

Good morning. The Lord bless you and give you peace. We are finishing our consideration of how marriage reveals the excellence of God as we find more and more ways of expressing the principles of God's redemptive work within the framework of marriage. Everything that we have been saying pivots upon Peter's teaching in **1 Peter 2:9**, that that we are called to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into marvelous light. Perhaps this illustration will help underscore how permeating the pursuit of the glory of God must be for every believer. If you like to eat at some point you will realize that there are some foods that completely permeate a dish regardless of what other things are put in. Have you ever used a banana for a smoothie and found that it was taking over the whole smoothie? What about peanut butter, the survival food of Americans? If peanut butter is put into anything it can be tasted. And then there is bacon, delicious, amazing, bacon. If bacon is in any dish it can be instantly identified. To the Christian, the glory of God must be the predominant flavor of the Christian life. It should be what permeates everything. It isn't just because God is God that He rightly demands this. It is because Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for our sins and has saved us unto obedience, as Peter says in **1:2**.

But before we begin, we have a problem, and that is that it may seem like an intangible message for many people here because you are not married. Let's touch on how to understand our responsibility with messages that don't seem to readily apply to our station in life. Remember first that Peter has already identified us with God's people. He is using language throughout this epistle that applies the language of believing Jewish people to believing gentile people. He identifies us with language that is only used in the O.T. for the people of God, but more specifically, those who were truly walking by faith – true believers. Considering that, let's take a look at **Psalms 122** for a moment. **Psalms 122** is a call to worship, a call to go to the Temple. But within that psalm we see that Jerusalem is prayed for and her best is sought because the Temple of God is there. **For the sake of a specific place and action of worship, all that surrounds it becomes identified as that which needs to be watched over and guarded.** Here is the application. As a Christian the health of Christ's body is of most importance to you, or it should be. The church and its betterment should be at the front of your mind because of what it is to Jesus Christ, and because of what it means to us. If as a Christian who is not married is see marriages around me in the church that are not healthy, I must seek to aid as much as possible, especially because that will have an adverse effect upon the body of Christ. But here is the question, how do I know what a healthy marriage is biblically speaking if I ignore messages that are geared towards married people and I am not married? This is so important. I am not called to listen only for the things that pertain to me when I am considering the Christian faith. I am called to understand what the Bible calls all in the church to be in every station they are in, and then I can do what Galatians 6 tells me, and that is to help bear the load of my brothers and sisters in Christ and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

So, we turn our attention towards marriage, and today towards the final commands that Peter gives pertaining to the Christian man in marriage. Let us begin today by considering the phrases in **verse 7**.

**3:7 "Likewise, husbands, live with your wives"** At first glance this may seem like an unnecessary parsing of the text, but I think there is something of importance here. The word used in Greek is *synoikeo*. The root word for home, or house is *oikos* and is quite readily seen in our word *synoikeo*. *Synoikeo*, translated "live with," is a present active participle. It assumes active cohabitation. It assumes that a man and a woman are living together as the normal pattern of their married life. There are times when we are pulled away for a season, but the example is that those under our care should never feel abandoned. Life is happening together and in the intimacy of all aspects of marriage, friendship, harmony, common goals and activities, not just physical intimacy.

Hold that thought in your mind and then consider the teaching that we are given in **Genesis 1 and 2**. In that section of scripture, Moses teaches us about origins, origins of all that is, origins of society, origins of the existence of evil, origins of all the most basic and fundamental nature that is essential for our understanding as mankind. In this section, before the fall of humanity through Adam and when all things are still in perfection, God declares 6 times that His creation is good, very good. But in the midst of His creation of mankind, while Adam is the only human being that existed on the earth and before God created Eve and completed the picture of His image He wanted to display on earth, we read the words, **"it is not good that man should be alone."** In the midst of abject perfection and

perfect harmony with God, God created ***Adam perfectly incomplete***. His incomplete nature is completed by the gift of Eve. These pictures inform the perspective of Peter as he writes his letter more than any cultural issues that may have been present. Peter is specifically saying that husbands are not to live apart from their wives and he will underscore how we are to do that in the next phrase. But this helps us tremendously as we determine the ways in which we are to approach life.

Here are some things to consider that give us immediate application. If you are contemplating work, or even a ministry, that will indefinitely remove you from being able to provide present and tangible companionship to your spouse, and remove you from a state God declared unacceptable with few exceptions — the state of loneliness, you are not honoring your biblical responsibility as a husband. Abandonment of your wife to do God's will is an oxymoron. God's will already determined through providence in creation how a marriage relationship is to function.

We must also recognize that God's will is not contradictory to itself. In other words, God will was the same for believers in the Ancient Near East, as it is for us. The expression may be a little different, but the patterns of obedience to God's design and order are the same. Notice how Jesus proves this to us when He is being tested by Satan. Satan wants Jesus to prove God is true to His word and sites a passage of scripture about the angels watching over Jesus. Within that framework of thought Satan challenges Jesus to jump of the top of the Temple. Jesus' response is that to jump would be to tempt God, and that was not to be done. In other words, God has already determined gravity. It is His plan, and therefore His will that things that have a certain mass will be brought to the ground if they are not working within other physical laws of nature. For Jesus to jump would have been to ask God to work outside of His providential will in creation. To get to our point again, it means that God's will is not different at different times so that it is contradictory to itself. God's design in marriage is not isolation and loneliness. Abandoning your wife for the ministry or for some job is not God's will and it never has been. In fact, Paul talks about this in passing when he challenges the church to provide for him as they provided for Peter and the other apostles who ***took their wives along these ministry journeys***. I am not saying that the Bible doesn't allow for periods of time where need or circumstance require us to be apart. I am saying that our normal pattern of life with our wives is to be there, and I am saying that this is the intent of this present tense participle which is given as a command. So, brother, what are you doing that is establishing a pattern of isolation from your wife? It certainly isn't the will of God, and if it is not God's will it will end in brokenness and more sin.

But consider the greater picture of marriage as a model for what we are saying. Marriage is a reflection of Jesus Christ with His church, called His bride in the scriptures. Christ does not abandon His people. This is part of the glorious teaching of ***John 14-17***. Jesus Christ sends the comforter to His people to indwell them. We are never alone as Christians. Though we may not see in times of trial, God is still there. What does that Psalmist say?

Psalm 139:7–12 (ESV): 7 Where shall I go from your Spirit?

Or where shall I flee from your presence?

8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there!

If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

9 If I take the wings of the morning  
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

10 even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and the light about me be night,"

12 even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light with you.

But my friends, Christ has sent us as well as His Spirit to be a means of comfort to those around us. In this consideration of a Christian husband's responsibility to be present with his wife as a normal pattern of life, let us also consider that what God designed is community and He ultimately satisfies that with His Church that is being built up TOGETHER as living stones, if we remember the early part of 1 Peter 2. You may not have a lot, but you do have the ability to be present with the lonely.

So, how do we do that successfully? I love how God has made us. Think about cars for a moment. There are those that artists with their clay carvings of cars that they want to put into production. But we also need the person who looks at that work of art and says, how do we make it move? How do we fit the passengers in that space, and how do we do it safely? Peter moves from the picture to the way in which we make marriage like this work.

3:7 "Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way." The word translating "understanding" is the word *gnosis* from *gnosis* (γνῶσις). It has the idea of *intellectual grasp or comprehension* and in its verb form it is sometimes used to describe *intimate knowledge of something*. The statement, "I just don't understand my wife" may be a true statement from every man at some point or another, but it is disobedience to stay in that place. When there is something that we don't understand, how do we get to a place of understanding? We study it. We look for help from people who have some grasp of understanding. We discipline ourselves in learning the woman that God has given us. That is part of being a Christian husband. How well are we doing in knowing what our wife likes or dislikes? How well are we doing in being able to determine by the look upon our wife's face, or the gate with which she moves, if she is happy or sad, in pain or doing well? Do we apply the same urgency to knowing the person God has placed under our care, and authority, so that they thrive *because* we are an instrument of grace which administers the inward beatification that God wants a Christian woman to attain?

Perhaps this illustration will help. We as guys are really good at pushing out statistics for sports, and talking about our favorite fishing spots, or how we capitalized on a business opportunity. Can we speak of our wives with the same passion and understanding with which we speak of other things? Oh dear friends, think of the blessings that God wants to see fulfilled in your own lives as you faithfully extend this kind of affection and commitment to the one God has given you. Think of the light of Christ in our communities that are grappling with an ever-changing landscape of what marriage should be, or what marriage is all about in the first place. May the Lord grant us favor in keeping us steadfast to this most incredible honor of displaying Christ in our marriages.

But let's think about this in light of Christ. If marriage reveals this union the church has with Him, and husbands are to reflect the person of Christ, as Paul clearly states in *Ephesians 5* as we have taken pains in other sermons to highlight, **what does this say about the intimate knowledge and study that Christ focuses upon us?** We've already read from *Psalms 139*, but notice how it begins.

*Psalms 139:1-6 (ESV): 139 To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.*

- 1 O Lord, you have searched me and known me!
- 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
you discern my thoughts from afar.
- 3 You search out my path and my lying down  
and are acquainted with all my ways.
- 4 Even before a word is on my tongue,  
behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.
- 5 You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is high; I cannot attain it.

Gentlemen, are we students of our wives in the way in which God searches our need? But for all Christians, this is the kind of love God bestows upon us. It is a love that commits to this intimate knowledge of our souls. The extent of this is seen in no greater way than to understand that God knowing that we were broken and in need of redemption prepared the only plan that would deliver us from sin, the sending of His Son. How well does Jesus know us? He became flesh and humbled Himself as a man so that He might do for us what we could not do, remove our sins and satisfy the justice that God required. Gentlemen, what are we willing to do to cover the needs of our spouse? Do we know them well enough to even discern that? Have we provided an environment where they can safely and openly raise these things? Jesus bids us to come to Him.

Peter continues:

“**Showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel.**” Notice two things, **one** is that Peter applies that same word for honor that he says is required to governors and to all people. He notes this is **2:17**. We show honor to her. She is distinct and worthy of that because of her role. Now, as we’ve said in the previous messages both to men and women, just because our spouse is not reflecting a life pattern that demands this kind of attention and respect does not mean that we do not give it. We are called to this kind of life pattern and we do it out of affection and obedience to God first. **Secondly**, Peter also includes the phrase “**weaker vessel**” which to some may sound quite diminutive. Please allow me a couple of thoughts for a moment. **First** I borrow from one commentator (Wayne Grudem) that takes time to underscore that this phrase understands men to be vessels as well. This is simply a metaphor that Peter uses to communicate an idea. Most people get caught up now a days in the idea of a woman somehow being weaker than men. But the lexical usage for this Greek word can include any limitation that might be upon someone. It is true that men are generally stronger than women physically, and that can apply in the sense that Peter is making sure that we understand that a man is not to take advantage of a woman by virtue of his strength. But it can also be that we understand that there are some ways in which our wives, either by cultural perspective, illness, or some other means, may be in a more vulnerable position. Peter wants us to understand that a Christian husband who is seeking to be obedient to Christ is not one who will take advantage of that vulnerability. What is being reached for is something of the value and care that we are to bring to this relationship.

Here is an illustration. Many of you will remember the hay days of Tupperware. You may have some. It is really indestructible stuff. And if you happen to destroy it, you can get it replaced for free. Everyone had to have some piece of Tupperware. But ultimately it was a pile of plastic. What dishes were brought out when special company was coming? It wasn’t the plastic, that is for sure. It was the, “if you touch that China I’ll knock you backside into next week” dishes that were used. The China was more fragile than the Tupperware, but it was more valued. It was more protected. Peter’s point is not to be diminutive of married women in any way. His point is rather to underscore the way in which we are to value them as Christian husbands. I fear that in this push to not treat women any different than men we have lost the sense of worth that women are to bear because of who God has designed you to be. Men, we can redeem that view in our culture by functioning with our wives in such a way that women want to have a Christian husband.

And in this is the application for all. Are we living our Christian lives in such a way that allows people to see the honor and dignity that God demands be given to people *because they are people created in His image*? Are we revealing God in such a way that people want Christianity for the beauty and thriving that it produces in life?

In this contexts Peter ties in our faithfulness to this calling to the fact that our wives are equal heirs of the Kingdom of God as we are. This is amazing given that Peter its underscore the equality that a wife should bear in status in a Christian led home. And, if it is true that a Christian wife can have redemptive affects upon her non-Christian husband, as we have seen, surely a husband living with this hope of inheritance can inspire an appetite through which a non-Christian wife will seek the Lord and taste of the goodness of God as well. And to add more urgency to

this equal state, Peter reveals that a Christian husband who is not reaching for this kind of sacrificial and intimate life pattern towards his wife, will not experience the intimacy of his Christianity, or the efficacy of a tool given to seek the favor of God for His intervention. What does Peter say, “that you’re prayers may not be hindered.” God is not interested in listening and aiding a man who is not interested in listening to and aiding those under his care and covering.

So, to all of us, as we have considered these things, we must remind ourselves of this. **First**, obedience is never contingent upon how it is received, or to whom it is given. We are obedient to God’s direction and commands because He is our Father. **Secondly**, these callings provide a template for us to understand how to filter a potential wife or husband. Knowing that we are called to this kind of life pattern, and knowing the extent to which the Bible demands obey God in these matters, it is very important to limit those in the pool of potential suitors to those who would not only profess Christianity, but already display a life pattern of obedience. Do not marry someone simply because they say they are a Christian, or simply because you like them. If these people do not display a propensity towards brokenness before God, they will not be inclined to display it when you are married.

Dear friends, the Christian life is reaching for more. It is reaching to make Christ known to the world through every means that we are given to engage the world, our social and governmental relationships, our work relationships, our marriage relationships, our familial relationships. All of these are tools to manifest something of the glory of God. Peter is telling us in context of this letter that it is better to do these things for God’s glory in spite of the suffering it may bring, than to seek our own glory and rob ourselves of the privilege of identifying with Christ’s name.

May God find us faithful. Amen.