

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

Reading: 1 Peter 3:1-7

9. WHEN THE HONEYMOON IS OVER

A couple were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary on the beaches in Montego Bay, Jamaica, where they had come for almost every anniversary for the last fifty years. Their loving relationship had long been the talk of the town. People would say, “*what a peaceful and loving couple.*” This being their anniversary, the local newspaper reporter wanted to get their story for a feature article, so he inquired of them to share the secret of their long and happy marriage. The husband replied, “*Well, it dates back to our honeymoon in America, let me explain.*” “*We visited the Grand Canyon, in Arizona and took a trip down to the bottom of the canyon by horse. We hadn't gone too far when my wife's horse stumbled and she almost fell off. My wife looked down at the horse and quietly said, 'That's once.'* We proceeded a little further and the horse stumbled again. Once more my wife quietly said, ‘*That's twice.*’ We had not gone half a mile when the horse stumbled for the third time. My wife very decidedly got off the horse and stepped ahead of it a few feet. She turned around while quietly removing a revolver from her purse and shot the horse dead.

I shouted at her, ‘ what's wrong with you woman ? why did you shoot the poor animal like that ? Are you crazy ?’ She then turned and looked at me and quietly said, ‘ That's once.’ ‘ And from that moment we have lived happily ever after.’ A wedding is one thing. A marriage is another. What a difference between the way things start in a home and the way they continue. In his book “Secrets to Inner Beauty,” Joe Alrdich describes the realities of married life. “*It doesn't take long for the newlyweds to discover that everything in one person nobody's got. They soon learn that a marriage license is just a learner's permit and ask with agony ‘ Is there life after marriage ?’* Strange is it not that we have more readily available information about dating, courtship, and marriage that ever before yet we have more marital problems, breakdowns, and divorces. Obviously something is wrong. Now it's not enough to say that the Lord is needed in those marriages, because even many Christian marriages are falling apart.

The fact that a man and a woman are both saved is no guarantee that their marriage will succeed. Marriage is something we have to work at. Success is not automatic. Now these believers to whom was writing lived in a day marked by just as much infidelity as we see in our day. They lived under tremendous pressures. They were being hounded and persecuted. Whenever this happens financial stresses and other problems are compounded. Then too, many women became Christians and they were seeking to maintain a happy relationship with their unsaved husbands. Peter therefore, talks to them about marriage and his words contain abiding principles for us today. Do

you recall that his overall theme has been submission? He has spoken about submission to civil government (2:13-17) he has written about submission in the workplace (2:18-25) and now he talks about submission in the family. (3:1-7) Notice he speaks about,

(1) A COMMANDMENT WIVES SHOULD RESPECT

Do you see how he begins ? “ *Likewise ye wives be in subjection wives,* ” (3:1) Did you notice that Peter’s advice to wives is six times as long as his advice to husbands ? That was because the wife’s problem was far more difficult. If a husband became a Christian, he would automatically bring his wife with him into the church and there would be no problem. *But if a wife became a believer, while her husband did not, she had taken a step which in the ancient world which was unprecedented and which produced acute problems.* You see, in every sphere of ancient civilization women had no rights at all. In first century Greco-Roman culture, women received little or no respect. As long as they lived in their father’s house they were subject to the Roman law of “ *the father’s power,* ” which gave the father even the right of life and death over her, and when she married she passed equally into the power of her husband. Society regarded women as mere servants who were to stay at home and obey their husbands.

It was the sign of a good woman that she must see as little, hear as little, and ask as little as possible. If a woman decided to trust the Lord that decision on her own

could result in severe abuse from her unsaved husband. You see, Peter is talking here about wives who have recently been saved. He is not dealing with a Christian wife marrying an unsaved man. The Bible is very specific about that. That we are to marry “ *only in the Lord.* ” (1 Cor 7:39) But Peter is not dealing with that relationship here, rather he is talking about wives who had come to know Christ as their Saviour and their husbands were still unsaved. Now notice that Peter assumes that the Christian wife is still living with her unbelieving husband. Indeed she must not leave him. Paul makes it clear “ *And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her let her not leave him.* ” (1 Cor 7:13) The question is how ? Will you notice that Peter brings before Christian wives a 2 fold commandment. He says that Christian wives must,

(a) **BE SUBMISSIVE:**

Now every time we think about husbands and wives we must distinguish between their position as individuals before God and their role within the structure of the family. If you do not distinguish between those two things the result will be confusion. **In other words we must distinguish between what they are spiritually and what they are functionally.** Spiritually, they are of equal status in Christ, and of equal value in the sight of God. Paul says, “ *there is neither Jew nor Greek there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* ” (Gal 3:28) Spiritually, there is an equality about them. But once you look at them as members of the family unit there is distinct position and

responsibility. Now what is the wife's primary duty and responsibility in marriage? Submission. Paul writing to the Ephesian believers says, "*Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord for the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church.*" (Eph 5:22) Writing to Titus Paul exhorts the young women "*to be discreet, chaste, obedient to their own husbands that the Word of God be not blasphemed.*" (2:5) Peter talks here about Sarah obeying Abraham. Now we have looked at this word "*subjection,*" before. It's a military term which means "*to fall in rank under the authority of another, to subject oneself for the purpose of obeying or pleasing another.*" Some men have taken this word to an extreme, promoting servile behaviour by women in the face of the worst kinds of abuse. Others have said these passages are dated and bear no relevance today. But God has a place for everything. He has ordained levels of authority. (2:13, 2:18) And God has set up the structure of the home, and as the husband submits to Christ, his wife should submit to him. Now submission is not slavery, it is not inferiority (Lk 2:51) It's simply the recognition of God's authority in our lives.

It is an affectionate submission to the will of your husband and a recognition of his God-given authority even if your husband is not a Christian. (Acts 5:29) Maybe you are saying, "*Hold on, do you mean to say that as late a date in the world's history, you're going to trot out these old words of Peter and Paul? Do you mean to tell us in this day of "Women's Lib," you would dare talk to us women like that? We live in modern Britain, you can't really mean what you seem to be saying can you?*"

Yes, I do. For was Paul and Peter not writing under the inspiration of God? My this is God's Word, God's plan for a happy and fulfilling home. "*Wives be in subjection to your own husbands.*" Are you? Are you obedient to this clear cut command? Young ladies, when you feel yourself getting all bubbly within and starry eyed about some man who has crossed your pathway, when your feet hit the ground ask yourself, "*Is this the kind of Christian man to whom I can submit myself?*" If he is not don't care how smart, wealthy, smooth, handsome he is, if you can't submit yourself to him and believe it would be good for you, don't marry him for he will make your life a living hell. Young men, when you feel drawn to some Christian girl, ask yourself "*is she the kind of girl that shows signs of being this kind of wife and if she doesn't run from her like the plague.*" (a)

(b) BE ATTRACTIVE:

That is you must live a Christ-like before your unsaved husband. Now when Peter says "*if any obey not the word,*" he is talking about the Word of God, the Bible. And he says "*if any about not the Word.*" Now he is not teaching here that you can be saved apart from the Word of God. We know that is not true because Peter has told us in (Ch 1) that we are born again by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever. The first phrase "*the word,*" is the Word of God, the second phrase "*the word,*" are the words of the wife. The word "*conversation,*" means behaviour and the word for "*behold,*" conveys a careful observation and not a casual glance. Now do you see what Peter is saying? In view of

your husband's obstinate rejection of the gospel, stop nagging him and live Christ before him. Be pure in your conduct and be respectful towards him. (3:2 Eph 5:33) Now this does not mean that you should not seek to influence your unsaved partner under the sound of the gospel, but it does mean that when he obeys not the gospel that such qualities as submission, understanding, love, purity, kindness patience should influence him for Christ. One of the greatest examples of a godly wife and mother in church history is Monica the mother of the famous Augustine. God used Monica's witness and prayers to win both her son and her husband to Christ, though her husband was not saved until shortly before his death. Augustine wrote in his confessions, "***She served him as lord, and did her diligence to win him unto Thee preaching Thee unto him by her conduct, by which Thou ornamentest her, making her reverently amiable unto her husband.***" Such a lifestyle has been called "*the silent preaching of a lovely life.*" Does your spouse see that in you ? (1)

(2) AN ADORNMENT WIVES SHOULD PROJECT

Now as I have said women in the ancient world had no part in public life whatsoever. They had nothing to interest them, nothing to pass their time and for that very reason it was sometimes argued that they must be allowed interest in dress and adornment. The word translated "*adorning,*" is kosmos in the Greek and gives us our English words "*cosmos,*" the ordered universe and "*cosmetic.*" It is the opposite of chaos. Roman women were captivated by the latest fashions of the day, and

competed with each other in dress and hairdos. Now you'll notice that Peter deals with this negatively and then positively. He states that Christian wives must not major

(a) ON AN OUTWARD ADORNMENT:

Look at (3:3) if you will. Is Peter actually telling Christian wives not to fix their hair and wear jewelry ? Well, if he is he is also telling them not to wear clothes. No. *Peter is telling the Christina wife not to major on minors.* She should not major on being a fashion plate just to keep up with the crowd. Now do you see these three things. They were big in the minds of the ladies in Peter's day. Their hair was very important to them. They had all kinds of elaborate and startling hairdos. They imported blonde wigs of real hair from Germany and wore them, and they used all kinds of dye on their hair. A bit like today you know. I heard about a man who came home one day and his wife had one of those do dads they put in their hair. He said, "*my gracious what is that ?*" She said "*Oh, I have set my hair.*" He said, "*Well, when is it going off ?*" Some of the scholars actually tell us they would stick jewels, that fortunes were worn in the hair. And then there was all kinds of elaborate clothing and the women of that day became preoccupied with their personal adornment. Sounds like our day, doesn't it ?

Are you majoring on the externals ? You spent time this morning with your body what about your soul ? You spent time looking into the mirror, but what about the time you spent looking into the mirror of God's Word ? Do you look at yourself continually, well how much time do you

take to look at your Lord ? Now this does not mean that a wife should neglect herself. *Some women think it is a mark of spirituality to look like an unmade bed.* Vance Havner once said, “ **To be all out for God you don’t have to look all in.**” Christian women can dress smartly modestly, with an outfit that does not accentuate the precise shape of her body, (1 Tim 2:9-10) she can dress distinctly, so as to maintain the distinction of the sexes. (Gen 1:27 Deut 22:5 1 Cor 11:3) but remember external beauty is passing, internal beauty is permanent, the former is attractive to the world, the latter is pleasing to God. Peter says Christian women are not to major (a) but,

(b) ON AN INWARD ADORNMENT:

The unfading beauty of a meek and quiet spirit. Another rendering puts it like this, “ *the unfading loveliness of a calm and gentle spirit.*” The phrase “ *the hidden man of the heart,*” refer to the personality of the Christian wife as made beautiful by the Holy Spirit in revealing Christ in and through her life. For surely a woman who is of a meek (gentle) and quiet (calm) spirit is like Him who said, “ *I am meek and lowly in heart.*” (Matt 11:29) Boys, let me give you a word of counsel. When you get ready to marry a girl don’t just look at the outward appearance, that would be like buying a house because of its paint. Look at the spirit of that girl. Has she got a meek and quiet spirit ? One of the elders used to continually say to me “ *Mark the sisters in the assembly who have a meek and quiet spirit for it is in the sight of God of great price.*” Christian women, are you cultivating the beauty of the inner person ? Are you like the holy women in old time ?

Are you like Sarah ? If you read the story of Sarah in the Old Testament you will find that she was one of the most beautiful women who ever lived. Sarah was so beautiful that at the age of ninety a king tried to seduce her. (Gen 20:3) And yet when we come to the New Testament the thing that makes Sarah beautiful and famous was her submissive spirit, the inward spirituality that she possessed. The fact that Sarah called her husband her lord (Gen 18:12) speaks volumes about their relationship. *She respected him, she was attentive to his needs, and she cooperated with his wishes.* Wives, do you wish to make yourselves beautiful ? Then don’t base your lifestyle on the latest fashion magazine, or the most recent trash on television. Take Sarah as a role model, emulate the holy women who trusted in God, note, that it is a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price. Now, Peter turns from Christian wives to Christian husbands. If he did not miss the wives he certainly does not miss us. We have noted (1) (2) but here we have,

(3) A TREATMENT WIVES SHOULD EXPECT

Now most of you men in this building today have the blessing of a godly wife and here Peter turns the spotlight on Christian husbands and he instructs them and us how to treat our wives. Peter tells us we are to treat our wives,

(a) LOVINGLY:

He says “ *dwell with them.*” By the way, this implies much more than sharing the same address. Marriage is

fundamentally a physical relationship. There is the leaving, the cleaving, the becoming one flesh. (Gen 2:24) Of course, Christian couples enjoy a deeper spiritual relationship, but the two go together. (1 Cor 7:1-5) A truly spiritual husband will fulfill his marital duties and love his wife. The idea is that of living with someone in intimacy and cherishing them. (Eph 5:25) “ *Dwell with them,*” implies spending time with them. The husband must make time to be at home with his wife. Christian pastors, preachers, elders, workers, who get too busy solving other people’s problems may end up creating problems of their own at home. One survey revealed that the average husband and wife had thirty seven minutes a week together of actual communication. Is it any wonder that marriages fall apart after the children grow up and leave home ? The husband and wife are alone to live with strangers. (a)

(b) *THOUGHTFULLY:*

For Peter says “ *dwell with them according to knowledge.*” Not an academic knowledge, but a thorough knowledge of how your wife is put together. Live with your wife in an understanding way. Get to know your wife. Find out what makes her tick. Now men I want to tell you that this is a life long quest. We have a lifetime of work learning to know what makes our wives tick. I mean before you were married did you know this. Did you know that when women are happy they cry ? Did you know that ? “ *What is wrong ? Oh, nothing I am so happy.*” And then some women when they are sad, they cry, and some of them when they are mad they cry. In fact

for some, most of the time they cry. And marriage is a process of getting to know, and being considerate of them. You see, God has physiologically built a man and a woman different. We are built different emotionally and marriage is a life long process, an educational process. Getting to know each other. I heard about a wife one time who said, “ *I met him eighteen months before I married, but I never did know him until the first time I asked him for money.*” One man said “ *I can’t stand my wife she is always asking me for money. Money, money, money I just can’t stand it.*” His friend said, “ *Well, what in the world does she do with it ?*” He said, “ *I don’t know I never give her any.*” Peter says “ *dwell with them according to knowledge.*” (a) (b)

(c) *COURTEOUSLY:*

“ *Giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel,*” (3:7)h Do you see that word “ *honour,*” in (3:7) ? The same word is translated “ *precious,*” in (1:19) where it speaks of the blood of Christ. Is that not significant ? Peter did not suggest that the wife is the “ *weaker vessel,*” mentally, morally, or spiritually but rather physically. In Peter’s day the clay pots in common use were very fragile and had to be handled with extreme care and Peter says this is how husbands are to treat their wives. Like an expensive, beautiful fragile pot in which there is a precious treasure. Tell me, macho man are you treating your wife courteously ? When you dated her, how thoughtful you were. When you married her how courteous you were, but tell me are you still acting like a gentleman ? (a) (b) (c)

(d) EQUALLY:

For as individuals before God “ *we are heirs together of the grace of life.* ” In other words Peter is saying in spiritual things the husband and wife are equal. They are heirs of God’s gift of natural life and spiritual life. When you get to ready to marry someone you need to ask yourself the question “ *will this help me spiritually or hinder me spiritually ?* ” Young ladies, if that boy you intend to marry cause you to love the Lord less, and be less concerned about the things of God, it’s a warning signal from the Holy Spirit, that you are about to land yourself in big trouble. Isn’t it interesting that Peter assumes that husbands and wives would go to the throne of grace together ? Do you pray together ? Is the family altar a feature in your home ? Is the atmosphere such in your home that “ *your prayers are not hindered ?* ” The word “ *hindered,* ” means “ *to cut in, to interrupt,* ” Peter is saying that when we men don’t treat our wives kindly, courteously, lovingly, when strife fills the home, the result will be a cutting in on the efficacy of prayer.

Men, let me tell you something. If you are making life miserable for your wife, you don’t have any business coming out here telling us how to run the work of the Lord. Someone has said, “ ***The sighs and cries of an injured wife come between the husbands prayers and God’s hearing.*** ” Do you know what that means ? It means its no use coming to the prayer meeting if you have left your wife at home in such a state because of your lack of understanding. It means its no use you having a quiet time

with the Lord if you have a wrong relationship with your wife.

WHEN THE HONEYMOON IS OVER. I think the trouble with most marriages today is that folk are all standing up for their ***rights.*** Have you noticed that this passage has all to do with our ***responsibilities ?*** How are you getting on in the home ? Are there matters that need to put right ? Is your treatment of your husband or wife in keeping with Peter’s words ? I don’t know about you, but for me there needs to be some soul searching.