

Text: I Peter 3:1-6 & Ephesians 5:17-24 & Titus 2:4,5

Title: The Christian Home Before the World: Wives Part 4

Occasion: Westminster Presbyterian Church

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Introduction

It is important that each of our marriages, our families - thrive Christianly. Certainly for our own comfort and happiness and that of our children, but particularly for the honor of Christ and as a testimony to the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives. I pointed out last week that empirical studies show that active conservative Protestants are 35% less likely to divorce whereas nominally attending conservative Protestants are 20% more likely to divorce as compared to secular Americans.

[<http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/09/25/factchecker-divorce-rate-among-christians/>] That reveals something doesn't it. Those who are sporadic and uncommitted, despite saying they are part of conservative evangelical Christianity, are more likely than their unbelieving counterparts in the culture to divorce; whereas those who are committed and active in their commitment to conservative evangelical Christianity are that 35% less likely to divorce.

We took the time to look carefully at the context in Ephesians 4 & 5, so that this is not simply a moral lesson: *Hey! Do this or else! Or 5 steps to the fulfilling happy marriage.* But rather, when the Apostle Paul writes and Christians speak about not grieving the Spirit, but being filled with the Spirit - it is first of all not like we might be popularly led to believe a matter of emotion, but that very Spirit inspires the Apostle Paul to write specifically about relationships between people in terms of very practical matters: "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another....do not let the sun go down on your wrath...do not grieve the Holy Spirit...be filled with the Spirit speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...giving thanks...submitting to one another in the fear of God." This is a matter of the Spirit-controlled, Spirit-directed, Spirit-filled life. Is the Gospel shining brightly in your marriage?

We then began to open the duty of the wife: She is called by her Lord who created her and marriage, who redeemed her and called her into the marriage relationships in His providence, to render a submission which is fitting her being yoked together with her husband. That role is her unique position in the relationship. While all of us are to fulfill our part in the relationships into which God has placed us "in the fear of God," yet specifically the manner is expressed: "as to the Lord." The first thing this submission of the wife to her husband involves is respect for him. The relationship between Christ and His Church is to be emulated, thus the manner of submission must be willing, sincere, because the Lord commands it, because He guides it and limits it, because the Lord takes notice of this. Heart respect and esteem is to be reflected in word and deed. Scripture illustrates both a good example in Sarah calling Abraham lord and a bad illustration in Michal who despised David and derided him sarcastically.

I. What else does this submission of the wife to her husband involve?

This involves inner heart respect for your husband which is expressed outwardly in word and deed. NOTE: Titus 2:4,5, “that they admonish [σωφρονιζωσι 3PIPRes.Subj- restore to a right mind, make sober-minded, to steady by exhortation & guidance] the young women to love their husbands [φιλανδρους husband-loving from *philos* - a dear friend, to show kindness & affection, to like, be fond of(I once had a wife tell me that she did not have to love her husband!)] .. to be .. obedient to their own husbands [**υποτασσομενας Pres.Mid.Ptc. to place or arrange oneself under, to submit one’s self rendering obedience], that the word of God may not be blasphemed.” This same root word is used in Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; I Pe. 3:1. How is this shown? Not time for husbands to go to sleep or those not married...

A. Selflessness

Writing to Titus, the Apostle gives some very practical instructions which he labels “speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.” Truly theology is living to God! Among the things which he exhorts concerning the older women in the congregations is that they teach good things. Like what *good things*? “That they admonish the young women to love their husbands to love their children” *You mean that a wife and mother has to be exhorted to love their husband and children? I thought that just came naturally?* To fulfill our responsibilities in relationships of marriage, the family, the home, as to the Lord, does take grace, the power of the Spirit, and personal effort. Such is our sin and corruption that it resists putting self to death in the exertion of ourselves in our responsibilities to husband and children. We live in a narcissistic, self-centered culture. What happens when two self-centered people enter into marriage in which Christ calls upon them to render to each other what is due in terms of their respective roles? Certainly the death of self! What else is to be taught and encouraged? “to be discreet[σωφρωνdecent,modest (staid, temperate)], chaste [αγνας pure], homemakers[οικουρους-οικουργος οικος + ουρος domestic,working at home; in I Tim. 5:14, οικοδοεσποτειν “manage the house”]...”? Certainly this calls for the crucifixion of self for her husband, family, for Christ.

B. Fulfilling her husband’s lawful word

Titus 2:5, continues, “good, obedient [**] to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.” Now sin certainly has corrupted this and works counter to this. Ever since the Fall men have a corrupt lazy tendency to lay off responsible headship to their wife and the wife has a corrupt desire to take up responsible headship in the marriage and family. Or there is the corruption of the husband to misuse and abuse his position. Or for the wife to balk and be grudging, discontent, and/or even belligerent. Ie. Zipporah in that occasion of the circumcision of her and Moses’ son. Did God/Does God view with importance the placing of the sign of His covenant even upon the infant seed of His people (which in OT was circumcision & in the NT is baptism)? Yes, because it had been omitted,

overlooked, forgotten, disregarded, by Moses and Zipporah and Ex. 4:24, says that the Lord met Moses to kill him! What was her response to Moses? “Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses’ feet, and said, “Surely you are a husband of blood to me!” As a positive example you have the remarkable account in Gen. 12, where God tells Abram to get up and go to where he would show him leaving his family and homeland! And 23:5, says Sarai his wife went and you find her blessed in this inheriting blessing in Gen. 17:6. When those three personages come to visit Abraham in Gen. 18, One of which is the Lord; Abraham hurries into the tent to Sarah: “Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and makes cakes.” She is called upon for some instant hospitality which she readily does. I once knew a man who said of that qualification for an elder/overseer in I Tim. 3, “given to hospitality” that he could not have people into his home because his wife would have none of it!! Doesn’t the whole manner of this submission direct obedience? Eph. 4:22, “as to the Lord”? Col. 3:18, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.” *As to the Lord/As if fitting in the Lord*- Is it not the case that our Lord would be served with a ready, glad willingness, cheerfulness, a heart desire to please Him not reluctant constraint? much less not utter refusal?

C. Acting as a comfort and help to her husband.

Gen. 2:20, “So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.” No helper comparable to Adam; no one serving as friend to comfort, assist, benefit, to him. It is the Creator who makes Eve from the side of Adam and brings her to him in covenant marriage who showed Adam this lack in himself and all creation: 2:18, “And the Lord God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” Now it should be evident that what the Apostle Paul and Peter direct with regards to a wife living in submission to her husband is not simply a throwback to a particular cultural time as if somehow the cultural clock’s mechanics suddenly stopped and we are stuck with this outmoded, first century notion. This is not simply a mode for retaining a male dominated culture. But this is God’s institution, God’s directive arising from the wisdom of the Creator Himself. Which means, that it is completely impossible to accept what the Scripture says about the role of a wife without taking to heart the full vigor of the biblical idea of submission and obedience. Without taking to heart the dynamic reality that she was made as a helper that is a friend, a comfort, to assist and benefit, the old word - succor - her husband. She was made the one answering his needs for there was no one, nothing else, comparable to Adam as a man made in the image of God, thinking, breathing, mental, emotional being with needs in all those areas; There was no one made for Adam but Eve. God makes Eve and says to Adam forsake all others and be united to her! Cling to her!

I did not address it earlier, but I must, for there are so many attacks on Genesis and of course then the whole notion of marriage that the wife was made for her husband, and the very use of the word *Submit*. So there are

attacks on Genesis and Paul is set against Paul. This has gone so far as to war against the use of the *Father* and *Son* with regard to the self-revelation of God as Trinitarian. But let's take a closer look at this!

Ie. When our Savior was born who were his earthly parents? He was born, He was incarnate of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born and part of the family of which Joseph was the father and head. We are not told a great deal about Jesus' childhood, but what we are told is important. In Lk. 2:41f, was the occasion of Jesus' parents going to Passover and taking Him at age 12. Jewish tradition for *bar mitzvah* becoming a *son of the law* was when a boy came to age of maturity and responsibility with regard to keeping the law, so it was customary for parents to take a son even before the usual 13th year. So right at teenage years we find Christ accompanying His parents for the 7 day feast and afterward the remarkable interchange with the doctors: "Did you not know that I must about My Father's business?" So here is the Son of God about His heavenly Father's business and the parents not understanding what He is saying, but note v. 51: "Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them...." Think about that: *Who* was submitting to Joseph and Mary? Jesus Christ the incarnate Son of God! *Who* were Mary and Joseph? God the Son's own creatures! *Why* was Jesus doing this? Because even when Christ the Son of God is incarnate, God's ordained order for the family is so inflexible, so unchangeable, that even Christ obeys that order. He renders submission in the duties which are due, in this case, from a child to parent! And remember this: If He did not. If He simply said that this is *unjust* and *I will do my own thing!* And refused to submit himself to them, then we could not be saved! Why? Because He could not be that spotless Passover Lamb which takes away our sin. He could not be *the Lord our Righteousness* by whose righteousness we stand righteous in God's sight.

What is more, if the wife's submission to her husband, if submission to God's order and the wife rendering what is due to her husband, works some kind of inferiority upon women and is not to be tolerated in Church or Society, then the whole Doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ is destroyed. Over and over Christ says Jn. 6:38, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." Jn. 12:49, "...the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak." Jn. 17:4, "...I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." What if the Son should have said, *Not Your will, but My will be done!* We could not be saved! Remember that *not being subject* is the characteristic of the carnal mind: Ro. 8:7, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." Christ always did those things which pleased His heavenly Father. The covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son in which the Son humbled Himself, taking on the task of our redemption in all which that involved. But this did not in the least reduce the full Deity of God the Son. It did not diminish His status and dignity as the Eternal Lord. It is because Jesus Christ is fully God that He was able to redeem and save to the

uttermost all who come to God by Him.

So, when you wives are called by God to submit to your husband, to take up in submission to your purpose this call to be a help answering his needs, it does not demean you or make you something less than a woman made in the image of God. Selflessness; fulfilling your husband's lawful word, acting as a help, friend, and comfort to your husband.

D. By a life of studied godliness raised against all that would deride the submission of the wife.

The entire context of Titus 2:3-5, fairly breathes a life of studied godliness. The older women are to be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience. They are women of godliness themselves and they then guide and exhort young women in this godliness in the place where it is to be most clearly and crucially seen: In the marriage and home. Then the Apostle caps it off: "That the word of God may not be blasphemed." That it not be said that *if Christianity and the Word of God prescribe such wonderful things then why is that marriage and home such a disaster!* Doesn't the Apostle Peter give us insight into this as well! For he writes to Christian wives who have unbelieving husbands describing this practical godliness in a number of areas. The point being, that your submission in fulfilling this roles is not conditioned upon the spiritual state or some other characteristic of your husband. Now this is not to say that it is not the duty of husbands to be to their wife as Christ is to the Church, but it is to say that the wife cannot simply turn a deaf ear to all of this with the excuse that *Well, my husband is not much of a Christian leader; Not much of a spiritual man; and he does this and says that and.....So I am off the hook!!* No, rather the reason why we must think in terms of a life of studied godliness against all that would deride the submission of the wife is in light of all we have noted which is against you in this! Your own corruption, the culture, the world, the devil, the desires of your own flesh, your own pride which does not want to crucify self, which says, *Surely Christ could not be calling me to this?!* We ought to conceive of this submission as to the Lord and fulfilling your role as a helper answering to his needs, as a positive concept -- that is, with an emphasis which more upon what you as a wife ought to do, rather than what you ought not to do. This is the divinely appointed context of your freedom. Submission in godliness means that you can put your talents, abilities, resources, energy at your husband's disposal. Submission in godliness means that you use your abilities under your husband's headship for the good of your husband and family. It means you are a part of him and a part of the team headed in the same direction - Not the opposing team - At cross-purposes or trying to frustrate him or compete with him; Not a different league - as if simply an individual going your own separate way, pursuing your own goals with simply this bothersome guy in the way. You are one with him.

Joseph A. Pipa Jr., "Today is our 42 anniversary and I daily thank the Lord for my wife. This morning I was reflecting on lessons from marriage. Marriage has been used by God to teach me how flawed I was. Through marriage I by God's work am less flawed. Our children are ahead of where at

their age we were in in their growth in grace (which is the way it should be in covenant). My son is a better husband and father than I was at his age.”

"It is often those most opposed to the Gospel, and most incensed by preaching of it and the way that others are being brought into the kingdom who are suddenly arrested by its power. John Skinner of Gloucestershire, was a strolling fiddler, going from fair to fair, and supplying music to any that would hire him. Having determined to incommode George Whitefield, who was going to preach, he obtained a standing on a ladder raised to a window near the pulpit; he remained a quiet, if not an attentive hearer, till the text was named, when he intended to begin his opposing and annoying exercise on the violin. It pleased God, while he was putting the instrument in tune, to convey the word spoken with irresistible power to the soul. His attention being diverted from its original design, and his purpose broken, that God's purpose according to election might stand, he heard the sermon out, after which he became altogether a changed character."