

1Peter3:7 Love! Respect! And Honour!

In last week's message 1 Peter 3:1-6 'Daughters Of Sarah' I entitled it, we looked at the contentious issue of wives submitting to husbands in the church. I suggested that out of all of the teachings within the whole of the Bible, this is the one that so angers and causes such contention among, not only women, but also many men in God's church today. And I said that to find the root cause of this contention, we must look to Genesis 3:16, and that perpetual curse upon womankind from God! "Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you." Yes that word "desire," meaning to have authority over. To have mastery over. As with sin and Cain in Genesis 4:6: "sin is crouching at your door and it desires to have you, but you must master it." So within God's curse upon womankind for sin, there is this perpetual latent desire, to be the head of the marriage!

And I said that this has nothing to do with talent, or gifts, or maturity, or understanding. No nothing at all which speaks of inequality. Men and women are equal before God. Equally condemned for sin and equally "saved by grace through faith." No, this speaks only of God ordained roles! And all submission must be addressed in the context of 1 Peter 2:13: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority." Kings, governors, Slaves to masters, or for us today, bosses and employers. And wives toward husbands. And the context is all about our testimony to those unsaved ones in authority over us. Chapter 3:1 "wives in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that any of them who do not believe the word, may be one over without words by the behaviour of their wives." V4-6a "the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in the Lord's sight. For this is the way the women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands. Like Sarah." Yes that purity of heart. That purity of intention which Jesus speaks of in Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart. For they shall see God." Because their greatest desire must be to see their unbelieving husbands saved!

So now we continue in the letter 1 Peter 3:7: 'Husbands: Love, Respect And Honour Your Wives!' Twice now in this passage of scripture, beginning in chapter 2:13 (which as we have been seeing is all about being subject, and submitting to those in authority over us at every level) and with our goal being, that testimony that we would bear to them for the Lord's sake. Yes twice now Peter has spoken of "respect." Chapter 2:17 "Show proper respect to everyone. Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king." V18 "Slaves, submit yourself to your masters with all respect." Again today, this would mean to employers and bosses over us. "With all respect."

Now Beloved, I hadn't really thought about it before, but when putting this message together I realised that this "proper respect," and this "with all respect," is indeed an act of love from those who have been born of the Spirit through Jesus' Blood, to those unsaved people around us! And now for a third time in this section Peter writes of "respect;" Chapter 3:7 "In the same way." Chapter 3:1: "Wives in the same way be submissive to your husbands." Chapter 3:7 "Husbands in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect."

Now friends I may be wrong, (although I don't believe so because a sober assessment of this society in which we live) powerfully bears testimony to what I'm about to say. That "respect" for others today, is sadly, almost non-existent. And may I suggest that mostly, it exists in those of an older, even an almost lost generation! Yes "respect" today, is in very short supply! And yet the opposite of respect, which is, let's say, contempt, is boiling up and exploding in plague proportions, in every level of society! Many politicians have such a contempt for those they are supposed to be serving. They treat us as fools. Even often bold faced lying to us. When asked a straightforward question, they

almost never give us an answer. Many people have a contempt for those they work for. Likewise others have contempt for those who work for them. There is a contempt for the police. The nurses. The firefighters. The volunteers. The paramedics and many others who are doing those jobs under the most difficult of circumstances, that make our society the place of relative safety and liberties that we enjoy, and take so much for granted! Students have contempt for their teachers. Children have contempt for their parents. And yes wives have contempt for their husbands and husbands for their wives. It's an epidemic! And our regulative authorities, and supposed justice systems and courts, perpetuate this ever spreading disease of contempt! Just this week there was a case of a young teenage male from a private privileged school, getting drunk, and then verbally assaulting and intimidating a woman. He then got physically violent with her by punching her in the face, and knocking her to the ground. Well surely such a cowardly assault ended up with him in prison? Well no! As you also may have seen in horror, the presiding magistrate let this unrepentant teenage thug, this criminal, walk free!

Yes "respect," like accountability and integrity today it seems, is in very short supply. Listen to how the word "respect" is defined by the old Collins dictionary. To highly esteem. To reckon worthy of. To treat or handle carefully. And the word in Greek for "respect" here is 'timair'. And it means to Honour!

So in light of all that I have just elaborated upon, Peter says to Christian men: "husbands in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with honour." Yes you husbands who claimed to believe in, and claim also to serve the risen Lord Jesus, (having had the very Spirit of the Living God poured into your hearts) must give honour to. Must hold with high esteem. Must render worthy of. Must handle carefully and tenderly. Yes must reckon your wives "worthy of honour." So if the wife of an unbelieving husband's great desire and duty before God, is to show him Jesus, through that testimony of a loving submission, not needing words but only her witness of a godly character. A believing husband's first duty before God, within his God given authoritative role of headship, is to pay his wife, that God given "respect" yes that "honour," that Timair which she deserves. And which God demands!

And friends as I mentioned earlier, this "respect" this "honour," has got to stem from an underlying love for one another. Which must ultimately come from our love for that God, who gave His Son that we might live! It is self-sacrificial; it is not self-seeking. It is for the building up of, and not for the tearing down of. Yes it is always that which is best, for the other! So if we understand this passage and see it correctly and clearly, it is saying, that at every level of our response to those around us, a "respectful honour" is what we are called to render to those that we love.

For husbands, how much more should this relate to our wives! Because as it was with our Saviour, this life, is about far more than living for self. It's about labouring for the Kingdom within every level of our life. And again, how much more so then, within the sanctity of our marriage! And Peter goes on to give us three main reasons why men should treat their wives in this manner. Firstly, treat them with "honour" as "the weaker partner." But the older translation uses the word "vessel" here and I believe it gives us a clearer picture in this case, of Peter's meaning. Because as I explained last week when speaking on v1-6 about "wives being submissive to their husbands." Peter is not speaking about talent, or gifts, or intelligence or maturity. Peter speaks only here about God ordained roles. So when he speaks of "the weaker partner." "the weaker vessel," this is not in any way or upon any level about inferiority. He is simply stating the fact that generally, the female is "the weaker vessel" physically. So this being the case, our wives should be treated with that consideration, with that due "respect," that due "honour," by their God honouring husbands, who are conscious of this reality!

Friends, we all are shamefully aware in this country of ours, of the abuse of women by men. And it's predominantly by their husbands or partners today. Whether it be emotional, intellectual, financial, spiritual or physical abuse that occurs. Again, it's an epidemic. And it is a national disgrace! The current statistics tell us, that every single day many women, are either emotionally abused, or physically beaten and even murdered, by those men who are nearest, (and dare I say dearest) to them. Those ones who they have made a commitment to.

Well Peter confronts this disgrace, this abomination in the sight of God, by declaring, that if there is a selfless "respect and honour" toward those whom men of God have chosen to love, then such things must never occur in the sight of God! Wives are literally the "weaker vessel." So they must in effect, be treated with double honour and consideration by their husbands in light of that truth! With tenderness and consideration. Yes with "honour and respect."

In 1 Corinthians 10:24 Paul writes, "nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others." Now if this is true in general within Christ's church, how much more so then should it be for a husband who claims Christ, within the sanctity of marriage, toward his wife?

Similarly in 1 Corinthians 12, when speaking of the different parts and functions of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, (His church) and combating the fact that everybody is wanting to have those SPECIAL GIFTS, so that they could be lauded by all, Paul writes in v21-23a "the eye cannot say to the hand; I don't need you! And the head cannot say to the feet; I don't need you! On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour." Can you see? That in effect Peter is giving husbands the same instruction here toward their wives. Again, the woman is literally "the weaker vessel." Not spiritually, not intellectually but physically. So in the same way that those weaker parts of Christ's body, (His church) are treated with special tenderness, special consideration, special protection, "respect and honour," so too should a man out of love, who claims the Name of Jesus as his Saviour, cherish, "respect and honour" his wife! Firstly, because she is "the weaker vessel." And deserves to be treated as such. Treat them "with honour as the weaker vessel." And the second reason Peter gives men to "honour your wives," is; "and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life." But again, I feel the older translation puts it much better. Because it doesn't say "heirs with you" which kind of sounds like the husband is the heir, and the wife is almost attached to him, as it were. The older translation puts it as "co-heirs with you of the gracious gift of life."

Beloved, regardless of any kind of cultural context, in Christ, women stand up on the same portion of level ground as men do, which we call salvation. And that ground is Christ. The term "Co-heirs" speaks of absolute equality before God. As I mentioned earlier. Equally condemned for sin and rebellion to hell. And also, equally "saved by grace through faith," because of Jesus. Such should be the selfless, devotional, "honour and respect," yes such should the love be that men have for their wives, that it is threefold!

I heard it wonderfully explained this way many years ago. We are called by Jesus in Mark 12:31 To "love our neighbour as ourself." And Jesus redefined who our "neighbour" is to the anger and indignation of the Pharisees and Sadducees who were the religious elite of His day. Who basically taught that our neighbours, are only those that we agree with or like. And are even of the same social standing as we are. But if you remember, Jesus redefined who "our neighbour" is, when speaking to the expert in the law about the good Samaritan. Explaining that "our neighbour", is anyone in need. And of course ultimately, anyone in need of His life saving Word the gospel! So we are to "love our neighbour." Over and over throughout the scriptures we are instructed to "love one another." Indeed Jesus said in John 13:35: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples. If

you have love one for another.” And in John 15:13 “Greater love hath no man than this: That he lay down his life for his friends.” And we have seen many times, in Jesus` own reinstatement of Peter he asked that threefold question, “Peter do you truly love me more than these?” Remember, that was his bold boast, before the cross. Peter answers, “Lord you know all things you know that I love you.” And the Lord replies basically, if this is true Peter, “feed my lambs;” “Take care of my sheep;” “Feed my sheep.” So love for Jesus, is all about loving His people!

We are seeing today all of the ways that husbands should love their wives! Paul put it this way in Ephesians 5:25-28: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives, for he who loves his wife loves himself.” Yes ‘husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” Again, it's a self-sacrificial love. So a husband is to love the woman that God has given to him because she is his wife. That one for whom he must be prepared to lay down his very life for, as Jesus did His church! He must “love’ respect and honour” her, because she is “his neighbour.” He must “love, respect and honour” her, because she is his “coheir” of Christ`s Kingdom. Not casting aside his headship and authority as Adam did in the garden, but “lay down his life” for her, because his utmost desire is to put her first in all things, (after Christ) as he instructs and encourages her in the things of God's Kingdom. That he longs to share with her in glory! So husbands love your wives, “love, respect and honour” your wife “because she is the weaker vessel.” You must “live with and love your wife because she is your coheir” in God's Kingdom! Yes this woman that God has blessed you with, for her too did Jesus shed His blood so that with you, she too, would be delivered from death, be set free from sin and inherit eternal life!

And the third reason Peter gives men to treat their wives in this God honouring way: “so that nothing will hinder your prayers.” So, “Husbands in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect, (honour) as the weaker vessel and as coheirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.” But of course the question is, What does he mean by “so that nothing will hinder your prayers?” Does he mean, that the way a man treats his wife (or indeed the way a woman treats her husband) in some way prevents their prayers from reaching God? You know, they only get so high and then fall to the ground. Do the many difficulties which most marriages face in effect, make God deaf to our prayers? Well this can't be right, because we know that Hebrews 7:24-25 says,” but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”

Yes we know that Jesus stands before the Holy Father interceding on our behalf continually! Jesus` Blood does in effect, wash out unworthy prayers clean. He can take those prayers of pure intent, and discard those ill thought impetuous offerings to God! We also know, that when life`s circumstances seem to beat us down, so that we feel like we can't even find the right words to speak, or offer up from our heart, the Holy Spirit speaks with God on our behalf. Romans 8:26-27 “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.” But again, what does Peter mean by, “so that nothing hinders your prayers?” Well praise God for sound Bible commentators. John Calvin explains, that what” hinders our prayers,” is not in them not rising up to God as it were, but the state of our heart and mind when we do pray. Is it something

that we just check off the list? Are we really even ever truly alone with God? Indeed, do we even pray as married people when we are at odds with one another or estranged? In the Old Testament, when a person was going to the temple to make an offering to God upon the altar. If they went up to the temple and then realised that either they had a problem with someone, or someone had a problem with them, or that there was something that they needed to make right. They had to leave the animal there, go home, (however long that journey may have taken them) make the situation right, and then return to make their offering to God, with a cleansed conscience! This is what Peter is speaking about here. What can “hinder our prayers,” is the state of our heart toward a loved one. And it will also “hinder” us from praying at all! We can praying with the heart of an unrepentant hypocrite.

Beloved, Satan loves to pounce upon disagreement, hurt feelings, and raw emotions within the bond and sanctity of the Christian marriage. So clearly then, Peter sees these things within the husbands role of loving his wife, to keep such things in check, and to make them right with his wife! So, “the weaker vessel,” “the coheirs,” and an uninhibited prayer life. Yes “love, respect an honour.” This is what God through Peter calls men to do toward their wives. And we are accountable before God in the way that we do, or do not, abide by this command!

As I finished last week, I do again this week with Proverbs 31:10 “a wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.” And Proverbs 31:30 “charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.” So my brothers this is your command from God. You must treat your wife in this honourable caring and tender way. Having her best interest always, as your first response and priority, in every situation! Yes this is God's command to you. Love. Respect. And Honour!

Let's pray.