

## Marriages to the glory of God (I Peter 3:1-7)

### Prayer

O God, You have chosen us as the bride for Your Son, the Bridegroom. What an incredible privilege that we don't deserve. When we are now going to read about the difficult situations in marriage in Your Word, lead us to see what You want to teach us here. Refrain us from listening with our own preconceived ideas and let the Spirit guide us to focus only on what is in this text and what You want to teach everyone who listens, who all finds themselves in different circumstances. Amen.

### Scripture

#### **1. Behave well...for the sake of the gentiles, to glorify God**

11 *Beloved, I urge you*

*as sojourners and exiles*

*to abstain from the passions of the flesh,*

*which wage war against your soul.*

12 *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable,*

*so that*

*when they speak against you as evildoers,*

*they may*

*see your good deeds and*

*glorify God*

*on the day of visitation (I Peter 2:11-12, ESV)*

Two days ago Peter gave us the command: Be holy, because God is holy. The purpose of this holy life, we covered yesterday in verse 11-12:

*Beloved... abstain from the passions of the flesh and keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that they (the unbelievers) glorify God.*

They change from people who *when they speak against you as evildoers* to people who *glorify God* because of *the day of visitation* – they were born again. The work of God comes from *seeing* the believer's *good deeds*.

So, we live as outcasts who bring glory to God in a hostile world.

Then, in verses 13 to 25, he gave us examples of what such a holy, God-worshiping life looks like. It is a life of submission that leads people to God. We have seen that we have to be submissive to the authorities and servants have to be submissive to their owners. Peter now goes further and applies it to marriage.

## **2. Likewise... men who are unbelievers should be won by the conduct of their wives**

1 *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,*

2 when they *see your respectful and pure conduct. (1 Peter 3:1-2, ESV)*

Peter begins this passage with "Likewise". The paragraph corresponds very closely to what we have now revisited in chapter 2:11-12. In the *first part* of verse 1 we see something being done so *that, they also can be won*. Just as verse 12 showed us how good deeds turned out on the day of visitation, here, in the same way, someone is won by good deeds.

We then see that the word "they" refer to *own husbands*. And then we see: *some do not obey the word*. When Peter speak about people who do not obey the Word, he refers to unbelievers. Look at 1 Peter 4:17: *For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*

So here we are dealing with an unbelieving man. Peter is talking here to the *wives*, who are not only exiles (outcasts) in this world, but also in their own homes. And just like the other examples, he asks the wives to be *submissive* to their husbands. And the reason then that they *can be won* for the Kingdom.

How? *Without a word*. In other words, not by winning over the unbelieving husband through words, but through action - *by the way she lives*. The husband then comes to repentance because he *sees* how she lives.

Just as in yesterday's passage, where we discussed servants, the life of *respect* may point to respect for the man, but verses 11-12, give the broader framework that is is because of respect for God. The wife therefore lives submissively to the unbelieving husband and by doing so gives glory to God. This kind of behaviour from the wife let the husband see God's glory and it changes him.

3 *Do not let your adorning be external*

—*the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—*

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. (1 Peter 3:3-4, ESV)*

Peter shows the women that, **inner beauty** and not **outer beauty**, is precious in God's eyes. The inner **gentle and quiet** spirit is eternal. It has eternal value.

Why would Peter jump to hair, jewellery, and clothing now? In the context described here, the woman's role in this marriage with an unbelieving husband, is to win him over to Christ. Peter knows clothes and jewellery **won't do that**. Inner beauty will. This is also why inner beauty is so **precious to God**.

How many women today are trying to gain approval from their husbands with outward beauty and splendour? If only you placed your hope in God, instead of your husband...

*5 For this is how the **holy women**  
who **hoped in God**  
used to **adorn themselves**,  
by **submitting to their own husbands**,  
6 as **Sarah obeyed Abraham**,  
calling him **lord**.  
And **you are her children**,  
if you **do good**  
and do **not fear anything** that is frightening. (1 Peter 3:3-6, ESV)*

Peter encourages the women to follow **the example** of the ancestral wives and by doing so become their **daughters**. They are described as **holy**, women who place their **hope** on God and who were **submissive** to their husbands and by doing so **clothed themselves beautifully**.

Peter gives us an **example** of Sarah here, because he wants to teach us more about submission. Well yes, in our culture it would be quite strange if my wife addresses me as **lord...** But let's see what we learn when we go looking for where Peter found the example in the Bible.

*12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and **my lord** is old, shall I have pleasure?" (Gen 18:12)*

She does not address Abraham directly here. She speaks to herself where he does not even hear. It shows us, that when she thinks about him, she does it with respect. And you, how do you speak about your husband when he does not hear?

If Peter wanted to convey the message of slavish submission, even if your husband demands bad things from you, there is a much better example he could use. When Abraham and Sarah were in Egypt, and Abraham saw how beautiful his wife is, he realizes that he might get killed for her. So, he asks his wife to say she is his sister. She knows it's going to make her part of the king's harem, but she agrees. Wow, that's submissiveness! But Peter does not use that example. He points to the attitude of the woman rather than the authority of the man...

This section ends with:

And *you are her children,*  
*if you do good*  
*and do not fear anything that is frightening*

So here we are talking about a believing woman whose love overflows into good deeds, but does not fear anything. The text does not paint the picture of a weak helpless woman who says yes and amen to everything her husband says. She is strong and does not become discouraged, even when she is threatened.

It is important to see what this text says that submission is not:

- It is not a woman who agrees with everything - especially in matters of faith, because in this text she believes, but the husband doesn't believe.
- It's not a woman who does not think for herself independently. In this text, the woman is clearly thinking differently than her husband.
- It is not a woman who gives up trying to win her husband for Christ
- It is not a woman who puts her husband's will before Christ's will
- It is not a woman who gets her spiritual power from her husband. It says she hopes in God
- It is not a woman who acts out of fear - she is not discouraged by threats

No, it is a wife who obeys her command to win her husband for Christ, to the glory of God.

### ***3. Husbands, treat your wives with respect, that your prayers may not be hindered***

*7 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. (1 Peter 3:7, ESV)*

For the men, he starts in exactly the same way: "Likewise". The same underlying principle of verses 11-12 applies to everyone. Also, to men. That's why the next verse also begins with have unity in mind...humble. So, here it says: **Husbands** live with your **wives** in an understanding way, **showing them honour**.

When Peter speaks here of "**weaker vessel**", he is addressing the men here, he is not trying to belittle women. He speaks to you as a husband, saying: Show understanding that the woman was made different to you... Husband, you were made to protect her. Some translations refer to living together wisely. Understanding and wise living comes from learning. You need to get to know your wife. You must know your own sin. You need to know the Word. How can you be the spiritual leader if you do not know the Word?

Marriage is the image of Christ and the church. The woman's submissiveness, as described above, is a biblical principle, but on the other hand, the Bridegroom washed his disciples' feet and died for them. Husband, she's a co-heir. She is a heavenly queen. Treat her with respect! Galatians 3 applies very directly to these passages we did yesterday and today: *26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither*

slave nor free, there is no male and female, *for you are all one in Christ Jesus*. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, *heirs according to promise*. (**Galatians 3:26-29, ESV**)

That beautiful inner garment of the woman is Jesus Christ himself. Everyone is one in Him! Just as the husband is a descendant of Abraham and therefore a child of God, the wife is a descendant of Sarah and a child of God.

Peter then concludes with a reason:  
*so that your prayers may not be hindered.*

This sentence could mean one of the following:  
If your relationship with your wife is bad, you will struggle to pray.  
Or if your marriage relationship is not good, you will not pray together.

I do think, however, in the light of the umbrella of verses 11-12, under which the passage is written, that there is a possible other explanation. Verse 12 pointed out that the good works of the believer lead others to God and all this to the glory of God.

The Gospel of John also sheds light on the condition for the hearing of prayers:  
*13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*  
(**John 14:13, ESV**)

The answering of prayers happens to glorify God. So, if your conduct as a husband is not one of respect for your wife, it is not to God's glory and He is not glorified by your marriage. Your selfish life and prayers are focused on yourself and not on your fellow heir of eternal life. On the other hand, it is also the starting point. Start praying for the things that glorify God. He will answer these prayers and if it includes your relationship with your spouse, you will also be able to live out Peter's instructions here with joy.

## **Conclusion**

The overarching command in chapter 2:11-12 were:

*Keep your conduct honourable...for the salvation of the Gentiles, to the glory of God*

The rest of chapter 2, that we discussed yesterday, had examples of submissiveness for all people, for the authorities, servants and employers.

We saw two key points:

1. Likewise, *wives your unbelieving husbands needs to be won*
2. Likewise, *men you need to treat your wives with respect*

In point 1 we saw:

*Wives, win them, without a word, but by them seeing your pure, reverent life*  
For that, they need a different kind of beauty: a *beauty that is precious to God*

and they need to follow the biblical examples and thereby **become the daughters of holy women**

Where point 1 addressed wives with regards to unbelieving men, point two addresses men regarding their believing wives: **They are co-heirs of the grace of life**

We saw that **their actions and prayers should glorify God**

So our theme for today

Marriages to **the Glory of God:**

#### ***4. Reflection***

Verse 12 resulted in praise to God for the unbelievers. What did you learn about God today that makes you want to praise and glorify Him? Write it down so that it can encourage you through your difficult day ahead.

#### ***5. Thanksgiving***

We cannot only be passive listeners of God's Word. This passage placed a very strong emphasis on good deeds. How has the Holy Spirit renewed you today and filled you with joy that will overflow into acts of gratitude and love in faith in your relationships? Think carefully about this and write down at least one, very specific, intention in which your joy will overflow today.

#### ***6. Prayer***

End this session in prayer as the Spirit leads you.