

FIRST PETER

Chapter 3

Wives and Husbands

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they see your respectful and pure conduct. 3 Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— 4 but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. 5 For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. 7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

3:1-2 Having spoken of the relation of citizens to their rulers and of servants to their masters, the apostle here addresses himself to those that are living in the holy estate of marriage, giving to both the wives and the husbands certain rules of conduct. Speaking to the wives first, he writes: In like manner you wives, be submissive to your own husbands, in order that, if some are disobedient to the Word, they may be gained through the behavior of the women without a word, if they observe your chaste behavior in fear. That is the first point that the apostle makes, the necessity for submissiveness, for subordination on the part of the wife. Not, indeed, as if the subjection and obedience of the wife were on the same level as that of the domestic slaves, since it is the result of mutual agreement and therefore is a relative obedience rather than an absolute subjection. But that is God's order: the headship of the husband should be unquestioned in a Christian home. This point, moreover, was here broached with a good reason. For it happened comparatively often in those early days that Christian women had heathen husbands. In the case of these husbands particularly, though other witnesses are not excluded, it was true that they who were disobedient to the Word of the Gospel, who were unbelievers, might be influenced and put into a state of mind favorable to the acceptance of Christianity by the conduct and behavior of their wives, even if these should not speak a single word of reproach, remonstrance, or admonition. For the entire conduct of the Christian women was to be a powerful argument for the truth and power of Christianity. As the men noticed with what care these Christian women kept themselves unspotted from the prevalent sins of unchastity, with what meekness and diligence they did the work of the household, with what reverent deference they observed the will of the housefather, it was bound to make an impression on them. A man would then also argue from the existence of these wifely virtues to the power of the Christian faith, the result being that his interest in the Gospel might lead him to the acceptance of the Word. Thus he would be gained for Christ, and Christ Himself would be his gain. (Kretzmann)

The reference to slavery reminds us that the apostolic world was different in many respects from ours. The pagan society of Peter's day was being challenged by people who had been introduced to a born-again, new lifestyle in Jesus Christ. At first it might seem curious to us in our advanced age to hear these admonitions to show good conduct to irreverent pagans, to be submissive to tyrannical governments, or to serve harsh slave masters. We might say, "Surely Peter's council is hardly applicable to us, who live in a different day." The same train of thought might continue as

Peter addresses wives and then husbands at a time when marriage relationships were considerably different from the ones we know. How does what Peter has to say fit in with 20th century, American mind-sets concerning the roles of women and men? Why should Christian wives be submissive to unbelieving husbands – or any kind of husband for that matter? (LifeLight)

The same answer emerges as in the other sections – for the sake of the Gospel witness. While the circumstances may be different, the issue is the same. The wife’s spiritual goal is to work quietly but effectively so that perhaps by her behavior the Holy Spirit might prod the heart of her husband and thus gain him for the kingdom. Peter counsels Christian wives not to argue about religion with their husbands or pressure them spiritually. Instead, Christian wives are to let their conduct do the talking. Their pure and chaste behavior, their acts of love and care, their gentle and quiet spirits (3:2-4) – these things are the things that will win their husbands over to the Gospel. (LifeLight)

3:1 *likewise*. As believers are to submit to government authorities (2:13–17), and as slaves are to submit to masters (2:18–25). (CSB)

As believers submit to civil authorities (2:13–17) and servants submit to masters (2:18–25). (TLSB)

Pagan Romans and Greeks who feared that Christianity would destroy society by destroying government, business, and family relationship were surprised to learn that Christian made the best citizens and workers and that Christian women made the best wives. (PBC)

be submissive. The same Greek verb as is used in 2:13, 18, a term that calls for submission to a recognized authority. Inferiority is not implied by this passage. The submission is one of role or function necessary for the orderly operation of the home. (CSB)

God’s order of creation should be a delight, not an affliction. Though sin has corrupted that order, in Christ there is sanctity and forgiveness in marriage. Here submission aids Christian witness. (TLSB)

It occurred frequently that Christian wives had heathen husbands, just like today in many marriages the wives are believers and their husbands are unbelievers. And under these circumstances Christian wives should be doubly careful to honor their husbands so that they might possibly by their conduct, without saying too much, win them to Christianity. This can occur when husbands view the chaste conduct of their wives. (Stoeckhardt)

the word. The gospel message. (CSB)

Believe its message. (TLSB)

without a word. Believing wives are not to rely on argumentation to win their unbelieving husbands, but on the quality of their lives. (CSB)

Behavior of Christian wives demonstrates their faith through sanctified living; they gently proclaim Christ in all they do. (TLSB)

3:2 *respectful and pure conduct*. Their lives are to be marked by a moral purity that springs from reverence toward God. (CSB)

Irreproachable behavior motivated by faith. (TLSB)

True Christian women walk “with fear”, that is, in holy fear of violating their duty, of all that is becoming to women and wives. And so, as the word “chaste” implies, they devote themselves to every appearance of chastity, modesty, purity, keep themselves unspotted from the world, in contact with those on the outside maintaining an honorable deportment and reserve, are thrifty and retiring. They, therefore, live, are then faithful and conscientious in the fulfillment of their domestic obligations, in dutifully serving their husbands. And when now the unbelieving husbands observe such conduct on the part of their wives day after day, they cannot remain completely blind to the fact that these Christian virtues displayed go hand in hand with the Christian faith of their wives, and so the conduct of the wives can be instrumental in getting their husbands to accept the Christian faith. (Stoeckhardt)

3:3 *braiding of hair ... gold jewelry.* Extreme coiffures and gaudy exhibits of jewelry. Christian women should not rely on such extremes of adornment for beauty. (CSB)

True beauty is not found in lavish adornment but in faith and service to Christ. (TLSB)

Women, in Peter’s day and in ours, have typically gained the attention of others with their beauty or attractive appearance or perhaps with a charming feminine personality. (LifeLight)

To this end, however, Christian women were to remember: Whose adornment should not be the outward braiding of hair, and putting round golden jewelry, or putting on (showy) dresses, but the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible beauty of gentleness and of a quiet spirit, which is precious before God. Cp. Is. 3, 17-23. The apostle mentions only a few of the evidences of worldliness and vanity which threaten women in particular. There was the elaborate coiffure which was built up with braids and golden combs, 1 Tim. 2, 19, and nets and artificial aids; there was the putting on of golden ornaments, of rings and bracelets and pendants round the forehead, the arm, the ankle, the finger; there was the vesting in costly and showy garments - all customs affected by the fine society ladies of the world. Note that Peter does not inveigh against neat dresses and modest, simple jewelry, but against that show of dress and finery which indicates that the heart is taken captive by such transitory, vain baubles. (Kretzmann)

clothing. The Greek for this word simply means “garment,” but in this context expensive garments are meant. (CSB)

3:4 *hidden person* – Wealth and outward beauty are passing, but in Christ personal character motivated by a transformed life endures. (TLSB)

The true ornament of a Christian woman is the hidden man of the heart, the new spiritual nature and life. This new, divine life will ever manifest itself in a disposition and in deeds of gentleness and meekness, in a quiet spirit, without pride, assumption, anger, and passionate boisterousness, Rom. 7, 22. (Kretzmann)

The hidden man of the heart or the inner self is not in itself decoration and ornament but one when it is put on and clothed with the incorruptible adornment of the mild and gentle spirit. Being meek, gentle, unassuming is “the opposite of willfulness, pride, arrogance, insolence, harshness, anger passion. Being quiet, composed, stands in contrast to a loud, noisy, passionate, quarrelsome conduct. This meek and quiet spirit, which stems not from natural birth but from conversion, is precious before God. (Stoeckhardt)

in God's sight is very precious – These virtues will clothe a Christian woman better than the costliest mantle which this world can supply, and, what is more, such conduct is precious in the sight of God. Note: This lesson should be heeded especially by many of the foolish young women, married and unmarried, who in our days are following the example of the painted and gaudily dressed women of the world. (Kretzmann)

Thus very expensive, costly is the basis for being submissive and will to some extent have a lasting effect upon unbelieving husbands, that they find themselves gradually taking pleasure in the spiritual, incorruptible adornment of their wives. (Stoeckhardt)

God values things that are often overlooked by humans. (TLSB)

Peter encourages Christian wives who want to turn the attention of their husbands to the Lord to impress their husbands with “the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.” (LifeLight)

3:5 *holy women who hoped in God.* The standards stated by Peter are not limited to any particular time or culture. (CSB)

Christian women will always be ready to follow the example of the sainted women of the Bible: For so did also the holy women formerly adorn themselves, who hoped in God, being subject to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, of whom you have become children, if you do well, and do not yield to any sudden terror. The meek and quiet attitude which has been praised by the apostle will naturally be accompanied by that conduct which unhesitatingly acknowledges the headship of the man. This is the chief, the finest ornament of a wife professing Christianity, as the example of the women of the Bible shows. Their hope was directed toward God and His promises; they knew that the reward of God was greater than anything that the world might offer and give, if they should want to follow its vanities. (Kretzmann)

The holy wives, concerning whom the Holy record reports, had adorned themselves with a mild, quiet spirit, and this disposition showed itself in their submissiveness to their husbands. The modifying statement “who trust in God” states the source of their piety, namely, hope in God, in the fulfillment of divine promise, and declare why it did and could not enter their minds to become addicted to vain adornments. They expected something better and greater from God than what they could expect from the world if they took the trouble to please the world. Since they placed their hope in God, they were of a meek and quiet spirit; for they desired nothing from the world, did not concern themselves about it. (Stoeckhardt)

The chief virtue of these spiritual ancestors was their faith. (TLSB)

Judges 4:4-10

3:6 *as Sarah obeyed Abraham* – *Gk hupakouo*, “listen, respond to.” (TLSB)

The apostle singles out Sarah as an exceptional pattern in this respect, in her submission to her husband. (Kretzmann)

If one reads the Greek imperfect tense for the verb “obeyed”, then obedience towards Abraham is expressed as a continuing conduct. Sarah’s whole life appears then as a definite whole. Sarah

demonstrated his obedience to Abraham by serving and being helpful to him as an honorable housewife, as the story of her accommodation of the heavenly guest shows. (Stoeckhardt)

calling him lord. An expression of the submission called for in v. 1. (CSB)

Or, “master”; title of respect. (TLSB)

She accommodated herself to his will, even though she knew this might bring her grievous sorrow. When Abraham during his stay in heathen lands desired that she pretend to be his sister, she agreed without murmuring and endured patiently the resultant distress. (Stoeckhardt)

She acknowledged, she called him lord, the head of the household. She was perfectly willing to occupy a subordinate position, to be a true helpmeet to Abraham, Gen. 18:12. And so Christian wives will become true children, true daughters of Sarah, if their entire life is spent in doing good, if they are continually active in good works, if they conduct themselves according to the will of God in their married state. (Kretzmann)

her children. Christian women become daughters of Sarah as they become like her in doing good and in not fearing any potential disaster, but trusting in God (cf. Pr 3:25–27). (CSB)

As Abraham is the father of believers, Sarah is our matriarch and a special example to Christian women. (TLSB)

At the same time they are to fear no terrors, not to yield to false fear in any matter. The reference is most likely to the incident related Gen. 21, 10, where Sarah did not hesitate to insist upon expelling the bondwoman with her son, since Isaac alone was the child of promise. Where the will of God, therefore, is clear, either in command or in prohibition, a Christian woman will not let a false dread keep her from obeying the Lord first of all. (Kretzmann)

When Abraham favored Ishmael and by that placed himself in opposition to God’s Word and promise, his wife Sarah bade him in God’s name: “Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac”, Gen. 21:10 or as Paul rightly interprets: “With the son of the freewoman”. Gal. 4:30. This remark displeased Abraham very much. But Sarah insisted upon having her way because God’s promise meant more to her than anything else, and she did prevail. Also in this instance Sarah is an example for Christian wives. Where it deals with matters relating to God, to God’s Word and promise, to the soul’s welfare and salvation, to the heavenly inheritance, there Christian wives should fearlessly and courageously oppose their husbands when they attempt to thwart their actions and not let themselves be intimidated by threats and hostile acts. Obedience to parents, masters, spouse has its limits when it comes to obedience to God. (Stoeckhardt)

Submission to physical, sexual, or other forms of abuse of wives and children is a different situation. Some situations may justify a wife’s resistance rather than compliance to protect herself and her children from harm by a violent husband. Such violence may result from alcoholism, drug abuse, a psychological disturbance, or mental illness. Love for her husband, as well as for her children, may well cause a Christian wife in such circumstances to encourage and even to insist that her husband obtain appropriate therapy. Failing that, a wife may need, in extreme situations, to leave or to compel her husband to move out of the home. (LifeLight)

do not fear anything – Believers follow God’s will, even if they have pagan spouses. (TLSB)

3:7 husbands...understanding way – That the husbands, according to this word, have no absolute power over their wives is indicated also in the next verse: You husbands likewise (give due honor to them), dwelling with the feminine, as with the weaker vessel, according to knowledge, giving honor to them as also fellow-inheritors of the grace of life, lest your prayers be hindered. The idea of giving due consideration and honor to every person in the station assigned to him by God governs the thought also here. (Kretzmann)

This is understanding God's will for marriage. (TLSB)

The trap that Christian husbands might fall into were twofold: (1) using their headship and authority selfishly – to control, abuse, and dominate; (2) seeing their greater physical, and perhaps emotional, strength as making them superior, despising their wives for being weaker than they. Just as society measures young women and grades them on the basis of their beauty, society measures and grades young men on the basis of strength. Strong young men without Jesus Christ tend not to respect people they perceive as weak. In Christ-less relationships, the strong prey on the weak. (PBC)

Believing husbands are called to approach unbelieving wives with the same goal – encouraging them by their loving and caring behavior to come to faith in Christ. Such husbands will treat their wives with consideration, tenderness, and love. This approach would have been surprising in Peter's day. Since the pagan was brought up to treat his wife as a weak vessel and to abuse her, he was not accustomed to building her up and respecting her – nor were wives usually accustomed to such caring treatment. Paganism despised men who were not masterful and who did not assert their own wills in getting their wives and families to bow to them. (LifeLight)

showing honor. Since a wife is a gift from God and of one flesh with husband (Gen. 2:24), she deserves honor. (TLSB)

weaker vessel. Not a reference to moral stamina, strength of character or mental capacity, but most likely to sheer physical strength. (CSB)

Some feminist interpreters have taken offense at this expression. However, the apostle actually chooses his wording to express care, not disrespect, for women. Physically women are typically smaller in size and weaker in strength, which could make them vulnerable to abuse. Peter admonishes husbands not to exploit the size and strength in unkind ways. Husbands and wives complement each other in God's design. (TLSB)

Both the husband and the wife are vessels according to God's creation, but the man is the stronger, the woman the weaker vessel. But now the husband should show that he appreciates the greater responsibility laid upon him by God in caring for the weaker vessel, his wife, in the proper manner, especially according to knowledge, with the application of Christian common sense. The husband should always be conscious of this fact and let this consideration govern his entire treatment, his entire attitude toward his wife, in all the conditions and circumstances of life. Cf. 1 Thess. 4:4. With all the intimacy that obtains between husband and wife, the former must never forget that he owes his helpmeet a measure of honor, namely, that which belongs to her as coheir of the grace of life. (Kretzmann)

Luther says, "The wife is weaker in body and spirit, more reserved and more easily discouraged; therefore, you should deal accordingly with her so that she is able to endure." (Stoeckhardt)

heirs with you of the gracious gift of life. Women experience the saving grace of God on equal terms with men (see Gal 3:28). (CSB)

Christ's work gives life to all who belong to Him. (TLSB)

Disrespect and mistreatment would prevent husband and wife from praying together. Such sins would also cause God to refuse their requests. Luther says, "A husband must bear in mind that his wife is a Christian too and is God's work or vessel. Both should conduct themselves in such a way that the wife holds her husband in honor and that the husband, in turn gives his wife the honor that is her due. If this were observed, peace and love would reign. Otherwise, where this understanding is lacking, there is nothing but aversion in marriage. For this reason it happens that if a man and a woman take each other solely for the purpose of sensual pleasure and are intent on having happy days and sensual pleasure, they find nothing but heartache. But if you have regard for God's work and will you can lead a Christian life in matrimony. Then you will not live as the heathen." (TLSB)

As Christians they both have their hope and faith set on the same salvation, and they should wander hand in hand to reach that glorious goal. (Kretzmann)

Husband and wife are considered as being Christians. If husbands are coheirs with their wives, then wives are coheirs with their husbands. The husband should not forget that they both, husband and wife, are hoping for the same salvation, are with each other walking towards the same glorious goal, towards the inheritance in heaven. (Stoeckhardt)

Christ's work gives life to all who belong to Him. (TLSB)

your prayers may not be hindered. Spiritual fellowship, with God and with one another, may be hindered by disregarding God's instruction concerning husband-wife relationships. (CSB)

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If the husband does not observe this rule, but attempts to lord it over his wife in a manner for which he has no authority, then the sighing of his wife will be an obstruction in the way of his prayers, her groaning will accuse him before the Lord even before the words which he foolishly considers a prayer have reached the Throne of Grace. The love and wisdom which the married life requires, especially among Christians, should cause all those that have entered into the blessed state of matrimony to seek wisdom from on high in daily, fervent prayer. (Kretzmann)

"being hindered" is not in the sense that something troublesome does not cross the path of him who is occupied with a matter or is on the way to accomplishing it, something so disturbing it will not allow him to continue or to arrive at fulfillment. Therefore, one should contemplate prayers which he directs to God along the way, prayers which may be thwarted by something that

does not let them accomplish their intent. If the wife under the husband has to sigh in weakness, her sighing accuses him before God, before his prayer, made ineffective thereby, even comes before Him. (Stoeckhardt)

3:1–7 God’s divine order calls men to love their wives sacrificially and to care for them. Wives are called to love their husbands and be subject to them. Sadly, sin affects marriage and families. We sometimes view God’s gift as a burden or hardship. When a believing wife speaks the Gospel gently to her unbelieving husband and demonstrates her faith in action, the power of the Gospel may lead him to salvation. When a husband truly loves his wife and treats her with honor, the family is strengthened, and all are blessed. When our families fall short of this calling, our gentle heavenly Father calls us to follow Him and is ever prepared to forgive us. • Gracious Father, sin has corrupted Your gift of marital and familial relationships. Grant that we do not fall into the ways of a corrupt culture, but by Your Word, stay true to spouse and family. Amen. (TLSB)

Suffering for Righteousness' Sake

8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. 10 For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; 11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” 13 Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, 19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. 21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

3:8–12 In 2:11–17 Peter addressed all his readers, and in 2:18–25 he spoke directly to slaves; in 3:1–6 he addressed wives, and in 3:7 husbands. Now he encourages all his readers to develop virtues appropriate in their relations with others (see “all of you,” v. 8). (CSB)

3:8 *have unit of mind.* See Ro 12:16; Php 2:2. (CSB)

From a common faith in Christ. (TLSB)

sympathetic. See Ro 12:15; 1Co 12:26. (CSB)

brotherly love. See 1Th 4:9–10; Heb 13:1. (CSB)

a tender heart. See Col 3:12. (CSB)

Compassion for others. (TLSB)

humble. See Php 2:6–8. (CSB)

Not exalting oneself in pride but considering others as Christ did (cf Php 2:6–8). Luther: “Here you see what true brothers are. They cling together much more closely than any friends do. We Christians should also do this, for we are all brothers through Baptism. After Baptism even my father and my mother are my brother and my sister, for through faith I have the very same blessing and inheritance from Christ that they have” (AE 30:96). (TLSB)

3:9 *bless* – Opposite of retribution. Do not retaliate for wrongs, but respond with the Gospel. Christ did this perfectly. (TLSB)

obtain a blessing – We bless others as God has loved, called, and blessed us. (TLSB)

3:10–12 Peter introduces this quotation from Ps 34 with the explanatory conjunction “For,” showing that he views the quotation as giving reasons for obeying the exhortation of v. 9. According to the psalmist, (1) the one who does such things will find life to be most gratifying (v. 10), (2) his days will be good (v. 10), (3) God’s eyes will ever be on him to bless him (v. 12), and (4) God’s ears will be ready to hear his prayer (v. 12). (CSB)

David wrote these words while fleeing for his life from Saul. Even then he remembered God’s call to act uprightly. (TLSB)

3:13 *Who ... harm you ... ?* As a general rule, people are not harmed for acts of kindness. This is especially true if one is an enthusiast (“eager”) for doing good. (CSB)

3:14 *even if you should suffer.* In the Greek, this conditional clause is the furthest removed from stating a reality. Suffering for righteousness is a remote possibility, but even if it does occur, it brings special blessing to the sufferer (see Mt 5:10–12). (CSB)

Whatever trials or sufferings Christians face, they know that Christ grants strength, forgiveness, and life everlasting. (TLSB)

no fear. In Isaiah’s context God’s people are not to view things as unbelievers do. They are not to make worldly judgments or be afraid of the enemies of God. Instead, they are to fear God (see Isa 8:13). (CSB)

3:15 *honor Christ the Lord.*† An exhortation to the readers to recognize Jesus as Lord and trust in him for strength in leading a God-pleasing life. Then they need not be speechless when called on to defend their faith. Instead, there will be a readiness to answer. (CSB)

Christian witness begins with a person’s own faith. We must know what we believe, teach, and confess according to God’s Word. (TLSB)

agiadzo – means to venerate or adore Christ. – The Christian self in you needs to reaffirm its faith every day – everyday rededicating your life to the Lord, every day giving Him honor and glory, every day praying for strength to stand up for the truth, every day listening to the Savior’s voice through His wonderful Word. And when your own heart is full of gratitude for being rescued

from death and hell, you will be ready to speak, and your speech will have death and conviction. (PBC)

being prepared to make defence – apologia means giving an answer to the skeptical, or derisive inquiries of ill-disposed friends, neighbors or co-workers. – As you look into the future, you know that in the months ahead you will have opportunities to share your faith. Think about what you might say. (PBC)

Gk *apologia*. Positive testimony and witness to the truth of the Gospel. Christianity stands up to scrutiny and investigation because it is true. Christians are to be prepared to tell others about this truth whenever they have the opportunity. (TLSB)

reason for the hope – Stoekhardt says, “even a simple Christian, in whom dwells the Holy Spirit, is able to hold up before unbelievers some clear texts and principles of Scripture which they cannot contradict. – When you talk to people, you don’t have to argue with them, struggles to make the perfect sales pitch, try to make God’s ways logical or reasonable, be clever, or take the burden of converting them on yourself. Just tell the truth. Just tell what happened, and how you know these things.

Others notice the Christian’s faithful response to adversity, which may cause them to seek the reason and thus hear the Gospel. (TLSB)

with gentleness and respect. The Christian is always to be a gentleman or gentle woman, even when opposed by unbelievers. Our apologetic (“answer”) is always to be given with love, never in degrading terms. – Meekness and a reverent fear. (CSB)

Defending the Gospel should not be done with arrogance or militance; God calls for a gentle witness to the truth. (TLSB)

3:16 *having a good conscience* – Given to us in our Baptism (v 21). (TLSB)

in Christ – The good conduct is caused by faith in Christ. Unbelievers can live a life of “good” conduct and do many helpful things but it is not motivated by Christ and his love. (CSB)

May be put to shame. Because it is shown to be obviously untrue and because the believer’s loving attitude puts the opponent’s bitterness in a bad light. – Insulters will be ashamed when they observe the humility and godliness of the good witness. This shame is good for them. By the grace of God it can lead to their repentance. (CSB)

3:17 *suffer for doing good* – For Christians, suffering is not harmful but gain. It is not to pay for sin. It is to honor God. Through it God disciplines the individual. Luther says, “for where God’s Word is preached, accepted or believed, and bears fruit, there the blessed holy cross will not be far away. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

God may put us in difficult situations to chastise, strengthen, draw us back into His fold, or to benefit others. He will never give us more than we can bear. Luther: “Here St. Peter again presents the Lord Christ to us as an example and always refers to the suffering of Christ.... Christ was righteous. For doing right He also suffered for us, who were unrighteous. But He did not seek the cross. No, He waited until it was God’s will that He should drink the cup. He should be the model for us to imitate” (AE 30:110). (TLSB)

Peter maintains that when we are zealous to do good, we rob our opponents of any real reason for treating us badly. (LL)

3:18 God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit worked together in the cause of our redemption. (TLSB)

once for sins. See Heb 9:28. – These words proclaim the gravity and finality of Christ’s words on the cross, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). (CSB)

Our sufferings do not atone for our sin; Christ made atonement for us by His cross. His resurrection gives absolute certainty that His sacrifice was effective. (TLSB)

the righteous for the unrighteous. Peter, like Paul in Php 2:5–11, refers to Jesus as an example of the type of conduct that should characterize the Christian. We are to be ready to suffer for doing good (vv. 13–14, 17). The thought of Christ’s suffering and death, however, leads Peter to comment on what occurred after Christ’s death—which leads to tangential remarks about preaching to the spirits in prison and about baptism (see vv. 19–21). – This should be motive for Christians to comply with the preceding exhortation to bear up well under suffering so that they, where possible, convert their opponents. (CSB)

made alive by the Spirit. Referring to the resurrection. Elsewhere the resurrection is attributed to the Father (Ac 2:32; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:20) and to the Son (Jn 10:17–18). (CSB)

Christ’s human spirit and body, separated in death, were reunited in His resurrection. Luther: “We are one sacrifice with Him. As He dies, so we, too, die according to the flesh; as He lives in the spirit, so we, too, live in the spirit” (AE 30:111). (TLSB)

3:19–20a† Three main incorrect interpretations of this passage have been suggested: 1. Some hold that in his pre-incarnate state Christ went and preached through Noah to the wicked generation of that time. 2. Others argue that between his death and resurrection Christ went to the prison where fallen angels are incarcerated and there preached to the angels who are said to have left their proper state and married human women during Noah’s time (cf. Ge 6:1–4; 2Pe 2:4; Jude 6). The “sons of God” in Ge 6:2, 4 are said to have been angels, as they are in Job 1:6; 2:1. The message he preached to these evil angels was probably a declaration of victory. 3. Still others say that between death and resurrection Christ went to the place of the dead and preached to the spirits of Noah’s wicked contemporaries. What he proclaimed may have been the gospel, or it may have been a declaration of victory for Christ and doom for his hearers. (CSB)

The weakness of the first view is that it does not relate the event to Christ’s death and resurrection, as the context seems to do. The main problem with the second view is that it assumes sexual relations between angels and women, and such physical relations may not be possible for angels since they are spirits. A major difficulty with the third view is that the term “spirits” is only used of human beings when qualifying terms are added. Otherwise the term seems restricted to supernatural beings. (CSB)

A better interpretation is that Christ in his glorified body “went and preached to the spirits in prison [hell]” to declare his victory over death and all evil forces (not to offer them a second chance)—especially to those further described. The absence of an article before “disobeyed” (v. 20) indicates that the spirits who refused to heed Noah’s warning were among the spirits in prison, but were not the only ones to whom Christ preached. They are a prime example of the unbelievers of all times. – (CSB)

3:19 Christ descended into hell to declare His victory over death and all evil forces. His power surpasses all others. Scripture does not teach that He offered these spirits a second chance for salvation. “It is enough if we know that Christ descended into hell, destroyed hell for all believers, and delivered them from the power of death and of the devil, from eternal condemnation and the jaws of hell. We will save our questions <and not curiously investigate> about how this happened until the other world. Then not only this <mystery>, but others also will be revealed that we simply believe here and cannot grasp with our blind reason” (FC Ep IX 4). (TLSB)

3:20 Noah preached to these spirits (unbelievers), who failed to hear and believe God’s Word. Thus they perished and remain in hell until the final judgment. (TLSB)

3:21 *baptism which corresponds.*† The flood is a counterpart to baptism in that in each water saves (Noah and his family by the flood; us by baptism). The flood was a figure of baptism in that in both instances the water that spoke of judgment (in the flood the death of the wicked, in baptism the death of Christ and the believer) is the water that saves (see Ro 6:4). Baptism is a means of salvation, a means through which the Holy Spirit produces faith as a gift of God because of God’s grace –The flood delivered the 8 souls from the destruction all around them. They were brought to an earth that was rejuvenated. Baptism transports the Christian into a new and glorified world which comes forth from the fiery judgment of the Last Day. Baptism is not putting away of the filth of the flesh which accumulates daily, but an inward cleansing and thus absolving the conscience from condemnation. (CSB)

The flood is a figure of Baptism. In each case, water saves. The world was cleansed when Noah and his family were lifted up by the flood. Baptism cleanses and raises us to new life. By grace, Baptism is a means of salvation through which the Holy Spirit produces faith (cf Eph 5:25–27). Luther: “Now baptism is by far a greater flood than was that of Noah.... Baptism drowns all sorts of men throughout the world, from the birth of Christ even till the day of judgment.... [Noah’s flood] was a flood of wrath, this is a flood of grace” (AE 35:32). (TLSB)

now saves you also.† Believers are saved by what baptism effects through Christ’s death and resurrection. (CSB)

appeal to God for a good conscience.† “Response” is a better translation than “pledge.” Baptism should result also in a commitment on the part of the believer in all good conscience to make sure that what baptism effects will produce a sanctified Christian life. (CSB)

We are forgiven and holy because of Christ. That forgiveness is applied to us in Baptism. (TLSB)

through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.† In the final analysis people are saved by the supernatural power of the resurrection. (CSB)

The life we are given in Baptism was earned by Christ. (TLSB)

3:22 *gone into heaven.* See Ac 1:9–11. (CSB)

at the right hand of God. See Heb 1:3; 12:2. – Jesus can and will vigorously guard and uphold his small flock upon the earth during the many hardships they have to endure. (CSB)

Not a physical place but a description of supreme authority. “Now He has ascended to heaven, not merely as any other saint, but as the apostle testifies [Ephesians 4:10], above all heavens. He also truly fills all things, being present everywhere, not only as God, but also as man. He rules from sea to sea and to the ends of the earth, as the prophets predict [Psalm 8:1, 6; 93:1–4; Zechariah 9:10] and the apostles testify [Mark 16:20]. He did this everywhere with them and confirmed their word with signs. This did not happen in an earthly way. As Dr. Luther explains, this happened according to the way things are done at God’s right hand.... ‘God’s right hand’ is no set place in heaven, as the Sacramentarians assert without any ground in the Holy Scriptures. It is nothing other than God’s almighty power, which fills heaven and earth” (FC SD VIII 27–28). (TLSB)

Romans 8:31-34: “³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”

angels, authorities and powers. See Eph 1:21; 6:12. (CSB)

Christ is Lord over all things and all creatures. (TLSB)

subjected to him – He declared victory in hell. Now everything is subject to him. Stoeckhardt says, Believing Christians, despite the fact that they still have much to suffer, are much better off than their adversaries, the unbelievers, who just because of their unbelief have an evil conscience and who, as it were, step after step see the sword of God’s vengeance poised above them.

3:8–22 In the midst of trials, we may be tempted to feel self-pity and despair. But God calls us to something greater. Jesus Christ is our Savior. He suffered and died for us. He rose to give us life. His power and authority is above all others. Our powerful Lord forgives us in our Baptism and gives us His life. He places us in the Church, where we may support and bless one another. And He blesses us by allowing us to tell others about the life we have in Him so that they, too, may share in His blessings. • “Almighty eternal God, according to Your righteous judgment You condemned the unbelieving world through the flood. In Your great mercy You preserved believing Noah and his family. You drowned hard-hearted Pharaoh with all his host in the Red Sea and led Your people Israel through the same on dry ground. By these events You prefigured this bath of Your Baptism. And through the baptism of Your dear Child, our Lord Jesus Christ, You consecrated and set apart the Jordan and all water as a salutary flood and rich and full washing away of sins. We pray through Christ for Your boundless mercy that You will graciously behold us and bless us with true faith in the Spirit. Then, by means of this saving flood, all that has been born in us from Adam and which we ourselves have added thereto may be drowned in us and engulfed. May we be separated from the number of the unbelieving, preserved dry and secure in the holy ark of Christendom, and serve Your name at all times fervent in spirit and joyful in hope. With all believers may we be made worthy to attain eternal life according to Your promise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen” (TLWA, p 364). (TLSB)