

1 Peter

1:2. “sprinkling with *the* blood of Jesus Christ.” This sprinkling of the blood of Christ is not referring to the new birth, or the cleansing of sin when one gets saved. Rather, this is speaking of a continual cleansing of sin throughout a believer’s life. The Greek of 1 Peter 1:2 literally reads, “In sanctification of spirit resulting in [*eis* # 1519 εἰς] obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” The obedience and sprinkling of the blood is the result of sanctification. If sanctification means the act of being made holy by God, this verse would be very confusing; we usually think of this sanctified state as the result of being washed by the blood of Christ, forgiven of our sins, and not the other way around (1 Cor. 6:11). Sanctification is not used only in this sense in scripture, however. It can also refer to the progressive holiness in the believer’s life as he sets himself apart from the world (1 Thess. 4:3-7; 1 Tim. 2:15; 21). This is its sense in this passage; this sanctification results in obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

That the sprinkling of Christ’s blood on believers is not merely a one time salvation event can be seen in 1 John 1:7-9 (NIV):

(7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

(8) If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

(9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

In the context of 1 John, to walk in the light is to acknowledge (confess) that one has sin (1 John 1:6); when we do this Christ’s blood purifies us from all sin.

The connection of obedience and sprinkling of blood in here in 1 Peter is an allusion to the Old Testament record of Moses sprinkling the Israelites who claimed they would obey all the words of the covenant (Ex. 24:7-8). The sprinkling of blood in the Old Covenant was not a one-time event either, but had two stages. First, there was the Day of Atonement, the yearly festival when the high priest would sacrifice for his own sin then sacrifice and sprinkle blood for the guilt of the people (Lev. 16). This was done to cover all the sins of the people that year. Secondly, there were all the other offerings that could be done throughout the year—burnt offerings, trespass offerings, guilt offerings—when one has sinned and felt separated from God. The blood of Christ in the New Covenant parallels this twofold purpose of sprinkling in the Old Covenant—there is the one-time sprinkling that covers the guilt of our sin and there is the continual sprinkling of forgiveness for sins throughout life. The difference between the Old and New covenants is that instead of a yearly offering, Christ offered himself once-and-for-all to redeem the people, and instead of cleansing our conscious with the blood of bulls and goats we can appeal to the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:25-26; 10:1-14). 1 Peter 1:18-19, which speaks of Christ’s blood “redeeming” us, is referring to a Day-of-Atonement-like function of Christ’s sacrifice, while 1 John 1:7-9 speaks to the continual sprinkling that has made the various sin offerings obsolete.

1:3. “who.” The Greek has the article *ho* (#3588 ὁ) before the active participle translated “given us new birth;” this is done for emphasis on “the one” who is doing the action. An expanded translation would read, “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the one** who... has given us new birth” (emphasis added).

“**mercy.**” Cp. Eph. 2:4. We do not deserve life, but God gives it in His mercy.

“we have been.” Cp. RSV.

“out from among the dead.” See Romans 4:24. Wuest: “out from among those who are dead.”

“new birth into a living hope.” For the New Birth to be seen for all that it is, we must see it in relation to the Hope. The New Birth gives us many blessings now, but they are small if all we have is this life without an everlasting future. We are still in our flesh bodies and have many problems. Yet, we have new birth into a living hope—we shall one day have new bodies in live forever in Paradise.

Another possible translation, although less readable, would be “birthed us again.” The NASB, ESV reading, “caused us to be born again” gives the wrong impression. God did not “cause” us to be born again, although He was the One who gave birth in us. The decision to get “born again” was ours.

The Greek word for “new birth” is the active voice, aorist tense, participle of *anagennao* (#3113 ἀναγεννάω). The active voice shows that God is the one begetting us again, he is performing the action of producing the new birth. But this does not show that he *caused* us to be born again, only that he performed the action of new birth once the cause was fulfilled. The scope of scripture indicates that it is our faith and free choice that causes us to be saved; once this prerequisite condition is fulfilled God gives us new birth into his family (cp. Eph. 1:13). For more on our spiritual birth, see commentary on 1 Peter 1:23.

1:10. “this salvation.” This is not referring to our new birth salvation, given at the time of believing the gospel, but the “salvation ready to be revealed in *the* last time” (1:5), “at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1:7).

“The prophets prophesied of the ‘grace.’” The grace they mention will be part of the Millennial Kingdom, and it has now come to Christians unexpectedly as part of the Sacred Secret, the “Grace Administration.”

1:11. The Millennial Kingdom is not well defined in the Old Testament, so the prophets searched for how long it was and what manner of period it was. By the grace of God, many blessings of the Millennial Kingdom, such as the holy spirit, have been given to Christians now.

1:14. “be conformed.” The word translated “be conformed” comes from the Greek *suschematizo* (#4964 συσχηματίζω) in the middle voice. Usually we think of the middle voice as the subject performing the action upon itself; e.g., “he hanged himself” (Matt. 27:5). However, this is the *permissive middle* where the subject allows or permits something to be done *to* itself, or *for* itself (cp. Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*). The sense would then be, “do not allow yourselves to be conformed to your former lusts.”

1:16. Quoted from Lev. 11:45.

1:19. “without blemish.” See note on Ephesians 1:4.

1:17. “Since.” The Greek reads “if.” This is a first class conditional sentence in Greek, which assumes the “if” clause to be true for sake of argument. Cp. NIV translation.

1:21. “out from among the dead.” See Romans 4:24. Wuest: “out from among those who are dead.”

1:22. “brotherly affection.” The Greek is *philadelphia* (#5360 φιλαδελφία), a compound Greek word made up of *philos* (a strong liking, a friendship; see note on John 21:15) and *adelphos* (#80 ἀδελφός), which means “brother.” It is the strong bond of friendship that exists between brothers.

1:23. “seed.” The Greek word is *spora* (#4701 σπορά), and it means “the sowing of seed,” and by extension, “seed” or that which is sown. When a person acts on Romans 10:9, and confesses that Jesus is Lord and believes that God raised him from the dead, he is “born again.” This birth is real, and involves God spiritually sowing his nature (or His seed), holy spirit, into the individual. Like God who gave it, the spiritual seed is “imperishable.” This should be a great source of comfort to every Christian, because the New Birth is irrevocable--it cannot be undone, and it guarantees salvation and everlasting life. God sows His imperishable seed into each Christian by creating it in him, which is why, upon being born again, each Christian is a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17).

“born again.” God’s use of “birth” to communicate what happens in Christian salvation is very clear. Birth is one of the few things on earth that is irrevocable--it cannot be undone. The use of “imperishable” and “birth” in this verse is one way God tells us that Christian salvation cannot be undone. There is no mention of salvation by birth outside the New Testament Epistles (the “Church Epistles” and the “General Epistles”). Jesus supposedly spoke of being born again in John 3, but the phrase “born again” in John 3 is a mistranslation. The Greek words in John 3:3 and 7, are totally different from the Greek word in 1 Peter 1:3 and 23. The Greek in John 3 should be translated “born from above,” as the NRSV and YLT do. In John 3, Jesus was referring to the resurrection out of the grave. For more information, see John Schoenheit, *The Christian’s Hope: The Anchor of the Soul* (Christian Educational Services, Indianapolis, IN, 2004), pp. 257-266.

The guarantee of Christian salvation is absolute, and one of the great blessings God has given to the Christian Church is our guarantee of salvation. Because the New Birth and our guarantee of salvation are hallmarks of the Administration of Grace, it makes sense that God would clearly tell us about it. He does exactly that by using three different words for birth, and each of them refers to the spiritual birth of an individual only in the New Testament Epistles. The three words are:

1. *Anagennao* (Strong’s #313; ἀναγεννάω) from the Greek prefix *ana*, “again” or “up,” and *gennao*, “to give birth.” It means to be given birth to again, or to be born again, and it occurs in 1 Peter 1:3, 23.
2. *Paliggenesia* (pronounced pa-lin-ge-ne-sia; the gg is pronounced as an “n g;” Strong’s #3824; παλιγγενεσία) from *palin*, “again” and *genesis*, “genesis” or “origin.” It means to have an origin again, a new genesis, and it occurs in Titus 3:5.
3. *apokueo* (Strong’s #616; ἀποκυέω) from the Greek prefix *apo*, “away from,” and *kueo*, “to be pregnant.” It means “to give birth to,” and it occurs in James 1:18.

As every parent knows, the predominant truth about a birth is the presence of a baby, who is “permanent.” God uses three different words for birth in the New Testament Epistles. The birth cannot be undone. Surely God would not use three different words for “birth” if there were not an actual birth, or if we could not apply the concepts of birth, such as permanence, to what happens when a Christian is “born again.” “Birth” is permanent, both in the flesh and in the spirit.

It is interesting that two of the three words for birth occur in the epistles to Peter and James, both of strong Jewish heritage, because one’s birth and lineage was extremely important to the Jews. In the Roman world, birth was also important, but a natural child could be disowned. In contrast, in the Roman world, an adopted child could not be disowned, so the book of Romans and Ephesians, both written to very Roman audiences,

say Christians are “adopted,” a powerful way to make the point that not only were we now part of God’s family, we could not be disowned. Our adoption is permanent. See note on Ephesians 1:5.

1:24. Quoted from Isaiah 40:6-8.

2:1. “and.” Figure of speech, *polysyndeton*, “many ands” (See Bullinger, *Figures*).

2:2. “the pure milk of the word.” The Greek adjective *logikos* (#3050 λογικός) is related to *logos*, word. There is quite a controversy over this word, with some commentators and versions attesting it should be translated “spiritual” (ESV, NIV, RSV), while some holding that “spiritual” does not make as much sense here and thus asserting that it is related to the Word (KJV, NASB, YLT). Robertson simply gives arguments from both sides without drawing a conclusion. Lenski argues quite forcibly that “Word-milk” (i.e., the milk of the Word) is the correct meaning, and the one to be preferred in this context, which refers to the Word in 1:23 and seems to make more sense in reference to the babies in the verse, who were in need of “the milk of the word.” We have gone with “the pure milk of the word” because it does seem to fit the context well, and is more concrete than “spiritual milk,” which is not clear in its reference. It should be noted that the only other occurrence of this Greek word is in Romans 12:1, where it is most often translated “spiritual” service. However, first, if it is “spiritual” in the context of Romans 12:1 it need not necessarily be “spiritual” here. Second, perhaps “service related to the Word” would be better in Romans 12:1 also.

“pure.” The Greek word is *adolos* (#97 ἄδολος), which means, regarding people, “without guile, honest” and regarding things, “pure, unadulterated.” Interestingly, verse 1 tells us to put away “guile (dishonesty)”, and this verse, verse two, tells us to desire the “guileless, honest” milk of the Word. The Word of God, unlike the words of man, contains no guile, no dishonesty.

2:6. Quoted from Isaiah 28:16.

“Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

“put to shame.” See note on Rom. 9:33.

2:7. Quoted from Ps. 118:22.

2:8. Quoted from Isaiah from 8:14.

2:9. “chosen people.” Quoted from Isaiah 43:20. The word for “people” is *genos* (#1085 γένος) and it could be translated “family,” “class/kind,” or “group” (Cp. BDAG). The sense of the word simultaneously points to our common heritage from God as our Father, that we are within our own class as we are the Church, and that together we form a distinct group. The translation “race” is incorrect and unhelpful; the people of God are not set apart based on any racial terms (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11).

“royal priesthood.” Quoted from Exodus 19:6.

“holy nation.” Quoted from Exodus 19:6.

“a people for God’s own possession.” An allusion from Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6, 14:2, and 26:18.

“glorious attributes.” The Greek is *arete* {ar-et'-ay} (#703 ἀρετή), which is a word with many meanings, including, “a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action; virtue or moral goodness; any particular moral excellence, as modesty or purity. Due to the many different meanings and shades of meaning in the word, translations vary greatly. “Praises” (KJV; NIV); “excellencies” (ESV, ASV); “mighty acts” (NRSV);

“fame” (Lenski). “Glorious attributes” is contributed by Meyer (Meyer’s Commentary). “Greco-Roman publics would in the main be conditioned to hear a stress on performance, which of course would elicit praise (BDAG lexicon).

2:12. See note on 2:15, “of foolish men.”

2:15. “of foolish men.” This is referring back to the Gentiles in verse 12, who speak evil against Christians as evildoers. The Greek has the article, *the* foolish men (Vincent, *Word Studies*). In their ignorance, men like this will speak against the church as evildoers in order to justify not becoming Christians. God tells us to live in such a way that evil speakers may see our righteous behavior in the very areas they are speaking against us, and that by our doing good we may silence their accusations and rob them of their excuses.

2:18. “household slaves.” The Greek word is *oiketēs* (#3610 οἰκῆτης), and it literally means one who is a member of a household (from *oikos*, house). However, it was used of household slaves and servants. In this context it seems to clearly refer to slaves, because it is contrasted with “masters” (*despotēs*). Furthermore, the situation with the *oiketēs* seems to be that he or she is not free to leave, but has to endure the harsh, perverse, and even dishonest ways of the master.

“reasonable.” See note on 1 Timothy 3:3.

“unfair.” The Greek word is *skolios* (#4646 σκολιός), and it literally means “crooked” or “curved” and was used of roads and rivers [it is the origin (via new Latin) of our English word scoliosis, a curvature or crookedness of a body part, often the spine]. However, *skolios* was widely used metaphorically to refer to people who were “crooked.” Exactly how any given person who was being discussed was “crooked” was usually easy to tell from the context of the conversation. However, in this verse an exact meaning is not being referred to, but rather the verse is referring in a general way to any “crooked” way a master was being toward a household slave. This makes the verse very difficult, and accounts for the multitude of different ways that different English Bibles translate the word. The meaning includes: being unfair, unjust, dishonest, unscrupulous, surly, harsh, unreasonable, cruel, etc. The Theological Dictionary of the NT captures the meaning in this verse: “In 1 Pet. 2:18 the term is perhaps a general ethical concept denoting the perverse master to whom slaves must still show respect. Yet there may also be a specific reference to pagan masters who are still enslaved in idolatry.” The immediate application in this verse is household servants, most of whom were slaves. However, we must see the wider Christian application of this verse, which is anyone who is subject to another according to the laws of God and man. This would include children, employees, etc. Christians are to submit to, and show respect to, those who are over them, even if those people do not actually deserve that respect by the way they live.

2:22. Quoted from Isaiah 53:9.

2:24, 25. Quoted from Isaiah 53:5-6.

3:1. “In the same way.” The Greek word is *homoios* (#3668 ὁμοίως, pronounced hō-moy-ōs), and it means “in the same way, likewise, in like manner.” This is one of the places where starting a new a chapter (Chapter 3:1) can detract significantly from the meaning of the Bible. Most people read, “In the same way,” but seeing the new chapter act as if there is a new subject and do not really take the time to ask themselves, “in the same way as what,” and then read back to the start of the subject, which is 2:18, “household slaves.” The section of 2:18-25 is about household slaves who have

“crooked” masters, and how those slaves should behave in a godly manner in less than ideal circumstances. So now 3:1 starts “in the same way,” and instructs women in how to behave when they are married and are in less than ideal circumstances. Thus what is said about the women in 3:1-6 is in addition to how God has told the household slaves to behave in 2:18-25.

3:2. “respectful.” The Greek literally reads, “in fear.” We feel it is most likely a dative of manner and thus is functioning as an adverb. Lenski, however, takes it as the general “fear of God” spoken in 1 Peter 1:16-18. He is right, though, that the behavior of the wife is not necessarily directed solely towards the husband but is also an act of reverence to God.

3:7. “You husbands.” This verse starts a new subject, that of “husbands.” The section and subject, living godly in less than ideal circumstances, started speaking about household slaves in 2:18, then referred to wives in 3:1, and now is referring to husbands.

“In the same way.” The Greek word is *homoiōs* (#3668 ὁμοίως, pronounced hō-moy-ōs), and it means “in the same way, likewise, in like manner.” When we read, “In the same way,” we must stop and ask ourselves, “in the same way as what?” To answer that question we will have to go back and find the start of the subject and then read to ascertain what God is trying to tell us at that point. Then we add that understanding to our understanding of what God is telling us in 3:7. In this case, the start of the subject is all the way back to 1 Peter 2:18, “household slaves.” The section of 2:18-25 is about household slaves who have “crooked” masters, and how those slaves should behave in a godly manner in less than ideal circumstances. As we continue to read, we find that 3:1 also starts with, “in the same way.” That section of Scripture (3:1-6) is instructing women on how to live godly lives in less than ideal circumstances, such as with an unbelieving husband.

We might be confused at first when when we see that this section of Scripture written to husbands begins, “in the same way.” This is due to the fact that there does not seem to be a connection between husbands and household slaves and wives, because the slaves and wives seem to be in a submissive position that husbands are not in. In fact, some commentators have tried to explain away the natural meaning of “in the same way,” by saying in this verse the phrase is only transitional and does not have its ordinary meaning. Commentators such as those assert that husbands are not to submit to wives (cp. notes in ESV Study Bible). However, the Bible says that husbands are to submit to their wives in some areas of the relationship. For one thing, in the Church, husbands and wives are to submit to one another (Eph. 5:21), and although men lead the family, the woman is the “house despot,” (see commentary on 1 Tim. 5:14; *oikodespoteō*, #3616 οἰκοδεσποτῶ, which means to rule a household).

In any marriage, the man has certain authority and accompanying responsibilities, and the woman has certain authority and accompanying responsibilities. A man who has an unbelieving or ungodly wife has to learn to live with her in a godly way just as a Christian household slave or godly wife has to learn how to be respectful to an unbelieving or ungodly master or husband. Also, if a husband is simply a tyrant in the house, and does not care about the family or listen to the wife and children, although there may be obedience in the household, there will not be warmth and the family love that really makes life enjoyable and places the husband and wife in agreement, something important in light of the last phrase of the verse about prayers. In fact, if the husband acts

like a tyrant in the house and does not show the mutual submission that the Bible says is part of the family structure, he is in fact ignoring this verse by not living with his wife “in a knowledgeable way,” and certainly not showing her honor, which he could do in part by recognizing the authority God has given her in the house and submitting to that authority.

“in a knowledgeable way.” The Greek is *kata gnōsis* (κατὰ γνῶσις); literally “according to knowledge.” The idea is “according to what you know and understand about your wife and her situation.” This can be ascertained from the context. The word *gnōsis* means both knowledge and understanding, the exact meaning depending on the context. It would not be a bad translation lexically to simply have “live with your wives with understanding.” However, in our culture today, to have “understanding” of someone in the context of an intimate relationship places the emphasis on the mutual mental agreement, accord, and understanding that the couple has for each other. Thus, the modern way we would think about the verse, it would mean the man would “understand” the woman, i.e., what makes her happy, what upsets her, etc. That is one of the meanings in the verse, but there are other important meanings that must not be overlooked. The problem in this verse is that “knowledge” must be understood in light of the biblical culture, not our present one.

The unspoken context of this verse is the biblical culture, which was very hard on women, and especially any women who did not have the support of a husband or strong family, and this is confirmed by the use of the phrase “weaker vessel.” The woman was the “weaker vessel,” the one who was less capable of sustaining herself without the support of a husband and family (see commentary on “weaker vessel”). For most of history women have been abused and ignored by men. At the time of Christ, for example, a woman’s testimony was not even valid in court. That kind of thinking about women ignores the very reason for their creation, that they were to be a helper suitable for man (in contrast to the animals that had been created earlier on day six and were not suitable helpers to man). The New Testament teachings of Christ and the other apostles elevates women in a way that they had never been elevated before. For example, the NT formally recognized that a woman had her “own” husband (1 Cor. 7:2). This negated the polygamy of many ancient cultures, and turned the acceptable sexual dallying of the men in the Greco-Roman culture into “sexual immorality.”

The husband is to live with the wife “in a knowledgeable way,” that means a true knowledge, not the so-called knowledge of women that was accepted as truth in the pagan culture of the first century, that women were inferior to men. The husband who is a man of God must ascertain God’s perspective and heart for women, and also know and act upon that knowledge. In Christ there is neither male nor female because when a person, either male or female, gets born again, that person receives the gift of holy spirit and becomes a spiritually powerful child of God. It is the gift of holy spirit inside a person that gives him or her a holy nature (cp. 2 Pet. 1:4) and enables him or her to walk in the power of the manifestations of holy spirit as set forth in 1 Cor. 12:7-10 (see commentary on those verses). To be truly knowledgeable of his wife, the husband must understand her physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. If he does, he will honor her naturally. If he does not, he should honor her because this verse commands him to until his knowledge grows to the point the honor is an effortless outflow of his knowledge of her.

In one of the sad turns in history, as the Church developed, the Christian men gradually again reduced the women to subservient roles in the Church, society, and even their own house, and these views were supported by misunderstanding of the text of Scripture (see commentary on Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 7:2, 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11, 12).

“honor.” The Greek word is *timē* (#5092 τιμή, pronounced “tee-may”), and it has meanings that relate to price and “honor.” It means the price or value of something, ascribing a value to something, or the price that is paid for something, and it also means “honor,” the honor that someone has or is given, the honor a person has because of their rank or position, or the honor that someone is shown out of respect or reverence.

In the first century culture, which was an “honor-shame” society, honor was a major part of the fabric of society. To be worthy of honor was a tremendous privilege, while to be dishonored was a huge disgrace. For example, to be asked to “move down” in place because you had taken the seat of one more honorable than you was a big disgrace (Luke 14:8-10). The Pharisees and experts in the Law loved the places of honor in the synagogues and at the feasts (Matt. 23:6; Mark 12:39). God will honor those who serve Jesus the Son (John 12:26). Christians are to honor those who deserve honor (Rom. 13:7), and elders who serve in the Church well are to be considered worthy of double honor (1 Tim. 5:17).

Because we do not live in an “honor-shame” society, it can be difficult for us to understand how it worked, but since the first century culture was an “honor-shame” society, we will not really understand the Bible until we do understand it. John Dickson writes: “Honor was universally regarded as the ultimate asset for human beings, and shame the ultimate deficit. ...humility was rarely, if ever, considered virtuous. ...Much of life revolved around ensuring you and your family received public honor and avoided public shame....Humility before the gods, of course, was appropriate, because they could kill you....But humility before an equal or a lesser was morally suspect. It upset the assumed equation: merit demanded honor, thus honor was the proof of merit. Avoiding honor implied a diminishing of merit. It was shameful” (*Humilitas: A Lost Key to Life, Love, and Leadership*, p. 86, 88, 89).

In the Semitic and Greco-Roman culture of the time of Christ, it was dishonoring (a shameful act), for a person to lower himself before someone who was of equal or lesser status. The thinking of the NT era towards a humble person was expressed well by Aristotle, who thought of a humble person, not as someone who was virtuous, but as “the weak and insipid man who poses no threat” (*Humilitas*, p. 89). When we understand the “honor-shame” society of the first century and see it in light of this verse in Peter, we can see that this command of God for men to give “honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel,” went totally against the grain of the culture. By giving honor to the woman, the woman must be honorable. If a woman was not honorable, then to give her honor was a shameful act.

Women were generally held in dishonor in both the Semitic culture and the Greco-Roman culture. They were considered to be physically, mentally, morally, and emotionally inferior to men. Thus, for a man to “honor” his wife in the biblical culture would lower the man in the eyes of the society around him. Thus this verse became one more command of God that caused Christians to have to make a choice between obeying God and following their culture (cp. commentary on Rom. 12:2).

We must realize that when God said in this verse that husbands were to give “honor” to their wives, the words would have had a huge impact upon both the men and women—a much larger impact that they have in Western societies which are not honor-shame societies and which do not think of women as inferior. For the women, this command elevated them in the eyes of their family and society. For the men, it usually dishonored them in the eyes of the society around them. But for both the men and women who were believers, it taught that humility was not a weakness, but a virtue.

Sadly, historically, this command to honor wives was ignored. We would expect that the pagan culture would pay no attention to it, but it did not take long after the original apostles died for the Church to again take the attitude of the surrounding culture. Thus, by the time of the post-Nicene Church fathers, women were again considered inferior to men. Any supposed “honor” they were shown, which usually showed up as either decoration (i.e., fancy clothes, etc.), protection, or the respect demanded of children and/or people of less status in society, was not the real honor of actual participation in the Church, society, and the family that God intended.

Men and women, and husbands and wives, are to honor each other, for we are all “vessels” created by God, each with its own abilities and purposes, none more valuable to God than another (cp. 1 Cor. 12:22-25; Rom. 12:10).

“weaker vessel.” The Greek translated “weaker” is *asthenēs* (#772 ἀσθενής), which means “weak, sick, infirm,” and the Greek word for “vessel” is *skeuos* (#4632 σκεῦος), which literally can refer to a container of any material, the context determining the meaning of the container, and it can also refer more generally to “things” or possessions (cp. Matt. 12:29). It *Skeuos* was used figuratively for the human body, which holds the soul (life), and that is its use in this verse and others in the NT (cp. Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:22; 2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:21). We must notice that in this verse, both the man and the woman are “vessels,” and thus the creations of God who need to be obedient to Him.

In this verse, the woman is referred to as the weaker vessel, and the meaning of that phrase is simple and straightforward: the woman is not as physically strong as the male. However, also the phrase was used in the Greek culture for the effect of that weakness; the woman was less capable of making a living on her own without family support (cp. notes in A. Nyland, *The Source NT*). Thus a woman without the support of a family or husband was often forced to survive by prostituting herself.

In the era before force-multiplying devices such as engines, and equalizers such as guns, brute strength was essential for most of the things that led to survival: personal protection, plowing, transportation, and building houses. The need for protection was especially acute in ancient societies because police forces were almost unknown. People survived by being physically strong and by being part of a strong social system, usually a family. Thus, it made perfect sense culturally to compare a person or nation that was weak and unable to protect itself to a woman, as Egypt is in Isaiah 19:16. A woman on her own was very likely to be molested, which is why Boaz had to tell his reapers not to touch Ruth, a woman without family protection (Ruth 2:9).

We need to understand that the Bible referring to a woman as the weaker vessel was not derogatory in any way. It was a simple truth, and it was designed to get the attention of the husbands who were reading this passage of Scripture and point out in a gracious way that a woman needed and deserved the help and support of her husband to be safe and supported. Thus in this passage we see God’s love for women and His desire

to see them supported in areas where they need it so that they can then graciously and fully contribute the things that they have to offer the family, the Church, and society. In contrast to the ancient culture (and many modern ones) in which men do not take the time to understand their wives, or make the effort to genuinely support them, 1 Peter 3:7 commands men to get to understand their wives and the situation they are in and honor them, rather than using them or abusing them.

One of the terrible things that has happened in the Church when it comes to women is that the male-dominated Semitic and Greco-Roman culture surrounding the Christians was more influential than the actual text of the Bible. For example, Aristotle asserted the women were in every way inferior to men except sexually, and that kind of teaching and belief permeated the culture at the time of the early Church. Thus it did not take too many years for the Church to be dominated by men who once again reduced women to practically the status of slaves. Women were considered physically, emotionally, and even morally inferior to men (the writings of the Church Fathers make this abundantly clear), and thus women were excluded from positions of authority in all facets of life, even in their own homes. As the Church developed in the early centuries, it was even thought that sexual intercourse with a woman negatively impacted a man's spirituality, which was a primary reason that the Church (later the Roman Catholic Church) came to have a celibate clergy.

Sadly, the attitude that women are inferior to men still continues in the Church. For example, based on Church tradition and the mistranslations of verses such as Rom. 16:1, 1 Corinthians 14:34, and 1 Timothy 2:12, in many denominations women cannot be ordained or teach. Furthermore, there are Christian commentaries that assert that because the Bible says the woman is the weaker vessel, women are inferior to men in ways other than just physically (“Weaker’...refers to physical or emotional weakness”; *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1983; “Women are weaker in body than men, weaker also in mind...;” *The Biblical Illustrator*, 2006).

If the Church is ever to operate in the love of God and power of the holy spirit, we must recognize women as the gift they are and that God created them to be. God created people either male and female (Gen. 5:2), and both sexes have giftings, responsibilities, and certain authority in the Church and family. The Church, the family, and society will never be everything God intended it to be until both men and women can and do walk in the fullness of what God has given them.

“giving.” The Greek is *aponemō* (#632 πονμω), and the definition given in BDAG captures the sense very well: “to grant that which is appropriate in a relationship, assign, show, pay.” It is appropriate for husbands to give honor to their wives for who they are and what they do even as it is appropriate for women to respect and submit to the husband (1 Pet. 3:1ff). This word, “give,” or “grant that which is appropriate,” again strikes out against any culture or system that says women are of little value. It is one more way God elevates women: He shows that they are worthy of honor, and it is a serious mistake, with serious consequences in the Church, family, and society, to fail to see that women are worthy of the honor God says they should be given (see commentary on “honor”).

“so that.” The Greek phrase is *eis to mē* (ες τμ), a phrase which, in this context indicates result, not purpose. It is perhaps more literally rendered, “to the end that,” but “so that” expresses the meaning well. The point is not that the man shows

honor to the wife just so his prayers will be better answered, but rather as he lives with his wife in knowledge and honor, the result will be that his prayers are better answered.

“prayers are not hindered.” It is clear in both the Old Testament and New Testament that if a person lives in disregard of God and His commands, that person will not receive the blessings of God (cp. Deut. 31: 16-18; Isa. 1:11-15; 58:1-9; 59:1-8; 66:1-4; Jer. 7:21-29; 14:10-12; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 3:9-12; 6:6-8; Rom. 2:13-16; James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). Jesus understood that, and so he told people that if they were making an offering at the altar in the Temple, but remembered that someone had something against them, they should stop making the offering and go be reconciled to the person. Then they could come back and finish offering the gift. (Matt. 5:23, 24). From that we see that Jesus understood Amos 5:24 and Micah 6:8, that righteousness and justice far outweighed sacrifice (i.e., religion, and all its “requirements”). Malachi 2:13-16 made it clear that if a man did not treat his wife in a godly way, God will not pay attention to his offerings, or accept them (Mal. 2:13).

Not only is the Bible clear that God will not look with favor on the offerings of anyone who disregards righteous and just behavior, the Bible also says that there is more effectiveness in prayer when more than one person is praying for something. “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they ask, it will be done for them by my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 18:19). A husband who does not live with his wife in knowledge and honor will definitely be hindered in his prayer life both because he is not obeying God, and also because he is not “in harmony with” his wife, so they will not pray well together. It is a “happy coincidence” of language that the Greek word translated “agree” in Matt. 18:19 is *sumphōneō* (#4856 συμφωνῶ) “to agree together,” and our English word “symphony” comes from the Greek word *sumphōneō*. When the husband and wife live together with love, respect, honor, and knowledge and understanding of each other, then they are like a beautiful symphony, each instrument different, but playing in tune with the other and making music together that is more wonderful than either instrument could make on its own. In light of the truth revealed in this verse, it is stupid for a man to live in disharmony with his wife if something could make the marriage better (sometimes this means the marriage needs the help of a trained counselor).

The context of this verse shows that “prayers” (*proseuchē*; #4335 προσευχή, the general word for prayer to God) is everything that any husband and wife would pray for in the course of marriage and life. Some commentators have suggested that the context dictates that the primary meaning of prayers here is prayers for the salvation of the wife (since 3:1-6 seem to be primarily about an unsaved man, so this must be prayers for the wife), but that is not the meaning of the verse. The women were living in a culture that already elevated men, so Peter would not have to make the point that husbands deserved honor. Verse seven notes that the wife is already an “heir together of the grace of [everlasting] life.” The men were living in a culture which so disregarded women that it would not occur to the man to give the woman honor, or consider his wife his primary prayer partner, which of course she is. She and the husband are “one flesh,” and in the eyes of God there is no more perfect prayer partner, nor are two people supposed to be more in agreement, more “in harmony,” than a man and his wife. This verse is not saying the man is to honor his wife so his prayers for her salvation are answered, it is saying that

a man is to dwell with his wife in knowledge and honor so that she is in fact in harmony with him and his (and her) prayers are not hindered.

It is stated in the verse in the word “your” (plural in the Greek), that if the man and wife are not in harmony, her prayers are hindered too. But it should not be lost on us that as the head of the family, God places upon the husband the primary responsibility for there being harmony in the marriage. Nevertheless, wives can be disobedient too, and if a wife is in disharmony with her husband, she should not resist God, but do what it takes to come into harmony with him.

In closing the commentary on 3:7, it bears repeating and clarifying that it is commonly taught that the New Testament is oppressive towards women. Nothing could be further from the truth. The New Testament, especially in light of the non-Christian first century cultural attitudes toward woman, liberated women and elevated them to a status that they had never enjoyed before.

3:10-12. Quoted from Ps. 34:12-16.

3:10. “deceitful speech.” Cp. BDAG’s translation, “speak deceitfully” and NIV: “deceitful speech.” Literally, the Greek reads, “keep your lips... from not to speak deceit.” The word for deceit, *dolos* (#1388 δόλος), is a noun, so the sense is, do not speak any *deceitful thing*. The translation “keep your lips from deceitful speech” captures the meaning of “do not speak any deceitful thing.”

3:13. “zealots for that which is good.” In the Greek the word for “zealots” is a noun and not the verb form. However, most versions read something like, “be zealous for what is good.” Instead of calling us to a state of mind, “being zealous” (verb), He is calling us to the identity of being a zealot (noun)—not in the sense of being ultranationalists, but rather, enthusiasts for what is good.

3:14. “do not fear them.” There is a question as to whether the genitive in this phrase is subjective (“their fear,” cp. KJV; NASB; NIV) or objective (“fear them,” cp. ESV; NAB; NET). The context of 1 Peter, however, strongly points towards the objective meaning, “do not fear them.” The book is very much about being persecuted and enduring under suffering, in the immediate context Peter is speaking of those who would “harm you” for doing good and “suffering for righteousness sake.” It would be a strange break in thought to say “do not fear what they fear,” but an encouragement to not fear *them* makes perfect sense. Interestingly, this phrase is alluding to Isaiah 8:12, which clearly has the subjective sense of not fearing what other people fear. In this case Peter is not directly quoting from the O.T. passage but using its language to make a new point in his own context (Lenski).

Quoted from Isaiah 8:12.

3:16. “put to shame.” See note on Rom. 9:33.

3:17. “if the will of God should will it.” It may sometimes be the will of God for one to suffer for doing good. The next verse, 3:18, explains why by using an explanatory “for,” showing how it was God’s will for Christ to suffer to bring about the much greater good of bringing us to God (cp. 4:1). The Greek of this phrase employs the figure of speech polyptoton—“if the will of God should will it” (Cp. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*). This structure deemphasizes God’s role in willing that one should suffer for doing good; it could have easily been written with *theos* (God) as the subject, “if God wills.” But by not making God the subject but rather the will of God the subject, He is a step removed from the action, giving the sense that He is slightly distanced from the statement. The philosophical notion of *primary* and *secondary will* is helpful for understanding this

verse—God’s primary will is that no one should suffer, ever; but His secondary will is that, given the fallen situation, suffering must be permitted at times to achieve the greatest good. It is not contradictory for one to hold both wills simultaneously. Interestingly, God can *will* for one to suffer for good but not *want* it to happen.

Furthermore, the verb for “will,” *thelō* (#2309 θέλω), is in the optative mood, expressing scant possibility. Specifically, this is an instance of the Conditional Optative, “used to indicate a *possible* condition in the future, usually a remote possibility” (cp. Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*). This verse shows us that it may be the will of God that one suffer for doing good and yet simultaneously portrays this as a remote possibility, reminding us that we must never be too quick to claim God’s will as the cause of our suffering. (See also 1 Pet. 4:19).

3:19. “heralded *his* victory.” Jesus was “put to death in *the* flesh, but made alive in *the* spirit” as per 1 Pet. 3:18. This is in accordance with the pattern revealed in 1 Corinthians 15. The flesh, which is corruptible, is changed (1 Cor. 15:52). The natural body is sown in death, and what is raised is a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:44). Jesus was raised from the dead as a “life giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45), or “in *the* spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18). What did Jesus do when he was raised from the dead and had a new, spiritual body? Sometime after he was raised from the dead, he went to the “prison” where the spirits who had defied God before the Flood of Noah were held (the prison is called Tartarus; see note on 2 Pet. 2:4). In Tartarus, Jesus “heralded” his resurrection and victory to the imprisoned demons. The word “heralded” is the Greek word *kerussō*, “to be a herald; to officiate as herald; to proclaim after the manner of a herald...to publish, proclaim openly something which has been done” (Thayer). To “proclaim victory” (Gingrich).

It is sometimes taught that Jesus went to see the spirits in prison during the three days and nights between his death and resurrection, but that is clearly not the case. During that time he was “dead;” not alive in any form. 1 Peter 3:18 and 19 teach that he went “in spirit.” He got his spiritual body and became a life-giving spirit at his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:45), so it was after his resurrection that he went to Tartarus. Furthermore, he did not “preach” to these imprisoned demons, as if they could have believed and been released. They had defied God in the days of Noah by working to create a fallen race (the Nephilim; see note on “when they sinned” 2 Peter 2:4), and were imprisoned as a result. They did their best to keep the Messiah from coming and to defeat God, but the Messiah came and achieved victory for God, so Jesus went to the prison and heralded his victory to the demons there.

4:1. “the same way of thinking” The Greek is *ennoia* (#1771 ἐννοια), and means “the content of mental processing, thought, knowledge, insight (BDAG Lexicon). For this verse BDAG has “same way of thinking.” This general definition is very good in this context. The KJV “mind” is not as good, because “mind” is generally translated from the Greek *nous*, and refers to the mind itself, not specifically the products of the mind. Also, while good, “purpose” (NASB); “attitude” (NIV); and “intention” (NRSV); all seem too specific, although the use of one English word to translate one Greek word is always a valuable goal and should be adhered to when possible.

4:4. “reckless actions.” See commentary on “recklessness” in Titus 1:6.

“**defame.**” The Greek verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημῶ) means showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. (For more on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3).

4:7. “the end [*telos*] of all things.” This is not referring to the *utter end* of all things, because life will go on in the new kingdom. The word *teleute* would have been the proper word for a temporal end; but the word here is *telos*, the “goal” (Lenski). BDAG defines *telos* as, “last in a series; the last part of a process; the goal toward which a movement is being directed, end, goal, outcome.” The last part of the series of God’s great end goal has come; we are in the last part of the process, the Grace Administration, waiting for nothing but Christ’s return. (Compare NIV’s translation of *telos* in 1 Cor. 10:11: “The fulfillment [*telos*] of the ages has come.”)

4:8. Quoted from Prov. 10:12.

4:10. “many-sided.” The Greek is *poikilos* (#4164 ποικίλος) and means, pertaining to that which exists in a variety of kinds or various modes, diversified, manifold, varied. “Many-sided communicates very well, and was used by Charles Williams in his New Testament. A less literal, but meaningful translation, comparing the grace of God to a gemstone, would be “many faceted.”

4:18. Quoted from the LXX version of Prov. 11:31. The Hebrew reads, “If the righteous will be rewarded in the earth, How much more the wicked and the sinner!” (NASB). See Lenski.

5:5. Quoted from Prov. 3:34.

5:10. “restore.” *Katartizō* (#2675 καταρτίζω) can mean to “restore to a former condition” or “to prepare; to outfit” (BDAG). In this context it means to restore—“after one has suffered for a little while,” God will put him into proper condition again, and then do more: confirm, strengthen, and establish him.