

Studies in I Peter (38)

Responsibility in Marital Relationships: The Husband

Introduction

- A. The text for this lesson (I Peter 3:7) is the fourth "test case" presented by the Apostle.
- B. As we read this verse and others in the Epistle, there are a few historical facts to keep in mind.
 - 1. The area of Turkey mentioned in the Epistle's first verse was the second missionary field of the early Church.
 - 2. From Pliny's letter to Trajan, written about 111, it seems the Gospel had a profound influence upon the community. We would probably have called it a revival.
 - 3. At the time the Epistle was written there was undoubtedly a "back-lash" from the pagan community to such a revival. Peter often speaks of the trials believers were going through.
 - 4. While it was in this very area that the first of Roman persecution of Christians broke out, it does not seem that it was, as yet, illegal to be a Christian. Believers, however, if they lived in an area ruled over by a zealous politician, would be tested for their allegiance when they paid taxes or were involved in some other public/political function. Many of these believers lost their life simply because they refused to acknowledge that Caesar was "god."
 - 5. Trials often tend to produce anxiety, confusion, and make a person vulnerable to reacting in anger rather than expressing faith, love and hope. This Epistle was written to comfort these early believers and to instruct them in how to live the Christian life in troublous times.
 - 6. The four "test cases" in this section, with the redeeming power of the Savior's atonement placed between such examples, clearly spell out how to live in adverse situations, with the assurance that there is grace and power to do so.
- C. The Scripture.

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.

I Peter 3:7

I. The Explanatory Context: Husbands, in the same way

- A. The primary emphasis is upon the way the Lord Jesus lived in the trials of His life, as explained by Peter in 2:21-24.
 - 1. The Lord Jesus submitted to His Father's will -- as difficult as that was.
 - 2. The Lord Jesus depended upon His Father for strength.
 - 3. The Lord Jesus did not sin by angry and bitter responses to His persecutors -- but left the issue in the hands of His Father.

- B. The secondary emphasis is on the role of submission to the husband that God has given to the wife. Such submission, in the will of God, opens the door to the work God wants to do in the family. (See 3:1) All he has said about grace, faith and hope are implied in such emphasis.

**II. The Instructive Exhortation: Be considerate as you live with your wives.
(Dwell with them according to knowledge. KJV)**

- A. The term "Considerate" (NIV) fails to emphasize the original that is better translated "According to Knowledge." The former would emphasize a husband's relationship with his wife that would be limited at best. "According to knowledge" goes further in that it indicates the husband's responsibility to gain all the information he can about marriage, the role of the husband and wife, the different personality strengths and weaknesses usually found in men and women, as well as other pertinent knowledge. It would also include all it would mean to live a Considerate life.
- B. The word "live", in the original, is found only here in the New Testament. It means "Making a home for" and emphasizes the role of the husband to plan, and implement the plan for the good of the wife and children. Such an exhortation reminds us that "A home must be 'built' as well as a house."

III. The Explanation of the Exhortation: Treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life.

- A. Treat the wife with respect as the weaker partner.

The designation of the wife as "the weaker partner" in the marriage may refer to at least four areas.

1. Weaker physically -- the husband should not expect/demand the wife work at his physical level.
2. Weaker in authority -- the husband should protect the wife and give her delegated authority.
3. Weaker in emotional sensitivity -- the husband should protect the wife from hurts and conflict.
4. Weaker in spiritual security -- the husband should provide security for his wife. Most husbands receive their security from God and from their ability to control life. As a result we often fail to realize the need of the wife for security.

- B. Treat the wife with respect as an heir with you of the gracious gift of life.

The designation of the wife as an heir with you of the gracious gift of life puts the emphasis upon two important factors related to the responsibility of the husband.

1. The spiritual equality of husband and wife.
2. The responsibility of the husband to provide for the spiritual growth of the wife.

Peter's exhortation brings an important truth to the surface. It has to do with the roles that both husband and wife play -- in the will of God. When the husband takes his place of responsibility before God as the leader in the family, and the wife takes here place of responsibility before God as submissive to here husband -- then, because they are in the will of God, they can both be blessed by God and grow spiritually. When these roles are not accepted and implemented, the result is a grieving of the Holy Spirit, a violation of the will of God, and the result in the family cannot be love, joy, peace and growth.

- IV. The Purpose in the Exhortation: So that nothing will hinder your prayers.