

Radical Submission, Continued 1 Peter 3:1-12

- 1 Peter 3:1-12 Introduction
- In the previous chapter Peter explained to us the importance of submission as a way of following the example of Christ.
- First, we should be subject to the government and similar human institutions.
- Secondly, we should be submissive in the workplace, having a good attitude toward our bosses.

- In our passage today, he will emphasize the submission of wives toward husbands.
- He also advises husbands to live with their wives in an understanding way – the opposite of simply bossing them around.
- Finally, we'll look at the rewards of the submissive life – namely right relationships and blessing from God.

Submission is not designed to destroy us, but to lead us into eternal blessing.

1 Peter 3:1-12 Outline

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Wives Submit to Husbands 3:1-7

- 3:1-2 Paul's instructions fit into roughly the same mold as Peter's.
 - See Ephesians 5:22-33
- The Greeks and Romans both viewed orderly households as the basis of social order.
- In practice, husbands had considerably more authority than in Western culture today.
- Still, Peter's counsel here would have been quite acceptable in the culture at large.
 - So it is with women also; if they subordinate themselves to their husbands, they are commended, but if they want to have control, they cut a sorer figure than the subjects of their control. And control ought to be exercised by the men over the women, not as the owner has control over a piece of property, but, as the soul controls the body, by entering into her feelings and being knit to her through goodwill.
 - Plutarch (46 – 120 A.D.)

- 3:1-2 Just as in 1 Peter 2, with respect to the state or our employers, it's important to recognize that biblical submission is not out of any sense of inferiority.
- Think in terms of the referee in an athletic contest, a traffic cop, or ranks in the military.
- A wife may truly be a more capable person than her husband and yet defer to him.
- (Ginger has to do this all the time.)

- 3:1-2 Scripture does not imply that women are to be subject to men in general.
- It does, however, affirm male headship in the home and in the church.

- See 1 Tim. 2:11-15; 3:2-5
- The Bible simultaneously supports the equality of men and women as both being equally made in the image of God.
 - See Gen. 1:27 or here in 3:7.
- 3:1-2 Here's the Greco-Roman historian and essayist Plutarch again:
 - "A wife should not acquire her own friends, but should make her husband's friends her own. The gods are the first and most significant friends. For this reason, it is proper for a wife to recognize only those gods whom her husband worships."
- It's clear that Peter wouldn't agree with this.
- 3:1-2 In the Bible, submission to human authority doesn't apply when it comes to the worship of other gods.
- Instead, Peter says that by submitting to their husbands for the Lord's sake in most other areas, a wife can make God more attractive.
- A godly life is a very effective way to continually share our faith with family members who already know what we believe.
- 3:2 We are to fear God first.
- That's the point of the word "fear" in 3:2.
- The NLT translates this verse as follows: "by observing your pure and reverent lives."
- The word "fear" or "reverent" connects back with the related words in 2:17 & 18.
- In those places it refers to the fear of God.
- 3:3-4 Peter is not prohibiting all literal braiding of hair or all wearing of gold jewelry.
- Since the word "fine" is not there in the original (it's added in NKJV), then the same prohibition would apply also to the literal wearing of all clothing. For example, the ESV: "Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing..."
- 3:3-4 Peter is warning against being preoccupied with personal appearance.
- One temptation may be to spend too much money on clothes or fashion.
- Trends may also tempt women to dress immodestly, in ways that attract the attention of men.
- Men will not complain, but the result is normally the wrong kind of attention.
- 3:3-4 Pastor Chuck Smith makes a good point:
 - "It's amazing how your relationship with the Lord can affect your whole being, even your countenance. A relationship with Jesus becomes apparent. Inward beauty results in outward beauty. A life lived in holiness leaves the marks of beauty on a person's countenance. True beauty is in the heart and the character of an individual."

- 3:3-4 A godly life also has a way of looking better and better as we age.
- This is not true of physical beauty, clothing, jewelry, hairstyles, etc.
- Thus, while physical appearance certainly has some value, devoting oneself to godly character is a far better investment.

- 3:3-4 As to that gentle and quiet spirit, Jesus said, “I am gentle and lowly in heart” in Matthew 11:29. Meekness or gentleness is one of the primary fruits of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:23).
- Peter sees it as being specifically important to wives, and especially if their husbands are disobedient or unbelieving.

- 3:5-6 The godly women of the Old Testament like Ruth, Esther and all the rest, were looking forward to the future hope that we enjoy today.
- Peter wants women today to be like them.
- The example of Sarah calling Abraham “Lord” comes from Genesis 18:12, but may well have been typical for the time.

- 3:5-6 Just as all Christians are children of Abraham by faith, women can become “Daughters of Sarah” through their obedience to the Lord – expressed in this case by their attitude toward their husbands.
- They show their spiritual connection with Sarah through by displaying a character similar to hers.

- 3:5-6 Augustine, in his Confessions, described the attitude of his Christian mother Monica toward his pagan father Patricius:
 - “She served her husband as her master, and did all she could to win him for You, speaking to him of You by her conduct, by which You made her beautiful ... Finally, when her husband was at the end of his earthly span, she gained him for You.”

- 3:5-6 not afraid with any terror
- Peter is drawing a contrast between this kind of fear and the fear of God that he has spoken of before. He actually adds a different word.
- For a wife to show this kind of respect toward her husband takes a major dose of faith.
- She should not give in to fear – whether of his poor judgment or of circumstances.

- 3:7 Peter does not mention the possibility of a husband with a non-Christian wife.
- As we saw earlier, if a husband believed first, it would have been accepted practice for the whole household, including slaves and children to simply go along.
- Think of Cornelius the centurion in Acts 10 or the Philippian jailer in Acts 16.

- 3:7 with understanding or “knowledge”

- The fact that wives are asked to submit to husbands does not say that the husband should be simply barking orders at her.
- Peter wants husbands to understand the needs of their wives.
- The knowledge he speaks of leads to loving and considerate care.
- Husbands, see that your wives' needs are met.
- 3:7 Sigmund Freud recognized the potential difficulty of this:
 - "The great question that has never been answered, and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is 'What does a woman want?'"
- But Freud didn't know Jesus, and the Bible can make us smarter than him.
- 3:7 the weaker vessel Peter is probably thinking here of the simple truth that men are, for the most part, physically stronger than women. (There are exceptions, of course.)
- They can be tempted to threaten their wives through physical or verbal abuse.
- This happens often enough even today – and the Bible is saying it is wrong.
- 3:7 A woman's delicacy should lead to greater consideration from the husband, not to a domineering stance toward her.
- This may sound overly chivalrous in our day when men and women are thought of as equal and interchangeable in everything.
- The Bible differs from our culture, but it's not like the record shows we're improving on marriage by contradicting it.
- 3:7 heirs together of the grace of life
- Men and women are equal before God. Both are equally made in God's image.
- Further, men, if husbands do not treat their wives in a godly way, it will have an adverse effect on your prayer life. Something more to think about. Maybe you are experiencing this already.

The Blessing of Submission to God 3:8-12

- 3:8 Like a good Father looking down upon His children, the Lord wants us to get along with all of our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Think of a father telling his children to behave.
- All five qualities sound exactly like something Jesus might have said to Peter and the original apostles.
- These are godly virtues that we should all cultivate toward one another at all times.
- 3:9 Again, as in Chapter 2, Peter recognizes that godly submission, in this case to one another, may lead to occasional evil or reviling – even within the church.
- He is being realistic.

- But he tells us to return it with blessing and consider it part of our calling to do so.
- We can almost hear Jesus in Matthew 5:44-45.
- 3:9 As with other types of submission, we have to view our willingness to suffer unjust attacks as part of an overall attitude of submission to God.
- When we bless in return, we are acting in the faith that God has actually called us to inherit a blessing.
- Our future will look better than our past.
- 3:10-12 To back up what he just said in 3:9, Peter quotes a passage from Psalm 34:12-16.
- Peter loves this psalm.
- It makes an interesting study to compare the language Psalm 34 with first half of 1 Peter.
- One commentator found no fewer than seven distinct parallels – which we won't bore you with – but we will read that Psalm as we close.
- 3:10-12 The words of the Psalm sound like they refer to blessing in this life.
- When David wrote them, that's probably pretty much what he meant.
- Peter, writing to a group of Christians enduring hardship, gives this whole passage a future focus extending on into eternity.
- We should be prepared to view it that way.

Submission is not designed to destroy us, but to lead us into eternal blessing.

1 Peter 3:1-12 Conclusions

- We can find a few main points of contact with what Peter says to us today.
- First, for wives: Simply take an attitude of voluntary subjection toward your husband.
- If he is “disobedient,” as Peter says, and especially if he is not a Christian, this will be the surest way to win his heart.
- Your godly attitude will give you more influence with him than a million good arguments.
- Our appearance should not be viewed as a way of impressing others or drawing attention to ourselves. The idea is to make God look good.
- Younger women especially need to be concerned about this, because our culture will pressure them into dressing simply to get the attention of men.
- Focus on your character more than your looks.
- Husbands, make it your goal to understand your wives – something Freud could never do.
- Her godly submission does not imply your ungodly domination over her.
- Your understanding, caring attitude toward her needs and security will provide the best environment for her personal growth as a godly woman.

- Peter’s goal in writing about all this submission, beginning back in the middle of Chapter 2, is not to limit us or ruin our fun.
- He wants our lives to be blessed.
- Just as Jesus endured the cross on the way to resurrection and ultimate glory, Peter wants us to see that our lives have meaning and direction.

- When we demand our rights and focus on ourselves, we reveal that we have bought into the values of this world.
- Peter want us to think and live differently.
- As peaceful people with uncompromising loyalty to God, we will easily stand out from others – who are only trained to look out for themselves.

- D.A. Carson says it well:
 - “... the privilege of belonging to God’s redeemed people brings with it the grateful, grace-driven responsibility to pursue righteousness and holiness, not to presume upon God’s grace while trying to live no differently from the world.”

- Let’s end with two Old Testament passages which Peter no doubt had on his mind as he was writing this. Absorbing the general feel of both of these will help us to gain Peter’s saintly outlook.
 - Proverbs 31, which could almost have been written about my wife Ginger.
 - Psalm 34, which Peter quotes to encourage us all to pursue the blessing of God.

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