

26.12

What John Calvin Said about Women as “the Weaker Sex”

Text of 1 Peter 3:7

Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honor to the woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life.

Commentary by John Calvin (1509–64)

The French theologian and Reformer interpreted this passage in light of an earlier comment to the effect that “the quiet and gentle spirit” of a woman is “very precious in God’s sight” (1 Pet. 3:4). Thus he concluded that women are deserving of special consideration because they are simultaneous physically inferior but spiritual superior to men:

Peter employs a two-fold argument, to persuade husbands to treat their wives honorably and kindly. The first is derived from the (physical) weakness of the sex; the other from the honor with which God favors them. These things seem in a way to be contrary, that consideration ought to be given to wives because they are weak, and also because they excel—but where love abounds, these things well agree together. (*Commentary sup.* 1 Pet. 3:7)¹

1. John Calvin, *Commentary* sup. 1 Peter 3:7, trans. John Owen. Available online at numerous sites, including rcbi-resoures.yolasite.com.