

Set Apart Christ As Lord

1 Peter 3:1-22

Key Verse: 3:15

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...”

In chapter 1 we learned that God has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. With this living hope we can live a holy life. In chapter 2 we learned that we are a royal priesthood and a holy nation. This sounds fantastic. We can imagine ourselves wearing royal garments and performing important priestly duties to bring the lost world back to God. It may be teaching the Bible one-to-one, or engaging in spiritual warfare through prayer, or serving as a missionary in a faraway land. Of course, there are many important tasks to carry out. However, the words "you are a...royal priesthood," tell us that being a royal priesthood begins with "being" rather than "doing." We "are" royal priests through the blood of Christ, by the grace of God. Our being itself has been transformed, and this affects our life at home, work, school, church, and in our nation. In brief, a royal priest lives like one, always and everywhere. In chapter 3, Peter tells us how to do so. It is by setting apart Christ as Lord: in the home (1-7), in Christian community (8-12), and in a hostile world (13-22).

I. Set apart Christ as Lord in the home (1-7)

First, "wives...be submissive to your husbands" (1-6). Look at verse 1a. "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands...." Peter boldly tells wives to be submissive to their husbands. To be submissive is an attitude of heart that recognizes the husband as the leader in the family and is willing to follow his guidance. It is not spineless submission but voluntary humility and service. Let's note that this is not a general teaching about men and women. It is specifically directing wives to submit to their husbands. Marriage is designed by God to work properly when men of mission lead their families in the way that pleases God, and women submit willingly in harmony, to be suitable helpers (Gen 2:18; 1 Cor 11:3).

So what is the problem? Genesis 3 reveals that the woman was seduced by the serpent and ate the forbidden fruit. Then she gave some to her husband and he fell into sin. Later, when God judged their sin he said to the woman: "Your 'desire' will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Gen 3:16). The same word for "desire" is found in Genesis 4:7 in which God warned Cain that sin "desired" to have him. It meant that sin wanted to control him. In the same way, women have a

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hidden, or not so hidden, "desire" to rule over men. The Net Bible translates Genesis 3:16b, "You will want to control your husband, but he will dominate you." A woman's desire to rule her husband is rebelliousness toward God, inverting creation order. To live a holy life, a wife must be free from the desire to control her husband; she must be submissive. A submissive wife is pure in heart and reverent in attitude toward God, and her husband. No doubt, we women need the blood of Jesus to sanctify us and to make us submissive to our husbands. Dr. Helen Rarick is a good example. She was once somewhat domineering. But the blood of Jesus worked powerfully in her soul. So she gave up her position as a top researcher in her field to be a suitable helper, a good mother, and a campus Bible teacher. Now she teaches at Wright College instead of Duke University in order to have enough time to serve her husband, her children and her sheep. She is a holy nation woman. Christian wives should be noted for godly submission to their husbands. A submissive woman does not nag her husband to change. She quietly sets a good example and prays for him, depending on God to change him.

Look at verses 3-4. Christian women must value the inner beauty of a transformed life more than outward beauty, which is already fading. Then how can they grow in this inner beauty? Verse 4b tells the secret. It says, "They were submissive to their own husbands...." When a woman submits to her husband out of reverence toward God, she learns the submission of Christ. She learns the humility of Christ, the patience of Christ, the gentleness of Christ, and the prayerful quietness of Christ. She grows in the image of Christ and attains a true and everlasting beauty that emanates from within. Even God takes note of her, and values her highly (4). So, a wise woman will spend quality time with Christ in the word of God, and use leftover time to shop for clothes, go to the beauty parlor, or buy cosmetics. In doing so, she will become truly beautiful with an unfading beauty.

In verses 5-6 Peter shares the example of Abraham's wife Sarah. She obeyed Abraham and called him her master. Consider her submission. One day Abraham came home and said suddenly, "Sarah, quick, pack everything. God just told me to leave this land and go to a land he will show me." Sarah might answer, "Where is that, dear?" And Abraham replied, "I don't know. But God said he will show me. Let's go." Sarah did not argue. She quietly packed and went with Abraham to a new land. There, a famine drove them to seek relief in Egypt. Abraham was afraid that Pharaoh would kill him and take beautiful Sarah for himself. To protect his own life, Abraham persuaded Sarah to lie that she was his sister. Then Sarah ended up in Pharaoh's palace as a harem candidate. How could she submit to such a person as Abraham? She put her hope in God. She believed God was leading Abraham. Even though Abraham made mistakes, God would not make a mistake.

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Indeed, God saved them from Pharaoh. In fact, God nearly killed Pharaoh to protect Sarah. She is a model of faith for all women in Christ. Hope in God drives out fear and frees a woman to be submissive to her husband.

Second, "husbands...be considerate as you live with your wives..." (7). After spending six verses on women, Peter gives one verse to men. Look at verse 7. "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." The problem for many husbands is a lack of consideration for their wives. Many husbands continue to think and act like bachelors, even after marriage. Husbands must shed their "bachelor mentality" and be considerate of their wives. A couple days after I married Deborah, Dr. Samuel Lee invited all Chicago staff for lunch to a Korean restaurant. I gladly went along, hungry and ready to eat as usual. Suddenly he looked at me and said, "Where is your wife?" Feeling somewhat of an ominous sensation, I found her and brought her with us. When we arrived at the restaurant, he asked me to wait in the parking lot, standing by the car, while everyone else went in to eat lunch. Many passersby looked at me with strange expressions. I missed lunch that day. It was a good lesson. After that, I began to think of my wife at mealtime. It is natural for sinsick husbands to take their wives' sacrifice and serving for granted. However, the word of God tells us to consider them, understand them, and appreciate the sacrifices they make. In fact, what a woman really wants is to be truly understood by her husband and appreciated.

Furthermore, husbands must respect their wives as the weaker partner. Now, if she is the weaker partner, that means that the husband is the weak partner. He is weak; she is a little weaker physically, and perhaps, emotionally. She is not weaker morally, intellectually or spiritually, as we all know. In treating the weaker members, we need wisdom. A "survival of the fittest" mentality urges us to despise and cut off the weaker member. Some men live by this mentality and abuse their wives physically. They destroy their families and themselves and provoke God's wrath. God's wisdom is to treat the weaker partner with respect, making an atmosphere of love and trust to build up their partnership, making it strong. Husbands must care for their wives during times of emotional stress. Husbands must be mindful of their wives' health. If she is pregnant, he must treat her tenderly. If she is exhausted, he must help her to rest, always showing great respect. Husbands and wives are partners, they are one in the gracious gift of life. When we truly live as are one we can and offer effective prayers.

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In our society, there has been a tragic breakdown of the family. In this environment godly families in which wives submit and husbands are considerate shine like stars in the universe and hold out real hope in this troubled world. One of the specific prayer topics that Dr. Lee gave us is for 10,000 house churches in North America. This means more than having 10,000 wedding ceremonies. It means raising 10,000 women who can submit to God and to their husbands, and 10,000 men who can be considerate of their wives until they make a vessel of prayer for God's world salvation purpose. May God raise 10,000 such house churches in North America!

II. Set apart Christ as Lord in the Christian community (8-12)

In this part Peter turns his attention from the family to the Christian community. Look at verse 8a. "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another...." In order to have a beautiful harmony, each different part must be played well, and in rhythm with the other parts. The Christmas Chorus made such a beautiful harmony that it moved our hearts to tears. Each section--soprano, alto, tenor, bass--mastered their parts and learned to sing together in harmony. Likewise, in the Christian community each person has their own part to play, yet it must be played together with all others, in harmony. Then there will be beautiful work of God. The problem arises when we want other people to be just like us, or when we want to be just like other people. Perhaps we envy a talent or ability that someone else has, or stir envy in others. This is foolish. God gifts each person in a unique way and provides unique opportunities to serve him. We must transcend self-centered thinking and look for ways to build up the body of Christ as a whole. We must lift our eyes to Jesus, our master conductor, and play the music he has given us to play. Then there is beautiful harmony.

Peter develops the idea of how to have harmony. Look at verse 8b. "...be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble." To be sympathetic is to understand things from another person's point of view. We can do this when we overcome our selfishness by the help of the Holy Spirit and truly see others as they are. Every human being has some kind of painful wound in their soul, which, if we understand it, will fill us with sympathy. Every human being also has some kind of greatness that is matchless, which, if we understand it, will fill us with profound respect for that person. To love as brothers is to realize that we are in the same family, going in the same direction with the same goal. Brothers will stick together, defending each other and helping each other to the end. Christians are family members, not just for a span of time on earth, but for all eternity. We should practice loving one another as family members now. Being compassionate is similar to being sympathetic, except for an additional emphasis on the action that

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relieves others' suffering. Being humble may be the foundation of all of the spiritual qualities. Humble people realize their need for Christ and for his help. They do not depend on themselves, but on Christ. Then his vast resources of compassion, love and understanding flow through them. When Christ is at the center of our community, and we all try to imitate his spiritual qualities, we can live in beautiful harmony with one another.

However, maintaining this beautiful harmony is not always easy. From time to time a brother or sister allows their sinful nature to manifest itself in the community of believers through evil words or wicked deeds. This causes pain to the body. The natural reaction is to repay: evil with evil, insult with insult. But we must not do this in Christian community. Look at verse 9. "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." As Jesus taught, we must bless those who curse us, and bless those who do evil against us (Lk 6:28; Ro 12:14). Then God in heaven sees this, and pours out a blessing upon us.

Sometimes we take our words too lightly. We don't realize the power of words. However, in building up a healthy Christian community, we must pay close attention to our words. Careless words can cause others to suffer unbearably. Evil words can spark a fire of criticism and vengeance that ruins a Christian fellowship. In verses 10-12, Peter quotes Psalm 34 emphasizing that to live well, we must not speak evil, deceitful words. On the other hand, he emphasizes that the prayer of a righteous man is heard by God, and God answers his prayer. Let's appreciate the tremendous power of our words and use them in prayer to God, not to criticize our dear brothers and sisters. We can do this when we set apart Christ as Lord in our community.

III. Set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts and share the gospel (13-22)

In this part we learn what it means to set apart Christ as Lord in our hearts while we live in this world. As Christians, we want to do good things in the world for the glory of God. Generally, no one wants to harm those who are doing good things (13). Yet some evil people will want to harm us. Then we may suffer for doing what is good. We should not fear this kind of suffering. The devil uses fear to paralyze people so that they will not do good things, but rather bad things. Fear, especially through peers, drives young people to commit sin, such as drug abuse or sexual immorality. God commands us not to fear the devil, conspiracies, or worldly powers (14). How can we overcome fear and go on the offensive?

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Look at verses 15-16. "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander." We learn 3 things.

First, in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord (15a). Sometimes we are hard pressed in our loyalty to Christ by Satan's fear. Peter tells us how to deal with this. It is to commit our hearts all the more to Christ in surrender and submission. This means to take him at his word and to pray, not giving in to Satan's pressure, until Christ wins the victory in our hearts. We cannot do this by our will power. But God gives us the Holy Spirit to help us. The Holy Spirit, coming in Christ's name, drives out fear and sets our hearts free to love and serve Christ. Romans 8:15 says, "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" When Peter tried to be loyal to Christ by his will power, he failed miserably (Mt 26:75). But through the Holy Spirit, he became bold enough to preach to those who had crucified Christ, and 3,000 repented in one day (Ac 2:14-42). To be useful to Christ in this sinsick world we must fight the spiritual battle through the word of God and prayer until Christ reigns in our hearts and we are full of the Holy Spirit.

Second, always be prepared to give an answer (15b). When we are free in Christ, there will be opportunities to share the gospel. But it is our duty to be ready for such moments. We must prepare in advance. Chicago UBF ministry grew most during persecution by ungodly people. At that time, we all memorized 14 gospel key verses, like soldiers who prepared a battle. We also memorized four page lectures that tied the gospel key verses together. We were ready to share the gospel in five minutes or less, anytime, anyplace and with anyone, quoting Bible verses with the cadence of a machine gun. Then God used us to share the gospel with hundreds of people every week. Are you ready to share the gospel with someone this afternoon?

When I traveled to Turkey last week, I had several opportunities on long airplane rides, sitting next to strangers. In God's grace I could share the gospel with an Egyptian businessman named Ali and an Indian grad student named Praveed. I am sorry that neither made an immediate decision to accept the gospel, though we did exchange contact information. I often have opportunities on facebook to respond to comments that students post. Sometimes in just a couple of minutes I can type out a relevant gospel presentation that speaks to the need of a particular person. I am still looking for my first facebook conversion. God gives opportunities; are we

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ready? We have many opportunities to evangelize Muslims who live and work just two blocks away from here. If we are not ready, let's repent and prepare to share the gospel.

Third, have hope and share it with gentleness and respect (15). When we have a burning hope in Christ in our hearts, we are different than the world, and people notice. They may ask, "How can you smile when the stock market went down so much today?" Or, "Why are you so joyful even though you just got a parking ticket?" This is an open door presented to us by God for the sake of sharing the gospel. When this kind of opportunity comes, we should not beat people over the head with our Bibles, but explain with the gentleness of Christ and with great respect, how we came to have this hope. It is very good to share our personal testimony.

Will we suffer for sharing the gospel in this way? Yes. Yet the truth is that we will suffer in this world no matter what we do. It is better to suffer for doing good. In verses 18-21, Peter summarizes the gospel. In verse 18 he says, "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit...." In verse 20b,21 he says, "It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him." Christ died, arose, ascended and is now ruling from the right hand of God with all things in submission to him. He shows us that submission is the way to victory. We who set him apart as Lord and share his sufferings in this world will also share his glory in the everlasting victory in the kingdom of God.

In this passage we learned how to live the practical Christian life. It is to set apart Christ as Lord in our homes, in our community, and in our hearts as we live in this troubled world. Christ gives us freedom through the Holy Spirit and enables us to serve God in holiness and righteousness. When Christ is Lord in our hearts, we can live every day as a royal priesthood and a holy nation for the glory of God. Let's set apart Christ as Lord in our heart!