

Text: 1 Pt 3.5-6

We continue with our study of the doctrine of submission, a characteristic spirit that ought to mark all Christians.

Our passage began in 2.13, and continues into ch. 3.

We learned Christian submission in these categories:

1. All Christians to kings and governors (2.13-14)
2. Christian slaves to masters (2.18)
3. Christian wives to husbands (3.1)

We make applications from all these lessons to other relationships in life.

Also notice, on the submitting side, the people are Christians. On the “ruling” side, the ones in authority may or may not be Christians – that fact is irrelevant to the command.

Our great example in all this is our Lord Jesus Christ, who laid out our school lesson to learn by showing us the way on the cross.

For the last couple of sessions, we’ve discussed the commands to women.

- The main issue is a spirit of worship that desires a godly testimony, especially before unbelieving authorities.
- That spirit displays itself by relying entirely on internal decoration, in the spirit, rather than attempting to win over the husband by external decoration. (This is no prohibition of external decoration.)

Tonight, our passage gives us a basis or rationale for this teaching. The basis goes far beyond the New Testament, as we find it rooted in the behaviour displayed by the believing women of Israel. Let’s read our passage:

Read 1 Pt 3.1-7, text 5-6

Proposition: Submission in marriage is an ancient doctrine. We see a precedence for it in the holy women of Israel.

*Godly Female Precedents***I. The ancient foundation of marital submission (5)**

A. The key word showing that we have an ancient precedent: “for”

B. The women who form the precedent group

1. They are the ones from “former times”

2. The identity of the *former times* becomes clear by mentioning Sarah as an example
3. Thus, we are thinking all the way back into ancient Israel

C. The characteristics of these women

1. They are holy: *i.e.* members of God's set-apart people, Israel
2. They are married: "submissive to their own husbands"
3. They are believers: "hoped in God"

"This comment is instructive, for it informs us that these women did not submit to their husbands because they believed their husbands were superior to them intellectually or spiritually. They submitted to their husbands because they were confident that God would reward all those who put their trust in him."¹

D. The adornment of the holy women of old

1. "In this way" – *i.e.* just as Peter advocates in vv. 3-4
2. Their adornment was in the spirit (the "inner woman") not in their outward ornamentation

Many aspects of the New Testament teaching on marriage finds its root in the OT. That is because marriage is a *Creation* institution. Marriage pre-dates the fall.

The place of marriage in the creative order means it instructs all believing people of all ages with the same basic principles (though cultural features adapt with time).

E. The restatement of our theme: "being submissive to their own husbands"

1. Repetition gives emphasis
2. Repetition makes submission our duty to God, not a badge of pride

¹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 155.

3. The repetition of “own husbands” points to the exclusive applications of this principle to marriage
 - a. In other words, Christians are called to have a sweet spirit to everyone, really
 - b. Thus, what we are advocating here is something special for the marriage relationship: something exclusive to it

A Christian wife is sweetly submissive to her own husband in a way she is to no other man, and all for God’s glory.

II. An explicit example in an implicit statement (6a)

A. Sarah’s behaviour becomes the explicit example

1. The great example of Sarah’s spirit towards Abraham is that “she called him lord”
2. This comes from Genesis 18.12

Gn 18.12 Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”

- a. Notice the context, Sarah overhears the angel telling Abraham they will have a son
- b. Abraham doesn’t command Sarah to do anything
- c. Sarah simply refers to her husband as “my lord”
- d. Peter uses this as his example

B. The term “lord”

1. In our culture, it has an elevated tone
2. We must remember that in Bible times it is a term of respect
3. The reason Peter uses this example of Sarah talking to herself about Abraham is to show her *attitude* towards her husband
 - a. Her inner woman of the heart respects her husband
 - b. She adorns her character, even in a pleasant jest she tells herself, by her respect for her husband

- C. The example of Sarah makes Christian women “daughters of Sarah” if they go and do likewise

III. The final assumption of godliness (6b)

- A. The last phrase of v. 6 presents some difficulties for understanding

if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

1. What is “doing what is right”?
2. What fear? Afraid of whom? That beast, your husband?

- B. Translation challenges

1. First, this is not a conditional statement, despite the way many English translations handle it

KJV “as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement”

ESV “if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening”

2. Youngs Literal Translation: “doing good, and not fearing any terror”
 - a. Two present participles
 - b. Activities paralleling Sarah’s obedience
3. Suggested translation:

just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children **doing what is right without fearing by any threat**

- C. The free heart before the Lord

1. Any woman who is doing what is right can’t be shaken
2. No one can accuse her of failing to follow the Lord
3. Her righteous, holy, godly submission brings praise to God and confidence to her

Conclusion:

Proposition: Submission in marriage is an ancient doctrine. We see a precedence for it in the holy women of Israel.

Now, for a broader application, when any of us are in an authority relationship:

- There are appropriate ways for us to manifest the spirit of submission (appropriate to the relationship)
- Our spiritual action in these matters is for the Lord and to the Lord, it is worship
- No one can bring any charges against us, if we live this way