

A marriage made in Heaven

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Date: 14 February 2010

Preacher: David MacPherson

[0 : 00] A warm welcome to you all to our service this morning, and I can see we have some visitors with us this morning. We're very delighted to have you amongst us, and pray that God would bless you as you worship together with us this morning.

Well, let us worship God, singing to His praise in Psalm 84 on page 338 of this blue psalm book, page 338, and singing verses 1 to 3 of that psalm.

The tune is University. How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord of hosts to me, the tabernacles of thy grace, how pleasant, Lord, they be.

Psalm 84, verses 1 to 3, it's on page 338. And we'll stand to sing and remain standing for prayer. Thank you.

Thy mercy, soul of sweet memory, it gains thy courts to see.

[1 : 40] Thy heavy heart and flesh cry out, O living God for thee.

The boldest battle findeth thou, and thou spare him to rest.

The boldest battle findeth thou, and thou hast thou, and thou hast thou, and thou hast thou, and thou hast thou. O God for her, and thou hast thou, and thou hast thou, and thou hast thou But thou hast thou art, and thou hast thou, and thou hast thou.

Amen. Let us pray.

We come before you, our great and good God, this morning, and we pray that the sentiments of the psalmist that we have sung would reflect our own sentiments, that it would be for us a pleasant and a lovely and a pleasing thing to gather in this place for the worship of you, the living and true God.

[3 : 24] Lord, that we would delight in yourself as we meet with you and worship you, and that we would delight in one another as God's people.

We pray that there would be in us a genuine recognition of our need of you, that we would know what it is to thirst and hunger for you.

And we pray that if that is absent, that you would cultivate and produce that in us, for we do need you. That is objectively true, whether we recognize it or feel it or are conscious of it.

And so we pray that you, by your Spirit, would deepen that conviction and that sense in ourselves.

But not only that we would be aware and conscious of our need, but that we would find our need satisfied as we turn to you, as we hear what you have to say to us, as we come confessing our sins and receiving the forgiveness that we so urgently require.

Lord, we pray then that you would bless us as we have gathered here this morning. Help us to worship you aright. Help us to worship you in a manner that is pleasing to you, and that what we offer to you this morning would be a sweet-smelling savor in your presence.

[4 : 52] Lord, we thank you that we do not come to some invented or local or regional deity, but we come to the Almighty Lord of hosts, the One who is from everlasting to everlasting, the only true and living God.

And we thank you that you have made yourself known to us, that we would know you, and that we might, wonder of wonders, become part of your family as we put our trust in your Son, Jesus Christ. And we would thank you for Jesus. We thank you that in Him we are able to see you as you really are. And we pray that we would see Jesus this morning as we sing your praises, as we turn to your Word, as we fellowship one with another.

We thank you that on this day of the week, this first day of the week, we celebrate that your Son, Jesus, who died on Calvary's tree in our place, rose again triumphant from the grave, that death could not hold Him down.

And we thank you that we, as His people, share in that victory over death. And we pray that that victory would be experienced and lived even now, that as we live our lives, our lives would be

resurrection lives, lives lived in the light of who Jesus is and what He has done, and indeed empowered by the resurrection power of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[6 : 29] We pray that you would bless us gathered here. But we thank you that we are part of a much greater gathering of your people across this city and across this country, and indeed across the world, who, like us, gather for this same purpose, to worship you.

And so we pray that we would be very conscious that we are part of one family, the one and the only family of God.

And we pray that we would have that sense of unity and solidarity with all those who, like us, worship you this day. We pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Amen. Now I'll invite the children to come to the first couple of pews, and I have a couple of things I want to say to you.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

[7 : 41] Good morning. Good morning. Now I think some people are away for the weekend, because this is a good weekend, isn't it? Because tomorrow, back to the place you love so much, back to school tomorrow?

No. Back on Tuesday. Oh, dear. Wednesday. Oh, ridiculous. It wasn't like that in my day. Thursday. Oh, dear. That's far too long. Far too long a holiday. Anyway. Now, what day is today? But don't say Sunday. The 14th of February. What's the 14th of February?

Yeah, you are. Valentine's Day. It's in Valentine's Day. Oh, my. Well, I've got something here I want to show you. Now, hang on. I've got to get the right one. I'm not going to read it, because it's private. But I'm going to show you. It's the cover. Okay? That's it. You've seen it. Very good. Good. So, I got this card this morning. And it was sent to me by somebody who loves me.

[8 : 42] Ooh. So, you can guess who it might have been. Okay? Now, this card, this Valentine's card, this love card, love letter, is, I suppose you could call it a symbol.

Now, what does that mean? A symbol means that it tells you something. And it tells me something about the person who sent it. It tells me that they care for me.

And they love me. And that's why they've sent this card. But it doesn't tell me that much. If this is all I had, if I only had this card, and I read what was inside it, and if that's all I knew, I really wouldn't know that much about the person who sent it.

I wouldn't even know that much about what they feel for me or the love that they have for me. It symbolizes, it tells me something about it, but not that much, really.

In fact, some Valentine's cards, especially when folk are teenagers or young people, sometimes you get Valentine's cards that are sent anonymously.

[9 : 52] And you don't know who sent them. And that's very exciting. You think, ooh, I wonder who this was. Did somebody get one? No. You're not allowed to answer out there.

And it's a mystery. Somebody has sent me this card. Somebody loves me, or somebody fancies me, or somebody is interested in me. But I don't know who it is.

Now, the Bible has been described as God's love letter to us. A communication. A communication. Something that he's sent to us, that he's given us, that tells us that he loves us.

But if we compare it to a Valentine's card, it's really very different in a few ways. It's much better than a Valentine's card because, first of all, the Bible tells us much more about who loves us.

The Bible tells us who God is and what he's like. The Bible is the way that God reveals himself to us so that we know him and can know what he's like and know who is this one who loves us.

[10 : 58] But the Bible also tells us how he has shown that he loves us. There's a verse in the Bible that I'm sure you've heard because it's very well known.

And it tells us, For God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son, that he sent Jesus for us and to die for us. And it tells us there that he so loved us and he showed it, he demonstrated it by sending his Son, Jesus.

So the Bible tells us who this God is who loves us and it tells us also how he has shown that he loves us. But the Bible also does something else. It invites us to love God back.

We discover in the Bible who God is. We discover that he loves us. But we also are invited to respond to his love, to love him back. Now here I've got another card.

Now this card is one I sent and it's been kindly lent to me by the person who received it. He doesn't live a million miles away from what I live. Hence it was quite straightforward for them to lend it to me.

[12:05] Now this is one I sent. Now imagine if I'd gotten a card. If I'd gotten this card. Oh, let's get this right. Yeah. If I'd gotten this card but I hadn't sent this card, then I'd have been in trouble.

Well, anybody here in trouble this morning? No. Well, you see, for love to be special, it needs to go in two directions.

Now God has shown his love to you and to me and to all of us, but he wants us to love him back. But that's the order. He loves us first.

The Bible says that we love God because he first loved us. Now one final thing I want to just mention. How do we show our love to God?

He sent us his love letter. He sent us Jesus, his own son. He sent us or has given us the Bible that tells us about Jesus. But how do we love him back?

[13:06] Do we send him a card? Well, we can't send him a card, I don't think. Well, I'll tell you. The Bible tells us. In fact, Jesus tells us. Jesus told his disciples, and he tells us, if you love me, keep my commandments.

So that's one way we can show that we love him, by obeying him, by living lives that are pleasing to him. And that's the way that God himself gives to us, that we can show that we can respond to the love that he has for us.

So I hope that we are very sure that God loves us and also that he invites us to love him back and that we would do so. Well, let's sing again.

But before we do, I just want to repeat the welcome to you all this morning. It is a holiday weekend. Well, for the schools, it's a holiday weekend. And hence, we've got a few of our own folk away, but also several folk I'm seeing who are with us.

And we're very pleased that you're able to join us today. At the close of the service, tea and coffee is served downstairs in the hall. And we'd be very pleased if you're able to remain for that.

[14:15] And that will give us an opportunity to meet you and chat with you. Also, just to mention that this Wednesday, our midweek meeting takes a slightly different form in that we have Alec MacDonald, well known to the congregation, former minister of the congregation, who will be with us in his capacity as chairman of the whole missions board.

And he will be giving a presentation about the work of the whole missions board. I'll also participate in my capacity as vice chairman of the international missions board.

So there's a little mention of that in the intimation sheet. And it would be good if there was a good attendance of folk from the congregation to hear what is going to be said in that regard.

Well, let's sing again. And we're going to sing in Psalm 80 and verses 1 to 7. Psalm 80 and sing psalms.

Psalm 80a. It's on page 106. Psalm 80a on page 106, verses 1 to 7. The tune is Love Divine.

[15:23] Hear, O Israel's shepherd, hear us. Joseph, like a flock you lead. You who are enthroned in glory, shine upon us in our need. Psalm 80a, verses 1 to 7.

And we'll stand to sing. Amen. O Israel's shepherd, hear us.

Joseph, like a flock you lead. You who are enthroned in glory, shine upon us in our need.

Riding on the angel in man's hand, and for it from cross to light, send us what's ahead towards you, come and save us, give us light.

O Lord God, the Lord Almighty, how long will your address come, making brighter people's prayers, so that honor them is not.

[16:59] You have fed us bread of sorrow, tears in plenty we must shed.

We are now before our neighbors humbled and discredited.

Riding on us, O God Almighty, let us see your glory bright.

Turn us once again towards you, come and save us, give us light.

Amen. Now we're going to read the Bible in the New Testament in 1 Peter 2, reading from verse 9.

[18:12] 1 Peter 2, reading from verse 9. It's on page 1218 in our Bibles. 1 Peter 2, reading from verse 9.

1 Peter 2, reading from verse 9.

1 Peter 3, reading from verse 1. of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in the world to abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the

day He visits us.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men, whether to the King as the supreme authority or to governors who are sent by Him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil.

Live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone. Love the brotherhood of believers. Fear God. Honor the King. Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps. He committed no sin and no deceit was found in His mouth. When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate. When He suffered, He made no threats.

[21 : 05] Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.

For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. Wives, in the same way, be submissive to your husbands, so that if any of them do not believe the Word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

For this is the way the holy women of the past, who put their hope in God, used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner, and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

The Word of God. Now let's join together in prayer once again.

Heavenly Father, we come before you and we thank you that you are a God who is concerned that we might live our lives peacefully and in a fulfilled and happy manner. And we thank you that you who have created us have also given us instructions as to how we might live, and that these instructions are not intended to be burdensome to us. They are not intended to limit us or to deprive us of freedom, but rather they have as their purpose that we might live happy lives.

[23 : 40] As we recall the words that you spoke to your people through Moses long ago, having given your law, and you, through him, reminded the people that these things you had taught them, that it might go well for them in the land that they had been given. And we thank you that this is indeed your purpose, as you would instruct us how we might live, that it would go well for us. We pray that you would grant us the discernment and the wisdom to look around us, to look at our own lives, to look at our own families and marriages and society. And as we see much that is awry, much that has gone wrong, that we would not stubbornly cling on to conventional or received wisdom as to the way things are, but that we would wisely and humbly turn to your Word, the very Word of God, and that there we would find the instruction that we need. If we have known this instruction and been foolish enough to ignore it or to leave it to one side, that we would repent of that. If we discover for the first time instruction from yourself, that we would be persuaded that this is indeed a good for us. And indeed, we are duty-bound to hear and to listen and to obey. We pray that you would guide us as we would listen to your instruction as we would turn to your Word this morning. But as we pray, we pray not only for ourselves, we pray not only that you would bless us and speak to us this morning, but we would pray for your world.

And we thank you that it is indeed your world. And though it is a world that is plagued by much suffering and violence and injustice, yet it remains your world. And you are a God who is concerned and indeed grieved by much of what you see. We pray for it. We pray for all lands where there is war and conflict that you would bring peace. We think of the conflict in Afghanistan and the offensive that is ongoing, even as we gather here peacefully this morning. We pray for those who

have already lost their lives, for the families of such as they receive that dreaded news of a loved one who has died. And we think not only of those in our own land who hear of servicemen who have been killed, but we think of families in Afghanistan who also face the tragedy and the sadness of the loss of a loved one. Lord, we pray that you would bring this conflict to a conclusion. And likewise, we know that there are many conflicts across this planet that is ours. And we pray that you would help those who seek to bring peace, those who have the responsibility to seek peace, that they would do so wisely and passionately. Lord, we commend to you this world. We think of those who mourn the loss of loved ones due to other acts of violence. We think of the terrorist attack in India in these past couple of days. And again, we pray for those who mourn, that you would comfort them. We pray for those who seek to recover a long road to recovery following disaster and tragedy of different kinds. And we remember once again that tragedy struck nation of Haiti as they seek to recover and respond with the passing of the past couple of days. And we pray for those who mourn the people who live and work and go about their business there. We pray your blessing on the church of Jesus Christ in that place. And indeed, whatever there is conflict, that your people would be able, by the lies they live and by the voice that they raise, be able to be a presence and a witness for you in the most dark places. Lord, we pray for our own land. And we pray that you would be pleased to bless us, that you would be patient with us, that you would draw many to yourself. that you would draw many to yourself. And we pray for many to yourself, that you would be anything on the church of Jesus Christ in that place. And indeed, whatever there is conflict, that your people would be able to be a presence and a witness for you in the most dark places. Lord, we pray for our own land. And we pray that you would be pleased to bless us, that you would be patient with us, that you would draw many to yourself.

Draw many to yourself. And we pray that even today, as the Word of God is preached and the good news concerning Jesus Christ is proclaimed, there would be those who hear and who respond to it, perhaps for the first time.

Lord, we commend to you then our own nation and our own church and our own congregation. We pray for all who make up our own congregation. For those present, we thank you also for those who are visiting us.

[29 : 07] For those who are visiting amongst us today and pray that they would be blessed as they are part of our fellowship this morning. And for those of our own number who are elsewhere and perhaps able to have a brief time of rest and relaxation.

We think especially of those who are involved in teaching, the teachers and the congregation, that this brief weekend that they have would provide them with a time of rest.

And as they return to their labors, be it to train for the work that they do or then once again to teach their pupils, that you would help them in that very important task to which you have called them.

Lord, we commend to you then these things and all these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now we're going to sing again. And we're going to sing in Psalm 15.

Psalm 15, it's on page 16. On page 16 of the blue psalm book, Psalm 15, we'll sing the whole of the psalm to the tune, Grathenberg.

[30 : 16] Lord, who may stay within your tent, your sacred dwelling place, and who upon your holy hill may live before your face, whoever walks a blameless path, who acts in righteousness, and who will always from the heart sincerely a truth express.

Psalm 15, the whole of the psalm, and we'll stand to sing. Psalm 15, it's on page 16.

Who has no song.

He's on page 16.

Psalm 15, it's on page 16. Psalm 15, it's on page 16. It's on page 16. It's on page 16. It's on page 16. It's on page 17. It's on page 16.

[32 : 21] He has sworn, I'll ever buy the price. He lends his money at no charge, no crime can he endure.

Those who behave in right, right this, will always stand secure.

It's St. Valentine's Day.

It just happens to fall today, 14th of February. And so, love is in the air. Or not, as the case may be. You can all take a view or judgment on that. It's been drawn to my attention that Tesco were offering three Valentine's cards for ten pounds.

[33 : 41] It was a special offer, three for ten pounds. Now, the question that jumps from that is, why would you need three cards?

But don't answer that. This morning. And yet, in a society that has done so much and does so much to devalue and to cheapen love, many still yearn for love.

Many yearn for true love, however that is understood or defined. Many look for and yearn for the love of their life, for, to use maybe somewhat old-fashioned language, a marriage made in heaven. It's not my purpose this morning to consider a marriage made in heaven, but rather marriage made in heaven.

Just a very small word distinguishes those two phrases. A marriage made in heaven or marriage made in heaven.

[34 : 56] And it is the latter that I want to consider. Just a very wee word. And yet, there is a fundamental difference. And it is crucial for our understanding of marriage that it is indeed made in heaven.

Marriage is a divine institution. Marriage is described also as a creation ordinance.

It is part of the very created order of God's creation. And it comes under the blanket and fulsome approval of the Creator.

When He spoke these words, as He contemplated all that He had created, we read in Genesis, God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.

And under that fulsome approval of all that God saw comes the institution of marriage. God invented marriage, if you wish.

[36 : 12] God has a universal and eternal patent on marriage. And that truth, that reality, lays bare the folly, laughable were it not so tragic, of those who today seek to redefine marriage.

Quite simply, it's not theirs to redefine. Marriage belongs to God. He invented it. He determines what it is.

Marriage was made in heaven and revealed or modeled on earth from the very beginning in the Garden of Eden. And if we had time and we don't have time, we could turn to see the very clear and fundamental principles that are established from the very beginning concerning what marriage is.

This morning, we want to consider teaching concerning marriage in the passage that we've read in 1 Peter 3. And in our reading, a clear distinction is drawn between the wife and the husband, the two parties in a marriage.

They are addressed separately, and different instructions are given to each, to the wife and to the husband. What are we to make of this?

[37 : 57] Well, I think there are three fundamental truths that Peter highlights in his instruction to Christians with regard to both the wife and the husband in a marriage.

And I want to mention what these three fundamental truths are, and then develop them each in turn.

The first thing that is very clear from the teaching that we have in this passage, and of course reinforced by the overall teaching of Scripture, the first thing we can say is that they are equal before God.

Husband and wife equal before God. The second thing that we can say that Peter teaches in this instruction to the Christian community concerning marriage is that husband and wife are to be equally committed to God.

So first of all, they are equal before God, but secondly, they are to be equally committed to God.

And thirdly, and where most instruction is given and where we will have to spend most of our time, they are equally commissioned by God.

Wife and husband. Husband and wife equally commissioned by God. Equally given instructions by God as to the role that they are to play within marriage.

[39 : 25] Marriage made in heaven. First of all then, and just very briefly, this first truth that husband and wife, wife and husband are equal before God.

We will be noting in a moment, and that's where we will spend most of our time, but we will be noting the clear teaching of Scripture regarding different and complementary roles in marriage made in heaven.

But before we turn to that and to consider that, it is important to stress and to make unequivocally clear that men and women, and consequently husbands and wives, are equal before God, of equal value and of equal a worth.

There is no gender superiority or inferiority. And this truth is grounded in two fundamental cornerstones, if you can have two cornerstones, and if you can't, bear with me for speaking in these terms.

This truth that men and women, and consequently husbands and wives, are equal before God, grounded, first of all, in creation itself. We're familiar with the words that we read in the first chapter of Genesis, of the Bible in Genesis 1 and verse 27.

[40 : 55] So God created man in His own image. In the image of God, He created him. Male and female, He created them. There could not be a clearer, more unequivocal declaration that men and women created in the image of God are consequently equal before God, of equal value, of equal worth.

But the equality of men and women before God is also established in redemption. Indeed, the passage before us makes reference to that in verse 7 in the instructions to the husband, or in the context of instructions to the husband.

And we read there in verse 7 of 1 Peter 3, Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner. And then we read, And as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life.

Joint heirs together of the gracious gift of life. As believers, as those who know Jesus, and love Jesus, and have put their trust in Jesus, they are joint heirs of the blessings of salvation.

There is no hierarchy in the enjoyment of the inheritance. There are not those who have a greater inheritance over others. No, we as Christians, men and women, are joint heirs of the gracious gift of life.

[42 : 32] And again, this truth could be reinforced in many ways from Scripture, but time does not allow us to go beyond the reference to the verse that we're commenting on here in our passage this morning.

So first of all then, let that be very clear. Men and women, equal before God. Husband and wife, equal before God. But the second thing we want to notice, and again, briefly before moving on to our primary concern, in terms of the amount of time we'll devote to it, the second thing we want to note is that both are to be equally committed to God.

And again, we turn to that phrase we've already noticed there in verse 7. Heirs with you of the gracious gift of life. The wife is heir with the husband of the gracious gift of life.

Now, what is the implication of that? When Peter addresses husbands and says to them, your wives are heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, what is he taking for granted?

What is he implying? What is implicit in what he says? Well, what is implicit is that both husband and wife are indeed heirs of the gracious gift of life, that both are indeed believers, that both share a commitment to God, having put their trust in Jesus as their Savior.

[44 : 06] Both committed to God, both believers, both Christians. Now, some might say, well, yes, but the very passage that you're considering or that we're considering this morning contemplates other alternative situation or circumstances.

In verse 1, we read, wise in the same way, be submissive to your husbands, so that if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives.

And so in this very passage, a scenario is presented where both are not equally committed to God, where both do not share the same faith. How are we to understand that?

Well, I think we have to recognize that Peter is identifying an exception that will hold in some circumstances. That it is an exception, I think is illustrated by the language he uses in verse 1, wives in the same way, be submissive to your husbands, so that if any of them do not believe the word, if any of them do not believe the word, I would anticipate that in most cases they would.

I would anticipate that in most marriages, husband and wife would share the same faith, would be equally committed to God. But in the event that that is not so, these are the instructions that I give to Christian wives concerning how they are to relate to their unbelieving husband.

[45 : 38] Indeed, it seems entirely reasonable that the circumstances that led to this situation where the wife was a believer and the husband was not a believer, and of course the reverse could be true, the circumstances that led to that in all probability would have been circumstances where husband and wife were married, and subsequent to being married, one of them became a Christian.

Subsequent to committing to each other, one of them hears the good news concerning Jesus and is converted, is born again, becomes a Christian.

And so they find themselves in this situation. The wife is a Christian. The husband is not a Christian. What are we to do? Well, the clear teaching of Scripture is that that marriage should continue and that God will bless that marriage.

And here the wife is given instruction concerning her responsibilities in that circumstance. But the general and fundamental model or pattern or expectation is that both husband and wife will be equally committed to God.

Now, that general principle, indeed going beyond its application to marriage, but particularly appropriate to marriage, that general principle is clearly and eloquently stated in the familiar words of Paul, do not be yoked together with unbelievers.

[47 : 13] And on that, let me be very clear and unequivocal. If you are a Christian, you are to marry in the Lord.

This is the clear teaching of Scripture. If you are not yet married, do not even contemplate, do not even consider entering into a serious relationship with somebody who doesn't share your faith. That is not pleasing to God. That is not what God would have you do. Let there be no doubt as to the clear teaching of the Scriptures in this matter.

What I would say before moving on to the third element that really occupies Peter's particular attention in the passage, what I would say in regard or under the umbrella of the second point, equally committed to God, is that this truth is relevant not only at the point of choosing a wife or husband, that we be sure that the one we are committing to shares our faith.

That is important. But this principle is not only important at that point. In our own marriages where by God's grace, both husband and wife, share the same faith, we should continue to strive to be equally committed to God.

[48 : 38] It is quite common to see marriages where both are Christians and yet one is growing in their faith and the other is, quite frankly, going backwards.

And that is a very sad and frustrating situation, very particularly for the one who has that desire and that commitment and is seeking to grow in their faith, and yet sadly, unaccompanied in that journey, if you wish, by their husband or by their wife.

I'm always struck by the very beautiful words that describe the marriage of Zechariah and Elizabeth, and time doesn't allow us to dwell on it, but if you want, you can look up the passage subsequently in Luke chapter 1 where it speaks of this aged couple and in describing them, and several adjectives are used to describe them, but the beautiful words that precede these adjectives are these, both of them, both of them were righteous, both of them were holy, both of them, both of them equally committed to their God.

So husband and wife, wife and husband equal before God, husband and wife equally committed to God, but thirdly, husband and wife equally commissioned by God.

Both wives and husbands have God established and God given instructions to follow. Both are commissioned by God to perform an identified and established role in the marriage relationship, and we're going to look at each in turn, the instructions to the wife or to wives and instruction to husbands.

[50 : 32] Now, before we do, it is, of course, clear, I hope, but necessary just to clarify that this passage that we're considering this morning is not an exhaustive treatment of roles in marriage.

It doesn't say everything that needs to be said concerning the role of wives or indeed the role of husbands. However, it does give us a measure of teaching and very significant teaching in this regard.

First of all, then, the role that is identified for the wife, husband and wife, wife and husband, equally commissioned by God, equally given instructions by God.

That in itself is a matter for great gratitude and dignity that God would commission us. But let us turn then, first of all, to the commission given to wives.

I think we can summarize really what is said under two headings or two commands that are given. First of all, submit to your husband. And secondly, and a rather more suggestive and seemingly more attractive command, make yourself beautiful.

[51 : 49] Submit to your husband and make yourself beautiful. First of all, submit to your husband. The language is very clear. Verse 1 of chapter 3, wives, in the same way, be submissive to your husbands.

Now, I'm not going to deal with the significance of the phrase in the same way that repeats itself also in verse 7, husbands in the same way. Much is said as to how that relates to previous teaching on the matter of authority and submission in this passage or in this letter.

Others suggest that it's simply a linking phrase. Also, also, I've taught about slaves, I've taught about authorities, and now I'm going to talk about the family.

We'll leave that to one sign. But the command is clear. Be submissive to your husbands. Now, before we develop that and identify what it means in the context of marriage, we do need to take a very brief step back and note some fundamental principles.

And they are very fundamental. I know I've used that word probably too often already this morning. But some very fundamental principles. First of all, God rules. On that we have to be clear.

[53 : 07] If we disagree on that, then we have real problems with dealing with this passage. That is fundamental. God rules. But also, the Scriptures are very clear that God has chosen to delegate His rule to others in civil society, in the world that He has created.

God delegates His rule. But also, God determines to whom that rule is delegated. As I say, in civil society, in relationships of work, in church, and in the family.

Our concern this morning is the family. Our concern is marriage made in heaven. And in marriage, God decides and exercises this prerogative to delegate His authority.

And what has He decided? To whom has He delegated that authority within the family? Well, in the first place, we can say that parents, husband and wife, delegate or enjoy delegated authority over their children.

In the commandments, it is clear, children are instructed to honor their father and their mother. They are to be under the authority of both parents, husband and wife, jointly exercise authority over their children.

[54 : 39] But also, husbands enjoy a delegated authority over their wives and family. The wife is subject to her husband in marriage made in heaven.

Now, that may be very unpopular in the conception of marriage in our society. Well, so be it. Our concern is not what society says about marriage. Our concern is not how society would seek to redefine marriage.

Our concern is with marriage made in heaven. And marriage made in heaven has this clear characteristic. And what can we say about this submission?

Well, firstly, we can notice what it is not. It is not unconditional. The submission of a wife to her husband is not unconditional. The first loyalty that we all bear is to God himself.

And so, if the submission required by a husband or presumed by a husband would involve disobedience to God, then the wife is subject, is bound to a higher authority.

[55 : 51] And so, this submitting herself, being submissive to her husband, enjoys that qualification, if you wish. It's not unconditional.

But also, another thing we need to say, really, not something really that is mentioned in this passage, but just to clarify, because it has introduced into this discussion unnecessary confusion.

The second thing to say that this submission is not is that it is not mutual. As I say, there's no suggestion of this in this passage, but it is necessary to clarify a misconception that surrounds a misunderstanding of Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 21.

And to discuss that particular verse and that passage would merit a sermon in itself and perhaps several, but just to notice what we read there in Ephesians 5 21.

We read, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Now, this verse is snatched from its context and bandied about very happily so often today in this discussion and it says, oh yes, this whole business of submission is really all about mutual submission.

[57 : 06] Submit to one another in the Lord. And there is no sense that the husband has authority over his wife or that the wife has to, in some kind of exclusive way, submit to her husband.

But no, we have to submit to one another. Now, I say that is a misunderstanding of that verse because what that verse is doing is introducing teaching on the whole matter of authority and it is saying that in the place that you are, you are to submit to the authority that you're in.

Submit to one another. So, for example, I am a citizen and as a citizen I must submit to the authority of those who govern. But as well as being a citizen I could be an employer and in that relationship the employee has to submit to my authority as the employer.

Or I may be a husband and so my wife is obliged to submit to my authority as a husband. So, there are a series of relationships of submitting to authority and of exercising authority.

Submit to one another in the Lord. In all of these areas respect the authority structures established by God. The idea of mutual submission though it sounds very attractive is entirely unworkable and

would result in complete chaos.

[58 : 30] The idea that we submit to one another. It sounds very nice but what does it actually look like? What will it produce if it were to be applied? But of course we don't even need to consider applying such a notion because it is not what the Scriptures teach.

So, this submission that wives are exhorted to it is not unconditional. This submission is not mutual. What is it then? Well, the example given by Peter is the example of Sarah.

And he says a lot concerning this but we can't deal with all of it. But if we just take that example that he gives that Peter gives concerning Sarah we can say two things about what it is this submission. First of all it is reverent. The word reverent is used in verse 2 also and it speaks of unbelieving husbands when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

But then in the example of Sarah and the manner in which she related to her husband Abraham there is a reverence that is a respect. The wife is to respect the authority of the husband.

[59 : 41] She is to gladly and willingly recognize the God-given role of the husband as head of the family. This reverence or respect is to be evident in the manner she treats her husband.

Now the passage that we've read and that we're considering gives the example of Sarah. And though the manner that this respect will find expression for example in the case of Sarah who called Abraham her master the manner in which this respect finds expression will be culturally conditioned and so it can be culturally modified.

The manner in which this respect finds expression let me be very clear the fundamental aspect that respect be present and expressed is not a cultural aspect.

It is a universal principle. It is part of marriage made in heaven. That wives are to be submissive to their husbands and that what this involves it involves in the first place respect.

They are to respect their husbands. but also it involves a practical submission. This submission is reverent it is also practical.

[61 : 06] It is practical in the sense that it involves obedience. Again the example of Sarah is given. We read there in verse six like Sarah who obeyed Abraham who obeyed her husband.

The example of Sarah if you wish helps define submission. You ask the question or the question is asked how was Sarah submissive? Well the answer is given she obeyed her husband.

So in the instructions given to wives in this passage first of all there is this command be subject to submit to your husband but secondly wives are exhorted are commanded to be beautiful if we can put it that way.

In verse three a reference is made to beauty your beauty should not come from outward adornment and so on. And then in verse five for this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful.

Be beautiful. That's a very suggestive command but is it reasonable if you're told be you a man or a woman whoever you are if you're told be beautiful you can say well that's all very well to say but is that possible is that something that's within my power well what does the passage teach us regarding what is involved in being a beautiful wife and I just want to notice very briefly in the passing some of the things that are said first of all and this is perhaps the one we must begin with is that it is attainable that the way that the language is posed especially in verse 5 when it speaks of these women these holy women who used to make themselves beautiful this was something that they could do it was something attainable it wasn't something that well if you've got it you've got it and if you haven't well tough no these women made themselves beautiful it was attainable now why is it attainable well because as we go on it is inward it's not a matter of the outside in verse 3 your beauty should not come from outward adornment such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes instead it should be that of your inner self a gentle and quiet spirit the contrast is drawn between outward and inward beauty outward beauty is not being criticized or questioned it is a gift of

[63 : 47] God to be grateful for and to be enjoyed and to be appreciated indeed neither is braided hair or jewelry or fine clothes being criticized per se they're not being disallowed what Peter is saying is that the beauty of a Christian wife is not to be determined by the outward appearance but by the inner self by all means outward beauty is to be enjoyed but that is not what determines the beauty of a Christian wife says Peter rather it is the beauty of the inner self beautiful on the inside is a phrase that is used and that describes very well what Peter is saying beautiful on the inside is what really counts and this inward beauty takes the form of a gentle and quiet spirit now that is not to be understood I don't believe as some feminine equality per se but rather it is being presented as

a quality a disposition that beautifies a Christian wife that this is not a uniquely feminine characteristic is best illustrated by the words of

Jesus concerning himself how did Jesus describe himself as a gentle or as gentle and humble in heart so when it speaks of wives Christian wives having this inner beauty that finds expression in a quiet and in a gentle and quiet spirit it is saying yes by all means this is the characteristic that should be enjoyed should be shown by Christian wives but it's not saying that this is somehow a feminine quality that would be necessarily absent in men so it's attainable it's inward but also it's visible see though it is inward it finds expression it's visible now the example that is given of the unbelieving husband it makes that very clear the unbelieving husband sees how this inner beauty finds outward expression he sees and he is impressed and he is persuaded and indeed he is brought to faith by the silent testimony of inner beauty finding outward expression and if the unbelieving husband sees and appreciates how much more the believing husband should see and should appreciate and value that inner beauty finding outward expression this beauty is unfading we're told in verse 4 it should be the inner beauty it should be that of your inner self the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit and again much should be said but the contrast with the modern conception of beauty is so stark and so sobering this unfading beauty and also we're told it is precious it is precious it is of great worth in God's sight

Peter tells us there in verse 4 precious to God and indeed it ought to be precious to a wise husband now what do you make of these commands of God these commands that God directs to wives submit to your husband cultivate a gentle and quiet spirit how do you respond to that does it sound tough does it sound ridiculous does it sound antiquated does it sound like the rantings of a raving misogynist well I would say two things in that regard that Peter says Peter says concerning these instructions first of all it is right he's saying these things I'm telling you because it is right in verse 6 you are her daughters of Sarah if you do what is right and do not give way to fear this Peter says is right this is what God has determined this is what God is not just some cultural norm that could change with the times no

Peter says it is right this is what God has established and Peter also says do not give way to fear now I wonder and perhaps it's not altogether clear what the reference here is pointing to it could well be a recognition on the part of Peter that husbands can and do sadly abuse of their authority and so a wife might understandably fear the consequences of obeying this command and Peter says don't fear don't fear honor God and God will honor you do not give way to fear in obeying these commands but then finally we have to note also and it seems inequitable but much more briefly the instructions given to husbands less is said in the passage but what is said is crucial and we can summarize the instructions to husbands in two exhortations or two commands first of all know your wife and secondly honor your wife in verse seven we read honors husbands in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives be considerate as you live with your wives now that seems a modest demand in comparison with what is being asked of wives and it does seem almost inequitable but as we just consider briefly what is actually being said it becomes very revealing the literal

Greek expression is that the husband ought to live with his wife according to knowledge that is what is literally said live with your wives according to knowledge and this has very rich implications and demands husbands are to live with or to treat or to relate to their wives according to knowledge that is according to the knowledge they have of their wives the husband must know his wife if he is to treat her as he ought and when you think about this it is very true we are often such lousy husbands because we don't know our wives if we knew our wives we would treat them differently we need to know our wives and I speak to the husbands here this morning you must know your wife you have to know her emotionally you have to know her spiritually you have to know her character and personality you have to know her sexually know what upsets her know what hurts her know what frustrates and infuriates her know what pleases her know what makes her happy know what makes her sad know what makes her feel secure and loved and appreciated know your wife know and act live with your wives according to knowledge on the basis of what you know so act so live and so [71 : 04] I asked the husbands this morning do you know your wife this is what God demands of you know your wife and live with her according to that knowledge but then secondly and finally honor your wife we're told that in verse 7 treat them with respect and this is the necessary compliment to the requirement placed on the wife to submit to her husband a husband who honors his wife will seek will listen to will value and will respect her opinions and in so doing husband and

wife will come to joint decisions that will not require the husband to exercise his authority to decide on everything a healthy marriage will invariably arrive at most if not all decisions by dialogue and consensus and compromise now this doesn't involve the husband abdicating his authority but rather wisely and obediently honoring his wife as he listens to her greater wisdom on many matters that need to be decided and discussed within a marriage honor your wife honor your wife now there is more that could be said but time has gone and so

I would just close by saying one further thing to husbands in a warning as it were that is given at the end of the passage rather surprising one perhaps where we read there they are to know their wives be considered to their wives honor their wives and then finally we read so that nothing will hinder your prayers now the suggestion there seems to be or it could be understood that well yes if things are going badly at home if there's friction in the marriage relationship if you're not talking to your wife if you're upset or she's upset then that doesn't generate a good atmosphere as it were to pray and so your prayer life is hindered that is the way that might be understood but really that is not what is being said what is being said rather is that if you don't treat your wife as you want God will not listen to your prayers your prayer will be hindered in that way the hindering is not something that the circumstances do it's something that

God does God will not listen to you God will not pay attention to you it is as if God is saying to husbands and husbands listen well God is saying to you as a husband your wife is precious to me your wife is one whom I love she is a princess in my kingdom I won't abide you dishonoring her I won't abide you mistreating her it grieves me when you belittle her and humiliate her and take her for granted and as long as you do don't bother praying and expecting an answer so marriage made in heaven husband and wife equal before God husband and wife equally committed to God husband and wife equally commissioned by God listen as we close to the words of Jesus and as these words can be applied and addressed to wives and husbands present now that you know these things you will be blessed if you do them let us pray

Lord we thank you for your goodness to us we thank you for the instructions we have in your word concerning a marriage we thank you for the gift of marriage and we thank you that you do not leave us in the dark as to how we are to build a marriage that is pleasing to you and a blessing to ourselves and we pray that you would help us to listen and to understand and to obey the instructions that we find in your word now we're going to close our service by singing in Psalm 119 in Sing Psalms Psalm 119 verses 33 to 40 it's on page 159 Psalm 119 verses 33 to 40 the tune is Trudeau teach me to follow your decrees and I will keep them to the end give insight and I'll keep your law with all my heart to it attend verses 33 to 40 of

Psalm 119 and we'll stand to sing if you follow your peace then I will keep them to the end give insight and I'll keep your love with all my heart to it attend givenhe s have givenness show I find In my My heart To our true Lost From selfish In reset My mind

[76 : 50] Oh, clear my Eyes, no Worthless things In life According To your Word To me I said And give your Quest So that you May be feared O Lord In the Funny The shame I dread Your loss Excelling In the Righteous O Thou I Long For Your Decrees Preserve Me In Your Righteous Now may the

Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love Of God The Father And the Fellowship Of the Holy Spirit Be with us All now And always Amen Amen Julie Inhale Two Seh You Go To To