

**HOW THEN
SHALL WE
LIVE?**



WEEK THREE: SUBMISSION, UNITY, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

Read 1 Peter 3

The chapter breaks down into these three themes, each of which can be challenging. We sometimes skim too quickly over things with which we don't feel especially comfortable. However, whilst they are not easy to achieve, they are essential to the growth of our spiritual life. As we have already discovered, Peter doesn't shy away from issues but addresses them head on.

Read verses 1-7 – Submission and Godly Living

Remember chapter two dealt with obedience to authority, both secular and spiritual. To become functional living stones we must live our lives according to God's ways and not ours. Some of the instructions in this chapter may seem out of sync with our modern society and its way of thinking, not least the relationship between husbands and wives.

You may recall from our study of Ephesians that Paul taught:

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church.” Ephesians 5:22-29

- Do these verses give a better understanding regarding obedience of wives to their husbands?

- If husbands are following God's word, then they will be prepared to do anything to help their wives lead a fulfilling life, and not be selfish.
- The example given of Jesus the Saviour sets the highest standard for a married relationship.

Submission in this context is not like the old wrestling bouts where competitors were goaded into submitting and losing the fight. This is considering the other person's needs and doing everything possible to meet them, which paints a different picture!

There is also the issue of women and their appearance! Most women like to ensure they go out looking their best, and there is nothing wrong with that. Here, it is talking about modesty and not being obsessed with clothes, make-up, and jewellery. Also, our 'real' self should shine through whatever we are wearing.

- What is your response to this?
- Does it mean that it is wrong to wear jewellery or extremely expensive clothes?
- For what should we aim?

Read verses 8-12 - Living in Love and Harmony

Peter describes this as: *being of one mind - sympathising - loving - having a humble attitude*. In other words, we should be in unity both in our family life and our church life. Remember what Acts 2:1 says: *"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."* In other words, they were united in purpose and the subsequent events proved how powerful that was.

I am sure the impact of that never left Peter. Unfortunately, the church in general today fails to see the importance of unity. If we could be united in purpose (does not mean we all have to believe exactly the same thing), we could do what they did in Acts and TURN THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN.

- Do we ever pray for unity within our own church and the wider church community?

There is that amazing passage in 2 Chronicles 7:1-2

"When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from the sky and burned up the burnt offering and the sacrifices. The Glory of the LORD filled the Temple. The priests could not enter the LORD's Temple because the Glory of the LORD filled it."

This was the occasion when the building of the Temple was completed, and Solomon prayed. So powerful was that prayer that God answered by fire and filling the Temple with his glory.

In the first chapter of 1 Peter 1:22 it says: *"Now you can have sincere love for each other as brothers and sisters because you were cleansed from your sins when you accepted the truth of the Good News. So see to it that you really do love each other intensely with all your hearts."*

- Do we understand how important it is to love each other and develop good attitudes?
- How often do we stop and think about what we say to people and how we say it?
- What must we do if we want God's blessings?

Read verses 13-22 – Suffering for Righteousness' Sake!

The idea of suffering is not an appealing one, especially if it happens when we have done the right thing.

One definition of righteousness is: *"The quality or state of being morally correct and justifiable. It can be considered synonymous with "rightness" or being "upright" or to-the-light and visible.*

- What does Peter say about the necessity of being able to explain about what you believe?
- Do you think verse 16 is right in saying people will see we belong to Jesus?

Verses 19 and 20 refer to Jesus going to preach to the spirits in prison – those who disobeyed God long ago i.e. when Noah was building his boat and only eight people survived the flood. It is suggested in scripture that during the time Jesus was in the tomb, he went down into Hades (or Hell) to preach to the people there.

There is no further detail given about this. It is interesting that he likens the people saved from drowning in the flood to water baptism, which is symbolic of God cleansing our conscience, and is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- What for you, is the most powerful lesson to be learned from this chapter?



Prayer:

Father God, help us to live Godly lives and be a living testimony to your love and sacrifice. Amen