

Last week we looked closely at the relationship between husband and wife. We saw a God designed order... a hierarchy... between them where the husband has the responsibility to provide loving care and leadership to his wife. The wife, in turn, has the responsibility to submit to that leadership and give honor to her husband. **This designed order is meant to be a blessing to both parties...** as is the case for all hierarchical relationships designed by God.

But we also saw that this design became quickly perverted and remains so until today. Husbands can and do become dictatorial in their authority and neglect their responsibility to love and care for their wives. Wives can chafe under their supposed relegation to what they see as an inferior and unappreciated position. We saw that both of these perversions have their root in the curse after Adam and Eve's fall.

1. Finally, we saw that God gives instruction to restore the order and blessing between husband and wife in Colossians, Ephesians, and 1 Peter. We looked at a couple of practical questions, including "How do we deal with perversions of marital hierarchy or counsel a believing wife in a physically abusive or dangerous situation? Does submission demand that the wife stay in the middle of an abusive and toxic situation?"
 - a. Some would say "yes" on the basis of 1 Pet 3.
 - i. They would appeal to the reality of God's sovereign protection.
 - ii. They would look to the straightforwardness of Peter's admonition
 - b. Some would say "no" on the basis of an inferred broken covenant and God's abhorrence of abuse and commitment to justice
 - i. But God's word provides a more complete answer as we understand that he has set protections in place, both to prevent these abusive perversions as well as correct them.
 1. General "preventative" instruction to keep us "safe and sound"
 - a. The worthy walk of Eph 4; The fruit of the spirit in Gal 5... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control
 - b. 1 Pet 3:8ff. (after instructions to husbands and wives) *"To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; 9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead"*
 - i. Do these not describe the kind of wife one should look for? The kind of husband ?
 - ii. These are all things designed for our happiness... our blessing.

1. John 10:10 *"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."*

iii. Understanding and affirming them keep us from foolish practice and decisions

2. More specific instruction

a. Prov 12:4 *"An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who shames him is like rottenness in his bones."*

b. Prov 19:14 *"House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the LORD."*

c. Prov 31:10 *"An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels."*

d. Perhaps the most pointed... 2 Cor 6:14 *"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?"*

i. We treat this scriptural admonition all too lightly in the church

ii. It is meant for our benefit... to shield us from ungodly influence and oppression

1. In marriage

2. In business "partnership"

3. In joint ministry

4. In governmental agreements and treaties

iii. Not a new thought Deut 7:1ff *"When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, 2 and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. 3 Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. 4 For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods"*

3. As an aside, do we see God's word... His instruction... that way? Not as a set of arbitrary rules and conditions in order to gain God's favor but as loving instructions from our Designer for our benefit?
 4. So we have a glimpse of God's design to prevent destructive abusive situations... but what about existing situations? Has God made provision for correction or only prevention?
- ii. The case of the unbelieving spouse
1. The context is a marriage in which one spouse has come to Christ... has received redemption and new birth... but the other has not
 - a. Would not have been uncommon in the early church
 2. 1 Cor 7:12ff. *"if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away."*
 - a. "consent" lit. "well pleased with"
 - i. The idea of "in favor". "pleased to dwell"
 - ii. Yes, it is "unequally yoked", but the unbelieving spouse wants to stay... wants to remain in the relationship.
 3. 1 Cor 7:15 *"Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace."*
 - a. "Leave" choridzo; to separate, divide, part, put asunder, to separate one's self from, to depart.
 - i. While it does commonly refer to physical separation, in the context of marriage it refers to the breaking of a covenantal relationship.
 1. Matt 19:3ff. *"Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?' 4 And He answered and said, 'Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, 5 and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What*

therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.

- ii. It is in contrast to “pleased to dwell” above. It seems reasonable to associate marital abuse as **not** being “pleased to dwell” and effectually a “leaving”; a shattering of the marriage covenant.
- iii. The case of the “believing” spouse; one who claims belief in Christ
 1. Before we begin, we must understand that it is rare for a marriage to disintegrate into abuse in a single step. In our previous case, it could.
 - a. Coming to faith could be seen as a rock of offense; a betrayal.
 - i. Matt 10:21,34. *“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death... Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; 36 and A MAN’S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.”*
 - b. Not so in a believing marriage. How does one go from a hopeful, committed couple to a situation of hatred and abuse?
 - i. An immature beginning
 - ii. An unforgiving spirit
 - iii. An unwilling, unyielding heart
 - iv. An unrepentant stance
 - c. What resources does God provide to counter these sinful states?
 - i. His Word
 1. 1 Pet 2:2 *“like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation”*
 - ii. His Spirit
 1. Rom 8:14 *“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*
 - iii. His Body
 1. Gal 6:1ff *“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one*

looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ."

2. Col 3:16 *"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."*

a. There is never a failure of God's word... never a failure of His Spirit... but there is all too often a failure of His Body.

i. Are we teaching?

ii. Are we admonishing?

iii. Are we restoring?

iv. If we are not, then we often end up at the last resource...

iv. His discipline

1. Directly

a. 1 Cor 11:31ff. *"But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.*

2. Indirectly through the church

a. Matt 18:15ff. *"If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that **BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.** 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 18 Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. 19 "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. 20 For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."*

i. "Let him be to you as a gentile or tax collector"; treat him as though he is unsaved, outcast

1. Tax collector was one who had turned against his people; allied with the oppressor

3. That moves the situation back to 1 Cor 7:15 *“Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.”*

- i. If he is not pleased to dwell, then let him leave

d. Final thoughts/takeaways

1. The beauty and intricacy of God’s design

- a. Intimate
- b. Interdependent
- c. Protective
- d. Sustaining
- e. Sanctifying

2. The critical part we are to play in that design

- a. **We ignore our responsibilities at the risk of our own spiritual health, our testimony, and the health of those around us**

- i. The responsibility to confess our sins, one to another
 - ii. The responsibility to teach, encourage, admonish and correct.

1. James 5:16ff. *“Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed...My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”*

2. Back to Matt 18; it does **not** say

- a. If things get **really** bad
 - b. If you have earned the right to be heard?
 - c. If you have the time and inclination?
 - d. If you are without sin?

3. It does say

- a. You who are spiritual
 - b. In a spirit of gentleness and humility
 - c. With the hope of restoration
 - d. In a spirit of sacrifice

Let us pray