

**Text: 1 Peter 3:1-12**

Wives to Submit to Husbands

*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, 2as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. (1 Peter 3:1-2)*

Here Peter is addressing a situation which, strictly speaking, should not have existed: the union between a believer and a nonbeliever.

**14Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? (2 Corinthians 6:14-15)**

However, in the early church—and today—a situation frequently occurred in which one spouse became a believer while the other did not. For believing wives during this time, when women had few rights, this could be a perilous situation. Still, Peter and Paul both commanded that such wives remain with their husbands (and vice versa) and offer effective Christian witness through their actions.

**10But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband 11(but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife. 12But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. 14For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. 15Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. 16For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? (1 Corinthians 7:10-16)**

**16"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)**

This is not to say that an unbelieving spouse—or any other unbeliever—will become a Christian solely by observing the actions of believers, but faithful Christian living does indeed break down barriers in unbelievers' hearts, making them willing to hear and, if God wills, receive the Gospel. Conversely, if we live in a manner that is inconsistent with our professed faith, we are viewed as hypocrites, and the effectiveness of the Gospel message is lessened.

"Adornment" Which Pleases God

*3Your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. (1 Peter 3:3-4)*

These verses serve as an extension of the command for wives to witness to their husbands through Christian behavior. The desire to advertise (or even inflate) one's social position through apparel and ornamentation is one shared by women more so than men in most societies (although this is unfortunately changing). However, the temptation of self-vention in one manner or another is one shared by both genders, and is incompatible with the Christian life. Christians are called to be humble, serving people, seeking the needs of others over those of themselves. It is this attitude which Peter commands of the believing wives, and which appears throughout the New Testament.

**1Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:1-4)**

7And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table, saying to them, 8"When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, 9and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. 10"But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. 11"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:7-11)

9And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: 10"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11"The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' 13"But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' 14" I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

25"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. 26"You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. 27"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28" So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (Matthew 23:25-28)

1Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. 3For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. (Romans 12:1-3)

The Christian is to live a simple life of faith and obedience. Anything beyond this is sinful self-indulgence.

#### "Sarah's Children"

*5For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; 6just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. (1 Peter 3:5-6)*

Remember, Peter wrote to an audience consisting primarily of Jewish converts to Christianity. The Jews, as God's chosen people, believed that they possessed and deserved salvation because of their descent from Abraham and Sarah, and indeed took a great deal of pride in this. However, John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, and now Peter indicated that it is not the *physical* descendants of Abraham that inherit eternal life, but his *spiritual* descendants, those that share the faith in and obedience to God that Abraham and Sarah exhibited.

7So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8"Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 9"Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (Luke 3:7-9)

31So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." 33They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?" 34Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. 35"The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. 36" So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. 37" I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 38" I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father." 39They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father " Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. 40" But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. 41" You are doing the deeds of your father " They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God." 42Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. 43" Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. 44" You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father He was a murderer from the

beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45"But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. 46"Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? 47"He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God." 48The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" 49Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. 50"But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges. 51"Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death." 52The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.' 53"Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?" 54Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; 55and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. 56"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." 57So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" 58Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." 59Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple. (John 8:31-59)

1I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, 2that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. 3For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. 6But it is not as though the word of God has failed For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; 7nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." 8That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. 9For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON." 10And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; 11for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, 12it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." 13Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED." 14What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! 15For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." 16So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. (Romans 9:1-16)

6Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. (Galatians 3:6-7)

### Husbands to Love Their Wives

*7You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered. (1 Peter 3:7)*

Feminist critics of New Testament passages regarding marriage especially despise the exhortations to "submit," and the reference to wives as "weaker." Regarding this passage in particular, having six verses referring to wives compared to only one referring to husbands is an object of scorn. However, I do not know what kind of wife would *not* want the type of husband that shows the love, honor, and regard for their wives that is commanded in the Scripture. Not only does such a relationship yield fulfillment in this life and honor toward God, but, according to Paul, also offers us a picture of Christ's love for the church.

22Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. 25Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30because we are members of His body. 31FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. 32This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband. (Ephesians 5:22-33)

Referring back to verse 7, the reasoning “*so that your prayers will not be hindered*” is interesting. Why would disregard for one’s wife cause disruption in his prayer life? First of all, because all disobedience is sin, and all sin creates a barrier between the believer and God.

**18**If I regard wickedness in my heart,  
The Lord will not hear; (Psalm 66:18)

Secondly, there is evidence from the Scripture that the marriage covenant causes the couple, in some respects, to be viewed as a single unit in the eyes of God. While the “one flesh” reference refers in part to the physical union of husband and wife, Jesus’ words in the following passage indicate that this union extends beyond the physical realm and into the spiritual one. Discord in the marriage is a disruption of God’s created order, and is abominable to him. The ultimate discord—divorce—is an especially heinous departure from God’s intent for humanity.

**3**Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?"  
**4**And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, **5**and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? **6**"So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (Matthew 19:3-6)

Finally, while the Scriptures clearly describe a created order in which the husband is the head of the household, exercising authority (but not tyranny) over the wife, this order exists only in the temporal realm. All saved persons, regardless of gender, are “*fellow heirs*,” equal in terms of their standing before God regarding faith in and submission to Christ, and the hope of eternal life.

**27**For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28**There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29**And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:27-29)

(Look at that—there’s the “Abraham’s descendants” issue again!)

#### General Rules of Conduct

*8*To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; *9*not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. *10*For,

*"THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS,  
MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT.*

*11*"HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD;  
HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT.

*12*"FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS,  
AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER,  
BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL." (1 Peter 3:8-12)

We discussed these issues to some extent last Sunday. Peter here exhorts us to live in a selfless, Christ-like manner, just as so many passages in the Scripture do. As stated earlier, such behavior strengthens our Christian witness, and may create opportunities to share the Gospel. Conversely, failure to live in this manner while professing Christ is hypocrisy, and ultimately leads unbelievers to scorn Christ rather than seek Him.

**17**Never pay back evil for evil to anyone Respect what is right in the sight of all men. **18**If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. **19**Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. **20**"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."  
**21**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:17-21)

**43**"You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' **44**"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **45**so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. **46**"For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? **47**"If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? **48**"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48)

**35**One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, **36**"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" **37**And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' **38**"This is the great and foremost commandment. **39**"The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' **40**"On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:35-40)

**12**"In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

Finally, look at the last part of verse 12: "*BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL.*" Why do we take care to obey all of Christ's commands? Because He is our Lord. If He is not Lord, he also is not Savior. If He is not Savior, then we are dead in our sins. The Bible is plain about the destiny of unrepentant sinners:

**8**"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8)

Certainly we all can find ourselves somewhere in this list, deserving, apart from God's mercy, of eternal torment. We must therefore:

**5**Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test? (2 Corinthians 13:5)

**10**Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; **11**for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2 Peter 1:10-11)

How do we do "examine ourselves" and "make certain?"

**21**"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." (John 14:21)

Obedience does not *cause* salvation—that would make God's favor something earned. Instead, obedience is a *result* of salvation. There is no salvation where there is not obedience. Ladies and gentlemen, "**test yourselves!**"