

1 Peter 3

Written by K B Napier
Thursday, 25 August 2016 10:43

Verses 1-4

1.

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

2.

While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

3.

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

4.

But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

“*Likewise*”, *homoios*: equally, or in the same manner, wives must be “*in subjection*” to their own husbands. No leeway is given to modernist wives who shun the idea of anything that appears to make them subject to the authority of men! The word ‘likewise’ means to resemble something else. In this case, our relationship with Christ, putting ourselves under His command, as the word is used to link the previous chapter with this one.

Note that ‘wife’ is taken for granted. No other union of man and woman is envisaged or accepted. And same-sex unions are not even to be considered in any situation except sin. The word *gune* can mean a virgin, or any woman, or a widow. In this text it means a married woman, as the context clearly shows.

Wives must be ‘in subjection’, *hupotasso*, to their husbands. That is, subordinate to, to obey and to put one’s self under the husband’s control. This is not as bad as it might seem, for it includes the idea of giving the self to another, willingly, cooperating and assisting by taking part

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of a burden. The reason for this subjection is not that a woman is inferior in status, but because it is the order of creation, where the female is second to the male and subject to him. You will note that subjection is set against the responsibility of the husband to act properly – he is not to lord it over his wife!

The wife is subject to her 'husband', *aner*: and this includes sexual union. (Same-sex sins do not even enter the conversation and are not legitimate, but sinful). She is not to be controlled by another male, only her 'own', *idios*, husband. Thus, once a woman marries, her father passes the responsibility of care on to the husband. From that moment, the wife must listen only to her own husband (see later qualifications for this). The reason for this is specific and interesting. By her behaviour and purity the wife can be an example of Christian virtue, even if the husband is unsaved and has not heard the Gospel. (Note: no Christian may marry an unsaved person).

This ought to be the way for us all, male and female. Anyone can talk about the Gospel, but how many of us live it out in practise and in our everyday lives? If there is a discrepancy, onlookers will soon pick it up and reject what we say, calling us hypocrites.

This is emphasised by the word 'won', *kerdaino*, meaning to win someone over to the kingdom of Christ. The good wife, then, can be instrumental in the salvation of her husband. You will note from this text that it does not speak about marriage only to another saved person, because it is not the point being discussed. It is about the proper place and behaviour of a married woman.

Peter advises against using falsity to lure a husband into giving her favour. He is talking about the natural purity and holiness of a true Christian woman, whose balanced character will win any man to her side. This is because what makes a woman beautiful is not how she looks, especially not looks obtained by expensive bottles and potions! Nor does it refer to sexual acts which, outside of marriage, are always tawdry and sinful, taking away what should be a beautiful union. True beauty comes from the soul, from humour and love, care and genuine gentleness. There is nothing wrong with a woman looking after herself. But, Peter is here referring to falsity and things that are used to compensate for true beauty. Sadly, both husbands and wives are fooled in modern times, by advertisements and film stars, and the supposed 'need' to always look young and 'sexy' (because most of society, including many Christians, is now based on sex). When do women stop using 'wrinkle-fillers', hair colours to cover grey, increasing amounts of make-up... etc.? It is all vanity.

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'Adorning' is the interesting word *kosmos*. It can refer to the world, or to the heavenly host, the stars. It can even mean the 'ungodly multitude'. Peter is using it to mean 'of believers' and 'ornament' or 'decoration'. But, Peter does not want women to rely on 'outward adornment', *exother*; what is seen on the outside. He gives examples: plaiting the hair, braiding the hair elaborately, *emploke*

.

This might seem innocuous enough, but Peter is thinking of the way unsaved women spend a very long time (and money) on their looks. Nowadays, so do men, which tends to make them effeminate in mind, if not in appearance! What does it tell you? It says they are being vain. Sitting in front of a mirror doing ever more elaborate things with the body, hair and face, is such a waste of time and effort. It suggests that the person thinks more of him or her self than of others. Constant preening is self-love. Do you walk past a mirror without checking yourself?

Far better to be 'natural' and have a lovely character, as Peter is advising, because this is the genuine person. The 'wearing of gold' is not as we know it today, but refers to women putting on many bangles and studs, on the head and body. Both this and elaborate hairdressing were the usual domain of prostitutes. In particular, piercing the ears and nose to wear rings and studs, which was considered to be pagan, and still is.

Peter adds the "*putting on of apparel*". We must all wear clothing, so what does he mean? Obviously, he is not against women wearing ordinary clothing. He is talking about clothes used to seduce (see young women attending clubs today!), or clothing that is expensive and suggests the status of the wearer. Today, many women wear clothing that is revealing, flimsy, without regard for being demure. In Peter's day, when this was done by young unmarried women ('virgins'), it was completely inappropriate and more suited to pagan temple prostitutes. Peter warns against this as an aid to securing the attentions of men. And some men are just as bad, showing off their bodies simply to secure the attention of females. Why not just act with humility and purity?

Women, then, should show their beauty in character rather than in outward appearance. I am saddened to see how far men and women have gone today. Forms of dancing in particular are frightening in their candid and open nature, where women's actions are, to say the least, very provocative and highly sexual. This has the effect of seducing men, and bringing about sexual actions. The whole 'rock' scene is designed for this very purpose, as singers, musicians and DJ's will admit. The whole scene should be shunned by Christians of any age, let alone youngsters, because it brings about a sexually promiscuous way of thinking.

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Thus, Peter advises that women should attract their menfolk with the *“hidden man of the heart”*. This is not how modern Christians act and think, but it is a shame, because they have been seduced both by their own sexual feelings and by the ways of the world. (As I have said elsewhere, illicit sex is the easiest sin to commit). Peter says that this goodness of the heart is *“not corruptible”*

, because it refers to the saved person. It is relatively easy to attract a woman or a man by acting in a sexually provocative way! But, it is far better to attract by simply being holy... using the

“ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.”

And a good heart with humour.

To be ‘meek’ is to be *praus*: gentle and mild in spirit. It is not about how we act toward each other, but how we act toward God. When we act properly toward God, it has an effect on our souls and on the way we act toward fellow human beings. To be meek is to accept what God gives with patience and humility, and not to argue against Him in any circumstance.

Women today like to ‘assert’ themselves, but this is not God’s way. A Christian woman will be subject to her husband and ‘silent’ in the churches except in suitable circumstances. Such a woman will not raise up her own self-interest but will live to serve her husband and, by doing that, serve God. Only the Holy Spirit can cause a woman to live this way. This does not mean a married woman must dismiss her own wishes or be a ‘skivvy’!

To be ‘quiet’, *hesuchios*, is to live in tranquillity. It does not mean all situations will always be calm and tranquil. It means that whatever the situation, the Christian wife will be calm and tranquil, knowing that the Lord will deliver. It also means to live in peace. Automatically, this rejects the actions of a woman who is always arguing, or full of temper, or nagging!

Peter says that all these good attributes of a woman are “of great price” to God. That is, *polutele*
s :
precious, excellent, of superlative value. Modern women have the idea that they must be equal to men in every way. They ‘take control’ and insist on their own way of life, even if married. In the sexual sense this has led to an increase in ‘women’s rights’ and to perverse sexuality, such as lesbianism, the ultimate in ‘woman power’ but declared wicked by God.

Verses 5&6

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1.

“For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

2.

Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.”

Peter points out that the behaviour he is suggesting, was the behaviour of the wives of the patriarchs. A good and holy wife is the ultimate prize of a good husband. Sara, and all wives after her, obeyed their husbands, thereby confirming their holiness before God and their goodness before men. See how Sara even called Abraham ‘lord’.

This will no doubt catch in the throats of many modern women! But, it shows, very clearly, a woman who is at peace with God and with her husband. To call him ‘lord’, *kurios*, was to show respect and honour. It shows who is master in the household. This is not an option for Christian women, but a duty and an expression of their holiness and goodness. Do Christian husbands deserve this kind of respect? Not always. But, the woman must show respect anyway (though calling the husband ‘lord’ might not be suitable for our day!).

Peter says that modern women must follow the example of Sara, “*as long as ye are not afraid with any amazement.*”

What

does this mean? To do ‘well’ is to do what is right,
agathopoieo

. More than that it means to do whatever profits someone else, e.g. the husband. Often, modern women claim their ‘right’ to work and to make their own way, even when they are married. But this is not the Christian way. Christian wives do what is ‘right’ when they obey their husbands. Sadly today, many women have to work to keep the family fed. Even so, they can still be holy and act properly and virtuously.

To be ‘not afraid’ means to act with reverence and not to overstep that boundary. To live without ‘amazement’ is to live without fear. Fear of what? Fear of the husband’s criticism for not acting properly. Of course, husbands cannot just act as they wish, but must also earn respect.

Verse 7

1.

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”

‘Likewise’... husbands cannot just do whatever they like! ‘likewise’ tells them to watch their own behaviour also! Even in my home town I know of several ‘Christian’ husbands who have beaten their wives and treated them despicably. What hatred they must harbour. God will judge!

Christian husbands must live with their wives in a proper way. A husband must give his wife ‘honour’, *time*: that is, reverence, deferring to her wishes; to value her above all else. It is always sad to see couples degenerate into a marital rut. This is when each person goes their own way, the husband becoming stricter and less amenable to his wife’s wishes, and grumpy, and the wife seeing her husband as a pest and one who is unreasonable. Each should see the other as highly prized and must *always* look out for what the other wishes. The husband must still have an overall view, though – wanting only what God wants. If the wife also thinks this way, the marriage will always be fresh and alive.

The husband must live with his wife “*according to knowledge*”. Knowledge of what? He means Christian knowledge, *gnosis*, of what scripture says, of Holy Spirit prompting, of what is good and bad, of what is holy and what is sinful; he must live morally himself and live in the purity of God. This inevitably means paying each other deepest respect and love. And if we look at the root, *ginosko*, it also involves the sexual side of marriage (from the Jewish use of the word), which must always be pure and honourable. This includes getting to know the wife’s likes and dislikes, and her own wishes in life.

The husband, then, should not just think of his wife as a second-class citizen, whose wishes do not count. He must always defer to her wishes. The only time he can override these wishes is if they are unholy, sinful or not useful. At all times he must be gentle and forbearing. At NO time may he be nasty, or dictatorial, or violent, or in any way treat her with disrespect.

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One reason he must treat his wife with gentleness, etc., is that she is the “weaker vessel”. No doubt many wives will laugh at that idea, but it holds true. The woman is said to be ‘weaker’, *ast henes*

: with little strength in matters of the soul. We must look at this not in the sense of everyday character, because there are holy women who put men to shame. Nor should we think women are inferior mentally or intellectually. It is used to describe the order of creation, when females were created to be the mates of males/husbands, subject to them. Thus, women are ‘weaker’ in terms of creational status.

It also suggests that female attributes are weaker than male. There is a modern idea that men must “*get in touch with their feminine side*”. This is a fallacy, based entirely on inept intellectual theory. Men *do not have* a ‘feminine side’! The need to be pleasant, kind, loving, etc., is neither feminine nor masculine – it is common to all of humanity! But, the idea suits those whose idea of gender is flawed, leading to perversion. (2016 note: See how the false ‘issue’ of ‘gender’ is now ruining lives! ‘Gender’ is NOT biological sex).

To show that men and women are equal in all other things, Peter reminds us that we are “*heirs together of the grace of life*”

. That is, both husband and wife share the same means of salvation, which comes by God’s wish to give it. If husbands do not think this way, of his wife as a prize, loved even with occasional blemishes of character (which we all have), and protected at all times, then his prayers will be ‘hindered’,

ekkopto

, cut off. There are times when our prayers are considered to be sinful by God. This is one of them. We can say, then, that a bad husband, though Christian, will not have his prayers heard by God.

Verses 8-11

1.

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

2.

Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

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3.

For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

4.

Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.”

Peter moves on from the duties of married couples, to cover general themes. As with the letters of other Apostles, his words are likely in response to actual problems arising in these churches.

He urges all Christians to have “compassion one of another”. This is not without qualification however. It does NOT mean we may accept everything a fellow Christian says and does. Indeed, there may even be times when such Christians must be shunned or cast out of fellowship for a season. Yet, we must still think of them in compassionate terms, because we could easily fall into sin just like them.

To have compassion, *sumpathes*, is to have sympathy for them in their (legitimate) trials. More than that it means to suffer because they suffer. It is to suffer like they do, in evils and persecutions. But, how many fellow Believers do this? How many look dispassionately at the sufferings of other Believers, even saying “It’s their own fault”! In recent days some have suggested that my own sufferings have been caused by a ‘stupid’ opposition to current evils; in this case homosexual activities.

They cannot understand that I oppose because that is how I am led by God; I oppose because these wicked people want to seduce children, and overturn freedoms to preach. They therefore have no compassion or even a real thought to pray for alleviation of suffering. The same can be said of many others, who cannot be bothered to think of the suffering of fellow Christians, whoever or wherever they are. Even if we secretly think another Christian is suffering because he is in error, we must still show compassion, plus assist by showing why he is suffering.

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To be compassionate, however, we have to be of “one mind”. This is loaded with meaning! It means to be *homophron*, concordant. That is, *phren* – what we think, perceive and how we judge, should all be the same. It includes the idea of curbing how we think and act, *phrasso*

. Surely this means we cannot think for ourselves? In a sense, that is correct. We should not be thinking for ourselves, but in line with how

God

thinks. I am free to choose the colour of my clothes, and many other things. But, when it comes to Christ and God’s word, there are no options; God provides the meanings and we simply have to think and act the same way! It is error to say that there are many interpretations about important facts. To be of ‘one mind’ then, is to think, speak and act, like one body, because God’s word has only one meaning.

Many today think they can hold divergent views just because they feel like it. They will say “But I don’t believe that”. They have no idea why they do not accept what you say. Usually they do not believe your ‘version’ because some other preacher has filled their mind with nonsense or error. Or, their own sin prevents them from accepting a true meaning. That is why they will not enter into deep discussion along Biblical lines. Instead they will throw out diverse ‘beliefs’ without any formal Biblical basis. In this way they refuse to be of ‘one mind’.

We must all love each other as brethren, *philadelphos*: to love one’s brother or sister, to love each Christian. Do brothers and sisters argue? Yes, they do! We may also argue, so long as it does not come from a heart of hatred or disrespect. It means to wish the other believer well, *philos*

, to be friendly. It also means to treat them as equals,

adelphos

, because we share the same final home, Heaven. The bonds of affection should always show.

As believers we must be “pitiful”, *eusplagchnos*; tender-hearted toward fellow Believers. We do not have to accept any sin they do, or always agree with certain sentiments, but we must always be tender toward them. I must say, in all frankness, that I have witnessed very little of this, except in a very few. Of course, if Christians harbour secret thoughts about others, this is bound to be the case. It is time that Christians cast aside their ‘evangelical smile’ and spoke honestly and truly, so that such bad habits can finally be discarded.

And, we must be “courteous” toward each other, *philophron*; kind and friendly. Again, I have seen very little of this in general. I have had serious and genuine reason to leave certain fellowships. Whilst I never did so with dislike or disrespect, those I left chose to shun me

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completely, and even said amongst themselves that I had 'backslidden'! Their Christian 'love', then, evaporated at the church doors! It did not extend to me when I had moved from them. This is a common problem amongst Christians. No wonder we now see the reverse of the scriptural comment "See how they love each other". Paul and Peter had blazing rows at times, but they still showed respect and love for each other! ('Courtesy' is another form of love).

We are not to 'render', *apodidomi*, or 'give back' evil for evil. Evil is *kakos*, 'of a bad nature', involving a way of thinking that is destructive. If someone does something wrong against us, we are not to do them evil in return. Partly this is because God deals out vengeance and punishment; partly because it does not do us any good, but fills our mind and heart with wrong thoughts; and partly because, by remaining passive, we are a stumblingblock to the wrongdoer.

Similarly, if someone 'rails' against us, we must not rail back. To rail is *loidoria*, to revile or to speak reproachfully. The major underlying meaning of this is to speak evil of someone because that is what they have done to us, and to add mischief. You will note that this does not prevent us from speaking strongly, or identifying evil in another, or even rebuking another. What we may *not* do, is add something that will cause further mischief.

I remind you that these texts refer to fellow believers, not to unbelievers. Does this mean we can do what we like to unbelievers? No, because the same principles apply to them, too. We can 'fight our corner' without resorting to their tactics of badness or a desire to inflict injury.

Rather, Peter says, we must do the opposite and bless them. We cannot give God's blessing, but we can give a brotherly blessing, because we are all susceptible to sin and error. We may not condone what the other Christian has done to us, but we can still continue to show respect and love, even if they reject it and carry on in their nastiness. This is our calling from God, and by doing so we receive His favour.

Do you love life? Then do what God says. In this text 'life', *zoe*, means spiritual fullness plus active and lively living on this earth. Both combined give us a love for God and for what He demands, leading to continual freshness in Christian attitude and a powerful witness.

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When we live like this we shall see 'good days', days filled with honour, pleasant and useful. There are Christians who constantly pray to be removed from this earth, and they somehow see this life as inferior. This is not how God sees it! Rather, He thinks it fit to place us on this earth, and gives us what is needed. He expects us to live life to the full and to honour Him in the meantime. Do not despise what God has given us! Do not wish your earthly life away! Live it to the full whilst you still have it.

Also, we must not speak evil against the brethren and must not have guile, or deception in our words. Many mistake this for saying nothing at all about fellow Christians, or what they do. This is not, however, godly. If someone, including fellow Believers, do what is sinful, we *must* speak against it. But, in so doing we must be factual and without personal vindictiveness. There are times when I have to speak very strongly, but this does not mean I do not love those I speak against. There are also times when something must be condemned. For example, the Alpha course. The text does not really apply to this, because the Alpha course is not Christian and defies God's word. It is a deception and *must* be condemned, regardless of the many excuses used to explain it away.

We must 'eschew evil and do good'. That is, we must shun doing something wrong against our brethren, but must do them good. (At its least, this means not doing them harm). This can often be very difficult, when those we would do good to despise and shun us. They will not know our true intentions simply because they are not there to see it! Sadly, this is rife in our churches. Even so, we must attempt to seek peace. Mainly, this means to live at peace with God, but it also can include peace with brethren... if they allow it! Some cannot see beyond their own scorn, bitterness or anger, so they reject anything coming from you, and so never come to the point of resuming brotherly contact. Even so, as far as you are able, only show good and love for the brethren, for this is our calling.

Verses 12-17

1.

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

2.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

3.

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But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

4.

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

5.

Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

6.

For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.”

As I write, a family of sparrows is nesting in the apex of our roof. The parents sit atop and chirp all day long. They fly straight towards the wall and literally ‘splat’ against it, clinging to the stone-dash before slipping under the fascia to the nest. To do it they have to squash their little bodies flat! To come out, first you see a tiny head, looking this way and that, then the body is flattened again before the parent emerges to fly away for more grass to repair the nest, or for food. The babies must be hatched because whenever a very much larger bird flies overhead, the parents chirp frantically as if to warn them away.

This is the kind of thing we read about in verse 12, where God watches over us like a protective bird. It is the same figure we read of in Genesis chapter one, where the Holy Spirit hovers over the earth like a mother hen with its wings wide open over her brood. That is how we should read *“For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous”*. It is another way of saying ‘God watches and knows’. It is used, then, metaphorically. The word ‘over’ is

epi

, meaning ‘upon’ (as in epi-centre). Thus, God keeps His watchful eye on all who belong to Him. We know this because the sentence is qualified with the words, ‘the righteous’. God looks after every person ever born, but His special care is given only to the righteous.

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The righteous, or *dikaïos*, are those who are upright, keeping God's commands. But it is far deeper than that, for it also means we are saved by grace and are therefore seen to be guiltless and innocent, and are therefore acceptable to God. We are acceptable not because we are saved but because of Jesus Christ and what He did on our behalf. Without His intervention we could not have been saved and would never be acceptable to God.

God also has His "ears... open (to our) prayers." By 'ears' is meant *ous* used metaphorically, to mean to know or perceive our prayers. It has the meaning of God leaning toward us to listen to our *deesis* or prayers.

In this text the simple meaning of 'prayers' is given... a seeking or asking, a need because of privation. This can include begging or pleading with God to supply our needs, *deomai*. God is open to such prayers, but note that prayers of the unrighteous or the unregenerated/unsaved are never heard by God. God will listen to the soul that has just been regenerated, because that is how we come to know God. But, the one who is simply unsaved is invisible to God as far as prayer is concerned. Many unsaved people claim to have prayed to God for all kinds of deliverance, but God does not listen to them, so they delude themselves. His 'face' is "against them that do evil." (Which can be totally heinous or ordinary rejection of God. Both are equal).

Verses 18-22

1.

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

2.

By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

3.

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

4.

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus

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Christ:

5.

Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

We must live holy lives 'because' (as "For" can signify) Christ suffered for us, and on our behalf. He is just – acceptable to the Father, yet He suffered and died for us, freeing us from the guilt of sin when we are saved. When we come to Him we die to sin (that is, it no longer controls us), by being made-alive spiritually: only the Holy Spirit can make us spiritually alive.

Jesus Christ also extended His love by preaching to the "spirits in prison". That is, souls kept captive in a 'prison' of sin, because they were disobedient to the Lord. This text refers to the time of Noah, when God had to destroy the whole world because of rampant sin. At that time, only eight people were saved... and this very small number is indicative of the 'remnant' who are saved from amongst the millions who are born. Note that God did not just destroy people instantly – He gave them over a hundred years to repent and change *"while the ark was a preparing"*

In the same way we 'destroy' the power of sin as a master, by being baptised. This is meant to be likened to the *"eight souls... saved by water"*. That is, Noah's family was saved from the fate of the world who died by water, the water signifying the means by which others died but they were saved (by being in the ark). Symbolically, baptism is a model of the actual Flood: the water kills our sin but raises us alive in God, so we prove ourselves to be 'new creatures'. The baptism does not save us, for it is *"not the putting away of the filth of the flesh"*

. Rather, baptism is our response to God's command to be baptised; we do so to show our *"good conscience"*

towards Him. And, just as Christ was resurrected from the dead with a new body, so we rise out of the water of baptism with a new heart, a determination to prove to all; that we have been saved by grace. If Christ was not raised again, baptism would be an empty gesture.

He is now in Heaven, the 'firstfruits', waiting for the day He will return. He is now on the right hand of God, His equal. Whereas the angels and all who have power or authority are under His

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direct command and rule.

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