



STRIVE FOR EXCELLENT BEHAVIOR 1 PETER 2:11 - 3:12

INTRODUCTION

Peter has carefully explained the doctrinal basis of the Christian faith. He has done so in a manner which encourages his readers to a response of holy living. Now he moves from doctrine to practical application. His gentle, general encouragement now becomes strong and specific as he explains how believers, as people who belong to God, can proclaim His praises (2:9) by standing out from the world with holy conduct (1:15) and offering spiritual sacrifices as a royal priesthood (2:5). In practical terms, this means that Christians are to live before the world in purity, humility, and peace.

OUTLINE OF 1 PETER 2:11-3:12

- I. Practice Purity - 1 Peter 2:11 - 12
- II. Practice Submission - 1 Peter 2:13 - 3:7
- III. Practice Peace - 1 Peter 3:8 - 12

I. Practice Purity - 1 Peter 2:11-12

In 1:17, Peter alluded to his readers as sojourners. In 2:9, he called them a royal priesthood and a holy nation. Now he turns from the picture of royalty back to one of sojourners and pilgrims (words which can also be translated aliens and strangers). The purpose is to again remind them that they are living in a place which is not their real home. Heaven is their home, and they are to live apart from the evil and immorality which surrounds them in this world. They are merely passing through.

A. Abstain from fleshly lusts - 1 Peter 2:11

Peter realized that Christians face a very real spiritual battle against their own desires for pleasure. The apostle James wrote of the same problem, *Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have.* (James 4:1-2a). Peter calls us to abstain, literally to "hold oneself constantly back from" worldly lusts and desires. These things are the enemy of the soul. They destroy the purity of your walk and your witness. Remember, you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit (1 Peter 1:22). Guard the purity of your soul! *Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts* (Romans 13:14 NASB).

B. Overcome opposition - 1 Peter 2:12

We know from several passages in the book of Acts that some unbelievers were speaking against the Christians (Acts 28:22), accusing them of such things as teaching customs which were unlawful for the Romans (Acts 16:21), acting against the decrees of Caesar, honoring another king -- Jesus (Acts 17:7), and upsetting the economy (Acts 19:27). Nothing conveys the truth louder than honorable conduct, so Peter beseeches believers to make their lives pure as a testimony to overcome the opposition which has been posed against them. This will surely bring glory to God, in the day of visitation. Jesus said, *let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven* (Matthew 5:16). Is your light shining?

The day of visitation is considered by some to be a day of judgment when God will no longer overlook the unbelievers' ignorance and rejection. Others take it to be the day when God looks upon them in mercy and brings them to salvation.

II. Practice Submission - 1 Peter 2:13-3:7

A. Submit to governmental authority - 1 Peter 2:13-17

All believers are called to submit to the government of their country. They are to be subject to those in authority and obey the laws. The motivation to obedience is that it is *for the Lord's sake* (1 Peter 2:13) and not for any selfish reasons such as seeking personal gain.

1. The purpose of government is to uphold justice - 2:13-14

Government is not merely a human institution, it is created by God. Rulers are where they are by the providence of God. Peter says God uses government and those in authority to punish evildoers and praise those who do what is right. Some may feel that the government and those in authority at times abuse their privilege and pervert justice instead of upholding it. We must rest in the knowledge that God is just. All will be rectified on the day of judgment and we can wait. It is interesting to note that the notoriously wicked Nero was Roman Emperor at the time Peter wrote this letter.

2. It is God's will that you obey - 2:15

Submission to government is submission to God's will

provided the laws do not conflict with God's will set forth in Scripture. God's people are to do what is right and good. Such actions will shut the mouths of those who are eager to criticize and blame. Someone has said that a good life is the best defense. It is difficult to slander excellent behavior. Is your own behavior above reproach? Do you carefully obey the law, even traffic laws, even speed limit signs?

3. God has given you freedom to obey - 2:16

Submission is the act of God's truly free people. We are free to obey God from our hearts as His willing and loving servants.

4. Summary - 2:17

Humbling yourself, honor and value all people. Love your brothers and sisters in Christ (See 1 Peter 1:22). Fear and reverence God (See 1 Peter 1:17-21). Have a high regard for those God has placed in authority.

B. Servants submit to masters - 1 Peter 2:18-25

The word servant here is the Greek "oiketai," which refers to household servants, either slaves or those who are employed as domestic workers.

1. In all instances - 2:18-19

Servants are to be respectfully submissive to their masters, whether the master is good and mild mannered or harsh. Harsh is the Greek "skolios," meaning curved and not straight. Our medical term, scoliosis, which refers to curvature of the spine is derived from it. The implication is that some masters were morally crooked or perverse. Peter is saying that this is no excuse for not obeying them faithfully, even if it means suffering wrongfully.

2. It finds favor with God - 2:19-20

The motivation for patiently enduring unjust sufferings is the conscious awareness that such perseverance finds favor with God. "Commendable" in verse 20 is the Greek word "charis," which means grace or favor and has the implication of praise. The servant is to endure in order to please God, seeking His favor and praise. His eyes are to be on God alone. The sole desire of his heart should be to receive and demonstrate the majestic grace of God in his life, even beyond what he may consider reasonable. Is your utmost desire to please God at any cost?

3. It faithfully follows Christ's example - 2:21-25

Beginning in verse 21, it seems like Peter's focus has now

broadened to take in all believers. We are also servants, humble servants of God, and suffering is part of our calling as Christians (2 Timothy 3:12). Peter says we were called to suffer because Christ suffered and He is our example. The Greek word translated "example" in verse 21 means a "writing copy." This refers to a copy of written letters or characters which were used for scholars to trace over. Christ is our writing copy. Our lives are to be traced over His, so that we follow very carefully step by step, walking as He walked.

In picturing our Example for us, Peter uses the description of the suffering servant from Isaiah 53. In these verses, he may also be remembering the last sufferings of Jesus he had witnessed. He had seen the scorn of the Jewish religious rulers, the beatings and bruises and blood, Christ's silent submission, and the cross.

a. Christ was sinless in suffering - 2:22-23

He was reviled but did not revile in return. He suffered but did not retaliate in any way. He suffered in silence, committing Himself to God, the Righteous Judge.

b. Christ suffered as our sacrifice - 2:24

Christ bore our sins in His own body on the cross. Our sinless sacrifice suffered for the judgment of our sins (2 Corinthians 1:5; 4:10; Hebrews 7:27; 9:28; 12:2; 1 Peter 1:19). He did it for us so we could die to sin and live to righteousness, following His example. By His stripes we were healed, meaning that the fruit of His suffering was our salvation.

c. Christ is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls - 2:25

Isaiah 53:6 states that, *All we like sheep have gone astray*. Every single person, in his or her own capacity, is going in the wrong direction until Christ comes to the rescue and brings that person back to Himself. He is the Savior of your soul. When you turn from going your own way and the way of the world and turn to Him, that conversion means a total redirection of your life and a personal commitment to Him as your Shepherd and Overseer. Jesus said, *If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me* (Luke 9:23). Have you made this commitment in your own life? Do you daily draw near to your good Shepherd (John 10:11) who restores your soul (Psalm 23:3) and leads you to living fountains of the waters of life (Revelation 7:17)? Do you follow closely to Him, tracing His steps, humbly, quietly? In what real and practical way can you make Him your Example this week?

C. Wives submit to your own husbands - 1 Peter 3:1-6

In Roman culture, a wife was obligated to take on the religion of her husband. But some women with unbelieving husbands had been converted to Christ. Peter instructs these wives not to argue with their husbands or be insubordinate. Rather, they are to win their husbands to the Lord with their pure actions and quiet sensitivity. They are to look to the Scriptures for examples of how Godly women of the past submitted to their husbands.

1. With chaste conduct and fear - 3:1-2

A Christian wife is to influence her unbelieving husband, not with words, but by her conduct. The word chaste alludes to purity in every aspect of life. Fear means respectful conduct. The purpose is for the husband to see the power of God in the life of his wife and be converted by her godly ways.

2. With a gentle and quiet spirit - 3:3-4

It was the Roman custom for women to wear extravagant hairdos, dresses, and jewelry. Peter is warning Christian women against becoming preoccupied with such things. He is not condemning all outer adornment, but merely calling for moderation and modesty. Christianity has a different standard than the world. Wives are called to beautify themselves for God rather than for men. Since God looks at the heart, women are to work to beautify their inner selves more than their outer bodies. A quiet and gentle spirit is incorruptible — it will not fade or go out of style.

3. As the holy women of the past - 3:5-6

Sarah is given as the example of a holy and submissive woman. The book of Genesis portrays her as showing respect for her husband, Abraham, and obedience to his decisions. (See Genesis 11:31; 12:5; 12:10-20; 18:6-8; 20:1-7.) Peter says she called Abraham *lord*, which was an expression of respect and submission, showing that she recognized her husband as the head of the household. In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul called wives to, *Submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything* (Ephesians 5:22-24).

Sarah submitted to her husband because she trusted God — she was a woman of faith (Hebrews 11:11). Those who follow Sarah's example are her daughters, and also have a place among the faithful of God. Those who put their trust in God have no need to fear.

*Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain,
But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall
be praised.* (Proverbs 31:30)

D. Husbands be understanding and honor your wives - 1 Peter 3:7

Husbands also have a responsibility toward their wives. Peter's use of the word "likewise" means that just as a wife submits to her husband, so the husband must give understanding and honor to his wife. The apostle Paul calls husbands to love their wives *just as Christ loved the church* (Ephesians 5:25), an even stronger exhortation.

1. The wife is the weaker vessel - 3:7

In referring to the wife as a weaker vessel, Peter is referring to the human body, the woman's physical strength, and not to moral or intellectual ability.

2. Fellow heirs - 3:7

Both husband and wife are *heirs together of the grace of life*, a term which most likely is descriptive of salvation and all that Peter has described in the first two chapters of this epistle. Both the man and the woman are equals in God's sight as receivers of the hopes, promises, and privileges of God's great salvation. Both are also equally responsible to God for their conduct. Wives are to be submissive to their husbands, and husbands are to be understanding and respectful of their wives so that their prayers may not be hindered. The hindered prayers probably refers to both husbands and wives. There must be peace in the family because discord and dissension hinders prayer.

III. Practice Peace - 1 Peter 3:8-12

Christians are called to blessing and are to adjust their attitudes and conduct their lives in such a way as to bless others and bring blessing upon themselves.

A. Be of one mind - 1 Peter 3:8

Christians are of one Spirit (Ephesians 2:18; 4:4; Philippians 1:27) so it follows that they should be like minded, see eye to eye so to speak, and live in harmony with one another.

1. Be compassionate - 3:8

Those who are of one mind are sympathetic with one another. Compassion means having so much concern for another's welfare that the other person's feelings become your own. How compassionate are you toward fellow Christians who are hurting?

2. Love as brothers - 3:8

As a Christian, God is your Father, and that makes all other believers your brothers and sisters. In 1 Peter 1:22, Peter called for loving one another fervently with a pure heart.

3. Be tenderhearted - 3:8

This is similar to compassion. It means to have a good heart which is soft toward others, not being judgmental and shutting others out but rather opening your heart to the underlying needs of others.

4. Be courteous - 3:8

The idea here is similar to that of submission. It means to be humble minded, always putting the other person and their feelings ahead of your own.

B. Bless others - 1 Peter 3:9-12

The above virtues are to be practiced even in the face of evil and reviling. Christians are called to blessing and not to revenge. Those who seek revenge deprive themselves of God's blessing. Jesus said, *Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you* (Matthew 5:44).

In verses 10 through 12, Peter quotes Psalm 34:12-16 to confirm what he has just said and to encourage his readers to trust in God so they may inherit a blessing. The rest is to be left to the Lord. Blessings will flow as God's children live humbly and honorably allowing Him to control their words and actions.

1. Choose to refrain from speaking evil - 3:10

Those who love life and desire blessing are called to direct the tongue correctly. Proverbs 21:23 states that, *Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles*. How well do you control your tongue? Are your words encouraging and uplifting? Is your speech free from gossip?

2. Choose to pursue peace - 3:11

Christians are not to be passive in their desire for peace. We are to turn from all evil and do only what is good. We are to look for the way of peace and actively pursue it. We are to do whatever is in our power to promote peace.

3. Choose righteousness - 3:12

God is watching over and listening to the righteous. He guards and cares for them and hears their prayers by His grace. However, the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. This is a picture of disapproval, condemnation, and judgment. Evil doers turn God's grace into wrath.

Application

1. How do you react when others abuse you verbally or treat you rudely? How do you think you might return a blessing to someone who has treated you badly?
2. In what practical ways will you show love to your brothers and sisters in Christ?
3. Is there a present relationship in which you need to humble yourself and be submissive, trusting God to work things out for good?
4. Is there a difficult relationship in which you need to take the initiative as peacemaker? What steps will you take to pursue peace in that situation?