

LESSON FIVE - 1 & 2 PETER

1 Peter Chapter Three

1. Living as Married Persons. 3:1-7.
  1. Wives: Be subject to your husbands. 3:1-6.
    1. Just as Christians were to be subject to governmental authorities (2:13-17), and servants were to be subject to their masters (2:18-25), Peter now exhorts wives to be subject to their husbands.
      1. Both Greek philosophy and Roman culture required order in the household as the foundation of order in the state.
      2. Peter is requiring conduct that would be approved in the society at large.
      3. Plutarch wrote in his *Advice to Bride and Groom* (perhaps not much later than Peter's letter):

So it is with women also; if they subordinate themselves to their husbands, they are commended, but if they want to have control, they cut a sorrier figure than the subjects of their control. And control ought to be exercised by the men over the women, not as the owner has control over a piece of property, but, as the soul controls the body, by entering into her feelings and being knit to her through goodwill.
    2. Christian women submit to their husbands, and particularly to non-Christian husbands, not because they are in some way inferior, for they are God's elect.
    3. Rather, they submit for the Lord's sake, with the particular purpose of winning their husbands to the Lord by their unselfish example.
    4. It may seem strange that Peter takes six times as much space to instruct the wife and he does the husband, but it could be that Peter recognizes that the wife's position is six times harder than the husband's.
      1. In ancient civilization the wives had no rights at all.
        1. The wife belonged to the husband in the same manner as his sheep and goats.
        2. He could divorce the wife, but not vice versa.
        3. Plutarch's advice did not keep the Greeks from asserting that it was the duty of the woman to stay indoors and to be obedient to her husband.
        4. Cato the Censor, a typical ancient Roman, wrote: If you were to catch your wife in an act of infidelity, you can kill her with impunity without a trial.
  2. What, then, must have been the problems of the wife who became a Christian while her husband did not?
    1. It is almost impossible for us to imagine.

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2. What, then, is Peter's advice in such a case?
  1. What Peter does not advise.
    1. He does not advise the wife to leave the husband.
    2. He does not tell the wife to preach or argue.
    3. He does not tell her to insist that there is no difference between slave and freeman, Gentile and Jew, male and female, but that they are the same in the presence of the Christ whom she had come to know.
  2. He advises her something simple - nothing else than to be a good wife.
    1. It is by the silent preaching of a lovely life that she must break down the barriers of prejudice and hostility, and win her husband for her new Master.
    2. She must be submissive.
      1. It is not a spineless submissiveness but a voluntary "selflessness."
      2. It is a submission based on the death of pride and the desire to serve.
      3. In is the submission not of fear but of perfect love.
    3. She must be pure.
    4. She must be reverent.
  3. She must adorn herself appropriately to accomplish that goal.
    1. The ancients reasoned that since women had no part in public life, they had nothing to pass their time ("a housewife doesn't work") and thus they should be allowed an interest in dress and adornment.
    2. Cato the Censor insisted on simplicity.
    3. Lucius Valerius countered: Why should we grudge women their ornaments and their dress? Women cannot hold public offices, or priesthods, or gain triumphs; they have no public occupations. What, then, can they do but devote their time to adornment and to dress?
    4. The ancient philosopher Epictetus seemed to agree with Peter: Immediately after they are fourteen, women are called 'ladies' by men. And so, when they see that they have nothing else than to be bedfellows of men, they begin to beautify themselves and put all their hopes on that. It is, therefore, worthwhile for us to take pains to make them understand that they are honored for nothing else but only for appearing modest and self-respecting."
    5. In the face of all of this Peter pleads for the graces that adorn

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the heart, which are precious in the sight of God.

6. These were the jewels that adorned holy women of old, including Sarah, the mother of God's faithful (Isa. 51:2); and if Christian wives are adorned with the same graces of modesty, humility and chastity, they too will be her daughters and will be within the family of the faithful people of God.
  7. When the Christian wife adorns herself with such jewels, her unbelieving husband may be won without the word.
    1. This does not mean without the word of God.
    2. Rather, it refers to the language of a beautiful life being more powerful than the spoken word of the wife.
    3. The opposite is true as well - as Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "What you are speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say."
  4. There are few passages where the beauty of a lovely Christian life is so vividly stressed.
2. Husbands: Live considerately with your wives. 3:7.
    1. Though brief, this passage has in it much of the essence of Christian ethic.
      1. That ethic may be called a *reciprocal* ethic.
      2. It never places all of the responsibility on one side.
    2. A marriage must be based on reciprocal obligation.
      1. A marriage with all of the privileges on one side and all of the obligations on the other is bound to fail.
      2. This was a new concept in the ancient world.
    3. We have already noted the woman's lack of rights and then quoted Cato the Censor's statement of the rights of the husband.
      1. However we did not finish it: If you were to catch your wife in an act of infidelity, you can kill her with impunity without a trial; but if she were to catch you, she would not venture to touch you with her finger and, indeed, she has no right.
      2. In the Roman moral code all of the obligation was on the wife and all of the privilege was with the husband.
    4. The Christian ethic never grants a privilege without a corresponding obligation.
  3. What are the obligations of the husband?
    1. He must be understanding.
      1. He must be sensitive to and considerate of the feelings of his wife.

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2. The cruelty that is hardest to bear is often not deliberate, but pure thoughtlessness.
2. He must be chivalrous.
  1. He must remember that women are the weaker vessel and treat them with courtesy.
  2. In the ancient world and in some of the present world it is not uncommon to see a man riding on an animal while the woman walks.
  3. It was Christianity that introduced chivalry into the relationship between men and women.
3. He must remember that the woman has equal spiritual rights.
  1. She is a fellow-heir of the grace of life.
    1. Women did not share in the worship of the Romans and Greeks.
    2. They did not share in the service in the Jewish synagogue, and, absent recent change, still do not share in the orthodox synagogue.
    3. When they were admitted to the synagogue at all, they were segregated from the men and hidden behind a screen.
  2. It is in Christianity that there is neither male nor female. Gal. 3:28.
4. Unless a man fulfills these obligations, there is a barrier between his prayers and God.
  1. One commentator wrote, "The sighs of the injured wife come between the husband's prayers and God's hearing."
2. Living as Christians Generally. 3:8-22.
  1. Be humble and united in spirit. 3:8.
    1. Right in the forefront Peter puts unity. John 17:21-23; Acts 4:32; Romans 12; 1 Cor. 12; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Cor. 3:3; 1 Cor. 10:17; 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 2:13-14; Eph. 4:3-6; Phil. 1:27; 2:2; 4:2.
      1. All through the New Testament rings the plea for Christian unity.
      2. The New Testament never treats agreeing in Christ as an unnecessary though highly desirable spiritual luxury, but as something essential to the true being of the Church.
    2. Division causes the world to reject Christ. John 17:21.
  2. Next is sympathy or compassion.
    1. The whole New Testament urges this duty upon us.
      1. We are to weep with those that weep and rejoice with those that rejoice. Rom. 12:15.
      2. When one member suffers all the other members suffer with it; when one member is honored all the members rejoice with it. 1 Cor. 12:26.

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2. On thing is clear; sympathy and selfishness cannot co-exist.
3. Sympathy comes to the heart when Christ reigns there.
3. Third, Peter lists brotherly love.
  1. Clearly, Peter remembered the words of Jesus. John 13:34-35.
  2. Of the necessity of brotherly love the New Testament speaks with unmistakable definiteness and with almost frightening directness. 1 John 3:34-35.
4. Fourth, Paul lists compassion, or pity.
  1. There is a sense in which pity is becoming a lost virtue.
  2. The conditions of our own age tend to blunt the edge of the mind to sensitiveness in pity.
  3. It is easy to lose the sense of pity and still easier to be satisfied with a sentimentalism that feels a moment's comfortable sorry and does nothing.
  4. Pity is the very essence of God and compassion of the very being of Jesus Christ - God gave the Son and the Son laid down his life.
5. Fifth, Peter lists humility.
  1. Christian humility comes from two things.
    1. First, it comes from a sense of creatureliness - the recognition of one's utter dependence upon God.
    2. Second, it comes from a new standard of comparison - Jesus Christ. 2 Cor. 10:12.
  2. When the Christian recognizes his dependence upon God and keeps before him the standard of Christ, he must remain humble.
6. Return blessing when evil is done to you. 3:9-12.
  1. Finally, Peter lists forgiveness.
    1. It is to receive forgiveness from God and to give forgiveness to men that we are called.
    2. The mark of the Christian is that he forgives as God has forgiven him. Eph. 4:32.
    3. Peter joins our calling to receive God's blessing with our calling to bless.
    4. Peter regularly appeals to what the Lord has done for us in order to encourage us to live for him.
  2. With a simple "for" Peter introduces Psalm 34 12-16a, not as proof but as elucidation.
    1. The thought is wanting a life here on earth that is worth while, that

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one can love with full intelligence and purpose.

1. The life is one that has "good days" - days that are really beneficial and not vain and empty.
2. David and Peter are not thinking about days that are easy, pleasant, and sunshiny, but of days that are full of rich fruit..
2. The negative prescription is to keep the tongue from evil and and the lips from guile.
3. The positive side of the prescription is to turn away from evil and doing good and seeking and pursuing peace.
3. The health that the prescription brings.
  1. The eyes of the Lord are upon you and his ears are open to you.
  2. Failure to follow the prescription brings antagonism with God - his face is against you. Psalm 78.
7. How to act when you suffer for righteousness. 3:13-4:19.
  1. Know that your are blessed. 3:13-14a.
    1. What Peter now begins rests on all that he has already written.
    2. The real purpose of Peter has now been reached, namely, to enlighten, comfort, and strengthen the readers in suffering and trial.
    3. The rhetorical question implies that no one will harm you if you are a zealot for doing good.
      1. Peter's point is not that his readers will avoid all persecution; that is the very subject with which he proposes to deal.
      2. Peter's point is that zealousness for good robs the persecutors of any real reason for their conduct.
    4. In fact, Peter tells them that in spite of good conduct they may suffer for righteousness sake.
      1. An unrighteous world cannot tolerate righteousness.
      2. The very presence of righteousness irritates it because it silently condemns its conduct. Heb. 11:7.
    5. At the same time God will bless them.
      1. Peter would prepare the church not simply to endure persecution, but to find in persecution an opportunity to proclaim the gospel.
      2. Peter might have cited his own example.
        1. Contrast Peter, filled with the Spirit as the apostle of the risen Lord.
        2. He is no longer huddled by the fire in the outer courtyard.
        3. Now he is the accused.

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4. He stands before the same tribunal that examined Jesus.
5. He who had feared to confront a maidservant now confronts the high court.
6. He accuses them of crucifying Jesus, and refuses their order to be silent - "We must obey God rather than men."
3. Peter lost the fear of men by gaining the fear of the Lord.
  1. Peter knew the meaning of fear.
  2. He remembered the panic that had unmanned him when, by the fire in the courtyard, he was recognized as a Galilean.
  3. His accent had given him away. Mt. 26:73.
  4. But Peter also knew the secret of a boldness that conquers fear.
  5. The secret was announced long ago in the prophecy of Isaiah:  
**Isaiah 8:12-13** Say ye not, A confederacy, to all *them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.* <sup>13</sup> Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and *let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.*
2. Trust Christ. 3:14b-15a.
  1. The antidote to the fear of men is awareness of the glory of the Lord Himself.
  2. To break the throttling grip of fear we must confess Christ's lordship with more than mental assent.
  3. Peter is not simply stating orthodox theology - he speaks from his own experience.
  4. God had enabled him to confess the deity of Christ as the Son of the Living God. Matt. 16:17.
  5. The reality of the resurrection had confirmed his conviction.
  6. It was not just that he had been with Jesus, but that Jesus was with him. Matt. 28:19-20.
  7. Peter had heard Jesus say fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Matt. 10:28.
3. Use this opportunity to proclaim Christ while doing right. 3:15b-17.
  1. Our courage in the face of those who persecute us is born of hope in the Lord as well as fear of the Lord.
    1. Peter tells us that hope provides both the courage for and the content of our proclamation.
      1. Hope is not substituted for faith; it is faith as it looks to the future; hope is the form that faith takes in the eyes of death.

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2. Hallowing the Lord in our hearts, we are always to be ready to confess his name before others.
2. That proclamation must be reasonable.
  1. To do so we must know what we believe; we must have thought it out; we must be able to state it intelligently and intelligibly.
  2. Too many church members if asked what they believe could not tell, and, if asked why they believe it, would be equally helpless.
3. That proclamation must be made with meekness and fear.
  1. Paul describes it as "speaking the truth in love." Eph. 4:15.
  2. We are not afraid to press Christ's claims, but we do so as his servants.
  3. It has been said that the corruption of the best is the worst; certainly no pride is more offensive than pride in being a trophy of grace.
  4. Men can be wooed into the Christian faith, but they cannot be bullied into it.
  5. Any argument in which the Christian is involved must be carried on in a tone that God can hear with joy.
    1. We must not state our beliefs in an attitude of arrogance and belligerence.
    2. We must not present the gospel with an attitude that anyone who does not agree is a fool or a knave and seek to ram the truth down their throats.
    3. No debates have been so acrimonious as theological debates; no differences have caused such bitterness as religious differences.
    4. In any presentation of the Christian case and in any argument for the Christian faith, the accent should be on the accent of love.
4. v. 16 - Bold words will not honor the Lord if they are not supported by a consistent life; the only compelling argument is the argument of the Christian life coupled with a loving discussion of the Christian faith.
  1. Keep a clear conscience.
    1. Conscience has been defined as a person's inner awareness of the moral quality of his actions, a definition that even

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Pagan moralists could accept.

2. Apostolic teaching transformed this definition - the spirit of God in the heart of the believer brings his conscience before God, with radical results.
  1. On the one hand the Christian's conscience is informed and reshaped by the light of God's righteousness; no longer is it insensitive to sin, like scar-tissue seared by a hot iron. 1 Tim. 4:2.
  2. On the other hand, because God is the Lord of the conscience, The Christian is delivered from false guilt, and from the condemnation of sin that God has forgiven.
2. Peter shows the source and power for a good conscience -- your good behavior in Christ. v. 16.
  1. We are in Christ because he gives us life.
  2. The Spirit of Christ joins us to our Lord as we hallow him in our hearts.
  3. We are in no sense alone as we seek to show by our lives that the gospel is true.
3. Under these circumstances we have chosen the better route - it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. v. 17.
4. For Christ suffered in order to bring you to God. 3:18.
  1. Christ suffered once for sins.
    1. It is a unique occurrence, not to be repeated in history or in symbol.
    2. When Christ comes again, it will be apart from or without reference to sin. Heb. 9:28.
  2. He was put to death.
    1. By death Christ won life for his own.
    2. Modernists may deny that Christ actually died, but Peter was there, he saw it, and he reports it.
  3. It was a vicarious death - the Righteous for the unrighteous.
    1. That the Just should suffer for the unjust is an extraordinary thing.
    2. Only forgiveness without reason can match sin without excuse.
  4. He was raised.
    1. Again, Peter was there; he saw the crucified Lord; he saw the buried Lord; he saw the risen Lord.
    2. Christ died in order to bring us to God - the resurrection is the

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power by which he accomplishes it.

1. The word "bring" has two backgrounds.
  1. Jewish - only the priests had the right of close access to God.
    1. All could pass through the Court of the Gentiles, the Court of the women (past which they could not go) into the Court of the Israelites - but there he must stop.
    2. Into the court of the priests, into the nearer presence of God he could not go; and of the priests, only the High Priest could enter into the Holy of Holies.
    3. But Jesus brings us to God - he opens up the way for nearer access by all men.
  2. Greek - At the court of kings there was an official called the *prosagogeus*, the *introducer*, the *giver of access*, and it was his function to decide who should be kept out and should be admitted to the presence of the king.
    1. He, as it were, held the keys of access.
    2. It is Jesus Christ, through what He did, who gives men access to God.
5. Another example: Noah proclaimed righteousness when persecuted. 3:19-20.
  1. These words have given rise to much discussion and speculation, considered by many to be among the most difficult passages in scripture.
  2. To fully discuss all of the theories and suggestions would likely take the entire time that we have to devote to both 1 & 2 Peter.
  3. Thus, our comments will be limited to some basic facts as to its most probable meaning.
    1. Keep in mind that one of the basic principle of hermeneutics is to interpret difficult passages by plain passages.
      1. There is no probation after death. Heb. 9:27; 2 Cor. 5:10.
      2. There is no missionary work in hell. Luke 16:27-31
        1. Like the fire of Sodom, etc., the flood is recorded in Scripture as a type of the final judgment.
        2. Neither could be a type of final judgment if probation and being saved were still possible after judgment.
        3. The time of grace ends when the longsuffering of God is

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exhausted as it was in the days of Noah.

2. Two things are said about Christ in this passage.
  1. He was put to death in flesh (no article in the Greek) and made alive in spirit (no article).
  2. "Flesh" and "spirit" are balanced in the text.
  3. It is not likely that one is locative (i.e., the location where the death and life occurred) and one is instrumental (the means by which the death and life occurred).
  4. Flesh and spirit are often opposed (balanced) to each other in Scripture.
    1. ". . . manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit." 1 Tim. 3:16.
    2. Flesh and spirit contrasted as the two manners in which men may walk. Rom. 8:3-10.
  5. Thus, it is likely that ". . . put to death in the flesh, but quickened (made alive) by the [s]pirit" alludes to the inner principle that stands in contrast with the flesh, the divine spirit that Jesus possessed in common with all men and that was not affected by the death that he suffered.
3. Why should it be asserted that Christ was made alive by [in, NAS] this spirit?
  1. It was Peter's purpose to show that though Christ suffered death, far from terminating his existence or destroying his influence, it merely enabled him to be energized, brought to active life in the realm of the spirit.
  2. His spirit, instead of perishing in death, was clothed with renewed and enhanced powers of life. [For a discussion of "The Resurrection Body" see the sermon by that subject at [www.thywordstruth.com](http://www.thywordstruth.com).
  3. At death, this spirit passed into a new sphere of existence and, therefore, was said to have been made alive.
4. v. 19 - ". . . [I]n which" (i.e., in this spirit) he preached .
  1. The people to whom he preached - those who were disobedient when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah.
  2. The content of what was preached is not stated.
  3. Those to whom he preached are described as spirits because they were in "prison" under restraint at the time that Peter wrote.

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1. "In prison" is frequently used to describe the state or condition of those spirits that await condemnation at the last day. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 20:7.
2. Note that Peter does not say that the objects of this preaching were in a disembodied state and in prison when the preaching was done; such was their condition when he wrote.
4. The time of the preaching. v. 20.
  1. The period when such lived in the flesh and when the preaching was done is clearly stated in verse 20.
  2. They were once "in the flesh"; they were once disobedient; it was during the time that the ark was preparing.
  3. During this period Christ preached unto them.
    1. What one does through an authorized agent he is said to do himself. 1 John 4:1.
    2. Hence, Christ, in the person of Noah, preached to the antedeluvians during the period the ark was constructed.
    3. These, having died in disobedience, were under restraint at the time that Peter wrote.
5. The meaning of the passage is : Christ preached; he preached "in spirit" to "spirits in prison." These spirits in prison were wicked persons who lived while the ark was constructed. The preaching that Christ did was through Noah as His agent. Those to whom the preaching was done were bound in the prison house of disobedient spirits at the time that Peter wrote the letter.
6. God will save you as he did Noah and Christ. 3:21-22.
  1. "Through water" in v. 20 leads Peter to New Testament baptism.
  2. Baptism which corresponds to this now saves you. v. 21.
    1. While the passage does not address the mode of baptism (except to the extent it is part of the anglicized word transliterated as "baptism"), commentators can hardly pass by a chance to discuss it.
      1. One suggested that "immersionists" can take no comfort from the text since the only people who were immersed in the flood perished.
      2. Another (obviously an "immersionist") suggested that it would be incongruous to talk about removing dirt from the body by using only a few drops of water sprinkled on the head.

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2. The passage is clear as to the purpose of baptism - it saves.
  1. Baptism does not save as a putting away of the filth of the flesh.
  2. Baptism is an appeal for a clear conscience toward God.
    1. That person has the assurance that every sin has been forgiven.
    2. Baptism is the cleansing of the inward man.
    3. Once we understand baptism this way we can understand:
      1. Mark. 16:16.
      2. Acts 2:38.
      3. Acts 22:16.
  3. The passage is clear that baptism derives its efficacy from the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
    1. His resurrection marked his once for all exit from the realm of death and his judgment on sin.
    2. Our union with him in his resurrection is the means by which God gives us new life. Rom. 6:1-7.
    3. The passage is also clear that those who have not been baptized for the remission of their sins are in the position of those who died in the flood.