

## *Second Baptist Church of Doylestown*

### *Bible Study Notes: Book of 1 Peter*

*6/28/17*

#### *Chapter 3*

##### **Wives & Husbands - Verses 1-7**

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own 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, <sup>2</sup> when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. <sup>3</sup> Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. <sup>4</sup> Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. <sup>5</sup> For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, <sup>6</sup> like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. <sup>7</sup> Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

**3:1-22** When a man became a Christian, he usually would bring his whole family into the church with him (see, for example, the story of the conversion of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:29-34). By contrast, a woman who became a Christian usually came into the church alone. Under Roman law, the husband and father had absolute authority over all members of his household, including his wife. Demanding her rights as a free woman in Christ could endanger her marriage if her husband disapproved. Peter reassured Christian women who were married to unbelievers that they did not need to preach to their husbands. Under the circumstances, their best approach would be one of godly behavior: They should show their husbands the kind of self-giving love that Christ showed the church. By being exemplary wives, they would please their husbands. At the very least, the men might then allow them to continue practicing their faith. At best, their husbands would join them and become Christians too.

**3:1-7** A changed life speaks loudly and clearly, and it is often the most effective way to influence a family member. Peter instructs Christian wives to develop inner beauty rather than being overly concerned about their outward appearance. Their husbands will be won over by their love. This does not mean that Christian women should be dowdy and frumpy; it is good to take care of oneself and look one's best. But far more important is the developing of an inner spirit of godliness. Live your Christian faith quietly and consistently in your home, so that your family will see Christ in you. True beauty begins inside (Proverbs 31:30).

**3:5** To be submissive to another's authority means to cooperate voluntarily out of love and respect for God and for that person. Ideally, submission is mutual ("Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ," Ephesians 5:21). Even when it is one-sided, however, the

expression of submission can be an effective Christian witness. Jesus Christ submitted to death so that we could be saved; we may sometimes have to submit to unpleasant circumstances so that others will see Christ in us. (Christian submission never requires us to disobey God, remain in an unsafe situation, or participate in what our conscience forbids.) One-sided submission requires tremendous strength. We could not do it without the power of the Holy Spirit working in us.

**3:7** When Peter says that women may be "weaker" than men, he was not implying moral or intellectual inferiority but was recognizing women's physical limitations. Women in his day, if unprotected by men, were vulnerable to attack, abuse, and financial disaster. Women's lives may be easier today, but women are still vulnerable to criminal attack and family abuse. And in spite of increased opportunities in the workplace, many women still earn considerably less than most men, and the vast majority of the nations' poor are single mothers and their children. A man who honors his wife as a member of the weaker sex will protect, respect, help, and stay with her. He will not expect her to work full-time outside the home and full-time at home; he will lighten her load wherever he can. He will be sensitive to her needs, and he will relate to her with courtesy, consideration, insight, and tact.

**3:7** If a man is not considerate and respectful of his wife, his prayers will be hindered, because a living relationship with God depends on right relationships with others. Jesus said that if you have a problem with a fellow believer, you must make it right with that person before coming to worship (Matthew 5:23-24). This principle carries over into family relationships. If men use their position to mistreat their wives, their relationship with God will suffer.

### **Suffering for Doing Good - Verses 8-22**

**<sup>8</sup> Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. <sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. <sup>10</sup> For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. <sup>11</sup> They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. <sup>12</sup> For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." <sup>13</sup> Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." <sup>15</sup> But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. <sup>17</sup> For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. <sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. <sup>19</sup> After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— <sup>20</sup> to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through**

water,<sup>21</sup> and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,<sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

**3:8** Peter lists five key elements that should characterize any group of believers: (1) one mind—pursuing the same goals; (2) sympathy—being responsive to others' needs; (3) love—seeing and treating each other as brothers and sisters; (4) compassion—being affectionately sensitive and caring; and (5) humility—being willing to encourage one another and rejoice in each other's successes. These five qualities go a long way toward helping believers serve God effectively.

**3:8-9** Where is God? How can we know God is real? Who says the Bible is any better than other holy books? To answer these questions, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, as living evidence. God also chose Peter and others to show what a difference true faith makes in the real world. So here the once rash, belligerent, domineering, and arrogant Peter bears witness to a life of harmony, compassion, love, and humility. What a difference God makes! You, too, are God's witness to skeptical people. Let your life be evidence of God's truth. Let your pride become humility and your insensitivity give way to genuine affection for others.

**3:9** In our fallen world, it is often deemed acceptable by some to tear people down verbally or to get back at them if we feel hurt. Peter, remembering Jesus' teaching to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39), encourages his readers to pay back wrongs with a blessing, such as by praying for the offenders. In God's kingdom, revenge is unacceptable behavior, as is insulting a person, no matter how indirectly it is done. Rise above getting back at those who hurt you. Instead of reacting angrily to these people, pray for them. For more about controlling your tongue, see James 3:2-18.

**3:11** Too often we see peace as merely the absence of conflict, and we think of peacemaking as a passive role. But an effective peacemaker actively pursues peace by building good relationships, knowing that peace is a by-product of commitment. The peacemaker anticipates problems and deals with them before they occur. When conflicts arise, they are brought into the open and dealt with before they grow unmanageable. Making peace is hard work—you have to search for it and work to maintain it—but it results in God's blessing.

**3:15** Some Christians believe that faith is a personal matter that should be kept to oneself. It is true that we shouldn't be boisterous or obnoxious in sharing our faith, but we should always be ready to give an answer, gently and respectfully, when asked about our faith, our lifestyle, or our Christian perspective. Can others see your hope in Christ? Are you prepared to tell them what Christ has done in your life?

**3:16** You may not be able to keep people from speaking evil against you, but you can at least stop supplying them with ammunition. As long as you do what is right, their accusations will be empty and only embarrass them. Keep your conduct above criticism!

**3:18-20** The meaning of preaching "to the imprisoned spirits" is not completely clear, and commentators have explained it in different ways. The traditional interpretation is that between his death and resurrection, Christ announced salvation to God's faithful followers who had been waiting for their salvation during the whole Old Testament era. Some think that this passage says that Christ's Spirit was in Noah as Noah preached to those imprisoned by sin (but now in hell). Still others say that Christ went to Hades to proclaim his victory and final condemnation to the fallen angels imprisoned there since Noah's day (see 2 Peter 2:4).

In any case, the passage shows that Christ's gospel of salvation and victory is not limited. While some Bible passages, such as this one, may remain unclear, we can discover certain truths from them along with the context of the rest of Scripture. In this passage, we discover that: (1) *God speaks*. While we puzzle over what, where, and how, we can see that God is communicating to the world. (2) *God triumphs*. Christ victoriously preached, indicating his power, control, and transcendence over all creation. (3) *God saves*. God exerts himself to rescue those who desire him. This mysterious passage tells us at least this much—and that is much indeed.

**3:21** Peter says that Noah's salvation from the flood (through water) symbolized baptism, a ceremony involving water. In baptism we identify with Jesus Christ, who separates us from the lost and gives us new life. It is not the ceremony that saves us; instead, the ceremony is evidence of our faith in Christ's death and resurrection. Baptism is a symbol of the cleansing that happens in the hearts of those who believe (Romans 6:3-5; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12). By identifying themselves with Christ through baptism, Peter's readers could resist turning back, even under the pressure of persecution. Public baptism would keep them from the temptation to renounce their faith.