

Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

An Expositional Journey Through 1Peter 1Peter 3:1-7

32- Submissiveness; Hoping in God; and Sarah

September 23, 2018

1 Peter 3:1-7

1 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,

2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

3 Your adornment must not be *merely* external — braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses;

4 but *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.

5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands;

6 just 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.

7 You 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.

To the Glory of God

Now “Fear” is a correct reaction to something that is “frightening”. It would seem odd if someone *did not* respond with Fear when they were confronted with what is “fearsome”. And yet, this is *exactly* what Peter says godly women will *not* experience. He said in verse 6:

Just 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.

... so what is Peter talking about? What else are Women frightened by, except those things that they fear? What else is *anybody* afraid of? Is Peter teaching here that a Woman being afraid of what is “frightening”, like sounds in the night or a burglar breaking in, that being afraid of those things is unbelief and sinful? What is he talking about?

Now in context, Peter is talking here *only* about the kind of “frightening fear” that believing Women of the 1st Century experienced, *especially* those Women who were being forced into being refugees for the Gospel’s sake. At the very beginning of this inspired “Letter from an Apostle”¹- Peter tells us who he is writing to:

Scattered Aliens

So, this entire Epistle was written to those who have become “Aliens” because of the Divine Call of God on their lives, and those who have become “Scattered” because of the intense persecution experienced at the hands of the Roman Emperor, Nero, near the second half of the 1st Century.

And among those refugees, who have lost all of their worldly possessions because of the hatred of the Roman Government and the Jews against the Christians, were Women. Now through verse 6 of Chapter 3-, the Apostle has addressed three different groups of people:

- ✓ All believers
- ✓ Household Slaves, who were saved
- ✓ Women- especially Wives, who were saved

... and in verse 7, he will address the believing Husbands.

Now, *specifically*, Peter is *continuing* to show us what “Biblical Holiness” or “Progressive Sanctification” looks like. And he began this discussion back in the beginning of Chapter 2, when he said:

1 Peter 2:1-3

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

¹ Gr. “*Epistle*”

... and everything he has said since then is telling us what “**growing in respect to Salvation**” looks like in the real world, where genuine believers are confronted with Sin and Temptation and Unbelievers and Persecution all day long.

So, here, in the beginning of Chapter 3, Simon Peter is now dealing with Christian Wives and how their relationship with their Husbands is related to their Sanctification. So, he begins the Chapter by saying:

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, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

... and then he tells them that their attention should *not* be focused on their *outward* self, made Beauty with various hairstyles or the wearing of opulent jewelry or colorful gowns, but Godly Women should place their focus on the kind of “spirit” or “demeanor” that pleases God,

Your adornment must not be *merely* external — braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but *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.

So, unlike what modern Feminism teaches, what actually honors God and what allows for the Woman to be in “right Standing” with God, and what produces the fullness of Joy in Women, is something that Peter calls:

...the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

... and now, in verses 5&6, Peter gives Christian Wives a very *precise* example of what this Godly Quality, “**a Gentle and Quiet Spirit which is precious in the Sight of God**”, looks like:

For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just 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.

So, what Peter is saying is that at the very *core* of all godly Women, cemented in their soul, lies a simple but steadfast Hope in God. And it is from the rock-solid Security that flows out from this steadfast Hope that wives fear nothing that is "frightening", even submission to a Husband who does not follow Jesus.

Peter was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to say that Godly Women adorn their souls with a very *peculiar* Beauty: not weak, voiceless *servanthood* or ugly *power*, but a flowering combination of both "Christ-like Humility" and "lion-like Courage" that the world simply cannot explain, and one that puts those who do not follow in this to shame.

The lost and fallen world simply *cannot* produce Women like this. This Beauty and Strength is *not* of this world, and neither does it *originate* from inside of any of the daughters of Eve. Strength and Beauty like this is *external* to the human. It originates from God, and is a Gift to the Woman who embraces it.

And with their souls beautified by God, Christian Women display Jesus in such a way that unbelievers may be won to Christ, even without a single word being spoken:

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, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior

Now back in **1 Peter 2:13-17**, the Apostle admonishes *all* genuine believers to be subject to every "Human Institution". He said:

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

He then addressed those Household Slaves, who had become believers by the Grace of God, and told them that simply being set free from the evil Institution of Slavery was not *nearly* as important as being set free to obey the Law of Love brought forth by Jesus Christ:

1 Peter 2:18-20

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.

And then Peter returns to address the Issue of "Godly Submission" with *all* believers by saying:

1 Peter 2:21a

For you have been called for this purpose...

Now we must notice that Peter does not use concepts like "Duty" or "Obligation", or even "Responsibility" to be the *catalyst* or the *origination* or the *power* behind the Command to "Submit". No, unlike many in the modern church, Peter doesn't promote the notion that we need to obey the Lord, "*because it is the 'right thing' to do!*". And Peter doesn't promote that notion because Jesus didn't promote it either. Nowhere in all the New Testament does any writer teach that we are to obey *simply because we are told to*. That idea is *foreign* to the New Covenant. At best, it is an Old Covenant mentality, but it isn't found anywhere in the New.

Instead we see a religion that is filled with Divine Promises and Heavenly Rewards that we are told, *repeatedly*, to believe in and to trust and to work toward. For example, the force or the Power behind the Command to "put aside":

... all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander...

... is twofold:

- 1. like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word**

2. if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

... things you would not normally associate with "Labor" and "Duty" and "Obligation" and "Responsibility". So, *unlike* what the world teaches, the Bible teaches that "putting aside" various sins have *more* to do with "longing" and "tasting" than they do with "will-power" or "effort".

And the same is true with Peter asking what, on the surface, appears to be harsh or mean or unloving or even cruel, asking slaves to obey their masters, even when their masters treat them terribly. The *power* behind the Command, the *force* behind the Apostolic Instruction, is also two-fold:

1. ... if for the sake of conscience toward God...
2. ... this *finds* favor with God.

... so once again, "Suffering as a Christian" has *much more* to do with our "Conscience toward God", and our Confidence that obeying God yields great Rewards than it does with simply being brave or courageous. And that means that the Suffering of believers that the New Testament talks about is *not* the weak and sinful path of a "Conscientious Objector". Christianity doesn't promote "Passivism" like you see it in those deceived by false religions. No, Christians suffer because Peter said:

1 Peter 2:21

For you have been called for this purpose...

... and then Peter gave us the very best Example of Someone, Who was not guilty of any sin, and Who didn't deserve any mistreatment, and yet Who was treated horribly:

1 Peter 2:21b-24

... since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats...

And what did Peter say was the Power behind *why* Jesus could act this way? Because He was brave? Because He was courageous? Because He had an elevated sense of "Duty or Obligation? No, Peter said that Jesus:

... kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously

Jesus was *not* a "Conscientious Objector". Jesus was *not* a "Pacifist". No, Jesus trusted God. Jesus believed God. Jesus knew Who God was, and He believed that God would judge righteously.

"Okay, Brother Blair, but that was Jesus. What about me? How am I supposed to obey this stuff? I'm not brave or courageous, so what am I supposed to do when I endure Injustice?" The very same way we got saved. The Apostle Paul said:

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

So, as we "see" Jesus, as we "behold" the risen Christ in His magnificent Glory, as we "fix our eyes on Jesus", the things of this fallen world will become strangely dim, and we will, first, love what we see, and, then, we will be *transformed* into the very same Image! And Peter said the same thing, he just used different words. How can we do all that we are commanded here? By beholding the Lamb of God!

1 Peter 2:24

... and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

So, even though we are weak, He is strong. Even though we are afraid, Jesus isn't. Even though we are incapable, Jesus was *very* capable. And so, as we look at Jesus, we believe God. As we behold the risen Christ, we trust God. And we have confidence that God is well-able to deliver us from all harm. But, if not, if it isn't God's Will at that time to deliver us, then we entrust our souls to the God, Who has promised to adjudicate *all* injustices at the Day of Judgment and to

reward the faithful. But, because we are fickle, and because we are weak, and because we are inconsistent, Peter said:

1 Peter 2:25

For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

So, likewise, Peter is *not* telling Wives to submit to their Husbands, "*because they're supposed to*", or "*because I said so*", or "*because it is the right thing to do*", or "*because that is the culture of the first century*". *None* of that is true. Now it *is* the "right thing" to do. But simply "being right" is *not* the power behind the Command because then it would be dependent on human will-power and human effort to accomplish.

No, we must get it into our minds that the very *same way* we were saved, in the first place, is the *way* we obey *after* we are saved, "by" the Grace of God and "through" the Gift of Faith, or God isn't honored and we will not receive the fullness of Joy.

And God has established a "Divine Order" of Male Leadership and Female Support. And the miracle of the New Birth has *transformed* our natures, so that, first of all, we may behold the risen Lamb and be gifted to see that God is the best and the most beautiful and the most glorious and the wisest and the kindest and the most important Being in the Universe. And this "seeing" produces an "admiration" and an "awe" and a "reverential respect" (fear) for God, which, in turn, produces an unquenchable "love" for God.

And so, we do not *originate* our love for God. Because we are fallen, loving God is not normal, it isn't natural, it is foreign to the sons and daughters of Adam. Love for God does not come from any *internal* "decision" or "act of our will". We lost that ability in the Fall. So, God must *gift* us with a love for Himself. As the Apostle John put it:

1 John 4:19

We love [God and the things of the Spirit of God], **because He first loved us.** [context added]

... so, our love *for* God is a gift *from* God.

But God isn't finished yet. Because the *second* "by-product" of the New Birth is that we are given both the "will" (desire) and the "power" (ability) to be able to believe and to trust that what God has said is the most satisfying and the most fulfilling and the most contented way to live our lives on this earth, and to understand that the Commands of God are actually the pathway to the fullness of Joy! Here is how the Apostle Paul put it in **Philippians 2:12b&13**:

... work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

... which illustrates the amazing and miraculous "cooperation" between those who are already saved and God the Spirit in their Progressive Sanctification.

So, the Reality is that "Submission" is the Calling of *all* believers, because *all* believers are called to submit to *something* or *someone* else. And no Submission is easy. Therefore, all Submission has to be a "conscious act of our will", yes, but it is a "will" that has become overwhelmed with a "love" for God. And that "love for God" has been *gifted* by God through the miracle of the New Birth. And the New Birth is where God sovereignly gives us "new spiritual life", so that we, first, "see" the Lord in His Beauty, and then, secondly, we begin to "love" what we "see", and then, thirdly, we are "changed" into what we "see". And all of this is granted "by" Grace and "through" Faith to an unworthy sinner.

And it is with all this in mind, that Peter then tells the Wives to be submissive to their Husbands, even to the Husbands who are unbelieving. And then Peter says this in verse 5:

1 Peter 3:5

For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands;

"In this way". In *what* way? Holy Women, who hoped in God lived in the way that Peter describes in verses 3&4:

Your adornment must not be *merely* external — braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but *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.

... in *that* way. In the way of an **“imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit”**. Why? Because, *that* way is, **“precious in the sight of God”**.

Now I would like for us to just gaze for a few minutes at the powerful portrait of Womanhood that Peter paints for us in these words. Because what we see here is very deep and very strong roots of Womanhood that lie underneath the fruit of this godly Submission. And it is the roots that make the Submission to be the strong and beautiful thing that it is. Look again at verse 5:

For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands

The deepest root of Christian Womanhood mentioned here is a “Hope” in God. **“Holy women... who *hoped in God.*”** A Christian Woman does not put her Hope in her Husband, or even in getting a Husband. She does not put her Hope in her own external Beauty. A godly and holy Woman puts her Hope in the Promises of God. Here is how the wisest man in all the world described a Woman like this:

Proverbs 31:25-31

Strength and dignity are her clothing, And she smiles at the future. She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband *also*, and he praises her, *saying*: "Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all." Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, *But* a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her the product of her hands, And let her works praise her in the gates.

... all of this is true, because a godly and holy Woman hopes in God. She looks *away* from the troubles and miseries and obstacles of this life that seem to make the future bleak, and she focuses her attention on the sovereign Power and Love of God, Who rules in Heaven and does on earth whatever He pleases. She knows her Bible, and she knows her theology of the Sovereignty of God, and she knows His Promise that He will be with her and help strengthen her no matter what.

This is the deep, unshakable root of "Christian Womanhood". And Peter makes it *explicit* in verse 5. He is not talking about just *any* Woman. He is talking about Women with unshakable biblical roots in the sovereign Goodness of God, "holy women who hope in God".

But the next thing to see about Christian Womanhood after Hope in God is the Fearlessness that it produces in these Women. So, verse 5 said that the holy women of old hoped in God. And then verse 6 gives Sarah, Abraham's wife, as an example, and then refers to all other Christian Women as her daughters. Verse 6b:

... and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

So, this portrait of Christian Womanhood is marked *first* by an unshakable Hope in God, and *then* what grows out of that Hope is resolute Fearlessness. The godly and holy Woman, who hopes in God, does not fear the future. Solomon says she smiles at the future. She laughs at the future. The presence of Hope in the invincible Sovereignty of God drives out all fear. Or, to say it more carefully, and realistically, *the daughters of Sarah fight the anxiety that rises in their hearts. They wage war on fear, and they defeat it with Hope in the Promises of God.*

Mature Christian Women know that following Jesus Christ will mean Suffering. But, they believe the Promises like:

1 Peter 3:14a

But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed...

... and ...

1 Peter 4:19

Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

... this is what godly, holy, Christian Women do: They *entrust* their souls to a faithful Creator. They hope in God. And the result is they *triumph* over fear.

But then, Peter brings up a very strange Old Testament example of all what this godly Submission in believing Wives looks like. He brings up Sarah. Sarah? Sarah? Of all the examples of godly Wives, he brings up the Wife, who laughed at God's Promise? The Wife, who told her Husband to go and be intimate with her slave because there was no way she could ever bear him a son? *That Sarah? Are you kidding?*

Yes, Sarah. But, why *her*? Why not some *other* Woman? *Why* did Peter bring up Sarah when talking about a Wife's submission to her Husband, *even if the husband is disobedient to the Word?* Well, let's look at what Moses wrote about this Woman named Sarah. First, let's look at **Genesis 12:10-16:**

Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you." It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels.

So here, Abraham tells his wife to say that she is his sister, not because he was interested in being technically correct, but simply to save his own life. Now keep in mind what Pharaoh had plans for Sarah. Remember, the Pharaoh was the unquestioned Dictator of Egypt. His word was *absolute*. No one could dispute him. People lived or died at Pharaoh's command. He could take *what* he wanted, *when* he wanted, and *how* he wanted, at any time. And he wanted Sarah.

And Abraham knew that. And he also knew that Pharaoh would have him killed in order to take his wife, because, evidently, Sarah was a very beautiful Woman. And so, to protect *himself*, Abraham told her to say that she was his sister. And that would keep the "man of God" safe.

But, what about Sarah? What about her well-being? What about Abraham's solemn Duty and Responsibility and Joy to honor and love

and protect and provide for his Wife? Is the Wife *required* to sacrifice herself for the benefit of her Husband, because the Hand of God is on his life? Does the fact that God chose Abraham allow for him to *endanger* his Wife so that he can be spared? Is that the way a Biblical Marriage works? Does the Anointing that God has graciously placed on Abraham allow for him to be safe at the expense of his Wife? Is that what the Bible teaches?

No. Just the opposite. Abraham, and every other Husband, is required to sacrifice *himself* for the benefit of his Wife. Every Husband, saved or lost, like Abraham, is called on by God to *resist* the temptation to protect *himself* so that he may love and honor and cherish his Wife. Because God has called every Husband to love his Wife, *sacrificially*. And Abraham knew that. And so, how should we understand this? Were things different under the Era before the Old Covenant came about? Did Marriage Work differently then? No. So, what should we say here?

Well, to start with, we should say that Abraham was wrong. And he is proving here to be a coward, and a self-centered oaf, who loved himself a whole lot more than he loved his Wife. And we should then also say that Abraham was a wicked sinner, who was *knowingly* and *purposefully* rebelling against the Command of God to love and cherish his Wife, for the *basest* of all reasons, *in order to save his own life!*

"Now wait a minute, Brother Blair. Are you saying that the great man of God, Abraham, was a 'coward' and a 'sinner'". Yea, that's *exactly* what I'm saying, along with being a very lousy Husband. *"But, if that is true, then how does he then become the "Father of Faith"?"* Abraham became the Father of Faith for two Reasons:

1. The Grace of God
2. His Wife, Sarah

God chose a wicked rebel to be the Father of Faith. And *that* is the Sovereign Grace of God. God exercises His Own Divine Prerogative to choose whomever He wishes and to use them however He desires. And God moving on unworthy sinners to save them and use them for His Glory is called "The Grace of God". And everybody in this Room this morning has experienced this Amazing Grace. And it ought to absolutely leave us speechless.

But the "Means" by which the Grace of God *flowed* to Abraham, and was *appropriated* to Abraham, was his Wife. Well, exactly how does that work? Remember what Peter said to us:

1 Peter 3:1&2

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, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

So, tell me what Sarah's response was to the betrayal of her Husband? What does the Word of God reveal to us that Sarah said when she realized that her Husband was allowing a wicked king to abuse her all night long, so he could go free? Nothing. Not a single word. Sarah demonstrated her rock-solid trust in God, by *hoping*, that, as she submitted to the authority of her Husband, that God would move and intervene and prevent sin and abuse from taking place, and that God would change her Husband. What an amazing Woman! What Faith! What Hope! What Trust! So, what happened? Read **Genesis 12:17-20**:

But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go." Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.

... so, here, God *sovereignly* intervened to protect Sarah from a horrible experience. And we praise God for that.

But now, at this point, many would say, "*Yea, but I bet Sarah gave Abraham an earful when they got home! And since she can't trust the guy, I bet she would never follow Abraham again!*" Well, if you bet that way, you would lose. Read with me the very next verse:

Genesis 13:1

So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him.

Here we see Sarah submitting once again to her Husband's authority and leaving Egypt and going to the Negev. *"But wait a minute, Brother Blair, are you saying that this was okay? Are you saying that all Wives have to just stand there and say nothing while their Husband's betray them?"* No. What I am saying is that the Apostle Peter was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to command believing Wives that they should submit to the authority of their Husbands, even when their Husbands are disobedient to the Word of God, because when the Husbands observe your chaste and respectful behavior, they may be won. And when Peter racked his mind to come up with an example of what that submission looked like, he used Sarah. But then Peter said:

Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

So, please do not say, *"Man, when you go to that Church, the Pastor makes you obey your Husband, even when the Husband is wrong."* Instead say, *"The Holy Bible commands me to trust God more than I trust my Husband, and the Pastor of the Covenant of Peace Church believes the Bible is true"*. I didn't write the Bible. I had nothing to do with what it says. But *this* is what it says.

So, what do we do? How is an educated and technologically advanced Woman in the 21st Century supposed to become a Woman like this? Well, I would start by eliminating every Teacher in your life that instructs contrary to what Peter says here. I would not feed on Feminist or Egalitarian indoctrination, and I would feed on the Word of God. Secondly, I would become a person of Prayer, and call out to God to help you become obedient to the infallible Word of God.

"Okay, Brother Blair, I think I've got, but that was a real hard Lesson." Well, I'm so glad you've got it, because it's about to get much worse. A lot worse. Abraham betraying Sarah down in Egypt would have been bad enough, but it wasn't long until Abraham did the very same thing again, the *second* time! Now please read **Genesis 20:1&2:**

Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar. Abraham said of

Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

"Wow! Again? Being thrown to the wolves the first time was bad enough, but this? This is intolerable! No self-respecting Woman would tolerate her Husband acting this way! Female Abuse is at an all-time high, so why are you promoting Women being weak and teaching them to allow themselves to be used like this? Why, every Marriage Counselor in town would recommend immediate divorce over betrayal like this!"

Yea, they probably would. But what do the inerrant Scriptures teach?

1 Peter 3:1-6

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, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. Your adornment must not be *merely* external — braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but *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. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just 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.

So, Peter doesn't say that Sarah was "weak". Peter says she was "strong in faith", and that she "hoped in God", and that she was "fearless". And Peter uses Sarah as a *living example* of a *real* Woman who suffered real harm, who actually possessed a quality about her that was both "imperishable" and that was "precious in the Sight of God".

"Yea, but look what being submissive got Sarah. Abraham just betrayed her, again!" Yes, but let's read what happened next. Read **Genesis 20:3-7:**

But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married." Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, will You slay a nation, even *though* blameless? Did he not himself say to me, 'She

is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. Now therefore, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not restore *her*, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."

... so two different times, with two different kings:

1. The Pharaoh of Egypt
2. The King of Gerar

... Abraham *betrayed* his wife and subjected her to being abused in order to save his own skin. What a no-good, low-life Man! But a no-good, low-life Man, who had the Hand of God on his life, and who became the Father of Faith. Listen at how the Apostle Paul describes Abraham in **Romans 4:1-3**:

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "*ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.*"

... and in **Galatians 3:6-9**:

Even so Abraham *BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.* Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."* So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

So, when the Apostle Paul wanted to give an Old Testament example of what "Justification by Faith Alone" looked like, he skipped right over Moses and went straight to Abraham. And then, in **John 8:56**, Jesus Himself said:

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.

So, what Happened? How did this lousy, no good, weakling, who *repeatedly* betrayed his wife, become “**Abraham the believer**”, and somebody who rejoiced at seeing Jesus? I mean there are people here today, who would not even associate with a Man who repeatedly betrayed his Wife like this, and rightly so. And yet the Apostle Paul uses this same man as the perfect example of “Saving Faith”.

So, what happened? Was it the Covenant? Did Abraham change after he was circumcised? No, his second betrayal came *after* God made that Covenant with him. Was it the fact that Abraham had received great and unthinkable Promises from God? No, Abraham was changed the very same way we are changed today, “by” Grace and “through” the Gift of Faith.

But what did God use as the “Means” of that Grace? For example, Jesus promised that the Church would be here when He comes back, and that He will present the Church to Himself spotless and blameless, in all her Glory! That is Triumph! That is Victory! Jesus said that the very Gates of Hades would not prevail against His Church. That is a solemn Promise from a God, Who cannot lie.

But the “means” by which that Promise is fulfilled are frail and fallible men, whom God periodically raises up, who are *speciall*y chosen and *speciall*y gifted and *speciall*y anointed, to call the Church to repentance and who lead the way to keep the Church on track.

So, yes, the majestic Grace of God happened to Abraham. But the *means* of that Grace was that he *saw*, he *observed*, and he *witnessed* the “**chaste and respectful behavior**” of his wife, even when he was “**disobedient to the Word**”. And it “won” him. Abraham *knew* he had sinned. But instead of his Wife giving him what he deserved, Sarah displayed “**the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God**”... and Abraham couldn't stay the same.

Now how do we know that Sarah actually did that? Because Peter uses her as the example for all New Covenant Wives to emulate. He said:

... Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear

... but on what basis did Abraham *deserve* his Wife to submit to him? He *didn't* deserve it. So, on what *basis* did she submit to her Husband? The Bible says that Sarah hoped in God. Sarah was a "godly Woman", who believed that God was the "Great Adjudicator" of all evils, and that, *ultimately*, God will "right all wrongs", He will comfort all the oppressed, and He will judge all things *Righteously*. Sarah loved God *more* than she loved Abraham. Sarah trusted God *more* than she trusted Abraham. And Sarah knew that she needed to talk to God about her sinful Husband *more* than she talked to her sinful Husband about God.

"Okay, look Brother Blair, I mean, I believe the Bible, and all, but this is ridiculous. You're saying that Wives just need to take it and keep their mouths shut. Have you even met my Husband? How am I supposed to submit myself to him? What guarantees do I have that he will not simply use my submission to walk over me and keep on abusing me?"

Now, there are a lot of things I could say in answering those Questions. But suffice it to say that I didn't write this. I'm not the One, Who told Wives to be like this. The God, Who made Women to be the "weaker vessel" in the first place, wrote this. The God, Who loves Women more than anyone else, wrote this. The God, Who cares that Women find Salvation and experience the fullness of Joy, more than anyone else, wrote this.

But, we might want to listen to someone *else* about this subject, because there are a lot of voices out there that seem to be saying a lot about this subject. For example, we might want to listen to Melinda Gates, the wife of Bill Gates, the Founder of Microsoft, and the CEO of the *Gates Foundation*, the Organization that just gave \$375 million dollars for "population control" in Africa. She said:

"A woman with a voice is, by definition, a strong woman."

... which sounds great, unless you're a poor, African, black, *unborn* woman, who has been targeted for Abortion. Or we could listen to that paradigm of virtue and morality, the pop singer, Beyonce, who said:

"We need to reshape our own perception of how we view ourselves. We have to step up as women and take the lead."

... or we might follow the Conservative icon and author, Ayn Rand, who said:

"The question isn't who's going to *let* Women, it's who's going to *stop* us."

... or we might want to become a disciple of that great theologian, Oprah Winfrey, who said:

"Think like a queen. A queen is not afraid to fail. Failure is another steppingstone to greatness."

... or we might want to buy into the logic of Gloria Steinem, who said:

"Women don't need a Husband or Children; they need a job and a career."

... or we could listen to the Apostle Peter, who spoke infallibly in Scripture and said,

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, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. Your adornment must not be *merely* external — braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but *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. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just 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.

What was Sarah's response to her Husband's betrayal?

... Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord...

... what was the Cause of her ability to do this, in the face of *repeated* betrayals? Her *own* strength? Her *own* integrity? No, Sarah was a "holy Woman", who "hoped in God". Sarah possessed "**the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God**". Sarah had a "**chaste and respectful behavior**". Sarah's attention was *not*

on her hair or her jewelry or her clothing, but her focus was on “**the hidden person of the heart**”. And Abraham was won.

You see, back in the Garden, before the Fall, God made a Divine Decree:

Genesis 2:18

It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.

... and so, unlike any other creation of God, Women have the Power to change things. They make ugly things beautiful, they make hard things soft, and they make wicked men to be “believers of God”. There is not a Man in this room, who has not been wonderfully affected by the touch of a Woman. And I have never met the godly man, who does not know, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that his walk with God and his success in the Gospel can be directly tied in with the “help” of his godly Wife.

And Peter said that the daughters of Sarah fight against the anxiety that rises in their heart about their Husbands and about their Children and about the future with unshakable Hope in the Promises of God. And a Woman like that not only changes her Husband, she changes the world!

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.