

# Notes on 1 Peter

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## Introduction

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This epistle claims that the Apostle Peter wrote it (1:1). Since there is only one Peter who was an apostle, we may be confident of the identity of the writer. There is only one Peter that the entire New Testament mentioned. For parallels between 1 Peter and Peter's sermons in Acts, compare 1 Peter 1:20 with Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 2:7-8 with Acts 4:10-11 (cf. Matt. 21: 42); and 1 Peter 4:5 with Acts 10:42. Scholars did not question Peter's authorship until the nineteenth century when destructive biblical criticism became popular.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the views that Silvanus wrote the epistle, or co-wrote it with Peter, or that an anonymous writer composed it in Peter's name after Peter's death, have been the more popular ones.<sup>2</sup>

"The epistle has been well known and consistently acknowledged as Petrine from the second century well into modern times. . . .

"Aside from the four Gospels and the letters of Paul, the external attestation for 1 Peter is as strong, or stronger, than that for any NT book. There is no evidence anywhere of controversy over its authorship or authority"<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, there has been much controversy over the authorship of 2 Peter.

Peter first sent this letter to believers living in the northern regions of Asia Minor (1:1). This was not a region that Paul evangelized, as far as we know. The locations of these Christians, as well as allusions in the epistle, indicate that they were mainly Gentiles, but also Jews (cf. 1:14, 18; 2:9-10, 25; 3:6; 4:3-4).

Peter died in the 60s and spent the last decade of his life in Rome according to reliable tradition. The exact date of Peter's martyrdom is a matter of debate among scholars. One wrote that the traditional date of Peter's death was A.D. 64.<sup>4</sup> Another claimed that it was A.D. 67.<sup>5</sup> Many interpreters have regarded Peter's reference to Babylon (5:13) as a reference to Rome that Peter described as Babylon to highlight its paganism.

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<sup>1</sup>See Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, pp. 7-15; and Donald A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 641-46..

<sup>2</sup>See Ernest Best, *1 Peter*, pp. 49-63.

<sup>3</sup>J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, pp. xxxii, xxxiv.

<sup>4</sup>Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, pp. 10-14.

"Since the historical city of Babylon in Mesopotamia, often mentioned in the pages of the Old Testament, had no Jewish population in Peter's day (see Josephus, *Ant.* 18.371-79) and was almost deserted in A.D. 115 when the Emperor Trajan visited, almost no one thinks Peter wrote his letter from there. Another, very small Roman military colony in Egypt called 'Babylon' existed in Peter's day, but this too is a very unlikely provenance for 1 Peter."<sup>6</sup>

In view of all this information it seems likely that Peter wrote this epistle from Rome about A.D. 64.<sup>7</sup>

### **SPECIAL FEATURES**

Theologically this epistle is eschatological (dealing with the end times). Along with its eschatological focus there is much emphasis on holiness (personal, social, and communal), hope, salvation, community, relationship to the world, the Trinity, and especially suffering.<sup>8</sup>

"Nowhere in the New Testament . . . are the priestly and the prophetic elements in Christianity so closely fused as in I Peter."<sup>9</sup>

". . . much of the material in 1 Peter is the stuff of basic Christian teaching rather than advanced instruction that assumes the mastery (and perhaps the perversion) of the basics, as in the Pauline letters."<sup>10</sup>

". . . despite its brevity—only 105 verses in all—it is a microcosm of Christian faith and duty, the model of a pastoral charge, composed of diverse materials and of many themes."<sup>11</sup>

"Probably no other letter in the New Testament is said to rely so much on traditional material as is 1 Peter. . . . Scholars estimate that no other book in the New Testament, with the exception of Hebrews and Revelation, depends so heavily on the Old Testament."<sup>12</sup>

"The Greek of the letter is smooth and competent, with rhetorical flourishes. Indeed, along with Hebrews and Luke-Acts, it is some of the best Greek in the New Testament."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Carson and Moo, p. 646.

<sup>7</sup>See my comments on 5:13 for additional support for this conclusion.

<sup>8</sup>For further discussion, see Davids, pp. 14-23, 30-44; and Michaels, pp. lxxv-lxxv.

<sup>9</sup>Selwyn, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup>Davids, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup>Selwyn, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>Carson and Moo, p. 640.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p. 642.

"In many . . . respects, 1 Peter and James form a matched pair within the NT canon. They are Christian diaspora letters roughly similar in length, one directed (probably from Jerusalem) to scattered messianic Jews (i.e., Christians) who are real Jews, and the other directed from 'Babylon' to scattered 'Jews' who are in fact Gentile Christians."<sup>14</sup>

As James is an exposition of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5—7, 1 Peter expounds some of the same themes that Jesus taught in His discipleship discourse in Matthew 10.

### **PURPOSE**

Peter stated his reason for writing, namely, to encourage his readers, who were facing persecution for their faith, to stand firm (5:12). Evidently this persecution was widespread among his readers. Local enemies of the gospel were not the only people responsible for it. When Paul traveled around the Roman Empire preaching the gospel, some churches that he planted experienced persecution from the unsaved in their communities, but others did not. However 1 Peter reflects persecution of the Christians throughout northern Asia Minor. This condition prevailed after Nero blamed the Christians for burning Rome in July of A.D. 64. While persecution seems to have been widespread, it may not have been official yet.<sup>15</sup>

### **OUTLINE**

- I. Introduction 1:1-2
- II. The identity of Christians 1:3—2:10
  - A. Our great salvation 1:3-12
    - 1. The hope of our salvation 1:3-5
    - 2. The joy of our salvation 1:6-9
    - 3. The witnesses of our salvation 1:10-12
  - B. Our new way of life 1:13-25
    - 1. A life of holiness 1:13-16
    - 2. A life of reverence 1:17-21
    - 3. A life of love 1:22-25
  - C. Our priestly calling 2:1-10
    - 1. Listening to God 2:1-3
    - 2. Growing in God 2:4-5
    - 3. Building on Christ 2:6-8
    - 4. Summary affirmation of our identity 2:9-10
- III. The responsibilities of Christians individually 2:11—4:11
  - A. Our mission in the world 2:11-12

<sup>14</sup>Michaels, p. xlvi. See E. M. Sidebottom, *James, Jude, 2 Peter*, pp. 15-16, for other similarities between 1 Peter and James.

<sup>15</sup>E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of Peter*, pp. 52-56.

- B. Respect for others 2:13—3:12
  - 1. Respect for everyone 2:13-17
  - 2. Slaves' respect for their masters 2:18-25
  - 3. Wives' respect for their husbands 3:1-6
  - 4. Husbands' respect for their wives 3:7
  - 5. The importance of loving enemies 3:8-12
- C. Eventual vindication 3:13—4:6
  - 1. Suffering for doing good 3:13-17
  - 2. The vindication of Christ 3:18-22
  - 3. Living with the promise in view 4:1-6
- D. The importance of mutual love in end-times living 4:7-11
- IV. The responsibilities of Christians collectively 4:12—5:11
  - A. The fiery trial 4:12-19
    - 1. Suffering and glory 4:12-14
    - 2. Suffering as Christians 4:15-19
  - B. The church under trial 5:1-11
    - 1. The responsibilities of the elders 5:1-4
    - 2. The responsibilities of the others 5:5
    - 3. The importance of humility and trust in God 5:6-7
    - 4. The importance of resisting the devil 5:8-11
- V. Conclusion 5:12-14

### **MESSAGE**

One writer has identified five major motifs in 1 Peter. These are: (1) the believer's behavior, (2) the believer's unfair circumstances, (3) the believer's deference, (4) the believer's motivation by Christ's example, and (5) the believer's anticipation of future glory. Putting these together, he has stated the message of 1 Peter as follows:

"The behavior of believers when they encounter unfair circumstances reflects a spirit of deference in all relationships as they follow Christ's example and anticipate future glory."<sup>16</sup>

This is a very fine statement of what the Holy Spirit has said to us through Peter in this epistle. However, I would add one more important motif. It is the believer's resource of God's grace. This is not an incidental motif but one that underlies all of what Peter called on his readers to do. We must understand and apply what he wrote about *God's grace as our resource* in order to obey his exhortations.

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<sup>16</sup>James R. Slaughter, "The Importance of Literary Argument for Understanding 1 Peter," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152:605 (January-March 1995):80.

It seems to me that Peter stated the message of this epistle clearly: "Stand firm in the true grace of God" (5:12).

The subject of the letter, therefore, is "the true grace of God." "Grace" is the key word in the argument of this epistle. In each case, the word "grace" occurs in the practical, rather than in the doctrinal, part of each section of the letter. Throughout 1 Peter, the fact of God's grace was in Peter's mind as crucial to the believer's practice. How does one explain God's grace? "Grace" means both "undeserved favor" and "divine enablement." A good synonym is God's "help."

The main purpose of this epistle was to strengthen the readers so they would persevere through their persecution with the right attitude. Peter did this by showing that God's grace provided all that they needed for strength. In a larger sense, the purpose is to help Christians know how to live as "aliens" in the world.

This epistle reveals, above all else, that *God's grace* is sufficient for *all* our needs. We could write over this whole book: 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you." Notice five things that Peter reminds us about God's grace, as we trace his references to grace though 1 Peter.

First, *grace proceeds from God*. God in His grace has chosen Christians (1:2a). Now we need to realize God's grace in its fullest measure in our experience (1:2b).

Second, *grace produces confidence*. The prophets foretold God's grace (1:10). The two advents of Jesus Christ supply God's grace (1:13). Grace came into the world at His first advent, through His sufferings and death. It will come into the world again at His second advent, through His glorification. This pattern gives us confidence. God has united us with Christ. As He suffered once, we suffer now. As certainly as He will receive glory in the future, we too will experience glorification in the future. We need to remember our hope. (cf. James 1).

Third, what *proclaims* God's grace is *our conduct* (2:19-20). The Christian's conduct in trying and difficult circumstances manifests God's grace in a human life. The submissive conduct of servants, whose masters are persecuting them, manifests God's grace. The submissive conduct of wives, whose antagonistic husbands are persecuting them, manifests grace. The submissive conduct of husbands, whom unbelievers are persecuting, manifests grace. The husband demonstrates his submission to God by treating his wife as a "fellow heir" of God's grace (3:7). Our patient endurance of trials displays our submission to God's will. Thus the Christian's conduct should manifest God's grace. Sometimes we marvel at the ability that God gives his persecuted saints to endure. We say, "How can he (or she) do it?" They can do it because God provides grace.

Fourth, *grace perfects character*. Grace is the source of service (4:10). Grace is also the source of humility (5:5). An attitude of humility manifests itself in service of others. God's grace is the secret of both the attitude and the activity. Jesus established "The Order of the Towel" by washing the disciples' feet (John 13).

Fifth, *grace promotes courage* (5:10). We need courage to resist the devil (5:8-9). God's grace gives us strength to defend ourselves against his attacks.

This epistle exhorts us to "stand firm in" this grace (5:12). This is Peter's appeal to his Christian readers.

When God tries our faith, we need to remember that we have an adequate source of strength in God's grace (2 Cor. 12:9).

When our faith is trembling, we need to remember that we have an adequate source of confidence in God's grace. This is not simply positive thinking, but real external help.

When our circumstances are difficult, we need to remember that we have an adequate source of conduct in God's grace, not just "pep talks."

When we suffer for conscience's sake, we need to remember that we have an adequate source of character in God's grace, not just self-effort.

When assaulted by the adversary, we need to remember that we have an adequate source of courage in God's grace. Some need courage to evangelize, others need it to do other forms of ministry.

We "stand firm in the true grace of God" when we respond to suffering for Christ's sake as Peter directed. God's grace is what we need to rely on as we commit ourselves to continue to walk in the will of God. We need to trust and obey!<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Adapted from G. Campbell Morgan, *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, 2:2:143-58.

## Exposition

### I. INTRODUCTION 1:1-2

Peter began this epistle in the manner that was customary in his day.<sup>18</sup> He introduced himself and his original readers, and he wished God's blessing on them to prepare them for what he had to say. He prepared them for dealing with trials by reminding them of who they were, what they had, and where they were going (vv. 1-5).

1:1 Peter is a Greek name (lit. *Petros*, meaning a stone or rock). No one else in the New Testament has the name Peter, though Peter called Christians stones in this epistle (2:4-5). In Aramaic "stone" is the word *cephas*. Jesus gave the name Cephas to Simon (The Greek transliteration of Simeon, Peter's Hebrew name) as a prediction of what this apostle would become (John 1:42; Matt. 16:18).

The word "apostle" has both a technical and a general sense in the New Testament. It refers to the Twelve and Paul, but also to others who went out as the Twelve and Paul did to represent Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 14:4, 14). Peter was one of the Twelve. He wrote with full apostolic authority.

Peter called his readers aliens (NIV strangers) to introduce this self-concept into their minds. In this letter he emphasized that Christians are really citizens of heaven and our sojourn here on earth is only temporary (2:11; cf. Gen. 32:4; Ps. 39:12). The Greek word *perepidemos* (alien) contains both the ideas of alien nationality and temporary residence (cf. 2:11; Heb. 11:13).



"*Perepidemioi* are persons who belong to some other land and people, who are temporarily residing with a people to whom they do not belong. . . .

"Aliens are often held in contempt by the natives among whom they dwell."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup>See Philip L. Tite, "The Compositional Function of the Petrine Prescript: A Look at 1 Pet 1:1-3," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39:1 (March 1996):47-56.

<sup>19</sup>Richard C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John, and St. Jude*, p. 21.

"This is an epistle from the homeless to the homeless."<sup>20</sup>

The particular group of Christians to whom this epistle went first lived in the northern Roman provinces of Asia Minor (modern western Turkey), north of the Taurus Mountains.<sup>21</sup> Peter Davids estimated that when Peter wrote this epistle about one million Jews lived in Palestine and two to four million lived outside it. Asia Minor held the third largest concentration of Diaspora Jews after Babylon and Egypt.<sup>22</sup>

This was originally an encyclical letter written for circulation among the addressees. The sequence of provinces corresponds to the route that the bearer of the original epistle would have normally followed.<sup>23</sup> This is also true of the seven cities addressed in Revelation 2 and 3.

Peter's readers were God's elect (Eph. 1:4; cf. Deut. 14:2; Isa. 45:4). One writer believed "chosen" (NASB) should be connected with "aliens."<sup>24</sup> However most translators regarded "chosen" as a noun, not an adjective, as the NASB suggests.<sup>25</sup>

". . . the letter develops a unified thematic focus: the existence of Christians in a non-Christian society and overcoming that society by being prepared to bear oppression, i.e., to 'suffer.'

"This thematic focus, i.e., the question of how to live in society—the fundamental problem of every social ethic—was for Jesus' disciples from the very beginning an acute problem."<sup>26</sup>

- 1:2 Election originates in the eternal will and purpose of God the Father. The foreknowledge (Gr. *prognosin*; cf. Acts 2:23) of God refers, of course, to what God knows beforehand. God's foreknowledge has an element of determinism in it because whatever really happens that God knows beforehand exists or takes place because of His sovereign will.<sup>27</sup> Therefore when Peter wrote that God chose according to His foreknowledge he did not mean that God chose the elect because He *knew* beforehand they would believe the gospel (the Arminian position). God chose them because He *determined* beforehand that they would believe the gospel (the Calvinist position; cf. Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:3-6; 1 Thess. 1:4; 1 Peter 5:13).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Michaels, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup>See Best, pp. 14-15.

<sup>22</sup>Davids, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup>F. J. A. Hort, *The First Epistle of St. Peter 1:1—2:17*, pp. 157-84; Selwyn, p. 119; Goppelt, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup>D. Edmond Hiebert, "Designation of the Readers in 1 Peter 1:1-2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137:545 (January-March 1980):65.

<sup>25</sup>E.g., Bigg, p. 90.

<sup>26</sup>Goppelt, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup>See Best, pp. 70-71.

<sup>28</sup>For further explanation of the Calvinist position, see L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 7:158-60.



"When applied to God's knowledge of persons (whether of Jesus or his people), 'foreknowledge' is more than mere prescience, it involves choice or determination as well (cf. Acts 2:23—the only other NT use of the noun—and Jud 9:6; also the verb *proginoskein*, 'know,' in Rom 8:29 and 11:2, as well as 1 Pet 1:20). In this sense God 'knows' some people and not others, whereas a general prescience would be all inclusive (cf. the particularized use of 'know' in Amos 3:2; Hos 5:3; 12:1 [LXX]; 1 Cor 8:3; Gal 4:9)."<sup>29</sup>

The Holy Spirit accomplished election when He separated the elect and set them aside to a special calling. God's purpose in election was that we might obey God the Son and that He might sprinkle us with His blood (cf. Eph. 2:10).

"To 'sprinkle with Christ's blood' means to take a person into the realm of influence of Christ's dying, to align him or her with the One who died. This alignment accomplishes, as the figure expresses graphically, purification and thereby appropriation into a new connection to God."<sup>30</sup>

This is probably an allusion to covenant ratification (cf. Exod. 24:5-8). Jesus' blood was the ratification of the New Covenant (cf. Matt. 26:27-28; Mark 14:23-24; Luke 22:20) since it was the basis for the forgiveness of sins (as promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34).<sup>31</sup>

"Peter's choice of images confirms the impression that he writes to communities of Gentiles as if they were a strange new kind of Jew."<sup>32</sup>

In this verse Peter referred to all three members of the Trinity.

"The primary import of the three clauses [that begin verse 2] is to open up clearly at the outset of the Epistle the transcendent origin, nature, and purpose of the Church and its life."<sup>33</sup>

Probably Peter had Old Testament sprinkling of blood in mind when he wrote this verse. There are many Old Testament allusions in this epistle. Sprinkling with blood in Israel resulted in cleansing (Num. 19:9), bringing the person sprinkled under the terms and blessings of a covenant (Exod. 24:3-8), and induction into the priesthood and kingship. Members of the priesthood enjoyed the privilege of mediating between God and people (Exod. 29:21; Lev. 8:30). Members of the royal line in Israel enjoyed the

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<sup>29</sup>Michaels, pp. 10-11.

<sup>30</sup>Goppelt, p. 75. Cf. Bigg, p. 93.

<sup>31</sup>Buist M. Fanning, "A Theology of Peter and Jude," in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 441-42.

<sup>32</sup>Michaels, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup>Selwyn, p. 119.

privilege of reigning under God. All of these benefits belong to the Christian whom God has figuratively sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ, the final sacrifice for our sins. Obedience is our responsibility, and sprinkling is our privilege. Christ's blood covers our sins as sinners, cleanses our defilement as unclean people, and consecrates our service as priests and kings.

"The author sees himself and his readers as a community situated in the world in much the same way the Jews are situated, and sharing with the Jews a common past."<sup>34</sup>

Peter prayed for God's fullest outpouring of His favor and help on his readers. They needed this in view of their sufferings, which Peter proceeded to discuss. His readers also needed God's gift of peace since they were suffering.

"In looking back over Peter's designation of his readers, one is awed by the sweep and richness of his statement. If one has been prone to think of Peter primarily as an aggressive man of action, he here reveals himself also as a man who had a firm grasp of the great spiritual realities of the faith."<sup>35</sup>

## **II. THE IDENTITY OF CHRISTIANS 1:3—2:10**

The essentially chiasmic structure of thought in the letter, excluding the introduction and conclusion, can be visualized in the outline (above). The recurrence of the direct address "Beloved" in 2:11 and 4:12 divides this letter into three main parts.

"The theme of the first part is the identity of the people of God established on the basis of the great salvation Christ has accomplished (and is accomplishing) on their behalf. Their identity as a 'chosen' people is affirmed programmatically in the address (1:1-2) and confirmed in the concluding pronouncements of 2:9-10 so as to form an inclusio. More broadly, there is an inclusion between the emphasis on the identity of Christians in the first section (1:1-12) and last section (2:1-10) of part one. In the first section, they are 'chosen' as heirs of divine salvation, while in the last their election is confirmed by the metaphor of priesthood."<sup>36</sup>

Peter began the body of this epistle by reminding his readers of their identity as Christians. He did this to enable them to rejoice in the midst of present suffering. They could do this since they would ultimately experience glorification. The tone of this entire epistle is warm, pastoral, and full of encouragement. In it Peter partially fulfilled Jesus' instructions to him to "tend (shepherd) my [Jesus'] lambs . . . sheep" (John 21:15-17).

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<sup>34</sup>Michaels, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup>Hiebert, pp. 73-74.

<sup>36</sup>Michaels, p. xxxiv.

## **A. OUR GREAT SALVATION 1:3-12**

The first part of this section on who we are as Christians is a revelation of our great salvation. Some have called it "the Great Doxology." In it Peter reminded us of our hope, our joy, and the witnesses of our salvation. He did this so we would appreciate how greatly God has blessed us.

### **1. The hope of our salvation 1:3-5**

1:3 Peter called his readers to bless (praise) God for giving us a living hope. This undying hope has its roots in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because He lives, we shall live. Our new birth gave us this life. Consequently our hope is both alive within us and part of our new life in Christ.

"Just as 'faith' can be subjective (the act or state of believing), or objective (the content of belief), so 'hope' can refer either to an anticipation (even a certainty) of good things to come or to the content of that anticipation, the good things themselves. The 'living hope' of which Peter speaks here is better understood in the second, objective, sense. As such, it appropriately parallels, and is further explained by, the 'inheritance' of v 4 and the 'salvation' of v 5 (cf. Col 1:5 . . .)." <sup>37</sup>

Many popular writers have called Paul the apostle of faith, John the apostle of love, and Peter the apostle of hope. They have done so because of the dominant emphasis each of these writers made in the New Testament. Peter had much to say about hope in this epistle.<sup>38</sup>

When James wrote of "salvation," the particular aspect of salvation he usually had in view was practical sanctification. When Peter wrote of "salvation" in this epistle, the particular aspect of salvation he usually had in view was glorification.

"While Peter's teaching on how salvation is applied gave attention to the beginning and continued process of living as a Christian, the actual words for 'salvation' have a predominantly future orientation in 1 Peter."<sup>39</sup>

"Born again" (cf. v. 23) describes the Christian who experienced spiritual regeneration (John 3:3). The phrase stresses the great change that takes place at conversion and our resultant participation in the life of God. God has been exceedingly merciful in giving us this blessing (cf. Rom. 11:30-

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 19. See also John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3:2:42.

<sup>38</sup>See Geerhardus Vos, "A Sermon on I Peter 1:3-5," *Kerux* 1:2 (September 1986):4-17.

<sup>39</sup>Fanning, p. 447.

32; 15:9; Eph. 2:1-7; Titus 3:5). One writer considered salvation the major theme of this epistle.<sup>40</sup>

"The Christian . . . is as incapable of starting himself on the new life as he was of conceiving himself for his first life."<sup>41</sup>

1:4 As the Israelites anticipated their inheritance, the Promised Land, so Christians should anticipate ours, the other side of the grave. However ours is not subject to destruction from any source, defilement from without, or decay from within. Peter played with words when he described three characteristics of our inheritance. Each Greek word begins with the same letter and ends with the same syllable: imperishable (*aphtharton*), undefiled (*amianton*), and unfading (*amaranton*). No one can ravage or pollute our inheritance, and it will not wear out or waste away.

"the inheritance is untouched by death, unstained by evil, unimpaired by time!"<sup>42</sup>

What is the Christian's inheritance exactly? It is Jesus Christ Himself and the blessings that He has promised us (cf. 1 John 3:2; Col. 3:4; Eph. 1:14; Rom. 8:11, 18-23). All Christians will not obtain the same amount of inheritance (cf. 2 Tim. 2:12; Matt. 25:14-30; et al.), but every Christian will obtain much inheritance. Heaven will be the portion of all, but rewards will vary (1 Cor. 3:14-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 John 8).

The idea of serving Jesus Christ faithfully to receive a reward is distasteful to some Christians because such service may flow from selfish motives. However selfishness is not the only possible motive. For example, two students could study hard to finish seminary with good records. One might do so to obtain a diploma with a "highest honor" stamp so he could hang it on his wall for all to see and admire. The other might do so to prepare to serve his Savior most effectively after graduation with no thought of broadcasting his honor. The Christian who serves Jesus Christ faithfully now so the Lord may entrust him with significant service opportunities in His coming kingdom may not be trying to earn rewards for his own glory. He may serve now so he can better glorify his Lord in the future. The present life is a training period designed to ready us for future service in our Lord's earthly millennial and heavenly eternal kingdoms (cf. Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 16:1-13; 19:11-27; Rom. 8:16-18).

1:5 Not only is God protecting our inheritance, but He is also protecting us by His power. All Christians will undoubtedly obtain an eternal inheritance one day (cf. Phil. 1:6; 1 Cor. 1:8). Our faith in Christ for salvation is, on the human side, what guarantees our final realization of the fullness of our

<sup>40</sup>Paul A. Cedar, *James, 1, 2 Peter, Jude*, p. 120.

<sup>41</sup>Best, p. 75.

<sup>42</sup>F. W. Beare, cited by Best, p. 76.

salvation (i.e., our glorification). Peter was not saying our faith keeps us saved. He said God's power keeps us saved. Our faith is the means by which we receive salvation initially and, therefore, our inheritance.

"To interpret faith as a 'steadfast determination to cling to God in all trials' (Wand) makes their faith the cause of their preservation by God, i.e. they are saved because they cling steadfastly to God; this really makes the reference to God's power unnecessary and provides no assurance to the believer since what he doubts is his own power to cling to God in trial."<sup>43</sup>

Some Christians (mainly in the Reformed tradition) believe this verse teaches that true Christians will inevitably continue in the faith, that they will never abandon Christianity or stop believing that Jesus is the Christ. They view the faith referred to in this verse as ongoing faith rather than initial faith. One advocate of this view wrote the following.

"Those who have true faith can lose that faith neither totally nor finally."<sup>44</sup>

I do not believe the apostle meant that the elect will inevitably continue in faith, namely, continue to believe the truths of the gospel. Paul warned that Christians can stop believing the truth (e.g., 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:17-18). Rather Peter meant that God's power keeps believers saved in spite of their sins because we have placed saving faith in Christ in the past. In this sense we never lose our faith.

There is much misunderstanding about the Bible's teaching concerning the perseverance of the saints. Joseph Dillow has the most helpful and biblically consistent discussion of perseverance that I have found.<sup>45</sup> Scripture does not teach that Christians will inevitably continue to persevere in the faith, that is, continue believing the truth, walking with the Lord, or doing good works. It does teach that God will persevere in His commitment to bring all who have trusted in Him to heaven. If someone asks me if I believe in the perseverance of the saints, I ask him what he means by the perseverance of the saints. If he means that a believer is eternally secure, I say that I believe that. If he means that a believer will *inevitably* continue to believe the truth or follow God faithfully to the end of his or her life, even with occasional lapses, I say I do not believe that.

The salvation ready to be revealed in the last time is the aspect of salvation that we have yet to enjoy, namely, our glorification. When God glorifies us, He will save us from the presence of sin forever. This will happen

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>44</sup>Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, p. 234. See also John MacArthur, *Faith Works*, pp. 175-92.

<sup>45</sup>Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*. See his Subject Index for his many references to it.

when we see our Savior and are from then on with Him (1 Thess. 4:17). This glorification will become ours at death or the Rapture, whichever event comes first.

"Every preparation for the final unveiling of this salvation is completed."<sup>46</sup>

Salvation is the subject of 1:3—2:10. Note the recurrence of the word "salvation" (Gr. *soteria*) in 1:5, 9, 10, and 2:2. Peter referred primarily to the future aspect of our salvation in this epistle, namely, our glorification.

## **2. The joy of our salvation 1:6-9**

"The main thread of Peter's rhetoric [in this pericope] can . . . be expressed in one sentence: 'Then you will rejoice with inexpressible and glorious delight, when you each receive the outcome of your faith, your final salvation' . . ."<sup>47</sup>

1:6 We can rejoice greatly in this hope. However, the antecedent of "this" may be "the last time" (v. 5). Peter's idea would then be that we will rejoice on that future day whereas now we experience various distressing trials. God will preserve both us and our inheritance until we receive our inheritance. "Trials" (Gr. *peirasmois*, the same kind of trials James wrote about in James 1:2, et al.) are all kinds of tests that challenge our fidelity to God's will.

"*Peirasmos* here means not the inner wrestling with evil inclination, but undeserved sufferings from outside the person who is distressed by them."<sup>48</sup>

Peter was not denying that we face temptation from within, but he was addressing temptations from external sources particularly.<sup>49</sup>

In comparison with the eternal bliss ahead, our present distresses are only temporary and brief (cf. Matt. 5:4-5; 2 Cor. 4:17-18). Trials are necessary for the Christian. God uses them to perfect us (cf. James 1:3-4). However they tend to rob us of joy if we do not remember what Peter urged his readers to bear in mind here (cf. James 1:2).

1:7 Trials do to faith what fire does to gold. They purify it and show it to be what it really is (cf. James 1:3). Peter anticipated his readers would respond to their trials properly. God purifies our faith with trials by helping us realize the inadequacy of anything but trust in Him in these

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<sup>46</sup> Davids, p. 54.

<sup>47</sup> Michaels, p. 26.

<sup>48</sup> Bigg, p. 103.

<sup>49</sup> See Gordon E. Kirk, "Endurance in Suffering in 1 Peter," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138:549 (January-March 1981):46-56, for a good brief summary of Peter's teaching on suffering in this epistle.

situations. He shows that our faith is genuine by demonstrating that our joy in trials rests solely on confidence in Him and His promises. Both results bring praise, glory, and honor to God ultimately, though they also benefit us.

"Glory is never said to be the possession of humans except as we share God's glory in the parousia (e.g., Rom. 8:17; Col. 3:4), although we contribute to this glory by our actions now (1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 1:12)."<sup>50</sup>

The Greek word *parousia* means "presence" and, specifically, the presence of one coming, hence the coming of Christ. The "revelation" (uncovering, appearing, Gr. *apokalypsis*) of Jesus Christ to Christians will take place at the Rapture, and His revelation to the world will take place at the Second Coming. Both events seen as a whole seem to be in view here (cf. v. 13). Peter's emphasis was not on when this would happen relative to other events yet future but on the fact that it would happen in the future rather than now.

- 1:8 Even though we will experience joy when we see the Lord, we can experience joy now too because we have hope (v. 3), faith (v. 7), and love (v. 8). These characteristics are inseparable. Our joy is "full of glory" in that the glory people will see when God reveals Jesus Christ infuses our present joy (cf. John 20:29). Our joy will be no different on that day, only greater.
- 1:9 Ultimately we will obtain the full salvation of our souls (i.e., glorification, though not necessarily exemption from physical suffering and death now). The Greek word translated "souls" (*psychon*) refers to our persons, namely, the whole beings God has saved (cf. Mark 3:4; 8:34-37; Rom. 13:1; 1 Thess. 2:8; James 1:21; 5:20; et al.).<sup>51</sup> A better translation would be "selves" or "lives." Peter probably did not intend a contrast with our bodies.<sup>52</sup> This is part of the reason we experience joy in present trials as well. Since our salvation comes by faith it is only consistent that we should continue to trust God now. Our salvation is still in process.<sup>53</sup>

To summarize this first major section so far (vv. 3-9), Peter called on his readers to rejoice in their present sufferings because of their hope, faith, and love. They had certain hope in the future appearing of Jesus Christ and in their final glorification. They had faith in God's dealings with them presently, namely, allowing them to undergo trials, and they had love for Jesus Christ for what He had already done for them in the past. It does not matter if we look forward, around us, or backward. We can find grounds for rejoicing wherever we look even as we suffer.

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<sup>50</sup> Davids, p. 58.

<sup>51</sup> See Bigg, p. 107.

<sup>52</sup> Edwin A. Blum, "1 Peter," in *Hebrews-Revelation*, vol. 12 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 221.

<sup>53</sup> See Dillow, pp. 119-22.

### **3. The Witnesses of Our Salvation 1:10-12**

Peter reminded his readers that the prophets had predicted that Jesus Christ's life, as their own lives, would include suffering followed by glory. He mentioned this to encourage them to realize that their experience of suffering for their commitment to follow God faithfully was not abnormal.

"To the elaborated and elevated declaration of his eschatological vision in vv 6-9, Peter now adds an explanatory postscript in a more didactic style. He pauses to measure the greatness of the salvation mentioned in vv 5 and 9 with a brief but wide-ranging reflection on the past and present. The curiosity of 'prophets' (v. 10) and 'angels' (v 12) underscores the mystery of the divine plan: God in his sovereignty has long kept secret the salvation soon to be revealed to his chosen ones (cf. Eph 3:4-6)."<sup>54</sup>

These verses reveal a chiasmic structure centering on the idea that God clarified what had formerly been unclear to the prophets.

1:10-11      Salvation is the major concept that Peter discussed. He wanted his readers to remember that it included suffering as well as glory. The Old Testament prophets had predicted that Messiah would experience both suffering and glory (e.g., Isa. 61:1-3). However, they did not understand how His suffering and glory would fit together. It is possible to understand that mystery only after Jesus' earthly ministry.

"He [Peter], who wanted to hear nothing of it [Christ's sufferings] during the lifetime of Jesus, made Jesus' suffering and death the very centre of his explanation of Jesus' earthly work."<sup>55</sup>

Many Christians do not realize that God intended our experience to include both suffering and glory.

The title "Spirit of Christ" occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in Romans 8:9. In both places it probably signifies not only that the Spirit came from Christ but also that He witnesses to Christ as His representative (cf. John 15:26-27). Peter was stressing the Spirit's witness to Christ in the Old Testament rather than the preexistence of Christ.<sup>56</sup>

Some interpreters have seen the phrase "the grace that would come to you" (v. 10) as a reference to the salvation of Gentiles. The Old Testament prophets predicted this, too (e.g., Isa. 52:15). Peter's original audience was probably predominantly Gentile groups of Christians. It seems more likely, however, that Peter was not referring exclusively to prophecy about Gentile salvation. He seems to have been referring to the grace God

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<sup>54</sup>Michaels, p. 38.

<sup>55</sup>Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, p. 74.

<sup>56</sup>Dauids, p. 62.



promised to bestow on believers generally, including Gentile salvation, about which he had been speaking in verses 3-9.

These verses clearly distinguish, by the way, between the divine author and the human writers of Scripture. The prophets were not merely religious geniuses. They were people through whom God spoke (2 Pet. 1:21). At times they knew that they did not fully comprehend what they were communicating. At other times they probably thought they understood but did not completely realize the full significance of what they communicated (cf. Dan. 9; 12:5-13; Hab. 2:1-4). They did not know the time when many Messianic prophecies would be fulfilled either.

1:12 The prophets did understand, however, that God would not fulfill all of their inspired revelations in their own days but in the future. God had fulfilled the prophecies about Messiah's sufferings in Peter's day, but He had not fulfilled the prophecies of Messiah's glorification yet. Even the angels are waiting to see how and exactly when God will fulfill them (cf. Heb. 1:5—2:18).

The Holy Spirit has a ministry of illumination as well as inspiration. He enables others to understand God's revelation as preachers explain it and, of course, as they hear it in other ways.

Peter's point in verses 10-12 seems to be that his readers could rejoice in their sufferings even though they could not see exactly how or when their present trials would end. The readers should find encouragement by looking at the prophets' limited understanding of their own prophecies dealing with the suffering and glorification of Messiah. God would bring their own experiences to a glorious completion just as He would Messiah's, though in both cases the details of fulfillment were not yet clear.

### **B. OUR NEW WAY OF LIFE 1:13-25**

Peter wanted his readers to live joyfully in the midst of sufferings. Consequently he outlined his readers' major responsibilities to enable them to see their duty clearly so they could carry it out. These responsibilities were their duties to God, to other believers, and to the world.

The first sub-section of this epistle (vv. 3-12) stressed walking in hope. The second sub-section (vv. 13-25) emphasizes walking in holiness, reverence, and love. Peter held out several incentives to encourage his suffering readers to walk appropriately: God's glory (v. 13), God's holiness (vv. 14-15), God's Word (v. 16), God's judgment (v. 17), and God's love (vv. 18-21).<sup>57</sup> Peter presented the believer's duty to God as consisting of three things: a correct perspective, correct behavior, and a correct attitude.

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<sup>57</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:395.

### **1. A life of holiness 1:13-16**

1:13 "Therefore" ties in with everything Peter had explained thus far (vv. 3-12). He said in effect, Now that you have focused your thinking positively you need to roll up your sleeves mentally, pull yourselves together, and adopt some attitudes that will affect your activities.

". . . the thought is: 'Make up your mind decisively!'"<sup>58</sup>

"The English phrase 'pull yourselves together' would express the meaning."<sup>59</sup>

"In Israel an ordinary person wore as the basic garment a long, sleeveless shirt of linen or wool that reached to the knees or ankles. Over this mantle something like a poncho might be worn, although the mantle was laid aside for work. The shirt was worn long for ceremonial occasions or when at relative rest, such as talking in the market, but for active service, such as work or war, it was tucked up into a belt at the waist to leave the legs free (1 Kings 18:46; Jer. 1:17; Luke 17:8; John 21:18; Acts 12:8). Thus Peter's allusion pictures a mind prepared for active work."<sup>60</sup>

Sober of spirit describes a Christian who is in full control of his speech and conduct in contrast to one who allows his flesh (i.e., his sinful human nature) to govern him.

The main duty, however, is to become conscious of the culmination of our hope when Christ returns (cf. v. 7; 4:3; Titus 2:10-13). When we do this, present trials will not deflect us from obeying God faithfully now. In other words, Peter urged his readers to face their daily trials with a specific attitude clearly and constantly in mind. We should remember that what God will give us soon as a reward for our faithful commitment to Him is worth any sacrifice now (cf. Rom. 8:18).

1:14 A better translation of "obedient children" might be "children whose spirit is obedience." Negatively we should stop letting our sinful passions dominate and control us (cf. Rom. 12:2). Self-indulgence is characteristic of those who are ignorant of God. Practically this involves saying no to the flesh.

The fact that Peter said that his readers had lived in "ignorance" identifies them for the first time explicitly as Gentile Christians (cf. Acts 17:23, 30; Eph. 4:18). The Jews were not ignorant of the importance of abstaining from fleshly lusts since their Scriptures informed them.

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<sup>58</sup>Lenski, p. 51.

<sup>59</sup>Selwyn, p. 139.

<sup>60</sup>Davids, p. 66. Cf. Exod. 12:11 LXX.

1:15 Positively we should emulate our holy God who called us to be holy and to be holy in all our behavior: thoughts, words, and deeds (cf. 2:9, 21; 3:9; 5:10; Mark 1:17). Holy means set apart from sin to God. We are to strive after sinless living, namely, purity. Peter was not implying that his readers had been living unholy lives but that holiness should mark them.

This verse contains the first use of a key word in 1 Peter: "behavior" (Gr. *anastrophe*; cf. 1:18; 2:12; 3:1, 2, 16). Other frequently recurring words include "bear up" (Gr. *pascho*; cf. 2:19, 20, 21, 23; 3:14, 17, 18; 4:1 [twice], 15, 19; 5:10), "submit" (Gr. *hypotasso*; cf. 2:13, 18; 3:1, 5, 22; 5:5), and "do right" (Gr. *agathopoieo*; cf. 2:15, 20; 3:6, 17). Taken together these words indicate one of this epistle's distinctive emphases, namely, the importance of bearing up submissively and practicing good deeds while enduring persecution for one's faith.

1:16 Peter reinforced this imperative with an Old Testament quotation (cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7).

"When it comes to the use of the OT, 1 Peter stands out among the NT letters, especially when one compares the number of citations and allusions to the length of the letter. 1 Peter contains about the same number of OT references per unit of text as does Hebrews. Only Revelation contains more."<sup>61</sup>

The writer just quoted listed nine citations of Old Testament passages in 1 Peter and 20 allusions to Old Testament passages.

In the context, Israel was to be holy so she could have intimate fellowship with God. We cannot expect to enjoy intimate fellowship with God who is holy unless we are holy too. Intimate fellowship with God is the greatest good human beings can experience (cf. Phil. 3:8), but without holiness it is impossible.

"The Word reveals God's mind, so we should *learn* it; God's heart, so we should *love* it; God's will, so we should *live* it. Our whole being—mind, will, and heart—should be controlled by the Word of God. . . .

"We do not study the Bible just to get to know the Bible. We study the Bible that we might get to know God better. Too many earnest Bible students are content with outlines and explanations, and do not really get to know God. It is good to know the Word of God, but this should help us better know the God of the Word."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Davids, p. 24.

<sup>62</sup> Wiersbe, 2:397.

## 2. A life of reverence 1:17-21

Peter continued the exposition of the Leviticus commands to be holy because Yahweh is holy that he began in verse 16.

"Peter's point is that if he and his readers have a special relationship to God by virtue of their calling and their new birth, then it is all the more urgent that they remember who he is in himself, and display the reverence that God deserves."<sup>63</sup>

1:17 "If" means "since" here (a first class condition in Greek). We do call on God as our Father because He is our Father (Matt. 6:4, 6, 9; Luke 11:2; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). Nevertheless He is also the Judge of all, and He judges impartially, not on the basis of appearances but on the basis of reality. Since we must all stand before God for an evaluation of our works, we should live now accordingly (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10).

"Each of us will give an account of his works, and each will receive the appropriate reward. This is a 'family judgment,' the Father dealing with His beloved children. The Greek word translated *judgeth* carries the meaning 'to judge in order to find something good.'"<sup>64</sup>

It is good for us to maintain respect (fear) for God as our Judge since He has this power over us (cf. Heb. 12:29). Again Peter reminded us that our earthly life of trials and suffering is only a brief sojourn.

1:18-19 The Greek word for "redeemed" (*elytrothete*) means to ransom, to free by paying a price (cf. Mark 10:45; Luke 24:21; Tit. 2:14).

"He [Peter] has some of the most noteworthy statements in the New Testament about the atoning value of Christ's suffering."<sup>65</sup>

"Any representative first-century church would have three kinds of members: slaves, freemen [those who had never been slaves], and freed men. People became slaves in various ways—through war, bankruptcy, sale by themselves, sale by parents, or by birth. Slaves normally could look forward to freedom after a certain period of service and often after the payment of a price. Money to buy his freedom could be earned by the slave in his spare time or by doing more than his owner required. Often the price could be provided by someone else. By the payment

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<sup>63</sup>Michaels, p. 60.

<sup>64</sup>Wiersbe, 2:397.

<sup>65</sup>Leon Morris, *New Testament Theology*, p. 319. See 1:1-3, 18-25; 2:21-25; 3:18; 4:1, and Frederic R. Howe, "The Cross of Christ in Peter's Theology," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157:626 (April-June 2000):190-99.

of a price (*lytron, antilytron*), a person could be set free from his bondage or servitude. A freed man was a person who formerly had been a slave but was now redeemed."<sup>66</sup>

As the death of the Passover lamb liberated the Israelites from physical bondage in Egypt, so the death of Jesus Christ frees us from the spiritual bondage of sin (cf. Exod. 12:5). In speaking of redemption Peter always emphasized our freedom from a previously sinful lifestyle to live a changed life here and now.<sup>67</sup> Jesus Christ's life, represented by the blood, is of infinitely greater value than any mere metal, as precious as that metal may be (cf. Acts 3:6; 8:20). "Futile" means vain or powerless, and it suggests that many of Peter's readers were indeed Gentiles. We would normally expect this in view of where they lived (v. 1). This word better describes the lifestyle of an unsaved Gentile than that of an unsaved Jew (cf. v. 14).

1:20-21 The Fall did not take God by surprise. He already knew what He would do in view of it and Who would do it. We have two good reasons why we can come to God: what Christ did for us, and what God did for Christ for what Christ did for us. Our attitude toward God, therefore, can and should be both reverential (v. 17) and confident as we endure suffering for our faith.

"The pre-existence of Christ is implied here through the additional words *was made manifest*, i.e. at the incarnation; it was not merely a plan of God but Christ himself who was hidden until the moment for revelation."<sup>68</sup>

So far ". . . the ethical impact of the epistle barely begins to make itself felt. The call to action and to a holy and reverent life is general rather than specific. The imperatives of hope and of godly fear have more to do with eschatological expectations than with ethics, and more to do with the readers' relationship to God than with their relationships to each other or to their pagan neighbors."<sup>69</sup>

"At this point ends what we may call the doctrinal section of the Epistle. St. Peter has been explaining the three Names [i.e., Jesus Christ, God, and Holy Spirit], their three attributes, and their several relations. Here he passes to the practical Christian life, catching up and expounding the words *hagiasmos* [sanctification], *anagennan* [born again]."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Blum, pp. 224-25.

<sup>67</sup>Douglas W. Kennard, "Peterine Redemption: Its Meaning and Extent," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30:4 (December 1987):399-405.

<sup>68</sup>Best, p. 91.

<sup>69</sup>Michaels, p. 71.

<sup>70</sup>Bigg, p. 122.

### **3. A life of love 1:22-25**

Peter next turned his attention from the believer's duty to God to the believer's duty to his or her Christian brethren. He did so to explain further the implications of living joyfully during trials and suffering. He returned to what he set out to do in verse 13, namely, to spell out the implications of Christian faith and hope. However, he continued to reflect on the theological basis of our ethical responsibilities. He would get into practical Christian ethics later. Obedience to the truth produces a sincere love for the brethren (1:22-25), repentance from sin (2:1), and a desire for spiritual growth (2:2).<sup>71</sup>

1:22           The purification to which Peter referred occurred at conversion as a result of believing the gospel (cf. John 13:10). This cleansing made it possible for us to love other Christians unremittingly (Gr. *ektenos*). Now Peter urged his readers to do everything out of love for the brethren. We do not need to love one another *as though* we were brethren. We can love one another because we really *are* brethren.

1:23           The Word of God is the instrument God uses to produce new birth (cf. Matt. 13:20; Luke 8:11). This "seed" shares the character of its Source. It never passes out of fashion nor does it become irrelevant.

"All the way from the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, to 'Babylon the Great' in Revelation 17—18, man's great attempts at unity are destined to fail.

"If we try to build unity in the church on the basis of our first birth, we will fail; but if we build unity on the basis of the new birth, it will succeed."<sup>72</sup>

1:24-25       This quotation from Isaiah 40:6-8 contrasts the transitory character of nature and the eternity of God's Word (cf. James 1:10-11). Every natural thing eventually dies and disappears, the opposite of God's living and abiding Word (cf. Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33). The seed lives and abides, and so do those to whom it gives new life.

"My friend, we need the preaching and the teaching of the Word of God above everything else. I do not mean to minimize the place of music, the place of methods, and the place of organization, but there is absolutely no substitute for the Word of God today."<sup>73</sup>

The duty of Christians to one another then is to love one another unremittingly. This is true even of Christians who are suffering for their commitment to follow God faithfully. We can and should do so because we are genuine brethren and because we will abide forever.

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<sup>71</sup>Roger M. Raymer, "1 Peter," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, p. 844.

<sup>72</sup>Wiersbe, 2:399.

<sup>73</sup>J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, 5:687.

### **C. OUR PRIESTLY CALLING 2:1-10**

Peter continued his explanation of Christians' duties as we endure trials and suffering joyfully. He called his readers to do certain things in the world of unbelievers, and he reminded them of certain realities in this pericope. He did so to motivate them to press on to finish God's plan and purpose for them in the world now.

"The great doxology (1:3-12) begins with praise to God, who is the One who begot us again. All hortations that follow grow out of this our relation to God: 1) since he who begot us is holy, we, too, must be holy (1:13-16); 2) since he is our Judge and has ransomed us at so great a price, we must conduct ourselves with fear (1:17-21); 3) since we are begotten of the incorruptible seed of the Word we are brethren, and thus our relation to each other must be one of love, of children of the one Father (1:22-25). So Peter now proceeds to the next hortation: 4) since we have been begotten by means of the eternal Word we should long for the milk of the Word as our true and proper nourishment."<sup>74</sup>

In this pericope Peter used four different images to describe the Christian life. These are taking off habits like garments, growing like babies, being built up like a temple, and serving like priests.

#### **1. Listening to God 2:1-3**

2:1 "Therefore" goes back to 1:3-12 as well as 1:22-25. To prepare for an exposition of the Christian's calling, Peter urged his readers to take off all kinds of evil conduct like so many soiled garments (cf. Zech. 3:1-5; Rom. 1:29-30; 2 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; James 1:21). The sins he mentioned are all incompatible with brotherly love (cf. 1:22). Malice (wickedness) and guile (deceit) are attitudes. The remaining three words describe specific actions. These are not "the grosser vices of paganism, but community-destroying vices that are often tolerated by the modern church."<sup>75</sup>

"The early Christian practice of baptism by immersion entailed undressing completely; and we know that in the later liturgies the candidate's removal of his clothes before descending naked to the pool and his putting on a new set on coming up formed an impressive ceremony and were interpreted as symbols of his abandonment of his past unworthy life and his adoption of a new life of innocence . . ."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Lenski, p. 76.

<sup>75</sup>Dauids, p. 80.

<sup>76</sup>J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude*, pp. 83-84.

Peter here called his readers to put into practice what they had professed in their baptism.

2:2 Next he urged them to do something positive. Since they had experienced the new birth (1:3, 23), they should now do what babies do, not that they were new Christians necessarily. The milk of the Word is probably the milk that is the Word rather than the milk contained in the Word, namely, Christ, though either interpretation is possible.<sup>77</sup> "Long for" is a strong expression that we could paraphrase "develop an appetite for." This is the only imperative in the passage in the Greek text. God's Word is spiritual food that all believers instinctively desire, but we must also cultivate a taste for it (cf. 2 Pet. 3:18).

"It is sad when Christians have no appetite for God's Word, but must be 'fed' religious entertainment instead. As we grow, we discover that the Word is milk for babes, but also strong meat for the mature (1 Cor. 3:1-4; Heb. 5:11-14). It is also bread (Matt. 4:4) and honey (Ps. 119:103)."<sup>78</sup>

Ask God to give you a greater appetite for His Word. God's Word is pure in that it is free from deceit (cf. 1:22-25). "Salvation" here, as Peter used it previously, refers to the full extent of salvation that God desires every Christian to experience.

"The point of the figurative language is this: as a babe longs for nothing but its mother's milk and will take nothing else, so every Christian should take no spiritual nourishment save the Word."<sup>79</sup>

The "milk" here is not elementary Christian teaching (cf. 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12-13), in contrast to "meat," but the spiritual food of all believers.<sup>80</sup>

2:3 Peter's readers had already tasted God's goodness in their new birth. Greater consumption of His Word would bring greater satisfaction as well as increased spiritual growth (cf. Ps. 34:8).

## **2. Growing in God 2:4-5**

2:4 Not only is Jesus Christ the source of the believer's spiritual sustenance, He is also our foundation. Peter not only changed his metaphor from growing to building, but he also changed it from an individual to a corporate focus. However, unlike a piece of rock, Jesus Christ is alive and able to impart strength to those who suffer for His sake. "Living stone" is

<sup>77</sup>A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6:95.

<sup>78</sup>Wiersbe, 2:400.

<sup>79</sup>Lenski, p. 78.

<sup>80</sup>Michaels, p. 89.



an oxymoron, a figure of speech in which the writer joins contradictory or incongruous terms to make a point. The point here is that even though Jesus Christ is the church's foundation, He is also alive today. Builders quarried and chiseled huge blocks of stone to support large buildings in the ancient Near East. Some of the Old Testament writers compared God to such a foundation (e.g., Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30-31; Ps. 18:2, 31, 46; 62:2, 6; et al.; cf. Matt. 7:24-25; 16:18). Peter modified this figure and used it to describe Jesus Christ.<sup>81</sup>

"The word used for 'stone' both here and in verse 5 signifies a stone dressed for building rather than a piece of raw rock or a boulder."<sup>82</sup>

Here Peter began to give the basis on which the four preceding exhortations rest. These exhortations were: be holy (1:13-16), be fearing (1:17-21), be loving (1:22-25), and be consuming the Word (2:1-3). They grow out of our relationship to God who has begotten us.

The apostle referred to Psalm 118:22 that both Jesus and he had previously quoted to the Sanhedrin (Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11).

2:5 Peter saw the church as a living temple to which God was adding with the conversion of each new believer. Each Christian is one of the essential stones that enables the whole structure to fulfill its purpose (cf. Matt. 16:15-18). Later Peter would say his readers were also priests (v. 9), but here the emphasis is on their being a building for priestly service, namely, a temple.

"This 'spiritual house' includes believers in the five Roman provinces of 1:1 and shows clearly how Peter understood the metaphor of Christ in Matt. 16:18 to be not a local church, but the church general (the kingdom of Christ)."<sup>83</sup>

"I Peter never speaks of the Church as *ekklesia*, but uses metaphorical images of OT origin."<sup>84</sup>

This verse helps us appreciate how much we need each other as Christians. God has a purpose for all of us to fulfill that we cannot fulfill individually. The Christian who is not working in relationship with other Christians as fellow stones, as well as with Jesus Christ as his or her foundation, cannot fulfill God's complete purpose for him or her. While every Christian has an individual purpose, we also have a corporate

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<sup>81</sup>See C. Norman Hillyer, "'Rock-Stone' Imagery in I Peter," *Tyndale Bulletin* 22 (1971):58-81; and Frederic R. Howe, "Christ, the Building Stone, in Peter's Theology," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157:625 (January-March 2000):35-43.

<sup>82</sup>Best, p. 100.

<sup>83</sup>Robertson, 6:96.

<sup>84</sup>Goppelt, p. 30.

purpose that we cannot fulfill unless we take our place in the community of Christians that is the church. Peter explained this purpose more fully below, but here he revealed that it involves worship and service (cf. Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15-16; Phil. 4:18).

### **3. Building on Christ 2:6-8**

Some scholars believe that what follows, and some other portions of this epistle, contains quotations from early Christian hymns.<sup>85</sup> Others dispute this hypothesis. In either case, the discussion is purely academic and has no bearing on the interpretation of the text.

2:6 Before going on, however, Peter elaborated on the foundation of this building, the church. "Zion" here refers to the heavenly Jerusalem, that larger eschatological entity of which the church will be a part (cf. Rev. 21:14). The "corner stone" refers to the main stone on which the building rests. It does not refer to a modern corner stone or to the last stone the mason put at the top of the building, the keystone (Isa. 28:16; cf. Eph. 2:20). In view of this, it seems that the rock (Gr. *petra*, a large stone) to which Jesus referred in Matthew 16:18 was not Peter (Gr. *Petros*, a small stone) but Himself. Jesus, not Peter, much less Judaism, is the foundation upon which God has promised to build the church (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11).

Isaiah promised that those who believe on the Stone will *never* (Gr. *ou me*, the strongest negative) be disappointed.

Peter clarified two relationships of the believer in these verses (4-6). He rests on Christ as a building rests on its foundation. Furthermore he relates to every other believer as the stones of a building under construction relate to one another. We need each other, should support each other, and should work together to build the church in the world.

2:7-8 In contrast to believers, those who reject Jesus Christ as the foundation find Him to be a stone over which they trip and fall. He becomes the instrument of their destruction. The "builders" were Israel's religious leaders (cf. Ps. 118:22). When they disobeyed Old Testament commands to accept their Messiah, they stumbled spiritually and would suffer destruction (Isa. 8:14). This was true of Israel corporately, and it is true of every unbeliever individually.

Jesus Christ was the stone that would have completed Israel had Israel's leaders accepted Him as their Messiah, Israel's keystone. Instead, the Israelites cast the stone aside by rejecting their Messiah. God then proceeded to make this stone the foundation of a new edifice that He would build, namely, the church. Israel's rejected keystone has become the church's foundation stone.

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<sup>85</sup>E.g., Selwyn, pp. 268-81.

Election results in the salvation of some (1:2), but it also means destruction for others (v. 8).

"In the immediate context it is not so much a question of how Christian believers perceive Christ as of how God (in contrast to 'people generally') perceives him, and of how God consequently vindicates both Christ and his followers."<sup>86</sup>

To what does God appoint those who stumbled, unbelief or the stumbling that results from unbelief? In the Greek text the antecedent of "to this" (*eis ho*) is the main verb "stumble" (*proskoptousi*), as it is in the English text. "Are disobedient" (*apeithountes*) is a participle that is subordinate to the main verb. Therefore we would expect "to this" to refer to the main verb "stumble" rather than to the subordinate participle "are disobedient." God appoints those who stumble to stumble because they do not believe. Their disobedience is not what God has ordained, but the penalty of their disobedience is (cf. Acts 2:23; Rom. 11:8, 11, 30-32).<sup>87</sup>

The doctrine of "double predestination" is that God foreordains some people to damnation just as He foreordains some to salvation. This has seemed to some Bible students to be the logical conclusion we should draw because of what Scripture says about the election of believers (e.g., Rom. 9; Eph. 1). However this is not a scriptural revelation. The Bible always places the responsibility for the destiny of the lost on them for not believing rather than on God for foreordaining (e.g., John 1:12; 3:36; 5:24; 6:47; Rom. 1—3).

". . . the point of 1 Peter 2:6-8 is to demonstrate the honored status believers have because of their relationship with Christ."<sup>88</sup>

#### **4. Summary affirmation of our identity 2:9-10**

Peter proceeded to clarify the nature of the church and in doing so explained the duty of Christians in the world, particularly suffering Christians.

2:9 All the figures of the church that Peter chose here originally referred to Israel. However with Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ (v. 7) God created a new body of people through whom He now seeks to accomplish the same purposes He sought to achieve through Israel but by different means. This verse, which at first might seem to equate the church and Israel, on careful examination shows as many differences between these groups as similarities.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Michaels, p. 104.

<sup>87</sup>Bigg, p. 133.

<sup>88</sup>Fanning, pp. 453-54.

<sup>89</sup>See John W. Pryor, "First Peter and the New Covenant," *Reformed Theological Review* 45:1&2 (January-April & May-August 1986):1-3, 44-50, for an example of how covenant theologians, who believe the church replaces Israel in God's program, interpret this and other passages dealing with Peter's perception of the identity of his readers.

"But this does not mean that the church is Israel or even that the church replaces Israel in the plan of God. Romans 11 should help us guard against that misinterpretation. . . . The functions that Israel was called into existence to perform in its day of grace the church now performs in a similar way. In the future, according to Paul, God will once again use Israel to bless the world (cf. Rom. 11:13-16, 23-24)."<sup>90</sup>

Israel was a physical race of people, the literal descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The church is a spiritual race, the members of which share the common characteristic of faith in Christ and are both Jews and Gentiles racially. Christians are the spiritual descendants of Abraham. We are not Abraham's literal descendants, unless we are ethnic Jews, but are his children in the sense that we believe God's promises as he did.

God's purpose for Israel was that she be a nation of priests (Exod. 19:6) who would stand between God and the rest of humanity representing people before God. However, God withdrew this blessing from the whole nation because of the Israelites' apostasy with the golden calf and gave it to the faithful tribe of Levi instead (Num. 3:12-13, 45; 8:14; cf. Exod. 13:2; 32:25-29). In contrast, every individual Christian is a priest before God.<sup>91</sup> We function as priests to the extent that we worship, intercede, and minister (v. 5; Rev. 1:6). There is no separate priestly class in the church as there was in Israel.<sup>92</sup>

"Whatever its precise background, the vision of 1 Peter is that the Gentiles to whom it is written have become, by virtue of their redemption in Christ, a new priesthood in the world, analogous to the ancient priesthood that was the people of Israel. Consequently they share with the Jews the precarious status of 'aliens and strangers' in the Roman world."<sup>93</sup>

"When I was a pastor, I preached a message entitled, 'You Are a Catholic Priest.' The word *catholic* means 'general,' of course. In that sense every believer is a catholic priest, and all have access to God."<sup>94</sup>

God redeemed Israel at the Exodus and adopted that nation at Mt. Sinai as one that would be different from all others throughout history (Exod. 19:6). God wanted Israel to be a beacon to the nations holding the light of

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<sup>90</sup>Blum, p. 231.

<sup>91</sup>See John E. Johnson, "The Old Testament Offices as Paradigm for Pastoral Identity," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152:606 (April-June 1995):182-200.

<sup>92</sup>See W. H. Griffith Thomas, "Is the New Testament Minister a Priest?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136:541 (January-March 1979):65-73.

<sup>93</sup>Michaels, p. liv.

<sup>94</sup>McGee, 5:692.

God's revelation up for all to see, similar to the Statue of Liberty (Isa. 42:6). He did not tell all the Israelites to take this light to those in darkness, but to live before others in the Promised Land. He would attract others to them and to Himself, as He did the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10) and Naaman (2 Kings 5). However, Israel failed. She preferred to be a nation like all the other nations (1 Sam. 8:5). Now God has made the church the bearer of His light. God has not told us to be a localized demonstration, as Israel was, but to be aggressive missionaries going to the ends of the earth. God wanted Israel to stay in her land. He wants us to go into all the world with the gospel (Matt. 28:19-20).

God wanted to dwell among the Israelites and to make them His own unique possession by residing among them (Exod. 19:5). He did this in the tabernacle and the temple until the apostasy of the Israelites made continuation of this intimacy impossible. Then the presence of God departed from His people (cf. Ezek. 10). In the church God does not just dwell among us, but He resides in every individual Christian (John 14:17; Rom. 8:9). He has promised never to leave us (Matt. 28:20).

The church is what it is so that it can do what God has called it to do. Essentially the church's purpose is the same as Israel's. The Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20; et al.) clarifies the methods God wants us to use. These methods differ from those He specified for Israel, but the church's vocation is really the same as Israel's. It is to be the instrument through which the light of God reaches individuals who still sit in spiritual darkness. It is a fallacy, however, to say that the church is simply the continuation or replacement of Israel in the New Testament, as most covenant theologians do.<sup>95</sup> Most theologians agree that the most basic difference between dispensational theology and covenant theology is that dispensationalists believe that the church is distinct from Israel whereas covenant theologians believe that the church is the continuation and replacement of Israel, the so-called "new Israel."

"In the ancient world it was not unusual for the king to have his own group of priests."<sup>96</sup>

2:10 Peter highlighted the differences involved in our high calling by contrasting what his readers were and had before conversion with what they were and had after conversion. The church is not the only people of God in history. Nevertheless it is the people of God in the present age because of Israel's rejection of the Corner Stone (cf. Rom. 9—11).

"The evidence from the use of the Old Testament in 1 Peter 2:6-10 suggests that the Old Testament imagery used to describe the church in 1 Peter 2:9-10 does not present the church as a new Israel replacing ethnic

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<sup>95</sup>For further information on the subject of the church's distinctiveness, see Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp. 22-47; idem, *Dispensationalism*, pp. 23-43; or Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, pp. 205-12.

<sup>96</sup>Dauids, p. 92.

Israel in God's program. Instead, Old Testament Israel was a pattern of the church's relationship with God as his chosen people. Therefore Peter uses various aspects of the salvation, spiritual life, and service of Israel in its relationship with Yahweh to teach his recipients the greater salvation, spiritual life, and service they enjoy in Christ. In his use of the three *people of God* citations in 1 Peter 2:9-10, the apostle is teaching that there are aspects of the nation of Israel's experience as the people of God that are also true of the New Testament church. These elements of continuity include the election, redemption, holy standards, priestly ministry, and honor of the people of God. This continuity is the basis for the application of the title *people of God* to the church in 1 Peter 2:1-10.

"The escalation or advancement of meaning in Peter's application of these passages to his recipients emphasizes the distinction between Israel and the church. Israel is a nation, and the national, political, and geographic applications to Israel in the Old Testament contexts are not applied to the church, the spiritual house, of 1 Peter. Furthermore, the initial application of these passages to the church by typological-prophetic hermeneutics does not negate the future fulfillment of the national, political, and geographic promises, as well as the spiritual ones, made to Israel in these Old Testament contexts."<sup>97</sup>

Christians, generally speaking, do not understand or appreciate God's purpose for the church that Peter presented so clearly here. Consequently many Christians lack purpose in their lives. Evidence of this includes self-centered living, unwillingness to sacrifice, worldly goals, and preoccupation with material things. Before Christians will respond to exhortations to live holy lives they need to understand the reasons it is important to live holy lives. This purpose is something many preachers and teachers assume, but we need to affirm and assert it much more in our day.

"Peter concludes the first major section of his epistle (1:3—2:10) by drawing the lines for a confrontation. Two groups are differentiated—'unbelievers' and 'you who believe'—on the basis of their contrasting responses to Jesus Christ, the 'choice and precious Stone' (v 6). The former are on their way to 'stumbling' and shame, the latter to 'honor' and vindication. The theological contrast between these two groups, with its consequent social tensions, will absorb Peter's interest through the remainder of his epistle."<sup>98</sup>

### **III. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN INDIVIDUALLY 2:11—4:11**

Since Christians have a particular vocation in the world, certain conduct was essential for Peter's suffering readers.

<sup>97</sup>W. Edward Glenny, "The Israelite Imagery of 1 Peter 2," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, pp. 186-87.

<sup>98</sup>Michaels, p. 113.

"The address, 'Dear friends, I appeal to you,' in 2:11 marks a shift from the identity of God's people to their consequent responsibility in a hostile world. If 1:3—2:10 expanded on their identity as 'chosen people' (cf. 1:2), the reference to them as 'aliens and strangers' in 2:11 serves as a reminder that they are at the same time 'living as strangers' (again cf. 1:2) in contemporary society."<sup>99</sup>

### **A. OUR MISSION IN THE WORLD 2:11-12**

Peter explained what Christian conduct should be negatively (v. 11) and positively (v. 12). Then he expounded more specifically what it should be positively in 2:13—4:11.

2:11 "Beloved, I [or we] urge you" frequently marks off a new section of an epistle, as it does here (Rom. 12:1; 15:30; 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10; 16:15; 2 Cor. 10:1; 1 Thess. 4:1, 10b; 5:14; Heb. 13:22; cf. 4:12; 5:1). "I urge you" typically introduces exhortations. Again Peter reminded his audience of their identity so they would respond naturally and appropriately (cf. 1:1-2, 17).

Aliens have no rights in the land where they live. Strangers are only temporary residents (cf. 1:17; Gen. 23:4; Ps. 39:12; Eph. 2:19; Heb. 13:14). Peter reminded his readers that, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through." Note the dual hendiadys that form an *inclusio* for 2:11-25: "aliens and strangers" (v. 11) and "Shepherd and Guardian" (v. 25). A hendiadys is a figure of speech in which the writer expresses one complex idea by joining two substantives with "and." Here the meanings are "strangers who are aliens" and "the Shepherd who guards."

"Peter's purpose is not to define his readers' actual legal or social status in the Roman Empire . . . but simply to further his standing analogy between them and the Jewish people (cf. Heb. 11:13 . . .)."<sup>100</sup>

In view of our status we should refuse the appeal of our desire to indulge in things that are contrary to God's will for us. "Fleshly lusts" are selfish natural appetites that appeal to our sinful nature (cf. 1 John 2:16). We experience temptation to satisfy bodily desires in ways contrary to God's will.

"The knowledge that they do not belong does not lead to withdrawal, but to their taking their standards of behavior, not from the culture in which they live, but from their 'home' culture of heaven, so that their life always fits the place they are headed to, rather than their temporary lodging in this world."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. xxxv.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>101</sup> Davids, p. 95.

Peter spoke of the soul as the whole person (cf. 1:9; 2:25; James 1:21; et al.). When we yield to the desires of the flesh that God's Word condemns, we become double-minded, somewhat schizophrenic. This Peter aptly described as war in the soul. The antagonists are the lusts or will of the flesh and the will of God (cf. Gal. 5:17).

2:12 Peace in the inner man is necessary for excellent behavior before others. Part of the suffering Peter's original readers were experiencing was due evidently to slander from unbelieving Gentile pagans. They appear to have been accusing them unjustly of doing evil. This has led some commentators to conclude that Peter wrote this epistle after A.D. 64 when Nero began an official persecution of Christians allegedly for burning Rome. I think this conclusion is reasonable.

Peter urged his readers to give their critics no cause for justifiable slander. If they obeyed, their accusers would have to glorify God by giving a good testimony concerning the lives of the believers when they stood before God. The "day of visitation" is probably a reference to the day God will visit unbelievers and judge them (i.e., the great white throne judgment). This seems more likely than that it is the day when God will visit Christians (i.e., the Rapture). The writers of Scripture do not refer to Christians' departure from this world as an occasion when unbelievers will glorify God. However when unbelievers bow before God they will glorify Him (e.g., Phil. 2:10-11). For the original readers this would have applied to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.<sup>102</sup>

"This brief section sketches Peter's 'battle plan' for the inevitable confrontation between Christians and Roman society. . . .

"The conflict in society is won not by aggressive behavior but by 'good conduct' or 'good works' yet to be defined. Peter's vision is that the exemplary behavior of Christians will change the minds of their accusers and in effect 'overcome evil with good,' . . ." <sup>103</sup>

### **B. RESPECT FOR OTHERS 2:13—3:12**

This section of the letter clarifies what it means to function obediently as God's people in a hostile world. It contains one of the tables of household duties or social codes in the New Testament (2:13—3:7; cf. Eph. 5:21—6:9; Col. 3:18—4:1). Luther referred to these sections as *Haustafeln*, and some scholars still use this technical term when referring to these lists. However, this one begins with instructions regarding the Christian's relationship to the state, which is similar to Romans 13:1-7. It is particularly our duties in view of suffering for our faith that concerned Peter, as is clear from his choice of material.

<sup>102</sup>J. Dwight Pentecost, "The Apostles' Use of Jesus' Predictions of Judgment on Jerusalem in A.D. 70," in *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands*, p. 141.

<sup>103</sup>Michaels, p. 120.



### **1. Respect for everyone 2:13-17**

Peter continued to give directions concerning how the Christian should conduct himself or herself when dealing with the state since his readers faced suffering from this source.

2:13-14 The Christian's relationship to the state and to state officials is quite clear (cf. Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; Titus 3:1-2). We are to submit to the authority of government rulers by obeying them. We should do this not because these individuals are personally worthy of our submission necessarily, but because by submitting to them we honor God by obeying His Word (cf. Matt. 22:21).<sup>104</sup> Peter reminded his readers that government has a valid and necessary God-appointed purpose. The presence of political corruption should not blind us to the legitimate role of government that God has ordained.<sup>105</sup>

". . . God has ordered creation in such a way that for its harmony some are always subject to others."<sup>106</sup>

Peter believed that there was a proper place for civil disobedience, however (cf. Acts 4:19-20). It is when the laws of human government make it illegal to obey God. In such a case we should obey God rather than man. However we should also realize that in disobeying the law we will probably have to bear the consequences of disobeying. The consequences may involve a fine, imprisonment, or even death.<sup>107</sup>

"Ever since Christianity was first preached the Christian citizen has been a puzzle both to himself and to his rulers. By the elementary necessities of his creed he has been a man living in two worlds. In one he has been a member of a national community, in the other of a community 'taken out of the nations.' In one he has been bound to obey and enforce the laws of his State, in the other to measure his conduct by standards not recognized by those laws and often inconsistent with them. This dualism has been made tolerable only by the prospect of a reconciliation. That prospect is, again, an elementary necessity of the Christian creed. Somehow, somewhere, the conflict of loyalties will end. The kingdom of this world will pass; the Kingdom of God will be established."<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Bigg, p. 139.

<sup>105</sup>See W. Robert Cook, "Biblical Light on the Christian's Civil Responsibility," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 127:505 (January-March 1970):44-57.

<sup>106</sup>Best, p. 113.

<sup>107</sup>See Charles C. Ryrie, "The Christian and Civil Disobedience," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 127:506 (April-June 1970):153-62.

<sup>108</sup>Lord Percy Eustace, *John Knox*, pp. 73-74. Cf. John A. Witmer, "The Man with Two Countries," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 133:532 (October-December 1976):338-49.

Some Christians have taken the position that believers are free to disobey their governments if the government *permits* conduct that is contrary to God's will.<sup>109</sup> Consequently some Christians feel justified in bombing abortion clinics, for example. However cases of apostolic civil disobedience recorded in Scripture involved situations in which believers *had* to disobey God's will. Christians should practice civil disobedience only when the government *requires* its citizens to disobey God, not when it only *permits* them to disobey Him. Currently the United States government permits abortion, for example, but it does not require it.

". . . the principle of the redeemed Christian life must not be self-assertion or mutual exploitation, but the voluntary subordination of oneself to others (cf. Rom. xii. 10; Eph. v. 21; Phil. ii. 3 f.)."<sup>110</sup>

". . . Christians are summoned to submission, not so that they may have an easy time in relation to the state, but as part of their service to the Lord."<sup>111</sup>

2:15 In the context Peter meant that by obeying the law we can obviate unnecessary and illegitimate criticism. Jesus did this by faithfully paying his taxes (Matt. 17:24-27; 22:21). Note that Jesus also told His disciples to pay their taxes even though Rome used their tax money for purposes contrary to God's will. Paul taught that Christians should pay their taxes, too (Rom. 13:6-7). Peter had learned that physical retaliation was not best since he had tried to defend Jesus by attacking the high priest's servant in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:50-54; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50-51; John 18:10-11).

2:16 Christians are free in the sense of being under no obligations to God to gain His acceptance. He has accepted us because of what Jesus Christ did for us. Also we are free from the tyranny of Satan. We are no longer his slaves. We should not use this freedom to sin but to refrain from sinning.

"Liberty misused is like a mighty river flooding its banks and bringing terrible destruction upon all in its path. Liberty used as service is like a mighty river flowing within its banks bringing life and refreshment to all who drink of its waters."<sup>112</sup>

2:17 These four injunctions summarize our social obligations. The first two and the last two are pairs. We should respect everyone, but we should love fellow believers. God deserves fear whereas the emperor is worthy of

<sup>109</sup>E.g., Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto*, pp. 134-37.

<sup>110</sup>Kelly, pp. 108-9.

<sup>111</sup>Best, p. 114.

<sup>112</sup>Cedar, p. 146.

respect. These two pairs connect with Jesus' teachings that we should love our enemies (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35) and render to Caesar what is his and to God what is His (Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25).<sup>113</sup>

All people are worthy of honor if for no other reason than because they reflect the image of God. Our primary responsibility to other Christians is to show them love (cf. 1:22; John 13:35). Our primary responsibility to God is to show Him fear (reverence, cf. 1:17). Peter added a final word about the king. He probably did so because his readers found it especially difficult to honor the Roman emperor, who was evidently Nero when Peter wrote this epistle (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-2). The distinction between "fear" and "honor" may imply that the emperor was not on the same plane as God—which was a tendency in Asia Minor.<sup>114</sup>

"Peter called believers to a different spirit, a spirit of deference—even while experiencing undeserved persecution. The word 'deference' conveys the idea of thoughtful consideration of another individual's desires or feelings or the courteous, respectful, or ingratiating regard for another's wishes. . . .

"Deference' refers to a proper attitude that results in behavior characterized by respect."<sup>115</sup>

Respect is not the same as honor. We may not respect someone, but we can and should still honor him or her. For example, I have a friend whose father was an alcoholic. My friend did not respect his father who was frequently drunk, often humiliated his wife and children, and failed to provide for his family adequately. Nevertheless my friend honored his father because he was his father. He demonstrated honor by taking him home when his father could not get home by himself. He sometimes had to defend him from people who would have taken advantage of him when he was drunk.

Similarly we may not be able to respect certain government officials because of their personal behavior or beliefs. Still we can and should honor them because they occupy an office that places them in a position of authority over us. We honor *them* because they occupy the office; we do not just honor the office. Peter commanded us to honor the king and all who are in authority over us, not just the offices they occupy. We may not respect someone, but we can and should honor them by treating them with respect. Respecting people and treating them with respect are two different things. Feeling respect for someone is different than showing respect for

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<sup>113</sup>Michaels, p. 123.

<sup>114</sup>Best, p. 116.

<sup>115</sup>James R. Slaughter, "The Importance of Literary Argument for Understanding 1 Peter," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152:605 (January-March 1995):77, 78.

someone. Honoring others is our responsibility; earning our respect is theirs. This is especially difficult when those in authority are persecuting us.

## **2. Slaves' respect for their masters 2:18-25**

Peter proceeded to address the situation of Christians working under the authority of others.

"The unusual fact, unnoticed by most Bible readers, is that he [Peter], along with Paul (1 Cor. 7:21; Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25; 1 Tim. 6:1-2; Tit. 2:9-10) and later Christian writers (Did. 4:11; Barn. 19:7), addresses slaves at all, for Jewish and Stoic duty codes (which in many respects this code in 1 Peter, as well as those in Ephesians and Colossians, resembles) put no such moral demands on slaves, only on masters.

"The reason for this difference between 1 Peter and other moral codes of his time is simple. For society at large slaves were not full persons and thus did not have moral responsibility. For the church slaves were full and equal persons, and thus quite appropriately addressed as such. The church never addressed the institution of slavery in society, for it was outside its province—society in that day did not claim to be representative, and certainly not representative of Christians, concepts that arrived with the Enlightenment—but it did address the situation in the church, where no social distinctions were to be allowed, for all were brothers and sisters (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 3:11; Phile. 16), however shocking that was to society at large."<sup>116</sup>

"The NT accepts this situation [slavery] and never suggests its abolition (cf. 1 Cor. 7:21); to do otherwise would have required a social revolution wholly out of keeping with the attitude to authority taught in 2:13-17; moreover a rebellion by slaves against authority would have been crushed with terrible cruelty, as had happened more than once in the past."<sup>117</sup>

Peter evidently addressed servants but not masters because he addressed a social situation in which some of his readers were household servants but few, if any, were masters.<sup>118</sup>

2:18 In Peter's culture the servant was the person who faced the most difficulty in relating to the person over him or her in authority. Masters traditionally enjoyed great power over their slaves. The Greek word translated "servants" (*oikelai*) means domestic servants, but in that society those people were slaves in that they had some limitations on their personal freedom. In our culture Peter's directions apply to how we behave in

<sup>116</sup> Davids, pp. 105-6.

<sup>117</sup> Best, p. 117.

<sup>118</sup> Michaels, p. 122.

relation to those directly over us in society (employers, bosses, administrators, teachers, et al.).<sup>119</sup>

Again Peter commanded an attitude of respectful submission (cf. v. 13). The master's personal character or conduct is not the reason for this behavior. We are to respond this way regardless of his or her actions (cf. Eph. 6:5-8).

2:19 The reason we should behave this way is that this behavior is God's will (cf. vv. 13, 17). The fact that this is how God wants us to behave is sufficient reason for compliance. Our conscious commitment to God should move us to do what is right resulting in a clear conscience. Probably many of Peter's readers were suffering because of the persecution of their masters (1:6-7). The translators of the word "favor" in this verse and the next in the NASB (Gr. *charis*) usually rendered it "grace." In this context it means what counts with God, what pleases Him, rather than what He gives.<sup>120</sup>

2:20 However, Peter hastened to distinguish between justifiable and unjustifiable suffering. He did not want his readers to rest comfortably if they were suffering for their own sins. Nevertheless if they were suffering for their testimony, or without having provoked antagonism by improper behavior, they could rest confidently because God approved their conduct even if other people did not. What God rewards is endurance in His will (cf. James 1:4).

"Although v 20 has domestic servants particularly in mind, neither it nor anything that follows is limited to them. Their experience, whether actual or hypothetical, becomes a paradigm for the experience of all Christians everywhere in the empire. The position of a household slave was tenuous, subject to the character and moods of the owner. Despite the justice of the state, the position of Christians in the empire was also tenuous, subject to differing local conditions and sudden changes in the public mood."<sup>121</sup>

2:21 Part of the Christian's calling (1:1; 2:9) includes suffering (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12). Jesus Christ suffered for His righteous conduct at the hands of sinners (cf. Matt. 26:67; Mark 14:65). We too can expect that our righteous behavior will draw the same response from the ungodly of our day (Matt. 11:29; 16:24; Luke 14:27; Acts 14:22).

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<sup>119</sup>For a different view, see William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*, p. 36. See Wayne Grudem, "Should We Move Beyond the New Testament to a Better Ethic?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47:2 (June 2004):299-346, for a thorough and devastating, I believe, critique of Webb's book.

<sup>120</sup>Michaels, p. 139.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 135.

Whereas Jesus' atonement set an example for us, it accomplished much more than that. Peter cited only His example here in view of his purpose, which was to encourage his readers to endure suffering with the proper spirit. They also needed to remember that their experience duplicated that of Jesus. They were like children who place foot after foot in the prints of their elder brother who walks before them in the snow (cf. Rom. 4:12; 2 Cor. 12:18). The Greek word translated "example" (*hypogrammon*) refers to a writing or drawing that someone placed under another sheet of paper so he or she could trace on the upper sheet.<sup>122</sup> In the next few verses Peter expounded on Jesus' example at length.

"These verses [21-25] contain the fullest elaboration of the example of Jesus Christ for believers in the New Testament."<sup>123</sup>

"Nothing seems more unworthy and therefore less tolerable, than undeservedly to suffer; but when we turn our eyes to the Son of God, this bitterness is mitigated; for who would refuse to follow him going before us?"<sup>124</sup>

2:22 Peter applied this prophecy to Jesus Christ (Isa. 53:9).

"The OT statement is applied to Christ to indicate that in his total conduct, especially in his words, he followed God's will."<sup>125</sup>

This is quite a statement. Peter had lived with Jesus for more than three years and had observed Him closely, yet he could say that Jesus never sinned.

The absence of deceitful speech would have been "... particularly applicable to slaves in the empire, where glib, deceitful speech was one of their notorious characteristics, adroit evasions and excuses being often their sole means of self-protection."<sup>126</sup>

2:23 Peter referred specifically to Jesus' sufferings when He was on trial and during His crucifixion. Certainly Peter's readers could find a strong example to follow there. "Revile" means to heap abuse on someone. Often our threats are empty; we cannot follow through with them. However, Jesus could have followed through. Instead He trusted God to deal with His persecutors justly, as we should.

<sup>122</sup>See Robertson, 6:104-5, for other extrabiblical examples.

<sup>123</sup>D. Edmond Hiebert, "Following Christ's Example: An Exposition of 1 Peter 2:21-25," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139:553 (January-March 1982):32.

<sup>124</sup>John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, p. 89.

<sup>125</sup>Goppelt, p. 210.

<sup>126</sup>James Moffatt, "The General Epistles, James, Peter, and Judas," in *The Moffatt New Testament Commentary*, p. 127.

"Peter's picture of what Jesus did not do seems clearly molded by his memory of the messianic picture in Isaiah 53:6-7. Yet rather than quoting this passage, he gives his own confirmatory witness, thereby underlining the veracity of the prophetic portrayal."<sup>127</sup>

2:24 Jesus' sufferings reached their climax on the cross. Peter taught that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins and laid down His life as payment for those sins (i.e., penal substitution; cf. Deut. 21:23). He viewed Jesus' cross as an altar on which a sacrifice was placed.<sup>128</sup>

"The social code in I Peter is unique among those in the NT because it bases its instructions to slaves on the example of Christ who took the form of a slave (Phil. 2:7) and bore the punishments, reviling, beating, crucifixion, of a slave."<sup>129</sup>

We could translate the second part of this verse as follows: "... that, having broken with our sins, we might live for righteousness." Jesus Christ's death separated our sins from us. Consequently we can now live unto righteousness rather than unto sin (cf. Rom. 6:1-11).

"The idea is that, Christ having died for sins, and to sin, as our proxy or substitute, our consequent standing before God is that of those who have no more connection with our old sins, or with the life of sinning."<sup>130</sup>

Some writers have cited the third part of this verse to support the non-biblical doctrine that Jesus by His death made healing from any physical ailment something that every Christian can claim in this life. This is the belief that there is "healing in the atonement." The context of Isaiah 53, as well as the past tense "were healed" here, implies spiritual healing from the fatal effects of sin rather than healing from present physical afflictions. Peter used healing as a metaphor for spiritual conversion, as Isaiah did (cf. Mark 2:17; Luke 4:23). "Wounds" refers to the bruising and swelling left by a blow that a fist or whip delivered.

"The expression is highly paradoxical because stripes, which make bloody welts and lay even the flesh bare, are said to have wrought healing."<sup>131</sup>

Undoubtedly some of Peter's original readers had received wounds in a similar fashion or were in danger of receiving them.

<sup>127</sup>Hiebert, "Following Christ's . . .," p. 37.

<sup>128</sup>Bigg, p. 147.

<sup>129</sup>Best, p. 117.

<sup>130</sup>Alan M. Stibbs, *The First Epistle General of Peter*, p. 121.

<sup>131</sup>Lenski, p. 124.

2:25 Peter concluded his citation of Jesus' example (vv. 21-24). He reminded his readers that they too, as the sheep Isaiah referred to in the passage he just cited, had once wandered from God. Nevertheless now they had returned to the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who would fulfill the function of a shepherd by guarding their souls from hostile adversaries. Their enemies might assail their bodies, but the Lord would preserve their souls (whole persons) safe (cf. 1:3-5).

### **3. Wives' respect for their husbands 3:1-6**

Having explained before how Christians should conduct themselves in the world, Peter next gave directions about how Christian wives and husbands should behave. He did this to help his readers identify appropriate conduct in family life during times of suffering as well as at other times.

". . . he [Peter] discusses husbands and wives, and unlike the Pauline *Haustafeln*, he omits references to children. The reason for this omission is simple: He probably did not consider children who had one believing parent outside the true people of God (i.e., the nations), whereas the husbands of some Christian women certainly were. Peter's concern at this point is not life within the Christian community, but life at those points where the Christian community interfaces with the world around it. . . .

"But what was probably surprising to the original readers is that here in a seemingly traditional ethical section wives are addressed at all. In that society women were expected to follow the religion of their husbands; they might have their own cult on the side, but the family religion was that of the husband. Peter clearly focuses his address on women whose husbands are not Christians (not that he would give different advice to women whose husbands were Christians), and he addresses them as independent moral agents whose decision to turn to Christ he supports and whose goal to win their husbands he encourages. This is quite a revolutionary attitude for that culture."<sup>132</sup>

This section, like the preceding one addressed to slaves, has three parts: an exhortation to defer (vv. 1-2; cf. 2:18), an admonition about pleasing God (vv. 3-4; cf. 2:18-20), and a precedent for the advocated attitude or action (vv. 5-6; cf. 2:21-25). The section on respect for everyone (2:13-17) contains the first two of these parts (2:13-14 and 15-17) but not the third.<sup>133</sup>

3:1-2 "In the same way" refers to the spirit of deference that Peter had already advocated regarding our dealings with government authorities (2:13-17) and people in direct authority over us (2:18-25). Primarily he meant as Christ submitted to the Father (2:21-24).

<sup>132</sup> Davids, pp. 115-16.

<sup>133</sup> Michaels, p. 155.



"The opening words ["in the same way"] are not intended to equate the submissiveness due from wives with that expected from slaves. Rather, as in [verse] 7, the Greek adverb (*homoios*) harks back to 2:13, implying that the patriarchal principle of the subordination of the wife to her husband is not a matter of human convention but the order which the Creator has established . . ."134

Clearly Peter was speaking of the relationship of wives to their husbands, not the relationship of women to men generically. Neither was he addressing only wives with unsaved husbands, as is clear from the clause "even if any are disobedient." He said "your own men" (i.e., your husbands). A wife has a special relationship to her husband in that she "belongs" to him, which is not true of the relationship of all women to all men generally. Even more specifically, Peter was referring to wives whose husbands were "disobedient to the word" (i.e., unbelievers, cf. 2:8).

Today many Christians believe wives are equal in authority with their husbands under God (the egalitarian position). Note that other admonitions to be submissive surround this section in which Peter called on wives to submit to their husbands (2:13, 18, 23; 3:8). Wives are not the only people Peter commanded to be submissive. Submission should characterize every Christian. The Greek word *hypotasso* ("to submit") has in view the maintenance of God's willed order, not personal inferiority of any kind.<sup>135</sup> This word may denote either voluntary or forced behavior, but not any sense of inferiority.<sup>136</sup>

Peter did not state the reason wives should submit to their own husbands in this passage, nor did he give the reason we should submit to rulers or masters, other than that this is God's will (cf. Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:9-15; Tit. 2:4-5). God gave another reason elsewhere in Scripture, however (Gen. 2:18-23; 3:16; cf. 1 Tim. 2:13-14). This reason is that God has so ordered the human race that we must all observe His structure of authority so that peace and order may prevail.

As all employees should submit to their masters, even the unreasonable, so all wives should submit to their husbands, even the unbelieving. In view of his terminology "be won" (v. 1), it seems clear that Peter had in mind the spiritual conversion of an unsaved husband. Peter did not promise that unbelieving husbands would inevitably become Christians as a result of the behavior he prescribed. That decision lies with the husband. Nevertheless the wife can have confidence that she has been faithful to

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<sup>134</sup>Kelly, p. 127. Cf. 1 Tim. 2:13.

<sup>135</sup>*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "*hypotasso*," by Gerhard Delling, 8 (1972):44.

<sup>136</sup>Gordon Dutille, "A Concept of Submission in the Husband-Wife Relationship in Selected New Testament Passages" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1980), pp. 81-82.

God if she relates to her husband submissively. For a classic example of a Christian woman leading her husband to faith in Christ through her virtuous example, see *The Confessions of St. Augustine*.<sup>137</sup> The woman was Monica, Augustine's mother, and her husband was Patricius.

Should a Christian wife submit to her husband even if he directs her to sin? Some evangelicals answer yes and appeal to Ephesians 5:24 for support.<sup>138</sup> Others say no but argue that submission should extend to everything except sin.<sup>139</sup> The examples of suffering that Peter cited as good models for Christians in 2:13-25 did not involve sinning. He said wives should submit "in the same way" (3:1). Furthermore the wife's behavior is to be "chaste" (3:2) or morally pure (Gr. *agnos*). Peter held up Sarah as an example (3:6) not because she submitted to Abraham by even sinning in Genesis 12 and 20, but because she submitted to him. She called him her lord in Genesis 18:12. Ephesians 5:24, which calls on wives to submit to their husbands in "everything" (Gr. *pas*), does not mean in every thing including sin (cf. Col. 3:25). Frequently *pas* does not mean every individual thing (cf. Matt. 8:33; Rom. 8:32; 14:2; 1 Cor. 1:5; 3:21-22; 6:12; 9:12; 10:23; 14:40; 2 Cor. 5:18; Phil. 4:13, et al.). Nevertheless short of sinning Peter urged Christian wives to obey their husbands. A primary responsibility of every Christian is to obey God.

It is specifically the wife's behavior in contrast to her speech that Peter said may be effective in winning an unsaved husband. "A word" includes preaching as well as the Word of God. Peter was not forbidding speaking to unsaved husbands about the Lord or sharing Scripture verses *if the husband would be receptive to those*. His point was simply that a godly wife's conduct is going to be more influential than anything she may say. "Chaste" is a general term describing her purity while "respectful" reflects her attitude toward her husband that rises out of her attitude toward God's will.

Submission involves at least four things. First, it begins with an attitude of entrusting oneself to God (cf. 2:23-25). The focus of our life must be on Jesus Christ. Second, submission requires respectful behavior (3:1-2). Nagging is not respectful behavior. Third, submission involves the development of a godly character (3:3-5). Fourth, submission includes doing what is right (3:6). It does not include violating other Scriptural principles. Submission is imperative for oneness in marriage.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>137</sup>Aurelius Augustinus, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, book 9.

<sup>138</sup>E.g., Mrs. Glenn R. Siefker, "God's Plans for Wives," *Good News Broadcaster*, February 1975, p. 24.

<sup>139</sup>E.g., Marilyn Vaughn, "When Should a Wife Not Submit?" *Moody Monthly*, October 1977, p. 107; James R. Slaughter, "Submission of Wives (1 Pet. 3:1a) in the Context of 1 Peter," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153:609 (January-March 1996):73-74; idem, "Winning Unbelieving Husbands to Christ (1 Pet. 3:1b-4)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153:610 (April-June 1996):203; Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, p. 139; and Paul E. Steele and Charles C. Ryrie, *Meant to Last*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>140</sup>*Family Life Conference*, pp. 105-6.

3:3-4 Peter was not telling wives to refrain from giving attention to their physical appearances (specifically, coiffure, jewelry, and dress), as the NASB makes clear. His point was that this should not be their total or primary concern. He urged the cultivation of the inner person as well. Beauty is more than skin deep. He contrasted what human society values and what God values. A gentle disposition and a tranquil spirit can make even a plain woman very attractive not only to God but to men (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Tim. 2:9-10). The Greek word for "adornment" (*kosmos*) is the one from which we get our word "cosmetics."

3:5-6 "His [Peter's] concern is that the church not be known for its production of rebellious wives who have an attitude of superiority, but of women who, because they know God will reward them and set everything right, demonstrate the virtue of gentle submission where Christianly possible."<sup>141</sup>

Sarah is a good example of such a woman. We see her attitude of respect in the way she spoke to Abraham (v. 2). "Lord" sounds servile to us, but an equally acceptable translation of the Greek word is "sir." The point is that she verbally expressed her submission to him in a way that was appropriate in her culture.<sup>142</sup> Women who behave as Sarah did show that they are her daughters in spirit. Such behavior demonstrates trust in God and holiness, separation from sin to God's will.

"His [Peter's] argument is from the greater to the lesser: if Sarah 'obeyed' Abraham and called him 'Lord,' the Christian wives in Asia should at least treat their husbands with deference and respect."<sup>143</sup>

"Without being frightened by any fear" (v. 6) is not a condition for becoming a true daughter of Sarah in addition to doing what is right. It is rather the consequence of adopting the behavior that Peter advocated. If a Christian wife was suffering for her faith because of her conduct, she could gain great confidence by doing what Peter counseled and what Sarah practiced. She could understand that any suffering that came her way was not a result of her sinful behavior but in spite of her godly behavior (cf. 2:20; Prov. 3:25).

"The sense is that these Christian women are to let nothing terrifying frighten them from their course. Pagan women may disdain and insult them because they have adopted a nobler wifehood, they yet remain unafraid. Pagan husbands

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<sup>141</sup>Davids, p. 120.

<sup>142</sup>See James R. Slaughter, "Sarah as a Model for Christian Wives (1 Pet. 3:5-6)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153:611 (July-September 1996):357-65.

<sup>143</sup>Michaels, p. 165.

may resent their Christianity; this, too, does not frighten them."<sup>144</sup>

#### **4. Husbands' respect for their wives 3:7**

Why did Peter write more about the conduct of women (vv. 1-6) than of men (v. 7)? He evidently did so because his concern was for Christian wives who were married to pagan husbands. A Christian wife married to a pagan husband was in a more vulnerable position than a Christian husband who was married to a pagan wife in that culture. Normally pagan women married to Christian husbands would adopt their husbands' faith. In Roman society a wife would normally adopt her husband's religion.<sup>145</sup>

"His emphasis throughout is on those points at which the Christian community faces outward to confront Roman society. Probably for this reason he omits children and parents altogether; the parent-child relationship (at least in regard to younger children) is not normally one in which belief and unbelief confront each other . . ."<sup>146</sup>

The Roman author Cato wrote, "If you were to catch your wife in an act of infidelity, you can kill her with impunity without a trial; but, if she were to catch you, she would not venture to touch you with her finger, and, indeed, she has no right."<sup>147</sup>

The Christian wife's new freedom in Christ created new problems and challenges for her. Perhaps Peter also wanted to communicate more encouragement (vv. 5-6) and tenderness to the women, not because he believed they were greater sinners than their husbands. What follows in verse 7 is just as challenging as what we have read in verses 1-6.

"It is clear that Peter does not think about the possibility of a husband with a non-Christian wife, for if a family head in that culture changed his religion it would be normal that his wife, servants, and children also changed."<sup>148</sup>

"In 1 Peter 3:1-6 Christian wives are instructed to behave with deference as they encounter the difficulties of living with an unbelieving husband. Similarly in verse 7 Christian husbands are told to honor their wives in unfair circumstances brought about by the wife's being the weaker vessel."<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>144</sup>Lenski, p. 136.

<sup>145</sup>D. L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*, p. 99; idem, "Let Wives Be Submissive . . .: The Origin, Form, and Apologetic Function of the Household Duty Code (*Haustafel*) in 1 Peter" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1974), pp. 240-46.

<sup>146</sup>Michaels, p. 122.

<sup>147</sup>Cited by William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p. 264.

<sup>148</sup>Dauids, p. 122.

<sup>149</sup>James R. Slaughter, "Peter's Instructions to Husbands in 1 Peter 3:7," in *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands*, p. 183.

Another possibility is that these husbands were suffering for their faith.

As with his instructions to wives, Peter began his counsel to the husbands with a command to think right first (cf. 3:1-2). He said men should cultivate understanding. This brief charge carries profound implications. It requires active listening to the wife as well as study of her temperament, emotions, personality, and thought patterns. It is a tall order to know one's wife, to understand her, even to be understanding with her. However the knowledge in view is probably primarily knowledge of God's Word concerning the proper treatment of one's wife.<sup>150</sup>

By comparing a wife to a weaker vessel Peter was not implying that wives or women are inferior to husbands or males or that they are weaker in every way or most ways. Obviously, in many marriages the wife is the stronger person emotionally, mentally, spiritually, morally, socially, and or physically. Nevertheless physically the wife is usually weaker than her husband. Men tend to choose as their wives women who are not as strong or muscular as they are. Furthermore generally men are stronger than women physically. In view of this, husbands need to treat their wives with special consideration. Both the husband and the wife are vessels, but husbands are more typically similar to iron skillets whereas wives resemble china vases, being more delicate. They are equally important but different.

Peter banished any implication of essential inferiority with his reminder that the wife is a fellow-heir of God's grace just as much as the husband. God deals with both types of people the same when it comes to bestowing grace on them. He shows no favoritism or partiality because of their genders. Wives may normally be more delicate in some respects than their husbands, but spiritually they are equal. "Life" probably refers to both physical life and spiritual life since husbands and wives share both equally.

The husband who does not treat his wife with honor will not get answers to his prayers the way he could if he did treat her with honor (cf. Matt. 6:14-15). In other words, disobedience to the will of God regarding how a man treats his wife hinders the husband's fellowship with God.

*"Egkoptesthai* ['be hindered'], to have an obstacle thrown in the way, does not restrict the thought to preventing the prayers from reaching their destination at God's throne of grace. The thought includes all manner of hindering. A husband who treats his wife in the wrong way will himself be unfit to pray, will scarcely pray at all. There will be no family altar, no life of prayer. His worship in the congregation will be affected."<sup>151</sup>

A man's selfishness and egotism in his marriage will hurt his relationship with God as well as his relationship with his wife.

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<sup>150</sup>Ibid., pp. 178-80.

<sup>151</sup>Lenski, p. 141.

"As the closest human relationship, the relationship to one's spouse must be most carefully cherished if one wishes a close relationship with God."<sup>152</sup>

One of a husband's primary responsibilities in a marriage is caring for his wife. Caring requires understanding. If you are married, what are your wife's greatest needs? Ask her. What are her greatest concerns? Ask her. What are her hopes and dreams? Ask her. What new vistas would she like to explore? Ask her, and keep on asking her over the years! Her answers will enable you to understand and care for her more effectively.

"In order to be able to love deeply, we must know each other profoundly. If we are to lovingly respond to the needs of another, we must know what they are."<sup>153</sup>

"In my premarital counseling as a pastor, I often gave the couple pads of paper and asked them to write down the three things each one thinks the other enjoys doing the most. Usually, the prospective bride made her list immediately; the man would sit and ponder. And usually the girl was right but the man wrong! . . .

"To say, 'I never knew you felt that way!' is to confess that, at some point, one mate excommunicated the other."<sup>154</sup>

### **5. The importance of loving enemies 3:8-12**

Peter concluded this section of instructions concerning respect for others with a discussion of the importance of loving our enemies.

3:8 "To sum up" concludes the section on respect for others (2:13—3:12). This verse deals with attitudes. Again we note that Peter regarded attitudes as foundational to actions (cf. vv. 1, 7; James 3).

"Harmonious" implies cooperation when there are individual differences. These differences can have a pleasing rather than an irritating effect. We do not all need to sing exactly the same tune, but our tune should harmonize with those of our brethren. We should be able to work together as the different parts of an athlete's body work together to reach our common goal victoriously.

"Sympathetic" means suffering with another by entering into and sharing the feelings of others rather than by having compassion on another person from a distance. It implies bearing one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2).

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<sup>152</sup> Davids, p. 123.

<sup>153</sup> Cedar, p. 158.

<sup>154</sup> Wiersbe, 2:410. McGee, 5:696-99, made excellent and sometimes hilarious comments on verses 1-7 that are too numerous to quote here.

"Brotherly" looks at the special love that unites believers (cf. 1:22; 2:17).

"Kind-hearted" means feeling affectionately, compassionately, and deeply for someone else.

The person who is "humble in spirit" is willing to put someone else's interests and needs before his or her own (cf. Phil. 2:3-4). This would apply to God's purposes as well as the needs of other people.

"Christians are to be emotionally involved with each other."<sup>155</sup>

These five qualities are vital to effective interpersonal relationships. They are also indispensable for maintaining oneness in marriage.

3:9 Like Jesus and Paul, Peter urged his readers not to take revenge. We should return positive good deeds for evil ones (2:23; cf. Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:9-18; 1 Cor. 4:12; 1 Thess. 5:15).

"As Christians we can live on one of three levels. We can return evil for good, which is the satanic level. We can return good for good and evil for evil, which is the human level. Or, we can return good for evil, which is the divine level. Jesus is the perfect example of this latter approach (1 Peter 2:21-23)."<sup>156</sup>

The ground for the Christian's good will to others, even our enemies, is the mercy we receive from God. God blessed us when we were His enemies (Rom. 5:10). Our blessing (Gr. *eulogein*, lit. to speak well) may be verbal or tangible.

"In biblical idiom 'to bless' is to invoke God's graciousness on a person."<sup>157</sup>

Peter's reference to inheriting a blessing reminds us of the inheritance he spoke of earlier and urged us to keep in view (1:4). However, God will give us this part of our inheritance only if we faithfully do His will (cf. Heb. 12:17).

The type of relationship in which we return insult for insult is one that intends to hurt the other person with remarks or actions. This approach springs from an unforgiving and hardened heart attitude. We can insult another person by hiding (the quiet method) or by hurling verbal or physical abuse (the noisy method). An insult can lead another person to clam up or to blow up. Both clamming up and blowing up produce bitterness and isolation. The insult for insult response often occurs when two people

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<sup>155</sup> Davids, p. 125.

<sup>156</sup> Wiersbe, 2:412.

<sup>157</sup> Best, p. 130.

develop habits of reacting in certain ways in certain similar situations. Therefore it is often helpful to analyze the circumstances that seem to produce this response inevitably.

The blessing for insult response, however, is one in which we react kindly when we suffer ill treatment. It springs from an attitude of forgiveness. It has its focus on God and the promises of His Word. Instead of reacting in anger, we respond with forgiveness. The consequences of taking this approach in interpersonal relationships are getting a blessing, having a full life, and walking with God (vv. 9-12).

How does one give a blessing instead of an insult? We refrain from speaking evil, walk away from it, do positive good, and seek to make peace rather than trouble (vv. 10-12). Our attitude is crucial. What kind of relationship will you seek to develop and maintain with your mate? The insult for insult type results in isolation, but the blessing for insult type results in oneness in marriage.<sup>158</sup>

- 3:10-12 To strengthen his case Peter again cited an Old Testament passage that supported what he said (Ps. 34:12-16). However the primary purpose for this quotation seems to be more clarification than proof. Really verses 8 and 9 are Peter's exposition of the psalm passage that he now quoted. Evil (v. 10) hurts, and guile misleads. God will judge those who do any kind of evil (v. 12).

This quotation (vv. 10-12) appropriately summarizes all Peter's instructions concerning proper Christian conduct during persecution (2:11—3:12).

### **C. EVENTUAL VINDICATION 3:13—4:6**

Peter previously explained how a Christian can rejoice in his sufferings, having set forth his responsibilities and outlined specific conduct in times of suffering. He next emphasized the inner confidence a Christian can have when experiencing persecution for his or her faith to equip his readers to overcome their sufferings effectively.

#### **1. Suffering for doing good 3:13-17**

- 3:13 This statement carries on what the psalmist said in the quotation just cited. If God will punish those who do evil (v. 12), who will harm those who do good? God will not, and under normal circumstances no other person will either.

". . . Christians have an incredible contribution to make to the society in which they live by breaking the cycle of people returning evil for evil. As we begin to do good, most people will return that good by doing good. What a

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<sup>158</sup>*Family Life . . .*, pp. 145-48.



marvelous ministry—with very immediate and measurable results. Just as people tend to return evil for evil, they usually return good for good. Indeed, when you do good, blessing comes to everyone involved."<sup>159</sup>

- 3:14 Nevertheless people are perverse and we do experience suffering for doing good sometimes. In such cases we need to focus our attention on the blessing that will come to us for enduring persecution when we do good (cf. Matt. 5:10; Luke 1:48). Peter quoted the Lord's exhortation to Isaiah when the prophet learned that the people of Judah and Jerusalem would not respond to his ministry positively (Isa. 8:12-13). God promised to take care of Isaiah, and He did. Though Isaiah eventually died a martyr's death, he persevered in his calling because God sustained him. This is what God will do for the Christian, and it gives us the courage we need to continue serving him faithfully in spite of persecution.
- 3:15 Rather than being fearful we should commit ourselves afresh to Christ our Lord (Yahweh of armies, Isa. 8:13) by purposing to continue to live for Him. We should also have the reason we are living as we do on the tip of our tongues so whenever an opportunity arises we can explain why we behave as we do (cf. Acts 22:1; 25:16). Our inquisitive questioner may not ask about our hope per se. Nevertheless our hope is the root cause of our behavior and should be the subject of our answer. We should give this answer with a gentle spirit to those asking and in a reverent spirit toward God.
- 3:16 A good conscience is possible when we know our suffering is in spite of good behavior, not because of bad behavior (cf. 2:19; 3:4, 6). A simple explanation of our good conduct may take the wind out of the sails of our critics.

"Conscience may be compared to a window that lets in the light of God's truth. If we persist in disobeying, the window gets dirtier and dirtier, until the light cannot enter. This leads to a 'defiled conscience' (Titus 1:15). A 'seared conscience' is one that has been so sinned against that it no longer is sensitive to what is right and wrong (1 Tim. 4:2). It is even possible for the conscience to be so poisoned that it approves things that are bad and accuses when the person does good! This the Bible calls 'an evil conscience' (Heb. 10:22). . . .

"A 'good conscience' is one that accuses when we think or do wrong and approves when we do right."<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup>Cedar, p. 164.

<sup>160</sup>Wiersbe, 2:414. See Roy B. Zuck, "The Doctrine of Conscience," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 126:504 (October-December 1969):329-340.

3:17 If it is God's will for us to suffer misunderstanding, abuse, or bullying, it is better that that suffering be for good conduct than for bad (cf. Rom. 8:28). Peter probably meant these words as assurance rather than as admonition. He meant that we are much better off when we suffer than the evildoers who oppress us.<sup>161</sup>

## **2. The vindication of Christ 3:18-22**

Peter now reminded his readers of the consequences of Jesus' response to unjustified persecution. He did so to strengthen their resolve to rededicate themselves to follow God's will wholeheartedly and confidently. He also wanted to assure them of their ultimate triumph in Christ.

Verses 18-22 contain some very difficult exegetical problems. Who are the spirits who received a proclamation (v. 19)? When did Jesus make this proclamation? What was its content? Why did Peter mention Noah? In what sense does baptism save us?

One group of interpreters believes Jesus went to the realm of the dead and preached to Noah's contemporaries between His crucifixion and His resurrection.<sup>162</sup> Some of these say He extended an offer of salvation to them. Others feel He announced condemnation to the unbelievers. Still others hold that He announced good news to the saved among them.

A second group believes Jesus preached to Noah's sinful generation while Noah was living on the earth. They see Him doing so through Noah.

A third group holds that Jesus proclaimed His victory on the cross to fallen angels. Some advocates of this view say this took place in hell between His crucifixion and His resurrection. Others believe it happened during His ascension to heaven.

I shall discuss these views in the exposition to follow.

In 2:21-25 Peter mentioned Jesus' behavior during His passion (2:21-23), His death on the cross (2:24a), and His present ministry as the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls (2:24b-25). In 3:18-22 he cited Jesus' resurrection and ascension into glory, the "missing links" in the previous record of Jesus' experiences. Peter proceeded to explain the significance of Jesus' resurrection and exaltation not only for believers but also for the whole universe. Whereas the previous example of Jesus stressed the way He suffered while doing good, this one emphasizes the theme of Jesus' vindication, which is major in 1 Peter following the quotation of Psalm 34 in 3:10-12.

3:18 "For" connects verses 18-22 with 13-17, but "Christ also" recalls and resumes the example of Jesus Christ that Peter cited in 2:21-25. Peter used the same phrase to introduce Jesus Christ as an example of suffering there. Suffering for doing good is the point of comparison in both passages.

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<sup>161</sup>Michaels, p. 192.

<sup>162</sup>E.g., Bigg, p. 162.

"Once for all" emphasizes the complete sufficiency of Jesus Christ's sacrifice. It does not need repeating (as in the Roman Catholic mass) or adding to (by any human works, cf. Rom. 6:10; Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 26, 28; 10:10). The emphasis is on the finality of His sacrifice ("once for all," Gr. *hapax*) rather than on the extent of the atonement ("for all").

His was also a vicarious sacrifice: the just One died for the unjust ones (1:19; 2:21-24; 4:1; cf. Isa. 53:11; Matt. 27:19; Luke 23:47; Rom. 5:6-10; 1 John 2:1, 29; 3:7). The purpose of Jesus Christ's death was to bring us into fellowship with God.

". . . no other NT writer has this active picture of Jesus leading the Christian to God. But it fits with Peter's usual conception of the Christian life as an active close following of Jesus (2:21; 4:13)."<sup>163</sup>

The phrase "having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" has received several different interpretations.

Some interpreters believe that "flesh" refers to the material part of Jesus Christ's person and "spirit" to the immaterial part.<sup>164</sup> Supporters of this view argue that we should regard "flesh" and "spirit" as two parts of the Lord's human nature (cf. Matt. 26:41; Rom. 1:3-4; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 5:5). The contrast then would be that Jesus' body ("flesh") died, but His immaterial part ("spirit") experienced resurrection. The problem with this view is that an article precedes neither "flesh" nor "spirit" in the Greek text. The absence of the article usually stresses the quality of the noun. This would not be normal if Peter meant to contrast Jesus' body and His spirit. He would have included an article before each noun. The absence of the articles suggests a special meaning of "flesh" and "spirit." Furthermore Jesus' resurrection involved both the material and immaterial parts of His person, not just His spirit.

Another view is that we should take the Greek nouns (*sarki* and *pneumati*, translated "in the flesh" and "in the spirit") as instrumental ("by the flesh" and "by the spirit") rather than as dative. The contrast, according to this interpretation, is between wicked men, who put Jesus to death by fleshly means, and the Holy Spirit, who raised Him. However, the Greek dative case ("in the flesh") is probably what Peter intended here rather than the instrumental case ("by the flesh"). This is probably a dative of respect.<sup>165</sup> It is not *who* was responsible for Jesus' death and resurrection that is the

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<sup>163</sup> Davids, p. 136.

<sup>164</sup> E.g., Lenski, p. 159; John Albert Bengel, *New Testament Word Studies*, 2:746; B. C. Caffin, "I Peter," in *The Pulpit Commentary*, p. 133; A. J. Mason, "The First Epistle General of Peter," in *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 8:420; J. W. C. Wand, *The General Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, p. 100; and Robertson, 6:116.

<sup>165</sup> F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, § 197.

issue but *how* Jesus suffered death and experienced resurrection. Moreover if "spirit" means the Holy Spirit, its meaning is not parallel with "flesh."

A third view is that "flesh" refers to Jesus' death and "spirit" refers to His resurrection. The weakness of this view is that it is redundant. Peter said, according to this view, that Jesus was put to death in death and that He was made alive in resurrection.

A fourth view sees "flesh" as describing Jesus' pre-resurrection condition (following the Incarnation) and "spirit" as referring to His post-resurrection condition. Peter used the same terminology in 4:6 where he referred to Christians who had died but were now alive. I prefer this view.

"As in Rom. i.3f.; 1 Tim. iii.16, *flesh* and *spirit* do not here designate complimentary parts of Christ, but the whole of Christ regarded from different standpoints. By *flesh* is meant Christ in His human sphere of existence, considered as a man among men. By *spirit* is meant Christ in His heavenly spiritual sphere of existence, considered as divine spirit (see on 1. 11); and this does not exclude His bodily nature, since as risen from the dead it is glorified."<sup>166</sup>

"'Flesh' and 'spirit' do not refer to two 'parts' of Christ, i.e., his body and his soul; nor does the 'spirit' refer to the Holy Spirit or Christ's human spirit. Rather, 'flesh' refers to Christ in his human sphere of life and 'spirit' refers to Christ in his resurrected sphere of life (cf. [William J.] Dalton, [*Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits*,] pp. 124-24; TDNT, 6:417, 447; 7:143)."<sup>167</sup>

"If 'flesh' is the sphere of human limitations, of suffering, and of death (cf. 4:1), 'Spirit' is the sphere of power, vindication, and a new life (cf. [F. W.] Beare, [*The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes*, p.] 169). Both spheres affect Christ's (or anyone else's) whole person; one cannot be assigned to the body and the other to the soul . . .

"The statement that Christ was 'made alive in the Spirit,' therefore, means simply that he was raised from the dead, not as a spirit, but bodily (as resurrection always is in the NT), and in a sphere in which the Spirit and power of God are displayed without hindrance or human limitation (cf. 1:21)."<sup>168</sup>

<sup>166</sup>Kelly, p. 151. Cf. Davids, p. 137-38; Best, p. 139.

<sup>167</sup>Blum, p. 242. Cf. Fanning, p. 444.

<sup>168</sup>Michaels, p. 205. Cf. Selwyn, p. 197.

Jesus Christ became the Victor rather than a victim. All who trust Him share that victory (cf. vv. 13-17). This verse is an encouragement to Peter's readers that even though Jesus died because He remained committed to God's will, He experienced resurrection. Therefore we should remain faithful with the confident hope that God will also vindicate us.

This verse is "one of the shortest and simplest [?!], and yet one of the richest summaries given in the New Testament of the meaning of the Cross of Jesus."<sup>169</sup>

3:19-20 Peter here introduced more information about Jesus' activity in His spirit (i.e., His post-resurrection sphere of life), in addition to what he said about His resurrection from the dead (v. 18), to encourage his readers.

"In which" refers back to the spiritual sphere of life in which Jesus Christ now lives (v. 18). The identity of the "spirits in prison" is problematic. The plural "spirits" describes human beings only one other place in the New Testament (Heb. 12:23), but it describes evil spirit beings frequently (Matt. 10:1; Mark 1:27; 3:11; 5:13; 6:7; Luke 4:36; 6:18; Acts 5:16; Rev. 16:13; et al.). Thus we would expect that evil angels are in view, but does what Peter said about them confirm this identification? He said they are in prison (cf. 2 Pet. 2:4) and that they were disobedient in the days of Noah (v. 20).

Some interpreters believe that the incident involving the sons of God and the daughters of men (Gen. 6:1-4) is what Peter had in view here.<sup>170</sup> But there are some problems with this theory. First, this incident evidently did not take place during the construction of the ark but before construction began. Second, it is improbable that the "sons of God" were angels.<sup>171</sup> Compare also Jesus' implication that angels do not procreate in Matthew 22:30. Nevertheless these "spirits" could still be angels. If they are fallen angels, Peter may have meant that after Jesus Christ arose He announced to them that their doom was now sure. He may have done this either by His resurrection itself or by some special announcement to them.

A more probable explanation is that these "spirits" were the unbelievers who disobeyed God in Noah's day by rejecting his preaching.<sup>172</sup> They are now "spirits" since they died long ago and their bodies have not yet experienced resurrection. He said the spirits of these unbelievers are in prison now (i.e., Sheol) awaiting resurrection and judgment by God (cf. Rev. 20:11-15). One could say that Jesus proclaimed a message to Noah's

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<sup>169</sup>J. M. E. Ross, *The First Epistle of Peter*, pp. 151-52.

<sup>170</sup>E.g., Michaels, pp. 206-13; Best, p. 140.

<sup>171</sup>See Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, pp. 181-83.

<sup>172</sup>Fanning, pp. 449-50; Raymer, pp. 851-52; Selwyn, p. 199; John S. Feinberg, "1 Peter 3:18-20, Ancient Mythology, and the Intermediate State," *Westminster Theological Journal* 48:2 (Fall 1986):303-36; and Wayne Grudem, "Christ Preaching through Noah: 1 Peter 3:19-20 in the Light of Dominant Themes in Jewish Literature," *Trinity Journal* 7NS:2 (Fall 1986):3-31.

unbelieving contemporaries in His spirit (i.e., His spiritual state of life before the Incarnation) through Noah. Noah was preaching a message that God had given him, and in this sense Jesus Christ spoke through him (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20). Just so, Jesus Christ was speaking through Peter's readers to their unbelieving persecutors as they bore witness for Him in a hostile world. Noah faced the same type of opposition in his day that Peter's original readers did in theirs and we do in ours.

Another view is that the people to whom Jesus preached were those alive after Pentecost and in bondage to Satan and sin. Jesus preached to them through the apostles. The obvious problem with this view is that Peter linked these people with Noah.<sup>173</sup>

God would bring Peter's readers safely through their trials just as He had brought Noah safely through his trials into a whole new world. God had done this for Noah even though he and his family were a small minority in their day. Furthermore as God judged the mockers in Noah's day, so will He judge those who persecuted Peter's readers.

"The phrase 'in the days of Noah' may well be based on the Gospel tradition and on Jesus' analogy between Noah's time and the time immediately preceding the end of the age (cf. Matt 24:37-39//Luke 17:26-27)."<sup>174</sup>

God is so patient that he waited for 120 years before sending the Flood in Noah's day (Gen. 6:3). Today He also waits, so patiently that some people conclude that He will never judge (cf. 2 Pet. 3:3-4). Relatively few will escape God's coming judgment, just as only eight escaped His former judgment. The rest will die.

3:21a-b The antecedent of "that" seems to be "water" (v. 20). Baptism saves Christians now as the water that floated Noah's ark saved him and drowned his unbelieving antagonists. It does not save us by cleansing us from defilement, either physically or spiritually, but by announcing publicly that the person baptized has placed his or her faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism now delivers (saves) us from the consequences of siding with the world (cf. James 1:21; 2:24; 2 Cor. 6:17-18; Col. 3:8-9; Heb. 10:22). Baptism is the evidence that a person has made a break with his or her past life and is taking a stand with the Savior. It is a pledge (translated "appeal" in the NASB) springing from a good conscience (i.e., a conscience that is now right with God; cf. v. 16).<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup>For fuller discussion of these views, see D. Edmond Hiebert, "The Suffering and Triumphant Christ: An Exposition of 1 Peter 3:18-22," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139:554 (April-June 1982):151-52.

<sup>174</sup>Michaels, p. 211.

<sup>175</sup>Hiebert, "The Suffering . . .," pp. 154-56.

". . . they have already experienced salvation in the same way Noah did, namely by passing through water to safety, the water of baptism (cf. the similar analogy in 1 Cor. 10:1-2)."<sup>176</sup>

"Corresponding to" (v. 21) is a translation of the Greek word *antitypon* ("antitype"). This is one of the places in the New Testament where the writer identified something as a type (cf. also Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 10:6, 11; Heb. 9:24). The flood in Noah's day is a type (i.e., a divinely intended foreshadowing) of baptism. God washed away from the earth its past evils and sins with the Flood, and Noah and his family could start life anew.

Peter's point in his comments about baptism was this. In water baptism his readers had made a public profession of faith in Christ in their community. This had led to persecution. However by that act of baptism they had also testified to their ultimate victory over their persecutors. Because they had taken a stand for Jesus Christ they could be sure that He would stand with them (cf. 2 Tim. 2:12).

Many people who hold to infant baptism appeal to this verse in support of their belief. Most Lutherans, for example, believe that infant baptism guarantees the salvation of the child until he or she becomes old enough to make the faith of his parents, expressed in having their baby baptized, his own (cf. Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16). In infant baptism the Lord bestows on the child "a good conscience toward God," which is the evidence of salvation.<sup>177</sup> At about 12 years of age, Lutheran children go through instruction to "confirm" them in the faith. Lutherans believe that infant baptism guarantees the salvation of children if they die before making their parents' faith their own. They see a parallel with circumcision in the Old Testament. Roman Catholics and many Presbyterians also baptize infants for the same purpose.

The problem with this interpretation, from my viewpoint, is that Scripture nowhere else makes baptism a condition for salvation. In fact, it consistently warns against adding anything to faith for salvation. Circumcision did not save children under the Old Covenant any more than baptism does under the New Covenant. Circumcision expressed the faith of the parents. Abraham received the sign of circumcision to demonstrate his faith on the male members of his household (Gen. 17).

3:21c-22 Salvation comes, not by baptism, but by faith in Jesus Christ whose resurrection and ascension testify to God's acceptance of and satisfaction with His sacrifice (1 John 2:2). First Corinthians 1:17 clarifies that baptism is not required for justification, and Acts 10:47 shows that baptism is a step of obedience for Christians. God has subjected all things, even the powers behind our persecutors, to Jesus Christ because of His

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<sup>176</sup> Davids, p. 143.

<sup>177</sup> See Lenski, pp. 172-73.

death and resurrection (cf. v. 18). The fact that Jesus Christ now rules over the church does not mean that He is ruling on the throne of David over the kingdom of David.<sup>178</sup> "Through the resurrection" continues the thought that Peter began in verse 18 from which he digressed in verses 19-21b.

Jesus Christ's ultimate victory in spite of temporary persecution should be an encouragement to any suffering disciple of the Savior. Verse 18 describes the saving work of Jesus Christ. Verses 19 and 20 refer to His ministry of proclaiming good news to those destined for judgment, which ministry we in our day must continue faithfully, as Noah did in his. Verse 21 stresses the importance of confessing Christ publicly in baptism by reminding us of what baptism does and what it does not do. Verse 22 reminds us of our ultimate vindication and destiny.

There is a difference between this reference to Jesus' sufferings and the one in 2:21-24. In the former case Peter used Jesus as an example of how to respond to suffering. In this case he showed that as a result of Jesus' sufferings we can be sure of ultimate triumph, and this gives us confidence as we suffer.

### **3. Living with the promise in view 4:1-6**

Since Jesus Christ has gained the victory, Peter urged his readers to rededicate themselves to God's will as long as they might live. He wanted to strengthen their resolve to continue to persevere. He resumed here the exhortation that he broke off in 3:17. Generally speaking, verses 1-3 focus on Christian behavior and verses 4-6 on pagan response.

4:1 Peter's present appeal grew out of what he had just said about Christ's victory (3:18, 21c, 22). In view of His example of committing Himself to accomplishing God's will, Peter called his readers to commit themselves to the same purpose (cf. 3:15). Jesus suffered to the extent of dying, and Christians should be willing to suffer to the same extent. Selwyn regarded Peter's statement here as the keystone of his whole doctrinal arch in this epistle.<sup>179</sup>

In the second part of the verse, Peter probably meant that his readers had identified themselves with Christ's suffering and death (in water baptism). They should, therefore, put sin behind them and live a clean life (cf. Rom. 6:1-11). Roman Catholic interpreters have seen this verse as support for their doctrine of purgatory. They believe that Peter meant that suffering purifies the life. The aorist participle (Gr. *pathon*, "has suffered") normally is antecedent in time to the main verb, which here is in the perfect tense (*pepantai*, "has ceased"). Suffering precedes ceasing, but Peter apparently meant that suffering with Christ should lead to a more holy life (cf. v. 2). It does not inevitably do so.

<sup>178</sup>See Cleon L. Rogers Jr., "The Davidic Covenant in Acts-Revelation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151:601 (January-March 1994):81-82.

<sup>179</sup>Selwyn, p. 195.



4:2 Peter clarified commitment to God's will in this verse. "Flesh" refers to one's mortal lifetime on earth, not to carnal living (cf. 3:18; 4:6).

". . . 'the flesh' is not used here or anywhere else in 1 Peter (it is used seven times; all but one of them are in 3:18—4:6) in the Pauline sense of the sinful nature in human beings (as, e.g., in Rom. 7—8), but in the normal Jewish sense of human existence as weak, fallen, and therefore subject to pain and death."<sup>180</sup>

"We may not always understand what He [God] is doing, but we know that He is doing what is best for us. We do not live on explanations; we live on promises."<sup>181</sup>

4:3 Peter's readers had already spent too much time living for self in typically unsaved Gentile practices. Note the prominence of sexual and alcohol related activities here (as in Rom. 13:13-14; Gal. 5:19-21). This verse along with others (e.g., 1:14; 2:10) suggests that Peter was writing to a predominantly Gentile audience.

4:4 Some of the persecution Peter's readers were experiencing was due to their unwillingness to continue in their old lifestyle with their unsaved friends. This continues to be a common source of persecution for Christians today.

"Unsaved people do not understand the radical change that their friends experience when they trust Christ and become children of God. They do not think it strange when people wreck their bodies, destroy their homes, and ruin their lives by running from one sin to another! But let a drunkard become sober, or an immoral person pure, and the family thinks he has lost his mind!"<sup>182</sup>

4:5 Peter reminded his readers that God would condemn their unsaved friends' behavior. Consequently they should not return to it. The Judge was already "ready" to judge the physically living and the physically dead (cf. Dan. 3:15 [LXX]; Acts 21:13; 2 Cor. 12:14). Peter viewed those who slander Christians for their lifestyles as really slandering God, who called us out of darkness into the light.

4:6 Because everyone will give account of his life to God (v. 5), Christians preach the gospel. We do so to enable people to give that account joyfully rather than sorrowfully (cf. 1 John 2:28). In Peter's day Christians had preached the gospel to other people who had become Christians who had already died. Even though these brethren had experienced judgment for

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<sup>180</sup> Davids, p. 150.

<sup>181</sup> Wiersbe, 2:420.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

their sins by dying physically, they lived on in a new spiritual sphere of life since they were believers (cf. 3:18). Physical death is sin's last effect on believers during their earthly lives.

Some people have incorrectly understood this verse as teaching that after a person dies he or she will have a second chance to believe the gospel.<sup>183</sup> This interpretation clearly contradicts the revelation of Scripture elsewhere that there is no second chance after death (Heb. 9:27).<sup>184</sup>

"Peter does not say that the gospel is being preached even to the dead but was preached.

"These are not all of the dead who shall face the Judge at the last day but those to whom the gospel was preached prior to Peter's writing (by the gospel preachers mentioned in v. 1, 12 [*sic* 1:12]), who at this writing were already dead [cf. 3:19-20]."<sup>185</sup>

The verses in this pericope are a strong encouragement to endure suffering. Christ has assured our ultimate victory, and to turn back is to incur God's punishment.

#### **D. THE IMPORTANCE OF MUTUAL LOVE IN END-TIMES LIVING 4:7-11**

To prepare his readers to meet the Lord soon, Peter urged them to make the best use of their time now that they understood what he had written about suffering.

4:7 Like the other apostles, Peter believed the return of Jesus Christ was imminent (i.e., it could occur at any moment; cf. James 5:8; Rom. 13:11; Heb. 9:28; 1 John 2:18). This fact should have made a practical difference in the way his readers lived. Eschatology has ethical implications. They were to remain clear-headed ("of sound judgment"), self-controlled ("of sober spirit") primarily so they could pray properly. This statement illustrates the importance of prayer. Prayer is the most noble and necessary ministry that God entrusts to His children, but it is also the most neglected ministry (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1; 1 Thess. 5:17; Heb. 4:15-16).<sup>186</sup> Jesus' praying in the Garden of Gethsemane may have impressed this truth on Peter (cf. Matt. 26:40-41). Jesus prayed when the end of His life was near. The Greek word Peter used for prayer (lit. prayers, *proseuchas*) is the general word for prayer and indicates that Peter had all kinds of praying in mind.

". . . proper prayer is not an 'opiate' or escape, but rather a function of clear vision and a seeking of even clearer vision

<sup>183</sup>E.g., Barclay, p. 295.

<sup>184</sup>See Millard J. Erickson, "Is There Opportunity for Salvation after Death?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152:606 (April-June 1995):131-44.

<sup>185</sup>Lenski, p. 186. Cf. Fanning, p. 448.

<sup>186</sup>D. Edmond Hiebert, *Working With God: Scriptural Studies in Intercession*, p. 7.

from God. It is only through clear communication with headquarters that a soldier can effectively stand guard."<sup>187</sup>

"To charge Paul or Peter with false prophecy for saying 1900 years ago that the end is near, is to treat them unfairly. They, as we, had to live in constant expectation of Christ's sudden return."<sup>188</sup>

"With the Messiah's first advent the reality of the eschatological kingdom broke on human history; but with the King's rejection, His eschatological kingdom was not established. It awaits the day of His return. But that eschatological encounter introduced a new element into the nature of history. Human history now moves under the shadow of the divinely announced eschatological kingdom."<sup>189</sup>

4:8 In relation to their fellow Christians, Peter considered it most important that his readers keep their brotherly love at full strength (1:22; Rom. 13:8-10; 1 Thess. 5:8, 15; 1 John 4:7-11). The same expression occurs in non-biblical Greek to describe a horse at full gallop and a runner straining for the tape at the finish line of a race.

The person with this kind of love is willing to forgive and even covers a multitude of the sins of others committed against himself or herself rather than taking offense (Prov. 10:12; James 5:20). We cannot compensate for our own sins by loving others. Peter was not saying that. The proper way to deal with our sins is to confess them (1 John 1:9).

"Love hides them from its own sight and not from God's sight. Hate does the opposite; it pries about in order to discover some sin or some semblance of sin in a brother and then broadcasts it, even exaggerates it, gloats over it."<sup>190</sup>

4:9 Offering hospitality without complaining is one way to demonstrate love for the brethren (cf. Matt. 25:35). A host might incur persecution by giving hospitality to a known Christian in Peter's day.

"In certain cultures that are strongly family-oriented, the bringing of strangers into a house may be somewhat shocking. Yet Christians overcome these conventions

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<sup>187</sup> Davids, p. 157.

<sup>188</sup> Lenski, p. 193.

<sup>189</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, "Living in the Light of Christ's Return: An Exposition of 1 Peter 4:7-11," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139:555 (July-September 1982):245.

<sup>190</sup> Lenski, p. 195. Cf. 1 Cor. 13:5.

because God's love has made them into a single great family."<sup>191</sup>

- 4:10 God has given every Christian at least one gift (ability) that he or she can and should share with other believers and in so doing serve them. The gift in view is evidently one of the so-called spiritual gifts (cf. 1 Cor. 12—14; Rom. 12; Eph. 4). "Manifold" means many faceted or variegated. God bestows His grace on different people in different ways. The gifts (Gr. *charisma*) are aspects of God's grace (Gr. *charis*). No Christian can claim that he or she has nothing to offer the church.<sup>192</sup>

"The Lord of the church has distributed His bounty with masterly variety to enable His people successfully to encounter the 'manifold trials' (1:6) to which they are subjected."<sup>193</sup>

- 4:11 Peter offered two basic ways of serving that represent two types of gifts as examples. Those who can share a word from God should do so by presenting what they say as God's Word, not just as their opinion. Obviously God's words are more important, and the way we present them should reflect their significance.

Those who can serve by providing some other kind of help or assistance should do so realizing that God has made their service possible.<sup>194</sup> Peter grouped the gifts under two types: speech, and service.

The reason for acknowledging one's words and works as from God is that God then gets the credit.<sup>195</sup> This is only fitting since He deserves all glory (i.e., praise) and might (power) forever (cf. Rev. 1:6). About this there can be no question. "Amen!" So be it!

"This passage is transitional. Looking backward, it serves as a kind of postscript to 2:11—4:6 (and in particular to the promise of vindication developed in 3:13—4:6). Its closing doxology forms an inclusion with 2:12: God is 'glorified' in the ministry of Christian believers to one another, just as Peter had earlier envisioned their enemies glorifying God on 'the day of visitation.' Looking ahead, the passage also anticipates on a small scale the issues to be developed more fully in 4:12—5:11."<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>191</sup>Blum, p. 246.

<sup>192</sup>For defense of the view that spiritual gifts are ministries rather than abilities, see Kenneth Berding, "Confusing Word and Concept in 'Spiritual Gifts': Have We Forgotten James Barr's Exhortations?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43:1 (March 2000):37-51.

<sup>193</sup>Hiebert, "Living in . . .," p. 250.

<sup>194</sup>See Robert A Pyne, "Antinomianism and Dispensationalism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153:610 (April-June 1996):141-54.

<sup>195</sup>Cf. Best, p. 161.

<sup>196</sup>Michaels, p. 254.

#### **IV. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHRISTIANS COLLECTIVELY 4:12—5:11**

Peter now broadened his perspective and reminded his suffering readers of their corporate responsibilities.

##### **A. THE FIERY TRIAL 4:12-19**

Peter reminded his readers of how sufferings fit into God's purposes to encourage them to persevere with the proper attitude (cf. James 1).

"The section which began at iii. 13 is here concluded in a passage which recapitulates much that has been said—on persecution, on Christ's sufferings, on Christian duty, on the imminence of the End and of divine Judgment—and which reflects the intensity of the author's eschatological faith."<sup>197</sup>

##### **1. Suffering and glory 4:12-14**

4:12 Some Christians feel surprised when other people misunderstand, dislike, insult, and treat them harshly when they seek to carry out God's will. Peter reminded his readers that this reaction is not a strange thing but normal Christian experience. Their persecutions were fiery (burning) ordeals in the sense that they were part of God's refining process and were uncomfortable (cf. 2:11). It was for their testing (Gr. *pairasmos*, proving), to manifest their faith, that God allowed their sufferings (cf. James 1:2-4).

4:13 We can also rejoice in these sufferings because when we experience them we share in Christ's sufferings. That is, we experience what Jesus did during His time on earth as He continued faithful to God's will. God will glorify us just as He will glorify Jesus. Therefore we can rejoice now at that prospect (cf. 1:6-7; 10-11; 2:21; Acts 5:41). The revelation (uncovering, Gr. *apokalypsis*) of Jesus Christ's glory is most likely a reference to the Second Advent that includes the Rapture and the Second Coming (cf. 1:7, 13). At both of these appearances His glory will become manifest, to the church at the Rapture and to the world at His second coming.

Our present experience as we suffer for Christ's sake is similar to a pregnant woman who feels discomfort and even pain as she anticipates her due date. When she gives birth, however, joy at the delivery of her child replaces the pain that she felt during her pregnancy. Similarly we groan now, but the hope of future joy should encourage us to hang on (cf. 2 Cor. 4:17-18).

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<sup>197</sup>Selwyn, p. 220.

4:14 When people revile, insult, and reject us for being followers of Jesus Christ, they may curse us, but their curses are really blessings from God (Matt. 5:11-12).

"To be insulted is not simply to receive a rebuke (2:12; 3:16; 4:5), but . . . it means to be rejected by the society (or even by humanity)."<sup>198</sup>

Their curses become blessings because the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of glory, already indwells us. The "and" here (Gr. *kai*) may be ascensive, meaning "even." Peter's thought was that the indwelling Holy Spirit is already part of our glorification, the firstfruits of our inheritance. As the Israelites enjoyed the presence of God in the fiery pillar even during their wilderness testing, so we enjoy His presence during our wilderness experience.

"The world believes that the *absence* of suffering means glory, but a Christian's outlook is different. . . .

". . . suffering Christians do not have to wait for heaven in order to experience His glory. Through the Holy Spirit, *they can have the glory now*. This explains how martyrs could sing praises to God while bound in the midst of blazing fires. It also explains how persecuted Christians (and there are many in today's world) can go to prison and to death without complaining or resisting their captors."<sup>199</sup>

## **2. Suffering as Christians 4:15-19**

4:15-16 However, we should not take comfort in suffering that we bring on ourselves for sinning in contrast to suffering that we experience because we take a stand with Jesus Christ (cf. 2:20). Peter felt ashamed when he denied the Lord in the high priest's courtyard, but he learned his lesson, stopped feeling ashamed, and urged his readers not to feel ashamed. We glorify God as we stand up as disciples of Christ both visually, as others view our lives, and verbally, as we explain our commitment to them.

"Clement of Alexandria tells of a favourite disciple of St. John who became captain of a band of robbers . . . There were men in the Apostolic Church who had been *kleptai* [thieves], and were still in danger of falling back into evil ways, see I Cor. vi. 10; Eph. iv. 28."<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Davids, p. 167.

<sup>199</sup> Wiersbe, 2:425.

<sup>200</sup> Bigg, p. 177.

4:17 In this verse and the next Peter gave two encouragements in suffering by comparing our suffering as believers with the suffering that unbelievers will experience. This verse focuses on the time of these two experiences of suffering. Our suffering is now, but theirs will be when they stand before God in judgment. Our judgment by unbelievers now is lighter than their judgment by God will be later. Our sufferings are part of the opening scene in the last act of God's redemptive drama. More severe judgment will follow on the ungodly. It helps to see our sufferings in the context of God's end-times plan. They are not an accident but an assurance of His sovereign control.

One writer argued that Peter was alluding to Malachi 3:2-3.<sup>201</sup> This seems unlikely since Malachi referred to a purifying judgment that would come on Israel whereas Peter wrote of one that Christians experience now. Peter previously called the church a spiritual household (2:5).

4:18 In this verse Peter contrasted the intensity of the two experiences of suffering, by disciples now and by unbelievers in the future. It is with difficulty that righteous people pass through this phase of our existence into the next phase because this phase involves suffering for us. "Saved" (Gr. *sozetai*) here means delivered in the sense of being delivered from this life into the next. Yet it will be even more difficult for godless people to pass from this phase of their lives to the next because they will have to undergo God's wrath. Their future sufferings will be more intense than our present sufferings.

The purpose of Peter's quoting Proverbs 11:31 loosely was to show that the Old Testament also taught that both the righteous and the wicked will receive from the Lord. The point in the proverb is that since God rewards the righteous on earth how much more can we count on His rewarding wicked sinners. If God disciplines His own children, how much more severely will He deal with those who are not His children. Our sufferings are light compared with those the ungodly will experience in the future.

4:19 "Therefore" draws these encouragements to a conclusion and introduces a command in view of them. In view of these reasons we should respond to suffering by entrusting ourselves to the God who created us (cf. Matt. 27:50; Luke 23:46). He will bring us through our sufferings safely (cf. Phil. 1:6). God is faithful to do this. Furthermore we should keep on doing what is right (e.g., submitting to government rulers, obeying masters, submitting to husbands, loving wives, etc.) rather than doing evil (v. 15). "Souls" (Gr. *psychas*) again refers to our total persons (cf. 1:9, 22; 2:11, 25; 3:20).

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<sup>201</sup>D. E. Johnson, "Fire in God's House: Imagery from Malachi 3 in Peter's Theology of Suffering (1 Pet 4:12-19)," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29 (1989):285-94.

"Peter described God as the 'faithful Creator'—an unusual designation because only here in the NT is God called *ktistes* [Creator] . . . The combination of 'faithful' and 'Creator' reminds the believer of God's love and power in the midst of trials so that they will not doubt his interest or ability."<sup>202</sup>

Peter brought together four reasons for suffering in this section. First, God allows us to suffer to demonstrate our character (v. 12). Second, those who identify themselves with Jesus Christ will share in the sufferings of our Savior (v. 13; cf. Phil. 3:10). Third, our sufferings will be an occasion of God blessing us (v. 14). In addition, fourth, our suffering will glorify God (v. 16). Peter then redirected our perspective on suffering by reminding us of the time and intensity of our sufferings, compared with those of unbelievers (vv. 17-18). Finally, he concluded with an exhortation to trust God and do right (v. 19). Peter thus encouraged his readers by revealing God's perspective on their sufferings.

"The most striking feature of this section is its bold emphasis on the sovereignty and initiative of God, even in the suffering of his own people."<sup>203</sup>

## **B. THE CHURCH UNDER TRIAL 5:1-11**

Peter concluded the body of his epistle and this section on encouragement in suffering with specific commands so his readers would understand how to live while suffering for Christ.

"An intimate personal note runs through this section, the author alluding to himself and his own experience and standing more directly than heretofore, and addressing his readers, especially those in the ministry, with primary regard to their pastoral relationship to one another in the Church. Earlier themes, such as the need for humility and wakefulness, and the promise of grace to stand firm in persecution and of glory at the last, are repeated."<sup>204</sup>

### **1. The responsibility of the elders 5:1-4**

5:1 In view of the inevitability of trials and God's judgment Peter gave a special charge to the elders (overseers) of the congregations of his readers. Peter himself was an elder as well as an apostle. As an elder he spoke from experience.

"As an apostle he could have ordered them to follow his instruction, but he did not take this approach. His appeal is

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<sup>202</sup>Blum, p. 249.

<sup>203</sup>Michaels, p. 274.

<sup>204</sup>Selwyn, p. 227.



based on the fact that he was one of them and thus understood their problems."<sup>205</sup>

He himself had participated in sufferings for Christ's sake. "Witness" (Gr. *martys*; cf. Acts 3:15; 10:39) does not just mean that he observed Jesus suffering, which he did. It means he shared Jesus Christ's sufferings and bore testimony out of that experience (4:13). As his readers, Peter also shared the glory that God will yet reveal (4:14).

5:2 Peter's exhortation to his fellow elders was to take care of those under their charge as a shepherd cares for his sheep (cf. John 21:16; Acts 20:28; Ezek. 34:1-16). In other words, elders are responsible for the pastoral work of the local church. A pastor is usually an elder who functions as a shepherd. The verb "shepherd" (Gr. *poimaino*) literally means to tend. Pastoring includes the duties of feeding, leading, guiding, guarding, and providing for the needs of those in the church, as a shepherd does for his sheep (cf. John 21:16).

"If we ever view the flock as 'ours' or the ministry as 'ours,' we are in serious trouble, and so is the church."<sup>206</sup>

Three contrasts follow that clarify the proper motivation and manner of an elder's ministry.

First, he should serve willingly as opposed to grudgingly (cf. 2 Cor. 9:7). God wants us to perform any service for Him willingly. Elders should not serve because they feel they must do so because of external pressure but because they desire to serve God.

"I have counseled with many pastors who . . . feel that they are imprisoned by their calling to ministry. They would prefer to be somewhere else, they are not enjoying their ministry, or they are in a difficult situation from which they would like to escape. To them, ministry has become mere drudgery.

"It need not be so! Peter reminds us that we should serve the Lord and tend His flock willingly. . . . The Lord does not force us or coerce us to be involved in ministry. He calls us and invites us to ministry, but we have the freedom of saying 'yes' or 'no!'"<sup>207</sup>

Second, an elder should serve zealously and enthusiastically as opposed to selfishly. He should not serve for what he can get out of his ministry now but for the love of his Lord. The gain one could derive from elder ministry

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<sup>205</sup>Louis A. Barbieri, *First and Second Peter*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>206</sup>Cedar, pp. 188-89.

<sup>207</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 190.

included honor in the church as well as possible financial gain. It seems that elders in the early church often received payment for their ministry (cf. 1 Tim. 5:17 where the "double honor" probably refers to payment; 1 Cor. 9:7-11). Otherwise there would be no such temptation.

"To enter the ministry simply because it offers a respectable and intellectually stimulating way of gaining a livelihood is to prostitute that sacred work. This warning also includes the temptation to use the work of the ministry to gain personal popularity or social influence."<sup>208</sup>

5:3 Third, an elder should lead by giving an example of godly living that others can follow rather than by driving people forward with authoritarian commands (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Thess. 3:9). He should be able to expect them to do as he does as well as to do what he says. The English word "clergy" derives from the Greek verb *kleroo*, meaning "to make a possession," here translated "allotted to your charge" (NASB).

"The shepherds are not to be little popes or petty tyrants. Matt. 20:25; II Cor. 1:24.

"Peter mentions three common sins of preachers: laziness, greed, popishness, all of which are especially objectionable in days of persecution."<sup>209</sup>

"I made it a practice never to ask my congregation to give to any cause to which I didn't also give. I do not think we have a right to make a demand of other folk that we are not doing ourselves."<sup>210</sup>

"If I have any counsel for God's shepherds today, it is this: cultivate a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, and share what He gives you with your people. That way, you will grow, and they will grow with you."<sup>211</sup>

"The effective pastor . . . must be 'among' his people so that he can get to know them, their needs and problems; and he needs to be 'over' his people so he can lead them and help them solve their problems. There must be no conflict between *pastoring* and *preaching*, because they are both ministries of a faithful Shepherd. The preacher needs to be a pastor so he can apply the Word to the needs of the people. The pastor needs to be a preacher so that he can

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<sup>208</sup>D. Edmond Hiebert, "Counsel for Christ's Under-Shepherds: An Exposition of 1 Peter 5:1-4," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139:556 (October-December 1982):336-37.

<sup>209</sup>Lenski, pp. 219, 220.

<sup>210</sup>McGee, 5:712.

<sup>211</sup>Wiersbe, 2:428.

have authority when he shares in their daily needs and problems. The pastor is not a religious lecturer who weekly passes along information about the Bible. He is a shepherd who knows his people and seeks to help them through the Word."<sup>212</sup>

Since one of the husband's primary roles is that of shepherd of his family, it is worthwhile to read verses 2 and 3 from this perspective. A husband should shepherd his family flock by caring for their needs. He should consider this a privilege (voluntarily), he should make his family a priority (eagerness), and he should be a model of integrity (example). Certainly he should tell the members of his family that he loves them.<sup>213</sup>

It might be profitable to read Psalm 23 and put your name in the place of the shepherd if you are an elder and or a husband.

"The flock" over which an elder ruled was probably a house-church. Each church in a town usually consisted of several house-churches at this time.<sup>214</sup>

5:4 Elders are shepherds who serve under the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ (John 21:15-17). Peter wanted the Chief Shepherd to find his fellow elders faithful when He returns at the Rapture. Then they would have to give an account of their stewardship at His judgment seat (cf. Heb. 13:17).

"To prevent the faithful servant of Christ from being cast down, there is this one and only remedy, to turn his eyes to the coming of Christ."<sup>215</sup>

The crown (Gr. *stephanos*, garland) of glory that does not fade probably refers to glory as a crown that will come to every faithful Christian when Christ returns. It is probably not a material but a metaphorical crown (as is the crown of righteousness in 2 Timothy 4:8, the crown of life in James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10, and the crown of joy in Philippians 4:1 and 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20).<sup>216</sup> The reason for this conclusion is that the biblical writers described the crowns in figurative language (glory, righteousness, etc.), not in literal language (gold, silver, etc.; cf. Heb. 2:9). Elders who are faithful now will receive glory that will not fade when Jesus Christ returns.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>212</sup>Ibid., 2:429.

<sup>213</sup>*Family Life* . . . , p. 125.

<sup>214</sup>See Del Birkey, *The House Church: A Model for Renewing the Church*, pp. 40-62.

<sup>215</sup>John Calvin, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St Peter," in *Calvin's Commentaries*, p. 317.

<sup>216</sup>Michaels, p. 287. See Joe L. Wall, *Going for the Gold*, pp. 125-71, for a practical discussion of these crowns.

<sup>217</sup>For a further helpful study of elders, see Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, pp. 295-308.

<b>BELIEVERS' CROWNS</b>		
<b>Title</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Reference</b>
An Imperishable Crown	For leading a disciplined life	1 Cor. 9:25
A Crown of Rejoicing	For evangelism and discipleship	1 Thess. 2:19
A Crown of Righteousness	For loving the Lord's appearing	2 Tim. 4:8
A Crown of Life	For enduring trials	James 1:12; Rev. 2:10
A Crown of Glory	For shepherding God's flock faithfully	1 Pet. 5:4

## **2. The responsibility of the others 5:5**

"Younger men" is literally "younger ones" and includes females as well as males.<sup>218</sup> Nevertheless younger men were probably in Peter's mind since the contrast is with older men in verses 1-4.

"In the ancient world the division of society into older people and younger . . . was just as much taken for granted as the division into men and women, free men and slaves, etc."<sup>219</sup>

Leaders of the church were normally in the older age group. Peter addressed the younger in this verse. "Elders" here refers to those in the older age group. That he did not mean just the official elders of the church seems clear from the contrast with "younger" (cf. 1 Tim. 5:1, 17).

The younger people in the church were and are to take a position under the authority of the older people. The reason for this, though unexpressed, seems self-evident: the older have more experience in living (cf. Job 32:4).

All Christians, regardless of our age, should put on humility as a garment, (i.e., let it be what others see as we serve; cf. 3:8). The Greek word translated "clothe" is a rare one that comes from a word referring to the apron that slaves put on over their regular clothes. This garment prepared them for service (cf. John 13:4-15). We should be ready and eager to serve one another rather than expecting others to serve us (Mark 10:45).

"In other words, believers should not insist on having their way over others."<sup>220</sup>

<sup>218</sup> Davids, p. 184.

<sup>219</sup> Kelly, p. 205. Cf. Bigg, p. 190.

<sup>220</sup> McGee, 5:713.

Peter again quoted Proverbs (Prov. 3:34) for support. This is the theological reason for his ethical charge (cf. James 4:6). He then proceeded to expound the ideas expressed in this proverb in the following six verses.

### **3. The importance of humility and trust in God 5:6-7**

5:6 God's almighty hand had permitted affliction to touch Peter's readers. The apostle urged them to submit to God's working in their lives as to the skillful hand of a surgeon. He assured them that God would raise them up eventually better off for their suffering (cf. Luke 14:11; James 1:2-4). Peter had learned to submit to God's hand on his own life, though at times he had not been as submissive as he should have been. The Old Testament writers used God's hand as a symbol of discipline (Exod. 3:19; 6:1; Job 30:21; Ps. 32:4) and deliverance (Deut. 9:26; Ezek. 20:34).

5:7 This verse does not introduce a new command but explains how to humble oneself: by entrusting oneself and one's troubles to God (Ps. 55:22; cf. Matt. 6:25-34; Phil. 4:6). We can do this because we have confidence that God cares for our welfare.

*"Mermina [sic, merimna] = worry or anxiety as when one does not know whether to do this or to do that, 'distraction.'"*<sup>221</sup>

### **4. The importance of resisting the devil 5:8-11**

5:8 Trust in God is not all that we need, however. We also need to practice self-control and to keep alert (cf. 1:13; 4:7) because Satan is on the prowl (cf. Job 1:7; Matt. 26:41; 1 Cor. 16:13).

*"Here is, as it were, a certain characteristic of the divine Word, that it never comes forth while Satan is at rest and sleeping."*<sup>222</sup>

Peter's readers were in danger from him if they gave in to his temptation to regard their sufferings as an indication of God's disinterest or ill will (cf. James 1:13). Satan not only seeks to deceive us as a serpent (2 Cor. 11:3), but he also seeks to devour us as a lion.

*"The picture is one of a beast swallowing its prey in a gulp."*<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>221</sup>Lenski, p. 224. Cf. Ps. 55:22; 37:5; Luke 10:41; 12:11-12.

<sup>222</sup>John Calvin, "Prefatory Address to King Francis I of France," sec. 7, in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

<sup>223</sup>Dauids, p. 191.

5:9 Whereas God commands us to forsake the world and deny the lusts of the flesh, we should resist the devil (cf. Eph. 6:11-13; Jas. 4:7). Satan's desire is to get the Christian to doubt, to deny, to disregard, and to disobey what God has said (cf. Gen. 3:1-5; Matt. 4:1-11). The Greek word translated "resist" means to defend oneself against as opposed to attacking. It is easier to resist when we remember that this duty is common to all Christians; it is not unique to us alone. A better translation of "accomplished by" might be "laid upon." Suffering is the common experience of all committed believers as long as we are in the world (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12).

<b>THE CHRISTIAN'S THREE-FOLD ENEMY</b>	
<u><i>Problem</i></u>	<u><i>Solution</i></u>
<b>The World</b> (1 John 2:15-17)  Lust of the flesh Lust of the eyes Pride of life	<b>Flee</b> (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22)
<b>The flesh</b> (Rom. 7:18-24)	<b>Deny</b> (Rom. 6:12-13; 8:13)
<b>The devil</b> (1 Peter 5:8)	<b>Resist</b> (1 Peter 5:9)

Peter advocated three responses to Satan in this passage. We should *respect* him ("be of sober spirit," v. 8). If Peter had respected Satan more he might not have slept in the Garden of Gethsemane after Jesus had warned him to watch and pray so that he would not enter into temptation. Second, Peter said we should *recognize* Satan ("be on the alert," v. 8). If Peter had been alert he might not have denied Jesus three times in the courtyard of the high priest. Third, we should *resist* Satan (v. 9). If Peter had resisted Satan he might not have felt that he had to resist Malchus' advance in Gethsemane and cut off his ear.

"Before we can stand before Satan [vv. 8-9], we must bow before God [vv. 6-7]. Peter resisted the Lord and ended up submitting to Satan!"<sup>224</sup>

5:10 We have on our side One who is able to overcome our adversary the devil. Furthermore God gives sufficient grace (2 Cor. 12:9). He has called us to experience eternal glory ultimately (1:1). Both our calling and our glory are in Christ. God will make us complete (Gr. *katartizo*, "to mend [nets]," Matt. 4:21) establish us, strengthen us for service, and give us peace in His will.

<sup>224</sup>Wiersbe, 2:433.

"What Peter has done is pile up a number of closely related terms that together by their reinforcing one another give a multiple underscoring of the good that God is intending for them and even now is producing in their suffering."<sup>225</sup>

5:11 God has enough power and ability to help us endure whatever suffering He allows us to experience (1 Cor. 10:13). Peter concluded this statement about God's sufficiency with another benediction (cf. 4:11).

To summarize, Peter exhorted the church elders to shepherd those under their care. He exhorted younger Christians to submit to their older brethren. And he exhorted all to stand firm against Satan's attacks armed with an attitude of submission to God and to one another.

### **V. CONCLUSION 5:12-14**

Peter concluded this epistle with a final exhortation and greetings from those with him and himself to encourage his readers further.

5:12 Silvanus is the Roman form of the Greek name Silas. This Silas may very well have been Paul's companion on his second missionary journey. Silas may have written this epistle as Peter dictated it or in some other way assisted in its composition.<sup>226</sup> Peter may have taken the pen from Silvanus at this point and written the conclusion himself, as was common (cf. Gal. 6:11; 2 Thess. 3:17). It seems more probable, however, that Silas carried this epistle from Peter to its first destination.<sup>227</sup> It would have been more customary for Peter to mention Silas at the beginning of the letter if he had had some role in its composition.<sup>228</sup>

Peter explained his purpose for writing this epistle. He wanted to exhort the readers to stand firm in the faith since suffering for the Savior is part of being a recipient of God's grace (5:9). One of Peter's gifts was exhortation. God's grace is sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9)! The "true grace of God" may refer to the help that the readers would obtain from the Lord and, specifically, from this letter.<sup>229</sup>

5:13 "She" probably refers to the church in the town where Peter was when he wrote this letter (cf. 2 John 1, 4). The Greek word for "church" (*ekklesia*) is feminine, though the word *ekklesia* does not appear in 1 Peter. Some commentators have suggested that Peter referred to his wife.<sup>230</sup> But this

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<sup>225</sup> Davids, p. 196.

<sup>226</sup> See Selwyn, pp. 9-17, for a helpful excursus on Silvanus (Silas).

<sup>227</sup> See E. Randolph Richards, "Silvanus Was Not Peter's Secretary: Theological Bias in Interpreting *dia Silouanou . . . egrapha* in 1 Peter 5:12," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43:3 (September 2000):417-32.

<sup>228</sup> Michaels, pp. 306-7.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 309-10.

<sup>230</sup> E.g., Robertson, 6:135.

seems unlikely to me since none of the other epistle writers in the New Testament referred to their wives. God chose the church together with the believers to whom Peter sent this epistle.

"Election is . . . : (1) the sovereign act of God in grace whereby certain persons are chosen from among mankind for Himself (Jn. 15:19); and (2) the sovereign act of God whereby certain elect persons are chosen for distinctive service for Him (Lk. 6:13; Acts 9:15; 1 Cor. 1:27-28)."<sup>231</sup>

"Babylon" may refer to Babylon on the Euphrates River.<sup>232</sup> However this seems more likely to be a veiled, metaphorical reference to Rome where Peter spent the last years of his life.<sup>233</sup> The technical name for this figure of speech (i.e., a code name) is atbash. We know that John "Mark" was in Rome (Col. 4:10). But why would Peter have called Rome Babylon? Probably he did so because Rome was the capitol of the pagan world. The Christians had come to think of Rome as Babylon. The Jews spoke of Rome as "Babylon" after the fall of Jerusalem, in A.D. 70, which may support the view that Peter wrote this epistle after that date.<sup>234</sup> Babylon on the Euphrates was then in decline, but it was formerly the world center of godlessness. The Bible uses Babylon as a symbol of ungodliness as well as the name of a real town (cf. Rev. 17—18). Similarly the name Hollywood is both a literal town name and the symbol of the industry for which the town is famous.

". . . Babylon [in 1 Peter] becomes a beautiful symbol for the capital of the place of exile away from the true inheritance in heaven."<sup>235</sup>

John Mark was Peter's protégé. Many scholars believe Mark wrote his Gospel in Rome and that Peter's influence is apparent in what he included in that record of Jesus' life and ministry. There is considerable evidence for this in the second Gospel.

5:14 In Peter's culture a kiss was a common way to express affection publicly (cf. Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26). It still is today in many parts of the world.

"In the ancient world kisses were normally exchanged among family members (parents and children; brothers and sisters; servants and masters) and at times between rulers

<sup>231</sup>*The New Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 1337.

<sup>232</sup>McGee, 5:714; E. Schuyler English, "Was St. Peter Ever in Rome?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 124:496 (October-December 1967):317.

<sup>233</sup>Kelly, pp. 218-19; Blum, p. 212; Goppelt, pp. 373-75; Michaels, p. 311; Robertson, 6:135; Best, pp. 65, 178-79; et al.

<sup>234</sup>See *ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>235</sup>Dauids, p. 203. Cf. 1:1, 17; 2:11.



and their clients. The erotic kiss is secondary and not stressed in the literature. The familial kiss probably forms the background to the NT practice, for all fellow-Christians were considered brothers and sisters. This affectionate kissing was normally on the cheeks, forehead, or hands. We can assume such to be the practice here. . . . In calling it the 'kiss of love' Peter not only brings out the meaning of kiss ('kiss,' *philema* in Greek, comes from *phileo*, a verb indicating familial and friendly as opposed to erotic love), but also expresses the proper relationship among the members of the Christian community ('love' here is the typical Christian term for love, *agape*, used also in 1:22; 4:8)."<sup>236</sup>

In the midst of their persecution Peter prayed that his readers might experience God's surpassing peace (Phil. 4:6-7). "Peace" expresses the common Jewish blessing "Shalom." This epistle opens and closes with a prayer for peace (cf. 1:2).

"What a wonderful way to end a letter that announced the coming of a fiery trial!"<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>236</sup>Ibid., pp. 204-5. Cf. Goppelt, p. 354; Michaels, p. 313.

<sup>237</sup>Wiersbe, 2:434.

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