

THE WIFE AS PRIEST, II

TITUS 2:3-5

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Third Sunday of Lent

A.D. March 15, 2009

INTRODUCTION

We considered Peter's instructions to wives last week to be priests to their husbands, to pursue incorruptibility in order to minister grace to them effectively. We look at Paul's instructions to Titus today regarding older women and younger women.

HOUSE GUARDIANS

Paul is writing to Titus who has been left by Paul on the island of Crete as a pastor to appoint qualified elders in every city and to address the various pastoral concerns in those churches (1:5ff). Paul tells Titus here that he needs to start a long sermon series on the Christian household (2:1-10ff). Our particular interest today is with Paul's instructions regarding what older wives are to teach the younger wives, particularly with the duty of being "house guardians" (2:5). This is one word in Greek, a compound word with "house" and "ouros" which means guardian, keeper or warden. The word in other contexts can mean "boundary" or even the canal by which a ship would be launched into the sea. There are a couple of root verbs that this word comes from one which has to do with "seeing" and one that has to do with showing "care or concern". Interestingly, it's also related to a word for time from which we get the word "hour."

THE GARDEN SANCTUARY

Eden was the first house that God prepared for His people. There are many lessons to learn from this first house for God's bride. But one of the most significant is the idea of progress. Every day creation is pronounced good, but every day God comes back and does more. Therefore Christians must have this as their standard of excellence: from glory to glory, from good to good. Finally, God created humanity to be his bride, to continue the work that He began in the world: ruling, glorifying, filling, and guarding (1:26-28, 2:15). This is the task of all of humanity still, but by analogy it is the task of wives who image the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:24-27). Notice that the only other "creature" given the task of ruling are the sun, moon, and stars; we are enthroned in Christ in the heavenly places like the rulers of heaven. Wives, you are the heavenly ruler of your house.

THE TABERNACLE SANCTUARY

This Garden House was lost through sin, and the tabernacle images that original house having three spheres representing heaven, earth, and the seas (ie. Most Holy Place, Holy Place, and Courtyard). The furniture and decorations also mirror that original house having cherubim guarding the sanctuary, a stylized tree with the heavenly lights, a table with the produce of the ground, and a glorified humanity guarding and keeping the house (e.g. Aaron's garments) (Num. 3:32). Notice two things about this house: there is continuity and there is glorification from the previous house. As God matures his people, the house matures. This principle is really the same as the progress we saw in the Creation week, but it applies to our homes too. Homes with young children will look and function differently than homes of grandparents. Secondly, the Tabernacle and the Mosaic/Levitical system were very concerned with distinctions. Clean and unclean, holy and profane, holy places and outside the camp were central to keeping God's house pure and clean. Christian wives are free to organize their homes to suit their needs and gifts best (in consultation with their husbands), but the character of God shows us that His bride must learn this discipline. Homes that have no organization proclaim a disorganized Church, and declare a chaotic bride of Christ. If God's people must approach him with discipline, orderliness and joy, why would we think that a Christian home would be different? But this is a glory that God calls us to grow in.

THE TEMPLE SANCTUARY

Finally, we should notice that the Solomonic Temple is the pinnacle of the Old Covenant house motif. Again we see all of the elements of the Garden and the Tabernacle but with more glory and now more permanence. It is made of wood; it is in one place, and it is heavy, grounded. The word glory means “heavy”—one of the glories of the temple is its heaviness and stability. It is also glorious in its richness. Consider two things: the Temple is awe inspiring for the nations; it welcomes seekers from afar. The Christian home should be such a glory, not in a gaudy, competitive, or trendy way. It should be glorious for its stability, its discipline, the obvious care and labor put into it. And it should be welcoming to the world (ie. neighbors and friends), not a museum that everyone is afraid to touch, but a warm, welcoming home. Secondly, remember that God left the temple and it was destroyed. The house of God was glorious and beautiful, but for all of that, God’s people filled it with wickedness and God left. Christ called the Pharisees whitewashed tombs, and that wasn’t a compliment. “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted calf with hatred.” (Pr. 15:17)

APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION: YOUR HOME

The two extremes are either to forget about the externals to the neglect of the internals or vice versa. The wedding ceremony is a fitting metaphor for the home. The wedding is both glorious and beautiful inside and out. There is no false dichotomy here.

But the last temptation is to take these points and start applying them to others or comparing yourself to others. But you are a Christian wife, and as such, you answer to your husband and ultimately to God himself. Use care with your words, guard your hearts; these principles will look different, and different families will need to work on different things.

And do not despair or be overwhelmed with your task: Begin with giving thanks for what you have already been given. Romans says that the fundamental difference between unbelievers and Christians is thankful hearts. Cultivate gratitude this week, a deep relentless thankfulness for your husband, your kids, your house, your furniture, your colors, your dishes: just keep going down the list and when you’re done, start over again. This is the most effective way of guarding your house, because thankfulness sees it all as a gift.

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen!



Published by: Canon Press • P.O. Box 8729 • 205 E. 5th St. • Moscow, ID 83843
www.canonpress.com • orders@canonpress.com • 800-488-2034 • Fax 208-882-1568