
a *Grace Notes* course

First Peter

Lesson 6

1 Peter 3:5-14

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1 Peter

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1 Peter 3:5-14**1 Peter 3:5**

"For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands."

For in this manner

"This manner" -- in the manner of the woman who, in her inner disposition, has in-wrought grace and is settled in her soul.

in former times

"Former times" is Old Testament times. Women do not change. Styles may change but the soul of a woman does not change.

the holy women

"Holy women" is just a term for Old Testament women who believed in God. This type of woman has no halo over her head.

who trusted in God

"Trusted" means placed their hope in God. The issue here is more one of confidence. God was the object of their hope. These women had a sense of awe of God.

Women who know God personally and respond to his Word have the aperture of their souls open to Him. Because they know how to respond to God, they know how to respond to their husband's needs.

Principle

God designed Christian marriage so that each partner meets the needs of the other partner.

Application

Many people come to a deadly truce in their marriage. They live under the same roof. They disarm their weapons for fighting relationship wars. They do not argue anymore. Each spouse goes his or her own way and each lives his or her own life. Neither fulfills the other.

Other marriages live in deadly cycles. Joe Husband comes home from work. He has had a bad day. He is tired. His wife meets him at the door but he wants nothing to do with her. She says, "All I tried to do was to kiss you." He says, "Get away. I don't want to be bothered. I have had enough of people today." She says, "OK, I can understand that." He sits down to read the paper but the sport's page is missing. She used the sports page to wrap garbage with it. He then goes on his petty tirade about not touching the sports page. "Do what you will with the woman's page or the want ads but never touch my sports page." She is about to explode, but she bottles her anger. They sit down to eat, but because of this tension she overcooks the meal. He says, "What kind of garbage is this? I did not ask for a Burnt Offering." This is all she can take. They spend the whole evening arguing until they reach a stage where neither says anything to the other. Silence goes on for a few days until they forget about it and the cycle starts over again.

What should the wife do to avoid something like this? All of the descriptions of the husband were overt. He growled at the door when he came home. He complained about the sports page and the meal. If all she sees is the surface, she cannot meet his need. If she would have asked about his day at the right time, the result may have been different. Maybe his boss reprimanded him for something. Not only that but his coach dropped him from the baseball team because he was not good enough. All she sees is the growl. If she was mature and could see beyond his immaturity, she could step into his essential need. She can let the superficialities fly by her because she knows him. She can step into the interior of his life.

This understanding does not come overnight. It takes months and years to discover your husband's needs. This is more than talk. This is communication. This is more than an understanding of what he likes for a meal. It is an understanding of what is most important to him. Many women married for 20 years still do not

know their husband's essential needs. They have their own construct as to what his needs are.

A woman often forms this construct based on her own needs. Her whole life centers on her own problems. She simply sees her own problems because her husband does not treat her right. She lets self-pity drive her relationship with her husband. Maybe the reason her husband does not treat her right is because she does not take the time to find out what he is all about.

Every man is different and unique. There is no categorization that covers all men. We cannot put every man into the same category. If a woman drags her dad into her relationship with her husband she commits a deadly error. "My dad did it this way and you are doing it that way." "My dad was horrible and therefore you are a monster." Each man is different. His wife must understand him for who he is and not have some imposed construct of what she thinks he might be.

Some of you may say that "It is too late for me. I am already married to the wrong man." There is hope, for there is the ingredient known as the grace of God. If a woman operates on the grace of God, she can change her situation.

also adorned themselves,

Peter now specifies what he means by adornment. The point is not physical adorning here. They adorned themselves in their person. However, neither does Peter put value on poor grooming. It doesn't make you more spiritual to neglect your appearance.

The Greek tense indicates that these women were accustomed to adorning themselves by being submissive to their own husbands.

Principle

A good relationship finds its foundation in personal maturity.

Application

Women who see a man with sex appeal and jump at him on a wave of libido make a big mistake. They will live in a vacuum. Very few women run down to the department store and pick out the first dress they see. No, they get a good picture of how

it looks on them. Why should a woman jump at the first man she sees?

A woman with good sense does not fall for the fast line. She does not fall for clucking noises.

Everyone has strong points and weak points. This is true with everyone that walks on two legs. Everyone has points of strength and points of weakness. The woman who only sees strong points is vulnerable to the strong line. The man she falls for may be very unstable. She will not find the truth until it is too late.

Maturity sees both weak points and strong points. A mature woman can see the balance and love a man in the face of the true reality of who he is. True love has its eyes open. Love does not depend on the other person either. Mature love loves out of one's own capacity to love.

A mature woman is not in a hurry to become married. First, toward herself, she needs to build up norms, so she has mature judgment about people. Second, she can distinguish a cluck from a mature man. How many women who wear a size 9 dress would buy a dress size 16, or 6? Why would you marry a man who is size 16 when you're a size 9? Choosing a man is far more important than choosing a dress.

1 Peter 3:6

"As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror."

as Sarah obeyed Abraham,

Sarah followed Abraham from the city of Ur in the Mesopotamian Valley to Palestine. God eventually changed her name from Sarai (bitter, Genesis 16:6) to Sarah (princess, Genesis 17:15). Before her name change, she was a contentious wife. She constantly fought with Abraham. Even though Sarai was a strikingly beautiful woman, she was ugly on the inside.

Why did God change her name? The reason Sarai was bitter was that she did not have a son. God, in his grace, gave her a son (Genesis 17:15f; 18:12f). She relaxed in God's grace (Romans 4:16f). Hebrews 11:11 shows that she relaxed in God's grace by faith:

"By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised."

What happened to Sarai? God said "I promise." Sarah believed that promise. She relaxed in God's promise. The anxious, bitter woman became a beautiful woman. God stepped into her life. She claimed by faith God's promise for her. So God singled Sarah out as an example of a woman who developed inner beauty.

The word "obey" comes from two words in the Greek: to obey and under. How does a wife arrange her life under her husband? By hearing under -- by listening to the essential needs of her husband. She does not do this with her mouth. She does this with her ears. She tunes into his core interests. She listens to his needs.

Christian women want to take the word "obey" out of their marriage ceremonies today. The reason is quite obvious but the reason is also quite humanistic.

calling him lord,

"Calling him lord" means showing Abraham respect. She acknowledged his authority over her. She recognized him as the leader of the household (Gen. 18:12). When Sarah was about 90 years of age God promised her a son. She believed God. She changed from a contentious person to a person of belief.

Lord is a title of respect for office. The husband's office is leader of the home. Sarah's held Abraham in high esteem. She never disparaged him.

Principle

God wants the wife to tune into her husband's essential needs.

Application

If a wife does not tune into her husband, she will not hear his needs. She hears his words, but not his meaning.

Many women do not listen to their husband's essential needs. Convinced that their view of his needs is right, they never question their assumptions about him. They, therefore, do not have their ears open to his true needs. Some men

do not communicate their needs directly. They usually do not like to divulge the core of their being, yet they will reveal themselves if their wives develop an environment of inner beauty.

Why did your husband marry you in the first place? You made him feel more special than any other girl. You treated him like he was somebody. You believed in him. If now you downgrade him or never agree with him, you go against the very basis of why he married you. When you make him appear foolish and use sarcasm against him in public, you go against the very foundation of your relationship. This also goes against inner beauty (vv. 1-5). Inner beauty opens men to disclose themselves to their wives.

whose daughters you are

If women of Peter's day follow Sarah's example they are her daughters. I do not think many women will form Sarah Societies today. This is to their own detriment, however. The purpose of the Sarah Society is to develop inner beauty by following Sarah's example.

The word "are" is really "become." The word "become" means that they became something that they were not previously. Previously they knew nothing of inner beauty, now they do.

if you do good

The word "good" means to do what is intrinsically right. We can translate "good" by the word "well." A Christian wife does well when she operates with inner beauty toward her husband.

and are not afraid with any terror

This is the only occurrence of this word "terror" the New Testament. A Christian woman does not let her husband - or anything else for that matter - terrify her. Some husbands can terrorize their wives into doing what is wrong. If women operate under terror they do not put their rest in God.

Principle

Fear hinders the development of inner beauty.

Application

Wives are to live with their husbands without fear. Fear hinders the development of inner beauty. The wife is not to infer, because God wants her to

submit to her husband, that she is somehow inferior in person to him. She does not simply exist to meet his needs. Her role is to meet his needs and his role is to meet her needs. God's design for marriage is a reciprocal relationship. Each has a role to fulfill the other.

Submission through inner beauty happens to be the wife's role. This does not mean that she lives her life vicariously through her husband. Neither does this mean that she cannot achieve her full potential as a person. God designs that she also exists in her own right. God's design for the husband is not to live like a leech, sucking every ounce of blood out of his wife. Many men draw the very life out of their wives and offer little in return.

Subordination does not imply inferiority. Submission is a purely pragmatic function so that each home has order. True, this does imply hierarchy but not hierarchy of person. This is simply hierarchy of function. No one argues that because the President of the United States has hierarchical authority over the country that he is the smartest person in the country. His role does not equate with his person. The role of the husband does not equate with his person. He is not superior to his wife.

Would we want pure egalitarian rights for our children? No. The reason for this is that they need the hierarchy of their parents to give them an environment to develop as people.

Christians who revolt against marital roles revolt against God. They allow deep invasion of their Christian belief system by a non-Christian, humanistic belief system. They never examine the assumptions of this cultural relativity.

1 Peter 3:7

"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered."

Today one out of every two marriages fail. Why is this? When people who are immature in their own person get into deep water with their marriage, they abandon ship and get a divorce. That is like having prefrontal brain surgery when you have a

headache. Some people do not have the maturity to face their problems. Their judgments are weak because their spiritual judgment is immature.

We covered six verses for the wife. We have one verse for the husband, but Peter crams this one verse with a lot of content for the husband.

Most husbands don't know how to meet their wife's essential needs when they first get married. That is why most of us make a mess of marriage. We usually establish homes like the one in which we grew up.

Husbands,

With verse 7 Peter defines the role of the husband in marriage. This is an entirely different role than that of the wife.

In North America the role of the husband has dramatically changed in the last half century. After World War 2 psychologists discovered that 2.5 million men were rejected from the services for neurotic and psychotic reasons. People began wondering what was responsible for all this neurosis. Eureka! They found the culprit -- mom! Psychologists called it "momism." Apron strings were nothing more than emotional umbilical cords for these boys. They could not take the discipline of the army or the rigors of military service. They fell apart under the duress of boot camp.

A few years later another theory emerged. This theory postulated that it was not an over-protective mother, but a detached mother who was the problem. This mother did not care sufficiently or relate to her son properly. The pendulum swung to the other side.

Then someone suggested that it was the father was the problem. He does not have time for his boys. Margaret Mead formulated the idea that husbands must become involved in the PTA and the Little League. Her theory postulated that we need to domesticate the male. With this, males almost lost their male identities.

Psychologists keep swinging the pendulum of theories. They develop a trend, then a counter trend about the role of the male. The Bible is very clear about the male's role in marriage.

Principle

God has a specific role for the husband in marriage.

Application

Some husbands criticize everything their wives do. They keep their wives off balance by constant criticism. They are insecure so they bolster themselves by minimizing their wives. She cannot be right otherwise they could not keep her off balance. They dole out money to their wives when their attitudes are right.

Other men pout and sulk if they do not get their own way. They bury themselves in golf or television and cease to communicate. They give their wives the "silent treatment." They do not assume responsibility as the head of the home.

likewise,

"Likewise" -- the husband has responsibility in marriage as well as the wife. Like the wife, the husband has a role in marriage. We had this same word for wives in verse one.

Some husbands say, "I thought it was my wife's responsibility to develop interpersonal communication. I don't have much time for such things. Isn't it the responsibility of the wife to be the 'keeper at home'?"

 dwell with them

The husband's primary responsibility in marriage is to "dwell" with his wife "with understanding." The word "dwell" comes from two words meaning to be at home and with. This is an intense verb in the Greek carrying the idea of sharing home life together. The idea is that the husband is to domesticate with his wife. The husband has responsibilities domestically.

Principle

God expects the husband to share his life with his wife.

Application

At times the husband becomes so busy and enamored with his job that he neglects his family. He neglects his children but he especially disregards his wife's needs. He is as busy as a bee, but someday he may find that his honey is gone!

A man seldom goes to work for his wife exclusively. He never says, "This business deal is for my wife." He is more likely to wonder if it will please his boss. Yet if a husband wants to kill his wife's spirit, all he needs to do is take her for granted. Husbands give their wives many material things. A husband and wife were arguing. The husband says, "Haven't I given you many material things." "Yes, Jack," she responded. "You have given me everything but yourself."

"It is not what we give but what we share, For the gift without the giver is bare."

Some men demand everything from their wives but give nothing. God wants men to master the art of understanding. Mutual understanding deepens the relationship between husbands and wives. God expects the husband to order his priorities with God first, his wife second and children third. She is to be precious to him. Apart from the Lord, the most precious person on earth is the wife.

with understanding,

The phrase "with understanding" means according to the norm or standard of experiential knowledge. Husbands should understand their wives. He should be aware of her physical, emotional and spiritual needs. God expects him to protect and care for her (Ephesians 5:28-30).

There are a number of Greek words for "understanding." One means academic knowledge. Another means experiential knowledge. A husband must get personal, experiential knowledge of his wife. It is not enough that he knows basic facts about his wife. He needs to know her essential needs.

Women often have difficulty explaining their needs to their husbands. God expects husbands to know what their wives want out of marriage.

God expects the husband to know and love his wife (Ephesians 5:25-33) and avoid harshness toward her (Colossians 3:19).

Principle

God expects the husband to know how to make his wife feel secure in his love.

Application

A husband says, "My wife, just thinks about money, money, money." Some sympathetic friend says to him, "Well, what does she do with it?" The husband answers, "Beats me, I never give her any!" This is not dwelling with a wife according to the standard of experiential knowledge!

A man's wife is at A = not feeling cherished by her husband. She is afraid to ask for love because if she did she would not know if it were genuine. So she goes to B = a test of whether he truly loves her. He is about to play golf, but she asks him to put screens on the windows for the summer. Her interest is not primarily in the screens but to see if she is more important than golf. What she is truly seeking is C = to be secure in her husband's love.

Most husbands do not understand this. They cannot understand why she would make an issue about him not going golfing at this time. "I can put the screens on the house tomorrow." They miss the point because they do not understand that she does not want to ask for love. Yet they must understand it because this is at the heart of femininity. The wife prefers to respond to her husband's initiative in love. This is how she proves to herself that he loves her.

Many men never know why their wives are upset. They do not know why their wives nag. Or why she is so miserable. It just may be that her husband has neglected to meet her essential need. Every woman needs to feel wanted and needed.

with understanding

The word "understanding" means experiential knowledge. The husband is to live with his wife according to his experiential understanding of her.

Principle

God expects the husband to understand his wife's needs.

Application

Here is a list of some experiential knowledge of the wife that the husband requires to meet her needs:

1. Make her feel desirable. "Honey, it is wonderful to be around you." Because of the routine of daily activities we can take our

wives for granted. This gives the impression that she is no longer desirable. She gets the idea that we are not aware of her. Marriage implies some basic things. It implies companionship, sex, a home and children. A woman wants these things set in the framework of her husband's acceptance of her.

2. Appeal to her. Women want their husbands wants to continue to pursue them. She derives significance from being desired. Buy her flowers. This appeals to her significance to you.
3. Be kind and gentle. A man does not have to be feminine to show gentleness to his wife. The man who can be gentle is truly strong. A woman is a finely tuned instrument. A husband does not have to get back at her if he is mature. He can do this when he is inwardly strong. He does not immediately have to argue his point. He gives her time to think. A woman has little defense against real, tender love. She will melt before it.
4. Make her feel wanted and needed. One of women's biggest gripes is "My husband takes me for granted. He never thinks about me. He goes on his way without considering me. He has his hunting trips every year. We never go on vacation by ourselves." The husband replies, "doesn't she realize I work in the salt mines all year?" This demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of his wife's situation. He is devoid of experiential knowledge. Does he not realize that her work too requires great skill? It is astounding how some husbands think they are the only ones doing any work. Every wife needs to feel that she is wanted and that she is an essential part of his values.
5. Be a man. A woman wants a man for a husband. It is true that some women distort their female role. When they have been rubbed the wrong way for a long period of time, some women become call us to their essential needs. She takes the leadership of the home. God did not make her for this role. Most women will let her husband lean on her emotionally. That is her nature. However, she will hate him for it.

I counseled a woman in her 60s. Her husband had just died. Something beyond his death was bothering her. She felt guilty for dominating him all through their marriage. I said, "Let me ask you something else. Did you also hate him for letting you dominate him?" For the first time in her life, she acknowledged that she hated him for this. She ran contrary to her fundamental nature of wanting protection from her husband. She dominated him which undermined her security. Women do not necessarily want a man who can press 250 pounds, they want someone with inner composure to handle the rough phases of life.

with understanding

As we saw in our previous study, "understanding" means that God expects the husband to have first-hand experience meeting his wife's needs.

Principle

God expects the husband to meet the essential needs of his wife.

Application

Here is a continuation of how a husband can meet his wife's needs:

6. Give her approval. "Honey, you look terrific in that dress." When was the last time you told your wife she is beautiful? What would your wife say? "The last time? Well, let's see. Was it on our wedding day?!!" If your wife says, "Don't you think Suzie is cute?" Don't bite! You can say, "Dear, do you realize how beautiful you are? I picked you over all other women in the world. You are everything to me." It is easy to sit down for a meal and say, "You overcooked this one, didn't you? I like it well-done, but I don't like burnt offerings!" This is not experiential understanding of your wife. Experiential knowledge gives her approval.
7. Protect and shield her. Do you protect your wife? When you go to a party, do you run her down? How far do you carry joking about her?
8. Know her moods. Women are chemical creatures. It is amazing how many men do not know this. They take little note that it may be 10 days before her period. They may be totally

oblivious to the reason as to why she is blue. They cannot fathom why she is up one time and down another.

9. Have economic responsibility. Economic insecurity is hard on a marriage. Economic stability makes a woman feel secure.
10. Set the emotional tone for the home. It is God's design that the husband set the tone of the home. If he does not do this, the wife will do it. Which requires her to leave her essential role and rule the home. If she sets the tone of the home she will become insecure. Femininity is essentially a responder. Masculinity takes the initiative. If a responder takes the initiative it distorts femininity. This will warp roles in marriage. If the husband is belligerent after a rough day at work and comes home howling then that is how the home will go. The kids will develop this mode of operation in their homes as well.
11. Avoid harshness (Colossians 3:19). The husband cannot take his wife for granted without consequence. If he is not sensitive to her essential needs then he will have trouble. He cannot neglect her without her feeling insignificant. He cannot be rough on her without distorting her femininity.

honor to the wife,

There is a word in the Greek that does not occur in this translation. It is the word "giving," which means to assign to, to portion out, give a share of. God wants the husband to portion something out to his wife. That "something" is "honor."

Honoring the wife was a radical innovation in the ancient world. This was foreign to their thinking because women were next to cows in esteem. The Greek and Roman religions did not allow women to attend worship services in their temples. The only exception was the prostitute because she was the center of religion in the temple. Even in Judaism women had to sit behind a lattice or screen in the Synagogue.

"Honor" means deference, courtesy or respect. God wants the husband to hold his wife as worthy of value. She has intrinsic value. Someone said, "God did not create the woman from the head of man (to lord over him); nor from his feet (to be

trampled by him) but from his side (to be a companion to him)."

The Greek is very strong -- "Give her an appraisal of preciousness." "Honor" means precious. Is your wife precious to you? Do you cherish her? Does she feel cherished? 1 Peter 1:19 translates this word "honor" as "precious" -- "the precious blood of Christ."

"Honor" means that the husband is to treat his wife with respect. She is a fellow heir of eternal life. He gives his wife deference. This implies that the husband perceives his wife's needs. We must see something before we can pay it regard.

Principle

God expects the husband to honor and respect his wife.

Application

It is popular to depict men as misogynists and exploiters of women today. Men are lower than a snake on snowshoes! If a husband heeds the principles of this passage he will understand an essential need of his wife.

There is an old proverb that says, "No one can stand the awful knowledge that he is not needed." The wife needs to know that her husband needs her. Our society greatly assaults the wife who stays at home. This lowers her self-esteem. The husband should not be a part of this attack.

The husband is to impart or portion out honor to his wife. The husband is to give his wife a very part of his being. In Christian marriage he cannot live as an entity apart from his wife. He must make his wife a part of his life.

The husband has the role of leadership in the home. As the leader, he has the great responsibility of initiating reconciliation after a quarrel.

"Honor" means worth. This means more than just saying, "Honey, you mean everything to me. You are the most important priority in my life." The husband must show that his wife is his number one priority by the time he gives her and by the emphasis he places upon her. To honor a wife means to attribute a quality to her. He has taken a long, hard look at his wife and then sees worth in her. "He that finds a wife finds a good thing."

Some men take their wives for granted. They so busily pursue their goals that they bypass putting priority on their wives. They cannot properly esteem them without putting priority on them.

A husband should cherish his wife like a precious gem. Some people have diamonds but they do not know how many carats are in that diamond. Is it a ¼ carat or 2 carats? They never stop to investigate whether their diamond has yellow streaks or whether it is crystal clear. Some people just do not know what they have. As well, some men do not know what they have. They never stop to examine the jewel called their wife. This is a fantastic lack of appreciation and awareness.

Husbands need to make a career of giving honor to their wives. They need to recognize her worth and let her know that she is precious. They should put her on a pedestal. This is quite a different interpretation of submission that what some men give it! To them, the woman is to be stepped upon. There is nothing in the Bible about that. The opposite is true. The wife is to be exalted, lifted up and highly prized.

Do you remember when you dated your wife before you were married? You dressed in your finest clothes. Others were after her but you wanted to be number one. You would go to the house and escort her to your car. Now married, you just beep the horn and yell "Come on, I'm ready." When you courted her you would put your arm around her as if to protect her. You opened the car door and seat her as if she were china. Now it is every person for themselves. You are half way down the street and she has not shut the car door yet. Now the marriage is simply a business partnership.

Where did the tenderness go? Where is the consideration you once had? You are good at making her cry, why not be good at making her laugh? Pray this, "Lord, make me a blessing to my wife." If dad is a great lover, his boys will be great lovers too. If dad does not show much love for their mother, they will behave the same way toward their wives. Like begets like.

as to the weaker vessel,

This phrase says that the wife is the "weaker" vessel. In what sense is the wife weaker than the

husband? Is she weaker mentally? Obviously not. Many women are more intelligent than their husbands. Is she emotionally weaker? Many women are stronger emotionally than their husbands.

Is the wife physically weaker? There are some aspects of physiology in females that are stronger than males. Women seem to be able to take more pain than men. If men had to bear children mankind would have ceased to exist millennia ago! They would talk about the pain of childbearing for the rest of their lives! Females do not have the same bulk or over-all bone structure as males. They generally cannot lift as much weight. They have broader hips so they can bear children. Physical weakness may be the point here but there may also be another issue.

Another possible thrust of this passage is that God placed the husband over the wife to be her guardian. The husband has authority over the wife in the marriage institution.

Genesis 3:16 says that God placed a "desire" in the female for her husband.

"To the woman He said:

"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16).

The word "desire" means that the woman's orientation will be to her husband. She will be husband-centered. When she goes to the supermarket she looks for T-bone steaks because that is his favorite meat.

Many men do not realize this. Most women do not say, "Do you realize why I cooked this meal today? I cooked it for you." She may be the top surgeon in her field but she is still oriented to her husband. She may not be cognizant of it. If her husband does not show appreciation for this orientation she may begin to feel resentment toward him, without understanding why she does. Remember the Frito-Lay potato chip ad -- "I bet you cannot eat just one." That is the point of the weaker vessel. The male meets a need in the female that she cannot meet without him. Both husbands and wives are vessels but God placed the male over (to "rule") the female in marriage. She is

weak only -- in the sense that God gave the male the leadership of the home.

Husbands have a different field of operation. They operate by categories. A woman has but one category (her husband). Men operate in separate categories. When he goes to work, he pleases his boss. When he plays on a team, he does it for the team. When he loves his wife this is yet another category. If men do not realize this difference, they will have problems in marriage.

Principle

God designed the woman to respond to her husband.

Application

Some men feel that their primary responsibility from God is to repopulate the human race. No, his primary responsibility is to guard his wife's soul. That is why the Bible calls the wife the weaker vessel. God made her insatiable when it comes to her husband.

Let us suppose you have an insatiable desire for potato chips. You must have them. You may be very strong physically but physical strength has nothing to do with this. You are made weak by one thing -- the desire for potato chips. The woman wants her husband to fulfill her. No matter how noble or how great she may be in life, if she is truly feminine, she will be insatiable toward her husband's leadership. This however, does not mean that a husband can meet all of the needs of his wife.

This insatiability makes her dependent on her husband. That is why she is the weaker vessel. This starts with being "boy crazy" in her teens. Most women, no matter how poised they may be now, went through that stage. They discovered the male of the species.

This means that a wife orients to her husband. Her main occupation is to please her husband. This is why some women put up with some of the worst critters in the world. She wants to surrender her soul to him. Here is where rapport begins.

If there are two people in any institution one must have the authority to have smoothness of operation. Biblically, authority goes with the male.

He may or may not be capable of handling this authority but, in principle, he has this authority.

the weaker vessel

"Vessel" here is utensil. We find utensils around the house. Every house has pots, pans, dishes, china, cups and silverware. The word came to mean instrument. The Old Testament uses the word "vessel" for a vessel in the Tabernacle or Temple. It was something set aside for special use. God sets the wife aside for special use.

The adjective implies that the husband is a vessel too. The wife is the weaker instrument.

God so sovereignly arranged creation that he built authority into it. God designed man to operate under authority. This authority comes out of the Trinity itself because the Trinity operates in authority. 1 Corinthians, chapter 11 shows how this principle relates to husband-wife the relationship.

"Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11: 2-3).

There is alignment in the Trinity. There is hierarchy of authority in the Trinity. The head of Christ is God the Father. The alignment of the Trinity is Father, Son, Holy Spirit. The Father has authority over the Son. The Son has authority over the Holy Spirit.

All three persons of the Trinity are God. They are one in essence yet align themselves under a hierarchy of authority. Each person of the Trinity has a role. The Father plans. The Son executes the plan. The Holy Spirit reveals that plan to the world. This does not make the Holy Spirit any less God than the Father or Son. It is simply his role.

God created the male first. The male, therefore, has priority in his role. He needs authority to carry out his responsibility as head of the home.

"Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman

independent of man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:9-11).

The man depends on the woman to a degree and the woman depends on the man to a degree.

Principle

Role in a relationship has to do with function, not person.

Application

If the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit operate under authority, should not the wife as well? It is not a matter of her person but her role. As the Holy Spirit is no less God than the Father or Son so the woman is no less a person than her husband.

In order for society to operate properly it is necessary to have authority. Authority gives order to institutions. The husband is also under the authority of Christ in the marriage relationship. Proceeding from the Trinity Paul argues that the head of man is Christ.

and as being heirs together of the grace of life,

The phrase "heirs together" means co-heirs. Husband and wife are joint heirs. This is a statement of equality. Cremer, the great Greek scholar, said that "heirs together" means personal equality based on equality of possession.

The word "together" means that the wife is a co-heir of fellowship, unity and sharing. What are they joint-heirs of? They are joint heirs of the grace of life. God gives them grace for living this life.

The wife has equal spiritual rights with her husband,

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3: 28).

Marriage is not an end in itself from a biblical viewpoint. God intends that marriage serve the ultimate end of glorifying God.

Principle

The woman has equal standing before God with the man.

Application

This verse says that the woman has just as much standing before God as the man. Man and woman are equal. They are not equal in role but equal in person. They stand equally before God. She has just as much eternal life as the man. She has just as many promises as the man. She has everything that the man has spiritually. She is a joint-heir with him. She is a co-heir with her husband because she possesses all that Jesus provided for her. Christianity flew in the face of the culture of its day. This was revolutionary thinking to the culture of that day.

that your prayers may not be hindered

"That" introduces a result clause. "With the result that your prayers may not be hindered." If there is bitterness in the marriage God will not answer the couple's prayers.

"Prayers" is in the plural indicating that this is family worship.

Do you know what "hindered" means? It means to cut into, to thwart. God will thwart our prayers. God will cut in on our prayers. The whole point is that the husband and wife must be in harmony if God is going to answer their prayers. If they do not have communication with each other they cannot have communion with God. If they are in domestic strife, they can pray from now until doomsday and God will not answer their prayers. If a husband does not honor his wife, if they do not live in harmony, God will not answer his prayers.

We may illustrate this by the telephone. The husband begins praying, "Hello God. I appreciate all you have done for me this past week. Thank you for blessing my business. I have a need. I would appreciate it if you will hear my petition?" At this point he hears clickety-click. God hangs up the phone on him. He has not dealt with a central issue—his relationship to his wife. "Lord, I cannot hear you" but the phone is dead. While the husband tries to talk to God, he has a problem with his wife. God will not hear him as long as that domestic problem is there. First get right with your wife then come to God in prayer. Then God will answer your prayers.

Principle

A broken relationship in marriage will hinder our prayer.

Application

An irate husband says to his wife, "Light bill! Water bill! Gas bill! When are you going to stop this wild spending?" Happy marriages depend on happy people. If you are a miserable person then your marriage cannot be happy. If you are a happy person then your marriage has at least a 50% chance of being happy.

Are you fulfilled in your marriage? God's design is that each partner in marriage fulfills the other. They can only do that if they are mature as individuals. Mature marriages depend on mature people. If you are a miserable person then obviously your marriage cannot be mature. If you are mature then at least your marriage has 50% chance of being a mature marriage. Marriage can be holy wedlock or unholy deadlock.

A woman telling of her marriage said, "I knew my husband 18 months before we were married but I really did not become acquainted with him until I asked him for money." That is the story with many marriages. Few people know each other before marriage. Each is attracted to certain things in the other, but rarely do they know each other before marriage. Maturity can see below the surface.

Young couples should set up a family altar on their first day of marriage. When children come they understand that a family has a family altar just like you are supposed to eat, take a bath or go to bed. Spirituality is part of a godly family.

1 Peter 3:8

"Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous."

Finally,

Peter now passes from specific exhortations to classes of people such as slaves, masters, husbands and wives to exhortations to all Christians. This paragraph sets before us the necessary information to live as true Christians. The issue now is how Christians should treat one another.

We now come to the responsibilities of all of God's own. Peter launches these directives by "finally." The household of God is to apply the following directives.

all of you be of one mind,

Classical Greek literature used "one mind" in connection with a war of common consent. World War II was a war of common consent. Just about everyone on the allied side felt the rightness of the war. It was a just war. The Vietnam situation was very different. Many people disagreed with U.S. involvement in that war. The point of these words is that Christians are to be in agreement as to our purpose. God wants us to have unity of purpose and mind. He desires common consent about oneness among Christians.

Harmony among Christians is the point here. Christians think in harmony when they agree on the principles of the Word of God together. God wants Christians to operate on values common to the Bible. He requires us to look at life from His point of view. His desire is that we bring every thought into captivity to Christ.

The early church operated "with one accord." The book of Acts uses this phrase eleven times. "One accord" speaks of spiritual harmony. Note the use of this phrase in Acts 1:14 (prayer), obedience (2:1), presence (2:1), purpose (2:46) praise (4:24, 31-37) unity in service (5:12), response to message (8:6), and unity for missions (15:25).

Principle

Spiritual harmony among God's own is important to the welfare of the body of Christ.

Application

For this "me" generation, everything revolves around the self. We expect everyone to submit to our way of thinking. God has a purpose to life that transcends our little world. It is God's desire that the church functions with one heart, not with compulsory uniformity. At high tide all the little pools blend together. Unity produced by the power of the Holy Spirit blends together differences among Christians. This is better than external unity.

Sin pulls people out of harmony with their family in Christ. Sin not only estranges us from our Lord but also from our friends. We have all seen organizations such as football teams fall apart because of suspicion and retaliation.

A baby is the center of his own universe. He demands that his needs be met. He wants immediate satisfaction. As he grows up, gradually he comes to realize that there are other people in the universe. He must adjust to them.

Development in the Christian life comes in part through this emerging interaction with other Christians. The new Christian becomes increasingly aware of the needs of others. At first he is a blind, unthinking little tyrant. But he soon learns that other Christians have rights. The more we experience loving others, the more we will mature. This is maturity via interaction. We do not grow by ignoring problems we may have with people.

Liberals unite on the least common denominator but conservatives divide on the least provocation. Some of us have the idea that just as long as we are orthodox it does not matter how we treat other Christians. This is to read the Bible with blinders on our eyes so that we see only what we want to see.

The best way to demonstrate that what we believe is right is to behave rightly. If we do not behave rightly it is because what we believe is not right. Without fail, belief affects behavior. Principle governs practice.

It is no wonder that wolves devour lambs. But it is a monstrosity for lambs to devour lambs. For lambs to devour lambs is a monstrosity.

The first challenge is in the category of our attitude. God wants all Christians to be of "one mind." This is not uniformity of thinking where everyone gets into line with how everyone else thinks. This is the farthest thing from Peter's mind. Diversity of viewpoint is a valid Christian value.

God does not desire Christians to have the same opinions but the same attitudes. His aim is not uniformity or same formulas of thinking. The idea here is, under diversity of opinion, to have a common loyalty to the Lord Jesus. As in the human body there is variety (eyelash, toenail, liver

and bone structure) and unity of body, so the church has both variety and unity. This is unity in variety, not sameness of similarity. The church is an organism, not primarily an organization.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

This refers to likeness of disposition or sentiment rather than of opinion. Christians can disagree as to methods but we are to agree in spirit. Unanimity requires us to strike at the root of the matter. Such unity is not the product of indifference. It is spiritual unity. As a rope of iron filings is held together by a magnet, so spiritual unity comes from the magnet of who Christ is and what He did for us.

"Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another" (Romans 14:19).

Principle

God does not want the drab uniformity of bureaucrats but a dynamic unity, held together by overwhelming loyalty to Christ.

Application

In our bodies we have a muscle called the "adductor." The adductor draws one part of the body toward one another. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ. His work is to draw Christians together.

In the realm of music, there must be harmony for a tune to be delightful to our ears. Discord is hard on the ears. God wants Christians to be like a well-tuned piano. If a piano gets out of tune, this will result in discord and discord offends. Discord, dissatisfaction and murmuring damage the church. Two things are hard on the heart: Running up a hill and running down people.

Strife within the church causes more harm than persecution from without. We can explode a whole case of dynamite on top of a rock without doing much damage. However, if we bore a hole in the heart of the rock and insert one stick of dynamite we will blow that rock to smithereens.

One of the reasons there is such fragmentation in evangelicalism is that if we are not satisfied in one church, we can go to another. That is latitude and freedom. We don't need to be unhappy in a church

that does not fit our style. If we do not like the music in one church, we can go to another. If we do not like the preaching in one church, then we can go to another church. If we like a less formal service, we can go where we will find it. There, we will be a blessing and we can rest at ease. We will cooperate and live in harmony with the church we choose. There, they can harness us to serve and there will be no grief or handicap.

Here is God's formula for spiritual unity: in essentials, harmony; in nonessentials, latitude.

having compassion for one another;

Peter proceeds to describe four characteristics of the "one mind." First, Christians with "one mind" have compassion for others who are under duress. Christians with mental stability can think for others who cannot think under duress.

"Compassion" comes from two words to be affected and with. "Compassion" then means to suffer with someone else, to be affected in like manner. This carries the idea of fellow-identity. This is the interchange of fellow-identity. We get our English word "sympathy" from this Greek word but the idea is closer to our word "empathy." Empathy is participation in the destiny of others in all situations.

Empathy is not pity. Sympathy simply feels for someone else. Empathy attempts to identify with the other's need and meet it. God wants Christians to identify with fellow Christians in sadness or joy (Romans 12:10,15). Empathy is not feeling sorry for someone but doing something to help them.

"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus can be touched. He is compassionate, a compassionate High Priest.

"For you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven" (Hebrews 10:34).

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).

God desires that Christians who suffered duress should express empathy toward those who are currently in suffering. God does not want

Christian to go through life oblivious to the needs of others. He wants us to enter their experiences.

The Greek used this word for the harmony of celestial bodies. All bodies of heaven appear to operate in relation to each other. They all orbit in relation to one another. God expects Christians to orbit in relation to other Christians. He does not want isolation. When Christians hurt one another they want to withdraw from one another, but God wants us to weep with those who weep.

Principle

Empathy and selfishness cannot coexist.

Application

God expects us to take the viewpoint of people who suffer. This is empathy, which is more than mere sympathy. Do you identify with what someone else is going through? Have you ever participated fully in the pain of someone else?

People who lack empathy are correspondingly rigid in their dealings with people. They are usually indifferent and inhibited in their relationships. They keep to themselves because they find it difficult to identify with the responses of others. They do not make friends easily. Their social relationships are limited and formal. They cannot give themselves to another because they cannot put themselves in their place.

So long as the self is the most important thing to us, there can be no such thing as empathy.

Empathy depends on the willingness to forget the self. God expects us to step outside ourselves and identify with the suffering of others. Empathy comes to our heart when Christ reigns within our hearts.

In music, harmony occurs when cords vibrate together. Do you vibrate with other Christians? Are you in harmony? Do you have affinity of heart with others in the kingdom? Compassion is two hearts tugging at one load.

It is because we love God's people that their misfortune, sickness, accident or surgery affects us. We feel badly that they have come upon evil days. Their tribulations and reverses concern us. Our first impetus is "I wonder if I can be of any help to them. Maybe I can get under their load

during this time of trial." This is part of our responsibility to fellow Christians.

We belong to the same spiritual family. We belong to each other. We should tell those we love that we love them before they end in a casket. It is very difficult for our loved ones to hear us when they are in a casket. Why not throw verbal bouquets to them now while they can appreciate it? We think of this when Mother's Day comes around. "I am going to tell my mother how much I appreciate her," but she dies before Mother's Day. After her death you say "Oh, what a wonderful mother I had." Why not tell her now?

Some folk have a love for souls but have no love for God's people. This is inconsistent. They feel no responsibility to people in the local church. They think that their only responsibility is to get the gospel out. They are half right and half wrong. Who wants to be 50% right? The same epistle that says "I am debtor" to the lost also says "own no man anything but to love one another."

"I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also" (Romans 1:14-16). I owe the lost and I also owe the saint. "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8).

love as brothers,

The phrase "love as brothers" is one Greek word. The word "love" is rapport love. It is a rapport-based friendship. We return love because someone loves us. This is reciprocal love.

This is not the word for sacrificial love but for human affection. Sacrificial love is the aggressive seeking of the good of others, independent of merit or reciprocation. This word refers to the return of someone else's love.

The love of God and the love of mankind go hand in hand. If there is no love of mankind there is no love of God. It is one thing to love but it is another thing to love as brothers. Do you love the family of God?

Principle

God wants us to love reciprocally as well as sacrificially.

Application

What are you doing for God's people? How are you helping God's people? This goes beyond missionaries. How can I help God's people in my home church?

We sing "Make me a blessing today." This is great spiritual ambition. "I would like to be a blessing to someone today. I wonder if I could spread sunshine and cheer to God's people today?" Pray this before you go to church, "Lord, make me a blessing to some discouraged Christian today. Make me a blessing to someone who is having a problem."

Not many people commit to being a blessing to God's people. We expect others to minister to us. We do not minister to them. Some of us cannot preach or sing but all of us can extend encouragement to someone. Why not determine that "I am not going to leave church without being a blessing to some stranger or someone to whom I have not communicated for many months"?

As we become acquainted with the problems of others, our own problems shrink. We then realize that we are better off than others. Alas, we may not care and so, we may not help others. Then, we do not "love as brothers." God discounts loveless service (1 Colossians 13:1).

Are you waiting for an engraved invitation to serve others? Accept by face value God's Word that He wants you to minister to Christians. There is room for everyone in the service of the King.

be tenderhearted,

"Tenderhearted" comes from two words good and guts. This word literally means "good guts or inner bowels!" Obviously this is not the meaning here. The figurative and true meaning is good heartedness or good emotions.

The Greek world used this term for the seat of emotional life. "Good heartedness" moves us to meet the needs of others. God does not want us to relate to others with a hard heart. He wants us moved by the pain of others.

What are good emotions? Good emotions are emotions influenced by a mind that submits to the Word of God. When emotions influence our understanding of the Word then distortion of the Christian life will occur.

When emotions operate properly, they appreciate or respond to God's viewpoint and the Christian way of life. Emotions are the response of the soul. If we are going to enjoy our emotions, we must orient to the biblical viewpoint of life. When emotions control truth, then we will distort life. The whole issue is which controls which. If emotions control the mind then we are in danger of instability. If the Word controls our minds, then God gives us orientation to life. One situation is stable, the other unstable.

Being tenderhearted means that a person lets God's way of thinking orient his or her emotions. Biblically, the mind influences emotions, not the other way around. When emotions influence the mind the believer develops weakness in his or her soul.

Principle

Tenderheartedness is an attitude full of grace toward God's family.

Application

Our emotions appreciate the best of life based on who God is. Therefore, we must channel our emotions through the Word. The only way we can understand the essence of God is by the Word of God.

Emotions are not criteria for the Christian life. How we feel does not determine truth. We are not Christians because we feel saved. We are not spiritual because we feel spiritual. Emotions are simply the vent of our attitudes. Our status before God depends on what God says, not how we feel.

Are you cold hearted? Are you callused to the pain of others? Do you have the ability to imagine yourself in someone else's shoes? Can you put yourself in his or her place? Do you have an eye that can see the unseen? Some of us have lost our capacity for compassion. We are immune to the needs of others. Just as medical doctors become hardened to the pain of their patients, so Christians

can become numb to the pain of their fellow Christians.

We can lose the ability to feel the pain in someone else's heart. Because of the exposure of so much grief through the media, we blunt our minds to the needs of others. When we hear daily reports of tragedy and suffering, we simply lapse into sloppy sentimentalism that can only feel the heartache of others for a moment.

We live in a sophisticated society where everyone develops a rhinoceros hide. We do that because of the dog-eat-dog world we in which we live. That is the kind of hide we need for the office. We need that to survive. The law of the jungle prevails there. It is every man or woman for themselves and the devil takes the hindmost.

That kind of societal attitude pervades our thinking and we bring that to church. We are not as tenderhearted as we should be. We are hard-headed instead. Our heart does not beat in harmony with God's heart. If our heart did, more of us would send get-well cards to the sick. Most of us do not have time for others. Why wait until someone lands in the hospital to send them a word of appreciation?

Tenderheartedness is at the very essence of who God is. His tender heart sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. Only the overflowing love of God and the ability to identify with pain will give us a tender heart.

be courteous

"Courteous" is humble-mindedness. This word comes from two words humble and minded. This is to have a modest opinion of self. We are a creature, not the Creator. We utterly depend on God. In ourselves we can do nothing. Our standard of comparison is God Himself, and that is why we are humble.

"Courteous" means literally humility of mind. Such a person has no illusion about himself or herself. Because such a person is free from pride, he or she is also free from trying to impress other people.

Principle

God expects us to have an attitude of humility toward other Christians.

Application

A humble-minded person treats others with grace. Gracious thinking leads to gracious action. If you are a gracious thinker, you will treat others with grace because of how you view yourself. Even if they are rotten people, gracious thinking will produce gracious action.

Humble-minded people do not treat others on the basis of what they think. They do not lower their thinking to what others are thinking. They do not lower themselves to others' level. They forgive as Christ forgave. They do not hold things against others. They do not allow themselves to get into a feud. They are never bitter toward others. People who possess a humble mind demonstrate poise and confidence.

We can always compare down to people who have not reached our level. We have nothing to fear from this comparison. However, the Christian standard of comparison is Christ.

1 Peter 3:9

"Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing."

Not returning

"Returning" means to give back, to pay off. This conveys the idea of retaliation. The Christian does not give lip for lip.

Principle

A mature Christian does not retaliate.

Application

Two wrongs do not make a right. When someone says something bad about us, we do not have to get back at them. If we do, we lower ourselves to enter their game.

We do not have to build our happiness on someone else's unhappiness. Vindictiveness is not God's method of providing us happiness. When we exercise vindictiveness we take the matter out of the Lord's hands. Now it is a matter of dog eat dog. In this case, the Lord will kick both dogs! That's why some people never take one step forward in their Christian lives. Our

vindictiveness, implacability, bitterness, hatred and antagonisms produce self-induced misery. This results in multiple discipline. If we retaliate by gossip, we parade the sins of someone else, even though it can be imagined or real, God's discipline will come our way. Discipline comes when we try to hurt others. If the sin is real, God may take the discipline off that believer and give it to you (Matthew 7:1,2).

evil for evil

"Evil" is anything that is base or evil in character. God does not want us to return insult for insult. Personal revenge is not in God's plan for the believer.

"Do not say, "I will recompense evil"; Wait for the Lord, and He will save you" (Proverbs 20:22).

"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27).

"Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.'

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:17-21).

"See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all" (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

"For" is means in exchange for. Christians are not to give back an evil in exchange for an evil. Retaliation is not proper Christian methodology to resolve broken relationships.

Principle

Tit for tat is an immature approach to dealing with life.

Application

A quick retort satisfies our surface emotion at the moment but does not deal with the essence of the problem.

It is natural to return evil for evil. It is the easy response: "I'll get even with you if it's the last thing I do." Yes, it may be the last thing we do.

Retaliation makes two evils instead of one and can make it worse. If we have a streak of retaliation in us, we need another perspective on Christianity. If we use recrimination as our method of dealing with problem people, we do not operate on God's methodology. We operate out of a sour soul.

An evil is an evil in the sight of God no matter what reason we may give for it. It is a big order to operate in maturity. It is easy to be nice to people who are nice to us. We can freely shake hands with people who are friendly to us, but is much more difficult to shake hands with people you know will knife you in the back verbally.

If we render evil for evil this makes us no different from the non-Christian. If we render good for good that is man-like. If we render good for evil that is Christ-like, and rare. If we want to evaluate the progress of our spirituality, try putting on good for evil for size.

What is your attitude toward people who criticize you? Can you still smile at them? Do you pray for them? Can you treat them as nicely as you treat your friends? When we do this, we operate in true spirituality.

or reviling for reviling,

The phrase "reviling for reviling" is more specific than "evil for evil." "Evil" speaks of deeds.

"Reviling" speaks of words, speaking evil to someone's face, not behind their back.

A "reviling" is a verbal wrong, an abuse. "Reviling" is retaliation. To revile is to execute malice toward someone in a fierce, bitter manner. When we gossip or criticize someone as a pay back, this is a reviling. This is a reproach.

Principle

Verbal assault is not a proper method of Christian communication.

Application

God wants us to watch our mouth. We do not have to always stand up for our rights. Rights have become a panacea to our generation. Everything is measured by rights. If we enter quarreling and

angrily scold someone because they were that way to us, we move off God's will for us.

"Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23).

Do you use scathing or insulting speech as your method of communication? Do you retaliate in kind? Note David's attitude to Shimei, a relative of Saul. David replaced Saul as king. Shimei called David a man of Belial (the Devil).

"Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, 'Why should this dead dog [Shimei] curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!' But the king [David] said, 'What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the Lord has said to him, 'Curse David.' Who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?' And David said to Abishai and all his servants, 'See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now may this Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the Lord has ordered him. 'It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day'" (2 Samuel 16:9-12).

When Christians adopt a "pay back" attitude they step into God's role. By taking vengeance in our own hands we play God. God reserves the right to take vengeance because He knows all the facts. We interfere with His justice when try to play his role. God reserves the right of vengeance.

but on the contrary blessing

"Contrary" means the opposite. God expects us to operate the opposite way of how we would normally behave when it comes to people who verbally assault us.

"Blessing" -- to speak well of, to praise, invoke a blessing upon, to cause someone to prosper, speak well of. Are you willing to invoke a blessing upon your enemies? Are you a blessing to those who do you evil and even rail against you?

"And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure" (1 Corinthians 4:12).

Principle

Blessing others is God's method of communication even in the face of verbal abuse.

Application

After telling us what not to do, Peter turns to what we should do. After negating vengeance, he shows us how to respond to our detractors -- to give contrary blessing. Do them good. God expects us to take the guff but he wants us to go farther -- he wants us to bless them.

We do not extinguish fire with fire but with water. Likewise, we do not extinguish verbal abuse with verbal abuse but with blessing. We have a much higher chance to resolve the issue by taking the high road of maturity.

Maturity returns blessings for railing. Matthew 5:44 says, "Love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray for those that persecute you." God calls us to do the difficult thing. The source of giving blessing to others is the Holy Spirit (John 7:38).

If someone is vindictive toward us, God wants us to think about how He has blessed us. We put it in the Lord's hands (1 Peter 5:7).

Principle

God calls us, because of His salvation, to live a mature life before those without Christ.

Application

Most everyone seems religious nowadays. But how many true Christians have people met? They need to come into contact with people who do not give tit for a tat. They need to see mature reactions to verbal abuse. They need to observe how people can live above a life of retaliation.

Non-Christians may not be able to understand this initially but they will come to know that it is Christ who makes the difference in your life. They have little confidence in Christians who claim regeneration but their lives are no different than anyone else.

The way we prove we have come to know God personally is our behavior. If we claim salvation but do not behave saved, no one will believe us. They will discount everything we say. Are we a

blessing to our enemies? If not, we do not live up to our calling.

that you may inherit a blessing

"That" is a result clause. We receive a blessing as a result of blessing those who revile us.

"Inherit" means to obtain by inheritance. Some people can receive an inheritance but get nothing in that inheritance. God, however, gives content in His inheritance. We must do something to obtain this blessing operate on God's viewpoint about retaliation.

"Blessing" means to speak well of someone. This is not the blessing of privilege. God called us to inherit His blessing, and this, in turn, should encourage us to bless others. God calls us to do this because He blessed us by His call.

Principle

God blesses those who bless others.

Application

God blesses us on the basis of His own character, not ours. This puts us all in the same boat because our blessing precludes merit. God does not bless us because of our good; He blesses us because of His good. He blesses us because of who He is and what He has done for us. Blessing, therefore, depends on the character of God.

We share God's blessing of grace when we "know" this. We cannot earn or deserve God's blessing, because it depends on our knowledge of God and His provisions in grace for us. Understanding this grace blesses us. Retaliation deprives us of God's blessing.

The Christian who blesses others does so on the basis of His own blessing from God. This is why He can rise above retaliation. The maturity of His character transcends motley little resentments people may have toward Him. God blesses Him because of this.

1 Peter 3:10

"For 'He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit.'"

For 'He who would love life

Verses 10-12 in 1 Peter 3 are a direct quotation from Psalm 34:12-14. Let us look at the historic coloring of Psalm 34. This passage deals with one of the darkest times of David's life. Being sought by Saul, David fled into the territory of the Philistines. David was a threat to the Philistines because he defeated them in war, so they brought him before their king, Achish. They would have killed him if it were not for the fact that he played insane. It was against Philistine culture to kill the insane. David left to the cave of Adullam in the wilderness of Judah. His friends joined him. He played the role of phony. Note the last phrase of this verse "And his lips from speaking deceit." David's method of deception became the subject of Psalm 34. He got nothing but misery for this.

"Love life." There is a vast difference between living life to the full and mere existence.

Principle

God expects Christians to live life to the full.

Application

Some Christians need a reminder that it is no sin to "love life." This is how God created us. God provides for every situation in life. Life will have its reverses but we can still love life in the midst of these times.

Jesus came to give spiritual life (John 14:6) and abundant living (John 10:10). Jesus delivers us from ourselves. If we live for ourselves, we will never "love life" to the full. Are you cynical and disillusioned with life? Do you anticipate each day? If you do not, this may be an indication of a spiritual problem. It is possible for a Christian to lose the quality of his life. Jesus can make our lives meaningful by living for God's glory and man's good.

Some people are disillusioned with life because they are not Christians. By going through life without Jesus Christ, people live for themselves and waste their lives. Jesus came to give us a purposeful life. Otherwise we will go into old age sitting around waiting for the undertaker.

Most people have nothing to look forward to beyond the grave. They feel shortchanged and they are. Most people work, sleep and play. That

is the full orb of their living. Life is a treadmill for them. Like a work horse, they plod through life. They die of boredom. They wish they could escape their dead lives. They have no high purpose for which they live. Some, as soon as they get off of work, stop at the bar to dull their feelings.

Throw yourself at the foot of the cross before you throw yourself at the foot of a train. Life with a capital "L" begins at Calvary (by believing that Jesus died for your sins).

And see good days,

"Good" is intrinsic value. Christians can live each day with intrinsic value by making every day a day that can produce something that honors God. When Christians see God's grace in their lives and see how God works out the situations in their lives, they will refrain their tongues from downing other people.

"See." We will never arrive at "good days" as long as we indulge in sins of the tongue. We will not have a good day if we sin with our tongue.

Principle

The Christian can have life at its best.

Application

Gossip, maligning and judging people cause "bad days." Do you impugn motives of other people? You do not know whether it is true or not but you think it is true so you "share" it with someone. This violates a "good life."

We have a phrase today called "The Happy Hour." It's called that in our society simply because it dulls the dead feelings of the stark life we live. There is a big difference between "the happy hour" and "good days."

There are not many Christians today who see "good days." Disappointed, disillusioned and disenchanted, they turn to their own resources. They run on the treadmill of meaninglessness. They will see no good days with this belief system. They will not see God's viewpoint; they see only their own. These Christians lose the thrill of sins forgiven. They are dull to the divine operating assets of the Christian life, and they have little interest in spiritual things. They simply

seek human success by using God as a gimmick to accomplish their humanistic ends.

It is amazing how many Christians have little interest in spiritual things. Christians in this condition begin to question the reality of Christianity. No wonder! Other judge themselves and say, "Maybe I am a phony. Maybe I have never truly become a Christian." No doubt many of these people never came to Christ in the first place. They drop out of church because the void violates their view of Christianity. Monkeys like to be with monkeys, cows like to be with cows and vibrant Christians love to be with vibrant Christians.

A person that keeps his tongue from reviling and speaking evil of others will "see good days." Christians who watch their tongue live peaceable lives.

Do you enjoy life at its best? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Be honest in your character. Noble attitudes produce noble living. This makes life worth living. We will see "good days," days that are worthwhile and beneficial to self and others.

Let him refrain his tongue from evil,

"Refrain" means to cease, desist, make an end or stop. Christians who fill their minds with hurt, anger or bitterness will manifest those attitudes in his tongue. Sins of the tongue will come to the fore.

"From" -- source. God does not want us to operate from the source of our evil attitudes. That's where gossip comes from.

"Evil" -- base or morally mean.

Principle

The mouth is an indication of our spiritual condition.

Application

The tongue ruins many lives:

"Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the

course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell" (James 3:5-6).

Refraining our tongues from evil means that we are to get a good grip on our tongue. When God saves a soul, He saves the tongue as well. Do you have a converted tongue?

Does your sharp tongue hurt those closest to you? Is your mouth unkind? People come to a place of maturity when they come to realize that most of what they say about someone will come back to them.

We need to learn to "refrain" our tongue from evil. How many times do we have to put our foot into our mouths before we learn this lesson? We cause more hurt with our mouths than anything else.

"Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips" (Psalms 141:3).

If Christians are to see good days they must refrain from something. Is that evil word on the tip of your tongue? Are you about ready to give someone a piece of your mind? A heart free from anything base is able to control the tongue.

"Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you" (Proverbs 4:24).

"Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles" (Proverbs 21:23).

"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:6).

1 Peter 3:11

"Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it."

and do good;

This "good" is the good of intrinsic value. Motivation for doing "good" is our relationship to Jesus Christ. We do not do good to gain approbation with God. We have his favor. We do good because we already have his favor.

"Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness" (Psalm 37:3).

This is the right sequence. This is how we prove that we know the Lord.

Principle

We do good because of our relationship to Jesus Christ.

Application

What kind of "good" are you involved in now that you have come to Christ? We have to involve ourselves in other people's problems. We confine our lives to our little world. We limit our relationships to our little family and a couple of close friends. Thus our lives shrivel into a small world.

Let him seek peace

We come to the third "Let him" -- "Let him seek peace." Christians already have peace with God (Romans 5:1) so we do not seek peace in that sense. Non-Christians should seek that kind of peace. Christians seek peace with people.

"Peace" is a well-ordered soul or a well-ordered relationship. In this context it means souls well ordered together. Christians can fellowship together even though they may differ about a lot of things.

Matthew uses "seek" of seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness in the sense of striving after his kingdom:

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

Here Christians are to attempt to attain the state or condition of peace with other people. When people lay charges against us, we seek peace with them.

and pursue it

"Pursue" is to do something with intense effort and with definite purpose. This pursuing person moves quickly and energetically toward some objective. He strives toward peace with the idea of seeking eagerly after it. Romans uses this term literally of pursuing (as a calling) the things that make for peace: "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another" (chapter 14, verse 19).

"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

Principle

The mature Christian seeks to find a platform of peace even with his enemies.

Application

Are you in the midst of a running battle with someone? Some Christians avoid other Christians. They can hardly speak to them in a civil way. If they can keep from it, they will not shake hands with them. They go out different doors of the church. This is not a loving Christian life.

God wants us to be tenacious about peace. As a drill sergeant keeps after his men to accomplish their goals, keep going after peace until you win it. The world still has a problem with Saddam Hussein because the US did not "pursue" him till they defeated him. Is peace with people an objective for your life?

"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

1 Peter 3:12

"For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,

Christians need not fear the cruelty of their enemies because God watches over them. When the Bible attributes eyes and ears to God, we call this an anthropomorphism. An anthropomorphism attributes human physical characteristics to God. This anthropomorphism usually describes an attribute or action of God that forms an orientation or policy toward us. The eyes of the Lord here is God's careful oversight of his people. God specially watches out for his people. He will never fail the righteous.

"Eyes" is qualitative in the Greek. God ever watches. He watches in order to bless us.

"For His eyes are on the ways of man, And He sees all his steps" (Job 34:21).

"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to

Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars" (2 Chronicles 16:9).

"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13).

"On" means "upon." God's eyes are favorably watching us.

"Righteous" -- Christians are righteous in two senses: 1) God views us as righteous in His eyes so we do not have to gain His favor. This is judicial righteousness (Romans 5:1). We already have God's favor because of the death of Christ for our sins. 2) We are experientially righteous when we walk with the Lord. The latter is the point of this verse. This righteousness is experiential righteousness, not judicial righteousness.

Principle

God sovereignly and favorably cares for us all of the time.

Application

It is wonderful to know that the eyes of the Lord are over us all the time. He watches, provides and protects us. He anticipates our problems. He knows the trouble that lies ahead.

And His ears are open to their prayers;

"To" means direction toward. God directs his attention toward our prayers. He is not off in the universe attending to other things. He pays attention when we pray. He is there for us. We can be assured that our prayer have been heard. We can also know that he will answer our prayer for our ultimate good.

God is omniscient (all knowing) and omnipresent (everywhere present) in both his sovereign care and response to prayer. This is especially true with suffering. Suffering is the main theme of the whole book.

Should anyone threaten injury to us, God is willing and able to intervene for us. God attends to our requests. God has good ears. He can hear everything we say. That is another reason why we "refrain" our mouths from evil.

"Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!" (James 5:9).

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him" (1 John 5:14).

Principle

God focuses His attention on our prayers.

Application

What a picture of God! Here is God with His eyes focused on you and his ears earnestly listening to your cause, ready, willing and able to answer your prayer. He is ready to come to your aid when you pray. We do not have to propitiate him to gain his openness to answer prayer. He is already open to answer our prayer.

God is not too busy doing other things in the universe to answer our prayer. He delights to respond to our need.

"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3).

But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil

"But" -- this is a right-about-face word. In contrast to answering prayer, God will discipline those who step out of His fellowship.

"Face" is an anthropomorphism indicating fellowship with God.

"Against" indicates discipline of the child of God who steps out of fellowship with God.

"Those who do evil" -- those who commit some sin and do not confess it. The Greek indicates that these are people who not only step out of communion with God but stay out for a long period of time.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear" (Psalms 66:18).

"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, But the prayer of the upright is His delight" (Proverbs 15:8).

"The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous" (Proverbs 15:29).

"You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:3).

God provides everything necessary for our lives even in our discipline. He provides a way to get back into fellowship. If we immediately confess our sin God takes that discipline off our lives.

Principle

God does not answer prayer when we are out of fellowship with him but he does provide a way back.

Application

Are you trying to pray while out of fellowship with God? God in most cases will not answer your prayer. The only thing that you need to do is get back in fellowship with God by confessing your sin. Specify the particular sin you committed acknowledging that it took Jesus to the cross.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

We have now come to the end of the quote from Psalm 34:12-16 (1 Peter 3:10-12). Paul memorized Scripture. Obviously he could not have written this passage had he not memorized the Old Testament. The Bible permeated his thinking.

Principle

The memorization of Scripture is crucial for spiritual development especially under affliction.

Application

Those who wait till the trial is upon them wait too long. We need to get Scripture in our mind to fortify us against suffering. We cannot transcend our circumstances in the midst of suffering unless we already have the Word in our mind. We must transcend trial before the trial comes.

1 Peter 3:13

"And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?"

And who is he who will harm you

"And" is a continuation of the idea of the quote running from chapter three, verses 10-12. If God sovereignly and providentially cares for the righteous, no one can do anything to us that God does not approve.

"Harm" in this context means the discrediting of our testimony. Christians will face harm even though we attempt to live at peace with our enemies but our testimony will stand in the face of affliction. The issue here is how the Christian responds to suffering.

Principle

God promises Christians immunity, not from difficulty but from the discrediting of their testimony.

Application

This verse does not say that the Christian will be free from pain or suffering. That is against everything he says in the book. The point is that no harm can come to our testimony if we follow God's will.

Much pain that comes to Christians is due to our own problems, not our testimony. People find it hard to work side by side with us. We may be arrogant and contrary. Others of us may be inert or unprofessional. If we do what is "good" we will not suffer for these things.

Do you rest in God's providential care? Do you believe that God cares for you in such a way as to manage the circumstances of your life so that everything comes out to the good?

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

if you become followers of what is good?

"Follower" means to burn with zeal. A "follower" is one who deeply commits to something and is therefore zealous. He is an enthusiast. Paul calls himself "zealous."

"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers'

law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today" (Acts 22:3).

Zealots were uncompromising devotees. They were fanatics who swore to liberate their native land from oppression by every possible means. They prepared themselves to die if necessary.

The name "Zealots" referred to an extreme subdivision of Pharisees who were bitterly hostile to the Romans. Josephus refers to them as the "fourth sect of Jewish philosophy" (in addition to the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes). Judas of Galilee founded the Zealots (Acts 5:37). After his rebellion in A.D. 6, the Zealots fostered the fires of revolution that broke out again in A.D. 66. This led to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Simon, one of the Apostles, belonged to this sect (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13).

"Become" means to become something that you were not previously. Christians in Asia Minor were not followers of the good but... Peter asks them to become zealots for the good. He wanted them to suffer for a good testimony, not for some reckless action.

"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14).

What harm can come to God's children if suffering should occur? Note the qualification "if." God promises exemption, not from difficulty, but from "harm." Zeal for good robs opponents of justification of their wrong treatment of us.

God prevents our enemies from going beyond His providential concurrence of what will happen to us. Nothing happens outside His permissive will. He turns everything to good account.

"But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt" (Genesis 45:5).

Principle

Nothing happens to us without God's permission.

Application

We can rest in God's providential care for us when we do God's will ("good"). God exempts us from a tragic testimony when we walk with Him. In this, God prevents our enemies from stepping outside His sovereign permission. No hurt can come to us without His permission. He turns everything to accomplish His purpose.

Are you resting in God's providential care for you? Why do you churn if you trust God's sovereignty?

1 Peter 3:14

"But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. 'And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled'."

But even if you should

"But" -- strong contrast. In contrast to suffering for sin, we suffer for "righteousness' sake." We either suffer for our sin or we suffer for God.

"If" in the Greek expresses strong doubt that they will suffer for righteousness. "If" deals with contingency. Suffering may not happen immediately. There is a risk of suffering. Pain always looms around the corner for all of us. Peter says, "I wish you were suffering for righteousness' sake but you are not." They were suffering for self.

Principle

We all face the risk of suffering and pain.

Application

Sooner or later we will all face suffering. If we depend on happy times to establish our character we will have a great fall one day. If we depend on the circumstances of life to make us happy, we will ultimately experience misery. We generally do this in periods of prosperity.

All of us will experience pain in our lives. Pain is for our growth. God allows two kinds of misery to come into our lives: primary and secondary. Primary pain comes from God's sovereign placement of pain to gain our attention. Secondary pain is self-induced misery. This comes from personal sin. We pay the consequences of our choices.

suffer for righteousness' sake,

"Suffer" -- God does not make Christians immune from suffering. Everyone suffers in this life. We cannot get through life without pain. Some suffer more than others but we all suffer. None of us are exempt from trial.

"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

Even the godly suffer.

God calls us to do well and suffer for it (1 Peter 2:20, 21). He wants us to raise our suffering to a higher level than simply suffering for our sin (1 Peter 3:13). Suffering for righteousness sake is suffering for taking a stand for what is right.

Principle

Unrighteousness has difficulty tolerating righteousness.

Application

True righteousness irritates unrighteousness, for godly righteousness quietly condemns unrighteousness.

You may say, "It is not fair that I suffer for righteousness' sake." However, we do not expect things to be fair here on earth. People are unfair. Even Christians are unfair. In soccer, a referee may miss a call. It is not fair to the player fouled, but it is a reality. The referees are not fair and the folks in the away stands are not friendly. All they do is boo. Before we crush our hearts we better learn that things are not fair here. We are "strangers and pilgrims." We are on the devil's playing field. If the world dines and dances us, something is wrong with our testimony. They do not know where we stand. People know us by our enemies as well as our friends.

"Woe to you when all men speak well of you,
For so did their fathers to the false prophets"
(Luke 6:26)

you are blessed.

The word "blessed" is different than the word "blessing" in verse 9. This word means privileged. Christians who suffer for righteousness' sake will enter a higher state. God will give them felicity of soul. This is not happiness but the person experiences fortunate divine blessing upon his life.

When we suffer for the highest reasons God blesses us in a special way. He blesses those special people who make an impact during times of duress.

God chooses to bless us with the opportunity to represent Jesus Christ on earth. He suffered and we suffer. We can simulate His sufferings to a world who does not know Him.

Principle

God designs all suffering for blessing.

Application

"Blessedness" is a higher state than happiness. We have God's favor if we suffer for righteousness' sake. We enter a state of blessedness, even during duress in our lives.

Are you truly blessed for suffering for righteousness' sake? If we do right and suffer for it, we transcend the tawdry issues of time.

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake" (Matthew 5:11).

People face many problems today. We endure domestic problems, financial problems and physical problems. If we suffer so many burdens and problems that we do not experience felicity of soul, we present a perverse picture of what it means to be a Christian.

How can we convert suffering to blessing? Some suffering has to do with divine discipline. If this is the case, all God expects of us is to confess our sin.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Suffering cannot touch the things that matter most. Changes and chances in our lives will not affect our state of blessedness. If we put priority on values of this life we make ourselves vulnerable. We could lose those things in a flash of time. We would put ourselves at the mercy of deep hurt. The man who transcends earthly values is the man who is anchored in eternal things.

And do not be afraid of their threats,

Two important directives close this verse. The first is "do not be afraid of their threats." "Do not let

people intimidate you." The second is "nor be troubled." This is dis-equilibrium of the person. Some people get off balance when trouble comes their way.

The Greek gives an implication that is hard to translate -- "Do not fear their fear." The word "threats" is the word "fear." It is the fear that arouses terror -- panic. This is the fear that causes flight -- dread, terror. This conveys the idea of not letting people intimidate us. First "fear" had the meaning of flight -- flight caused by being scared. Then the word came to mean that which may cause flight -- the intimidation of adversaries

"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

"But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine'" (Isaiah 43:1).

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

Principle

God wants us to put fear to flight.

Application

What casts fear into your soul? You have the providential care of the Lord on your side (1 Peter 3:13). We have promises of God's presence (Hebrews 13:5). Most of us fear things that might happen but the future does not belong to us. We have no jurisdiction over tomorrow (Matthew 6:34) so why should we fill our minds with anxiety?

"There they are in great fear Where no fear was, For God has scattered the bones of him who encamps against you; You have put them to shame, Because God has despised them" (Psalm 53:5).

It is ridiculous to fear something that is not there. We are afraid of our own shadow. Why should we fear a shadow? That, however, is exactly what we do. We fear things that are nonexistent. We tell our children, "Don't be afraid, I am here." Nevertheless the fear is real to them.

Some people fear old age. Nothing is more pitiful than a crotchety old person. They know they are close to death and they are terrified of it. Pity them that have nothing to look forward to. The Christian is one day closer to being with the one he loves the most. He is one day closer to the open arms of Jesus. The best is yet ahead for the child of God.

Fear can ruin our outlook on life. We can become so disabled with fear that we will not venture into realms that we could. We thus live in a small orb entrapped by a world of our own making. We will ruin our lives if we permit fear to paralyze us from attempting feats beyond our confidence.

When we suffering for righteousness' sake, God can use us in a unique way to demonstrate the reality of Christ in our lives. Why should a Christian cower in fear? God placed us on the stage of suffering with a purpose. One reason why God allows suffering is to demonstrate how sick our heart is. This is a fresh direction about suffering for righteousness sake -- suffering is a high calling that demonstrates the reality of God in our lives.

Fear comes in many different sizes and lurks in unexpected places. There are many things to fear. Small children fear very few things. They do not fear traffic, fire or heights so they get into trouble. Teens have many fears. Fear stalks their paths all through high school. They are afraid that they will not be popular. They are afraid that people will not like them. They are afraid that the right kind of people will not date them. When we move into young adulthood, different fears loom larger and more complicated. The longer we live, the more fears will become a reality in our lives unless we know the One who delivers from fear.

do not be afraid of their threats

The above phrase is the second quotation of Isaiah 8 in 1 Peter 2:8. This phrase is the beginning of a quotation from Isaiah 8:12,13. Isaiah in the historic context exhorts Israel not to fear Assyria but to fear the Lord because He sovereignly sent the Assyrian army for His purposes. As in the day of Peter, intimidation was true in the days of Isaiah. Assyria tried to intimidate Israel into submission.

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

There are two cautions in the beginning of this quote from Isaiah 8. The first is do not be afraid of their "threats." Many people are afraid of people. Fear of people will cripple an effective testimony. It will paralyze and immobilize us from achieving our goals. If we are afraid of what people say about us we will never accomplish much. Are you afraid of a person or a group of people? Fear of people will hinder our service for the Lord.

"The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1).

"The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Psalm 118:6).

"The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25).

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18).

Principle

The fear of man destroys our potential.

Application

If the Christian is to have felicity of soul, he cannot fear people. There is no excuse for fear in the Christian life. If we fear, it is because we do not apply God's Word. We do not claim His promises.

People who live in fear that folks will not like them live in subjection to other people. Teens fear that their peers will not put their stamp of approval on them. Without that stamp of approval, they are done.

The pressure of public opinion begins in grade school. It intensifies until high school where peer pressure forces teens into patterns of life they do not like. Fear grips their heart. But character transcends the grip of peer pressure. It is character that helps teens choose the high road of living

under the influence of God rather than people. No one wants to be an odd ball. Everyone wants to be accepted by the community. We all want to be popular. Whoever told us that we should live by the opinions of other people? Why are we out to win a popularity contest?

The only way we can be free from fear is to be faithful to higher purposes. God wants us to be faithful to Him. We know we can take our fear to Him. We can say, "By the grace of God I need no longer fear man. I do not have to gain the approval of my peers. I do not have to impress my peers. I only want to be what God wants me to be."

Do you not share your faith due to fear of people? Are you afraid that they might reject you? This will immobilize us from being an effective witness. May God deliver us from fear. Only He can.

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

God does not want us to fear the fear people cast toward us. The only people who can march through life without fear are those who claim the promises of God and fear God, not man.

When faith shines, fear dissipates. This does not mean that we will never fear anything. We do not become dehumanized when we exercise faith. We, however, do know the one to whom we can take fear. We can trade our fear for confidence and courage. "I do not have to establish a reputation. I need not impress others. All I want is to please the Lord."

nor be troubled

"Troubled" means disturbed, agitated or ruffled, stir up, disturb, unsettle, throw into confusion, shake together, frightened, terrified. In this passage it means to not to allow ourselves to be intimidated, confounded, agitated, disturbed, disquieted. This is mental and spiritual agitation and confusion. People can trouble our minds, if we let them, we violate this command.

Secular Greek used this term for throwing an army into confusion and disorder. Thus, the army enters into anarchy and confusion. Are you in some sort of uproar because of acute emotional distress or

turbulence? God does not want us to be in great mental distress -- "Do not be distressed"

Principle

God provides a way for us not to be upset by our enemies.

Application

God does not want trouble to get us down. Do not let that situation you're facing get you down. Rise above it. When someone asks, "How do you feel?", we often respond, "I feel pretty good under the circumstances." But we are not supposed to be under the circumstances. God expects us to be on top of the circumstances.

"Yes, but I'm defeated. I'm whipped. I do not know which way to turn. I cannot make heads or tails of the mess I'm in." What does it take to have a content mind? What would you give to have a content mind? Contentment frees us from greedily grasping for more -- more money, more power, more prestige.

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

When pressure hits at a point in time, this person becomes disturbed and upset. The opposite of this is to be relaxed. We are free. No one is free until they are occupied with Christ. No one can witness without fear until they understand the presence of Christ in their lives. A young man shows his girlfriend's picture with pride. He does not tie himself up in knots talking about her. He is relaxed about it. He is proud of her. A Christian who loves his Lord tells of his grace with pride.

Our hearts automatically gravitate towards trouble. Because our hearts are trouble-prone we have a world filled with disturbed people. It does not take much to disturb some of us. We hear people say, "I am upset." This is the meaning of "troubled." To be upset means to be upside down. Why do we become upset so quickly? What made us blow our top?

What troubles you just now? "It is not what you eat that kills you. It is what is eating you that kills you." What is eating at you today? What is eating

your heart out? What robs you of the peace that should be yours as a twice-born person?

"Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1).

We gravitate to trouble. We have a knack for trouble. We stew about it and it looms larger and larger until we break under trouble.

"This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalm 34:6).

"The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles" (Psalm 34:17).

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Psalm 50:15).

God not only saves us from sin but he saves us from trouble. Physicians listen to people narrate their troubles all day. If he took all that home with him each night he would burn out quickly. We have one who takes all our problems to himself (Psalm 55:22; Hebrews 4:16; 1 Peter 5:7).

Trouble comes in many packages. What kind of trouble do you face today? Why not put the situation in God's hands? Have you had bad news today? Have you had hurtful news about your children? That kind of trouble comes in an ugly package. How do you handle your problems? Do you take those issues to yourself? Some of us never learn what to do with our problems. If we take our problems to ourselves it will make us old ahead of time. It will stoop our shoulders and break our hearts.

"He will not be afraid of evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD" (Psalm 112:7).

God comforts us in the midst of our trials (2 Corinthians 1:3,4). God permits us to go through deep waters so that He can encourage us. We then can encourage other Christians who are in trouble. We then become fellow-workers with God. We can be a blessing to someone in trouble.
