

Good morning. The Lord bless you and give you peace. We are continuing our consideration of Peter's discussion regarding marriage. We traced it's place in the context of the text last week. There is too much to review from last week, so if you missed it, I would encourage you to go back and listen to what we walked through.

This morning we will continue with the details of Peter's exhortation and work through this phrase by phrase. But I think what one immediate question will be the question why. Why would anyone do this? I'll give you this example. Well, considering the way the scriptures underscore our identity in Christ and what redemption means for us, asking why we would commit to this kind of instruction is like asking a bird why it flies, or a fish why it swims. Christianity isn't an adjustment in my life that I embrace as a coping mechanism. True Christianity is an encounter with God through Jesus Christ His Son that leaves us in a place where we realized that we needed redemption through the forgiveness of sins, and that Christ is the only means of redemption for us. Whatever He would call us to is worth it, given who He is, and given what He has done. Who is He? He is the eternally begotten Son of God. What has He done? He bore our sins on His body on the tree that we who repent of our sins in surrender to Him might have Christ's righteousness, His "right-ness" bestowed upon us. There is no facet of our lives that is not affected by this reality. But this calling is also a calling of reordering what was lost in sin. It is a glimpse of what the world would have looked like in the most intimate relationships when they are lived in a way that honors God's design. Peter's concern in this section is to show us what Christian marriage should look like. As we saw last week, it is not diminutive or overly authoritarian. We took a lot of time to make sure that we understood the vocabulary that was being used by Peter in context of the scriptures.

Let's continue to consider the details of Peter's exhortation. The next phrase that we have is as follows.

**3:1-2 So that even if some do not obey...won by the conduct of their wives.** As we touched upon last week, we see the power that the Lord bestows upon the living testimony of a wife who reflects the kind of life pattern that God has established in the marriage relationship. The root basis for all of this is that we have the opportunity to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into marvelous light. Though this does not mean that a woman has never shared the gospel, **what makes a wife's testimony to the truth so inescapable is her transformation.** It certainly gives credence to the old adage, "actions speak louder than words."

Now it's quite natural to let a voice be heard, even biblical. Why aren't you doing this? Why can't you listen? When will you...? These are not necessarily wrong things to do. In fact, the scriptures are clear with respect to reaching out to find some sense of common ground so that we may live peaceably with all men. Consider **Leviticus 19:17** <sup>17</sup> "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him." **Proverbs 16:21-23** <sup>21</sup> "The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness. <sup>22</sup> Good sense is a fountain of life to him who has it, but the instruction of fools is folly. <sup>23</sup> The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips. <sup>24</sup> Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body." But here we must remember that God is also speaking through Peter to reveal **the means that will be effective in the transformation of one's husband given his nature.** We are different in the way we approach things as men and women. We were created with different primary focuses and with naturally good and different perspectives that correspond to our God given gender. But that difference coupled with sin has been a primary source of contention within relationships. Given that, there is prudence in knowing how to be most effective in our communication so that when we do have the opportunity to speak, we are actually heard. Gentlemen, this discerning spirit is mandated for us when we consider in verse 7 that we are to live with our wives in an understanding way. We will spend some time dealing with this when we come to that section in coming messages, but in this case we can certainly take a moment and understand that if we want our wives to hear us in a way that is healthy for the relationship, we must live in a manner that invites her to hear. In this case for a wife, it is the action of a gentle spirit that is resiliently tethered to obedience to God, and coupled with a disposition to display Godly conduct, which is the means of winning a husband to Christ or winning a husband's perspective towards your own.

And this underscores two major points that are true for all of us, irrespective of our gender, vocation, or station in life. The **first** is this, **misuse of something good does not abrogate its use, nor does it demand imbalance**. Here is what I mean with prescription drugs as an example. Are prescription drugs abused in our society? Yes, they are. If because of their abuse I decide that I will never use them, I may actually limit the kind of care that I could properly have. That would be foolish, especially if I refuse anesthesia before a surgery. We are inclined to overreach in how to fix problems when God just wants us to use whatever instigated the problem in a proper way. The consequence is that our society toggles back and forth between legalism and licentiousness.

The **second** point that we can derive from this teaching of Peter towards women in married relationships that applies to us all is this, that ***our testimony to those around us, especially in this relationship, is a major tool of advancing the gospel or diminishing its necessity.***

Recently I had the opportunity to speak with a gentleman about his faith. He said that he had been committed to church years ago, but he stopped attending because the preacher would participate in every sin that he was engaged in. This man new these things were sinful, but then the preacher would stand up and condemn everyone for the very same things he was doing himself. The man was robbed of decades of exposure to the Word of God because of the unfaithful life pattern of someone who claimed Christ. To be sure, the preacher himself may not have been a true Christian. Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. There are many who hate Jesus Christ and the Word He has mercifully preserved for us, but they still pose a pious face while in the background they season their life with every spice of evil that appeases their vice-craved palate.

Here is another example of how our sin can diminish our testimony. I heard the testimony of a man who in college had been part of a Christian organization. An attractive young lady, who had been in the normal party scene in college and had been given to all the normal interactions that go along with that lifestyle, began coming to their meetings. Seeing she was an attractive person and had an attractive personality, he quickly struck up a connection with her. However, he was trying to maintain a guise of spirituality while behind the scenes maintaining a non-Christian pattern of life. He recounted with great sorrow the wakeup call that God used. He and this young lady ended up being intimate and after their tryst she began weeping. When he sought to find out what was bothering her, she simply said, I thought you Christians were different. The relationship was completely consensual, but what he didn't perceive because of his sin was that she was desperately searching for something more. Instead he just gave her more of the same empty sins that rob us of our dignity and worth. ***Our actions can aid or hinder the light we are called to proclaim.*** What are you and I doing that will bring great sorrow upon the testimony of Christ, and upon the testimony of this church? There is forgiveness for Christians, to be sure. ***But it is the Christian that wants to thrive and not just cling to the elementary teaching of forgiveness from sin, as Hebrews puts it, that will truly live in triumph and joy in this life.***

Ladies, in the same way that our testimony can be affected positively or negatively, so, for those who are married, your actions can have a measurable impact on your husband. In fact, it is the means of actually winning a non-believing husband to Christ.

Before we continue, I think it is necessary to meditate on the idea of a Christian and non-Christian marriage. **Marriage is not intended to be a program for evangelism.** God is gracious and many men and women have come to know Jesus as a result of marrying a Christian spouse, but the order that God wants is, Christian first, then marriage. We have to be careful ***NOT*** to assume that Peter is prescribing the freedom to marry whomever because he acknowledges that there will be some marriages in which there will be a Christian and non-Christian relationship. I say this out of concern that we ignore that the scriptures are clear about not being unequally yoked with unbelievers.

Paul, in harmony with Peter's teaching, gives this some more detailed thought. I think it would be helpful to consider this for a moment. The passage of scripture is **2 Corinthians 6:14-18**. What is translated as "**unequally yoked**" is a participial phrase in Greek translating one word which literally means to be **diversely yoked**. It is used as

an agricultural term but has a [broader sense of not belonging together](#). A yoke is an instrument that was put on beasts of burden so that they could pull something, but more commonly so that they could plow. It was important to put animals together that fit in size and kind because they would pull together, and they would pull in the same way. Failure to follow this would cause hardship or injury to the animals in the yoke. **Paul uses this metaphor to describe the difference in which a Christian and a non-Christian approach life, and therefore why a Christian and a non-Christian should not marry one another if it is in one's power to make that decision.** But if you do find yourself in that place, either through disobedience to the Word of God, or that you came to faith later in your marriage, or that you were directed in an arranged marriage to marry someone that was not a believer, Peter has outlined a means through which you can model the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, and a means through which the need to be obedient to Christ can be both demonstrated and satisfied.

Oh, dear brother and sister in Christ, there is so much beauty that God has afforded us if we will but put ourselves in a place to enjoy it. Trying to enjoy God's gifts like marriage, our way, is like trying to paint a house with our bare hands instead of using the tools that are available to us. It's like using a broom stick to reach for the plates on the top shelf of the cabinet because we can't reach them. We may get one or two down, but there will be disaster at some point. May God grant us humility to embrace the provisions He has made for a successful marriage, and success in our lives. Amen.