

## THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

### 1 PETER 2:11-3:12, THE IMPORTANCE OF SUBMISSION

#### INTRODUCTION

##### A. Introductory outline of 1 Peter

1. Greeting (1:1-2)
2. The greatness of salvation (1:3-12)
3. Characteristics of the Christian life (1:13-2:10)
4. The importance of submission (2:11-3:12)
  - a. General principles on Christian conduct in the world (2:11-12)
  - b. Civic responsibilities of Christians (2:13-17)
  - c. Christian submission to masters (2:18-25)
  - d. Christian submission in marriage (3:1-7)
  - e. Christian respect for others (3:8-12)

##### B. Review of 1 Peter 3:1-7

1. David Walls, *Marriage is a two-way relationship. Both husbands and wives must fulfill their respective roles.*
2. Edmund Clowney, *Piety becomes hollow and false if it is not expressed in the closest of human relationships. Marriage is not a sacrament conveying divine grace, but it is the human relationship that God has designed to mirror the love of Christ for the church, and of the church for Christ.*
3. J. Vernon McGee, *She is there to help him. She is there to be a part of him. She is there to love him. And he is there to love and protect her. That is the ideal relationship in marriage.*

##### C. Introductory comments on 1 Peter 3:8-12

1. Peter Davids, *Peter is now ready to sum up his ethical exhortation on how to live properly in the world, and he does it by citing some general ethical imperatives for Christians in any situation.*
2. Wayne Grudem, *This section concludes with some general instructions on relating to others, especially those who may be hostile.*
3. Scot McKnight, . . . *this section records the general ethical principles required of believers who want to live circumspectly in a world that opposes both their lifestyle and existence.*
4. Roger Raymer, *First Peter 3:8–9 is Peter’s exposition of Psalm 34:12–16, which he then quoted (1 Peter 3:10–12).*

### 1 PETER 3:8-12, CHRISTIAN RESPECT FOR OTHERS

##### A. Practical principles for Christian living (8), ***Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.***

1. *Finally, all of you*
  - a. Roger Raymer, *Finally introduces a new section rather than giving a summary of the previous exhortations to specific groups . . . Peter now addressed all his readers (all of you) and gave practical principles for living peacefully in a hostile pagan culture.*
  - b. J. Ramsey Michaels, *Peter is obviously concluding not the epistle as a whole, but a specific series of exhortations.*
  - c. David Walls, *These verses present an ideal picture of the life of a church. The target audience (all of you) has expanded beyond husbands and wives to include everyone in the church. Harmonious living is displayed in the life of the church.*
  - d. H. D. M. Spence, *He turns from particular classes and relations to the whole Christian community, and describes what they ought to be in five Greek words, the first three of which are found nowhere else in the Greek Scriptures.*
2. Characteristics of a mature Christian that brings blessing despite the circumstances.
  - a. *have unity of mind*
    - 1) It means *like-minded, united in spirit, harmonious.*
    - 2) Consider Romans 12:16, *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.*

- 3) Thomas Constable, *“Harmonious” implies cooperation when there are individual differences . . . We should be able to work together as the different parts of an athlete’s body work together to reach our common goal victoriously.*
- 4) Warren Wiersbe, *Unity does not mean uniformity; it means cooperation in the midst of diversity.*
- 5) David Walls, *It describes an inner unity of attitude that makes division and mutiny within the body of Christ unthinkable . . . This does not mean the church will never have any differences of opinion. The variety of gifts and talents God has given his people mean differences of opinion are bound to occur. The key is not the differences; the issue is how those differences are handled . . . Christians should pursue the same primary purpose of serving God and extending love to one another, instead of being fueled by individual and selfish interests.*
- 6) Peter Davids, *This is not the unity that comes from a standard imposed from without, such as a doctrinal statement, but that which comes from loving dialogue and especially a common focus on the one Lord. It is his mind and spirit that Christians are to share (1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5–11), and therefore have access to a unity that they are to experience.*
- 7) Charles Swindoll, *Peter isn’t calling us to sing together in unison, but in harmony—which means we all contribute our unique notes in a beautiful chorus that far surpasses any single note.*
- 8) Edmund Clowney, *Christians find oneness of understanding in the gospel of the cross.*

b. *sympathy*

- 1) Hebrews 4:15, *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*
- 2) 1 Corinthians 12:26, *If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.*
- 3) Cestas Spicq, . . . *refers to a person who is affected by the same suffering, the same impressions, the same emotions as another, or who undergoes identical trials, and finally “sympathizes” with this other person who is in some sort of trouble, has pity.*
- 4) David Walls, *This word has a distinctly practical bent. Not only do believers understand the feelings of another; they act appropriately to assist that person.*
- 5) Edmund Clowney, *The love that binds the body of Christ together not only seeks the other’s good, but enters into the other’s needs and concerns . . . Christian sympathy does not exploit; it shares and supports.*
- 6) Warren Wiersbe, *We dare not get hardhearted toward each other. We must share both joys and trials (Rom. 12:15). The basis for this is the fact that we are brethren in the same family (see 1 Peter 1:22; 2:17; 4:8; 5:14).*
- 7) Charles Swindoll, *When we are in as close a fellowship with fellow believers as Peter has in mind, we will naturally affect each other emotionally, rejoicing when others rejoice, weeping when others weep. We will have a mutual interest in each other.*
- 8) William Barclay, *One thing is clear: sympathy and selfishness cannot co-exist. As long as the self is the most important thing in the world, there can be no such thing as sympathy; sympathy depends on the willingness to forget self and to identify oneself with the pains and sorrows of others. Sympathy comes to the heart when Christ reigns there.*

c. *brotherly love*

- 1) It means *loving a brother/sister in the Christian faith, loving one another as family.*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *“Brotherly” looks at the special love that unites believers (cf. 1:22; 2:17).*
- 3) Peter Davids, *Jesus commanded Christians to love one another—this was the mark by which a person could recognize a Christian (John 13:34–35). It is no wonder, then, that the virtue appears so commonly in Christian teaching and that Peter puts it in the center of his virtue catalogue.*
- 4) Edmund Clowney, *It is not simply a sense of comradeship, but the knowledge that we have been given new birth. We are children of the heavenly Father and therefore brothers and sisters in Christ. As we have been loved by God, so we must love our fellow-believers.*
- 5) William Barclay, *The simplest test of the reality of the Christianity of an individual or a church is whether or not it makes them love their neighbours.*
- 6) Scot McKnight, *Such a virtue characterized much of early Christianity, though because of human nature, it was always under threat.*

- d. *a tender heart*
- 1) It means *compassionate, deep feelings for someone else.*
  - 2) Ephesians 4:32, *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*
  - 3) David Walls, *It underlines feelings that come from deep inside a person, especially when one observes the suffering and pain that another person is enduring.*
  - 4) Edmund Clowney, *It is God who has in Christ shown compassion to us . . . God's compassion demands love like his, love that cannot be demanded, the love of free grace. Only God's love, poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, can move us to show his compassion.*
  - 5) Charles Swindoll, *This heartfelt compassion, closely associated with forgiveness, emphasizes the actions taken to reach out to the hurting.*
  - 6) William Barclay, *Pity is of the very essence of God, and compassion of the very being of Jesus Christ—a pity so great that God sent his only Son to die for us, a compassion so intense that it took Christ to the cross. There can be no Christianity without compassion.*

- e. *a humble mind*
- 1) It means *to be humble in your attitude toward one another.*
  - 2) Ephesians 4:2, *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,*
  - 3) Thomas Constable, *The person who is "humble in spirit" is willing to put someone else's interests and needs before his or her own (cf. Phil. 2:3–4). This would apply to God's purposes as well as the needs of other people.*
  - 4) David Walls, *Humility is an awareness of strengths and gifts as provided by God and a grateful attitude for them. It is also an awareness of areas of weakness and need and a desire to grow in these areas and the willingness to receive assistance with these needs.*
  - 5) Wayne Grudem, *A humble mind refers not only to ideas but also to attitudes and to general mental outlook—it is contrasted to pride in Proverbs 29:23.*
  - 6) Charles Swindoll, *People blessed with exceptional talents or skills fight a great temptation to promote themselves and crave the limelight. A true spirit of humility curbs from within the ego's insatiable appetite.*
  - 7) William Barclay, *Christian humility comes from two things. It comes, first, from the sense of creatureliness. Christians are humble because they are constantly aware of their utter dependence on God and that they can do nothing without God. It comes, second, from the fact that Christians have a new standard of comparison. It may well be that, when they compare themselves with others, they have nothing to fear from the comparison. But the standard of comparison for Christians is Christ, and, compared with his sinless perfection, we can never fully measure up. When Christians remember their dependence on God and hold themselves up to the standard of Christ, they must remain humble.*

### 3. Comments

- a. Peter Davids, *Three of these terms are used in the Greek OT and are also paralleled in the Dead Sea Scrolls; for example . . . the sons of light have "a spirit of humility, patience, abundant charity, unending goodness . . . great charity towards all the sons of truth." But the NT puts them in a new context, that of Christ, who embodies them all and enables them all.*
- b. Charles Swindoll, . . . *the apostle Peter sums up what he sees as the kind of lifestyle that epitomizes Christian maturity. As such, these virtues provide believers with a sort of measuring rod for spiritual growth. As a tangible, objective set of checkpoints, we can use them to measure the level of our own maturity in different areas of life.*
- c. Joel Green on Peter's purpose, . . . *that his audience be conformed to the example of Christ, in whose suffering and death all these qualities of character are on display.*

### B. The appropriate way to deal with difficult situations (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.***

#### 1. Christians are not to seek revenge or retaliate.

- a. Roger Raymer, *The second exhortation, taken from Psalm 34:14, is foreshadowed by 1 Peter 3:9, do not repay evil with evil (cf. Rom. 12:17).*
- b. Thomas Constable, *We should return positive good deeds for evil (2:23; cf. Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:9–18; 1 Cor. 4:12; 1 Thess. 5:15) . . . The ground for the Christian's good will to others, even our enemies, is the mercy we receive from God. God blessed us when we were His enemies (Rom. 5:10) . . . The blessing for insult response . . . is one in which we react kindly when we suffer ill treatment. It springs from an attitude of forgiveness. It has its focus on God and the promises of His Word.*

- c. Warren Wiersbe, *As Christians we can live on one of three levels. We can return evil for good, which is the satanic level. We can return good for good and evil for evil, which is the human level. Or, we can return good for evil, which is the divine level. Jesus is the perfect example of this latter approach (1 Peter 2:21–23).*
  - d. David Walls, *Evil and insult in verse 9 refer to abusive speech. This is speech with a snarl attached . . . Revenge is not part of the path a believer is to follow. This is quite an exhortation, since it comes from a man who chopped off a person’s ear in an act of retaliation at one point in his life.*
  - e. Wayne Grudem, *Christians are not to repay evil words with more of the same, but with the opposite, following both the teaching and example of Christ (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27–29, 35; 23:34; cf. Rom. 12:14, 17–21; 1 Cor. 4:12). The reason given in the gospels is that they ought to imitate the goodness of God even to undeserving sinners (Matt. 5:45, 48; Luke 6:35–36), goodness which is meant to lead them to repentance (Rom. 2:4 cf. Acts 14:17).*
  - f. Charles Spurgeon, *Good for evil is Godlike. You, who are the children of God, should seek to act as He does: “not repaying evil for evil.”*
2. The result of blessing others is God’s blessing.
- a. Thomas Constable, *The consequences of taking this approach in interpersonal relationships are getting a blessing, having a full life, and walking with God (vv. 9–12).*
  - b. Roger Raymer, *Peace is pursued by returning a blessing (1 Peter 3:9) when an insult is given . . . As a result, believers inherit a blessing (1 Peter 3:9; cf. 1:4; 3:7) . . .*
  - c. David Walls, *God calls the believer to model right living within the church, with special emphasis on harmony in relationships with one another. When this happens, the believer may inherit a blessing (v. 9) . . . God directs his hand of blessing toward those who model this loving, humble behavior.*
  - d. Peter Davids, *But Peter and the NT go far beyond simply not taking vengeance and leaving it to the Lord; the command is, instead of attacking or insulting those who attack and insult . . . to bless the persecutor . . . God, then, has already given Christians a blessing; Christians pass on what they have received.*
  - e. Wayne Grudem, *Verses 8 to 12 therefore teach that one proper motive for righteous living is the knowledge that such conduct will bring blessings from God in this life. These may take different forms but in view of the quotation from Psalm 34 they may be expected to include loving life, seeing ‘good days’, having God’s ‘eyes upon us’ to care for our needs, and having his ‘ears open’ to hear and answer our prayers (cf. Jas 5:16; 1 John 3:21–22). Nevertheless, in the larger context of the whole of 1 Peter, such blessings do not include freedom from opposition or suffering—the blessings of the New Testament age generally are more spiritual, psychological, and interpersonal, and less material or physical, than in the Old Testament . . .*
  - f. H. D. M. Spence, *Christians bless others, not in order that they should inherit a blessing, but because it is God’s will and their duty; and that duty follows from the fact that God has made them inheritors of his blessing.*
- C. Peter supports his instruction in verse 9 by citing Psalm 34:12-16, (10-12)
1. Introductory notes
- a. Thomas Constable, *To strengthen his case Peter again cited an Old Testament passage that supported what he said (Ps. 34:12–16). However the primary purpose for this quotation seems to be more clarification than proof.*
  - b. Roger Raymer on the historical, *He cautioned Christians to keep clear consciences when facing injustice, to endure the inevitable suffering with Christlike courage.*
  - c. Edmund Clowney, *Peter cites the psalm to describe the blessing of the life to which Christians are called. Those who practise the love of compassion, refrain from speaking evil, and pursue peace are blessed by the Lord.*
2. Peter’s emphasis from Psalm 34
- a. There is blessing for restraint in dealing with others (10), **For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit;**
    - 1) *to love life and see good days*
      - a) Warren Wiersbe, *This is an act of the will: “He who wills to love life.” It is an attitude of faith that sees the best in every situation . . . We can decide to endure life and make it a burden, escape life as though we were running from a battle, or enjoy life because we know God is in control.*
      - b) H. D. M. Spence, *St. Peter is teaching us to love life wisely, not with that selfish love which Christ condemns. And see good days. Not necessarily in outward prosperity, but in the favour of God; days of suffering may be good days in the truest sense.*
      - c) Warren Wiersbe, *A “good day” for the believer who “loves life” is not one in which he is pampered and sheltered, but one in which he experiences God’s help and blessing because of life’s problems and trials. It is a day in which he magnifies the Lord (Ps. 34:1–3), experiences answers to prayer (Ps. 34:4–7), tastes the goodness of God (Ps. 34:8), and senses the nearness of God (Ps. 34:18).*

- 2) *keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit*
  - a) Peter's characteristics of spiritual maturity in verse 8 are not found in those who seek revenge in verses 9-10. The admonition in Psalm 34 is to *turn away from evil and do good.*"
  - b) Wayne Grudem, *To love life does not mean that one has a trouble-free life, either in the context of 1 Peter (for the previous verse expects 'evil' and 'reviling') or of Psalm 34 (for Ps. 34:19 concludes, 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous' before adding, 'but the LORD delivers him out of them all'). It rather suggests an enjoyment of life and contentment in the life God has given, no matter what the outward circumstances (cf. Eph. 5:20; Phil. 4:4, 7, 11; 1 Thess. 5:16-18).*
  - c) Roger Raymer, *Turning from evil (1 Peter 3:11) requires that there be no retaliation for ill treatment. Jesus taught this same law of love: "If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39).*
  - d) David Walls, *Obviously, evil and insulting words can achieve a temporary victory, but they inflict pain and destroy relationships and the believer's testimony for Jesus Christ. . . . When believers receive insults and evil, they should not retaliate, but repay with blessing. This means several things: (1) You are to pray for those people who come after you verbally; (2) you are to treat them kindly, even with sympathy; and (3) you are to forgive them even when they have hurt you deeply.*
  - e) Charles Swindoll, *The mature believer tames his or her tongue, avoiding gossip, slander, crude language, deception, exaggeration, and all kinds of wickedness and folly. This reminds me of another psalm: "Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips" (Ps. 141:3). Those lines are worth praying every morning before a single stray word slips from our tongues.*
  
- b. Christians are to pursue peace (11), ***let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.***
  - 1) Charles Swindoll, *Purity from wickedness means turning away from evil inclinations, temptations, and even the sins that once beset us in our past. Instead, we are to replace these bad thoughts and habits with pure, positive ideas.*
  - 2) David Walls, *Verse 11 directs us to seek peace and pursue it. Peace means "agreement between people." That is what harmony is all about. Such harmony does not happen naturally. Believers must "pursue it."*
  - 3) Roger Raymer, *Peace is pursued by returning a blessing (1 Peter 3:9) when an insult is given. "Blessing" (eulogountes) here means to speak well of someone.*
  - 4) Warren Wiersbe, *"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). If we go out and seek trouble, we will find it; but if we seek peace, we can find it as well. This does not mean "peace at any price," because righteousness must always be the basis for peace (James 3:13-18). It simply means that a Christian exercises moderation as he relates to people and does not create problems because he wants to have his own way.*
  - 5) Wayne Grudem, *To work for reconciliation and harmony among people (rather than returning evil for evil) is pleasing to God.*
  - 6) Charles Swindoll, *Christians can quickly rob each other of peace. Instead of seeking and pursuing peace, more often we pursue controversy or engage in open conflict. Instead, shouldn't the servants of the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6) reflect something of that peace—both in their churches and in the world?*
  - 7) H. D. M. Spence, *Let him seek it as a hidden treasure, and pursue it as if it might escape from him.*
  
- c. Righteousness is blessed by God but evil is condemned (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.***
  - 1) *the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous*
    - a) Peter spoke of men whose prayers are hindered because of ill-treatment of their wives. Here, a blessing of God for righteous behavior is unhindered prayers.
    - b) Edmund Clowney, *The Christian's knowledge of the blessing that he will receive from the Lord encourages and enables him to bless others, even his enemies. . . . The blessing that they inherit reaches to eternal life, but it also fills this life with good days. Peter affirms this, although he knows that days of suffering will come (3:14).*
    - c) H. D. M. Spence, *God's people must turn away from evil and do good, because the all-seeing eye is upon them; they will find strength to do so, because God heareth prayer.*
    - d) Wayne Grudem, *The phrase the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous implies not merely that God sees what the righteous are doing (for that would be no greater privilege than that experienced by all people), but that he is looking after them for good, recognizing and meeting their needs (note the affirmations of God's timely care in Ps. 34:7, 8, 10, 17, 18, 19-20, 22).*

- e) J. Ramsey Michaels, *Those who do good have no reason to fear because God will reward their justice and punish any who slander or oppress them—never mind how!*
  - f) Charles Spurgeon, *There is not a righteous man upon the earth whom God does not see. He may be in a very obscure position, his circumstances may be those of poverty, he may be anything but famous. But so long as he is righteous, God delights to look upon him. He looks upon him so as to take care of him.*
- 2) *the face of the Lord is against those who do evil*
- a) Thomas Constable, *God will judge those who do any kind of evil.*
  - b) Wayne Grudem, *By contrast, the statement But the face of the Lord is against those that do evil is, in the context of Psalm 34, clearly a verdict of judgment, for the verse continues, ‘to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth’ (Ps. 34:16).*
  - c) H. D. M. Spence, *The Lord’s eye is upon the good and the evil. The apostle omits the words that follow in the psalm, “to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth,” perhaps because he wishes us to regard the spiritual rather than the temporal consequences of our actions.*
  - d) J. Ramsey Michaels, *Safety and vindication for the just means judgment on their enemies.*
  - e) J. Vernon McGee, *God has guaranteed to hear the prayers of those who are His own. He has not guaranteed to hear the prayers of those who are not His own. The only prayer that a sinner can pray is, “Lord, I admit that I am a sinner, and accept Jesus Christ as my Savior, and ask that You accept me in Him.” That is a prayer that God will hear and that God will answer.*

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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- Thomas Constable, *This quotation (vv. 10–12) appropriately summarizes all Peter’s instructions concerning proper Christian conduct during persecution (2:11–3:12).*
- Wayne Grudem, *Verses 8 to 12 as a whole should not be taken as evidence for final salvation by good works, for they are addressed to those who are already Christians and already have an imperishable ‘inheritance’ kept for them in heaven (1:4). Yet this passage does present a bold affirmation of the relation between righteous living and God’s present blessing in this life. As such it provides a needed corrective to careless, half-hearted Christians living in any age, and a powerful motivation to the kind of holy living to which Peter says all Christians have been ‘called’ (v. 9).*
- Warren Wiersbe, *The next time you think you are having a “bad day,” and you hate life, read Psalm 34 and you may discover you are really having a “good day” to the glory of God!*