

1. **Introduction:** For the past few lessons, we have been studying Peter’s teaching about attitudes and actions and their impact on our interactions with the government, husband-wife interactions, and interactions with fellow members of Christ’s church. Peter sums up his teaching on attitudes and actions by giving a list of virtues that should be present in the life of all mature Christians.
2. **1 Peter 3:8-12:** *Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; <sup>11</sup> let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. <sup>12</sup> 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.”*
  - The first virtue he lists concerns how we should think. We should be humble, displaying unity of mind about Christ, having sympathy for others, brotherly love for other Christians, and a tender heart toward all (3:8).
  - He does not mean a uniformity in which everyone looks, acts, and thinks the same.
  - Believers should in general agree on the gospel and the essential beliefs of Christianity. We should be willing even in confusion and adversity to cooperate with one another and recognize the importance of each distinctive living stone in Christ’s church.
  - We should always heed Christ’ command to love one another.
  - By having an “humble mind,” Peter means we are to be the opposite of proud or arrogant or haughty. Modest is probably a good descriptive word.
  - We are to strive to do and be the best we can in all that we do. But we are to be modest about achievements and recognize that the glory belongs to God.
  - A mature Christian’s emotional life will be characterized by a tender heart, a sympathetic attitude, and brotherly love.
  - Other virtues he lists deal directly with what we say and do. We are not to repay evil with evil but rather to have a forgiving heart -3:9. We are to restrain and control our tongue, speak the truth within an attitude of love with a complete absence of pride or a “better than you” attitude – 3:10. We are to turn away from evil, do good, live a life of purity – 3:11.
  - Verses 3:8-12 provide a check list against which we can test our maturity.
3. **Distinction Between What and Why:** Christians may differ on how things are to be done, but they should in general agree on **what is to be done and why.**
  - Believers are to love life and demonstrate that love by keeping their tongue from evil and their lips from speaking deceit. They are to turn away from evil opportunities and instead seek opportunities to do good.
  - They are to “**seek peace and pursue it.**” Pursue adds a sense of urgency to the sense of “seek.” Pursue or urgently seek peace.

- A believer's love of life in Christ is the opposite of a pessimistic attitude. By faith we are to make the most of every situation.
4. **Not Easy to Achieve:** None of the virtues Peter refers to are easy to achieve or maintain. The most difficult to achieve is likely "restraining the tongue" and "cultivating a peaceful disposition." We often seem to have a built-in attitude of "my way or the highway," agree or stay out of my way.
- Peter clearly believes that, with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we can develop all the virtues he lists. He believes Christians can grow in spiritual maturity to the point of walking in the light of God's Word - not perfectly, but with God's help they will overcome inconsistencies and continue to grow in their walk with Christ.
  - The virtues, a mature Christian should have, are broad enough to cover all of life but specific enough to grab our attention in specific situations.
5. **Paul's Summary of the Law:** Paul sums up the whole of the Law as love (Romans 3:8-10), and Peter concludes this section by showing that all rules for human relationships can be summed up as being inherent in genuine love.
- The marriage covenant creates a special relationship between husband and wife. It is subject to the general rule of love but has added requirements we examined earlier.
  - The next verses deal with the fact that spiritually mature people, who live by the virtues Peter has just described, will provoke both positive and negative responses from the world.
  - Many in the world live lifestyles of conflict rather than peace, sin rather than purity, pride rather than humility, hatred rather than compassion, and thrive on gossip and hurtful talk rather than controlling their tongues.
  - Such people are offended by people who live godly lives based on the virtues Peter lists.
  - Peter now talks about that issue.
6. **1 Peter 3:13-17:** *Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup> 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, <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.*
- If you live with an eagerness to do good, people will likely be surprised and think you are a bit strange, but most people are unlikely to want to harm you.
  - Unfortunately, though, some will see us as an easy target for abuse. Peter says that if you happen to suffer for doing what you know is right, God will bless you in His sight "***For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer***" (3:12).
  - Even if you must suffer for it, stick to your righteous game plan.
  - Do not fear what unbelievers fear and do not be troubled or shaken in your faith by their threats. Rely on God's promises. Tremble before Him and no one else. In your heart

“honor Christ the Lord as holy.” He is the One who is truly in control of your destiny, no one else. As a believer, you are “in Christ.”

7. **Christ is Lord of All:** Having set apart Christ as Lord in your heart, prepare yourself to be an active witness, able to take advantage of every opportunity. You may need to defend yourself against untrue allegations of wrong-doing or misrepresentations of your faith.
- Always be prepared, whatever the circumstance, to make a faithful defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you.
  - Yet, your defense should be given with gentleness and respect even in the face of malicious accusations and slander.
  - There must be no attempt on your part to overpower the unbeliever with the force of human personality or aggressiveness but trust the Holy Spirit to quietly persuade the listener, praying that the listener will not be “dull of hearing.
  - In conversion, the indispensable role is that of the Holy Spirit. Our participating role is likely more important for our own benefit than it essential to the work of the Holy Spirit.
  - Having a good conscience does not imply sinless perfection.
  - Having a good conscience means a believer should genuinely strive to have and maintain a “clean conscience” before God. “Clean” means confessed and forgiven not perfection. It means avoiding conscious or willful disobedience throughout each day.
  - It means practicing immediate repentance and prayer for forgiveness (and hence a cleansing of our conscience) whenever we realize we have sinned.
  - Patiently endured wrongful suffering is such a remarkable exception in our world that it becomes a powerful testimony to unbelievers. This view is confirmed by the next verse which reminds us that Christ suffered unjustly that we might live “in Him.”
  - The parallel is obviously not complete at every point. Jesus’ suffering not only bore witness but earned our salvation because He died as our legal substitute, paying the penalty due for our sins.
  - The next passage (3:18-22) is notoriously difficult to interpret. No one seems to know for sure what Peter meant by portions of this passage.
8. **1 Peter 3:18-22:** *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, <sup>19</sup> in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*

- Peter’s concern appears to be something that happened during the time interval between Jesus’ death on the cross and His resurrection (after He was put to death in the flesh but before He was made alive in the spirit).
  - Jesus suffered and died for the benefit of the unrighteous. He bore the penalty due sins and did so in a way that was sufficient for all time. Though His body was put to death by men, Peter says Jesus was *“made alive in the Spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison.”*
  - Peter clearly considered his statement to be about something significant. However, though there has been much speculation, we don’t know what Peter meant by the phrase *“went and preached to the spirits in prison.”*
  - There have been a great many interpretations, but most are suspect, and all are disputed. It is safe to say that between His death on the cross and His resurrection, Jesus did something significant whose details have not been given us, details unimportant to our salvation.
  - A final “perhaps” comes from noticing that in verse 22, the subjection of angels, powers, and authorities is in the past tense, meaning that subjection took place before the ascension.
  - Perhaps Peter means that in causing Jesus to be crucified, Satan and wicked spirits tried to eliminate the One who was destined to crush the serpent’s head. They not only failed, but Jesus’ death brought about victory over sin, death, and Satan’s power.
  - During the interval between death on the cross and resurrection, Jesus may have proclaimed His victory to fallen angels and Satan. Peter’s reference then would be to fallen angelic spirits who are being held captive until the judgment.
  - Jesus would proclaim His victory and the failure of the Satanic plan to eliminate the Christ.
9. **Other Points About Noah’s Flood:** Peter made a couple of other points in the passage. He relates Noah’s flood to baptism.
- The significance of the “flood comment” relative to baptism seems to be that as the flood cleansed the earth of sin, Noah’s family was saved by the Ark placing them out of danger.
  - By comparison, baptism is a symbol of the inward spiritual reality of being cleansed of sin by the blood of Jesus, changing our inward nature and firmly placing us in Christ in perfect safety from the flood of sin.
  - Peter’s final point in these verses is that Christ has spiritual authority over all spiritual beings, good and evil – angels, authorities, and powers – all have been placed under Christ.
  - The next 6 verses return to the theme of the great value in imitating Christ’s example through willingly suffering if that is necessary to accomplish God’s will – even if the suffering is unjust.