

1 Peter 3:7

1Pe 3:7 (NKJV) Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

This morning I want to close out v7 by speaking on the phrase “**as being heirs together of the grace of life**”. Right at the beginning, the word that stands out to me personally is the word “**together**”, but unfortunately it is not written that way in the Greek transcripts. The phrase “**being heirs together**” is actually just one word in the Greek language – “*synkleronomos*”, and it is translated in other various translations as “**a fellow heir, are heirs, are joint heirs, as heirs with you, coheirs, being...joint-heirs, heirs equally, equal partner, heirs with them**”. So, you can see just by the various translations that there are many different ways in which the translators see this word. The actual Greek word comes from the preposition “*sun*” which means “**with**”, and it denotes union or together. By association it means companionship and carries the idea of completeness. So, that is why the word “**together**” is used in the NKJV. The main root of the word is “*kleronomos*” and means to be an inheritor, a possessor, an heir.¹ So, it means that two people are what make each other complete.

Now, what is important about how we handle this word is whether or not it means that in marriage that we both separately are given God’s grace to help us simply live out our life or whether or not that together that we inherit a certain grace from God for the marriage that is unique to the marriage. In reality, it does not appear that it is an either / or, but both. I.e., as an individual believer, both the husband and the wife are heirs of the distinct grace that God provides to every believer to live out the Christian life as an individual. Obviously, this grace is given to the believer at the moment of their salvation when they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It is a grace that sustains them in the Christian life, that teaches them, that encourages them, and that gives them the strength to live how God wants them to live. To never experience this is most likely evidence that that individual may very well not be saved. Many Christians who do get married were saved before they even met their mate, so they were already an heir of this “**grace of life**”.

However, and you certainly do not have to agree with me, it appears that both the husband and the wife are also given a certain aspect of grace to live out their marriage “**together**”, as one, as fully equal partners, and in unity and harmony. It must be understood that Peter is talking specifically to the husband, and at this point he is reminding him of how he is to treat and minister to his wife. What Peter wants the husband to understand is that God has given to him **AND** to his wife a “special grace” for the marriage. It is still grace, and it is still a grace that they have both received individually, but it is more than that. It is something that now they have to use “**together**”, to benefit one another “**together**”, a special grace for their marriage – which is really needed for every marriage. Think of it as a specific kind of grace that the husband and wife receive “**together**” specifically designed for their marriage. It appears that Peter wants to remind the husband that whatever grace God gives to him, that the same exact grace is afforded to the wife as well, and that God in His divine outworking of this grace in their marriage has given them a special grace just for the marriage.

¹ Strong, 1390-91 and 1188.

It has to be appreciated that marriage is a bringing together of two completely different and unique individuals with completely different backgrounds, upbringings, childhoods, interests, bodies, experiences, skills, talents, personalities, emotions, temperaments, families, education, locations, ideas, philosophies, dreams, opinions, mindsets, viewpoints, and anything else that life has created in them. It is what we call their “life grid” and it is very, very strong in them. It is why they are what they are and how they are – and you simply cannot erase those things out of their life because you get married. They are who they are and they will always retain most of these different attributes that were just mentioned. These are the elements and experiences of their life that have made them what they have become. So, when you put two people together that have completely different backgrounds and experiences, trust me, but it will take a special kind of grace to unite those two people and make them as one. That is one of the things that Peter is addressing here, and in my understanding, he is laying the greater responsibility on the husband to understand this and to integrate that understanding into the marriage – and to do so with grace. Think about this for a moment. Why would he tell the husband to live with his wife with understanding? Why even bring that up? It is because the his wife is so very different, so uniquely different than he is because of the fact that she is a woman with a completely different life grid than he as the husband has. His divine responsibility is to recognize and account for those differences in the marriage.

So, what Peter is driving at is that we understand that there is a completely different level of grace for marriage. It is the most unique relationship on the planet, and when God is in it, there is nothing with which it can be compared – nothing. It is the most matchless and irreplaceable relationship possible, and the sad part is that so many couples never experience it. They never experience this unique measure of grace for the marriage. So, it is critical that we understand what this particular “**grace of life**” that we need for marriage really is and how we are able to both have it and integrate it into our marriage.

The first thing that we have to do is to define the term “**grace of life**”. If you have the NIV, ISV, NRSV it reads the “**gracious gift of life**”, which I personally believe completely misses being a proper translation – even though grace and life are both gifts from God. The NLT also misses the meaning when it reads “**God’s gift of new life**”. In fact, it leaves out the word “**grace**”. We cannot divorce the meaning of this phrase “**grace of life**” from the context of being with someone with whom we share our life together in the most intimate of ways. I am absolutely convinced that if a husband wants to have a meaningful relationship with God that he must cultivate an incredibly intimate relationship with his wife, and one that is not centered on his having to always be satisfied sexually. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with having a fruitful sexual life together, but it is not enough to keep two people from drifting further and further apart. The problem is that once many couples become married, their life grid differences actually start heading them both down different paths for the marriage. They remain very different, so they want to do different things. One partner does not see something the same way as the other partner, so off they go in their separate directions. Once that happens, there is almost no limit to the number of different scenarios that will develop in the marriage, and rather than drawing the couple closer together, they actually push them further away from one another so that they actually learn to live without one another. They literally lead two separate lives. That scenario right there is what makes it so easy for people to justify getting a divorce – “we’re just not compatible”. Well, why are they not compatible? It is because they never understood all of the differences between them. I know couples

who have separate bank accounts, sleep in different rooms, make different investments, have different friends, and have completely different interests. They have never even considered what it means to become one. In their mind, they almost see being one as a hindrance to the marriage and not an asset. In a godly marriage, the goal is always oneness – always. Never forget that simple principle.

The word for “**grace**” is “*charis*”. It is a great Bible word, but in reality it is often somewhat difficult to define. For instance, we often hear things like this to define grace. It is “God’s unmerited favor”, or “God’s riches at Christ’s expense”. Now, there is nothing at all wrong with the substance of those statements, but they are somewhat incomplete because they completely leave out a person’s response to God’s grace. At the core of its meaning, it spiritually and figuratively represents the divine influence on a person’s heart. However, and this is critical, it also represents how that divine influence is expressed in the individual’s life.² So, it represents more than just God’s persuasion, influence, and power working in a person’s life, but it also includes how that person integrates that influence and persuasion into their life – and there is no greater place for this influence to impact us than in our marriages. It does not do anyone any good to have God work deeply in their life, but them not assimilate that work into their life. Just because God gives you His grace in no way guarantees that you actually receive it. Just ask Israel – right? Another way of saying all of this is that grace indicates God’s favor on your life, but you must be grateful for that grace by integrating it into your life.

Stated even more strongly, as a believer you cannot live a meaningful Christian life apart from God bestowing His grace on your life. You can live however you want to live. You can live for yourself, for your personal goals, and for your own pleasures, but in the end it will leave you empty and miserable. Every area of truth and doctrine in the Scriptures is in some way related to and interwoven with God’s grace. If you do not learn to constantly drink from this fountain, then in reality all you will experience as a Christian is a life of spiritual mediocrity and indifference, and even rebellion to God’s Word. At the end of your life, you will never have made any kind of difference in people’s lives, and especially your own family. [Jeremiah 2:13](#) says is best,

Jer 2:13 (NKJV) "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns--broken cisterns that can hold no water.

When we reject the operative grace of God in our life, all we are left with is our own ideas, tendencies, and priorities – all of which are nothing more than a “**broken cistern**” that holds no water. So, grace has this double side to it – God’s giving and our receiving. We cannot miss this.

So, exactly how do we go about receiving God’s grace? How does it begin to be operative and meaningful in our personal life? What is our part? Well, [James 4:6](#) states it best,

Jas 4:6 (NKJV) But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

This verse tells us that God actually “**resists**” someone who is proud. The word for “**proud**” is the Greek word “*huperephanos*” and simply means to shine above or show yourself as being above others.³ Mark it down that God resists the attribute of pride in a person’s life. That word for “**resists**” means that God

² Strong, 1451-1452.

³ Zodhiates, 1416.

will oppose both you and your efforts. That is not good. It comes from a root word that was used to describe an army that was arranging itself against an opposing army.⁴ So, in this verse, it means that God is personally arraying Himself against that person who is proud and arrogant, and who is unwilling to integrate God's truth and God's principles into their life. The last thing that you want in your life is for God to be resisting you. You have no chance of winning, no possibility of ever being successful when God is resisting you. So, in the context of [1 Peter 3:7](#), "grace" is not referring to what we often call "saving grace", or that grace given to us at salvation, but it refers specifically to the fact that in our marriages that not only are we equal companions in God's grace, but that this grace that is needed is something that is being given to both partners. What this grace requires is that we are working "together" to fulfill God's ordained purpose that we fully and completely glorify Him in our marriage. If there is any place that God wants to be glorified, it is in your marriage ([Ephesians 5](#)). If you find yourself always resisting that purpose and continuing in your pride to have your own way, then you as a marriage partner may very well find God opposing all that you are doing simply because you are living for yourself, living for your priorities, and living for the fulfillment of your own selfish desires. You cannot escape the consequences that pride creates in your life. It is actually a very frightening thing to me personally to think that when I have to have everything my way, no matter who I may hurt in the process, that God is actually arrayed against me. If we are unwilling to be humble both to and before our wives, God will bring emptiness into our personal life and into our marriages. If I can say this in a very strong way, if a husband does not love his wife the way that God commands him to love her, then in essence he has made both God and his wife an object of his personal contempt – and God will severely resist that man. It is the idea that pride not only removes the heart from God, but actually sets itself up against God. Martin Luther once said that "*until a man is nothing, God can make nothing of him*".

Now, the solution is that God gives His enabling grace to those who are exercising humility in their life and in their marriage. The word for "humble" is the Greek word "*tapeinos*" and it means to think less of yourself. It means to get down as flat as you possibly can get so nobody can see you at all, to be level with the ground.⁵ When humility is really a driving force in a person's life, then the will of Christ will always be pre-eminent above that person's will. [Philippians 2:3](#) says it this way,

Php 2:3 (NKJV) *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*

When someone is exercising humility, what is happening is that they are constantly acknowledging their desperate need for God's help. They are more than willing to submit themselves to God's divine purposes for their marriage. Anyone who truly knows God will be humble. The greater the pride in a person's life, the less they know anything about God – if anything at all. As you humble yourself before God in your marriage, God will give you His grace. I love [Hebrews 4:16](#) which says,

Heb 4:16 (NKJV) *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

⁴ Zodiates, 195.

⁵ Precept, *James 4:6*, *tapeinois*, ep.

This verse is not an offer for you to pray so that you can get what you want, but it is an invitation to come to God to receive what He knows is best for your life and for your marriage. This is God's solution.

So, in a godly marriage, in a Christ-honoring marriage, this kind of grace that we have been addressing is something that works "**together**" with the grace that the other partner is receiving from God as well. I want to call this "**shared grace, mutual grace, combined grace**". This marital grace is designed to be shared, to be combined, and it is exactly what draws the husband and the wife closer to each other – just being humble "**together**". What an incredibly novel idea. You have to think how amazingly powerful this is for a marriage. This is when two people who are divinely designed by God to be one are both receiving God's grace on their life and then exercising that grace towards each other.

I am convinced that when marriages are failing and when there is hurt and pain and disunity on almost everything, that either one or both of the partners have no idea what humility is all about. A Christ honoring marriage is always based on the constant outworking of humility in each partner's lives. No humility, no grace. So, if you really want God's absolute best for your marriage, then **you must humble yourself to your partner** so that you can receive this grace. This is not just humbling yourself before God, but it also **REQUIRES** humbling yourself to your marriage partner. If you want to experience pain and anger and frustration to the maximum, then just ignore this idea of humbling yourself to your marriage partner. Just go ahead and have it your way – and that is exactly what you will get in return. Many husbands are very stubborn and proud, and then wonder why God is not working in their marriage. It may very well include what we talked about previously in v7 that their prayers are being "**hindered**" and resisted. Listen very carefully. Grace is always about God making changes in our life – always. His grace is both powerful and sustaining in nature, but it definitely is something that God provides so that we have what we need to make the necessary and divine changes and adjustments that God wants us to make in our life and in our marriage.

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