before his death, won "without the word" because he could not deny the Gospel he saw living in his wife.

II. THE CHARACTER THAT CAPTIVATES (vs. 3-6)

Let me make this observation. The context here might be speaking to the behavior of a believing wife and an unbelieving husband, but these principles are true for every believing wife, whether the husband is a believer or not.

A. The vanity to avoid (vs. 3) – "outward adorning"

1. Peter lists *plaiting the hair, wearing of gold, and putting on of apparel*. Historically, Roman women of wealth were obsessed with elaborate, tiered hairstyles (often using wigs) and heavy gold jewelry to flaunt status.
2. This is not a blanket prohibition of nice clothes, nice jewelry, or having hair styled, but it is a prohibition of ostentation and reliance on the external to please the husband.

B. The virtue to acquire (vs. 4) – “the hidden man of the heart”

1. “A meek...spirit” (πραῦς) – gentle, not self-assertive.
2. “A quiet spirit” (ἡσύχιος) – tranquil, undisturbed (only used one other time in the Greek New Testament in 1 Tim. 2:2).

1 Timothy 2:2

² For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

This is the opposite of the clamorous, contentious woman described in Prov. 21:9.

Proverbs 21:9

⁹ *It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.*

3. God places great value on this: “In the sight of God of great price.”
- The world values gold (vs. 3); God values the spirit (vs. 4).

C. The validation of Scripture (vs. 5-6)

1. "The holy women...who trusted in God": their submission was a result of their faith in God (vs. 5).
 - a) These women hoped in God
 - b) Their hope shaped their conduct
 - c) Their submission flowed from faith, not coercion.
2. Sarah is given as an example (vs. 6) – "calling him lord."
 - a) Sarah is cited as an example of faith-driven submission, not enforced subjection.
 - b) It is interesting that Peter cites this specific instance. In Genesis 18:12, Sarah laughed in unbelief, yet in that private moment, she still referred to Abraham as "my lord." It shows that respect was her *habitual* attitude, even in her weaknesses.

Genesis 18:12

¹² Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

3. "As long as ye do well" – this places a moral boundary on submission. Peter does not endorse obedience that requires sin, produces fear, or violates conscience toward God.
4. "Not afraid with any amazement" (μη φοβούμεναι μηδεμίαν πτόησιν) – literally translates "not fearing any terror."

A Christian wife with an antagonistic, unbelieving husband lived in constant potential "terror" of his anger or rejection. Peter commands her to do right ("do well") and

trust God with the reaction. She is not to be bullied into silence or sin by fear.

III. THE CONSIDERATION THAT CHERISHES (vs. 7)

A. The mandate

“Likewise, ye husbands” – the husband has a reciprocal duty.

B. The mindset

1. “Dwell with them” (συννοικέω) simply means to live with, to share a household, to well together.
 - a) Living with one’s wife in an informed, thoughtful, God-conscious way
 - b) Recognizing her vulnerability and worth
 - c) Exercising authority with understanding and honor
2. “According to knowledge” – this implies study and understanding. The husband must be a student of his wife’s needs.

Proverbs 24:3-4

³ Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: ⁴ And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

C. The manner

“Giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel...”

1. “Giving honour” – to fix a value upon or to prize.

Ephesians 5:28-29 [the definition of honor]

²⁸ So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. ²⁹ For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

2. "As unto the weaker vessel..."

- a) The term "weaker" is comparative – it's "weaker," not weak.
- b) Peter is not saying that women are spiritually weaker, or morally weaker, or intellectually weaker, or less valuable before God.
- c) In the Greco-Roman and Jewish world of Peter's day, this would have been understood as referring primarily to physical, social, and legal vulnerability.

Women were, as a general rule, physically less able to defend themselves; socially more dependent on their husband's status; and legally more exposed to abuse or neglect.

D. The motive

1. Spiritual equality: "Heirs together of the grace of life."

In Roman law, a wife was often property. In Christ, she is a joint-heir of the "grace of life."

2. Spiritual efficacy: "That your prayers be not hindered."

A husband who treats his wife harshly or ignores her value will find that his prayers will be very ineffective until he sets things right in his relationship with his wife.

Malachi 2:13-14 [Peter is not introducing a new doctrine]

¹³ And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth *it* with good will at your hand. ¹⁴ Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet *is* she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

Conclusion:

Just as Christ “committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (2:23), both the wife and the husband must commit their roles to God.

- The wife is challenged to trust God with a submissive heart. Like Sarah, and like the Lord Jesus, the wife is called to entrust herself to God, believing that a “meek and quiet spirit” is more powerful than a loud argument.
- The husband is challenged to honor his wife as a joint-heir “of the grace of life.”

The sobering warning of verse 7 is given for every Christian marriage: “*That your prayers be not hindered.*” If there is trouble in the living room, there will be silence in the prayer room. You cannot be right with God while you are wrong with your spouse. God is calling us to a higher standard – a standard where the Gospel is not just something we believe, but something we live.