

THE POWER OF A GODLY LIFE

1 Peter 3:1-6

Intro: I almost entitled my message for this morning, “The Power of a Godly Wife,” because that is really what the Apostle Peter was discussing in the first six verses of 1 Peter 3. And I will be making that application. But I decided on, “The Power of a Godly Life,” because what Peter had to say to wives, applies in principle to unmarried ladies and girls as much as it does to wives, and to a great extent it applies to men and boys of all ages. He, of course, was speaking of wives who know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

We don’t know exactly how it was that the particular wives he was speaking to whom he was speaking were married to unsaved men, but it very likely had to do with situations where both the husband and wife were unsaved when they were married, and then the wife was saved, but the husband was not saved. The Scriptures are very clear that a Christian man should not married a lady who is not a Christian, and *vice versa*. But it does not seem that Peter had that kind of a situation in mind. And so I am inclined to think that it was the former situation: the couple had married when neither of them knew the Lord, and then the wife had been saved. It would appear that there probably were many wives who were in this kind of a situation.

So there were two questions facing a Christian wife whose husband was not a Christian:

- 1) Is a wife in this kind of a situation supposed to be submissive to an unsaved husband like she would be if he were a Christian?
- 2) What should a wife do in such a case do to win her husband to the Lord?

Well, let us see what the Apostle Peter had to say on these subjects.

I. A WIFE’S RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD HER HUSBAND (1 Pet. 3:1-2).

In the preceding passage Peter had been discussing a servant’s responsibility toward his master. And his instruction to servants was that they were to be submissive to their masters. And submissive means that they were to place themselves under the authority of their masters, and to be obedient to their master’s.

Now, as he addressed himself to Christian wives, he used identically the same verb: “be in subjection,” or, “be submissive.” They were to place

themselves under the authority of their husbands. Somebody has to be in charge, and the Apostle Peter, in total agreement with the Apostle Paul, said that it is the husband who is the head of the wife. And you will probably remember that Paul likened the wife's relationship to her husband as our relationship as believers to Christ. Christ is the Head of the church, and the husband is the head of the wife.

This is not the way most people in the world face marriage, but this is God's way. Remember that God is the One Who created us. He is the One Who ordained marriage, and He is the One Who established the first home with Adam as the first husband and Eve as the first wife.

I have pointed out to you more than once the times that the Apostle Peter used the word ὑποτάσσω in this epistle. He used it with reference to governments. He used it with servants. Here he used it with wives. And he would use it for young people. In fact, the Apostle Paul in Eph. 5:20 used it for all of us in our relationship with each other.

This is one reason I have given my subject this morning a title that would apply to all of us. The husband may be the head of the wife, but Christ is the Head of the husband, and even our Lord was included in this business of submission because Paul said that the Head of Christ was God! See 1 Cor. 11:3.

But this is one of the most difficult lessons any of us has to learn. I heard it said about the two young men who killed their fellow students and one teacher this past week were young men who didn't want anyone telling them what to do. And you see where it got them. Rebellion seems to be the order of the day with many people, but that is not God's way. When a person becomes a Christian he must learn the importance of submission, the importance of obedience to those who are in authority over them.

And it is an indication that a marriage will succeed if a young lady gives herself to a man in marriage having learned submission to her parents, as well as submission to the Lord. This word *submission* is the key to happiness, and definitely the key to the blessing of God. It is so in marriage, and it is so in every other relationship. This may not be man's way, but it is God's way! So while we are thinking today from this passage about a wife's relationship to her husband, let us all make the application to our own lives. It is doubtful if there is a more important lesson that any of us has to learn.

But notice another point which Peter made in the first verse of this chapter. *The need for submission applies to a wife even though her husband*

may not be a Christian. This may make it harder for a wife, but she will always be a better wife if she is a child of God because as a Christian she will learn what her place is in her relationship with her husband. Peter here was not discussing any of the problems that might arise because he wanted every wife to pay particular attention to what the will of God for her was.

But now this is especially important when a wife has a husband who is not a Christian because such a wife is in a key position to see her husband saved. But how would this be? Notice what Peter said (and I am going to give you a more accurate translation of the original text). Here is the way our KJV reads:

That is any man obey not the Word (capital W), they may without the Word (capital W again) be won by the conversation of the wives.

But let me ask you a question. In the light of 1 Pet. 1:23 is it possible for a husband, or anyone else, to be “won” to Christ without the Word of God? Of course not! And Peter did not say that a wife could win her husband to the Lord “without the Word,” meaning, *without the Word of God*. What Peter did say was this (and it is corrected in the NKJ, as well as the NASB and the NIV). What he did say was this (and I am reading from the NKJ):

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,

Listen to the way it is translated in the NASB:

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,

The NIV takes some liberty with the text by making the second “word” plural, but if you take it as a slight paraphrase, the meaning is the same:

Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,

The point is this: The wife is not going to win her husband by nagging him to go to church, or by preaching to him all of the time. She may be able to ask her husband to accompany her to church, and there may be times when she can speak to him about the Gospel. *But the Apostle Peter was saying that if a wife is living a life of submission to her husband, along with everything else that makes for godly living, if her husband is to be won to Christ, this is the way she will win him. Let me say as I have indicated in the title for this message, **there is power, tremendous power, in godly living. And godly living is a life of obedience to the Word of***

God. For a wife, this means, among other things, but primarily, submission to her husband.

And verse 2 goes on to say that the Spirit of God is going to use what a husband sees in his wife more than what he hears from his wife. (Read verse 2.)

What does “chaste” mean? It means “morally ‘pure.’” And, as Lenski mentioned, it has reference to “the whole of life” (p. 129). If your version of the KJ uses italics, you will see that the word “coupled” is in italics, meaning that it was added to make the meaning clearer. But the verse actually reads, “Having looked upon your pure conduct in fear.” And “in fear” means, *in the fear of the Lord*. You see, a wife who is submissive to her husband is not just seeking to please her husband, but she is seeking to please her husband because she is also seeking to please the Lord.

This may be the slow way to win a husband to Christ, but it is God’s way, and if it is God’s way, we can expect to see the blessing of the Lord.

Now this principle applies in any relationship where we are seeking to win another person to Christ. It is godly living that God blesses, and He blesses it with mighty power. Let us believe God that this is so, and we will see that this is how God works.

But let us go on to verses 3 and 4. In these verses we have:

II. A CHRISTIAN WIFE’S PROPER ADORNMENT (1 Pet. 3:3-4).

In these verses the Apostle Peter was elaborating upon the conduct, the proper conduct, of a Christian wife. How should she adorn herself?

The word “adorning” in the Greek text is the word κόσμος. And here it means that the idea of beauty in the world is how you fix your hair, and the jewelry that you wear, and keeping up with the latest fashion. In other words, the world places a high premium on your outward appearance. And a wife may feel that the more time and money she spends on making herself physically attractive to her husband, the more likely he will be to want to listen to her about the importance of his soul.

Now I don’t think that the Apostle John was saying that it is wrong for a woman to be attractive and neat, but if her outward appearance is more important to her than what she is on the inside, in her heart, before God, then she has her heart set on the wrong things. And this is not God’s way. Where a wife needs to put her attention is on “the hidden man of the

heart.”

This goes along with what the Apostle Paul said about one who is truly “a Jew,” that is, one who really knows the Lord. I am sure most of you will remember his words found in Rom. 2:28-29:

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

When Samuel went to anoint a new king for Israel from the sons of Jesse, he was impressed with those who were brought before him because of their physical appearance. Then it was that the Lord said to him

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7).

This is always what the Lord looks at: our hearts. And what would He be pleased to find when He looked into the heart of that wife who wanted to see her husband saved. He was looking for “a meek and a quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” A meek person is not only gentle, but one who accepts God’s dealing with us as good. And a quiet person is one who is at peace. We often get irritated even with the Lord because He does not change our circumstances, but He waits until we learn to be accepting and peaceful. These are the characteristics that are most precious in the sight of God.

And men, this is just as true for us as it is for any woman. But only by the power of the Holy Spirit can we become what the Lord wants us to be. If a wife is anything but “meek and quiet,” a husband can easily feel that his wife wishes that she was not married to him. Young people, begin to learn now to be meek and quiet in your heart in your relationship with the Lord. This is the way of blessing for ourselves, and this will make us a blessing to others. There is always the temptation for us to wish that things were different in our lives. And they eventually may be what we want them to be, but we need to learn to be satisfied with things as they are now. This is basic godliness. This is a great part of what it means to be holy.

Our text concludes with:

III. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT (1 Pet. 3:5-6).

Peter called the women to whom he was referring as “holy women.” This confirms that his subject here and in all of the other passages where he emphasized submission, was holiness. To whom could he have been referring? Well, Hannah for sure. Abigail was another one. Ruth had to be another.

But the one he mentioned in particular was Sarah. When we read the record of Sarah’s life, there are many things about her that we might object to. One write said, “Imitate Sarah in what was good, but avoid her failings” (John Brown, I, 562). However, let us remember that Sarah left Ur of the Chaldees when it is specifically said that Abraham did not know where he was going. That was submission for Sarah. But the main reference to Sarah here seems to be a commentary on her words which are recorded for us in Gen. 18:12. The Lord had just announced to Abraham, with Sarah listening inside the tent, that she would bear a son. And her response is recorded in Gen. 18:11-12:

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

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

Those who were wives married to pagan husbands when Peter wrote these words, and Christian wives down to the present day who are married to men who do not know the Lord, can consider themselves daughters of Sarah as long as they seek to please God, as Sarah did, and are not fearful of the consequences of their obedience to the Lord.

Concl: This is not only a great passage for wives, but it is full of instruction for every child of God. And when we think of how we are to seek to win the lost to Christ, there could hardly be a better passage than this. We all need to remember that whatever may be our circumstances, and however we might wish right now that they were different, God has a purpose in leaving us where we are at the moment, and that purpose has to do with the improvement of our hearts. God is working to make us meek and quiet in heart. This not only pleases God, but it also has a powerful witness even to those who do not know the Lord. And when we are mainly concerned about pleasing God, then we become instruments of blessing even to the people of the world. And in the case of a wife whose husband does not know the Lord, what he sees, even more than what he hears, may be used of the Lord to bring him to the Savior.

I close with words written by John Brown, a native of Scotland, born in 1780, and who began publishing eleven expository volumes after he was sixty years of age. He wrote two large volumes on 1 Peter. These were

among his concluding words on the passage we have considered today:
The individual who realizes the force of these motives, and exemplifies these precepts, habitually in heart, temper, and behavior, whatever station she occupies, is a blessing to society, an ornament to the Church of God. Happy is the man who has such a wife. He who has found such a wife has found a good thing, and has obtained favor of the Lord. Happy are the children who have such a mother, happy the family who has such a mistress, happy the congregation which has many such members. "Such a gracious woman retaineth honor." "Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates" (Brown, John, I, 562).

May God enable all of us today and in the days ahead to cultivate that "meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."