

**Women's Bible Study – Fall 2017**  
**Submitting in Difficult Times: 1 Peter 3:1-22**  
**11/15/17 ~ Svea Merry**



Let's just get some things rolling right off the bat. If you've studied or even just read through 1 Peter 3, you probably noticed that there are some pretty tricky things in this chapter. There's a really weird verse about Jesus preaching to spirits, Noah and the flood appears out of nowhere, and in certain translations, it is implied that baptism saves us, and if that wasn't enough, we start off the chapter with the whole issue of wives submitting to their husbands. This is a chapter with a bunch of tangles in it.

Well, having had long hair for most of my life, I'm no stranger to dealing with tangles. When I was a little girl, I was a pretty restless sleeper, and used to wake up with my hair tangled into a huge knot at the back of my head. Many mornings, my mom and I would both be in tears as she worked to comb all the tangles out. I hated having my hair combed and eventually my mom resorted to braiding my hair almost all of the time so that it wouldn't get so tangled. I spent most of my early childhood with this hairstyle (photo). Once I realized that letting Mom take 5 minutes each morning and evening to braid my hair meant I could avoid the pain of the tangles, I was on board. And it didn't hurt that I thought it made it easier to pretend I was my favorite book turned tv character, Laura Ingalls from Little House on the Prairie.

But braiding our hair isn't going to prevent any tangles for us this morning. In fact, look at this verse: Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair... Oh dear. See, there are some tangles in chapter 3. We'll come back to that one in a bit, and if you have braided hair right now, don't worry. It's ok.

So how are we going to handle this chapter? Well, we're going to comb our way through it carefully and gently just like we do when combing through tangled hair. And by the time we're finished, we'll have a beautiful picture of one of the best things in the whole Bible, in addition to figuring out why its ok to braid our hair.

So I'll ask you, when you have to comb through a tangled mess, where do you start? Do you start at the top and pull your way through? No, you start at the ends and work your way up. So that's what we're going to do. Now, before you think I'm taking an analogy way too far, I promise I have a good reason for doing this. And it isn't that I learned in seminary to tackle hard chapters of the Bible at the end first like how we comb our hair (many of my professors were bald and wouldn't know that anyway!), but in this particular chapter, there is a very good reason to look at the end first, and that's because the end of chapter 3 contains the mountaintop peak of the whole book.

#### CHIASM OF 1 PETER

Let me show you something really cool about 1 Peter. Have you heard of a chiasm? It's a literary tool that was popular when the Bible was written. Something written with a chiasmic structure has a beautiful symmetry to it. Ideas grow and grow, like a hiker climbing a mountain, and whatever is in the middle of the chiasm is the pinnacle of the

book, the summit, the idea with the million dollar view, and then the rest of the writing echoes the first half in reverse order. 1 Peter just happens to be written with a subtle chiasm in it. The first and last chapters, chapters 1 and 5, have some mirror echoes of each other. Remember in chapter 1 we learned of our living hope in the age to come and that that inspires how we live as holy people. Well, not to give anything away, but when we get to chapter 5, we'll revisit more about how we live and then see, once again, the hope we have when God will gather us to eternal glory with Himself.

Then on the second line of our chiasm, in chapter 2 we saw who we are in Christ and began looking at different ways that we are called to submission, a topic which continues in today's chapter. And we'll see in chapter 4 what it means to suffer for who we are as Christians.

So with that beautiful message on both sides of the mountain, aren't you curious to know what's at the summit? It's the gospel. Look with me at chapter 3 verse 18 to see one of the best things in the whole Bible: "Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." Don't let this go by you too quickly. This is amazing! I know as Christians it is easy to feel so familiar with this that we take it for granted, but dwell on this with me for a minute. Jesus, our sweet God in human flesh, suffered. He willingly took on the worst consequences of all the evil in the world even though he never contributed to that evil himself, even a spec, all for the purpose of bringing us to God.

When my first husband was dying of cancer, there were times when watching him hurt was nearly too much for me to bear, and several times I wished that I could suck up all the cancer in his body and take it myself so that he wouldn't hurt anymore. Friends, that's exactly what Jesus did for us!

The last paragraph of chapter 3 is the pinnacle of the book because we see in verse 18 that Jesus suffered and died in order to bring us to God, and in the last verse of the chapter that he was resurrected and is now reigns with God, sovereign over all powers that make us suffer. Let me talk through this a bit longer before we dive into the rest of the chapter because this is so beautiful.

God saw how evil makes us suffer, and like I wished I could have taken away the pain for my husband, Jesus actually did take all the evil in the world onto Himself for our sake. He had to die in order to do this because God explained way back in the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve that the result of evil is death. Jesus, being perfectly good, would never have died on his own because he never did anything evil that would have caused him up to die. So the fact that he did die proves he was successful in taking our evil on himself.

And the resurrection? That's the best part. Jesus's resurrection means it worked! It means the evil was defeated. Death was conquered. Now, as we know too well, despite that, we still suffer and die. And many wonder why this is if Jesus defeated it? Well, the short answer is that God didn't want to prematurely end the opportunity to save people when Jesus died 2000 years ago, He wanted to save future generations too, so He has continued to let each generation be born and live in this same fallen world, and yet still have the gracious sure gift of salvation through Jesus, until the day comes when everyone

who God has called has been gathered, and then Jesus will come back and permanently eradicate the evil that plagues us now.

Isn't this all good news?! Now, there are probably some of you who thinking, this all sounds good in church, but how does this really help me when I'm back home in my bed, lying awake because the pain in my life is too much to bear? Well, what do we want when we're suffering? That it'll stop? Well, what Jesus did for us guarantees that one day, not only our suffering but the suffering of every other believer will stop. What else do we want when we suffer? To know that we are loved and cared for? That's exactly why God sent His Son to save us. He not only saw our suffering and cared about it, He gave up His only Son to experience it as we do so that he could completely understand and empathize with us, and then fix it. This is what Jesus's death and resurrection ultimately means. That's why this last paragraph of chapter 3 contains the pinnacle statement of this book on suffering. It's our hope. It's the answer.

Well, if that's Peter's central thought on his writing on suffering, what does he want us to do about it? As we're going to see in the rest of the chapter, He wants us to live through that perspective and to share our hope with others.

When I was a teenager, in my church youth group, it was cool to wear t-shirts with Christian phrases on them. I think secretly, we all kind of thought we could change the world with our cheesy t-shirts. One shirt I remember in particular had the phrase "He died for us, so let's live for him" on it kind of like this one. This phrase kept coming to my mind as I studied this chapter. I think Peter may have liked this shirt because it really illustrates his point.

Here's what I want you to take as the central idea of chapter 3: CHRIST DIED FOR US SO LET'S LIVE FOR HIM IN A WAY THAT SHOWS IT. That's it. That's what 1 Peter 3 is all about. Christ's death and resurrection means that we can have hope in our suffering. And if we believe that, it changes everything about how we live. It will frame how we treat each other, and inspire us to want to share that hope with everyone.

So with that foundation laid, let's start combing our way through this chapter to see how we do this. Let's look at some tangles embedded in that final paragraph more closely. I'll warn you, because of some strange details, verses 19–20 are often considered one of the most challenging passages to interpret in all of biblical studies. In fact, I had to laugh when I came across this quote from Martin Luther who has been in the spotlight lately with the 500th anniversary of the launch of the Protestant Revolution. Luther, who was known for his bold statements and brash confidence said about this passage: "This is a strange text and certainly a more obscure passage than any other passage in the New Testament. I still do not know for sure what the apostle meant."<sup>1</sup> So if even a guy like Luther wasn't willing to try to say what this meant, I'm not going to claim that I can. Fortunately though, if we pull back a bit, Peter's main point is fairly easy to see, and it is the point on your outline: The first way we show that we're living for Christ is by believing in what he did for us and identifying with him through baptism. Jesus suffered and was restored to God, and we too suffer and our belief in Jesus which we express publicly

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<sup>1</sup> Karen Jobes, Baker Exegetical Commentary, p. 236.

through the act of baptism, saves us and restores us to God too. If you hang onto that central truth, the rest falls into place.

But I know some of you come to Bible study to learn what verses like this mean and you'll feel cheated if I brush over this too quickly. So let's briefly tackle verses 19 and 20 about Jesus preaching to the spirits in prison in the days of Noah. Scholars widely disagree on how to interpret this, but three main theories are most common.

The first is that *Jesus's spirit preached through Noah to the wicked people in his day*. As you may remember from the Noah and the flood story, the people on earth had become extraordinarily violent and wicked. That's why God wanted to remove them from civilization through the flood. Noah and his family were saved because Noah believed God. But this verse could mean that the spirit of Jesus Christ preached a message of repentance to these wicked people through Noah.

The second main theory is that *Jesus's death and resurrection proclaimed victory to the wicked spirits of Noah's day*. These spirits may have been the Nephilim of Genesis 6. But, unfortunately, Genesis 6 is also a real head-scratcher of a passage, so we don't have firm answers for who exactly who the Nephilim were. The implication is that they may have been the offspring of fallen angels who had children with human women, and their wickedness contributed to God's decision to send the flood. When God destroyed the earth with the flood, these spirits were cast into a spiritual prison awaiting God's final judgement. So when Jesus died and was resurrected in his glorified body, his triumph over suffering and death was a proclamation to these spirits of his victory.

The third theory is that Jesus, in the period when he was dead, offered a second chance to spirits who had failed to believe. Unfortunately, there is not strong Scriptural support for this theory, and it doesn't really fit the context of 1 Peter which was written to people who were already believers and offers the living hope of eternity with God because of that belief. So this theory is the least commonly accepted among the three.

My own personal leaning is with the second theory, that Jesus's victory over suffering, evil, and death "preached" a visible message to the evil spirits in the world that their day was ending, but ultimately, what we think about this verse doesn't change anything essential to our faith or the message of 1 Peter so let's move on to the next part about Noah and the flood and baptism because that is more foundational.

Let's look at verses 20 and 21. *"because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. <sup>21</sup> Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience"*

Fortunately this isn't nearly as weird as the previous verse. Peter is comforting the suffering Christians of his day by comparing them to Noah and his family who also were the rare godly people in the midst of a very wicked community. They were saved by going through the flood waters, and so the people of this book, and by extension us, are saved by belief in Jesus which is symbolized by the waters of baptism.

It's important to realize that in the early days of the church when Peter was writing, belief and baptism nearly always went hand-in-hand. Baptism was a first public declaration of belief and an initiation into Christian fellowship. It was unthinkable that someone might say they believe in Christ but not be baptized. So, when Peter says, as it does in some translations, that baptism saves you, he means this public declaration of faith and identification with Christ.

So what does this mean for us? Peter's point at the end of this chapter is that everything rests on the fact that Jesus suffered, died and was resurrected and is now reunited with God reigning over all authorities. So we who believe in that should live our lives in such a way that shows that we've been impacted by that and when others see that in our lives, they'll want to know why and will hopefully be drawn to Christ as well. It's the phrase I introduced a couple of minutes ago: CHRIST DIED FOR US SO LET'S LIVE FOR HIM IN A WAY THAT SHOWS IT.

Let's comb up a bit higher in this chapter and see a second way that we show we're living for Christ, and that is by telling others why we hope in God. Start reading with me at verse 13. *Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? <sup>14</sup>But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup>but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.* That last one is such a great verse. Sometimes we hear it used to prod us on to be ready to share our faith at any time, and that's a good thing, but notice in this context, what Peter is really getting at is that people notice when we suffer with hope in God and we should be ready to explain why we hope in God when we suffer for the sake of righteousness. Have you seen this? Have you known someone who has suffered greatly through no fault of their own, and yet emerged with a beautiful relationship with God? People like that have a powerful voice, and the rest of us are often hungry to hear their story. And in our culture, story is one of the most influential tools we have for sharing the gospel.

Is it going to be easy to share our hope in God when we're suffering through no fault of our own? No, but there's a good in it. Look at the rest of the paragraph starting in verse 16: *<sup>16</sup>having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup>For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.*

Do you remember when Juli spoke a couple of weeks ago, and she pointed out the incredible words in chapter 1 verse 6: "if necessary"? She said if God lets us suffer, it's never senseless or meaningless. It has to be something that was ultimately necessary to accomplish something greater. Verse 17 of chapter 3 echoes that. It is better to suffer for doing good than for evil, that's fairly obvious, but again Peter says it's better if it should be God's will. Here's what encourages me so much about this. I am comforted by the fact God wouldn't allow what I suffer if it had no ultimate purpose, and that because He is so perfectly good, if I have to endure something really difficult, I can trust that He has an ultimately good plan for it.

Well, what's the third way that we show we're living for Christ? We do this by blessing others through how we act towards them. Look with me at the next section up starting in verse 8. *Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. <sup>9</sup>Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.*" This is a beautiful list of virtues that we should live out for each other. Unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and humility. I hope you'll have some good discussion in your small groups about how to live these out. But I want to focus on this idea of not repaying evil for evil but instead responding with blessing for a minute. This is hard but powerful stuff! On a somewhat minor scale, have you ever witnessed or been a part of a fight when someone is really angry and hurling insults and accusations and the other person just won't engage? Instead they remain calm and even say something like, "Honey, I understand why you're so upset. I can see why this hurts you." What often happens? It takes two to keep a fight going, right? If one person is seeking unity, remains full of sympathy, brotherly love, has a tender heart and a humble mind, they can often dissolve the fight. In this way, they are not returning evil, instead they are blessing the other person. On a bigger scale, though, think of the impact it has when someone blesses when no one would expect them to. I recently read a story about Ruby Bridges who was the first African American child to attend a previously all-white school in New Orleans in the early 1960's, and every day as she was escorted to school she was spat upon, threatened, and insulted and yet she remained calm and did not react to the evil being flung at her. News got out of this, and it impressed many people, and when her mother was asked how Ruby could be so calm despite what was being done to her, she said that each night they prayed a blessing for all the people in the angry crowd.

But maybe you say, "God, this doesn't seem fair. Why should we have to rise above the evil and fallenness of this world and bless others when they don't deserve it?" You know what I think He might say? Gently, but directly, He might point out that when humanity treated Him badly, when we sinned and hurt others and hurt Him, He didn't give us what we deserve. He blessed us. He sent His Son to fix everything for us and to restore us to eternal life in paradise. And our goal in this chapter is to live in light of what Christ did for us, so we bless others because we've been blessed.

And that puts the rest of this passage into perspective. In verses 10–12, Peter quotes Psalm 34 which says, *Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.*

God is pleased when we turn away from evil and do good, when we seek peace. That builds our relationship with Him. In light of what this chapter tells us Jesus did for us, being kind to others isn't so much to ask.

But now finally we arrive at with the section many of us have been bracing for: the section on submission in marriage. Now here's the thing about this section. Regardless of what kind of background thoughts you bring with you to this passage—positive, negative, or none at all—take a deep breath and relax because at its core, this really is a beautiful

application of Peter's point for this chapter, and again that is that Christ died for us so let's live for Him in a way that makes Him known. And specifically how this section reveals that, this fourth way we show that we're living for Christ, is by reflecting him to our spouse.

What we're going to do as we comb through this passage is to read it for what it says. We're not going to make it say more than it does, and we're not going to shy away from anything that it says. We want to get to the meaning Peter intended. So, as we've been doing all along with this chapter, let's start combing near the end with verse 7.

Verse 7 says, *"Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."*

In this case, Peter calls Christian husbands to be understanding and to live honorably toward their wives because of their recognition that their wives are weaker vessels than they are. Now, of course, we have to establish what Peter means by weaker vessels. In what way are women weaker? Well, even from this verse we see that women are co-heirs of God's gracious gift of eternal life and the rest of Scripture affirms that women are, without question, equal in value to men. Though some say it could refer to a woman's disadvantaged social status, nearly all scholars agree that what Peter meant by this is that women, generally speaking, are *physically* weaker than men.

So here is what I want to say about this. Before we look at the wife's role, I want to establish right away that this verse affirms that men are supposed to treat their wives with understanding, and honor their imbalance in physical strength. And I don't think Peter means that when you're moving to a new house, the man should carry the heavier boxes and let his wife take the lighter ones. This verse is affirming that it is wrong for a man to abuse his wife physically.

We've seen a lot in the news lately about women who have silently endured sexual abuse and now with the publicity of the Harvey Weinstein case and others, are beginning to feel more able to come forward, and this a good thing. If you have suffered physical abuse in your marriage, I am absolutely heartsick for you and know that this chapter does not condone that behavior, nor does it suggest that a woman submit herself to it. If you find yourself in this situation, I beg you, please seek help. Please talk to a pastor—Karen Foster is available if you prefer to speak to a woman—or I highly recommend you see Dan Farm at his counseling practice. But please hear this: domestic abuse is not ok with God and He does not call you to tolerate what He does not. Look at the end of verse 7. The man who does not treat his wife rightly has his relationship with God through prayer hindered, the implication being that our just God will not honor an abusive husband's prayers if he is hurting his wife.

Remember last week when Jann carefully addressed what it means to show submission to our governing authorities and how slaves and servants were to respect the people in authority over them? She said submission is not the same thing as total obedience. It does not mean that we must silently endure anything someone says or does. Jann made the point that we follow the laws of the land unless they contradict God's laws. Precious women, abuse violates God's laws and is not something that we should submit ourselves

to. If you are suffering in this way, I plead with you to get help for your sake and for the sake of everyone else in your home, including your husband.

So what is it that Peter does say wives should do? Let's read verses 1 and 2 and see for ourselves. *"Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, <sup>2</sup>when they see the purity and reverence of your lives."*

That's it. That's not so bad, right? Yes, there are more verses, but they really just round out this thought a bit more. So let's think about what this means for us. First of all, who is this addressed to? Peter is calling a wife to submit herself to her own husband. He's not speaking to all women about all men. So, you single ladies may be thinking, phew, I'm off the hook. You are, kind of. Just as all of us can apply the principal from the previous chapter of working in an honorable way for our employers or supervisors even though we are not slaves or servants, all Christians, married or single, female or male, can apply this principle that we influence people with our pure and reverent behavior in a way that can make them want to know more about our faith in Christ. This section is perhaps Peter's best application of his point that Christ died for us so let's live for him in a way that makes him known.

Before we go on, I think you might be interested to learn some things about the culture of Peter's day. For a wife to adopt a religion different than her husband would have been seen as a major disruption to an orderly home. Also, because religion in their culture was completely intertwined with all aspects of society including education and commerce, if someone became a Christian they ran the risk of becoming socially ostracized in all kinds of ways. It would have been doubly upsetting if a wife became a Christian and not her husband because he may have reaped social consequences because of her actions. And, for her to reject her husband's religion and to instead worship God with other Christians would have been seen as a threat to the integrity their marriage.

So here's what I find fascinating about Peter's instructions to Christian women married to unbelievers. He doesn't tell her she should pursue her Christianity regardless of how her husband feels about it, nor does he tell her to stay home and not rock the boat because of her faith. He simply tells her to be reverent and pure toward her husband; to live in such a way that might win him over to Christ.

The next verses have that little tangle I referred to in the beginning about braided hair. But by keeping Peter's point in mind, this too will comb right out. Verses 3–4 say, *"Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— <sup>4</sup>but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."*

Anyone feeling a tad uncomfortable right now because you're wearing gold jewelry, have your hair braided, or heaven forbid, are wearing clothing? It's ok. Peter's not saying we *cannot* wear these things. He's pointing out that it isn't ultimately our beauty, our physical appearances that will draw people to Christ. It's our character. It's the way we love, the way we encourage, the gentleness we show others, the quiet spirit we have which doesn't mean we are always silent, it means that we have a peaceful calmness



because of the Spirit in our lives. God loves these traits in godly women. And aren't you glad this should be our focus rather than our looks? Because as many of us know, and the rest of us are finding out with time, chasing physical beauty is futile.

Notice how Peter describes the beauty of a woman's character. He calls it an *imperishable* beauty. Does that word imperishable seem familiar from this book? This is cool. Peter described two other things as imperishable in chapter 1. First was the living hope that we have of our inheritance that God is keeping for us which he called imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, and second is that we have been born again into an imperishable life through the Word of God which remains forever. Look at the honor that Peter is prompting us to recognize, friends! Peter is urging us to see that our character is among these beautiful, permanent things which promote life! We are who we are because of what Christ did for us, so let's live our lives in a way that makes that known, and that's what will draw others to him. Isn't that good stuff?!

Well, finally, we have two last verses to examine, and quite frankly, these are the ones that have most challenged me in this chapter. Let's read verses 5–6. *For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, <sup>6</sup>as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.*

Here's what I find so challenging: this whole paragraph is completed with the instruction to do good and not fear anything that is frightening. I will admit to you, I struggle with fear. And it would make sense to me if Peter was telling us not to fear the things that we shouldn't be afraid of, but he's saying we shouldn't fear the things that *are* frightening!

Let's look a bit deeper at this and comb out this last tangle. Verse 5 says the holy women of old made themselves attractive with their beautiful character shown by how they treated their husbands because of their hope in God. I'm thinking hope in God is going to help us with our fear, but let's keep digging. Why does Peter then use a really odd example of Sarah calling Abraham lord to illustrate his point? If you know the stories about this famous couple from the book of Genesis, you might question them as marriage mentors. When I think of them and the issue of submission, the first thing that comes to mind is that it seems like Abraham was the one who was all too willing to submit to Sarah's plan that they conceive a child through Sarah's maid. And considering Sarah, the most obvious example of her submission may be from Genesis 12 when she submitted to Abraham's awful plan to pass her off as his sister to Pharaoh. Neither of these were wise or godly decisions, and both resulted in bad consequences.

So I think it is really important that these are *not* the examples that Peter points to, because he is not at all saying that wives are supposed to submit to or obey everything their husbands say and do. Instead, let me show you the example he uses, where Sarah called Abraham lord. It is found in Genesis 18:12 in the story where they are told that they would finally have a baby even though they were approaching 90 and 100 years old. And Sarah laughs to herself and says, "*After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?*"

Now how is that an example of a godly woman with a beautiful spirit submitting to her husband? I think what we see here is a glimpse of the sweet way she spoke about her husband even when not talking to anyone in particular. She was eavesdropping when she said this. How do you speak about your husband when no one is listening? Is it respectfully like Sarah? Can you see that if this is how Sarah thought of her husband in her casual, reflexive thoughts that she probably had a huge influence on him because of how she treated him? Do you see how powerfully a wife could attract her husband to Christ through her godly spirit?

But we still have the "don't fear what it is frightening" part. The life of Sarah does help us to understand this. When God called Abraham to leave his home country and head out on faith to a land which God would show him, Sarah must have suffered the loss of friends, family, and security and been afraid, but God was faithful. When they were in Egypt and Abraham was convinced that Pharaoh would kill him to get to her so he passed her off as his sister, she must have suffered for the break in their marriage and been afraid to lose him forever not to mention afraid for what Pharaoh might do to her, and yet God was faithful. When Abraham and his brother Lot suffered strife in their relationship, when Abraham went to war with the kings of Canaan, and after they suffered nearly a lifetime of infertility, God was faithful.

Dear sisters, Sarah suffered many things, but God was faithful through it all, even when she and Abraham weren't. This is our hope. This is the message of 1 Peter. This is what matters when we suffer. The lives of the godly women who came before us tell us the truth that we have a sure hope in God. And that hope is what gives us the confidence to not fear what is frightening.

But better than that, our ultimate hope for all of suffering is because God sent his very own Son to take all of the evil and suffering in the world on himself in our place. He is that friend who could not bear to see our desperate situation and suffered it so that we won't have to. Friends, we don't have to fear what it is frightening because Jesus died for us. We can treat our husbands with gentle respect because Jesus died for us. We can bless others even when they hurt us because Jesus died for us. We can share our hope in God when we suffer, even if we are suffering for doing what is good, because Jesus died for us. He died for us, so let's live for him in a way that shows it!

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