

**I PETER 3**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Peter chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Back in I Peter 2:13 we began to look at *THE SUBMISSION OF THE BELIEVER* and that thought continues on through I Peter 3:12.

Now let's face it, how many of us like to be in submission to anyone?

None of us do and yet, God has called us to be in submission not only to Him, but to government, to our boss and now he is going to speak to wives who are to be in submission to their husbands!

Not an easy subject to say the least and yet, God is speaking to us today and we need to listen and obey.

And ladies, hang in there, Peter will also be speaking to what husbands are to do and will conclude by speaking of how we are to be in submission in the church!

Now why would Peter write about submission when these Christians were being persecuted for their faith and that persecution was only going to grow more intense?

As we have seen so far, Peter is admonishing them to have a steadfast endurance in the midst of the persecution they were facing and to live exemplary lives, holy lives in spite of the persecution they were facing.

In other words, God has saved you, He has a place reserved in Heaven for you that no one can take away. Thus, have a walk that is worthy of the high calling by which you have been called!

Their witness needed to be strong in the unbelieving world they were living in and so does ours. You see, our faith is not lived in some ambiguous sphere, it is lived out in the real world.

One writer put it like this, *“Biblical submission to authority is recognizing that God, my Creator, is the ultimate authority and has all power. As clay in the potter’s hand, I, His creation, should yield full control of my life to His will. This includes submitting to and obeying all delegated human authority over me, realizing that when I do so, I am actually submitting to God’s authority. Likewise, when I rebel against delegated authority, in essence I rebel against God Himself.”*

Thus, like I have said, Peter tells us that we must live blamelessly and submit ourselves to **THE GOVERNMENT** – *I Peter 2:13-17*; we are to submit ourselves in **THE WORKPLACE**, to our boss whether he is nice or mean to us – *I Peter 2:18-25*; and tonight we will see Peter admonish us to have **SUBMISSION IN THE FAMILY** – *I Peter 3:1-7*; and he concludes this section by dealing with **SUBMISSION IN THE CHURCH** – *I Peter 3:8-12*.

After that, here in I Peter chapter 3, we will move into the last division of this letter that deals with ***THE SUFFERING OF THE BELIEVER***, which will take us to the end of the letter and we will see four areas of focus in regard to suffering:

- A. HOW WE CONDUCT OURSELVES IN SUFFERING – I Peter 3:13-17.***
- B. CHRIST, OUR EXAMPLE IN SUFFERING – I Peter 3:18-4:6.***
- C. GOD’S COMMANDS TO US IN SUFFERING – I Peter 4:7-19.***
- D. HOW WE ARE TO MINISTER IN SUFFERING – I Peter 5:1-14.***

So with that as our background, let’s begin reading in I Peter chapter 3, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study His Word.

**I PETER 3****VERSES 1-2**

Let me say this before we dig into this verse. I want to speak about marriage and what we see happening today in our world.

Think about this for a minute. How many books, videos, this and that do we have about marriage and sex and yet, with all that material on how to have a good marriage we have more marriage problems than ever and thus, more divorces than ever!

And tragically, we even see this problem in Christian marriages. Why is that?

I believe it is because we are getting our instructions on marriage and how to live from the world, and thus, we see the problems that it brings into marriage relationships.

Like it or not. Agree with it or not. We must, we must get our instructions from the One who created marriage in the first place and that is God! I think He knows what He is talking about and we need to listen to Him.

But we don't always like what God is saying and thus, the world many times tells us things we want to hear and then we reap what we have sown and that is not good when we move away from what God has told us in His Word!

God is calling wives to submit to their own husbands, not to be a slave but to rank under in authority, and then the opposition to that is seen as the world, the flesh and the Devil try to bring disorder in the family unit.

And the reason this works is people no longer want to submit or rank themselves under the authority of another. Thus, the end result is disorder in the home where kids are out of control, parents are out of control and the family unit is being blown apart!

And let me say this, because I have heard it before. Some will argue, ***“He does not deserve my love, my submission to him!”***

If our conduct, our behavior was based upon people deserving it, no one would get anything! And that is not **AGAPE** love, that is conditional love! Make no mistake about it, this submission isn't a reward for the husband's good behavior; but, as the proper order of the home, God commands it.

And so, what we see here is that Peter is putting the family unit back in order by saying wives need to submit to their **OWN** husbands even if they are not saved!

In fact, the idea here is these unbelieving husbands are actively disobedient to God's Word!

Thus, like I have said, a wife is not to submit to her husband just because he is good, or he deserves it but because God commands that this is the proper order of the home.

Yet submission to authority can be totally consistent with equality in importance, dignity, and honor.

That does not seem right! But it is!

Jesus was subject to both His parents and to God the Father but was not lower than either of them.

As Grudem put it, ***“Thus the command to wives to be subject to their husbands should never be taken to imply inferior personhood or spirituality, or lesser importance.”***

Now, by your actions your unsaved husband may come to know the Lord. But please understand that this is not going to happen by beating him over the head with the Bible or putting Bible verses in his lunch bag or telling him to ***“Turn or burn!”***

Then how is it done?

By loving him with the love of Christ. By serving him even if he doesn't deserve it. You see, submission is a heart attitude that then is reflected in our actions and if your heart is not right, eventually your actions will reflect that and you won't submit to anyone!

Again Grudem tells us, "The attractiveness of a wife's submissive behaviour even to an unbelieving husband suggests that God has inscribed the rightness and beauty of role distinctions to include male leadership or headship in the family and female acceptance of and responsiveness to that leadership . . . The unbelieving husband sees this behaviour and deep within perceives the beauty of it. Within his heart there is a witness that this is right, this is how God intended men and women to relate as husband as wife. He concludes, therefore, that the gospel which his wife believes must be true as well."

And then Peter says, "**when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear**", what in the world is he talking about?

Please understand that this is not a fear of their husband, but it is a reverential fear as they honor the Lord in their conduct and are not only a witness to their husbands, but to the world!

Listen to what one writer had to say about submission and the family and the results of not obeying what God has said. He wrote,

I recognize that this whole issue of authority and submission in the home is not very popular, but do you know why? It's because we've had our minds literally brainwashed that we are doing an injustice to women by categorizing them in this way.

If you have trouble accepting these principles it's because you are a part of a society that has been victimized by a godless, Christ-less, non-biblical philosophy of living that has been perpetrated for centuries on human thinking.

What we're seeing today in our society is the result of the thinking of the French Revolution which was a humanistic, egalitarian [equal] approach to life. They believed in a society where there was absolute equality - a classless, godless kind of humanistic existence.

These ideas have been brewing for years and have now come to full brew and our age is drinking them in - no classes, no sexes, no distinctions, no authority, no submission and no humility.

Our society has been victimized by this atheistic approach to life. And the Church instead of rejecting it falls right into it by supporting equal rights for homosexuals, advocating women elders and women preachers and functioning on a philosophical godless hermeneutic that forces a reinterpretation of the Bible in terms of our present time instead of accepting the authority of the Word of God.

- John MacArthur, *The Fulfilled Family*

That is why so many Christians struggle with this. It is because they are listening to what the world is telling them instead of what God is telling them and they are reaping what they have sown!

#### VERSES 3-4

Now let me say this before we move on here. Yes, a wife is to submit to her own husband as long as he doesn't tell her to do something that goes against what God has said in His Word. If he does, then you must obey God rather than man! (Acts 5:29)

And in her own personal life, she is to obey God and His Word and not do things that God has forbidden! That should just make sense.

Thus, she is submissive to God and her husband. But today, we don't see that and we think that this is only a problem today. Are you kidding me? It was a problem in Peter's day as well.

We see this played out in the city of Corinth, that was very immoral. Some of the Christian women refused to cover their heads and thus, they could not be distinguished from the prostitutes that lived and worked in the city of Corinth who did not wear head coverings. That is rebellion!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

We know from secular history that various movements of women's liberation and feminism appeared in the Roman Empire during New Testament times.

Women would often take off their veils or other head coverings and cut their hair in order to look like men.

Much as in our own day, some women were demanding to be treated exactly like men and they attacked marriage and the raising of children as unjust restrictions of their rights. They asserted their independence by leaving their husbands and homes, refusing to care for their children, living with other men, demanding jobs traditionally held by men, wearing men's clothing and hairdos, and by discarding all signs of femininity.

It is likely that some of the believers at Corinth were influenced by those movements and, as a sign of protest and independence, refused to cover their heads at appropriate times.

- Source Unknown

So the world is telling women to be just like the world, be rebellious, be aggressive, be fiercely independent and thus, we are reaping once again what we have sown.

And notice what God is saying through Peter here. He is telling them not to be so concerned with your outward beauty but cultivate that inward beauty that will overflow, and people will see.

And yet, look at the emphasis that is placed on outward beauty today, the billions of dollars that are spent each year on plastic surgery and all kinds of other things. We have magazines that name the sexiest men and women each year.

Folks, the dress does not make the person. In fact, this outward beauty is corruptible, or it is fading away as much as we might try to stop it.

Now I am not saying that women are not to wear makeup or wear jewelry, that is not what Peter is saying.

J. Vernon McGee had to deal with this issue years ago as some women were upset in his church because other women were wearing makeup. And he told them, *“Madam, if the barn needs to be painted, then paint the barn!”* Only J. Vernon McGee could say that and get away with it!

And again, Peter is not saying this is wrong, but that is not where true beauty is!

Paul, in I Timothy 2:9-10 makes this same point as he said, **“in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.”**



Listen to what one commentator had to say about this. He wrote,

Peter's culture, like our own, had an obsession with external adornment. Women were under enormous pressure to look beautiful. They were fixated on the hair, the wearing of jewelry, and clothing.

In response, Peter wants Christian women not to be overly concerned about external beauty.

Only the famed children's book character Amelia Bedelia could misunderstand the meaning of this verse.

Amelia was a household servant for Mr. and Mrs. Rogers, and Amelia took everything she was told to do literally – woodenly.

So she would put real sponges in the sponge cake she was baking or pitch a tent by throwing it into the woods.

An Amelia Bedelia interpretation of this verse would leave women without *any* braiding of hair, wearing of jewelry, or wearing of clothing.

Peter is not advocating any such thing. His concern is one of emphasis, as any discerning reader will understand. The pressures placed on Christian women by today's culture are nothing short of oppressive.

Women today can't walk into a store without being bombarded with shelves devoted to hair products. They can't walk down the street without being overwhelmed by the need for more jewelry. Women cannot open a magazine without being assaulted by the sense that their own closets are threadbare of anything worth wearing.

This passion for external adornment comes at a terrible cost for today's women – the sense of never looking good enough, never being pretty enough, never measuring up. Women are made to feel inferior, ugly, and unlovable. And the consequences are mounting.

It is with a sense of irony then that we recognize that the Bible leads the way against such oppression and that Peter thinks more highly of women than does the culture in which we live. Peter wants to free women from the obscene obsession of looking good.

- David R. Helm, 1 & 2 Peter and Jude, pp. 103-104

Exactly!

Now I do understand that there are those who say Christians are not to wear make-up, wear jewelry, dress like the world, which I am not sure how you dress then but if you do feel that way, great.

But also understand God is not telling us that it is wrong as long as your dress is modest, not vulgar!

In fact, in Song of Solomon we are told of the bride, **“Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, Your neck with chains of gold. . . . Your lips, O my spouse, Drip as the honeycomb; Honey and milk are under your tongue; And the fragrance of your garments Is like the fragrance of Lebanon. . . . How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O prince’s daughter! The curves of your thighs are like jewels, The work of the hands of a skillful workman.”** Song of Solomon 1:10, 4:11, 7:1.

You see, the bride is beautifully adorned but don't let this be a preoccupation or the main focus of your life because that is not where true beauty is at, in spite of what Hollywood likes to tell us!

The main focus ladies is that you build up your spirit, the inner man you might say because that is where true beauty is at and it is incorruptible, it will not fade away. And the reality is, that is for all of us!

And as you build up that inner man, what has taken place in your heart will then overflow in your outward actions, the fruit of the Spirit will flow from your life!

This is not only precious to the Lord but a blessing to your husband as you live your life obeying the Lord, of manifesting the inner beauty or spiritual virtue.

Again, these things our culture does not promote and look at how dissatisfied they are because they are not living in a way that honors God, a way that God says is best for them.

#### VERSES 5-6

Ladies, do you want to trust in your ability to influence and control your husband or can you trust God and be submissive to your husband?

Do you want to trust in your outward adornment, your outward beauty or can you just trust in God and cultivate a gentle and quiet spirit?

You see, it all comes down to this, can you trust God, and can you be obedient to what He has said? It is an attitude of the heart that is manifested in your life!

And Peter's point is this is not something new but holy women in former times submitted themselves to their husbands and cultivated that inner beauty!

And we see that Peter uses the example of Sarah, the wife of Abraham who submitted to his leadership as her husband by being obedient and respecting him by calling him lord.

What is interesting here is that the only place we see her do this is in Genesis 18:9-14, we might call it a day of lord and laughter!

She heard the Lord say that she would have a son and she laughed at the idea.

And many do what Sarah did here, they laugh at what the Lord is telling us here in these verses and in the Bible in general about women and how they are to be submissive to their own husband. In other words, ***“You have to be kidding me! This is the twenty-first century; I am not going to do that!”***

And yet, Sarah respected her husband, she called him lord!

Now I am not saying to call your husband ***“lord,”*** kind of neat but I don’t think it will fly.

But the idea is how you talk to him and about him is a reflection showing if you are honoring him or not.

You should be his biggest cheerleader you might say. You should be his biggest fan. Not pointing out all of his mistakes. If my wife did that it would take a lifetime for her to get through all the things I have done, but she doesn’t do that and wives are not to do that. Encourage them, bless them, be submissive to them and see how God will bless your marriage!

You see, this is a heart attitude, like I have said; and true submission is done with joy and not sulking or complaining on how humble you are and the sacrifices you have made. And if you are trusting in the Lord, there is no need to fear, God will honor your obedience.

### VERSE 7

We need to understand that what Peter is saying here was very radical in the period of time that Peter lived in. You see, in that ancient culture a husband had absolute rights over his wife and the wife had virtually no rights in the marriage.

In fact, in the Roman world, if a man caught his wife in an act of adultery, he could kill her on the spot. But if a wife caught her husband, she could do nothing against him.

All the duties and obligations in marriage were put on the wife.

Peter's radical teaching is that the husband has God-ordained duties and obligations toward his wife.

Men, just because your wife is to be submissive to you doesn't make you a dictator in the family.

Do you understand you are married to the King of king's and Lord of lord's daughter?

She is to be treated like royalty, not a slave. She is to be the most precious thing in the world to you, not your personal servant.

I think a husband that bosses and mistreats his wife is out of sync with God and Peter even says that when this occurs, their prayers won't rise above the ceiling, it will not reach the ears of God, He won't answer them! Thus, repent and start treating your wife as God treats the church and gave His life for it! (Ephesians 5:25)

And Peter says we are to dwell with them with understanding.

Do you take the time to understand your wife?

I know, the Scriptures do say, "... **With men this is impossible** ..." Matthew 19:26.

Please do not send in your letters to me on that one, I am in so much trouble!!!!

No, that is not what that Scripture is saying because it is possible if we take the time to spend with them, to get to know them.

When your wife is having a bad day, don't say, "***Suck it up!***" Not a good idea and not very helpful.

Have compassion on her, help her out, love her.

When was the last time you took her out on a date? I know, you are married now, but that doesn't mean you stop dating her, she is the King's daughter you know!

The more time you spend with her the more you will understand her, what she likes, what she dislikes, what she is going through and-so-on!

And please understand that this is not a suggestion for men. Dwell with her with understanding!

But today, we are on the other end of the spectrum and with the women's liberation movement and men being put down as evil, men are not treating women like they should.

Richard Fugate in his book: *What the Bible Says About . . . Being a Man*, shares from history how men treated women and children when the Titanic sank on the 15th of April 1912. This is what we are told,

“There was an unwritten code of the sea which said, ‘women and children first.’ It is the natural code that a man operating by Biblical standards will always follow . . . large number of male passengers [on the Titanic] were Christians and those men knew well the passage, Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).

Knowing they had a place reserved in Heaven, they had no need to grasp onto their physical lives. Because of their sacrifice, approximately 75% of the women were saved while only 20% of the men survived.

Do you think men today would make the same sacrifices?

In 1987 a ferry sank in the Philippines killing over 4000 people - mostly women and children. The majority of the survivors this time were men.

Similarly, when the ferry, Estonia sank in the Baltic Sea, most of its survivors were also men.

When the male survivors were questioned why they had not helped the women and children, they were quoted as saying: ‘Hey, its survival of the fittest,’ ‘It was every man for himself,’ ‘If women want, equality so much - they’ve got it!’

In 1992 when a survey was taken among 200 adults called the ‘Titanic Test.’ It revealed that:

If the Titanic sank today, only 67% of the men . . . would be willing to give up their seat for their spouses.

A little more than 33% of the men would give up lifeboat seats to a woman other than their wives.

Also, only 55% of men would yield a seat for their own mothers.”

And as unbelievable as that is, Fugate goes on to say how we can rectify this problem. He wrote,

“If our nation is to return to a period of greatness, men will have to accept the role of protector over those who are weak and needy. If the family is to again be strong, husbands and fathers will have to exercise their strength and leadership for the protection of their wives and children. In other words, we will need Biblical men who are willing to sacrifice their lives for their families.”

This is nothing more than a demonic attack on the family, this feminist movement as the roles of men and women have all changed, they are all mixed up and no one knows what they are doing any longer.

But Peter says that wives are the “**weaker vessel**” and thus, we are to care for them accordingly!

I know that is hard for some to swallow, but yes, they may be the weaker vessel, for the most part. That is just the way that God made us. Are their women that are stronger than men? Sure, but that is not the case most of the time and there is a reason for that.

But let me say this first and then I will deal with the reason for that weakness.

I want you to understand that Peter is not saying that women are weaker spiritually speaking, or intellectually speaking, or have some kind of inferiority to men, because we are equal in Christ.

In Galatians 3:26-29 we are told, **“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 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. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”**

And here is the reason why they are weaker, how God has put us together. You see, the woman was taken from the side of man, close to his heart, under his arm and thus, he is to protect her, love her, watch over her as God has placed him in that position, not because he is better than a woman, but that is God’s order for the family! And as we do men, we are honoring her in the Lord! You see, Peter says we are heirs together of the manifold grace of God!

Again, let me show you how things have changed over the years. This story came from the early 1800’s, and we are told,

“It has been said that an Eastern newspaperman went ‘down South’ prior to the Civil War to interview the southern ladies. He had heard they were more feminine, desirable, and submissive to their husbands than were their counterparts back East, and he desired to know why.



After his interviews, he wrote an article stating that, ‘The difference with southern women is . . . southern men.’ His article continued to describe how southern gentlemen treated their wives and daughters with total respect and honor. In other words, the wives were cherished, and the women’s response was to live up to their reputation of being noble ladies.”

I think God has a good order for the family and when we are following what God has said, both the husband and the wife are blessed!

#### VERSES 8-9

Please understand that when Peter opens up in I Peter 3:8 with the word, “**finally**” he is not finishing up his letter. What he means is that he is finishing up this section on – ***THE SUBMISSION OF THE BELIEVER!***

And as we have seen, Peter does not only plea for submission towards the government, submission in the workplace, submission in marriage but he also makes a plea for unity and love among God’s people that boils down to submission within the body of Christ.

Peter tells us that we need to be of one mind and that is no problem as long as they agree with me, and that is what usually happens and that is not Peter’s point, that is not the mind he is speaking of!

Paul, in Philippians 2:1-5 tells us, “**Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.**”

What is the mind of Christ that we are to put on?

The mind of Christ is one of humility, servanthood, submission, looking out for the welfare of others.

How do we accomplish that, how do we put on the mind of Christ?

By allowing the Spirit of God through the Word of God to direct us to walk in His ways, for as Paul said in I Corinthians 2:16b, “**. . . But we have the mind of Christ.**”

Thus, as we are one with God, as we put on the mind of Christ, there will be unity with the brethren and if not, then it just gets ugly as Paul said in Galatians 5:15, “**But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!**”

What can we do?

Paul goes on to say, “**I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.**” Galatians 5:16-18.

You see, there is the answer to our fighting, our anger, or whatever. Walk in the Spirit and the Fruit of the Spirit, which is love, will flow from your life and not the ugliness that comes from the works of the flesh!

One of the challenges we face in this area of loving the brethren is when we have been wronged, someone treats us unfairly and the natural response is to repay evil with evil, distance yourself from them. But the supernatural response is to love them and bless them, why?

Because God has commanded us to love the brethren and if you can't, you need to do a heart check and ask God to help you!

As you love the brethren there is a built-in blessing from God for you, don't miss it!

And think about it, God has blessed you by forgiving you of all your sins and thus, learn to forgive others as God has forgiven you!

### VERSES 10-12

Peter is quoting out of Psalm 34:12-16 and the thrust of this is the blessings that come to those who turn from evil and do good.

How often people go after things that may satisfy for a time but are very short-lived and usually have severe consequences attached to them and yet, people still go after “*the good life*” you might say. But in the end, they come up empty. Case in point,

One of the most notorious twentieth-century personifications of the hedonistic life was famed novelist Ernest Hemingway. The author of the noted literary works such as *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, and *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway also became notorious for his avant-garde [modern] lifestyle.

He had little regard for the teachings of the Bible or traditional systems of morality. He pursued the “good life” with a vengeance. His literary talent brought him fame, prestige, and money, which allowed him to seek pleasure all over the world through hunting and fishing expeditions, celebrity parties and gatherings, heavy drinking, fighting in and reporting on several wars and revolutions, and sleeping with women wherever he went. However, none of that ultimately gave Hemingway any lasting or genuine satisfaction. His life ended tragically one day in 1961 when he inflicted himself with a fatal shotgun blast to the head.

- John MacArthur

Why did he kill himself when he had everything he could ever want? In fact, he had what most people are striving for today and yet it didn't help.

Some say he suffered from depression, but why?

Because true joy, true satisfaction is only found in the Lord and the humblest Christian, having nothing, is filled with more joy and satisfaction than the richest men in the world who have everything.

It is as David said in Psalm 16:11, **“You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”**

And in Psalm 17:15 we are told, **“As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.”**

We are to live lives pleasing to God, centered upon Him and the reward for obeying the Lord, even though it might not be immediate, is secure and it is rewarding!

Evil practices will never produce true joy and satisfaction, just take a look at the people of this world and you can see that for yourself!

Now we are moving into the third and final division of this letter that deals with ***THE SUFFERING OF THE BELIEVER*** and it covers I Peter 3:13-5:14.

In I Peter 3:13-17 we are going to focus on ***HOW WE CONDUCT OURSELVES IN SUFFERING***, something the people of Peter's day were facing and it was only going to get worse and thus, they needed to know or be reminded of how they were to live in spite of these persecutions.

And I think these are important lessons for the days we are living in and the coming days as well.

VERSES 13-17

For the most part, Peter is saying that it is unusual for people who are hostile to Christianity to harm you because you are zealous for Jesus, but it does happen and for the people of Peter's day, the persecution was growing. We have had it pretty easy in this country, but things are changing and because we stand for the Lord, for what is good, persecution is coming!

Today we see in many parts of this world the persecution of Christians; in fact, more Christians have been martyred in our day than at any other part of Christian history!

And folks, like in Peter's day, that will grow only more intense and spread throughout the world!

The question is, *“Are you going to allow persecution, people coming against you and what you believe to change your behavior? Are you going to water down your faith? Are you going to play secret-agent Christian and live out your faith in secret?”*

Of course not, we are to live out our faith in spite of what people throw at us! You see, we should always answer evil with good even though when we do good, people may answer back with evil. Just don't let it change how you live out your faith!

Jesus said in John 15:18-20, **“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”**

It is always a dangerous thing when the church, when believers befriend the world because it will only weaken the believers, weaken their faith while persecution will strengthen it.

Meyer put it this way, *“Not to be hated by the world; to be loved and flattered and caressed by the world – is one of the most terrible positions in which a Christian can find himself. ‘What bad thing have I done’ asked the ancient sage, ‘that he should speak well of me?’”*

I would have to agree and as James warns us, **“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”** James 4:4.

One pastor put it like this, *“Spiritual warfare will be won or lost in the mind - in your attitude toward what the Christian life is really all about and how you view every situation and circumstance that God puts you in. I believe one of the big reasons that the church in America is so powerless, defeated and irrelevant is because most Christians don’t have the proper attitude toward the Christian life - they don’t have the mindset of a soldier and as such they have no heart for battle. They are nothing more than ‘Country Club Christians.’”*

Now, if we do suffer, if we are persecuted, may it not be because we are obnoxious but because we are zealous for our faith, for Jesus and we respond in love.

And when they do persecute us, may our good behavior expose their wickedness, their evil, may they be ashamed of what they did to us!

Paul, in Colossians 3:2-4 tells us, **“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”**

You see, when your mind and affections are set on things above, when suffering comes your way, you will rejoice because you know that God is working and as Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, “**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.**” Perspective is everything!

I like what Puritan Thomas Watson wrote regarding afflictions,

Afflictions work for good, as they make way for glory. . . . Not that they merit glory, but they prepare for it. As ploughing prepares the earth for a crop, so afflictions prepare and make us [ready] for glory. The painter lays his gold upon dark colours, so God first lays the dark colours of affliction, and then He lays the golden colour of glory. The vessel is first seasoned before wine is poured into it: the vessels of mercy are first seasoned with affliction, and then the wine of glory is poured in. Thus, we see afflictions are not prejudicial, but beneficial, to saints.

- Thomas Watson

Peter also calls us to be ready to defend our faith.

That word “**defense**” in the Greek is APOLOGIA, (ap-ol-og-ee’-ah) and it is where we get our English word “apologetics” from.

Thus, it is a word that speaks of a formal defense in a judicial court. In other words, can you defend your faith before the court of this world, what you believe?

You see, if we are living what we say we believe, then we need to be able to share that with others, give them the reason for the hope that is in us.

How is that done?

By “**sanctifying**” or setting your life apart for the Lord, by consecrating yourself to His control and be ready to share your faith. Be men and women of the Word!

You see, we are not to just endure through the suffering, but we are to be ready to defend our faith as the opportunities come our way!

Why is this such a big deal?

First of all, if you can't share your faith, you are a poor witness of Jesus and what are you going to give people if you are not giving them Jesus?

Secondly, if you don't know what you believe, when difficult times come your way, your faith is going to be shaken, you may even doubt your salvation.

Thus, know what you believe and be ready to share it!

We have looked at ***HOW WE CONDUCT OURSELVES IN SUFFERING*** and now, in I Peter 3:18-4:6 we will be looking at ***CHRIST, OUR EXAMPLE IN SUFFERING***.

### VERSE 18

How many times did Jesus suffer for our sins?

Only once as He hung on the cross of Calvary and bore the sins of the world and the wrath of God was poured out upon Him, the wrath of God that was for you and me!

Why did He do this?

To bring us to God, to restore that relationship that was broken by sin.

The word "**bring**" was used "*of admission to an audience with the Great King.*"

(Blum).

That is what Jesus has done for us and thus, when we refuse to have fellowship with God, we are trashing the work that Jesus has done for us. You see, I couldn't save myself because I am a sinner but Jesus was the perfect sacrifice and He paid in full the penalty for my sins, your sins in order that we can come before God and have fellowship with Him!



The just God, perfect, without sin suffered for us to bring us to the Father, that is love!

Now, Peter, as well as other portions of the Scriptures tell us that Jesus died a physical death, but He then was raised from the dead on the third day.

Who raised Jesus from the dead?

Peter tells us the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead.

But in Romans 6:4 we are told that the Father raised Jesus from the dead, **“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”**

But there is one more point I need to make and that is Jesus says that He raised Himself from the dead according to John 2:18-22, **“So the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ Then the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.”**

What does all this mean?

It means that the Holy Trinity, the Triune God was actively involved in the resurrection!

#### VERSES 19-20

This is one of those controversial portions of Scripture and I am going to share with you what I believe Peter is telling us here.

First of all, this was done, I believe, after the death of Jesus but before His resurrection for now He is in glory with the Father.

And Peter tells us that Jesus went down into Hades, the abode of the dead and He preached to the spirits who were in prison.

I do not believe these spirits are human spirits but demons who, during the time of Noah co-habituated with women to pervert the human race and prevent the Messiah from being born. (Genesis 6)

And gross sin was permeating this world and God brought judgment upon it destroying all of creation except for the life that was saved on the ark, the animals and Noah and his family who were not contaminated.

I believe it is these demons that are chained in Hades that will be released during the Tribulation Period spoken of in Revelation chapter 9.

And if you are still unsure about this, the word “**spirits**” is a word that is never spoken of people except if it is qualified, like we see in Hebrews 12:23, “**the spirits of the righteous.**” I hope that clears that up.

Now, what message did Jesus preach to them?

Not the salvation message because they can't be saved but the message that He preached was that of victory over sin, victory over the enemy!

Keep in mind that the word “**preached**” in I Peter 3:19 is a Greek word that means “**declare**” or “**herald**” an important announcement.

In fact, *“In the ancient world, heralds would come to town as representatives of the rulers to make public announcements or precede generals and kings in the processions celebrating military triumphs, announcing victories won in battle.”*

Now, if Peter was talking about Jesus preaching the gospel, he would have used the Greek verb euangelizō (“to evangelize”). But he didn’t and thus, this was not a message spoken to give these spirits a chance to be saved, but to announce the victory that Jesus has made for us!

Thus, our victory is found in Christ no matter what the enemy may throw at us!

And Peter speaks of Noah and those who were saved, eight souls and yes, the flood was real, and it covered the entire earth.

Now Peter is going to make an application about the flood waters as we read on.

### VERSES 21-22

Here is a picture of baptism as Noah and his family were saved as they went through the water. You see, the floodwaters came and washed away the evil and brought forth a fresh start for Noah and his family.

As we look at the waters of baptism, it is the same general idea, the moving from the old to the new life in Christ!

Now some look at baptism and see it as being necessary for salvation, but that is not what the Scriptures teach.

The washing of water doesn’t save us, Jesus does, but there is a spiritual truth behind the immersion of water.

We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and baptism is an outward showing of what has taken place inwardly. You are telling those around you that you have died to sin, that old life and as you come out of the water you are a new creation in Christ!

It symbolizes what has already taken place and is a witness to those around you of that reality!

The word “**baptism**” simply means “*to immerse.*”

And as we come to Christ, immerse our lives into His, we are saved and, like I have said, this immersion in water is an outward act to show an inward reality!

And then Peter tells us of Jesus, “**who has gone into heaven and it at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.**” I Peter 3:22.

Remember what Peter said to us back in I 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.**”

Now Jesus has become our example of someone who suffered greatly for doing good and the blessing He inherited; He was received up into glory and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

And we too will be taken to glory to be with Him one day!

As I close this evening let me leave you with these words from Paul as he wrote back in II Corinthians 2:14, “**Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.**”

Our victory is in Christ and His completed work – thus, know what you believe and be ready to share it, give people the reason for the hope that is in you – give them Jesus, let His sweet perfume permeate your life and be the aroma of life to others!

Yes, as Peter has told us, difficult days are upon us and they give us many different ways, many different opportunities to share our faith.

And I will leave you with this – ***ARE WE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THOSE OPPORTUNITIES? BECAUSE WHERE CHRIST IS, THERE IS HOPE!***