

THE POWER OF A GODLY LIFE

1 Peter 3:1-6

Intro: I almost entitled my message for this morning, "The Power of a Godly Wife," because that is really what the Apostle Peter was discussing in the first six verses of 1 Peter 3. And I will be making that application. But I decided on, "The Power of a Godly Life," because what Peter had to say to wives, applies in principle to unmarried ladies and girls as much as it does to wives, and to a great extent it applies to men and boys of all ages. He, of course, was speaking of wives who know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

We don't know exactly how it was that the particular wives he was speaking to whom he was speaking were married to unsaved men, but it very likely had to do with situations where both the husband and wife were unsaved when they were married, and then the wife was saved, but the husband was not saved. The Scriptures are very clear that a Christian man should not married a lady who is not a Christian, and *vice versa*. But it does not seem that Peter had that kind of a situation in mind. And so I am inclined to think that it was the former situation: the couple had married when neither of them knew the Lord, and then the wife had been saved. It would appear that there probably were many wives who were in this kind of a situation.

So there were two questions facing a Christian wife whose husband was not a Christian:

- 1) Is a wife in this kind of a situation supposed to be submissive to an unsaved husband like she would be if he were a Christian?
- 2) What should a wife do in such a case do to win her husband to the Lord?

Well, let us see what the Apostle Peter had to say on these subjects.

I. A WIFE'S RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD HER HUSBAND (1 Pet. 3:1-2).

In the preceding passage Peter had been discussing a servant's responsibility toward his master. And his instruction to servants was that they were to be submissive to their masters. And submissive means that they were to place themselves under the authority of their masters, and to be obedient to their master's.

Now, as he addressed himself to Christian wives, he used identically the same verb: "be in subjection," or, "be submissive." They were to place themselves under the authority of their husbands. Somebody has to be in charge, and the Apostle Peter, in total agreement with the Apostle Paul, said that it is the husband who is the head of the wife. And you will probably remember that Paul likened the wife's relationship to her husband as our relationship as believers to Christ. Christ is the Head of the church, and the husband is the head of the wife.

This is not the way most people in the world face marriage, but this is God's way. Remember that God is the One Who created us. He is the One Who ordained marriage, and He is the One Who established the first home with Adam as the first husband and Eve as the first wife.

I have pointed out to you more than once the times that the Apostle Peter used the word ὑποτάσσω in this epistle. He used it with reference to governments. He used it with servants. Here he used it with wives. And he would use it for young people. In fact, the Apostle Paul in Eph. 5:20 used it for all of us in our relationship with each other.

This is one reason I have given my subject this morning a title that would apply to all of us. The husband may be the head of the wife, but Christ is the Head of the husband, and even our Lord was included in this business of submission because Paul said that the Head of Christ was God! See 1 Cor. 11:3.

But this is one of the most difficult lessons any of us has to learn. I heard it said about the two young men who killed their fellow students and one teacher this past week were young men who didn't want anyone telling them what to do. And you see where it got them. Rebellion seems to be the order of the day with many people, but that is not God's way. When a person becomes a Christian he must learn the importance of submission, the importance of obedience to those who are in authority over them.

And it is an indication that a marriage will succeed if a young lady gives herself to a man in marriage having learned submission to her parents, as well as submission to the Lord. This word *submission* is the key to happiness, and definitely the key to the blessing of God. It is so in marriage, and it is so in every other relationship. This may not be man's way, but it is God's way! So while we are thinking today from this passage about a wife's relationship to her husband, let us all make the application to our own lives. It is doubtful if there is a more important lesson than any of us

has to learn.

But notice another point which Peter made in the first verse of this chapter. *The need for submission applies to a wife even though her husband may not be a Christian.* This may make it harder for a wife, but she will always be a better wife if she is a child of God because as a Christian she will learn what her place is in her relationship with her husband. Peter here was not discussing any of the problems that might arise because he wanted every wife to pay particular attention to what the will of God for her was.

But now this is especially important when a wife has a husband who is not a Christian because such a wife is in a key position to see her husband saved. But how would this be? Notice what Peter said (and I am going to give you a more accurate translation of the original text). Here is the way our KJV reads:

That is any man obey not the Word (capital W), they may without the Word (capital W again) be won by the conversation of the wives.

But let me ask you a question. In the light of 1 Pet. 1:23 is it possible for a husband, or anyone else, to be "won" to Christ without the Word of God? Of course not! And Peter did not say that a wife could win her husband to the Lord "without the Word," meaning, *without the Word of God*. What Peter did say was this (and it is corrected in the NKJ, as well as the NASB and the NIV). What he did say was this (and I am reading from the NKJ):

Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,

Listen to the way it is translated in the NASB:

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any {of them} are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,

The NIV takes some liberty with the text by making the second "word" plural, but if you take it as a slight paraphrase, the meaning is the same:

Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,

The point is this: The wife is not going to win her husband by nagging him to go to church, or by preaching to him all of the time. She may be able to ask her husband to accompany her to church, and there may be

times when she can speak to him about the Gospel. *But the Apostle Peter was saying that if a wife is living a life of submission to her husband, along with everything else that makes for godly living, if her husband is to be won to Christ, this is the way she will win him. Let me say as I have indicated in the title for this message, there is power, tremendous power, in godly living. And godly living is a life of obedience to the Word of God. For a wife, this means, among other things, but primarily, submission to her husband.*

And verse 2 goes on to say that the Spirit of God is going to use what a husband sees in his wife more than what he hears from his wife. (Read verse 2.)

What does "chaste" mean? It means "morally 'pure.'" And, as Lenski mentioned, it has reference to "the whole of life" (p. 129). If your version of the KJ uses italics, you will see that the word "coupled" is in italics, meaning that it was added to make the meaning clearer. But the verse actually reads, "Having looked upon your pure conduct in fear." And "in fear" means, *in the fear of the Lord*. You see, a wife who is submissive to her husband is not just seeking to please her husband, but she is seeking to please her husband because she is also seeking to please the Lord.

This may be the slow way to win a husband to Christ, but it is God's way, and if it is God's way, we can expect to see the blessing of the Lord.

Now this principle applies in any relationship where we are seeking to win another person to Christ. It is godly living that God blesses, and He blesses it with mighty power. Let us believe God that this is so, and we will see that this is how God works.

But let us go on to verses 3 and 4. In these verses we have:

II. A CHRISTIAN WIFE'S PROPER ADORNMENT (1 Pet. 3:3-4).

In these verses the Apostle Peter was elaborating upon the conduct, the proper conduct, of a Christian wife. How should she adorn herself?

The word "adorning" in the Greek text is the word κόσμος. And here it means that the idea of beauty in the world is how you fix your hair, and the jewelry that you wear, and keeping up with the latest fashion. In other words, the world places a high premium on your outward appearance. And a wife may feel that the more time and money she spends on making

herself physically attractive to her husband, the more likely he will be to want to listen to her about the importance of his soul.

— Now I don't think that the Apostle John was saying that it is wrong for a woman to be attractive and neat, but if her outward appearance is more important to her than what she is on the inside, in her heart, before God, then she has her heart set on the wrong things. And this is not God's way. Where a wife needs to put her attention is on "the hidden man of the heart."

This goes along with what the Apostle Paul said about one who is truly "a Jew," that is, one who really knows the Lord. I am sure most of you will remember his words found in Rom. 2:28-29:

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

When Samuel went to anoint a new king for Israel from the sons of Jesse, he was impressed with those who were brought before him because of their physical appearance. Then it was that the Lord said to him

— But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7).

This is always what the Lord looks at: our hearts. And what would He be pleased to find when He looked into the heart of that wife who wanted to see her husband saved. He was looking for "a meek and a quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." A meek person is not only gentle, but one who accepts God's dealing with us as good. And a quiet person is one who is at peace. We often get irritated even with the Lord because He does not change our circumstances, but He waits until we learn to be accepting and peaceful. These are the characteristics that are most precious in the sight of God.

— And men, this is just as true for us as it is for any woman. But only by the power of the Holy Spirit can we become what the Lord wants us to be. If a wife is anything but "meek and quiet," a husband can easily feel that his wife wishes that she was not married to him. Young people, begin to learn now to be meek and quiet in your heart in your relationship with the Lord. This is the way of blessing for ourselves, and this will make us a blessing

to others. There is always the temptation for us to wish that things were different in our lives. And they eventually may be what we want them to be, but we need to learn to be satisfied with things as they are now. This is basic godliness. This is a great part of what it means to be holy.

Our text concludes with:

III. ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT (1 Pet. 3:5-6).

Peter called the women to whom he was referring as "holy women." This confirms that his subject here and in all of the other passages where he emphasized submission, was holiness. To whom could he have been referring? Well, Hannah for sure. Abigail was another one. Ruth had to be another.

But the one he mentioned in particular was Sarah. When we read the record of Sarah's life, there are many things about her that we might object to. One write said, "Imitate Sarah in what was good, but avoid her failings" (John Brown, I, 562). However, let us remember that Sarah left Ur of the Chaldees when it is specifically said that Abraham did not know where he was going. That was submission for Sarah. But the main reference to Sarah here seems to be a commentary on her words which are recorded for us in Gen. 18:12. The Lord had just announced to Abraham, with Sarah listening inside the tent, that she would bear a son. And her response is recorded in Gen. 18:11-12:

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

Those who were wives married to pagan husbands when Peter wrote these words, and Christian wives down to the present day who are married to men who do not know the Lord, can consider themselves daughters of Sarah as long as they seek to please God, as Sarah did, and are not fearful of the consequences of their obedience to the Lord.

Concl: This is not only a great passage for wives, but it is full of instruction for every child of God. And when we think of how we are to seek to win the lost to Christ, there could hardly be a better passage than this. We all need to remember that whatever may be our circumstances, and however we might wish right now that they were different, God has a

purpose in leaving us where we are at the moment, and that purpose has to do with the improvement of our hearts. God is working to make us meek and quiet in heart. This not only pleases God, but it also has a powerful witness even to those who do not know the Lord. And when we are mainly concerned about pleasing God, then we become instruments of blessing even to the people of the world. And in the case of a wife whose husband does not know the Lord, what he sees, even more than what he hears, may be used of the Lord to bring him to the Savior.

I close with words written by John Brown, a native of Scotland, born in 1780, and who began publishing eleven expository volumes after he was sixty years of age. He wrote two large volumes on 1 Peter. These were among his concluding words on the passage we have considered today:

The individual who realizes the force of these motives, and exemplifies these precepts, habitually in heart, temper, and behavior, whatever station she occupies, is a blessing to society, an ornament to the Church of God. Happy is the man who has such a wife. He who has found such a wife has found a good thing, and has obtained favor of the Lord. Happy are the children who have such a mother, happy the family who has such a mistress, happy the congregation which has many such members. "Such a gracious woman retaineth honor." "Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates" (Brown, John, I, 562).

May God enable all of us today and in the days ahead to cultivate that "meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

HOLY HUSBANDS

1 Peter 3:7

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5:15-33.

Intro: When we compare what Peter had to say to husbands with what the Apostle Paul had to say, especially in his epistle to the Ephesians, Peter was very brief. That is probably to be explained by the fact that he was not trying to treat the subject of husbands in a thorough manner, but because he was writing to meet specific needs. That is generally true about the writing of all of the NT epistles – they were written to meet specific needs. What they were in the case of Peter's epistle, we can't really say, but it would appear that the wives were having trouble with submission to their husbands, and so Peter wrote as he did. In the case of the husbands it seems that they generally had not been treating their wives with the love and respect that they should have been treating them. And that which it was costing the husbands was a lack of effectiveness in prayer. All that Peter said in this verse was leading up to the last phrase of the verse, "that your prayers be not hindered."

Both in the writings of Peter and the writings of Paul it is apparent that the praying of *men* was especially important. For example, Paul told Timothy, "I will therefore that men prayer every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:8). We can't have holy hands unless we are holy, and we can't be truly holy unless we are living holy lives. Long before Peter and Paul lived, one of the Psalmists wrote, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. 66:18). To "regard iniquity" is to know that it is there, but to refuse to do anything about it. A wife is regarding her own iniquity if she refuses to be submissive to her husband, and a husband is regarding iniquity in his heart when he fails to show true love for his wife. It is the will of God for all of us to be holy, but it is only HOLY HUSBANDS are husbands who are pleasing to the Lord. And to be holy they must not just profess to be holy in name, but they must be holy in practice.

This is not just true of husbands, but it is true of all believers. Sin is the great hindrance to prayer, the cause of much unanswered prayer. This is true of each of us individually, but, since a married couple is really "one flesh," it is especially true of a husband and wife. We all love to see answers to prayer. It is obviously God's intention to answer our prayers, but if we are to expect answers, things must be right between a husband and his wife.

Now from the husband's standpoint, our text tells us how that is to be accomplished. And so I want to take each part of this verse, examine each as carefully as I can, trusting the Lord to enable us to see from a husband's point-of-view the attitudes and conditions which will make our prayers more effective.

Note with me, if you will,

I. THE WORD "LIKEWISE."

Peter began singling out special groups when in chapter 2, verse 13, he addressed all believers as citizens, or at least as people who were to be submissive to the government under which they were living. Then in verse 18 of chapter 2 he moved on to servants. When he came to wives in chapter 3, verse 1, he said, "Likewise." He did the same here in verse 7. And he did it a third time in chapter 5, verse 5, when he spoke to the young people.

The word he used could simply be translated as *also*, or *in the same way*. But there is another translation that needs to be emphasized as we move from group to group. And it is this: "*equally*," or "*of equal importance*." It is a word which puts all that the Apostle Peter had to say *on the same level*. The Apostle Peter did not mention wives first and say the most to them because they were the main problem. Nor did he mention husbands second in the use of this word because he was singling them out as the chief offenders. *But he was saying that the instructions given to each group were of equal importance, and that there could not be true harmony among believers until each one not only knew what he or she should do, but that each one was intent on doing the will of God.*

A husband and a wife have different responsibilities, and there are many ways in which a husband and wife are different, but what they are to do is of equal importance in the sight of God, and in the making of a happy marriage, a marriage in which they enjoy the blessing of the Lord. So a wife needs to be thoroughly familiar with the first six verses, and do what they say, but it is just as important for a husband to be thoroughly acquainted with verse 7, and to do as this verse says. I hope we all get the point of this simple but very important word, "Likewise."

But what did the Apostle Peter say to the husbands? The first was this:

II. "DWELL WITH THEM ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGE."

One very obvious meaning of this statement is that a husband and wife are to live together. They are to have their own dwelling place. It was said in the very beginning when the Lord God made Eve and brought her to Adam that

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Gen. 2:24).

But it needs to be said in our day that a man and a woman should not live together until they are legally husband and wife. Regardless of what they might say about their relationship, if they are not married according to the laws of the government under which they live, it is not marriage, but it is adultery. And instead of having the blessing of the Lord, they will face the judgment of the Lord. We may think that times change, but they don't change that much so that it is right to undo what God has done. And let us all be sure that we know this.

But let me get back to the words of our text. A husband and wife need to live together. They need to be together. It is never a healthy thing for a man to live in one place for a long period of time, and for his wife to live in another place. Abraham and Sarah lived in the same tent. The same was true of Isaac and Rebekah. Unfortunately not all marriages in Bible times followed the divine pattern, but this was God's plan.

And perhaps the reason that this is emphasized with the husband is because it is more likely that the husband will become an absentee husband and father than that it would be true of the wife. But in modern America where women are out in the workplace, it is possible for the wife to be absent from the home. The husband goes to work, but he needs to come back home at night to be with his wife and family, and to carry one his responsibilities as a husband and father. Sometimes when a move is necessary from one city to another, a separation is unavoidable for a time. But even then it needs to be cut short as soon as possible. "Husbands, dwell with them." Don't leave the home and the children to your wife, but make sure that you both call the same place "home"! Even be careful that recreation does not take you away too often and for too long a time from your wife, and, when children come along, from your children. "Husbands, dwell with them."

But what did Peter mean when he said, "according to knowledge"?

In its context this would mean, *according to his knowledge of God and of the Word of God*. Do you remember what the Apostle Paul told wives to

do when they wanted to know the truth? You will find his words in 1 Cor. 14:35. Just reading a part of the verse, he said this: "And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home."

In the first place, every husband should get his understanding of what a home and a family are to be, not from the current trend in the world, but *from the Word of God!* A husband is to be his wife's primary teacher. And if a husband is to fulfill that role, he must be a diligent student of the Word of God.

But it is not just enough to *know* what the Bible says, but knowledge in Scripture always includes the personal application of the Word in daily life. It means, as James taught us, being *a doer of the Word, and not just a hearer. How fortunate a wife is if she has a husband who is constantly learning more about the Word, and who is living according to what he knows. And how fortunate children are to have such a family.* Husbands, if you want to ruin your marriage and your family, then follow the ways of the world. But if you want your marriage to be enduring, and your love for your wife to grow with the years, and if you want your children to come to the Lord and to walk with the Lord, then get your knowledge of what life is supposed to be from the Word of God.

But this is not all that Peter said to the husbands. He continued with

III. "GIVING HONOR UNTO THE WIFE, AS UNTO THE WEAKER VESSEL."

According to the fifth commandment which the Apostle Paul repeated for children (see Eph. 6:2-3), children are to learn to honor their parents so that when the sons grow up and become husbands, they will know what it means to honor their wives. It is the same idea.

For children as they grow up, there are no people on earth who are more important to them than their parents. And when a son grows up and becomes an adult, and gets married, there is no one more important to him, no one who is as dear to him, as that person who has become his wife. And so he is to treat her as his dearest treasure. He is always to love her, to show her the greatest respect, never to injure her, but always to take the greatest delight in meeting her every need. And the Bible says, which means that God says, she is "the weaker vessel." This means that she is always going to need his help and his protection. He is to take care of her like her parents used to take care of her. This does not mean that she is

weaker in intelligence, nor that she is weaker in morality. Our wives often excel us in both of these areas, but she is weaker physically, and often emotionally. Read Proverbs 31 and you will see that a wife can be a great source of strength to her husband, and most of us know this from personal experience. God brings two people together because the man needs a wife and a woman needs a husband. And really tragic results can take place when we step out of the role which God has ordained for us.

Let me say, by the way, that I doubt very much, from what I know of the Scriptures, if it is God's will for a woman to be driving around in a police car, with a gun at her side, to face whatever criminal she might have to face all by herself. And I doubt if it is the will of God for us to be sending women into combat as soldiers on the ground, or as pilots of a fighter plane, or as a part of a crew on a warship. There are ways in which we are equal, but not physically, and not emotionally. And the way men and women are thrown together in the business world has been a powerful in the break up of many homes.

Ladies, let me plead with you not to argue with the Word of God on this point. The more our nation opposes what God has said in His Word, the more corrupt our society becomes, and the faster we will move toward the greater judgment of God.

Husbands, let us honor our wives. Let us treat them as our superiors, and thank God every day that He has blessed us so richly in giving us the one you call your wife, and I call my wife.

But Peter still is not finished. Next he spoke of the way in which we are equal.

IV. "AS BEING HEIRS TOGETHER OF THE GRACE OF LIFE."

This verse gets better and better, doesn't it?

This expression "heirs together," is the same expression that is used three other times in the NT, and only three other times. Let me read them to you.

The first is in Rom. 8:16-17:

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs

with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

The second is in Eph. 3:6:

6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

The third is in Heb. 11:9. Referring to Abraham, we read,

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

"Heirs together" means *joint heirs*. All of us who know the Lord are Joint heirs with Christ. We all have the same inheritance with Christ. The saved Gentiles have the same inheritance as saved Jews. And Isaac and Jacob had the same inheritance as Abraham. And since husbands and wives are "heirs together of the grace of life," this means that all that a saved husband has in Christ, is exactly what his saved wife has. This is where we as husbands and wives who know the Lord, are exactly the same. A husband has no more than his wife, and a wife has no more than her husband. And the hope that a husband has is exactly the same hope that a wife has – to be with the Lord and to be like the Lord for all eternity.

Don't you like that expression, "the grace of life"? We got it by grace. We keep it by grace. And that same wonderful grace assures us of the fulfillment of every promise that God has given to His people. And it is by that grace that we live together as husbands and wives, and it is by that grace that we love each other and walk with the same Savior.

The vow which many of us have taken when we got married says that we take each other "to love and to cherish, for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death us do part." And we never know what is ahead of us. But what we do know is that we have a life from God and in God which is characterized by grace. It is "the grace of life." And God's grace is sufficient for whatever may come. And that which a husband has in Christ is no more, no less, and nothing else, but what his wife also has in Christ. We are "heirs together of the grace of life."

One writer has expressed it this way:

The Christian husband, when he realizes these truths, cannot but honor his partner; cannot but treat her with cordial respect, as one, equally with himself, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ;

already blessed with many invaluable heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ, standing in a most dignified relation to the great God our Savior; already animated by His spirit and adorned by His image, and destined to be one day perfectly like Him, their common life, when He appears in His glory (Brown, John, *Expository Discourses on 1 Peter*, Vol. I, p. 574).

Finally, we come to:

V. THE BLESSED OBJECTIVE: "THAT YOUR PRAYERS BE NOT HINDERED."

A husband prays alone, and a wife prays alone. It is a characteristics of all true believers that they pray. But here the Apostle spoke of "your prayers," plural, family prayers. A husband's proper relationship with his wife, helps his prayers, and his prayers make his relationship with his wife better and better.

The word "hindered" means *to be cut off*, or *to be cut into*. There is an obstacle in the way that keeps our prayers from being heard, and if they are not heard, they are not answered.

Quoting the same writer I quoted a moment ago, this is what he had to say on this point:

Let, then, Christian husbands, and wives too, guard against every things which may hinder family prayer. Let their whole conduct toward each other look back and forward to the family altar. Let it be consistent with devotion, preparatory to it, indicative of its influence. Avoid whatever makes an introduction into the Divine presence less easy or less delightful. Keep open a passage wide enough to advance together to the throne of grace: go hand in hand (*Op. cit.*, p. 576).

Concl: But perhaps the Apostle Peter's main point in this last statement was to husbands, and that he had them in mind when he said "your prayers." It is true that wives also are responsible for seeking God's blessing as they pray with their husbands, and alone by themselves. But there is a particular need for every believing husband to make sure that the Lord's blessing is not withheld because of his failure to live according to what Peter has said to all Christian husbands in this verse. Another writer has said,

So concerned is God that Christian husbands live in a loving and

understanding way with their wives, that He 'interrupts' His relationship with them [the husbands] when they are not doing so. No Christian husband should presume to think that any spiritual good will be accomplished by his life without an effective ministry of prayer. And no husband may expect an effective prayer life unless he lives with his wife "in an understanding way, bestowing honor" upon her (Grudem, Wayne, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 1 Peter*, p. 146).

Whatever may be the condition of our relationship with our wives, let us seek by God's grace that any wrongs may be made right, that what is good may become the best that the Lord intended that it should be.

Even any marriage that is happy without Christ can be infinitely happier with Christ, since a godly life not only holds great promise for the life that now is, but what is even more important, of the life that is to come. Cf. 1 Tim. 4:8.

IN PURSUIT OF PEACE

1 Peter 3:8-12

Intro: We have noticed in studying this first epistle of Peter that after giving teaching which applied to all of the believers who were to receive this epistle, in chapter 2, verse 13, he spoke to them as citizens, speaking briefly of their responsibilities toward the Roman government under which they were living. He followed this in verse 18 by addressing himself to servants. Next, at the beginning of chapter 3 he taught wives what their duty was toward their husbands, even when the husband might not be a believer. Then, as we saw last week, in verse seven of chapter 3 Peter told husbands how they were to behave toward their wives, and why!

Today, as we come to the eighth verse of chapter 3, we can see that the Apostle was again devoting himself to all of the Lord's people. We can see this from the words which he used, "Finally, be ye all of one mind . . ." So this was meant to apply to all of the family of believers, not only husbands and wives, but all men and women, not only servants, but their masters as well, all citizens who were believers, and young people who knew the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Let me repeat what I have said before, that the Bible is addressed mainly to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostles did not expect unbelievers to live as though they were believers because he would have been asking them to do the impossible. It is only possible for us who know the Lord to live obedience to God's Word, but it is totally out of the question for people who are not saved, and therefore, who do not have the enabling power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. But, on the other hand, no true Christian has any right to exclude himself from any of the practical teaching of Scripture which relates to daily life. What we are to consider this morning is for *all of us*, and so I trust that you were all listening carefully to the reading of the Scriptures, and that your heart, and my heart, will be receptive to what we are going to consider from the Scriptures today.

In some ways this passage is similar to the verse we considered together last Sunday morning. In verse seven (I trust you will remember) the Apostle Peter not only told the husbands what they were to do in their relationships with their wives, but he told the *why!* It was "that your prayers be not hindered." Have you noticed the same thing about verses eight through 12? Peter told all of the people of God how they were to

live, and then in verse 12 *he told them why!* It was,

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

Here again obedience is linked not just with prayers, *but with answered prayers!*

The Apostle John brought together obedience and answered prayer more than once. For example, in 1 John 3:22 we have these words:

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight (1 John 3:22).

And then let me remind you of 1 John 5:14-15:

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Let me ask you a question regarding these last two verses I have read to you. "Do you think that you and I can 'ask any thing according to His will,' that is, God's will, and at the same time not be living according to His will?" The answer to that question is, "NO!" Asking according to God's will requires that we are living in obedience to God's will, and then making our request in line with His will. God would be condoning our disobedience if He were to hear us when we were not living to please Him. That sure is why in reading 1 John we come to 3:22 before we get to 5:14 and 15.

So this makes both verse seven of our chapter, followed by verse 12, extremely important. We are often inclined to say when our prayers are not being answered, that evidently it is not God's will for us to have what we are seeking from Him in prayer. That may not be the reason at all! It may be that the Lord is waiting until there is a change in our lives before He gives us what we are seeking from Him in prayer. Let all of us take this heart. This is a major point that the Apostle Peter was making. And this is often God's purpose in the trials that we have. God is seeking to awaken us to things in our lives that are not pleasing to Him, and so He withholds blessings that He would otherwise give us because there are wicked ways in us, and He wants us to confess and forsake them.

So let us turn now to our text keeping in mind that all that we will see in verses 8 through 11 is leading up to verse 12.

Depending upon how we divide these commandments, there are approximately a dozen things here that we need to be concerned about. Peter did not go to great lengths to discuss them, but the fact that he stated them so briefly, and so clearly, and because there are so many of them in such a few words, his purpose was that they would strike every reader's heart with powerful conviction. And today as we read them, almost two thousand years after they were written by the Apostle Peter, let us take them as though they were contained in a letter which he had written this past week, especially for us.

Notice:

I. THE FIRST WORD: "Finally."

We can see that he was not finishing his letter. He was only about half through. Nor can we feel that he was like many of us as preachers say, "Finally," and then go on another fifteen or twenty minutes. *Instead, it may be that he was indicating that he was coming to the main part of what he had to say from the standpoint of his purpose in writing.* The apostles were all *teachers* of the great doctrines of Scripture, but they were also *exhorters*, as every good teacher should be. The apostles were always greatly concerned about how the people of God were living. They always looked to see how the truth was affecting the lives of the people who were under their ministries. And in this they were just like the greatest Teacher of all, our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so the word "finally" takes the position in this epistle as though Peter had said, "I have had a word for you as citizens. And then a word for those of you who are servants. I have spoken to you who are wives, and to you who are husbands. Now I come to speak in a special way to all of you, and I want to impress upon you needs which we all have, needs which we must not forget, ways in which we must make sure that we are pleasing the Lord.

And so let us look at what he had to say. The first command has to do with:

II. THE NEED TO GUARD THEIR FELLOWSHIP (1 Pet. 3:8-9).

This seems to me to be the meaning of his first command, "Be ye all of one mind."

In verse 8 he approached this from a positive point-of-view, and in verse 9 from a negative point-of-view. In verse 8 he mentioned four things that are necessary for real fellowship, and then in verse 9 he mentioned what they must not do if their fellowship was to be a source of blessing to them, as well as being pleasing to God. The object of their fellowship was to win the blessing of the Lord, and each believer needed to recognize that he or she was to be an instrument of blessing to the others in the church.

Oneness, harmony, agreement, fellowship – all are touched upon by the various writers of the NT, as it was a major emphasis in the teaching and prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have been "called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). And what a fellowship it is! There is nothing on earth that even approaches it. And we need to guard ourselves and others against anything that would mar that fellowship.

Now let us look, first, at:

A. The positive side (1 Pet. 3:8).

And so we need to have "compassion one of another." This means that we are to be sympathetic with each other. The word *sympathy* is brought into the English language from the Greek, and it literally means *to suffer with each other*.

The Apostle Paul was talking about compassion when he was speaking of all of us as members of the body of Christ, and he said this:

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it (1 Cor. 12:25-26).

This is compassion.

When we injure some member of our physical bodies, we often say that we hurt all over. The members of our bodies are all tied in together. We can hurt in one place, but the trouble may be in another part of our bodies. Our bodies were made to show compassion, and that is true also of the body of Christ.

But we are not only to have compassion as members of the same body, the body of Christ, but we are love as brethren because we are all members of

the family of God. There may be times in our families when brothers and sisters fight, but when a real need arises, such as the people of Kosovo are experiencing, we see what grief it causes when family members are separated and they can't find each other. When we were saved, God not only put a love in our hearts for Himself and for the Lord Jesus, but He put a love in our hearts for each other. Whenever you meet another Christian, you immediately sense a bond of fellowship with them. Again referring to the writings of the Apostle John, he said,

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death (1 John 3:14).

One indication that you are a true child of God, is that you love other Christians.

"Be pitiful" – This means to have a tender heart. "Pitiful" really means *to be full of pity*. It is the opposite of being hardhearted and critical. And it goes right along with showing compassion and love.

To "be courteous" is to be of a humble mind. This is what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote Rom. 12:16:

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

It means that we pay attention to those who may be less prominent, and that we do what we can to encourage them, or to help meet their needs.

Notice that all of these words in a sense are a definition of what it means for us to love each other in the body of Christ, and in the family of God.

But now we come to:

B. The negative side (1 Pet. 3:9).

We are not to render evil for evil. We are not to try to get even because that not only prolongs trouble that we might be having with each other, but it always makes things worse.

The same applies to "railing." Here Peter referred for the first time to how we hurt each other by the things we say about one another. And our sinful hearts are such that if anyone says anything bad about us, we are inclined to say something a little worse about them. Neither "evil for evil" nor "railing for railing" is ever acceptable behavior for those of us who know

the Lord. Instead, we should seek to be a blessing to that person who has been an offence to us. And the last part of this verse ought to be an encouragement to all of us. We have been called to Christ and to salvation because it was God's intention to bless us. And the Lord blesses us when we react to others in a way that is pleasing to Him, not in the way that will enable us to get even. Instead, let us make sure that we understand what Peter was saying here, and also what the Apostle Paul said in Rom. 12: 19-21:

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

When Peter came to the end of verse 9, he did a very interesting thing as he went on to verses 10 through 12. Without saying what he was doing, he began to quote from the OT. And yet the word "for" at the beginning of verse 10 is a giveaway that he was citing his special authority for what he had just said.

II. OLD TESTAMENT SUPPORT FOR NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING (1 Pet. 3:10-12).

The quotation here is from Psalm 34, verses 12 through the first part of verse 16. This shows that the standards for holiness in the NT are not different from the standards of holiness in the OT. And it also shows that obedience to God in the OT was a condition of God's blessing just as it is in the NT. We know from what David said in Psalm 34 does not mean that loving life and seeing good days means that we are the Lord's people will live trouble-free lives, because David said in Psalm 34, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous" – and he was probably talking about the troubles, the persecution that comes our way because we are the children of God. But to love life and to see good days means to have the blessing of the Lord even though we do have our troubles. Such a life is promised to those of us who refrain from speaking evil of our brothers and sisters in Christ, who likewise refuse to use our tongues to deceive each other. And let us remember that to pretend to love each other when we really don't, is one major form of guile.

But it is not enough to avoid evil and guile, we must "eschew" it, that is, we must keep ourselves as far away from it as we can possibly get, and, on

the other hand "do good" and "seek peace, and ensue it."

Last Sunday night in speaking on the first eleven verses of Psalm 37, I quoted one writer who said Psalm 37 "is the finest exposition of the third Beatitude that has ever been written." That is the Beatitude which says, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." This morning I would like to say that it would be hard to find a better exposition of the seventh Beatitude than this passage in 1 Peter, and the passage from Psalm 34 which Peter quoted. What is the seventh Beatitude? It is, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). Instead of retaliating against others, which is the natural and human thing to do, we "do good," that is, seek to respond as the Lord wants us to respond, and we not only "seek peace" at all times, but we "ensue it," meaning that *we pursue it*.

That is why I have given my message the title, **In Pursuit of Peace**. This is not "peace at any price," but it is refusing to react as people usually react. We would rather be wronged than to do wrong. Our fellowship with each other is a precious treasure, and it should be our objective to see that that fellowship is maintained even though it means that we have to be humbled in order to preserve it.

And what blessing do we seek?

Verse 12 is the reward which God has promised us. His eyes are upon us, and so He knows all that is going on in our lives. He knows the troubles we have, and the problems we face. His ears are open unto the prayers of the righteous, not used of our standing before God, but of the practical way in which we seek to please God by acting and reacting in a righteous manner.

On the other hand, His face is against those who do evil. I don't want to face that consequence, do you? I am sure you don't. So let us be sure that in all that concerns our relationships to each other, our main objective is to react in a way that is pleasing to God, not so we can get even with others.

Concl: F. B. Meyer was an Englishman, born in London in 1847, a godly minister of the Word, a contemporary of Spurgeon, a man greatly used of God in the United States as well as in Great Britain, who lived until 1929. In preaching on this passage he raised this question, and then commented on it:

Where in all the world can we discover such a community of

Christians? It were a fair vision, worth going far to see. A temple of Love. An abode of heavenly bliss. An oasis in the desert. A snatch of celestial harmony amid the jarring discords of human selfishness. The New Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven. Yet nothing less than this is the Christian ideal, as it is also that which our Lord died to secure. And it would well become us, if, without waiting for others, each one would adopt the injunctions of these verses as the binding rule and regulation of daily life. This would be our worthiest contribution to the convincing of the world, and to the coming of the kingdom of our Lord. And it would spread (Meyer, F. B., *Tried by Fire*, p. 107).

Most of us probably have known the truths we have been dealing with today, but the question is, How has it affected our lives? And this is especially important today as we come to the Lord's Table. To really be walking in fellowship with the Lord, we need to be walking in true fellowship with each other. May the Lord make that a reality in all of our lives.

TRUE EVANGELISM

1 Peter 3:13-17

(Express appreciation to the men who ministered during my absence – John Seavey and Mat Uchiyama on the Sunday mornings, and Ron Bystrom and Joe O’Banion on the Sunday evenings. Dr. Lockwood and Dennis Hayes led the Wednesday night prayer meetings, and Ralph Wecks brought brief messages at the Saturday morning prayer meetings. My thanks to all of you who prayed for Lucille during her surgery a week ago Wednesday, and also during her recovery since then. Several of the ladies had brought food to us, for which we are very grateful. Thanks, too, for those who have sent cards and written letters, and for those who have sent or brought flowers. We are thankful to the Lord for all of you, and trust that the Lord’s blessing will be upon each one of you for your loving concern and prayers for us. Lucille’s sister, Pat Rutledge, has been here since last Monday, and she has been a great help and encouragement to us. She leaves tomorrow to return to her home and her husband in Bellingham, WA. Lucille is recovering nicely from the surgery, but her main problem continues to be *pain*. She had hoped to be here this morning, but just isn’t up to that yet. We ask for your continued prayers. Dr. Lin, her physician, has cut down on her pain medication, but we are hoping and praying that the day will come when she can be off of the medicine completely. On Tuesday Dr. Zook, her surgeon, will remove the clamps from her incision. The Lord has been very faithful and very good, and we ask you to pray that Lucille and I will learn what the Lord wants us to learn through the troubles we have faced in the last year and a half. But again let me say how thankful we are for each of you and for your prayers. We had a delightful time on Orcas Island, and especially enjoyed being with Gary and Martha and Will and Katie. We also came back through Bellingham, spent a night with Pat Rutledge, and got to see that newest great granddaughter of ours, little Kelsey Grace Matthews, and her parents, Jason and Andrea. They will be down here next week for Miles’ graduation.)

(Mention other matters for praise and prayer.)

PRAYER.

Intro: All of the epistles, or letters, found in the NT have two main characteristics. They were all written to the people of God, and they all emphasize the importance of holy character and holy living. Most of the

epistles of Paul were written to churches, but a few were written to individuals. The churches to which he wrote were located in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, and Thessalonica. The individuals to whom he wrote were Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. It is very likely, although not certain, that he wrote the epistle to the Hebrews, probably Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. James, Peter, John, and Jude wrote what we call General Epistles because they wrote to larger groups of believers. However, the Apostle John's book of the Revelation was sent originally to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia. *But without a single exception they were all concerned about godly character and godly living.* And the writers of these epistles believed that in order to be holy, and to live in a holy manner, it was important for every child of God to know the truth of the Word of God which each of them had a part in writing. Their object was that the people of God should know God – all Three Persons of the Godhead – and that they should live their lives to please God, which basically is what a holy life is. It is a life that is pleasing to God. It is a life in which the people of God are continually seeking a greater understanding of the Word of God so as to be strengthened to do the will of God in daily life. And this life is to be nurtured not only by teaching, but by continual fellowship with the Lord in prayer.

Now it is apparent as we read through these NT letters that the believers in the first century were not perfect. They had their problems just as we do today. The NT epistles were usually written to help them with particular failings. *But one thing is certain, and it is especially prominent in this letter written by the Apostle Peter, 1 Peter. It was this: that the believers of the first century were living lives that drew opposition from the people around them who did not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior! Persecution was what the early church faced because of their love for the Lord, and because of the way they were living to please Him. But the interesting thing about their trials was that God in His infinite wisdom and sovereign power, was using these trials to make His people even more holy in their hearts and in their lives.*

At the same time the Apostle Peter warned these believers that they must not suffer because they have done wrong.

Note, for example, 1 Peter 2:11-12 and 13-15, and then follow those verses with what we read in vv. 18-20. (Read.)

And this brings us to our text for today: 1 Peter 3:13-17. (Read.) This passage follows what Peter had said in verses 8-12.

I. A BELIEVER'S RESPONSE TO WRONGDOING.

We often justify the wrong kind of behavior because someone else has done something to hurt us. And so we naturally feel justified in retaliating against the person who has done us wrong. But when we are in such a position, we need to remember the three points which the Apostle Peter made in verse 12:

- 1) The Lord's eyes are upon the righteous. He sees everything that is going on. He doesn't miss a single thing.
- 2) When we cry out to Him, He hears what we have to say. So our trials are to make us turn to the Lord, to trust Him, and to look to Him for help, instead of taking matters into our own hands.
- 3) The third point is that the Lord takes our part against the evildoer if we are really trusting Him for the help that we need.

And so instead of doing evil, we do good.. One place that the reality of our faith in Christ becomes evident is when we are the objects of the harmful, and often hurtful, behavior of others.

So note the question that Peter asked in verse 13. (Read.) The word "followers" is an interesting word. It is the Greek word for *a zealot*. And a zealot can be one who is looking for any opportunity to do evil, but here it means one who is looking for any opportunity to do good. And the word "be" is the Greek word for *become*. So someone seeks our harm, but he or she sees that we take this as an opportunity to do "good," *i.e.*, that which is pleasing to the Lord.

But then Peter went on in verse 14 to say that even if people seek to do evil to us because we stand for what is right in the sight of God, we are to rejoice in the privilege of suffering for the Lord's sake. Let me remind you again of what we read in Acts 5:41-42:

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

This was written after the apostles had been beaten, and told never to teach again in the name of Jesus. The true people of God in Scripture, such as Daniel and his three friends, realized the price they might have to pay for obeying the Lord, but they obeyed nevertheless, not fearing their enemies, but if they had a fear it was that they might fail the Lord in such a time of testing.

Let's skip verse 15 for the moment, and go on to verse 16 where the thought of verses 13 and 14 continues.

"A good conscience" is a conscience that has been enlightened and instructed by the Word of God. And though people may falsely accuse us of being evildoers because we obey the Word of God, yet the Apostle Peter said that our accusers are the ones who will be ashamed when it is shown by our conduct that their accusations are false.

And then in verse 17 Peter said that sometimes it is the will of God for us to suffer for doing the right thing, but that is always "better" than doing evil.

Now the point in all that the Apostle Peter was saying in this epistle about living to please the Lord, was that such a life is never acceptable in the world. Those early Christians faced all kinds of opposition because they were Christians who lived like Christians ought to live. Many of them, including the apostles, faced all kinds of suffering because they loved the Lord and lived to please Him. And if tradition along this line is reliable, all of the apostles died a martyr's death because they loved the Lord.

In our day we do not face that kind of opposition. We are protected by the laws of our country. But that does not mean that the Gospel is any more acceptable than it has been in the past. Living for the Lord often causes the loss of friends, and sometimes strongly divides members of the same family. Christians are often the objects of ridicule because of their faith in Christ and their desire to live according to the Bible. But I believe that this leads us to the very point that the Apostle Peter was making here in verse 15. *He brought up the subject of evangelism.*

II. WHAT IS EVANGELISM?

Evangelism is the spread of the Gospel through preaching in the hope of seeing other people turn to Christ for the salvation of their souls. And in every generation every Christian needs to ask, "What is true evangelism? What does the Bible teach us about how we are to evangelize the world?"

We all ought to know that professing Christians give many answers to that question today. On an individual basis we are taught a variety of methods by which we are to try to get people to listen to the message that we have to proclaim because it is generally believed among Christians that if we present the right arguments at the right time, we can get people to "accept

Christ." We have lost sight of the teaching of Scripture regarding man's depravity, that no man seeks God, that no man can come to the Lord, nor will any man come to the Lord of His own accord. He has to be drawn to the Lord by the Spirit of God. People talk about man's "free will," never having learned that man's will is in bondage to his sinful nature, and that he is a slave to his sin. We have a message to proclaim which the world does not want. How can we get them to listen? All of this has to do with evangelism on a person to person level.

Or take what is called "mass evangelism," where we try to reach great numbers of people. Now we all rejoice when anyone truly is drawn to Christ. God often works even when the wrong methods are being used because He is a sovereign God and can work whenever and wherever and with whomever He may choose to work. But what is the prevailing idea today? We spend thousands and thousands of dollars in massive advertising, rent the largest auditorium or stadium that we can find, employ as many contemporary musicians as we can to come to present music which is brought right out of the world as far as its style is concerned. We want people to be attracted by the programs we are prepared to put on in the hope that this will bring them under the Gospel so they will be saved. Hundreds, and even thousands, will profess faith in Christ, but what is the result? Only weeks after it is hard to find any of them who supposedly are saved. We seek to draw support from churches of the widest possible doctrinal stand, and some whose doctrine is contrary to the doctrines of Scripture. But doctrine is not the main issue to those who plan these great campaigns. The main idea is to get the largest number of people into the meetings, and so everything is done to get the most people involved regardless of what they believe.

But what is "true evangelism"? I am borrowing that title from a book written early in this century by Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer who became the founder and first president of the Dallas Theological Seminary. In his early days before he started the seminary he was busy in evangelistic work, and back then became very concerned that the things that were going on were not in harmony with the Word of God. He would be extremely distressed if he were alive today to see what is going on in the name of evangelism.

III. TRUE EVANGELISM.

In 1 Peter 5:12 the Apostle Peter spoke of "the true grace of God." The term suggests that it is possible that there can be a *false and misleading*

idea about the grace of God. The same is true of evangelism. While we do not have the expression, "true evangelism," in Scripture, yet it is possible to be involved in methods of evangelism that are false in the light of what the Scriptures teach on this important subject.

In 1 Peter 3:15 we have the teaching of the Apostle Peter as to what *true evangelism, Biblical evangelism*, really is. The epistle was written, as I have said, to help the people of God to whom Peter was writing to know how to live holy, godly lives. And as we have seen, he singled out various groups to tell them how they needed to live to please the Lord. ***And then we come to verse 15 in chapter 3.*** What was the point he was making?

He was saying that if we are living the way God wants us to live, if the Lord's people, if people in our churches which profess to believe the Bible and to preach the Gospel, will only live godly lives, the people of the world are going to be asking us to tell them about the hope that we have which makes us the way we are. Godly people are people who pray. Godly people are people who trust the Lord. Godly people are the people the Lord works through to awaken in others by the lives they live that what we have in Christ is what the world does not have and what the world can never provide.

Let me spend just a few minutes of this great fifteenth verse of 1 Peter 3.

What does it mean to "sanctify the Lord God" in our hearts?

The word "sanctify" can mean *to make holy*, but it can't possibly mean that in relation to the Lord God because He is perfectly, absolutely, and eternally holy! And besides what could we, mere human beings, do to make the Lord God better than He is?

But this word also means *to set apart*. And some MSS read instead of "the Lord God," *Christ as Lord*. There seems to be more textual support for this latter reading – "Christ as Lord." But the meaning remains the same regardless of which wording is the correct wording.

I haven't read any explanation of this word "sanctify" which satisfies my understanding of this passage, and so I am going to tell you what I believe Peter had in mind. I believe he was saying that believers need to set the Lord apart in the hearts as being the main Person in their lives, the One they love the most, the One they want most to please. He alone is to be our Lord, and we joyfully recognize that we are His servants, living only

to do His will. And the fact that this is to be done in our hearts, means that it is real! He is not just our Lord in name only, but He is really our Lord. We are committed to Him alone! Such a relationship with the Lord will obviously show up in the way a person lives. This is the way of true holiness.

But what then?

"Be ready," that is, *be prepared*. Because instead of you asking people to listen to what you have to say, they will be asking you for a statement of your faith, and *what you believe, and why?* The Apostle Paul said that we are saved by hope. We have life now, our sins are forgiven. Are we prepared to tell people why we know our sins are forgiven. And what is the future prospect, a certain prospect, for all who know the Savior. It is not only to be in heaven, and with the Lord, but, most amazingly, to be like our blessed Lord.

And finally, "with meekness and fear." We do all of this with the greatest humility, not taking any of the credit for ourselves, but giving all of the glory to God, to the Lord Jesus, and to the Holy Spirit.

Concl: This is "true evangelism." This is God's way, not better or more novel methods, but a holy people, who walk with the Lord, seeking to please Him in all things. We are never separated from the message we are to proclaim. Our lives are to be a manifestation of what it means to know God and to know Christ in salvation. Oh, that the Lord would cause us to do His work in His way that we might have His blessing. It would be a new day for the church, a day of greater usefulness in these days when it is so obvious that the world is desperately in need of the Gospel of the grace of God. Let 1 Peter 3:15 be a verse that you have committed to memory. But more than that, let it be descriptive of what you are doing each day in your relationship with the Lord, and then "be ready" for those doors that the Lord will open to you to tell others the Gospel of the grace of God "with meekness and fear."

THE GOODNESS OF CHRIST AT THE CROSS

1 Peter 3:18-22

Intro: We have seen over and over again as we have moved through this first epistle of Peter, that the people to whom he was writing had suffered, and were suffering, a great deal because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Apostle Peter had been directed by the Holy Spirit to write to them for their encouragement. Obviously they were not ashamed of the Lord, and so they did not try to hide the fact that they loved Him and were trusting Him.

But that did not mean that they did not have the normal feelings that anyone might have under such circumstances, and I am speaking of the desire that is in all of us, the desire to get back in some way at those who have wronged us, either in what they have *said* against us, or in what they have *done* to us. And so several times in this epistle Peter warned them against doing things that were evil in God's sight. And he encouraged them to continue to live for the Lord in order that their lives might prove that their enemies were wrong. It was a time for drawing nearer to the Lord, trusting that the Lord would touch the hearts of some of their enemies so as to cause them to ask about their faith. Or, as Peter expressed it in chapter 3, verse 15, "Be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you." Often it is the way that we as believers respond to opposition that the Lord works to open the hearts of our enemies to the message of the Gospel of Christ.

Today we come to the last five verses of chapter 3 – verses 18-22. And here the Apostle Peter did a surprising thing, and yet, as you think about it, it is not so surprising after all.

If you were asked who throughout human history has suffered more than anyone else, what would your answer be? I hope that without much hesitation you would respond by saying that the Lord Jesus Christ has suffered the most. If I were to ask you who least deserved to suffer of any person who has ever lived, I hope that again you would answer that it was the Lord Jesus. And if I were to ask you a third question – Who has accomplished the most through his sufferings? – again we would all have to say that, beyond any doubt, the Lord did!

I. THE SUFFERING OF OUR LORD (1 Peter 3:18).

Back in 1 Peter, chapter 2, beginning with verse 21, the Apostle Peter told

us that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Example even in His sufferings. (Read verses 21-23.)

When Peter said that He "did not sin," he was probably thinking about our Lord's behavior at the time of His death. But those words apply to His whole life on earth, don't they? He never did any sin. All of the charges that our Lord's enemies brought against Him were false. No one could convict Him of any sin – ever! Sin was never a part of His being. He was, always had been, and always will be, the absolutely holy Son of the living God! He was without sin. He did no sin. He knew no sin. There was no sin in Him.

Then why did He suffer? (Read 1 Pet. 2:24.)

He suffered for our sins. He took our sins upon Himself at the Cross "that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness," and it was because of the stripes which fell on Him, both from man and from God, that we "were healed."

Now we find this same emphasis in our text for today. (Read 1 Pet. 3:18, but read also verse 17 with verse 18.)

Christ did not deserve to die. He had done nothing wrong. The charges brought against Him were false. He was "the just" One that Peter referred to here. He died for the unjust – that is what we are. The charges against us before a holy God are too numerous for any of us to mention. And they are all true. We have wronged God and Christ and the Holy Spirit by our sins. And yet our dear Lord took our sins, He suffered for our sins, He paid our penalty in full, and He did all of this "that He might bring us to God, not in our sins, but having been cleansed and forgiven of our sins.

So the point that the Apostle Peter was making was that if the Lord suffered like He did for us, suffering in our place, in order that He might bring us to God, then surely we should not complain about the opposition of men toward us if, in the providence of God, God might be please to awaken some guilty sinner of his, or her, need of a Savior. Of course, we can't save anyone. We couldn't even save ourselves. That is why the Lord Jesus had to come if we were to be saved. No, we are not anyone's Savior, but it may please God to use us in the sufferings that we have, to awaken some guilty sinner to his or her need of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ died "once," that is, *once for all*. His one sacrifice was sufficient for the salvation of all for whom He died, and it never will need to be repeated. It is the one sacrifice by which sinners may be cleansed from the guilt and defilement of sin, and made ready to stand accepted in the presence of a holy God. It cost Him His life, but, thank God, He was "quickened by the Spirit." He was raised from the dead by the Spirit of God, and let your eye run on down to verse 22, and you will see what happened to Him after His resurrection. (Read verse 22.)

He succeeded in what He came to do. He has brought us to God. But it was through His suffering on the Cross that this great work for you and for me was done. And I repeat, that it may be that the Lord will use the suffering which we experience because we belong to the Lord, to awaken guilty sinners to their need of Christ. Do you see the parallel between His sufferings, and ours? God works through the trials of His people in a different way from that work which He did through the trials of His Son, but the fact remains that there is a similarity between our sufferings and His in that God is accomplishing His purposes through both.

Now, as we move on to verse 19, the manner in which godly men have sought to explain these verses, shows that they have caused a lot of difficulty among expositors of the Word. I am not going to give you a run-down on the various interpretations that men have given, but I want to tell you what I believe these verses teach.

I would like to give verses 19 and 20 the heading:

II. THE PREACHING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST (1 Peter 3:19-20).

The big question is, To what preaching was the Apostle Peter referring?

Many expositors say that this was preaching after the Lord was "quickened," or raised, by the Holy Spirit. And so the idea has arisen that Christ preached to fallen angels after His resurrection, or that the Lord actually went to hell to preach to the wicked. Some even suggest that His preaching was to give them a second chance.

But there is nothing in Scripture that I know of to indicate that the Lord did anything like this, and the idea that there is a second chance for salvation after death is certainly foreign to Scripture. There are no opportunities for salvation after death. And what would be the purpose of preaching

to angels since salvation was not for them.

I believe, after studying this passage again, that by linking verse 19 with verse 20 the preaching that is referred to, preaching by the Spirit, was preaching that the Lord did in the days of Noah *through Noah*. God spoke through His prophets. He spoke through Moses. He speaks to the hearts of people through the preaching of His servants down to the present day. And in 2 Peter 2:5 we see that Peter called Noah "a preacher of righteousness."

This is a change from what I understood on this passage when I preached on it back in 1887 when I said that I thought this referred to our Lord's preaching after His resurrection. I think that verse 20 shows that this was preaching the Lord did through Noah in the time just before the flood.

So read verse 19, and then go on into verse 20, and see if it doesn't seem to you like Peter was speaking of a past ministry of our Lord when he spoke to "spirits in prison," that is, people who were in bondage because of their sins.

Perhaps you remember that as the Lord Jesus was beginning His earthly ministry, He went to the synagogue in Nazareth, and the book of Isaiah was given to Him from which to read. And He turned to the first two verses of Isaiah 61, and this is what He read:

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19).

Note the statement, "to preach deliverance to the captives." Also note: "to set at liberty them that are bruised."

People then, as today, are in hopeless bondage to their sins, and the only way they can be set free is through Christ and the Gospel. But people do not know their hopeless condition, and that is why we preach to them. And today, as in Noah's day, God speaks to the hearts of people as His Word is proclaimed. God's longsuffering is always displayed in the preaching of the Word. In Noah's day it was for one hundred and twenty years while the ark was being constructed. In Heb. 11:7 we read

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteous-

ness which is by faith.

The one hundred and twenty years is mentioned in Gen. 6:3.

But Peter tells us that the Lord was the One Who was ministering even though He obviously did it through Noah.

Now after all of those year there were only "eight souls" who were saved: Noah and his wife, Shem and his wife, Ham and his wife, and Japheth and his wife. The rest of the world was destroyed by the flood.

But Peter said that they were "saved by water." And yet it was God Who saved them. He was the One Who told Noah to build the ark. And He is the One Who caused Noah to persevere through all of those hard years until the ark was completed. He saved them by his grace. They were saved through faith. God's mercy was displayed in those long years when the judgment was delayed. But the point that Peter was making, was that in the ark and in the flood we have a picture of salvation. The water brought death and judgment to that whole generation, and yet the same water that meant death to the multitudes of that day, preserved the life of Noah and his family.

And then Peter went on immediately to speak of water baptism.

III. THE SIMILAR MESSAGE OF WATER BAPTISM (1 Pet. 3: 20-21.

Peter was not saying that we are saved by water baptism, or even partially saved by water baptism. *He was saying that just as in the ark and the flood we have a picture of salvation, so in water baptism we also have a picture of salvation.* And I believe that our KJ translators were right in making the middle part of this verse a parenthesis, so that we read, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us . . . by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

By this he meant that in baptism (and immersion is the only mode that would give us the picture of resurrection that is mentioned here) we have a picture of salvation. We are saved by that which is portrayed in water baptism – our union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection! It does not provide cleansing for the flesh, but it is in response to the specific command of our Lord – and so it is "the answer of a good conscience toward God."

And the fact that by the death and resurrection of Christ we have a most certain and eternal salvation, our Lord is in heaven, "and is on the right hand of God with "angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him."

These three terms, "angels and authorities and powers," have to do with different ranks of angelic beings *both good and bad*. But it may have a special emphasis upon demonic beings.

In our Sunday School memory work for this summer we are learning Eph. 6:10-18. It speak of our spiritual warfare. And verse 12 says this:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:12).

The Devil and his demonic forces are still alive and well, and ultimately our conflict is with them. But how wonderful it is to know that all of them are, in the words of the final verse of our text for today, "made subject unto Him," our Lord Jesus Christ.

But let us not be overconfident, or self-confident in any way. It is only as we are strong in the Lord that we are able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. Martin Luther had it right in our Sunday School hymn for this summer, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." Listen to two verses of that great hymn:

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He,
Lord Sabaoth His Name, from age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure;
One little word shall fell him.

Concl: How thankful we can be for our victorious Savior, Who through His sufferings has not only delivered us forever from our sins, and has brought us to God, but He has conquered our foes. And just through His sufferings we have salvation, so it may very well be if we behave as the children of God should behave when persecutions come our way be-

cause of our salvation, others may be awakened from the sleep of death to ask a reason for the hope that we have. Let us pray for greater boldness to live for Christ, and to speak for Him. There is no telling what purposes of God are involved when He lets us share a little in the same kind of affliction our Lord experienced, and which the saints of every age have experienced when they have trusted God to make and keep them faithful in times when the whole world seems to be against us. Ultimately the victory belongs to our Lord, and we will share the victory because of Him.

And so our text tells us that the infinite goodness of the Lord was seen in:

- 1) His sacrificial death on the Cross for sinners -- which is the primary message of our text. .
- 2) His preaching to Noah's generation, but above that, to all generations from the beginning of time.
- 3) The record that He has left for the world to read in His Word.
- 4) The illustrations that we have of salvation in such events as the flood in Noah's day, and in ordinance of baptism. And we can add to this what we are to do in just a few minutes, the observance of the Lord's Supper.

We would have had none of this if our Lord had not died. How thankful you and I should be that the intense hatred of men did not keep the Lord from manifesting His goodness toward guilty, undeserving sinners like you and I are.

(Appeal to any who do not know the Lord.)

Closing verses: Heb. 12:1-3.

BE PREPARED FOR SUFFERING

1 Peter 4:1-6

Intro: We have seen in our study of this wonderful first epistle of Peter, that the people to whom he wrote, believers, mostly Jewish, were a people who had suffered, and were still suffering, because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Everybody in the world suffers. It is the result of sin. There is tremendous physical suffering throughout the world as we meet here today. We are especially aware of what has gone on in Kosovo and Serbia, and the troubles that they continue to have over there. There is much suffering in the world because of disease and death. And then there are all of those personal trials which we all experience from day to day. Truly this world has been called *a valley of tears*. Suffering comes in many different forms, and in one way or another it touches all of our lives.

But it has always been the case that those people who know and love God, and who know and love God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, are the objects of a special kind of suffering. And this, too, comes in different forms, with different intensity, and for different periods of time. It can come in the form of rejection by family and friends, or, as has often been the case, it can take the form of active persecution which in countless numbers of cases, has led to physical death. That is the kind of suffering that the Apostle Peter was speaking about in this epistle which we are considering together. And I think that I am right when I say that this is the kind of suffering that the Bible speaks about in most instances where it deals with the subject of suffering.

Now we all know, or should know, that our God is a sovereign God. There is none greater than He. And He could put a stop to all of the persecution that has gone on in the world from the day that Cain killed Abel. But He hasn't seen fit to do that yet. Some day, for those of us who know the Lord, persecution in its every form will be a thing of the past. But for the present God allows it to continue, but He has a purpose, or purposes, in any persecution which causes suffering for any of His people wherever they may be. This applies to you, and it applies to me. It applies to all of us who know the Lord.

It was when the Apostle Paul was discussing some of the trials that touch the lives of the people of God that he wrote Romans 8:28:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.

We all know that God is a good God, and that everything that He does is

good. And all of our trials, all of our sufferings, are included in the truth of that statement. God makes things that are bad in themselves, turn out for the spiritual good of those of us who know Him. Peter believed the truth that is declared in Romans 8:28.

Among other things, Peter mentioned that our trials provide the circumstances in which God can and does demonstrate His power to keep us, to protect us, and to deliver us. Peter also said that the trial of our faith will “be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:7b). In chapter 1 and verse 13 Peter said that our trials make us hope more for the coming of the Lord. If we were comfortable and never had any difficulties here, we would be inclined to be satisfied with this world. But our trials make us long for the coming of the Lord.

Matthew Henry pointed out in his commentary on this chapter that through our trials God is teaching us patience. And you see this in a verse like verse 20 of chapter 2.

I could go on to speak of other good purposes God is fulfilling through the trials and sufferings of His people, but I will just concentrate on the one which the Apostle Peter mentioned in the text which we are dealing with today. And this purpose is involved in all of our trials even though sometimes we are very slow in recognizing what God is doing in our lives. I am speaking of what God is doing through our trials to draw us away from our sins. This, of course, brings up the whole subject of our sanctification. In chapter 1, verse 15, Peter said that we are to “be . . . holy in all manner of conversation,” which means, in all of our conduct. And we can’t be holy in our conduct unless we are holy in our character. Or, to state this another way, we can’t be holy outwardly unless we are holy inwardly, holy in our hearts. And it is usually in our trials and the suffering we experience, that God works to purify us, and to make us more like our Lord. And this is the purpose that He has in saving us.

Now this is what Peter was teaching in the text which we have come to in our study of this epistle, the first six verses of 1 Peter 4. And Peter did in our text for today what he had been doing all through this epistle: He pointed his readers to the sufferings of Christ. And so as our first point in examining this passage is:

I. A LESSON TO BE LEARNED FROM THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST (1 Pet. 4:1-2).

Notice the references to the suffering of Christ in this epistle: 1:10-11, 18-19; 2:21-24; 3:18; and now in 4:1. It is through Christ's death of the Cross that God secured our salvation, but the message of the Cross has many facets to it, and Peter comes back to one of the truths issuing from the Cross that he had mentioned before. *It was through Christ's suffering on the Cross that He put away our sins. He did not die because He was a sinner; He died, taking our sins upon Himself, and He fully atoned for them by His death. Therefore, when He came out of the tomb in His resurrection, our sins were no longer on Him. They were gone!*

And so what is one message for us from the Cross? It is that we are to "arm" ourselves with the same mind because the message of the Cross is that those who have been forgiven of their sins through the sacrifice of Christ, through His sufferings, are no longer to live in sin. Christ died not only to save us from sin's penalty, which He bore for us, but He died to save us from sin's power. *And it is through the trials and sufferings which we experience as the Lord's people, that God causes us to realize our own sinfulness, and through our sufferings He makes us long to be like the He wants us to be!*

But let us remember what the Lord Jesus said about the world's attitude toward Him, and so consequently what the world's attitude toward us would be:

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 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.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me (John 15:18-21).

So to be armed for persecution and suffering, is to know that just as the Lord had that to face, we will too because we belong to Him. But furthermore, we arm ourselves when by God's grace we are determined that, come what will, we are committed to do the will of God because it is our desire under all circumstances to do what is pleasing to the Lord.

And so we are to "arm" ourselves "with the same mind." As Paul taught

the Philippian believers, *we are to have the mind of Christ. Even He, our blessed Lord, as we learn from Hebrews 5:8, "learned obedience by the things which He suffered." And God designs our sufferings that we might learn to hate sin, and to love righteousness.*

What did Peter mean by those words, "arm yourselves with the same mind"?

Well, for one thing, he obviously meant that *we are in a warfare!* We are in a warfare not only with the Devil, and with the temptations that we face in a God-less world, but *we are in a warfare with sin!* And we need weapons on order to win in this battle against sin. So our weaponry here consists in having the same attitude toward the will of God that our Lord Jesus Christ had. He came not to do His own will, but to do the will of the Father Who had sent Him into the world. He always did those things that pleased His Father. Cf. John 6:38 and John 8:29. And this last verse to which I have referred, gives each of us a word of encouragement. Let me read all of John 8:29 to you. This is what the Lord said,

And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

We can say that the Father has not left us alone to do His will. He is always with us. And it is He Who gives us the strength to resist the evil and to choose the good, and this is what it means to be armed with the mind of Christ. If we are trusting in ourselves, we will fail, and fail continuously, and fail miserably (like Peter did). But if we are trusting God, trusting also in our Lord Jesus Christ, *They will keep us from sinning.* We can't do it by ourselves, but we can do all things through Christ Who strengthens us. Cf. Phil. 4:13.

It is in the sufferings and trials which God brings into our lives that we learn not to sin. We no longer will live according to the lusts of our flesh, which have led us into sin time and time again, but now by the grace of God we live to do the will of God. As strange as it may sound, and I am not justifying the sin Peter committed in denying that he even knew the Lord, but it was through those bitter tears that he shed, that Peter came forth a new man in Christ.

We have Solomon's words in Prov. 20:30 that "blows that hurt cleanse away evil, as do stripes the inner depths of the heart." This is what the Apostle Peter was saying about the effect of persecution upon us.

And for all of us who have tasted of sufferings, whether physically, or by

way of some form of persecution, we know what Peter was talking about. But let us go on in our text.

II. THE OLD LIFE (1 Pet. 4:3).

This is one verse among many in Scripture which describes how those who are Christians used to live. Peter did not mean that every Christian has done all of the things that he mentioned here, but that this is a good picture of what life was like before we were saved. None of it is good; it is all bad. It is all description of the lusts of the flesh. Let me describe each of these words, although they do not all need an explanation. He mentioned six sins.

A. "Lasciviousness."

This is uncontrolled sexual behavior. It is reckless, unrestrained behavior. It is a person who refuses to be controlled by what is right and good, and even by what is legal.

B. "Lusts."

This is a longing for anything that is forbidden by decency, by a desire for what is wrong instead of what is right.

C. "Excess of wine."

This is nothing but drunkenness, a sin which is often the cause of other terrible sins. Often murders are the result of drunkenness. We have Solomon's word in the book of Proverbs, chapter 20, and verse 1 (and I am reading from the NKJV),

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise (Prov. 20:1).

D. "Revellings."

These are drinking parties that extend into the night, and which often result in brawls and rioting which are accompanied by various sins and often in personal injuries to the people involved.

E. "Banquetings."

These, too, are dinners which get out of hand, and people find themselves

doing various things that they would not do if they were sober.

Be sure to notice how sex and drinking are involved in several of the words which the Apostle Peter used here. To be sure he was speaking of several extremes, but many people have been drawn into sin who felt that it was safe for them just to be observers of what others would do.

F. “Abominable idolatries.”

This can mean the worship of graven images, but it can also mean *coveting* in any form. And this in the latter case means the lust for money. It is all putting something else in the place of God. Our Congress was guilty of “abominable idolatries” when they dared to put our economy ahead of what was wrong in the sight of God. And so they were guilty of another wrong, which is just as abominable in the sight of God as if graven images were brought into the House chamber or the Senate chamber, and they were all to fall down to worship those images. It is still true that we can’t serve God and money. The man who loves money, hates God.

Now notice that the Apostle Peter introduced these sins by saying, “Now the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles,” meaning unsaved Gentiles. Jews and Gentiles alike are all capable of committing the same sins.

But notice the word, “suffice.” What Peter was saying was that for a Christian to look back over the life that he used to live, he gladly admits that *he has had enough of that way of living, and that he wants no more!*

Whatever sins we may have committed in the past, and even though we may have been saved when we were children, it is always true that we want no more of that way of living. Wouldn’t you say that? Don’t you regret every sin you have ever committed, and don’t you envy the Lord Who could say, “I do always the things that please” the Father? And He is the only person who has ever lived who could truthfully say that. But we have had enough of sin in any form, and we look forward to the day when it will be impossible for us ever to sin again.

But the old crowd doesn’t feel that way! And that is what Peter takes up in verses 4 and 5 – and this is where persecution usually arises.

IV. THE OLD CROWD (1 Pet. 4:4-6).

Peter said here three things about the old crowd:

- 1) They think it strange that you don't live like you used to live.
- 2) And so they turn against you. They speak evil of you. They say that you have gotten religion, and that now you are too good for your old friends. They say that you think that you are too good to associate with them any more. And sometimes the persecutions get even stronger than that. They start with words, but often resort to actions. Whatever, it is all persecution.
- 3) But they are critical of you because they are ignorant of something very awesome that you know, but they don't know. And that is that we are all going to stand before God as our Judge, to give an account of ourselves and the way we have lived in this life.

What are we to do? Should we avoid them altogether? We can't live like they live, or do the things that they do, and which we have done in the past. Is there anything that we should do?

Yes, there is! And we are told what it is in verse 6. They need the Gospel. They live like they live, and do the things that they do, because they are "dead," *spiritually dead!* They need to be given that life-giving message of the suffering Christ, and why He suffered. They need to hear that their condition is so hopeless that only God's Son, coming into this world as a Man, and dying for the sins of sinner, could possibly deliver them from their sins and their sinful way of life. They need to hear that there is only one way to escape the judgment of God, and that is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But Peter also may be speaking here of those to whom he was writing. They were saved by having the Gospel preached to them. "that they might be judged according to men in the flesh," receiving the persecution that they have experienced, "but live according to God in the spirit." The only way a man or woman of the world will ever understand what a Christian is, is when they are saved and believe the Gospel.

Concl: So the Apostle Peter was saying that the persecution of the world doesn't draw a true believer back into the world, but it causes him to draw closer to the Lord and to pray constantly that he may be delivered from temptation, kept from sin, but also enabled to live a life that is pleasing to God.

Some of you may be having a difficult time because you have come to Christ, and you are seeking to please Him. Remember that the Lord is

using that to give you even greater deliverance from sin, to cause you not just to avoid it, but to hate it. But it may be that the very people who are inclined to ignore you, or even to make things difficult for you, may by God's grace see the light in your life, and, as Peter said in chapter 3, verse 15, even ask you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Then you can tell them about Christ in the greatest humility, giving all of the glory to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation you have, and the changes that the Lord has made in your heart and in your life.

LIFE FOR BELIEVERS IN THE END TIMES

1 Peter 4:7-11

Intro: The name of John Calvin has become increasingly important to Christians in the later years of this century. He was born in 1509 in France, and became a mighty influence in the Church even down to the present day, more than 400 years after his death in 1564. His life was relatively short when compared with the age to which many people live today. But in our day God has been reviving in the church two great doctrines which were very precious to Calvin, the doctrines of predestination and the sovereignty of God.

I was reading what Calvin had to say about the text of Scripture we have before us today, and was especially interested in what he had to say about the Apostle Peter's words at the beginning of verse 7, "But the end of all things is at hand."

Remember that he lived 400 years ago, and even then, approximately 1500 years after the ministry of Christ on earth, many were inclined to wonder how Peter, if writing under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, could say that "the end" was "at hand." But he reminded his readers (and I am sure, his hearers) that God does not count time like we do. Calvin's response was this:

But it may be objected and said, that a long series of ages has passed away since Peter wrote this, and yet that the end is not come. My reply to this is, that the time seems long to us, because we measure its length by the spaces of this fleeting life; but if we could understand the perpetuity of future life, many ages would appear to us like a moment, as Peter will also tell us in his second epistle. Besides, we must remember this principle, that from the time when Christ once appeared, there is nothing left for the faithful, but with suspended minds ever to look forward to His second coming (Vol. XXII, p. 128).

The passage in 2 Peter to which Calvin was referring is found in chapter 3, verse 8,

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

So, according to eternity, our Lord has only been gone two days!

The point I am making is that this word which is before us today, is just as true, and just as important, as it was to the believers in the first century when the Apostle Peter wrote these words. So it is a word we need today.

The second thing that Calvin pointed out was that we need a message like we have in 1 Peter 4:7 because believers, or “the faithful,” as he called us, tend to live from day to day like we are going to be here forever. In his words, he said, “We promise, almost all of us, an eternity to ourselves in this world; at least, the end never comes to our mind” (*Op. cit.*, pp. 127, 128). And so this makes us careless and slothful as far as our eternal hope is concerned.

Now repeatedly I have reminded you since we began the present consideration of this great epistle, that the people to whom Peter was writing, had suffered, and were continuing to suffer, for their faith in Christ. And so this truth about “the end of all things” being “at hand,” would not only arouse them, but comfort them with the very real prospect that they could very soon see the Lord returning for them.

You and I need to realize that one very strong evidence that the promise of the Lord’s coming is still the great hope of the Church, is the fact that believers today are still expecting the Lord to return. If it were not a true hope, it would have died long ago.

We are in exactly the same position today that the believers were who first received Peter’s epistle. We don’t know when the Lord will come, but we know that **He** is coming. We know that this world is not our home; our home is in heaven, and the joy we will experience when the Lord comes will be so far beyond any joy that we have experienced here that there will be no way we could possibly compare the two. And so on the authority of God’s Word, I declare to you today that “the end of all things is at hand.” “At hand” means that *it is drawing near*, how near we cannot say, but it is possible that it is very near. And His coming will usher in all of those events which will ultimately lead to the new heavens and the new earth where only righteousness will dwell. This ought to be in our minds every day we live. This truth will stir us up to live every day for the glory of God, and it will give us renewed zeal to spread the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ throughout the whole world.

We are in “the last days.” The Church has been in the last days ever since the Lord returned to heaven. And so what Peter said to the people who first received this epistle, applies just as much to you and to me today. In these verses, along with those which led up to verse 7, and those that follow verse 11, Peter was describing what life should be in the end times for those of us who know the Lord. So let us take these verses today as though they were written also for us – because they were! *How should we*

be living in these end times? Let us learn what Peter had to say. He immediately followed his statement that “the end of all things is at hand” with a twofold statement on:

I. SOBRIETY AND PRAYER (1 Peter 4:7b).

(Read v. 7.)

What did Peter mean when he said that in view of the fact that “the end of all things is at hand,” we should “be sober”?

Do you remember the time when the Lord Jesus was in the country of the Gadarenes, and He was met by a demon-possessed man. People had tried to bind him with chains, but he just broke the chains and cast them aside. The people couldn't do anything to control, or to change him. Well, the Lord Jesus commanded the demon to come out of him (actually there were many demons in him), and the Lord drove them into a herd of swine, and the pigs then rushed down a hill and were drowned in the sea. Those who took care of the swine went into the city nearby, and people came out to see what had happened. And this is what Mark recorded in Mark 5:15:

And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

We could translate what they saw in this way: The people who had come out to see what had happened, saw him who had been demon possessed, “sitting, and clothed, and sober: and they were afraid.”

To be “sober,” is *to be in your right mind*. Peter's use of this word means that there is a certain kind of insanity that is characteristic of people who are ignorant of the character of this world, and that time is running out on them. And we as Christians must not be carried away with the insanity of this world in which we live. It seems like everything today has to be funny, doesn't it? Even commercials on television try to be funny. People for the most part have no time for God, no time to think about what comes after death. People who live just for the present life, and who make no preparation for eternity, according to the Scriptures, are “out of their minds.” And just as that man, with his reason restored, were afraid, and wanted to get rid of the Lord, so people today want God, if they believe in God, to leave them alone! Nothing could possibly be more insane. And yet people are doing this every day.

Now you and I need to be careful that we are not swept along with the

insanity of the world. It will cause us to be slothful and careless about the way we live. We are here, not to be trapped by the world, but to tell people about our blessed Lord and His salvation, so they can be delivered out of this world.

Oh, that we would take this word to heart: “Be ye therefore sober.” Make sure that you are thinking straight about what you are doing, and about where you are going, and even about what you are saying and what you are thinking. “Be ye therefore sober.”

And Peter coupled that with, “And watch unto prayer.” And the same idea of seriousness and alertness is in these words.

Why do we pray? Well, the person who really prays is the person who feels His need of the Lord and of the Lord’s blessing. We pray because we want His help, and we pray because we are seeking His help for others who are dear to us. We pray to ward off the attacks of the enemy. And so the person who is most convinced that the coming of the Lord is near, is a person who will give the most attention to prayer. You can be sure that the person who really prays, is a person who is thinking straight about His life in the light of eternity.

We all need to ask ourselves, What place does prayer have in my life? Do we pray regularly? Does it have precedence over all other things? In the light of conditions in the world today, you and I who know the Lord, and who know what real prayer is, should be praying more than we ever have before.

So point #1 that Peter was making was, “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”

What is #2?

II. WE ARE TO HAVE FERVENT LOVE FOR EACH OTHER (1 Peter 4:8-9).

Peter had touched upon this earlier in his epistle when he wrote 1 Peter 3:8. (Read.)

We all know, or should know, that one of the signs that a person is really saved, is that we love the people of God. We love to be with them. We love to have fellowship with them. Cf. 1 John 3:14. But Peter spoke her

of “fervent love.” What is that?

“Fervent love” is the love that the Lord has for us. The word literally means in the Greek, *stretched out*. It is a love which is constant, a love that keeps on in spite of what may happen. It is the kind of love that Solomon had in mind when he said, “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Prov. 17:17). And you will remember that Solomon also said, “There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24b).

This was the kind of love that David and Jonathan had for each other. This is the love that Ruth had for Naomi. This is the love that God has for us that caused Him to send His Son to die for us, for our sins. This is the love that our Lord has for each one of us. This is the love that parents have for a wayward child, like the love that the father had for his prodigal son.

It is usually our idiosyncracies that are a hindrance to our love, or our sins. We are to love each other in spite of our sins, and if we love each other, we are not going to be spreading what we know about other people’s sins, but they are covered. When you read our Lord’s prayer in John 17, you would think that His disciples were almost perfect.

Let us be careful that when the Lord comes, He does not find us out of fellowship with each other. And Peter probably began this verse with the words “above all,” not because it is more important than prayer, but it is this kind of love that gives real meaning and leads to real blessing in prayer.

And verse 9 gives us one of the ways in which we are to show our love for each other. And it has in mind those believers who may come our way and whom we have not known before. “Hospitality” is literally *a love for strangers*, not just any stranger, but for those who are our brothers or sisters in Christ, but whom we may not have met before. The writer of the book of Hebrews was speaking of believers we had not known before when he said,

1 Let brotherly love continue.

2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares (Heb. 13:1-2).

Abraham was *given to hospitality*, and he had the privilege of entertaining the Lord in his home. Let us be very, very careful to preserve our fellowship with each other as we wait for the coming of the Lord.

But there is still another point that Peter made which should be helpful for us as we await the coming of the Lord.

III. THE USE OF OUR GIFTS (1 Peter 4:10).

Peter was probably speaking of the ways in which God has given a gift, or gifts, to each one of us. Of course, we all know that whatever we have, God has given those to us. We are under a divine obligation to minister to others as the Lord has blessed us with the gifts necessary for such a ministry. It might be provided help in some way. We hear of a need, and we have the ability to meet that need, and so that is what we are supposed to do. Peter was undoubtedly speaking of spiritual gifts, and that would have been very important when we consider how those believers in that day were suffering. They were not just to be occupied with their own needs, but they were to be concerned about how they might help their fellow-believers face the needs they had. This could have meant praying together, or giving words of encouragement from the Scriptures that they did have. But it could also have meant food and clothing and a place to stay. When we love each other, we are always looking for ways in which we can help one another. We don't really have to be told to do so.

But our last verse tells us of the way in which some were able to minister to others. This had to do with:

IV. THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD (1 Peter 4:11).

Calvin said of this verse, "The office of teaching in the Church is a remarkable instance of God's favor" (*Op. cit.*, p. 131). He probably appreciated that more than we do because the ministry of teaching was not very prevalent in his day, and it was often done with the possibility of personal injury or even death. We ought always to be thankful that the Lord has preserved the opportunity for us to hear the Word of the Lord.

Perhaps you remember what the prophet Amos said about the ministry of the Word, and judgment which would fall upon His people in their latter days. Let me read what he wrote.

11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:

12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it (Amos 8:11-12).

Let us be thankful that we can still hear the preaching of the Word. That, in itself, is always a sign of the Lord's blessing.

But the two things that he said about the ministry of the Word apply just as much today as it did in his day. And it is very important that we abide by them if we are to have God's continued blessing upon us.

The first is to be seen in this statement: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."

I am sure that you believe, as I do, that the Old and New Testaments are unique among all other books that have ever been written because they are the Word of God. "Oracles" are *utterances*, and so in this instance Peter was speaking of the Scriptures as *the utterances of God Himself*. And those who teach it are to teach it with the care and reverence that they would if God had delivered a particular message for a particular people. You will remember how Paul rejoiced over the Thessalonian believers and thanked God for them. And this is the reason which he express in 1 Thess. 2:13:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

People who hear the Scriptures taught must be careful that they are receiving it *as the Word of God*. But Peter was saying the same thing about those who teach the Word. They certainly are not to teach it as the word of men, handling it carelessly, accepting some parts of it, but rejecting others, or changing it to suit their own fancy. There is no more sacred work in all the world than the teaching of the Word of God, and those who teach it should handle it all as the Word of God – with no part excluded.

And Peter made a second point that all of us who teach the Word need to remember. It is this: We are not to teach to show how much we know, or so people will praise us. But we are to teach with the ability which the Lord gives us, recognizing this as we teach, in order "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to Whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

It is God Who is to be glorified in the ministry of His Word, and not those of us who teach His Word. Instead of hoping that people will go away saying what a great teacher he is, or what a great preacher, may they go away saying what a great God we have, and how blessed we are that we

have His very Word in our hands, and hopefully in our hearts.

Concl: So these are points that are to be characteristic of our lives in the end times, in these last days, as we await the fulfillment of the Lord's promise that He would come again to receive to Himself, and to take us to be forever where He is:

- 1) We must be sober and prayerful.
- 2) We must love each other fervently, and take every opportunity we have to show our love for all of the Lord's people.
- 3) We must make sure that in the public ministry of the church, as well as in whatever ministry we have with each other personally, we teach the Word, and we teach it as the Word of God, and we teach it that God may be glorified through His Son. And it necessarily follows that if we are seeking to glorify God, we will be careful not to seek any of the glory for ourselves.

Let us make the application of each of these points to ourselves as we look forward to that glorious day, which is sure to come, when we will be forever with the Lord. In the meantime, let us live for God's glory, and pray that we may be His instruments to reach others who today are without the Savior, but whom the Lord has appointed for eternal life.