

8. 1 Peter 3 of a Verse by Verse Study of James, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter

1 Peter 3 flows directly from 1 Peter 2:22-25 where Peter closed that chapter showing the humility and patience of Jesus in the face of persecution and punishment:

22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

What follows in 1 Peter 3 is the exhortation for Christians to apply this example set by the Lord to the relationships of their lives. These instructions are for wives, husbands, and all Christians.

Wives, Pure and Reverent in Their Lives

3:1 Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. 4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

Modern day husbands and wives should pay close attention to this passage. In a day of women's liberation and equal rights for women, the word *submissive* causes some to question the necessity and wisdom of applying such scriptures to the modern world. However, in the context of how all Christians are to act toward one another, it becomes perfectly understandable. Paul introduces a similar instruction to wives by saying first in Eph 5:21, "21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." All Christians are to submit to one another. Paul spoke in Phil 2:3-4, "3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." All the statements of submissiveness are conditioned by the Words of the Lord in what we call the Golden Rule, found in Matt 7:12, "12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

When husband and wives are Christians in deed, issues of obedience and submission are non-existent. However, this passage turns on a finer point—that of the believing Christian woman married to an unbelieving husband. In this latter case, the unbelieving husband may be converted without words, "They may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives." In addition, two examples illustrate this model behavior. First, the woman who expects to win her husband should not lean on the outward adorning with jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, her adornment should be the unfading beauty of gentle and quiet spirit. This is how women make themselves beautiful. Second, the spiritually adorned wife expresses this inward beauty by unassuming and humble acts toward the husband—just as Sarah did toward Abraham. Paul concurred with this teaching in Eph 5:22-24:

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Sometimes it is impossible for an unbelieving husband to live with a Christian wife. In that case, the Christian wife is not bound to that man. According to Paul in 1 Cor 7:15, the same is true for men and women, "15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances."

Husbands, Considerate and Respectful

7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

In the same way, Peter constrains the husband to exhibit the righteous and humble life of a Christian before his wife, treating them with respect. Paul explains this principle in Eph 5:25-33:

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. . . 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." . . . 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

In our modern time when women are top executives and world-class athletes, some may have difficulty with the expression *weaker partner*. Indeed, women in many ways are stronger and more resilient than men are. Yet, the real equality of husbands and wives exists as they both are heirs of the gracious gift of life. In this relationship there are no males and females, bound or free, but we are all one in Christ Jesus, according to Gal 3:28, "28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

All Christians, Sympathetic and Compassionate to One Another

8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For,

Verse 8, extends the principles of the previous verses to all Christian relationships. The principles of rewarding Christian relationships teach us how to accommodate the life here upon the earth.

- Live in harmony
- Be sympathetic
- Love as brothers
- Be compassionate and Humble
- Do not repay evil with evil
- Do not repay insult with insult but with blessing

Beyond what is right for Christians, the way of the bully will not work in the marriage, the family, the church, the job, or the neighborhood. Out of such lives comes violence, anger, and destruction.

Those Who Love Life and See Good Days

*"Whoever would love life
and see good days
must keep his tongue from evil
and his lips from deceitful speech.
11 He must turn from evil and do good;
he must seek peace and pursue it.
12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears are attentive to their prayer,
but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."*

As taught in Psalm 34:12-16 and repeated here, if you want to love life and see good days, choose the

way of Christ and do good unto all men. It is very interesting that Paul spoke of how, with proper obedience to parents, children can extend their days in Eph 6:1-3, where he quotes from Duet 5:16 when the 10 commandments were given:

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother"- which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Those Who Do Good and Are Always Prepared to Give and Answer

13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." 15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 17 It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

This passage describes how we are to keep ourselves concerning those not taught in the gospel. The beginning of our effort should be to do good. The possibility of harm in the hostile world of unbelievers is dramatically reduce if we are doing good. Doing good is an admonition that we are always to follow. Gal 6:8-10 teaches:

9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

If we do suffer for what is right, it is a blessing, and we are not to be frightened. A good idea when we are confronting others is to remember Rom 8:31, "31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?" This idea is expressed in the present passage by verse 15," But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord." When you are confronting unbelievers or teaching others, if you set Christ as Lord in your heart, fear will dissipate, and anger will wilt. You are doing the work of the Lord. However, you must be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in you. Only you can do this, not the Lord. We must follow what Paul taught Timothy in 2 Tim 2:15, "15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." To teach other requires the noble character of the Bereans in Acts 17:11: "11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."

Attitude in teaching may be more important than what one knows. Peter tells us that when giving a reason to others, we are to do this with gentleness and respect. If we maintain a Christ-like attitude toward those we are teaching, they will be ashamed when they slander us. In the final analysis, if we will do God's will (teaching in this case) and suffer, it is far better than doing evil and suffering.

The Saved with the Pledge of a Good Conscience toward God

18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, 19 through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison 20 who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Verse 18 reasserts the theme from which these command flow, Christ died for our sins. Christ, as we, died in the body but was made alive in the Spirit. In verse 19, the antecedent of *whom* is the Spirit. In the Spirit he preached to those in prison. The *when* of the passage is in the days of Noah and while the ark was being prepared. This passage does not teach a second chance for the sinners in the days of

Noah. When the Spirit inspired Noah to preach the Word, Christ was preaching in the days of Noah. This is a common teaching in the New Testament: that Christ was active as the word of God during the Old Testament period. 1 Cor 10:1-4 teaches this same principal:

10:1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

This passage explains that water saves us today just as it did save Noah and his family: this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Hebrew writer places this same construction on baptism in Heb 10:22-25:

22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The very end of this chapter teaches us that Jesus has accomplished everything that he came to do and that he reigns above all in heaven. As water saves us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ so he has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to him. Christ will not be coming back to earth to complete some alleged unfinished business. Paul concurred fully with this teaching that Christ is supreme now in Eph 1:19-23:

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.