

The Imperishable Forms  
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From 1 Peter 3:1-22. THE IMPERISHABLE FORMS.  
PART 1: BEHAVIORAL FORMS.

#1. "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives", v.1.

#2. This entire biblical text establishes the relation between the Word of God and human behavior. *Personal behavior is to be shaped as a form of the gospel.*

#3. A form is a tangible, visible expression of an eternal idea. Therefore, the submissive behavior of a Christian wife, even to an unbelieving husband, becomes a form of revealed truth. This cannot be easy. Such behavior is not the expression of the self. None of the behavioral forms referred to in this text are referenced in the self. The self usually recoils from such acute spiritual demands.

#4. This chapter is replete with so many behavioral forms that originated in the revealed Word of God and were consciously so formulated by the believer. These behavioral forms are to be pushed into all the situations, circumstances, events and states of being in our experience.

#5. Here, then, is the meaningful relation between the Bible and one's personal behavior. Revealed truth is the source of Christian behavioral forms.

#6. The believer does not respond to circumstance and situation founded upon human experience nor self-interest nor predictive powers.

#7. The believer's personal behavior is evangelistic. "...they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives", v.1. Belief in revealed truth is the starting point. But the will of the believer must push the behavioral form into the situation. This is our concern.

#8. Behavioral forms are of specific, principal, primary interest to the Almighty.

From 1 Peter 3:1-22. THE IMPERISHABLE FORMS.  
PART 2: THE IMPERISHABLE FORMS DISALLOW SUPERFICIALITY v.3, 4.

#1. "Your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing jewelry, or putting on dresses", v.3.

#2. The apostle's admonition has to do with the menace of spiritual superficiality. This generalizes to both men and women. Personal satisfaction with weak minded and dissolute

spiritual states of being is the antithesis to the revealed behavioral forms. Such disinterest in spiritual maturity is the familiar bane of the churches. These are not in the same universe.

#3. "But let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God", v.4.

#4. Consider, then, what the Scripture has to say about the biblical behavioral forms.

#5. They are imperishable, and therefore, such behavior is not subject to time, age nor historical conditions. Apparently, one's behavior never dies in the heart of God. The revealed behavioral forms performed today are a permanent part of those situations.

#6. They are precious in the sight of God. His evaluation discredits all others. The Almighty is not pleased with spiritual superficiality.

#7. Every trial, hardship, circumstance, situation, event and state of being is a moment in time into which we push the imperishable and precious behavioral forms.

#8. Biblical behavioral forms embody eternal truth and their proclamation in time and circumstance.

#9. Imagine, after years of pursuing the imperishable in every kind of hazard, what would be said of such a one finally appearing before the Lord! "Here, O Lord, appears one of proven imperishable and precious qualities". Can you imagine the exaltation?!

1 Peter 3:1-22. THE IMPERISHABLE FORMS.

PART 3: REVEALED BEHAVIORAL FORMS AS DISASSOCIATION, v.5-7.

#1. "For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands", v.5.

#2. Here are real women involved in historical conditions beyond their own control.

#3. Peter said of them that they put "hope in God"; for there was no hope of natural solution.

#4. These are the biblical women who "adorned themselves" with imperishable behavioral forms. No adornment of an "external" (v.3) kind was found suitable for them.

#5. They were "submissive" to their husbands; facing the same risks as he and perhaps more.

#6. The revealed behavioral forms they observed were *disassociated* (not the professional psychology term) from their immediate historical conditions. The foundation for their behavior

was outside of circumstance, outside the marriage relation. And their personal commitments transcended time, gender and the self.

#7. The burden of the biblical behavioral forms is the "fear" (v.6) engendered by the fact that revealed forms are fully disassociated from our experience of the material world. The natural does not "work" that way.

#8. Sarah was one of those women. Too old, too barren to have children, this woman of faith committed her future to something she could not see. Her hope was not time-based. Sarah acted on the revealed truth that the promises of God are clearly disassociated from time. They are rooted in the power of God. "Fear" destroys faith!

#9. No one pursues revealed behavioral forms who has not dealt first with his/her own personal fears.

#10. "...husbands in the same way" relate to their wives on the foundation of a revealed "understanding way", v.7. The reason? Because relation to God is everything. Behavior is about God, not the immediate temporal world, not the self, not preferred outcomes. So "your prayers will not be hindered".

From 1 Peter 3:1-22. THE IMPERISHABLE FORMS.

PART 4: OUR EARTHLY NATURE IN THE IRON GRIP OF BIBLICAL BEHAVIORAL FORMS, v.8-12.

#1. The revealed biblical behavioral forms originated with God. As with all things rooted in the will of God, the power of God is the enabling factor. Our fleshly nature does not pursue the "harmonious", the "sympathetic", the "brotherly" embrace, the "kindhearted", nor humility of "spirit", v.8.

#2. But the iron grip of the revealed behavioral forms are reinforced so as to bring an imposing restraint and purification upon the sinful nature.

#3. Believers are subject to a non-temporal calling put in place by the Almighty. "...for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing", v.9.

#4. The term "blessing", used so frequently in Scripture, refers to a supernatural conditioning of one's temporal circumstances. That fact tells us about the extraordinary value of supernatural blessings. The Bible is referring to a different kind of life, not built on the fleshly nature. Therefore, our earthly nature is not to be allowed to sit unmolested in the churches, in our families, nor in other relations of consequence. Such a subversive force cannot be allowed to remain untouched in the mind.

#5. Peter makes reference to David's Psalm 34:12-16. *The perfect idea*, the psalmist says, is that the believer "must" keep his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit", v.10. "He must turn away from evil and do good. He must seek peace and pursue it", v.11.

#6. The iron grip of biblical behavioral forms allow for this outcome. The Lord is interested in the co-venture of generating a spiritual universe, which is the church, in time and materiality.

#7. None of this is without significant consequences. "For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil", v.12.

#8. If this is so, then, is it acceptable to allow the behavioral forms to sit unused, idle, while the churches are swallowed alive by this present age?

From 1 Peter 3:1-22. THE IMPERISHABLE FORMS.

PART 5: THE REVEALED BEHAVIORAL FORMS ARE THE ANTI-RATIONALISM, v.13-17.

#1. Being "zealous for what is good" (v.13), announces a seismic shift in consciousness and unsettling to some. Its energy puts into evidence that human reason is no longer the managing presence over behavior. A revealed standard of judgment has supplied a different perspective.

#2. That perspective is worth suffering for. "But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidations. And do not be troubled", v.14.

#3. Believers are called to suffer for the sake of "righteousness", which is a kind of behavior. We suffer because of the revealed behavioral forms.

#4. The behavioral forms honor God and the Word of God, and they are the objective result of revelation. They did not grow out of the human rational mind. And that is the point.

#5. The world does not like that and does not believe that. "Intimidations" and trouble are to be expected. Peter is concerned that world resistance, in or out of the churches, could cause believers to rationalize away the revealed behavioral forms.

#6. Fear is the handmaiden of rationalization; the "fear" that following the biblical behavioral forms will result in failure, unreasonable loss and perhaps even death. Is there any doubt that faith, in the contemporary, has precisely been so rationalized.

#7. The biblical behavioral forms are calculated to make God and the Word of God the point. That is the substance of the anti-rationalism.

From 1 Peter 3:1-22. THE IMPERISHABLE FORMS.

PART 6: BIBLICAL BEHAVIORAL Forms: EXPRESSION OF RELATIVITY, v.15.

#1. ". . . But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence", v.15.

#2. To sanctify Christ as Lord means to put one's personal will and experience in direct relativity to the Lord and His Word.

#3. The sanctification of Christ in the heart is to construct *a world cosmology* founded upon revelation.

#4. Everyone has a cosmology, which is a belief about the way the universe is ordered. There is a revealed cosmology stipulating that Christ is creator and master of all time, space, matter and energy.

#5. In consequence, every particle of the material universe has been made quite relative to the "Lord". This revealed truth generalizes to all and every personal circumstance, situation, event and state of being.

#6. To build personal behavior on the foundation of biblical forms and accept the consequences, requires this dimension of faith. It is very rare indeed.

#7. So, one's behavior is relative to Christ, not the situation. The "defense" one makes for that behavior is relative to revealed truth not the situation. The "hope" we hold is not a function of circumstance. In fact, circumstances have no effect upon hope because that hope is relative to unseen reality.

#8. To pour our behavior into the biblical forms is a real-time expression of this revealed practice of making all things relative to "Christ the Lord".

#9. It counters the sin of making our behavior relative to the immediate situation: Faithlessness.

From 1 Peter 3. THE IMPERISHABLE FORMS.

PART 7: "BEHAVIOR IN CHRIST": THE BEHAVIORAL FRONTIER, v.16, 17.

#1. ". . .and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame", v.16.

#2. There is a range of personal behavior that is peculiar to the followers of Christ. This is called "good behavior in Christ".

#3. Such a range of behavior is not generated by the wisdom of human reason. It is, rather, constituted of the revealed biblical behavioral forms. Peter carries our understanding beyond the limits of rationalized behavior founded upon the dynamics of the situation.

#4. Therefore, behavior in Christ, in effect, represents a behavioral perimeter between the church and the world. This is not an arbitrary behavioral frontier, but a distinction commanded by the Lord.

#5. Believers do not build bridges to the world; believers preach the Word of God to the world of men.

#6. Those who willingly stand within the perimeter of active belief, stand against everything the world espouses with fervency. This has never been socially nor politically acceptable to unbelievers.

#7. The maintenance of this frontier is the responsibility of the believer and of the church: "keep a good conscience". Just such a mental state of being stands outside of any contemporary sociology. Believers will be "slandered", lied about. Strategic ridicule will be applied.

#8. The behavioral perimeter may not be breached. "...it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing good...", v17. Suffering is no excuse for failure!

From 1 Peter 3:1-22. THE IMPERISHABLE FORMS.

PART 8: THE PIVOTAL PERSON, EVENTS, FORMS and HUMAN CIRCUMSTANCE, v.18-20.

#1. The Incarnation of Christ presaged His death on the cross.

#2. "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God...", v.18.

#3. The redemptive death of Christ occupies the center, the axis of time, life and history.

#4. His "once for all" death is sufficient to cover all the sins prior to the cross and all human sins thereafter.

#5. All men who will be saved must bear the exact same relation to that person and to that event. Without Christ there is no coming "to God".

#6. Jesus was "put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit". His spirit was and is the determinant element in human existence. It was this same spirit that made "proclamation(s)" to earlier generations of people who had lost their way on the earth, v.19.

#7. Those "...who once were disobedient" (v.20) and who finally were fixed in an eternal prison, were not without recourse; but that was rejected. Disobedience to the biblical revealed forms, at any time in history, carries eternal consequences.

#8. The imperishable behavioral forms evidenced by Christ, are, in effect, the believer's understanding of time, life, history and experience.

#9. Today, we are to comprehend that "the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water", v.20.

#10. These are imperishable forms into which we pour our behavior, language and reasoning. Like the ark, they hold, in integrity, that which belongs to God.

1 Peter 3:1-22. THE IMPERISHABLE FORMS.

PART 9: THE ETERNAL STARTING POINT, v.21, 22.

#1. Scripture is consistent throughout. The starting point for revelation and for the conduct of human reasoning is the mind of God. Furthermore, that is impossible without a revealed language manifold which stands in the world as a linguistic form of the mind of God, so that we may know: a language form of the mind of God. The apostle Peter insists that our behavior in the material world is to be so generated as to constitute a form of the Word of God.

#2. Therefore, Christian behavior is stipulated to be a form of belief. Belief is to be expressed in the conscious structure of revealed behavioral forms.

#3. "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you--not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ", v.21.

#4. The ark (v.20), and the practice of baptism share a correspondence. They both, in spite of their differences, are forms of salvation.

#5. The true and actual source of redemption is the Almighty and not the forms. However, the revealed behavioral forms have been vested with *salvation purpose*. They cannot be dismissed.

#6. The behavioral form of baptism is not reducible to contact with water. It is "an appeal to God", v.21. Baptism is the pursuit of "a good conscience". To have that outcome one must be freed from sin and its guilt. No form can produce that; only the Lord can grant that state of being.

#7. The source is the resurrected Savior "who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him", v.22.

#8. Any violence done to revealed behavioral forms will have a non-trivial effect. Some theologies separate the revealed behavioral form from its revealed meaning and purpose.

#9. The apostolic message, itself a revealed form of the will of God, teaches that the biblical behavioral forms link the believer to the absolute eternal reality.

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PART 10. THE WATERSHED OF BIBLICAL FAITH.

#1. The revealed biblical forms of behavior, everywhere in the Bible, show no immediate nor direct bearing on situational outcomes.

#2. The behavior enjoined upon the Israelites at Jericho (Joshua 6) was fully disassociated from the temporal/material realities of the situation.

#3. At Kadesh-Barnea (Numbers 13, 14) Joshua and Caleb tried to convince the Israelites to go to battle against the Canaanites. The people rebelled and rejected that form of behavior. To them such behavioral forms were irrational, senseless and self-destructive.

#4. Pouring one's behavior into the biblical forms is an indirect way of dealing with materiality. Human beings, routinely, do not like that arrangement. We tend to distrust it.

#5. This is a type of unbelief. The behavior of prayer and waiting on the Lord is considered by many believers today to be woefully inadequate, irrational and unacceptable. The divide between revealed behavioral forms and direct action upon human circumstances is the persistent watershed between belief and unbelief in Scripture.

#6. The contemporary churches have changed and weakened the focus of faith. They put the divide at the point of doctrine. Doctrine should be held in truth and inviolate. However, when the biblical watershed between belief and unbelief was displaced, from behavior to doctrinal interpretation, then the revealed portrait of belief was diminished.

#7. "But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind"... "a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways", James 1:6-8.

#8. The double-minded man swims around in the sea of world information and synthesizes doubts and objections to the biblical revealed behavioral forms.



#9. The watershed is trust in the Word of God or trust in human lived experience.