

In Fallen Families and Fellowships

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Date: 24 November 2013

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn now to our scriptures this morning, and we're back to Peter's first letter, and we're going to be reading together principally in 1 Peter chapter 3, looking this morning at 1 Peter 3 verses 1 to 12, but to get the context, the very important context of Peter's writing, we're going to start reading partway through verse 20.

Now, you'll see that this section really begins at verse 11 of chapter 2 and goes through to verse 12 of chapter 3.

Peter's talking about how we're to live with holiness in a hostile world, in the world generally to begin with, in workplaces, which can be difficult, and also in the family and even in the Christian fellowship, and right at the heart of it all, it's centered upon the pattern of our Lord Jesus Christ. So in verse 20, he says, If when you do good and suffer for it, you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example or better, leaving you an exact pattern that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin. Neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in turn. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

[1 : 41] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives.

When they see your respectful, better reverential and pure conduct. When they see your reverence, that is for God, and your pure conduct.

Do not let your adorning be external, the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, the putting on of clothing. But let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their husbands as Sarah, babe, Abraham, calling him Lord. And you have become her children if you do good.

[3 : 00] And do not fear anything that is frightening. Likewise, 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.

Do this so that your prayers may not be hindered. Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind.

Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless. For to this you were called, that you may obtain, that you may inherit a blessing.

For whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good.

Let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.

[4 : 09] But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. Amen. And may God bless to us this his word.

Well, turn with me, if you would, to 1 Peter chapter 3. And we're looking at verses 1 to 12 this morning. Those of you who were with us on Wednesday evening and saw our report from Nigeria got a taste, I think, of the starkness of the prosperity gospel, which is so rife in that nation.

Every roadside billboard and poster promising an outpouring of blessings and miracles and healings and riches and immediate fulfillment of your destiny, of your true calling from God, as it would be outlined by this glitzy apostle or that in their fine suit and their exalted pulpit. But what a total contrast to Peter, the genuine apostle of Christ. Look at chapter 2, verse 21. Our true calling, he says, is to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, whose path in this world was a path of suffering as the most lowly servant of all.

[5 : 39] Yes, of course, Peter says, we are an elect people. We are called to share in God's glory to come. But our road to glory is Christ's road to glory.

And it is the only road to glory in this world, and that is the road to the cross. And that means that now in this world, we will always be an exiled people.

But we're called, nonetheless, to show God's glory to the world in this fallen and hostile world, just as the Lord Jesus Christ did.

And that is very hard. Authentic holiness in a hostile world is very, very hard. But Peter says in verse 24, that in Christ, God has given us the power.

He has borne our sins away on the tree so that we might have a new life, dead to sin and alive to righteousness. And verse 21 says he's also given us a pattern of that righteous life to follow in his steps.

[6 : 52] The Lord Jesus submitted willingly and served winsomely and suffered worthily for our sake, says Peter. And now we, his people, are called to do the same for his sake in this world.

Submitting, verse 13, for the Lord's sake, even to pagan governments, far from perfect. And verse 19, to masters, also far from perfect.

Why? Because we are mindful of God. Because everything is done in his sight and for his sake. Verse 21. And as it is in the fallen world and workplace, so also it must be, says Peter, in our family life and in our fellowship in the church.

Again, even if that situation is far from easy, and often it isn't. In the real world and in the real Christian life, there are battles in all of these areas.

Look back at chapter 2, verse 11. Peter says we're in a war against the natural ways of our fallen sinful hearts. That's one reason for the grievous trials that we often face as Christians that he talks about in chapter 1.

[8 : 05] And for some of us, for some of us, these grievous trials are very close to home. They affect the most intimate of our relationships, our marriages, and our home lives.

So here in verses 1 to 7 of chapter 3, Peter has some vital instruction for that particular situation. Of wives who find themselves in very difficult marriages.

Now he tackles that specific issue, but notice he is very clear that the principles he applies here are no different. They're just the same principles of the Christ-like path in life.

Willing submission, winsome service, and worthy suffering for the Lord's sake. So in verses 8 to 12, he moves that most exclusive relationship of marriage to apply exactly the same pattern to the most extensive relationships that we have in the whole of the Christian fellowship.

And so what's clear in this whole section is that the pattern of godly submission within the family and the fellowship mirrors the same pattern for our life in the world and in the workplace.

[9 : 16] At the heart of it all, at the very center of all of this teaching, as we've seen, is verses 21 to 25. It's the pattern of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He suffered for you, leaving you an exact pattern that you might follow in his steps. So let's focus first of all at verses 1 to 7 on godly submission in the family.

Where the focus is authentic Christian living exhibited in the most exclusive relationship at the very heart of family life, in marriage.

It's all about the struggle for real marital love, especially when the relationship may be one full of tension and stress and even antagonism because of the place of Christian faith in the household.

And I want to say at the outset that I do realize that this may be a very difficult subject for some of us here today. Some of us do have very trying circumstances in their marriage.

[10 : 26] In fact, most of us do at times. Of course we do. It goes with the territory, doesn't it? We're all married to terrible sinners. And so are our spouses, by the way. But for some of us, it may be a real struggle right now.

And you may feel really up against it. You may feel very near to despair. And if that is you, I want to say right at the outset that this is not a word to beat you up or to make you despair even more.

It's the absolute opposite. Peter wants to encourage you and to help you and to give you hope. He wants to strengthen you and give you heart in the situation that you're in.

So if that is you this morning and you really are suffering because you're struggling to be faithful to the Lord in a difficult marriage, then please do take the second half of verse 20 in chapter 2.

Take it to heart as a word for you today. Take it to heart as a word for you today.

[11 : 52] But you see, the Lord wants to equip you. He wants to equip you very practically as well. So let's look at Peter's words here carefully and seek God's wisdom.

And by the way, if you're not in that situation, then if everything is wonderful and happy for you in your marriage, it is for you still because that may also be you one day.

And even if you're not married, if you've never been married, that doesn't matter either. We're all called, aren't we, to strengthen and encourage Christian marriage. So this, friends, is a word for all of us, whether it's directly to you today or more indirectly.

Well, look at verses 1 to 6. Peter addresses Christian wives and he says, likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands. Now, notice, this is not the New Testament's only teaching about marriage, nor is it even the only teaching about this pattern of male headship.

We'd need to study Ephesians 5 for starters and many other places to get the full picture. We don't have time for that today. We have done that in the past. You can listen in online. But here, a very specific situation is in view, and it is Christian wives in difficult marriages.

[13 : 10] And especially, as verse 1 indicates, if their husband is not a believer, if they refuse to obey the word of the gospel. That's Peter's standard language for unbelievers.

You'll see it if you look back to chapter 2, verses 7 and 8. Unbelievers are those who disobey God's word. But it's not only to wives of unbelieving husbands he's speaking.

He just says, even if some of them do not obey. And the truth, I'm afraid, is that there are many Christian wives who also face very difficult marriages with Christian husbands.

And so, men, if you think that you're here today as a Christian husband and none of this applies to you, just wait till we get to verse 7, because Peter does have you in his sights too. But the situation addressed here is a real one.

A wife in that Grisha-Roman culture was expected to follow her husband's religion. And if she refused to do that, it was a cause of great social embarrassment, potentially.

[14 : 11] And for her to worship not his gods, but to worship Christ, especially if that was an exclusive worship, that could be considered as rebellion, not just against her husband, but against the state.

And for her to be going off outside her own household to somebody else's household, where a meeting of the Christian church was being held, well, that could be very humiliating and scandalous for her husband.

Now, it's not quite the same for us today in our culture here in the West, but it certainly is still the same in many other parts of the world today, where for anyone to convert from the culturally dominant religion brings all sorts of shame to the household, all kinds of difficult issues, especially for women.

We know that. But even in our own culture, though it's different, it can bring all sorts of strains and difficulties to a marriage. If a woman is converted to Christ, then her husband isn't.

Or if her husband drifts away from his faith, and he leaves a woman in the household, a wife, as a lone disciple of Christ, that is very far from easy to deal with.

[15 : 23] But notice that in this heavily patriarchal culture, which Peter is speaking to, he addresses the woman directly.

I hope you noticed that. He's speaking to her in her own right, according to her, her own moral autonomy. Now, that was something very revolutionary in itself for that time. It's rather ironic that a passage like this, which many feminists today rage about and say it's oppressive to women, actually the first women and the first men who heard this or read this would have seen exactly the opposite.

Far from that. Peter is according the wife here exactly the same dignity as her husband and the same as all believers. He said back in chapter 2, verse 16, that they all live as free people, but voluntarily make themselves slaves to God to live under his instruction.

And God's instruction to the wife here is not to revolution. It's not to self-assertion, but it is to willing submission. For the sake of worship to God and witness to their husbands and the whole

community.

He wants her to embrace God's creation order in order to do that. Now, Peter is very careful in what he says. He's very nuanced in how he says it.

[16:49] Even a Christian husband will be challenged to see that his wife has equal status with him, equal value in Christ, what he says here.

And yet even a non-Christian husband can hardly object to what Peter's saying because he is affirming the husband's authority. As one writer says, it's a masterful move. And Peter both upholds and subverts the social order at the same time.

There is to be submission, he says, but voluntarily from a wife who is equal in status with her husband before God. She's a co-heir, verse 7, a co-heir with him in the grace of life, in her salvation.

And a woman, along with Christian men here, is called equally to follow the pattern of Christ in his own submission to God.

So Peter doesn't just give a command here, he also gives a motivation and focuses on the manner of the wife's willing submission, even with a difficult husband. And he tells us what that marks out for a wife when she lives this way.

[18:00] So verses 1 and 2 focus on the motivation for the wife's behavior here. Why are they to submit themselves even to difficult husbands? Well, Peter says the principal motivation is that a Christian wife should revere God's will in everything.

Look at verse 2. It's all about pure and reverential conduct, literally with fear. We've seen already several times that Peter always means, when he talks about fear and reverence, he always means reverence for God.

He's not talking here about respect for her husband. Not at all. That's clear from verse 6. He uses the same word and says, don't fear anything frightening about them. No, fear God.

Just as servants are to submit to their masters, in chapter 2, verse 18, literally with all fear of God, in verse 19, mindful of God, just as we're all, chapter 2, verse 13, we're all to submit to authorities. For the Lord's sake, likewise, wives, submit to your own husbands. For the Lord's sake. By the way, notice he says, to your own husbands.

[19:10] It's not a general expectation that women have to submit to all men everywhere, or their expectation. No, your own husband, he says. Just as the Lord Jesus suffered for doing good, not reviling in return, entrusting himself to God who judges justly, wives, you also, like Jesus, have to be willing to submit to your own husbands, even if some are hostile to your faith in Christ, even if that brings about suffering for you.

By the way, don't misunderstand this. He's not here talking about a wife having to endure physical abuse, a wife beater, a rapist, that sort of thing. That's just not in view here at all. That was abhorred in the Grisha Roman world.

He's talking about verbal suffering, verbal abuse, those who speak against you as evildoers, chapter 2, verse 12. And that is just the kind of struggles and tensions that many Christian women, many Christian wives still experience today with a spouse who rejects their faith in Christ.

It's very hard. Now, that's hard enough, isn't it? Your husband maligns your faith, if he's hostile to Christ, even if he's indifferent to Christ.

And I guess if that is the situation of a Christian wife, well, it's very easy to think, isn't it? Well, he just doesn't deserve my respect. Doesn't deserve my love.

[20:42] He doesn't deserve my submission in that way. And that's true. He doesn't. Not at all. But Peter is saying, you see, saying that it's not him who is asking it or demanding it.

It's you who are offering it, not principally to him, but for the Lord's sake. It's your pure and reverential worship of God.

Verse 4. We're told that that is very precious in God's sight. That makes a real difference, doesn't it? This is what he bore away your sins for, that your new life of righteousness might bring glory to him in earth and in heaven.

This is your worship to him. Your willing submission is a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God in Christ. That's your primary motivation in living this way.

It's worship to God. But also, notice verse 1, it's witness to God as well. This is the way, says Peter, to win your husbands. Both to win them to a more godly and obedient way themselves, if they are Christian men, but if they're lazy, if they're lacking in their spiritual responsibility.

[22 : 07] But also, even to win them to Christ from their unbelief, if they're not. Win them without a word, says Peter, by the conduct of their wives. He's not saying, of course, that you never speak about the gospel to your husband.

Don't be silly. Anyway, chapter 3, verse 15, verse is plain enough. He talks about that. But he is saying that ramming the gospel down your husband's throat all the time, nagging him all the time about his spiritual deficiencies, he is saying that will never be a way to win your husband over. That kind of nagging will turn a man off every single time. But by contrast, Peter is saying, authentic Christian living, living the grace of the gospel, living the goodness of the gospel before him, according to God's created order, that will deeply impress him, that will influence him. That's primary evangelism, isn't it? Because people see that the power of God is real. They see that God must be wonderful and attractive if you will submit to his will joyfully and willingly in these trying circumstances.

That's the power of true holiness. It promotes the gospel of Christ. It shows the attractiveness of the Savior. And friends, many a husband has been one exactly that way by seeing the life of Christ, animating the woman that they love.

[23 : 37] No, to be a real encouragement, I think, to any Christian wife who knows the pain of that situation, knows the pain of the struggle.

Well, hold on to it. Ask God to help you to be able to submit willingly, to serve winsomely, and even to suffer worthily in your marriage for the sake of Christ, for the sake of witness, to win your husband to Christ or to win him to be a better Christian husband, a better man for Christ. And when it's very hard, and sometimes it will be very hard, remember the chief motivation of all. It's for the Lord's sake. And those efforts of yours are precious in his sight.

And rejoice that even if it seems to be fruitless in your eyes, it is precious in God's eyes. What does this submission look like?

Well, verses 3 and 4 focus on the manner of this godly submission. And the picture given in these verses is of a woman who gladly welcomes God's order of creation and doesn't seek to assert the opposite, even under provocation and with good reason for resentment.

[24 : 55] It's a woman who cherishes what God cherishes, a beauty that's more than skin deep, something that shines out from within, from the heart, verse 4.

It's truly Christ-like. Adorning the imperishable beauty, says Peter, of a gentle and quiet spirit. That's what's truly precious in God's sight.

And the truth is, that too is what will touch the heart of your husband. Attractive cosmetics alone can never do that.

It's attractive character that can save a marriage, that can transform a marriage. That's what Peter's saying. And wives, you need to know that, says Peter.

It's not outward beauty. No amount of outward beauty, he says here, hairdos and jewellery and clothes, no amount of outward beauty can ever compensate for inward bitchiness, if I can put it as bluntly as that.

[25 : 56] That's what Peter's saying. Now don't misunderstand verse 3 either. Peter is not forbidding wives from trying to look their best. If he's banning gold, and if he's banning braided hair, as John Calvin points out, he must also be banning clothing.

I hardly think that's the case. Don't be silly. He isn't saying, try to be as dowdy and dull as possible in order to win your husband.

Let me just tell you, in case you are in any doubt, that is no way to win a man. I'm quite serious. Some people have very odd views. And girls, if you think that dressing down and utterly minimizing your femininity, scorning all man's attraction to beauty is a good strategy for pleasing your husband or for finding a husband, let me tell you, you need to think again.

I'm very serious about that. Peter is not saying here, wives, look your worst and behave your best. No. But what he is saying is first, that it is not mere outward beauty that you need, not merely the cosmetic.

It is the inward beauty of Christian character. And secondly, he is saying that you are to look your best not for yourself, not out of aggressive self-assertion, but for your husband in order to honor him, in order to make him proud of you, not ashamed of you among his friends.

[27 : 31] The scholars tell us that these particular marker he's speaking about here, the hairstyles and all the rest of it, they weren't just indulgences, they were something more, they were marks of a

kind of proto-feminism, a way of expressing power and independence of the husband, possibly even asserting sexual freedom as well.

A sort of ancient world power dressing, if you like. And what Peter is saying is no, don't be tempted to that even if your husband does frustrate you. Be a true woman.

Be feminine, not feminist. Let your outward adornment be matched by the beauty of the true womanhood that you are called to in Jesus Christ, reflecting his beauty and his gentleness and his quiet spirit.

What Peter is saying to you, wives, is that's the way that you will outshine your husband in the right way. Not trying to outdo him for your own sake out of rivalry, not trying to usurp him as a man.

That will alienate any normal man every time, let me tell you, but by outdoing yourself as a woman for him and for God himself.

[28 : 48] And that is what is precious in God's sight, says Peter. And what you'll find is that is what's very precious in your husband's sight too. There's no man that I know who isn't filled with joy when the wife on his arm outshines him totally.

Not just that she looks her very best for him, but also, and perhaps above all, when his friends, he knows, are full of admiration for her character. When they envy him for the treatment that he gets at home.

That swells the heart of a man. By contrast, there is nothing that so crushes a man than to know that his friends pity him for what he had to put up with at home from an HMW, a high-maintenance wife.

Yes, girls, we've got our codes as well. That's the truth. The manner of submission requires real feminine beauty.

This picture is of a radiant Christian woman gladly welcoming God's order for marriage, not asserting selfish independence, but magnifying a godly interdependence with her husband.

[30 : 07] That's how you worship God in your marriage, says Peter. And that's how you win your husband in marriage as well. But Peter points to a third thing in verses 5 and 6.

The mark of this godly submission, what it manifests. And if you are a wife who is struggling in a difficult marriage, especially with an unbelieving husband, or one who has lapsed from the way of Christ into disobedience, then it's easy to think, isn't it?

Well, maybe that's evidence that God has abandoned me as well. It's because I'm not really his. It's because I'm not really good enough for him either.

My marriage, my family, isn't a proper Christian one. That's why all this is going wrong for me. And Peter says, no, that is dead wrong. Look at verses 5 and 6.

This pattern of godly living that you're struggling with is an assurance that you have true hope in God, he says. It tells you that you share the authentic pedigree of God's chosen family right from the beginning.

[31 : 14] You're in line with all of them, verse 5. The holy women of old who hoped in God. You are Sarah's children. You're part of God's genuine family if that's what you're doing.

Verse 6. So go on doing good. Don't fear anything. Don't be frightened. Don't let these thoughts torment your heart. I think that's a wonderful encouragement to somebody who's struggling very deeply.

Easy to feel that struggle, especially if it's in the intimacy of a marriage relationship. It's so easy for that kind of struggle to induce all kinds of shame and guilt and self-loathing.

So easy for that to erode your joy, your assurance in Christ. Peter says, no, the very fact of your struggle to do the right in God's eyes in this situation is a sure mark that your faith and hope in Christ is real, not false.

Be encouraged. Go on. Trust God. Your willing and godly behavior is a powerful weapon in itself in a difficult marriage because grace can disarm great hostility, can disarm great hardness.

[32 : 40] Rejoice, says Peter, in your spiritual pedigree. As a godly and willing wife, you bear the mark of the true family of faith and don't ever forget that.

Well, there's a lot there and more for Christian wives to ponder, but wake up men and look at verse 7. Peter does not let husbands away with anything here.

His focus on the wife is, of course, because most likely, sadly, they are the ones who are facing up to great struggles in marriage, in difficult marriages. As it was then, I rather suspect it is still the same today.

But here is a clear word to Christian husbands or to husbands who come to church and claim to be Christian husbands. So are you listening? Husbands, verse 7, show understanding and honor to your wives.

And Peter gives us the theological reason why we must and a trenchant reminder of what will happen if we don't. First, the reason husbands are to honor their wives is just the same as the reason wives are to submit to their husbands.

[33 : 52] It shows reverence for God by gladly embracing God's creation order and his redeeming grace. First, the husband is to honor God's created order of sexuality.

That is, he is to recognize and rejoice in the proper complementary differences between the sexes as God has ordained. In other words, to realize that men are different from women.

Peter says, therefore, they need understanding as the weaker vessels. Not mentally inferior, not morally inferior. He doesn't say that.

Calm down. Don't worry. He has just urged women to be fearless and bold in verse 6. He clearly can't mean that. All he means is that women generally are physically more vulnerable than men and therefore vulnerable to being exploited by men.

There's no paid up feminist in the world will not say amen to that. But the answer is not addressed to women. Peter does not say, so women, rise up and get tough with your men.

[35 : 06] No, he speaks to the men and he says, man up. Be what God made you to be, protectors of women, not exploiters of women. It's the very reverse, isn't it, of male chauvinism.

Show honor to your wife, says verse 7, as a woman, literally as the feminine one. In other words, as different from you, complementary to you, and therefore needing proper understanding from you.

You see, if men had done this, there would be no need for the feminist movement, would there?

Men are the reason for the feminist movement. The feminists are absolutely right about that.

Women have been forced to compete with men men's way because men have not been like this.

But no, says Peter, you Christian men are to honor your wives as women, not just as wives and partners, but as women, as feminine, not as masculine.

Of course, that's the problem because men generally don't understand women. You can hear a lot of amens under the breath from the ladies there.

[36 : 24] But women, I suppose, have this thing called intuition. They seem to understand men, but we don't seem to have it in the same way. But Peter says, you can learn and we have to learn.

And so that's that. So, men have to just man up and learn how to understand women, how to understand their wives. Simple as that.

Now, the Bible can give us a lot of wisdom on this, but we can also learn a lot from one another and from the wisdom of God's common grace through many books and many helps and so on.

Excellent marriage courses like the one we had recently.

But men, this is a command. Don't treat it lightly. To honor your wife as a woman is a way of honoring God. You have to understand her as a woman.

She is not the same as you in nature. And God made her that way on purpose. It wasn't a mistake, even though sometimes we might think it.

[37 : 30] So don't ever exploit her as weaker. Honor her for her sake, but also because this is God's command that you honor his creation of marriage between man and woman, between masculine and feminine, and not anything else.

But second, he says, you must honor her because also she is your absolute equal as a co-heir in the grace of life. Now, do you see that? Absolute equality of status of male and female and clear complementary difference in roles of male and female go hand in hand together in the Bible.

And so husbands must honor God's created order, understanding his wife is a woman and is not like him in nature, and he must honor God's redeeming grace that she is absolutely equal with him as an heir in life.

If we need it hammered home, and men usually do, Peter is very clear, is he not, in his last line. Do you see it? If you don't honor your wife, if your relationship with her is wrong, then you are dishonoring God and so your relationship with him cannot possibly be right and so your prayers will be hindered.

In plain language, what he means is this, God will not listen to your prayers at all. He'll distance himself from you. He'll shut you out.

[39 : 13] It doesn't matter how sound your doctrine is. It doesn't matter how much you think you're being the head of your household and a spiritual leader. It doesn't matter how many pious texts you can quote about that. It doesn't even matter how often you say your prayers, how long your prayers, how heavy they are, how spiritual they are.

Forget about all of that, says Peter. God will not listen to that kind of man. Look down to verse 12. His face is against those who do evil.

So if that's you, you better watch out. You really had better repent. You better start to be understanding of your wife as a woman, as the feminine one God has blessed you with. to help compliment your feeble masculine foolishness. You see, it's serious, isn't it? I'm not joking. Peter is just saying the same as what we heard James the Apostle saying last Sunday evening, that how we relate to one another expresses the truth about our relationship with God himself.

[40 : 24] simple as that. Whether it's in the most exclusive relationship at the heart of the family and the intimacy of marriage or in the most extensive relationships within the heart of the Christian fellowship, the church.

That's why in verse 8, Peter turns from this particular example to apply exactly the same principles to every believer in the church family. He talks in these last few verses about godly submission in the fellowship.

Finally, all of you, he says. All of you. This spirit of willing submission and winsome service and even willing suffering is for all of you in every relationship in the church.

A particular example he's given is one of the toughest situations that people find themselves in. But if they're to submit willingly in these very tough cases, then how much more are we all to be characterized by this pattern of Christ's self-giving love in every situation in life, in every relationship?

For all of us, following Jesus means that we are to struggle against evil and for good in order to glorify God. It's the great struggle against self-love and for love to Christ and therefore for love to his people and for love to the world.

[41 : 49] That's why marriage is such a good example for Peter to use here because in marriage you can't hide your selfishness. That's why so often the very early years of marriage, the very first year of people's marriages can be so fraught and so difficult because you're forced to see sin right close up in your spouse but also in yourself.

selfishness is exposed as soon as you have to start living closely and intimately with somebody and selfishness is the great idol that God wants to slay in every one of us.

But the heart of the struggle for real marital love is the struggle against selfishness and it's just the same in the church. It's the struggle for real brotherly love especially when we're faced with antagonism and hardship.

Look at verse 8. Right at the heart of those five things he mentions there is brotherly love. That's the command all the way through this letter. Chapter 1 verse 22 we're redeemed for a sincere brotherly love.

So love earnestly from a pure heart. And again all the way through the letter. You see love for Peter and for the whole Bible is not just an emotion that you feel it's an action.

[43 : 10] It's something you do purposefully. And Peter in these verses describes the practice of genuine Christian love which denies self and submits to others for the Lord's sake.

And it's evoked he says here in verse 8 by minds that are harmonious and humble. The very opposite of pride and self-assertion. That always destroys harmony and brings division in a church. Only a fellowship that is united in humility can be a truly loving fellowship just as only a husband and wife united in humility can have a truly loving marriage.

And genuine love is expressed as verse 8 says in sympathetic hearts that care for others' needs and others' joys and others' hopes and tender hearts that have compassion and mercy for those who are in pain those who struggle in sin.

What does it look like in the cold light of day? Well, verse 9 it looks just like the Lord Jesus Christ was described in verse 23 of chapter 2 who did not return evil for evil or reviling for reviling but blessed his persecutors.

[44 : 30] You see, the practice of real Christian love expresses the beauty of real righteousness the new life that we are born into in Christ. But Peter points us also to the purpose of this genuine Christian love that denies self and submits to others.

the end of verse 9 he says it's for our blessing the blessing of true righteousness the blessing of true life whoever loves life will be this way.

It manifests who we really are. See what he's saying as he quotes from the psalm. It's people who are changed and renewed to live for righteousness who manifest the pattern of the Savior like this. Verse 11 turning from evil loving good it's them that the Lord loves and knows and sees and cherishes in verse 12. It's their prayers that his ears are open to because he sees and rejoices in the image of his own son the Lord Jesus in their lives.

He recognizes these as truly being his children. You see the trouble is friends we can so easily fool ourselves even in the Christian church but Peter is saying we can't fool God.

[46 : 04] He sees within he sees beyond the mere cosmetic he sees to the heart to the wife's heart in verse 4 the imperishable beauty of precious gold of a Christ-like spirit.

In all our hearts which so often are given away by our tongues which is why he mentions it here. We can't fool God. Look at verse 12. He cuts through all the pious claptrap to the truth in all of our relationships to what we really are inside to what we really do and his face is against those who do evil no matter whether they call themselves a Christian or not.

Whether you're a wife or a husband or a brother or a sister or a church member or a church leader especially a church leader and he will be deaf to the prayers of those who dishonor him by dishonoring their wife or by dishonoring their brothers and sisters or indeed by dishonoring their husband.

He will not hear your prayers. His face is against those who do evil. But don't miss the first half of verse 12.

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer. He does see and he does hear and he does answer the prayer of every Christian wife however hard her marriage who for the Lord's sake and out of reverence for him seeks to adorn herself with the beauty of a Christ-like spirit in order to worship Christ and in order to witness Christ to her husband and her family.

[48 : 04] And he does see and hear and answer every Christian husband who does honor his wife and is seeking to live with her with understanding even though she may not be in many ways his spiritual equal but nevertheless cherishing her as a sister in Christ.

He does see and he does hear and he does answer the prayer of every Christian in the fellowship who denies himself and seeks to submit to the Lord and therefore to others and to love them earnestly from a pure heart even when it is a huge struggle to do so because they are a pain in the neck.

He sees and he hears and it's beautiful in his sight and he will turn his face to you and he will answer your prayers.

he sees and he hears and he blesses a life like that because that is authentic Christianity.

For to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps.

[49 : 33] Amen. Let's pray. Lord, will you help us to live the pattern of your son, our Lord Jesus Christ who submitted willingly and served winsomely and suffered even so worthily that we might become his.

lead us we pray Lord in your righteousness. Make your way plain before our faces this week. For we ask it in Jesus name.

Amen.