

April 23, 2023
 Faith in Exile: Marriage in Exile
 1 Peter 3:1-7
 Vernon Advent Christian Church

Intro – Faith in Exile (How are we as Christians to live in a hostile world?)

Which has brought us to the book of 1 Peter. Peter wrote this letter to other persecuted Christians who were scattered across the Roman Empire. And in this letter, Peter is reminding these Christians to live every moment of every day with the hope they have in God, because it's only this hope that will see them through their times of suffering and persecution. One of Peter's main points he continually drives home on how to live out our faith in exile is our conduct. If you go back to 1 Peter 2:12, we read, "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable." He says people are already saying bad things about you as Christians, so be extra careful not to give them ammunition for their slander, but live in a way that is a good witness to them and, thereby, glorifies God. He then follows up in v. 13, "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution," in other words, be a good witness by submitting to authority wherever you are: at work and towards the government. Peter says even when you suffer it, like Jesus did for us, do it as a good witness, trusting God. This is the context which brings us to our passage. Ch. 3 just continues these same ideas from ch. 2 that Pastor Bruce walked us through last week except now Peter applies them to the home. He says live this same way as a witness at home for the sake of your family and others who are watching. Our first mission field as believers is our very own homes. So, God speaks here to both men and women about how to live out our faith, while in exile, at home in front of a world that is watching.

Let's jump right in to our passage this morning and see what God has instore for us as we consider the role of our marriage while we are living in exile. If you are able, please stand with me as I read the Word of God from the book of 1 Peter 3:1-7.

[Read Passage]

Peter begins the subject of submission in the home first by addressing wives. This follows the pattern that we find in other parts of scripture, Eph. 5 and elsewhere, as Peter follows the order that God established. Each person is subject to governing authorities outside of the home including governments and employers. But then each of us has a God-given role inside of the home as well. If you are currently unmarried, either single or widowed, these verses are still relevant as either as a standard by which to measure a possible future spouse or biblical principles that you can pass on to younger believers concerning their roles in a Christian home as Paul instructs us to do in his letters to Timothy and Titus.

Verse 1 begins, "Likewise," or "In the same way," so it clearly is referring back to ch.2 and what Peter has already said about submission. "Likewise, wives be subject to your own husbands..." So, for the Christian wife, what does it mean to "be subject to your husband?" As Pastor shared with us last week, the word translated "be subject to" is from the Greek word, "hypotasso" with a literal definition of "submitting to" or "be subject to," but with the connotation of "voluntarily place yourself under the authority of another." You have to understand that the fact that Peter is even writing this directly to a first-century woman was revolutionary! In the Greco-Roman world of the first century, women were considered inferior to men. Wives had no say in their household; they weren't allowed to vote or teach. They had no choice but to submit!

Now we have Peter encouraging wives to “be subject to their husbands.” So that begs a question: If the women were already in submission to their husbands, why is Peter telling them to submit? What’s happening here? What’s happening is that even though this principle applies for all marriages, Peter is specifically dealing with wives who have come to faith in Christ and are now wondering what to do in their marriages especially if their husbands had not. In Greco-Roman culture, a wife was expected to adopt the religion of her husband. And when women in Peter’s time became Christians while their husbands were not, this was seen by many as rebellion against their husbands! Of course, Peter was not going to tell these women to give up their faith in Christ. But that is why he emphasized this point to them, in light of the way people think you are rebelling against your husband by worshiping Christ, be especially careful to show them that you are not rebellious. Show them that Christ makes you a godly and loving wife in your home.

Peter is telling wives that have previously had no choice, you now have a choice. It’s now an act of the will rather than a legal requirement. You see, Peter is getting to the heart of it. He’s after a heart attitude, a spirit of humility by choice, not by coercion. For the wife, submission is an attitude where she says to her husband, “I delight for you to take the initiative in our family. I am glad when you take responsibility for things and lead with love. I will honor Christ by yielding to your leadership in our home.” And this is such a beautiful and honorable thing. So beautiful and honorable that Peter says this is even applicable to those women who are married to non-Christian husbands: “Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives,”

Imagine winning someone over to Jesus without preaching to them? What if he or she simply witnessed Christ at work in you and desired to know the God who has transformed your life? Yet this is exactly what Peter is suggesting. This is an echo of what he said earlier in chapter 2, verse 12: “Keep your conduct...honorable, so that when they [unbelievers] speak against you...they may see your good deeds and glorify God...” In other words, we ought to conduct ourselves in such a way that when others observe us they might be drawn to God. So, if you’re married and your husband is not a follower of Jesus, God can, and does, use your submission as a powerful spiritual influence in your home. Now it is not guaranteeing that your husband will accept Jesus, it says he “may be won.” Chances are that your husband won’t accept Christ by talking to him only, because that might drive him further from God. The Word of God says the best thing you can do for him is to display Christ through your character and your conduct as the most promising option. If he continues to reject Christ he is the only one responsible for that decision. But you wives, continue to demonstrate your extraordinary love of God.

Now verse 2 assumes that wives will be characterized by their godly respect and their pure conduct. And when Peter says “respectful” here, we’re reading a translation of the phrase “in fear.” So, a literal translation would be “as they observe your pure conduct in fear.” He’s not talking about any kind of fear directed toward the husband; rather, he is emphasizing the wife’s reverence directed toward God in the same way that we speak of having “fear of the the Lord.” Peter’s point is this: Any and all good conduct of the wife should come from their relationship with God. You don’t conduct yourself in such a way in order to show how godly you are, to impress the neighbors, or to manipulate your husband. You conduct yourself in such a way because it’s an outpouring of your relationship with God and your trust in Him.

Peter continues in vs. 3-4, “Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight

is very precious." Apparently, women in the first-century were just as interested by the latest fashions as most women are today. It wasn't uncommon for first-century women to be decked out in elaborate jewelry and expensive clothes. So, Peter is exhorting the women to stop putting all their attention and value on the external, but to focus on the internal. Of course, he's not forbidding women to wear jewelry or nice clothing rather, he is warning against placing your identity in these external things. He's warning against making these external, temporary things your source of beauty.

If you are a woman here today, the world tells you the opposite of what Peter is saying in these verses. The world tells you your appearance is everything. When you are in the checkout line at the grocery store or when you turn on the tv, our scrolling through social media, you're being bombarded with commercials about lotions, hair products, and the latest fashions. And it doesn't matter what the product is, they all promises to make you look younger and more beautiful and that you should find your value and self-worth in your looks. But understand this: God has a very different message, for when he looks upon you, He looks at your heart. He's most concerned with the state of your heart. This is why Peter says in verse 4, "but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious." External beauty will fade over time, but internal beauty will never fade, and will even continue to grow, and it is your inner-person that God considers most valuable. As opposed to the loud, abrasive personality of the woman influenced by culture who places her identity in external appearances and screams for the world to notice her beauty, the woman influenced by God recognizes that her beauty is within. She has a gentle and quiet spirit. She isn't insistent on her own rights, she's not pushy, she's not demanding of her own way. It's through your gentle and quiet spirit that you exhibit trust in God. Rather than beating your husband down with words and gossiping about him to your girlfriends and family, you show your love to him through your gentleness. You love him with the same kind of grace that Jesus loves you.

Next, Peter gives the example of Sarah from the OT in vs. 5-6. "For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening."

No, you don't go around calling your husband "lord," this was simply an Old Testament cultural term of respect, notice the lowercase "l." Remember the context here: Peter is addressing Christian women who are living as exiles in a hostile society. Much the same way that we read, in Genesis, of Sarah living through frightening situations in a foreign environment as she and Abraham sojourned to the land God had promised. He's saying, "Just like there had been times for Sarah in which following Abraham meant trusting God in uncertain times, God wants you, also, to have that level of trust in Him." So wives, trust in God! Love your husband by voluntarily submitting to his leadership in the home. Love your husband out of the outpouring of your love and relationship to God. And take more care of your inner beauty that will have more influence within your home than anything external.

And men, we're not off the hook. Peter speaks briefly, but forcibly, to the husbands in verse 7 where he says, "Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered." Again, we see the word, "likewise," which means "in the same way." This means that husbands have a role to play in our marriages and in our homes as we "submit ourselves," or "voluntarily place ourselves" under the Lordship of Christ

and take up the mantle to lead our wives and families well. Husbands, we must love our wives in such way that they will gladly want to place themselves under our leadership in the home as God intended.

In this one verse, Peter gives us four ways that we, as husbands, can love our wives for their benefit, the benefit of our families, and for the purpose of showing the world the love of Christ. The first way is simple, Peter says, “live with your wife.” We’re not talking about sharing the same physical address. But when you are physically home with your wife, are you present with her? As husbands, this is something we really have to work on. Be intentional with spending time with your wife, communicating with her, and doing life with her. Honor her by being physically present with her. Don’t just occupy the same space but enjoy life together.

The second way to love to your wife is by honoring her intellectually. This phrase “in an understanding way” literally means “according to knowledge.” Likewise, husbands, live with your wives “according to knowledge.” What Peter’s saying is, “Men, love and honor your wife intellectually. Know and understand your wife’s moods, feelings, needs, fears, and hopes. Share meaningful communication with her.” Do you realize that it’s possible to sit with your wife on the same couch every night, watch the same TV shows with her, eat the same food as her, sleep in the same bed as her, raise the same kids with her, while at the same you don’t even know her? Honor your wife intellectually. Take her out and get to know her. Learn about her desires, goals, and frustrations. When she talks to you about her day, engage with her in conversation.

The third way a husband reflects the love of Christ through his marriage is by honoring his wife emotionally. When Peter says that women are the “weaker vessel” he is not saying they are unequal, or lesser than, he’s saying that, in general, men are larger and physically stronger than women. Understand that Peter is really going deep with this one and we need to really grasp what it means to show honor to our wives as the weaker vessel. It means that you never take advantage of her. Never play the role of the bully to push her around. You are not to use your position of authority to mistreat or manipulate your wife. To show your wife honor means you will treat her like an expensive, beautiful, and fragile vase, in which is a precious treasure. It also means more than this. To show honor to your wife as the weaker vessel means that you will cherish her and will never take advantage of her emotionally. You will never exploit her vulnerabilities. God’s word calls you to honor your wife in your words, in your praise of her, in your encouragement. You refuse to let your words tear her down. You refuse to speak ill of her and your refuse to say demeaning, cruel, and disrespectful things to her and about her. Rather, you will speak honestly, respectfully, and lovingly to her. You will connect with her, encourage her, and pursue her. Husbands, your wife is an heir with you of the grace of life. She is your equal. She is eternally important and she shares the same spiritual inheritance as you. Bestow honor on her, love her and lead her.

Then the fourth way you reflect Christ in your marriage is by honoring your wife spiritually. Peter’s conclusion here is a stern and serious warning to husbands. If you don’t listen to God’s command to love and honor your wife with your words and actions, there will be spiritual consequences. “...so that your prayers will not be hindered.” Just like any continued sin hinders our relationship with God, Peter tells us husbands that if we don’t obey his word in regard to our wives, this will interrupt, or hinder, our relationship with God. This is not saying that if you are in Christ that you are in danger of losing your salvation. But what it is saying is that any failure to obey God’s word does affect our relationship with him. And this one in particular doesn’t only affect us, but has a detrimental effect on our wives and our families. So don’t think for one second that you can come before God in prayer when you haven’t loved your

wife as we're told to do so. Notice that Peter assumes that husbands will pray. So when you are loving your wife as Christ loved the church, be sure you are leading her spiritually. Pray for her, pray with her, pray over her, don't let her be the one dragging you to church or to Bible study, you initiate it. If you want to lead like Jesus and have your wife to voluntarily submit to your God-given authority as head of your household, you must understand that your source of authority is the Word of God and for us husbands, the bottom line is this: Love your wife as Christ loved the Church. What did Christ do for the Church? He died for her, right? But He also lived his life for her! His time on this earth was spent dying to Himself. He lived a completely selfless life, putting you before Himself. If you love like that, if you love your wife and desire what is best for her and put her first, you'll bring God glory through your marriage. And your marriage will be a reflection of the Gospel, pointing other to Jesus.

Your love for your spouse should always reflect Christ's love for you! Women, whatever God has done for you, through Jesus, go and do for your husband. Likewise men, whatever God has done for you, through Jesus, go and do for your wife. Love your spouse the way God, through Christ, loves you. And for those in here who are believers, but haven't really been living like one, take this time to remind yourself of the great love God has for you. Maybe you realize that you haven't been loving your spouse the way Christ loves you; use this time to turn to your spouse and ask them for forgiveness and renew your love commitment to God. And for every one of us in here, let's allow God to rest His glory in our marriages and in all of our relationships; let's allow God to rest His glory in every area of our lives. But this requires faith, faith in exile.