

# 1 PET. 2:11 – 3:7

By Ashby L. Camp

Copyright © 2010 by Ashby L. Camp. All rights reserved.

## III. Live as Strangers and Sojourners in the World (2:11 – 4:11)

A. Live differently from, yet attractively to, the hostile world (2:11-12) –  
*<sup>11</sup>Beloved, I urge [you] as strangers and sojourners to abstain from fleshly desires which war against the soul. <sup>12</sup>Keep your conduct among the Gentiles good in order that, in which case they malign you as evildoers, by observing [your] good works they may glorify God on [the] day of visitation.*

1. Peter addresses them as "Beloved," probably referring to God's love for them as well as his own.

2. He urges them as "strangers and sojourners" to abstain from fleshly desires that war against the soul.

a. They are like foreigners in their own land because of their allegiance to Christ. As resident aliens generally were looked down on and discriminated against by native populations, so Christians had the same experience in their homelands.

b. Christians, those who have the Spirit, are not exempt from base desires, from desires for things that are contrary to the Spirit (see Gal. 5:16-25). Indeed, those desires are so strong that they are described as "warring" against the soul. They are portrayed as an enemy that is attempting to conquer believers. As Schreiner remarks (p. 121), "Such desires must be resisted and conquered, and the image used implies that this is no easy matter. The Christian life is certainly not depicted as passive in which believers simply 'let go and let God.'"

c. With J. N. D. Kelly, J. Ramsey Michaels, Peter Davids, Paul Achtemeier, Thomas Schreiner, and Karen Jobes, and against Wayne Grudem, I understand "the soul" against which the fleshly desires war as the whole person rather than the immaterial part of one's being. In Schreiner's words (p. 121), "The whole person is in view, showing that sinful desires, if they are allowed to triumph, ultimately destroy human beings." If you believe "the soul" is here limited to the immaterial part of a human being, then fleshly desires war against that part of a person, presumably by weakening its resolve.

d. I Howard Marshall comments in *1 Peter*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 80-81:

Normally, the alien is someone who is visiting a country to which he does not in any sense belong. The readers, however, used to belong to

the "country" in which they are now aliens. If we want to stretch the metaphor to make it fit, we could think in terms of a person who visits a country and there falls in love with and marries one of the local people. The spouse now adopts the nationality and way of life of the alien and ceases to "belong" to the country where he or she still resides. Clearly a break of this kind, involving a "conversion" that makes people no longer citizens of their own country but resident aliens within it, is all the more difficult to carry through. The temptation to go back to the old way of life must be immensely strong.

3. Peter tells them in v. 12 to live such good lives among the Gentiles, meaning the pagans, the unbelievers, that though they falsely accuse them of doing evil they will, by observing their good works, glorify God on the day of visitation.

a. The thought seems to be that by living good lives in the presence of unbelievers they may lead to the conversion of former accusers so that as converts they will be part of the chorus glorifying God when he visits in the return of Christ to finalize history.

b. Jobes states (p. 172): "The day of visitation should probably be understood as a reference to the future final judgment, by which time Peter hopes that unbelievers who have observed the good works of the Christians they have slandered will have come to faith in Christ." She elsewhere puts the point like this (p. 173): "A primary purpose of the self-controlled life is its evangelistic value for attesting to the truth of the Christian gospel. The winsome way of life of Peter's readers even in the midst of a difficult social situation is hoped to be the witness that would bring unbelievers into the Christian community so that they too might glorify God on the coming day of judgment."

c. The function of godly living here parallels the call on wives in 3:1-2 to live in such a way that their unbelieving husbands may be won over by seeing their pure and reverent conduct.

d. When we start looking for reasons why the church is not growing, why people seem less attracted to Christianity, we should start here. As Ronald Sider points out in his book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience* (excerpted in *Books & Culture*, January/February 2005), polls show that Protestants who claim to take the Bible and their faith seriously ("evangelicals") divorce their spouses just as often as their secular neighbors, beat their wives as often as their neighbors, and are almost as materialistic and even more racist than their pagan friends. Sider writes: "Scandalous behavior is rapidly destroying American Christianity. By their daily activity, most 'Christians' regularly commit treason. With their mouths they claim that Jesus is Lord, but with their actions they demonstrate allegiance to money, sex, and self-fulfillment."

B. This includes submitting to authorities (2:13 – 3:7)

1. All submit to governing authority (2:13-17) – <sup>13</sup>*Submit to every human creature on account of the Lord, whether to a king as being supreme* <sup>14</sup>*or to governors as those sent by him for punishment of those who do evil and praise of those who do good,* <sup>15</sup>*for this is the will of God: by doing good [you are] to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* <sup>16</sup>*[Do so] as free people, yet not as those viewing freedom as a cloak for evil but as God's slaves.* <sup>17</sup>*Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.*

a. The good conduct they are to exhibit among the pagans includes submitting to the emperor and the various governmental authorities he appoints. The Christian's participation in the inaugurated kingdom of God does not free him from obligations to secular authorities.

b. As Paul spells out more fully in Rom. 13:1-5, Christians must submit to the governmental authorities because they have been established by God. Governmental authority was established by God within human society to be a blessing through preventing anarchy and social chaos. As with the institution of marriage, government has a positive role to play *even after* the inauguration of the new age.

c. Governmental authority punishes those who do evil in the sense of rebel against it and commends those who do good in the sense of contribute to the order it seeks to maintain.

d. These authorities are referred to as "human creatures" probably to remind his readers that however exalted and powerful the authorities may be in the eyes of the society, they are merely creatures, beings who were made by God and who exist under his lordship.

e. The Christian's submission to the governmental authorities does not depend on their goodness. It depends only on the fact they occupy the position of authority within that society. Nero was the Emperor (A.D. 54-68) when Paul wrote Romans and Peter wrote 1 Peter, and he certainly was an evil man, though the full extent of his wickedness was only later to be displayed.

f. God sometimes brings or allows evil people to come to power for various reasons. As Paul mentions in Rom. 9:17, God raised up the wicked Pharaoh that he might be glorified through displaying his power against him. And Jesus told Pilate in Jn. 19:11 that he would have no authority over him if it were not given to him from above. See also, Dan. 4:17, 25, 32.

g. But God holds these evil rulers accountable for their wickedness. Daniel 4 tells us that God caused the great king Nebuchadnezzar to lose his mind so that he wound up living like a wild animal. It was not until he repented that his rule was restored to him. And though God used the Assyrians to punish Israel and the Babylonians to punish Judah, he poured out his wrath on the wickedness of those nations (e.g., Isaiah 10; Habakkuk). Their ultimate punishment, of course, will be in the judgment.

h. Peter says their obedience to governmental authority is to be done on account of the Lord, meaning they are to obey those authorities ultimately because of their reverence for and submission to Jesus. Christians cannot obey governmental authorities when to do so would mean disobeying God. As Peter and the other apostles put it to the Sanhedrin in Acts 5:29, "We must obey God rather than men!" Otherwise, we would be placing government over God, which is idolatry. There are notable examples in Scripture of this kind of civil disobedience.

(1) When Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill the newborn boys, they refused to obey (Ex. 1:17).

(2) When Nebuchadnezzar ordered all his subjects to fall down and worship his golden image, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to obey (Daniel 3).

(3) When King Darius decreed that for thirty days no one should pray to any god or man, except himself, Daniel refused to obey (Daniel 6).

(4) When the Sanhedrin banned preaching in the name of Jesus, the apostles refused to obey (Acts 4:18 ff.).

i. It is God's will that in doing good, in being good and virtuous citizens, they will silence the ignorant talk of foolish men who falsely accuse them of being a threat to the social welfare.

j. They are to submit to the authorities as free people, as people who ultimately are not answerable to the state but people who do not view that freedom as a cover for rebellion but who realize that God who is their master calls them to submit.

k. The four commands of v. 17<sup>1</sup> set forth obligations to the people and ruler in the worldly sphere and to the people and ruler in the heavenly sphere that they would be tempted to ignore in the context of their persecution.

(1) Peter says Christians are to treat all human beings as special or important, treat them with dignity and respect. I suspect this was to counteract the temptation spawned by local persecution to treat those outside the church with contempt.

(2) He reminds them that they are to love the brotherhood, something that is tempting to forget when identification with the church is drawing ire from the larger society.

---

<sup>1</sup> Though the first imperative is aorist and the other three are present, I treat them the same. See, e.g., Davids (p. 103, n. 14).

(3) He says they are to fear God, which is a reminder not to yield to pressure to deny or be unfaithful to him, including being unfaithful to him in refusing to submit to the governing authorities.

(4) He tells them that they must honor the emperor, which reinforces the point of vv. 13-14. The more alienated one feels from the society by virtue of local persecutions, the less one is inclined to honor the political ruler of that society.

2. Slaves submit to earthly masters (2:18-25) – <sup>18</sup>*Slaves, submit in all fear [of God] to [your] masters, not only to the good and gentle ones but also to the harsh ones.* <sup>19</sup>*For this [is] commendable: if someone bears the pains of suffering unjustly because of an awareness of God.* <sup>20</sup>*But what credit [is there] if, when sinning and being beaten, you endure? But if when doing good and suffering you endure, this is commendable before God.* <sup>21</sup>*For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered on your behalf, leaving you an example in order that you should follow in his steps.* <sup>22</sup>*He did not commit a sin nor was deceit found in his mouth";* <sup>23</sup>*when being insulted, he did not return insults; when suffering, he did not threaten but kept entrusting himself to the one who judges justly.* <sup>24</sup>*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, in order that, having died to the sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wound you were healed.* <sup>25</sup>*For you were going astray like sheep, but you have now turned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

#### Excursus on First-Century Slavery

Slavery was a basic social institution in the ancient world. S. Scott Bartchy writes in "Slave, Slavery" in Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 1098: "As many as one-third of the population of the empire were enslaved, and an additional large percentage had been slaves earlier in their lives."

The Bible does not endorse or assume the goodness of slavery; it simply tolerates it. It takes slavery as a fact of life and regulates people's involvement in it. Unlike marriage and parent-child relationships, Scripture nowhere suggests that slavery was ordained or instituted by God; it was a product of sinful humanity. This is evident from the fact that in 1 Cor. 7:21 Paul urges, "Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you -- although if you can gain your freedom, do so." He would never give such advice to spouses or to parents and children. In this regard, it is probably more than coincidental that, from all indications, neither Jesus nor the Apostles owned slaves.

The seeds for slavery's dissolution were sown in texts like Phlmn. 16 ("no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother"), Eph. 6:9 ("Masters . . . do not threaten [your slaves]"), Col. 4:1 ("Masters, provide your slaves what is right and fair"), and 1 Tim. 6:1-2 (masters are "brothers"). (Note also that Jesus' teaching about mercy and forgiving debts [e.g., Mat. 6:12, 18:23-34] implies the inappropriateness of debt-slavery.) As has been said, where these seeds of equality came to full flower, the very institution of slavery would

no longer be slavery. That this took so long to happen is a result of Christian dullness to the implications of the gospel.

The fact God did not forbid Christians in the first century from owning slaves but rather tolerated a regulated form of first-century slavery does not mean that was his ideal for mankind. His ideal is brotherhood and equality, but it is possible that the world had gotten so twisted that he was willing to tolerate less than his ideal as a concession to the hardness of men's hearts, similar to what he did, through Moses, in permitting divorce (see Mat. 19:3-9).

Or maybe he tolerated it because mandating the release of slaves in that social context would have caused anarchy and consequent suffering as the gospel exploded across the Roman world. In other words, perhaps the thorn of slavery needed to be removed slowly; perhaps society first needed to be altered under Christianity's influence to be able to handle such a change without overwhelming adverse side effects. James D. G. Dunn states (*The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 699):

[S]lavery was an established fact of life in the ancient world. As many as one-third of the inhabitants of most large urban centres were slaves. The economies of the ancient world could not have functioned without slavery. Consequently, a responsible challenge to the practice of slavery would have required a complete reworking of the economic system and a complete rethinking of social structures, which was scarcely thinkable at the time, except in idealistic or anarchic terms.

In the context of this regulated form of first-century slavery that God tolerated, if release was desired it needed to be worked out on an individual basis consistent with the principle of brotherhood. But as long as the relationship remained, the slave could not take advantage of having a brother for a master, and the master could not mistreat the slave.

That God tolerated a regulated form of first-century slavery does not mean he would tolerate that same form of slavery under different social conditions or tolerate other forms of slavery, such as the slavery that existed in early America. Slavery in the first century was a very different institution from early American slavery. S. Scott Bartchy states in "Slavery (Greco-Roman)" in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:66-70 (paragraphs are not continuous in original):

Central features that distinguish 1st century slavery from that later practiced in the New World are the following: racial factors played no role; education was greatly encouraged (some slaves were better educated than their owners) and enhanced a slave's value; many slaves carried out sensitive and highly responsible social functions; slaves could own property (including other slaves!); their religious and cultural traditions were the same as those of the freeborn; no laws prohibited public assembly of slaves; and (perhaps above all) the majority of urban and domestic slaves could legitimately anticipate being emancipated by the age of 30.

It must also be stressed that, despite the neat legal separation between owners and slaves, in none of the relevant cultures did persons in slavery constitute a social or economic class. Slaves' individual honor, social status, and economic opportunities were entirely dependent on the status of their respective owners, and they developed no recognizable consciousness of being a group or of suffering a common plight. For this reason, any such call as "slaves of the world unite!" would have fallen on completely deaf ears. (From p. 69: "The great slave rebellions, all of which were led primarily by prisoners of war between 140-70 B.C.E., never sought to abrogate slavery. Rather, these rebels sought either escape or to turn the tables by enslaving the owners.")

Furthermore, by no means were those in slavery regularly to be found at the bottom of the social-economic pyramid. Rather, in that place were those free and impoverished persons who had to look for work each day without any certainty of finding it (day laborers), some of whom eventually sold themselves into slavery to gain some job security.

Large numbers of people sold themselves into slavery for various reasons, e.g., to pay debts, to climb socially (Roman citizenship was conventionally bestowed on a slave released by a Roman owner), to obtain special jobs, and above all to enter a life that was more secure and less strenuous than existence as a poor, freeborn person.

Slaves were used for "an enormous variety of functions in enormously different circumstances," some of which when compared to New World slavery seem astonishingly responsible: "doctors, teachers, writers, accountants, agents, bailiffs, overseers, secretaries, and sea-captains."

Since slaves represented a substantial investment by their owners . . . , they could at least expect to receive enough food to keep them alive and working. Manumission could mean the end of that security. Epictetus [a first-century philosopher], himself an ex-slave, took pleasure in pointing out that the slave who thinks only of gaining his freedom may be reduced, when he is manumitted, to "slavery much more severe than before."

For many, self-sale into slavery with anticipation of manumission was regarded as the most direct means to be integrated into Greek and Roman society. For many this was the quickest way to climb socially and financially. As such, in stark contrast to New World slavery, Greco-Roman slavery functioned as a process rather than a permanent condition, as a temporary phase of life by means of which an outsider obtained "a place within a society that has no natural obligations of kinship or guest-friendship towards him."

Andrew Lincoln writes in *Ephesians*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 418:

Many slaves in the Greco-Roman world enjoyed more favorable living conditions than many free laborers. Contrary to the supposition that everyone was trying to avoid slavery at all costs, it is clear that some people actually sold themselves into slavery in order to climb socially, to obtain particular employment open only to slaves, and to enjoy a better standard of living than they had experienced as free persons. Being a slave had the benefit of providing a certain personal and social security.

-----

a. Peter commands the slaves<sup>2</sup> to submit out of fear of God to their earthly masters, even those that mistreat them. The motivating fear seems clearly to be a fear of God (in the sense previously described) rather than a fear of the master because fear of God was commanded in the preceding verse, elsewhere in the letter fear is to be directed toward God and not toward humans (1:17, 2:17, 3:6, 3:14), and the following verse specifies the motivation as an awareness or consciousness of God.

b. It is commendable before God if one is willing to endure *unjust* treatment at the hands of human authorities such as slave masters, to refrain from rebelling against them, because one is mindful that God has called one to honor their authority. Enduring *justified* punishment for wrongdoing is not commendable because one is only getting what one deserved; there is no injustice to "swallow" out of allegiance to God.

c. They were called to endure injustice at the hands of human authorities without being sullen or rebellious because Christ suffered this way and left them an example in doing so. He was sinless, perfect (drawing on Isa. 53:9), and yet was horrifically abused by human authorities. Rather than lashing out at his tormentors with insults or threats, he submitted to them and kept trusting in God the Father, the one who judges justly and who thus can be counted on to right all wrongs.

d. Having cited the Lord as an example of submission to unjust treatment, Peter, alluding to other verses in Isaiah 53, speaks of the Lord's crucifixion that brought us healing from sin so that we might live for righteousness. This radical change in orientation is summarized in v. 25: they were wandering like lost sheep but have now, in their conversion, turned to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls, the one who will bless and protect them and lead them to eternal glory.

e. Remember that this call to submit is in the larger context of helping to draw pagans into the kingdom of God. Norman Hillyer states in *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 83:

---

<sup>2</sup> "Although οἰκέται can specify slaves attached to a household rather than, for example, those who worked the field, it can also be used generically for slaves and is probably to be understood in that sense here." Achtemeier, 194.

Masters fall into two main types. Some are good and considerate in their dealings with servants, who therefore do not find it difficult to submit. For servants having to deal day after day with masters who are harsh and mean, and who mistreat those who serve them, however, it is another story. Yet in both situations Peter tells his readers that it is their Christian duty to submit cheerfully. Their constancy in bearing whatever they have to suffer in the course of duty is a powerful sign to those over them that they possess inner resources beyond the natural. This positive attitude may indeed cause annoyance to an uncomprehending pagan master who expects a very different response. That in itself witnesses to the special grace believers are given and could be the means of prompting a desire in the master to share the believers' secret.

3. Wives submit to husbands (3:1-6) – *Likewise, [the] wives be subject to your own husbands, in order that even if some disobey the word they will be won over without a word through the conduct of the wives<sup>2</sup> by seeing your pure and reverent conduct.<sup>3</sup> Do not let your adorning be outward – of hair-braiding and wearing gold or of putting on garments –<sup>4</sup> but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable [quality] of a gentle and tranquil spirit, which is of great value in the sight of God.<sup>5</sup> For this way [is] also [how] the holy women who in the past hoped in God adorned themselves, by being subject to their own husbands,<sup>6</sup> as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You became her children, so do good and do not fear any intimidation.*

#### General Remarks on the Submission of Wives to Husbands

Men and women are created equally in the image of God and together comprise mankind (Gen. 1:26-27, 5:1-2). In 1 Cor. 11:11-12 Paul points out that men and women are dependent on each other. In 1 Cor. 12:12-27, he makes clear that all who are in Christ are part of Christ's body and are equally precious; there are no second-class citizens in the kingdom. Peter describes husbands and wives as "co-heirs of the gracious gift of life" (1 Pet. 3:7). In terms of one's standing before God, Paul says in Gal. 3:28 that there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus.

In the marriage partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, a man and a woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction. He is head of the wife as Christ also [is] head of the church (Eph. 5:23). God in his sovereignty has bestowed on the husband the responsibility of headship or leadership.

In doing so, and in calling the wife to accept her husband's leadership, God is not saying that the wife is inferior to, less worthy, or less capable than her husband. Husbands and wives simply have different roles or functions.

We ask, "Why did God place the leadership responsibility exclusively on the husband (and the men in the spiritual family) rather than letting the wife lead where she is the more (or equally) capable partner?" In other words, why isn't it merit based rather

than sex based? Ultimately the answer is that God is sovereign (Ps. 103:19; 1 Tim. 6:15) and that he chose to do it that way.

One could just as well ask why God gave the tribe of Levi the exclusive responsibility to care for the Tabernacle, or why he gave the family of Aaron the exclusive responsibility of serving as priests. Why limit these roles to people who happen to be born in a certain lineage rather than allowing everyone equal access to the roles? Why isn't it merit based rather than tribe based?

And that is precisely what led to Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16. Korah, a Levite, and 250 community leaders opposed Moses and Aaron on the basis that they should have equal access to God. All Israel was holy, so no one family line should be exalted to the priestly function. It was a challenge to God's right to choose select groups for specific roles. And, as you know, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed by the earth, and the 250 community leaders were incinerated by God. The spirit of Korah is alive and well in those who deny the leadership role of men in the family and the church. As is usually the case, they have masked their rebellion with claims of insight and enlightenment, but it is still rebellion.

Understand that a submissive or nonleading role does not mean an inferior status. Jesus is God; he is one in nature, being, and essence with God the Father. So the Son is not inferior to or less worthy than the Father, yet he is functionally subordinate to the Father; he willingly submits to the Father's authority. This is made explicit in 1 Cor. 11:3, 15:27-28 and is demonstrated by a number of facts:

1. He was sent by the Father (Mat. 10:40, 15:24, 21:3 7; Mk. 9: 37, 12:6; Lk. 4: 43, 9:48, 10:16, 20:13; Jn. 3:34, 4:34, 5:23, 5:30, 5:36-38, 6:29, 6:38-39, 6:44, 6:57, 7:16, 7:28-29, 7:33, 8:16, 8:18, 8:26, 8:29, 8:42, 9:41, 10:36, 11:42, 12:44-45, 12:49, 13:20, 14:24, 15:21, 16:5, 17:3, 17:8, 17:18, 17:21, 17:23, 17:25, 20:21; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 3:2; 1 Jn. 4:9-10, 4:14).

2. He spoke the words of the Father (Jn. 7:16, 8:26-28, 8:38-40, 12:49-50, 14:24, 15:15).

3. He came to do the Father's will (Jn. 4:34, 5:19, 6:38, 14:30; Heb. 10:5-9).

4. He revealed the Father (Jn. 1:18, 12:45, 14:7-9, 17:6, 17: 26; Heb. 1:1-4).

5. He seeks to please, glorify, and honor the Father (Jn. 5:30, 8:29, 14:13, 17:1-5).

6. He judges only as he hears from the Father (Jn. 5:30).

If Jesus, being in very nature God, can submit to the Father's authority, then certainly a wife can submit to her husband's leadership without denying her equal dignity or value. She is acting like Christ! That parallel is specifically drawn in 1 Cor. 11:3.

Submission to Christ is expressed in unquestioning obedience because he is God. He is the holy and infallible Creator and Savior. There can be no justification for questioning his will or attempting to enlighten him. Husbands, on the other hand, are limited, sinful human beings. Unlike the Lord, they can make very foolish and even sinful choices.

Submission to husbands is expressed in supporting their nonsinful decisions, not because of husbands' inherent qualities (who they are) but because God has given the responsibility of leadership in the family to the husband. When the husband has finally chosen a course of action, the wife willingly supports and follows that choice. She does not resent it and does not seek to sabotage or undermine it.

Of course, if a husband chooses a sinful course of action, the wife cannot support it. The husband's authority is from the Lord, and he has no authority to push one of Christ's disciples into sin. To follow one's husband into sin is not a submission that is "fitting in the Lord," to use the words of Col. 3:18.

Unlike the situation in submitting to Christ, the wife must help her husband in the discharge of his leadership responsibility. This often requires her to inform, question, advise, and correct her husband. A wife's submission to her husband does not mean she cowers silently and occasionally utters "Yes, oh great one." She is a nonleading partner and is called to use her abilities and gifts to bless her husband and the family.

In a healthy marriage, husbands and wives can almost always come to a consensus on what course of action should be taken, but occasionally they cannot. In those situations where a mutual decision cannot be reached, the wife is called by God to yield to her husband's decision. I think James Hurley captures very well the spirit in which such decisions should be made (*Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981], 151):

The manner in which such decisions are handled is crucial. The husband may not be high-handed and stubborn, knowing that she will finally have to give way. That is not the model of Christ's headship. Neither may the wife be grudging and resentful. That is not the manner of our response to Christ. In the last analysis, when the two can devote no more time to individual and joint seeking of the grace of God to permit them to come to one mind or to be willing to yield to the other, an exchange along the following lines is in order:

Husband: "Not because I am inherently wiser or more righteous, nor because I am right (although I do believe I am or I would not stand firm), but because it is finally my responsibility before God, we will take the course which I believe is right. If I am being sinfully stubborn, may God forgive me and give me the grace to yield to you."

Wife: "Not because I believe you are wiser in this matter (I don't) or more righteous, nor because I accept that you are right (because I don't or I would not oppose you), but because I am a servant of God who has called me to honour your headship, I willingly yield to your decision. If I am wrong, may God show me. If you are wrong, may he give you grace to acknowledge it and to change."

-----

a. As slaves submit to earthly masters knowing that God calls them to do so (in fear of God), the wives are to be subject to their own husbands knowing that God calls them to do so (Likewise).

b. The purpose of that submission that Peter highlights in this context is its potential for winning to the faith unbelieving husbands. They can be won to the Lord, meaning they can be persuaded to accept the truth of gospel they already have heard (implicit in their having disobeyed it), without (further) verbal persuasion from their wives by seeing the truth of Christ reflected in their pure and reverent conduct, which includes their submission.

c. Peter warns them not to let their adorning be outward, through things like hairstyles, gold, and clothes, but to let their adorning be through the kind of person they are on the inside, specifically through having a gentle and tranquil spirit, a submissive spirit, which is of great value in God's sight.

(1) I do not think this is a flat ban on items of outward adornment; I think it is a ban on allowing such externals to substitute for inner beauty. A godly woman can "dress up," within limits of modesty, meaning not being so flashy or revealing as to reflect an inappropriate desire for attention, and still have her adorning be the beauty of her inner person. Though she is dressed up, her spirit is her true attractiveness.

(2) In Ezek. 16:10-13 God is speaking metaphorically of his role as Jerusalem's husband. He says that he clothed her in embroidered cloth, fine linen, and silk; that he adorned her with ornaments and put bracelets on her wrist and a chain on her neck; and that he put a ring in her nose, earrings in her ears, and a crown on her head. Though it is a metaphor, it suggests to me that outward adornment is not inherently sinful. The problem comes when that external beauty is all there is such that his wife (Jerusalem) trusts in it and goes after other men (representing foreign gods and illicit political relationships).

(3) In Song of Songs/Solomon 1:8-11 the woman's external ornamentation is spoken of positively, which again seems inconsistent with any notion of such things being inherently sinful.

(4) Marshall states (p. 101):

It is true that Peter's statement might well be translated: "Your beauty should *not so much* come from outward adornment . . . *but rather* it should be that of your inner self." Though desire to be beautiful and attractive is manifestly a commendable one, outward beauty, however much desirable, is secondary to beauty of character. The desire for outward beauty can easily lead to the sins of pride and vanity as well as of a wrong use of money.

d. Peter says that it is by possessing a gentle and tranquil spirit expressed in submission to their husbands that godly women in biblical history adorned themselves, "exhibit A" being Abraham's wife Sarah.

(1) Her submission to Abraham's leadership is represented in Gen. 18:12 where she refers to him as her "lord."

(2) Dan McCartney states in his doctoral dissertation titled "The Use of the Old Testament in the First Epistle of Peter" (quoted in Schreiner, 156, n. 157): "Although Gen. 18:12 does not give in itself a direct example of Sarah's obedience, the fact that even in this negative instance in Sarah's life she referred to Abraham as 'my lord' would have indicated to Peter, and it did so to his contemporaries, that submission was her *customary attitude* toward Abraham."

e. He tells the wives he is addressing that they became Sarah's children, meaning that in their conversion to Christ they became her descendants in that they shared her faith in God. Through faith they were grafted into *true* Israel, the ethnic Israel of faith, the offspring of Abraham and Sarah who believed God's revelation in Christ, which fusion resulted in *new* Israel (Rom. 4:16, 9:6-8, 11:13-20; Gal. 3:7-9, 3:29, 6:16; Eph. 2:11-22), though Peter does not go into all of that.

f. As those in Sarah's lineage of faith, they are to do good, do right, which includes submitting to their husbands, and they are not to fear any intimidation they may receive as a result of their faith. They are to fear God, not man.

4. Comment on husbands' duty to wives (3:7) – <sup>7</sup>*The husbands, in turn, live with [your wives] according to knowledge, paying honor to the female as to a weaker vessel, as also to co-heirs of [the] grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.*

a. Having addressed the fact wives are to submit to their husbands, Peter mentions the corresponding duty of husbands to their wives. Whereas wives are to submit to their husbands, husbands are called to live with their wives in accordance with their knowledge of God's will, which is that they pay honor to their wives.

b. A husband pays honor to his wife, says she is important and significant, in how he talks to her and about her and in the kind of priority he gives to her needs and to their relationship. Treating her with disrespect and running her down in talking with others is the opposite of showing her honor.

c. Peter says the husband pays honor to his wife as to a weaker vessel. The female is a "weaker vessel" physically and positionally, but not mentally, morally, or spiritually. She is in a "weaker" position than her husband in the sense God has assigned her a nonleading role in the marriage and because, at that time especially, the husband had greater social power. This physical and positional weakness makes the wife more vulnerable to mistreatment and therefore, in God's eyes, especially worthy of protection. God is the champion of the vulnerable, and he will not tolerate those who exploit them. See, e.g., Jas. 2:1-4.

d. The wife is also to be honored as a co-heir of salvation. In terms of her relationship with God, the Christian wife is in no way "weaker." That was Paul's point in Gal. 3: 26-29:

<sup>26</sup> For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup> for as many of you as were baptized into Christ, clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.

e. And notice that this honoring of wives is so important, that failing to do so will disturb the husband's relationship with God and thus hinder his prayers. The Christian who insists on mistreating his wife cannot expect to come to God as though all was well. Rather, he can expect to be disciplined through God's refusal to answer his prayers.