

# Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 242

## A WIFE'S RESPECT

---

*And the wife see that she  
reverence her husband.*

Ephesians 5:33

### Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,  
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,  
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

# Free Grace Broadcaster

## A WIFE'S RESPECT

# 242

### Contents

She Was Taken Out of Man .....	2
<i>Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)</i>	
A Wife's Responsibilities.....	9
<i>Thomas Vincent (1634-1678)</i>	
Reverential Deference .....	10
<i>David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)</i>	
A Respectful Life Described .....	16
<i>Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690)</i>	
Submission, Pure Conduct, Inward Ornaments .....	22
<i>John Brown (1784-1858)</i>	
Reverence and Submission.....	31
<i>George Swinnock (1627-1673)</i>	
A Disobedient Husband .....	38
<i>John Brown (1784-1858)</i>	
Lovely in Her Husband's Eyes.....	41
<i>J. R. Miller (1840-1912)</i>	

Published by Chapel Library • 2603 West Wright St. • Pensacola, Florida 32505 USA

*Sending Christ-centered materials from prior centuries worldwide*

**Worldwide:** please use the online downloads worldwide without charge, [www.chapellibrary.org](http://www.chapellibrary.org).

**In North America:** please write for your free subscription in print. The FGB is sent quarterly without charge. Chapel Library is a faith ministry that relies upon God's faithfulness. We seek His glory in all things, depending upon Him to supply our needs through those who freely desire to give and pray. We therefore do not solicit donations; you will only hear from us when you request materials or receive your subscription. We also do not share our mailing list, so your contact information will remain secure with us. Chapel Library does not necessarily agree with all the doctrinal views of the authors it publishes.

© Copyright 2017 Chapel Library: compilation, abridgment, annotations.

# SHE WAS TAKEN OUT OF MAN

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

*And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.—Genesis 2:21-23*

**T**HE peculiar process adopted by the Creator in forming the help meet<sup>1</sup> was to intimate to man the nature of the companion presented to him and the closeness of the tie between them. Adam was thrown into a deep sleep, which made him insensible to pain, though, perhaps, not unconscious of what was passing. When in this state, God took one of his ribs and fashioned out of it a woman, healing the wound at once. Then God brought her to Adam, revealing at the same time to him the history of her formation. Adam recognizes Jehovah's gracious purpose in this: he feels the void supplied; he acknowledges the oneness between himself and her; he gives her a name expressive of this. Her name is to be woman, *Isha*, derived from his own, *Ish*, man.<sup>2</sup> Then follows the historian's statement regarding the oneness of the two and man's duty to make this tie paramount.<sup>3</sup>

The marital<sup>4</sup> relationship is closer than the filial.<sup>5</sup> All other bonds must yield to this, however sacred and tender they may be. The words of the twenty-fourth verse are evidently not the words of Adam himself, but the comment of Moses upon the words of Adam. And a greater than Moses has enlarged this comment: "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put

---

<sup>1</sup> **help meet** – suitable helper; the Hebrew phrase translated by the English *meet for him* literally means "like opposite him," that is, "a helper matching him or suitable for him."

<sup>2</sup> **Isha...Ish** – the most common Hebrew words for *woman* or *wife* and *man* or *husband*.

<sup>3</sup> **paramount** – of the greatest importance.

<sup>4</sup> EDITOR'S NOTE: The author originally used the word *conjugal*, which is unclear for many modern readers. *Marital* has been substituted in all the articles of this FGB.

<sup>5</sup> **marital...filial** – relation of husband and wife is closer than that of parent and child.

asunder” (Mar 10:6-9). [Therefore,] with one or two further remarks, we leave this passage.

1. *As to Adam’s sleep.* It was a heavy or deep sleep. It was a sleep sent directly from God. It was a sleep for a special end. In the case of Abraham and Daniel, we see the same thing (Gen 15:12; Dan 8:18, 10:9). A deep sleep from God fell on both these, when God designed to communicate visions to them. In their case, God caused them to sleep that He might show them what was to be done, [whereas] in the case of Adam, that He might actually do the thing. In both instances, the individuals were rendered unconscious to outward things by that which we call sleep. In that state, God took possession of them: in Abraham’s and Daniel’s case, of the soul; in Adam’s, of the body. It would seem to be intimated that God could not accomplish His design until Adam had been brought into that state that approaches nearest to death. There must be sleep in the first Adam ere<sup>6</sup> God can take out of him the ordained spouse; and there must be death in the second Adam ere God can take out of Him the chosen Bride. In this way, there might be something prefigurative<sup>7</sup> in Adam’s sleep.

2. *As to the taking of woman out of man.* As it was God that caused Adam to sleep, so it was God Himself that took the rib out of him. Thus, God shows Himself to us as at once the great Purposer and the great Doer of all things. “Second causes,” as we speak, are but the mysterious tools or instruments that He makes use of in carrying out His designs. He lays us to sleep each night, and He awakens us each morning with His own loving hand. He is the God of our nights and of our days. It was from Adam that God took the substance that He meant to fashion into woman, indicating that as man was formed first and as woman sprang from man, so man is to be her head. He from the dust, she from him. *He* directly from the Former’s hand, *she* indirectly and through *him*. “Adam,” says the apostle, “was first formed, then Eve” (1Ti 2:13). Therefore, says he, she is “not to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” Thus, again, he states the gradation:<sup>8</sup> (1) the head of the woman is the man, (2) the head of the man is Christ, (3) the head of Christ is God (1Co 11:3). Further, he adds that “the woman is the glory (or ornament) of the man”; for, says he, “the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man” (1Co 11:8-9). Such is God’s order of things; such His

---

<sup>6</sup> ere – before.

<sup>7</sup> prefigurative – representing something to come.

<sup>8</sup> gradation – series of gradual and progressive steps.

assignment of place and rank to the creatures that He has made. We may be sure that there is a reason for this gradation, not merely a *typical*, but a *natural* one, whether we fully understand it or not. We cannot alter this law and be blameless. We cannot reverse it and not suffer loss. The construction of our world's fabric is far too delicate and complex for man to attempt the slightest change without dislocating the whole. One star displaced, one planet thrown off its orbit, will confound the harmonies of space and strew<sup>9</sup> the firmament with the wrecks of the universe. [Likewise,] one law lost sight of or set at naught will mar the happy order of God's living world below.

In one age or nation, man treads down woman as a slave; in another, he idolizes her and sings of her as of a goddess. Both cases inflict a social wrong upon the race, in the latter case as truly as in the former. And who can say how deep an injury—both spiritual and social—has been wrought and how fatal an influence has been sent forth, by that fond sentimentalism that, impregnating our poetry and coursing like fever through the veins of youth, not only “costs the fresh blood dear,” but saps the whole social system, nay, propagates a principle of subtle ungodliness and creature-worship in its praise of woman's beauty and idolatry of woman's love.

3. *As to the taking of woman from the side of man.* From neither extremity of Adam's body did God take the woman, signifying that she was neither to be man's lord nor man's drudge,<sup>10</sup> but his fellow, with this inferiority only: she was taken out of him, and therefore he was to be her head. From the part that lies nearest his heart did woman come. She was not so much to partake of man's intellectual as of his loving nature. It was not from man's thinking forehead or sinewy arm that she sprang, but from those parts where it may be said there is the least of *man* to be found. From the region where the warm blood flows, the heart throbs, the pulses take their rise, and the fountain of life wells up did woman come. From that quarter of man's being where, in all ages, affection has been conceived to make its home, where joy and sorrow have their flowings and reflowings, where fear and hope are each hour sinking and swelling, did woman come. The fragrant plumage<sup>11</sup> of the turtle dove tells us out of what spice grove she has come. So does woman's tender nature of itself declare that it is from the region of the kindly and the gentle that she has been brought forth.

---

<sup>9</sup> **strew** – scatter.

<sup>10</sup> **drudge** – slave.

<sup>11</sup> **plumage** – feathers on a bird's body.

As it was out of the bosom of the Father that the Eternal Son came down to us laden with the Father's love; as it was out of the bosom of the Son that the church came forth, at once the object and the reflection of His mighty love; so it was out of man's side, man's bosom, that she came forth who was to be at once the embodiment of his gentler affections and the being round whom these affections were to cling. And as it was on the high priest's breast—his place of love—that the names of Israel rested in jeweled splendor, so is it on man's breast that woman is to rest. And so it is hereafter on the breast of the eternal Bridegroom that the church is to repose—in more than earthly glory—in that day when His left hand shall be under her head, and His right hand shall embrace her (Song 2:6); when she shall be set as a seal upon His heart, as a seal upon His arm forever (Song 8:6).

4. *As to the making of woman from a rib of man.* One of those protecting circles that prevents the sinking in of the flesh upon the heart and gives the heart full room to play was to be taken out entirely that out of it woman might be formed. The bone and the flesh were both taken—the softer and more solid parts of man's body—that it might be seen how truly she was of man's very nature, though in some respects different. Not a separate being formed out of the dust in which man could not recognize a part of himself, but a being thoroughly identified with him—not merely *like* him, but one *with* him, so that her absence would be the absence of a part of himself—a blank, a void, without whom he would be incomplete... Thus woman, taken from the very shrine of man's corporeal sanctuary<sup>12</sup> (for the apostle teaches us to call our bodies temples, 1Co 6:19), is linked with all the sacred or tender associations that are called up by that well-known but mysterious word—*heart!*

5. *As to the making of the woman.* The expression is a very peculiar one. It is neither of the two former that have been already employed—"created" or "made." It is, literally, "builded." The word is a very common one, occurring about four hundred times, but here only in so peculiar a sense. It is the word used referring to the building of a city, a house, a family, a temple, a throne, an altar, and such like. And there is surely some signification in applying such a word to the formation of woman. Of man it is said he was *made*, of woman she was *builded*. Now, man was the type of Christ; and of the latter, in reference to His human nature, it might be said simply He was "made"—formed at once. But the woman signifies the church, taken out of the

---

<sup>12</sup> corporeal sanctuary – fleshly body.

wounded side of her dying Lord. And of the church it is often said she is “builded”; “in whom,” says the apostle, “all the *building* fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph 2:21-22); and again, “for the edifying”—literally, the *building*—“of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12).

By the term *building*, applied to the formation of Eve, God has thought fit to shadow forth to us the process by which, age after age, the church (which is the second Eve) was to be fashioned into a help meet or counterpart for Christ, the second Adam. Yet, as the second Adam was far more glorious than the first, so does the second Eve—taken out of His pierced breast—far transcend the first, God in all respects bestowing more cost and pains upon the new creation than upon the old. For redemption has brought in not simply a new order of things, but one far higher than that which it is designed to replace: the one being earthly, the other heavenly; the one fleshly, the other spiritual; the one human, the other divine. Thus the church, Christ’s chosen Bride, springing from His smitten side, is *builded*; *builded* by the same Almighty hands that built the wondrous heavens; *builded*, as was the temple of old without sound of axe or hammer; *builded*, at once as the *city* of the Lamb’s special habitation and the *companion* for His dearest fellowship, without whom this goodly universe would have been incomplete to Him. For even in it, though renewed and glorified, it would have been found that it was not good for Him to be alone (*see* Gen 2:18). For Him, no help meet could have been found had not the Father provided this “glorious church,” and had not He Himself in the greatness of His longing for that help meet, consented to sleep the deep sleep of death upon the cross that thus *she* might be taken out of Him, whose beauty—as seen pictured in the Father’s purpose—had already ravished His heart (*see* Song 4:9). [Her] presence alone could make even the better paradise complete, and His heart’s desire was union with [her] throughout eternity (Joh 15:9; 17:23-26).

**6. *As to the closing up of the flesh instead of what was taken out.*** Adam was not to be the loser in any way or sense, but the gainer. All deficiency was replaced, all loss supplied. God would teach him the nature of woman and the object of her creation (wrapping up in this also a type of things to come), but He would teach it in a way that would not leave man the sufferer. Jacob’s lesson was to be learned by halting on his thigh all his life after (*see* Gen 32:31); but Adam’s was to be learned by looking at his help meet, and then while remembering how she had been “builded,” to feel that she had cost him nothing

beyond the sleep into which he had been so mysteriously thrown. A sleep, but nothing more—this was all the price for a boon<sup>13</sup> so precious! No abiding pain, loss, or weakness—he was still the same Adam as when he came from the hands of his Maker.

Neither has the second Adam suffered loss for us. It did indeed cost Him much to redeem us. It cost Him a darker, sadder, and more troubled sleep than Adam's. But it is all over now! He retains nothing of the weakness, sorrow, or darkness of His low estate. He is not less the King of glory because He was once the humbled Jesus. He does indeed appear in heaven "a Lamb as it had been slain" (Rev 5:6). He may, perhaps, retain the wounds of the cross; but more than this, He does not. All other traces of His humiliation are erased. He has lost nothing by the Bride that He has gained. Nay, He has won much; for His weakness, sorrow, shame, when here, have bought for Him new strength, gladness, and glory. Hence, the song of angels: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev 5:12).

*7. As to the woman's introduction to the man.* "He brought her unto the man." God Himself, as if standing in a father's room, and acting the father's part, brings the bride to the bridegroom. As a beloved daughter, He presents her to her future husband. He joined their hands and pronounced over them the marriage-blessing: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen 1:28). A stranger, and yet no stranger—a part of himself, the filling up of his being, she was brought before him and knit to him in inseparable bonds. And it is thus that the true Eve speaks of herself in the Song, "The king hath brought me into his chambers" (Song 1:4); and again, "He brought me to the banqueting house" (Song 2:4). Of her also it is written, "She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework" (Psa 45:14), and again, that she is "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev 21:2). One of her special characteristics is that she is "given" of the Father to the Son; and in that day when He comes in His glory, she shall be caught up to meet Him in the air and be brought into His presence by the Father, there to have the marriage service celebrated and, as a "chaste virgin" (2Co 11:2), to be presented to Him to Whom she has been so long betrothed. Then shall that song be sung to which all the new creation shall echo: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." <sup>8</sup> And to her was granted that she should be

---

<sup>13</sup> **boon** – gift.



arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Rev 19:7-8).

8. *As to Adam’s recognition of her.* Whether by revelation or consciousness we know not; but Adam knows the woman thus brought to him and calls her *woman*, as being a part of man. This is his response to God’s introduction of her. He acknowledges the oneness and receives her as Himself. We have God’s consent in bringing, the woman’s consent in coming, and now we have Adam’s consent in receiving. Thus is the marriage completed by the full concurrence of all.

And so it is with the second Adam, too. He receives and owns His Bride. He welcomes her as indeed part of Himself, one with Himself. “Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb 2:11). Again it is written, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph 5:30). Thus recognizing the mysterious oneness between Himself and His Bride, He expresses His admiration of her beauty as the “fairest among women” (Song 1:8), “all glorious within” (Psa 45:13); she responds with joy and speaks of Him as “fairer than the children of men” (Psa 45:2). “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee” (Song 4:7) is the utterance of His admiring love of her; she replies, “My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven...His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely” (Song 5:10-11; 15-16). And in the happy consciousness of possessing Him and His love, she gives vent to the deep feeling of her satisfied soul, “My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away” (Song 2:16-17).

From *Earth’s Morning: Or, Thoughts on Genesis* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1875), 86–99, in the public domain.

---

**Horatius Bonar (1808-1889):** Scottish Presbyterian minister and hymn writer; born in Edinburgh, Scotland, UK.



Reverence consists of love and esteem, which produce a care to please, and of fear, which awakens a caution lest just offence be given. That the wife thus reverence her husband is the will of God and the law of the relation.—*Matthew Henry*

When Eve was formed by the Lord God and brought to Adam so as to effect a marriage union, there was shadowed forth that highest mystery of grace, of God the Father presenting His elect and giving them to Christ.—*A. W. Pink*

# A WIFE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Thomas Vincent (1634-1678)

**Q**UESTION 7: What are the duties of wives to their husbands? **ANSWER:** The duties of wives to their husbands are [as follows:] 1. Love of them above all other persons in the world. “That they teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children” (Ti 2:4). 2. Loyalty and faithfulness in reference to the bed and estate and any secrets entrusted with them. “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled” (Heb 13:4). “Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things” (1Ti 3:11). 3. Reverence and fear of offending them. “Let the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Eph 5:33). 4. Submission to them in all things lawful under Christ. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord...As the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Eph 5:22, 24). 5. Care to please them, suiting themselves to their disposition, and all things to their liking. “She that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband” (1Co 7:34). 6. Helping them to bear their burdens and in making provision for their families. “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen 2:18). “She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness” (Pro 31:27). 7. Giving ear to and complying with the counsels of their husbands, if good, for their souls’ welfare. Endeavoring, with meekness and wisdom, with kindness and loving admonitions, and a chaste, sweet [behavior], to win their husbands over to the ways of God when they are wicked. “Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear” (1Pe 3:1-2).

From Thomas Vincent, *An Explanation of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism*,  
(New Haven, CT: Walter, Austin, & Co, 1810), 155-156,  
in the public domain.

---

**Thomas Vincent (1634-1678):** English Nonconformist Puritan preacher; born in Hertford, England, UK.



# REVERENTIAL DEFERENCE

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

*...and the wife see that she reverence her husband.—Ephesians 5:33*

**T**HE apostle used a very striking word here. It is rightly translated in the Authorized Version as *reverence*, but the word really means “fear.” “And the wife see that she fears her husband.” But we must remember that there are different types of fear. There is a fear, as John reminds us in his first Epistle, “that hath torment” (1Jo 4:18). That is not the fear the apostle speaks of here; he speaks of “reverential” fear. What it really means is “deference.”<sup>1</sup> “Wives, see that you treat your husbands with deference,” “with reverential obedience.” Here, again, is an idea the apostle has already introduced when he was dealing with the wives. He says, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”<sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.<sup>24</sup> Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Eph 5:22-24). He comes back to it again here: “Let the wife see that she treats her husband with due deference, with reverential obedience.”

Perhaps the best commentary on this is found in the first Epistle of Peter, chapter 3 and verse 1, where Peter is in his own way dealing with the same subject. Peter goes back to the great example and pattern of this particular teaching. He puts it in this form: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands”—the same idea, “deference”—“that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.” Peter here introduces a slightly different matter, to which I will refer in a moment. However, to impress this upon the wives, he proceeds to say, “For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands.” Then in the sixth verse, “Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.” Being interpreted, it means something like this: the wife is to treat her husband with deference; in other words, she is to recognize this biblical and Christian view of marriage—she

---

<sup>1</sup> **deference** – respectful acknowledgement of and submission to another’s authority.

is to regard the husband as her head, the head of this new unit. They are both one, but there is a head to the unit, as there is a head to our body, as Christ is the Head of the church. As the husband is the head, the wife is to treat him with the deference that is becoming in one who realizes that relationship. So what it means for the wife is that the deference that she formerly paid primarily to her parents she is now to pay to her husband. Such is the meaning of the injunction<sup>2</sup> in Psalm 45, verse 10, which puts it like this: “Forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house.” That was addressed prophetically to the Christian church—that is what she is to do when she becomes joined to her heavenly Bridegroom; but it is also applicable to the case of the wife in the marriage relationship...The wife is to forget her own people and her father’s house. I repeat again that you have to use common sense in interpreting words such as these. She is not to forget in an absolute sense, but she is to forget in this sense, that she is no longer to be controlled by her parents. The man is not to be controlled by his parents, and the wife is not to be controlled by her parents.

It may occur to someone to ask this question: Why, in connection with the plain teaching about marriage, are we told that the man is to leave his father and mother and to be joined unto his wife, while there is no corresponding statement about the woman either in Genesis chapter 2 or in Ephesians chapter 5? The answer, it seems to me, is quite simple. The woman is always in this position of paying deference. The man was in this position until he got married; but from that point onwards he becomes the head. The woman pays deference to her parents; she gets married, and now she pays deference to her husband. She is always in the position of paying deference; she is never the head. But the man who formerly was a child and a son and paid deference now becomes the head and receives this deference from his wife...Is it not obvious that it is because people have no conception of this teaching that there is so much trouble in marriages, and so many breakdowns?

There is nothing that is so fatal to a marriage as that either partner should be paying deference to a third party. In so doing, they are breaking the unity; they are failing to realize the fact of this new unit and the headship of the man in the new unit. So, the wife must see to it that she pays this reverential deference to her husband. She has to make a mental and spiritual adjustment as had her husband also in his case. She does not receive her instructions any longer from par-

---

<sup>2</sup> **injunction** – authoritative order.

ents; she does not submit herself to them, she submits herself to her husband. She still maintains the relationship of daughter, of course; but she must see to it that her own attitude is right and that the attitude of her father and mother is right. So often there is failure at this point on the one side or the other. The man who gets married becomes absorbed into his wife's family, or the wife becomes absorbed into her husband's family. That is wrong on both sides and should never be allowed to happen. This is a new family. The relationships of love should be maintained with the parents on both sides, but never in terms of deference and of submission. And the essence, the whole secret of Christian marriage and of a happy married life, is that the man and the woman who get married realize this at the beginning, act upon it, and stand to it at all costs. If there is interference by the parents on either side, they are guilty of sin and of failure to understand and to live according to the biblical teaching concerning marriage. "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband." That is the great adjustment she makes. She submits to him. She must not compete with him, she must not strive with him; she must recognize that the essence of marriage is that she pays this deference to him.

There is an odd phrase used by the apostle Peter, which we must glance at for a moment: "Even as Sara," he says, "obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." Have you been interested in the change of fashion with respect to this matter? One can read about people in the eighteenth century and notice how the wife habitually referred to her husband as Mr. So-and-so. You may smile at that, you may ridicule it, and I will agree with you; but I am quite sure that we have gone too far to the opposite extreme. There is a right balance in these matters. Sara called Abraham "lord," and thereby she recognized the biblical principle. Then we read, "whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." The meaning is this: Christian wives are to pay deference to their husbands, and Peter tells them that they should do so in spite of what the pagan women round about them might say. Here was something new: it was rare, it was exceptional, and, of course, it created a great stir. When the pagan women, who were restless and rebellious—and rightly so—saw a woman behaving in this manner, offering and paying this deference to her husband, many of them would attack her and persecute her. What Peter is saying is this: Go on doing it because it is right; do not let them frighten you, do not let their persecution make the slightest difference to you. Let them insult you as much as they like; take no notice of them. Do not be afraid with any amazement! And indeed,

even if *the husband* misunderstands it and abuses it, go on doing it, says the apostle; “Do not be afraid with any amazement.” Do what is right! Do not be worried at what other people may say. This twentieth-century pagan world in which we are living says the same thing still; Christian wives will be told that they are being foolish, that they are denying their rights as women. “Do not pay any attention,” says Peter, “let the people of the world say what they will. What do they understand? They have not got Christian minds, they are not filled with the Spirit. Realize always that you are meant to do that which is right, that which is good; and do not be frightened, do not be put off, do not allow them to interfere with your conduct and your behavior.” Such, then, is the apostle’s last injunction. We cannot but comment on the wonderful balance which is ever preserved in the Scriptures.

The apostle sums it all up in verse 33, “Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” As long as they both do that, there is no risk of dispute about “rights” or about “my position” or “my status.” Here is a man given headship—yes—but because he loves his wife as himself, he never abuses his position. And here is a woman submitting herself to this great and glorious ideal. She need never be afraid that she will be taken advantage of or that she will be trodden upon. Husband and wife are both dealt with, and the balance is perfect and entire... This is how a Christian man and a Christian woman become married and become this new unit—and I would repeat again that there is no more wonderful way of testifying to the difference it makes to be a Christian than just this.

Surely one of the greatest needs in this modern world of ours is found at this precise point. Most people are troubled about the discord between nations. That is right, and it is also right that we should be deeply concerned about the clashes within nations. People are giving their opinions, talking boldly, and condemning this side and that side. But when you get to know something about the private lives of some of the people who are most eloquent in that respect, you will find that, in their own married lives, they are doing exactly the same things that they are condemning! How ridiculous it is! One great difference between Christianity and Secularism is that Secularism is always talking about generalities, and the individual is forgotten. Christianity realizes that the mass, the nation, is nothing after all but a collection of individuals. I have very little interest in what a statesman has to say if he does not carry out his principles in his own personal life. What right has he to talk about the sanctity of Internation-

al Contracts, and to say what people should do and not do in groups, if he is not carrying out in his own private life the precepts he gives to men and women in their various spheres? It is as individuals are put right that a nation is put right. The most glorious epochs in the history of this country have followed times when a personal gospel has been preached, and when a large number of individuals have become Christians. It is only then that we have begun to approximate to a Christian nation. But it is no use telling people to employ Christian principles in their conduct if they are not Christians themselves, and if they do not understand the Christian faith in a personal sense. That is my answer to those who criticize evangelical preaching and biblical exposition, saying, "I thought you would have had something to say about disarmament conferences, or about what is happening in South Africa, and here you are talking about husbands and wives. I wanted to know how to solve the great world problems." I trust that by now it is clear that it is evangelical preaching alone that really deals with these big problems—*all else is but talk*. You can organize marches and make your protests. It all comes to nothing and makes not the slightest difference to anyone. But if you have a large number of individual Christians in a nation, or in the world, then and only then can you begin to expect Christian conduct on the international and national level. I do not listen to a man who tells me how to solve the world's problems if he cannot solve his own personal problems...We can all talk, but the problem is how to apply Christian doctrine in practical living. And it is precisely at this point that you must be "filled with the Spirit."

In the light, then, of the several principles that have emerged, we can draw certain conclusions about Christian marriage. First, the importance of 2 Corinthians 6:14: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Having understood something about the true nature of marriage, and of Christian marriage in particular, is it not an obvious deduction? A Christian should not marry a non-Christian; if he does he is asking for trouble. You cannot get the two sides, the balance indicated in this last verse, unless the two partners are Christians. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

Secondly, there is only one thing that really breaks marriage, and that is adultery. "The two shall be one flesh," and it is only when that "one flesh" is broken that the marriage is broken...there is no cause

for divorce and the breaking of a marriage apart from adultery.<sup>3</sup> That is a cause because it breaks the “one flesh.”

Thirdly and lastly, the supreme thing always is to consider our Lord Jesus Christ. If a husband and a wife are together considering Him, you need have no worry about their relationship to each other. Our human relationships and affections and loves are cemented by our common love to Him. If both are living to Him and His glory and His praise, if both have got uppermost in their minds the analogy of Christ and the church, and what He has done for the church that she might be redeemed, and that they, as individuals, might become the children of God—if they are overwhelmed by that thought and governed by it, there will be no danger of their personal relationship meeting with disaster. The headship of the husband will be the same kind of headship as the Headship of Christ over the church. He gave Himself for her; He died for her; He nourishes and cherishes her life, He lives for her, He intercedes for her, His concern is that she may be glorious and spotless and blameless—without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. That is the secret—that we are ever to be looking unto Him and realizing that marriage is but a pale reflection of the relationship between Christ and His church. So the principle of success in marriage is this: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Husbands, “let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Thank God we are brought into a new life, we are given a new power, and everything is changed—“old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”(2Co 5:17). All the relationships of life are transfigured and transformed, are elevated and uplifted, and we are enabled to live after the pattern and the example of the Son of God.

From *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home, and Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18-6:9* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 228-234, [www.banneroftruth.org](http://www.banneroftruth.org), used by permission.

---

**David Martyn Lloyd-Jones** (1899-1981): Welsh expository preacher and author; born in Cardiff, Wales, UK.



---

<sup>3</sup> EDITOR’S NOTE: We understand that not all our readers will agree with the author’s view of divorce.



# A RESPECTFUL LIFE DESCRIBED

Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690)

**L**ET us consider the duties of the wife towards the husband. They are these, which follow: **1. Submission and obedience.** This is required from them as absolutely and peremptorily,<sup>1</sup> as unto Christ Himself: “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Eph 5:22). And, again, “Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Eph 5:24). And not only doth the apostle give authority and command for it, but enforceth it by sundry reasons. As,

[1] **Woman was made *out* of man and therefore ought to be subject unto him (1Co 11:3, 8).** The head of the woman is the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. She is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, and therefore ought to pay him the homage of obedience and submission for those materials of her being, which she first received of him.

[2] **Because the woman was made *for* the man, and therefore ought to be submitted to him.** So, in the next verse, “Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man” (1Co 11:9). She owes her being to the man’s necessities and convenience; and the great end of her creation, next to the glory of God, was that she might be helpful and profitable to him: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen 2:18). Therefore, having received her being for the sake of man, she ought to be subject unto him.

[3] **Another reason, which the apostle gives, is taken from the priority of the man’s creation (1Ti 2:12-13).** “I suffer not a woman...to usurp authority over the man...For Adam was first formed, then Eve.” Therefore, in the same rank of creatures, it is but fit that he should be first in dignity, who was first in nature. And,

[4] **Because, by the occasion of the woman, sin entered the world.** So, 1 Timothy 2:14: “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.” Therefore, it is but fit and just that she, who made all mankind disobedient against God, should herself be made subject and obedient unto man. And this sentence we

---

<sup>1</sup> **peremptorily** – without exception or question.

find inflicted upon her as a punishment for her transgression: “Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen 3:16). Not as though there would have been no submission due from her to man if sin had not entered the world by her means; for the reasons before alleged do manifestly prove the contrary. But now her submission is a curse; and whereas before it would have been easy and pleasing unto her, now it is become burdensome and grievous—man being made more [unpredictable and bad-tempered] by sin and harder to be pleased, and she being made less able and willing to do it. God justly and righteously [punished] her by imposing on her a work that she herself hath made irksome<sup>2</sup> and difficult. And, let me add to these reasons of the apostle,

**[5] That the man’s titles do imply superiority<sup>3</sup> and authority over the wife.** Such as *lord*: Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord (1Pe 3:6). He is likewise called the head and guide of his wife (1Co 11:3; Pro 2:17).

**[6] The husband represents Christ, the wife the church;** and that, in this very particular of superiority and submission. Therefore, as the church submits to Christ, so let the wife be to her own husband.

Thus, we see [wives’ submission] abundantly proved, both by natural and spiritual arguments...And this submission is recommended unto them by the example of holy women to whose practice they ought to conform their own: “Holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands” (1Pe 3:5). And Paul gives it in charge to Titus to exhort wives that they be “discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands” (Ti 2:5). And he exhorts them to the same duty: “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord” (Col 3:18).

These commands are so many and so express that there is scarce any other duty that the Scripture doth urge with so [many examples] and earnestness, with such pressing reasons and enforcing motives, as this of the wives’ obedience. The duty is frequently expressed: “Submit yourselves” and the manner of performing it; “Be subject, as to the Lord...submit, in the Lord.” This phrase carries in it three things: a motive, a direction, and a limitation.

1) A *motive* to obedience: It is done to the Lord. And though,

---

<sup>2</sup> **irksome** – troublesome; wearisome.

<sup>3</sup> **superiority** – when the Reformers, Puritans, and later theological writers used the terms *superior* and *inferior* when referring to the relationship between men and women, they spoke in terms of *rank*, for example, a sergeant to a private, not in terms of *human nature*. God created both male and female in His image.

through the froward and peevish humors<sup>4</sup> of the husband, they may have no other encouragement to observe and obey him, yet, to the conscientious wife, *this* will be encouragement enough: the Lord will accept and reward her obedience. Her heavenly husband, Jesus Christ, will account it as a service done unto Him. For marriage, being a type of our mystical union unto Christ, [Paul] especially is concerned that the duties of that relation be performed to bear some proportion to that spiritual mystery.

2) A *direction* how to perform it: It must be as to the Lord. She must obey her husband, not only with a design of pleasing him, but the Lord Christ. For, were it not that God commands it from them as part of their duty and obedience to Him, it might sometimes seem very fit that [bad-tempered] and self-willed men should be crossed; and that those, who have no other reason but their will, should fail of that observance and [groveling] that they tyrannically expect. But then consider, it is not the husband only that commands, but the Lord; and the wife must eye His sovereign authority through the authority of her husband. Then it will appear that though there be no necessity in what is required [by her bad-tempered husband], yet there is a necessity she should perform what is required [to honor Christ].

3) The words import likewise a limitation of her obedience. The wife must submit and obey, but *in the Lord* and *as to the Lord*: that is, only in lawful things, wherein, by her obedience to her husband, she may not offend against God. And, excepting this, in all other cases the wife is absolutely bound to obey the will and commands of her husband to the utmost of her power. It is true, he abuseth his authority if he commands things unnecessary and unfit; yet, neither her unwillingness to perform them nor her judging them inconvenient can excuse her or exempt her from the obligation that lies upon her of a ready obedience. Nothing can do this, but the unlawfulness or impossibility of what is enjoined. In all other things, although they be never so contrary to her [disposition] and inclination, she is bound by the law of God and nature to obey and to submit, if not her judgment, at least her practice to the will of her husband. [She must do so] whether she thinks it fit or unfit to be done, so long as it is not unlawful. Unless she can meekly<sup>5</sup> persuade her husband to revoke his command, she is obliged to perform it. Otherwise, when the apostle

---

<sup>4</sup> froward and peevish humors – stubborn and irritable moods.

<sup>5</sup> meekly – humbly.

commands wives to submit themselves to their husbands in everything, it would signify no more than in everything that they think fit. This, certainly, is no greater submission than every husband would readily yield to his wife, and [it] falls infinitely short of the apostle's intent. [He] requires this subjection of the wife to the husband in everything, as the church is subject unto Christ; this, certainly, is not in everything she thinks fit; neither ought she to take upon her to judge or reject His laws, but to fulfil them.

This, therefore, is the first and most comprehensive duty of a wife: submission and obedience.

**2. Another duty of the wife towards her husband is respect and reverence of his person:** Let “the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Eph 5:33). Now, reverence consists in two things: esteem and fear.

[1] **She ought to cherish a *high esteem* of him:** if not for his gifts and graces, yet at least for that relation in which he stands to her, as her lord and her head, superior to her by God's appointment and ordinance. Yea, she must look upon him as that person whom God, out of all the numerous millions of mankind, hath particularly chosen and selected for her: one whom He saw fittest and best to be her head and guide.

[2] **Another part of reverence is *fear*:** not a servile,<sup>6</sup> slavish fear, for that is inconsistent with love; but an awful<sup>7</sup> and a loving fear, which will shew itself in two things.

1) **In her care to please him:** [She endeavors] to conform her actions to his inclinations, so far forth as they are not repugnant<sup>8</sup> to the supreme duty that she owes to God. “She that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband” (1Co 7:34). Therefore, she will endeavor how to comport herself in her speeches, in her gestures, and in her whole demeanor, to render her most grateful and most amiable to him.

2) **In her joy in pleasing him and grief in offending him.** Indeed, a good wife should be like a mirror. A mirror, you know, hath no image of its own, but receives its stamp and image from the face that looks into it. So should a good wife endeavor to frame her outward deportment and her inward affections according to her husband—to rejoice when he rejoiceth, to be sad when he mourns, and to grieve when he is offended. This is that respect that wives owe to their husbands: thinking highly and honorably of them for their place's sake and en-

---

<sup>6</sup> **servile** – cringing like a slave.

<sup>7</sup> **awful** – profoundly respectful.

<sup>8</sup> **repugnant** – contrary.

deavoring to avoid and shun whatever may offend them. Therefore, those who are cross and vexatious, and, by clamors and contentious speeches or by thwarting and peevish actions, grieve and sadden the hearts of their husbands—let them know that they highly provoke the Lord, Who hath commanded reverence and respect to be paid to the husband as His type and as part of the reverence and respect that is due unto Himself.

**3. Another duty of a wife is helpfulness to her husband.** She ought, indeed, to be a help to him in everything. *To his soul*: in furthering his graces and wisely and opportunely admonishing him to his duty, at least by a holy and blameless conversation. [By this, she commends] the gospel of Christ unto her husband that at length he may begin to esteem and reverence that godliness, which hath so adorned and qualified his wife. “For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?” (1Co 7:16), as the apostle speaks. *To his body*: by cherishing and tendering<sup>9</sup> of it. *To his good name*: by endeavoring to augment and preserve it, reporting well of him, and silencing and convincing any scandalous rumors that may be spread abroad concerning him. *To his estate* (wherein, indeed, lies her chief helpfulness and which she ought to make her constant and daily employment): if she cannot bring in and get anything to increase the stock, yet she ought prudently and frugally to manage what her husband entrusts her with. [She ought] not to waste it vainly and profusely; for let her know that whatsoever is so spent or wasted is but stolen. If she shall alienate anything from her husband contrary to his consent, either expressly declared or else upon good grounds supposed to be tacitly<sup>10</sup> granted and allowed, it is no better than theft...Her proper office is providently and faithfully to manage the affairs of the family that are committed to her oversight and care. Therefore, in the description of a good wife given us at large [in] Proverbs 31, from verse 10 to the end, we find the whole of it taken up in showing her industry and care in ordering the affairs of the family.

**4. Another duty of the wife is modesty in apparel and behavior.**

[1] **In apparel**: [This should] be according to her place and rank, not affecting gaudiness or strange fashions, nor, on the contrary, affecting a singularity of obsolescence and outworn antiquity. Pride may be equally shewn either way. The best temper is for them not to wear garments to be taken notice of. The apostle gives them this rule:

---

<sup>9</sup> **tendering** – treating tenderly.

<sup>10</sup> **tacitly** – understood or implied without being expressed directly.

Let not the woman's adorning "be that outward adorning, of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel: But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible; even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price" (1Pe 3:3-4). And so, Paul: "I will...that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (1Ti 2:9-10). This indeed is the best ornament: [it] makes them lovely in the sight of God and [it] makes them esteemed by all sober and serious persons. Indeed, I do not think that costly array is in either of these places absolutely forbidden...But the prohibition is to be interpreted, either by the degree, i. e., be not excessive or vain in your apparel...Study not so much how to set off yourselves in your garments, as how to adorn yourselves with a meek and quiet spirit, with sobriety, modesty, and good works, which is the richest and most beautiful robe you can wear.

[2] **As she must be modest in her apparel, so in her behavior and deportment.** Her countenance, gestures, and speeches must be all fitted to show the inward calmness and serenity of her mind. Therefore, imperious, clamorous, and turbulent<sup>11</sup> women, who at every word spit passion and poison, are a torment and vexation to themselves and more to their husbands. "The contentions of a wife," saith [Solomon], "are a continual dropping<sup>12</sup>" (Pro 19:13). And it is such a dropping [that it] will at last eat and fret through his very heart, though it were made of stone.

These, therefore, are the duties of the wife.

From "An Exposition of the Ten Commandments" in *The Works of Ezekiel Hopkins*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: The Leighton Publications, 1868), 464-470, in the public domain.

---

**Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690):** Anglican minister and author; born in Sandford, Crediton, Devonshire, UK.



The wife has to reverence her husband and to be subject unto him in all things. That is precisely our position towards Him Who has married us. Let His will be our will. Let His wish be our law. Let us not need to be flogged to service, but let us say, "Tis love that makes our willing feet, In swift obedience move."—*Charles H. Spurgeon*

---

<sup>11</sup> **imperious, clamorous, turbulent** – domineering, shouting, unruly.

<sup>12</sup> **dripping** – constant dripping from a leaky roof, applied to a nagging or contentious wife.

# SUBMISSION, PURE CONDUCT, INWARD ORNAMENTS

John Brown (1784-1858)

**O**F the duties of wives: Their duty is thus stated and enforced in the first six verses [of 1 Peter 3]: “Likewise, ye wives, be in submission to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation<sup>1</sup> of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.<sup>2</sup> Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.”

1. **The first duty of Christian wives mentioned by the apostle is submission.** “Be in subjection<sup>3</sup> to your own husbands.” The apostle Paul enjoins the same duty in similar terms: “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Eph 5:22); “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord” (Col 3:18); and he commands Titus, in speaking “the things which become sound doctrine” (Ti 2:1)...that “the aged women likewise...may teach the young women to be...obedient to their own husbands” (Ti 2:4-5). I believe that in the marital relation, matters are best managed when there is little display or assertion of superiority or rule on the part of the husband; but where the spouses submit themselves “one to another in the fear of God” (Eph 5:21). There can, however, be no doubt that God—as the God of nature and the God of

---

<sup>1</sup> **conversation** – behavior; way of life.

<sup>2</sup> **chaste...fear** – pure and respectful behavior.

<sup>3</sup> **EDITOR’S NOTE:** In our day, the word *subjection* is more often misunderstood than the word *submission*. Both English words represent the same Greek word in the NT; but in English, the word *subjection* is often used to mean “forced submission to control by others,” whereas the original Greek also carries the notion of voluntary, willing submission to the authority of another as it does here. Therefore, the words *submission* and *submitting* will be used instead of *subjection* in most of the articles of this FGB.

revelation—has distinctly indicated that the rule of the domestic society is vested in the husband. Hear the declarations of Scripture: “Adam was first formed, then Eve” (1Ti 2:13). “The man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man” (1Co 11:8-9). “The LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen 2:18). “For a man...is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man” (1Co 11:7). Even in a state of innocence, the husband had rule; and after the introduction of sin, of which the apostle gives this account, “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1Ti 2:14), the divine will was then declared: “Unto the woman he said...thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen 3:16).

This appointment is in entire [agreement] with sound reason and true expediency.<sup>4</sup> “In all communities, whether more or less extensive, there can be no happiness without peace, no peace without order, no order without subordination, no subordination without submission. Perpetual strife would originate from equality or contested superiority.”<sup>5</sup> To secure the advantages of society in all its forms, authority must be established and submission enjoined. The only question in such a case is, where should the authority be lodged? And in the case of the domestic society,<sup>6</sup> it seems that the question admits only one answer.

The submission of the wife is extensive,<sup>7</sup> but by no means unlimited. It is submission *in the Lord*; such a submission as becomes a Christian woman who feels her own responsibilities to the one Master in heaven. “His authority is primitive, and binds first,” as Leighton says, “and all others have their patents and privileges from Him; therefore, He is supremely and absolutely to be observed in all.”<sup>8</sup> Besides, “It is not the submission of slaves to their master, or of subjects to their sovereign, or of children to their father. It is a submission that has more of equality in it, accords with the idea of a helper, a companion, and a friend; springs originally from choice, and is acquiesced in for the sake of propriety and advantage.” It has been very

---

<sup>4</sup> **expediency** – appropriateness; suitability.

<sup>5</sup> William Jay (1769-1853), *The Mutual Duties of Husbands and Wives* (London: C. Whittingham, 1801), 11.

<sup>6</sup> **domestic society** – family at home.

<sup>7</sup> **extensive** – broad in scope or content.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Leighton (1611-1684), *A Practical Commentary upon the First Epistle General of Peter* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1864), 6.



justly remarked, “The bitterness in this subjection arises from the corruption of nature in both: in the wife a perverse desire rather to command, or at least a repining<sup>9</sup> discontent at the obligation to obey; this is increased by the disorder, imprudence, and harshness of [a] husband in the use of his authority. But in a Christian, the conscience of divine appointment will carry it and weigh down all difficulties, for the wife considers her station. She is set in it; it is the rank the Lord’s hand hath placed her in, and therefore she will not break it. From respect and love to him, she can digest much frowardness in a husband and make her patient submission a sacrifice to God. ‘Lord, I offer this to Thee, and for Thy sake I humbly bear it.’”<sup>10</sup>

It is a happy thing when the personal excellence of a husband makes submission a compliance with inclination. But a Christian woman, even when her husband is not so wise or reasonable in his requisitions and arrangements as she could wish, yet, by God’s providence, he is her own husband, and God’s command is to be submissive to him. [So] she is submissive to the marital authority, not only “for wrath, but also for conscience sake” (Rom 13:5). Such conduct is acceptable to God and generally draws down tokens of His approbation.<sup>11</sup> By following this course, many a woman has spent a life of respectability and usefulness, who, by acting otherwise, would neither have been respectable nor useful. And many a family has been a scene of order and peace, where otherwise there would have been nothing but confusion and every evil work. Besides, it is the submissive wife who generally gets most of her own will.

**2. The second duty of Christian wives mentioned by the apostle is “chaste conversation coupled with fear.”** *Conversation* here, and uniformly in the Scriptures, does not signify mutual talk, [ordinary communication, or] familiar discourse, but habitual conduct—manner of life. Chaste conversation means much more than abstinence from gross vice [or] direct violation of the Seventh Commandment—an actual infraction<sup>12</sup> of the marriage covenant. Indeed, such things were not even to be named among Christians. The reference is rather to an avoidance of everything that has even the appearance of an approximation to the indulgence or display of sentiments and feelings, inconsistent with that purity of mind, that chastity of heart, which the Christian law requires. There is, as has been justly observed, an au-

---

<sup>9</sup> **repining** – grumbling; complaining.

<sup>10</sup> Leighton, 7.

<sup>11</sup> **approbation** – approval.

<sup>12</sup> **infraction** – breaking; violating.

dacity of countenance, a boldness of look, a levity of discourse, a freedom of manners, a forwardness of behavior, a challenging, obtrusive, advancing air, very unbecoming the sacred decorum that should mark the character of Christian females. Their conduct must be such as to awe the licentious<sup>13</sup> and keep them at a distance. Their language must be free of all foolish talking and jesting, which is not convenient, does not suit with their character and profession as holy women. “Diffidence,<sup>14</sup> the blushings of reserve,<sup>15</sup> the tremulous retiring<sup>16</sup> of modesty; the sensation that comes from the union of innocence and danger; the prudence which keeps far from the limits of permission; the instinctive vigilance which discerns danger afar off; the caution which never allows the enemy to approach near enough, even to reconnoiter.<sup>17</sup>”<sup>18</sup>—all this, which virtuous women understand far better than any man can describe it to them, is included in chaste conversation.

This “chaste conversation” is to be “coupled with fear.” Some suppose that fear here is respect to their husbands; others that it is that timidity that I have just noticed. I rather think that here, as at the 18<sup>th</sup> verse of the preceding chapter, “fear” is the fear of God, reverence for the divine authority, fear of the divine displeasure. Their chastity, like all their virtues, was to have a religious character, to be based on faith, sustained and nourished by those principles that naturally spring from faith of the truth, respecting the divine character. Genuine religion is the grand security of all the virtues; and it was of importance that these Christian wives of heathen husbands should make it plain that their chaste behavior, which their husbands could not but appreciate, was the result of that religion that they neglected or opposed.

**3. The adorning themselves with inward ornaments.** The third duty enjoined on Christian wives refers to the manner in which they were to adorn themselves: “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” The love of ornament belongs to the species, but it is a principle peculiarly strong in the female part of

---

<sup>13</sup> **licentious** – sexually unrestrained or promiscuous people.

<sup>14</sup> **diffidence** – shyness.

<sup>15</sup> **blushings of reserve** – redness of face with emotional restraint or silence.

<sup>16</sup> **tremulous retiring of modesty** – trembling reluctance to draw attention to oneself.

<sup>17</sup> **reconnoiter** – explore; survey.

<sup>18</sup> William Jay, *Mutual Duties*, 14.

it. That “a maid should forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire” (Jer 2:32) is spoken of by the inspired writer as a very unlikely thing. There is nothing wrong in this principle in itself. It serves important purposes. Its lack is felt as a serious drawback. A sloven<sup>19</sup> is disagreeable, a slattern<sup>20</sup> intolerable; Christianity makes no war with anything in any of man’s natural principles but their abuse. Its object is not to extirpate<sup>21</sup> them, but to prune them, to train them, to make them yield good fruit. Thus it is with the love of ornament, which is natural to the female mind. The apostle gives directions as to the guidance and regulation of this principle. These are both negative and positive. Let us look at them in succession.

The negative direction is, “Let not the adorning” of Christian wives—and the remark is applicable to Christian women generally—“let not their adorning” be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, and of putting on of apparel. Some have considered these words and the corresponding words in the First Epistle to Timothy—“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel,<sup>22</sup> with shamefacedness<sup>23</sup> and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array” (1Ti 2:9)—as an absolute prohibition of Christian women, artificially to dress their hair, to wear ornaments composed of gold, silver, and precious stones, or to clothe themselves in any garment but what is plain and unadorned. I think Christian women may very easily fall into more dangerous misinterpretations of the Scripture than this; yet I have no doubt it is a misinterpretation. The words before us do not contain positive prohibition of all ornamental dress; but they are a statement that these ornaments were not for a moment to be compared to ornaments of a higher kind. “I will have mercy and not sacrifice” (Mat 9:23, 12:17) means “I prefer mercy to sacrifice.” And the passage before us means, “I pay more, far more, attention to the adorning of your minds and hearts with Christian graces and virtues, than of your bodies with jewels and splendid apparel.”

At the same time, I have no doubt that these words were intended to suggest some very important hints as to the principles on which Christian women should regulate their dress. Christian women should

---

<sup>19</sup> **sloven** – one who is careless or negligent in dress, personal appearance, or cleanliness.

<sup>20</sup> **slattern** – woman or girl of dirty or untidy habits.

<sup>21</sup> **extirpate** – totally destroy; pull up by the roots.

<sup>22</sup> See FGB 216, *Modest Apparel*, and *Christian Modesty and the Public Undressing of America*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

<sup>23</sup> **shamefacedness** – extremely modest; bashful; shy.

carefully avoid everything that has the appearance of immodesty or levity<sup>24</sup> in dress. Abandoned women were, in the apostle's time, distinguished by their very great attention to external ornamentation. Christian women, on the contrary, must adorn themselves in modest apparel. It is most unbecoming that a woman, professing godliness, should wear the attire of a mere woman of the world, much more "the attire of a harlot" (Pro 7:10). No fashion can sanction such a mode of dress.

Christian women should also avoid undue expense in their mode of dress. It cometh of evil when Christian females aspire to and indulge in a richness of apparel and ornament, which is unsuitable to their rank in life and which curtails their means of Christian [giving], especially in clothing the poor. "Such excessive costliness," says the good archbishop, "both argues and feeds the pride of the heart, and defrauds, if not others of their dues, yet the poor of their charity, which in God's sight is a due debt, too; and far more comfort shalt thou have on thy deathbed to remember that at such a time, instead of putting lace on my own clothes, I helped a naked back to clothing; I abated<sup>25</sup> somewhat of my former superfluities<sup>26</sup> to supply the poor with necessities; far sweeter will this be than to remember that I could needlessly cast out many pounds to serve my pride, while I grudged a penny to relieve the poor."<sup>27</sup>

There is still another hint that this negative injunction is intended and fitted to give. That dress should not occupy an undue share of the attention and time of Christian wives. The apostle intimates that it is a very subordinate thing. No Christian woman will suffer the adorning of her body to be either her business or her delight. She will not render herself responsible at the bar of God for the work of hours, days, weeks, months, in a long life of years, which might, which ought to, have been otherwise and more worthily employed, in a way more becoming rational, responsible, immortal beings.

Listen to the good archbishop again: "To have the mind taken and pleased with such things is so foolish and childish a thing that if most might not find it in themselves, they would wonder at many others of years and common wit, not twice children, but always; and yet truly it is a disease that few escape. It is strange upon what poor things men and women will be vain and think themselves somebody; not only

---

<sup>24</sup> **levity** – inappropriate lack of seriousness.

<sup>25</sup> **abated** – diminished; lessened.

<sup>26</sup> **superfluities** – excessiveness.

<sup>27</sup> Leighton, 352.

upon some comeliness in their form or features, which, though poor enough, is yet a part of themselves, but of things merely without them; that they are well appareled, either richly or well in fashion. Light, empty minds are as bladders,<sup>28</sup> blown up with anything; and they that perceive not this in themselves are most deluded; but such as have found it out and abhor their own follies are still hunting and following them to beat them out of their hearts and to shame themselves out of such fopperies.<sup>29</sup> The soul fallen from God hath lost its true worth and beauty, and therefore it basely descends to these mean things, to serve and dress the body, and to take share with it of its unworthy borrowed ornaments, while it hath lost and forgotten God, and seeks not after Him, knows not that He alone is the beauty and ornament of the soul, and His Spirit and His graces its rich attire.”<sup>30</sup>

This naturally leads to the apostle’s positive injunction regarding ornaments. It is in these words: “But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not compatible; even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God, of great price.” The general meaning here is plain enough. There is some difficulty, however, in fixing the construction of the passage...The precise meaning, of course, varies according as the words are construed. Some would construe them thus: “Let your adorning not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart”—the new creature, “the inner man,” the holy character that springs out of the faith of the truth—“in that which is incorruptible,” which is not like gold and jewels put on thy corruptible body, but which inheres in the incorruptible mind, “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.” Others would construe them thus: “Let the hidden man of the heart, in contrast to the outward man of the body, be adorned with the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, in contrast with the corruptible ornaments of gold and apparel—an ornament, which in the sight of God is of great price, in contrast with the estimation in which men hold external ornaments.” The latter construction seems to me to bring out most exactly the apostle’s thought, which let us now endeavor shortly to illustrate.

“The inner man of the heart” is just the heart, which is the inner man. The heart in its ordinary figurative sense is the mind of man considered both as the seat of intellect and of affection, the soul.

---

<sup>28</sup> **bladders** – inflatable parts of something.

<sup>29</sup> **fopperies** – foolish acts of one who is excessively concerned with dress and appearance.

<sup>30</sup> Leighton, 353.

Christian women, indeed all Christians, whether men or women, should be most [concerned] about the welfare and the ornament, not of the outer man, the body, but of this inner man, the soul. And the ornaments with which it is to be adorned must be suitable to its nature; they must be incorruptible. The soul is indestructible and immortal; and so should its ornaments be. The appropriate ornaments of the soul are truth and holiness, knowledge, faith, hope, love, joy, humility, and all the other gifts and graces of the Spirit, [such as] wisdom, prudence, fortitude, gentleness; these are the jewels with which the inner man should be adorned. The outward man is corruptible. Dust it is, and unto the dust must it return. However stately and strong, and graceful and beautified, it must, ere long, be a mass of putrefaction, a ghastly skeleton, a heap of bones, a heap of dust, indistinguishable from the dust by which it is surrounded. And all its ornaments are, like itself, destructible. Moth and worm destroy the richest garments; silver and gold are perishable things. Gold, though tried with the fire, perishes. But neither time nor eternity can destroy either the soul or its appropriate ornaments. The soul is immortal; these ornaments are not put on it: they are essential qualities of itself. While it endures, they must endure.

There is particular notice taken of one of these imperishable ornaments, of which it was the duty of the Christian wives to see that they were possessed: “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.” Nothing is more ornamental to a Christian wife than a meek and quiet spirit. No deformity is more unsightly than its reverse: a discontented, fretful, peevish, domineering spirit. Hateful everywhere, it is nowhere more hateful than in woman, and in no woman so hateful as in a wife. Hear the declaration of [Solomon]: “A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself” (Pro 27:15-16). “It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house” (Pro 21:9). “It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman” (Pro 21:19).

How beautiful, on the other hand, is the Christian woman who, amid the endlessly perplexing details of domestic management, maintains an unruffled temper and in Christian patience possesses her soul. It is a lovely picture that has been drawn of a Christian wife, as one “who can feel, but retain her composure; who can calmly re-

monstrate,<sup>31</sup> but know not to insist; who can yield and accommodate; who is not ‘easily provoked,’ but ‘easily entreated;’ who is disposed rather to endure than complain, and to suffer in secret, rather than disturb others with her grief.”<sup>32</sup>

This ornament, and the whole class it belongs to, is “in the sight of God of great price.” One of the reasons why many females are so fond of fine clothes and rich ornaments is that these are admired by others. But by whom are they admired? By men, and most admired by the least wise and worthy of the species, men whose opinion is little worth. But this ornament of the hidden man of the heart is “in the sight of God of great price.” He Who alone has wisdom admires it. Yes, “He looks to, He dwells with the meek, the humble, the lowly heart.” And his approbation is of more value than that of all the other beings in the universe. Not she who commended herself, not she whom men commend, is approved, but she whom God commendeth. The meek and quiet spirit, like faith, will “be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 1:7). In that day, the man who for his genius, learning, or successful ambition, excited the wonder of nations, and whose praises were celebrated from age to age and through widely distant countries, but who never obtained, because he never sought, the honor that cometh down from above, shall be filled with shame, covered with contempt; while the woman of a meek and quiet spirit, who in the retirement of very lowly domestic life, performed conscientiously the laborious duties, and sustained patiently the varied trials of her humble sphere from regard to the authority of God and under the constraining influence of the love of His Son, shall be seen to be “glorious within,” one whom the King of kings delights to honor, and to whom He will say, in the presence of assembled men and angels, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Mat 25:21).

From *Expository Discourses on the First Epistle of the Apostle Peter*  
(Edinburgh: William Oliphant & Co, 1866), 191-240,  
in the public domain.

---

**John Brown (1784–1858):** Scottish Presbyterian minister and theologian; born in Whitburn, Linlithgowshire, Scotland, UK.




---

<sup>31</sup> **remonstrate** – urge strong reasons against a course of action; point out a fault.

<sup>32</sup> William Jay, *Thoughts on Marriage* (Boston: James Loring, 1833), 75.

# REVERENCE AND SUBMISSION

George Swinnock (1627–1673)

**I**T is observable that the Holy Ghost, wherever He mentioneth the duties of husbands and wives, doth, in the first place, always set down the duty of the wife, as Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18; 1Pe 3:1-3, of which a double reason is given by learned Davenant: first, because the duty of a wife is most difficult. Affection or love, which is the husband's chief duty, is pleasant; but subjection or obedience, which is the wife's main duty, is painful. Subjection is so much against the hair, that many, like untamed heifers, kick and fling if the yoke comes near their necks; though the harder their task is, the greater is their credit if they perform it conscientiously. Secondly, because the love of a husband doth very much depend upon the subjection of a wife. Women cannot rationally expect that their husbands should affect<sup>1</sup> them unless they obey their husbands. An obedient wife is the likeliest woman in the world to command her husband.<sup>2</sup>

Reader, if God hath called thee to this relation, make His Word thy rule and godliness thy business in it: "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" (Pro 31:30). Inward beauty is indeed praiseworthy: "She shall be praised." A gracious wife is a credit to herself and [to] her sex a crown; a choice ornament to her second self<sup>3</sup> (Pro 12:4). Both her holiness and her husband will praise her.

**1. Her holiness:** "Her works praise her in the gate" Pro 31:31. When others have nothing but the black beauty-spots of sin to set them forth, pride compasseth them about as a chain, and atheism covereth them as a garment. [But for a virtuous woman], grace is her glory and godliness is her comeliness.<sup>4</sup> Religion buildeth her such an honorable monument, that neither age nor hell can ever pull it down. How famous are many women in Scripture for their faith! "And some of them believed...and of the chief women not a few" (Act 17:4). When the apostles proved cowards, many women followed Christ to His shameful cross; and the Holy Spirit records it to their eternal

---

<sup>1</sup> **affect** – be fond of; be drawn to.

<sup>2</sup> John Davenant (1572-1641), *An Exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians*, Vol II (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1832), 151-152.

<sup>3</sup> **second self** – her husband.

<sup>4</sup> **comeliness** – beauty.



credit: “And many women were there” (Mat 27:55). The feminine gender hath sometimes done more worthily than the masculine. The weaker vessels have held out in the hottest fires. In the Marian days,<sup>5</sup> some women proved eminent martyrs. Though the philosopher tells us that woman is only “the aberration of nature,” and many vilify them as persons of no worth, yet Scripture, the Word of truth, dignifieth them as consisting of the same essential parts and capable of the same celestial perfections as men. How highly doth God commend them when they are holy! And for aught any man can tell, a woman, next [to] the human nature of Christ, hath the greatest place of any creature in heaven.

**2. Her husband will praise her.** A gracious wife satisfieth a good husband and silenceth a bad one: “Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her” (Pro 31:28)...

The wife’s special [responsibilities] consisteth principally in these particulars: First, in honoring her husband’s person...The wife, next to her husband, shines in her house far above all those stars that are fixed there. But God hath appointed that she give place to her husband and be willing to prefer him. Rebekah, when she approached Isaac, “took a vail, and covered herself” (Gen 24:65) in token of submission to her husband...That this veiling the face is a token of great reverence, we find in Elijah, who, when God appeared and talked to him in Mount Horeb, covered his face (1Ki 19:13)...

**This respect must be inwardly, in her affections.** She must love him as a member and fear<sup>6</sup> him as a head. Her fear indeed must not be like that of a servant to his master nor that of a child to his father. From the former it differs specifically: for the slave fears the rod, not the person; the wife feareth the person, not the rod. From the latter it differeth gradually: according to the degree of the distance, such is the degree of respect. The *child’s* distance being much greater, his respect is, or should be, greater also; but *her* fear must be like that of the church to Christ: an acknowledgment of His superiority over her, an unwillingness to displease Him in anything, and a dread lest she should offend Him. When the judgment consents to the husband’s authority, the will resolves to own it in all her actions, and the heart hath a dread upon it lest she should disown it. Then she is said to fear him, and not before. The apostle Peter, writing to wives, wishing

---

<sup>5</sup> **Marian days** – days of Mary Queen of England (1553-58), known as “Bloody Mary” because she had more than 280 Protestants burned at the stake during her five-year reign.

<sup>6</sup> **fear** – profoundly respect.

them so to live that their unbelieving husbands may be won, [said,] “Whilst they behold,” saith he, “your chaste conversation, coupled with fear” (1Pe 3:2). A respectful wife may possibly make a religious<sup>7</sup> husband. The head may fare much better for the good temperature<sup>8</sup> of the body. Fear in her may be instrumental to work faith in him. There was one woman famous, or rather infamous, in the world for the lack of this fear; but, reader, observe the sad fruit of it. Michal, David’s wife, despised him in her heart. Here was her fault: instead of fearing him as her head, she despised him in her heart, and that for his holiness (1Ch 15:29). But mark also the fruit: “Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death” (2Sa 6:23). God hath barren wombs for such bold, [disrespectful] women. If she slights her head, God will scourge her body. Barrenness in those days made women contemptible. Then when Elizabeth had a child, she triumpheth: “He [God] looked on me, to take away my reproach among men” (Luke 1:25). Now, because David was contemptible in Michal’s eye, God made her contemptible in every eye. And it is further remarkable that Michal, having no natural children, would [of necessity] have adopted some of her sister Merab’s children; but God punished her in them also. He disgraced her in hanging and bringing them to disgraceful ends. Barren Michal hath many daughters, who despise their husbands; but let such consider that they shall one way or other feel God’s anger. Though they will not fear their dying husbands, yet they shall find that “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (2Sa 6:23; 21:8-9; Heb 10:31).

This reverence must be outward in their expressions and actions. Sarah called Abraham *lord* (1Pe 3:6), not out of flattery, but to acknowledge his authority; not as desirous to humor his pride, but as willing to know her own place. Jezebel and Zipporah are both stigmatized in holy writ for their saucy,<sup>9</sup> sinful language to their husbands (1Ki 21:7; Exo 4:25). If a woman answers her husband, it must be with [humility]; if she would advise him, it must be with [gentleness]; and if she admonishes him, with much [lowliness of mind]. If she speaks *of* him, it must be respectfully; if she speaks *to* him, it must be respectfully. The humble posture of her body upon all occasions should speak the respectful temper of her mind. The fault of some wives is very foul, who, out of disrespect, refuse to call their husbands

---

<sup>7</sup> **religious** – godly.

<sup>8</sup> **temperature** – temperament or disposition; in other words, the husband [head] will benefit from his wife’s [body’s] godly expression of respect.

<sup>9</sup> **saucy** – insolent toward superiors; sassy.

by their names, but have some passionate periphrasis<sup>10</sup> to [describe] them by—“this man” or “this fellow” or, it may be, “this fool”; as Saul in derision called David, “the son of Jesse” (1Sa 22:9, 13), and the Jews in contempt called Christ, “the carpenter’s son” (Mat 13:55).

The woman is called “the glory of the man” (1Co 11:7) because it is a high honor to him that so excellent a creature as a woman should be [in submission]. Surely, then, wives that refuse this respect are their husbands’ shame and disgrace. When once a woman harbors contemptible thoughts of her husband, this one evil weed will so overrun and spread in her words and actions that no good thing will grow by it. Oh, it is a most doleful living, when the wife, instead of respecting, is always railing at and wrangling with her husband. There are wives that are worse than their dogs: though their dogs bark at strangers, [they] will not bark at their master; but they spare not the husband—the master of the house—in their cursed peevishness and passions. Nay, the very devils have order amongst themselves: they will acknowledge a prince, a superior among them; but these wives will acknowledge none above themselves, but must rule all or else the house must quickly be made too hot for their husbands. A serpent is as good a companion as such a wife; for a serpent, if it kill, doth it suddenly; but such a wife makes her husband die lingeringly, for his whole life is a civil death. I thank my God [that] I never so much as tasted those sour herbs; but truly I have pitied from my heart some husbands, whose outward beings have by such wives been made as miserable as is almost possible on this side of hell. It is a thousand pities that the tongues of such shrews have not as many blisters as their jaws have teeth. It is never better with their husbands than when they are hoarse; and it were well if such blemishes of their sex, such monsters in nature, and such plagues to a family, were gagged until they had learned better language...

Indeed, the titles given to the husband in Scripture speak both his superiority and her submission. He is called her *lord* (1Pe 3:6), her *master* (Est 1:17), her *guide* (Pro 2:17), her *head* (1Co 11:3). How many reasons are laid down for this respect?

**1. Because the woman was made *after* the man.** Therefore, she should not go before the man. That which was first in this sense must not be last; and that which is last, first. “For Adam was first formed, then Eve” (1Ti 2:13).

**2. Because the woman was made *of* man.** “For the man is not of the

---

<sup>10</sup> **periphrasis** – indirect way of expressing things.

woman, but the woman of the man” (1Co 11:8). She is a branch springing from him as her root and, under God, did receive her origin and being from him. Now, the effect is ever less noble and inferior to the cause.

**3. Because the woman was made *for* man.** “Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man” (1Co 11:9). In reason, that which serveth to any end is less than the end to which it serveth.

**4. Because the woman was first in sin (Gen 3:16; 1Ti 2:14).** Sin brings shame; therefore, she that was first in sin must not expect to be first in honor. Since Adam sinned in being ruled by her, it is fit that she should be ruled by him.

**5. Because the man is the head of the woman (Eph 5:23).** The members are subject to the head, without rebelling or reasoning. This duty of respect is natural as well as necessary.

**6. Because the man is the image and glory of God (1Co 11:7).** In man there is a resemblance of God’s dominion and authority, being lord of the world. The woman is the image and glory of God, according to her original creation, for she was made as holy and happy as the man. But [this is] not according to her *personal* relation to her husband; for [rule], which is the man’s privilege, is God’s glory and prerogative, and not submission, which is the woman’s duty.

**7. Because God hath given the man [rule] over his wife.** “Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen 3:15)...

Reader, if thou hast any fear of God, I know thou wilt fear thy husband; then thy language to him and of him will not be rude but respectful. And thy [attitude] will not be pouting and [gloomy], frowning and fuming, but such as is clothed with the garment of meekness. In obeying his lawful precepts, thy work is not to complain of, but to comply with thy husband’s commands; obedience will arise naturally from respect and is the best testimony of it. Many women are noted for questioning and quarrelling at their husbands’ [authority], but few for obeying their husbands’ lawful [desires]...But holy women will be like Dorcas, full of good works, and know the [role] in which God hath set them. How infamous is that family where the wife, like Jezebel, rules the roast;<sup>11</sup> and the husband, like Ahab, lets her do

---

<sup>11</sup> **rules the roast** – nowadays, “rules the roast”; originated in the 15<sup>th</sup> century as *rules the roast*, which probably meant a person in charge of the roast, who thus ruled the kitchen; this became a metaphor for someone who ruled the home; in this sense, it meant that strong-willed Jezebel ruled the roast, i.e., her home and her weak, controlled husband.

what she [wills]! If the moon gets the upper hand of the sun, the wife of the husband, the next thing to be expected is an eclipse of the honor of that house...“Wives,” saith the apostle, “submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands in everything” (Eph 5:22-24). In which words, the Spirit of God gives women,

**First, a precept to submission:** “Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands.” The word *submit* signifieth an...orderly submission of the wife to the authority of her husband. A commanding wife inverts the order of nature, as well as the ordinance of the Creator. A wife is made to be a help to a man, not to be the head of a man. Ahasuerus’ law was written in the tables of those heathen hearts that every man should bear rule in his house (Est 1:22).

**Secondly, a spring of this submission:** “as unto the Lord.” Her obedience to her husband must proceed from conscience to God. It will not be a sufficient excuse for her to say, “He doth not love me, therefore I will not obey him!”—for not the husband’s affection to her, but her affection to God, must be the great motive to subjection. “If my husband fails in his duty, I suffer; but if I fail in my duty, I sin.” The former is a cross, but the latter is a curse. If the husband does not mind his duty, but is wicked, the wife hath the more need to [take her responsibility] that she may win him (1Pe 3:1-2). Besides, it is God that commandeth this obedience, and He will requite<sup>12</sup> it.

**Thirdly, the ground or reason for this submission:** “For the husband is the head of the wife” (Eph 5:23). His [authority] commandeth submission from her. It is natural for the body to obey the head. What an uncomely sight it is to see the shoulders above the head—the wife lording it over her husband.

**Fourthly, the pattern:** “Therefore, as the church is subject to Christ, let the wife be subject to her husband.” The obedience of the church is cordial; sincerity is her glory—she doth the will of God from the heart. The obedience of the church is constant; it runneth parallel with her life. “I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end” (Psa 119:112); thus should wives obey their husbands. Their hearts should accompany their hands, and their obedience should last whilst they live. As a fair, gilded mirror is of little worth unless it represents the image of him that looks into it, so a beautiful, wealthy wife is worth little unless she resembles her

---

<sup>12</sup> **requite** – reward.

husband's disposition in her [attitudes] and conditions—I mean, so far as she may with a good conscience.

**Fifthly, the extent:** “So let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing”—*i.e.*, in everything that is lawful. If the husband enjoins what is inconvenient, she may meekly desire it may be waived and humbly offer her reasons; but if he persists, she must obey though it be painful. If it be possible, she must set about it. And truly, though thy husband be never so peevish, endeavor to thine utmost to please him; for though he take all thy actions ill, yet thy God will take them well. And [in] so doing, thou shalt be sure to please God, Who, the harder thy task is by reason of thy husband's untowardliness,<sup>13</sup> will take it the kinder at thy hands. Only, if he commands what is sinful, she may, nay, she must, refuse to obey him, for then he commandeth beyond his power. It is said, therefore, “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord” (Col 3:19); mark, *in the Lord*, not *against the Lord*. As God must be loved above a husband, so God must be pleased before a husband. As thy husband is to be loved next to God, so he must be pleased next to God, but not before God. If a justice of peace command his neighbor to take up arms against the king, he is not to be obeyed. If his neighbor obeys him, they are both traitors. But what a justice commands an inferior officer in the defense of his prince, or in obedience to him, must be obeyed.

Indeed, sad are the consequences of unruly wives. When the order of nature is disturbed, there ensue great inconveniences, as earthquakes, thunders, and deluges; so when this order of the wife's subjection to her husband is denied, there follow sad inconveniences. Their hearts tremble like an earthquake with jealousy of each other; their house is full of the thunder of brawling and scolding, and their whole lives with an inundation<sup>14</sup> of weeping and bitterness.

From *The Works of George Swinnock*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh; London; Dublin: James Nichol; James Nisbet and Co.; G. Herbert, 1868), 503-512, in the public domain.

---

**George Swinnock (1627-1673):** Puritan preacher educated at Cambridge and Oxford; born in Maidstone, Kent, England, UK.




---

<sup>13</sup> **untowardliness** – obstinance; bad-temperedness.

<sup>14</sup> **inundation** – flood.

# A DISOBEDIENT HUSBAND

John Brown (1784-1858)

**A** Christian woman may, without fault on her part, find herself the wife of an unconverted man. It is a possible thing that she may have been deceived in her estimate of the character of him whom she has chosen for her companion through life. The mask of religion is often assumed to serve a purpose; and sometimes it has so much the appearance of reality that it is not [surprising] that mistakes—sad mistakes—are committed by the inexperienced. Or, what is of much more frequent occurrence, and to which in all probability the apostle refers, both were in a state of unconversion when the marriage relation was formed, but a change in the wife has taken place subsequently. She, under divine influence, has been led to embrace a vital Christianity, while her husband remains destitute of or opposed to it, “dead in trespasses and in sins.” She becomes a subject of Jesus Christ, while he continues a rebel. What probably would have prevented, what in ordinary circumstances *ought* to have prevented marriage does not dissolve it. The Christian wife is not warranted to withdraw from her unconverted husband on that ground. She must continue with him and perform to him all the duties of an affectionate and respectful wife. She must be in submission to her own husband, probably more in submission than ever, for her conversion will likely have greatly widened her view of marital duty and deepened her sense of its obligation.

The situation referred to is a very trying one, and the apostle proposes a very powerful and encouraging motive to a discharge of its difficult duties. He holds out the hope of the Christian wife becoming the means of the salvation of her husband. He supposes a very bad case: he supposes that the husband has not “obeyed the word,” that is, “the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col 1:5). He has resisted its claims on his attention, faith, and obedience. The Christian wife, no doubt, has endeavored to bring him within the reach of the Christian preacher’s voice: it may be, he refused to come; or he came, but departed unimpressed, unbelieving. It may be scoffing and blaspheming. The Christian wife, if she acts in character, will use more private means to bring her husband under the influence of the word by reading the Scriptures and other good books—if she can get him to listen to them—and by wisely and affectionately, with her own living voice,

endeavoring to convey to him the saving truth. But all may be in vain, all often has been in vain, apparently worse than in vain, so that all direct attempts to effect change must be abandoned, as likely to do mischief rather than good, hardening prejudice, provoking resistance.

Still the Christian wife must not despair. She especially must not be weary in the well-doing of a conscientious performance of her marital duties; and the motive, the all-powerful, the sweetly constraining motive, so full of power over the principles of the Christian, and the affections of the wife, is: "What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?" (1Co 7:16). Even without the word, which he will not obey, he may be gained by thy chaste [conduct], obviously based on and sustained by Christian [godliness]. It has been said justly, that "men who are prejudiced observe actions a great deal more than words."<sup>1</sup>

The cheerful, affectionate, constant performance of all marital duties, especially when it is made quite plain that this is the result of Christian principle, is fitted to make impression even on unthinking and insensible men. The difference that conversion has made to the better on the relative conduct of the wife, almost necessarily leads the husband's mind to what has produced it and gives birth to the thought: "That cannot be a bad thing which produces such good effects." His prejudices are gradually weakened. By and by he, it may be, voluntarily commences to talk on a subject on which formerly he had angrily forbidden all conversation, accompanies his wife to the Christian assembly, and ultimately listens to, believes, and obeys the Word that he had formerly rejected. "A life of [evident] holiness, heavenliness, self-denial, meekness, love, and mortification is a powerful sermon, which, if you be constantly preaching before those who are near you, will hardly miss of a good effect. Works are more palpably significant than words alone."<sup>2</sup> This is the natural tendency of a quiet, cheerful, persevering performance of marital duty to unconverted husbands; not only to those who are good and gentle, but even to those who are [bad-tempered]; and by the accompanying blessing of the good Spirit, this has not unfrequently been its blessed effect.

There is something very beautiful in the phraseology in which the conversion of the Jewish or heathen husband is described. He is said to be "won." He was lost—lost to true happiness; lost, continuing in his present state, for eternity; but when he is brought to the

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert Leighton (1611-1684), *A Practical Commentary upon the First Epistle General of Peter* (London: James Duncan, Paternoster Row, 1835), 349.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Baxter (1615-1691), *A Christian Directory*, Vol. 3 (London: Richard Edwards, 1825), 136.



knowledge of the truth, he is won, gained—gained to himself, gained to the Savior. “Added,” as Leighton says, “to His treasury, Who thought not His own precious blood too dear to lay out for this gain.”<sup>3</sup>

The motive here presented to a truly Christian woman is certainly a very cogent one. Its force has been finely brought out by a great living preacher: “The salvation of a soul! The salvation of a husband’s soul! Of one endeared by so many ties! O lose not each other ‘in the valley of the shadow of death.’ See that the parting at death be not a final parting. Let your friendship survive the desolations of time, and be renewed to infinite advantage beyond the grave. To the tie that nothing but death can sever, seek to add one which defies even his power to cut asunder. Think, O wife, of the happiness that will result from the success of your endeavors. What pleasure will attend the remainder of your days, now you are ‘of one heart and of one mind.’ How sweet will be the counsel you can now take together. How delightful to go to the house of God in company. How enlivening to add the *our* Father of the family altar to the *my* Father of the closet, which witnessed your wrestling with God that he whom you loved might also be led to say, ‘*my* Father.’ And what will be your joy and crown of rejoicing in that day when, before assembled men and angels, he will say: ‘Blessed be the providence that attached us in yonder world, and has still more united us in this. “The woman thou gavest me to be with me,” led me not to “the tree of knowledge of good and evil;” but to the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.’”<sup>4</sup>

The practical effect that the pressing of this motive should have on the Christian wife is excellently expressed by one of the fathers of the church: “The wise woman, then, will first choose to persuade her husband to be her associate in what is conducive to happiness. And should that be found impracticable, let her by herself earnestly aim at virtue, gaining her husband’s consent in everything, so as never to do anything against his will, with exception of what is reckoned as contributing to virtue and salvation.”<sup>5</sup>

From *Expository Discourses on the First Epistle of the Apostle Peter*, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: William Oliphant & Co., 1866), 211-215, in the public domain.



<sup>3</sup> Leighton, 350.

<sup>4</sup> William Jay (1769-1853), “The Mutual Duties of Husbands and Wives” in *The Standard Works of William Jay*, Vol. 3 (Baltimore: Plaskitt & Co., 1832), 168.

<sup>5</sup> Clement of Alexandria, “The Stromata” in *Fathers of the Second Century*, Vol. 2, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 432.

# LOVELY IN HER HUSBAND'S EYES

J. R. Miller (1840-1912)

ONE of the first essential elements in a wife is *faithfulness*—faithfulness, too, in the largest sense. “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her” (Pro 31:11)...A shadow of doubt destroys the peace of married life. A true wife by her character and by her conduct proves herself worthy of her husband’s trust. He has confidence in her affection: he knows that her heart is unalterably true to him. He has confidence in her management: he confides to her the care of his household. He knows that she is true to all his interests—that she is prudent and wise, not wasteful nor extravagant. It is one of the essential things in a true wife that her husband shall be able to leave in her hands the management of all domestic affairs, and know that they are safe. Wifely thriftlessness and extravagance have destroyed the happiness of many a household and wrecked many a home. On the other hand, many a man owes his prosperity to his wife’s prudence and her wise administration of household affairs.

Every true wife makes her husband’s interests her own. While he lives for her, carrying her image in his heart, and toiling for her all the days, she thinks only of what will do him good. When burdens press upon him, she tries to lighten them by sympathy, by cheer, by the inspiration of love. She enters with zest and enthusiasm into all his plans. She is never a weight to drag him down; she is strength in his heart to help him ever to do nobler and better things.

All wives are not such blessings to their husbands. Woman is compared sometimes to the vine, while man is the strong oak to which it clings. But there are different kinds of vines. Some wreath a robe of beauty and a crown of glory for the tree, covering it in summer days with green leaves and in the autumn hanging among its branches rich purple clusters of fruit; others twine their arms about it only to sap its very life and destroy its vigor, until it stands decaying and unsightly, stripped of its splendor, discrowned,<sup>1</sup> and fit only for the fire.

A true wife makes a man’s life nobler, stronger, grander by the omnipotence of her love “turning all the forces of manhood upward and heavenward.” While she clings to him in holy confidence and loving dependence, she brings out in him whatever is noblest and richest in

---

<sup>1</sup> **discrowned** – deprived of dignity or adornment.

his being. She inspires him with courage and earnestness. She beautifies his life. She softens whatever is rude and harsh in his habits or his spirit. She clothes him with the gentler graces of refined and cultured manhood. While she yields to him and never disregards his lightest wish, she is really his queen, ruling his whole life and leading him onward and upward in every proper path.

But there are wives also like the vines that cling only to blight. Their dependence is weak, indolent helplessness. They lean but impart no strength. They cling but they sap the life. They put forth no hand to help. They loll<sup>2</sup> on sofas or promenade<sup>3</sup> the streets; they dream over sentimental novels; they gossip in drawing rooms. They are utterly useless; and being useless, they become burdens even to manliest, tenderest love. Instead of making a man's life stronger, happier, richer, they absorb his strength, impair his usefulness, hinder his success, and cause him to be a failure among men...The true wife clings and leans; but she also helps and inspires. Her husband feels the mighty inspiration of her love in all his life. Toil is easier, burdens are lighter, battles are less fierce because of the face that waits in the quiet of the home, because of the heart that beats in loving sympathy whatever the experience, because of the voice that speaks its words of cheer and encouragement when the day's work is done. No wife knows how much she can do to make her husband honored among men and his life a power and a success by her loyal faithfulness, by the active inspiration of her own sweet life.

Here are true words from another pen: "The woodman's axe swings lighter, the heavy blows on the anvil have more music than fatigue in them, the farmer whistles cheerfully over his plough, the mechanic's severest toil is lightened by a sweet refrain, when he knows that his fair young bride is in sympathy with him, and while watching his return is providing daintily for his pleasure and comfort, eager to give him loving welcome. To the artist at his easel come fairer visions to be transformed to the canvas because of the dear one presiding over his house. The author in his study finds the dullest subjects clothed in freshness and vigor because of the gentle critic to whom he can go for aid and encouragement. The lawyer prepares his case with better-balanced energy, thinks more clearly, pleads his cause with more effective eloquence, inspired by the cheering words uttered as he goes to his labors by the young wife whose thoughts he is assured will fol-

---

<sup>2</sup> **loll** – lie, lean, or lounge in a lazy or relaxed manner.

<sup>3</sup> **promenade** – walk about in a leisurely way, especially for amusement or display.

low his work with her judicious, tranquilizing sympathy. The physician in his daily rounds among the sick and suffering knows there is one, now all his own, praying for his success, and this knowledge so fills his being that his very presence by the sick bed has healing in it. The young pastor in his efforts to minister to the spiritual wants of his flock will speak peace to the troubled souls committed to his trust with far more zeal and tenderness for the love that will smile on him when he returns home.”<sup>4</sup>

**The good wife is a *good housekeeper*.** I know well how unromantic this remark will appear to those whose dreams of married life are woven of the fancies of youthful sentiment, but these frail dreams of sentiment will not last long amid the stern realities of life, and then that which will prove one of the rarest elements of happiness and blessing in the household will be housewifely industry and diligence.

A Greek philosopher, walking at night and gazing up at the sky, stumbled and fell. His companion observed: “One should not have his head in the stars while his feet are on the earth.” There are some wives who commit the same mistake. They set their eyes on romantic ideals and neglect the real duties that come close to their hands, in which the true secret of happiness and blessing lies. They have their eyes and head among the stars while their feet are walking on mundane soil—no wonder if they stumble. It may be put down as a positive rule, whether among the rich or the poor, whether in a palace or in a cottage, that the wife who would be happy and make her home happy and permanently beautiful must work with her hands at the housewifely tasks that the days in turn bring to her.

When young people marry, they are rarely troubled with many thoughts about the details of housekeeping. Their dreams are high above all such commonplaces. The mere mention of such things as cooking, baking, sweeping, dusting, mending, ironing, jars<sup>5</sup> upon the poetic rhythm of the lofty themes of conversation. It never enters the brains of these happy lovers that it can make any difference in the world in their home life whether the bread is sweet or sour, whether the oatmeal is well-cooked or scorched, whether the meals are punctual or tardy. The mere thought that such sublunary<sup>6</sup> matters could affect the tone of their wedded life seems a desecration.

---

<sup>4</sup> Eunice White Beecher, aka Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher, “Long Engagements or Early Marriages” in *The Christian Union*, Vol. 24, No. 1, New York, July 6, 1881.

<sup>5</sup> **jars** – cause the nerves or feelings to vibrate painfully; to send a shock through.

<sup>6</sup> **sublunary** – earthly; belonging to this world as contrasted with a better or more spiritual one.

It is a pity to dash away such exquisite dreams, but the truth is they do not long outlast the echo of the wedding peals or the fragrance of the bridal roses. The newly married are not long within their own doors before they find that something more than tender sentiment is needed to make their home-life a success. They come down from the clouds when the daily routine begins and touch the common soil on which the feet of other mortals walk. Then they find that they are dependent, just like ordinary people, on some quite prosaic<sup>7</sup> conditions...The palace that is to rise into the air, shooting up its towers, displaying its wonders of architecture, flashing its splendors in the sunshine, the admiration of the world, must have its foundation in commonplace earth, resting on plain, hard, honest rock. Love may build its palace of noble sentiments and tender affections and sweet charities, rising into the very clouds; and in this splendid home two souls may dwell in the enjoyment of the highest possibilities of wedded life; but this palace, too, must stand on the ground with unpoetic and unsentimental stones for its foundation. That foundation is *good housekeeping*.

In other words, good breakfasts, dinners, and suppers, a well-kept house, order, system, promptness, punctuality, good cheer—far more than any young lovers dream does happiness in married life depend upon such commonplace things as these. Love is very patient, very kind, very gentle; and where there is love, no doubt, the plainest fare is ambrosia<sup>8</sup> and the homeliest surroundings are charming...Husbands are not angels in this mundane state; and not being such, they need a substantial basis of good housekeeping for the realization of their dreams of blissful homemaking...There is no doubt that many a heart-estrangement begins at the table where meals are unpunctual, and food is poorly cooked or repulsively served. Bad housekeeping will soon drive the last vestige of romance out of any home. The illusion that love weaves about an idolized bride will soon vanish if she proves incompetent in her domestic management. The wife who will keep the charm of early love unbroken through the years, and in whose home the dreams of the wedding-day will come true, must be a good housekeeper...

It should be understood that for every wife the first duty is the making and keeping of her own home. Her first and best work should be done there; and until it is well done, she has no right to go outside

---

<sup>7</sup> **prosaic** – commonplace; matter-of-fact; unromantic.

<sup>8</sup> **ambrosia** – in classic mythology, the food and drink of the gods; therefore, something divinely sweet or exquisitely delightful to taste or smell.

to take up other duties...She must look upon her home as the one spot on earth for which she alone is responsible and which she must cultivate well for God if she never does anything outside. For her the Father's business is not attending Dorcas societies, missionary meetings, mothers' meetings, and temperance conventions, or even teaching a Sunday School class, until she has made her own home all that her wisest thought and best skill can make it. There have been wives who in their zeal for Christ's work outside have neglected Christ's work inside their own doors. They have had eyes and hearts for human need and human sorrow in the broad fields lying far out, but neither eye nor heart for the work of love lain about their own feet. The result has been that while they were doing angelic work in the lanes and streets, the angels were mourning over their neglected duties within the hallowed walls of their own homes...Let it be remembered that Christ's work in the home is the first that He gives to every wife, and that no amount of consecrated activities in other spheres will atone in this world or the next for neglect or failure there.

**The good wife is *generous and warm-hearted*.** She does not grow grasping and selfish. In her desire to economize and add to her stores, she does not forget those who suffer or want. While she gives her wisest and most earnest thought and her best and most skillful work to her own home, her heart does not grow cold toward those outside who need sympathy. I cannot conceive of true womanhood ripened into mellow richness, yet lacking the qualities of gentleness and unselfishness. A woman whose heart is not touched by the sickness of sorrow and whose hands do not go out in relief where it is in her power to help, lacks one of the elements that make the glory of womanhood...It is in her own home that this warmth of heart and this openness of hand are first to be shown. It is as wife and mother that her gentleness performs its most sacred ministry. Her hand wipes away the tear-drops when there is sorrow. In sickness, she is the tender nurse. She bears upon her own heart every burden that weighs upon her husband.

No matter how the world goes with him during the day, when he enters his own door he meets the fragrant atmosphere of love. Other friends may forsake him, but she clings to him with unalterable fidelity. When gloom comes down and adversity falls upon him, her faithful eyes look ever into his like two stars of hope shining in the darkness. When his heart is crushed, beneath her smile it gathers itself

again into strength, “like a wind-torn flower in the sunshine.”<sup>9</sup>...Men often see not the angel in the plain, plodding woman who walks quietly beside them until the day of trial comes: then, in the darkness the glory shines out. An angel ministered to our Lord when in Gethsemane He wrestled with His great and bitter sorrow. What a benediction to the mighty sufferer was in the soft gliding to His side of that gentle presence, in the touch of that soothing, supporting hand laid upon Him, in the comfort of that gentle voice thrilling with sympathy as it spoke its strengthening message of love! Was it a mere coincidence that just at that time and in that place the radiant messenger came? No, it is always so. Angels choose such occasions to pay their visits to men...So it is in the dark hours of a man’s life, when burdens press, when sorrows weigh like mountains upon his soul, when adversities have left him crushed and broken, or when he is amid fierce struggles that try the strength of every fiber of his manhood, that all the radiance and glory of a true wife’s strengthful love shine out before his eyes. Only then does he recognize in her God’s angel of mercy...

In sickness how thoughtful, how skillful, how gentle a nurse is the true wife! In struggles with temptation or adversity or difficulty, what an inspiration she is! In misfortune or disaster, what lofty heroism does she exhibit and what courage does her bravery kindle in her husband’s heart! Instead of being crushed by the unexpected loss, she only then rises to her full grandeur of soul. Instead of weeping, repining and despairing, and thus adding tenfold to the burden of the misfortune, she cheerfully accepts the changed circumstances and becomes a minister of hope and strength. She turns away from luxury and ease to the plainer home, the simpler life, the humbler surroundings—without a murmur. It is in such circumstances and experiences that the heroism of woman’s soul is manifested. Many a man is carried victoriously through misfortune and enabled to rise again because of the strong, inspiring sympathy and the self-forgetting help of his wife; and many a man fails in fierce struggle, and rises not again from the defeat of misfortune because the wife at his side proves unequal to her opportunity...

**A true wife gives her husband her fullest confidence.** She hides nothing from him. She gives no pledge of secrecy that will seal her lips in his presence. She listens to no words of admiration from others that she may not repeat to him. She expresses to him every feeling,

---

<sup>9</sup> William Henry Davenport Adams (1828-1891), *Woman’s Work and Worth in Girlhood, Maidenhood, and Wifehood* (London: John Hogg, 1880), 38.

every hope, every desire and yearning, every joy or pain. Then, while she utters every confidence in his ear, she is most careful to speak in no other ear any word concerning the sacred inner life of her home. Are there little frictions or grievances in the wedded life? Has her husband faults that annoy her or cause her pain? Does he fail in this duty or that? Do differences arise that threaten the peace of the home? In the feeling of disappointment and pain, smarting under a sense of injury, a wife may be strongly tempted to seek sympathy by telling her trials to some intimate friends. Nothing could be more fatal to her own truest interests and to the hope of restored happiness and peace in her home. Grievances complained of outside remain unhealed sores. The wise wife will share her secret of unhappiness with none but her Master, while she strives in every way that patient love can suggest to remove the causes of discord or trouble.

Love sees much in a wife that other eyes see not. It throws a veil over her blemishes; it transfigures even her plainest features. One of the problems of her wedded life is to retain this charm for her husband's eyes as long as she lives, to appear lovely to him even when the color has faded from her cheeks and when the music has gone out of her voice. This is no impossibility; it is only what is done in every true home. But it cannot be done by the arts of the dressmaker, the milliner,<sup>10</sup> and the hairdresser. Only the arts of love can do it. The wife who would always hold in her husband's heart the place she held on her wedding day will never cease striving to be lovely. She will be as careful of her words and acts and her whole bearing toward him as she was before marriage. She will cultivate in her own life whatever is beautiful, whatever is winning, whatever is graceful. She will scrupulously avoid whatever is offensive or unwomanly. She will look well to her personal appearance; no woman can be careless in her dress, slatternly<sup>11</sup> and untidy, and long keep her place on the throne of her husband's life. She will look well to her inner life. She must have *mental* attractiveness. She will seek to be clothed in *spiritual* beauty. Her husband must see in her ever-new loveliness as the years move on. As the charms of physical beauty may fade in the toils and vicissitudes<sup>12</sup> of life, there must be more and more beauty of soul to shine out to replace the attractions that are lost. It has been said, "The wife should always leave something to be revealed only to her husband, some modest charm, some secret grace, reserved solely for his delight

---

<sup>10</sup> **milliner** – woman's hat maker or seller.

<sup>11</sup> **slatternly** – unconcerned about good standards of hygiene, grooming, or tidiness.

<sup>12</sup> **vicissitudes** – unpredictable changes that keep occurring in life; shifting circumstances.



and inspiration, like those flowers that give of their sweetness only to the hand that lovingly gathers them.”<sup>13</sup> She should always care more to please him than any other person in the world. She should prize more highly a compliment from his lips than from any other human lips. Therefore, she should reserve for him the sweetest charms; she should seek to bring ever to him some new surprise of loveliness; she should plan pleasures and delights for him. Instead of not caring how she looks, or whether she is agreeable or not, when no one but her husband is present, she should always be at her best for him. Instead of being bright and lovely when there is company, then relapsing into languor<sup>14</sup> and silence when the company is gone, she should seek always to be brightest and loveliest when only he and she sit together in the quiet of the home. Both husband and wife should ever bring their best things to each other.

Again, let me say that no wife can overestimate the influence she wields over her husband, or the measure in which his character, his career, and his very destiny are laid in her hands for shaping. The sway which she holds over him is the sway of love, but it is mighty and resistless. If she retains her power, if she holds her place as queen of his life, she can do with him as she will. Even unconsciously to herself, without any thought of her responsibility, she will exert over him an influence that will go far toward making or marring all his future. If she has no lofty conception of life herself, if she is vain and frivolous, she will only chill his ardor, weaken his resolution, and draw him aside from any earnest endeavor. But if she has in her soul noble womanly qualities, if she has true thoughts of life, if she has purpose, strength of character, and fidelity to principle, she will be to him an unfailing inspiration toward all that is noble, manly, and Christlike. The high conceptions of life in her mind will elevate his conceptions. Her firm, strong purpose will put vigor and determination into every resolve and act of his. Her purity of soul will cleanse and refine his spirit. Her warm interest in all his affairs and her wise counsel at every point will make him strong for every duty and valiant in every struggle. Her careful domestic management will become an important element of success in his business life. Her bright, orderly, happy homemaking will be a perpetual source of joy and peace, and an incentive to nobler living. Her unwavering fidelity, her tender affectionateness, her womanly sympathy, her beauty of soul, will make her to him God’s angel indeed—sheltering, guarding, keeping,

---

<sup>13</sup> Adams, *Woman’s Work and Worth*, 49.

<sup>14</sup> **languor** – lack of interest or energy; inactivity.

guiding, and blessing him. Just in the measure in which she realizes this lofty ideal of wifhood will she fulfill her mission and reap the rich harvest of her hopes...

So, it all comes back to a question of character. She can be a good wife only by being a good woman, and she can be a good woman in the true sense only by being a Christian woman. Nowhere save in Christ can she find the wisdom and strength she needs to meet the solemn responsibilities of wifhood. Only in Christ can she find that rich beauty of soul, that gemming and empearling of the character, which shall make her lovely in her husband's sight when the bloom of youth is gone, when the brilliance has faded out of her eyes and the roses have fled from her checks. Only Christ can teach her how to live so as to be blessed and a blessing in her married life.

Nothing in this world is sadder than to compare love's early dreams, what love meant to be, with the too frequent story of the after-life—what came of the dreams, what was the outcome of love's venture. Why so many sad disappointments? Why do so many bridal wreaths fall into dust? Is there no possibility of making these fair dreams come true, of keeping these flowers lovely and fragrant through all the years?

Yes, but only in Christ.

The young maiden goes smiling and singing to the marriage altar. Does she know that if she has not Christ with her she is as a lamb going to the sacrifice? Let her tarry at the gateway till she has linked her life to Him Who is the first and the last. Human love is very precious, but it is not enough to satisfy a heart. There will be trials, there will be perplexities, there will be crosses and disappointments, there will be solitudes and sorrows. Then none but Christ will be sufficient. Without Him, the way will be dreary. But with His benediction and presence, the flowers that droop today will bloom fresh again tomorrow, and the dreams of early love will build themselves up into a palace of peace and joy for the solace, the comfort, and the shelter of old age.

From *Home-Making* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1882), 61-92, in the public domain.

---

**James Russell Miller (1840-1912):** Presbyterian pastor and gifted writer; born at Frankfort Springs, PA, USA.

