Presenting Peter
Who is this man called Peter? WEEK 10: Submission

Wednesday Night Crew Summer Series Presenting PETER: A study in Mark and the Letters of Peter
Come Join Pastor Orleen and the Wednesday Night Crew this Summer beginning 6/9th
Who is this man whom Jesus Loved&Corrected&Taught&Trusted & Rebuked & Gave the Leadership of His Church to?

WEEK #1: Power in a name: Simon Peter. Social, Economic, Family Culture. What was it like to live life in Peter's neighborhood? What did this Family Culture ADD to the nascent, embryonic, incipient Church?
WEEK #2: Peter in the Gospels – The Confession "LORD, I am a sinful man!" & Walking with Jesus – Confessing Him as Messiah
WEEK #3: The Passover, The Prophecy & The Reinstatement
WEEK #4: Matthais, Pentecost, Abuse: Ananias&Sapphira
WEEK #5: PETER IN LEADERSHIP – Samaritan Pentecost, Gentile Pentecost (Cornelius), The Council of Jerusalem
WEEK #6: Pastor Peter #1 – An EYE witness to the GRACE of God. Expect trials. How to live the Gospel.
Week #7: The Discipline of Suffering

8/11, 8/18, **8/25(gone), 9/1(gone),** 9/8, 9/15(Kick off: Testimonies of Warfare)

~~Who does Peter say Jesus Christ is?~~
Peter and the HS
Husband/Wife
2 Peter? Eschatology!
False Prophets/Teachers (13)
Traditions (rest of the story)
Legends (15) & Legacy
1 Peter 3:18-22

WEEK #9
Pastor Peter – The Royal Priesthood
Matthew 16:19

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth is already bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven."

- Written to the house churches in the 5 Roman provinces of Asia Minor (Turkey)
- From Rome at the end of his life after Paul had left (Released from his first imprisonment in AD 62).

Purpose of the letter:
- Peter already 'wrote' his witness of the life of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Mark through John Mark.
- In the epistle (letter), knowledge of the story of Jesus is assumed – It is NOT the Gospel of Mark rewritten.
- Instruct the church in the **apostolic interpretation of the gospel**. (Like Paul)
- **What we seen. What we heard. What we knew. What we did.**

This is how Peter "Fed the Sheep"
1.Shared his testimony. (**Peter's testimony** against the background of his own experience as Christ's disciple.)
2.Connected the **Old Testament promises** to Christ. (with which the letter is saturated.)
3.Outlined the apostolic **faith** (**Faith in action is trusting God's word**) like Paul and other authors of the New Testament.
4. Outlined application into The Hellenistic world in which his hearers lived. (**Understood the culture**)
Our job is to take these timeless truths and apply to our world.
Peter eye witnesses to the Grace of God

Peter is moving US with the Five House Churches and infusing OUR mindset of WHO WE are as a Believer in Christ Jesus with:

What we've seen.
What we've heard.
What we've known.
What we've done.

READ, make short comments, move back to Chapter 2

1 Peter 3:1-7

Wives and Husbands

3 *In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the Christian message, they may be won over without a message by the way their wives* *live* [2] *when they observe your pure, reverent lives.* [3] *Your beauty should not consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold ornaments or fine clothes.* [4] *Instead, it should consist of what is inside the heart with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very valuable in God's eyes.* [5] *For in the past, the holy women who put their hope in God also beautified themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands,* [6] *just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children when you do what is good and are not frightened by anything alarming.*
[7] *Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives with an understanding of their weaker nature yet showing them honor as coheirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.*

- What are you feeling as we read this and react with our 21st Century life?
- What comes to mind after reading this?

Let us begin with using scripture to interpret scripture.

FIRST Interpretive Scripture:

A. 1 Peter 2:11-20

A Call to Good Works

[11] ***Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and temporary residents to abstain from fleshly desires that war against you.*** [12] ***Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that in a case where they speak against you as those who do what is evil, they will, by observing your good works, glorify God on the day of visitation*** [2nd coming].

[13] *Submit to every human authority* [KING] *because of the Lord, whether to the Emperor as the supreme authority* [14] *or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good.* [15] *For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good.* [16] *As God's slaves, live as free people, but don't use your freedom as a way to conceal evil.* [17] ***Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the Emperor.***

Submission of Slaves to Masters

[18] *Household slaves, submit with all fear to your masters, not only to the good and gentle but also to the cruel.* [19] *For it brings favor if, mindful of God's will, someone endures grief from suffering unjustly.*[Note: It does not say accept it but endure it for His sake. When do we know it is time to leave or…we have options, these slaves did not.] [20] *For what credit is there if you sin and are punished, and you endure it?* ***But when you do what is good and suffer, if you endure it, this brings favor with God.*** [THIS is where we come in. Do good.]

SECOND Interpretive Scripture:

When it comes to submission verses, what is tradition? what is cultural? What is God's order?

- Are women inferior to men?

Genesis 1:26-31

How is the role of Men and Women listed:

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth."

27 So God created man in His own image;
He created him in the image of God;
He created them male and female.

28 God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls[c] on the earth." 29 God also said, "Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This food will be for you, 30 for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth—everything having the breath of life in it. I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 God saw all that He had made, and it was very good. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

- Who is given dominion over the earth? Male and Female.
- Is there any inferiority? NO.

> "The subordination of wives to husbands reflected in this passage must be seen against the background of the general status of women in the Hellenistic world of that time. Dominant among the elite was the notion that the woman was by nature inferior to the man.[13] Because she lacked the capacity for reason that the male had, she was ruled rather by her emotions,[15] and was as a result given to poor judgment, immorality,[17] intemperance, wickedness,[19] avarice; she was untrustworthy,[21] contentious, and as a result, it was her place to obey.[23] Such a view of women was also sedimented in legal tradition: women could not vote or hold office, could not take an oath or plead a case in court, could not be the legal guardian of their own minorchildren, and were legally dependent on either their father or a guardian."
>
> Achtemeier, P. J. (1996). *1 Peter: a commentary on First Peter*. (E. J. Epp, Ed.) (pp. 205–219). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

THIRD Set of Interpretive Scriptures

Other verses that outline the N.T. Church's stance on women:

- **Galatians 3:28**

There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

- **Acts 16:11-15 LYDIA**

11 Then, setting sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, the next day to Neapolis, 12 and from there to Philippi, a Roman colony, which is a leading city of that district of Macedonia. We stayed in that city for a number of days. 13 On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate by the river, where we thought there was a place of prayer. We sat down and spoke to the women gathered there. 14 A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God, was listening. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was spoken by Paul. 15 After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

- **Vs. 40**

After leaving the jail, they came to Lydia's house where they saw and encouraged the brothers, and departed. [Lydia ran a home church]

- Paul's view of women in leadership/ministry & JUNIA

Romans 16:1-16

*I commend to you our sister **Phoebe**, who is a servant[a] of the church in Cenchreae. 2 So you should welcome her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints and assist her in whatever matter she may require your help. For indeed she has been a benefactor of many—and of me also.*

Greeting to Roman Christians

*3 Give my greetings to **Prisca**[b] and Aquila, my coworkers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their own necks for my life. Not only do I thank them, but so do all the Gentile churches.*
5 Greet also the church that meets in their home.
Greet my dear friend Epaenetus, who is the first convert[c] to Christ from Asia.[d]
*6 Greet **Mary**,[e] who has worked very hard for you.[f]*
*7 Greet Andronicus and **Junia**,[g] my fellow countrymen and fellow prisoners. They are noteworthy in the eyes of the apostles,[h][i] and they were also in Christ before me.*
8 Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord.
9 Greet Urbanus, our coworker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.
10 Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ.
Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.
11 Greet Herodion, my fellow countryman.
Greet those who belong to the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.
*12 Greet **Tryphaena** and **Tryphosa**, who have worked hard in the Lord.*
*Greet my dear friend **Persis**, who has worked very hard in the Lord.*
13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother—and mine.
14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them.
*15 Greet Philologus and **Julia**, Nereus and **his sister**, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.*
16 Greet one another with a holy kiss.
All the churches of Christ send you greetings.

Footnotes

a. Romans 16:6 *Or Maria*
b. Romans 16:6 *Other mss read us*

c. Romans 16:7 *Either a feminine name or "Junias," a masculine name* [Junias, the name, does not exist anywhere in Greek literature]
d. Romans 16:7 *Or are outstanding among*
e. Romans 16:7 *"The apostles" is not always a technical term referring to the 12; cp. 2Co 8:23; Php 2:25 where this word is translated as "messenger."*

In that light, it has been argued that the **subordination announced in this passage, reflecting an extended tradition in later canonical epistles, meant a lessening of, or limitation on, the emancipation Christian women had enjoyed earlier on**.[39]

Achtemeier, P. J. (1996). *1 Peter: a commentary on First Peter*. (E. J. Epp, Ed.) (pp. 205–219). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

FOURTHLY

So, WHAT is Peter saying?

1 Peter 3:1-7, 8-12

Wives and Husbands

3 In the same way, **[Same way as what?]** *wives*

1 Peter 2:11-17

A Call to Good Works

11 Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and temporary residents to abstain from fleshly desires that war against you. 12 ***Conduct yourselves honorably*** *among the Gentiles, so that in a case where they speak against you as those who do what is evil, they will, by observing your good works, glorify God on the day of visitation* [2nd coming].

13 Submit to every human authority [KING] *because of the Lord, whether to the Emperor as the supreme authority 14 or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good. 15* ***For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good. 16 As God's slaves, live as free people, but don't use your freedom as a way to conceal evil.*** *17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the Emperor.*

1 Corinthians 7:12-16

12 But I (not the Lord) say to the rest: If any brother has an unbelieving wife and she is willing to live with him, he must not leave her. 13 Also, if any woman has an unbelieving husband and he is willing to live with her, she must not leave her husband. 14 For the unbelieving husband is set apart for God by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is set apart for God by the husband. Otherwise your children would be corrupt, but now they are set apart for God. 15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let him leave. A brother or a sister is not bound in such cases. God has called you to live in peace. 16 For you, wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Or you, husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?

It must be noted, however, that this passage intends to say nothing about the subordination of women to men in general, nor even within Christian marriage, but intends to be understood primarily within the context of a Christian wife married to an unbelieving husband.[41]

That this was a problem very early in the Christian community is indicated not only by Paul's discussion of it in **1 Cor 7:12–16***, but also by its reflection in sayings attributed to Jesus about the deleterious effect following him can have on family life (Luke 12:51–53*; Mark 10:29*).[42]

At the root of the problem is the requirement, voiced by Plutarch, that the wife must worship and acknowledge only the gods of her husband. That obviously places the converted wife of an unconverted husband in a most difficult situation; on that critical point she may *not* be subordinated to him, thus incurring his disapproval as well as that of his family and acquaintances. In such a situation, maintaining a demeanor acceptable in all other areas to her non-Christian husband and his values[44] not only lessens the tension within the household but may even contribute to the eventual conversion of the unbelieving husband. Yet whether it does or not, the wife must hold fast her Christian confession and practice, whatever threats may be leveled against her.[46]

Achtemeier, P. J. (1996). *1 Peter: a commentary on First Peter*. (E. J. Epp, Ed.) (pp. 205–219). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

1 Peter 3:1-7

Wives and Husbands

3 *In the same way**,** wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the Christian message, they may be won over without a message by the way their wives* *live* [2] *when they observe your pure, reverent lives.* [3] *Your beauty should not consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold ornaments or fine clothes.* [4] *Instead, it should consist of what is inside the heart with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very valuable in God's eyes.* [5] *For in the past, the holy women who put their hope in God also beautified themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands,* [6] *just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children when you do what is good and are not frightened by anything alarming.*

[7] *Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives* [females – not woman nor wife] *with an understanding of their weaker nature* [Vessels] *yet showing them honor as coheirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.*

The participle συνοικοῦντες ("living with"), like the those in 2:18* and 3:1*, is to be construed not as imperatival[critical] but as instrumental: it indicates the way obligations are to be met. While those addressed (οἱ ἄνδρες) surely include husbands, a meaning clearly intended in 3:1*, the use of the adjectival substantive "female" (τῷ γυναικείῳ) instead of the noun "woman" or "wife" (τῇ γύνῃ) points to a wider meaning, and probably refers to the way males in a household deal with its female members, including of course the man's wife but not limited to her. Achtemeier, P. J. (1996). *1 Peter: a commentary on First Peter*. (E. J. Epp, Ed.) (pp. 205–219). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Verse 7 does not contain any admonitions to Master's and their slaves so we can assess that the admonition of 1-7 is for married people.

- **First**, a different word is used for the woman in a Christian household (γυναικεία) than for a wife in a non-Christian one (γυνή), almost as though the author wished here to dissociate what he had said to wives about subordination in the latter situation.

Achtemeier, P. J. (1996). *1 Peter: a commentary on First Peter*. (E. J. Epp, Ed.) (pp. 205–219). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

- **Second**, that impression is strengthened by the fact that the Christian man (including the husband) is to apportion honor to the women in his household (including his wife) **as to equals in the eyes of God**: they as much as he are heirs of God's life-giving grace. So necessary is this second admonition that for the Christian man to ignore it is to have God ignore him: the prayers of a Christian husband and head of a household who acts otherwise will be ignored by God.
  Achtemeier, P. J. (1996). *1 Peter: a commentary on First Peter*. (E. J. Epp, Ed.) (pp. 205–219). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Although nothing is said in vv. 1–6* about the general status of women within the Christian community, or within Christian marriage, that status can be deduced from v. 7*, addressed to Christian husbands. The fact that no parallel admonitions to masters are appended to the passage dealing with slaves indicates the author's intention to point up the differences between women in a non-Christian and in a Christian situation, and the equality they enjoy in the latter. That is done in two principal ways. **First**, a different word is used for the woman in a Christian household (γυναικεία) than for a wife in a non-Christian one (γυνή), almost as though the author wished here to dissociate what he had said to wives about subordination in the latter situation. **Second**, that impression is strengthened by the fact that the Christian man (including the husband) is to apportion honor to the women in his household (including his wife) as to equals in the eyes of God: they as much as he are heirs of God's life-giving grace. So necessary is this second admonition that for the Christian man to ignore it is to have God ignore him: the prayers of a Christian husband and head of a household who acts otherwise will be ignored by God. The glimpse this gives of the status of a Christian woman within the Christian family, as well as in the Christian community, shows that the emancipation of women is far from diminished, and that their equality is in fact enjoined as a Christian duty (κατὰ γνῶσιν) upon Christian men.
Achtemeier, P. J. (1996). *1 Peter: a commentary on First Peter*. (E. J. Epp, Ed.) (pp. 205–219). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

The seriousness with which God takes the necessity of men to treat women as equal heirs to God's eschatological grace is shown in the final phrase: lack of such treatment means that men's prayers to God are hindered and so have no effect—God does not listen to them.
Achtemeier, P. J. (1996). *1 Peter: a commentary on First Peter*. (E. J. Epp, Ed.) (pp. 205–219). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

B. 1 Peter 2:11-20

A Call to Good Works

11 Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and temporary residents to abstain from fleshly desires that war against you. 12 Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that in a case where they speak against you as those who do what is evil, they will, by observing your good works, glorify God on the day of visitation [2nd coming].

13 Submit to every human authority [KING] *because of the Lord, whether to the Emperor as the supreme authority 14 or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good. 15 For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good. 16 As God's slaves, live as free people, but don't use your freedom as a way to conceal evil.* ***17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the Emperor.***

Submission of Slaves to Masters

18 Household slaves, submit with all fear to your masters, not only to the good and gentle but also to the cruel. 19 For it brings favor if, mindful of God's will, someone endures grief from suffering unjustly.[Note: It does not say accept it but endure it for His sake. When do we know it is time to leave or…we have options, these slaves did not.] *20 For what credit is there if you sin and are punished, and you endure it?* ***But when you do what is good and suffer, if you endure it, this brings favor with God.*** [THIS is where we come in. Do good.]

[21] For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example,
so that you should follow in His steps. [22] He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth; [23] when
He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He was suffering, He did not threaten but entrusted Himself
to the One who judges justly. [24] He Himself bore our sins
in His body on the tree, so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness;
you have been healed by His wounds. [25] For you were like sheep going astray,
but you have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

Submission, the door to freedom for a Christian:

- Free from embracing fleshly desires – Abstain from them.
- Free from deciding who to honor – Honor everyone.
- Free from deciding how to treat other Christians – LOVE them.
- Free to live with GODLY suffering instead of pretending good Christians don't suffer.
- Free to respect authority as an act of Godly obedience. [need to stand up to authority? Do it with repsect. i.e. Gahndi]
- Free to live in Submission.
- Free to run from Evil in all its forms and entanglements.
- Free to live as this life is temporary.
- Free to be strange!

[Use this portion as a closing prayer]

1 Peter 3:8-12

Do No Evil

[8] Now finally, all of you should be like-minded and sympathetic, should love believers, and be
compassionate and humble,
[9] not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you
were called for this, so that you can inherit a blessing.
[10] For the one who wants to love life and to see good days must keep his tongue from evil
and his lips from speaking deceit,
[11] and he must turn away from evil and do what is good.
*He must seek peace and pursue it, [12] **because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous***
***and His ears are open to their request.** But the face of the Lord is against those who do what is*
evil.

NoTES:

The Beauty of Submission (Paper: The Ministry of Women)

Submission covers a multitude of relationships. For a Christian, it appears to be involved in ALL of them. Understanding how submission permeates our lives as a Christian, helps us to apply it as the bible intends.

The word translated "submissive" (Gk. *hupotassō*) means literally "to place under, to line up under"—for example:

Christ
1 Cor. 15:28 "The Son of Man will be made subject to Him… (that is God the Father)

Christians
Heb. 12:9 "How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live."
James 4:7 "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."
Eph. 5:21 "Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ."
Eph. 5:24 "Now as the church submits to Christ…"

Husbands & Wives
Eph. 5:22 "Wives submit to your husbands as unto the Lord."
{Eph. 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,"}
Col. 3:18 "Wives submit to your husbands as it is fitting in the Lord."
Titus 2:5 "…be subject to your husbands that no one will malign the word of God."
1 Pet. 3:1, 5 Submission can win over an unsaved husband.

Parents
Luke 2:51 "Then He went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them."
{Eph. 6:1-4 outlines expectations of children to parents.}

Masters
Titus 2:9 "Teach slaves to be subject to their master"
1 Pet. 2:18 "Slaves submit to your masters w/all respect…"
{Eph. 6:5-9 vs.9 *Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with Him.*}

Secular authorities
Rom. 13:1 "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established."
Titus 3:1 "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities , to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men."
1 Pet. 2:13 "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men"

Church officials
1 Pet. 5:5 "Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older"

Roles within Relationships outlined in Ephesians 5 and 6:

Ephesians 5:15-21
15 *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,* ***16*** *making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.* ***17*** *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of*

*the Lord is. **18** And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, **19** addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, **20** giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.***

Ephesians 5:22-33

***22** Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. **23** For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. **24** Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. **25** Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, **26** that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, **27** so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. **28** In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. **29** For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, **30** because we are members of his body. **31** "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." **32** This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. **33** However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

Ephesians 6:1-9

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. **2** "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), **3** "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." **4** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*
***5** Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, **6** not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, **7** rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, **8** knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. **9** Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.*

Note the different relationships Paul is addressing. Is he directing how all relationships are to operate for all time or how Christ is to operate within all the relationships that are present in the current culture when Ephesians was written?

From the article "A Christian Understanding of Submission" by Alan F. Johnson on Christians for Biblical Equality website, the concept of cultural expectation is unpacked at length:

> Christians living under such a widespread social system were expected, as Christians, to follow the rules that were essential to the patriarchal social order, including the strict honor-shame observance. They were also given strong arguments from biblical texts and Christian theology for doing so. This applied even to the attitude and behavior of Christian slaves who were, in submission, to serve their masters. But note well, however, that the ultimate reason for submitting was not to endorse the validity of the status inequality of slaves to masters, but to yield to their masters because by so doing they were serving Christ (Eph. 6:5-8). Wives also were to honor their husbands and submit to them. But, again, not to endorse the validity of male superiority and rule over wives, but as submitting to Christ (Eph. 5:22). But is this the whole story? Not at all. If it were, modern advocates of the ancient patriarchal order structures might have more credibility. However, the New Testament itself also contains the command for Christians to "submit to *one another* in the fear of Christ" (Eph. 5:21). This emphasis on "mutual submission," to my knowledge, is not found in the pagan and patriarchal world order of the first century. "Mutual submission" is a unique practice related to Christ, the Christian community, and the gospel realities. It is to this aspect of New Testament teaching that I want to now turn. http://www.cbeinternational.org/resources/article/priscilla-papers/christian-understanding-submission

Appropriate Conduct for Christian Wives—and Husbands
1 Peter 3:1–7*

3

1 Similarly you wives, [fulfill your Christian duty] by being subordinate to your own husbands, so that even if some are disobedient to the word, they shall be gained by the behavior of their wives without a word, 2/ because they observed[2] your reverent, chaste behavior. 3/ Let your decoration not be the external sort, consisting of the braiding of hair[4] and the wearing of gold or the putting on of garments, 4/ but the secret inner person, accompanied by the incorruption of a calm and quiet spirit, which is most precious before God, 5/ because in that way also holy women in former times, women who put their hope in God, used to decorate themselves by being subordinate to their own husbands, 6/ as Sarah obeyed[6] Abraham when she called him "master," whose children you became when you did what is good and were free from all fear. 7/ In like manner you men, [fulfill your Christian duty] by living with the women in an enlightened way as with a weaker vessel, according her honor as also to fellow heirs[8] of the grace of life, so that your prayers are not hindered.

Analysis

While a number of traditions underlie this passage, the presence of characteristic words and phrases employed elsewhere in the letter makes it apparent that these verses represent the composition of the author of the epistle. The *inclusio* formed by the phrase ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ("[by] being subordinate to your own husbands") in vv. 1* and 5* is in this instance probably not intended to frame the passage, since the comment about Sarah in v. 6* is closely tied to v. 5* and cannot be regarded as an appendage to the discussion, as the *inclusio* might otherwise indicate.

The subordination of wives to husbands reflected in this passage must be seen against the background of the general status of women in the Hellenistic world of that time. Dominant among the elite was the notion that the woman was by nature inferior to the man.[13] Because she lacked the capacity for reason that the male had, she was ruled rather by her emotions,[15] and was as a result given to poor judgment, immorality,[17] intemperance, wickedness,[19] avarice; she was untrustworthy,[21] contentious, and as a result, it was her place to obey.[23] Such a view of women was also sedimented in legal tradition: women could not vote or hold office, could not take an oath or plead a case in court, could not be the legal guardian of their own minor children, and were legally dependent on either their father or a guardian.[25] To be sure, some of these measures began to be relaxed in the time of Augustus. Women could petition for a change in guardian if the present one proved harsh; they could inherit and hold property; they could decide whom and when to marry and whether to divorce, and by decree of Augustus if a mother had three to five children, depending on her status, she acquired legal independence

and full right to participate in business.[28] Despite this emancipation of women in the Augustan period, however, the idea of women remaining subordinate to men remained. The equality of women espoused in theory by the Stoic philosopher Musonius, for example, in practice was denied in favor of the traditional notion that the man should rule the woman,[30] and the cults of Dionysus and Isis, which gave women a dominant role, were criticized for their excesses by Roman men. The role of married women at this time was also undergoing change;[32] Plutarch, for example, urged that in the proper marriage there ought to be a mutual amalgamation of bodies, property, friends, and relations, with all material possessions held in common. Yet even Plutarch held that the wife must be subordinate to the husband, who must rule her, in a kindly way, to be sure, but he must nevertheless be the superior partner in the marriage,[34] even to the point of determining which gods the family is to worship.

It is against this background that one must view the status of women reflected in the NT as a whole, and specifically in this passage in 1 Peter. *That the Christian faith inherently meant equal status for women in the sight of God is evident from such a passage as Gal 3:28*, and from the important role played by women in the early church.[37] In that light, it has been argued that the subordination announced in this passage, reflecting an extended tradition in later canonical epistles, meant a lessening of, or limitation on, the emancipation Christian women had enjoyed earlier on.[39]*

It must be noted, however, that this passage intends to say nothing about the subordination of women to men in general, nor even within Christian marriage, but intends to be understood primarily within the context of a Christian wife married to an unbelieving husband.[41] That this was a problem very early in the Christian community is indicated not only by Paul's discussion of it in 1 Cor 7:12–16*, but also by its reflection in sayings attributed to Jesus about the deleterious effect following him can have on family life (Luke 12:51–53*; Mark 10:29*).[42] **At the root of the problem is the requirement, voiced by Plutarch, that the wife must worship and acknowledge only the gods of her husband. That obviously places the converted wife of an unconverted husband in a most difficult situation; on that critical point she may *not* be subordinated to him, thus incurring his disapproval as well as that of his family and acquaintances. In such a situation, maintaining a demeanor acceptable in all other areas to her non-Christian husband and his values[44] not only lessens the tension within the household but may even contribute to the eventual conversion of the unbelieving husband. Yet whether it does or not, the wife must hold fast her Christian confession and practice, whatever threats may be leveled against her.[46]**

Although nothing is said in vv. 1–6* about the general status of women within the Christian community, or within Christian marriage, that status can be deduced from v. 7*, addressed to Christian husbands. The fact that no parallel admonitions to masters are appended to the passage dealing with slaves indicates the author's intention to point up the differences between women in a non-Christian and in a Christian situation, and the equality they enjoy in the latter. That is done in two principal ways. **First**, a different word is used for the woman in a Christian household (γυναικεία) than for a wife in a non-Christian one (γυνή), almost as though the author wished here to dissociate what he had said to wives about subordination in the latter situation. **Second**, that impression is strengthened by the fact that the Christian man (including the husband) is to apportion honor to the women in his household (including his

wife) as to equals in the eyes of God: they as much as he are heirs of God's life-giving grace. So necessary is this second admonition that for the Christian man to ignore it is to have God ignore him: the prayers of a Christian husband and head of a household who acts otherwise will be ignored by God. The glimpse this gives of the status of a Christian woman within the Christian family, as well as in the Christian community, shows that the emancipation of women is far from diminished, and that their equality is in fact enjoined as a Christian duty (κατὰ γνῶσιν) upon Christian men.

In that light, the subordination of Christian wives in a non-Christian marriage here enjoined is not a matter of theological principle so much as it is a matter of avoiding unnecessary conflict. Yet it is not even an admonition to blanket conformity in every area where it would not conflict directly with her Christian faith. The illustration of submission given in vv. 3–4* does not, to be sure, conflict with certain social expectations of her unbelieving husband, but even more, they reflect activity sanctioned by Scripture and Christian tradition.[49] Even such subordination as is enjoined, therefore, is subordination authorized by the faith that above all else the Christian wife must put uppermost in her behavior. For that reason, in this instance, as in the case of Christian slaves, Christian wives here point beyond themselves to the general situation of Christians who find themselves at odds with a society within which they must remain true to their Christian confession, whatever suffering that may bring in its wake.

Comment

■ **1–2***[51] The adverb ὁμοίως ("similarly") that begins this verse is intended to show not that wives like slaves must be subordinate, but that, like household slaves (2:18*) and Christian husbands (3:7*), wives too are to obey the commands in 2:17* (honor all people, love those in the Christian community, revere God, honor the emperor), in their case by being subordinate to their husbands.[53] The participle ὑποτασσάμεναι is thus not so much imperatival as it is instrumental, showing the means by which the wife is to fulfill those commands.[55] The presence of ἰδίοις ("[your] own") shows that this is not a general statement of subordination of women to men, but rather of the Christian wife to her husband, whether he is Christian or not.

The purpose of such action by the wife is stated in the ἵνα clause: it is to win unbelieving husbands to the Christian faith. While the phrase καὶ εἰ τινες ("even if some") implies that not all husbands of Christian wives are nonbelievers, it is clear that the verse is directed to those Christian wives for whom that is in fact the case: the interrogative particle εἰ states a fact here, not a hypothetical possibility. Whether a Christian wife with a non-Christian husband is assumed here to be unusual[58] or the normal case is difficult to determine from this language. What is clear is that the conduct of wives with non-Christian husbands is the chief concern of the author here. The phrase ἀπειθοῦσιν τῷ λόγῳ ("disobedient to the word") may imply not only absence of belief but active opposition to the Christian faith; the counsel to wives no longer to speak of it (ἄνευ λόγου ["without a word"]) would indicate further discussion to be unfruitful if not provocative. The first use of λόγος ("word") clearly means the Christian faith; whether the second does so as well has been disputed,[62] but the intention is surely that the wife's Christian behavior will be an effective witness even without verbal reference to the gospel, not that she is to remain dumb in the presence of her husband as she lives her Christian life.[64] It is thus to be understood as meaning "**without verbal reference to the gospel.**" That the

husband will be gained not as a compliant mate for the wife but as one converted to the Christian faith is implied in the verb κερδηθήσονται ("they shall be gained"), which belongs to the language of mission.[66]

The final phrase (v. 2*) supports the idea that a husband who has rejected the proclamation of the gospel can be won to it by his wife's exemplary behavior. While the participle ἐποπτεύσαντες ("[because] they observed") carries a causal force, the emphasis here is probably to be seen rather on the temporal: subsequent to the husband's seeing his wife's exemplary behavior, he will be won to her faith. The description of that conduct, although it uses concepts employed in the description of the ideal wife of the Greco-Roman world,[68] is best understood in this context as pointing to Christian behavior. The phrase ἐν φόβῳ refers here, as it did in 2:18, to reverence before God rather than respect for, or fear of, the husbands, a point made clear in 3:6*, where the author counsels against such fear of husbands.[71] Its point is as much prescriptive as descriptive, that is, it points out that the wife's subordination must be carried out within the perimeters of the faith. When such subordination would require of her an act incompatible with her faith, she is evidently not to do it. Ἁγνή probably means not simply "chaste," but "pure" in a more general sense, as in most other cases in the NT.

The pronoun ὑμῶν ("your") is the first direct address to the readers in this passage and it is not repeated until v. 6* (ἐγενήθητε ["you became"]); the ὧν ("your") of v. 3* reverts to the third person γυναῖκες ("wives") of v. 1*. This may indicate that the whole sentence was taken from an earlier source, and adapted to the direct address found in the admonitions to the household slaves (2:20*, 21*, 24*, 25*).[73]

The problem addressed in this verse is not simply that of a wife defying the ideal of the Hellenistic elite that women in general are to be subordinate to men, but more specifically that wives in that culture were expected to assume the religion of their husbands.[75] The reason was that the household, like the republic, expressed its solidarity in a common religion, and **unwillingness to share such solidarity was perceived as a threat to the state as well as to the family.** It was the Christian wives' necessary insubordination in the matter of sharing the unbelieving husband's religion that led to the problem addressed in these verses, with their plea that where such insubordination is not required, subordination may indeed have the effect of winning the husband to the Christian faith.[77] Such subordination is thus a matter of expediency, and is based neither on the nature of women, nor on the inequality of husband and wife in marriage; the equality of marriage partners, rooted in the sayings of Jesus (cf. Matt 19:4–6* par.), was made explicit in early Christian tradition (cf. 1 Cor 11:11–12*; Gal 3:28*).[78]

In sum, the verses concern the relationship between husband and wife, with emphasis on the believing wife married to an unbelieving husband; they do not deal with the general relationship of male and female. Submission in this context therefore does not mean any woman is to do anything any man may tell her.[80] **Rather, in the context of this letter, the wife's ultimate submission, and thus responsibility, is to Jesus as her Lord,** and that ultimate submission means that the submission to her husband is secondary, and is to take the form of living out her faith so transparently that her unbelieving husband may be won to the faith.[82] The fate of such a wife, and her response, is thus exemplary for that of any Christian forced to live in unsympathetic, even threatening, surroundings.

■ **3*** The description of the Christian wife in vv. 3–4* follows a widespread tradition in the ancient world. Condemnation of excessive personal ornamentation can be found in Isa 3:18–24*;[84] later Jewish tradition also contains references to it (e.g., *T. Reub.* 5.3; *1 Enoch* 8.1), as does Philo.[86] **Far more widespread was the Greco-Roman tradition that the proper attire for the woman is modesty rather than expensive garments, fancy coiffures, and jewelry; among those who use, and approve of, this widespread tradition** are Phintys, Perictione,[88] Seneca,[89] Dio Chrysostom, Juvenal,[91] Plutarch, Epictetus,[93] Pliny, Tacitus,[95] Lucian of Samosata, and Ovid,[97] among others. **While the presence of this tradition in 1 Tim 2:9–11* may point to a common catechetical source,[99] its relative absence in other NT documents suggests only a limited circulation.**

Whatever the source of the tradition upon which our author is drawing, it makes sense only if there were women among the readers of this letter who could afford the kind of expensive clothing and jewelry referred to. Arguments against the presence of such wealth in the churches being addressed lack persuasive power;[101] early Christianity appealed to people of the widest variety of economic situations.

While some of the activity described may have played a part in other cults, for example, the braiding of hair was especially important for women devotees of Isis and Artemis of Ephesus,[104] there is no evidence that our author intended to counter such practices. Nor does the intention seem to be to forbid all ornamentation,[106] although it was so interpreted by later Christian writers. The point is rather that the attraction of the Christian wife to her pagan husband is to consist not in external adornment but in the more important internal qualities outlined in the following verse.[108] Only in that way will the virtue of the Christian faith become evident, and, more importantly, will the wife act in accordance with the divine will, and so be pleasing to God. That in the end is the purpose of the wife's inner adornment, as v. 4b* makes clear. The wife, acting within the limits imposed on her by the social order that in this case urges a modesty in apparel also appropriate for Christians, **must nevertheless have as her primary intention activity that is pleasing to God**.[110]

■ **4*** This verse provides the positive counterpole to the negative v. 3* regarding what is appropriate for the Christian wife who seeks to be faithful to God and to win her unbelieving husband to the faith. Grammatically the negatived contrast ("not [οὐχ] this, but [ἀλλά] this") between the external (ἔξωθεν) and secret (κρυπτός) is not, as one might expect from v. 3*, between an acceptable and an unacceptable type of decoration, but rather between (negatived) external decoration (οὐχ ὁ ἔξωθεν … κόσμος) and the (affirmed) secret person (ὁ κρυπτὸς … ἄνθρωπος). Yet the return to the idea of decoration in v. 5*(οὕτως … ἐκόσμουν ἑαυτάς ["thus…they used to decorate themselves"]) indicates that the contrast between unacceptable and acceptable forms of decoration was nevertheless present in the author's mind. If, then, the broad intention of the verses is clear enough, it is nonetheless difficult to accommodate the apparent contrast to the actual grammatical form of the verse.

The "secret person" in this context refers not so much to the general inner aspect of the human being as it does to the person who is determined by a faith that is visible directly only to God (cf. Matt 6:4*, 6*, 18*),[113] and that is apparent to other human beings only by way of external acts (cf. v. 1*). The contrast is reminiscent of Paul's contrast between outer and inner person (ὁ ἔξω, ἔσω ἄνθρωπος) in 2 Cor 4:16* (cf. Rom 7:22*; Eph 3:16*),[114] but the use here of

κρυπτός (“secret”) instead of ἔσω (“inner”) shows lack of dependence on Paul. The genitive τῆς καρδίας is probably qualifying, defining further what the “secret person” is: the seat of thought and thus of action.

The “secret person” is further defined by the phrase ἐν τῷ ἀφθάρτῳ, probably best taken as a dative of accompaniment, rendered as “together with” or “accompanied by” and modifying the adjective ἄφθαρτος, here used as a neuter substantive (“incorruption”). The following genitival phrase (τοῦ πραέως καὶ ἡσυχίου πνεύματος [“calm and quiet spirit”]) is appositional (“consisting of”) and further defines what the author means by the “secret person,” rather than identifying the spirit as the Holy Spirit.[120] The two words that modify “spirit,” “meek” and “quiet,” are Christian rather than purely feminine virtues. “Meek” is used by Jesus as a self-designation (Matt 11:29*) and characterizes people on whom he pronounced a blessing (Matt 5:5*); our author calls all people to such a virtue in 3:16*.[122] Similarly, a “quiet” spirit is the ideal both for the Christian community (1 Tim 2:2*) as well as for individual Christians (1 Thess 4:11*; 2 Thess 3:12*).[123]

The relative pronoun ὅ that introduces the final phrase may refer to “spirit,” but it could also refer to the entire preceding clause[125] as indicating what is highly precious in God’s sight. The latter alternative is probably the one to choose.

The thrust of the passage with its emphasis on the internal quality of the person, by implication visible only to God, is a topos in biblical thought and, appropriately for this context, emphasizes the contrast between outward appearance and inner reality.[127] Because that contrast is not exclusively Christian—the Greco-Roman world also valued the inward reality of a person as opposed to an excessive outward show calculated to excite or impress—some have argued that what the author here sets forth is not a particularly Christian morality. Yet the final phrase indicates clearly that the author meant it to be just that: what he has described is in fact something God values highly.

■ **5*** In this verse we learn the reason (γάρ) for the advice given in vv. 3–4*: This is also the way (οὕτως) holy women conducted themselves in the past (ποτε). While groups of people are identified as “holy” in the NT (e.g., holy apostles and prophets, Eph 3:5*; 2 Pet 3:2*; Christian believers as a class, Rom 1:7*; 1 Cor 1:2*; Phil 1:1*), **the phrase “holy women” (αἱ ἅγιαι γυναῖκες) is unique here in the Christian canon.** The mention of Sarah in v. 6* makes it likely that the author has in mind in the first instance the matriarchs of Jewish tradition, viz., Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah,[130] who were holy not because of moral acts but because of their membership in God’s holy people. The “holy women” function therefore not so much as models of moral behavior to be imitated as examples of women who have followed the path here described.[132] That point is confirmed by the different language used to describe them from the language used to describe Christ in the preceding section, where the household slaves were in fact “called” to emulate aspects of that life. **Such “calling” to follow an example is absent here. The activity most characteristic of the women for our author was their continuing hope in God; the similar form of αἱ ἅγιαι (“the holy [women]”) and αἱ ἐλπίζουσαι (“who hoped”) makes clear that it is that aspect of holiness the author wishes to emphasize.**

The imperfect verb ἐκόσμουν, here designating customary or habitual action in the past (“were accustomed to decorate themselves”), shows that despite the grammatically apparent contrast in vv. 3–4* between outer decoration and inner spirit, there nevertheless was also a

contrast in modes of decoration, the one external and appealing to sensual desires, the other internal and reflecting the values of the wife's faith. The repetition at the end of this verse of the phrase with which v. 1* began (ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίος ἀνδράσιν) shows a preliminary closure to the argument, with v. 6* providing an example of the holy women of the past mentioned in this verse. The participle here, as in v. 1*, is not imperatival but circumstantial,[135] here either attendant circumstance ("subordinate as they were to their own husbands"), or, more likely, instrumental ("by being subordinate to their own husbands"), the same force it had in v. 1*.[136]

■ **6*** As a way of completing the discussion begun with v. 1*, the author cites Sarah as an example (ὡς Σάρρα) of a holy woman who subordinated herself to her husband. As Sarah is one example of the holy women mentioned in v. 5*, so her obedience is one example of the subordination of which the author is speaking (vv. 1*, 5*).[138] That obedience is illustrated by her calling Abraham "master,"[140] an allusion to Gen 18:12*.[141] Whether the context of Abraham and Sarah resident in a foreign land also figures in this choice of Sarah as example, fitting as it would be for the context of this letter, cannot be determined for lack of evidence; the general high regard in which Sarah was held in both Jewish and Christian[144] tradition is probably sufficient to account for her presence here.

The second half of the verse describes Christian wives as children of Sarah. The aorist ἐγενήθητε ("you became") indicates a past action, thus rendering it highly unlikely that the two participles (ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι, φοβούμεναι) are to be understood as conditional, that is, "if you do good and do not fear." To understand ἐγενήθητε in its usual sense means the participles are more likely to be either instrumental of means, that is, you became her children "by doing good and not fearing," or more likely as attendant circumstance, that is, you became her children "when you did what is good and did not have any fear."[149] To suggest the point at which these Christian women became "children of Sarah" as the time of their baptism is to miss the point of the passage. What is at issue is not when, or how, the women addressed became Christian;[151] the point is how Christian wives are to act within the potentially hostile situation of marriage to nonbelieving husbands. Sarah is thus understood not as the "mother" of the faith of these Christian women, but as an example of the way these Christian women are to act within their marriage situation. Thus they became her "children" when they emulated the respect she showed her husband Abraham, not when they were admitted to the Christian faith by baptism.

Although the verb "to do good" (ἀγαθοποιέω) is not of Christian coinage, in our letter it is virtually synonymous with doing God's will (see 2:15*), **and is so to be understood here. The second phrase (μὴ φοβούμεναι μηδεμίαν πτόησιν ["free from all fear"]), perhaps an echo of the phrase οὐ φοβηθήσῃ πτόησιν ("do not be terrorized") found in Prov 3:25*,[154] means to be free from any fear of other human beings.**[156] Its use here, along with the reference to doing what is good, points to the fact that the wife is to do what is appropriate for her as a Christian even within the confines of a marriage to a non-Christian husband, a husband who may use fear and intimidation in the attempt to compel activity inappropriate for her as a Christian. It is for that reason that these Christians wives are paradigmatic for the way all Christians are to live within a hostile cultural situation, and hence is the basis for their inclusion here.[158]

■ **7*** Since this verse shares characteristics similar to the preceding sections dealing with household conduct—introduction with ὁμοίως ("similarly"), address, participle, advice, and

then motivation—it is, despite its brevity, to be regarded as the third in the series advising household members on appropriate conduct, each of which depends on the imperatives of **2:17*.**[159] The participle συνοικοῦντες ("living with"), like the those in 2:18* and 3:1*, is to be construed not as imperatival[160] but as instrumental: it indicates the way obligations are to be met. While those addressed (οἱ ἄνδρες) surely include husbands, a meaning clearly intended in 3:1*, the use of the adjectival substantive "female" (τῷ γυναικείῳ) instead of the noun "woman" or "wife" (τῇ γύνῃ) points to a wider meaning, and probably refers to the way males in a household deal with its female members, including of course the man's wife but not limited to her. Those female members of the household are further characterized as "the weaker vessel." The comparative adjective "weaker" (ἀσθενεστέρῳ) clearly implies that both men and women are "vessels," with the women the weaker of the two. While in Hellenistic culture such weakness was taken as a description of a woman's nature, moral and intellectual as well as physical,[164] the point here is not to highlight women's spiritual or moral weakness—3:1–2* counters such an idea—but rather their physical frailty.[165] In keeping with Christian tradition, that meant that they must be given the special consideration accorded those of lesser social and physical capacity, since they too are precious in God's eyes. They too must also be apportioned honor (ἀπονέμοντες τιμήν) despite the lower value in which they are held in non-Christian society.[168] The use of "vessel" (σκεῦος) to describe a woman is rare in the NT, where it also can be used to describe a man.[170] The intention here may be to point to human beings as creatures and hence as having no justification to take advantage of one another.

The way men are to dwell with women as the weaker partners is described, in addition to the circumstantial participle ἀπονέμοντες ("according"), by the prepositional phrase κατὰ γνῶσιν, also used in an adverbial sense. It probably is to be understood as playing the same role as the phrase ἐν φόβῳ ("reverent") in 3:2* and διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ ("because of one's consciousness of God") in 2:9*, that is, enlightened by the man's knowledge of what God requires of him,[172] rather than meaning simply "considerately" or "intelligently." The description of the women as coheirs of the grace of life forms a grammatical parallel to their description as weaker vessels[174] and gives further reason for men not to adopt the normal cultural attitude toward them, since in God's eyes, as heirs of grace, men and women stand on the same level. The genitive ζωῆς ("life") is probably epexegetic ("grace that consists in life") rather than qualitative or adjectival ("living grace"), and bears an eschatological implication: it refers to the new life awaiting the Christian subsequent to God's judgment of the world.[177]

The seriousness with which God takes the necessity of men to treat women as equal heirs to God's eschatological grace is shown in the final phrase: lack of such treatment means that men's prayers to God are hindered and so have no effect—God does not listen to them.[179] While the pronoun in the phrase "your prayers" (ὑμῶν) could perhaps be understood to mean the prayers of both men and women, there is nothing in the context to lead one to assume the pronoun refers to anyone but the men addressed in this verse (οἱ ἄνδρες). The notion that God would ignore the prayers of women who are not treated in a Christian way would be to punish the weak who are abused, an idea hardly in accord with Christian tradition about the relation of God to the downtrodden. The point is clear: men who transfer cultural notions about the superiority of men over women into the Christian community lose their ability to communicate with God.[182]

The essential incompatibility of the Christian ethos with that of secular culture is here once more clearly on display, and it is surely for that reason that this section on the Christian men and husbands is included, not because such advice was a normal part of household codes[184] or specifically to address men who had pagan wives. Rather, it is included to warn men (and husbands) that the advice to wives in 3:1–6* **to be subordinate to their pagan husbands did not carry with it the kind of superior status for male members of the Christian community that it did in secular society.** Reciprocity is the key to such relationships within the Christian faith. The discussion of the place of men could be somewhat more succinct than that of slaves and wives, however, since (1) men and husbands do not serve as examples to the Christian community of the way Christians are to react to the oppression of secular society, and (2) Christian men would also have had fewer difficulties in secular society than women, even when they lived out their Christian convictions, given the bias against women in that culture.[187] Yet the section apparently had to be included, lest any notion of female inferiority infect the essential equality between men and women inherent within the Christian community: they are together and equally heirs of God's grace that promises life in the age [1]

Lesson 5—Test: Leading an Exemplary Life in Difficult Times and Trying Relationships

(1 Pet. 2:11–5:14)

It has been many years now, but his memories are clear. A third imprisonment for preaching the good news. A transfer from crowded cell to labor camp. An assignment which amounted to a signed death warrant.

In the beginning, the stench of the cesspool had left him reeling with nausea, weak, and trembling. But as Pastor Chen stood alone raking the human waste which swirled around him and calling upon the name of his Jesus, the answer came. Even more tangibly than during the proclamation of the gospel, he could sense the Lord saying: "You are My own."

The affliction prescribed by his enemies to break his body and his faith became the place of Pastor Chen's breakthrough into the heavenlies—his private garden. The sweet fragrance of his praise was echoed by the sweet presence of his Lord, and all was well. To this day, the testimony of George Chen's faith and his Lord's faithfulness remains a witness to all who hear.

Even though statistics show that persecution and violence against Christians is at an all-time high worldwide, few who read this account will suffer similar adversity. Yet, in many ways, we all must be ready and able to present a godly witness during difficult times and in trying relationships. In the context of persecution and suffering, Isaiah declared, "Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel." (Is. 8:18). In 2:11–5:14, Peter affirms the powerful potential of an exemplary life and gives practical advice to help us: (1) live in harmony and submission to all earthly authorities (2:11–3:7), (2) follow Christ's example when suffering because of good works or our Christian faith (3:8–4:19), and (3) serve in the church with humility and wisdom (5:1–14).

LIVE IN HARMONY AND SUBMISSION TO ALL EARTHLY AUTHORITIES (1 PET. 2:11–3:7)

Before talking to specific groups of Christians (citizens, servants, wives, and husbands), Peter offers an introduction to his topic of submission (2:11, 12). He draws his readers' attention back to the fact that they are "sojourners" and "pilgrims" in this world (1:1). It is as if he were saying, "Don't give undue weight to your present, temporary circumstances." He challenges Christians to move their focus away from their particular situation (with its questions of

[1] Achtemeier, P. J. (1996). *1 Peter: a commentary on First Peter*. (E. J. Epp, Ed.) (pp. 205–219). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

justice, rights, and freedoms) **and center it upon the Christian response which will bear eternal significance.**

Read 1 Peter 2:11–3:7. What one verse seems to encapsulate the directives for all relationships?

How likely is it that Christians will be criticized by non-Christians? What present and final witnesses will determine the truth concerning your life? (2:12, 15)

Where is the real site of the battle for submission and a godly witness? (2:11)

What is Peter's command and the motivation behind it concerning civil authorities? What groups today might be included in Peter's list? (2:13–16; also see Rom. 13:1–10)

WORD WEALTH

Free … but as bondservants (2:16): Peter's whole idea of submission may be summed up here. As individuals, we are free (*eleutheros*, Strong's *#1658*), "not under legal obligation, freeborn, able to move on our own and come and go as we please." But as Christians, we willfully exchange our independence for servanthood (*doulos*, "slavery" Strong's *#1401*) under God and the authorities He sets (2:14, 16). By doing so, we become "free to serve the Lord in all the ways that are consistent with His word, will, nature, and holiness."

Peter shows that a "master's" or employer's actions are not the determining factor for our responses and actions. What two measures may be used to determine what is commendable on our part? (2:18–20)

Read verses 21–25. Who is the prototype of suffering and righteousness?

WORD WEALTH

Christ, our Example (2:21): "Example," *hupogrammos* (Strong's *#5261*) derives from *hupo*, "under," and *grapho*, "to write" and originally referred to tracing the letters or copying the handwriting of one's teacher.

Study Jesus' example and list actions restrained and undertaken. (2:22, 23)

Actions Restrained	The Action Undertaken

BIBLE EXTRA

The Suffering Servant (2:22–25): Peter quotes a familiar Old Testament passage which would cause his first readers to recall Isaiah's "Suffering Servant" motif with its list of the benefits of salvation. Read Isaiah 53 which lies behind this text. Peter emphasizes Christian conversion as enablement to endure suffering righteously. Not only are Christians dead to sin and alive to righteousness, healing and health has been provided for mind, body, soul, and spirit. (Is. 53; 1 Pet. 2:22–25)

Read 3:1–7. By use of the term "likewise" or "in the same manner," Peter connects the directives to wives and husbands to the servanthood and submission described earlier (2:11–25; 3:1, 7). When talking to wives, how does Peter describe the way in which they should relate to their husbands in:

attitude? (3:2)

action? (3:1, 2, 6)

manner? (3:3–5)

Peter commands "fear" (respect) but warns against being "afraid with any terror" because fear can cause one to act/ react in a nonconstructive or even destructive manner. How could a wife retain her personhood and even disagree with her husband without giving up Peter's directives concerning attitude, action, and manner? (3:6)

BIBLE EXTRA

[NOTE: HAYFORD DOES NOT FOLLOW THE CONNECTION OF DIRECTION TO WOMEN WITH UNBELIEVING HUSBANDS ONLY. WHY?]

Bible Wisdom Concerning Wives and Women: "The spirit of submission, whereby a woman voluntarily acknowledges her husband's leadership responsibility under God, is an act of faith. The Bible nowhere 'submits' or subordinates women to men, generically. But this text calls a woman to submit herself to her husband (Eph. 5:22), and the husband is charged to lovingly give himself to caring for his wife—never exploiting the trust of her submission (v. 7; Eph. 5:25–29). This divinely ordered arrangement is never shown, nor was it ever given, to reduce the potential, purpose, or fulfillment of the woman. Only fallen nature or persistent church traditionalism, finding occasion through 'proof-texts' separated from their full biblical context, can make a case for the social exploitation of women or the restriction of women from church ministry.

"First Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35, which disallow a woman's teaching (in an unwelcomed manner), usurping authority, or creating a nuisance by public argument, all relate to the woman's relationship with her husband.

"The Bible's word of wisdom to women seems to be summarized in Peter's word here: counsel given to a woman whose husband is an unbeliever. She is told that her 'words' are not her key to success in winning her husband to Christ; but her Christlike, loving spirit is. Similarly, this wisdom would apply to any woman with the potential for a public ministry of leadership in the church. Her place will most likely be given when she is not argumentatively insistent upon it, so much as given to 'winning' it by a gracious, loving, servantlike spirit—the same spirit that ought to be evident in the life of a man who would lead."

What two understandings or "honorings" are foundational to a husband's right relationship with his wife? (3:7)

Understanding that his wife is physically weaker calls a husband to a protective role—an honoring of the way God created women. List practical ways a husband could show consideration for his wife based on this knowledge.

How would a husband honor a wife's spiritual status?

WORD WEALTH

Heirs together of the grace of life (3:7): Here, "fellow heirs of eternal life" is the primary meaning and indicates the full status and inheritance of each spouse in Christ. Yet Peter also may be suggesting that husbands understand that Christian marriage itself is a gracious gift intended to bring a special abundance to this life.

What powerful personal and joint ministry is thwarted when husbands do not dwell with their wives with understanding?

BIBLE EXTRA

Submission and Ethics (2:11–3:7): Peter calls us to obey and respect all authorities. However, not all authorities are godly or ethical. Read Psalm 1:1, 2 and Matthew 22:37–40. How do these laws of relationship and blessing help to weigh the authority of Scripture and conscience against the authority of a supervisor, civil official, or spouse when an ethical issue is at stake?

FAITH ALIVE

What is the context of your greatest battle in regard to submission to authority? What does biblical submission call you to change? How will you go about this?

Describe a marriage of mutual respect in which both partners are fully submitted to God. What qualities from this ideal would you like to see worked into your marriage or dating relationship?

FOLLOW CHRIST'S EXAMPLE WHEN SUFFERING BECAUSE OF GOOD WORKS OR THE CHRISTIAN FAITH (1 PET. 3:8–4:19)

Having addressed specific relational situations affecting individual lives, Peter now broadens his focus and discusses what it means to be a member of the community of faith in times of persecution. Peter talks to the church as a whole as he addresses the topic of suffering which occurs because one lives in this world as a Christian. Read 3:8–4:19.

Why is unity especially important among Christians during times of persecution? What other attitudes should characterize both our life with other Christians and our response when persecuted by unbelievers? (3:8)

How and why should we bless those who insult and persecute us for our faith? (3:9–14a)

What fears probably motivate the persecutors' insults? (3:14b)

What three actions are an antidote for our fear when suffering for doing good? Explain, in practical terms, what each of these means. (3:15–17)

1.

2.

3.

What encouragement is offered sufferers by the story of Noah and the Flood? (3:18–22)

PROBING THE DEPTHS

He preached to spirits in prison (3:18–20): This passage, although probably easily understood by its first readers, is difficult to interpret. It likely refers to the event of Christ's resurrection which openly proclaimed His victory to "spirits in prison"—the demonic spirits behind the corruption of Noah's day (v. 19; see Gen. 6:1–8; 2 Pet. 2:4, 5; Jude 6). Such proclamation may have been an integral part of subjecting "angels and authorities and powers" to Christ's rule (v. 22). A second chance for salvation after this life is not in keeping with Jesus' or apostolic teaching and should not be inferred here.

What is the great benefit of following Christ's example when enduring persecution? (4:1, 2)

For what do unbelievers often ridicule Christians? Why? (4:3, 4)

Read and compare 4:5, 6 with 3:12. Peter says that everyone will be judged according to what they did with the gospel in this flesh-life. What does he show to be the potential of the gospel which is preached by a Christian's life?

What three things does Peter call us to do in light of the times? (4:7)

What is Peter saying about the generosity, character, and power with which we are to minister our gifts—especially love—to the body of Christ? How would you evaluate your service using these three criteria? (4:8–11)

What is the likelihood of "fiery trials"? What double reason for rejoicing does Peter see in them? (4:12, 13)

How can you know that you are suffering "as a Christian"? (4:14–16)

Why is it a gracious act of God for judgment to begin with the family of God? (4:17–19; also 4:1, 2)

PROBING THE DEPTHS

Christian Persecution and the Great Judgment: Today we are experiencing a worldwide increase in Christian persecutions, especially in the East. Yet even in nations where open, violent persecution is not prevalent, it seems the holy lifestyle and the precepts of Christianity are being publicly ridiculed and politically maligned. According to Peter, we should see these facts as an indication that the appointed time for judgment has begun. Instead of complaining or rebelling against God, we should commit ourselves to God and allow suffering to have its full purifying effect on us individually and as a corporate church.

The judgment which begins with the church will culminate in the great outpouring of God's wrath upon unbelievers. For us, judgment brings hope and preparation for Christ's return. For unbelievers, it brings utter hopelessness. (See: Joel 3:9–17; Mal. 3:1–3; 4:1–6; 1 Pet. 4:1, 2, 16–19.)

SERVE IN THE CHURCH WITH HUMILITY AND WISDOM
(1 PET. 5:1–14)

Peter pens his exhortations to leaders and members of the church on the heels of his declaration that judgment has begun in the house of God. This context gives added weight to his specific instructions as he urges elders (5:1–4) and all members (5:5–11) to indeed commit their souls to Him in doing good. Read 5:1–14.

Why are wise leadership, humility, and spiritual warfare especially important during times of persecution? (5:1–10)

What attitude and example is Peter trying to communicate by identifying himself as "fellow elder" and "fellow witness"? (5:1; see John 21:15–17)

Contrast each wrong motive/action with the right motive/action for leadership. (5:2, 3)

1.

2.

3.

How/why might leaders be vulnerable to sin in the areas of: satisfaction with their role, money, control, being an example to the flock? How can members help leaders keep right motives in these areas?

BIBLE EXTRA

Shepherd Leaders (optional): Read the following passages which depict leaders as shepherds and the Lord as the Great Shepherd. Jot down the characteristics of a true shepherd and the tasks a shepherd performs. Decide what each means in practical terms. (Ps. 23; Jer. 3:15; 10:21; Ezek. 34:2–16)

What actions does Peter call for among the membership of the local assemblies? What would obedience to his commands look like in the church's daily life? (5:5, 6)

Compare James's "Submit … resist" passage on spiritual warfare with Peter's instruction here. How is submission defined differently in 1 Peter? Is this a contradiction? Why/why not? (5:5–10; James 4:6–10, Lesson 2)

What particular cares or anxieties might plague Peter's first readers or any under the threat of severe persecution? What is the cure? (5:6, 7)

WORD WEALTH

Casting all your care (5:7): The phrase follows "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God" and is very closely connected to it. Humble submission brings one under God's protection and grace in a special way. Here, "care," *merimna* (Strong's *#3308,* from *merizō*: "to divide" and *nous*: "the mind") denotes distracting "anxieties," "burdens," or "worries," over daily matters or needs before they arise. We are called "to throw" cares onto God's broad shoulders because His protective and attentive love is well able to secure all our needed provisions.

What personal traits and understandings might be needed to successfully stand against the devil as he is described here? (5:8, 9)

How does the fact of other Christians' suffering serve to encourage faith and perseverance? (5:9)

List the four things God will accomplish in you through suffering. Then tell what each means to you. (5:10)

1.

2.

3.

4.

Note the terms "our faithful brother," "Mark my son," "greet … with a kiss of love," and "elect together with you," which are part of the close of Peter's letter. Add the fact that Mark and Silvanus ministered at different times with both Paul and Peter. What observations might be made about life in the early church? (5:12–14)

BEHIND THE SCENES

It seems that Silvanus (Silas) and Mark both began their ministries from the Jerusalem church where Peter was one of the early leaders. Both served under Peter at some point. Church tradition holds that Mark ministered in Rome with the apostle Peter during Peter's last years of ministry and that Mark's Gospel is largely based on Peter's preaching. Trace Mark and Silvanus's ministry through the Scripture.

Silvanus (Silas)	**(John) Mark**
Acts 15:22, 32, 40	Acts 12:12–18, 25; 13:13; 15:36–39
2 Cor. 1:19	Col. 4:10
1 Thess. 1:1	Phil. 2:4; 2 Tim. 4:11
2 Thess. 1:1, 2	Read the Gospel of Mark

FAITH ALIVE

What area of your life needs to be repaired, established, strengthened, or made steadfast? Surrender that area to God. Ask Him to begin working there. Search the Scripture for wisdom in that area.

What is your "humility level" in relation to the local church? Identify one situation in which it is difficult for you to "bend low." Prepare yourself with prayer, and then purposely serve in that situation, asking God to create a servant's heart in you.

Satan hunts for Christians who are weak, only partially committed to God, afraid, unprepared, or not closely connected to the flock. Scripture shows us how to avoid becoming Satan's victim. Study the resources 1 Peter has provided. Then create a "battle plan" for future attacks. At the top of a sheet of paper, write the headings: *Area of Attack, Right Response, Right Motive.* Then, in your own words, complete your chart for each reference listed below.

1. 1 Peter 2:12
2. 1 Peter 3:9
3. 1 Peter 3:16
4. 1 Peter 3:18–20
5. 1 Peter 4:2, 4
6. 1 Peter 4:14–16[2]

A Comparison of 1 and 2 Peter

1 Peter	2 Peter
Emphasis: Hope in the midst of suffering	**Emphasis: The danger of false teaching and practices**
Christology: The sufferings of Christ for our salvation and example at His incarnation	**Christology: The glory of Christ and the consummation of history at His return**
The day of salvation when Christ suffered, died, and rose from the dead	**The day of the Lord when Christ returns in judgment**
Redemptive title: Christ	**Title of dominion: Lord**
Be encouraged in your present trials	**Be warned of eschatological judgment**
We need hope to face our trials	**We need full knowledge to face error**
Numerous similarities to Paul (especially Ephesians and Colossians)	**Almost identical similarities to Jude (compare 2 Peter 2 with Jude 4–18)[3]**

NotES:

5. Live as the people of God

II: The new lifestyle

[2] Hayford, J. W., & Hagan, K. A. (1997). *Passing Faith's Tests with Love and Joy: A study of James, 1&2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
[3] Hayford, J. W., Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). *Hayford's Bible handbook*. Nashville, TN; Atlanta, GA; London; Vancouver: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

2:11–20

1. The new lifestyle's pattern: freedom in bondage (2:11–17)

Peter moves to a suprising and urgent application of the teaching he has just given. He has been emphasizing the status that Christians have as the people of God, chosen by him and drawn into privileged fellowship. They are a priestly nation, the recipients of God's grace and favour.

But why should Peter remind them of their status? To be sure, he would have them exercise their priesthood in praising the Lord who bought them; but he has another reason. He would prepare them for lowly service. Just because they are God's royal people they can be servants. The example of Jesus is already before Peter, although he does not yet mention it directly. Knowing who he was, and what he came to do, Jesus could subject himself to people. He came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. Called as children of the light, Christians are free. **Their freedom, however, binds them to their calling. They are free in bondage to God. They know what it means to fear God in his presence. They are free to love their fellow-Christians. The dark blindness of sinful selfishness is gone; they are free to love. They are also free to honour unbelievers as God's creatures, and to respect the role of authority given to each one.**

This whole section is in direct antithesis to the spirit of the world, where every individual and group demands its 'rights' and understands liberty as freedom from responsibility. The apostle describes what is, for our time, a strange liberty. Yet, as Roberto Mangabeira Unger has pointed out, the liberal ideal of liberty is bankrupt. The liberal ideal would free every individual to do what he wants. If there must be curbs to this freedom, they must be neutral and impersonal. But the liberal can find no ground for this neutrality in his own liberal assumptions. The letter of the law cannot provide neutrality, for, on liberal assumptions, the language of law is arbitrary, carrying such meaning as we choose to assign to it. Similarly, if law is viewed as social policy, neutrality is impossible. As Alexander Solzhenitsyn has reminded us, the Soviet Criminal Code of 1926 makes any action directed toward the weakening of state power counter-revolutionary. Only what advances the Soviet state is legal. If there is no standard for values outside of society, there can be no true liberty in social policy.

Peter proclaims liberty in Christ. Because our liberty is under God there is an objective standard of value. But our liberty is not under an abstract deity. It is under the true and living God. It could be no liberty at all if Christ had not died to set us free and to proclaim liberty in the jubilee time of God's favour.

Our freedom is necessarily in servitude to God. Paul delighted to call himself the slave of Jesus Christ. But we also are called to serve our fellow-Christians and to render proper service to the people of the world. In this section Peter describes our freedom in service; to God, to the church, and to the world.

a. Free in bondage to God: 'Fear God!'

The freedom of God's servants in this world is the freedom of *aliens* and transients. Those who belong to God as his people can have no abiding city here. Like Abraham, they are strangers and pilgrims, even while they live in the world which they will inherit at last. Peter asks his *dear friends* to *abstain from sinful desires*, as *strangers* in a sinful world. The verb *to abstain* fits the calling of strangers. It means literally 'to distance' themselves from fleshly lusts. A temporary resident in a foreign land is not likely to adopt the customs of the land through which he is travelling. His standard of values, his lifestyle, is different. Peter wants Christian pilgrims to remember their heavenly citizenship. Calling his hearers 'transients' or 'pilgrims', Peter returns to a description he used at the beginning of his letter (1:1). He has now shown why they must regard themselves as pilgrims: they are the people of God, a holy nation, and they dare not conform to the wicked conduct of their neighbours. Instead, they must bear witness by their *deeds* to the kingdom of light.

Peter calls the pilgrims *dear friends* to express his affection for them. It expresses as well their belonging to God. They are 'dear' or (better) 'beloved' (*agapētoi*) not only to Peter, but to the Lord, as his own possession. Their alienation from the world is just because they are dear to God. Jesus himself is the Beloved of the Father.[5] (The biblical use of the term goes back to the description of Isaac as the beloved son of Abraham.) Peter's *dear friends* are God's beloved children, adopted in his Son.

Because they are God's children and pilgrims in this world, Christians are also warriors, repulsing the attacks of fleshly lusts that war against the soul. Peter clearly states the opposition between the *desires* of the flesh (literally) and the welfare of the *soul.* This does not mean that our souls are innately good and our bodies innately evil. When Peter lists the 'evil human desires' in the Gentile world, he includes the non-fleshly sin of 'detestable idolatry'. Yet, in our fallen world—Rome in Peter's day, New York or London in ours—the corruption of bodily desires for food, drink, and sex sweeps over us like a flooding sewer. The apostle calls on Christians to be 'out of it', out of the compulsive urgings of hammering sexual music, the seductions of pandering commercials, the sadism of pornographic films and paperbacks. In fleshly temptation the devil promises life, but his assault is against life; he would devour our very souls (5:8). John Stott well points out that the apostolic counter to lasciviousness is thankfulness for sex in loving marriage. God is the creator of our bodies; sex is his gift, not Satan's invention.

Christians have been liberated from sin's bondage, not only to praise God, but to live as his witnesses in the world. Here is an apparent paradox. Christians are not to be *of* the world, but they are to be *in* the world. Peter warns against the desires of the flesh, but instructs us how to live 'the rest of your time in the flesh' (4:2, ASV). In a long section in the middle of his letter, Peter presents the kind of ethical instruction that was common in the early church. We find similar lists of duties within domestic relationships in Paul's letters.[3] But Peter presents these duties in the framework of his special concern. He urges Christians to be the servants of God in the world, and therefore to submit themselves willingly, and even to suffer, so that God might receive the glory.

Peter's instructions tell us how to relate to the world while we are pilgrims in it. On the one hand, we do all before God and for God. (Notice how many times through the rest of this chapter Peter refers to God or Christ.) On the other hand, Christians also live before the world. Some of the duties in the Christian 'household code' were also advocated by Greek or Roman moralists. This is not unintentional on the part of the apostles. To some extent the Gentiles do recognize right and wrong in human relationships (performance being quite another matter!). Surely to that extent Christians must commend themselves to their neighbours and win their grudging respect. When Peter tells his hearers to live *good lives*, he uses a word that can also mean 'beautiful' or 'attractive'. The high holiness of fellowship with God must also produce observable conduct, admirable in its consistency and integrity. This theme of luminous goodness runs like a thread through all of Peter's exhortations. It reflects the word of Jesus, 'Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.'[3]

But, given the bias of unbelievers against God, even the good that Christians do will be ill spoken of. That certainly happened. The Roman historian Tacitus remarks that Christians were 'loathed because of their abominations'. Another author, Suetonius, approved of Nero's persecution of Christians, 'a class of people animated by a novel and mischievous superstition'.

Peter knows that the opposition of the Gentile world will not be limited to gossip, calumnies, and fantastic lies. Christians will be accused in the courts; false charges will lead to imprisonment and death. Peter had escaped the sword of Herod, but he would not escape the perverse hatred of Nero.

Yet in spite of pagan injustice, the impact of the Christian witness will not be lost, in Peter's day or ours. The surrounding world will see the *good deeds* of the Christian community (2:12). They cannot avoid it. For some, unbelief will turn to belief as they behold the obedience of the people of God. Unbelieving husbands will see, and be touched by, the godliness of their wives (3:1–2). In the day of God's 'visitation', even those who misrepresented and hated the good works of Christians will *glorify God* for them.

The term 'visitation' in the Old Testament most often refers to God's coming in judgment. It is also used, however, of God's coming in mercy. Zacharias praises God for 'visiting' and redeeming his people in the birth of his son John. John is the forerunner of the Messiah, in whom 'the dayspring from on high hath visited us.'[2] If the 'day of visitation' bears a positive sense here, it would mean the conviction and conversion of those who have seen Christian behaviour. However, in view of the emphasis that Peter puts on the coming of judgment in the day of the Lord, it seems more likely that Peter is describing the day when every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. God's searching judgment will then compel the acknowledgment, to his glory, of the faithful living of his true servants.[4]

b. Free in submission to others

Peter draws a radical and difficult conclusion. Christians who would *live as servants of God* in this world (2:16) must be willing to be in submission to others. There is, of course, a vast difference between our submission to God and our submission to other people. He tells us to fear God; he does not tell us to fear people. Peter does not call to us to become their slaves. Even when he addresses those who are slaves, he uses another word, 'household servants' (2:18). Peter does not argue that we should be lowly before others because we are lowly before God. He does the opposite; he stresses the privileged position to which God has exalted us. We have been brought near to God as priests, saints, sons and daughters. Because we are God's own possession, beloved of the Lord, we need not cherish our own dignity. Indeed, we may not. For the Lord's sake, for our fellow-Christians' sake, for the world's sake, we must be ready to subordinate ourselves to others.

We submit ourselves for the world's sake so that our good deeds may be a witness to them or a testimony against them. We submit ourselves for our fellow-Christians' sake out of sacrificial love for them. We submit ourselves for God's sake because we honour his image in our fellow-creatures, and because we respect his ordering of our lives, but especially because we gratefully seek to take up our cross and follow Jesus Christ. In the code of duties that follows, Peter describes Christian living in terms of submission: submission to one another as Christians, and especially to unbelievers. WE SUBMIT OURSELVES FOR……

2. The new lifestyle's practice: submission in role relationships (2:13–14, 18–20)

a. Submission as citizens of worldly kingdoms (2:13–14)

Peter provides almost a title for what follows: *Submit yourselves.* In this whole section the general principle of submission is developed according to the roles that we fill: citizens are to submit themselves to their *governors* (2:14) and servants to their masters (2:18); wives to their husbands (3:1) and, in a yet deeper sense, husbands to their wives (3:7); and Christians to one another (3:8).

It is this link with what follows that helps us to understand what might seem to be a strange expression: literally 'Be subject to every human creature' (2:13). Many interpreters give another meaning to the word for 'creature'. They take it to mean 'order' or 'institution'. (The NIV expands this to *authority instituted*). It is hard to find a clear example of this meaning outside the Bible, and it never means this in biblical usage. **Peter is not talking about submission to institutions, but submission to people;** to people, however, who have been given roles to fill in God's appointment. Our submission is to creatures of God made in his image. We are to show proper respect to everyone (2:17), recognizing them as God's creatures to whom honour and respect are due. C. S. Lewis has said that if we could see a lowly Christian as he will be in glory, our temptation would be to fall down and worship him. Peter does not call us to worship human beings, of course. Indeed, he may speak of human creatures so as to oppose emperor worship. In spite of the claim of Caesar, he is only a human creature. Such a creature is not to be worshipped, but is to be shown honour; we are to be in submission to him.

There is a submission that is due to every human being, the submission of respect and honour. As Paul says, we are 'to show true humility towards all men'. The particular submission that we owe another will vary according to the role that the person fills in the divine ordering of human life. Peter goes on to describe certain roles. **The form of our submission is unique to Christian witness.** Christians are called to serve others, to go the second mile, to suffer

injustice without demanding their rights, knowing that they have an assured status before God, and that he will vindicate them at last. In this willingness to serve while suffering injustice, Christ himself is the great example for those who bear his name.

It is this submission to suffering, not as something inevitable, but as the Lord's calling, that distinguishes the Christian pattern of loving service. It is true that Stoic moralists had also made lists of duties appropriate to the various stations of life; Jewish authors had similar codes for good behaviour. The same framework appears in Paul's letters, and seems to have been a fixed pattern in Christian teaching.[4] But while Christian instruction followed to some extent a common form of classified duties, the contents were transformed by the teaching and the love of Christ. Peter, in particular, shows the completely new dimension brought to morality by the sacrificial love of the Saviour.

For good behaviour among the pagans, Christians must be subject to the existing rulers. **This may seem a commonplace to us: Christians are to be law-abiding citizens. Yet it was a burning issue when the letter was written, and it has become an issue again today.** How are God's people to relate to the kingdoms of this world? Israel had been given the land of promise through God's blessing on armed conquest. God used Israel to judge the Canaanites and Amorites when the cup of their iniquity was full. David's kingdom was established with victories over the Philistines and other surrounding nations. When Israel sinned, God used the Assyrians and Babylonians as his instruments to judge and punish Israel. The whole nation went into captivity. The prophets, however, promised a vast restoration, including the triumph of the people of God over all their enemies.[2] Fired by the memory of independence under the Maccabees, Zealots in the time of Christ fought as guerrillas and terrorists against the Roman occupation. At least one of Christ's disciples seems to have been a Zealot. Revolt led by Zealots was to bring the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70, a few years after the time that Peter wrote this letter.

The teaching of Jesus, however, cut across revolutionary political expectations. When he refused to claim political kingship and lead revolt against the Romans, the crowds began to desert him. Peter's confession revealed his faith in Christ even when he could not understand the kingdom Christ was bringing in. The Old Testament promises, as even John the Baptist understood them, predicted salvation through judgment. To deliver the poor and the oppressed, the Messiah must judge the oppressor. The Coming One must hew down all unjust power to inaugurate his peace.

In the light of Easter and Pentecost, Peter could remember the delegation of John's disciples who had come to Jesus. 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?' they asked. John, in Herod's prison, had heard of Jesus' power to raise the dead, and was baffled that Jesus did not use his power to bring in his kingdom (and to deliver his forerunner!). Jesus kept John's disciples with him while he performed miracles that directly fulfilled the prophecies of Isaiah. He then sent them back to tell John what was happening, and added the word, 'Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.'[6] Jesus was performing signs of kingdom blessing without first inflicting kingdom judgment. John must trust the King to bring in his kingdom in his own way. That way was the way of the cross. Jesus came not to destroy people but to save them. To accomplish that, he had to defeat the great oppressor, Satan; he had to redeem sinners from the guilt of sin. His hands did not grasp a sword, but were stretched out to be pierced with nails. He did not lift a spear but received the thrust of the spear in his side. He did not come to bring the judgment, but to bear it … for us.

Christ's death was his victory over Satan; it was the judgment of the prince of this world. Yet the day of Christ's final judgment will come only when Christ comes again. Peter awaited that coming (1:5, 7, 13; 4:5, 13; 5:1, 4; *cf.* 3:22). Christ had made Peter put up his sword; not in that way would his kingdom be brought in. As Jesus suffered meekly, so must his followers (2:21). His kingdom cannot therefore be one of the kingdoms of this world. His servants cannot use the sword to bring in kingdom justice. Kingdom justice must be absolute; only Christ can bring it.

What, then, of this interval between the first and second coming of Christ? Christ rules in glory, but what of human government on earth? Peter has already given the key to this question when he calls the new people of God the Diaspora (1:1). Just as the Jews in exile were scattered among the nations of the earth, so now are the people of God scattered. In the exile God had shown how his people might live among the nations, praying for the peace of the cities where they were captive. The subjection to Gentile government of the Jewish communities in dispersion paved the way for the pilgrim form of the people of God. New believers from the Gentiles joined believing Jews of the dispersion; they must be taught a similar loyalty to the existing Roman government.

Peter's instruction to this effect has always been needed. There has been no end of confusion about civil and spiritual power. Some have directly challenged the word of the Lord that his servants do not fight because his kingdom is not of this world. Claiming to be Christ's servants they have taken the sword in his name. Often this has not been done directly in the name of the church. Rather the church has summoned the kings of the earth to do its bidding and

to carry out its crusades. Empires, nations and city-states have identified themselves as the political arm of Christ's kingdom.[2] They have imagined themselves to be the theocratic successors of Old Testament Israel, and have gone to battle singing imprecatory psalms against their foes.

Nations claiming theocratic status are now limited to the Muslim lands dominated by Islamic fundamentalists. The temptation to take the sword in Christ's name is again offered, however, in liberation theology. The error is not the conclusion that there can arise regimes so unjust as to make revolution justifiable. The error is the sanctifying of revolution as the work of God's kingdom, a work of salvation to be pursued in his name. No state, no freedom fighters today can lay claim to Israel's theocratic calling as warriors of God's covenant. The new Israel is the church of Jesus Christ, and he has forbidden the sword to the church. Under the lordship of Christ the kingdom of God does take form in the church, but through mightier weapons than the sword: weapons, as Paul affirms, that can reduce every towering imagination of the rebellious human heart.[5] No other weapons can advance Christ's kingdom. The political renovation of the world awaits his return, for he is the sole monarch of the universe. Until he comes, Christians are to be in submission to the governments that exist in the world.

This, too, is part of God's plan. We submit to the king for the Lord's sake, not just because the king has the force to govern. While Peter does not say explicitly, as Paul does, that the powers that be are ordained of God, he nevertheless recognizes their authority as part of the order that is God's will for us. That he does recognize this authority as more than a circumstance of God's providence appears from his summary of this section. There he places the honour we owe to the king beside the fear we owe to God, the honour we owe to all people, and the love we owe to the brethren (2:17).

For the Lord's sake refers not so much to our duty as to the opportunities God gives us in our relationships. We serve and honour the Lord by submitting to others. We honour every 'human creature' and acknowledge the supreme authority of the king and of governors sent by him. This is amazing when we reflect that the supreme king of the Roman empire was the neurotic Nero and that a governor sent by another Caesar was Pontius Pilate! Jesus, however, had justified paying tribute to Caesar, and had recognized the authority of Pilate as given, not merely from Rome, but from heaven.

For the Lord's sake implies, then, that our obedience serves God's purpose. By our civil obedience we *silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.* Christians were often charged with subversion of the established order. They were accused of spreading disloyalty against the government, of disrupting trade, and of all manner of shocking practices, including cannibalism and incest. By their law-abiding conduct they could give the lie to such wild and ignorant accusations.

Peter could speak of the Roman government, in spite of its exploitative economic practices and its curtailing of liberty, as a government that punished those who did wrong and commended those who did right. Clearly he does not imply that the perfect justice of Messiah's reign was executed by Nero. Nor does he encourage civil disobedience until Nero's administration of justice improved. Rather, Peter states the purpose of government in terms that Roman government adequately fulfilled: the restraint of crime and wrong-doing and the encouragement of civic righteousness. No doubt regimes may arise that would be so oppressive and unjust that they can no longer be said to fulfil that function. Peter's description of the function of governments serves indirectly to limit his command to be in subjection to them.

Peter gives instruction to subjects, not to rulers; to servants, not to masters. He instructs both husbands and wives in a significantly different relationship. Why does he not caution Christian masters? What of Christian rulers? Part of the answer may have been the membership of the churches that Peter addressed. Presumably very few were rulers or wealthy householders. Yet there is clearly another reason. Every Christian needs to learn the secret of freedom, freedom in bondage to the Lord and in humility toward people. Peter never forgot that his Lord had washed his feet. As Jesus girded himself with a towel, we must all gird ourselves with humility in order to serve one another. Peter reminds the proud that they must learn this lesson of humility (5:5). The lesson of submission in freedom is particularly important, however, for those who must bear subjection in their daily life. Theirs is a special privilege: they find that they can serve the Lord in serving others; their humble witness can powerfully show the love of Christ. Peter addresses them in particular to teach the humility that all must learn.

As Paul's letters show us, there is apostolic instruction for those who receive submission as well as for those who render it. The lesson is the same. Particularly in the church, all authority is exercised as a ministry. Jesus' disciples are not to govern the church in the fashion of rule among the nations (5:2–3). Christ's lordship must also transform the way Christians exercise authority in the other spheres of life. They will understand that political authority, too, is

service under God. Its purpose is the good of those governed, not the glory of the governor or the profit of the governing class. This principle guides Christians who share in governing authority in democracies. Their goal must also be to serve, to seek the good of the whole people, with special concern for the poor and weak.[3]

Peter summarizes his teaching of humility in compact and memorable form: 'Honour everyone; love the brotherhood; fear God; keep honouring the king' (2:17). The form of our submission differs greatly, although it is all grounded in the fear of God, who made us in his image. We do not simply honour our fellow-Christians, we love them dearly (1:22). Our continuing respect for the king (2:13) does not worship him as divine, but is of a piece with the respect we owe to all. These brief mottoes summarize again the two commandments that fulfil the law: love for God and love for neighbour.

b. Submission as servants of worldly masters (2:18–20)

The NIV translation *slaves* is not precise. Peter addresses 'domestics' (*oiketai*), those servants and retainers who would be under the rule and control of an often despotic head of the household. Nevertheless, he seems to have slaves mainly in view: perhaps he wants to reserve the usual Greek word for 'slaves', *douloi*, for our service to the Lord (2:16). Slavery was widespread in Peter's world; it included many who would today be regarded as professionals: managers of estates, physicians, teachers and tutors.

Peter's admonition reveals in pointed fashion the heart of his teaching about submission. Obviously his concern is not social stability or the perpetuation of slavery. He does take for granted faithful service on the part of Christian household slaves. In a sense, this is the least they can do to show their willingness to serve God where he has placed them. If they are at fault in this service, they should expect punishment and not suppose that such suffering has any particular value. What does have point and value for their Christian testimony is their response to unjust punishment. Such treatment offers a golden opportunity to show the uniqueness of Christian service. By patiently enduring unmerited abuse they show the opposite of a servile attitude. They demonstrate their freedom. In their servitude they may not escape beatings. They may be beaten without cause, or even for good things that they have done; a 'crooked', perverse master may repay evil for good. If the Christian responds in kind—good for good, evil for evil—he becomes merely a victim when he is treated unjustly. In burning resentment he seeks an opportunity to repay the evil. But if he bears the evil patiently he has broken the chain of bondage in the power of the Lord. He shows his confidence in God's justice; he need not avenge himself. He also shows that his service is not really forced but voluntary. He is willing to serve his master for the Lord's sake, even to honour him for the Lord's sake. His master cannot enslave him, for he is Christ's slave; he cannot humiliate him, for he has humbled himself in willing subjection.

Peter is here applying the teaching he heard from his Lord. It is the privilege of those who are sons and daughters of the Most High to imitate the magnificence of their Father's mercy. They rise above simple justice to reflect God's goodness and love. Unthreatened by evil, they can overcome evil with good, and in the midst of suffering show mercy to those who would show no mercy toward them.

'And I thank God that he has given me the love to seek to convert and to adopt as my son the enemy who killed my dear boys.' These were the words of Korean Pastor Yang-won Son. The year was 1948; the place was the town of Soon-chun, near the 38th parallel. A band of Communists had taken control of the town for a brief period, and had executed Pastor Son's two older boys, Matthew and John. They died as martyrs, calling on their persecutors to have faith in Jesus. When the Communists were driven out, Chai-sun, a young man of the village, was identified as one who had fired the murderous shots. His execution was ordered. Pastor Son requested that the charges be dropped and that Chai-sun be released into his custody for adoption. Rachel, the thirteen-year-old sister of the murdered boys, testified to support her father's incredible request. Only then did the court agree to release Chai-sun. He became the son of the pastor, and a believer in the grace of Jesus Christ.

How different is the forgiving love of Christ from the best of pagan ethics! Seneca wrote, 'What will the wise man do when he is buffeted? He will do as Cato did … He did not burst into a passion, did not avenge himself, did not even forgive it, but denied its having been done.'

The respect that servants show for their masters is not a slavish fear, but the result of their fear of God. The word translated *respect* in 2:18 is *phobos*, which does mean 'fear'. Some think that Peter is here speaking of the fear of God rather than of respect to masters: 'Servants, be in subjection to your masters with all fear [of God].' In favour of this understanding is the fact that Peter has just distinguished between the fear we show toward God and the honour that we give to people (2:17). He also says that we do not share the unbeliever's fear (3:14). But *phobos* may carry many shades of meaning, as Peter's usage shows (3:14). Peter commends *phobos* in a wife's behaviour toward her husband

(3:2) Paul shows the connection between 'fear' of masters and fear of God when he tells slaves to be obedient, with fear and trembling, 'but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.'[4] Slavery to Christ transforms servitude into freedom.

For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. The translation *conscious of God* interprets the word *syneidēsis* in the general sense of 'consciousness', rather than in the more technical sense, 'conscience', that is usual in the New Testament. The NIV gives the word its usual translation in two other passages where Peter speaks of a good conscience (3:16, 21). The difference is that in 3:21 Peter speaks of a good conscience *toward* God, while in 2:19 his phrase is 'conscience *of* God'. Perhaps Peter is describing the conscience as being of God in its origin, God-given. More likely, he thinks of the conscience as directed toward God. In that case, the difference from 'consciousness' is not great; the translation 'conscience' would stress ingrained and habitual reference to the will of God in the midst of patient suffering for his sake.

The term for *commendable* is *charis*, which means 'grace', or 'gracious' in the sense of 'pleasing' (2:19–20). Could it have the stronger meaning that it has elsewhere in the letter (1:2, 10, 13; 3:7; 4:10; 5:10, 12)? 'This is grace, if a man bears up … this is grace before God.' Samuel Bénétreau thinks so: 'Peter dares to claim it: this unmerited suffering takes place in the majestic current of grace. It is a favour of God! Only the light thrown by the christological section which is going to follow could permit the accepting, if not the comprehending, of so demanding a thesis.'

In spite of Bénétreau's appeal, however, the weaker meaning of 'gracious' or 'thankworthy' seems to fit better. The word is used this way in Luke 6:32–34, and this saying of Jesus was evidently in Peter's thoughts as he wrote the passage. Further, Peter puts *charis* in parallel with *kleos*, 'glory' or *credit* (2:20).

Clearly Peter has the submission of Christ already in view as he describes the submission of Christian servants. Christ is the suffering Servant of the Lord. He, too, was beaten. Mark's Gospel, reflecting Peter's preaching, uses the term to describe Christ's beating before Pilate. Now Peter turns to the suffering Lord whom Christians are called to follow.

6. Live as the people of God

III: The new lifestyle (continued)

2:21–3:7

3. The new lifestyle's motivation: Christ's suffering (2:21–25)

a. His saving example: in his steps (2:21–23)

To this you were called. Peter has shown the glory of God's calling. Christians have been called out of darkness into God's marvellous light (2:9). They are called as God's elect, his chosen people, heirs of his blessing (3:9). But now Peter says, *To this you were called.* To what? To suffering, to unjust abuse, to patient endurance when they are beaten for doing right! Peter has described our heavenly calling; he does not conceal our earthly calling. 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous,' declares the psalm to which Peter often alludes in this letter. Clearly Peter is thinking not only of Christian servants who were subject to abuse. They have a particular duty to serve the Lord where he has called them; in this, however, they do not differ from their brothers and sisters in other situations. All Christians are called to suffer with Christ before they are glorified with him. Archbishop Leighton comments on the readiness of Christians to claim the peace of Christ while expecting no tribulation in the world. 'They like better St. Peter's carnal advice to Christ, to avoid suffering. Matt. 16:22, than his Apostolic doctrine to Christians, teaching them, that as Christ *suffered*, so they likewise *are called to suffering.*'

Peter does not ask us to view suffering as inevitable in the world under the curse. He does not ask for stoic resignation. A life of suffering is our calling, not our fate. It is our calling just because we are God's people. It is our calling because it was Christ's calling. He calls his disciples to follow him. To be sure, suffering is a flame to burn away the dross so that our tested faith may shine as gold (1:7; 4:12). Some of the suffering that we endure is the direct result of our own sin (2:20; 3:17). But our example in suffering is One who was totally innocent and free from sin (2:22). He suffered, not for his own sake, but for the sake of God's purpose, and for the salvation of others. As we follow him, we suffer for his sake, and for the sake of winning others to his saving gospel (3:1–2; 4:13–16).

Two themes are woven together in this magnificent section of Peter's letter. One is the theme of the *example* of Christ's suffering: *leaving you an example.* The other is the more basic theme of the *saving purpose* of Christ's suffering: *Christ suffered for you*. Some commentators suppose that the cadenced prose of this passage must reflect

an early Christian hymn or a credal statement. It has been suggested that the references to the atoning power of Christ's suffering are present here because they were in the source that Peter quoted. Kelly even speaks of 'the stress of the vicarious nature of Christ's sufferings, which is a theme that is strictly irrelevant to the conduct of slaves.'[3]

Far from being irrelevant to Peter's exhortation, the atoning sacrifice of Christ lies at the heart of all that he has to say. The cadences of the passage could well reflect the eloquence with which Peter had preached Christ, the suffering Servant, from the prophecies of Isaiah. The example of Christ is a *saving* example. Peter does not hold forth the meekness of Christ simply as an abstract pattern, a pattern that might have been offered by any uncomplaining sufferer. Christ's suffering is our model because it is our salvation. It does not simply guide us; it is the root of all our motivation to follow. Our 'living to righteousness' follows in Christ's steps because we died to sin in his atonement (2:24). Remove Christ's atonement from the passage and its point would be lost.

Knowing that we were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (1:19), we take up our cross to follow him. He has left us an example, a pattern to follow. Peter's word translated *example* refers to a pattern to be traced. Clement of Alexandria gives samples of Greek sentences containing all the letters of the alphabet (the Greek equivalent of 'The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog'). They were written out to be traced so that children would learn their ABC. The word could also apply to an artist's sketch to be filled in (our painting-by-number kits).

To the vivid figure in his word for *example*, Peter joins another, the figure of footsteps to be traced. Peter, Christ's disciple, had followed in his Master's footsteps along the narrow paths of the hill country and through fields of grain in Galilee. No doubt Peter also witnessed the dreadful procession that led to Calvary. To save himself from that path he had sworn fearful oaths. Now he is ready to follow Jesus all the way. He calls every Christian to walk that path with him.

The path that Jesus took was the path of meek obedience to the calling of his Father. Peter now presents Jesus as the suffering Servant of the Lord, taking his language from the song of the Servant in Isaiah 53. Jesus advances toward Calvary as a lamb that is led to the slaughter (Is. 53:7). He is without sin or deceit; here Peter quotes directly from Isaiah 53:9. The sufferings of the Servant are not for his own faults, but for the sins of others. He suffers to fulfil the will of God: 'It was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer' (Is. 53:10). He is a willing sacrifice: 'he poured out his life unto death' (Is. 53:12). His meekness appears in his silence—before the high priest, before Pontius Pilate, and before Herod. On the cross he answered nothing to the mockery of his enemies as they cursed the King of the Jews, or to the taunts of the thief crucified with him. Peter had cause to remember all too vividly the silence of Jesus before the high priest. He can bear witness: *When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate.* Oppressed and afflicted, he was silent: 'as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth' (Is. 53:7).

The meekness of Christ not only showed his submission to his Father's will; it showed also his confidence in his Father's righteous judgment. He did not revile or threaten because he *entrusted himself to him who judges justly.* He had no need to vindicate himself. Paul writes to Christ's followers: 'Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.'

Perhaps there is even a deeper sense to Peter's description of Christ's meek commitment to God. The verb translated *entrusted* is used twice in the Greek version of Isaiah to describe the 'delivering up' of the Servant for our sins (Is. 53:6, 12). It is also used in the gospels for the delivering up of Christ to Pilate. Stibbs says of the term, 'Here in the phrase *committed himself* it is used to describe our Lord's own surrender of Himself to bear the penalty of sin—not His own sin but ours (cf. Rom. 4:25), and not at the hands of men, but at the hands of God, the righteous Judge.'

Certainly the way of Christ's meek suffering, so well remembered by Peter, is the way of redeeming love. By the welts of his scourging we were healed: Isaiah foresaw it, and Peter witnessed it. The very torture that Peter wanted Jesus at any cost to escape was the torture that Jesus came to endure. In Isaiah's songs, the Servant is both identified with the people of God and distinguished from them. He suffers for them, stands in their place, and bears the judgment of their sins. The example of Christ's meekness is drawn from the mystery of Christ's sacrifice.

b. His atoning sacrifice (2:24)

Jesus is far more than our example; he is our sin-bearer. As Leighton says, 'This was his business, not only to rectify sinful man by his example, but to redeem him by his blood.' In one brief sentence Peter uses the prophecy of Isaiah to interpret what he had seen: Jesus going to his death. Jesus' predictions of rejection, suffering and death had contradicted the expectations of the disciples. But they did not contradict the words of the prophet. Isaiah had said, 'He bore the sin of many.'[2] Now Peter understands those words; they convey the heart of the gospel.

The background for Isaiah's prophecy and Peter's teaching is the symbolism of sacrifice that God appointed for Israel. Sin was pictured as a burden to be placed upon the head of a sacrificial animal before it was killed. Death was the penalty for sin; the sacrificial animal died in the place of the sinner, who confessed his sin with his hands on the head of the animal. That action graphically pictured the transfer of the weight of his sin from himself to the substitute. The sprinkling of the blood of the sacrificed animal marked atonement; the penalty of sin had been paid.[4] Isaiah describes the mysterious tragedy of the righteous Servant of the Lord: his astonishing agony, his scornful rejection, his submissive meekness. Then he discloses the meaning of the apparent tragedy. The suffering Servant offers himself as a sacrifice for sin. He was stricken with death for the transgression of his people. His soul was made an offering for sin. He bore the sin of the many.

We lack Peter's preparation for understanding Christ as the sacrifice, the lamb whose precious blood redeems us (1:19). We have not witnessed, as Peter did, the offering of lambs, bulls and goats on the altar of sacrifice; the symbolism is not vivid in our minds. Yet Peter knew that the sacrifices at Jerusalem had not cleansed his heart from sin. Faced with the divine power of Jesus on the Lake of Galilee, he had fallen on his knees in his fishing-boat to cry, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'

Peter, who had slept through his Lord's agony in the garden of Gethsemane, now knows what cup it was that Jesus had to take; he knows why Jesus cried out in his abandonment, '*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*?' When Jesus went to Calvary, 'he bore the sin of many'. The wood of his cross could be put upon another; the weight of sin was his alone to bear. Should anyone think lightly of his sin—and Peter could not—then to see the agony of the Son of God must call him to think again. Jesus bore our sins personally, in his own body. Only he could do so, for only he was sinless, God's lamb without spot (1:19; 3:18). Only he could do so, for only he was who Peter confessed him to be: no mere man, not even the greatest prophet, but the Lord's Anointed; indeed, the Lord himself, the Son of God, now crowned with glory (3:22; 4:11). If our death does not confront us with the wages of sin, then his death must. That such a price was paid, by the Son who gave his life, by the Father who gave his Son, is the measure of the measureless love of God.

The priests of old put away sin in the symbolic ritual of sacrifice; Jesus put away sin through the sacrifice of himself. The author of Hebrews reminds us of the words of Psalm 40:

> 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
>
> but a body you prepared for me;
>
> with burnt offerings and sin offerings
>
> you were not pleased.
>
> Then I said, "Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—
>
> I have come to do your will, O God." '

The expression Peter uses seems to describe not simply Christ's bearing of sin *on* the cross, but his carrying the burden of sin *to* the cross. In any case, it is the death of Christ, the shedding of his precious blood, that accomplishes our redemption. Peter's expression emphasizes the dreadful extent of Christ's sin-bearing. He suffered not only to the point of death, but to death as one accursed. Peter is well aware of the law's curse upon one who died as a criminal *on the tree.* To Pharisees like Saul, before his conversion, Christ's death on the cross refuted any claim to Messiahship. The Messiah could not die as one accursed of God. The astonishing prophecy of Isaiah shows the very opposite; only the One who becomes a curse for us can be the true Messiah, for his accursed death in our place paid the price of sin. Peter had proclaimed to the Sanhedrin the horror of their offence in killing Jesus, 'hanging him on a tree'.[2] Yet the wicked hands of men had fulfilled the counsel and will of God. God raised up Jesus, and by his death brought forgiveness of sins to all who trust in him.

By bearing our sin Jesus brings healing as well as atonement. The curse of sin includes suffering as well as death. From this, too, Jesus saves us. Peter again quotes from Isaiah: *by his wounds you have been healed.* Slaves who had been beaten bore the scars of the lash to which *wounds* ('welts') refers. Jesus had been tied to a post on the 'Pavement' of the palace where Pilate administered justice. There he had been whipped with the Roman scourge, a lash with multiple thongs, weighted with lumps of lead or bone. How did Christ's wounds bring healing to slaves who might also have felt the lash? Did not Peter call them to follow in Christ's steps, to imitate him in receiving wounds for his sake?

The apparent contradiction reveals the heart of Peter's message. That which is to be feared is not the wrath of men, but the wrath of God. That which is to be desired is not the passing comforts of the world, but the blessing of God's eternal inheritance. This is not just a matter of suffering now and glory to come: the promised blessing is already the possession of believers in Christ. They now taste the joy of heaven, for they taste the Lord's grace (2:3). They know Jesus, the great Physician. Peter well knew the healing power of Christ. As an apostle he had power to declare, 'Jesus Christ heals you.' In hope of the resurrection, Peter could promise the final healing of all the people of God. But here Peter speaks of healing, not by the hands of Jesus, but by the wounds of Jesus. Christ's wounds heal suffering at its root: the curse of sin. Not only do they plead the sinner's case in the judgment; they transform his present suffering. No longer is it the bitter legacy of unrighteousness; it has become fellowship in the steps of Jesus. The pain that remains for the Christian is not the penalty of sin: Christ has suffered that in his place. The pain that remains is Christ's calling to follow in his steps, sharing his reproach.

c. His saving claim (2:24–25)

Christ's atoning sacrifice has accomplished our salvation. We were like sheep going astray, but now we have been brought back to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. Jesus is not only the Good Shepherd who gives his life for the sheep; he is also the seeking Shepherd, the Lord who gathers his remnant flock. He bore our sins with a marvellous purpose: 'that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness'. (This translation in the ASV is to be preferred to that in the NIV.[3])

Peter here speaks in a way that is close to the language of Paul. Central for Paul is the doctrine of union with Christ. We were united to Christ in his saving death; when he died to sin, so did we. When he rose, we rose with him. We are therefore to live in accord with our new position. Peter, too, stresses what Christ has accomplished for us. He makes Christ's finished work the ground of his exhortations to live for righteousness. While he does not develop the theme of our union with Christ in the way that Paul does, he presents the same conviction from a different perspective, using particularly the Servant songs of Isaiah.[2] In this passage he is showing us the meaning of the death of Christ from Isaiah 53, a passage in which the Servant suffers for the sins of the people because he is identified with them. In affirming that Jesus bore our sins, Peter teaches that Jesus is identified with us as our representative. That enables Peter to say that because of Christ's sin-bearing in our place, we have died to sin. Peter makes it clear that Christ has done more in his death than enable us to die to sin. By his death in our place 'once, the righteous for the unrighteous', he has brought us to God (3:18). We have ceased from sin in Christ's suffering and death for us, and therefore we are to live to God (4:1–2).

Peter had begun this section by addressing servants, speaking to them of their calling to follow Christ. But now he speaks in the first person plural, not 'you' only, but 'we'. Peter's hope is one with theirs, remission of sin through the death of Christ and freedom for a new life of righteousness.

By his atoning death Jesus puts his saving claim upon us. We *have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.* The title *Shepherd* for the One who is the suffering Servant of the Lord is suggested in Isaiah 53:6, the passage that follows the statement that we are healed by his wounds: 'We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.' David's confession, 'The Lord is my shepherd …', presents one of the major images of the Old Testament describing the Lord's care for his covenant people. The Lord, the true shepherd, promises to gather and care for his scattered flock. In the prophet Zechariah the figure of the shepherd and that of the sufferer are brought together. The shepherd, the one who was pierced, is identified with the Lord himself,[2] yet distinguished from him as his 'fellow', the man close to him:

> 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd,
>
> against the man who is close to me!'
>
> declares the LORD Almighty.
>
> 'Strike the shepherd,
>
> and the sheep will be scattered,
>
> and I will turn my hand against the little ones.'

Peter would well remember that passage. He had heard Jesus quote it as he led the disciples from the last supper to the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus used it to warn the disciples of their scattering, their falling away, when he, the Shepherd, would be struck down. Peter had replied, 'Even if all fall away, I will not.' Yet Peter, too, had forsaken

Jesus and fled. When he later followed from a distance, he had been prepared to swear that he never knew Jesus. What joy filled Peter's heart to receive forgiveness and blessing from his risen Lord! Peter had returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of his soul. His own calling as an apostolic shepherd had come from the Lord, the good Shepherd, who had reclaimed Peter from his desertion.[5]

The Zechariah passage goes on to describe how the Lord will purify his people, refining them as silver or gold in fire. This image, too, is in Peter's thoughts (1:7; 4:12). The Lord who is now gathering his own from the nations of the world leads them through suffering to know him.

> They will call on my name
>
> and I will answer them;
>
> I will say, 'They are my people,'
>
> and they will say, 'The Lord is our God.'

Our Shepherd is also our *Overseer*, the 'Bishop' (AV; Greek, *episkopos*) of our souls. The overseer is one who watches over a charge to protect and preserve it. A shepherd is the overseer of his flock. The elders of the church are to exercise oversight as they tend the flock of God (5:2). Yet the oversight of the 'Chief Shepherd' (5:4) has majestic breadth and depth; it goes far beyond the care of any under-shepherd. The Lord who knows the secrets of our hearts watches over our souls. So Jesus was the Overseer of Peter's soul, warning him, calling him to watch and pray, praying for him that his faith should not fail, and searching his heart in order to restore him to his calling.[2] Household slaves, designated as 'things' by the Romans and 'bodies' by the Greeks, are in Christ a kingdom of priests; Jesus the Lord is their Shepherd, the guardian of their precious souls.

4. More on the new lifestyle's practice: submission for the Lord's sake in role relationships (3:1–7)

a. Submission of wives to husbands (3:1–6)

Both Greek philosophy and Roman custom required order in the household as the foundation of order in the state. In calling for the submission of wives to their husbands Peter is requiring behaviour that would be approved in society at large. Such conduct would put to shame the slanderers of Christian lifestyle (3:16). Plutarch, the Greek biographer and moralist, wrote in his *Advice to Bride and Groom* (not much later, perhaps, 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.

But Peter is by no means urging Christian wives to pattern their lives on even the best traditional values of their society. He has already condemned the 'empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers' (1:18). The distinctive behaviour of the Christian wife is signalled at once by the word translated *in the same way.* Peter refers us back to the whole pattern of Christian conduct he has described, the life of Christian pilgrims in this world. This style of life will force hostile pagans to recognize Christian genuineness (2:12). Christians fear God; they are his slaves, therefore they do not fear people. They are free, because they are the royal people of God. Free in slavery to God, free as followers of Christ, they submit themselves to others freely. No-one else has the status and honour of Jesus Christ, whom Peter confessed to be the Son of God. Yet Jesus had washed Peter's feet like a domestic slave. His girding himself with a towel for that humble task was as nothing compared to his bowing beneath the cross to bear Peter's sins. It is Christ's example that Peter calls us to follow in all the relationships of life. We need not be concerned about maintaining our rights. Jesus trusted his Father, the righteous Judge, to do that; and so should we. The Christian who follows Jesus does not grasp for privilege; he or she is already privileged beyond imagination. The Christian seeks rather opportunities to imitate Christ in willing subjection to service.

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. Rather, they submit for the Lord's sake, with the particular purpose of winning their husbands to the Lord by their unselfish example. The key expression, *in the same way*, is applied to the husband as well as the wife (3:7). Both follow Jesus, the suffering Servant. Although the husband does not fulfil the same role in relation to his wife as his wife does to him, there is a fundamental identity of attitude: both are servants of God, seeking to serve others for Christ's sake.

Peter shows how all social relationships are transformed by following Jesus Christ. These relations differ in their nature. The honour that we give to civil rulers recognizes the appointment of God. They have been authorized by him to restrain evil-doers and encourage civil peace (2:14, 17). In contrast, no divine warrant or approval is given to slavery; rather it is assumed that slave-masters may be guilty of despotic and wicked treatment of their slaves. The submission that Christian servants give is presented as a privilege, the privilege of glorifying God by submitting willingly to an unjust situation (2:19–20). In the case of wives also there is the possibility of mistreatment. Christian wives are to remain faithful to God under pressure; they are not to deny the Lord for fear of their unbelieving husbands (3:6).

But the submission that wives are to yield to their husbands represents more than an opportunity to endure injustice for the sake of Christ. Peter presents this submission as an adornment of the Christian woman, the *beauty* of a meek and quiet spirit that is pleasing to God. The *spirit* of which Peter speaks is not here the Holy Spirit, but it is the fruit of the Spirit in the heart of the Christian. The *gentle and quiet spirit* is not presented as distinctively feminine, for Jesus described himself as 'gentle and humble in heart.' He entered Jerusalem, not like a proud conqueror on a war charger, but 'gentle and riding on a donkey'. Meekness or gentleness is one of the principal fruits of the Spirit.[2] The 'quietness' of a woman is linked with her submission in 1 Timothy 2:9–12, a passage that is similar to Peter's exhortation. But Paul also urges quietness upon all, as a Christian virtue, in 1 Thessalonians 4:11. The role of the wife gives her an opportunity to display Christian love and humility in a distinctive way, but Peter makes it clear that Christian men and women are alike called to reflect toward others the meekness they find in following Christ.

Peter points Christian wives to the example of *holy women of the past* who, *like Sarah*, were submissive *to their own husbands.* While Peter does not expand on God's creation ordinance of marriage as Paul does, he clearly assumes that wives have a role to fulfil in marriage that pleases God.

While Peter's exhortation applies as well to wives of Christian husbands, he has particular concern for the witness of women married to unbelievers. This flows from his burden in this part of his letter. In 2:11 he begins the section with a plea for behaviour that will be a witness to the pagans. In 3:16 he is still speaking of how the good behaviour of Christians will put to shame those who slander them. Peter sees the 'impossible' position of the Christian as a remarkable opportunity to bear witness to Christ.

In the Roman world it was assumed that wives would conform to the religious practices of their husbands. This became an issue in Roman history when many women were attracted to the cult of Bacchus or to the worship of the Egyptian goddess Isis. The rituals of Bacchus had been banned by the Roman Senate; the senators saw a threat to the state in the participation of women in bacchanalian revelries at night in the mountains.[5] These suspicions were later directed against Christians. In the eyes of imperial Romans, here was another subversive Eastern religion threatening the stability of the home and of the state.

Peter's letter might certainly have been shown to pagan rulers, masters, or husbands as evidence of the falsity of the charges made against Christians. But Peter is not writing to suspicious non-Christians. He is writing to encourage Christians to accept suffering and reproach for the sake of Jesus Christ (4:16). Christian wives can have an important part in the church's witness. That witness may not be easy. Their husbands have resisted the claim of the gospel. They may ridicule the message and insult their wives. So strong may be their hostility that it is no longer possible for their wives to speak of the Lord to them. Even then the Christian wife must not despair. She still possesses a mighty weapon for winning her husband to the faith; it is the testimony of her life. Her husband has refused to heed the word; very well, let him be won *without words.* The silent eloquence of his wife's pure and reverent behaviour can preach daily the transforming power of Jesus Christ. No-one could be more emphatic than Peter has been about the place of the word of God in conversion (1:23). Yet there are situations in which the silent witness of Christian love must support and prepare for the presentation of the truth.

Augustine describes the faithful witness of his Christian mother Monnica to his pagan father Patricius:

> She served her husband as her master, and did all she could to win him for You, speaking to him of You by her conduct, by which You made her beautiful … Finally, when her husband was at the end of his earthly span, she gained him for You.

The deep and growing beauty of a woman who trusts in the Lord will have its effect on her husband, but, above all, her spiritual beauty will be precious in the sight of God. Peter's contrast between the outward vanities of fashion and inward spiritual adornment calls to mind the catalogue of beauty aids that Isaiah denounces in proclaiming God's judgment against the idle luxury of the daughters of Zion.

Peter's teaching may be misunderstood in two directions. On the one hand, the positive thrust of his contrast may be missed. Later church fathers interpreted the passage as banning all aesthetics in women's dress, attributing such desires to the work of fallen angels. If the 'literal' force of Peter's warning is taken out of context, he could be made to say that the wearing of clothing is prohibited as outward adornment (3:3)! The point is not a legalistic ban on beauty of attire. (The father of the prodigal welcomed his returning son with the best robe and a ring!) The point is the vastly superior value of inward beauty and the danger of extravagant and sensual fashions in dress.

The opposite misunderstanding is much more popular. Peter's warning can be brushed aside; it was conventional for the times. Did not Plutarch say,

> That adorns a woman which makes her more decorous—not gold, emeralds, scarlet, but whatever invests her with dignity, good behaviour, modesty.

Indeed, the same author opposed gaudy clothing and the equivalent of rock music (cymbals and drums) in connection with the cults that attracted women:

> Those who have to go near elephants do not put on bright clothes, nor do those who go near bulls put on red; for the animals are made especially furious by these colours; and tigers, they say, when surrounded by the noise of beaten drums go completely mad and tear themselves to pieces. Since, then, this is also the case with men, that some cannot endure the sight of scarlet and purple clothes, while others are annoyed by cymbals and drums, what terrible hardship is it for women to refrain from such things, and not disquiet or irritate their husbands, but live with them in constant gentleness?

We must not discount Peter's warnings, however, just because pagan moralists warned against some of the same things. The contrast that Peter makes is real. Enslavement to fashion by men or women runs counter to growth in spiritual holiness. Coiffure, jewellery, dress: the categories have not changed since Peter's day, as any shopping centre demonstrates. Ornate hairstyles were prevalent in the high society of the Roman world:

> Curl climbs on top of curl and over the forehead there arose something which at its best looked like the *chef d'oeuvre* of a master pastry cook and, at its worst, like a dry sponge. At the back the hair was plaited, and the braids arranged in a coil which looks like basketwork.

Today's hairstyles are less ornate, but the time and expense demanded have hardly decreased. The issues of stewardship are pressing: Christian expenditures for beauty aids, jewellery, and modish costumes increase while church funds go begging and thousands starve. Nor is the cost the only factor. Open licentiousness sweeps in and out of the fashion world: modesty as well as restraint should mark the Christian style.

The submission of a Christian wife must always be first to God. Worldly husbands may wish to flaunt the beauty or even the sexuality of their wives. Christian women will seek to please their husbands, but they cannot avoid the issue of obeying God rather than men. Peter calls for the fear of God that dispels the fear of men (3:6, 14).

Knowing how precious to the world are the gold and gems of outward show, Peter displays that on which God puts a high-price tag: the hidden but unfading beauty of the heart. The contemporary world resists the aging process at all costs, yet the youthful body that it idolizes quickly fades. Christians need God's values to reject the futility of the worldly search for beauty. Can real beauty still be blooming along with wrinkles? Peter offers the answer of a long-established beauty school: the daughters of Sarah (3:5–6).

Peter names *Sarah* as an example of a class of godly women who cultivated the beauty of spirit that he has been describing, and who were *submissive to their own husbands.* He calls attention to the fact that Sarah spoke of Abraham as her *master* (the reference is to Gn. 18:12). The Greek term *kyrios* was used in polite address, rather like our 'sir' or 'Mr'. It indicates the respect with which Sarah spoke of Abraham. Certainly Sarah's submission to Abraham was not slavish.

It would be misleading to think of a separate line of 'children of Sarah' like the 'seed of Abraham'; nevertheless the Lord insisted that Isaac, the son of the promise, be born of Sarah, not Hagar. Sarah, like Abraham, was a chosen believer, and theirs is the line of the promise from which Christ was born. In speaking of Sarah and her 'children', Peter indicates her calling and dignity. Her willing submission to Abraham was therefore freely given. Like Sarah, Christian women of the new covenant are believers, doing what is right, and not giving way to fear. It is better not to put an *if* in the translation of verse 6, but to follow the Greek more closely: 'of whom you have become children, doing

good and not being afraid of any terror'. Peter consistently begins with the privilege we have and moves on to the behaviour we show.

b. Consideration of wives by husbands (3:7)

Husbands, in the same way … The path of Christian living is no different for the husband than for the wife. Both are called to follow Christ in humble and compassionate love, accepting rebuffs with forgiving grace (3:8–9). Since the husband's role is different, the form of his service is different. The wife is called to be submissive to her husband; the husband is called to honour his wife. That honour includes considerate understanding.

The husband is to live with his wife considerately, literally 'according to knowledge'. The expression describing their living together is not limited to sexual intimacy, but it has particular reference to it. In all their life together, and particularly in their sexual union, the husband is to relate to his wife 'according to knowledge'. Does Peter mean knowledge of the wife, or knowledge of God and his calling? The close connection with the description of the wife as *the weaker partner* favours the specific sense: the husband must dwell with his wife as one who knows her needs, who recognizes the delicacy of her nature and feelings. On the other hand, Peter has warned against 'the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance' (1:14). Knowledge of God distinguishes Christian love from pagan lust. That saving knowledge enables the husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.

Peter describes the wife as *the weaker partner.* The word translated *partner* in the NIV means 'instrument' or 'vessel'. Again it is possible that the sexual relation is particularly in view.[3] The description of their bodies as 'instruments' might suggest that *the gracious gift of life* of which the man and wife are *heirs* together is not eternal life, but the gift of new life in children. Peter's description of the inheritance of Christians (1:4), however, is a persuasive argument for holding to the traditional interpretation. In any case, whether the gift in view is of physical life or of spiritual life, Peter is stressing the mutuality of the relationship. While the wife is of the weaker sex in muscular strength, her role in the gift of physical life is surely not less! In relation to the gift of spiritual life, the woman is in no sense weaker, for in Christ there is no longer male and female. No less then her Christian husband, the Christian wife is a living stone, 'being built into a spiritual house' in the Lord (2:5).

The husband gives to his wife the 'honour' that is her due. *Respect* is not strong enough. Peter uses the word translated 'precious' in 2:7; literally it means 'preciousness'. The honour or preciousness that the husband must bestow on his wife is not only the recognition of her place in God's ordinance of marriage; it is the honour that is hers as one of God's precious and holy people. If husbands fail to give that honour, their fellowship with their wives will suffer; so will their fellowship with God. Their prayers will be 'hindered', a strong word. The prayers of the husband will be blocked, will lose their effectiveness. Probably Peter also has in view the joint prayers of the couple. Husband and wife are to pray together; their home becomes a temple where they together approach God in the worship of a holy priesthood, offering up spiritual sacrifices.[2] Paul, too, emphasizes the importance of prayer in the marriage relationship. He counsels consideration in the sexual expression of marriage; marital intercourse is not to be unduly denied by either partner. But he makes special note of times of mutual continence 'so that you may devote yourselves to prayer'. Piety becomes hollow and false if it is not expressed in the closest of human relationships. Marriage is not a sacrament conveying divine grace, but it is the human relationship that God has designed to mirror the love of Christ for the church, and of the church for Christ.

7. The blessing of living with Christian suffering

3:8–22

1. Response to suffering in a life of blessing (3:8–12)

a. Called to a life of blessing

Peter has concluded the section of his letter in which he has encouraged Christians to display their freedom in submission for Christ's sake, as citizens, servants, wives, and husbands. He has encouraged them to bear unjust treatment as part of their calling. Now he turns to deal with the issue of suffering at greater length. He has spoken of trials from the very beginning of the letter (1:6), and has presented the example of Christ to show Christians how to submit to suffering for doing right (2:19–24). In 3:8–9 he summarizes what he has been saying and prepares for what will follow. As always, he begins with what God has done. God calls us to be heirs of his blessing (3:9). That calling commits us to a life of blessing, a life that responds to the free grace of God. Peter thinks of God's blessing as it is proclaimed in Psalm 34 (quoted in 3:10–12). Does he not also remember the Beatitudes pronounced by Jesus?

Certainly he reflects Jesus' teaching regarding the love and meekness of the heirs of the kingdom, especially as it is shown toward enemies.

Peter names five characteristics of the life that brings blessing: like-mindedness, sympathy, brotherly love, compassion, and humility. These are not virtues chosen at random. Like the fingers of the hand, they radiate from one centre and work together. The key to them all is the love of grace: they reflect the grace, love, and compassion of Jesus Christ. The teaching and example of Jesus have become the teaching of the apostles.

Live in harmony with one another. The NIV translation paraphrases one word, 'like-mindedness'. Greek and Roman philosophers spoke of the need for such harmony in the home and in the state.[3] In Peter's letter, however, the word has new depth. It is interpreted by the parallel terms, and by the focus of the letter on Jesus Christ. Peter describes the 'clear mind' in which Christians are to be united (4:7–11). It is the mind of those who prayerfully await the coming of the Lord and serve one another in fervent love. They prepare their minds for action by setting their hope on Christ (1:13). When Peter had urged Jesus not to speak of the cross, Jesus had rebuked him for minding the things of men rather than the things of God. Christians find oneness of understanding in the gospel of the cross.

The unity of mind that Christians are to show includes harmony of attitude as well as of understanding. It relates directly to the humility and love that Peter goes on to mention. When Paul urged the Philippians to be 'of the same mind', he added 'having the same love', and continued, 'Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.' The magnificent passage that follows describes how Christ humbled himself, even to the death of the cross. Being of one mind means having a common understanding of the truth, but it means more. When the truth of Christ is affirmed in arrogance it is denied. The 'like-mindedness' that Peter requires manifests the mind and love of Christ. It is precisely willingness to submit ourselves to others for Christ's sake that undercuts the misunderstandings and hostilities that can divide the Christian community. That willingness flows from the love of Christ.

Christ's love also shines in the *sympathy* that marks the Christian life of blessing. The author of Hebrews describes Christ as the high priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses. Peter has just spoken of the sympathetic understanding that husbands must show to their wives (3:7). Sympathy means readiness to rejoice with those who rejoice and to mourn with those who mourn. In his vivid image of the body of Christ, Paul reminds us of the sympathy that exists among bodily parts: when one member suffers, the other members suffer with it.[4] The love that binds the body of Christ together not only seeks the other's good, but enters into the other's needs and concerns. Such identification begins in the heart, but it is seen, often enough, in the event. Peter could remember the event that exposed his failure to 'sympathize', to suffer with Christ, who had come to suffer for him. Much contemporary research into human motivation and psychology has the purpose of manipulating people for economic or political advantage. Christian sympathy does not exploit; it shares and supports.

Love as brothers. Like these other graces, brotherly love is specifically Christian. It is not simply a sense of comradeship, but the knowledge that we have been given new birth. We are children of the heavenly Father and therefore brothers and sisters in Christ. As we have been loved by God, so we must love our fellow-believers. Here Peter returns again to the theme of the 'family' love of the Christian community (1:22; 2:17). Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call us brothers, since he has taken part in our flesh and blood.

Each of these graces reflects the love of Christ. In none is this clearer than in the case of compassion: *be ... compassionate.* It is God who has in Christ shown compassion to us. Paul urges us: 'Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.' The root of the word refers literally to one's inner organs, and therefore to one's feelings. The Greeks associated inner organs with courage (*cf.* our use of 'guts'). But in the Bible these inner organs are linked with mercy and concern (the 'bowels of mercy' in the AV). The prophet Isaiah uses the term as he seeks the mercy of the Lord. His cry is accurately, though euphemistically, translated, 'Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from us.'[5]

The Gospels speak of the compassion of Jesus for the crowds, and for the sick. Jesus describes the compassion of his Father in the parable of the prodigal son.[7] In the parable of the good Samaritan Jesus binds that compassion upon his disciples. He contrasts the tender care of the Samaritan with the indifference of the priest and Levite. The Samaritan had *compassion* on the critically wounded man. The priest and Levite would surely be considered 'neigbours' to the victim. The Samaritan would not. No-one would hold a Samaritan accountable to nurse a wounded Jew at his own expense. Yet the Samaritan showed a love that could not be demanded, the love of mercy. He made himself a neigbour in the love of compassion.

The burden of the Lord's teaching is the burden of Peter's letter. We have received the free compassion of Christ's grace. Jesus himself bore our sins; he suffered, the righteous for the unrighteous (2:24; 3:18). The love that he now requires of us as his people is not a self-righteous, legalistic love, working to score points for heaven. Rather, as those who are made heirs of the blessing of life eternal (3:9), we must model our love on the love of God in Christ. God's compassion demands love like his, love that cannot be demanded, the love of free grace. Only God's love, poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, can move us to show his compassion.

The last of the graces that Peter mentions is humility: *be ... humble.* Friedrich Nietzsche scorned this biblical virtue. He called the Jews 'a people "born for slavery" ', and accused them of inverting values by making the word 'poor' synonymous with 'saint' and 'friend'. The Scriptures do, indeed, give place to the poor and humble in contrast to the rich and proud. The remnant of God's people, redeemed by his grace, are the poor and lowly. In Greek literature, by contrast, the word that Peter uses is often taken in a derogatory sense: 'low-mindedness'.[2]

For this grace, too, Christ is our model. He called disciples to him as one who is 'gentle and humble in heart'. The word is a compound, like the first in this list, and the two are in close harmony, for if there is to be 'like-mindedness' there must also be 'lowly-mindedness'. Peter will return to this theme, urging Christians to 'clothe yourselves with humility', to serve one another (5:5). Clearly Peter had learned humility the hard way. His pride had been crushed by the denials that shamed his boasting. But Peter sees humility as deeper than the levelling of pride. He finds it in the free humiliation of his Lord, not only in taking the towel and basin, but in taking the cross. This is the lowliness that calls us to humble service. Christian humility will be mocked, as Jesus' humiliation on the cross was. But it will be honoured by God in the triumph of the returning Lord. Even before that day, the power of Christian humility bears witness. Our world has seen the outworking of Nietzsche's 'master-race' in Nazi Germany. Does it yet recognize the power of what Nietzsche scorned?

b. Called to bless in response to cursing

God's calling of the Christian appears in a marvellous contrariness. Opposition and hatred cannot thwart the life of blessing. Even when Christians are cursed, they bless. This is how Christians 'get even'. They pay back evil with good, insults with blessing. This, of course, was the teaching of Jesus, as well as his example (2:23). 'But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.' Christians are free from vindictiveness because they trust God's justice; but they are free for blessing because they know God's goodness. Again, this was standard apostolic instruction.[2] It is not only in the world that Christians must repay evil with good; they must do it in the church, too. Certainly this attitude of loving humility will provide the strongest rebuke to the conscience of a fellow-Christian.

The blessing with which a Christian meets insults cannot, of course, pronounce God's favour on those who blaspheme his name. In the psalm that Peter quotes we read that 'the face of the Lord is against those who do evil' (3:12). Our blessing of evil-doers and persecutors must take the form of a prayer that seeks their salvation and good. Yet this does not reduce blessing to mere well-wishing words. Stephen prayed for those who stoned him, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' A young Pharisee named Saul was one of those for whom Stephen prayed. The Lord who stood at the right hand of God received Stephen and answered his prayer.

c. Called to bless as heirs of blessing

Peter joins our calling to bless with our calling to receive God's blessing (3:9). His words may be taken to mean 'You have been called to this, to bless, to the end that you may inherit a blessing'. Alternatively, the 'this' may refer to what follows: 'Bless, because you have been called to this, that you might inherit a blessing.' As we have seen, Peter regularly appeals to what the Lord has done for us in order to encourage us to live for him. According to the second interpretation, this is what Peter now does again. But he cites Psalm 34 to support his statement, and this favours the first interpretation. The psalm summons the righteous to keep their lips from evil that they may see good days. Peter, of course, does not understand the psalm to present a 'works' religion, suggesting that we can *earn* God's blessing by guarding our tongues. He speaks of God's gracious calling, and of the inheritance of blessing that we receive (1:4). Yet the Lord who keeps the inheritance for us keeps us for the inheritance by keeping us in the faith, and by leading us in the paths of righteousness. God who calls us to inherit his blessing calls us to follow the path of peace that leads to blessing (3:11). The Christian's knowledge of the blessing that he will receive from the Lord encourages and enables him to bless others, even his enemies.

Peter quotes from Psalm 34 without any introductory phrase. He has alluded to it already (2:3–4); it may have been used regularly in the instruction of new Christians and in the worship of song. Peter cites the psalm to describe

the blessing of the life to which Christians are called. Those who practise the love of compassion, refrain from speaking evil, and pursue peace are blessed by the Lord. His *eyes are on* them; he hears *their prayer* (3:12). The blessing that they inherit reaches to eternal life, but it also fills this life with *good days.* Peter affirms this, although he knows that days of suffering will come (3:14). Yet the blessing of the Lord will make days of suffering 'good days' in his favour. A 'good day' in a television beer commercial pictures friends imbibing in the sunset at a fishing-lodge. 'It doesn't get any better than this,' they say. A 'good day' in the book of Acts shows Paul and Silas in a Greek prison, their backs bleeding and their feet in stocks. They are singing psalms at midnight—perhaps Psalm 34! Silas, now sitting beside Peter, would remember with him the word of Jesus, 'Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.'[4]

2. The blessed witness of suffering for righteousness (3:13–22)

a. The opportunity for witness in word (3:13–15)

Peter has moved to the issue that is central for the rest of the letter: the issue of Christian suffering. He has shown how the love of God turns the problem upside down. Christians are free from the need of vindication, and filled with humility as heirs of grace. Suffering has become an opportunity to meet evil with good and cursing with blessing. Peter describes the triumphant witness of this response.

'Who, then, will *harm you if you are eager to do good?*' This question could be taken to mean that, on the whole, Christians who heed the counsel of Psalm 34 need not expect any harm. Governments are instituted to commend those who do right, masters do not usually punish servants who do what they are told, spouses of pagans may win their grudging respect. No doubt there is truth in this observation. God's blessing may give many 'good days' in this sense to those who are zealous for doing good.

But it is likely that Peter is saying much more than this. The 'and' at the beginning of the sentence (omitted in the NIV) has the force of 'then'. It ties the statement to what has just been said, that the eyes and ears of the Lord are fixed on the righteous, while his face is against those who do evil. Further, the word 'evil' at the conclusion of the psalm quotation is picked up again in the verb for *harm* (3:13). 'Who, then [in the light of the Lord's care, and his control of evil], will do you evil …?' Peter is not encouraging Christians to suppose that their chances are better than average for escaping persecution. He is assuring them that, under God's care and blessing, no evil can befall them. Peter's words express Paul's affirmation: 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' The psalmist had the same conviction: 'In God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?'[2]

'But if, indeed, *you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.*' No harm, to be sure, can come to us at last. God's vindication and protection will preserve the heirs of his blessing. Christ prayed that the Father would protect his own from the evil one. But he did not pray that they be taken out of the world. Jesus warned his disciples, 'In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.'[4] Peter writes to those who feel the mounting pressure of opposition in their society. 'Indeed, the spectacle of moral beauty does not disarm all the wicked; they are often even irritated by the radiance of a virtue that condemns them.'

Christians should therefore not think it strange that they are called to endure persecution (4:12). Yet they must understand that suffering is not the opposite of blessing. Jesus had declared those to be blessed who suffer for righteousness. He promised them a reward in heaven: 'Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.' That word of Jesus is more than a promise. It pronounces blessing. Those who will receive a heavenly reward are already blessed by the Lord. Peter emphasizes this. Those who suffer receive the benediction of Christ as a present possession. Their time of suffering has been made a time of blessing.

Paul knew the blessing of Christ's grace given in the midst of suffering. 'That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.' Tertullian, an African church father at the beginning of the third century, said that 'Prison does for the Christian what the desert did for the prophet. Call it not prison but the place of retirement. The body is shut in, but all is open to the spirit: it may roam abroad on the way to God … The leg does not feel the chain if the mind is in heaven.' It was Tertullian who said that the blood of martyrs is indeed the seed of the church. Peter writes at the outset of centuries of persecution that the church of Christ has endured, a chronicle that is still being written today in the labour camps and prisons of a world that rejects the gospel.

If you should suffer …, he writes. The imperial persecutions that would sweep across the Roman world had not yet come. Christians were not yet being compelled to affirm the deity of Caesar. No doubt there were already those who had given their witness as martyrs (see 4:6), but much more was to come. Yet it was already time to prepare. Churches today that experience little persecution need Peter's instruction; in a future nearer than they suppose they may find themselves suffering with the rest of Christ's afflicted church in the world.

Peter would prepare the church, not simply to endure persecution, but to find in persecution an opportunity for witness. Both the boldness and the humility needed for witness come about through a fundamental exchange. Christians must exchange the *fear* of men for the fear of the Lord. Peter gives the secret of boldness as one who had found it after failure. Waiting in the courtyard of the high priest's house while Christ was being examined, Peter had failed miserably. Rembrandt's painting captures the scene: Peter has just denied Christ for the third time, swearing with fearful oaths that he was no disciple of Christ, was not with him, did not know him. In the background shadow stands Jesus. He has just turned to look at Peter.

Contrast Peter, filled with the Spirit as the apostle of the risen Lord. He is no longer huddled by the fire in the outer courtyard. Now he is the accused. He stands before the same tribunal that had examined Jesus. He who had feared to confront a maidservant now confronts the high court. He accuses them of crucifying Jesus, and refuses their order to be silent. 'We must obey God rather than men!'

Peter had lost the fear of men by gaining the fear of the risen Lord. He had set apart *Christ as Lord* in his heart. Yes, Peter knew the meaning of fear. He remembered the panic that unmanned him when, by the fire in the courtyard, he was recognized as a Galilean. His accent had given him away! Peter also knew the secret of a boldness that conquers fear. That secret was announced long ago in the prophecy of Isaiah:

> 'Do not fear what they fear,
>
> and do not dread it.
>
> The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy,
>
> he is the one you are to fear,
>
> he is the one you are to dread.'

Peter quotes from that passage to share his secret of boldness. No doubt the Lord's words through Isaiah had strengthened his own heart. He had already quoted from this section of Isaiah concerning the stone of stumbling (2:8). *Do not fear what they fear*, writes Peter. (His statement could also be read, 'Do not be afraid with fear of them.') In Isaiah's prophecy the Lord calls his true disciples not to share the fears of the people: they see only the armed power of the enemy. The antidote to the fear of men is awareness of the glory of the Lord himself. Peter's words *But in your hearts set apart*—literally, 'sanctify'—*Christ as Lord* echo Isaiah's words 'The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy', literally 'Sanctify the Lord' (AV). When the Lord sanctifies us, he makes us holy (1:2; 2:9); when we sanctify the Lord, we set him apart as the Holy One. We recognize his lordship and confess his transcendent deity. Jesus taught his disciples to pray to the Father, 'Hallowed be your name.' That petition asks God to set apart his own name, to be the God that he is in all his glory.

To break the throttling grip of fear we must confess God's lordship with more than mental assent. We must confess it with our heart's devotion. Setting him apart as Lord means bowing before him in the adoration of praise. A praising heart is immune to the fear of other people. Fear of another sort takes possession of our hearts and minds: a fear that does not flee in terror, but draws near in awe and worship.

We are amazed, then, at the force of the addition Peter makes. He says, literally, *Do not fear what they fear*, … *But in your hearts* sanctify the Lord, the *Christ.* He repeats the words of Isaiah, 'Sanctify the Lord', but adds, 'the Christ'. He does not hesitate to identify the Lord of hosts with Jesus Christ. More than that, he does so in a passage that calls for our total devotion to the Lord in his transcendent deity. Peter is not making a merely verbal connection between two meanings of 'Lord', as applied to God and men. He is explicitly identifying the One who slept in the stern of his fishing-boat with the almighty Creator of heaven and earth. Nor is Peter simply stating the orthodox theology of the earliest period of the church. He speaks from his own experience. The Father in heaven had enabled him to confess the deity of Christ as the Son of the living God. The reality of the resurrection had confirmed his conviction: Jesus who could command the storm and the demons had conquered death and ascended to the right hand of his Father. The Spirit of Christ, given from the throne of glory, worked in Peter awe and reverence for his Lord and

Saviour. Filled with that awe, he scorned all that men might do to him. In prison he could sleep securely; on trial he could accuse his accusers. His secret was not simply that he had been with Jesus, but that the Lord Jesus was with him.

Peter had heard Jesus say, 'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell.' Jesus had followed that solemn warning with words of supreme assurance to his disciples. Their Father in heaven has numbered every hair in their heads; nothing can happen to them outside of his care.

For the Christian, the fear of death has been removed by Christ's resurrection. He no longer shares the dread that shadows mortal life: fear of atomic holocaust, of terrorist attack or wasting cancer. Certainly he does not fear those who may persecute him for Christ's sake. Indeed, he can understand that their very persecution is fear-driven, the fear of the light on the part of those who live in darkness.

Yet the conquest of fear does not yield pride or smugness. The Christian must not taunt his enemies, but bear witness to them. This, too, will be the fruit of sanctifying the Lord in his heart. The fear of the Lord in the heart of the Christian is not the terror of the guilty under judgment. It is awe before the love of God as well as before his holiness. Awareness of the Lord's presence means tasting afresh that the Lord is good (2:3). We adore the Lord Jesus Christ who redeemed us at the cost of his life's blood (1:19). Peter has already joined our fear of God with our knowledge of his redeeming love (1:17–19). The Lord whom we sanctify in our hearts is the Lord who died for us.

Our courage before those who persecute us is born of *hope* in the Lord as well as fear of the Lord. In our response to those who may interrogate us we give a reason for our hope. Peter's letter is of hope. Hope is not substituted for faith; it *is* faith as it looks to the future of the Lord's salvation. As we have seen, it is a sure hope, not wishful thinking, and it is firmly grounded in the redemption that Jesus Christ has established for us. Hope is the form that faith takes under the threat of death. Stephen's hope lifted his eyes to Christ in glory as he finished his defence before his accusers. They viewed his hope as blasphemy, and stoned him in their fury.

Peter shows us that our hope provides both the courage for our witness and the content of our witness. Our hope is in our risen Lord. We sanctify the Lord Christ in our hearts; there is the end of fear. We sanctify Christ in our words; there is the start of witness. In the Greek, Peter does not begin a new sentence when he tells us to be always ready to give a reason for our hope. Rather, he says, 'Set apart the Lord, the Christ, ready always for answer.' Our devotion to Christ the Lord makes us ready, not only in attitude but in rationale. The word that Peter uses for *answer* is our word 'apology'. We use the word exclusively in the sense of 'excuse', to express regret for a wrong. In the New Testament, however, the word is used to describe a 'defence', usually in a formal or courtroom context. (That meaning survives when we speak of an 'apologist' for the Christian faith.) Paul, for example, speaks of his right, under Roman law, to meet his accusers face to face and to make his 'defence' against their charges.[2] Jesus had promised the presence of the Holy Spirit to enable his disciples to state their case before authorities. Peter well knew what it meant to stand accused in court and give answer.

As Peter speaks of Christian readiness to defend their hope, he is certainly allowing for situations in which they might be haled before Roman magistrates. His encouragement is not limited to Christians in court, however. He speaks of readiness to make a defence to all who might ask a reason for their hope. Persecution was not as intense as it would become; Peter could still speak of *if* rather than 'when' times of trial and suffering would come (3:14). Yet Christians must be ever ready, not only because they would be called to face Roman courts one day, but because they might be accused or challenged by suspicious or malicious pagans any day. It is true, of course, that the witness of a godly life can evoke questions of another sort. Unbelievers may become inquirers, asking with more than curiosity about the distinctive Christian hope. But Peter is here speaking of suffering for Christ's sake. He is arming Christians against attacks, showing them how such confrontations can be turned into occasions for witness.

How, then, does setting apart Christ as Lord prepare Christians to make defence of their hope? The formal speeches of defence in the book of Acts provide the answer; so, indeed, does the whole New Testament. For the Christian faith, a strong offence is the best defence; indeed, it is the only defence. Christians defend their faith by proclaiming the gospel, declaring the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the plan and power of God. That which is foolishness to the Greeks and an offence to the Jews is the saving wisdom of God.

Paul's defence before Agrippa shows us why Peter speaks of giving a reason for the *hope* that we have. Paul declares, 'And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers.'[2] 'Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?' he asks. Peter and Paul both centre on the reality of the

resurrection, and they both proclaim the resurrection as the fulfilment of Scripture. Paul summarizes his defence: 'I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles.' In this letter, Peter has proclaimed the same gospel to those who have been given 'new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' (1:3). Peter, too, presents this salvation as the fulfilment of what the prophets have spoken (1:10–12, 25). The apostolic gospel bears witness to the historical fact of Christ's death and resurrection, and proclaims the meaning of that fact from the word of God. The reality of the resurrection and the rationale of the resurrection are joined under the authority of God. Apart from the testimony of God's word, the fact of the resurrection could be discounted as a strange and unexplained fact of history. The chief priests who bribed the soldiers to lie about the empty tomb were in full possession of the evidence, yet they did not submit to the word of God.[5] Conversely, there is no lack of contemporary theologians who display their skill in reconstructing apostolic Christianity so that an empty tomb is no longer necessary.

When Paul gave the reason for the Christian hope, Festus, who with King Agrippa heard Paul's defence, declared that he had lost his reason. (Festus, indeed, shouted his charge, betraying by his emotion the offence that the gospel aroused!) Yet, in spite of hatred or scorn, the Christian presents his hope, humbly proclaiming God's work and word. As we acknowledge the deity of the risen Lord in our hearts, we bear witness to our hope in doxology; we declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his light (2:9). Worshipping the Lord, we set our hope fully on the grace to be given us when Jesus Christ is revealed (1:13).

Peter has made it clear that Christians are to be bold in their witness. Hallowing the Lord in their hearts, they are ready at all times to confess his name before others. But now Peter returns to his major theme, the other side of the coin. Humility of life is as important as boldness in word. This is the other result of glorifying Christ as Lord. We are unafraid to press his claims, but we do so as his servants. It has been said that the corruption of the best is the worst; certainly no pride is more offensive than pride in being trophies of grace. The *gentleness* or humility that we are to show is far more than politeness of manner. It reflects the fear of the Lord in which the gospel is presented. *Respect* seems to be the wrong translation here. It suggests a proper attitude toward those who question us. Peter may have used the Greek word *phobos* in that sense when he described the attitude of servants to their masters (2:18), but he has just used it to speak of our fear of God rather than of man (3:14). It seems unlikely that he is now reversing this to ask that we fear man, even in a lesser degree. Rather, Peter is teaching us that it is our fear of the Lord that enables us to bear witness in humility.

b. The opportunity for witness in life (3:16–17)

Bold words will not honour the Lord if they are not supported by a consistent life. Consider the bitterness of a wealthy old man: he was orphaned as a boy, but his father had made provision for him by entrusting funds for his support to the minister of his church. The minister made off with the money. Through a long life the victim of that injustice saw Christianity as financial exploitation of the gullible. The lives of Christians must reflect the gospel message to those outside the church. That consistency is not less needed in the church and in the heart of the believer. The witness of a good *conscience* is crucial for the witness of a good word. Again, Paul's defence illuminates Peter's words. Standing trial after his arrest on false charges of desecrating the temple, Paul could say, 'So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.'

Conscience has been defined as a person's 'inner awareness of the moral quality of his actions'. Pagan moralists recognized this inner awareness of behaviour, but apostolic teaching transformed its meaning. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer brings his conscience before God, with radical results. On the one hand, the Christian 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.[3] On the other hand, because God is Lord of the conscience, the Christian is delivered from false guilt, and from the condemnation of sin that God has forgiven. Robert Leighton, with Puritan wisdom, traces the care and nurture of the Christian conscience, growing in the light of the Lord's presence and cleansed by his blood.

In this passage Peter is speaking of our clear conscience as obedient saints rather than simply as forgiven sinners. The clear conscience of a justified sinner indeed frees him for witness, but the impact of his witness will require the outward evidence of a consistent life. By maintaining a clear conscience before God we will be able to show a godly life to others. The Walt Disney version of Pinocchio has given us the cartoon image of conscience as a friendly cricket, an effort, perhaps, to reduce the hostility with which people are inclined to view the promptings of conscience. Christians are called to do much better: to cultivate conscience rather than to stifle its occasional chirps. Suspicious

observers are quick to detect hypocrisy in a Christian's life; if we are to avoid self-deception we need a conscience that is both informed and clear.

A clear conscience gives stamina and faithfulness to a Christian's witness. He knows that the malicious slander that he hears is untrue; he can therefore wait patiently for the truth to win out. His detractors may be ashamed sooner than he thinks. It may be, however, that their shame will be evident only when Christ returns to judge. In any case, even if persecution and suffering do not end, he knows that he is in God's will and that to suffer for doing good brings blessing. To invite the scorn and hostility of others by doing evil would be quite another matter (3:17).

Christians with tender consciences may be dismayed by Peter's words. Aware of their sins and shortcomings, they may despair of having a clear conscience. They may find the suspicions of others confirmed by their suspicions of themselves. Peter shows that he knows our need of forgiveness and cleansing, for he goes on to describe again Christ's atonement (3:18). He also shows the source of power for holy living and a clear conscience. He expresses it in the telling phrase *your good behaviour in Christ* (3:16). Peter uses the phrase *in Christ* that is a keystone of Paul's teaching. Like Paul, Peter glories in the fact that Christ represented us in his death and resurrection. He suffered, the righteous for the unrighteous (3:18), bearing our sins in his body on the tree (2:24). We are given new birth because we are joined to Christ in his resurrection (1:3). We are therefore 'in Christ' as our representative: he died and rose for us. But our union with Christ does not stop there. We are 'in Christ' also because he gives us life. The Spirit of Christ joins us to our Lord as we hallow him in our hearts. We are in no sense alone as we seek to show by our lives that the gospel is true. Without the assurance of sins forgiven, we could not bear witness to those around us. Christians may rightly plead on bumper-stickers, 'Christians are not perfect: just forgiven.' Yet, because the Lord who forgives us also makes us new creations, we are able by grace to show in our lives the reality of his salvation. The God of all grace has called us to his eternal glory in Christ, and will restore and strengthen us (5:10).

Peter again summarizes by saying that *it is better … to suffer for doing good than for doing evil* (3:17). We are reminded of his word to servants in a section that parallels this (2:20). In both passages this statement leads into a declaration about the sufferings of Christ, who did only good. One commentator suggests that Peter may also be warning those who might seek martyrdom through mistaken zeal in oppposing the pagan government. 'It is unworthy of Christian believers to court martyrdom through deeds of violence, as for instance, the Jewish zealots did.' Peter, however, seems concerned to encourage Christians to endure suffering; he does not speak of their seeking it. In any case, the application of Peter's teaching does have importance for some forms of Christian protest today. Suffering for provocative acts in the name of Christ is not to be commended, but rather suffering that follows our Lord's example in doing good.

c. The victory of Christ's suffering (3:18–22)

Again Peter returns to the cross. Our willingness to suffer for the sake of Christ is grounded in the wonder of Christ's willingness to suffer death for our sake. This passage stands in close relation to 2:21–24. There, too, we read of Christ's atoning death as our substitute. There, too, the merciful purpose of Christ's suffering is declared (that we might die to sins, live for righteousness, and be healed, 2:24). Yet Peter now presents the suffering Christ as the Victor. He adds to his teaching about the saving power of Christ's *death* a fresh emphasis on the saving power of his *resurrection.* In the earlier passage, Peter points us to the example of Christ's meekness in suffering. We are called to imitate him as we suffer for his sake. In this second passage, Peter tells us that Christ who suffered and died was made alive again, has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand. He is the Conqueror; we share his triumph.

Persecuted and suffering Christians need to remember both the humiliation and the exaltation of Christ. His patient suffering will show them meekness when they are interrogated. His glorious triumph will give them courage to face their accusers. Undergirding both the meekness and the boldness of the Christian is the saving work of Christ.

Christ died for sins once for all. Christ's saving victory flows from the fact that his sacrifice was perfect, final, and therefore not to be repeated in history or in symbol. If Christ's sacrifice were not complete, it would have to be offered again, as the Old Testament sacrifices were. But, as the author of Hebrews teaches us, Christ's sacrifice was of a different order. If he had offered no better sacrifice than the priests, and had entered no better sanctuary than they, then he would have had to 'suffer many times since the creation of the world'. But he is the Son of God, his royal priesthood is heavenly, his sacrifice is his offering of his own blood. 'But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.' When the Protestant Reformers understood this, they could no longer participate in the mass, for the mass is celebrated as a bloodless sacrifice in which Christ is again offered for sin.[2]

Christ suffered and died to pay the price *for sins*, fully and finally. The phrase 'for sin' appears in the phrase for the sin-offering in the Greek Old Testament.[2] He who was righteous and without sin took the place of unrighteous sinners. His purpose, Peter tells the Christian 'pilgrims and strangers', was *to bring you to God.* Apart from Christ's saving work they were without hope and without God. The judgment of God against their sins separated them from fellowship with him. But now those who were far off are brought near. They may approach God in worship and fellowship, for he has claimed them as his own. On earth they are journeying pilgrims; Christ, their shepherd, is leading them home.

By his death Christ won life for his own. His resurrection brings triumph after suffering, a triumph that is the hope of suffering Christians. Notice the credal or confessional content of this section (a form that resembles the credal hymn of 1 Timothy 3:16): *For Christ died for sins once for all … He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit … has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*

That Peter is describing Christ's triumph is clear. His death was not defeat, but the once-for-all sacrifice that atoned for sin. It was followed by the resurrection and the ascension. In that context, Peter writes about Christ's preaching to *spirits in prison.* His words were no doubt clear to those who first heard them, but they have been hard for later generations to understand. Martin Luther writes in his commentary: 'A wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the New Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means.' Study of the passage may have progressed since Luther's day, but his confession still warns us against over-confidence!

Three major interpretations have been given to Peter's words, each with various modifications. According to the first, Jesus descended into hell and preached to the spirits of those who perished in the flood in the time of Noah. Some who hold this view also think that what Jesus proclaimed to the dead was the gospel, offering them a further opportunity to repent. Others would have Christ preaching to the righteous dead, proclaiming their release from the prison where they awaited his coming. Still others would understand his preaching to be the heralding of the doom of the wicked dead.

The second major interpretation was presented by Augustine, who objected to the first view as presented by Origen and others. Augustine held that Christ's preaching was done in the Spirit through Noah. Peter says that it was the Spirit of Christ who preached through the Old Testament prophets (1:11); Christ's preaching through Noah would be a case in point. Those to whom Noah preached were not in prison literally, but they could be described as in prison spiritually. (Or, it might be said that those to whom Noah once preached are *now* spirits in prison.)

A third interpretation would understand *spirits in prison* to refer to fallen angels rather than to human beings. Jesus proclaims to them his victory and their doom. This is seen by some as taking place after his resurrection. As he ascends into heaven, Jesus confronts the principalities and powers, showing his victory and power over them.

None of these explanations is free of difficulty; to weigh them we must answer several key questions. First, when did Christ preach to the spirits in prison? Was it long before the incarnation, in the time of Noah? Was it after his death, but before his resurrection? Or was it after his resurrection (either before he appeared to the disciples, or in the course of his ascension)?

To answer the question we must understand the words, 'having been *put to death* with respect to the flesh, *but made alive* with respect to the spirit' (3:18). Martin Luther explains these words as expressing the same distinction that Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 15:45, 49. Paul contrasts our present 'natural' bodies with the 'spiritual' bodies that we shall receive at the resurrection. It is Christ's resurrection that is the source of the spiritual: 'The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit'.[2]

Peter is not saying that Christ's body died but that his spirit continued to live. He is saying that Christ died as to the natural, physical sphere of existence, and that Christ was given life as to the spiritual sphere of existence. If Peter were distinguishing between the death of the body and the continuing life of the soul, he would not have said that Christ was *made* alive. 'Thus the second phrase does not refer to Christ *disembodied*, but to Christ *risen* to life on a new plane.'

This explanation would also help us understand somewhat similar language in 1 Peter 4:6. There Peter speaks of those to whom the gospel was preached so that they might indeed have been judged 'according to men with respect to the flesh', but might live 'according to God with respect to the spirit' (my translation). If those spoken of are the

Christian dead, then the life that they receive through the gospel should not be thought of as the continued existence of the soul, but as the resurrection life of Christ they receive.

The phrase 'he was raised as to the spirit' rules out the thought of an underworld descent by the disembodied soul of Christ in the time between his death and resurrection. It does not settle the question, however, as to the time of Christ's preaching. Christ's death was physical, but his resurrection was in the realm of the spiritual, that is, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The NIV translation, *made alive by the Spirit*, may well capture Peter's meaning. It allows for Augustine's interpretation: Christ who rose 'spiritually' also preached 'spiritually' through Noah.

What, then, is the connection between Christ's death and resurrection and his proclamation to the spirits in prison? There are two possibilities. The Greek phrase which the NIV renders *through whom* (3:19) means 'in which'. It may refer directly to the word 'spirit' or it may be more indefinite, 'in which time'. If it is the latter, the preaching spoken of must have taken place after the resurrection. It could then have been before Christ appeared to the women, as Luther an interpreters have held. It could also have been during the forty days, or in the course of Christ's ascension. If, however, 'in which' refers to 'spirit', then the preaching of the Spirit of Christ through Noah remains a possibility.[3]

The next key question is: To whom did Christ make proclamation? Who are *the spirits in prison?* The phrase 'spirits in prison', taken by itself, could refer to fallen angels. In 2 Peter 2:4–5 fallen angels are described as imprisoned; the passage then goes on to speak of Noah and the judgment of the flood:

> For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell [literally, 'Tartarus'], putting them into gloomy dungeons [literally, 'pits of darkness'] to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others …

In the letter of Jude similar language is found:

> And the angels who did not keep their domain, but abandoned their own dwelling, he has kept in everlasting chains, under darkness, for judgment on the great Day.

Both the term *spirits* and the reference to *prison* fit well with these passages that describe the doom of fallen angels. But could angels be described as spirits *who disobeyed long ago … in the days of Noah?* A case can be made for this by taking account of Jewish traditions and writings that were current when Peter wrote, especially the book of *Enoch.* (A prophecy of Enoch contained in this book is quoted in Jude 14–15.) In Genesis 5:24 are the striking words, 'Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.' These words contrast with the concluding formula of the Genesis genealogies, 'and then he died'. Enoch's walk with God links with the righteousness of his descendant Noah, and contrasts with the wickedness that abounded on earth before the flood.

What happened to Enoch when the Lord took him? Where did he go? Jewish traditions and writings speculated about this. In the version now designated as *1 Enoch*, we are told of Enoch's travels as he was shown the secrets of the universe. In particular, he went to the place where the fallen angels were kept under judgment. In *1 Enoch* and in some other Jewish traditions, it is assumed that the 'sons of God' in Genesis 6:2 were angels who took wives as they pleased from the 'daughters of men'. Their progeny, the 'Nephilim', were thought to be demons. The angels who had disobeyed and had left their place were imprisoned in a 'burning valley'. Enoch describes the place:

> 'Beyond that abyss I saw a place which had no firmament of the heaven above, and no firmly founded earth beneath it; there was no water upon it, and no birds, but it was a waste and horrible place.'

This is supplemented by a further description of 'another place, which was still more horrible than the former', a place cleft as far as the abyss, having descending columns of fire. 'This place is the prison of the angels, and here they will be imprisoned forever.' In *1 Enoch* this prison for fallen angels is distinguished from the places where the souls of men await judgment. Another writing, *2 Enoch*, locates the place of detention for the fallen angels in the second heaven.

It would be a great mistake to read into 1 Peter the fanciful descriptions of *1 Enoch.* But the use of *1 Enoch* in Jude 14–15 and the passage about the doom of fallen angels in 2 Peter 2:4 show us that the language of the 'Enoch' literature could help us to understand the terms used in 1 Peter. Since the disobedient angels and their offspring were viewed as instigators of lawlessness in the antediluvian world, it might be possible to speak of them as those *who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah* (3:20). On this understanding, Peter is claiming for Christ a mission that far transcends the journey that tradition ascribed to Enoch. Enoch was sent by God to

pronounce doom upon the rebellious angels. They asked Enoch to present a petition to God to cancel their sentence. Enoch did so, but God sent him back with the same message.[5] Peter's word for *preached* (3:19) means 'heralded' or 'proclaimed'. It could carry the meaning of announcing judgment rather than offering salvation. In view of the description of Christ's victory in 3:22, that meaning is possible here. Christ's 'preaching' to the spirits in prison would then be his proclamation to the 'angels, authorities and powers' of his resurrection victory and their doom. Christ is the true Enoch: he walks with God and is taken up to be with his heavenly Father. Not Enoch, but Christ, is the one who confronts the angelic and demonic forces of evil.

Yet, attractive as this explanation may be, it is not completely satisfying. To speak of those *who disobeyed long ago … in the days of Noah* recalls at once the generation that perished in the flood. In *1 Enoch* the disobedient angels are said to have sinned, not in the days of Noah, but in the days of Jared, the father of Noah. Even if angelic disobedience were thought of as continuing in the days before the flood, why would it be described as taking place while God was waiting patiently during the building of the ark? God's patience during the time before the flood is obviously like the patience he now shows in postponing judgment: 'The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance' (2 Pet. 3:9).

While the ark was being built, the possibility of escape from judgment existed for human beings, not for fallen angels. The patience of God was directed to the sinners of Noah's generation, those to whom Noah preached righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5). This refers so clearly to human beings, not angels, that some who favour the reference to angels have concluded that human beings must also be included. Further, if angels were in view, it would seem strange that Peter should use the word that he does for *disobeyed.* It is a term that describes the disobedience of unbelief.

Yet another consideration supports the view that the 'spirits in prison' are the sinners of Noah's generation. A recent commentator has pointed to a better translation of 1 Peter 3:19–20: 'He went and preached to those who are now spirits in prison when they disobeyed formerly when God's patience was waiting in the days of Noah.' This preferred translation shows that the disobedience was going on along with the preaching. It is a perfectly natural expression if Peter is thinking of Christ's preaching through Noah, and does much to relieve the usual objection to referring the preaching to the days of Noah. In the time that the ark was being built, it is true, the people of that generation were not in prison. (Augustine's explanation that they were spiritually imprisoned is unconvincing.) But the shift in translation underscores the fact that we are to understand that the spirits are *now* in prison. These sinners, now under condemnation, were those who were disobedient when the Spirit of Christ preached to them *long ago* through Noah (3:20; 1:11). This understanding gives the same interpretation to *in prison* that is given to 'dead' in 1 Peter 4:6. In both cases Peter is referring to people in terms of their present state. (The NIV translates 1 Peter 4:5 'to those who are *now* dead', adding the word to convey the meaning.)

An objection to this understanding of the text appeals to the word *went* in verse 19. The same verb is used in verse 22 (*has gone*) to describe Christ's going to heaven in the ascension. 'How,' it is asked, 'can Christ's preaching through Noah be described as his "going" in the Spirit?' This is not a compelling objection. God's interventions in Old Testament revelation are often described in terms of his going or coming.[2] The verb *went* may also be used with little or no emphasis, as in colloquial English speech: 'He went and told him.'

The strong case for regarding the 'spirits in prison' as the spirits of those who were disobedient to the preaching of Noah can settle the question as to what was preached. On this assumption, what was preached is identified in 2 Peter 2:5, where the same word-stem is used in the phrase 'Noah, a preacher of righteousness'. It is the proclamation of God's righteousness, and therefore of the need for repentance. That message was addressed through Noah to those disobedient sinners during their lifetime. The passage describes no second chance for repentance after death. Even less does it promise universal salvation.

In this whole passage Peter continues to give reassurance to Christians who must endure suffering and persecution. Christ has conquered by the power of his resurrection. He has prevailed to bring them to God. The devil may still be on the prowl like a roaring lion (5:7), but he cannot destroy those whose refuge is the Lord. Peter reminds suffering Christians of the period before the flood. The power of evil might then have been greater, the number of the elect even fewer. But God was in control. He withheld judgment, then as now, only to display his longsuffering grace. But his judgment did come: Noah and his family were delivered from that evil age by the judgment, the waters of the flood. Yet the judgment of the flood was only provisional, and the deliverance of Noah but a prefiguring, or 'type', of the final and full salvation of Jesus Christ. The doom of death in the flood pictures the doom that Christ suffered for us. He was put to death in the flesh. But he was made alive in the power of the Spirit. It was in that power that he

preached through Noah to those whose disobedience brought eternal condemnation. It is in that same power that he now saves us. Those who reject the gospel put themselves under the judgment that will come when Christ comes. But those who are united to Christ are saved by the same promise that delivered Noah and his family.

Peter continues to relate the time of Noah to that of the church by appealing to typology. The inspired authors of the New Testament find in the Old Testament history not merely instances of God's saving power, but also anticipations of his final salvation in Christ. By providing the ark, God saved Noah and his family from the judgment of the flood. That deliverance, however, did not in itself give eternal life to the eight persons that were spared. Like the exodus liberation, it was a symbol of God's final salvation from all sin and death. Peter uses the term 'antitype' to describe the relation of the new to the old (3:21; NIV's verb *symbolises* translates the Greek noun *antitypos*). This use of 'type' and 'antitype' is itself figurative, drawn from the striking of coins or the impression of seals. 'Type' describes either a matrix from which an impression is made, or the image created. In the letter to the Hebrews, the typology is vertical. That is, the heavenly realities are called the 'type' and the earthly symbols the 'antitype'. The tabernacle in the wilderness was therefore the antitype of the heavenly sanctuary.[2] In Paul's letters and here in 1 Peter, the typology is horizontal in history: the Old Testament symbol is the type, and therefore Christ's fulfilment is the antitype.

What is the 'antitype' to which Peter refers? Apparently it is *baptism*, although the construction of the passage is difficult. (The antitype could be *you:* that is, Noah and his family were types of Christians: they were saved through water, and Christians are also saved through the water of baptism.) In any case, Peter would have us understand that the God who delivered Noah will also deliver us, and that ours is the final salvation.

That full and final salvation is sealed to us in Christian baptism. It may seem strange that Peter finds the fulfilment of Old Testament symbolism in New Testament symbolism. The symbol of the type points us to the symbol of the sacrament. Indeed, to prevent misunderstanding, Peter at once adds that he is not speaking of the outward application of *water, the removal of dirt from the body.* Rather, he is speaking of the new existence that we have through *the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* Baptism as an outward sign marks the putting off of the pollution of sin, and the beginning of new life in Christ.

Yet Peter also calls our attention to an analogy between the type and the sacrament. Both involve water in the context of gaining life out of death. The *eight* persons in the ark *were saved* 'by' or *through* water. 'By' would be the more usual translation of the preposition. We might think of the water of the flood as the means by which Noah's family was delivered from the threatening wickedness of their generation. But the verb for *saved* has the same preposition attached to it; there it must mean 'through'. Noah and his family, then, were saved 'through' water. Why does Peter not say 'saved *from* water'? Perhaps because the water that destroyed the wicked also bore up the ark. But more probably Peter is already pointing forward to the analogy that he has in mind. Meredith Kline has pointed out that covenants in the ancient Middle East, and in the Scriptures, are sealed by an oath. A powerful example is the oath that God himself takes in Genesis 15. There the divided parts of the animals symbolize the malediction that God calls down upon himself if he should not be faithful to his pledge. So, too, the blood shed in circumcision implies not only cleansing, but an oath involving one's descendants. In baptism, Kline reasons, the same element remains. When baptism is compared to the waters of the flood or to the waters of the Red Sea, the threatening symbolism of water is brought into view.[4] Israel was brought through the waters of the sea and of the Jordan; Noah was brought through the waters of the flood. Christians are brought through the waters of death, the flood of destruction, in order that they might be established upon the rock, secure in the resurrection life of Christ.

It is significant that Peter goes on to speak of the pledge made in baptism, *the pledge of a good conscience towards God.* The word for *pledge* implies an undertaking made in reponse to formal questions. Peter underscores the solemnity of the commitment made by these new Christians. They pledge the life of a good conscience. (Or, they make the pledge of baptism sincerely, out of a good conscience.) In that pledge Christians agree with God's judgment on sin, and on their own sinful past (4:3). They acknowledge that to turn from their commitment would be to bring upon themselves God's just judgment. Yet Peter's words stress the wonder of the sacrament even more than its solemnity. As Noah was delivered by the grace of God, although only in symbol, so have they been delivered in fact. Christ has saved them, for he died for their sins and gave them life through his resurrection (3:18, 21).

Like circumcision, baptism does symbolize cleansing. Indeed, when Peter says that we are not saved by the 'putting off' (NIV *removal*) of impurity, he uses language that seems even more appropriate to circumcision than to baptism. But baptism means much more. It means union with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection.[3] Christians have set apart Jesus Christ as Lord; they have been participants in his victory over death and all the powers of darkness. Christians need never fear their enemies; their concern must rather be to live in good conscience toward God.

Christ's conclusive death for our sins was accomplished *to bring* us *to God* (3:18). The victory of his atoning death is seen in his resurrection, and in his triumphant ascension to the right hand of God. He died to bring us where he now is. Peter has called Christians to lives of submission for Christ's sake, following the example of his humiliation (2:21). Yet the submission of Christians is not that of defeated captives, brought into hopeless slavery. It is the willing and joyful service of those who know that they are victors with Christ. Once he submitted himself, but now all the *angels* are *in submission to him* (3:22). So, too, Christians are called to submit themselves, but in the sign of baptism they are already participants in Christ's resurrection victory. Peter had witnessed the ascension of Christ; he had proclaimed from Psalm 110 the seating of Christ at the Father's right hand. Here in his letter he stresses the authority that Jesus has over all the powers of creation. Christians need not fear the sword of Roman magistrates or the fury of Satan. They belong to the Lord in glory.[4]

1 Peter 3:1–7

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.

[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.

PETER'S PRINCIPLE OF denying sin and conducting oneself in holiness (2:11–12), with its important manifestation in society of living "under the order" (2:13), is now applied to a third group: wives and husbands (3:1–7). His emphasis on the wives (3:1–6), like his emphasis both on governmental authority (2:13–17) and slaves (2:18–25), probably emerges from the presence of a large number of women whose husbands were not yet Christians. Because Peter spent most of his time addressing women does not mean today that men need to be addressed only briefly.

Peter's address to wives begins with the exhortation to "be submissive" (3:1a) and follows with the reason: so they can win them to faith on the basis of their good behavior (3:1b–2). His reason is developed further in 3:3–4 as he delves into the kind of clothing Christian women should be known for. Following this Peter gives examples (3:5–6) of the kind of behavior

[4] Clowney, E. P. (1988). *The message of 1 Peter: the way of the cross* (pp. 136–168). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

mentioned in 3:1b–2. Christian husbands come next: They are exhorted to live with their wives knowledgeably and considerately (3:7ab) so that their prayers will be heard (3:7c).

Exhortation to Wives (3:1–6)

The Exhortation to Submit (3:1–2). As with the other units in this section, the exhortation to submit in 3:1a is part of a larger pattern: living a holy life before unbelievers with the hope that such conduct will have a positive impact on them. The exhortation to "be submissive" draws its energy from 2:13. Christian women, like Christian slaves, when they find themselves with a non-Christian husband, are to partake of the same ethic that Christians ought always to have: Live under all the orders of the day (2:13).

As with 2:18–25 on slaves, so with this passage—we must beware of the problem of hearing a passage today in a way that was never intended. To begin with, because of the dominance of men in the history of the church and the patriarchal-hierarchical nature of culture in the greater part of the world, we must admit that great abuses have taken place and have led many to see in this passage some kind of moral subjugation of women by men. While I do not want to pretend that "submission" did not really mean some kind of respectful deference to authority, neither should we go to the other extreme and think this text says nothing about the relationship of wives to husbands. Parallels with the relationship of the Christians to Roman authority and slaves to their masters have to be recognized: Peter sees an importance in wives "living under the order of their husbands." Our problem here is with the fundamental abuse this text has created in the hands of too many men who have forced their wives against their wills.

Accordingly, to begin with this text is to begin with a problem: We will never hear this text the way it was intended to be read, nor will we able to bring this text into our world, until we confess the abuses it has been made to serve. Many women do not hear this text in any other way than how it has been practiced by abusive men. Until we learn to understand how women have heard this text, we will never learn what our interpretations are leading people to do. This means that the place to begin is with the ancient world.

What was it like for women in the ancient world? There are two dimensions to the answer to this question: (1) The women Peter addresses are in Asia Minor where, it may be supposed, a Greco-Roman attitude toward women prevailed; (2) yet some of his converts presumably had a Jewish background, where a different attitude dominated.

In Jewish perspective, while women were respected and protected in the laws, they were treated as inferior in most every way to men. In the words of Ben Witherington, III,

> The dominant impression left by our early Jewish sources is of a very patriarchal society that limited women's roles and functions to the home, and severely restricted: (1) their rights of inheritance, (2) their choice of relationships, (3) their ability to pursue a religious education or fully participate in the synagogue, and (4) their freedom of movement.

While it would be wrong to think that everything was bad for women in the Jewish world, it would not be wrong to think that their world was highly restrictive, patriarchal, and clearly debilitating to the development of their gifts.

Women in the Greco-Roman world, on the other hand, were in most cases better off. But what women could or could not do depended on location and culture. Wives of citizens in Athens, for example, had about as much freedom as Jewish women in Palestine (though for different reasons), while women in Asia Minor had much more opportunity to pursue their own interests. Women there "engaged in private businesses, served in public offices, and had prominent roles in various religious cults." They were even able to vote and hold public office. Roman society in particular—and we can assume that over time such attitudes influenced Asia Minor—allowed more property rights for women, permitted greater leverage for women in marriage and divorce situations, and encouraged more education for women.

What all of this means for our text is simple: Peter is urging the women of the Asia Minor churches to live a life that is respectable in society so that they will be able to maintain a good reputation for the gospel. If women in Asia Minor had considerably more freedom than women under the influence of Jewish customs, then we must interpret Peter's words in the former context. That will mean that "submission" here probably does not refer to the same kind of restrictions in society that such a concept meant in Palestine. Furthermore, it makes his injunction a more pragmatic one. That is, Peter wants wives to submit *because of the influence* (3:1b–2) they can exert on their non-Christian husbands. This is entirely consistent with his agenda at 2:11–12, that Christians live such holy lives so that nothing can be lodged against the gospel because of their behavior. Any insults they receive must be the result of injustice.

Accordingly, Peter's injunction to Christian wives is that they conduct their lives so as to win their husbands to the Christian faith "without words."[8] That is, "in certain cases the eloquent silence of Christian deportment is its most effective vehicle." As we saw above, Asia Minor permitted freedoms to women, including some kind of religious freedom; however, most scholars are agreed that when a woman struck out on her own and joined a religion different from her husband's, that could be seen as an act of insubordination.[10] Far from making what was probably a difficult situation worse, Peter exhorts these women to be especially circumspect. Thus, as Wolfgang Schrage contends, "the author … expects missionary success from Christian life, lived in the power of the Word and representing its reality—not with a zeal for conversion, but in the knowledge that one's life is a form of proclamation, which can affirm or deny the authenticity of the gospel."

Development of the Reason (3:3–4). Having mentioned that women ought to have a life that is noted by "purity and reverence," Peter develops this lifestyle issue further by delving into the matter of appearance. He contrasts external beauty with internal beauty. Every culture has its own ideas of external beauty for women. Today, for example, the "ideal woman" is tall and thin, shapely, dressed in the latest of fashions (which change by seasons), and full of zest and confidence. For Peter's day, the image was that of the woman with "braided hair," who wore "gold jewelry and fine clothes"—comments that might indicate some of Peter's churches contained women of wealth and standing.[13] Peter's critique here joins a long list of ancient writers who chastised women for their concern with appearance, including Paul (1 Tim. 2:9–10). Some have suggested that Peter's comments here actually prohibit Christian women of all ages from braiding their hair and wearing jewelry and fancy clothing, but the majority see a comparison of values: External appearance is relatively unimportant, but internal virtue is the prime pursuit of life.[16] Yet this interpretation ought not to lead to the view that Christian

women can dress as they like; rather, Peter urges them to regard their external appearance as a secondary matter to personal beauty and to dissociate themselves from the cultural trend of that day to adorn themselves so as to attract attention.

The virtues Peter praises are "the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight." The "quiet spirit" Peter enjoins here is that Christian wives avoid a cantankerous grumbling that would prevent a non-Christian husband from seeing God's grace and goodness in her behavior.[18] This expression, however, is not a virtue assigned in the early churches exclusively to women: in fact, this "nonviolent disposition" was characteristic of the early church in general and is but one example of "living under the order" of the day. Such a beauty emerges from "your inner self," the hidden person, a person who has been transformed from the inside out by God's Spirit.[20] Such virtues are pleasing to God and have a powerful impact on unbelieving husbands.

Examples of Good Behavior (3:5–6). Peter now legitimates his instructions to Christian wives about their good behavior by appealing to "the holy women of the past." What is noticeable here is that Peter extends the instruction to include women who had believing husbands, showing that his instructions to submit are not just some pragmatic expedient.

Exhortation to Husbands (3:7)

HAVING ADDRESSED THE wives of unbelieving husbands, Peter now addresses Christian husbands. He assumes that their wives are Christians too, so his exhortation to them moves in a different direction. Inasmuch as his exhortation to them to "be considerate" borrows its force from the verb of 2:13, it is best to see here a specific kind of "living under the order" for husbands, a kind of submission,[24] yet distinct from it. The order for Christian husbands is one of being considerate—literally, of "living with one's wife knowledgeably."[26] The verb *synoikeo* ("living together") was especially used for sexual relations between husband and wife (Deut. 22:13; 24:1; 25:5), and that is no doubt the intended meaning here, though obviously not limited to that. The Christian man, Peter says, is neither demanding nor selfish in his sexual and marital relations; he is instead considerate, sensitive, and serving.

The reason the Christian husband must be especially considerate in these relations is because his wife is "the weaker partner." This expression has given rise to two major interpretations: physical weakness, and spiritual weakness. Inasmuch as the preponderance of evidence in the ancient world uses identical or similar language when describing a woman's physical condition, it is almost certain that Peter has in mind a wife's physical capacities.[29]

Peter largely repeats himself in the second clause of 3:7: Christian men are to "treat [your wives] with respect," inasmuch as they are "heirs with you of the gracious gift of life." Here again Peter participates in the early Christian tendency to elevate the position of women in society; they are seen as *fellow* heirs. Twice in this verse he forms a compound verb in his incorporation of women into the lives of husbands: "living together" and "fellow heirs." In respecting their wives, these men and their wives will gain a hearing with God, and their prayers will be answered (cf. Matt. 5:21–26; 6:12, 14–15; 18:19–35; 1 Cor. 11:17–34; James 4:3).

SOME THINGS ABOUT men and women apparently do not change: Just as men in the ancient world had a tendency to be demanding, both sexually and emotionally, so also today; and just as women had a tendency to desire compliments for appearance, so also today. Furthermore, although great strides have been made in the development of physical strength through today's culture of physical training, it remains a fact of physical nature that women are physically weaker than men. And it also remains a tragic fact that men love to assert their strength and overpower women. In these traits of human nature, there is little change.

But many other features about men and women have changed since the first century, most notably in society's perception of how the marriage relationship is to work itself out. Just arguing that the term "submission" (or translating it "living under/according to the order," in order to take modern sensitivities into consideration) is a legitimate word to describe the relationship of a wife to her husband can make many readers hyperventilate. But it is in such a context that we must apply this text today. I am aware that some women appreciate this term today and dutifully submit to the authority of their husbands; but I am also aware that this is not the case with the majority. Some interpreters might want to spend time castigating the majority as living with less than God's will. But I will not, because I believe times have changed, the culture has changed, and it is ours to relate the gospel to our modern world.

How, then, do we bring this matter into our day? First, as with the meaning of the term at 2:13 and 2:18, I do not believe "submission" here means always "living under the order of one's husband." It is obvious that the Christian woman who is married to a non-Christian man should not deny the Lord or refuse to associate with other Christians for the sake of submitting to her husband; such would be to make her husband tantamount to God. And note how Abraham at times was instructed to act (Gen. 21:10–13). No matter how one understands this category, there are times for "civil disobedience" for the Christian wife. Just as civil disobedience is necessary at times for the Christian in society (2:13–17), and just as it is necessary for the worker to buck heads with his or her boss, so it is sometimes necessary for the wife to take umbrage with her husband, whether he is a Christian or not.

Second, if we have understood the ancient context properly, Peter is saying that Christians have an obligation to live "under the order," whatever order that may be, so as to maintain a credible witness. Living "under the order" always involves some kind of submissiveness. If this is the case, we have to examine carefully what the "orders" are today, so that we will know what kind of behavior is expected. There is little doubt that the "orders" have changed from a hierarchical to more of an egalitarian view; if this is the case, then changes of "living under the order" will follow.

To be sure, Peter justifies this orderliness on the basis of other godly women behaving in this manner (3:5–6) and not just on the basis of an expediency. In addition, we must also be prepared to admit that those "older women" lived in the same kind of environment. On the other hand, we must admit that they did so as one covenant member to another, not as a believer to an unbeliever so as to be a witness to God's grace. Furthermore, in the wider sweep of the New Testament, Paul's justification of submission is anchored in other themes (for example, Christ's relationship to the church, creation). However, I am still of the view that both Peter's and Paul's prescriptions for a culturally relevant dress here are firmly anchored into a specific period of history and that the views of that culture helped shape each of their minds.

Our culture has changed so dramatically that we have to think through this issue to discern how we are to apply such teachings to our world. To think that a one-to-one correspondence obtains for today would be a tragic (and completely unworkable) mistake.

One specific point we can make is that the principle of living for the sake of the gospel is transcultural. Thus, it would be wrong for a Christian woman to give the wrong impression of the nature of the gospel to her unbelieving spouse (and vice versa) by acting in a manner inconsistent with their marriage contract. This is where Peter's focus is—with how believing wives relate to their unbelieving husbands. The wives must be beyond reproach, loving, and serving—so much so that their husbands will be won to the faith by their behavior. Christian women ought to be concerned with the kinds of obligations that are perceived by our society and with what is assumed in the marriage contract. For the sake of the gospel, these conventions ought not to be flaunted. Just as a mother who does not take proper care of her children receives deserved criticism in our culture, so also does the woman who shows no respect for her husband.

Furthermore, it is my firm conviction that we have placed the wrong emphasis on the word "submission"; we have also been preoccupied with "what we can do" and "what our rights are," whereas the biblical injunction is that the wife ought to give her life to her husband, "to serve and cherish him," and the husband ought to lay down his life for his wife. Thus, when the Christian wife is seeking to love her husband with her whole being and the husband is seeking to love his wife with his whole being, the issue of submission never emerges. If the Christian husband resorts to demanding sexual satisfaction, he is not considering his wife's needs; if the Christian woman refuses to go along with her husband, she may not be considering her husband's needs. In each of these cases, to apply the "doctrine of submission" is to focus entirely on the wrong thing. The focus of biblical marriage is on love and service of one another.

In Cloud and Townsend's insightful book *Boundaries*, they come to the following conclusion:

> We have never seen a "submission problem" that did not have a controlling husband at its root. When the wife begins to set clear boundaries, the lack of Christlikeness in a controlling husband becomes evident because the wife is no longer enabling his immature behavior. She is confronting the truth and setting biblical limits on hurtful behavior. Often, when the wife sets boundaries, the husband begins to grow up.

What these two authors are saying is that focusing on submission is almost surely an indicator that one's priorities are messed up. Husbands too frequently resort to demanding submission when they are unable to "get their way"; that indicates selfishness, not loving and devoted service to one's wife (which is the way Christ loved the church). What the husband ought to be saying to himself is, "Why do I have to use force to get this done?" Often he has decided that his own desires and ideas have to be fulfilled and that his wife's do not matter. Such behavior is not loving. Marriages that are full of love, respect, and honor rarely, I believe, need to resort to the issue of submission.

Perhaps discussing an issue in my relationship to Kris, my wife, will illuminate what Cloud and Townsend mean by *boundaries* and how they work themselves out in the issue of submission. I am a spontaneous type; my wife is not. I have learned over the years that major decisions around our home require time because Kris needs to process such decisions for a

while. Often time will cure my "spontaneous urges"; on other occasions it will enable Kris to make the decision the way she likes to make them. Rarely do we disagree if time has been given for the decision; we do, however, disagree if I demand some spontaneous decision with significant implications for our life together.

One of my students illustrates this perfectly. He told me, rather humorously, that he had an old Volkswagen that had been sitting in our seminary parking lot, rusting and rotting there for two years. "Why?" I asked. He responded, "Because my wife was not ready to part with her dear old VW." He also told me that she was now ready to "cut the cord." I appreciated his sensitivity to her boundary line: She simply was not ready to make that decision, and he was respectful of that view. Someone might argue that she should have been submissive; I think my student was right and was "living with his wife considerately." Had he pushed forward in the name of submission, he may have done irreparable harm to his marriage. Good for him!

Before bringing this text into our modern world, we must also address the issue of how such a practice (submission) is to be understood within a larger unfolding theme in the Bible, namely, the equality of the sexes in Christ (Gal. 3:28). Few will squabble with me when I contend that the Bible sowed the seeds that eventually grew into the doctrine of the total inappropriateness of slavery, even if the Bible itself permitted and accommodated itself to such a practice in the ancient world. I maintain likewise that the biblical notion of equality has given rise to the modern notion of the equality of all people, and in particular to the equality of the sexes in the church.

After surveying briefly the teaching that submission is rooted in the fall of humans into sin and that Paul teaches the equality of the sexes in Christ, I. H. Marshall concludes that "this teaching clearly shows that the effects of the Fall are undone in the new creation that is manifested in the Church." And K. R. Snodgrass, at the end of an exposition of Galatians 3:28, concludes: "If God has poured out his Spirit on both the sons and the daughters (Acts 2:17ff.), it will not do for us to erect a modern-day 'court of women' for our churches.

I agree with this approach in the main: The seeds of equality have grown so high that the earlier plants of hierarchy are not as visible. This is why I. H. Marshall can argue that "the command here [1 Peter 3:1] may be transcended in a Christian marriage." He further adds, "Submission in marriage was the type of moral conduct required at the time, certainly by Jews and also by many Gentiles. Christians were to live at least at that level."[38] What he means by "at least at that level" is what he means by "transcending": Christian wives who truly love their husbands in the way Jesus exhorted them to love and in the way Paul exhorts them to love will be more than submissive. They will be so loving that the term "submission" can hardly describe their relationship.

One time I was in a car with a well-known evangelical scholar, and we were discussing our wives. The conversation eventually flowed into the matter of submission, partly out of curiosity to what we each believed. A statement he made illustrates the previous paragraph: "I believe in a wife submitting to her husband, but I don't believe the husband ever has the right to demand it. In fact, I know that when I am worthy of submission, my wife submits; and when I am unworthy of it, she does not." His final words send up all the fireworks: "My responsibility as a husband is to be worthy." That is the point! When a husband focuses on submission and the

wife worries about it, the image of marriage is distorted. But when each focuses on the mutual responsibility to love and serve one another, the image of marriage is clear and beautiful.

In our previous paragraphs the issue of feminism has been vying for discussion. This, then, is a good place to survey how modern feminists, and some of their opponents, interpret Scripture. Feminist hermeneutics describes how the various branches of the modern-day feminist movement interpret the Bible and examines the various ways that movement seeks to apply (or deny) the relevance of the biblical text. *Radical feminist hermeneutics* is suspicious of the text, ultimately repudiating the revelatory value of the text in many (if not all) of its dimensions because of an ideological agenda that drives the interests of the interpreter. Such interpreters see a chauvinistic world inherent in a text that is ultimately used in manipulating and subjugating women. The appeal to Sarah in our text, it is argued, is because she legitimates male dominance. The text for these interpreters has no value except to point to error.

Liberal feminist hermeneutics tones down some of the starker proposals of the radical feminists. Here there is a desire to retrieve what is good, even if heavily suppressed, in the ancient text, while there is also a clear decision to reject what is unacceptable to modern feminist experience and ideology. While the text is clearly influenced by a hierarchical and patriarchal world, there are features of that text that can be sustained across the centuries.

Within the orbit of evangelicalism, an *evangelical feminist hermeneutic* argues for a hermeneutic of understanding that is both socio-critical with respect to the text as well as mildly submissive to the text. This approach sees the text of 1 Peter 3:1–6 as a text for its time, accommodated to its cultural context. While it is not a chauvinistic act of manipulation, it is still heavily dominated by a male culture, and to that degree it must be reconstructed or altered. In other words, the text must be understood in its own terms, decoded, and then restructured to speak to modern women. While one might wonder if the text is allowed here to speak for itself, it should be pointed out that there is a living dialectic in this movement between the authority of the text and the modern world, creating what is clearly a living synthesis of how Christians ought to understand the Bible.

Finally, the *hermeneutic of many conservatives is one of tradition*. The text is timeless; a patriarchal world is what God intends, and women are to be submissive to the divinely ordained order, which has men as God's appointed heads of authority. To be sure, there are abuses, but in the main the cultural changes we find today are inconsistent with biblical notions and therefore ought to be criticized. The key for this approach to our text (and other texts of the same ilk) is to understand it and apply it, though a minimal amount of restructuring may be necessary.

It is impossible for me to evaluate each of these methods here, nor is it necessary. The alternatives for evangelical scholars nearly always fall into the latter two camps: evangelical feminism or traditionalism. To the degree that one believes the text must be updated, to that degree the interpreter is feminist in orientation. However, rather than be labeled in this camp, I urge that each interpreter look long and hard at his or her own principles and see if consistency is achieved in the process of interpretation. It will simply not do for someone to dismiss slavery as outmoded, or to contend for civil disobedience to governmental authorities, or to argue for some kind of "Mr. Mom" theory, and then not be consistent in permitting to women the same freedom and change of application. Nor is it fair to argue without substantial reasoning for

some things being cultural (like wearing jewelry or fancy clothing) and other things being transcultural. Above all, we must be both biblically anchored and culturally reasonable if we are to let the gospel have its way of power today.

TRAGICALLY, WHILE MODERN society has made great strides in the direction of equality of all peoples, men have remained behind the times in learning how to love their wives respectfully and treat women appropriately. Too frequently interpreters have become so preoccupied with the verses about women that they have neglected the impact Peter's exhortation to men ought to have on our world. But the words of Peter to husbands are highly relevant; therefore, I will devote my attention here to those words.

There are, in the United States alone, around sixty thousand reported cases of rape a year, not to mention many more that are left unreported. That there are between three to six million women per year who are victims of some form of physical violence in their homes staggers the imagination. In addition, it is women (or the elderly) who are the favorite targets of robbery and assault. In each of these kinds of sinful, social deviance, the prominent issue is a violent act by a man who takes advantage of a woman because of his superior strength. In my judgment, the most blatant and pervasive form of men using violence against women is at the emotional and mental level—husbands intimidating, threatening, and manipulating their wives in countless ways. Anger is the foundation of it all; angry men at home may be the biggest problem in our society, however they appear in the public square. This problem of anger-induced violence, or violence against women in general, is not just found among non-Christians. The typical pastor sees over a dozen persons per year who are involved in family violence.

Against each of these acts of violence the words of Peter could be cited. Some (too many) men, for whatever reason, try to strengthen their own egos by bully behavior and refuse to live within the limitations of their own inadequacies. Instead of living with the tension created by their inability to persuade or their inability to love or feel loved, they resort to violent activity targeted for a vulnerable woman. When the wife has small children, she becomes doubly addicted to staying with the abusive man: She both loves him (in spite of his violence) and loves her children. Furthermore, acts of violence against wives are often followed by some form of remorse, guilt, and apology, leading the wife to think things will get better. But the man will only change when he becomes convinced that the wife will no longer tolerate his abuse. Total separation is about the only hope for the wife and nearly the only form of communication that can get through to the husband. In some cases, the cycle of violence can be broken and restoration can take place.[44]

When violence takes place in a Christian home, it is sickening, both because of what happens to the wife (and children) but also because of the negative social implications it has for the impact of the gospel. Pastors, Sunday school teachers, parents, and Christian media need to devote large amounts of time and space to the instruction of boys and young men, not to mention adult men, in order to inform them of the hideousness of acts of violence against women and to guide them through and out of any feelings of violence or assaults of women. The church may pretend that acts of violence do not take place within its walls, but they do; and the church has this small word of Peter regarding any kind of violence against wives, daughters, and women.

Peter's advice is rooted in the notion that Christian husbands need to understand their wives. To be sure, wives need to understand their husbands as much as husbands need to understand their wives, but we are not talking here about what women need to understand. Husbands need not only a crash course[46] in understanding their wives, but they need to become lifelong learners of them because, just as husbands change over the years, so also do wives. Gary Smalley's conclusion is as humorous as it is helpful:

> I would venture to say that most marital difficulties center around one fact—men and women are TOTALLY different. The differences (emotional, mental, and physical) are so extreme that without a *concentrated effort* to understand them, it is nearly impossible to have a happy marriage. A famous psychiatrist once said, "After thirty years of studying women, I ask myself, 'What is it that they really want?' " If this was his conclusion, just imagine how little we know about our wives.

It would be foolish for me to think I could sketch here a "view of women," but I do think that my experience of over twenty years of marriage to a wonderful (and challenging!) woman, my experience in studying the Bible, and my reading about marriage entitle me to a couple pieces of advice. Truly, no marriage is perfect because, as sinners, we all have personal problems that prevent us from being all that we could and should be to our mates. But that is no basis for excuse-making, nor is it any reason to avoid working hard at being a good husband.

First, I believe that wives want a husband who is loving, caring, sensitive, and understanding. Men may strut around thinking that what a woman wants is a strong man, a hulk, or a successful man who drives fancy cars and wears flashy suits; but when the doors are shut in the house, those things disappear into a mist. What remains is a desire by a woman to have a husband that understands her and loves her. A wife responds to a husband who showers all of his attention on her all the time, not just when he wants something. A wife wants a husband who calls her during the day to tell her an important piece of news because he can't wait to share it with her—because she is his best friend. A wife wants a husband who listens to her, really listens and learns in each conversation just what she is saying. In other words, a woman wants to be "number one" to her husband (just as a husband wants to be "number one" to his wife). A good test here might be that you imaginatively eliminate your wife's last birthday, the last Christmas, and your last anniversary, and ask yourself, "Are there any other special days during the year that I showered her with my love?" If not, you have much to learn about what it means to make your wife number one, to show her your love and affection, to show her that you care.

Second, I believe that a wife wants a husband who is respectable and worthy of honor. Men are powerful at work and weak at home; men are famous in the public square but unauthoritative in the home. The reason for such a dramatic shift is that the wife knows what her husband is "really like," and there is no pretense inside the home. What a woman wants is a man who is consistent and therefore respectable, a man who lives his life with personal integrity in such a manner that he is justly "famous in his living room" as well as at work.

Perhaps it is because I have been married to a psychologist for so long, but I rarely trust the "public image" of professional athletes, those who are in the media, or those whom we see often in public (at work, at school, etc.). What I like to know is, "What are they really like at

home?" When we hear of the breakdown of marriages of people in the public eye, we are usually confronted with the obvious problem of someone whose public persona is quite different from the private reality (call it "hypocrisy," if you want). Wives know these things, and what our wives want from us is integrity—and that means being who we are wherever we are. In other words, that means extending our private lives into the public, not creating two different personas.

I could go on about the implications of Peter's advice to husbands to be considerate in their relationship with their wives. The above two pieces of advice only begin to illustrate what it means to "live with our wives knowledgeably." Other points could be made, involving such things as leadership, responsibility, planning, caring for children, and taking time for vacations. But they will only strengthen the observations about what wives want from their husbands. If I go much further, my wife will have me cornered for the rest of my life.

Socially, those who believe men need to treat women considerately and kindly and who also believe, with Peter, that violence against women is morally despicable, need to agitate for stiffer punishment for those who abuse women. It is a blot against our society that abusive men—men who have raped women, who have had incestuous relations, and who have beaten women—can be sentenced and then freed all too quickly, only to commit the same or worse crimes. As Christians, we ought to speak vocally against light punishments and to argue instead for "truth in sentencing." We ought to write to our public leaders and express our outrage about leniency for violent crimes. Furthermore, we ought to elect judges who take a stand against violence against women, just as we ought to protest against judges who are lenient with violent husbands and fathers.

1 Peter 3:8–12

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,

"Whoever would love life
and see good days
must keep his tongue from evil
and his lips from deceitful speech.
He must turn from evil and do good;
he must seek peace and pursue it.
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."

THE FIFTH AND final section of Peter's "Guidelines to Social Groups" (i.e., household codes) expresses his concern with everyone in the churches, and his regulations exhort Christians on how they are to behave in general. Accordingly, this section records the general ethical principles required of believers who want to live circumspectly in a world that opposes both their lifestyle and existence.

Peter begins with a brief listing of virtues concerning harmonious social relations (3:8); these are immediately followed by two clauses that deal with an appropriate Christian response to opposition (3:9). These exhortations are then buttressed in 3:10–11 by a quotation from Psalm 34:13–17, reexpressing the virtues of 3:8–9 and grounding the motivation of living this way by an appeal to the omnipresence and omniscience of God (3:12). Peter calls his readers' attention to this passage from Psalms especially because of its last verse.

The interpreter must decide whether 3:8 is concerned with "insider" ethics (how individual members are to interact with one another) and 3:9 with "outsider" ethics, or whether both verses are concerned with how Christians are to relate to the world. To begin with, Peter's exhortations here are applicable to every encounter Christians have with others. To be sure, (1) his concern from the beginning has been with how various Christians relate to the outside world (Christians to government, slaves to unbelieving masters, wives to unbelieving husbands, and husbands to wives in general); (2) there is nothing in 3:8 that makes us think exclusively in terms of insiders; and (3) 3:9 is clearly concerned with outsiders. The flow of the text, then, makes us think almost exclusively in terms of how Christians are to relate to the outside world. In other words, we would be on sure footing if we read 3:8 as providing ethics for general relations in society rather than for relations within the Christian community, and particularly for how the church ought to relate to a hostile society (3:9). In this interpretation, Peter then grounds this ethics in the important observation that "God is watching us" (3:10–12).

However, to balance the evidence properly, we must note that the specific words Peter uses in verse 8 are used elsewhere in the New Testament (documented below) for the ideal relations of Christians to one another. I contend, then, that Peter begins by exhorting all Christians to relate to one another in a certain way, both because it is right for them to relate this way and because it provides them with a family of acceptance in the face of a hostile world.

Ethics for General Relations in the Church (3:8). While the previous three sections were addressed to specific kinds of people (slaves, wives, husbands), this exhortation is for "all of you." All his addressees are to "live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble." If our conclusion above is accurate, the focus in these virtues is on how Christians demonstrate these virtues as they live with one another in a hostile world. They must begin with "harmony" (cf. Acts 4:32; Rom. 12:16; 15:5; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:2; 4:2) in both mind and spirit. When this virtue is present, "what results from this is not uniformity but unanimity." Harmony is, in part, a development of being "sympathetic" (cf. Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26; Heb. 4:15; 10:34). It is both compassion and understanding.

In addition, believers are to "love as brothers" (1 Peter 1:22; 2:17; 1 Thess. 4:9). Such a virtue characterized much of early Christianity, though because of human nature, it was always under threat. Christians are to love one another and any whom they encounter as good neighbors. Those who love others are also "compassionate" (Eph. 4:32) and "humble" (Phil. 2:3).

Ethics for Relations to a Hostile Society (3:9). Since it is difficult to imagine Peter thinking of Christians throwing hostile barbs at one another, we are probably justified in thinking he has here moved from "inter-Christian" ethics to "outsider" ethics—to how believers should relate to the hostile world in which they live. "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing," just as Jesus lived (cf. 2:21, 23). Once again, Peter sees the Christian response to pressures from the outside world as one of passivity and grace, not aggressive retaliation. Why? "Because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." Peter anchors their relationships to outsiders in their calling and promises them a "blessing."

While some have seen this blessing as the final state of salvation, others find here a promise for some kind of blessing in this life, perhaps a longer life or greater toleration for Christian faith.[7] In light of Peter's citation of Psalm 34, where the beginning emphasis is on "see[ing] good days" (3:10), he likely has in mind a prolonged life on this earth because of Christian goodness, in spite of persecution. In line with his emphasis at 2:11–12, he imagines it will be a much better life for the churches if they are quiet, humble, and gentle, and if they refrain from retaliation and vindication. One might dub this orientation as "optimistic," but it is a conclusion drawn by a victim of persecution who knows, from tough times, how life works.

Foundation for Ethics: God Is Watching Us (3:10–12). In Peter's principle that believers are to absorb some injustices for the sake of the gospel by not returning evil with evil, the apostle expresses a theological anchor that goes deep into the network of New Testament theology. The Christian is supposed to be motivated by a desire to receive a "blessing from God" (3:9), a desire grounded in the fact that God is the final Judge. Christians have been called to inherit a blessing, which is God's reward for an obedient life. Peter supports his exhortation by quoting an Old Testament text that describes the close relationship between one's life and God's assessment of that person. Knowing that God knows everything and is control of everything gives Christians a serenity and acceptance of injustices while they await the truthfulness of God's final assessment.

Psalm 34 is particularly suitable for a situation of being harassed and persecuted. Its theme is that the one who wants to "get along in this world" must be peace-seeking, gentle-spoken, and good. Yet the fundamental point Peter makes is that God is omniscient and omnipresent—he sees all, knows all, and is always present. People must not think that they can get by with evil behavior, for God is watching and evaluating; his eyes are on the righteous. Moreover, he hears their prayers—that is, God is on their side, protecting and shielding them. At the same time, the Lord's face is turned against those who are wicked. Once again we are drawn back to 1 Peter 2:12: Those who live righteously before God will, in the end, be vindicated by God on the great day of glory, but those who live sinfully and oppressively will receive condemnation from God Almighty on that same day of his glory.

IT REQUIRES NO special knack to understand abstract moral principles and see their *general* relevance to one's everyday Christian life. Texts that exhort Christians to "live in harmony with one another" are not hard to apply, since "living in harmony" is so flexible a principle and so clear an order that a special context is not required to discern its relevance. Texts that are specific and intricately linked with a cultural context (e.g., shaking the dust from your feet at Matt. 10:14) require the interpreter to generalize a specific practice into a

transcultural principle that can then be applied to his or her target audience. But if the principle is general, specific applications need to be discerned for that principle to be practiced in various cultures.[9] Our passage here provides an abstract principle ("live in harmony") for us apply to our cultures in various ways.

To be sure, to say "live in harmony" in Ireland may be different from saying it in the Netherlands, but the point remains the same: Abstract moral principles are not hard to understand. Their *specific* application in particular contexts, however, may be especially difficult to put into actual practice. This passage, then, is filled with abstract moral principles (be sympathetic; live in light of the judgment) that are not hard to understand (Christians of all ages need to live in light of the judgment), but specific applications can be difficult.

What does it mean, for instance, to "live in harmony" when one Christian group disagrees theologically with another Christian group? As an example, for a post-World War II Confessing Christian survivor of a German concentration camp to be understanding of a German Lutheran State Church pastor who supported (indirectly or even directly) the Third Reich was more than difficult for many of them. In the broader context of biblical theology, a statement like "live in harmony" cannot be given more than its due because it is not intended to be the only factor in determining relationships. Truth is not sacrificed on the altar of harmony, but personal feelings belong on that altar. I can live in harmony with the person who has offended me by worshiping with him and by serving him; I cannot live in harmony with the person who blasphemes the name of Jesus Christ. I can pray for him and I can evangelize him, but those activities are not what Peter has in mind when he speaks of harmony.

Thus, in moving this text into our world, we must take into consideration Peter's setting as well as consider the meaning of his words and the function they were to have in his setting. He is exhorting communities under stress to live in harmony so that the gospel can have its desired effects. He is not speaking of the attempts of some Roman Catholics and Anglicans to unite their respective congregations into one large, catholic communion (though his point about harmony might apply in some senses). For true application to take place, the context of Peter must be considered carefully.

If Peter's words here are driven by the contextual situation of Christians under stress, then they need to be applied especially to any situation where Christians are experiencing persecution. Whenever Christians are under threat, they need to be harmonious and love one another if they are going to be able to make an impact on the outside world; in fact, they may need to unify *simply in order to survive*. In the introduction to this commentary, I called attention to the work of J. H. Elliott. One major element of his understanding of 1 Peter is his accurate emphasis on the church as the household of God. Elliott develops this emphasis in the direction of self-identity; that is, the church developed its own identity through its reliance on other members who could become an extended family and allow that very identity to nurture itself and grow. Two Christian fundamental ethical principles were brotherly love and not retaliating when injustices occurred. I believe Peter's exhortations here are not only Christian theology and ethics, but also important common sense at the social and pragmatic level: If his audience wants to survive and live God's will in this world, then they must be loving and kind people.

To bring this passage into our modern world, then, and to apply it the way Peter did, we should find analogous circumstances of Christian communities under threat. In fact, this context is more important for application than is sometimes recognized, for this text is only *indirectly* about social influence. It is about how to live together under stress in such a way that the community can survive. The impact this community may have on its surrounding environment is indirect; that is, if believers live together harmoniously, they will be able to survive; if they meet injustices with non-retaliatory attitudes, they may have an influence on their world. But this text is not a strategy for evangelizing the world. Life among the outsiders is here described as a life known for being nonvindictive (3:9, 10–11). One has to think that the peace that is enjoined in 3:11 is along the line of being harmonious, gentle, and "submissive" (2:13, 18; 3:1, 7).

If it is Christian high school students experiencing opposition at the public schools for meeting with one another "at the pole" to pray for the school, or if it is the Christian businessman or businesswoman finding it tough going in an unsanctified environment, or if it is some local church in a difficult area of China, the words of Peter are especially important: Stay together, live peacefully, do not retaliate. Christians ought to be good citizens and be obedient to their superiors; wives ought to win their husbands by good behavior, and husbands ought to live with their wives sensitively. These short exhortations, then, are timeless words, but I doubt that they are a timeless or a "situationless" strategy for every Christian facing persecution.

My daughter and her friends, for instance, can write to the school newspaper and appeal to their civil rights for free speech; a Christian businesswoman can appeal to the same or to "fair trade" laws; a local church in Saudi Arabia, however, may have no other option. That last situation is analogous to Peter's situation. But what should Christians do when they face persecution and can do something about it? This is exactly the kind of question we need to ask and probe in order to find out how to apply this text to our world.

I contend, above all, that regardless of whether we can do something about our situation, the gentleness and "general pacifistic" nature of Peter's exhortations are fundamental to how Christians are to relate to the outside world. We ought not to be known for fighting and quarreling, nor ought we to become an unruly mob that is always agitating for one thing or another. Instead, we ought to be seen as peace-loving people who are good citizens. This is what I mean by "pacifistic" (the word comes from *pax*, the Latin word for "peace"). Christians are to be known not only for their love (John 13:34), but also for their peacefulness.

Arguing that Christians ought to be peaceful does not mean they ought to opt out of culture and the public forum. There is a time when they ought to act, just as there is a time when they ought to wait. But, Peter urges us, when they do act, it should be in a gentle, law-abiding manner and in consort with one another; they live before the holy God who will judge them for their behavior.

Another point worthy of consideration is whether words like these apply when severe differences over the nature of the gospel are at stake. In other words, does the exhortation to live in harmony apply when the minister has gone off the deep end theologically or when someone in the church has ransacked his own family through hideous sins? I doubt it. Peter's words are not "situationless." They no more apply to the sinning husband in such a way that the wife must stay with him than they do when a leader argues that Christ is but one way of

salvation. Harmony and unity are important, but that unity is not to be preserved by sacrificing what unites Christians: Christ and the gospel.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH should be seen as a *community*, a family. A local church ought to be the model *par excellence* in its own community of what it means to live harmoniously, lovingly, righteously, and peacefully. When disruptions are necessary, even these ought to be done in as peaceful a manner as possible.

John R. W. Stott has insightful words in regard to this issue:

> The problem we experience, whenever we think about the church, concerns the tension between the ideal and the reality. The ideal is beautiful. The church is the chosen and beloved people of God, his own special treasure, the covenant community to whom he has committed himself for ever, engaged in continuous worship of God and in compassionate outreach to the world, a haven of love and peace, and pilgrim people headed for the eternal city. But in reality we who claim to be the church are often a motley rabble of rather scruffy individuals, half-educated and half-saved, uninspired in our worship, constantly bickering with each other, concerned more for our maintenance than our mission, struggling and stumbling along the road, needing constant rebuke and exhortation, which are readily available from both Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles.

Stott contends that there are at least three challenges from the secular world to the church today: the challenge for transcendence, the challenge for significance, and the challenge for community. The church, in other words, ought to be a living embodiment of what God wants for people in social relations. Simon and Garfunkel sang the song that reflected individualism at its highest when they sang, "I am a rock … I am an island … a rock never cries … and an island feels no pain." But what people continually return to is the *need for community that is driven by the divinely created need for love*. The church of Jesus Christ, in its deepest sense, is to be precisely that: the living incarnation of the love of Christ that is expressed for one another and the world.

The great Russian novelist Dostoevsky once said that "hell is the punishment of being *unable* to love." This places love where it ought to be: the most important virtue of the virtues, the leading note of all our relationships. This is the love Peter calls his churches to have as they live in harmony and in community. "Love cures. It cures those who give it and it cures those who receive it."[16] But love must be worked at because those with whom we live in our communities are not, unfortunately, innately lovable. All we can offer to others is who we are: "The primary gift of love is the offering of one's most honest self through one's most honest self-disclosure." When we truly open ourselves to one another, we pave the way for love, and love creates community. But until we open up, we will retain worldly values and blockade the creation of community. This, too, prevents growth, both personal and communitarian, for, as Harry Stack Sullivan said, "All personal growth, all personal damage … as well as all personal healing and growth, come through our relationship with others."

Churches throughout the world need to examine their constitutions and confessions, and then thoroughly analyze their practices to see if the idea of the "church as community" defines their existence. I am not speaking here just of programs, like "coffee hour" or "prayer

meetings"—both good ideas that may well encourage community. Nor am I speaking here only of "church growth" and its apparent development of a larger community. Rather, what I have in mind is a perceptive discernment of our local churches to see if they truly function as a community where people are led to the holy love of God (the Father of the family), where that same love dominates the relationships and programs within that church (the nerve of the family), and where that love is known in the larger society as the characteristic of that church (the mark of the family).

Many kinds of suggestions have been made on how the church can "live as a community." One might think of the *individual home model*, where Christian families begin to become "open" to having others live with them; or one might think of the *community church model*, where churches strive to be an alternative society. Neither of these models is the superior, though the latter is our concern in this section. Unfortunately, many churches are not defined in light of the biblical category of "community." Instead, they are defined by how many people attend, on how tight their doctrinal statement is, or by some other measure. While we have to be balanced, arguing that community, evangelism, and doctrine each have their place in the definition and organization of the local church, we must also admit that far too few churches are defined by how they foster community—and, tragically, in a time when community is fundamentally needed.

A sure indicator of how "community oriented" a church is, in my experience, is how one is greeted and incorporated into a church as a first-time attendee. Both words are important: "greeted" *and* "incorporated." Some churches are gregarious at greeting new people but seem unable to incorporate; other churches may be a little bashful at "greeting" but work strenuously and sensitively at incorporating new people. A church that sees itself as a community welcomes new people and finds a place for them within its fellowship. While it may be normal for a three-year-old to resent the new infant mommy brings home from the hospital, such an attitude among Christians when new (and sometimes gifted!) people enter their community is repugnant. Churches ought to be welcoming, expanding, and developing as they grow with the gifts of new members.

In fact, it is precisely here that we see the fundamental nature of Christian community. When nothing changes and the church stays the same, no one gets upset. But when new people invade the community, as when a transfer student invades a student group or a neighborhood clique, we find out whether or not the church is a true community. When it can reach out and include *because the other person is a Christian*, then the church is operating as a community. But when it finds the poor person unacceptable, the African-American suspicious, or the Irishman intolerable, we are seeing the opposite of what Peter wants in the church. Differences create the need for sympathy and brotherly love. The churches of God are supposed to be communities, and that means expanding, welcoming, and incorporating *all kinds of believers*.

For Peter's day, as for ours, the church as community was vital for survival, for sustaining one's faith in the midst of threats and violence. We cannot compare our "Western trials with society" as identical to the Diaspora churches' experience of persecution, but such an analogy can be made as long as we recognize its distance. If the early church was a community in which Christians found strength to carry on in the midst of troubled times, then the church today

ought to play the same role in our world, whatever the "trouble" might be. If our society is noted by an absence of moral values, then Christians need the family of believers to reinforce and strengthen their resolve to inculcate morals in their children and live a life of righteousness. If our society is noted by pluralism and skepticism about knowing "truth," then Christians need the family of believers to confirm their grasp of the truth as taught in the Bible and to hold that truth high. If our society is noted by psychological battery with its increase in technology and its absence of treating workers as genuine individuals in need of love, then Christians need the family of believers to be a society in which they are treated as those worthy of love and affection.

In a brilliant examination of the problem of self-identity in modern society, Anthony Giddens, a noted British sociologist, contends for elements in a "pure relationship" that characterize meaningful relationships and are the desire of people in modern society. He finds seven characteristics of pure relationships: They (1) are not anchored in social or economic life but in the relationship itself; (2) are sought only for what the relationship itself can do for the parties involved; (3) continue to be based on self-examination of its value for the persons involved; (4) root themselves in commitment to one another rather than in some kinship relationship or economical relationship; (5) focus their attention on intimacy in a world that is characterized by a lack of privacy, thus leading to the idea that a pure relationship is in part a haven in an invasive world; (6) base themselves on mutual trust by the persons involved; and (7) create and sustain self-identity in our world.

Giddens has made some penetrating insights into our modern culture. While marriage and family are two areas where the "pure relationship" ought to be found today, the *pure relationship of which he speaks ought also to be a fundamental trait of the church*. In the church people ought to find trust, commitment, the development of self-identity, and growth in one's understanding of what it means to be a Christian in relationship with others. It can be easily said that what the world needs from the church is an alternative society, a society in which people are treated as genuine individuals worthy of love and instruction. Instead, the church has too often repeated those characteristics of society that are sources of despair and pain, instead of offering an alternative to a hurting people. Put differently, if Peter's churches were havens in which people could endure persecution, ours today ought to be havens in which people can endure the onslaught against personal morals and identity. The church is the house of God, and God is holy and loving. He calls people to be holy and loving *in community*.

1 Peter 3:13–22

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. [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.

PETER HAS NOW instructed various groups with specific guidelines on how to live in a world that is hostile to their presence. What has surrounded the discussion has been the problem of suffering; that is, his guidelines for these groups have been shaped under the fire of persecution. Peter now gives his principles for enduring suffering in a way that is thoroughly Christian. His first guideline, that good behavior will ultimately lead to victory (3:13–22), is followed in chapter 4 with the present value of suffering (4:1–6).

Peter begins the first section with an exhortation to be good, based on the pragmatic concern that such behavior will be less likely to bring persecution (3:13). This, in turn, leads into a discussion on the possible problem: suffering in spite of doing good (3:14). Regardless of what is going on, Peter adds, Christians must be ready always to explain their hope in an unassuming manner (3:15–16). He then repeats (in different terms) the point made in 3:13: The perfect way for the Christian is to do good, for it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing bad (3:17).

Attached to that section on the importance of being good in order to alleviate suffering are some verses about Jesus that have stirred up considerable controversy in the history of the church, not to mention the idea that Jesus "descended into hell" (see the Apostles' Creed). As will be seen below, I believe these verses are attached here to emphasize the *victory* that Jesus achieved in order that the readers can perceive that, if they live the way Jesus did (doing good), they also will find ultimate victory in spite of the persecutions that loom on their horizon. When the next chapter begins, we find ourselves back at the themes discussed at 3:13–18: The suffering of Christ is a model of how to endure suffering. This confirms that 3:18–22 begins with the themes of 3:13–17 but extends them into a digression on more than what was brought up in Peter's concerns for his readers.

The Pragmatic Issue (3:13). While it may be naive for someone to think that good behavior will *always* save the Christian from persecution, such naiveté does not characterize Peter here. To be sure, he asks this question somewhat rhetorically ("Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?"), but he is clearly aware that believers will nonetheless have to endure suffering (cf. 1:6–7; 2:11–12, 15, 18–25; 3:9). But this pragmatic argument fascinates Peter; he has raised the issue in different forms already and uses it particularly as a tool for evangelism (2:11–12, 14–15; 3:1–2, 9, 10–12). The followers of Jesus have been taught this (Matt. 5:16), and early Christian experience for the Petrine churches confirmed it (1 Peter 2:11–12; 3:1–2). What we have, then, is a stance of hope that is baptized into a context of realism (cf. 3:14, 16–

17). But ultimately, Peter's assurances are grounded in his final hope: God will eventually (even if not now) establish complete justice.

The Possible Problem (3:14). Showing that he is not naive about this issue of suffering, Peter continues by saying that "even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed." While he believes generally in the rule that good behavior will alleviate suffering, he knows that not all opponents will be lenient. Even here he finds something positive: As Jesus taught, those who suffer because of doing what is right will be blessed by God (Matt. 5:10). Peter's exhortation to his readers, when they do have to endure suffering, is not to fear the oppressors. Once again, he draws this teaching from Jesus (Matt. 10:26–33).

The Need for Preparation (3:15–16). Instead of fear, believers are to honor the Lord Christ by being ready to speak boldly about their hope. That is, they are to acknowledge as holy the Lord himself and refuse to profane his name or breach his covenant with them by fearing someone else more than him. But such a disposition is not relegated to one's mental or spiritual attitudes. Rather, to set apart the Lord is a dimension of Peter's exhortation to holy living (1:2, 13, 22; 2:1–2, 5, 24; 4:1–6). This implies a constant willingness to speak up for him, to confess one's allegiance to him, and to witness fearlessly to his saving grace.

The defense of the Christian concerns their "hope." This term is not to be thought of specifically, in categories like "millennium" or "rewards." Rather, it is to be understood comprehensively, as all that drives the present history toward its destined future. Thus, this term includes terms like "salvation," "inheritance," "hope" (e.g., 1:21), and final vindication (3:18–22). Christians are, in other words, expected to be prepared to speak at any moment about God's salvation of his people through Jesus Christ and how that salvation will manifest itself at the end of history. This very hope sustains them through persecution and gives them strength to carry on when everything looks dismal (cf. 1:6–9).

Such a boldness, Peter warns, ought not to lead to a haughty, ugly defensiveness but to "gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander." Instead of brash defensiveness (which is frequently nothing more than an expression of insecurity), Christians ought to defend the Lord in a humble and respectful manner. Such a manner can lead both to conversions (3:1–2) and to leniency when persecution strikes (3:13). Moreover, if they live a good life before their opponents, they can have a "clear conscience" (Rom. 2:15; 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:12).

The Perfect Way (3:17). Once again, Peter returns to the pragmatic situation: "It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." That is, "it is better" both before God and in the practical results for living if people live a godly life. If God wills that they are to suffer, it is better that such takes place when the Christians are doing good rather than evil.

A Digression on the Example of Jesus (3:18–22). These verses begin with the example of Jesus as worthy of understanding and imitating in order to cope with persecution (when God so wills). Jesus suffered as a righteous man (for the unrighteous), but he was also vindicated and now sits at the right hand of God. Between the statement of Jesus' suffering and his vindication Peter brings up some kind of preaching of Jesus to spirits (3:19). These spirits are then subjected to further scrutiny as Peter identifies them with the spirits who were alive at the time of Noah, which in turn gives rise to a Petrine comparison of the delivery of God's people during

the Flood (through the ark) with the delivery of contemporary Christians through baptism (3:20–21). All of this is tied off with a conclusion about the vindication of Jesus. Even though Jesus suffered (3:18), he was ultimately vindicated by God (3:22).

Few passages have so many themes and different ideas intertwined. It is no wonder that commentators have shaken their heads in despair! But the main point is not complex. Just as Jesus suffered as a righteous man and was vindicated, so too if the churches of Peter live righteously (as he has exhorted them to do), they will be vindicated and sit with Jesus in the presence of God. Such an understanding of this passage is a typical way of putting this section into focus with the previous verses (3:13–17).

At this point, however, the discussion becomes highly complex and controversial. It has led to three main views: (1) the descent-into-hell view, (2) the preexistent Christ view, and (3) the triumphal proclamation over the spirit-world view. Rather than seeking to defend or to refute any of these views at length, I will briefly explain each view and show how each position fits into the overall theme of this section in 1 Peter.[10]

(1) For those who believe Peter is here describing the descent of Jesus into hell after his death, the prominent features are as follows: (a) "through whom" refers to Christ in his disembodied spirit and prior to his resurrection, (b) the "spirits" refer either to the fallen angels of Genesis 6:1–4 or to the spirits of those who died prior to the Flood, (c) the "prison" refers to the underworld, (d) the expression "he went" describes a descent into the underworld, and (e) "preached" refers to a genuine offer of salvation to those who had never had an opportunity to hear the gospel. In general, then, while the text does bring in some extraneous factors, it deals with the vindication of Jesus and his continued ministry in spite of death. As the text goes on, the theme of vindication becomes more prominent.

(2) The view that Peter is describing the preexistent Christ understands the same elements as follows: (a) "through whom" describes the preexistent Christ in the person of Noah, (b) the "spirits" are the contemporaries of Noah who needed to hear the word of God, (c) the "prison" is a metaphor for sin and ignorance or a literal description of their location now, (d) "he went" refers neither to a descent nor an ascent but rather describes simply that Jesus spoke to that generation, and (e) the verb "preached" describes a genuine presentation of the gospel of salvation to the contemporaries of Noah. Once again, the overall compatibility of this view with the theme of 3:13–17 is not hard to understand: Just as Jesus endured suffering in different ways and experienced opposition to his preaching, though he remained faithful, so also the Christians Peter is addressing must remain faithful in spite of suffering.

(3) The view that Peter is here describing a triumphal proclamation of Jesus Christ after his resurrection and prior to his exaltation assumes a Jewish context and takes the following views: (a) "through whom" refers to some kind of spiritual existence of Christ after his resurrection (as the chronology of the text suggests), (b) the "spirits" refer to the fallen angels of Genesis 6:1–4, (c) the "prison" describes the upper regions of binding or, in the words of 2 Peter 2:4, the "pits of darkness," (d) "he went" refers to an *ascent* of Jesus, and (e) "he preached" describes the proclamation of victory that Jesus announced over the spirit world as he ascended to the right hand of God. Once again, the compatibility of this view with the theme of 3:13–17 is obvious: Just as Jesus was vindicated before his opponents, so also will the Christians be, if they, like Jesus, remain faithful and righteous to the tasks God has called them to do.

I prefer the third view, but regardless of the view one takes, I would emphasize at this point the need to see this passage in light of its context: the overall theme of vindication. Jesus was righteous and suffered for the unrighteous; God vindicated him by exalting him to his right hand. The churches of Peter need to know that if they remain faithful, like Jesus they too will be vindicated. That is the hope that ought to sustain them as they endure suffering, the hope of which they are to be ready to speak, and the hope that Peter urges them to embrace.

IN INTERPRETING THIS passage, one needs to recognize how easy it is to drift into the problem verses (3:19, 21) and lose sight of the way in which these particularly disputable passages fit into the general theme of persecution and suffering. That is, focusing on these verses tips the balance against the weight of the passage—how the example of Jesus becomes a source of encouragement for those who are facing suffering. While I would not want to minimize the significance of this passage for formulating special ideas (though I doubt debate about the location of Jesus after his death and before his exaltation advances theology much), it is fundamentally important to interpret these problem verses in light of their overall context.

Furthermore, interpreting problem passages in light of their overall context permits us to see the more basic point of the author here: *vindication*. Vindication, not the precise nuances of baptism (for infants or adults? by immersion or by sprinkling?), is a significant point with many ramifications for Christian living today. That is, while the context is one of suffering—and suffering is comparably rarer today than in Peter's day—the theme of vindication applies more readily to our world. In general, then, we learn how to move a text into our world today more effectively if we learn to interpret specific elements of a text in light of the larger picture.

On the other hand, I do not want to minimize the importance of examining difficult passages and learning how to make applications of such passages in our world. But such passages need to be dealt with fairly; we need to canvass the interpretations to find the options. As seen above, there are three broad views of the difficult expressions in 3:19. Then we need to examine the evidence for each viewpoint, a procedure that is beyond the scope of this commentary, though I have pointed the reader to a significant piece of bibliography for each view. Finally, we need to come to a conclusion for ourselves. After analyzing the evidence myself, mostly in preparation for class lectures at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where students are quick to challenge a professor's points of view, I came to agree with those who thought that Peter was utilizing a view about spirits that was current in the Judaism of his time. Inheriting this tradition, probably from *1 Enoch* (a Jewish pseudepigraph), Peter adds color to it by having Jesus announce his victory over the nether world in his exaltation to the Father.

Finally, we need to be humble about conclusions to passages that are "clearly unclear." Accordingly, while I prefer the view stated above, I am by no means certain (and neither was Martin Luther—a man who did not lack confidence in his interpretations!) that this view is vastly superior to the others. Knowing this, we must respect other views and live with the diversity such interpretations create. We do not often find a passage where its central ideas are so much in dispute; when we do, we need to admit that there is great debate over the meaning of the passage.

Another idea worthy of our attention for application is that of the "pragmatic value of doing good." Several times in this letter, and a couple of times in our passage in particular, Peter

urges his fellow Christians to live godly lives *because it will make their difficult situation better*. It would be foolhardy to think Peter was prescribing some surefire method for escaping opposition to the gospel or for a style of living that would make everyone like the churches. His optimistic hope about the value of doing good is tempered by a genuine realism, for in several places he suggests the likelihood of being persecuted. Thus, it is important that his pragmatic argument not be given too much weight in his overall strategy for living Christianly in the world. But the argument is nonetheless valid: If we assume (1) the similarity of human nature and (2) the general limitation of such an argument, then it becomes important to urge Christians who are being persecuted to live godly and good lives *so that those who are against them might be more tolerant of them*. That is, human beings in general do appreciate being respected, and when they are respected, they will be kinder.

Along this same line it makes sense that people who are being opposed will get defensive, even churlish and petulant. For this reason Peter has to urge his readers to be humble and respectful (3:16). In our day, we must remind those who are being opposed for their faithfulness to Christ to avoid using any bitter language and retaliatory speech, however great a temptation it may be. Instead, they must learn to be respectful and humble in their responses to suffering.

Once again, we need to remind ourselves what Peter means by "harm" and "suffering" in our passage. He is not talking about human pains, about children being sassy, or about things not "going our way" in social events. Rather, he is talking about the fundamental opposition to the gospel in society when it is confronted with the truth of the gospel. The way to move this text into our society, then, is to find examples and scenarios where Christians are being persecuted for their faith and where they need to hear both about the pragmatic effects of good behavior and the hope of vindication. That is, we must find those who need to be sustained by the prospect of following the vindication path of Jesus.

FOR THE THEME of vindication to have meaning in our day, we must emphasize both the need to *believe in final justice* and to *live in light of that justice*. Perhaps we have been worn down by the seeming lack of justice in our world, worn down into living in apathy about justice—and especially final justice. Justice in our world seems to be haphazard, even chaotic, and it seems extremely slow in its realization. All of us have followed news stories of murderers or criminals who got "off the hook," received some minor punishment, or were released from jail far too early, only to find that they were arrested shortly thereafter for the same violent crime. When events like this take place before our eyes, it is not surprising that a sense of justice is eroded. Before long we can slide into a state of not believing in ultimate justice.

It is true that sometimes justice does seem to take place in our world; right is rewarded and wrongdoing punished. Our government and its judicial system seem particularly just when it comes to drug busts and abuse of children, and we applaud the government and its officials when they seek to bring a swift and enduring judgment on criminal activity. But we are perplexed when white-collar crime goes unpunished or people who have ruined countless lives can somehow be set free on some "legal technicality." Such haphazard realization of justice erodes our confidence and belief in justice. It is not my task here to criticize or evaluate the legal system, for my readers may come from different countries or different parts of the same

country and may have different perceptions of legal systems and justice. My point is merely that we live in a day when many people *have surrendered their belief in justice to the winds of modernity and relativism.* I suspect that many people in our world have simply given up on any sense of justice.

We must attempt to regain a belief in justice, but we must transfer our hope away from governmental officials to God, to his actions both in this world and especially in the next. It is in that future that we need to focus our hope for final vindication and justice. I can weep about children who are abused by their parents, and I can work until my bones grow weary so that less abuse takes place. But I can also be dismayed when I read in the morning newspaper that some judge has released an accused abuser because of a lack of evidence when nearly all followers of the case were certain of the parent's guilt. To be sure, the legal system demands that evidence be clear and incontrovertible to convict someone of abuse. Nonetheless, I still stand aghast when I see abusers released to commit the same crime. What I argue here is that I can cope more readily with this kind of limitation and chaos in society *because I know that someday all will be rectified, the guilty will be fairly punished, and the innocent victims will be vindicated to enjoy the life that God wants for them.*

But dealing with the theme of justice and vindication has a special angle in Peter's letter. We would be unfair to Peter if we left this theme of vindication at the broadest level. We need to apply *his own angle on vindication* in order to be true to the text. And Peter's angle is that vindication will come to the faithful Christians who are being persecuted because of their faith, obedience, and refusal to participate in the sins of their society. Once again, this leads us into the need for finding analogies in our Christian world, analogies of persecution for being a Christian. In such context the message of vindication needs to be heard.

The critical issue here is to think clearly: Where do Christians suffer injustice *because they are Christians*? Such people need to hear the message of Peter, the message of Christ's vindication and ours, and then to learn to live in light of that message so they can live beyond and through the persecution itself. I have known people who were fired because they were honest, people whose children suffered severe forms of ostracism because they sought to live Christian lives, people whose careers were jeopardized because of their faith and denominational affiliations, and people who simply felt "out of it" because they refused to "run with the crowd." Such people readily discover the message of Peter applicable to their own lives and can find solace in the midst of their trouble by reflecting thoughtfully on the ultimate vindication of God. They can learn to say, "Someday—" and so can learn to live in joy today.

Imagine you are teenager where the majority of high schoolers drink alcohol to the point of drunkenness on a semiregular basis, where many of them smoke pot or use addictive drugs, where they go to bed with other teenagers in a casual manner, and where that same teenage society knows who does these things and who does not. Then imagine that you would not be accepted (to some degree) if you refused to go along with these activities. Peter's message says something to you about your situation. He knows how difficult it is to fight off pressures for acceptance and conformity; he knows that Christians seek to live holy and good lives and so refrain from sinful behaviors; and he knows that you will need to have special faith and courage to endure. My contention is that Peter wants you to focus on the final day when God will bring about ultimate justice. He wants you to say: (1) I will not conform to the sinful habits of my

peers and friends; (2) I will remain faithful to the teachings of Jesus by living faithfully and obediently; (3) I will endure lonely nights and few friends; (4) I will find my friends in those who seek, with me, to be obedient; and (5) I will look forward to the day when God shows that faithfulness rather than acceptance is the truer virtue.

Maybe I am sensitive to these issues because I have two teenagers and because I coach basketball at a high school. But these issues are the very ones our youth are constantly facing. Furthermore, whether we are aware of them or not, similar kinds of peer pressure to conform also face adults. These pressures are "a form of persecution" in the sense that they are socially driven institutions that seek to prevent us from obeying the words of the apostles and the teachings of Jesus. We need to learn, with Jesus, to be just; we need to listen to Peter and seek to be obedient. And we especially need to get our eyes off the problems of acceptance and get them focused squarely on God's final day of vindication, when all will be made right and all true virtues will appear for what they are: the will of God, now done on earth as it is heaven.[5]

AN EXEGESIS OF A PIVOTAL PASSAGE

3:1 The distinctive behavior of the Christian wife is signaled at once by the key expression "likewise," which applies to the wife and also to the husband (vv. 1, 7). Both follow Jesus, the Suffering Servant, whose suffering ultimately led to healing. Both are servants, seeking to serve one another and others for Christ's sake.

3:1, 2 Words come easy; yet a wife's "gentle and quiet spirit" is the healing agent her husband needs (vv. 3, 4). She is allowed the same incredible privilege given to the Lord Jesus, to suffer in order to bring healing to another. Although the reference given is specifically concerning a non-believing husband, the application is also for the Christian husband who is being disobedient to the Lord in a certain area of his life. The wife's "conduct" or lifestyle is to be accompanied by "fear" or reverence in the sense of respect.

3:3, 4 The idea is not that outward appearance is unimportant but rather that the inward qualities are more important. Outward beauty is corruptible; inward beauty, incorruptible. This hidden beauty of the heart is displayed by a "gentle and quiet spirit" (v. 4). This quality is not a reference to genetically acquired personality traits, such as being a person of few words, but rather to an inner attitude marked by the absence of anxiety, coupled with a trust in God as the blessed controller of all things. "Precious" (Gk. *timē*, lit. "value" or "price") is used elsewhere in 1 Peter: the shed blood of Jesus Christ is "precious" (1 Pet. 1:19), and He is the "precious" cornerstone of our faith (1 Pet. 2:6). A woman characterized by a "gentle and quiet spirit" is not only precious to God and a glory to her husband but also a joy to all who are around her!

3:5, 6 Sarah is an example of a woman who trusted God and obeyed her husband. Abraham lied in identifying Sarah as his sister and not his wife (Gen. 20:1–18), and Sarah

[5] McKnight, S. (1996). *1 Peter* (pp. 180–222). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

was immediately taken into the king's harem! Sarah was not trusting Abraham; he had been deceptive and more concerned with saving himself than protecting his wife. Sarah trusted God by giving Him time to work in Abraham's life and in this difficult situation. God intervened and told Abimelech in a dream that Sarah was Abraham's wife. Obviously, if Abimelech had attempted to force Sarah into a sexual liaison, she would have had to tell him the truth and say a definite "no" to intimacy. Sarah is our example because she trusted her sovereign God by giving Him time to work.

3:7 Husbands, as wives, are obliged to follow Christ's example. The first stated duty for husbands is to dwell with their wives with "understanding" (Gk. *kata gnōsin,* lit. "according to knowledge"). The considerate attitude described for husbands likely includes knowledge of God's plan for marriage as well as a personalized understanding of the needs, desires, and goals of their own respective wives. Second, husbands are to give "honor" (Gk. *timē,* lit. "precious") to their wives—respecting and esteeming them (see vv. 3, 4, note). According to Peter, wives are "weaker," possibly an allusion to the fact that a woman's physical strength is not usually equal to her husband's. Both have the dignity of being "heirs together of the grace of life." This realization is the key to mutuality in marriage (see also Eph. 5:21). A husband's failure to treat his wife with dignity and love would hinder his relationship not only with her but also with God.

SUBMISSION

Definition	Method	Example	Rewards
• An attitude of the will • More than obedience • Resting, leaning, trusting, abandoning yourself to the Lord • Void of stubbornness	"As to the Lord" (Eph. 5:22) "To your own husbands" (Eph. 5:22; 1 Pet. 3:1) An act of the will (1 Pet. 3:1, 2) Extends to "everything" (Eph. 5:24) Patterned after the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:25–32)	Jesus: He had no other purpose (Heb. 10:7). To submit was joy (Ps. 40:7, 8). He did not consider His will (John 5:30). Mary: "Let it be to me" (Luke 1:38) Esther: "I will go . . . if I	A vibrant witness (1 Pet. 3:1) A means of glorifying God (1 Pet, 3:5, 6) A means for teaching spiritual truths (Eph. 5:25–32) A way to train children (Titus 2:3–5) The object of human love and divine protection

A response to love (Eph. 5:24, 25)

Extends to everyone:

- The church to Christ (Eph. 5:24)
- All believers to God (Heb. 12:9; James 4:7), to spiritual leaders (Heb. 13:17), to governing authorities (Rom. 13:1, 5; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13), to one another (Eph. 5:21);
- Wives to husbands (Eph. 5:22, 24; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1, 5);
- Children to parents (Eph. 6:1–3);
- Slaves to masters (Titus 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18)

perish, I perish" (Esth. 4:16).

(Eph. 5:25; 1 Pet. 3:7)

A way to increase worth (1 Pet. 3:4)

A means for liberating creativity (1 Pet. 3:7)

SUBMISSION: *AS UNTO THE LORD*

Submission means to put all of yourself—understandings, knowledge, opinions, feelings, energies—at the disposal of a person in authority over you. This never means subjecting yourself to abusive tyranny, nor does it suggest mindless acquiescence to the whims of another. It is the yielding of humble and intelligent obedience—without suggestion of inferiority or worthlessness. A wife's deference to her husband is a duty owed to the Lord. A wive's submission is not as much to her husband, a mere man, as it is to God and His plan for marriage.

Relationships in life are merely the classroom for teaching submission to the will of God. The word translated "submissive" (Gk. *hupotassō*) means literally "to place under,"—for example, husbands (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1, 5), parents (Luke 2:51), masters (Titus 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18), secular authorities (Rom. 13:1; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13), and church officials (1 Pet. 5:5). The word is also used with respect to God (1 Cor. 15:28; Heb. 12:9; James 4:7) and to Christ (Eph. 5:24).

The Book of Esther provides a possible study in submission. Queen Vashti—self-ruled, greedy, selfish, cowardly—was unwise in disobeying Ahasuerus, who was not only her husband but also her king. She sought to cover her disobedience with the pretense of propriety and attempted to hide her pride with a show of modesty. The text gives no evidence that Ahasuerus did any more than give a ridiculous and distasteful command. Obedience only to "reasonable requests" is selfish license, not good judgment.

On the other hand, Esther was obedient, grateful, selfless, and courageous. She was a member of a minority race, an orphan child bereft of family and friends and saddled with awesome and fearful responsibility. Yet Esther rose to the occasion with an inner beauty of spirit and unshaking commitment to God's providence. She was obedient to her foster father (Esth. 2:20), cooperative with authorities over her (Esth. 2:8, 9, 15), and submissive to her husband (Esth. 2:17; 5:2–4; 8:3).

See also Esth. 1:15–22; Heb. 13:17; notes on Complementarity (Eph. 5); Egalitarianism (Rom. 9); Equality (Gal. 3); Headship (Gen. 1); Marriage (Gen. 2; 2 Sam. 6; Prov. 5; Hos. 2; Amos 3; 2 Cor. 13; Heb. 12); Obedience (Philem.); Wives (Prov. 31); portraits of Esther (Esth. 2); Sarai (Gen. 11); Vashti (Esth. 1)

3:9 Many relationships develop an "evil for evil" or insult for insult pattern of interaction. Peter noted that to achieve intimacy, both parties must cultivate Christ's pattern of rendering a blessing when experiencing hurt or unjust treatment (1 Pet. 2:21–24). This response is a distinctive characteristic of the Christian ethic (see Matt. 5:43–46; Rom. 12:17–21). Peter gave three reasons for this unusual response to hurt (1 Pet. 3:9–12). First, the one who gives a blessing to others will receive a blessing in return (v. 9). Second, positive responses produce an attitude of enjoyment and love for life (v. 10). Third, God hears the prayers of those who follow this pattern and turns His face against those who do not (v. 12). Seeking peace and pursuing it by disciplining one's tongue has practical rewards and is wise in all relationships (v. 11).

EVANGELISM: *PERSONAL TESTIMONY*

Nothing is any more effective in drawing someone to Jesus Christ than the sharing of personal testimony (John 4:39; 11:32). Believers should always be ready to share. A

personal testimony catches the attention of those listening and holds the interest of the unbeliever (John 4:28–30).

By its very nature, a personal testimony is unique. It should describe your life before receiving Christ, how you realized your need for Christ, what steps you took to become a Christian, how Christ helps you and makes a difference in your daily life, and any unique ways Christ has dealt with you in drawing you to Himself. A personal testimony is difficult to refute because an individual is sharing truth that has come to her firsthand through her own personal experience with God (John 4:29).

A personal testimony is an opportunity for you to identify with the unbeliever and to show how Christ makes the difference in a person's life (John 4:42). Preparing a thoughtful and logical defense of the faith enables the believer to present the gospel in a persuasive manner, answering with clear and precise reasons for her hope in Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:15).

See also 2 Chr. 7:11–16; 15:1–19; 20:1–25; Neh. 8:1–18; Acts 13:15, note; notes on Evangelism (Matt. 28; John 6; Col. 4); Salvation (Eph. 2); Women's Ministries (John 4; Acts 2; 1 Cor. 11; Eph. 2; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 2)

3:18–22 The spirits in prison could refer to evil angels, to individuals who have died, or to the people who were alive at the time of Noah (v. 19). The passage is difficult to interpret. Christ apparently preached to these "spirits" after His death and before His Resurrection, or perhaps He preached through Noah to the antediluvians prior to the flood (v. 22). The content of Christ's message was likely a victorious proclamation of the defeat of the enemies of God. Peter mentioned this because he wanted the suffering Christians to know that one day their persecutors would face this condemning proclamation just like the evil spirits of the days of Noah.

3:21 Baptism is an "antitype" or picture of salvation, showing Christ's death, burial, and Resurrection as well as portraying the believer's death to sin and resurrection to walk in a new life.

> *God points to the peaceful attitude of suffering people to teach others about Himself.*
> Joni Eareckson Tada[6]

[6] Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman's Study Bible* (1 Pe 3:9–21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The Household Code in 1 Peter 2:18–3:7

Treatments of various portions of society and their status and obligations in relation to other portions of society are known as "household codes." Texts containing a household code existed in various Greco-Roman texts (e.g., Plato's *Republic*, Dio Chrysostom's *On Household Management*) as well as in Paul's writings (e.g., Eph 5:22–6:9).

There are key differences between 1 Peter's household code and those of the broader Greco-Roman world. Foremost is the fact that 1 Peter addresses both wives and slaves directly; furthermore, 1 Peter does not address them as inferior entities but as full members of the covenant community. This is made clear by Peter's comparison of slaves to Jesus Christ himself in 1 Peter 2:21—i.e., Christian slaves do not suffer because it is their lot in life, but rather because they are imitating Jesus Christ. It is also clear in Peter's declaration that Christian wives are "co-heirs" (*synklēronomois*) with their Christian husbands. Consequently, Peter, like Paul, "actually subverted cultural expectations by elevating the slave and the wife with unparalleled dignity" (Jobes 2005, 185); indeed, "by calling attention to the inversion of values which characterized the Christian brotherhood, 1 Peter gave assurance to slaves, women and others of low social rank that 'in Christ' all believers were equal recipients of the grace of God" (Elliott 2005, 149). Additionally, as Christensen (2016, 184) has noted, the Petrine household code is less concerned with the stability "of the Greco-Roman *polis*" than the pagan variations; it possesses radically different "theological purpose statements and christological foundations," in addition to focusing on inward attitude and purpose in addition to outward action. For more on 1 Peter's household code, see Balch 1981; Lovik 195. For general information on Greco-Roman household codes, see the following:

> Household Codes | The Lexham Bible Dictionary
> Household Codes | Lexham Research Commentary: Ephesians
> Household Codes | Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments
> Households and Household Codes | Dictionary of Paul and His Letters
> Women on the Edge (Bauman-Martin 2004) | JBL 123
> From 'Subjection to Authority' to 'Mutual Submission' (Richardson 1987) | Faith and Mission 4

The Christian's Relationship to Society (2:18–3:7)

We have already discussed debate regarding how 1 Peter expects its audience to interact with society (see The Church of 1 Peter and Its Role in Society). I recommend Christensen (2016, 173–93) for a detailed comparison and analysis of the two sides in the debate. In his interaction with Elliott and Balch, Christensen (2016, 185) brings up a key issue: "How willing individuals should be to adopt relationships and cultural norms for the sake of mission, and what issues cannot be compromised because of the necessity of maintaining a distinct identity as a Christian who is 'in the world, but not of the world' (cf. John 17:16)." Christensen sees 1 Peter's message as indicating both resistance (e.g., not worshiping the pagan gods) yet also contact that would provide evangelistic opportunity. In other words, 1 Peter does not allow for "full sectarian withdrawal like the Qumran community" (190–91).

This issue becomes more pertinent when we consider that Peter did not advocate for the overthrow of societal structure, whether it be the Roman Empire, slavery, or other systems. Christians were still to honor the emperor. But at the same time, Peter expected the church to live in such a countercultural way that the people around them thought they were strange (1 Pet 4:4). This would include both the absence of the "wild party" lifestyle that previously characterized many believers (1 Pet 4:3–4), as well as the expression of affection given to Christians even on the lowest rung of society (1 Pet 1:22)—an affection that would indicate all believers are equal members of the household of God. In other words, one can be a slave in the world's house but free in the house of God.

In conclusion, 1 Peter declares that the Christian church must always be countercultural. Drawing from Gonzaléz's (2010, 74–77) statements, we must acknowledge that the church has often failed to recognize the cultural wickedness in even a so-called Christian society, and consequently it has failed to live as light in the darkness. For instance, many churches throughout American history, even after the eradication of slavery (e.g., 1950s), deliberately practiced racial segregation. In doing so, the church was surrendering to the ungodly cultural norm of a supposedly Christian culture and thus failing in its mission to demonstrate to the world a new kingdom and family—one where membership rests not in social status, skin color, or even nationality, but solely in the new birth status confirmed by the Word of God and the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

- Gonzaléz (2010, 74–77) focuses on how Christians simultaneously belong to "two worlds," and how the church is ultimately supposed to model the kingdom of God in the midst of wicked society. Thus, while Christian slaves may exist in pagan, Roman society, within the church itself "there was an overcoming of the division between slave and master and other hierarchical structures of the old creation" (75). Gonzaléz further cautions against what happens under a "Constantinian" system where Christianity becomes culturally acceptable; the danger in such cases is that Christians begin to think that they exist "only in one world"; however, in reality, in the era of Constantine "it was the world of the empire that had invaded the church itself" rather than vice versa (76). Gonzaléz then states, "Even when all the members of a society are part of the church, that society is still a fallen society, and the church still has the task of providing a model of the true life God intends for the world. In that sense, there is no such thing as a 'Christian' society" (76).

  1 Pet 2:18–20 | Belief: 1 & 2 Peter and Jude

- Green (2007, 71) rejects Balch's model that Peter is encouraging acquiescence to the norms of the Roman Empire, arguing that "such a reading of the household code in 1 Peter would require that we view this section of the letter in unbending tension with the rest of the document." Green prefers to see this section as urging believers to avoid "compromise with Roman social values" despite the consequences, seeing 1 Peter 2:13–3:12 as an "inverted parallelism" with the example of Jesus Christ at the center. Consequently, for the "persons without power and privilege" that Jesus is addressing, "their maintenance of Christian behavior in the midst of unjust suffering might bring to faith those who presently abuse them (see 2:12; 3:1)."

  1 Peter 2:13–3:12 | THC: 1 Peter

- Harink (2009, 75) sees the material beginning with 1 Peter 2:11 as causing a "revolt in kind against the enemy," albeit a countercultural revolt that "takes the shape of service, mercy, and forgiveness," and thus initiates a "messianic political revolution." Indeed, through voluntary subordination, the Christian initiates a "revolution that looks like it is not one." Yet based on the redeeming power of the example of Jesus Christ, and the voluntary act of "*serving* '*every human creature,*'" Christians unleash "the gospel's liberating power" upon the world (76–77; emphasis original).

1 Peter 2:11–12 | BTCB: 1 & 2 Peter

Slavery and Freedom in the New Testament (2:18–25)

First Peter 2:18–25 addresses the *oiketai* (the household slaves)—a subset of the broader *douloi* addressed elsewhere in Scripture. Slavery played a significant role in the Roman Empire, especially in the second century BC and onward. Julius Caesar was apparently responsible for approximately one million new slaves from 58–51 BC. In later years, war and conquest often served as a significant source of slavery, exemplified by how Lucius Aemilius Paullus took captive 150,000 people from the region of Epirus and gave them to his soldiers as slaves. Although some of these people would have been ransomed back, the majority would have been sold into slavery (Goldsworthy 2016, 52, 153). Piracy and abduction also fed the slave markets (Goldsworthy 2016, 153), though a slave could also be inherited or simply born into the household since "a child took the status of the mother" (Ferguson 1993, 59). Goldsworthy (2016, 153) provides a helpful summary of slavery in the Roman Empire:

> Hundreds of thousands were enslaved in the second century BC and even more in the first century BC, paying a heavy price for the spread of Roman power. Conditions were worst for those sent to work the mines run by the *publican* in Spain and elsewhere. Life expectancy was only a little better for those destined for the rural estates, some living chained in barracks, their numbers supplemented by free citizens kidnapped while travelling. Household slaves did better, but lacked legal rights and were simply property at the disposal of their owners. Slaves could run, but it was hard to escape and the punishments were severe for those recaptured. All of the servile rebellions were crushed—that of Spartacus ending with the massed crucifixion of 6,000 men along the Appian Way from Rome to Capua as a ghastly warning.

Philosophically, in the eyes of Greco-Roman society, "The legal status of a slave was that of a 'thing.' Aristotle defined a slave as 'living property' (*Politics* 1.2.4–5, 1253b); 'the slave is a living tool and the tool a lifeless slave' (*Nicomachean Ethics* 8.11)" (Ferguson 1993, 59). Yet slaves could be freed, and the Roman Empire probably had a higher proportion of freed slaves than either the preceding Greek Empire or Carthagian Empire, though this was much more likely for the *oikonomoi* (the household slaves; Goldsworthy 2016, 154). Often freedom would be gained through sacral manumission, whereby "the slave's freedom was purchased in a pagan temple in the name of the deity" (Ferguson 1993, 60).

It is within such social circumstances that Peter pens his letter. Neither Peter nor Paul were in a position to abolish slavery. The ghastly crucifixions of previous slave revolts would have been

a deterrent to most slaves anyway. Peter and Paul were not called to be Spartacus. Yet Paul recognized that a Christian slave is not actually a slave in God's eyes, but rather a brother to fellow Christians (Gal 3:28; Phlm 15–16). Peter envisioned those with *oikonomos* status within the church as part of a greater community of equals in Christ. Those who were *oikonomoi* in the world's system were nevertheless fellow members of the new *oikonomia* of Christ. Gonzaléz's (2010, 75) statement bears repeating: Christians existed "in two worlds," and thus "In terms of the issue of slavery they needed to live in Roman society in the old way, but within the community of believers there was an overcoming of the division between slave and master and other hierarchical structures of the old creation." The spiritual solution to the sad state of slavery within the Greco-Roman empire was not violent overthrow but the construction of an alternative society: the church of Jesus Christ, which would ultimately triumph.

While addressing this group of Christians, which included a significant number of both household slaves and wives married to unbelievers, Peter stressed that their code of conduct stemmed from their being free men and women (*eleutheroi*) on the one hand, but slaves of God (*ōs theou douloi*) on the other. The significance—especially applied to Christian slaves—must not be missed. Despite what the world might say, they are both free yet slaves of God, a much greater master. Ironically, in an era where society thought that slaves were obligated to serve their master, Peter declares that the only person one is obligated to serve is God himself. Thus, all Christians, regardless of social status, are actually free of the world yet slaves of God. As Friedrich Schröger (1981, 147–48) brilliantly articulates,

> The Christian is "free" because he expects nothing from Caesar or from the governor, but all from the Lord—*not from "Lord Caesar," but from "Lord Christ."* The criteria and requirement for what is here meant as "freedom" is that one is free from the anxieties of his own salvation, he stands completely in the favor of God, and he is free from anxiety in his interaction with humankind. (emphasis added)

Early Christianity thus developed a concept of freedom that differed from that of the Greco-Roman society—one that allowed a slave to be the equal of a slaveholder within the new ecclesiastical community, for all are equally both free and slaves of God. In the New Testament, freedom is consistently viewed as "freedom *from* circumstances or other people" at the social level; the freedom terminology in the New Testament "points to the fact that believers are set free and enabled to engage others in *agape*" (Hurtado 2015, 209; see also the discussion in Senior 2003, 72–73). This theological orientation explains how *1 Clement* 55:2 describes Christians who willingly sold themselves into slavery so that they might both free and feed others.

Gonzaléz (2010, 69–77) provides a good discussion of slavery in the ancient era in relation to the slavery of Africans in early American history, as well as its theological implications. We should further recognize that a proper understanding of human dignity in Scripture, the testimony of Jesus Christ, and the theology of the New Testament served as the impetus for the abolishment of slavery in the modern era. Consider the examples of Granville Sharp (see Wallace 1998, 594–95, 598–602) and William Wilberforce. E. P. Barrows (1862, 563–606), in an article titled "The Bible and Slavery," presented one of the best (and theologically comprehensive) examples of biblical scholarship from the era prior to the Emancipation Proclamation in the U.S. that eruditely refutes American slavery. We close this section with Barrow's (1862, 605–6) excellent statement:

> The apostles, while they abstained from any interference with slavery, in its outward legal form, introduced into the relation, on both sides, the brotherly love, which, so far as it actually prevailed, emptied this old and selfish system of the main part of its contents, and gradually prepared the way for its outward and formal removal.

1 Peter 2:18a–c (Elliott 2000, 514–15) | AYBC: 1 Peter
Domestic Slavery and First Peter (Witherington 2007, 148–51) | Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians, Volume II: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1–2 Peter
The Bible and Slavery (Barrows 1862) | Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 19
Slavery (Ferguson 1993, 59–61) | Backgrounds of Early Christianity
Slavery in the First Century | Faithlife Study Bible
Slavery | The Lexham Bible Dictionary
Slavery | Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments
Slavery | Dictionary of New Testament Background
Slavery | Dictionary of Paul and His Letters
Slavery | The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Volumes 1–5

When Did Sarah Call Abraham "Lord"? (3:6)

First Peter 3:6 contains one of the most puzzling intertextual allusions in the entire epistle. When, exactly, did Sarah call her husband "Lord"? The only place where this occurs in quoted speech is Genesis 18:12, where Sarah overhears the Lord speaking with Abraham, and she laughingly dismisses the possibility that she would become pregnant. Could such a scenario really be the sort of positive example Peter wishes his audience to meditate on? The problem is exacerbated by two more points: (1) Sarah is not actually addressing her husband at that point; and (2) in Genesis, Abraham seems more likely to follow his wife's direction (Gen 16:2, 6; 21:12) than vice versa. Dinkler (2007, 10), suggests that "Abraham is an example of the husband in 1 Pet 3:1 'who does not believe/obey the word' "; Jobes (2005, 205) thinks this suggestion goes too far, as it is hard to imagine a pious Jew holding up Abraham as analogous to a nonbeliever.

Several commentators take Genesis 18:12 as the implied referent, often without grappling with the difficulties. These include Selwyn (1969, 185); Achtemeier (1996, 215); and Powers (2010, 109). A few elaborate, such as Carson (2007, 1036) who is cautiously open to the possibility of other passages being in view, though he still sees an "explicit allusion" to Genesis 18:12 LXX.

A minority of scholars do not see any specific Old Testament reference. Grudem (1988, 149) states, "Peter does not seem to be referring to any one specific incident here, for the main verb and both participles in verse 5 all indicate a continuing pattern of conduct during one's life." A few others concur, including Blenkin (1914, 67) and Jobes (2005, 206), who states, "The apostle Peter is most likely simply drawing on Jewish interpretive tradition."

Aída Besançon Spencer prefers to focus on Genesis 12:11–20 as the general Old Testament background for 1 Peter's citation. However, she also argues that the present participle of *kaleō* indicates not a single, specific event, "but a practice over time." This is exemplified by her conduct in Genesis 12:11–20, where "Sarah's obedience was exemplary of Christ-like righteous, vicarious suffering. She gave her life as a potential sacrifice for Abraham" (113–14). Spencer also offers a helpful chart comparing the themes of Genesis 12 and 1 Peter 3. Thus, for Spencer, Sarah

functions as a good model because "Vicarious suffering is at the heart of Christianity's good news" (118). Spencer's position is followed by Dinkler (2007, 10), with a focus on practical application in Dinkler's article on pages 13–15.

One more main option exists. Troy Martin (1999, 141–43) has suggested the *Testament of Abraham* as a possible source for the following reasons: (1) It was probably written before 1 Peter; (2) it yields multiple instances of Sarah calling Abraham "lord"; (3) like 1 Peter, it "present[s] Sarah as the mother of the elect"; and (4) like 1 Peter, it contains a link between "the believing women's lack of fear with their good deeds." Martin has been followed by Senior (2003, 83), Charles (2006, 328), and Witherington (2007, 165), though Witherington also sees the expression "she obeyed Abraham" as possibly referring to Genesis 18.

All four positions have merit, yet each one has a significant problem to overcome. Position one simply does not align with the context in Genesis 18:12, and it can only be easily held to if Peter is either more casual in his use of this text than he is with his other Old Testament references, or if Peter intends some sort of irony (though Schreiner's [2003, 156–58] argument is perhaps the best defense of this position). On the other hand, position two (that there is no specific Old Testament allusion) would be much easier to hold to if only *hypēkousen tō Abraam* existed, and not *kurion auton kalousaēs*; in other words, why the second phrase if Peter only intended a general overview of Sarah's conduct? The second phrase, with its participle, seems to narrow down the reference to a specific incident.

Position three (Spencer's view; Gen 12:11–2) is helpful in its emphasis on vicarious suffering, but it has not adequately grappled with the actual situation Sarah was in. Is the potential to be sexually exploited by Pharaoh truly a situation a Christian wife would be expected to be put in? Finally, position four (*Testament of Abraham*) is certainly possible and should not be an issue with even the most conservative of students (in light of Jude's obvious use 1 Enoch), yet it is unclear whether 1 Peter's audience would have been familiar with this extra-canonical text.

- Davids (1990, 120) argues, "While the grasping of an isolated term outside its literary context may bother modern readers, it was quite in line with the exegesis of Peter's day and thus spoke to his readers."
  1 Peter 3:6 | NICNT: The First Epistle of Peter

- Osborne (2011, 211) acknowledges the difficulties in the context of Genesis 18:12 but suggests that "Peter's midrashic exegesis centers on Sarah's use of the world 'lord' (or 'master') rather than on the whole context and connects it to the use of submission."
  1 Peter 3:6 | CBC: James, 1-2 Peter, Jude & Revelation

- Schreiner (2003, 156) states, "We do not find here an arbitrary exegesis foisted upon the text," for Genesis 18:12 indicates "that even in casual situations Sarah respected Abraham's leadership, revealing thereby that her honor of him was part of the warp and woof of life."
  1 Peter 3:6 | NAC: 1, 2 Peter, Jude

Submission of Wives in 1 Peter (3:1–6)

We have already briefly discussed the issue of practical application in Sarah calling Abraham "lord." Due to her unique perspective, Spencer's article has one of the better discussions of this issue. However, two more issues must be discussed here. First, how does 1 Peter 3:1–6 fit with a broader theology of marriage relationships? Second, what about the danger that this passage could be used to justify abuse? Regarding the first issue, we will certainly not attempt to solve the complementarian-egalitarian debate here. Nevertheless, a wide range of scholars will be cited here.

James R. Slaughter (1996, 63–74) sees the *homoiōs* of 1 Peter 3:1 linking back to the broader principles of 1 Peter 2:13–17, the "more all-encompassing exhortation to submit for the Lord's sake to others in various relationships instituted among human beings" (69). Jesus' example in 1 Peter 2:21–25 is deliberately positioned to apply equally to wives and servants, though in slightly different ways (69). He emphasizes that *hypotassō* does not imply inferiority, but rather "the maintenance of the divinely willed order," noting that even Jesus submitted (*hypotassō*) to the Father (70).

Bird (2011) focuses on what she perceives to be the "silencing" of women within this passage (esp. 90–99), by which she means "keeping them from speaking out about any abusive treatment they have received" (123).

> The "fear" that is to be rendered to God in 2:17 is also the manner in which the slaves and wives are to interact with their superior, the head of the household. Whether written consciously or not by the author, it seems it is no coincidence that the male god-figure and the male head of the household are to be given the same treatment and "reverence" (Bird 2011, 91).

I have already objected to Bird's perception that Peter was encouraging, or at least allowing, emperor worship; to reiterate, "submit" and "reverence" point to two significantly different concepts. In addition, we must ask how Peter prohibits the women from "speaking" or crying out when abused? The passage, unlike the discussion of household slaves, does not seem to deal directly with abuse. As I explain further below (see Background Study: Wives in the First Century), even Plutarch frowned on the concept of "dominating" one's wife; having said that, Plutarch's *Advice to the Bride and Groom* 40 does, in passing, hint that such abuse might take place in a Greco-Roman household. The reference to *tō logo* and *aneu logou* in 1 Peter 3:1 is certainly in reference to the spoken gospel, not whether a wife may speak out when being abused. Reeder (2015, 538) offers a different sort of criticism against the idea that the text is "silencing" women.

The *ēsuchiou pneumatos* (KJV, NIV: "quiet spirit") refers not to a wife's inability to speak out, but rather to a general characteristic of her life as "tranquil" (as the NET translates). This becomes clearer upon observing how the word is used in 1 Timothy 2:2 and Isaiah 66:2 LXX. Consequently, it is baffling how Bird (2011, 90) can transition from the statement "the women/wives are to let their actions speak for them" to the argument that "in other words, they were not allowed to speak." Peter does not assume that the wife has not been speaking to her husband; to the contrary, he sees godly character as the possible means to win him over after verbal communication of the gospel has failed (see Seland 2009, 585).

Ultimately, Bird does not see any value for Christians in the address to wives in 1 Peter 3:1–6. She states that in this passage, "women/wives are constructed" in the following way: "their

circumscribed subjectivity prescribed by kyriarchal structures and power relations, created and sustained by abusive power dynamics" (2011, 86). Bauman-Martin (2004, 257–58) offers a helpful survey of other feminist scholars who likewise see this passage as dangerous. Caryn Reeder (2015, 532) offers the following theological critique of Bird:

> By claiming that the Bible fails to teach the life-giving, liberating gospel of Christ, Bird removes the Bible from its central space in the church, in essence replacing it with the authority of contemporary readers, which is itself problematic (not least in the resulting suppression of the complex realities in which wives may have found themselves in first century churches).

Virtually all Christian scholars, both complementarian and egalitarian, would agree that Jesus Christ and the ethics of the apostles elevated women significantly compared to the surrounding culture. However, a person's theological convictions will most likely determine how they read 1 Peter 3:1–6. In addition, the missional nature of this text makes it difficult for it to function as a prooftext regarding normal relations in a Christian marriage. That issue will have to be determined elsewhere. (Bauman-Martin [2004, 264] lists three key differences between the Petrine household code and the one in Colossians.)

The passage is meant to be applied in some way, and the fact that a modern Christian woman married to a nonbeliever can potentially (though not always) soften his heart via a particular mode of conduct has not changed in two thousand years. While Bird (2011, 92) downplays any missional role of the text, stating that "Nowhere in the text does it say to what the husbands might be won over," surely what the husbands would be "won over" to is the very "Word" that they were currently disobeying (*tō logō*, harkening back to *tō logō* of 1 Pet 2:8).

On the other hand, Peter clearly does not intend for the Christian wife to submit to a command to sin—for example, to worship the family gods or to commit immorality. The same could be said about the household slave. For instance, Bauman-Martin (2004, 270–71) correctly notes that a master's attempt to force a household slave to have sex with him or somebody else would have come into conflict with that slave's Christian convictions. In 1 Peter 4:3, such things are part of the past life, not the present life. Peter is clear that Christians should be willing to suffer for what is good (1 Pet 4:12–16), which would obviously include avoiding the sins of 1 Peter 4:3. Slaughter (1996, 73) aptly sums up this point: "Peter's readers must also consider that submission in keeping with God's character rules out a wife's agreement to a husband's ungodly requests."

- Calvin (2010, 95) sees this passage as applicable to wives with Christian husbands as well: "If wives ought to obey ungodly husbands, with much more promptness ought they to obey, who have believing husbands."

  1 Peter 3:1–4 | Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles

- Gonzaléz (2010, 81–82) stresses the difference between ancient and modern contexts: "Marriage in our culture today assumes mutual responsibility and mutual love. Rather than a corporation headed by the husband as CEO, marriage is understood as a cooperative, where husband and wife make decisions jointly, with mutual respect. A wife today is not necessarily e conomically dependent on her husband, nor does he have an automatic right to the children

if there is a separation. The attempt by some Christians to enforce these ancient cultural forms in today's world is foreign to the gospel and is an attempt to undo the work of the Holy Spirit altering the world around us."

1 Peter 3:1–7 | Belief: 1 & 2 Peter and Jude

- Grudem (1988, 142–43) sees the *homoiōs* as linked directly to the discussion of household slaves, though he points out that Peter used *homoiōs* rather than *kathōs* ("in the same way") or *kata panta* ("in every way"). Grudem further notes that submission in marriage does not merely include "obeying commands," but also the "numerous words and actions each day which reflect deference to [the husband's] leadership and an acknowledgement of his final responsibility—after discussion has occurred, where possible, to make decisions affecting the whole family" (145).

  1 Peter 3:1 | TNTC: 1 Peter

- Harink (2009, 86) argues that, with the command to be subordinate, "Peter is not legitimizing a patriarchal familial regime, whether oppressive or not … Peter simply deals with the household regime that exists in his time." Harink further emphasizes how this functions "as a disruptive grace and in the mist of what exists, breaking into it and breaking it open for the sake of its own healing" (86). Thus, Peter's epistle gives "resident aliens, slaves, and wives" the opportunity "to participate in the life-altering power of the gospel even within the societal norms: 'Patience is crucial, but the decisive alteration of history is *already activated* in the cruciform presence and action of the faithful person' " (87; emphasis original).

  1 Peter 3:1–7 | BTCB: 1 & 2 Peter

- Jobes (2005, 202–3) briefly discusses the societal norms of a wife's life and the changes that Christian conversion might bring about. She highlights how Peter does not specify in what ways the wife should submit; instead, "Peter opens the door for social transformation by leaving it to husband and wife to work out the specific way her submission is to be expressed." Jobes also points out that while "Greek moral philosophers do not usually address women (and slaves), here Peter does so" (203). On the one hand, Jobes states, "The church today is right to uphold a biblical order within marriage that mirrors the relationship of Christ and his church," but she also notes that one must not automatically assume that this would look identical in different circumstances and in different cultures. For example, "a married woman appearing in public without the escort of her husband or other male relative" would hardly have the same significance in Western society of the twenty-first century (211–12). In addition, Jobes provides an excellent discussion of how Peter's instructions regarding modesty would make sense: Because society may have linked a woman going outside the home "decked out" in jewelry, fancy clothes, etc. with a desire to be noticed, a Christian wife who went to church in such a manner might have raised suspicions (in her husband's mind and that of others) that she had more than mere worship in mind. Thus, "By leaving her home unadorned, her intent to attend worship and not a tryst would presumably be all the more clear" (205).

  1 Peter 3:1–6 | BECNT: 1 Peter

- McKnight (1996, 181–83) cautions his audience against divorcing themselves from the social-historical context of the passage and notes the various degrees of freedom and non-freedom that women had in both Jewish and Greco-Roman society. He further acknowledges the various abuses that have utilized this passage as a prooftext. He then declares, "What all of this means for our text is simple: Peter is urging the women of the Asia Minor churches to live a life that is respectable in society so that they will be able to maintain a good reputation for the gospel." In addition, one cannot deny the "pragmatic" effect Peter's exhortation has: "Peter wants wives to submit *because of the influence* (3:1b–2) they can exert on their non-Christian husbands" (183; emphasis original).
  1 Peter 3:1–6 | NIVAC: 1 Peter

- Schreiner (2003, 148–50) notes the missional nature of this text, that fact that it is mostly addressed to wives with unbelieving husbands, and the equality of men and women in Scripture. He argues nonetheless that the command for wives to submit is still paradigmatic for Christian couples (see esp. 150). However, he does not make this argument from 1 Peter only but rather from Scripture as a whole, and he further notes the "crucial difference between slavery and the admonition given to husbands and wives," wherein the former is clearly wicked while the latter is God's own invention (151).
  1 Peter 3:1–6 | NAC: 1, 2 Peter, Jude

- Slaughter (1996, 63–74) devoted an entire article to the topic. He follows Kelly in seeing the *homoiōs* of 1 Peter 3:1 linking back to 1 Peter 2:13–17. Slaughter stresses that *hypotassō* does not imply inferiority, but rather "the maintenance of the divinely willed order," noting that even Jesus submitted (*hypotassō*) to the Father (70). Slaughter, however, makes clear that he does not see the use of *hypotassō* in regard to the wife to indicate that the wife is similar to the slave. They submit in significantly different ways (72).
  Submission of Wives (1 Pet. 3:1a) in the Context of 1Peter | Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 153

Spousal Abuse and the Misinterpretation of 1 Peter 3:1–6

Unfortunately, one more issue must be dealt with before moving on to Peter's admonition to men. We must address that this passage has the potential to be used to justify the sin of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. In her 2004 article "Women on the Edge: New Perspectives on Women in the Petrine Haustafel," Betsy J. Bauman-Martin cites a 1998 article in the *Los Angeles Times* detailing how churches often dealt with spousal abuse. In one case, a woman who was being physically beaten was told by her pastor "to 'go back, be a kinder wife'" in order to win him to the Lord; this is obviously in reference to 1 Peter 3:1–2 (Bauman-Martin 2004, 253). Most likely this is not as rare as we would like to think. Thus, although we may strongly disagree with Bird's argument that 1 Peter 3:1–6 encourages abuse, we must also acknowledge that the same passage can be used as an excuse for abuse. The problem does not lie with the Apostle Peter, but with abusers, who will take any excuse to assert their pseudo-masculinity. Bauman-Martin (2004, 258) well states that certain feminist scholars "have failed to distinguish between the patriarchal (mis)interpretation of the letter over the years and the possibilities of interpretation it may have offered for the original readers."

God is not glorified by the abuse of those in vulnerable positions; indeed, the entire testimony of Scripture stands against such a possibility (see Reeder 2015, 531). Thus, Reeder rightly states, "Surely, the church can do better than to tell an abused woman that God wants her to continue to be abused" (2015, 531). In addition, the idea that Christians should suffer abuse simply because others are trying to abuse them is absurd; if this were the case, Jesus himself would not have fled dangerous circumstances prior to the cross (Luke 4:28–30), nor would Paul have used his Roman citizenship to escape a beating (Acts 22:25). Consequently, Peter does not portray abuse as normative for either wives or slaves, nor does he "silence" them (contra Bird) by saying that they are not allowed to take any steps to alleviate such abuse.

If 1 Peter 3:1–6 were intended to speak to abused wives (which is improbable but not impossible), then it does so on two levels. First, it offers "an authoritative message of hope" for what may have been an "impossible, potentially deadly situation" (Reeder 2015, 533–34); indeed, what the pagan world saw as "weakness and humiliation," the wives of the Petrine audience are encouraged to "appropriate" as "strength and honor." They are, in essence, enabled to persevere in the midst of an abusive situation (Bauman-Martin 2004, 276).

Second, one can argue that because some (if not most) of the abuse would have stemmed from the woman's decision to embrace a Christian lifestyle (and thus not worship pagan gods, etc.), then "by rejecting the major premise of their κύριοι that force and intimidation should change their behavior and beliefs, the women of 1 Peter could make at least one part of their lives their own" (Bauman-Martin 2004, 277). Bauman-Martin argues that this aspect "should be left in the first century; the women are an example of courage in a situation that no longer exists" (277). Yet surely there are still societies even in the twenty-first century that might reflect the circumstances of 1 Peter's audience.

This is hardly all that needs to be said on the topic of abuse being justified by 1 Peter 3:1–6. Those interested in further study should read both Bauman-Martin's and Reeder's articles. Two more points will be briefly made: First, given that laws against abuse exist in the United States (and most civilized nations), this fact probably "limit[s] the applicability" of the text (Reeder 2015, 534). In other words, it is hard to imagine Christians "bearing one another's burdens" by telling each other to endure physical abuse if viable alternatives exist (a point which Reeder stresses in her article).

In addition to legal action, one of the most viable alternatives is for the church family to offer divine sanctuary in order to protect Christian women from their abusive husbands. DeSilva briefly mentions this possibility in his discussion of the hospitality command of 1 Peter 4:9: "The reality of the family of God continues to come to expression when believers open their homes to a wife who needs to distance herself from an abusive husband" (deSilva 2000, 44). Indeed, one can assert a strong theological parallel from the Torah itself; in Deuteronomy 23:15–16, the Israelites were prohibited from returning an escaped slave who had fled from his master (presumably due to abuse). If the Lord recognized that, within the imperfect social conditions of that era, the community of God had an obligation to provide sanctuary to the lowest members of society when they were being abused, how much more so should the church, following the law of Christ, offer sanctuary to a spouse who is being abused? To echo Reeder's statement, surely this provision of sanctuary would be a Scripturally superior alternative to "tell[ing] an abused woman that God wants her to continue to be abused" (2015, 531).

Finally, 1 Peter 3:7 clearly prohibits spousal abuse of any kind by a Christian husband. Reeder (2015, 535) offers an excellent study on the significance of *synoikeō* here. Churches must make it clear (preferably through official documentation) that spousal abuse is grounds for church discipline followed by legal recourse, with the church itself standing as a shield for the battered spouse. The testimony of Jesus Christ is at stake, and the proclamation of the gospel itself can suffer when those who would proclaim a God of love tolerate abuse within the ecclesiastical community. We can even go further and say that when a professing Christian abuses his spouse, it is the duty of the church to "purge out the old leaven" and hand over that person "unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh" (1 Cor 5:5, 7 KJV).

> Spousal Abuse | Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary
> 1 Peter 3:1–6 (Jobes 2005, 206–7) | BECNT: 1 Peter
> 1 Peter: Strategies for Counseling (deSilva 2000) | ATJ 32
> "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth" About Domestic Violence (Potter 1996, 12–13) | Priscilla Papers 10
> Women on the Edge (Bauman-Martin 2004) | JBL 123

The View of Women in 1 Peter 3:7

What do the phrases *kata gnōsin* ("according to knowledge") and *asthenesterō skeuei* ("weaker vessel") mean in 1 Peter 3:7? The general perspective of Greco-Roman society regarding the female gender is reflected in the words of the Athenian in dialogue with Clinias in Plato's *Laws* 6.781b, which communicates that, in regard to virtue, females are viewed as inferior to males (*hē thēleia … pros aretēn cheirōn tēs tōn arrenōn*). Since Peter obviously does not share Greek philosophical views elsewhere, we should not necessarily assume that he does here. We must consider two issues here. First, what does it mean to "live according to knowledge"?

Schreiner (2003, 159) sees the phrase as pointing to "the relationship of husbands to God"; in other words, "husbands, then, should live together with wives informed by the knowledge of God's will." Kelly (1969, 132) sees the phrase as referring to "Christian insight and tact, … in understanding sympathy and respect for the weak." However, similarly to Schreiner, he also sees here "a conscience sensitive to God's will" (compare Case and Holdren 2006, 89–90, for essentially the same interpretation). Witherington (2007, 166) sees the expression as deliberately broad, referring to all aspects of the marriage relationship, including (but not limited to) sexual relations.

Second, in what ways are women a "weaker vessel"? Bott (2015, 253) sees the expression as referring to "reproduction; specifically, the inherent limits of female fertility due to the loss of fertility with age" (in light of the apparent allusion to texts in Genesis that deal with Sarah's barrenness in 1 Pet 3; see also Bott 2015, 257). A surprising number of older commentaries (e.g., Calvin 2010, 99–100; Jamieson, Fausset, Brown 1997, 507; Leighton 1864, 2:20) do not clarify the matter, perhaps assuming that their audience would know what Peter meant. Most modern commentators do address the topic, however.

The majority of modern scholars prefer to see Peter as referring strictly to the relative physical strength of the two genders—that females generally have a lower percentage of muscle mass (e.g., Achtemeier 1996, 217; McKnight 1996, 186; Mounce 2005, 45; Jobes 2005, 209; Kelly

2009, 133; Beare 1947, 132). This is well-accepted in the scientific literature. For instance, Miller, MacDougall, Tarnopolsky, and Sale (1993, 254–62) suggest in their abstract that "The greater gender difference in upper body strength can probably be attributed to the fact that women tend to have a lower proportion of their lean tissue distributed in the upper body." This validates Schreiner's point that this is "the most obvious meaning." The differences in the genders in this regard would have been more pronounced in the biblical era, which knew nothing of gyms where women could exercise in a manner equal manner to men (Sparta being a possible exception). Keating (2011, 76) provides an apt summary of the consensus:

> While it was common in Greco-Roman culture to treat women as inferior to men in terms of physical strength, intellectual ability, and moral firmness, there is no hint here that Peter considers women to be inferior in either intellectual or moral qualities. Given the overall context of the letter, by "weaker" he probably means weaker in physical strength, and therefore subject to intimidation and abuse by husbands, and also weaker in social standing and influence in society, and so in need of being established and honored by husbands. In these ways wives were vulnerable, and so Peter counsels husbands to show special honor to them.

While the issue of emotional vulnerability may be further debated, the possibility of spiritual inferiority should be completely discarded. It is not the woman's prayers that are threatened with being rejected in this passage, but the man's (see Key Word Study: *Enkoptō*, "Hinder," or *Ekkoptō*, "Cut Off"). Consequently, we may even suggest that the man is in more danger spiritually than the woman.

- Grudem (1988, 152) suggests three simultaneous understandings of the reference to woman as the "weaker vessel," from the broader perspective of "any kind of weakness of which husbands would need to be cautioned not to take advantage": (1) less physical strength, (2) the difference regarding "authority in marriage," and (3) "greater emotional sensitivity" (in that "wives are often more likely to be hurt deeply by conflict within a marriage, or by inconsiderate behavior").
  1 Peter 3:7 | TNTC: 1 Peter

- Hiebert (1992, 206) follows Susan Foh's suggestion that the "weaker vessel" refers to the wife's acceptance of a position in marriage that is "vulnerable, open to exploitation" (quoting Foh, in *Women and the Bible*, 133).
  1 Peter 3:7 | 1 Peter

- Concerning the phrase *kata gnōsin*, McKnight (1996,186), in light of the use of the verb *synoikeō*, sees marital sexual relationships as the primary (though not exclusive) reference here: "The Christian man, Peter says, is neither demanding nor selfish in his sexual and marital relations; he is instead considerate, sensitive, and serving."
  1 Peter 3:7 | NIVAC: 1 Peter

- Michaels (1988, 168) sees the participle *synoikountes* as focusing on the "social and sexual aspects" of marriage, yet he emphasizes the role of the adverbial prepositional phrase *kata gnōsin* as noting that the marriage relationship must center on "the knowledge of God in

Jesus Christ." Thus, for a Christian husband, "living with a woman" is not a mere physical function but something a man must "*know how* to do" properly, in the Christian way, which would radically contrast with the "'ignorance' of an unbeliever" (emphasis original).

1 Peter 3:7 | WBC: 1 Peter

- Richard (2000, 135–37) suggests that 1 Peter is essentially reflecting the culture of the day: Because of her "weaker or more limited powers (in accordance with contemporary anthropology) … the woman needs the guidance or direction of the man's intellect." (As stated above, I am unwilling to assume that Peter is merely reflecting the perspective of the broader Greco-Roman society.)

  1 Peter 3:7 | Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter: A Literary and Theological Commentary

- Schreiner (2003, 160) disagrees with Grudem that the issue of authority is in view with the reference to woman as the "weaker vessel," and he also argues that Peter is not referring to women being "weaker emotionally." To the contrary, Schreiner argues for "the most obvious meaning"—namely. physical strength. Schreiner points out that Peter uses the technical term *gynaikeios* (focusing on "what is uniquely feminine" about them).

  1 Peter 3:7 | NAC: 1, 2 Peter, Jude

- Selwyn ([1946] (1969), 187) acknowledges that society's perspective of women had changed since Plato's day, but he suggests the phrase captures both the difference in physical strength and the difference in household authority.

  1 Peter 3:7 | The First Epistle of St. Peter with Introduction, Notes, and Essays

Key Word Studies

Kakopoieō, "Doing Evil," and *Agathopoieō*, "Doing Good"

First Peter uses five words to describe the opposite behaviors of "doing evil" versus "doing good." All of the words he uses are relatively rare. The noun (or perhaps substantival adjective) *kakopoios* occurs four times in 1 Peter (1 Pet 2:12, 14; 3:16; 4:15). Depending on which edition of the Greek New Testament is in use, it also occurs once outside of 1 Peter: In John 18:30, the crowd uses the term to describe Jesus to Pilate. The SBLGNT and NA27 have two words, *kakon poiōn*, while the Byz and the TR both have *kakopoios*. Since the earliest manuscripts did not have spaces, it is easy to see how a scribe could have gone either way. In the only two occurrences of this word in the LXX, it is parallel to *amartōlous* in Proverbs 24:19 and the opposite of *andreia* in Proverbs 12:4. Neither Josephus nor Philo use the word. In three out of the four cases in 1 Peter, it is paired opposite a positive term: In 1 Peter 2:12 it is opposite of *kalōn ergon*; in 1 Peter 2:14 it is opposite of *agathopoiōn*; in 1 Peter 3:16 it is opposite of *tēn agathēn*. In 1 Peter 4:15, the term is used along with "murder," "thief," and *allotrioepiskopos* (a term which will be discussed later). Overall, *kakopoios* seems to be a catch-all phrase intended to designate one who is characterized by performing actions harmful to society.

Kakopoieō seems to function as the verbal counterpart to *kakopoios* (as seen in its New Testament usage outside of 1 Pet 3:17—Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9; 3 John 11). The broad usage in the LXX confirms this, and the vague/broad nature of the word makes it appropriate to refer to either

physical harm (e.g., Num 35:23) or spiritual wickedness (e.g., 1 Kgs 16:33). The word does not occur in Josephus' writings, and only once in Philo's writings (*Dreams* 2.296), where it is placed opposite *kalōs poiēsai*.

For the positive counterparts, the rare term *agathopoios* is a New Testament *hapax*; it does not occur in the writings of Josephus or Philo, and in its sole LXX occurrence (Sir 42:14) it is part of a disparaging statement against women in general, describing how an *agathopoios* woman is inferior to even a *ponēria* man (see the discussion in Di Lella 1987, 483). As noted, its occurrence in 1 Peter 2:14 contrasts *kakopoiōn*. There seems to be no discernable difference between *agathopoios* and *agathopoiia*, another New Testament *hapax*, which does not occur in the LXX, Philo, or Josephus. The latter occurs in 1 Peter 4:19 and seems to be the broad, positive counterpart to the description of sins in 1 Peter 4:15. The general point is simply that the Christian should suffer for doing good, not doing evil.

The verb cognate *agathopoieō* is much more common, occurring four times in 1 Peter (1 Pet 2:15, 20; 3:6, 17) and five times elsewhere in the New Testament (Luke 6:9, 33 [x2], 35; 3 John 11). In the LXX it has the general sense of "blessing" (Num 10:32; Judg 17:13; 2 Macc 1:2; Zeph 1:12)—causing good to happen to somebody as well as the performance of a good deed (Tobit 12:13).

Overall, these terms should be taken in the broadest possible sense, as generally "performing actions for the benefit of others [or, perhaps, society]," and "performing actions to the detriment of others [or, perhaps, society]." The broad nature of the terminology would seem to argue against the idea that Peter has in mind civic benefaction. The theological take-away is that Christians should be known in society as "do-gooders"—i.e., those who work for the betterment of others—rather than for being harmful.

κακοποιός | Bible Word Study
ἀγαθοποιέω | Bible Word Study
κακοποιέω | The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament
κακοποιός | The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament
κακοποιός | The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
ἀγαθοποιέω | The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament
ἀγαθοποιός | New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis, Volumes 1–5
ἀγαθοποιέω | The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

Enkoptō, "Hinder," or *Ekkoptō*, "Cut Off"

The majority of popular translations render *enkoptō* or *ekkoptō* in 1 Peter 3:7 as a form of the English word "hinder" (KJV, NKJV, NIV, NLT, ESV, NASB, NET, RSV), regardless of which word in this textual variant the text represents (SBLGNT, NA27, and Byz have the former, while TR has the latter). Yet such an English translation may be too ambiguous, meaning either "to make slow or difficult the progress of" or "to hold back" (Merriam-Webster, s.v. "hinder"). If the first meaning is implied, the rhetorical effect is not very strong—a running back in football, for example, may be "hindered" by an opposing defensive tackle yet still make a touchdown. In contrast, *enkoptō*

seems to generally mean "prevent" rather than "slow down," while *ekkoptō* is an even stronger word.

Within the New Testament, *enkoptō* is used four times outside of 1 Peter 3:7. In Romans 15:22; Galatians 5:7, and 1 Thessalonians 2:18 it clearly means "prevent" in the sense of "causing a total failure of purpose." In Romans and 1 Thessalonians, Paul is unable to visit his addressees. In Galatians 5:7, Paul's diatribe indicates that his audience was disobeying the truth, not merely obeying it after great struggle. Thus, "prevented" is a better sense. On the other hand, in Acts 24:4 the word seems to mean "detain" (as the ESV translates), though even this implies being kept from something else you'd rather be doing. In other words, *enkoptō* in the New Testament is consistently used as a stop sign rather than a "slow down" sign.

Enkoptō does not occur in the LXX. However, in Josephus the word seems to indicate that Herod was "interrupted" (*J.W.* 1.629 [1.32.3], Whiston), which indicates in this context a cessation of Herod's speech and the subsequent initiation of a different action. On the other hand, in *J.W.* 6.111, Josephus describes his own speech to his countrymen as being "interrupted" by weeping; since in this case he links *tauta legōn* with a present particle ("*while* he was saying these things"), we must concede that *enkoptō* can indicate temporary hindrance rather than complete cessation, though this is only made clear by the present participle in the context. Consequently, it seems safe to conclude that the general sense of *enkoptein* is "to cause something to be halted" rather than "to slow something down" or "to temporarily hinder" (though the latter may be meant in some cases).

For those who prefer translations based on the TR, "hinder" would be an even more inappropriate translate. *Ekkoptō* is a much stronger word than *enkoptō*. It occurs ten other times in the New Testament, and in eight out of ten cases it refers to the physical act of cutting something down or cutting something off (Matt 3:10; 5:30; 7:19; 18:8; Luke 3:9; 13:7, 9; Rom 11:24). The other two occurrences (Rom 11:22; 2 Cor 11:12) seem to be a spiritual expansion on the physical sense (e.g., NET renders 2 Cor 11:12 as "so that I may *eliminate* any opportunity").

The forty-eight occurrences of *ekkoptō* in the LXX also generally represent a harsh, violent sense of the word (e.g., Gen 32:8; 36:35), including the destruction of a city (Josh 15:16), the destruction of armies (1 Macc 6:6), and the destruction of pagan altars (2 Chr 31:1). The word can be used in conjunction with *ophthalmos* to represent the act of physically blinding somebody (e.g., Num 16:14; 4 Macc 5:30), in addition to the expected frequent usage referring to the cutting down of trees. Once again, a spiritual and/or metaphorical sense occasionally expands on the literal sense (e.g., 4 Macc 3:2, the ability to destroy lust), but other than a few cases like this, a violent sense of the word predominates. The semantic range in Josephus's writings mirrors that of the LXX, including a frequent combination of the word with *ophthalmos* to refer to blinding (e.g., *Ant.* 5.313 [5.8.11], 10.140 [10.8.2]).

In conclusion, if *enkoptō* is the correct reading, the word should be read as "prevented" or "stopped," since "hinder" is too weak and ambiguous in modern English. If, however, *ekkoptō* is the correct reading, then a harsher expression such as "cut off" or "destroy" would be more appropriate: "so that your prayers are not cut off."

Whichever reading is correct, the warning for Christian husbands is serious. A careless husband, and especially an abusive husband, should understand that it is not a matter of his prayers being slowed down or made more difficult, yet ultimately being heard by the heavenly

Father. To the contrary, a husband who does not treat his wife properly needs to realize that his prayers will fall on deaf ears.

> ἐγκόπτω | Bible Word Study
> ἐκκόπτω | Bible Word Study
> ἐκκόπτω | The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament
> ἐγκόπτω | New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology
> ἐγκόπτω | New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis, Volumes 1–5
> ἐγκοπή, ἐγκόπτω | The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

Background Study: Wives in the First Century

In any discussion of marriage, gender roles, and sexuality in the first century, we must take care not to overly generalize. Greco-Roman society over the centuries saw significant exceptions to the general societal trends. For instance, Spartan women, including married women, possessed "status and power unknown in the rest of the classical world" (Stark 1997, 103). Another example is that, although sexual morality for males had a reputation for being loose (as made famous by Apollodorus in Pseudo-Demosthenes, *Against-Neaera* 59.122), Epictetus discourages premarital intercourse and holds up married romance as the ideal; he also tells his audience not to be judgmental toward those who do dally before taking a wife (Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 33.8).

Nonetheless, Greco-Roman society in the first century did see some consistent trends. Female infanticide was common, resulting in an unbalanced gender ratio (Stark 1997, 102; Ferguson 1993, 80–82; for a key primary source, see "Hilarion to His Wife Alis," P. Oxy. 744, in Milligan 1912, 32–36, dated shortly before the time of Christ). Girls in the Roman Empire could be married shortly after puberty, though Plutarch and Dio Cassius suggest that many people considered twelve years old to be an appropriate time for marriage (see Stark 1997, 105).

Three types of marriage were practiced under Roman law. Each type "brought a woman under the power (*manus*, hand) of her husband: *confarreation* (a religious ceremony and the most solemn and elaborate form), *coemption* (a sale of the woman to her husband), and *usus* (living together uninterruptedly in the man's house for one year)" (Ferguson 1993, 72–77). An exception existed whereby a wife would could still be under her father's control rather than her husband's (Ferguson 1993, 72–77). Interestingly, under Greco-Roman law, both the wife and husband could initiate divorce (see Instone-Brewer 2001, 102–5).

That women were considered to be subject to male authority at all times in their life is illustrated in Livy's *History of Rome* (34.7.12–13). In a speech near the close of the Second Macedonian War speaking in favor of allowing women more freedom in decoration for their dress, Lucius Valerius states,

> Women are never freed from their subjection as long as their husbands and fathers are alive; they deprecate the freedom which orphanhood and widowhood bring. They would rather leave their personal adornment to your decision than to that of the law. It is your duty to act as their guardians and protectors and not treat them as slaves; you ought to

> wish to be called fathers and husbands, instead of lords and masters (trans. Canon Roberts).

Thus, we see the irony that even a relatively progressive speaker like Valerius still views it as natural that women are not meant to be free in any sense.

Perhaps the most paradigmatic treatment of wives in first-century Rome is Plutarch's *Moralia: Advice to Bride and Groom* (*Coniugalia Praecepta*). Plutarch, who seems to have had an amiable marriage (see his effusive praise of his wife's character in *Moralia: Consolation to His Wife*), saw it as a character failure for a husband to dominate his wife and force her to submit instead of bettering himself. He compares such behavior to a man who is unable to mount his horse but must force it to kneel down (*Advice to Bride and Groom* 8). In addition, Plutarch distinguishes between the wife and a slave, and he argues that a husband should rule his wife gently—not as property, but as an integral part of himself (33). However, in the same paragraph Plutarch takes it for granted that it is natural for a wife to submit (Gr. *hypotattousai*) to her husband rather than seek power over him (33). Furthermore, Plutarch states that a wife should not befriend people other than her husband's friends, and she should only worship her husband's gods (19).

For Plutarch, wives were expected to be modest and above reproach (9 and 31); however, Plutarch also states that a wife should not be overly angry with her husband for committing an indiscretion (*examartē*) with a female of low social status (e.g., a *hetairan*) because he does well to protect his wife from his own baser instincts (16). Interestingly, Plutarch does discourage "unholy and unlawful intercourse" (42; trans. Frank Cole Babbitt) outside of marriage, though it is unclear from the context whether this covers anything other than unions that result in the bearing of illegitimate children.

Advice to the Bride and Groom ends with an interesting parallel to 1 Peter 3:3–4. In section 48, Plutarch advises the bride, Eurydice, to clothe herself with the wisdom and knowledge of the wise women of the past (e.g., Theano, Scipio's daughter, etc.), who are priceless compared to even the grandest physical adornments of the richest women. First Peter, rather than focusing on the wisdom of the past, admonishes Christian wives to clothe themselves with a "gentle and quiet spirit" (NIV).

If Plutarch's views are to be seen as the norm for this era, then two things are clear: (1) the wife was considered subordinate to her husband within Greco-Roman society, and (2) the wife did not occupy anything near the position of the slave. While abuse undoubtedly took place, it seems significant that Peter did not believe it necessary to address the possibility of abuse toward the wife in 1 Peter 3:1–6 like he did with the household slave in 1 Peter 2:18–21. Perhaps even the pagan elite (e.g., Plutarch) would have been horrified with a husband abusing his wife (see Spousal Abuse and the Misinterpretation of 1 Pet 3:1–6).

> Background Study: Women in the Roman World | Lexham Research Commentary: 1 Timothy
> Gender Roles in Antiquity (Keener 2004, vi–ix) | Paul, Women & Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul
> Marriage | The Lexham Bible Dictionary
> Marriage | Lexham Theological Wordbook

Wives and the Realities of Marriage (Cohick 2009 99–131) | Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life
Women in the Early Church | Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments
Women in Greco-Roman World and Judaism | Dictionary of New Testament Background

Application Overview

First Peter 2:11–3:7 is one of the most difficult passages to apply correctly, and perhaps one of the most open to abuse. Christians must place this passage in its first century socio-religious context, and not carelessly use these verses as prooftexts for unrelated, modern circumstances. Conversely, however, these verses *do* have a bearing on how Christians live their lives today.

Elliott (2000, 502) offers an apt summary of the issue: "The issue here is not the validity of social structures and authority as such, but how Christian believers as the children of God conduct themselves in relation to these unquestioned structures of social life." Peter does not justify the existence of the Roman Empire or master-slave relationships—as Shively T. J. Smith (2016, 165) states, "1 Peter … is writing from the underclass for the underclass, not the overlord." Nor does 1 Peter necessarily justify the Greco-Roman prototypical views regarding the relationship between husband and wife (1 Pet 3:7 is countercultural in that regard). Nevertheless, Peter gives Christians encouragement and hope for how to live in the present social order without harming their testimony for Christ or their effectiveness as witnesses.

On the other hand, as Elliott (2000, 502) further notes, "The point the author impresses on his readers is that such authority and social orderings of relationships can be respected *insofar as* subordination to the will of God, the creator and ruler of all, is not compromised." We have seen this in 1 Peter 2:16: Christians only respect Caesar to the extent that they can do so as subordinates of Jesus Christ, but as free in all other respects. A Christian member of the guild would *not* offer oblations to Caesar, a Christian slave would *not* perform sexual favors for his or her master, and a Christian wife would *not* expose her female infant on the hilltop (see *Didache* 2.2). (Interestingly, David Instone-Brewer [2009, 301–21] believes that the *pniktos* of Acts 15:20, 29 is a reference to infanticide.) After all, it was Peter himself who declared to the authorities, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29 KJV). Edwards (2017, 102–3) aptly states regarding 1 Peter 2:11: "The people of God, who are God's special possession, simply cannot participate in the same sinful behaviors as the broader society. Consequently, an identifying mark of God's ownership of the Christian community is its distinction, morally, from the rest of those around them."

For the Christian and the state, then, the broad practical application remains: Show respect/honor to the ruling authorities, especially to the highest ruling authority. Those in the United States should add that they should respect the ruling authorities regardless of whether they are Republicans or Democrats. However, people should show this respect/honor in the same way that they would respect "all people." Furthermore, whether or not civic benefaction is in mind, Christians should be known as "do-gooders" in the eyes of the state. This means that even something like political activity should manifest in Christians a character of "respect and evenhanded work" that also remembers that the "first task" of the Christian is "to glorify God by bringing the good news of the gospel of the kingdom to bear on our world" (McKnight 1996, 159).

All this is done through embracing one's status as a resident alien yet member of Christ's holy nation.

Sadly, it is easy for modern Christians in the West to take an easy Christian life for granted and thus allow themselves the leisure of prioritizing political activities for or against gun laws or health care reform over biblical matters. Meanwhile, many Christians, even in the modern era, do not have the benefit of a friendly state. Those interested in the challenge of living in a Christian community under a hostile state should read the work of Toivo Pilli, who experienced such circumstances firsthand during his life as a Baptist in Estonia (for a brief, accessible discussion, see Pilli 2010).

Overall, the admonition to household slaves and wives should not necessarily be viewed as normative for a Christian household, for in both cases it is presumed that the authority figure is not a Christian. With slaves and possibly with wives, it is assumed that they face the likelihood of suffering abuse for offering loyalty to God above loyalty to the master or husband (see Gonzaléz 2010, 70–71). Yet in such seemingly hopeless circumstances, Peter offers the strong encouragement that with such suffering they are emulating Jesus Christ, and that even in the midst of such suffering, a gentle, holy character can glorify the Father. These texts, however, must never be allowed to excuse abuse, especially in the case where help is available (and we cannot rule out that slavery-like employment exists in the modern world, especially when immigrants are exploited even in the U.S.). If no help is available, however, for the victim "to have the biblical authority to compare her situation with the suffering of Christ could be a powerful source of strength and redemption" (Reeder 2015, 535).

Even if Christians in the modern era do not find themselves in a situation similar to 1 Peter 2:18–3:6, Peter includes elements here that speak to Christians in all circumstances: a willingness to suffer for doing what is right (or refusing to do what is evil), a gentle and humble character that points to Christ, etc. Even the admonition to modesty in 1 Peter 3:3, though culturally quaint by today's standards, is relevant: "The character of the Christian life, for men as well as for women, is one of simplicity, not showy ostentation; of modesty in dress and behavior.… in whatever culture, [we should] be modest in appearance, not drawing attention or being provocative" (Gonzaléz 2010, 82–83). In addition, we have already noted Jobes's (2005, 205) excellent discussion on how a Christian wife "dressing up to go to church without her pagan husband would naturally arouse suspicion and perhaps resentment". The same situation may still exist in some cultures today.

Regarding 1 Peter 3:7, we have noted the countercultural nature of this verse in declaring that husbands and wives are co-heirs, and that husbands who fail to treat their wives properly will find their prayers stopped before they ever enter God's ears. This should not only engender an attitude of tenderness and patience between husbands and wives, but it should also decisively eliminate any excuse for verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse on the part of the husband. The husband's own relationship to God is at stake here.

Finally, assumed throughout, especially in the admonition to the slaves, is the state of non-retaliation. As 1 Peter 2:23 states, Jesus Christ, the example for Christian slaves, did not retaliate even when he was suffering. Edwards (2017, 124) well states, "One thing that marks Christians … is our conformity to the life of Christ. And a witness to Christ that speaks powerfully and remarkably to the broader society is the ability to show restraint and not seek vengeance, even

when attacked." Edwards (2017, 120–24) further offers an excellent discussion of this principle in regard to the state of slavery, including a helpful mention of Jackie Robinson as one who avoided retaliation. In an era when politics result in rioting and violence in as diverse places as the U.S. and Kenya, Christians would do well to remember this principle.[7]

[7] Himes, P. A. (2017). *1 Peter*. (D. Mangum, E. Vince, & A. Salinger, Eds.) (1 Pe 2:18–3:7). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.