

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY: 1 PETER 3:1-12

TOBY SUMPTER

TRINITY REFORMED CHURCH - MOSCOW, ID

A.D. JANUARY 17, 2010

INTRODUCTION

Last week we considered the fact that the Christian community embodies the life of the Trinity through submission. As the Son entrusts Himself to the Father, so we are to entrust ourselves to the Son, and this submission manifests itself in submission to human authorities, just as Jesus did. As we cling to Jesus in this, our submission and suffering is taken up into Christ's and becomes part of Christ's reconciliation of all things.

SUBMISSIVE WIVES

Peter continues with the theme of this submission with an exhortation to wives. While Christ is the central example that we are to follow, Peter implies that submissive slaves and wives are models of faith as well. Notice that this means an efficacy is tied to this submission. As Christ's example accomplishes the replication of His life in us, so too, submissive wives do so with the aim of "winning" their husbands (3:1). Peter says this is true of disobedient husbands (3:1) just as it was true of "harsh masters" (2:18). Notice that this "submission" ought to be done in fear for both slaves and wives (2:18, 3:2). While there may be a faithful sort of fear of human authorities, Peter's introduction grounds this fear ultimately in God (1:17, 2:17). How much more so ought this pattern to hold true for generally more faithful husbands/masters? Notice that submissive wives strive to imitate Jesus by their actions and without words (3:1, cf. 2:12, 22-23), and all of this is in order to silence the foolishness of ignorant men (even ignorant husbands) (2:12, 15). These actions cannot be merely outward beauty, but must imitate the Trinity in incarnating the "hidden person," manifesting that "incorruptible" inheritance we have in Christ (1:4), but there is also something efficacious about suffering for others that mimics Christ (cf. 1:18-19, 23). God the judge, who judges righteously, intervenes for those who act commendably, for those who are "precious" in His sight (3:4). This submissive spirit imitates Sarah and the other holy women who trusted in God and did not fear (3:5-6).

HUSBANDS WHO KNOW

Peter urges husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge (3:7). Given that we have an exhortation for husbands to "know" their wives, it is difficult not to think of the first marriage and the role of "knowledge." God planted the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" in the midst of the garden, and this tree tested the loyalty of Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:9). It is the lie of the dragon that when they eat their eyes will be opened, "knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5). After eating, their eyes are opened and they "know" that they are naked (Gen. 3:7), and God recognizes that now they do know good and evil (Gen. 3:22). The very next use of the word "know" occurs when the text describes Adam knowing his wife sexually (Gen. 4:1). Given Adam's blessing/response to God's curses, we are to believe that Adam repented (Gen. 3:20-21) and God forgave them (Gen. 3:21). "Knowing" is bound up with loyalty, glory, and God-likeness. And sexual love is no different. Peter says that husbands are to live with their wives like the repentant Adam. Rather than abdicating, they are to honor their wives as "fellow heirs" of the promises of God (1 Pet. 3:7). This kind of love results in answered prayers (3:7, cf. 3:12).

CONCLUSION & APPLICATION

Peter closes these particular exhortations by calling upon all Christians to be of “one mind,” sharing burdens, loving one another like family (3:8). This all goes back to an imitation of Christ, particularly with our tongues (3:9-10). Full repentance is always a “turning” away from evil and running after what is good (3:11).

Our ability to submit and suffer injustice rests upon knowledge, knowing Jesus and the Judge who vindicated Him. Husbands must know Jesus so that they may know their wives. Wives must prioritize their love and submission with Jesus at the center so that they may submit to their husbands.

Most marital sins are disobedience to the basic gospel. Jesus did not revile when He was reviled (2:23) so neither should we (3:8-9). We are called to bless those who persecute us and run after peace (3:9-11), trusting that God’s ears are open to our prayers and He will judge those who do evil (3:12).



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