

HOLY MATRIMONY

1 Peter 3:3-7

INTRODUCTION

- Sacrificing ourselves for the needs of others is contrary to our sinful nature, yet this is what the covenant of marriage calls us to
- The marriage vows are a solemn covenant of commitment that can only be broken by death
- Sadly, too many couples fail to take seriously the vows they make and, when feelings change or problems arise, break them
- It should not be surprising that among the unregenerate of the world, marriages are failing through selfishness, as it is in man's fallen nature to be "covenantbreakers" (Romans 1:31)
- But among the people of God who have received grace, regeneration and the Holy Spirit, marriage ought to be magnified and upheld to the standard to which God established it, and thereby testify to the world the power of God's grace in our relationships
- In this epistle, Peter strongly emphasises the importance of the believer's godly conduct in the world (1 Peter 2:12)
- We are to "shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9)
- One of the ways we do this is by having a submissive attitude to the authorities God puts over us, whether they be governments (2:13-17), employers (2:18-29), or husbands (3:1-7)

- So powerful is the influence of a Christian's godly behaviour, that it may lead to the conversion of unbelievers who behold it (1 Peter 2:12)
- This is an encouragement to Christian wives who have unbelieving husbands, that by their chaste conversation they might win their husbands to Christ (3:1-2)
- As we continue studying these instructions to wives (vv.1-6) and to husbands (v.7) we are reminded that there is to be a hierarchy of authority within the marriage in order for it to function properly as God designed it
- Traditionally, the term "holy matrimony" is used in wedding ceremonies, and that use of the word "holy" is an acknowledgement that God himself ordained the institution of marriage, that it is "honourable in all", that it is "in the sight of God", and must be established and built according to his precepts
- Here Peter guides Christian wives and husbands in their quest to build holy marriages

I. THE HEART AND ITS ADORNMENT (3-4)

A. The outward adornment to be avoided

1. "Adorning" (*kosmos*) is broadly used in the NT for "world", but here refers to "order, arrangement" and is found in the word "cosmetics"
2. It is speaking about the adorning and ornamenting of the woman's body by her clothing, jewellery, make-up, hair-dressing, etc
3. In those times it women would apply the most extravagant ornamentation to themselves to attract attention

4. This has been a temptation for women in every age – the LORD rebuked the daughters of Zion by the prophet Isaiah for their proud and wanton dress and bejewelling of themselves (Isaiah 3:16-23)
5. In that case, their haughtiness and wantonness was evident in their dress
6. Our dress and adornment expresses something of our character (Proverbs 7:10)
7. The Scriptures give several principals to be observed in the Christian woman's dress
 - a. It must be distinct from male clothing (Deuteronomy 22:5)
 - b. It must be modest (1 Timothy 2:9)
 - i. Covering the body (Isaiah 47:2-3)
 - ii. Loose fitting
 - iii. Not extravagant
 - c. It must consider others
 - i. Men are responsible for guarding their eyes (Job 31:1; Psalms 101:3)
 - ii. The specific commands for women to dress modestly show the woman has responsibility
 - iii. Women must not put a stumbling block before men (Romans 14:13)

B. The inner adornment to be sought

1. This is the “hidden man of the heart”, the “inward man” (Romans 7:22) which is the soul, the place of our affections and passions
2. It is an incorruptible adornment
 - a. Peter makes frequent use of “incorruptible” in this epistle (1 Peter 1:4, 18, 23)
 - b. The outward adorning is corruptible (Proverbs 31:30)
 - c. But the inner adorning of godliness is incorruptible (1 Timothy 4:8; 2 Corinthians 4:16)
3. A meek spirit
 - a. Meekness is a calm, serene temper of mind, not easily ruffled or provoked to resentment
 - b. This is not just for wives or women, but for all believers
 - c. Meekness is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)
 - d. Christ himself shows us what meekness is, being “meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:28-30)
4. A quiet spirit
 - a. All believers are to have a quiet spirit (1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 Timothy 2:2)
 - b. She is contrasted with the strange woman – loud and stubborn (Proverbs 7:11)
 - c. She is contrasted with the contentious woman – like a continual dropping (Proverbs 27:15-16)

- d. She is comparable with the Proverbs 31 woman
- 5. Of great price in God's sight
 - a. What is precious in man's sight is seldom precious in God's sight (Luke 16:15)
 - b. God prizes a submissive, meek and quiet spirit in a woman – and the world despises it

II. THE HOLY WOMEN'S EXAMPLE (5-6)

A. The women of old time

- 1. What Peter is teaching here regarding gender roles is not peculiar to the culture of the first century AD, but that it has applied from the beginning, and still applies today
- 2. These women were "holy"
- 3. These women trusted in God
 - a. They trusted in God, not their adornment
 - b. It is impossible to fulfil these duties in our own strength – we must rely on God (Philippians 4:13)
- 4. These women were adorned not outwardly but with a meek and quiet spirit
- 5. These women were subject to their husbands

B. Sara's example

- 1. Sara obeyed Abraham
 - a. When Abraham left his homeland to go to Canaan, Sarah followed (Genesis 12:5)

- b. When Abraham gave orders to his wife, she dutifully obeyed (Genesis 18:6)
2. Sarah called Abraham “lord” (Genesis 18:9-15)
 - a. This is a title of respect, acknowledging her husband as her head and authority to rule over her, and her own subjection to him
3. Just as those who are of faith are called the children of Abraham (Galatians 3:7), so those women who share the same meek, submissive, reverent spirit to their husbands as Sara did, are called the daughters/children of Sara
4. There is encouragement here for wives who may think the duty of being the “perfect wife” is beyond them
5. Sara was by no means sinlessly perfect, and she experienced times when her faith was weak (Genesis 16:2; 18:12), yet she is honoured in Scripture for being a godly wife

III. THE HONOUR FROM THE HUSBAND (7)

- A. Dwell with the wife according to knowledge
 1. The husband ought to dwell, live, abide, remain with his wife
 - a. Not spending inordinate time away from his wife, neglecting her (Mark 10:7-9)
 - b. Not intimate with other women, but remaining faithful to his wife (Ecclesiastes 9:9)
 - c. Dwell not merely bodily, but in close-knit union

2. With a knowledge of his duty under God
3. *“Husbands are to dwell with the wife according to knowledge; not according to lust, as brutes; nor according to passion, as devils; but according to knowledge, as wise and sober men, who know the word of God and their own duty”* (Matthew Henry)

B. Give honour unto the wife

1. She is to be honoured in his love, leadership, provision and protection
2. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25)
3. She is to be honoured as the “weaker vessel”
 - a. Women are weaker, created for a different role to the man, complimenting one another
 - b. Weakness does not mean inferiority or lesser worth
4. Both husband and wife are co-heirs of God’s grace (Galatians 3:28)

C. That prayers be not hindered

1. The husband who mistreats and dishonours his wife is showing he has a selfish and proud spirit
2. God does not hear such a man, he rather resists him (1 Peter 5:5)
3. He is sinning against his wife and against God, and sin hinders prayer (Psalm 66:18)

CONCLUSION

1. A godly life begins only with a transformed heart
2. These instructions are not directed to unbelievers who have no capacity to obey them
3. They are for those who have been regenerated by the Spirit, freed from sin and enabled to walk in holiness
4. Have you received that new heart through repentance toward God and faith toward our lord Jesus Christ?
5. Note that God requires us to be faithful even under difficult circumstances – the Christian wife is not excused from her obligations to her husband if he is an unbeliever and difficult to live with
6. God is not interested in our excuses for failing to obey him
7. What is your chief concern in life – the visible and physical things of this passing world that pertain to the body? Or the invisible, spiritual and eternal things that pertain to the soul?
8. The surest means by which we can ornament our souls with grace is by applying the word of God, the instrument of our sanctification