

1 Peter

Chapter 3

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1Peter 3:1-4

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, (2) as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. (3) Your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; (4) 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.

This discussion begins based upon 2:13 regarding slaves but not meant to infer that wives are slaves in a Christian household. However this society viewed women as inferior to man and when the wife became saved before the husband he might seem defied by her in her submission to God. Thus it was very important for the wife to remain submissive to her husband and to show her submission to God in a way so as not to insult her husband. Similar rules for wives appear in Eph. 5:22, Col 3:18, 1 Tim 2:9-15, and Titus 2:4-5. When Peter says that the husband may be won without a word he is not meaning the Word of God but by the words of the wife. The behavior of the wife in the situation of being in a household where she is subservient to the man would be what the husband would notice for it is the Christian nature that compels the wife to love her husband even if he is a pagan. Their chaste and respectful behavior can be used by God to demonstrate that the wife is subject to her husband as unto Jesus (Eph 5:22). This behavior might be the route that God uses to save the husband although Peter knows that it is the Word of God that is involved in salvation: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."* (Rom 1:16)

A Christian woman should not **merely** adorn herself as can any woman. Woman in general, as is today, would go to great cost to look as beautiful as possible. But God looks at the heart and He desires the woman's husband to also have some insight into his wife's heart: *"But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."* (1 Sam 16:7) The gentle and quiet spirit produced by the Holy Spirit in the wife is what God wants the husband to see by virtue of the wife's physical appearance. This spirit will never fade because it is a supernatural phenomenon and so is imperishable.

1Peter 3:5-7

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; (6) 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. (7) You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since

she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Next Peter uses OT examples to help the readers understand his meaning about the behavior of wives. These women were holy, meaning set apart for the purpose of God. Their hope was in God as He had given them the needed faith. One example is Ruth: *"It shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down; then he will tell you what you shall do."* She said to her, *"All that you say I will do."* (Ruth 3:4-5) The primary example is Sarah who obeyed Abraham and even called him lord: *"Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?'"* (Gen 18:12) Paul stated that all who follow the example of Abraham using his faith belong to the same faith family as Abraham (Rom 4:1-16; Gal 3:7-29). Similarly Peter states that all wives who follow the example of Sarah are her children, meaning belonging to the same family of faith. The wives who exhibit this Christian behavior will not fear even the possibility of severe retribution that husbands at that time could have manifested. They understand that God could use their behavior in His salvation of their husbands. All Christians understand that they should only fear God: *"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* (Mat 10:28)

Peter then gives commands to the husbands. Writing "in the same way" also refers back to the behavior of slaves as they are to act toward their wives knowing that Jesus is their Lord and Master. Acting in an understanding way means that they are to be considerate of the basic needs of their wives, which is to know that they are loved. Paul also stated this command in Eph. 5:25-28. Stating that the wife is weaker does not mean morally, spiritually, or intellectually but recognizes that women are generally physically weaker than men and depend upon him for protection. He is to treat her with respect as she is also a member of God's family: *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* (Gal 3:28) The threat that God may not hear their prayers if they do not act properly toward their wives is a severe warning that should be taken seriously.

1Peter 3:8-9

To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; (9) not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

Peter has given directions for Christians in civil relationships (2:13-17), workplace relationships (2:18-20), and marriage relationships (3:1-7). So now he summarizes as he addresses his latter now to "all of you". He gives five spiritual virtues that should guide all Christians in their attitudes toward life here. The first is to be harmonious, meaning that they should not be in conflict with each other. Jesus prayed for spiritual unity among believers:

John 17:20-23 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; (21) that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. (22) "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; (23) I in them and You in Me, that they may be

perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

This unity must be with proper doctrine and not compromised with worldly standards.

Eph 4:14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

1Tim 6:3-5 If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, (4) he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, (5) and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

Tit 1:9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

The second is to be sympathetic meaning to truly relate to other Christians in their sorrow and happiness as well as when they are ill. Life in the world can be very difficult and Christians need to be open to showing love toward fellow believers. The third is to be brotherly, which means to act in unselfish ways toward other Christians. The fourth act is to be kindhearted, which is sometimes translated as compassionate, a quality of God: "*The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.*" (Psa 103:8) The fifth is to be humble in spirit, which some consider to be the most basic quality of Christian life. Peter will write more about being humble later. There are many verses related to this quality like:

Phil 2:3-4 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; (4) do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Mat 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Next Peter writes about the reactions of a life committed to serving the Lord Jesus Christ. They are not to return evil for evil or insult for insult. The word "evil" means anything in opposition to the righteousness of God. Peter is echoing the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:38-45). The word "insult" refers to speaking evil of someone and Paul wrote against such an action also: "*Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*" (Eph. 4:29) Rather than returning evil in any way, Christians are to give a blessing and means to praise or speak well of someone. Again Jesus is the perfect example as stated in the parable of Matt 18:21-35. This blessing can take the form of forgiving the person, praying for them, and loving them unconditionally. Believers have received the ultimate blessing and should be quick to pass that on to anyone regardless of their actions toward them. No evil action against us is worthy of losing any aspect of the rewards associated with the ultimate blessing from God.

1Peter 3:10-12

For, "the one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. (11) "He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. (12) "For the eyes of the lord are toward the righteous, and his ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the lord is against those who do evil."

God has turned us from darkness to light and we must love the light so much that we want to rid our life of any aspect of that former darkness. Peter is quoting from a Psalm:

Psa 34:12-17 Who is the man who desires life and loves length of days that he may see good? (13) Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. (14) Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it. (15) The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry. (16) The face of the LORD is against evildoers, To cut off the memory of them from the earth. (17) The righteous cry, and the LORD hears And delivers them out of all their troubles.

In the Psalm "life" and "days" refers to the time on earth but Peter is extending it to the life everlasting as well. The life that Christians desire is the life to come and a life on earth dedicated to properly serving God and ridding the heart of any lasting evil. Naturally the tongue is included for James also recognized the tongue as a revealer of remaining evil in the heart (James 3:6). The Christian must love the truth and be committed to it so that he never states any deceit. Jesus stated the source of such evil:

Mat 12:34-35 "You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. (35) "The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil.

It is not enough to just turn away from evil but the Christian must also do what is good. Paul also wrote of these necessary actions:

Rom 12:17-21 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. (18) If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. (19) Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "vengeance is mine, i will repay," says the Lord. (20) "but if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." (21) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Peace does not come naturally but must be sought aggressively as Paul wrote in 12:18 above. We are responsible only for our actions and sometimes peace may not just depend upon our actions but we should do our part toward such a goal. However the truth must not ever be compromised even when seeking peace.

The last verse is also a quote from Psalm 34. "The eyes of the Lord" is a common OT statement regarding God's taking care of His people and refers here to His omniscience in all aspects of the lives of His people. His knowledge is used to answer the prayers of His people that He hears. Since He alone knows every aspect of whatever is affecting the lives of His children only He can properly answer the prayers as He causes results to be good: "*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*" (Rom 8:28) Since the "good" is that according to God's definition, it is not

always recognized as such by the recipients. Sometimes the bread looks like a stone and the fish like a snake:

Mat 7:9-11 "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? (10) "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? (11) "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

We have to trust God at His Word. Sometimes we actually ask for a snake because it seems like a fish so thankfully God does not give us that snake. We receive blessings every day even when we are not aware of such so we should praise Him at all times that He is taking care of His children.

But "the face of the Lord" refers to His judgment that is always against those who do evil: "*The face of the LORD is against evildoers, To cut off the memory of them from the earth.*" (Psa 34:16) Anyone who does evil means those who practice what is opposed to the righteousness of God. It is clear that those who do evil are not of God: "*Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.*" (3John 1:11) One day God will execute His judgment upon the earth and those who practice evil will face Him and receive their judgment. It is important for those charged with earthly justice to take care of it quickly for those who practice evil and see that such is not judged quickly will be encouraged to sin even more: "*Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil.*" (Ecc 8:11)

1Peter 3:13-14

Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? (14) But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. and do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled,

Remember that the major reason for Peter writing this letter is to encourage Christians who will receive persecution and urging them to react properly to such. From 3:15-5:11 this is his chief concern. The doing good is what Peter referred to in quoting from Psa 34. Paul also addressed the impossibility of anyone being against those who love God:

Rom 8:31-34 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? (32) He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? (33) Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; (34) who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

Even the most adamant enemy of Christianity will be reluctant to attack someone who is zealously doing good, even those doing so for the glory of God:

Mat 5:16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Rom 12:20 "but if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."

Of course there will still be those so opposed to Christianity that they will find ways to attack those Christians doing good such as Franklin Graham and others. Jesus did nothing but good but was still killed by a hostile world. But even the most harm that any of these can do is still of little

consequence to eternity and its rewards for those chosen by God. Paul said that there was no comparison “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*” (Rom 8:18)

Peter goes on to say that even when they do receive sufferings they are still blessed and Jesus promised persecutions and blessings:

Luke 6:22-23 "Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. (23) "Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

John 15:20-21 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. (21) "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

Peter tells them not to fear their intimidation. Intimidations are threats and since they should not be concerned about any such results they should have no fear of any intimidations. The most they can do is kill the body: “*Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*” (Matt 10:28) Only by continuing to focus on God’s blessings and on Jesus:

Heb 12:1-2 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Peter also tells them not to be troubled, which would result in anxiety against which Peter also warned: “*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*” (Phil 4:6) Jesus also warned against any anxious thoughts (Matt 6:25-34).

1Peter 3:15-7

but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; (16) and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. (17) For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

Having told them what not to do, Peter now tells them what to do that will help them in attaining proper responses to tribulation and persecution. Sanctify means to set apart or consecrate and in this context it means to place the Lordship of Jesus Christ primary in all thoughts and actions. Christians are to be in total submission to the sovereign God of the universe with Jesus as the focus as stated above: “*fixing our eyes on Jesus* (Heb 12:2a) Total submission to another is not an easy concept for most American Christians but it is absolutely essential. Christians should also be ready to present an apology – a defense of our belief. The “hope that is in you” is the gospel. The readers are urged to be ready to present that defense to any who might ask but always with gentleness and reverence. Gentleness is the attitude the believer has before the

accuser and reverence is his attitude toward God. If someone cannot clearly present the gospel message then he might be easily dissuaded from following through with his belief.

The readers are also told to keep a good conscience, meaning guiltless in the face of accusations. If a person is really innocent of accusations and can demonstrate such to the accuser the accuser will be put to shame. They are told to keep a “good” conscience because that aspect of a person that either accuses him or excuses him of wrong doing can also be affected by sin and so become marred. Thus believers should attempt to always make sure that their conscience is “good” or totally based upon God’s and not the world’s values. The cleansing of the conscience is part of the process of sanctification: *“how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”* (Heb 9:14)

It may be that the accuser “wins” so that the believer still suffers for doing what is good, meaning according to God’s standards. Peter states that it is still better to suffer for doing those good things rather than stooping to do evil, perhaps by recanting from the good behavior. The suffering is seen as being allowed by sovereign God so that it will result in good for those God has called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28). This suffering may lead the accuser to salvation and/or it may be a path toward glorification for the believer. We must all trust and submit to God.

1Peter 3:18-20

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; (19) in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, (20) who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.

Peter states that Jesus Christ certainly had a clear conscience and maintained His innocence before God but He suffered the ultimate persecution: death on the cross. His purpose was even to bring the readers to justification before God so they should be encouraged knowing that even though they may suffer the same persecution they will also be blessed with the same reward of being made alive in the spirit. The “just for the unjust” refers to Jesus as the Righteous Servant of Isaiah 53. The righteous behavior of the people is because God made such possible by the work of Jesus. He was just but He took on the sins of the unjust so that He brings all of us to God. Jesus was put to death in the flesh but He was made alive in the spirit.

A lot of people have practiced eisegesis by interpreting verse 19 to mean that Christ went to hell after His death on the cross but that is clearly not what the verse is saying. Context demands a different interpretation and it is really quite simple. Also carefully read the “also” in verse 19 so that one does not think that “made alive in the spirit” is after His resurrection when He made this proclamation. Just read verses 18-20 without stopping to breathe and it is clear that Peter is writing that Christ also preached in the spirit to the people in Noah’s time who are now in prison since they did not become regenerated but were killed by the flood. The Bible makes it clear that

all except for these 8 people were consumed with evil and were destroyed physically and then held in hell until the final judgment when they will join Satan in hell forever:

Gen 6:5-13 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (6) The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. (7) The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." (8) But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. (9) These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. (10) Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (11) Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. (12) God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. (13) Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

1Peter 3: 21-22

Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you--not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (22) who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

Corresponding to the eight people being brought out of the water to serve God in a new time on earth, people after the resurrection of Christ are also saved rather than being destroyed by the water of testing. Peter then writes that the act of baptism symbolically demonstrates what happened to regenerated people in that they died to their old self and began life again in Christ. He is clear that the act of baptism is not the saving factor. People are saved from the wrath of God because the resurrection of Jesus Christ showed that the Father accepted the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of His chosen people. In baptism regenerated people appeal to God for a conscience based solely upon His standards so that they can better live pleasing to Him in all that they do and say. Jesus is now at the judgment seat of God after having gone into heaven:

Acts 1:4-11 And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; (5) for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (6) And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (7) He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; (8) but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (9) And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. (10) And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; (11) and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This

Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

Since God gave Jesus all authority in heaven and on earth, we should all go forward with courage even in the face of great adversity to obey His commands:

Mat 28:18-20 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Peter then has given his readers all the reasons they need to go forward serving Jesus as their Lord during their brief time on earth.