

THE WINNING WIFE

1 Peter 3:1-2

INTRODUCTION

- The issue of who bears rule in marriage and the home has long been a source of contention
- When Queen Vashti rightly refused to display herself at king Ahasuerus' drunken feast, the king, fearing that the women of his kingdom might despise and disobey their husbands, issued a decree that "all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small" and that "that every man should bear rule in his own house" (Esther 1:20,22)
- The "New Roman Woman" which emerged in the 1st century BC, saw wives defying their husbands initiating divorce and indulging in promiscuous lifestyles
- The gradual rise of feminism in the nineteenth century, women's suffrage, then the "Women's Liberation" movement of the 1960's and 70s sought to free women from the Biblical role given to them by God
- The traditional *complementarian* view of marriage has been replaced with the new *egalitarian* view of marriage, where the husband is not the head, and the wife is not in subjection to him
- We can see the awful fruits of our society's rejection of the Biblical pattern for the home in the high prevalence of divorce, the rejection and redefining of marriage, single-parent homes, the disintegration of the family, and children traumatised and confused as to who they are or how they should live
- The teaching of our text is completely contrary to the philosophy of the world
- Ungodly women will devise their reasons for rejecting God's order:

- ✓ “It would make me of lesser value or worth”
 - ✓ “My husband will take advantage of my submission and abuse his power”
 - ✓ “I don’t like being told what to do”
 - ✓ “The world would mock me if I obeyed my husband”
- Such an attitude shows both the danger of trusting in the fallen wisdom of man, and of failing to trust God
 - Whether the husband is a believer or unbeliever, the wife’s duty remains the same
 - In this section of 1 Peter, having set forth the believer’s position in Christ, the apostle instructs the saints on the necessity of a holy walk before the world, a practical demonstration of their faith, “that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (2:9)
 - Part of that holy conversation is a spirit of submission to the human authorities God has put over us
 - We are naturally rebellious
 - ✓ Satan is the original rebel
 - ✓ Adam and Eve rebelled against God
 - ✓ The antediluvian world rebelled against God, except for eight people
 - ✓ The kings of the earth rebel against God (Psalm 2)
 - ✓ All of us rebel against God, going astray from him (Isaiah 53:6)
 - If we are to be saved, we must repent of our sin and rebellion and submit ourselves to God
 - As we submit to God, the grace of God then calls us to submission to God-ordained authorities
 - We considered what Christian citizens ought to do under ungodly governments

- We considered what Christian employees ought to do under untoward employers
- Now we consider what Christian wives ought to do under unbelieving husbands
- Peter sets forth the model Christian wife, her character, her behaviour, and her profound influence upon her husband

I. HER SUBMISSIVE CHARACTER

A. The wife must submit to her husband (v.1)

1. “Likewise” refers us to the previous chapter
 - a. As citizens are to submit to rulers, so are wives to submit to their husbands
 - b. As servants are to submit to their masters, so are wives to submit to their husbands
 - c. But more than these, it is the example of the Lord Jesus Christ given at the end of chapter 2, who submitted himself to the Father and who patiently endured the spiteful mistreatment of his persecutors, that Peter encourages the wives to submit to their husbands
2. From the creation, God has ordained the wife to submit to her husband
 - a. The *order* of the creation – Adam was first formed, then Eve (1 Timothy 2:13)
 - b. The *origin* of the creation – Adam made from dust, Eve made from Adam (1 Corinthians 11:8)
 - c. The design of the creation – Eve made as an “help meet” (Genesis 2:18), “for the man” (1 Corinthians 11:9)

3. The fall did not alter this order, but rather reinforced it
 - a. It was by Eve's usurping of the leadership role from Adam that the fall eventuated
 - b. "Unto the woman he said...thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3:16)
4. Plain reason and common sense tells us that there must be one person in charge of the home
 - a. We expect our government to have a leader, the "Prime Minister"; we expect the workplace to have a boss; so we should expect the home to have a head who is in charge
 - b. Generally speaking, God has endowed the man with the physical and emotional qualities to fit him for this role of leadership (see v.7)
5. The consistent teaching of the New Testament is that the wife must submit to and obey her husband (Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5)

B. The wife must obey her husband (v.6)

1. While Peter does not qualify this or give exceptions, we know, as with governments or employers, there is no requirement to obey when doing so would be committing sin

C. The wife must reverence her husband

1. The wife is to have "fear"
2. This is not a fearful terror of the husband (see v.6)
3. It is a reverence and respect as the wife submits to her husband "as unto the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22,33)

II. HER SANCTIFIED CONVERSATION

A. An unbelieving husband

1. He is described as: “if any obey not the word”
 - a. This “if” is a first class conditional clause which assumes the reality of the condition
 - b. “Obey not” (*apeithousin*) is present tense – a continual disobedience actively being committed
 - c. Throughout this epistle, Peter describes believers as “obedient” (1:2,14,22; 3:1,6; 4:17) and unbelievers as “disobedient” (2:7-8; 3:20)
 - d. Those who walk in continual and habitual disobedience to God demonstrate they are not saved (1 John 3:10)
2. As the Gospel of Christ went forth throughout Judea, Samaria, and beyond into the Roman Empire, in to Asia Minor some of these pagans were converted to Christ, and assembled into churches
3. When a wife was converted, but not the husband, this could create conflict in the home
4. Why does not Peter address the marriage where the husband is believing, but the wife isn’t?
 - a. Possibly because the wife was most likely to submit to her husband’s authority in matters of religion – not that the husband could *force* the wife to believe, but that the husband, the head and leader of the house, would lead his wife and family to a saving knowledge of Christ
 - b. Numerous examples can be found in Scripture where the husband’s conversion was immediately followed by the rest of his house (John 4:53; Acts 18:8; 16:31-34)

B. The wife's holy conversation

1. Despite her husband's disobedience, his lack of wisdom, his spiritual blindness, his ignorance of Biblical morality, the wife is yet to submit to him
2. Not because he is a good husband, but because it is the will of God for her, and she loves God and desires to obey God
3. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul also gives instruction to believers who are married to unbelievers, not to divorce them, but rather seek for their salvation (1 Corinthians 7:12-16)
4. There is hope that the unbelieving spouse may come to saving faith through the influence of the believer
5. What is the Christian wife to do, in order to see her non-Christian husband saved?
6. She might invite him to church, leave gospel tracts where he will see them, have the pastor come visit him – those are all fine things, but that is not what Peter exhorts her to do
7. He shows the most effective, the most powerful means of winning her husband to Christ is not through her words, but through her behaviour
 - a. "Conversation" (*anastrophe*) is a favourite word of Peter's (1:15,18; 2:12; 3:1-2,16) and means behaviour or conduct
 - b. "Chaste" (*hagnos*) is pure, free from defilement, both inwardly and outwardly
8. "Without the word" does not refer to the word of God, which is essential for salvation (Romans 10:17), but to the words of the wife

9. The wife is to be careful not to resent him, nag him, despise or neglect him, but rather to keep cheerfully submitting to him, honouring him, obeying him
10. What greater advertisement for Christianity could there be, than a wife, who was formerly a selfish, pagan idolater, now transformed into a loving, selfless, supportive, obedient, serving wife?
11. No words, no matter how eloquent and persuasive could compare to such a display of the power and virtue of true religion
12. What an effect this can have upon an unbelieving husband, softening his heart, bringing him to the realisation that Christ is real, and has the power to deliver from sin, and transform the life.

III. THE SPIRITUAL CONSEQUENCES

A. The winning of the husband

1. To save a soul is to “win” them to Christ
2. The word for “won” (*kerdethesonta*) is most often translated as “gained” (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:19-22)
3. As believers we should see the unbelievers around us as “lost” ones whose souls must be won and gained to Christ, and that we might be instruments in winning them (Proverbs 11:30; Jude 22-23)
4. There is no guarantee that the husband will be saved, yet the wife who follows this has done all she can to win him
5. Furthermore, she has done her part to create the most peaceful, harmonious, and loving marriage and home that is possible

B. The favour of the Lord

1. On the day of judgment, such an obedient wife will receive the imperishable rewards of the treasure she laid up while on earth

CONCLUSION

1. In the same way the serpent beguiled Eve, the world today beguiles women to forsake their God-ordained roles, their femininity, their beauty, all for the myth of “equality”
2. Eventually these women grow old and miserable, realising too late that they were sold a lie
3. It is only in Biblical Christianity that the woman is exalted to the glorious station for which she was created, and finds true satisfaction and fulfilment
4. The world thinks that power and influence comes only through claiming authority for ourselves
5. But in God’s economy, the greatest power is exerted by those who take the place of a servant (Matthew 20:26)
6. Such was the case with the Lord Jesus Christ, and such is the case with the submissive wife, whose godly behaviour may be used of God to deliver her husband’s soul from hell
7. All of us must realise the immeasurable power of our example upon others, either for good or evil
8. What are you testifying to others by your life?
9. As the wife in our text sought to win her husband, are you seeking to win those around you to Jesus Christ?