

## HONOR CHRIST IN YOUR MARRIAGE (I)

*3 Likewise, let the wives be in submission to their own husbands, so that, even if any do not obey the word, they may be won over without the word through the conduct of their wives, <sup>2</sup>as they observe your virtuous conduct lived out in reverence [to God]. <sup>3</sup>May your beauty not [merely] be the external beauty of having elaborately braided hair and wearing gold jewelry or dressing in exquisite garments; <sup>4</sup>rather, may it be the inner beauty of the heart, consisting in the imperishable [beauty] of a humble and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. <sup>5</sup>This is also how in the past the holy women who hoped in God adorned themselves, being in submission to their own husbands—<sup>6</sup>just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and are not intimidated by any fear. (1 Pet. 3:1-6)*

### **Introduction**

Back in May of '74 a group of women got together and drafted a 31-point document that they entitled, "*The Code of Love*." The ladies who drew up "*The Code of Love*" were all in the vanguard of the "liberation" movement. Their goal was to create for themselves—and for future generations of women—a new set of ethics: the guidelines for liberated conduct in modern times. In the process of designing this new code, they examined what they viewed as "archaic" standards and developed what amounted to a revolutionary redefining of love.

What was contained in this document known as "*The Code of Love*"? Here is a sampling: You cannot have "true love" within the bonds of marriage, because marriage is too restricting; marriage destroys the freedom and spontaneity of love. Being married should not prevent a woman (or a man) from seeking "love" elsewhere; the only requirement of these extra-marital affairs is that the participants be "honest" with each other and that they be "mature" adults. "Love" is always in flux: increasing or diminishing; once it begins to diminish there is no reason why it should not be dropped and a new "love" pursued.

Needless to say, if such a code were enacted, it would shatter the whole institution of marriage and family. It would advance the wretched cause of all that is promiscuous and immoral. It would promote a lifestyle that is completely hedonistic, self-serving, and utterly selfish.

Now let me tell you that the women who wrote "*The Code of Love*" never heard of feminism and "the women's lib" movement. The ladies who wrote "*The Code of Love*" belonged to the French court and were led by the Countess of Champagne. Their document, "*The Code of Love*," is dated May 3, '74, ... May 3, **1174!** (*Paul Harvey's The Rest of the Story*, pp. 147-149) That's right, "*The Code of Love*" was written over 800 years ago!

The radical feminist proposals of the present day are not avant-garde at all; actually, they are pretty archaic! They can be found in the twelfth-century document, "*The*

*Code of Love,*” and they can be traced back even to the first century. Peter is alluding to the influence of such movements when he urges Christian women not to be intimidated by any fear (1 Pet. 3:6.)

Despite the pressures to conform to the world, as a Christian woman and Christian wife, conduct yourself in a manner that will honor Christ your Lord.

## **I. Honor Christ in Your Marriage, ...By Being in Submission to Your Husband**

The first thing that Peter finds necessary to emphasize is the exhortation, *“wives be in submission to your own husbands.”*

This does not mean to imply that the woman and wife is inferior to the man. Both the man and the woman have been created in the image of God, and as such share an equal status before God: *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them”* (Gen. 1:27.) The Christian husband and wife are *“co-heirs of the grace of life”* (1 Pet. 3:7,) and as such they share an equal status before God in the Lord Jesus Christ: *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Gal. 3:28.)

But this is God’s ordained pattern for marriage; namely, that the wife be in submission to her own husband, as also the Apostle Paul exhorts Christian wives: *“Wives, [submit] to your own husbands as to the Lord, <sup>23</sup>because the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, he being the savior of the body. <sup>24</sup>But as the church is in submission to Christ, so also wives ought to submit to their husbands in all things”* (Eph. 5:22-24.) Note the connection between Ephesians 5:18 and Ephesians 5:21-22: *“be filled with the Spirit ... <sup>21</sup>submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. <sup>22</sup>Wives, [submit] to your own husbands as to the Lord”* (Eph. 5:18,21-22.) One characteristic of the Spirit-filled life is submission. Christian wives, when you are living a Spirit-filled life, (which is normal Christian living,) this characteristic of submission will especially be displayed and practiced towards your husband. Conversely, the source of submission is the Spirit-filled life. The Christian must release himself or herself to the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, letting Him fill our lives with His presence and His work of grace. As Christians, we must reverence the sacred Person of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us; we must not resist Him or suppress His work of grace within us. As Christians, we must not be like Old Testament Israel against whom Stephen testified, *“You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers! You always resist the Holy Spirit!”* (Acts 7:51.)

In Ephesians 5:21-22 the Apostle Paul exhorts Christian wives to be in submission to their husbands *“as to the Lord.”* That is to say, the Christian wife is to submit herself to her husband’s authority in the marriage for Jesus’ sake, submitting to her husband out of love and devotion to Christ her Savior. We must

remember that out of love for us Christ submitted Himself to God the Father and to the cross of Calvary. We must remember that our love for Jesus is best expressed in terms of obedience to His commandments. Jesus declares to His disciples, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments"* (Jn. 14:15.) Note, also, His words recorded in Luke 6:46, *"And why do you call me, Lord, Lord, but do not do what I say?"*

The Christian wife is called to submit herself to her husband's authority because he is responsible to fulfill the role of the Lord Jesus in the marriage: *"the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church"* (Eph. 5:23a.) The Apostle Paul further exhorts the Christian wife to be in submission to her husband *"in all things."* That is to say, her role of submission and his responsibility of headship pertain to every aspect of the marital relationship. This is so because the husband's authority and responsibility in the marriage is reflecting Christ's lordship, a lordship that extends over every area of life. Within the marriage the husband is to exercise his God-ordained authority with the same self-giving love Christ has for the church: *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her"* (Eph. 5:25.)

In verse 6 Peter refers us to Sarah, Abraham's wife, as a model for the Christian wife; he reports, *"Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him, 'lord.'"* Peter is alluding to Genesis 18:12. Overhearing the LORD tell Abraham that he and Sarah shall have a child in their old age, Sarah's response is as follows: *"Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have become old shall I have pleasure, my lord also being old?'"* Note that in this passage Sarah is not addressing Abraham directly, she is speaking to herself. The point Peter is making is the fact that Sarah in heart and mind viewed Abraham as her "lord," (i.e.; she had a submissive attitude towards him in their marriage.) This attitude on the part of Sarah expressed itself in terms of obedience to Abraham, her husband. But we should note, too, that when the roles were reversed, with Sarah issuing ungodly counsel to her husband and Abraham submitting to her counsel, the results and consequences were tragic. Genesis 16:1-5 reports the role reversal, with Sarah giving orders to Abraham, and Abraham submitting to his wife's directive:

*Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children; but she had a maidservant, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. <sup>2</sup>And Sarai said to Abram, Listen, Jehovah has prevented me from bearing children; so I ask you, please go and sleep with my maidservant; it may be that I shall have children by her. And Abram agreed to what Sarai suggested. <sup>3</sup>Now Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her maidservant—after Abram had been living for ten years in the land of Canaan—and gave her to Abram her husband to be his wife. <sup>4</sup>And he slept with Hagar and she conceived. But when [Hagar] realized that she was pregnant, her mistress became despised in her eyes. <sup>5</sup>Then Sarai said to Abram, You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my maidservant into your arms; and when she saw that she had become pregnant, she despised me. May Jehovah judge between me and you. (Gen. 16:1-5)*

Genesis 21:8-12 reports on the tragic consequences of this role reversal, a situation in which the LORD did not intervene, allowing Abraham to experience the consequences of the course he had allowed Sarah to initiate:

*And on the day that Isaac was weaned Abraham made a great feast. <sup>9</sup>Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, the son whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking [Isaac]. <sup>10</sup>Therefore she said to Abraham, Get rid of this maidservant and her son; for the son of this maidservant shall not be heir with my son, Isaac. <sup>11</sup>Now this matter was very distressful to Abraham because it concerned his son. <sup>12</sup>But God said to Abraham, Do not let this matter concerning the boy and your maidservant be distressful to you. Listen to all that Sarah says to you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring shall be counted. (Gen. 21:8-12)*

Christian wives, honor Christ in your marriage, by being in submission to your husband. There can be only one head of the household, and God has given that responsibility to the husband. Wife, if you seek to usurp the role of headship given to your husband, or if you ignore that role and your responsibility to it, you will come to regret it: you will frustrate yourself, lose respect for your husband, and even come to despise him for allowing you to take over his God-given role and responsibility.

## **II. Honor Christ in Your Marriage, ...By Adorning Yourself with Godly Beauty**

Every woman wants to be beautiful. T.V., newspapers, magazines are filled with advertisements featuring glamorous and beautiful women selling a whole host of products “guaranteed” to make every woman beautiful and glamorous, too. Every woman of every age desires to be beautiful, and Peter addresses this matter of beauty in verses 3-4:

*May your beauty not [merely] be the external beauty of having elaborately braided hair and wearing gold jewelry or dressing in exquisite garments; <sup>4</sup>rather, may it be the inner beauty of the heart, consisting in the imperishable beauty of a humble and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. (1 Pet. 3:3-4)*

The Apostle Peter exhorts the Christian woman: Do not let your beauty consist in your hairstyle, jewelry and clothing—this does not mean that the Christian woman is forbidden to look pretty or make herself attractive! Sometimes Christians have understood this exhortation to mean that it is sinful for a Christian woman to seek to make herself physically attractive. But this is not the thrust of Peter’s exhortation; in refutation of such a notion, consider such Scriptural evidence as the following: Sarah was a beautiful woman:

*When he came near to the border of Egypt, [Abram] said to Sarai his wife, Listen, I know that you are a beautiful woman. <sup>12</sup>When the Egyptians see you*

*they will say, This is his wife. They will kill me, but keep you alive. <sup>13</sup>I ask you, Please say that you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you. (Gen. 12:11-13)*

Abraham's servant presented Rebekah with expensive jewelry:

*Then I asked her, Whose daughter are you? And she said, I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him. Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets upon her arms. (Gen. 24:47)*

Christ is preparing the church to be a beautiful bride for Himself:

*... Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup>so that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her with the washing of water by the word—<sup>27</sup>so that he might present the church to himself in glory, without blemish or wrinkle or any [other] such thing, but being holy and blameless. (Eph. 5:25-27)*

What Peter is saying here in verse 3 is this: Christian woman, do not let your beauty merely consist in such external things as the way you wear your hair, your jewelry, and your clothes. It is fine to make yourself as attractive as you can, but when you lay aside your jewelry and elegant clothes, be sure that you are not laying aside your beauty. If your beauty only consists in your outward appearance, and below the skin there is the ugliness of a self-centered, demanding, discontented spirit, then your beauty has not gone nearly deep enough.

In verse 4 Peter goes on to instruct the Christian woman as to what composes true and lasting beauty. Let your beauty consist of "*the inner beauty of the heart.*" That is to say, let your beauty stem from the new nature that God has given you in Christ—Christ by His Holy Spirit, resides within you, let His beauty be seen in you, radiating from you. Let your beauty consist of "*the imperishable beauty of a humble and quiet spirit.*" The character of Christ-like humility, gentleness, and quietness is a beauty that does not fade away; it does not become replaced by wrinkles and gray hair, it continues to grow more gracious and beautiful as the years go by. The best way to appreciate this beauty is to contrast it with its opposite, as presented in the Book of Proverbs:

*It is better to live on a corner of the roof than to share a house with a quarrelsome wife. (Prov. 21:9)*

*It is better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife. (Prov. 21:19)*

*A beautiful woman who shows no discretion is like a gold ring in a pig's snout. (Prov. 11:22)*

The beauty of a Christ-like character is a beauty that is highly valued in the sight of God.

Christian wives, honor Christ in your marriage, by adorning yourself with godly beauty. Christian woman, make yourself really beautiful: Go beyond the latest fashions, go to the heart; there cultivate that spiritual beauty that can be produced only as you walk with Christ and become more like Him.

### **Conclusion**

Christian woman, you are constantly being confronted by the pressures of an ungodly society telling you to rebel against your God-ordained role in marriage and renounce your primary responsibility to home and family, all in the name of "liberation."

As a Christian woman, set your hope on God, and by His grace, conduct yourself in a manner that will honor Christ your Lord.