



SUBMIT



HONOR



BLESS



DO GOOD



BE READY

# 1 PETER 3 FIRST, BE

**T. M. Moore**

## **The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*A ReVision Resource*

First, Be: 1 Peter 3  
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## 1 Peter 3: Introduction

Peter emphasizes the “be” part of our witness for Christ, beginning in the home. Wives must show a true and holy character as they submit to their husbands; husbands must love and honor their wives as they together live their witness for Christ.

In the Christian community as well we must work hard to show the world that we are a different people, who know how to do good and love one another, even when circumstances aren’t completely to our liking.

As we cultivate true Christian character we will grow in the hope of glory which is ours in the Gospel, and that glory will show through in everything we do, prompting some people to ask a reason for the hope they see within us. At such times we must be ready to explain why we and our Christian friends are so different, why we have so much hope in a world that everywhere militates against hope.

And in order to do this, we must keep our eyes on Jesus, remember what He has done for us through His suffering, and focusing on what He is doing for us now in His resurrected glory. As we keep our eyes on Jesus, we’ll be able to endure whatever the world throws at us, and to keep our hope in tact.

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1 and 2 Peter can encourage, embolden, and instruct us, if we’re willing to take the Apostle’s words to heart. My prayer is that all who take up this study will do just that. Thank you for joining us.

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## 1 Without a Word

1 Peter 3.1, 2

*<sup>1</sup>Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, <sup>2</sup>when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.*

**The Story:** We must always remember that, as Christians, indwelt by the Spirit of God, we are called first of all to *be* witnesses. “Being” a witness must blaze the trail for giving a witness with our words. Christians lead by their lives, in other words. Nowhere is this more important than in the home, when a believing spouse – in this case, a woman – is seeking to win her husband for the Lord. Her gentle, submissive, and servant spirit will go a lot farther with her unsaved husband than nagging him about church, harping about his sins, or throwing Bible verses in his face at every opportunity. These words should be read not as a guarantee that a humble life will win a hardened husband, but as a guideline for a living witness in the most intimate of circumstances. The advice is equally sound for every believer. Nor should these verses be taken to mean that we don’t need to be ready to give our spoken witness, either. If we’re faithful in living for Christ, the time for a spoken witness will come soon enough.

**The Structure:** Christians are key players in the divine plan to advance Christ’s Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Our witness is central to the progress of the Gospel, and we need to work at *being* witnesses as well as at *speaking a witness* to our loved ones and neighbors. The Gospel which we proclaim as light to the world will shine more credibly when our lives glow with the warm light of Christian love.

*Would your friends say that your life is an example of what Jesus can do in transforming theirs?*

## 2 Proper Adornment

*1 Peter 3.3-6*

<sup>3</sup>*Do not let your adornment be merely outward – arranging the hair, wearing of gold, or putting on fine apparel – <sup>4</sup>rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's sight. <sup>5</sup>For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their husbands, <sup>6</sup>as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.*

**The Story:** I don't think Peter is here offering a blanket proscription on cosmetics or jewelry – any more than he is doing so with clothes. Women should be clothed, of course, but modestly and decently. The same is true of all other external adornments. What really matters is not outward appearance but inner transformation. Women must work hard to be beautiful in their souls as the highest priority in life. If they adorn their souls with a gentle and quiet spirit they will be true children of Sarah. Let them focus on good works and not fear what unsaved husbands might do to them. Women have great power to influence others, especially men. They should make sure that the influence they wield is that which is precious to God.

**The Structure:** These are important words for contemporary Christian women. In our day, when men fixate on the female form inordinately, they need Christian women to remind them of what really matters in life. The Christian woman who cares more about what she looks like to a man than how she may influence him for Christ has her priorities way out of whack. She may make herself attractive to the men at church, but her neglect of her soul in favor of outward appearances cannot be pleasing to the Lord.

*How can women encourage one another to work harder at the inner person than they do on outward appearances?*

### **3 Show Honor**

*1 Peter 3.7*

*7Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.*

**The Story:** A woman is a weaker vessel than a man like a crystal goblet is weaker than a pewter mug. They can both do the same amount of work; you just have to handle one rather more carefully than the other. This takes understanding on the part of a man, a challenge many men find exasperating (Henry Higgins: “I cannot understand the wretch at all!”). But this is a man’s primary mission in life – to love his wife as Christ loves the Church. He must work hard to honor his wife by exalting her, commending and praising her, and placing her above himself, so that he can serve her as he should. The grace of life will flow in a marriage where men work hard at honoring their wives and wives work hard at adorning their souls. The man who fails to honor his wife will not be able to expect success in prayer. Honor your wife, though, brethren, and you’ll have a powerful prayer partner to help you in all the challenges of following Jesus.

**The Structure:** In our day the Biblical view of marriage is under assault and coming unglued. Christian couples have an excellent opportunity to provide a showcase of mutual love, respect, and service in the way they relate to one another in marriage. While we need to work hard in the moral and political spheres to protect the sanctity of marriage, nothing is more important than that Christian husbands and wives demonstrate the power of the Gospel in their relationships at home. When the world sees marriages that work for mutual honor, edification, and love, they’ll realize the strength of our argument for a Biblical approach to marriage.

*How can husbands be more consistent in honoring their wives?*

## 4 Called to This

*1 Peter 3.8, 9*

*<sup>8</sup> Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous, <sup>9</sup> 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.*

**The Story:** We hear in Peter's exhortation the ancient words of God's covenant with Abraham: blessed to be a blessing (Gen. 12.1-3). The Gospel brings the realization of those precious and very great promises (2 Pet. 1.4) in our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1.20). Thus, we who have believed in Him should expect that, as we gain those promised blessings, and they begin to affect how we think and feel, we will act toward others as a blessing as well, beginning with the members of God's household. Thus we must strive to "put on Jesus," as Paul might say (Eph. 4.17-24) and work for unity, humility, longsuffering, and love. It's not an easy row to hoe, but it is what we are called to as the followers of Jesus Christ. God blesses us with the riches of His grace and truth, and through us, He blesses the world – even though they may hate and revile us.

**The Structure:** In this time of restoration, therefore, the followers of Jesus Christ bring a new pattern of living into the world of self-seeking, self-interest, and every-man-for-himself. Christians are light, salt, and leaven, exerting transforming power gradually but truly, as they draw on the blessings of God and reach out to bless the people around them. Remember, the people to whom Peter was writing were experiencing hard persecution. How much more should we, in this freest of nations, make the most of every opportunity to join with fellow Christians and look for ways to be a blessing to the world!

*How does that "blessed to be a blessing" formula affect the way you think about your life each day?*

## 5 Zealous for Good?

*1 Peter 3.10-14*

<sup>10</sup> For

*“He who would love life*

*And see good days,*

*Let him refrain 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 prayers;*

*But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”*

<sup>13</sup> *And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.”*

**The Story:** One of the great mysteries of the Christian life is that we can know blessings from God that override and overcome the sorrows and sufferings we may experience in this life. It’s not clear how that happens, but, when we are “in” the blessing of God, we know peace, joy, contentment, confidence, and strength, regardless of how difficult, challenging, or painful our temporal circumstances may be. The way into such blessedness is through faith and obedience, beginning with rejoicing and thanksgiving. As we walk in the promises of God and rein in the sinful tendencies of our flesh, we are able to bring good and peace into the lives of those around us. God sees us as we do this, and He hears our prayers when we cry out to Him for mercy and strength. He will not fail or forsake us. He will bring His wondrous blessing to us, even though others may persist in wishing or doing us ill. For our parts, we must be zealous for what is good. There is thus a twofold motivation for Christians to do good works (Eph. 2.8-10): gratitude for having been saved, and desire to know the promised peace of God.

**The Structure:** I find it difficult to understand why so many believers want to separate the life of good works from the life of salvation. Many, many Christians believe that we are saved simply by uttering a little prayer of confession and faith. Whether or not we ever get around to the good works part of the life of faith is irrelevant to the question of whether or not we are saved. We’re saved, many insist, just by “believing.” But Peter, John, Paul, the writer of Hebrews, and the vast majority of the witnesses of Church history would differ, insisting with the Lord Jesus that the “proof” of being saved lies in the good works which come with salvation (Matt. 7.20). Without those works, James insists, any claim to possessing saving faith is empty, dead.

*Is there a difference between doing good works and being zealous for good works? Which of these best describes you?*

## 6 Lived Hope

*1 Peter 3.15-17*

<sup>15</sup> *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. <sup>17</sup> For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.*

**The Story:** There is power in a life well lived. The Christian's hope is to enjoy God in His glory and to show that glory to the watching world in every aspect of our lives (Rom. 5.1, 2; Hab. 2.14; 1 Cor. 10.31). When we are truly living in this hope – engaging with God in His glory and knowing the joy and power of His transforming Word and Spirit (2 Cor. 3.12-18) – our lives will show the blessings of God even in the midst of difficulties and trials. People notice that, and some will want to know how it is possible for us to have such peace, joy, and forbearance. We must be ready with an answer. That will take the form of an explanation for why we are the way we are – what we believe, how God has wrought in our lives, and why our hope has such sustaining power to bless. We must be gentle and respectful as we answer, not overbearing, preachy, or putting others down. By giving our answer we may suffer even more. So be it; the joy of the Lord will flow just that much more to us and through us.

**The Structure:** Peter understood well that Jesus has commissioned us first to *be* witnesses and then to *do* witnessing out of the context of a life well lived. God Himself is the power for our witness (Acts 1.8; Phil. 2.13), so we only need to concentrate on believing and obeying the Lord unto good works, regardless of the circumstances in our lives. If we will, open doors for bearing witness will be flinging wide before us every day.

*What would be your “answer” should someone ask a reason for the hope that is in you?*

## 7 Eyes on Jesus

1 Peter 3.18-22

*<sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit <sup>19</sup> by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, <sup>20</sup> who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. <sup>21</sup> There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God”, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.*

**The Story:** There’s enough here to spark theological debates for the rest of our lives, if we choose. But don’t miss the way this passage begins and the way it ends – focused on the work of Jesus. What Jesus has done for us is to have borne the greatest suffering any man could ever know, so that we might be forgiven and saved. And what Jesus is doing for us now, having risen from the dead, is reigning at the Father’s right hand so that we might press on in good works and be ready to proclaim the Good News that has changed our lives. Theologians differ about the meaning of Jesus’ preaching to departed spirits, and I won’t try to resolve that here. As for baptizing saving us, Peter perhaps intends to say that baptism culminates our declaration of faith and inaugurates us into the life of obedience, since, in many cases, baptism is the first act of real obedience a believer can point to and say, “Jesus commanded this, and I will obey” (Matt. 28.18-20).

**The Structure:** If we read this, the end of chapter 3, in the light of its middle (vv. 8-12), we will strive to avoid controversy and debate over the obscure and difficult parts of this text, for the sake of focusing together on what is clear and undeniable about it. Isn’t this the way Christians should always act toward one another? If we keep our eyes on Jesus and rest together in His work for us, we will make room for differing views about things that don’t pertain to the essence of our salvation. This, too, is part of our “being” His witnesses. The sad history of bitter church squabbles and splits over matters of interpretation not related to salvation has not been the kind of witness Peter envisioned in this chapter.

*How can keeping our focus on Jesus help Christians to bear with one another in areas where we cannot agree on what the Bible teaches? Does this mean that we should not debate such matters? We should, but how?*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. As you understand it, what is the relationship between *being* a witness and *doing* witnessing? How would you assess the state of each in your life at this time?
2. How does Peter envision the husband/wife relationship working out in the home? In what ways does this reflect Christ's view of the Church? How does such a relationship bear witness to Christ in the community?
3. Peter wants the believers to love and care for one another (vv. 8-12). In a local church setting, what should this "look like"? What are the primary obstacles keeping us from a greater manifestation of what Peter envisions here?
4. What is the hope of the Gospel? How should we expect people to "see" that hope manifested in our lives?
5. Would you describe yourself as "ready" to give an answer to anyone asking you a reason for the hope within you? What would that "answer" look like?
6. The work of Jesus is central to Peter's epistles, all of Scripture, and our calling to live for the Lord in this life. How should Jesus' suffering, reign, and imminent return affect the way we approach our lives each day?

*Prayer:*

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Thank you.