

Text: I Peter 3:1-6 & Ephesians 5:17-24

Title: The Christian Home Before the World Part 3

Occasion: Westminster Presbyterian Church

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Introduction

Following the Lord Jesus Christ involves the ruling power of His Spirit directing each Christian in all of life. Intimately related to our relationship with God is the outworking of the power of the Gospel in our relationships. Being filled with the Spirit, experiencing His leading in the truth and commands of Christ, His comfort and powerfully supplying us in Christ will be seen in “submitting to one another in the fear of God” Submission is to be taken as that duty, those responsibilities, which each of us owe to others in our relationships for our mutual good. While this involves all our relationships with others high and low and peers in Church and State, yet most foundationally this involves the family. It is in the Christian family that Christianity most shines. I picked up an article on the Aquila Report by Elise Grafe how “About 45 percent of marriages in the United States end in divorce, and now 1 in 4 of those are by couples over 50, according to the Bowling Green State University study. Even as the divorce rate growth flattened out overall, the divorce rate among older adults doubled between 1990 and 2009. The study suggests the rising rate stems from a snowball effect. As the baby boom generation greys, it represents the “first cohort to divorce and remarry in large numbers during young adulthood.” Married people who have previously been divorced are 2.5 times more likely to divorce again, so as baby boomers enter their second or third marriages, the risk of divorce rises at an ever increasing rate.” BUT “W. Bradford Wilcox, a leading sociologist at the University of Virginia and director of the National Marriage Project, finds from his own analysis that “active conservative Protestants” who regularly attend church are 35 percent *less likely to divorce* compared to those who have no affiliation. Nominally attending conservative Protestants are 20 percent *more likely* to divorce, compared to secular Americans.” [<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/09/25/factchecker-divorce-rate-among-christians/>]

I. The Apostle begins with the duty of the wife.

Is the power of Christ and His Gospel shining brightly in your marriage? The relation between husband and wife is foundational for all other relationships and so the Apostle begins with them. And he begins with the wife in the duty of submission in its difficulty and also in its incentive to the husband to perform his duty to his wife.

A. What is the duty? “Submit yourselves”

God who is our Creator has wisely ordained for our good and His glory

certain order which means that our own good and comfort is tied to submission to God's directive in relationships. This involves each of us knowing what God would have us do in each relationship. The wife is called by her Maker and Redeemer, the One who made marriage and who brought her into the relationship, to submit to her husband. A submission which is not as children to their parents or as an employee to employer because there is greater freedom and coordination between husband and wife. As our Lord quoted Genesis as authoritative, Mt. 19:6, "What God has *joined together*, let not man separate." Husband and wife in marriage are *συνεξευξεν* literally *to yoke together* or *joined together* and so live together as the Apostle Peter says I Pe. 3:7, "as being heirs together of the grace of life." Yet there can be no order in *the yoke* or really no joined together practically speaking nor order or safety or coordination to anyone's comfort in the family if she will not be in subjection to the authority of the husband.

B. Who are the persons involved?

Obviously "Wives, submit to your own husbands." It speaks of your own promised loyalty to your own husband in the covenant obligations of marriage establishing a unique arrangement between one woman the wife and one man the husband -- allowing no other to come into this place. No one else can come in to take up these rights and obligations in the marriage.

C. What is the manner of doing this?

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, *as to the Lord*" says the Spirit. It really does fit that the Spirit of Christ as we are told to be filled with the Spirit, to fulfill our duties to one another in God's established relationships "in the fear of the God", that it is to be done "as to the Lord." What does this imply?

1. This duty of the submission of the wife must be done willingly and sincerely; meaning that it is to resemble submission which is given to Christ. Why is that? Because in this very section the Apostle tells us that the marriage relationship between husband and wife is a reflection of Christ's relationship and government of His Bride the Church. While that imagery is unique, yet the manner is not: Eph. 6:5, "Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh...*as to Christ*." v.7, "with goodwill doing service, *as to the Lord*, and not to men." That authority structure is repeated in I Cor. 11:3. We are to be submissive and obedient to Christ willingly, heartily, sincerely. And here is the husband representing Christ in this ordinance of marriage and so *as to the Lord* necessarily implies that her submission is performed willingly, heartily, sincerely.

2. This duty of the submission of the wife *as to the Lord* implies the reason and motive, namely because your Lord commands it. From the very beginning this was the very order of creation: I Tim. 2:13, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." The problems found in Genesis 3, fall out because of Adam and Eve's sin. Then this duty is enshrined in the law. Then it is urged in the NT as this image of Christ's communion with His Church.

3. Then when you read "as to the Lord" there is a necessary guidance and limitation. A husband is NOT some Divine Right King who is the law

and may command whatever. The easy yoke and light burden of Christ is no such thing as such mis-applications by sinful men and mis-characterizations by wicked men and women. But this speaks of the lawful, that is submitting to Christ as to content and manner and all else use of the authority which He has given: Col. 3:18, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.” Fitting obedience is rendered as far as the husband has been given this authority by Christ.

4. But then see how the Lord’s sees this submissiveness and obedience rendered by the wife to her husband - as given to Him and by the way - the contrary action of rebellion as committed against Him. It is the same Lord who made this ordinance of marriage, who in His providence brought you into this marriage covenant, who heard your vows and whom you invoked to help you keep them, who sees and knows what you do from the heart before and as unto Him! Christ knows when what Peter describes in I Peter 3, is going on! He sees the chaste conduct accompanied by fear. He sees the hidden person of the heart, the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, *which is very precious in the sight of God.* He sees when she is submissive and the husband is self-centered, unappreciative, domineering and worse! Christ is able to repay His own even when the husband will not.

So then “Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord” this submission is the duty of wives to their husbands, this is the lesson.

II. What does this submission of the wife involve?

Now this is not time for husbands to keep poking their wife in the ribs! *Uh, huh! Hear that!!* How ought we to be praying for our wives for grace - particularly since we have made it so very difficult for them to follow Christ by our conduct!

A. The first thing involved is respect for your husband.

Remember that the general directive Eph. 5:21, that we must all submit to one another fulfilling the God ordained order and duties which we owe to one another in relationships was to be done “in the fear of God.” Eph. 5:33, “...and let the wife see that she *respects* her husband.” φοβηται τον ανδρα *Phobos* - Not, have have night mares about your husband!

1. But this begins with an inward due respect and esteem of the husband which brings forth the fruits of love and submission. The great basis of this, as in all relationships as we acknowledge God’s order, is to be found in God. This is what you find the Apostle Paul setting out in Romans 13, concerning civil authorities as ordained and given their place and authority by God: Ro. 13:7, “Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, custom to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.” It is not just the qualities or lack of them in an individual, but the office or position in which the person is placed by God and the individual dignity of every person made in God’s image. So even you find little to be acknowledged in the person, yet we still acknowledge God in His image and placing them in position. But then besides this inward respect and esteem for your husband....

2. There is outward respect in word and deed. The indication of what is in the heart is what comes out in words and deed. The Spirit takes note of this: I Pe. 3:1, "Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear." What example does the Spirit set before you? v. 6, "As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord..." How did Sarah demonstrate her submissiveness and fulfillment of her duty toward her husband Abraham? By her language of respect to him and about him. What makes this amazing is that the text in Gen. 18, from which this comes is filled with indications of unbelief and doubt, yet the Lord takes notice of the least act of sincere obedience to His commands. It was after the Lord had come to Abraham to reassure them that He would return "to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." But - Gen. 18:12, "Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" What is there that is commendable here except that one word "lord" expressed in reverence about her husband, yet Sarah is commended as one of the holy women trusting in God; and from this the Apostle Peter infers how much women should give reverence to husbands even when they are unbelievers and demonstrating that unbelief in their lives! What is the language like between wife and husband in the home? Sarah's laugh concerning the Lord's promise was heard by Him though she denied it, just as her reverence for her husband heard by Him. What are your words? your communication like? Not in front of others, but when no one else but the Lord hears?

What about deeds? Is your behavior as a wife toward your husband one that demonstrates contempt, disdain, indifference? Is that fitting according to what the Lord says? The Lord Himself says in Mal. 1:6, "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? says the Lord of hosts..." In all these relationships from the heart then in words and actions there is an expected honor, yet the Lord who is due greater honor was without what was due to Him. Our Lord takes this up in Mt. 15:8, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me....Not what does into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." The words and actions demonstrated what was in the heart with regard to the Lord's word -- His word meant nothing to them. Now this whole notion of respect in the heart coming out in word and deed is absolutely foreign to our culture. Many dishonorable things are done by those in places of authority and in our context here, by husbands in marriages. But does the Lord see and take seriously this whole matter of attitudes and words from the wife to her husband? There is a striking example in II Sa. 6:20-23. The context is the great defeat of the Philistines and the return of the ark to Jerusalem with great joy and rejoicing. Michal, was a daughter of Saul who had been given to David as a wife in I Sa. 18, after he had killed Goliath. But when David

was away in I Sa. 25, (Nabal/Abigail becomes David's wife) King Saul gives Michal his daughter, David's wife to another! She is returned in II Sa. 3:13f, after Saul's death. But now was her love torn apart in all this? We may recoil at some of these things, but the point is that she was David's wife and what happened? The ark is brought back in great procession with joy, shouting, trumpets, dancing to Jerusalem. Again there are a lot of problems with the whole way in which this was done. But David is ecstatic "leaping and whirling before the Lord." But look what it says in II Sa. 6:16, "And she despised him in her heart." Then from despising in the heart comes these words dripping with sarcasm: v. 20, "Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!" She taunts at him in utter contempt. She after all is the daughter of King Saul and here is this low-class boy taken from the sheep acting like some kind of unrefined jerk! You get insight into what is behind this from David's response in v. 21, "So David said to Michal, "It was before the Lord, who chose me instead of your father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel. Therefore I will play music before the Lord. And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maidservants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honor." His worship was without pretension. It was not calculated. He says, "I will be even more humbled than this" - He is willing to humble himself, to abase himself and to obey the Lord so very much opposite of her father Saul who in I Sa. 15, not only sets up a monument to himself, but disobeys the clear command of the Lord and was rejected by the Lord as king. David's worship was not done to be seen by others, but the expression of his heart before the Lord. But now what did the Lord think of this breach of Michal's duty as wife toward her husband? What did the Lord think of her despising David in her heart and her sarcastic words? Perhaps they were uttered only between the two of them as he returned, but the Lord heard: II Sa. 6:23, "Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death." And forever her sin is set out for our instruction in God's Word.

O that husbands were so leading their wives as men of high Christian character! That your honorable life and treatment and speech of your wife makes it easy for your wife to respect you! But everywhere in the media dishonorable attitudes, words, deeds between wife and husband are presented as *Real*, as the norm! As Christians - what we learn here must be the norm! This must be the evident fruit of the filling by the Spirit to the praise of Christ and for our comfort. Let us in repentance seek pardon for our sin and grace that we may walk in new obedience. Amen.