

March 9, 2008 by Steve Brandon



Christ-Like Wives: Hope in God

1 Peter 3:5-6

1. Jochebed
2. Rahab
3. Ruth
4. Hannah
5. Abigail
6. Huldah
7. Sarah

Our text this morning comes from 1 Peter 3:5-6. Consider these verses in context.

1 Peter 3:1-6

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any [of them] are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. And let not your adornment be [merely] external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but [let it be] the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. Just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

The above verses instruct wives in how they ought to conduct themselves in their marriages. In verses 1-2, Peter exhorts wives to submit to their husbands. This exhortation isn't conditional, based upon the actions of a husband. Rather, Peter was very clear to point out that even if a husband is disobedient to the word, she is still called to submit to him. In verses 3-4, Peter exhorts wives to seek their true beauty. Women are not to focus their attention upon their external appearances. Rather, they are to focus their attention upon the inner person of the heart: the gentle and quiet spirit.

Today, we come to verses 5-6. Peter calls our attention to think of the women of old. They submitted to their husbands (verses 1-2) and pursued their internal beauty (verses 3-4). This is clear in verse 5, "For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands." The first phrase of verse 5 calls us to think about the holy women who lived before us. They were "submissive to their own husbands" (as Peter exhorted in verses 1-2). Also, they "used to adorn themselves" with a gentle and quiet spirit (as verses 3-4 describe).

The exhortation of Peter from verses 5-6 today is really quite simple: Learn from the holy women of old and imitate their behavior.

It may be that some of you women who have read the past two messages, feel in your hearts that you want to submit to your husbands, and you want to have a gentle and quiet spirit. But, quite frankly, you don't quite know how to do this, or whether it is even possible in your situation. Peter says, look to the women of the past. They were able to do this. They adorned themselves with a gentle and quiet spirit. They submitted to their disobedient husbands. Learn from their example. Certainly, you can do it as well. Peter knew full well that you should never underestimate the power of example.

Consider the following example taken from the world of track and field, and the running of the mile. In 1945, Gunder Hägg of Sweden ran the mile in four minutes and 1.3 seconds. For nearly a decade after this record was set, nobody ran a mile faster than this. In fact, there were many informed people who thought that it was physically impossible for anyone to run the mile in less than four minutes. It seemed as if no matter how hard men trained and how hard they pushed themselves, it was simply a magical barrier that couldn't be broken. And then, on May 6, 1954, at Iffley Road Track in Oxford, some 3,000 spectators witnessed Roger Bannister run the mile in 3 min. 59.4 sec. What an incredible feat.

What happened after that demonstrates the power of example. A mere 46 days later, John Landy of Australia broke Roger Bannister's record. Over the next three and a half years, there were 16 runners in all who had logged sub-4-minute miles. A barrier that stood a decade was broken many times after Roger Bannister showed that it could be done. [\[1\]](#) It's the power of example. When you observe another person do it, you are encouraged that you can do it too.

This is Peter's argument in our text this morning. Wives, you may be finding that submission to your husband with chaste and respectful behavior to be difficult, but it's not impossible. Women, you may be finding that a gentle and quiet spirit is difficult for you to achieve, but it's not impossible. We know this because there have been many holy women who have gone before us who have done this very thing. And you ought to consider their example and follow in their steps.

Now, how is it that they were able to do this? I believe that Peter answers this question in verse 5, "In this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands." Do you see what Peter identifies as the key to their endurance in these things? It's their hope! These holy women, "hoped in God."

Let me ask you, "What is it that will give a woman in a difficult marriage the strength to continue to submit herself to her husband?" It's hope! It's the hope that God will see her suffering and come to her aid in her distress and reward her appropriately in the future. The way to change a disobedient husband is by trusting God to change him through your chaste and respectful behavior.

"What is it that will give a woman in trying times to maintain a gentle, quiet, tranquil, patient spirit?" It's hope! It's the hope that God knows of her trying circumstances and will work when she is patient and gentle and quiet. "The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). So also, God uses the gentle and quiet spirit to accomplish His purposes.

Hope is what characterized these holy women of old. For this reason, I believe that the main point of application that comes out of our passage this morning is this: "Hope in God." Do you want to be a Christ-Like wife? Then hope in God.

When you think about "hoping in God," it is helpful to think in terms of faith. In many ways, "hope" is a synonym for "faith." When you "hope" for something, you are trusting that it will come to pass. In fact, when the writer to the Hebrews defines "faith" it is defined in terms of hope. Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" Do you want to be a Christ-Like wife? Then trust in God. Hope in God.

In my message this morning, we will look throughout the Scriptures at many examples of these "holy women who hoped in God." In fact, my message this morning has seven points. [\[2\]](#)With each point, I want to highlight a holy woman who "hoped in God." With so many points, they will come fast and we will only be able to spend a brief amount of time with each of them. My aim in looking at these examples is to encourage you women to "hope in God." Some of these women will be familiar to you. But, others will not be.

At this point, it might be pertinent to mention that there will be much application in this message for men. Though we are speaking primarily about women, we are looking at the way in which they hoped in God. This isn't something that only women are called to do. We are all called to place our hope in God. So, men will find these women encouraging as well.

At this point, it would also be good to note how we are using the example of these women. Many times, people studying the Old Testament can get in trouble when they use Old Testament characters as role models. They think that since an Old Testament character did something, that we are called to do the same. As long as the example is something that we are called to do in the New Testament as well, such a practice is permissible. However, it can easily lead astray.

In our case this morning, this will be especially evident, as not every woman used as an example is a pristine example of godliness. Some were known for their sinfulness. Others were in roles and situations that are different than any of us are in. But, all of these women found themselves to be in a particularly difficult situation. In it, they hoped in God! And God was faithful to come to their aid. It is this hope that I am calling you to this morning. Particularly for the women to realize is that their hope in God gave them a chaste and respectful behavior. Their hope in God gave them a gentle and quiet spirit. May these women encourage your hearts to place your hope in the Lord!

I want to begin with ...

1. Jochebed

Her story is told in Exodus, chapter 2. However, before we read any verses from that chapter, we need to catch up to speed on what was told in Exodus, chapter 1. The people of Israel has been brought to the land of Egypt in a search for food. When they came, they numbered seventy people (Gen. 46:27). As they were shepherds by trade, they settled in the land of Goshen, which was under the rule of Egypt (Gen. 47). After about 400 years, these 70 people had multiplied greatly and had come to number about 2 million. The Pharaoh in Egypt was threatened by this increasing population and subdued them to slavery. "The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field" (Ex. 1:13-14). As the Israelites still continued to multiply (Ex. 1:12), Pharaoh gave orders to the Hebrew midwives that any son that was born to the Hebrews should be put to death (Ex. 1:16).

The story of Jochebed picks up in the following text.

Exodus 2:1-3

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi, Jochebed. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile.

Many of you know how the story continues. The child was seen by the daughter of Pharaoh, and she had compassion upon him and raised him up as one of her own (after Jochebed had a brief opportunity to nurse him). This is the story of Moses. But, we aren't thinking about Moses this morning. We are thinking about his mother, Jochebed. Her name isn't mentioned here in this context, but it is in Exodus 6:20.

My point is this: Jochebed hoped in God through this situation. Rather than seeing her child killed, she protected Moses, exposing herself to potential punishment from the Egyptian government. But, she feared God more than she feared the king and in this way put her hope in God on display. The writer to the Hebrews comments about Jochebed, and her husband, Amram. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict" (Heb. 11:23).

And so, women of Rock Valley Bible Church, learn from Jochebed and hope in God even when circumstances are difficult.

Let's go forward a few books and look at ...

2. Rahab

Her story is told in Joshua, chapter 2.

In the historical context, Israel had just been delivered from slavery in Egypt. Moses had died and Joshua had been placed in command. Israel was en route to conquer the promised land. The first city on their agenda was the city of Jericho. So, according to Joshua 2:1, Joshua had sent some spies secretly to go and spy out the land. As would have been typical for strange men entering the city, they happened upon Rahab, the harlot. She housed them and protected them from the people of Jericho, who had heard that there were spies coming into Jericho. She provided them with a way of escape, telling them where to go to avoid the pursuit of those in Jericho who went out to look for them.

Pertinent to my message this morning are Rahab's comments to these spies before they returned to Joshua at Shittim.

Joshua 1:8-13

Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth, and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.

Rahab, though not a righteous woman, had a fear of God in her soul. But, rather than fight against him, she professed her faith in him, "For the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath" (verse 11). She sought help from the spies. In this way, her hope was in the LORD. And she was saved from destruction. The writer to the Hebrews comments on the faith of Rahab, "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace" (Heb. 11:29).

Obviously, we don't know all of the details, but Rahab received these spies with a tenderness and compassion that is typical of a gentle and quiet spirit. In this way, you women can learn from Rahab's spirit. She was in a very difficult situation. Jericho was soon to be destroyed and her life was in danger. Yet, she hoped in God seeking peace with His people.

I hope that Rahab is particularly encouraging for you women. She didn't have everything in her life under control. She wasn't living a righteous life. But, she did place her hope in the Lord, and He saved her from destruction.

So, if these last few weeks of exhorting you women to live with a submissive attitude toward your husband, with chaste and respectful behavior, with a gentle and quiet spirit, have found you discouraged. Be encouraged that the path to these behaviors is faith. It's not merely "suck it up and do it." It's believe God and trust in the power of the gospel to keep you until the day of salvation.

Let's move on to our next example, ...

3. Ruth

Ruth was not from the nation of Israel. Rather, she was born in Moab, strangers to the covenant of promise. Due to a famine in the land of Israel, a man named Elimelech came from Bethlehem to live in the land of Moab. He brought with him his wife, Naomi, and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. As these men grew up in the land of Moab, they married Moabite women, one of whom was Ruth, the other was Orpah. Tragedy struck their home. Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died. About 10 years later, both Mahlon and Chilion died as well. So, they were left with three women in their family.

Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem, where she would receive some support from her extended family. She encouraged her daughter-in-laws to remain in Moab. Orpah decided to stay in her hometown. But Ruth didn't.

I want to pick up the story in Ruth 1:15. Naomi pleaded with Ruth, ...

Ruth 1:15-18

"Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me."

When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

This is a great picture of a woman who hoped in God. She had married a Hebrew man, and though he was dead, she embraced his God. She returned to Israel, trusting in the Lord to provide for her. And the Lord was faithful to her. When they had arrived back in Bethlehem, Ruth went to glean from the field of Boaz, one of Naomi's relatives (2:1). After a day of gleaning, Boaz took notice of her and had compassion

upon her. Let's pick up the scene with Boaz speaking to Ruth, ...

Ruth 8:8-13

Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw."

Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."

Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

This interaction between Ruth and Boaz demonstrates her character. She had cared for her mother-in-law, thinking of Naomi's interests above her own. With a gentle and quiet spirit, she wasn't drawing attention to herself and the great sacrifice that she had made in returning to Bethlehem with her. Rather, when she was willing to work as a poor woman, gleaning after the workers, putting in a long day's work. She didn't push. She didn't barge in. Rather, she considered herself a beggar, who needed something to sustain her.

And the Lord blessed her. Boaz became the means of her provision. Ruth responded with a humble, gracious spirit to Boaz. In verses 15 and 16, we see the way in which God abundantly provided for Ruth in the way that Boaz instructed the reapers. He said, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. "Also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her." In other words, "Purposely drop some of your gleanings, so that Ruth doesn't have to work so hard."

Women, this is a great picture of the way in which God will provide for you when you walk with a gentle and quiet spirit. He will stir the heart of your husband or the heart of others to help you and take care of you. You need not fear. You don't need to fight for your own rights. The Lord will do it in His time.

We could speak much more about Ruth. In chapter 3, verse 11, she is described as "a woman of excellence." But, we must move on to another example of the "holy women who hoped in God."

We turn now to ...

4. Hannah

Her story is told in 1 Samuel 1. The book of 1 Samuel begins by mentioning a man named Elkanah. He had two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. "Peninnah had children, but Hanna had no children. The LORD had closed her womb" (1 Sam. 1:2, 5). Though Hannah's husband loved her greatly, Peninnah was cruel to her. She "would provoke her bitterly to irritate her. ... As often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she would provoke her" (1 Sam. 1:6-7).

From everything that we know about Hannah is that she didn't seek to retaliate back. Rather, she simply prayed to the LORD, that He would open her womb. Consider the following account:

1 Samuel 1:10-11

She, greatly distressed, prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. She made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head."

You can feel her pain in these verses. She was on the receiving end of some intense hardship. So much so that it drove her to tears, bitter tears. And so what did she do? She entrusted herself to the LORD, by praying for her situation to improve. In her case, she wanted a child.

The story continues in verse 12, ...

1 Samuel 1:12-18

Now it came about, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli was watching her mouth. As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk.

Then Eli said to her, "How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you."

But Hannah replied, "No, my lord, I am a woman oppressed in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the LORD. Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless woman, for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation."

Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him."

She said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight " So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

That's a gentle and quiet spirit. Not provoking others, not standing up for her rights, but, broken, pleading before the LORD. And when her petitions before Him were made known, she left the temple in peace, content that she had entrusted her situation to the Lord. She hoped in God. And God was gracious to her. The story continues by detailing how "the LORD remembered her" (1 Sam. 1:19) and opened her womb. She brought forth Samuel and dedicated him to the LORD (1 Sam. 2:18). Then, the LORD continued to bless her, giving her three sons and two daughters (1 Sam. 2:21).

Hannah hoped in God with a gentle and quiet spirit. Oh, women, may you learn to follow her example.

Let's now look at ...

5. Abigail

Her story is told in 1 Samuel 25. Of all the women we have looked at so far, her situation parallels the situation that Peter addresses better than them all. Peter addressed the believing wives who were living with unbelieving, disobedient husbands. So also was Abigail's husband a disobedient man.

Abigail's husband's name was Nabal. And his name was very appropriate for him. In Hebrew, "Nabal" means "fool." And he was a fool. Abigail, on the other hand was a very wise woman. Here is a picture of their marriage: "Now the man's name was Nabal, and his wife's name was Abigail. And the woman was intelligent and beautiful in appearance, but the man was harsh and evil in his dealings" (1 Sam. 25:3).

In the course of time, Nabal insulted the servants of King David, returning David's kindness to him with evil. When David heard of it, he was enraged and said,, "Surely in vain I have guarded all that this man has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; and he has returned me evil for good. May God do so to the enemies of David, and more also, if by morning I leave as much as one male of any who belong to him" (1 Sam. 25:21-22).

But, Abigail, hearing about the incident, pursued David with some gifts to appease his anger. He brought him "two hundred loaves of bread and two jugs of wine and five sheep already prepared and five measures of roasted grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs" all loaded on donkeys (1 Sam. 25:18).

Let's pick up the story in verse 23, ...

1 Samuel 25:23-31

When Abigail saw David, she hurried and dismounted from her donkey, and fell on her face before David and bowed herself to the ground. She fell at his feet and said, "On me alone, my lord, be the blame. And please let your maidservant speak to you, and listen to the words of your maidservant. Please do not let my lord pay attention to this worthless man, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is with him; but I your maidservant did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, since the LORD has restrained you from shedding blood, and from avenging yourself by your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek evil against my lord, be as Nabal. Now let this gift which your maidservant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who accompany my lord. Please forgive the transgression of your maidservant; for the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil will not be found in you all your days. Should anyone rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, then the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God; but the lives of your enemies He will sling out as from the hollow of a sling. And when the LORD does for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and appoints you ruler over Israel, this will not cause grief or a troubled heart to my lord, both by having shed blood without cause and by my lord having avenged himself. When the LORD deals well with my lord, then remember your maidservant.

With these words, Abigail was working hard to help her foolish husband. How easy it is to say, "That's his problem." But she was gracious and kind to David and spoke tenderly to him. That's a gentle and quiet spirit, bringing gifts, pleading softly, and taking the blame upon herself. It is really quite amazing that Abigail pleaded that David would place the blame of Nabal's sin upon her, "On me alone, my lord, be the blame." (verse 24). She also said, "Please forgive the transgression of your maidservant" though she had done nothing wrong (verse 28). The only way that Abigail was able to say such things is because of her heart of submission to her husband.

And David was moved by her request. David said to Abigail, ...

1 Samuel 25:32-34

Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand. Nevertheless, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from harming you, unless you had come quickly to meet me, surely there would not have been left to Nabal until the morning light as much as one male.

Because of Abigail's gentle and quiet spirit, Nabal was saved. But, typical of Nabal, when she returned home, she found her husband "very drunk" with wine (25:36). His life was at stake, and he was partying, like there was no tomorrow. What a fool he was. Ten days later, "the LORD struck Nabal and he died" (1 Sam. 25:38).

When David heard about this, he sent "a proposal to Abigail, to take her as his wife" (25:39). When the servants told her of David's proposal, She arose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, "Behold, your maidservant is a maid to wash the feet of my lord's servants." What humility and submission! Abigail said, "I'm the servant of servants."

Women, may you learn from her example!

Our next example is ...

6. Huldah

This is my favorite of all the woman we have looked at so far this morning. I think that she is my favorite because I couldn't recall ever reading about her or hearing anything about her.

Her story is told in 2 Chronicles, chapter 34. This takes us back to the time of Josiah, the king of Judah. He became king when he was eight years old. When he turned twenty-six, he gave orders that the money in the temple be counted and that repairs be made to the temple. In the process of cleaning out the temple, Hilkiah "found the book of the law in the house of the LORD" (2 Chron. 34:15). Hilkiah gave it to Shaphan, who brought it to the king and read it in his presence.

2 Chronicles 34:19-21

When the king heard the words of the law, he tore his clothes. Then the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, "Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book which has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD which is poured out on us because our fathers have not observed the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book."

I trust that you see what's going on here. The book has been found. It is read to the king. He responded to it with grief. And then, he said, "inquire of the LORD." In other words, "Let's find somebody who can tell us what we need to do!" And so, Hilkiah goes out and finds someone to "inquire of the LORD."

Who does Hilkiah search out? He goes to Huldah, the prophetess. "So Hilkiah and those whom the king had told went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, the keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter); and they spoke to her regarding this" (2 Chronicles 24:22).

Now, you have to catch this. There were other prophets that Hilkiah could have gone to. He could have gone to Zephaniah, who prophesied during the days of Josiah. He could have gone to Jeremiah to "inquire of the LORD." But, he chose to go to a woman, Huldah, the prophetess. The fact that there was a prophetess in the land speaks to the moral condition of the people (much like in the days of Deborah). Think about what had happened to the nation of Israel. They had lost the book of the law, and without the Bible, it's no wonder that the spiritual state of Israel was in shambles. Isaiah had prophesied of the time when women and children would come to rule over his people (Isaiah 3:12). And that time had come.

When it came time to seek a message from the LORD, they sought out a woman. And she prophesied a word from the LORD.

1 Chronicles 34:23-28

She said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me, thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I am bringing evil on this place and on its inhabitants, even all the curses written in the book which they have read in the presence of the king of Judah. Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore My wrath will be poured out on this place and it shall not be quenched.'" But to the king of Judah who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus you will say to him, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel regarding the words which you have heard, 'Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and because you humbled yourself before Me, tore your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you,' declares the LORD." Behold, I will gather you to your fathers and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, so your eyes will not see all the evil which I will bring on this place and on its inhabitants.'"

Huldah's prophesy came to pass, exactly as she had said. Now, why did Hilkiah seek out Huldah? I believe that she was a "holy woman" of old.

Now, consider Huldah's situation. Moral wickedness was all around her. And it appears as if Huldah remained true to her God. And the LORD used her in a mighty way.

Isn't this the sort of woman that Peter is describing in his epistle. Peter addresses the woman who is married to a man who is disobedient to the word. In the home, there are ungodly influences all around. And yet, Peter calls women in this situation to be holy. Peter calls women in this situation to be a light in your home, so that when the spiritual crisis come you may speak the word to those who need to hear. That's what Huldah was doing. She was in Israel with idolatry all around her. And yet, her reputation was such that she was a holy woman, dedicated to the Lord. Women, work hard to develop a reputation like Huldah, as a holy woman of God, even though surrounded by an ungodly influence at home.

Thus far, we have looked at six holy women who hoped in God. 1. Jochebed, 2. Rahab, 3. Ruth, 4. Hannah, 5. Abigail, 6. Huldah, I want to

turn our attention finally to ...

7. Sarah

I finish with Sarah, because Peter mentioned Sarah in our text this morning. "Just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear" (1 Peter 3:6).

When Peter mentions Sarah's example, he brings to mind her submission to Abraham. "Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." While it is true that Sarah did call Abraham her lord (in Gen. 18:12), Peter isn't merely pointing to the time when Sarah said some words out of her mouth. Rather, Peter is directing our attention to the general flavor of Sarah's life. She submitted herself to Abraham, even in the most difficult and unpleasant of circumstances.

One such circumstance is recorded for us in Genesis 12. This chapter contains the great promise to Abraham, "Go forth from your country and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show to you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you" (Gen. 12:1-2a). We often think about these words in relation to Abraham, but fail to think about the implication of these words to Sarah. It's one thing for a man to go out in obedience to the Lord. It's another thing for a woman to follow. And yet, Sarah went with her husband (Gen. 12:6).

Along the way, they encountered some great difficulties. Here is one of them.

Genesis 12:1-15

Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you."

It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

Now, we don't know all of the details of Sarah's actions, whether she actually obeyed Abraham by lying to Pharaoh with her own lips. It may have been that Sarah merely went along with Abraham's plan, but never had to lie to Pharaoh. When Abraham announced Sarah as his sister, she merely needed to remain silent and it would have been assumed. It may have been the case that she didn't need to sin. But, we do know that Sarah demonstrated a heart of submission, even to a disobedient husband, which is exactly the situation Peter has in mind.

And yet, Peter is very careful to point out that a wife ought never to sin in submitting to her husband. "Just as Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him lord, and you have become her children **if you do what is right** without being frightened by any fear." See, Peter isn't calling you to do what is wrong. As Sarah erred in doing wrong, she isn't a model for you women to follow. But, as Sarah submitted herself to her husband by obeying a disobedient husband, she is a model for you to follow.

And it is amazing, isn't it, of how the LORD protected Sarah. The story continues in Genesis, ...

Genesis 12:17-20

But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go."

Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.

Sarah was one who "hoped in God!" And God was faithful to protect her and deliver her.

A similar story takes place in Genesis 20. This time, it was with Abimelech, rather than with Pharaoh. Abraham had not learned very well from his first encounter with Pharaoh.

Genesis 20:1-3

Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar. Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister."

So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married."

After this, there ensues a discussion between Abimelech and God. Abimelech claimed his innocence, and God was gracious not to destroy him. But, God came to Sarah's rescue, because she hoped in God.

The lesson of Sarah comes to you women. She submitted herself to her disobedient husband, hoping in the Lord. Now, again, we don't know all of the circumstances surrounding her interaction with Abraham and with Abimelech. According to verse 5, it appears as if Sarah was

actively engaging in the deceit with her husband. Such sin is not what Peter is calling you wives to do. Again, Peter says, "you have become her children **if you do what is right** without being frightened by any fear."

Wives, you aren't called of God to sin in following your husband. But, if at all possible, your heart ought to follow the heart of Sarah's, which was one of obedience to her husband.

Now, I'm not oblivious as to how difficult this is. How far do you obey your husband without crossing the line? How do you appeal to him that he is calling you to do wrong? How can you have a gentle and quiet spirit during these times? I don't know. I don't have answers to these questions. But, Sarah is your example of submission.

I leave with two comments about the example of Sarah.

It's a fearful thing to submit to your husband to the point of obedience. It's fearful, because when you do, you are out of control. But, know this: when you submit to your husband, you demonstrate your hope and trust that God is in control. And God looks down upon circumstance and will protect you as he protected Sarah. Peter's exhortation to you women is to "do what is right without being frightened by any fear." And the only way to do this is to hope in God, just as Jochebed, Rahab, Ruth, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah, and Sarah did. Follow their example.

My final comment is that such submission will bring a blessing. It will. Peter promises, "You have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear."

In this way, Peter is tying Sarah into the Abrahamic covenant. God promised unbelievable blessing to Abraham. He said, "I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you. And make your name great; so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:2-3).

The Bible often speaks about the amazing thing it is that by faith we are sons of Abraham, and heirs of his promises. The blessing given to Abraham has come to us who believe in Christ (Gal. 3:8). "It is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7). And as we believe in Christ, we are "blessed with Abraham" (Gal. 3:9). Now, we often think of the promise given to Abraham as only involving him. But, Abraham's wife, Sarah, was a part of this blessing as well. You can't have a great nation without women.

Oh, Sarah may not receive the popularity and the name recognition as Abraham did. But, as God blessed Abraham, the blessing overflowed unto his wife as well. And you women can join in a special way in solidarity with Sarah, if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. [3]

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 9, 2008 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] The following web sites were helpful in researching these things:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Bannister
http://www.sptimes.com/News/121799/Sports/Bannister_stuns_world.shtml
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/4_minute_mile

[2] I am indebted to Herbert Lockyer's book, "All the Women of the Bible." In this book, he catalogues every woman listed in the Bible, with a brief summary of the life of each woman. In preparation for this message, I found his summaries helpful to decide who to include in this message and who to pass over.

[3] After my message, several people asked me who I didn't include on this list who may have been included. For the sake of completeness, here is a list of women that I didn't mention, but could have mentioned: Esther, Lois/Eunice, Anna, Elizabeth, Mary (mother of Jesus), Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany. Additionally, there are some women worthy of mentioning whose name we don't even know: the woman of Zarephath (1 Kings 17); the woman who paid her debt with a jar of oil (2 Kings 4:1-7); the Shuammite woman (2 Kings 4:8-37); the maid of Naaman's wife (2 Kings 5); the woman who had a blood hemorrhage who wanted merely to touch the end of Jesus' garment (Matthew 9); and the syrophenician woman, who was willing to eat of the scraps off the table (Matthew 15). Another woman would be the one describe in Proverbs 31.

There are also many evil women in the Bible who could have been included: Adah, Athaliah, Delilah, Gomer, Jezebel, Herodius' wife (and Salome), Miriam, Saphira, Job's wife, and Potiphar's wife.