

THE PEOPLE OF GOD

1 Peter 2:9, 10

Intro: Our text for this morning is 1 Peter 2:9, 10. Please take your Bible and read it with me, or quote it if you have it memorized.

The world is made up of two kinds of people in the eyes of the Lord--those who believe in Christ for salvation, and those who do not; those who believe the Bible, and those who do not; those to whom Christ is precious, and those to whom He means little or nothing.

Peter began v. 9 with a word of contrast: "'But . . .'" He had been writing about those who stumble at the Word of God, those who are disobedient to the Word of God, those who have examined Christ, and rejected Him, those who were doing what they were doing by their own will, and yet were divinely appointed for the very thing that they were doing--with all of its dire consequences.

And then he said, "But," indicating that he was going to look at the other side, at those who do believe the Word of God, those who do trust in Christ, those to whom He "is precious." What did he write about them? Or, since most of us are in that category this morning, let me phrase my question by changing one word: What did he write about us? How else can we describe those who believe in Christ?

Peter really did three things in these two verses. First he stated:

- 1) WHO WE ARE.
- 2) HOW WE BECAME WHAT WE ARE.
- 3) WHAT WE ARE TO DO.

Let us look at these in that order.

I. WHO WE ARE.

Look at your Bible and you will see six ways in which he described a true Christian. Let me point them out, and then discuss each one for a few minutes. In v. 9 he said that we are:

- 1) "A chosen generation."
- 2) "A royal priesthood."
- 3) "An holy nation."
- 4) "A peculiar people."

And then we have two more in v. 10:

- 5) "The people of God."
- 6) Those who "have obtained mercy."

In using these terms Peter really has given us the outstanding themes of this Epistle.

A. "A chosen generation."

Peter was not using the term "generation" like we would describe the people of our day by saying that we are "the people of this generation," but the word he used here means that we are of the same family, of the same stock; we are individuals who all have one thing in common: we are, as he said in v. 10, "the people of God."

I will wait until we get to v. 10 to describe "the people of God," but let me point out here that you and I who believe in Christ belong to this group of people who are to be found in every period of time from the beginning up until now have been "chosen" by God to be what we are. It was not our idea, but God's. We did not originate our relationship with God and His people; God chose us to be His people.

Cf. v. 2.

This was not meant to be a controversial truth, but to be a subject for praise to God. Cf. what Paul said in writing to the believers at Ephesus in Eph. 1:3, 4.

Let me call you attention again to 2 Thess. 2:13, 14 (because we have looked at them before).

The origin of our relationship to God goes back before the beginning of time when God in His grace chose us, along with a host of others, an innumerable host, to be His people. If anything should get your heart singing today, that should.

Listen to what Isaiah said to the chosen of Israel*
 But thou, Israel, art my servant,
 Jacob whom I have chosen,
 the seed of Abraham my friend (Isa. 41:8).

What else can be said about WHO WE ARE?

B. "A royal priesthood."

The priesthood should make us think of the OT. What was the special privilege of the priests of the OT, especially of the High Priest?

They were the ones who ministered to the Lord in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple. They had the privilege of entering into the very presence of the Lord, bringing the sacrifices of the people. No one else could do what the priests were appointed to do.

But what we do find in the NT about the priesthood?

(Remember that this was one of the truths that was revived at the time of the Reformation.)

Peter had spoken of this earlier in chapter 2. See v. 5.

See what John the Apostle wrote in Rev. 1:6. Also see Rev. 5:10.

Peter calls us "a **royal** priesthood" because we are a kingdom of priests, suitable for the King Himself. Our God is the Sovereign of heaven and of earth, and we are members of His kingdom with all of the priestly rights which He has granted to us. What an amazing truth this is! And yet there is more.

C. "An holy nation."

We hear a lot about ethnic groups these days. Peter here said that we are an holy ethnos! We are not a separate earthly nation, but we are members of the Kingdom of God, an eternal Kingdom, whose citizens are to be characterized by what? HOLINESS.

Is that not what Peter has already told us in chapter 1, vv. 14-16?

What does it mean to be "holy"? Does it mean that we are to act like we are better than anyone else? No, because we are not. We are only sinners saved by the grace of God. "Holy" means set apart. We are set apart from the world, and set apart for God. There is and will continue to be a difference in our lives where sin is concerned. We will be characterized by godliness!

Cf. Phil. 3:20, 21.

D. "A peculiar people."

Notice the similarity between the words "generation," "nation," and "people."

What did Peter mean by this expression?

Here is a very wonderful truth. Peter meant that we are a people not only possessed by God now, but a people which He will finally and eternally possess as His very own!

Paul used this in Eph. 1:14. He used it again in 1 Thess. 5:9. And again in 2 Thess. 2:14.

This is what Peter was thinking about in 1 Pet. 1:5 and 9. We have been purchased by the precious blood of Christ (see 1:18, 19), and our possession by Christ is guaranteed for all eternity.

But let us go on to v. 10 for the last two terms which show WHO WE ARE.

E. "The people of God."

We are God's people. Cf. Rom. 9:25, 26. As Peter would say in 2 Peter, we are "partakers of the divine nature." We have divine life, the very life of God, in us.

The last thing that Peter said about us here is:

F. We have "obtained mercy."

You see, we are not "the people of God," nor do we claim the right to any of the other titles which Peter has given to us. They are ours, we are WHAT WE ARE, by the mercy of God!

Cf. Paul's words in Eph. 2:1-8, esp. v. 4.

We could go on and on in dealing with these wonderful terms, but let us move on to the second main point:

II. HOW WE BECAME WHAT WE ARE.

We have already seen several answers to that:

- 1) We are chosen.
- 2) We have been purchased.
- 3) The mercy of God.

But let me call your attention to what Peter said there in v. 9--the latter part: speaking of "him who hath called **you** out of darkness into his marvelous light."

We have been "called"--effectually, effectively, sovereignly, personally "called." We were in ignorance due to our sin, and in sinfulness of various kinds, displeasing God in all that we were and in all that we did, when God "called" us by His Word to come to Christ, and we came! We would never have come apart from this. God was the One Who chose us, Who sent Christ to die for us, and Who by His Holy Spirit awakened us to our sinfulness, and then called us by His grace out of all that we were, and brought us to Himself. As the words of the hymn teach us,

Oh, the love that sought us,
Oh, the blood that bought us,
Oh, the grace that brought us to the fold,
Wondrous grace that brought us to the fold!

One final word:

III. WHAT WE ARE TO DO.

Why has the Lord done all of this for us? And why is the same true of any person whom He calls to Himself, any person who will this very day believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved?

Look at Peter's words again in v. 9: " . . . that we should show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Who has called us? God has. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:9, 22-31.

What are His "praises"? Cf. Eph. 1:6, 12, 14. His praises include all for which He is to be praised--all that He is, all that He has done, and all that He continues to do.

How do we "shew" them "forth"? This means that we are to declare them, publish them far and wide, make them known.

We are to do this by our lives. We do this in our talk. We do this when we sing hymns of praise to God. This is to be descriptive of the way the child of God lives. We have nothing more important to do while we are here on earth, and we will be doing this throughout eternity!

Cf. Isa. 42:12,

This people have I formed for myself;
they shall shew forth my praise.

Praise Him for His grace and mercy. Praise Him for His love. Praise Him for His faithfulness. Praise Him for His Son. Praise Him for His Word. Praise Him for His daily mercies. Praise Him, praise Him, praise Him--always praise Him!

Concl: May the Spirit of God write these words in our minds and in our hearts so that we will never forget WHO WE ARE, HOW WE BECAME WHAT WE ARE, and WHAT WE ARE TO DO throughout our lives here on earth, and in the glory that is to come.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

1 Peter 2:11, 12

Intro: Although Peter was not an educated man according to the world's standards, this Epistle shows that he was a man especially gifted of God to compress a great deal of truth into a few words. Such is the case with our text for today. In these two verses Peter has really summarized our mission in this world as the people of God, what one of our chief obstacles is, and what is involved in accomplishing this mission.

He said here that we are involved in a warfare!

The verb "war" that is used here is the Greek word from which we get such words in the Greek as army, commander, and soldier. The word brought into English has given us such words as strategy and strategic. Military people in any country and in any age are involved in strategy, military strategy. Military leaders are strategists. In times of war military leaders are always planning how to carry on a campaign so as to meet the enemy at a particular time and in a particular way so as to be victorious. The object of warfare is victory! To be victorious strategy is used.

One place among many where this is brought out in the Bible is in Deut. 25:17, 18. Moses said to the children of Israel,
 Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way,
 when ye were come forth out of Egypt;
 How he met thee by the way,
 and smote the hindmost of thee,
 even all that were feeble behind thee,
 when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.
This was Amalek's strategy, this was the way the Amalekites had planned to conquer the Israelites, and would have conquered them if it had not been for the way in which God protected His people.

The Christian faces three enemies, not just one. They are: the world, the flesh with its lusts, and the Devil. And these three enemies are allies, that is, they are united in their opposition against the Christian, and Satan, our chief adversary, has carefully planned for our downfall and ruin.

See what Peter said about our warfare in 1 Pet. 5:8, 9. Here in these two verses he spoke of our other two enemies, "the devil," and "the world." You see, Satan is "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4).

Now, just as Satan is a master strategist, so the Christian, if he is to be successful in the battles of life against Satan, must have a strategy. Strategy is built upon what the

leaders of an army know about the enemy, the size of the enemy's army, his weapons, his location, etc. That information is gathered by army intelligence, by spies, by any means of getting the information so that a proper campaign against the enemy can be planned.

Where do we get such information about our enemies?

There is only one place that it can be found: in the Bible. Here we learn exactly what Satan is seeking to do, and how he seeks to do it. So, the Christian who ignores the Bible, who is ignorant of Biblical truth, is like an army trying to fight a war without any information at all about the enemy. The Bible not only tells us what our enemies are seeking to do to us, but the Bible teaches us how to protect ourselves in such a way that our very defense becomes an offense that will cripple and defeat our enemies. This is what Peter was doing when he wrote the words of these two verses in chapter 2--verses 11, 12.

Let us think first about the enemy that Peter was concerned about here:

I. THE ENEMY: "FLESHLY LUSTS THAT WAR AGAINST THE SOUL."

The way in which Peter was using the word "fleshly" here means that he was speaking of our old sinful, depraved nature. We are born sinners. We sin because we have a sinful nature. When we are saved, the power of our old nature is broken, but it is not taken away--and it will not be taken away until we are with the Lord. We can always succumb to temptation even as believers, and that is where we face one of our greatest dangers--and the Devil knows it. And so he has carefully planned how he can get us to yield to the temptations of our flesh.

Our flesh has certain "lusts," or desires. These desires are inordinate, that is, they easily get out of our control. They are excessive. They do not fit in with God's will, nor do our "fleshly lusts" seek the glory of God. In fact, they lead us in just the opposite direction. And so they lead to our downfall.

Peter had spoken of our "fleshly lusts" earlier in this Epistle. See 1:14-16. Some of them are mentioned in 2:1. See also 4:1-4. These "fleshly lusts" are what Peter had in mind when he spoke many times in this Epistle of evildoing.

Another passage to look at is Gal. 5:16-21.

So, while we have the Devil above us (because he is

greater than we are), and a sinful world all about us in which we live every day, we have an evil nature within us which is responsive to the temptations which Satan places before us, and which we constantly face day after day in this world.

Secondly, notice . . .

II. THE EXHORTATION, which comes as A WARNING.

There are two things that the Apostle Peter was directed by the Holy Spirit to say: one was negative; the other was positive. But together they form one exhortation. If you do one, but neglect the other, you will experience defeat in this warfare.

As for that which which was negative, that which they were to avoid, we have it in the expression,

A. "Abstain from fleshly lusts" (v. 11).

THE TENTH
COMMANDMENT.

This means that we are to hold ourselves back from these sinful desires that we have in our hearts. They do not have to be especially bad in themselves, but they become bad when they become the overruling desires of our hearts. This would include the desire for money, for food and drink, for possessions, for positions of power, for knowledge. These things can have a legitimate use, but they are so often corrupted by our evil nature.

When the Lord taught His disciples to pray, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," or from the Evil One, this is what He had in mind. Cf. Matt. 6:13a.

We are to recognize sinful desires for what they are, and to stay away from them. Keep out of situations where we will be tempted by them, and, when we are tempted, realize what is going on and seek deliverance from the Lord.

They "war against the soul." What a statement!
Oh, the many times we have ignored what was going on, and our souls have suffered as a result!

But what are we to do on the positive side?

B. "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles" (v. 12).

Peter used this word, "conversation," eight times in

his two Epistles. See 1:15, 18; 2:12; 3:1, 2, 16. In 2 Peter, 2:7; 3:11. It means conduct. It has to do with the way we live--what we are and what we do or do not do.

Jas. 3:13-18

"Honest" is one of the Greek words for good. It means to be morally good. It is the Greek idea of beauty--a life that is harmoniously complete, with all of the parts of a person's life in correct proportion to each other. It is that which is praiseworthy.

"The Gentiles" here would refer to unsaved Gentiles, Gentiles who are not Christians. The idea is that if you claim to be one of God's people, the world has certain expectations of us, and you and I cannot ignore those expectations without harming our souls. The people of the world may ridicule us (see 4:4) if we do not live as they live, but, when we do, then we are ridiculed even more!

Remember what Paul told the Colossian church in Col. 4:5a, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without."

This twofold emphasis can be seen in the verses I referred to before: 1:14-16. Remember that they both are important, and one will not be sufficient without the other.

But now let us look at . . .

III. THE PURPOSE.

There are actually many purposes for living a godly life. We do it for the glory of God. We do it for our own blessing and usefulness. Both of these are involved here, but notice how Peter stated it in v. 12. (Read.)

The Gentiles may "speak against you as evildoers" when you are seeking to do that which is pleasing to God, but that is not always the end of the story!

There is one mighty testimony that the world cannot close its eyes to, and that is the testimony of a godly life! "Good works" do not necessarily mean service; here it means our obedience to God, the things we do to please God, those things which indicate to the world that it means something to be a Christian in spite of what they may think. They are going to see what we are. They may ridicule what we believe, but they cannot deny that we are different because of the grace of God in our lives.

But when is this especially important?

Notice the expression, "the day of visitation." It may be that the Lord will use our lives in their lives in "the day of visitation." What is this "day"?

This is "the day," the time, when God visits people in one of two ways:

- 1) Either for judgment,
- 2) Or for blessing--for salvation!

Now if they are going to "glorify God," this must mean salvation. This is "the day" when, as Alford has said, "The day when He (God) visits mankind with His offers of mercy and grace" (IV, 350).

Cf. Luke 1:68, the words of Zacharias when he said,
 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel;
 for he hath visited and redeemed his people.

Or see what he said in vv. 76-79 of the same chapter. We have the same emphasis in Luke 7:16. When the Lord raised from the dead the son of the widow of Nain, the people said,

That a great prophet is risen up among us;
 and, That God hath visited his people.

And Luke said in that verse that the people were glorifying God when they said these things.

When Peter wrote these words, he must have had in mind what the Lord said in Matt. 5:16, "Let your light so shine among men . . ."

But, before we leave our text, let me go back to the beginning of v. 11.

You can see that Peter has been dealing here with very important issues--the glory of God, the warfare we are engaged in, holy living. He has done as he did over and over again in his Epistles, he compressed a tremendous amount of truth into a very few words. How concerned he was for the people to whom he was writing! How he longed for them to be honoring the Lord in their then-present circumstances, as difficult as they were.

But notice the nature of . . .

IV. THE APPEAL.

He said, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims . . ."

There are three things here:

- A. "Dearly beloved."

He only used this expression twice in the Epistle. See 4:12 for the other instance. The expression becomes, as one commentator has it, "weightier," the less it is used. Peter had a very great love for the people to whom he was ministering in this Epistle, and he earnestly desired their continued blessing from the Lord. He was an example of the way in which he taught them that they should love each other.

B. "I beseech you."

For the significance of this, remember how Paul addressed Onesimus in Philemon 8, 9.

Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Note Peter's words to the elders at the beginning of chapter 5, and again see that he was an example of the very way in which he sought to help the people of God. Beseeching is often more effective than commanding.

C. "As strangers and pilgrims."

In v. 10 Peter had called them "the people of God." It was because of this that they were "strangers and pilgrims" on the earth.

They were sojourners, just here for a time; their citizenship, and their ultimate destination, was in heaven. And so they were "pilgrims." They were not in the world to live as the world, but to live as the people of God. See v. 10 of this chapter. And it was in this way that they would glorify God, and it was in this way that they would see God working through them to draw others into the pathway that leads to heaven.

Concl: Man has his way. There have always been those in the church, at least the professing church, who say that we need to be like the world, and, within limits, of course, do what the world does, if we are to win the world. But the Word of God says the opposite. We are in a warfare, a warfare where you and I can be injured. We can be hurt, hurt very badly. Our souls can be damaged. The name of God can be either blasphemed or glorified. If it is to be glorified, then we must be godly by abstaining from "fleshly lusts" and by making sure that our lives are lived in accordance with the Word of God.

May God be pleased to work in all of us for His glory!

THE CHRISTIAN AS A CITIZEN

1 Pet. 2:13-17

Intro: In this First Epistle of Peter we come in our text for today to a word which Peter used no less than five times (in some MSS, six). It is the word "submit," or "be Subject, or "be in subjection"--all translations from the same Greek root. We have it here. We have it again in 2:18. Again, in 3:1. And then in 5:5. (In the KJV the verb is found twice, but in other MSS only once.) In these instances they were given by Peter as commands to the people of God. Peter also used it in 3:22, but there he was writing about angelic beings. It is the Greek word, ὑποτάσσω.

We will all have to recognize that is . . .

I. AN UNPOPULAR WORD.

It is a very unpopular word in the world today (and probably always has been), but it is often an unpleasant word to the people of God--although it should not be.

We may not mind it when it is used as James used in in Jas. 4:7, but even then we have our problems with it, if not in word, yet often in our hearts. James said, "Submit yourselves therefore to God."

To submit ourselves to others means that we place ourselves under them, under their authority. We submit to their control over our lives. We agree to do what they want us to do, and we agree not to do what they do not want us to do. To submit is to obey.

What might make it an even more unpopular word, it is a military term. No military group could possibly exist if it did not have this kind of authority.

There is a God-given authority in the local church. It is referred to in Hebrews 13:17, where we read,

Obey them that have the rule over you,
and **submit** yourselves:
for they watch for your souls,
as they that must give account,
that they may do it with joy, and not with grief:
for that is unprofitable for you.

However, in that verse we have a different word for "submit" although the meaning is the same. The word that is used there (ὑπακούω) means to yield under. It is a word often used of combatants. It means to submit to their authority and admonitions. This is what Jacob did in Genesis 32 when he wrestled with the Lord at Peniel.

Submission sounds like we are giving up our liberty. In these days when people in all classes and races are demanding their rights, the last thing that they want to hear about is submission. But the Christian has to face the fact that it is used in the Bible, and it is the Holy Spirit Who has given us this Word of God. Submission is to be a major influence on the way we live from day to day. The Christian is to be submissive to:

- 1) God (Jas. 4:7).
- 2) Church leaders (Heb. 13:17).
- 3) Governmental leaders (our text for today).
- 4) If servants, to their masters (1 Pet. 2:18).
- 5) In the case of wives, to their husbands (1 Pet. 3:1).
- 6) The younger to the elder (1 Pet. 5:5).
- 7) And all of us to each other (1 Pet. 5:5).

And there may be more that we should identify, but this will be enough for now.

But now let us think about our submission to . . .

II. KINGS AND GOVERNORS.

Peter wrote in the time of the Caesars, and in the days of such men as Pilate and Herod and Felix and Festus. And so he used these two terms: "kings" and "governors."

But the same would apply to other forms of government, such as, presidents, governors, mayors, etc. Whoever is "supreme," and "them that are sent by him."

Let us think for a few minutes about what the Scriptures say with reference to leaders of government.

Paul told the Romans with reference to government that "the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1). In other words, the men in power hold their office by divine authority. They may have used money and politics to get where they are. In themselves they may be very unworthy men. But over all of the schemings of men is the sovereign hand of God, setting men up, and then bringing them down! Cf. Dan. 4:17, 25.

Now, according to our text, governmental leaders have two responsibilities:

- 1) They are to punish evildoers.
- 2) They are to praise, to reward, those who do well.

And, in the Bible doing evil and doing well has to do with that which is evil in God's sight, and good in God's sight.

Therefore it becomes governmental leaders to know what is right and what is wrong in the sight of God, and to govern

accordingly. Obviously few men in such positions rule this way, but this is God's purpose, His will, for them.

And, in order to rule, they must have the submission, the obedience, of those who are under them.

We are not dealing here with how well they do what they are supposed to do, but Peter is simply stating God's plan for leaders, and His will for His people regardless of what kind of government they may be under.

We can always think about the exceptions when we might be asked to do something that is contrary to the will of God, but for the present let's forget the possible exceptions, and think of the basic principles.

Now we come to . . .

III. THE WILL OF GOD FOR THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN.

See v. 13a.

Our obedience is to extend to "every ordinance of man."

This can mean two things, and probably does include both:

- 1) It can mean that we are to be subject to all leaders in government, regardless of how high or how low they may be.
- 2) We are to obey all of the laws--the tax laws, the marriage laws, the traffic laws--all of them.

The word that Peter used here for "ordinances" is the word for creation. "It refers to all human institutions which man set up with the object of maintaining the world which God created" (J. H. A. Hart, Expos. Gk. Test., V, p. 59).

Again--we are not to start thinking about the problems that might come up; we are to keep in mind that this is the will of God for people living in any government. We are not to be rabble-rousers. Remember that civil disobedience is just that: disobedience!

Christians are to be noted for their careful observance of all of the laws of the land.

But why?

IV. THE REASONS FOR OBEDIENCE TO GOVERNMENT.

Peter has given several reasons here.

- A. In v. 13: "for the Lord's sake," or lit. on account of the Lord.

Peter must be speaking here of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for His sake. It is always good for us to do as David said he did in Psa. 16:8--set the Lord before us.

How can it be "for the Lord's sake"?

1. Because He said for us to be obedient. Our lives are to be guided by what He wants us to do.
2. Because He lived this way--and we are to be like Him.
3. Because this will glorify Him, and promote His cause in the world. See 2:12.

But Peter gives another reason.

B. This is the will of God. Cf. 2:15.

There are two prominent ideas in this.

1. The fact that it is the will of God.

This should be enough for the child of God. When he know that something is the will of God, he should need no other argument to persuade him.

2. The object that God has in His will: "that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

People say foolish things because they are ignorant of spiritual truth. They have strange ideas about Christians, warped ideas. See v. 12 again: "they speak against you as evildoers." The best way to silence foolish talk and false charges is to prove them wrong by the lives we live. Therefore, how important it is for us to be obedient citizens.

A third reason:

C. Because we are "the servants of God." We are His bondservants.

We are "free," but not free to sin, but free from sin. Our freedom in the Lord does not set us at liberty to use it to gratify our own desires, but being free, we delight to do that which will please and glorify God.

"A cloke of maliciousness" is that of a hypocrite who uses his liberty in Christ to cover up his wicked dis-

obedience to excuse himself from doing his duty toward his government.

A Christian is never right, and will never be happy, nor have the blessing of God, as long as he lives in rebellion against "the powers that be."

But we still have one verse, a verse in which there are four short commandments, and are all the more forceful because they are short. What do they mean, and why do they appear in this way here?

V. FOUR COMMANDMENTS (1 Pet. 2:17).

These verses give a general statement of all that is involved in the obedience of Christians, and it forms a transition between the section we have just covered, and that which begins with v. 18.

The first of these commandments is stated in the aorist tense; the other three in the present. The difference is this:

- A. "Honour all men." The Greek actually says simply, Honor all. It can include women as well as men. Perhaps this is preparing the way for what Peter would say about the attitude of husbands toward their wives in 3:7. But whether it be men or women, the aorist means that they are not all to be honored in the same way, but according to the position that they hold.

To honor a person is to give them respect for the position that they hold.

This is an important part of our testimony.

The next three in the present tense indicate that which they are to continue doing as a way of life.

- B. "Love the brotherhood."

This means that we are to love everyone who is in the family of God. Cf. 1:22. There is a special relationship every Christian has to every other Christian.

- C. "Fear God" -- again, habitually. Show continual respect for God and His will, fearing that you might displease Him in anything either by what you do, or in what you may fail to do. Nothing is more important than this!

- D. "Honour the king."

Proverbs 24:21, 22 as it appears in the NIV says,
 Fear the Lord and the king, my son,
 and do not join with the rebellious,
 for those two will send sudden destruction
 upon them,
 and who knows what calamities they can bring?

We are to fear God and honor the king not only because we want to please God, but we keep in mind that disobedience to either can be severely punished. Paul said this, speaking of human rulers,

For he is the minister of God to thee for good.
 But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid;
 for he beareth not the sword in vain:
 for he is the minister of God,
 a revenger to execute wrath upon him
 that doeth evil.

Concl: Place these words in the hearts of the people to whom Peter was writing when you stop to think of their circumstances. Three times Peter had referred to the fact that they were foreigners on the earth, citizens of heaven. Cf. 1:1, 17; 2:11, 12. If we think that we have our reasons for not being obedient to governmental authorities, what do you think that the original recipients of this Epistle could have told us? Undoubtedly this was a special problem to them, or Peter would not have had so much to say about it. We will get to more in chapter 4.

And then link it, too, with the exhortation that immediately preceded this section: 2:11, 12.

Whatever our circumstances may be, we are to be of that frame of mind which inclines us to be obedient to our government, and to be obedient to our God, to love each other, and to be prepared to honor all people, regardless of what they may do to us. We know these things now, and our Lord said about the teaching that He gave His disciples on one occasion, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). There is no other way to have peace and happiness in our hearts, and there is no other way that we can have the blessing of God upon our lives and upon the work that He has given us to do.

THE CHRISTIAN SERVANT

1 Peter 2:18-25

Intro: We come today to the second of Peter's exhortations in which he was particularly concerned about submission. The first was general--to all of the people of God. This one is specific--to "servants."

But the words here are Οἱ δούλῳ, different from "servants of God" (Θεοῦ δούλῳ) in v. 16. Here Peter was addressing a household servant. He (or she) might be a bondservant, or he might be one who was hired to do a particular job. The work would not necessarily have to be work done in the house. It could be work in the field, or even elsewhere--whatever the master might assign the servant to do.

And so it is addressed to servants, however they may have become servants. It is any social situation where one person is under the authority of another, and would have special application today to anyone who is in the employ of another person.

Peter, of course, was addressing THE CHRISTIAN SERVANT, telling him how he was to behave in his relationship to his master, the one over him.

We will see how very, very different this is from the kind of behavior that has become so common and so acceptable today--the striking worker, the striking teacher, the agitation caused by labor leaders, and so on. This is an area where there is great strife today. It seems that we go from one crisis to another. And the non-Christian servant who reads the words of our text will be quick to say that this will never work, and that it must have become obsolete about as soon as it was written--if indeed it ever was a valid form of behavior.

But let us remember that we as Christians are not to be guided by the ways of non-Christian men or women. Our first allegiance is to the Word of God and to the God of the Word. Therefore, we need to pay particular attention to what Peter wrote, and Peter will explain for us why!

Let us note, first of all . . .

I. THE EXHORTATION TO SERVANTS (1 Pet. 1:18).

Brown wrote in his commentary that this meant that the will of the servants was to be regulated by the will of the master. The servant was to be obedient to his master's commands. He was to be submissive to his master's arrangements. He must go when the master said,

"Go." He was to come when the master said, "Come." He was to do what his master told him to do. See Brown, I, pp. 492, 493. LIKE RUTH WITH NAOMI - RUTH 1:16, 17.

And the servant was to do this whether his master was "good and gentle," or "froward"--that is, harsh, rude, cruel.

Paul wrote to Timothy,

Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.

And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.

These things teach and exhort (1 Tim. 6:1, 2).

And he wrote to Titus,

Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again (gainsaying); Not purloining (not stealing), but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things (Titus 2:9, 10).

These words of Scripture set the standard for any Christian who works for someone else.

Now remember what I said last week: Peter is not dealing with the exceptions, possible places where the conscience of a Christian might be violated (as when he might be required by his boss to do something wrong). Peter was seeking here, as in the preceding section, to establish the main idea that ought to be in the mind and heart of every CHRISTIAN SERVANT.

But I have passed over three words: "with all fear." What did Peter mean? Who is the servant to fear?

Look back at v. 17 and the expression, "Fear God."

This is what Peter had in mind in v. 18--and the verses which follow will confirm the point that I am making now. THE CHRISTIAN SERVANT is to obey his earthly master because **he is intent on pleasing God!** This always must come first with any Christian: **What does the Lord want me to do?** "All fear" is the highest degree of fear. The Christian believes that he is under the sovereign hand of

God, and that there is nothing more important than that his life, in every detail, should be pleasing to the Lord.

What a standard! Nothing could be higher. This is indeed "the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10).

Now, having written this, Peter went on to explain why he would write such a commandment.

II. THE EXPLANATION (1 Pet. 2:19-25).

Peter gave four reasons in his explanation.

A. Because this is what pleases God (vv. 19, 20).

Peter had just exhorted them to do this in the fear of the Lord, and so he must show that this was what the Lord wanted.

Notice two expressions in these verses--one in each verse:

1) In v. 19, "for conscience toward God."

2) In v. 20, "this is acceptable with God."

The expression in v. 19 needs to be taken with them: "For this is thankworthy."

The idea is that such submission is going to bring, not only the blessing of God now, but the reward of the Lord in that day when we stand before Him.

Cf. Col. 3:22-24:

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh;
not with eyeservice, as menpleasers;
but in singleness of heart, **fearing** God:
And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily,
as to the Lord, and not unto men;
Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive
the reward of the inheritance:
for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Let all of us who serve a master remember that, whoever our human master may be, we are to serve him as we would serve the Lord if He were in our master's place. We should not only be concerned about the pay that we are going to get now, but, even more so, about "the pay," the reward that we are going to receive in heaven! You see, there are heavenly bonuses coming, heavenly profit-sharing that we have to look forward to.

The second reason:

B. This is our calling (v. 21a).

Remember how Paul and Barnabas retraced their steps on their first missionary journey,
 Confirming the souls of the disciples,
 and exhorting them to continue in the faith,
**and that we must through much tribulation
 enter into the kingdom of God** (Acts 14:22).

The Lord Jesus said in John 16:33, "In the world ye shall have tribulation . . ."

This is our calling. The Lord has never promised us an easy time. In fact, we are promised just the opposite. So let us not be amazed if we have trouble with the work we do, and with the people with whom we are thrown into contact here in this world. But let us be comforted in the fact that the Lord is sovereign in our circumstances, and He will honor us if we seek to honor Him by doing what He wants us to do.

Again I say, this is our calling.

The third reason:

C. The Lord lived this way--and He is our Example (vv. 21b-23).

Those of you who have read Bishop J. C. Ryle's book, Holiness, may remember how he spoke in Chapter 2 about "the passive graces of Christianity" (p. 28) as a mark of "genuine sanctification"--and he meant that we should give "habitual attention" to them.

What did he mean by "passive graces"? Listen to his words:

When I speak of passive graces, I mean those grace which are especially shown in submission to the will of God, and in bearing and forbearing towards one another. Few people, perhaps, unless they have examined the point, have an idea how much is said about these graces in the New Testament, and how important a place they seem to fill (pp. 28, 29).

And then, to explain what he meant, he cited vv. 21-23 of 1 Peter 2--these verses we are looking at right now. These are "the passive graces" of our Lord Jesus Christ! They have to do with what the Lord Jesus did NOT do!

Instead of sinning, or reviling, or threatening, He exercised an active grace: "he committed (himself, or

His plan) to HIM THAT JUDGE THOSE RIGHTEOUSLY."

Did He make a mistake in doing so? Absolutely not!
He came out the Victor, and God vindicated His Son by raising Him up from the dead, and giving Him glory, as Peter said in 1 Pet. 1:21.

Can it mean anything but blessing for us if we follow the Lord, and do as He did?

One more reason:

- D. This is the way the Lord brought spiritual and eternal blessing to us (vv. 24, 25).

Peter never lets us lose sight of one of the main objectives of our lives here on earth--and that is the spiritual blessing which the Lord may bring to others through us. Cf. 3:1, 15.

Perhaps that boss of yours needs the Lord. He certainly does if he is not a Christian. How is he going to be reached. You may not be able to go into his office to talk to him, but your behavior on the job is a powerful way of reaching him.

Or perhaps your boss is a professing Christian, but is not walking with the Lord. What would be a greater rebuke to him, and what might the Lord use to convict him of his failure, than to see you so careful about pleasing the Lord.

Or, maybe your boss is a Christian, and is walking with the Lord. He still needs blessing and encouragement, and so the Lord has you there to minister to him through the obedience of your life.

Do you see what tremendous issues are involved in your obedience to the Lord?

But how did the Lord minister to us by His submission to the will of the Father?

Peter mentioned four ways in these two verses:

1. By Himself He bore our sins in his own body on the tree, or to the tree.

Peter has been saying that we should not be wrongdoers in our relationships with men, especially with our masters. But stop, he seems to say, and think how many times you have been a wrongdoer

against God! He suffered all that He did "in his own body" (and this is Communion Sunday for us).

He died for your sins, for my sins! Should this not make us gracious in dealing with the sins of others, even that froward, unpleasant, unfair boss, when we think of how the Lord has suffered for us?

2. He healed us. By His stripes we have been healed, and we are healed. That is why we are the way we are--because He healed us, He saved us, He has changed us, He has forgiven us. We are healed!

Would it not be something that you would be eternally grateful for if through your suffering quietly under injustices and wrongs there might be those in your organization who are brought to the Lord when they see Him in you?

3. He has made it possible for us to "live unto righteousness."

Living unto righteousness means exactly what Peter was writing about at the beginning of this passage: living to please the Lord.

Why do you want to live to please the Lord? It is only because of what He has done for you. It is not anything that you or I can take credit for. The reason that we do not live like people in the world live is because the Lord has not only delivered us from the penalty of sin, but from the power of sin. Should not the remembrance of this make us want to live our lives to please and glorify Him.

Finally,

4. The Lord has brought us to Himself.

And Who did Peter say in v. 25 that He is? He is "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls."

We once were straying; now we are in the fold. We are under the daily, moment by moment, care of our Shepherd, Who gave His life for the sheep. And He oversees our souls. That is the work of a Bishop. He is an overseer. The Lord is concerned about the welfare of our souls. And this is why He has directed Peter to write here as he has--because such submission is good for our souls! We will

never go wrong when we obey the Word of God.

Remember the warning which Peter sounded in 2:11. For me to be saying, "I am not being paid enough," or, "I deserve a better job," or anything else that is the expression of fleshly lusts--all rebellion and unrest wars against our souls.

Instead, great blessing, great peace, great joy, great usefulness, great spiritual progress, and great rewards in heaven await the child of God who faithfully submits to men because He wants so desperately to please the Lord.

Concl: May the Lord Himself give us the grace to obey Him by exercising those passive graces toward Him and toward men which were so wonderfully exemplified in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And, as we come to the Lord's Table this morning to remember our Lord in His death, let us remember that in His death we have the supreme example of what it means to please the Lord. The blessings cannot be calculated. They are still coming in day after day as God is claiming His people for Himself, and then making us more and more like the One, our Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom He finds all of His delight.

THE CHRISTIAN WIFE

1 Peter 3:1-6

Intro: We come today in our study of the First Epistle of Peter to a very important section--the part dealing with wives and husbands. If we are thinking only of our own dear country, we can certainly say that there never has been a time when the home has been in greater danger of being destroyed than it is today. There never has been a time when there have been more books written on the subject of the home than today. There never has been a time when there has been more marital counseling than today. And yet neither has there been a time when the divorce rate has been higher. Millions of couples are living together as husbands and wives who have not been married. Homosexual couples are claiming the right to be recognized as in a marriage relationship, even to the point of adopting children. And re-marriage of divorced people has become so common that it is even being lauded from many of our pulpits as a way in which to find personal growth and true meaning to life in the world today.

But perhaps the most alarming things that is happening is the tendency on the part of even Christians to set aside the teaching of the Word of God as though it is no longer applicable today, especially in its teachings about marriage. The women's liberation movement, so-called, has affected the attitude of many women who claim to be Christians. The clamor for personal freedom has made many feel that a wife's subjection to her husband is one of the best ways for her to be destroyed. And so wives refuse to be subject to their husbands. They do not look upon their husbands as having any authority over them. They are in pursuit of building up their self-esteem, of learning who they are, of exerting their independence and protecting their self-worth, **BUT REFUSING TO SEE THAT TO FOLLOW THIS PATH IS TO GO THE WAY THAT LEADS TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THEIR MARRIAGES, OF THEIR CHILDREN, AND OF THEMSELVES!**

only

This is not to say that the wives are the ones who are to blame for the present situation in American (and throughout the world --we will be thinking about "husbands" next week), but they surely bear a major part of the blame IF they are ignoring the Word of God in the way they conduct themselves in their relationship toward their husbands.

I am speaking particularly to you ladies this morning just as Peter wrote to the Christian women in his day--almost 2,000 years ago! I speak to the young, to those who are older; to the married, and to the unmarried; to you, whatever your background might be, or regardless of your present status. I appeal to you all to hear again what the Word of God has to say. And I would especially appeal to you younger ladies, to the young girls who are present, to listen to the Word of God this morning and to

determine in your heart that your marriage, whenever it comes, will be built, not upon the stupid advice of those who ignore the Scriptures, but upon those who cleave to what the Bible teaches our homes should be--to cleave to it just as tenaciously as you do to the teaching about salvation BECAUSE BOTH TEACHINGS ARE FOUND IN THIS SAME BOOK!

I would remind all of us this morning that there is no conflict among the writers of Scripture as to the place of the husband and the place of the wife. In fact, the Apostle Paul solicited the help of the older women in teaching the younger women how to be the wives God wanted them to be. Listen to these words from Paul's Epistle to Titus. Speaking to the older women, he said:

That they may teach the young women to be sober (wise), to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands,

THAT THE WORD OF GOD BE NOT BLASPHEMED (Tit. 2:4, 5).

What does it mean to blaspheme the Word of God? It means that you abuse it. You treat it as though it were not the Word of God. You explain it away, trying to make it say something besides what it actually says. You retain the parts that you want to keep, but throw the rest out!

But, you say, surely no Christian wife would do that! BUT THEY ARE DOING IT! Whether a true Christian will continue to do this is very doubtful. But this is the situation that we face today. Much of even so-called Christian counseling today is nothing more than Christians promoting the philosophy of the world with a few Scriptures thrown in to make it acceptable to Christian people. But the Word of God is being blasphemed!

Let me suggest to you this morning that if what Peter wrote to wives was wrong, there is the strong possibility that what he wrote about God, and about Jesus Christ, and about salvation--that all of these are wrong too. We reject that idea, do we not? WHAT PETER WROTE ABOUT SALVATION NEVER CAN BE OUT DATED, AND NEITHER CAN THESE WORDS WHICH HE WROTE TO WIVES AND HUSBANDS.

May the Lord give all of us open hearts as we consider His Word today!

There are four parts to what Peter had to say to the wives:

- I. The wife's conduct (vv. 1, 2).
- II. The wife's adornment (vv. 3, 4).
- III. The wife's examples (vv. 5, 6).
- IV. The wife's purpose toward her husband (vv. 1, 4).

First of all, then,

- I. THE WIFE'S CONDUCT (1 Pet. 3:1, 2).

If I were teaching the book of Ephesians today, and had come

to the fifth chapter where he addressed himself to wives and husbands, I would remind you that his remarks to them were based upon what he had written in the first four and one-half chapters. I say the same about this Epistle. Chapter three is based upon Peter's remarks in chapters 1, 2--and in particular upon what he began to say by way of exhortation in 2:11, 12.

There are four things that Peter emphasized:

A. "Be in subjection to your own husbands."

Wives are to place themselves under the authority and protection of their husbands--their "own" husbands. He is the most important person in her life!

She is not to be in subjection to her father,
 nor to her pastor,
 nor to her counsellor.
 nor to some other woman who
 may be trying to counsel her, nor to the writer of some
 book, BUT TO HER OWN HUSBAND. And this is true even if her
 husband is not a Christian!

Let this be forever established in the heart of every
 woman--those married, and those who hope some day to be
 married. This is the Word of God.

Secondly with regard to a wife's conduct,

B. Her emphasis is to be more on her walk than her talk.

Peter was saying that she should keep a careful watch on
 the way she was living and reacting and submitting her-
 self to her husband.

It is always easier to talk, but not nearly so effective.

C. Her walk is to be "chaste"--meaning, pure, holy, fault-
less.

The best way she can please her husband is by making sure
 that she is pleasing God.

D. It is to be a walk in "fear."

What does this mean? Does it mean that a wife will have
 much to fear if she submits herself to her husband?
 That is the way a lot of wives feel?

Look at what Paul said about this. In Eph. 5:22 he said
 this:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands,
as unto the Lord.

In the verse just before that he had said,
Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear
of God.

Then in v. 33 he concluded by saying,
. . . and the wife see that she reverence her
husband.

So to couple a holy life with fear means to be
desirous of pleasing God and her husband.

But a wife may respond by saying, "But I can't do
both." My answer is, "Yes, you can, or the Lord
would not have told you to do both."

REMEMBER AS I HAVE STATED REPEATEDLY IN TEACHING
1 PETER, WE ARE NOT DEALING WITH POSSIBLE EXCEPTIONS;
PETER WANTED HIS READERS TO GET THE PRINCIPLES IN
MIND.

But let us move on.

II. THE WIFE'S ADORNMENT (1 Pet. 3:3, 4).

Every woman likes pretty things. She likes to look nice.
And there is certainly nothing wrong with this as long as it
is kept in moderation. But the question is: What kind of
adornment is most important to you?

Peter spoke negatively first, then positively.

A. Negatively: v. 3.

The word for "adorning" is the word, world, _____. It
speaks of that which is used to beautify, to improve.
How are you trying to make yourself attractive to your
husband? Is by having the latest hair style, or by
having all kinds of expensive jewelry, or by wearing the
most fashionable clothing?

Peter said, "No, that is not the way to go." But . . .

B. Positively: v. 4.

The wife who is primarily concerned about how she looks
and what she is wearing is usually the wife who has for-
gotten that she has an inner person as well as an outer
person. She has forgotten "the hidden man of the
heart." She has forgotten character and disposition and
behavior. She may scorn meekness and quietness.

I like the comment that Fausset made in his commentary

about "a meek and a quiet spirit." He said that meekness means that you don't cause disturbances; quietness means that you don't blow up when your husband causes an uproar! You lovingly, patiently, bear with him--over and over again.

You know, God is not concerned about you being the latest fashion plate, BUT HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT SHAPE YOUR HEART IS IS--NOT PHYSICALLY, BUT SPIRITUALLY! Cf. 1 Sam. 16:7. People may look at the outward appearance, but God looks at your heart. Cf. also 1 Tim. 2:9-11.

See 1 Pet. 3:15. To be meek is to be like our Lord. Cf. Matt. 11:28-30.

III. THE CHRISTIAN WIFE'S EXAMPLES (1 Pet. 3:5, 6).

Man is always on a stretch for something NEW; the Lord is always directing us to the OLD.

Let me ask you ladies this morning: Who is your role model (to use present-day terminology)? Who is your ideal of what a wife should be? Who do you think that Peter had in mind when he wrote of "the holy women" "in old time"?

Have you ever studied the women of the Bible? What do you think of the virtuous woman who is described in Prov. 31:10-31.

Don't take some woman who is not even a Christian. Or a woman who may be very pleasing on TV, but who has demonstrated that she cannot hang on to a husband, nor raise her children to be morally upright people. Take the "holy women." None of them is perfect, but they should be your examples, your ideals--even women today who clearly show that they know how to walk with the Lord and who are more concerned about what a woman is that what she has.

Sarah is the one Peter cited. And he had reference to her words in Gen. 18:12.

You see, godly submission has never gone out of style with the Lord. It is "of great price" (v. 4). And, if you want the blessing of God, this is the way to go.

But what did Peter mean when he said, "as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement"?

Did you ever hear a woman say with regard to being submissive to her husband, "Well, I've tried that, but it doesn't work"? You know, I am always suspicious of people, men or women, who are trying to "work" the Bible, or God. It sounds

too much like we are trying to manipulate God to get what we want, and you are right, that does not "work." We are not to try to "work" God, but to obey Him. And we are to obey Him even when it does not seem to work. Peter was talking here about the wife who is inclined to panic because she sets out to obey God, and things do not improve with her husband, or they may even get worse.

The word for what Peter was encouraging here is the word, perseverance.

Do you quit praying just because you ask God for something and He doesn't do it? No, we make sure that what we are asking is something that is pleasing to Him, and then we persevere--we ask and we keep on asking!

So, do we quit obeying God when it does not bring His immediate blessing? No, we do not panic. We trust Him more, we hope in Him (the word Peter used in v. 5--the Lord was their only hope), and continue on with our obedience, believing that the Lord will in His own time come to our aid. The problem with all of us is that we quit too soon.

God will always be faithful to His Word, so keep on doing what He tells you to do, and you will find that He will never fail you.

One final word:

IV. THE CHRISTIAN WIFE'S PURPOSE (1 Pet. 3:1, 2, 4).

Peter was speaking here of a wife whose husband was not a Christian, but those who have Christian husbands can also learn from this.

A Christian wife has a twofold purpose:

A. The first is to please God!

This comes first, or should come first, with all of us. See vv. 2, 4.

B. The second is to win her husband. See v. 1.

Winning is a legitimately Biblical term for seeing a person come to Christ. See 1 Cor. 9:19-21.

To state it more generally so as to include a wife whose husband is a Christian although he might not be a very good one, A CHRISTIAN WIFE IS TO BE ZEALOUS FOR THE SPIRITUAL BLESSING OF HER HUSBAND. In the words of Gen. 2, she is to be his helper, his helper on to God!

But, can a wife please God and her husband at the same time, even when her husband is not a Christian? ABSOLUTELY!
How do you do it? By concentrating on what you are, not on what he is. By living a godly life before your husband, and by thinking more about your inner adornment than about your outer adornment.

Concl: Be assured that the Lord seeks our happiness, our greatest joy. He does not deceive us. Nor will He forget His Word. If we persist in doing what pleases Him by seeking to do His will in pleasing each other, and do not quit, continuing to do well, THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT THE BLESSING WILL EVENTUALLY COME. Walk with Him. Let all of your hope be in Him--not yourself! And wait with real expectation to see Him work.

A lady said to me, not more than a month ago, who is now divorced and living happily with a second husband that, if she had known then what she has learned since by becoming a Christian, she would have still been married to her first husband.

Next week we will see what Peter had to say to husbands.

THE CHRISTIAN HUSBAND

1 Peter 3:7

Intro: The section that we are currently considering in 1 Peter was introduced with the words found in 1 Peter 2:11, 12. (Read.)

Following those words, Peter commanded his readers to be in submission to the government (2:13-17). He commanded servants to be subject to their masters (2:18-25). He commanded the wives to be in subjection to their own husbands (3:1-6). And now we come to his words for the husbands (3:7).

His words to the husbands are shorter than any of the other, but how full they are of instruction! As you can see, Peter did not go into the detail with the husbands that Paul did in Eph. 5, but there certainly is no conflict between the two Apostles. Peter was probably writing to meet some specific needs which the believers had to whom he addressed this Epistle.

The wife had her responsibilities in the home, but so did the husband. The duties were not all on one side. And notice that Peter wrote as Paul did in that he told the wives what to do, and then told the husbands. He did not tell the wives what the husbands should do, neither did he tell the husbands what the wives should do. He spoke to each groups about themselves. We always compound our problems when we are more concerned about what others should do than we are about what we should do. Let us learn that simple lesson from the text of Scripture.

Before we consider the verse in detail, let me point out the relationship of the various parts of the verse to each other.

Peter gave the husband two commandments:

- 1) "Dwell with them according to knowledge."
- 2) "Giving honour unto the wife."

And their is a motive for each of the commandments:

- 1) For the first: "as unto the weaker vessel," or as with the weaker vessel.
- 2) For the second: "as being heirs together of the grace of life."

And then the purpose for the two commandments concludes the verse: "that your prayers be not hindered."

So in the KJV the commandments are stated, then the motives for each, and finally the purpose for both commandments.

The order is better in the NASB. Look at your Bible as I read from the NASB.

You husbands likewise,

live with your wives in an understanding way,
 as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman;
 and grant her honor as a fellow-heir of the grace of life,
 so that your prayers may not be hindered.

A literal rendering of the original text would run like this:
 Husbands likewise, dwell with them according to knowledge,
 as with a weaker vessel who is a woman,
 rendering them honour, as also being joint-heirs
 of the grace of life,
 so that your prayers will not be cut off.

So the first commandment is, Dwell with your wife in an understanding way because she is a weaker vessel.

The second is, Give her honor because she is an heir with you of the grace of life.

And the reason why the husband should be concerned about these was in order that their prayers (the "your" is plural) be not hindered, or cut off from reaching the Lord.

Now let us consider them point by point.

I. THE FIRST COMMANDMENT FOR CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS: "Dwell with them according to knowledge."

There are two parts to this:

A. "Dwell with them."

We are dealing now with husbands who are Christians and wives who are Christians, but the basic principles apply to all homes.

Husbands and wives are to live together. The wife's place is in the home, BUT SO IS THE HUSBANDS. And the idea is here that they ought to live by themselves, not with other people around (except for any children that they might have.

The husband may have to leave for work, but at the end of the day he should come back to his wife, looking forward to being with the person who is the most important person in the world to him. When the husband is away from home for longer periods of time, trouble is in the making. Absence for more than a day may occasionally be necessary, but it should not be a continuing thing.

The husband who is obedient to what Peter wrote here will look forward to being with his wife when the

duties of the day have been completed. He will find his greatest pleasure in her company, in confiding in her, in the encouragement which she gives him, and in the help that he is able to give to her. When she is happy, he will be happy. When she is sad, he will enter into her sufferings. Their mutual love for each other is what will make their lives the blessing that God intended that it should be.

The second part:

B. "According to knowledge."

Every husband should seek to be wise and knowledgeable in the things of the Lord. He should know what God's will is for him as a husband, i.e., what a husband should be and do in his relationship with his wife. He should seek to be able to teach her in the things of the Lord. Cf. 1 Cor. 14:35. He ought to seek to understand his wife--her strengths, her weaknesses (physically and spiritually), her particular needs, etc., so he will be able to help her. If there are children, he should should know the place that he is to have in their lives. These things are all very, very important! As Peter would suggest in his second Epistle, the husband is to be one of those who would be adding to his excellence as a father, knowledge, that he might be an even better father. Cf. 2 Pet. 1:5. There is nothing worse than an ignorant, foolish husband and father.

But why is this so important? What should be the husband's motive for being knowledgeable in the ways I have mentioned?

II. THE MOTIVE: THE WIFE, THE WEAKER VESSEL.

There are some ways in which women can be stronger than men, and often stronger. A wife might be wiser than her husband. She may be more spiritually minded than her husband. But as a general rule they are weaker physically (although not always), and weaker emotionally. She may not be able to stand the strain of life as much as the husband can. She is affected more deeply by trials and by criticism. She also can be more easily deceived than a man will be. Each husband needs to know his own wife so he will be able to help her in her weaknesses, whatever they may be.

But it is interesting that Peter used the word, "vessel." This is the word that Paul used in 2 Tim. 2:20, 21 where he was referring to the people of God as "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and

prepared unto every good work."

The word "vessel" points to the woman's usefulness in the place of service that the Lord has given her--with her husband and with her children in the home. The stronger a man's wife is spiritually, the more she will help him. He needs her prayers, her encouragement, just as she needs his. And so the husband needs to be wise in building up his wife so that she will be strengthened where otherwise she would be weak.

But let us go on.

III. THE SECOND COMMANDMENT FOR CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS: "giving honour unto the wife."

The husband is the head of his wife, but he is not to treat his wife as an inferior, as his servant. He is to treat her at all times with the great honor and respect. After all, she is God's gift to him. God has given her to him to be his helper. He is incomplete without her. He is to treat her with the same affection that Christ manifested for the Church when "he loved her, and gave himself for her." If a husband honors his wife, he will give himself completely to her. No one will be more important to him than she is!

I repeat what I said last week: There is no religion or way of life that has ever been taught among men that gives a woman a greater place of honor than she is given in the Word of God.

A godly husband will never belittle his wife to his children, nor to others. Not even to his wife herself. He will guard her honor as he guards his own.

John Brown (born in Scotland in 1780) has this very wise comment with regard to the weakness of the wife:

The feebleness of their frame should keep husbands in mind of the insecure tenure by which they (the husbands) possess them, and lead them to dwell with them, as they will wish they had done, when they must dwell with them no longer (1 Peter, I, 570).

But why? What is the motive?

IV. THE MOTIVE: THEY ARE "HEIRS TOGETHER OF THE GRACE OF LIFE."

The Greek says, joint-heirs! It is the same word that Paul used in Rom. 8:17 when he said that we all as believers are "joint-heirs with Christ."

This expression has to do with our salvation, with the evidence of it in our daily lives, as well as with the heavenly destiny that awaits every child of God. The husband does not have even one more blessing in salvation than his wife has. She has all that he has! She is equally precious to God, and just as much a member of God's family as her husband. So a husband should treat her as he would any other Christian, ONLY MORE SO--with love and honour and all of the fruit of the Spirit.

This is where a husband and wife find their greatest unity--"in Christ." How wonderful is that "grace of God that bringeth salvation" to men and women alike! Paul wrote to the Galatian churches that in Christ "there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28b). Let me repeat: when the Lord saves a woman He does everything for her that he does for a man. Let the husband always remember this, and he will find that this is the basis of true and lasting harmony in his home.

But this motive also means that heaven should be much in their thoughts and in their conversation with each other. If we are anticipating what it will mean to be with the Lord, and talking about it, it will make a big difference in the way in which we conduct ourselves at home.

But now we come to that last phrase:

V. THE CHRISTIAN HUSBAND'S PURPOSE: "that your prayers be not hindered."

The word "your" is plural in the original. This means that Peter was talking about the prayers of the wife as well as the prayers of the husband. If a husband fails his wife, he will not only be responsible for cutting off his own prayers, but hers as well!

Peter was indicating here that true Christians pray, and that prayer was at the very heart of their lives. One of the reasons that Christians have so much trouble, often trouble just like non-Christian families, is because they do not pray as they should. And, if things are not right between a husband and wife, their prayers amount to nothing. They never reach the throne of grace.

Let me ask you husbands. Do you pray? Is your life built upon prayer? Have you sensed your dependence upon the Lord in your responsibilities as a husband, as the father of your children?

Let me ask you this also: Do you pray with your wife, and

with your children? Do they hear you seeking the blessing of the Lord, calling upon Him in humility and dependence? Does your wife and do your children know how concerned you are that your home be a place where the Lord is honored?

Or could it be that you could flipantly say, "It makes no difference if my prayers are cut off because I don't pray much anyway!" If you can say that, I would doubt if you know what "the grace of life" is. I would doubt if you are a true Christian.

Job was the godliest man on earth in his day, and the thing that is mentioned to substantiate that statement was the fact that "continually" (the Hebrew says all the days) he prayed for his children and offered burnt offerings for each one of them because he said, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts" (Job 1:5b). It would have alarmed Job in the worst way if you had told him that his prayers might be cut off!

You know, men, usually our wives are better known for their prayers than we are. You ought to thank the Lord if you have a wife that faithfully prays, but you ought to be ashamed if the Lord hears her voice in prayer more than He hears yours.

Paul placed a special responsibility upon men for prayer when he wrote to Timothy. He said,

I will therefore that men pray every where,
lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting
(1 Tim. 2:8).

Concl: What more needs to be said? Peter has done here in v. 7 what he has done so often before--compressing so much in few words! May every husband here take these words to heart, memorize them, and pray that the Lord will enable you to be this kind of a husband. May you be knowledgeable and wise in the ways of God, honoring her as a fellow-believer in Christ, and praying for her and with her. Great issues involving the glory of God and His blessing upon your home and your entire life, as well as the lives of those who are so dear to you, are at stake. This is what God says a Christian husband should be. And these words will never be out-dated as long as the world continues to go on.

THE CHURCH IN DAILY LIFE or FROM DAY TO DAY
1 Peter 3:8-12

Intro: Our text begins with the word, "Finally." What did Peter mean by this when he was only halfway through the Epistle? Did he think that he was concluding? Or was this just a bad habit he had gotten into? Or was there some other reason?

It might help us to note two other times when Peter used the word that he used here. In fact, there are three. Cf. 1:9; 4:7, 17.

The word speaks of a goal, an objective, a purpose.

This would mean that Peter had arrived at a major point or purpose that he had had in mind in writing to these believers.

What had he been doing?

Well, we have noticed that he had been addressing certain groups of believers. We have linked all of these instructions to the words found in 2:11, 12. Then Peter spoke of:

- 1) Submission to government (2:13-13).
- 2) Submission of servants to their masters (2:14-25).
- 3) Submission of wives to their husbands (3:1-6).
- 4) Submission of husbands to the will of God for them (3:7).

Now he was preparing to speak to the whole Church generally. What follows has to do with their relationship to each other, as well as to other people who might not be believers. There were certain standards of conduct in their relationships with other people generally which must be maintained day after day. The child of God can never dismiss what Peter was about to say about their lives in relation to others.

This is what Peter had in mind as he wrote, or was moved by the Holy Spirit to write, to these suffering saints.

There would be a tendency for them to neglect their personal duties in a time of persecution and trouble. But Peter wanted them to realize that it was through obedience personally to their individual responsibilities that the behavior of the church in each locality generally could be what it ought to be.

The same applies to us today.

Together we make up Trinity Bible Church. But we are so many individuals who make up Trinity Bible Church. We come from many different homes. AND IT IS WHAT WE ARE IN OUR HOMES, ON OUR JOBS, IN MEETING OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO OUR GOVERNMENT, THAT IS COMBINED WHEN WE COME TOGETHER TO MAKE UP WHAT IS TRINITY BIBLE CHURCH. If we are weak and failing and disobedient personally, the church will be weak. If we personally are strong and obedient, then the church will be strong. I hope you see this.

There are three things that Peter did in these verses:

- 1) First, he gave FIVE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS of Christian fellowship in the church (3:8).
- 2) Second, he spoke of THE PRIORITY OF BLESSING (3:9)--that "blessing" is what we ought to be primarily concerned about, "blessing" for other believers, as well as "blessing" for ourselves!
- 3) Third and last, OLD TESTAMENT SUPPORT for what he was writing to them, from Psa. 34:12-16. The quotation is in vv. 10-12.
Peter simply began this quotation, not in the usual way, but with the word, "For," and not in the usual way of citing an OT passage. And he probably did it that way because the passage was well-known, and well-loved, by those believers to whom he was writing.

He did this like we would cite Scripture, OT and/or NT, to confirm some point that we would be making in our teaching.

Let us consider now what Peter wrote in these five verses.

I. FIVE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS of fellowship in the church (1 Pet. 3:8).

A. "Be ye all of one mind" (v. 8).

This meant that they were to be likeminded. They were to think alike, and their thinking needed to be directed and controlled by the Word of God. They were to be submissive to the authority of Scripture both as to what they believed, as well as in the way that they behaved.

We may be different as to our individual personalities, as to our backgrounds, as to the circumstances in which we live, BUT THERE IS ONE WAY IN WHICH WE ARE TO BE ALIKE, AND THAT IS IN OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORD OF GOD. IT IS TO BE THE FINAL COURT OF APPEAL FOR ALL OF US. Beware of the person who argues with the Word.

This exhortation means that we are all to think alike, and to seek and strive to live alike--in obedience to the Word of God!.

B. "Having compassion one of another" (v. 8).

We get our word sympathetic from the word Peter used here. It means that we need to learn to feel like other people feel when they are in the midst of their troubles. We are to put ourselves in their places so that we will be understanding and helpful to them, not critical and aloof.

Much of what Peter wrote here is found also in Rom. 12.

Cf. Rom. 12:15,
 Rejoice with them that do rejoice,
 and weep with them that weep.

C. "Love as brethren."

We get the name Philadelphia from this word. It is brotherly love. It is an emotional love, an expressive love, It is a love which moves us to delight in each other. There is a special love that believers have for each other, and which they are to manifest toward each other. Cf. 1 John 3:14.

D. "Be pitiful."

This word is only used elsewhere in the NT in Eph. 4:32 where it is translated, "tenderhearted." It means that we are to be kind toward each other, to excel in compassion--and that it is to be strongly expressed and well-expressed.

E. "Be courteous."

The root of this word is the same as the first expression in this verse, "be ye all of one mind." It has to do with the way we think, only here it has to do with the way we think about ourselves. We are to be humble-minded, to have a modest opinion of ourselves. After all, we are only sinners saved by grace.

If we want to have good fellowship, these are the things that we need to cultivate in our lives.

II. THE PRIORITY OF "BLESSING" (1 Pet. 3:9).

The circumstances of the believers to whom Peter was writing were very difficult, and gave rise to the desire to retaliate when they were sinned against. That desire is in all of us. We are inclined to feel that we have the right to do to others what they do to us. But Peter said that that is never the way to go.

Note that "evil" is mentioned in each verse of the remainder of our text. (Point them out.)

"Evil" is that which a person does to injure someone else. It can be physical injury, or mental injury, or material loss--all of these things come into this category. Sometimes it is verbal injury, either to ourselves, or about us to others.

"Railing" is mainly verbal--abusive, critical, reviling,

language. And all of this is done to blame, to censure in the most severe manner possible. And the point that Peter was making was that this would be done when there was no reason for it.

— Instead of getting back at people, we need to be thinking in terms of how we can be a blessing to them. Cf. Rom. 12:14:

Bless them which persecute you:

 bless, and curse not.

Also Matt. 5:44, 45a,

 But I say unto you, Love your enemies,

 bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,

 and pray for them which despitefully use you,

 and persecute you;

 That ye may be the children of your Father

 which is in heaven . . .

We are to be concerned about "blessing"--being a blessing to others, and receiving the blessing of God upon ourselves. This is why we were called, as Abraham was--to "inherit a blessing." And so our behavior toward others has eternal consequences as well as temporal.

Cf. the reference to our "inheritance" in 1:3-5. See the connection also with our calling as in Rom. 8:28.

— How different things would be if we were concerned about blessing--not in having our own way, and in standing up for our rights, as is the way most people are thinking today!

III. OLD TESTAMENT SUPPORT (1 Pet. 3:10-12).

As I have mentioned, this was a well-known passage, and so Peter did not even have to write, "as it is written," or, "thus saith the Lord." BUT THE PROBLEM THAT WE ALL HAVE IS THAT WE OFTEN IGNORE THE SCRIPTURES THAT WE KNOW WHEN WE NEED TO BE THINKING ABOUT WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO IN THE SITUATION WE ARE FACING.

Peter (and David) were addressing themselves to people who wanted to enjoy life--to those who loved life, and wanted to see good days, i.e., to experience the blessing of the Lord every day that they lived.

— Illus: Little children. Allison. They wake up excited about what they might be doing. They enjoy life. They are glad to be alive. Life is "a bowl of cherries"! It is too bad that we lose this so quickly. Sometimes we begin the day wondering what trouble is going to face us, or how things can get worse. We sometimes hate to get up. That is not the way we should be. We should "love life, and see good days." That is the common greeting now" "Have a

good day!"

If we are going to have good days, then there are certain things that we must not do.

Note that Peter mentioned three things that we must NOT do, and then three things that we MUST DO!

What should we NOT do?

- 1) Stop trying to hurt people. "Refrain his tongue from evil" means both that they were to stop it, and that they were to resist this temptation and tendency which we all have.
- 2) Do the same about "guile"--stop trying to deceive people, or to trap them, or to bait them so as to cause them to do the wrong thing, thus corrupting them.
- 3) "Eschew evil"--stay away from it, turn away from it. Do not let this be an option with you, i.e., trying to hurt people because they have hurt you.

What should we do?

- 2) "Seek peace." Let peace be our objective, the thing that we desire most of all. If we do not add fuel to the flame, it will go out.

Cf. Matt. 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for . . ."

- 1) "Do good."

Make a practice of doing that which is going to have good results, i.e., good in God's eyes. Overcome evil with good. Cf. Rom. 12:18.

- 3) "Enslave it." Pursue it. You probably will not achieve it the first time, so persevere! Keep working at it. You may achieve it once, and then have to do it again. But keep at it relentlessly.

Now the big question is WHY? And the answer is given in v. 12. It has to do with the Lord!

NOTICE: The Lord has eyes, and so He sees, He knows all that is going on.

The Lord has ears, so He hears what you have heard. He knows how it cuts. The Lord understands this because He went through it, too.

His face represents not only His presence, but His pleasure or displeasure. If He is displeased, nothing we do can possibly solve the problem that we face.

On God's eyes, cf. Psa. 33:18,

Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him,
upon them that hope in his mercy.

Cf. Prov. 15:3,

The eyes of the Lord are in every place,
beholding the evil and the good.

Cf. 2 Chron. 16:9,

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro
throughout the whole earth,
to shew himself strong in the behalf of them
whose heart is perfect toward him. . .

Cf. Heb. 4:13,

Neither is there any creature
that is not manifest in his sight:
but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him
with whom we have to do.

On God's ears (and eyes), cf. Psa. 94:9,

He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?
he that formed the eye, shall he not see?

Cf. 1 John 5:14, 15, "And this is the confidence that we
have in him . . ."

What about God's face? Cf. the Aaronic benediction in Num.
6:24-26,

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:
The Lord make his face shine upon thee,
and be gracious unto thee:
The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee,
and give thee peace.

David said in Psa. 27:8,

When thou saidst, Seek ye my face;
my heart said unto thee,
Thy face, Lord, will I seek.

When David had sinned so grievously against the Lord, he
prayed,

Hide thy face from my sins,
and blot out all mine iniquities (Psa. 51:9).

When we take matters into our own hands, using measure that
displease the Lord, He turns against us. See v. 13.

Concl: This is God's way. We know it now. We have seen it in
the Word. Let it be our way, too. May our greatest
desire always be to please the Lord. Then our days will be good
days, and all of our paths will be peace. Cf. Prov. 3:17,
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace. (Concerning God's wisdom.)

SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS
1 Peter 3:13-17

Intro: There is not a chapter in 1 Peter which does not speak of suffering. Obviously suffering was very prevalent among the believers to whom Peter was writing, and the Spirit of God was using Peter to explain their sufferings to them, and to instruct them as to how they were to behave while they were suffering.

I hope you are reading this Epistle through from beginning to end once a week, and, if you are, the next time you read it, or quote it (in case you have memorized it, or are memorizing it), NOTICE HOW MUCH PETER SAID ABOUT SUFFERING. MARK THE PASSAGES, AND PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO WHAT THEY SAY. If 1 Peter were a symphony, suffering would be the theme that occurs and recurs throughout the Epistle.

We are in one of those passages on suffering today. Actually it began in v. 9, and it continues on with certain strong points of emphasis until we get to the end of the Epistle as such in 5:10, 11. (Vv. 12-14 are the conclusion.) It may swell at times like a rising crescendo, and at other times it is more in the background, but it is always there: SUFFERING!

Suffering is evident in the word "scattered" in 1:1. But it is very clear in 1:6, 7. It comes up again in 2:1. And it reaches a major emphasis when Peter addressed himself to "servants" in 2:18, and continues on to the end of that chapter. Evidently "servants" especially were suffering. Then, as I have said, we have it in 3:9, perhaps more subdued, but it is heard loud and clear as we come to our text for today. Let me read vv. 13-17.

Now the kind of suffering that Peter was talking about, and the kind of suffering which has the greatest emphasis throughout the Bible is the suffering that God's people experience because they are God's people--suffering for righteousness' sake. All suffering raises questions in our minds, but the suffering that Christians experience, especially when they are seeking to please God, is often the most baffling, and the most discouraging. It is only in the Word of God that we find an adequate explanation for the whole problem of suffering for righteousness' sake.

Let us see what we can learn this morning, as the Holy Spirit is please to teach us.

First of all we have . . .

I. A QUESTION AND A STATEMENT OF TRUTH (1 Pet. 3:13, 14a).

These two go together because they were intended to give strong encouragement to the readers.

A. The question (v. 13).

To understand the question we need to notice again the verses which come before it--the quotation from Psa. 34. See vv. 10-12, and especially v. 12. These verses tell the Lord's people how they are to behave at all times, and, as always, the blessing of God is promised for those who obey the Lord.

The emphasis seems to be upon the word, "harm." If I understand what Peter was saying, he was assuring those believers that though sufferings could hurt them, it could not "harm" them, i.e., it could not do permanent damage to them.

Instead--and this is where we move on to . . .

B. The statement of truth (v. 14a).

...they were promised blessing; "happy are ye."

What could this mean? Surely no one likes to suffer! How can you be persecuted and happy at the same time?

We can be happy in times of persecution because of what is being accomplished through the suffering--especially two things:

- 1) God is being glorified.
 - 2) Spiritual profit is coming to us!
- There is one other thing which we will come to in a few minutes.

Notice both of these points as the last thing which Peter mentioned in the main part of the Epistle: 5:10, 11.

Our main purpose always is to seek the glory of God, regardless of what our circumstances may be. We should always be asking, "What can I do in my present circumstances that will bring the greatest glory to God?" See 2:20.

And just to know that the Lord is with us, helping us, working in us and working for us, that ought to make us happy. If it doesn't, we have our hearts set on the wrong things.

Let us make sure that we take in the encouragement that we have here in vv. 13, 14a.

But next we come to . . .

II. THREE EXHORTATIONS (1 Pet. 3:14b-16).

The first two exhortations go together, and then we will consider the third by itself.

A. The first two commands (vv. 14b, 15a).

1. Negatively (v. 14b).

We are usually inclined to start doing the wrong thing, and so we have to be told to stop it, or not to start it, before we are told what we should be doing.

The expression should begin with the word but: "But be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled."

Remember: Peter was probably talking about some life-threatening situations, not just a minor conflict or argument, and so his words would in and of themselves raise questions.

The verse means, Do not go to pieces when you face persecution; don't even be agitated by it.

Stated positively this would mean, Be at peace in your hearts; you have nothing to be afraid of!

Surely Peter is being very unrealistic and unsympathetic. Can he really mean this?

Of course he does! How can he? Because of all that he has been teaching them in the Epistle about the purposes of God, and about the promises of God. They can be hurt, but not harmed. They will come through it and out of it (even if it meant death) much, much better than they were before the persecution started!

Well, instead of being terrorized, what should they do?

2. Positively (v. 15b).

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts."

Some MSS have "Christ" here instead of "God." The NIV renders it, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord."

What does this mean?

The basic meaning of "sanctify" is to set apart. And so it means that, with all of the thoughts that go racing through your mind in such a time as this, turn your attention to God and to Christ. Remember

that they are both entitled to be called "Lord," the sovereign God, the sovereign Christ, supreme over all men, all circumstances, all troubles--everything! Think of Their purposes. Think of Their power and glory. Think of their love, their promises. THINK OF THEM. Take comfort in all of that, and, as Peter would go on to say in v. 18 and following, think of how Christ endured His sufferings and ultimately came forth as the Victor.

In David's words, set Him before your face. In Isaiah's words, keep your mind stayed on Him. Peter was saying that, in such a time as those believers were experiencing, the important thing was what was going on in their hearts! And, if we form the habit of thinking much about Christ when things are going well with us, it will be something that we will habitually do when things go wrong--and then we will have peaceful hearts.

Make sure that you are doing this.

But there is . . .

B. A third command (vv. 15b, 16).

If we have obediently followed Peter's instructions thus far, then we need to be ready to do something: We need to be ready to answer questions! About what? Look at what Peter said.

You see, the only reason that a person can face possible death unafraid, and even happy, is because he has a "hope" that makes him unafraid to die. People can see this in such a Christian's behavior, and so they will say, "How can you be this way?"

It is very, very likely that this was the kind of an effect that Stephen had upon Saul of Tarsus.

Remember how we define the word "hope" as it is used here.

Most people are without any "hope." And consequently they are not really happy unless things are going right for them in this world. And no person ever has everything going the way he would like for them to go!

But how is this answer to be given--with a holier-than-thou attitude, or in a vindictive way, with hate and with scorn? NO! But "with meekness and fear"--meekness toward men, and fear, not toward men, but toward God, fear

lest even in giving our answer we might do it in a way that would be displeasing to the Lord.

And we are to do this:

- 1) With a good conscience, as having not done anything evil which would be the cause of our suffering.
- 2) And with a good conversation, a good life, a life in which we have had one purpose, and that is to be pleasing to the Lord.

We might have our false accusers like the Lord did, But in seeing the child of God behave in the way Peter described here, they will be ashamed and admit that their accusations were wrong.

III. THE FINAL WORD (1 Pet. 3:17).

This is not all that Peter had to say, but all we will be able to consider now.

When it is the will of God for us to suffer for doing good, good in His sight, it is better to suffer than not to suffer. Why? Because of all that the Lord accomplishes through the sufferings of His people. It is "better." And this is true of all kinds of sufferings.

Concl: What are some of the benefits? Let us just take what we have in our text: vv. 13-17. We can be hurt, but not harmed, because "we know that all things work together . . ."

- 1) The result of suffering for righteousness' sake is happiness.

Illus: The people who were on the Oprah Winfrey program.

- 2) We find peace which dispels our fears. "He that fears God has none else to fear" (JFB, VI, 610).
- 3) It draws us closer to God and to Christ.
- 4) It provides opportunities for witnessing of Christ, and the hope we have in Him.
- 5) It humbles us, and takes away our self-sufficiency.
- 6) It makes us even more careful that what we do, what we say, what we think, and what we are, are pleasing to the Lord. This is the fear of God.
- 7) It silences opposition. The Name of God is not blasphemed, as when we do evil, but it is glorified.

In all of our trials, may the Lord give us blessings like these.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR SUFFERING SAINTS

1 Peter 3:18

Intro: The people of God have always had to suffer in varying degrees for the sake of the Gospel, and for the truth of the Word of God.

The Gospel often separates Christians from members of their families who are not Christians. Christians lose friends who are not sympathetic with their faith in Christ. Often suffering for the sake of Christ takes on a more aggressive character. Christians have been known to lose their jobs. When it reaches the extreme, Christians have laid down their lives rather than to deny Christ.

All of this means that the work of the Lord is never easy. From the standpoint of personal relationships it can be very costly. Even within the church there is often opposition to the Gospel; there is often opposition to the teaching of the Word of God.

These are not facts for us to become morbid about, but they are realities of life for one who is a faithful child of God. WE MUST BE CAREFUL, AS PETER TAUGHT IN THIS EPISTLE, NOT TO SUFFER BECAUSE OF OUR OWN EVILDOING, BUT NEITHER MUST WE BE SURPRISED WHEN WE SUFFER AS WE SEEK TO DO THAT WHICH IS PLEASING TO GOD. This was one of the major concerns which led to the writing of this First Epistle of Peter.

But Peter did not stop there. He sought to encourage the people of God who were going through times like that.

Remember that he was not writing about the sufferings that a person goes through because of physical illness, or injuries that we may have as the result of some accident. The Lord is certainly in those things, and uses them, but by far the greatest emphasis in the NT has to do with persecution for the sake of Christ! If we make ourselves obnoxious, and do foolish things, perhaps wrong things, with the excuse that we are serving the Lord, that is wrongdoing. But when we suffer legitimately as Christians, where can we find encouragement?

Our text for today answers, IN THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST! (Read.)

Now this is obviously a Gospel text. And I am sure that the Gospel has been preached from this verse hundreds upon hundreds of times since it was written. But when you look closely at the context of this verse, you can see that Peter was not writing for unbelievers, but for believers. He was showing that there is encouragement for believers if they will only compare their sufferings with the suffering of Christ when He died on the Cross to provide salvation for us. That is the reason that this verse was originally written!

How can we find encouragement here? Let me point out five things which Peter said about the sufferings of Christ in this verse which can be an encouragement to us in those times when we suffer for the sake of the Gospel.

— The first has to do with . . .

I. THE WILL OF GOD AND SUFFERING.

Note the connection between 1 Pet. 3:17 and v. 18.

One thing is certain about the sufferings of our Lord which ended in death: IT WAS THE WILL OF GOD!

Old Testament prophecy proves it.

Old Testament types prove it.

The words of the Lord Jesus prove it.

In John 6:38 we have our Lord's words when He said,
For I came down from heaven,
not to do mine own will,
but the will of him that sent me.

— When the Lord was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said,
Father, if thou be willing,
remove this cup from me:
nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done (Lk. 22:42).

When Peter tried to kill Malchus, the Lord rebuked him with these words,
Put up thy sword into the sheath:
the cup which my Father hath given me,
shall I not drink it? (John 18:11).

So what is our encouragement from this?

It is that suffering for the sake of the Gospel is a part of God's will for us. Paul told the Philippian church,
For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ,
not only to believe on him,
but also to suffer for his sake (Phil. 1:29).

Look at 1 Pet. 5:10.

— Paul told Timothy,
Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus
shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

This is the testimony of the OT as well as of the NT: the people of God will suffer. BUT HOW COMFORTING IT IS TO KNOW,

WHEN IT COMES, THAT IT IS THE WILL OF GOD--not just the result of the evil work of people against us.

Remember what Peter said on the Day of Pentecost about the sufferings of our Lord:

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel
and foreknowledge of God,
ye have taken,
and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (Acts 2:23).

But let me give you a second word of encouragement.

II. THE PERSON WHO SUFFERED.

Peter wrote, "the just for the unjust." We have a contrast there. He was (and is) THE JUST ONE; we are "the unjust." He did not deserve to suffer; we do! It may not be that we deserve the sufferings that come to us because of our desire to please the Lord, but there are so many reasons why we deserve far more trouble than we ever get. If the Lord were to deal with us according to our sins, what would our lives be like?

On the other hand, think of the sinlessness of Christ. He not only did no sin, but He could not sin. There was no sin in Him. He did not know sin. He was without sin of any kind.

But the record is different with us, isn't it? If Christ suffered, even though He was not a sinner, should we expect anything else? The Lord said, and His words are in John 15:18, 19,

If the world hate you,
ye know that it hated me before it hated you.
If ye were of the world,
the world would love his own:
but because ye are not of the world,
but I have chosen you out of the world,
therefore the world hateth you.

A third word of encouragement:

III. THE PURPOSE OF SUFFERING.

It should encourage us to know that God has a purpose for all suffering, just as He had a purpose for the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What was the purpose of Christ's sufferings? It was "that he might bring us to God." All that was necessary for our salvation, He accomplished by His death. He left nothing undone.

And note the way in which the sovereignty of God in salvation is brought out by that statement, "that he might bring us to God"! No sinner comes to God of His own accord; it is Christ Who brings us. If He did not bring us, we would not come--our hearts are so perverse, and our minds are so blinded because of our sin, and because of what Satan always does. But it was necessary for Christ to suffer in order to bring us.

How can that be encouraging? We cannot cause anybody to be saved. We cannot bring them to God.

That is true. But the sufferings of the saints is often used by God to touch the hearts of unbelievers, and through that, the Lord brings them to Himself.

How can this be?

Because the response of Christians when they are being persecuted is so different from what you would expect.

Think of the story of Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail. Cf. Acts 16:25,

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed,
and sang praises unto God:
and the prisoners heard them.

What happened afterwards? After the earthquake the jailor came in, fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" As a result, HE AND HIS WHOLE FAMILY WERE SAVED.

God had a specific purpose for the sufferings of Paul and Silas in Philippi at that particular time.

But look also at 1 Pet. 1:6-9 and 4:12-14 and 5:10.

We do not rejoice in suffering because we like to suffer, but we rejoice in suffering because of what the Lord is accomplishing through that suffering.

It was the same with our Lord Jesus Christ, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2b).

There are two more words of encouragement that I want you to see in this verse.

IV. THE EXTENT OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING.

Two things need to be pointed out here.

A. He suffered unto death.

So far, we have not had to suffer like that. We may have lost friends. And certain doors may have been closed to us. And perhaps there has been a lot of mental anguish we have gone through. But there have been a lot of things that have happened to some Christians that have not happened to us. AND WE ARE STILL HERE! WE HAVE NOT LAID DOWN OUR LIVES FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL, as our Lord Jesus Christ did. His sufferings were far greater than ours ever have been, and greater than ours ever can be.

Do you remember those encouraging verses in Heb. 12:3, 4?
For consider him that endured such contradiction
of sinners against himself,
lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.
Ye have not yet resisted unto blood,
striving against sin.

So let us be encouraged that the God has put limitations upon our sufferings, far more so than He did with our Lord.

But also notice this:

- B. If the time should come when we, like other believers in the past, are called upon to lay down our lives for the sake of the Gospel, killing us is all that our enemies can do to us.

Cf. Luke 12:4 where we have those words of our Lord when He said,

And I say unto you my friends,
Be not afraid of them that kill the body,
and after have no more that they can do.
Think of what it will mean if we are killed. To be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). That would be, according to Paul, not only "better," but "far better" (Phil. 1:23).

It is God Who sets the extent of our sufferings, and we can always rejoice that we are in His hands, not left in the hands of our enemies.

So we ought to find encouragement here.

Finally,

V. THE OUTCOME OF SUFFERING.

Think of it in the case of our Lord. Is the fact that Christ died all that we can say about Him? Was that the end?

Certainly not! Look at what Peter wrote in the verses at the end of this chapter: vv. 21b, 22.

And think of those verses we have had just recently in our SS lesson: Eph. 1:19-23.

And also Phil. 2:8-11. And Heb. 1:3, "Who being the brightness of his glory . . ."

The sufferings of Christ were followed by resurrection and glorification--His ascension to and at the Father's right hand. And some day He is coming "in the glory of his Father with his angels" (Matt. 16:27).

So our Lord's enemies did not have the last word. They did all they could to keep Him in the tomb, but they could not do enough!

Does this have any application to us? Of course it does!

Cf. 2 Cor. 4:17,
 For our light affliction,
 which is but for a moment,
 worketh for us
 a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Cf. Rom. 8:18,
 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time
 are not worthy to be compared
 with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

And look again at 1 Pet. 1:6 and 4:13.

But even here and now we reap eternal benefits from the sufferings which are the will of God for us. Cf. Jas. 1:2-4,

My brethren, count it all joy
 when ye fall into divers temptations (trials);
 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith
 worketh patience.
 But let patience have her perfect work,
 that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Peter said essentially the same thing in 1 Pet. 5:10, 11.

Suffering causes us to trust the Lord more. We learn to know Him better. And because of the way the Lord works in our hearts through trials, we are conformed more than before into the very likeness of Christ.

Concl: Are you encouraged? You see, this is an illustration of the fact that the Gospel message itself can provide us with strength in our times of trial. Our sufferings do not lead to defeat, but to greater and greater victories and greater and greater blessings.