

“Silence, Adornment and Godliness”

Christ and the Christian Life

1 Peter 3:1-7

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Jeff: I’ll tell you that when I got here, I wasn’t sure what to expect, and I’d never been here before. You know, it’s funny how Looney Toons and then a kazoo can sound so professionally done, you know? *(Laughter)*

Transcriber’s Note: A whistle shaped like a kazoo is blown and the Looney Toons theme is played to commence the meeting of the Brave Men.

Jeff: I came here thinking, “Wow, this is a well-run Bible study! *(Laughter)* We ought to be thankful for Sig and what he does here. *(Applause)*

Transcriber’s Note: Sig is the M.C. of the Brave Men.

Jeff: Okay, Don. Do you want to lead us into our time of prayer? *(Music)*

Our heavenly Father, we are thankful for this day. We’re thankful most of all for the Lord Jesus Christ and for the blessings that we have in Him. We possess an abundance of Your grace. And that is made manifest to us by Your Holy Spirit in us, who is a deposit and a down payment, and certainly a guarantee of better things yet to come. And Father, we thank You that as we stand in Christ, that the Holy Spirit prompts us to pray and even prays on our behalf when we know not what to pray for. Father, we are thankful for the Son who intercedes for us. And we are thankful to come to You, our Father, as sons this morning. Father, we come to You and we bow before You, thanking You for the opportunity to be in Your word, praying that it would change our lives, praying that the Holy Spirit would take this word, which is His word, and apply it to our lives that we might be different than we were even earlier this morning.

Father, we come before You now, praying for Bruce, asking that You would sustain him on this trip with his wife, praying that You will bless him in every way and her as well. Father, we pray for Pam and for Sue and for Sarah, each one according to their perspective needs. We ask that our hand would be upon them for good and that You would strengthen their bodies, their minds and certainly bless their hearts in the Lord Jesus.

Father, as we come to Your word today, we pray that You would conform us to the image of Your Son. We pray, Father, that indeed You would bless us as we study. And we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. Well this morning we’re going to revisit 1 Peter. And the reason that we’re going to revisit 1 Peter is not necessarily to stay with the work that we’ve been doing. That three-part series that we enjoyed or hopefully enjoyed—and we certainly enjoyed it because it was the word of God!—but we studied that as a unit. Well I was thinking about what we might do for the next two times together. And I thought at least one of those times that I would stay with 1 Peter and open something up. And I have a particular reason for doing that. That which I want to open up is 1 Peter chapter 3, verses 1-7.

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And I want to open that up because that provides us a way of understanding how certain aspects of the history and philosophy and culture of the early first century helps us to understand Scripture. There's a balancing act that we have to work out as we study when we do that sort of thing. And so that's one of the reasons I want to study this.

The other reason is this. This is an important passage. And it's an important passage because it's a passage that people sometimes get wrong. They get it wrong, and what happens is that they use this passage in order to ascribe things to God that don't belong to Him.

Do you all know what's in this passage?

Participant: No.

Jeff: Okay. Let's take it and read it right now. I had it planned for later. But let's take it out. It's 1 Peter chapter 3, verses 1-7. I want somebody to read this with a good strong voice. Don, go ahead.

Don: *“Wives, likewise be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they without a word may be won by the conduct of their wives when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair; wearing gold or putting on fine apparel. Rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner in former times the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him ‘Lord,’ whose daughters you are if you do good, and are not afraid with any terror.*

“Husbands, likewise dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel, and of being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”

Transcriber's Note: NKJV.

Jeff: Okay. I want you—oh, sorry. Yes.

Don: This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Thank you, Don.

Participant: An unusual response to you Presbyterians.

Jeff: Yes, it is. *(Laughter)* That's the Presbyterian in me going—

Participant: It's the Anglican in me, too.

Jeff: Yes, that's true. I want you to look at verse 3. *“Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of the hair and the putting on of gold, jewelry or the clothing you wear. But let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart, which is of imperishable beauty.”*

Transcriber's Note: ESV.

Jeff: When I was younger I had a pastor in the church I was attending tell this story. He said that when he was a young seminarian he went over to a friend's—

Transcriber's Note: A cell phone goes off.

Jeff: Is that mine? *(Laughter)* It just made me think that I'd better shut mine off. So he went over to the house of the pastor. And when he went over to the house of the pastor, he

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said that the pastor’s wife was in the kitchen and she was preparing lunch. And he said he was looking on the mantle. He said that there were all these pictures on the mantle. But he said that there was this one picture of this gorgeous woman. And he said that as he was staring at this picture that the pastor’s wife came into the room and said, “Ah, yes! That was me before Jesus got hold of me.” *(Laughter)*

And he said, and now you have to understand that he said that she wasn’t unattractive. But she wasn’t attractive. And he said, “My first response was this. Don’t you blame that on Jesus.” *(Laughter)* But sometimes we do, and it’s because of this passage. So a little bit of intro before we get into this.

All right. Let’s think about what we’re going to do today. We’re going to think about .

. .

Participant: Jeff?

Jeff: Yes?

Participant: You know, our wives can listen to this tape. I just want you to know that. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: All right, I’m going to shut off the recording. *(Laughter)* Thanks for that reminder, Sig. And Sig, if I’m traveling in waters too deep for me, please just raise your hand. *(Laughter)* The tape need not show that you raised your hand. *(Laughter)* But I will say it. “Sig raised his hand at this point.” *(Laughter)*

All right. So we want to talk about the introduction. The introduction is going to be a little longer today than it normally is. So we’re going to talk about the wife’s situation. The second major point is going to be to obey or not to obey; that is the question. And then thirdly, the wife is bound to a higher authority. We’re going to try to make it through these things today. There’s a lot here, so let’s get started.

In this introduction I want us to think about some basic rules. What do I mean by that? Well I want you to think about the Scriptures for a minute. In general, in the Bible, what we have is basically two things. We have the Bible’s teaching about itself and we have phenomena.

Now when we think about *phenomena*, what are we thinking about? Well, we’re thinking about things like archaeology and numbers and chronology, those kinds of things. We’re thinking about things that we might be able to prove by extra-Biblical documents or archaeology, or any number of things like that.

Now when you have that kind of material, sometimes one can be set off against another. Now what do I mean by that? Well I mean this. I mean that if you’re of a more liberal persuasion, you are going to take the phenomena and you’re going to say something like this. And this is true. For years there was no archaeological proof that the person of King David existed. And so you will take something like that and you will say that the Bible talks about a King David. But there is no proof of a king by the name of David. And so we really can’t believe that such a person who was supposedly so prominent existed.

And so what will begin to happen is that you will take the phenomena of Scripture—the evidence of archaeology, the numbers. Maybe you don’t think the numbers jive in terms of the numbering of Israel, the chronology. Maybe you think that the gospel of

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Matthew and the gospel of Luke don't quite match up in terms of their chronology. And what you will do is you'll begin to say that this, the phenomena, must influence or affect the way I think about Scripture, regardless of what Scripture says about itself. If you are more of a liberal persuasion, that's what you'll do.

I'm going to take liberty here and tell you exactly where I stand. I hope you're with me on this, and I think you are. But if you are of a more orthodox persuasion, you're going to say, “No-no-no.” What the Bible says about itself—in other words, the Bible says that it's God's word. In other words, when the Scripture says it, God says it. They're synonymous terms. They mean the same thing. In other words, when we look at the Scripture, and its self-testimony—what it says about itself,—that trumps the phenomena.

For instance, take King David. For a long time people said, “We can't believe that there was such a person as King David. We have no archaeological evidence.”

And so what do we say? We say this. Archaeology will catch up to the Bible.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Okay, you get it; all right. And the reason I say this is because I'm going to use some information from the culture to help us to interpret the Scriptures. But here's the point. It's still what we've said. *“For those who make their doctrine of Scripture dependent upon historical research into its origination and structure have already begun to reject Scripture's self-testimony, and therefore no longer believe the Scripture.”* That's Herman Bavinck. He was a Dutch theologian of the 19th and 20th centuries. He wrote a four-volume systematic theology. It's excellent.

B. B. Warfield. *“It's one thing to correct our exegetical process to modify our exegetical conclusions in the new light obtained by the study of the facts, and quite another to modify the Scriptural teaching itself.”*

What I'm going to do gets near this.

Participant: Can you explain the *exegetical*—

Jeff: Yes. What I'm going to do is that I'm going to talk to you about what does the Scripture say? When we think about exegetical work we're thinking about reading out of the Scripture what it says. But sometimes it's helpful to bring to bear upon our reading of Scripture and our study of Scripture the surrounding culture, philosophy, literature of the day, and say that this helps us to have a better understanding of what would have been going on in the culture at the time that Peter wrote. And so it informs our understanding of the text. But it does not change our view of what the Scripture says about itself.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Okay? And then this is my doctoral adviser. He says this, and I think it's a really helpful thing. *“There is an important and formative role to extra-Biblical evidence”* like archaeology, or like some of the material I'm going to read to you today. *“But never a normative role for constructing our doctrine of Scripture.”* In other words, the extra-Biblical evidence, like archaeology and the literature and philosophy of the day never has a normative role in saying that the Scriptures really don't mean what they say they mean when they say that they are the word of God.

Participant: Amen.

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Jeff: So all of that is to say that as we look at this passage, keep this in mind. I’m using the literature of the day for formative and informative purposes, because I think it’s important for us to understand the text with it.

Any questions about that? I don’t want to get too much into weeds on this one. But this is an opportunity to teach and to say that when you study the Scriptures, it’s okay to look at extra-Biblical evidence and to bring it to bear on what you’re teaching. But if that extra-Biblical evidence ever starts to undermine what Scripture says about itself, then the thing that needs to be questioned is the extra-Biblical evidence and not the Scriptures. Okay? All right.

So open the text. We’ve already read it. That’s our text for this morning. So let’s get to it. I want to ask you this question. What is the main thrust of this passage? Is it how to win your husband to the Lord? Is it a matter of adornment? Is Peter teaching that external adornment is wrong and that internal adornment is right? Is that what he’s teaching in this text?

Is Peter relieving domestic tension? Is that what he’s trying to do? For instance, you remember that Peter is writing to a people who are a long ways away. They are in exile. And Peter has heard that there is tension, especially between believers and unbelievers. And here is the situation domestically, where the believer is the wife and the unbeliever is the husband, and he hears about this. And so what is he doing? Is he writing to the wife? Is he trying to relieve the tension in saying, “Just be silent? Just be quiet.” You’re a long ways away. There’s no support. Let’s just try to relieve the tension. Is that what he’s doing? Or is he doing something else?

Well I want to say that he’s doing something else And I think that we get to the something else that he’s doing when we look at the text itself. Your text may have something different, but mine has *likewise* at the very head of it. 1 Peter 3:1. “*Likewise.*” There are some translations that have “*in the same way.*”

Okay. Now obviously, when you read something like that, you say to yourself, “Wait a minute! Something has gone before this,” right? There’s an antecedent to what he is saying here. And I need to go back and I need to find out what that antecedent is.

Now the thing that is beforehand is in 1 Peter 2:13. And what does it say? Something very significant and similar to what he says here. He says, “*Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution.*”

And we say, “Oh!”, because now, all of a sudden, we understand what he is saying to us in this passage. He is saying something similar. “*Likewise, wives be subject to your own husbands.*” That’s exactly what he’s saying.

And I want you to understand what he is saying here when he says, “*Likewise, wives be subject to your husbands*” “as, or in the same way that I call slaves and everyone else to be subject to every human institution. I want you to be subject. I want you to be submissive. I want you to submit.” That’s what he’s saying.

I want to argue that no matter what, (Sig, put your hand down! No, just kidding!) (*Laughter*) I want to argue that, no matter what, the thrust of this passage is that women are to submit to their husbands.

Participant: Amen.

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Jeff: I got an Amen! (*Laughter*)

Participant: How is it working out for you? (*Laughter*)

Jeff: Now every sub-theme—and there are sub-themes, and the sub-themes are the things we already talked about—the things about relieving the tension, the things about internal versus external adornment—those things, all of those things, fit under this particular theme, this main theme, which is wives, submit to your husbands. Okay? And what we’re going to do is that we’re going to look in this text at how that main theme works itself out in relation to those sub-themes. So let’s do that.

But the first thing we need to do is to look at the wife’s situation in this particular circumstance. And the wife’s situation is difficult with a D. It is. Why?

Well I want you to know that women’s studies today have really helped us to better understand the culture of the first century. They really have. But I want to argue that maybe they’re slightly overdone. But even though those studies are slightly overdone and perhaps overemphasized in some areas, they’re not in others.

Why do I say that? Well, because though there were expectations of Roman women—and we’ll get to that—there was also this idea among the general populace of males that you had three categories of women. You had companions, you had handmaids and you had wives.

Now the wives were for childbearing. And the handmaids were for getting your drinks on a hot summer day, general care. The companions were for your sexual pleasures, or at least your intimate companionship.

Now I want you to know that if that does not create a difficult scenario for the wife, I don’t know what does. And that was the general scenario—not every scenario, but that was the general scenario. It was alive and well in Roman culture.

Now in the midst of that a wife was called to submit. In Roman culture a wife was called to submit. But she was to be a manager in her own home. In other words, she was to exercise authority. And she had authority over the slaves of the house and the children of the house. And she even had authority over property.

Now here’s the thing that I want you to understand. The thing that I want you to understand is that when you begin to listen to some of these quotes that I’m going to read to you, what you’re going to say is that some of this sounds like Scripture. For instance, being a manager in your house sounds like 1 Timothy, and it sounds like Titus.

You remember that Paul says to Titus that wives are to manage their own homes. So you begin to say to yourself that there is some overlap. And there is overlap. And we ought not to be surprised about that.

But the thing that we need to keep in mind is that she was to submit. It was a difficult situation anyway, because the husband had this immoral freedom if he so chose. But she also had a certain amount of authority that she delegated.

Plutarch, in his *Advice to the Bride and Groom*, says this. He says, “*So it is with women also. If they subordinate themselves to their husbands, they are commended.*” There’s your submission. “*But if they want to have control, they cut a sorrier figure than the subjects of their control.*”

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Now the reason I bring this up is because it highlights both their submission, and it highlights their managerial role. They do have control in their homes over slaves, children and property. This is Plutarch who is writing.

Participant: Who is Plutarch?

Jeff: Plutarch was the cultural philosopher of the day. And so within about one hundred fifty or two hundred years or so, I want to say that this would be the accepted norm of the cultural practice.

Again this is another thing that he says from the same book. *“Control ought to be exercised by men over women.”* Now this is the significant thing. *“Not as the owner has over a piece of property.”* That’s interesting, isn’t it? *“But as the soul controls the body, by entering into her feelings and being knit to her through good will.”*

Now I don’t know about you, but I look at that and I say, “Well that’s pretty good!” Right? I mean, that’s not a bad thing. I want to even say, “Doesn’t that sound like Peter?” When you get to verse 7, what does Peter say? Read it. Look at it. I can’t see; I don’t have my readers. But it says something like *“Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life.”*

Transcriber’s Note: ESV.

Jeff: That sounds like Peter. So the question that I have for you is this. So when in Rome, do you do what the Romans do? Is that all we have here in the Scriptures? Is Peter kind of just digging up what’s in Rome, saying, “Let’s follow the culture here?” No, not quite.

Why do I say that? Well when you look at women in the New Testament, one of the things that you discover is this. One of the things that you discover is that women are considered morally capable. In fact, they are considered morally culpable. It’s not just the men who will be judged. It’s women as well. But they are also intellectually capable. And they’re considered free.

One of the things that I just love is how the New Testament presents women to us. I mean, one of the things that you grab hold of pretty quickly is that women were faithful to Jesus when the men weren’t. One of the things that you grab hold of pretty quickly is that there are some places in Paul’s writings where he seems to give precedence to slaves and women, and then husbands. In fact, that’s Peter right here in this text, in chapters 2 and 3.

Peter talks about slaves first in chapter 2. He talks about women, and then he talks about men.

Now when you think about how the household codes were written in the day, that’s not how they were written. It was the household leader first, and so on, and then down the hierarchical chain.

So it’s really interesting how the New Testament treats women in comparison to how they are treated in Rome. There is a difference, and I want to make sure that you see that and understand that.

Let’s go back to another quote. *“A wife ought not to make friends on her own.”* Okay, now we’re getting into some differences between Rome and Christianity. *“But enjoy her*

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husband's friends in common with them. The gods are the first and most important friends. Wherefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions.”

Now Christianity would have fit nicely into that last phrase.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: It would have. I want you to think about it, because what was the rumor of the day about the Christian church? The rumor of the day was that they were cannibals because of the Lord's Supper, right? There were immoral practices, queer rituals going on in the church. And so Christianity would have fit nicely into that statement.

All of a sudden, now we're not only seeing the difference between the way Roman women were treated, and the expectations that there were for them, but also how the New Testament treats them. And so I want you to understand that what we have here is a basic thesis. A wife must submit. That's the basic thesis of these six verses.

But I want you to understand that there is a tension here. There's a tension. And the tension is in the passage from Plutarch that we just read. “A wife is not to have friends apart from her husband's, and the most important friends are the gods.” She is not to have a god apart from her husband, okay?

Now that raises the question, does it not?—*to obey or not to obey?* That is the question. I've been talking a lot. Do you have any questions up to this point?

Participant: You know, I'm just thinking about after the Thirty Years War. What was the Latin? “The ruler's religion is the ruler for the people.”

Jeff: Yes, all right.

Participant: So I mean that this is not very far-fetched from that.

Jeff: No, uh-uh. No, that's very true. In fact, here it's households, but there it's whole lands and kingdoms.

Participant: Right.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: I thought that when he said “the Thirty Years War” that he was referring to his anniversary. *(Laughter)*

Participant: Let me testify. *(Laughter)*

Participant: I surrender all. I surrender all. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Oh, man! Whew! *(Laughter)* That's the only thing I can say. *(Laughter)* Yes?

Participant: So the context is very crucial, because we as 21st-century Americans wouldn't necessarily know the context Peter is writing to. And we read it and we say, “Wives, be submissive to your husbands.” Well, every women's rights movement—

Jeff: Hates it.

Participant: Would shoot that down and say, “What are you talking about? This is the 21st century! Grow up!”

Jeff: Right. Yes.

Participant: Or whatever. But in the context of what you are saying, maybe you could help me out with this. I've been told that if you put the Ten commandments in the context of the Pharaoh, and the way he treated the Jews, when God says, “Do not commit

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adultery,” it could be refreshing because the men were told to have many children, as many as they could, because Pharaoh needed workers. And so we look at it and say, “Come on, man! I love women. What am I going to do, you know?” Maybe that’s exaggerating it.

Jeff: Well, I don’t think it is.

Participant: But there’s a context. We don’t see what people were living and knowing. I guess in summary my question is why isn’t that clearer in the Scripture? When you say that it will catch up to the Bible, I think, “That’s clever; that’s a nice turn of phrase.” It’s good for us. But a nonbeliever would look at it and say, “Really?”

Jeff: Let me give you the simple answer to that, okay. The simple answer is that “*the workman is worthy of his wage*”, and that though all things necessary in the Bible are plain unto themselves, either by a plain reading or comparing the difficult texts with simpler texts, and so the way of salvation is clear and many other things, there are things that are not as clear. And I think this passage happens to be one of them.

A workman is worthy of his wage. I say that because that’s the teaching elder who ought to be teaching the congregation that doesn’t have the time to spend in this kind of literature, and say to them that this is what this text means to the best of our ability, as we study the surrounding culture and that sort of thing. So I’m going to argue that a pastor, a teaching elder, is a crucial thing.

Participant: Yes. Amen.

Jeff: Have you read *Pilgrim’s Progress* yet? (*Laughter*) Nobody has raised his hand at this point because nobody—Remember what Pilgrim finds as soon as he comes into the house of Interpreter? He finds a picture, a picture of a man who is staring up, who has got the world at his back and the book in his hand. And all of a sudden you realize that a pastor is crucial for the guide. And he appears in that book in various ways. And so that’s essentially what I’m saying to you. A pastor who is a good workman will tell his congregation these things.

Participant: Very good. Thank you, Jeff.

Second Participant: Since we like to go deep into Scripture, the problem with the women today—and I’m sure it was that way then—the problem is the want to.

Jeff: Yeah.

First Participant: What was that?

Second Participant: When we get to the submissiveness of the woman to the man, the problem is the want to.

Jeff: Yes. They don’t want to.

Participant: And that comes from the Fall.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right. Well, that passage in Genesis chapter 3 says, and you know how it’s phrased sometimes. The wife’s desire will be for her husband and he will rule over her. And the women’s hearts flutter. (*Laughter*) And we go, “No, no! That’s the curse!” (*Laughter*) You’re going to desire to usurp him and he’s going to desire to dominate you. And Ephesians 5 is the reverse of that, right? The husband loves, the wife submits.

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Participant: I want to point out that this has far-reaching issues right now before the church, such as the ordination of women.

Jeff: Yes. So anyway, *(Laughter)*

Participant: Let’s go to the next Scripture. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Anyway, to obey or not to obey? That is the question that Plato or—

Participant: Plutarch.

Jeff: Or Shakespeare should have asked. *(Laughter)* Come on, it’s Shakespeare! So there is Christianity versus the social order. And you have to understand that in that particular day that Christians were being used as the scapegoat for problems. All you have to do is fast forward in your head to the year 65 A.D. and the burning of Rome. There were nine or ten sections of Rome burned. And what was the rumor? The rumor was that Nero was on top of his palace, playing his fiddle as Rome burned. There were some who were saying that Nero actually set fire to his own city as emperor.

But what did he do? He blamed the Christians! He said, “Wait a minute! There are two sections of Rome that did not burn badly. And they are populated, for the most part, by who? Christians!” Isn’t that convenient? It can’t be the providence of God preserving them. Absolutely not! So what he did was that he blamed them. They turned into the scapegoat. And that’s often the way of it when we find out what’s going on.

Not only that. Can you imagine how embarrassing that would have been for a husband to have his wife have friends other than his own, especially gods other than his? It’s interesting that Peter says, “Do not fear” at the end of that passage. It makes you wonder what he’s saying. These are intimidating people. Don’t fear them.

So then, what is the way forward? Is the way forward to be an under-cover Christian? In other words, is the way forward for this woman to be a Christian in private but not in public? In other words, will she write Peter a secret letter and say, “Peter, I can’t possibly do anything other than go to the temple with my husband. I can’t go to the Christian church and worship. I can’t do that. I’ve got to be an under-cover Christian.”

So what is Peter’s counsel to her? Well I want you to catch it because it’s really important. The first thing he says is to be silent. Why? So that your conduct will win them over.

Now that’s the very first thing that he says. But then there’s a second thing that he says, and it’s really fascinating. I want you to catch this. He says, “Let them see.” In other words, let your husband see *“your respectful and pure conduct.”*

Now here is the thing that you have to catch about this. The New American Standard has *“let them see your chaste behavior.”* In other words, this is what Peter says to them. Peter says, “Hey, girls, be silent. Be respectful. And let them see that you’re not having an affair with them,” or rather on them.

And you’re going, “Wait a minute!” The first thing that we want to ask is this. Why would a Christian woman have to show that she’s not having an affair on her husband? I mean, doesn’t your mind immediately ask that question? Wait a minute! He is assuming that this is a Christian woman. He’s assuming that she’s pure, that she’s faithful to her husband. Why would he say to her, *“Let them observe your pure and chaste behavior?”*

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How? He goes on to answer that. How should they observe this behavior? He says to focus on the internal rather than on the external adornment, doesn't he? He says, “Show them this by focusing on internal adornment, not external adornment.” Let your internal adornment be godliness. Don't let your external adornment be braided hair and jewelry and bracelets, and so on. That's how you show them that you are chaste in your behavior.

Now why does that matter? I'll tell you why. It's because the Greeks said that outward adornment was an instrument for seduction.

Let me give you some quotes. Here's Xenophon in his *Economics*. And *economics* isn't financial. Economics is home management, domestic ordering in the old language. “*External adornments and cosmetics are unnecessary if a woman simply stays at home.*”

That's Plutarch. He adds, “*Most women stay indoors if you take from them gold-embroidered shoes, bracelets, anklets, purple and pearls.*” The implication? Take these things away and they'll be chaste. They will not be used as instruments for seduction. Your wife will not become somebody else's pleasure giver.

Look at Peter's counsel in verse 3. A Christian wife is to help her unbelieving husband in what way? By not letting her adornment be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry and fancy clothes.

In other words, here is how you are to help your husband see that you're not using these things as instruments of seduction. When you want to go and worship, don't get dressed up.

In other words, catch this. Here's the tension. In other words, she is to obey. She is to comply with the expectations of her husband, based on his cultural understanding of what it means to dress yourself up. But she is to obey even while she disobeys, because all she is doing is that she is setting herself up so that she can go and be friends with a God who is not her husband's.

Do you see that? Do you see how fitting the culture around it helps us to understand exactly what it is that Peter is saying, and how we ought to understand this? In other words, if your wife all of a sudden becomes very unattractive because she reads 1 Peter chapter 3, you say, “No way!” All you have to do is read Psalm 45 and see the bride adorned with beautiful embroidery and all of these other wonderful things to realize that this would be an inconsistency in Scripture if God in the Old Testament said, “Yes, fine embroidery and bracelets and all of that are fine for a woman, especially a bride on her wedding day. But oh no, not for a Christian!”

You have to say, “Wait a minute! Where is my understanding wrong at this point? How do I need to understand 1 Peter chapter 3?” I need to understand 1 Peter chapter 3 in that Peter is saying this. Keep in mind your cultural context so that you can be as submissive as you can be.

Look, it's the same way with Christians. A Christian ought to be the very best citizen that he or she can be, until the government tells them to disobey God.

Participant: Right.

Jeff: But then what we ought to be able to do is to say to the government, “We are absolutely the best citizens you have, except for here. And we're going to continue not to be good citizens here. We're going to be good citizens of the kingdom of God, maybe not

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of America. But we’re going to be good citizens in every way we can.” That’s what he’s telling the wife. Bill?

Bill: It’s a parallel to Daniel.

Jeff: Yes. Absolutely.

Participant: Amen.

Second Participant: What does that mean?

Jeff: Well Daniel was absolutely the best wise man that he could be. He served his king faithfully, right? But when the king says, “Don’t pray to any other god except me”, Daniel has to disobey.

Okay, I’ve got four quick points here. *The aim is not to conform to culture. The aim is to subvert culture.* I’m going to illustrate that in the next point. Let me just say that for now. I’m just going to go through these quickly.

Listen to what Peter is saying. Isn’t it interesting that Peter is not saying, “Hey, listen to what Plutarch says. Listen to Xenophon.” No, no, no. He says that Sarah obeyed, right? God’s redemptive historical plan trumps Greek culture.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: So what Peter is trying to do is not to say, “Conform to your culture.” What he’s trying to do is he is trying to say to them, “Let redemptive history and the precepts in Scripture subvert the culture.” And here’s how to do it. Where it best conforms, let’s utilize it. That’s the idea.

The wife is to follow Christ in His humiliation. In other words, the wife says, “Wait a minute! This is far too difficult. This may bring me a lot of pain and loss and suffering.”

And we want to say, “Duh!”, right? When is walking in the path of humiliation ever easy? I don’t know. If you can tell me when humiliation is easy I’d like to know. But I think that fits in with our overall theme, that humiliation is what’s being taught here.

And then notice this. This is a great thing. She’s not to be silent forever, is she? 1 Peter 3 verse 15. When someone asks you to give a reason for the hope that is in you, then be ready to give a defense. That’s what he comes along and says. So be silent. Do not do what the culture would expect you to do when you leave the home. Go out in your sweat pants and your hair not done. Take your coffee mug with you without your lipstick on so that your husband doesn’t think that you’re going out and performing some lewd act. Go to church and worship. If he follows you, he’ll be able to see you in worship.

And then when he asks you, “Honey, what are you doing?”, you’ll be ready to give him an answer, a gentle and respectful answer, but an answer for the hope that is in you.

You see, I think that is how you want to understand 1 Peter chapter 3, verses 1-7. That’s all I have. If you have questions, I’ll take them.

Participant: So really the idea of subverting the culture isn’t to be aggressive.

Jeff: Oh yes, right!

Participant: But it is subversion. The husband can look at his wife and say, “She’s not being a threat to me in any way.”

Jeff: That’s right.

Participant: And yet at the same time she is being a witness to him in regard to her faith without even saying anything, because it will open up opportunities.

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Jeff: Exactly.

Second Participant: That’s a good point, because in this setting that the Bible doesn’t quite sway them.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: Yes it does, from the heart out.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right. That’s exactly right. Bill first, then Don.

Bill: It’s no different today. We’re supposed to live our lives as Christians in such a way that even though we’re committed to do things that could cause someone watching us to misconstrue or think badly of us, we’re supposed to protect ourselves from doing such things.

Jeff: You’re right. It’s Romans 15, isn’t it?

Bill: So the situation with the wife is this. Don’t give someone a reason to conjecture erroneously, but nevertheless to conjecture.

Jeff: Yes.

Bill: And that’s putting it (*unclear*) for today. We should live our lives in such a way that when people observe them, we remove any possible negative objection that they can apply that’s humanly possible.

Jeff: Yes. Don?

Don: So Jeff, are you saying that it’s wrong to use 1 Peter 3 verse 15 the way so many people use it, as an apologetics verse?

Jeff: Well, you know, that’s really interesting, Don. I’ll say it like this. Often, some of the headiest theology that we read about—for instance, I’m thinking of Philippians 2:5-10—is often used as sort of a weighty, heavy, Christological passage. But the way Paul uses that passage is very pastoral and practical. He says, ‘Have this mind which was in Christ.’ And then he goes on to talk about how that affects them, that this Christology is meant for this practical end. I think that this particular passage, this passage about apologetics, is meant for a very pastoral end.

Now I think you can extrapolate principles from these passages. But first and foremost, I think they have a primacy in the Biblical text that they aren’t often given when they are talked about in those sorts of ways. So oftentimes we jump right to evidentialism or presuppositionalism with 1 Peter 3:15.

Transcriber’s Note: Two competing systems of apologetics, defending the faith.

Jeff: And that’s really not the first place where we ought to jump. Bill?

Bill: On the lighter side, whether it’s men or women, we always like to come up with excuses as to why we don’t obey God.

Jeff: Yeah, right.

Bill: Women say, ‘Pastor, you don’t know what my husband is like!’ But what Peter uses is Sarah as an example. Her husband tried to pawn her off twice as his sister to save his own skin.

Jeff: Yes, that’s exactly it. Anybody else? Okay. Thank you. (*Applause*)