

# Commentary on 1 Peter

## Bible Study Notes and Comments

by David E. Pratte



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# Comments on the Book of 1 Peter

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Notes to the reader: I have chosen not to include the Bible text in these notes (please use your Bible to follow along). Instead, I have divided the notes by groups of verses; each group of verses begins with a numbered study question or questions for you to consider. The abbreviation “**b/c/v**” means “book, chapter, and verse.” Also, when I ask the reader to refer to a map, please consult the maps at the back of your Bible or in a Bible dictionary.

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## Introduction to 1 Peter

### **Author**

The inspired author was Peter the apostle (1:1).

The book is largely undisputed in authorship or canonicity. Horne states:

The genuineness and canonical authority of the first Epistle of Peter have never been disputed. It appears to be twice referred to by Clement of Rome; it is twelve times distinctly quoted by Polycarp and is once cited in the Epistle of the churches of Vienne and Lyons. It was received by Theophilus bishop of Antioch, and quoted by Papias, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian; and Eusebius informs us that it was universally acknowledged to be the production of Saint Peter in the fourth century, since which time its authenticity has never been questioned.

MacKnight confirms:

“...the authenticity of the first [letter of Peter] was never called in question; being universally acknowledged as Peter’s from the very beginning ... Wherefore there can be no doubt that the first epistle of Peter was all along received as an inspired writing, by the whole Christian church.”

### **Notes regarding Peter**

\* Peter was also called Simon (Matthew 10:2) and Cephas (John 1:42). He was called Bar-Jonah because his father was named Jonah.

\* He lived in Bethsaida and later Capernaum – John 1:44; Mark 1:21,29.

\* Peter was originally introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew, who had been a follower of John the Baptist. Jesus then gave Peter the name of Cephas – John 1:40-42.

\* Peter had been a fisherman before being called to be an apostle; but Jesus called Peter, along with his brother Andrew and his partners James and John, to become “fishers of men” – Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:18-22.

\* Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law of a fever – Matthew 8:14,15. This demonstrates that Peter was a married man (1 Corinthians 9:5).

\* Peter accompanied Jesus through much of His earthly ministry and, along with James and John, was present for many special events which even other apostles had not attended. These included: the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51), the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1ff; Mark 9:22ff; Luke 9:28ff), and Jesus’ agony in the garden (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42.).

\* Peter was one of the original twelve apostles sent by Jesus for the specific purpose of testifying that Jesus was raised from the dead – Luke 5:1-11; 6:13-15; John 15:27; Acts 1:8.

\* He attempted to walk on the water in imitation of Jesus, but after an initial success his faith failed – Matthew 14:28-31.

\* He received no formal religious training in established schools – Acts 4:13.

\* At the arrest of Jesus, Peter attempted to defend Him. He used his sword to cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest – John 18:10,11. Jesus rebuked Peter and restored the man’s ear.

\* As predicted by Jesus, Peter denied Jesus three times while Jesus was being tried by the Jews – Matthew 26:33,69-75.

\* He was one of the first to enter Jesus’ tomb and see that the body was not there after the resurrection. Jesus later expressly appeared to him – John 20:1-10; 1 Corinthians 15:5.

\* He played a leading role in the selection of Matthias to take the place of Judas as an apostle – Acts 1:15-26.

\* Like all the apostles, he received the power of the Holy Spirit to directly guide him in his teaching and to empower him to do miracles – John 16:13; Acts 2. Specifically, Peter’s mission was mainly to Jews – Galatians 2:7.

\* He was always known for being impetuous and outspoken, a characteristic which sometimes got him into trouble but sometimes led to great statements of faith – Matthew 16:15-18; John 6:68,69.

\* Despite his failings, Jesus chose him to be the first to preach the gospel to the Jews and the first to preach to the Gentiles – Matthew 16:18,19; Acts 2; Acts 10.

\* Though he was a great and good man in many ways, there is absolutely no truth to the Catholic claim that he was the first Pope or the head or foundation of the church. Jesus Himself is the head of all things to the church (Ephesians 1:22,23). Jesus is only foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3:11).

### **Ones addressed**

Those addressed were pilgrims of the dispersion in the areas of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1:1). The geographical areas named are all regions in Asia Minor (see *map*).

Pilgrims are sojourners (ASV), those who reside as aliens (NASB), or strangers (KJV). They are people who live in a place away from their own native country (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11). The term can also refer in a spiritual sense to people to whom Heaven is their real country and their sojourn on earth (compare Hebrews 11:13-16).

The dispersion sometimes refers to the Jews who were scattered among the nations when they went into captivity (Deuteronomy 28:25; Jeremiah 34:17). So, some believe that Peter wrote to Jewish Christians. Horne points out that Peter was primarily an apostle to the Jews. In 1 Peter 1:18 Peter states that the recipients had been redeemed from the vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers, which would be typical of Jewish converts. And 2:9 refers to them as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people, all of which were terms for the people of Israel in the Old Testament. So this view holds that, having become Christians, the Jewish people addressed became part of the true Israel of God.

However, 1:14; 4:3,4 indicate that the recipients had lived in a Gentile manner prior to their conversion (note especially the reference to idolatry). This would seem to indicate a broader reference than just to Jewish Christians. Some might think it refers to the Christians scattered in Acts 8:1-4; but that does not fit because they went only as far as Antioch (11:19), not the places listed here. A more likely view is that the reference is to Christians viewed as citizens of Heaven (Philippians 3:20) but who are pilgrims on earth, comparable to the Jews who had been scattered among the Gentiles. This would be confirmed by the fact that the regions described are all primarily in Gentile territory, and the churches there consisted primarily of Gentiles. Why write a letter to Christians in primarily Gentile regions but address only the Jewish Christians who would be a minority there?

In any case, the important point to remember is that Peter was addressing suffering Christians who needed encouragement in the time of hardship.

### **Time of writing**

There is no indication whatever in the book regarding when it was written, and the date is of no great importance. Most scholars place it in the AD 60s. It was almost surely written before the destruction of Jerusalem.

### **Place of writing**

As he wrote, Peter said that he was in Babylon (5:13). This could be the literal city of Babylon on the Euphrates river. But some say it figuratively represents Rome. Rome was the capital of the world at this time (like Babylon had been in the past). Peter might have referred to it figuratively knowing Christians would understand but other readers might not (thereby avoiding persecution). It is apparent from the text of the book that the people were facing persecution.

Contrary to the Catholic view, however, there is no evidence anywhere else in the Scriptures that Peter was ever in Rome. He surely was not there when Paul wrote his letters to the church in

Rome or from the prison in Rome, since Peter is not mentioned in any of those letters. However, neither is there any evidence in Scripture that Peter was ever in literal Babylon (see notes on 5:13).

It is likely that the book of Revelation refers to Rome figuratively as Babylon in chapters 14, 17, 18. However, Woods points out that such usage likely did not become common till after the destruction of Jerusalem, which would have been after the time that Peter wrote this letter. There is no reason to believe that Peter would seek to disguise the place where he was when he wrote this letter.

The usual approach to Scripture should be to conclude that names of places and people are literal unless there is some compelling reason in the text to conclude otherwise. Other places mentioned in the letter surely appear to be literal and are virtually never taken to be symbolic (as in 1:1). I know of no reason that would compel us to conclude that Babylon was not literal. Caton points out that there was a large group of Jews living in literal Babylon at the time this letter was written, which might explain why Peter would be among them since his work of preaching emphasized teaching Jews.

So, while there may be good reasons to conclude that the reference to Babylon is literal, the point cannot be settled definitely. But again the point is not important to understanding the teaching of the book.

### ***Theme***

Peter encourages endurance and holiness in times of suffering and persecution.

The book contains many passages of tenderness and compassion. This might seem unexpected considering the impetuous and often awkward nature of Peter as revealed in the gospels. Perhaps his experiences of suffering for Christ helped him develop a greater sense of compassion.

### ***Outline of the book***

1. Our blessings sustain us to endure hardship and live holy lives – 1:1-2:10.
  - Our inheritance should lead us to endure hardship – 1:1-12.
  - Our salvation should motivate us to faithful living – 1:13-25.
  - Our position as God’s chosen people should encourage faithfulness – 2:1-10.
2. We should act honorably in relationships and endure patiently – 2:11-3:22.
  - Submit honorably to rulers and masters – 2:11-17.
  - Imitate Jesus in suffering persecution – 2:19-25.
  - Husbands and wives treat one another properly – 3:1-7.
  - Conduct oneself in holiness toward all – 3:8-22.
3. Live a holy life despite sufferings and hardship – 4:1-19.
  - Expect ridicule from those who know our past – 4:1-6.
  - Serve God and one another as faithful stewards – 4:7-11.
  - Suffer for doing good, not for doing evil – 4:12-19.
4. Relate properly with leaders, trusting God and resisting Satan – 5:1-14.
  - Proper relations between elders and members – 5:1-6
  - Trust for God but resistance for the devil – 5:6-11
  - Concluding remarks – 5:12-14

### ***References in the book to trials and suffering***

The following information is taken from Milliner’s introduction to the book:

Manifold temptations – 1:6

Trial of faith – 1:7

Gentiles speak against you as evildoers – 2:12

Suffering wrongfully – 2:19

He that will harm you – 3:13

Suffer for righteousness sake – 3:14

They speak evil of you – 3:16  
Suffer for well doing – 3:17  
Speaking evil of you – 4:4  
Fiery trial which is to try you – 4:12  
Reproached for the name of Christ – 4:14  
Suffer as a Christian – 4:16  
Suffer according to the will of God – 4:19  
Afflictions accomplished in your brethren – 5:9  
After you have suffered a while – 5:10

## 1 Peter 1

### 1:1-2:10 – Our Blessings Sustain Us to Endure Hardship and Live Holy Lives.

#### 1:1-12 - Our Inheritance Should Lead Us to Endure Hardship.

#### **1:1 – Peter writes as an apostle of Christ to the pilgrims of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.**

Peter identifies himself as the author and as an apostle of Jesus Christ. See our introductory notes for specific information about Peter and a discussion of the recipients to whom this letter was written.

Interestingly, Peter describes himself simply as an apostle. He makes no effort to exalt himself above any of the other apostles, as would be expected if Catholicism is correct in claiming that he was the first Pope. Certainly he was an important man who accomplished many great things for the Lord, but there is no passage here or elsewhere that would prove him to be in any way superior in position or power above the other apostles or in any sense the head or foundation of the church universal.

Notice that, in contrast to most of the letters of the apostle Paul, this letter was not addressed to a specific church or a specific Christian. Rather it was addressed to Christians throughout a widely scattered area. This is one reason why epistles like this are referred to as “general epistles.”

“Pilgrims” (παρεπιδημος) – “properly, one who comes from a foreign country into a city or land to reside there by the side of the natives; hence, stranger; sojourning in a strange place, a foreigner ...; in the N.T. metaphorically, in reference to heaven as the native country, one who sojourns on earth: so of Christians, 1 Peter 1:1 ...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

“Dispersion” (διασπορα) – “...‘a scattering, a dispersion,’ was used of the Jews who from time to time had been scattered among the Gentiles, John 7:35; later with reference to Jews, so “scattered,” who had professed, or actually embraced, the Christian faith, ‘the Dispersion,’ Jas. 1:1, RV; especially of believers who were converts from Judaism and ‘scattered’ throughout certain districts, ‘sojourners of the Dispersion,’ 1 Pet. 1:1, RV. In the Sept., of Israelites, “scattered” and exiled, e.g., Deut. 28:25; Deut. 30:4; Neh. 1:9.” – Vine.

#### **Qualifications of apostles**

The word “apostle” simply means one who is sent on a mission. It can have different significance, even in the Scriptures, depending on who does the sending and what the mission is. Peter makes clear that he was sent by Jesus Himself personally. This was not simply some mission assigned by men.

By claiming to be an apostle, Peter was asserting the authority by which he wrote this epistle. He wrote, not by human wisdom, but by the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit. See his own description of inspiration in 2 Peter 1:20,21.

True apostles of Jesus had the following characteristics or qualifications:

1) *Apostles had to be chosen by Jesus Himself.*

He is the one who “sent” them on the mission, authorizing their work. They did not assume the office by their own choice, nor were they chosen by majority vote or political maneuvering. There was always clear evidence that Jesus Himself had personally chosen each individual who received the office. See Luke 6:12-16; Acts 1:24-26; 26:16; Galatians 1:1.

2) *Jesus then sent the Holy Spirit to directly guide the apostles as they preached the gospel and bore their testimony (Acts 1:8).*

This direct guidance began when the apostles received Holy Spirit baptism on Pentecost (Acts 2). (John 16:13; 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:10-16; 14:37; Ephesians 3:3-5; Matthew 10:19,20)

3) *This baptism also gave them the power to do miraculous signs to confirm that their testimony really was from God.*

These constituted the “signs of an apostle” (2 Corinthians 12:11,12). (Acts 14:3; 2:43; 3:1-10; 5:12-16; 9:32-42; Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:3,4)

4) *Apostles could lay hands on other people and give them miraculous powers.*

But those on whom they laid hands could not in turn pass the powers on to others – Acts 8:14-24; 19:1-7; Romans 1:8-11; 2 Timothy 1:6.

5) *Specifically, an apostle had to be an eyewitness of Christ after His resurrection, so that he could testify that he had personally seen Jesus alive after He had died.*

The apostles had been chosen personally by Jesus to serve as witnesses of His work, especially of the fact that He had been raised from the dead (see Acts 1:21,22; compare 1 Corinthians 15:4-8; 9:1; Luke 24:36-48; John 15:26,27; 19:35; Acts 1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39-42; 13:31; 1 John 1:1-4).

Note that, since no men today can have these qualifications, we can have no apostles living on earth in the church today. This disproves the concept of the Catholic Pope or Mormon apostles as successors to the apostles. The Catholic claim that Peter was the first Pope completely contradicts numerous New Testament teachings. Notice that Peter never made such a claim. All he ever claimed was to be an apostle like other apostles.

“Apostle” (αποστολος) – “1. a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders ... 2. Specially applied to the twelve disciples whom Christ selected, out of the multitude of his adherents, to be his constant companions and the heralds to proclaim to men the kingdom of God ... With these apostles Paul claimed equality ... 3. In a broader sense the name is transferred to other eminent Christian teachers ...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

**1:2 – Those Peter addressed were elect according to the foreknowledge of God in sanctification of the Spirit for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ.**

Peter begins his letter by briefly stating the gospel doctrine of election. It is nothing like the Calvinists claim (compare 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15; Romans 8:28-30,33; 2 Timothy 1:9,10; Colossians 3:12; Ephesians 1:4).

**Elect according to the foreknowledge of God**

The word “elect” signifies picked out, chosen (not voted on, as today). The idea emphasizes two things: (1) a choosing, and (2) a separation – i.e., because one has been chosen, he is set apart from others who are not so chosen.

The term does not, however, in any way indicate the *manner* in which an individual is chosen. Calvinists assume that God elects certain individuals from before time began wholly on His own will, without regard to the character, attitudes, desires, or choice of the individual. Then He leaves all others to be lost, regardless of their character, will, choice, etc. The issue is not what God *could* have done, but what He *willed* to do.

It is not at all out of character with Bible teaching for God to choose men by some standard which takes into account the desires and character of the men. The fact that God does the choosing does not necessarily eliminate the power of man to choose. In fact, many other Scriptures show that man does have a choice in his salvation (Joshua 24:15; Mark 16:15,16; 2 Peter 3:9; etc.).

A person’s method of choosing can be *conditional* (and usually is). For example, when we choose a marriage partner, a home, a car, a political candidate, etc., usually the choice we make depends on the character and nature of the possible prospects. We set our standards regarding what we are looking for, then we measure each prospect by how well it measures up to the standards we set. We then choose the one(s) that meet those standards. It is entirely possible that one of those criteria would be whether or not the individual would choose to please us (as in choosing a marriage partner).

Illustration: When I was young we were picking out a puppy from a litter. We decided to call the puppies to come out from their hiding place, and the first one that came out would be the one we would keep. So, we chose the one that chose to heed our call. This is exactly the point regarding how we become God's elect.

Peter says God chose us according to His foreknowledge. He does not say exactly what God foreknew. It certainly does not state that God knew what specific individuals He would choose, then chose them regardless of character, etc. Other possibilities exist, including knowing that certain classes or kinds of people would exist, and choosing what rewards or treatment He would give to each of these classes.

Illustration: Before the school year begins, a school teacher may not know what specific students he will have, but he can foreknow the **kinds or types** of students he will have, and can foreordain the treatment each kind will receive. This may include knowing that some students will choose to act in certain ways (studying hard, neglecting to work, disrupting class, etc.). So the teacher decides how he will react to each of these actions that the students may choose to participate in. The teacher does not necessarily predetermine what he will do to each individual student. But he foreknows the kinds of students the kids will choose to be, then he predetermines how we will deal with each kind. Each student decides which kind he is, and then the teacher deals with each one as he had foreordained that kind of student to be treated.

Let us summarize the teaching of other passages about God's election and predestination of man.

*God desires all men to be saved and He offers salvation to all through the gospel.*

2 Peter 3:9; Titus 2:11; 1 Timothy 2:4,6; Hebrews 2:92; Thessalonians 2:14; Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38,39

If God sincerely wants **all** people to be saved and wants none to perish, and if the decision is entirely up to Him (man has no choice), then all people will be saved and none will be lost! The logical conclusion of unconditional election must be universalism!

Yet we know only a few will be saved and most lost (Matthew 7:13,14; 22:14). So, either God does not sincerely want everyone saved, or else man does have a choice! (Ezekiel 33:11; 18:32; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Revelation 3:20; 1 Timothy 4:10; Isaiah 45:21f; Colossians 1:20; Lam. 3:33; Acts 26:28,29; Matthew. 18:14)

John 3:16 – God so loved the **world** that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Note that the ones Jesus died to save are all those in the world whom God loves. Yet He loves even His enemies (Matthew 5:43-38). (1 John 2:2; 4:14; 5:19; John 3:17; 1:29; 4:42; 12:47; 6:51)

Romans 5:18,19 – Justification came unto “all men” by Jesus' righteous act (His death). This was the same “all men” on whom condemnation came as a result of Adam's sin. So, however many people are condemned by sin, that is how many can receive the benefit of Jesus' death. (Note that both the condemnation and the justification are received conditionally – verse 12.)

The intent of Jesus' death was to offer salvation to all men. If these passages are true, then either all men will be saved (which cannot be), or else there is something each man must do to determine whether or not he will receive the benefit of Jesus' death.

(See also Luke 19:10 with Romans 3:23; 2 Peter 2:1; 2 Corinthians 5:10,14,15; Acts 3:26; John 10:9; 12:32,33 compare 6:44,45; Matthew 11:28-30; 24:14; 22:14; Romans 16:26; 10:16-18; Luke 9:23,24; Ephesians 3:8,9; Colossians 1:28; 2 Timothy 14:17; Acts 20:31; Colossians 1:6,23; 1 Corinthians 1:21.)

*God has decreed conditions of salvation that all people can meet.*

The following passages clearly teach that everyone can obey the conditions of salvation, but Calvinism flatly contradicts this and denies that everyone can obey.

Mark 16:15,16; John 3:14-16; Acts 17:30,31; 2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 10:32; Acts 2:38,39; Romans 10:13,14,17; (Romans 1:16; John 6:44,45; 1:7; 6:40; Acts 10:43; 13:39; Hebrews 5:9; John 12:26; 2 John 9; Acts 22:16)

*God grants to each person the power to choose to accept or reject salvation.*

Revelation 22:17 – **Whosoever will** (KJV) may freely take of the water of life. It is a matter of man's **will**, and each person may determine his own will.

All the following passages show that man does have the power to choose and that what we do will determine whether or not God chooses to give us eternal life.

Deuteronomy 30:15-19; Joshua 24:15; Exodus 32:26; 1 Kings 18:21; Hebrews 11:24,25; Isaiah 1:18-20; Matthew 23:37; Matthew 13:14,15; 1 Peter 1:22; Romans 6:13,16-18; 2 Corinthians 8:5; Philippians 2:12; 1 Timothy 4:16; Acts 2:40; 2 Corinthians 5:20.

(Psalm 119:30,173; Isaiah 56:4; Hebrews 2:17 and 4:15 with Isaiah 7:14,15 and Matthew 26:53 and John 10:18; John 7:17; 1 Chronicles 28:9; Luke 7:30; Proverbs 1:29; 3:31; Matthew 5:6; 16:24; 19:17,21; 21:29; 26:41; Acts 17:11; Romans 7:15-21; Galatians 5:17; James 4:8; Luke 18:14; 14:11; Matthew 18:4; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 John 3:3; 5:18,21; 1 Timothy 5:22; 6:19; James 4:18; 1:27; Jude 21; Acts 13:46; 1 Thessalonians 4:4; 2 Timothy 2:1,5,21,26; 2 John 8,9; Titus 2:7)

*God is no respecter of persons.*

Romans 2:6-11 – If God chooses to save some but not others, either the choice must be based on the conduct of the people (hence, conditional) or else God is a respecter of persons. Since the Bible teaches that He is not a respecter of persons and shows no partiality, it must be that election and predestination are conditional on the character and choice of each individual. (Compare Acts 10:34,35.)

It follows from the teaching of Scripture that God's election is conditional. God offers salvation through Christ to all who are willing to turn from sin and serve obediently. He extends His offer of salvation to all through the gospel. Then each individual must decide whether he will choose to obey or disobey. Those who choose to obey have chosen to place themselves among the category that God foreknew would respond with faithful obedience, and so He chooses them to be his elect.

“Elect” (Gk. εκλεκτος) – “1. pert. to being selected, *chosen* gener. of those whom God has chosen fr. the generality of mankind and drawn to himself ... 2. pert. to being esp. distinguished, *elect* ... 3. pert. to being considered best in the course of a selection, *choice, excellent* ...” – Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich.

“Foreknowledge” (Gk. προγνωσις) – “1. foreknowledge ... 2. forethought, pre-arrangement ...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

### **In sanctification of the Spirit**

Calvinists say God unconditionally chose certain people to be saved, then the Holy Spirit irresistibly compels those people to accept the gospel and be saved, giving them an “experience” that confirms to them that they are saved. They say this is the meaning of sanctification.

But the Bible says we are sanctified by the truth (John 17:17-19; compare Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:12; Hebrews 10:9,10; Romans 8:1-17). This truth was revealed by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:7,8,13,14). This word, when taught to those with honest hearts, produces faith and leads people to repent and be baptized (Romans 10:17; Titus 3:5; John 16:8; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

We have the choice whether or not to meet these conditions (1 Timothy 2:4; Revelation 3:20; Acts 2:21; John 3:16; etc.). If we choose to obey, then the blood of Jesus forgives us, thereby setting us apart to God's service – i.e., sanctifying us by the Spirit (the One who revealed the word that does all this).

But if God elects us by sanctification of the Spirit, and if the Spirit works through the word, and if we have a choice whether or not to obey that word, then it must be that election is **conditional** upon man's choice. It is not unconditional or irresistible. The key to all this is to

realize that the Spirit works through the **word** which reveals the eternal purpose of God. New Testament examples of conversion show this is exactly how it worked.

### **Unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ**

The goal of God's plan and purpose for us is that we will obey the gospel and thereby receive the blood of Christ to cleanse us from our sins, as described in the passages we have already discussed. Obviously, Jesus' blood is not literally sprinkled on us, so the expression must be spiritual. The blood of Christ is applied to our souls to forgive us of our sins when we are obedient to God's conditions of forgiveness. This was symbolized by the sprinkling of blood in the Old Testament (Exodus 24:7). Jesus' blood is sprinkled on us to forgive us in baptism – Hebrews 10:22 (compare 9:13,14; 12:24. His blood also cleanses us as we confess sins we may commit as children of God – 1 John 1:7-9.

Grace and peace from God are to be multiplied to those who will respond and receive this forgiveness.

“Sanctification” (Gk. ‘αγιασμος) – “...1. consecration, purification ... 2. the effect of consecration, sanctification of heart and life ...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

**To learn more about the New Testament teaching about election and predestination, we urge you to study our free articles on that subject on our Bible study web site at [www.gospelway.com/instruct](http://www.gospelway.com/instruct).**

***1:3-5 – By His mercy God has begotten us through the resurrection of Christ to an incorruptible, undefiled inheritance reserved in heaven.***

Peter blesses (speaks well of) God for the great favor He has shown us. He has begotten us again to a living hope according to His great mercy.

### **Begotten again**

To be begotten again is simply another expression for the new birth or being born again. This concept is expressed in a number of other passages.

One can only be born again by obeying the gospel – 1 Peter 1:22-25. Hearing and believing give one the **right to become** a child of God, but they do not automatically make one a child of God – John 1:12. To be born again, one must come into Christ where he is then a new creature and all things are made new – 2 Corinthians 5:17. As result of this new birth one becomes one of God's spiritual children, a part of God's family or household which is the church (Galatians 3:26; Romans 8:16,17; 1 Timothy 3:15).

In John 3:3,5, Jesus described this new birth as being born again of the water and the Spirit. Consider this teaching more closely.

*What is the “water”?*

“Born of the water” must refer to water baptism because: (1) Baptism is the only command in the New Testament that requires the use of water (Acts 8:35-39; 10:47; John 3:23; Hebrews 10:22; etc.). (2) To come into Christ and thereby become a child of God, one who believes must be baptized – Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27 (see also Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). We will also notice later several verses that tie baptism to hearing the gospel like John 3:5 does.

**For further discussion of the purpose of baptism and the need for obedience, see our articles on these subjects on our Bible Instruction web site at [www.gospelway.com/instruct/](http://www.gospelway.com/instruct/).**

*What is the “Spirit”?*

The Holy Spirit revealed the message of the gospel, which one must learn and believe in order to be forgiven. The word is the “seed” by which one is born again (1 Peter 1:23). The word is the “sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17). It is the tool or means used by the Spirit to accomplish His work in conversion (2 Peter 1:21; Ephesians 3:3-5; John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13).

So, to be born of water and the Spirit means to learn the gospel message revealed by the Spirit, believe it, and obey it in baptism. This same connection between the word of the Spirit and water baptism is made in several other passages about conversion. Compare John 3:5 to Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:41; 8:12; 8:35-39; 16:32,33; 18:8; Ephesians 5:26.

### Through the resurrection of Christ

We have this living hope only through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This means that the resurrection is inseparably connected to salvation. The Scriptures teach that, not just the crucifixion of Christ is essential to our salvation, but so also is His resurrection. Without it, we could not be saved. Had Jesus merely died on the cross, Satan would have triumphed. But by coming back to life, Jesus proved His power over Satan.

The resurrection is a fundamental part of the gospel of Christ – 1 Corinthians 15:1-8.

We must believe in the resurrection in order to have salvation – Romans 10:9,10.

Without the resurrection of Christ, we would be of all people most miserable – 1 Corinthians 15:12-19.

See John 14:19; 1 Peter 3:21.

Yet surprisingly, there are those who profess to be Christians, even those who profess to be preachers, New Testament scholars, or seminary professors who deny that Jesus was bodily raised from the dead. They have all kinds of excuses for claiming that the New Testament evidence does not necessarily prove the resurrection. The clear import of these passages is that such people do not share in the living hope that awaits faithful Christians.

For other passages about the resurrection of Christ, and see Romans 1:4; 10:9,10; 6:4-13; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:1-26; Luke 24:44-46; John 20:24-31; Acts 2:23-36; 17:30,31; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 3:21; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Ephesians 1:19,20; Colossians 2:12,13.

### An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled reserved in heaven

Specifically, Peter is emphasizing here the **inheritance** we have as children of God (see verse 4). As a result of being born again, we become children of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). An inheritance is a possession given one by right of his position as son (Hebrews 9:15; Titus 3:7). As God's children, we have an inheritance.

This inheritance is a **hope** (desire plus expectation). Here it refers to the object of hope: that inheritance for which we hope. This is a "living hope" because it is the hope of eternal **life**. The atheist has no hope after death, by his own admission. False religions claim to offer hope, but those are dead hopes because they lead to death, not life (Matthew 25:31ff; 7:20ff). Only the Christian has a living hope (1 Peter 1:13,21; 3:5,15; Hebrews 3:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; 1 John 3:3; etc.).

This hope is offered us by the mercy of God through Jesus' resurrection. It is made possible only for the because Jesus died and arose again. This is truly great mercy.

Peter then describes our inheritance as God's sons.

It is **incorruptible** or "imperishable" (NASB, ESV) ("not liable to corruption or decay, imperishable" – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer). Whereas all things on this earth are temporary and will corrupt, decay, or otherwise perish, that is not so of the eternal reward of the righteous. We can be sure at the judgment that we will enter into an eternal reward that not only cannot be corrupted, but is also assured to continue forever. See 1 Corinthians 15:52; 9:25.

It is **undefiled** ("free from that by which the nature of a thing is deformed and debased, or its force and vigor impaired" – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer). Nothing that defiles can enter that heavenly city – Revelation 21:27. See James 1:27.

It does **not fade away** ("to extinguish, ... cause to wither ... wilt, dry up; ... to waste away, consume away, perish" – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer).

The point of these expressions is to show the **perpetual** or eternal nature of the inheritance. It never ceases. See 2 Corinthians 4:17,18; Matthew 6:19-21.

The verses also show the **quality and character** of the reward. It does not just continue to exist, but its beauty will never be dimmed or diminished in any way. A flower may continue to exist, but if it has wilted, its beauty and value are gone. Such will never happen to heaven. It will be as glorious to us after ten billion years as it was on the very first moment. (Note that this incorruptible inheritance, verse 3-5, is the end result of the incorruptible seed, verse 22-25).

Woods points out that the last two of the three terms Peter uses here strongly rhyme with one another in the original Greek. In fact, it appears to me that all three terms have a similar sound. Our inheritance is *aphtharton*, *amianton*, *amaranton* (αφθαρτον, αμιαντον, αμαραντον): incorruptible, undefiled, fading not away.

This inheritance is **reserved in Heaven** (compare Matthew 5:10-12; Colossians 1:5). This is the crown of righteousness reserved for all that love His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8). It is the city (Hebrews 11:16) that Jesus went away to prepare (John 14:1ff). It is the dwelling place of God and His angels (Matthew 5:34; 22:36; 6:20; 19:21; 1 Peter 1:12; John 3:13; Acts 2:34). There we will ever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 5:9,10).

Just as one may have reserved seats at a theater, restaurant, or ball game, so we have a reserved place for us in heaven. No one can take it from us (though we may fail to receive the benefit of it through our own neglect). Those who are faithful have their names written in heaven – Luke 10:20. Is your name written there? See also Philippians 4:3; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 20:12,15; 21:27.

Some have denied that heaven, as the dwelling place of God, is the eternal reward of the righteous. Some tell us that instead we will live forever on a renewed earth. Peter here clearly affirms that our inheritance as children of God is reserved in heaven. These and other Scriptures we have listed show clearly that those who are found faithful will be with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ throughout eternity in the eternal dwelling place of God: Heaven. This earth, however, will be destroyed by fire and the elements will melt with fervent heat (2 Peter 3).

Notice that this inheritance is something to be actually received as a possession in the future. It is not a present possession but a promise of God's eternal reward to us (Titus 1:2; 1 John 2:25; Mark 10:30).

(For more regarding the fact that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is essential to our salvation, see notes on 3:21.)

### Kept by the power of God

“Kept” is translated “guarded” (ASV, ESV), or “protected” (NASB). Peter emphasizes the assurance of our reward by showing that we ourselves are guarded that we might obtain this salvation. Thayer says this word originally had a military connotation as something being guarded by a body of soldiers. So God's power protects us to give us strength to remain faithful.

This does not mean, as some teach, that we cannot be lost. The passage says that we are guarded “through **faith**.” Just as we must have faith as a condition to become saved (Ephesians 2:8), so we must maintain faith as a condition to receive the inheritance. But one can lose his faith (2 Timothy 2:18; 1 Timothy 1:19; 4:1; 5:8,12).

The purpose of the promise, however, is to assure us that, so long as we have a true faith (which requires obedience), **nothing** can take our inheritance from us (John 10:28f; Romans 8:31; 2 Timothy 1:12). This should give strong assurance to each Christian that eternal life is within the reach of all who will truly dedicate themselves to the service of the Lord. The basis of the Christian's hope to receive the inheritance is the power of God to meet our needs to remain faithful.

Note that our salvation will be revealed at the last time. “Salvation” can have different specific applications. Salvation can refer to the forgiveness of our past sins. In that sense, Christians have already been saved in that our past sins are forgiven and we are saved from the condemnation they brought upon us (Mark 16:16).

However, salvation can also refer, as it does here, to the actual entrance into our eternal reward. We have not yet received final salvation as an actual present possession. We will enter into that reward when Jesus returns and judges us.

**To learn more about the possibility of apostasy, we urge you to study our free articles on that subject on our Bible study web site at [www.gospelway.com/instruct](http://www.gospelway.com/instruct). *1:6,7 – Our inheritance motivates us to endure suffering, thereby proving the genuineness of our faith.***

The recurring theme of the book is now introduced: the Christian's relationship to suffering. Peter says that:

(1) We have cause to rejoice because of our inheritance, even when we suffer. Hope sustains us through hardship. People have been known to endure severe affliction as long as they have hope. A great goal is needed to sustain us through great hardships. No one ever had a greater goal than does the Christian.

(2) Suffering involves grief. There are blessings in being a servant of Christ, yet the afflictions involved still do cause grief. The fact that one grieves as he suffers is not necessarily wrong. However, we should never lose sight of the rewards and blessings that sustain us. (John 11:35; Romans 12:15)

(3) Trials last only a "little while" compared to the bliss of the inheritance that does not fade away. When a child is being properly disciplined by a loving parent, he tends to think his punishment is unbearable. But when he grows up, he looks back on his childhood punishments, sees them as minor problems, and sees how he benefitted from them. So, our sufferings as Christians are relatively brief, and later we will look back and see them as far less threatening than they seemed at the time (compare Romans 8:16-18; Hebrews 12:11; 2 Corinthians 4:17,18).

(4) Suffering tests our faith, like gold being purified by fire. Heavy metals, such as gold, can be purified by melting them down (Proverbs 17:3; Psalm 66:10; 1 Peter 4:12). Impurities float and can be skimmed off, leaving the metal purified. This is what "manifold temptations" do to our faith. They determine whether or not our faith is "true gold." They remove our weaknesses and help us become stronger and more useful to God (compare James 1:2-4; Romans 5:2-4).

(5) All this leads us to receive praise and honor and glory at Jesus' appearing. This is again the ultimate goal for which we endure. But note that we receive these benefits only if we do endure. If we give in to temptation, we are proven to be impure, fit to be cast out. Note that, not only does our hope help us endure our suffering, but suffering helps us attain our hope!

(6) Valuable as gold is, faith is of far greater value. Gold will some day perish, no matter how pure it is. But faith leads to an eternal reward.

***1:8,9 – We do not see Christ now, but we rejoice because we love Him and believe in Him, which leads to our salvation as the end of our faith.***

Peter continues his praise for salvation through Jesus, stating that though we do not see Jesus, yet we love Him and rejoice with inexpressible joy, because through Him we receive this salvation which is the goal toward which our faith is motivated.

Men say "seeing is believing." In particular, people require a personal relationship with someone in order to come to love him. They need to experience the finer points of that person before they develop the kind of appreciation that leads to love, in human ways of thinking. Yet in the Bible, believing is accepting a thing to be true even though we do **not** see. We believe on the basis of other kinds of evidence (Hebrews 11:1; John 20:29; 2 Corinthians 5:7).

Men say this is "unscientific," yet all of us accept many things to be true even though we have no personal physical observation of the kind required by the "scientific method." We accept the existence of many historical people and events even though we have never physically seen them and never could see them. In court trials, mathematics, history, and other realms, we use

“evidence” of many kinds other than physical experimentation. Faith is not based on sight, but this does not mean there is no evidence.

It is this faith that leads us to trust Jesus to save us from our sins and to love Him for the great sacrifice that He made for our sins. That hope of salvation is what gives us inexpressible joy despite our sufferings. So, when we find that our struggles with hardships are overwhelming us, we need to refocus our minds by studying the word of God which provides us abundant evidence for the existence of God, the truth of the Bible, and especially the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 20:30,31). This strengthens our faith and our love for Jesus, and gives us the joy and hope that we need to endure.

***1:10-12 – Prophets who testified about Christ were told that their revelations would be fulfilled in later times. Angels also sought to know these truths.***

Old Testament prophets revealed many predictions about the suffering of Christ and the blessings that would come upon mankind as a result. The suffering and sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was not unknown to God before Jesus came, nor was it a change in God’s plans as many premillennialists believe. Many other Scriptures refer to these prophecies. See Luke 24:25-27,44-46; John 5:39,46; Acts 2:23-36; 3:18-24; 17:2,3; 10:43; 13:27-39; 26:22,23; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; 2 Peter 1:19.

Peter tells us that the prophets who made these predictions diligently sought to understand what events and what time period the Holy Spirit referred in to these inspired messages (compare the language used to the question that the disciples asked of Jesus in Acts 1:6-8). It was revealed to them that these things would not be fulfilled in their lifetime, but pertained to things in the future. The fulfillment came in the suffering of Jesus and the blessings of the gospel that came on men as a result (Matthew 13:17). Even angels desired to know about these things, but could not know till the time of the fulfillment.

Peter states here the principle, also mentioned elsewhere in Scripture, that God’s plan for the salvation of mankind was revealed gradually through the centuries. People in the past did not know about these things, but now it is known (Titus 2:11; Ephesians 3:3-5). Even angels and the men through whom God revealed His will were not given the fullness of understanding of God’s plan.

This truth needs to be understood by people who think God’s instructions for mankind have always been the same throughout the ages. That was never God’s intent. Rather, He gradually developed a plan working through the nation of Israel and especially through various prophets, till the fullness of time came when He sent His Son to fulfill the prophecies. This involved giving various different laws and different instructions to different people at different times. Now we have the full and complete revelation of God’s plan for our salvation in the gospel of Christ. See Acts 3:18-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Galatians 4:4; Matthew 5:17,18.

Note that salvation, grace, and glory have now been announced or reported. Many people today are still looking for the future fulfillment of many prophecies that have already been fulfilled. Let them not look to the second coming of Jesus as the fulfillment of these great promises to the prophets. They were fulfilled in Jesus’ first coming. Let us rejoice in the fact these things have now come and let us make full use of them.

Here also is a passage plainly affirming that Old Testament prophets, like Jesus’ apostles and New Testament prophets, were inspired by the Holy Spirit. However, these spokesmen for God sometimes themselves did not understand the meaning of the message they were delivering. They were clearly not speaking by human wisdom else they would say what they thought to be wise. They were directly given a message to deliver and they did so whether or not they understood it. See Daniel 7:16-28; 12:8,9; compare the example of Peter in Acts chapter 10.

And note that the Holy Spirit is here referred to as the Spirit of Christ. This proves beyond question the preexistence of Jesus before he came to earth, since the Holy Spirit who spoke to the

Old Testament prophets is referred to as the Spirit of Christ. This also demonstrates the deity of Christ, for who but deity could send the Holy Spirit to inspire the prophets.

We ought to view ourselves as blessed people indeed to live in the time when the knowledge of salvation through Jesus has been fully revealed. His plan was hidden for ages from even God's greatest prophets and angels. Though He used them to bring about the fulfillment of the plan, yet they did not see the whole plan. We today have it revealed in the gospel. We ought to praise God, honor, and serve Him for His great mercies.

**To learn more about specific examples of prophecies about Christ we urge you to study our free articles Biblical evidences on our Bible study web site at [www.gospelway.com/instruct](http://www.gospelway.com/instruct).**

### 1:13-25 - Our Salvation Should Motivate Us to Faithful Living.

**1:13 – Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope in the grace provided through Christ.**

Here Peter describes the condition of the Christian's *mind* as a result of the salvation we have received.

#### **Gird up the loins of the mind.**

To "gird up the loins of the mind" is a:

"metaphor derived from the practice of the Orientals, who in order to be unimpeded in their movements were accustomed, when about to start on a journey or engage in any work, to bind their long and flowing garments closely around their bodies and fasten them with a leathern girdle" – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

(Compare Luke 12:35; Ephesians 6:14; Acts 12:8.)

So, the expression was an instruction to "prepare your minds for action" (NASB, see ESV). Peter is saying that, since God has prepared this wonderful salvation for us, we must not sit around relaxing in self-indulgence and laziness. We should get ready to go to work by serving according to His will.

Specifically, it is our *minds* that must have their loins girt or ready for action. Preparing to serve God must begin with an attitude of mind in which we are ready to work. Becoming a Christian requires a *change of mind* (repentance) in which we are ready to put God's will first. We must "get our hearts right."

Too many people wish to receive the forgiveness of their sins and have the hope of eternal life, but they are not willing to accept the commitment to serve God with zeal and diligence. We must realize when we become Christians that we must devote our lives to sacrifice and service for the Lord.

#### **Be sober**

The second part of the right attitude Peter teaches is to be *sober*. This basically means to be free from the influence of intoxicants, but from that comes the importance of being "calm and collected in spirit" so that we can use good judgment and be clear-headed in making the right decisions regarding God's will for our lives.

This would clearly forbid the use of intoxicants or recreational drugs that dull the ability of the mind to think clearly and to exercise our inhibitions. But it also includes a positive exhortation to keep our attitude right so we are at all times ready to recognize our duty and do it. We should never let our thinking become muddled about our need to work diligently for the Lord.

(See also 1 Thessalonians 5:6,8; 1 Peter 4:7; 5:8.)

"Sober (νηφω) – "...to be calm and collected in spirit; to be temperate, dispassionate, circumspect..." – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

"...to be free from the influence of intoxicants;' in the NT, metaphorically, it does not in itself imply watchfulness, but is used in association with it..." – Vine.

## **Set our minds on the hope given us through Christ.**

Then our minds should have their hope set perfectly on this grace that has been described. God's grace has offered us the hope of an inheritance reserved in heaven for us (verses 3-5). This inheritance will ultimately be the reward of those who persevere to the coming or revelation of Christ. This great blessing is offered us by the grace of God and has been described in the preceding verses.

Some people have been told that God has done these great things, but they have made no commitment to act accordingly. They have not set their hope on these things. They must make the commitment to set their hope **completely** (NASB) or perfectly on these blessings. There must be nothing else in all the world that is as important as this. God's effort to provide this great inheritance for us does us no good unless each of us devotes himself to faithful service to God.

**1:14-16 – We must be holy in all our conduct because God is holy. We must be obedient children, not living in the ignorance of our former lusts.**

### **Obedient children, not conformed to former lusts**

This condition of mind described in verse 13 must show itself in a proper **life or conduct**. We must be obedient children. All children are expected to obey their father – this is a characteristic of the father-child relationship (Ephesians 6:1). So we must not conform ourselves to our former lustful ways, in which we lived when we were ignorant (compare 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:17-24; Romans chapter 6; 12:1,2).

Before we became Christians, our former way of life was a way of disobedience (see 4:1ff). Instead of submitting to the Father, we were characterized by living in lust – fulfilling our own personal desires. Because we were ignorant of the will of God, we did not serve our Heavenly Father. If we have now become His children and seek to receive His inheritance, we must be obedient to our Father's will.

One of the serious problems the children of God face is the pressure to conform ourselves to people of the world around us – see Romans 12:1,2. In this case, it would include being conformed to our former way of life before we became Christians. We should know as Christians what God wants of us, but there is strong temptation and pressure to refuse to be different or holy as God requires. We often allow the world to set the standards for the way we dress, speak, act, and think. We must have the conviction and strength of character to conform to the will of Christ, not to the way we used to live when we were in the world.

Notice that this past conduct, from which they needed to repent and correct their lives, was done in ignorance. Ignorance is no excuse. Even though that had acted in ignorance, they still needed to repent and receive the redemption that is to Christ. See also Acts 17:30.

The nature of this language is one indication that Peter was writing to an audience that included Gentiles in a predominantly Gentile region. He was not speaking primarily to Jewish Christians (see our introductory notes). The language used here, for those who lived in ignorance and so conformed themselves to the lusts of the flesh, is typical language used to refer to Gentiles before their conversion. See Acts 17:30; Ephesians 2:11-19; 4:17-19; Romans chapter 1; etc.

It is true that the Jews were in some ways ignorant, but their ignorance was primarily a lack of understanding that Jesus was their predicted Messiah. Having received the law, they had a better understanding of moral precepts. The Gentiles, however, engaged in the worship of their idols, were completely ignorant of God's law in general, including the moral teachings. As a result, they lived in gross immorality. The description used here fits the Gentiles better than the Jews, and is often used elsewhere to describe them.

### **Holy as God is holy**

In particular, we must live a holy life in all our conduct because God our Father is holy (quoted from Leviticus 11:44f; 19:2; 20:7). To be holy is to be set apart from sin to serve the Lord, so that we live a pure and upright life. Children must obey and be like their Father. Since holiness is such

an inherent part of our Father's character, it must also be an inherent part of our character. Our Father is so holy He cannot fellowship those who are in sin (Isaiah 59:1,2). If we want His fellowship, then, we must be determined to separate ourselves from sin (2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1; Hebrews 12:14).

The nature of God is fundamental to that character which He requires of us in our lives. His commands and expectations of us harmonize with His own character and will. Since the God that we worship and serve is a righteous, holy, and good God, it follows that obedience to Him will lead us to strive for those characteristics as well.

This contrasts to the idols and false heathen gods, who often practiced vices and immoralities of all kinds. Worship of such gods led to the wickedness and evil that pervaded the nations that surrounded Israel in Canaan. In fact, the gods that the heathen worshiped, being the figment of the people's imaginations anyway, were wicked and corrupt because that is the way the people imagined them to be. The result gave the people the excuse for themselves practicing wickedness and corruption of all kinds. And failure to exalt the true God is what leads to so much of the wickedness in the world today.

Notice that the holiness of God requires us to be holy in **all** our conduct: not just some of our conduct or part of our conduct, but all our conduct. We must not excuse ourselves in disobeying God in any area of life. This does not mean our case is hopeless if we ever do sin, since all of us do stray at times (1 John 1:8-10). But we must turn from those sins and return to serving God faithfully for Him to accept us.

Too many people want the blessings of salvation, but they do not want to live the **holy life**. They don't see the need for the changed mind and life. They need to realize that, without the change in life, their forgiveness means little or nothing to God. If we are begotten to the Father because we seek the inheritance of sons (verses 3,4), then we must accept the responsibility of children to obey the Father.

Note that when people are conformed to the lusts of this world or when they return to their past life of sin, it is ultimately the result of their own choice. They conform **themselves** to their former lusts. People sin because they make the wrong decisions or choices in life, and that is why God is just to hold us accountable for our sins. We cannot blame others, not even Satan and the forces of evil that tempt us, since we do not need to give in. God has provided all the means that we need to resist error and be faithful if we will make the proper choices.

"Holy" (ἅγιος) – "1. properly reverend, worthy of veneration ... 2. set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His ... 3. of sacrifices and offerings; prepared for God with solemn rite, pure, clean ... 4. in a moral sense, pure, sinless, upright, holy..." – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

***1:17 – If we appeal to God as our Father, we must conduct ourselves throughout life in fear, knowing that He judges each one impartially.***

As children of God, we must remember that the Father will judge our work. So, we must spend the time of our sojourning (compare 1:1) in fear.

This is the fear a son has for his father. It is not that we dread ever being near him nor that we are constantly concerned that He will harm us, but it is a sense of respect and awe that leads us to do all we can to please Him, realizing we will be punished only if we disobey. The proper way to show fear for God is to live in obedience and faithfulness to Him, so that we need not have terror of punishment. See Psalm 111:10; Deuteronomy 6:2; Proverbs 1:7; 14:26,27.

God will judge "without respect of person" or without partiality (Romans 2:1-11; Acts 10:34,35; James 2:1-9; etc.). God will not show favoritism to us because of any physical advantages we have other than or apart from our character and service to Him according to His will. Our deeds will be judged, but we will have no advantage because of other circumstances unrelated to God's will. This flatly contradicts the Calvinist view of election (see notes on verse 2). No concept is more filled with partiality than Calvinism.

Note further that we will be judged according to our work: what we do, not just what we believe. People who preach and practice salvation by “faith only” will be surprised at the judgment to see that their destiny will depend on what they **did** as well as what they believed.

Other verses about God’s judgment of our lives include Matthew 25:31-46; John 12:48; Acts 1:9-11; 10:42; 17:30,31; Romans 2:4-11; 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-9; 2 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 9:27; 10:26-31; Revelation 20:11-15; Ecclesiastes 12:13,14.

“Fear” (φοβος) noun - “(1) fear, dread, terror 1a) that which strikes terror 2) reverence, respect (for authority, rank, dignity)” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

“...(b) ‘reverential fear,’ (1) of God, as a controlling motive of the life, in matters spiritual and moral, not a mere ‘fear’ of His power and righteous retribution, but a wholesome dread of displeasing Him, a ‘fear’ which banishes the terror that shrinks from His presence....” – Vine.

**1:18,19 – We were redeemed from sinful conduct, not with corruptible things like silver or gold, but with the blood of Christ, without blemish or spot.**

Peter again reminds us that our service to God should be based on and motivated by our salvation from sin and the hope of eternal life. He spoke of this in the first part of the chapter and now reminds us of it.

A purchase price was paid that we might be “redeemed” (compare Ephesians 1:7; Matthew 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Hebrews 9:12). The idea refers to releasing one from imprisonment or bondage by paying a required sum. Such a price is sometimes paid to free a kidnapped child or to obtain the release of prisoners captured in wartime.

That which held us in bondage and from which we needed to be freed was the aimless or vain conduct we received from our fathers. This may include the Jews’ traditions which they had added to God’s law – Jesus called these traditions vain in Matthew 15:1-9. However, the practices of Gentile idol worshipers are also referred to as vain in Acts 14:15. So the phrase probably refers in a broad sense to the fact that all of us are born into a world where the standard practices are **sin**. Doing human will instead of God’s will is the tradition here, and this is handed to all of us just by being born as humans.

As a result of our participation in such a life, we become prisoners to sin (John 8:34; 2 Timothy 2:24ff). As prisoners, we are destined to die – we are all inmates on death row (Romans 6:23). The ultimate wage we earned is death. However, God has decreed that, rather than paying this price ourselves in hell, someone else can pay the price for us thereby redeeming us from the wages of our sins. We can be redeemed from our sinful life, and especially from the sinful consequences of it, by Jesus Christ.

The price of our ransom was not something corruptible like silver or gold, such as may be paid to redeem a child from a kidnapper or prisoners of war from an enemy. No amount of money or material possessions could attain our release from the power of sin and Satan. The world views wealth and riches as a source of power. Many seem to think that they can solve any problem if they have enough money. But money cannot redeem us from sin.

We are redeemed by an incorruptible ransom price (verses 18,19), just as we have been born again by incorruptible seed (verse 23), to receive an incorruptible inheritance (verses 3,4). The price paid to redeem us is the blood of Jesus.

Death was the penalty sin required, so death was required to redeem us from sin. But Jesus’ perfect and sinless death is adequate to save us all who deserved to die for our own sins (1 Timothy 2:5,6; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7; 5:23). In order to be able to die to save us, Jesus had to Himself live a sinless life. This was symbolized in the Old Testament by the fact that the animal sacrifices had to be perfect, without blemish. So Jesus is our lamb without blemish offered for us: He had to be without sin in order to be an adequate sacrifice.

Knowing that our salvation required Christ to shed His blood on the cross, which involved great suffering and humiliation, ought to lead us to view that ransom price as something truly

precious. Under the Old Testament, when one sacrificed a lamb without blemish, he would give up something of great value— something precious. How much more valuable and precious to us should be the life of Christ, which was the price paid to redeem us from sin! No animal sacrifice could redeem us – see Hebrews 10:1-4. No amount of gold or silver or any precious material possession could redeem us from slavery to sin. Only the death of Christ would suffice. Surely this should make His death precious to us.

This is why Jesus, as our sacrifice for sin, is often called the lamb of God in the gospel – John 1:29,36; Isaiah 53:7; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Revelation 7:14.

Now note 1 Corinthians 6:20; 2 Corinthians 5:14f which show that, since Jesus died and bought us with this purchase price, we no longer belong to ourselves. So we must live to serve Him, not ourselves. This is exactly the point Peter is making here. If we were redeemed to God, and are now His children, then we should live our lives as obedient children, etc.

“Redeem” (λυτροω) – “to release on receipt of ransom’ ..., is used in the Middle Voice, signifying ‘to release by paying a ransom price, to redeem’ ... (b) in a spiritual sense, ... of the work of Christ in ‘redeeming’ men ‘from all iniquity’ ... 1 Pet. 1:18 (Passive Voice), ‘ye were redeemed,’ from a vain manner of life, i.e., from bondage to tradition. In both instances the Death of Christ is stated as the means of ‘redemption.’ ...” – Vine.

***1:20,21 – Jesus was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in the last times for the benefit of those who believe in God.***

Peter says further that the sacrifice of Jesus was known and foreordained (foreknown – ASV) by God from before the foundation of the world. It did not really take place, so was not manifested to men, till “these last times” when God’s preparation was complete (see notes on verses 10-12). Acts 2:23 confirms that all this happened by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God.

This does not mean that God compelled those who killed Jesus to become evil or even to commit this specific act. God respects the free will and power of all men to choose for themselves to do good or evil, and nothing here or elsewhere teaches otherwise. God did, however, know ahead of time how wicked these people would be, so He used them to accomplish His purpose. The result brought about the means of salvation for all people.

It is simply not true, as premillennialists claim, that God did not know the Jews would reject and kill Jesus. Nor was it an unplanned accident. Nor was Jesus powerless to prevent the act. Peter by inspiration plainly says God foreknew it. It happened according to His counsel or plan. It had been prophesied in the Old Testament, as many New Testament Scriptures confirm (Isaiah 53; Luke 24:25-27,44-46; 1 Peter 1:10,11; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Jesus’ sacrifice was necessary for our salvation, so God used men who, by their own choice, were already wicked men.

“These last times,” as used in this context, refers to the period of time in which the message of Jesus in the gospel prevails – compare Acts 2:16,17; Isaiah 2:2-4; Hebrews 1:1,2. Some believe this expression refers to the period of time immediately before Jesus’ second coming. However, such a view cannot fit the passage here. Peter describes Jesus as having been manifest in “these last times.” Others view the expression as referring to the last days of the Old Testament age. But the context of this and other references seem to include the whole gospel age: the age in which God’s last will for man is revealed through Jesus Christ, in contrast to the Old Testament age when God spoke through prophets. See other uses of the expression in Genesis 49:1; Numbers 24:14; Deuteronomy 4:30; Jeremiah 23:20; Micah 4:1; Hosea 3:5; Daniel 10:14.

Jesus’ death and resurrection, though offered to all, was actually of effect only for those who believe in God and therefore in the plan He revealed in the gospel for salvation through Jesus. It follows that our hope for salvation must be placed in God, not in our own human wisdom or ability.

**1:22 – Those who have purified their souls in obedience to the truth should love one another fervently with a pure heart.**

These Christians to whom Peter wrote had been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (verses 18,19). But to receive that purifying of their souls they had to obey the truth that has been revealed by the Spirit.

Notice that the verse plainly says that we must **obey** the truth in order for our souls to be purified. We do not receive forgiveness of our sins by “faith only” without the necessity of obedience, as many teach. Rather, we must have faith enough to **obey** God’s word. Surely faith is essential, but the actual purification does not occur until we **do** what God has commanded.

**Obedience Necessary to Salvation**

Matthew 7:21 – Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. (See verses 24-27.)

John 14:15 – If you love Me, keep My commandments. (See verses 21-24)

Acts 10:35 – In every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

Romans 2:6-10 – Who will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness--indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 6:17,18 – But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Hebrews 5:9 – And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

Galatians 5:6 – For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

2 Thessalonians 1:8,9 – In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

James 2:19-24 – You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

1 John 5:3 – For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

1 John 2:3-6 – Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

This obedience includes baptism (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21).

This forgiveness of sins, however, must manifest itself in a changed life (as in verses 13-21). It is not enough to just be forgiven. Specifically, we must love our brethren fervently from a pure heart. Our love for our brethren indicates whether or not we have passed from death to life (1 John

3:10-24). If we have passed from death to life, then we must be determined to show it by our love. See also John 13:34,35; Romans 12:9,10; 1 John 3:10-24; 2:8-11; 4:7-21; Galatians 5:13-15; 2 Corinthians 6:6; 2 Peter 1:7; Hebrews 13:1.

This love must be “unfeigned” (ASV) or sincere (NKJV), or without hypocrisy. It must come from the heart – from within, not just a superficial front that we put on whenever we are around certain people. It must be a genuine, deep-seated attitude that leads to right conduct. See 2 Corinthians 6:6; Romans 12:9; 1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 1:5; James 3:17.

We must love “fervently,” (Acts 12:5; 26:7; Luke 22:44) earnestly, not expecting it to just happen. We must be determined to make love happen as a matter of choice by faith in the power of God.

Far too many people view love as simply a superficial sweetness and outward expression with words of goodwill. But Biblical love shows itself in **action**. Such a love requires us to serve one another and be willing to care for one another in time of need (Galatians 5:13-15; 1 John 3:13-19; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Love is not just something we talk about, but something we do. If we really loved our brethren would we neglect their needs as we so often do?

***1:23-25 – We are born again through the word of God which lives and abides forever. That word is like incorruptible seed that endures forever, not like plants or human glory that withers and dies.***

**Begotten by the word of God**

As Peter again describes how conversion should change our lives, he here returns to a discussion of our begetting (as discussed in verses 3-5). Here he shows how it comes about. We are begotten by the word of God (Luke 8:11). This refers to the gospel which was preached to us (verse 25).

We may compare this as follows:

Corruptible seed → Begetting → Birth → Maturity
Incorruptible seed → Begetting → New birth → Maturity

Other important passages regarding the new birth help us understand this one. One can be born again only by obeying the gospel (see verse 22). Hearing and believing give one the right to become a child of God, but they do not automatically make one a child of God – John 1:12. To be born again (a new creature), one must come into Christ – 2 Corinthians 5:17. To come into Christ and thereby become a child of God, one who believes must be baptized – John 3:3-5; Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27 (see also Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

Notice that John 3:5 says specifically that we must be born of the water and the Spirit. So John 3 says we must be born of the Spirit, but 1 Peter 1:23 says we must be born by the word of God. This is just one of the many Bible examples showing that, in converting and instructing men, the Spirit works through the word, not apart from the word.

When a person hears the word of God with a receptive heart, he will believe and obey it like seed taking root in good soil. He is then a new plant, a new creature, a child of God born again by the power of the word. He should then produce the fruits of an obedient life as Peter has been describing in the context.

So, people can be saved from their sins only when they have heard, understood, and believed the gospel. This is why hearing and learning the word is so essential. All examples of conversion in the gospel demonstrate that people were saved from their sins and became followers of Jesus Christ only after and as a result of learning the message of the gospel. Even in the Bible examples in which a lost sinner received some direct contact with an angel or with a vision of Jesus Himself, nevertheless they were required to be taught the message of the gospel by an inspired messenger in order to receive the gospel and become a Christian. Consider some examples:

In Acts 8, the Holy Spirit gave instructions to Philip the evangelist that put him in contact with the eunuch from Ethiopia. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit did not directly teach the eunuch, but he had to learn the message of the gospel from the inspired preacher.

In Acts 9, Jesus Christ Himself appeared directly to Saul of Tarsus. But instead of teaching Saul what he should do to do to be saved, Jesus sent him into the city where he would be told what he must do. Then He sent an inspired man to reveal to him the steps to salvation.

In Acts 10, an angel revealed to Cornelius that he needed to send for Peter. But even so the angel did not tell Cornelius what he needed to do to be saved. Rather he said that Peter would give him words whereby he might be saved – Acts 11:14.

For other passages on the importance of learning the word in order to be saved, see John 6:44,45; 8:31,32; Matthew 13:23; Romans 1:16; 10:13,14,17; Mark 16:15,16; Acts 8:26,29,35; 9:6; 11:14; 18:8; Luke 6:46-49; 11:28; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; Revelation 3:20.

### **Reproduction by means of seed can maintain and restore God's people.**

Note further that, since the power is in the seed, this result will occur any time and any place where the seed is planted in good hearts. If it produces anything at all, it will produce a child of God. It must do so because, like all of God's seed, it reproduces after its own kind (Galatians 6:7,8). This is how people can become Christians today by obeying the gospel.

Some have wondered and even argued that, in order to know that we have the truth or the true church today, we must historically trace a succession of churches or religious leaders back to the first century. Such an approach depends on the weakness of fallible human records of history which are often in error. In fact, the evidence presented by those who believe this approach is self-contradictory and woefully inadequate.

But proper understanding of the word of God as the seed by which we are born again eliminates the need for attempting to trace records of historical succession. The power is in the seed and it will reproduce after its kind. From the very beginning, God created all of His seed, whether in the physical realm or the spiritual realm, to reproduce after its kind (Genesis 1:11,12,21). Since the seed that reproduces Christians is the word of God, it follows that any time and any place when a person obeys the true word of God, he will become a Christian just like Christians in the first century – nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else.

But man-made doctrines also reproduce according to their kind – Matthew 15:13,9. These teachings are also seed, having the power to produce plants. But they produce weeds, not the plants God wants, so He will destroy them. The reason why we have so many false churches and false practices today is that so many people have been teaching and believing man-made doctrines different from the word of God. These seeds reproduce after their own kind, producing differing, contradictory churches and practices.

But if we teach and believe simply the pure word of God, it will reproduce true Christians in any age and any place. This is the principle by which the Lord's church can be restored in any age, even if no Christians have been present in that area for many years.

### **The word is incorruptible seed that lives and abides forever.**

Peter here quotes Isaiah 40:6-8. In order for this new birth to occur, we must have living seed. Dead seed cannot reproduce. So, Peter proceeds to tell us something else of vital importance about the seed, the word. It is incorruptible, like the incorruptible price paid for us (verses 18,19) and the incorruptible inheritance we receive (verses 3-5).

This means this seed will “live and abide forever.” This is explained in contrast to grass or plants or the glory of man: these come forth, then wither and die. God's word will not do that. It was not sent here just to die and cease to exist. This is God's guarantee of the preservation and accuracy of His word throughout time. No power on earth can destroy it. He is protecting it by His providence, so it will always be here.

The word was sent here to remain and always be present to produce this new birth in the lives of receptive men. So, as long as we plant the true word of God (not some human doctrine) in a man's heart, if that man has a receptive heart, he can obey and become a Christian any time because the power will always be there in the word.

Note the comparison of verses 3-5 to verses 22-25:

<b>Inheritance (Heaven)</b>	<b>Word of God</b>
<b>Living hope</b>	<b>Living</b>
<b>Incorruptible and undefiled</b>	<b>Incorruptible</b>
<b>Fades not away</b>	<b>Abides and endures forever</b>

The idea of these phrases is to emphasize permanence and continued purity. It refers to that which cannot be damaged or destroyed (though it may be ignored). This answers the theories of those who claim God's word was lost over the centuries so we need modern revelation today to restore it. God says He will not allow it to be lost, so such reasoning is fallacious.

This also answers those who claim we cannot trust the Bible because we do not know it has been accurately preserved. In fact, it has been preserved by the providence of God so that it abides and endures forever. We can be sure that we have the true and pure word of God today, because God cannot lie.

Other passages that assure us of God's preservation of the Scripture are Psalm 119:152,160; Isaiah 40:8; 30:8; John 12:48; 2 John 2; 2 Peter 1:12-15; 2 Timothy 3:16,17.

## 1 Peter 2

### 2:1-10 - Our Position as God's Chosen People Should Encourage Us to Faithfulness.

Peter continues to admonish Christians to be faithful despite the problems or suffering we face. In chapter 1 he exhorted this on the basis of our eternal reward and our redemption in Christ. Now he examines our status as God's people that results from our salvation and again encourages us to be faithful despite hardship.

**2:1-3 – If we have experienced God's graciousness, we should lay aside malice, guile, envy, evil speaking, etc. and desire the pure milk of the word like newborn babes.**

"Therefore" refers us back to the teachings of chapter 1. We are exhorted to live godly lives if we have tasted that the Lord is gracious (this is essentially a quotation of Psalm 34:8). This would include all the blessings that have been described in the previous chapter, including being born again by the word of God, having that promise of the eternal inheritance in heaven, being children of God, etc. If we appreciate all God has done for us, we will surely live as He wants us to. Note the positive approach used. We should eliminate bad things, but it is done because of the good things God gives that motivates us to want to do good.

**This godly life requires us to lay aside the following:**

#### *Malice*

"Malice" (NKJV, KJV, NASB, ESV) is also translated "wickedness" (ASV). The word emphasizes wickedness that leads to disobedience to the will of God but shows itself especially in ill will or desire to harm other people.

1 Corinthians 14:20 explains the idea well. Malice delights in evil simply because it **is** evil, because it does harm to others or angers others, or because it simply does not care what happens to others. Surely such conduct does not belong in the life of one who has been redeemed by the blood of Christ and seeks to receive the hope of eternal life.

"Malice" (κακια) – "1. malignity, malice, ill-will, desire to injure ... 2. wickedness, depravity ... wickedness that is not ashamed to break laws ... 3. Hellenistically, evil, trouble ..." – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

"... 'badness in quality' (the opposite of αρετη, 'excellence')..." – Vine.

#### *Deceit*

"Deceit" (NKJV, NASB, ESV) is translated "guile" (KJV, ASV).

Deceit is, in effect, the sin of lying perhaps without directly saying what is untrue. We may say what cannot be technically proved untrue, but we say it with the intent to mislead. Such is still deceitful, dishonest.

Many salesmen and politicians are experts at half-truths. Modern entertainment is often filled with it. Even Disney movies, "I Love Lucy," "Andy Griffith," and other supposedly good programs often justify deceit.

A popular song from my youth, entitled "Sad Movies Always Make Me Cry," tells of a girl who goes home crying because she saw her boyfriend at a movie with another girl. When her mother asks her what's wrong, she says, "To keep from telling her a lie, I just said, 'Sad movies always make me cry.'" It was technically true, but deceitful.

Most false teaching involves half-truths. What the teacher says may be technically true, but he leaves out essential facts or twists the truth to lead people to believe something different from what God intended.

I emphasize: we are **not** required to tell people everything we know. Some things are confidential or there may be no good reason why some particular person should be told what we know. Keeping a matter secret or confidential is not necessarily wrong. But if you are keeping a

matter to yourself, don't lead others to think things that are untrue or that you have told them the whole matter when you have not.

This is one of the hardest of sins to overcome. I suspect that every accountable person has violated these principles, most of us many times. But have we repented of it, or do we continue to justify such practices?

Scriptures on lying and deceit include the following: 1 Peter 2:22; 3:10; Matthew 15:18-20; Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9; Revelation 21:8,27; 22:14,15; Proverbs 6:16-19; 19:22; Psalm 24:3-5; 40:4; Exodus 20:16; John 8:44; Acts 5:1-9.

“Guile” (Gk. δολος) – “bait ... a lure, snare; hence, craft, deceit, guile...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

### *Hypocrisy*

“Hypocrisy” (so translated here in all major translations) is a particular kind of deceit in which we lead others to believe we are a kind of person which we really are not. The word relates to the idea of a play actor who pretends to be something he is not. A hypocrite is a deceiver because he tries to give other people the impression he is more righteous than he really is. The hypocrite puts on a false front.

1 Timothy 4:2 – Those who depart from the truth speak lies in hypocrisy. Note that their hypocrisy is associated with lying.

Malachi 1:14 – When one pretends to offer a sacrifice to God but refuses to give what He knows God wants, he is a deceiver accursed of God.

Hypocrisy would include people who do good acts, but from wrong motives (Matthew 6:1ff). Or people may talk as if they do good, but they fail to practice what they preach (Matthew 23:1-4). To avoid such sins, we must heed the continual Bible warnings that admonish us to have proper motives in our heart (1 Peter 1:13; Matthew 13; etc.).

Many people, even in the church, profess to serve God faithfully. But are we really doing what we know we should, or are we just deceiving others and maybe ourselves? Are we giving what we know God wants, or is it just a pretense?

(See also Psalms 78:35-37; Galatians 2:14; Acts 5:1-9; Jeremiah 7:4-11; 3:10.)

“Hypocrisy” (ὑποκρισις) – “... 2. the acting of a stage-player ...3. dissimulation, hypocrisy.” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

### *Envy*

“Envy” is again translated this way in all major translations. The word refers to a feeling of upset or anger because other people have advantages that we wish we had received instead of them.

Many situations may tempt us to envy. Here are some that the Bible specifically mentions:

\* Wealth and possessions – Genesis 26:14; 31:1 (compare 1 Timothy 6:9)

\* Favor, honor, praise, or popularity with men – Genesis 37:3-5,11; 1 Samuel 18:6-9; Matthew 27:18; Acts 13:45; 17:5

\* Leadership or authority – Numbers 11:27-29; 12:1-10; chapter 16; Psalms 106:16; 1 Samuel 20:31,32; Daniel 6:4

\* Ability, privileges, or skill – 1 Samuel 18:8-11; Ecclesiastes 4:4

\* Righteousness – Genesis 4:5-8; Psalms 106:16; Matthew 27:18

\* Family Relationships – Genesis 30:1,15; 37:4-11; Luke 15:28-30

Envy can lead to terrible consequences including anger, strife, alienation, division, mistreatment of others, hatred, violence, murder, deceit, lying, and slander. If those who are guilty do not repent, the ultimate consequences will be alienation and punishment by God.

For other related passages see Romans 1:29,32; Matthew 27:18; Titus 3:3; James 3:14-17; 1 Timothy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 13:4; Galatians 5:19-26; Romans 13:13.

“Envy” (φθονος) – “...the feeling of displeasure produced – by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others; this evil sense always attaches to this word ... ‘envy’ desires to

deprive another of what he has, 'jealousy' desires to have the same or the same sort of thing for itself..." – Vine.

### *Evil speaking*

"Evil speaking" is also translated "slander" (NASB, ESV). This refers to speaking evil of other people. What is condemned here is defamation of character that speaks what is untrue or what is spoken for the purpose of harming the person, not to help people.

Slander involves saying unfavorable things about a person in the following ways:

\* Some people accuse others of doing wrong when they do not know it to be true – Exodus 20:16; 2 Timothy 3:3; Titus 2:3; Exodus 23:1; 1 Timothy 6:4.

\* Some make derogatory statements from malicious motives – Psalm 41:5-7; Jeremiah 20:10; 1 Peter 3:9; 2:23; 1 Timothy 6:4; 3 John 9,10; Matthew 5:11.

\* Some simply enjoy meddling in the personal affairs of others, spreading dirt about others – 1 Timothy 5:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:11; Leviticus 19:16.

\* Some broadcast private sins instead of personally confronting the sinner – Matthew 18:15-17; Luke 17:3.

Note that when we are sincerely concerned for the well-being of others, we still should tell other people when they are guilty of evil. Under certain circumstances we may even speak to third parties for the purpose of warning them about the sins of other people who are not present. (See Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15ff; 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 2:17; 4:10,14; 3 John 9). Again, what is condemned here is defamation of character that speaks what is untrue or what is spoken for the purpose of harming the person, not to help people.

For other passages see Psalm 101:5; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; 5:11; Proverbs 16:28; 26:20; 11:9; Romans 1:30,32; Titus 3:2; 2:3; 1 Peter 2:1,23; 3:9; 2 Timothy 3:3; Exodus 23:1; Psalm 41:5-7; 3 John 9,10; 1 Timothy 6:3,4; 5:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:11; Leviticus 19:16.

"Evil speaking" (καταλαλία) – "...the act of speaking ill of another, *evil speech, slander, defamation, detraction ...*" – Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich.

### **Christians should desire God's word like newborn babies desire milk, so they can grow.**

If we are born again by God's word (1:22-25), then we must surely appreciate that word when we become God's children. Having been born again, we need to grow. Like newborn babes want to feed on the milk that can strengthen them and make them grow, so we must seek to feed on God's word. Christians are commanded to grow (2 Peter 3:18). We should go on to perfection (Hebrews 6:1). We seek to grow up in all things to Him who is the Head: Christ (Ephesians 4:13,15).

Hebrews 5:12-6:2 shows that we need milk as babies but should then grow to the point we are able to handle meat. But the point here seems to be that all of us need God's word just as surely as little babies need milk. No one reaches the point of maturity in which he does not need to feed on God's word.

Occasionally we meet a child who physically does not grow. We recognize it as a tragedy. But far too often Christians become stunted in their spiritual growth. This leads to even more serious consequences. Growing up as a Christian is not just optional.

Consider some areas where growth is needed:

\* Knowledge and wisdom – 2 Peter 3:18; Colossians 1:9,10; 1 Corinthians 14:20

\* Faith – Luke 17:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:3

\* Love – Philippians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9,10

\* Strength and work (fruitfulness) – John 15:2; Colossians 1:9-11; 2:19; 4:12

Note that a true child of God will **want** to study and learn if he has tasted that God is gracious, etc. It is our lack of appreciation for what God has done for us that keeps us from living for God and studying His word as we should.

See notes on 2 Peter 3:18 to learn more about the importance of growing as Christians.

Consider other passages regarding the importance of Bible study and knowledge: John 8:32; Acts 17:11; Joshua 1:8; Hosea 4:6; Hebrews 5:12; Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 2:15; Proverbs 2:1-20; Psalms 1:2; 119:47,48,97-99; 19:7-11; Matthew 5:6.

**2:4,5 – Christ is a living stone, rejected by men, but chosen and precious to God. Christians are stones built up as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Christ.**

Peter now describes the blessings God has graciously given by comparing us to a house that belongs to God (compare 1 Timothy 3:15; Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 3:16). “House” (Gk. οἶκος) can refer either to a physical building or to the members of a household or family. Both these ideas fit our relationship to God. The passages above refer primarily to the household as a family relationship, but the current passage refers primarily to a physical building. Of course, the church is really people, but they are here *illustrated* by a physical building made of stones, etc.

**Christ is the living stone rejected by men but precious to God.**

In this house, Jesus is a living stone, not a lifeless stone such as would be found in physical houses. Stone is a building material used especially in homes in Israel. But certain kinds of stone would be unsuitable for purposes of construction. So, Jesus was considered by some to be unsuitable to fit into a house made by God – that is why they killed Him. But to God, this same stone was elect and precious. He found the stone to be of great value.

Christ is a living stone in at least two senses. First, Christ Himself possesses life. He has been alive from eternity in the past and will be alive in eternity in the future. Perhaps the emphasis especially is upon the fact that He has been raised from the dead, so that He is no longer in the tomb. He is alive forevermore – Revelation 1:18. Second, He is the source of life for all others who need to receive spiritual resurrection from spiritual death and thereby become living stones in the spiritual house built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ.

Verses later will show more specifics about Jesus as the precious stone. This would include a discussion of Old Testament Scriptures that are fulfilled by the Jewish rejection of Christ.

**Christians are living stones built up into a spiritual house.**

Likewise, Peter says that Christians are living stones in this same house. This is not just any house. This is the house God dwells in (spiritually, as taught in the illustration – 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:18-20 1 John 4:15; 3:24). If we receive God into our hearts by obedience to the gospel, then we have fellowship with God, so He dwells in us (compare 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

As shown in these passages, this building is a spiritual temple (Ephesians 2:20-22). It is the church. It is not a physical building, but is that body or group of people who offer spiritual worship to God and serve Him as His people.

**And Christians are a holy priesthood that offer spiritual sacrifices.**

Then Peter immediately switches the illustration and shows that we are not only the house (temple) in which God dwells, but we are also the priests who offer sacrifice in that temple. As priests we offer sacrifices to God in this house.

In the Old Testament, the temple and the priesthood stood as symbols or shadows of the coming spiritual temple in which Christians serve as priests. One of the primary purposes of the priests in the Old Testament was to offer the sacrifices of worship to God. So, other passages show that Christians under the New Testament offer sacrifices that include praise to God (Hebrews 13:15). We also offer our bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).

Notice that the sacrifices offered are clearly stated to be *spiritual* sacrifices. This is because the temple is spiritual, not a physical temple: it is the church. As with many other passages in the New Testament, the emphasis in Jesus’ church is on that which is spiritual, in contrast to the relatively outward, physical emphasis of many Old Testament rituals.

Notice how the spiritual nature of the church is emphasized in all the following ways in the gospel:

### **The Church: A Spiritual House**

\* The Founder, Owner, and Head of the church came to earth to meet man's spiritual needs – Ephesians 1:7; Luke 19:10; 5:32; Matthew 20:28; 26:28.

\* The church was purchased with a spiritual price – Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23-25.

\* The membership of the church consists of people who have been spiritually saved and who seek eternal life – Acts 2:47 (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23,25; Colossians 1:12-14).

\* The church is entered at the point of baptism by a spiritual birth in which people receive forgiveness of sins – John 3:3,5 (Romans 6:3,4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:38,47; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

\* The primary work of the highest leaders in the church (apostles and elders) is spiritual – Acts 6:2-4; 20:28-30; Hebrews 13:7,17.

\* The church is a spiritual house, a spiritual temple, a kingdom not of this world – 1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:20-22; John 18:36 (compare Romans 14:17; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Luke 17:20,21).

**The church is fundamentally spiritual in nature. It is the only institution God established to meet man's spiritual needs.** Everything we can now do to help people physically, we could have done had Jesus never died and established the church. But none of man's spiritual needs can be met without Jesus' death or outside the church He purchased.

This explains why the work of local churches is primarily spiritual. It is true that local churches should help certain physically needy members. But that work is limited, and the emphasis in the work of the church should be on man's salvation and eternal life.

Too many religious groups, including denominations and even some churches of Christ, have diverted the church from its spiritual work to involve it in activities of a material or physical emphasis. They often appeal to people to attend church meetings or even become members of the church by using carnal attractions such as entertainment, recreation, social activities, banquets, parties, common meals, kitchens, and fellowship halls, etc. Too often they become involved in a Social Gospel approach emphasizing the physical needs of people by building or financing hospitals, camps, schools and colleges and kindergartens, day care centers, etc. This tendency to emphasize that which is outwardly, carnally attractive to people is just one of many reasons for objecting to the use of mechanical instruments of music, quartets, choirs, and special singing groups in worship.

Spiritual-minded people, who offer spiritual sacrifices in the spiritual house of God, will not allow the spiritual worship of God to be turned into **carnal, fleshly** emphasis.

How diligent are you in offering the spiritual sacrifices of praise and worship to God in God's spiritual house, the church? Are you diligent and regular in attendance whenever the church meets? And do you sincerely worship God from the heart?

See notes on verse 9 for further details regarding this priesthood.

**2:6-8 – As prophesied, Jesus is an elect, precious cornerstone to those who believe, but a stone of stumbling rejected by those who are disobedient.**

### **A precious cornerstone to those who believe**

These verses consider the different ways in which this stone (Jesus) is viewed. Some people believe in Him and view Him as elect and precious, the chief cornerstone (compare Isaiah 28:16). This is how God views Him (verse 4), so all true believers view Him this way also. He is the cornerstone in that all the rest of the spiritual house is built upon Him. Our salvation depends so entirely on what He did that we could never have been saved without Him. The house would be a worthless disaster without Him.

“Preciousness” is a recurring theme in 1 Peter. Jesus is here said to be precious to God and to those who believe in Him. We ought to truly value Him for the blessings we have through Him, even as God values Him for the great sacrifice that He made for our salvation.

This passage and its parallels are among the many passages that refer to Jesus as the cornerstone or foundation upon which His church is built. The Bible clearly teaches that He is the foundation and there is no other foundation – Ephesians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 3:11.

It is especially interesting that Peter himself by inspiration explains the significance here of Christ as the cornerstone upon which the church as a spiritual house is built. Christ had renamed Peter with a name that refers to a stone. Jesus then referred to this in Matthew 16:18 and then proceeded to say that the church would be built “upon this rock.” But Peter’s explanation here helps us understand the teaching of Matthew 16:18.

Some have claimed that Matthew 16:18 means that Christ intended for Peter to be the foundation or the stone upon which the church would be built. But Peter corrects that idea showing that the stone upon which the church is built is Jesus Christ Himself. The idea that any man or any office can be the foundation on which the church is built would completely contradict the Scriptures. Jesus is the divine Son of God who alone deserves to be the head and foundation of the church. To claim that anyone else occupies such a position would be to demean the Son of God.

### **A stone of stumbling and rock of offense to those who are disobedient**

Other people, however, do not view Jesus as being valuable. This refers primarily to the Jewish leaders who killed Him (Psalm 118:26; compare Luke 20:17-19; Acts 4:10-12). These men ought to have taken the lead in building up the nation of Israel to worship God according to His word. Instead, they rejected the very Son of God and killed Him. They did not believe He fit the pattern they thought He should. However, it was not God’s plan that Jesus failed to fit, but rather the human plan of the Jewish leaders.

Yet in spite of this rejection, God made Jesus the chief cornerstone. The rejection of Jesus did not keep God from accomplishing His plans – in fact, He anticipated their rejection and developed His plans accordingly. This flatly contradicts the views of premillennial folks who say that Jesus’ rejection was unexpected by God, and Jesus failed to do what He came to do. God says He knew what would happen and succeeded despite the people.

To the people who so reject Him, Jesus is a stumbling block and rock of offense (Isaiah 8:14). People stumble at Him and fall. This means that the same stone that is so precious to us as the means of salvation, is at the very same time a source of offense and rejection to those who disbelieve! Note especially Acts 4:10-12 for an inspired explanation of this.

Here is an excellent example of God’s foreknowledge and predestination at work (compare 1:2). He knew certain kinds of people would reject His Son, but other kinds would accept Him. So He designed His plan to distinguish the two kinds. As with those rulers, so it is today with all others who do not have the kind of attitude God is looking for. If their hearts are such that they are not willing to repent, God has appointed that they will be destroyed (John 8:24). The same plan that leads to our salvation, also leads to the condemnation of others; this depends entirely on people’s attitude and response toward it.

Note that the gospel itself does not cause people to be lost. It is the attitude of people that leads them to reject the gospel and this in turn leads to their condemnation. The passage does not teach Calvinistic predestination: that God predetermined that certain people would be saved regardless of their choice or will, but other people would be lost. Rather, people have a choice whether they will believe and obey or not. That is the point here. No one is appointed unconditionally to be disobedient and stumble at the word. They choose for themselves how they will react to the message of Christ. What is appointed is that those who choose to be disobedient will stumble at the word and so be lost (see notes on 1:2).

The parallel passages upon which Peter based his teaching here make this clearer. Isaiah 8:14,15, as explained by Jesus in Matthew 21:42-44, show that those who stumble at the word would fall and be broken. God knew that some people would be willing to believe in His Son, as described by Peter here. He predetermined that those people would receive the blessings Christ has to offer. But He also knew that some would choose to be disobedient and reject Christ, so God determined to reveal the message of the gospel in such a way that those people would reject the message and be punished.

**2:9,10 – You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own special people having obtained mercy. So, you should proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness.**

Others have rejected the Christ, but those who believe in Him recognize Him as precious. As a result, they are living stones in the spiritual house which is also a holy priesthood (verse 5). In verses 9,10, Peter goes further to describe the blessings of those who are in this spiritual house, which is the church.

### **“A chosen generation”**

“Chosen” (εκλεκτος) is the same word as translated “elect” in 1:2. It refers to those who have been specially chosen and set apart to be given a special place in God’s plan on the basis of their faithful obedience to God’s will.

Thayer says that, in this passage, “generation” means “stock, race.” Other translations say an elect or chosen race (see NASB, ESV, ASV).

In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was God’s chosen people (1 Chronicles 16:13; Isaiah 43:20,21). But under the New Testament Christians are God’s elect. We are God’s people, members of His spiritual family, sharing a common nature with one another and with Him, because He chose us to be His. Christians are God’s children by the new birth, destined to receive His inheritance (1:3,4,23).

“Generation” (Gk. γενος) – “...race; a. offspring: ... b. family ... c. stock, race ...; nation (i.e., nationality or descent from a particular people) ... d. concr. the aggregate of many individuals of the same nature, kind, sort, species ...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

### **“A royal priesthood”**

This expression is fairly consistently translated “royal priesthood” in all standard translations. See also verse 5.

Under the Old Testament the people of Israel were called a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6). However, the people worshiped God through the descendants of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi, who served as special priests (Numbers 3:10; 16:10,39,40; 18:7; etc.). Their duties included: (1) offering sacrifices thereby making forgiveness available to the people (Hebrews 5:1,3; 8:3; 10:11; 13:11); and (2) revealing and teaching God’s word to the people (Deuteronomy 31:9-12; 24:8; 17:9-12; Nehemiah 8:2-8; etc.). So, the priests stood between the people and God in both directions, both in communicating God’s will to the people and in communicating the people’s worship to God.

In the New Testament Jesus is our only High Priest, the one Mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 5:4-10; 2:17; 3:1; 4:14,15; 7:26-28; etc.). The Levitical priesthood has been abolished (Hebrews 7:11-18), along with the rest of the Old Law (Hebrews 8:6-13; 10:9,10; Galatians 3:24,25; Colossians 2:14-17; Ephesians 2:14-16).

As our High Priest, Jesus offered the one sacrifice for sins under the gospel (Hebrews 9:11-14,24-26; 2:17; 8:3; 10:9-18; etc.). He is the One through whom we receive forgiveness (Hebrews 7:25; 10:10-18; 9:11-14,24-26; Titus 2:14; 1 John 1:7). He is the giver of the New Testament by which we can be saved (Hebrews 1:1,2; 10:9,10; Ephesians 2:12-16; Matthew 28:18-20).

The point of 1 Peter 2:5,9 is that all Christians today are priests, subject only to the High Priesthood of Jesus. Unlike the Old Testament, there is no special body of men ordained according

to God's word to stand between us and God. Jesus is the only Mediator between us and God (1 Timothy 2:5).

That this passage is addressed to all Christians saying all are priests is clear from the context.

**This “royal priesthood” (“you”) is addressed as:**

1:1,2 – The elect and forgiven  
1:3-9 – Those destined for heaven  
1:17 – Those who call on God as Father  
1:18-21 – Those redeemed by Jesus' blood  
1:22-25 – Those purified by obedience and born again by the gospel.  
2:5 – Those who are living stones in God's spiritual house (the church – 1 Timothy 3:15).  
2:7; 1:21 – Those who believe in Jesus  
2:9,10 – Those who belong to God, His people, who received His mercy

Other passages make a similar point. Revelation 1:6 says all who were washed from sin in Jesus' blood (verse 5) are priests to God. Hebrews 10:19 says we can enter the holy place (which only priests could enter – 9:2-7). As priests, Christians can perform through Christ all the necessary duties of priests, without the need of any other human agency. We can:

\* Offer spiritual sacrifices of worship to God – 1 Peter 2:5; Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15; Philippians 4:8.

\* Go to God through Jesus in prayer for forgiveness – Acts 8:22-24; James 5:16; 1 Timothy 2:5,6. We must confess to humans whom we have wronged and we can pray for one another, but this is something all Christians can do for one another. There is no select body of church leaders chosen to do this for us.

\* Study and teach God's word – Acts 17:11; 8:1-4; 2 Timothy 2:2; Jude 3; Hebrews 5:12. While some may be supported as teachers or appointed as elders to lead, these do not study for us. We are responsible to study for ourselves to check them out and refuse to follow if they teach other than what God's word says (Acts 20:28-30; Matthew 15:14; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11).

It follows that all Christians are priests to God, and there is no human or earthly priesthood of men who stand between Christians and God. Catholicism and Mormonism both err here, as does any other group that has a special body of earthly priests ordained and set apart from among the membership to offer special worship on their behalf.

The idea that we are royal priests appears to emphasize that we rule victoriously with Christ over sin and wickedness. In eternity we shall reign with Christ along with all the faithful of all ages as victors who by the grace of God receive the eternal reward.

Do you truly appreciate the great privilege God has given you to be a priest in his house? Do you recognize the importance of being diligent in offering the sacrifice of worship and praise to God, especially whenever the church meets? Do you use your opportunities to teach the word of God to others? And do you realize the importance of living the holy, godly life that God would expect of those who are His royal priests?

“Royal” (Gk. βασιλειος) – “...royal, kingly, regal...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer. (This word is related to many other words referring to king and kingdom.)

“Priesthood” (Gk. ιερατευμα) – “...a. the office of priest. b. the order or body of priests ...; so Christians are called, because they have access to God and offer not external but ‘spiritual’ ... sacrifices ... priests of kingly rank, i.e. exalted to a moral rank and freedom which exempts them from the control of every one but God and Christ...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

**“A holy nation”**

Again, this expression is consistently translated “holy nation.” The emphasis here appears to be on “holy.” We are a nation in that we all possess a similar relationship to our King. We are the

citizens subject to our great King who rules over us in this life and whom we will serve as citizens, subject to Him throughout eternity.

So, Christians have been made a holy group of people. This is the nature we should all partake of, thus uniting us as a group. See 1:14-17 regarding our need to be holy.

“Holy” (ἅγιος) – “1. properly reverend, worthy of veneration ... 2. set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His ... 3. of sacrifices and offerings; prepared for God with solemn rite, pure, clean ... 4. in a moral sense, pure, sinless, upright, holy...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer (compare related verb and noun “sanctification”).

“Nation” (Gk. ἔθνος) – “1. a multitude (whether of men or of beasts) associated or living together; a company, troop, swarm ... 2. a multitude of individuals of the same nature or genus ... 3. race, nation ... 4. [as] ... in the O.T., foreign nations not worshipping the true God, pagans, Gentiles ... 5. ... even of Gentile Christians ...” – Thayer.

### **“His own special people”**

The emphasis here is on “special.” The KJV has “peculiar,” but that is an Old English use meaning peculiarly belonging to someone. We are God’s special possession, His “own possession” (ASV) or “a people for his own possession” (NASB, ESV, etc.).

Deuteronomy 7:6 said that the Israelites were “a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.” But as we have seen, in the New Testament Christians are God’s special people.

The point is that, while dwelling in sin, we did not belong to God. We could not be His people because He cannot have fellowship with sin (Isaiah 59:1,2). Having been cleansed by Jesus’ blood (1:18-22), we now belong to Him as his special or peculiar possession.

Verse 10 returns to this same word for “people” (λαός) saying that we were not a people but now are His people. He explains this to mean that we had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy: the mercy of forgiveness through Jesus as explained above. He called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (verse 9).

This may sound like it is referring to Gentiles who were not part of the nation of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-18). But actually it appears to be a reference to Hosea 1:9-11; 2:23 in which God spoke to the people of Israel and Judah saying they were not His people because of their sins. The Jews were His as a nation, but not His spiritually because their sins had alienated them from Him. But by repentance and forgiveness they could again become His people. Romans 9:25,26 quotes this showing that the “people” who would be God’s in fulfillment of that prophecy included both Jew and Gentile. So again Peter here refers to all saved people as in the context of 1 Peter 2:9,10.

### **Proclaiming His praises**

The end result of our being chosen to serve God is that we ought to show forth His praises or excellencies to the world. We were not chosen and blessed simply for our sake that we might enjoy these great blessings. We were chosen that we might honor God and lead other people also to praise Him. We do this by obeying Him and especially by worshipping Him. This fits especially with the concept of priests. Those are not faithful as His priests who do not want to worship but prefer to do other things of their own choosing.

Truly the Lord has given His people a great and exalted position, as Peter has been describing in these verses. Surely we ought to honor Him and forever strive to show Him the glory He deserves for His blessings to us. Let us show forth His excellencies. To fail to do so is to fail to accomplish the purpose for which we were chosen.

What does the world see when it sees us? Are we acting as the special people showing forth His praises, or does the world point with justification to “the hypocrites in the church”?

“Special” (περιποίησις) – “1. a preserving, preservation ... 2. possession, one’s own property ... 3. an obtaining” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

“People” (λαος) – “...people; 1. a people, tribe, nation, all those who are of the same stock and language ... the people whom God has chosen for himself, selected as peculiarly his own ... 2. indefinitely, of a great part of the population gathered together anywhere ...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

## **2:11-3:22 – We Should Act Honorably in Relationships and Endure Patiently.**

The inspired instruction of Peter, especially in the following verses, combines the discussion of several concepts. He talks about the importance of living faithful godly lives. He shows throughout that we should obey those who have authority over us. And he also shows that we should be willing to suffer for serving God faithfully.

These concepts are deliberately connected in Peter’s teaching. He explains that godly people will suffer even at the hands of those who have authority over them, but they should not use the suffering as an excuse to disobey God or to rebel against those in authority. Rather, they should remain faithful to God and respectful to the authorities despite the suffering. A proper example of upright living, combined with respectful submission towards those in authority, would set a good example to their enemies and would help demonstrate that the persecution was unwarranted and the Christians were not a liability in the community.

Notice how Peter repeatedly makes these points and ties them together throughout the discussion.

### **2:11-18 - Submit Honorably to Rulers and Masters.**

***2:11,12 – Abstain from fleshly lusts and act honorably so our good works will lead others to glorify God instead of speaking against us as evildoers.***

Peter addresses them again as sojourners and pilgrims (compare 1:1) and reminds them of the importance of living upright lives. We must remember that we are not citizens of this earth. We are citizens of the heavenly kingdom. That should reflect itself in the way we live. We do not live by the standards of this world because we have obligations to a higher kingdom. See Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 11:9,10,13; Colossians 3:1,2.

### **Abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul.**

Lusts are desires, but lusts in particular are desires that are based on the physical appetites of the body. The fact that the body desires to participate in an act does not make that act either right or wrong in and of itself. However, if we allow those appetites to control us, they will eventually lead us into wrong because they have no standard in themselves of good or evil.

So, Peter refers to those desires that would lead us into evil as being fleshly lusts. These desires war against the soul and should therefore be avoided: we should abstain from them. They war against the soul in the sense that they have eternal consequences for the soul – they lead us to be lost eternally instead of receiving eternal life. (Compare Romans 6:12; 13:14; Galatians 5:16-24; 1 John 2:15-17.)

“Lust” (επιθυμια) – “...denotes ‘strong desire’ of any kind, the various kinds being frequently specified by some adjective ... The word is used of a good desire only in Luke 22:15; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 2:17. Everywhere else it has a bad sense. In Rom. 6:12 the injunction against letting sin reign in our mortal body to obey the ‘lust’ thereof, refers to those evil desires which are ready to express themselves in bodily activity. They are equally the ‘lusts’ of the flesh, Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:16, 24; Eph. 2:3; 2 Pet. 2:18; 1 John 2:16... Such ‘lusts’ are not necessarily base and immoral, they may be refined in character, but are evil if inconsistent with the will of God.” – Vine.

“1. a great desire for someth., *desire, longing, craving* ... 2. a desire for someth. forbidden or simply inordinate, *craving, lust...*” – Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich.

## **Have honorable conduct among those outside Christ.**

We should avoid such lusts for the sake of our own relationship to God. But we must also be aware of the **influence** our conduct has on people in the world around us. People naturally tend to reject those who live and believe differently from most other people, especially when this is caused by religious beliefs that differ from the majority.

Peter here says the people of the world speak against us as evildoers. This is surely the case in our day, as people who stand for right are often criticized, whereas those who are practicing evil are justified and defended. But this is nothing new. God's people have always been ridiculed for such reasons. Christ was criticized and even crucified. The early Christians were accused of disrupting society, promoting rebellion against the government, harming the financial affairs of those who profited by evil, and opposing the prominent religions of their day.

Likewise, when we try to live a good life, people want to prove we are really no better than they are, so they find fault any way they can. In this case, Peter says, it is even more important to live a good life with which they cannot find fault, but will instead see good works that motivate them to give glory to God. Often people will be persuaded by seeing our lives even when they are unconvinced by the things we try to teach them.

We will see that these words were written regarding Christians in a time of persecution. It is easy for us to think our influence is important only toward other Christians, or maybe toward people who are at least in sympathy with our service to God. We do not want to set a bad example for them. But it really doesn't matter, we may think, what people of the world think about us. They are going to think evil of us no matter what we do, so why worry about what they think?

But Peter is here saying that we should be concerned for our influence even with people who oppose our service to God. These people need our good example in order to urge them to see their own error and their need to change. The idea that "some people are just evil and are going to think evil no matter how we act," may be true, but it does not excuse us in being indifferent toward the things we may do to help overcome and discourage their evil thoughts and deeds.

A Christian needs to maintain a reputation such that there is absolutely no excuse for people who may criticize and condemn us. They may criticize and condemn no matter how we act, but we should never act so their criticisms are justified.

"The day of visitation" here refers to a time of affliction and suffering. See Luke 19:44; (Isaiah 10:3; Jeremiah 6:15). Usually it is a time of judgment or punishment by God on wicked men, but it can refer to a time of blessing or reward from God (see Grimm-Wilke-Thayer). The reference here could be to the final judgment. MacKnight thinks that in this case it refers to the persecution Christians would suffer, but their good conduct would cause the Gentiles to give glory to God when they saw the patience demonstrated by the Christians.

For other verse regarding godly influence see 1 Peter 2:15; 3:15,16; Matthew 5:16; 18:6,7; 2 Corinthians 6:3; 8:20,21; Philippians 2:15; Romans 16:17.

"Visitation" (επισκοπή) – "inspection, visitation ... b. In biblical Greek, ... that act by which God looks into and searches out the ways, deeds, character, of men, in order to adjudge them their lot accordingly, whether joyous or sad; inspection, investigation, visitation ... c. ... oversight i.e. overseership, office, charge ... specifically, the office of a bishop (the overseer or presiding officer of a Christian church)..." – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

***2:13,14 – Submit to every ordinance of man, including the king or governors, whose job it is to punish evil doers and praise those who do good.***

### **Submit to every ordinance of man.**

Peter now names specific authority relationships in which it is essential for us to set a good example and be in subjection. He begins with civil rulers, whether the highest ruler (a "king") or a lower ruler ("governor") who works as a servant for the king. We should submit to those who have such authority, in every ordinance they give.

Notice that the passage expressly says to submit to **every** ordinance. We have no right to pick and choose which laws we want to obey or which we think are “reasonable” or “unreasonable.” The only exception is that we must disobey those laws that, if we obeyed them, would cause us to disobey God (Acts 5:29).

Far too often citizens – even members of the church – decide that they do not really need to obey some civil laws which they have somehow decided can be overlooked. This may include traffic laws, tax laws, or other rules that they find especially irritating. But the Scriptures command us to obey civil rulers “for the Lord’s sake.” It follows that to disobey the rulers is to disobey the command of God. In other words, knowingly disobeying civil rulers is a sin just like disobeying any other command of God.

We may think such obedience is difficult in our society, but Peter is emphasizing this especially because these people were facing persecution at the hands of rulers. The Roman government was exceedingly corrupt and rulers then were often wicked. Our Master was crucified by Roman authorities, and the apostle Paul was imprisoned and eventually martyred by them. Obedience in such cases would be especially difficult, but God required it then. Would it be even less required now? The fact the rulers are not doing their work properly does not justify us in disobeying them. Two wrongs do not make a right. If they misuse their position, we must still obey the law.

For other passages that teach the duties of civil government and our responsibility to rulers, see Romans 13:1-7; Matthew 22:17-21; Titus 3:1; 1 Timothy 2:1,2; Acts 5:29; 22:25-29; 25:10-12.

### **Rulers should punish evil doers and praise those who do good.**

Far too often, civil rulers overlook or deliberately violate the very reason for their existence as rulers. They may think that they are in office for their own gain, power, wealth, or popularity. But they need to realize that they are not in power to please themselves or even to please the people. They exist by the specific ordinance and command of God. It follows that they must accomplish the purpose for which God put them in office, and if they fail to do so they will be held accountable.

Peter here identifies the purpose of government. It is to punish the evildoer and praise those who do good (Romans 13:3,4). Too often rulers do the opposite. They punish those who do good (as in persecuting Christians) or ignore and overlook those who do evil. Such is a miscarriage of justice.

All across this land people are arrested for crimes for which they are clearly guilty, yet they escape punishment because of some technicality found by a smooth-talking lawyer (or perhaps a bribe?). Yet other people are punished for far lesser evils, perhaps no evil at all. And increasingly the laws of this country defend and even reward wickedness while punishing those who oppose the evil. In our society, this includes such matters as homosexuality, abortion, gambling, divorce, alcoholic drinking, and other evils.

Men in high places need to know that God put them in office for a reason, and they themselves are subject to God’s final judgment. Their responsibility is to punish evil doers and praise those who do good. The effect of this, if they do it properly would be to protect good citizens from evildoers. If instead they praise or reward those who do evil or punish those who do good, they have perverted the very purpose for which they exist. They need to accomplish the purpose for which God put them in office because, when they stand before that Judge, there will be no miscarriage of justice before His seat of judgment!

**2:15-17 – Doing good will silence foolish men, so we should use our liberty as servants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.**

**Silence the ignorance of foolish men by doing good and not using our liberty as a cloak for vice.**

If Christians work diligently at being the kind of citizens they should be, obeying civil law, and generally setting the good example described in verses 11,12, they will put to silence the arguments of men who speak against Christians. Specifically, some may argue that Christians rebel against the law and try to overthrow it (as Jesus was accused of doing). We can silence such statements (or at least show there is no grounds for them) if we will live as good citizens despite persecution.

Incredibly, those who follow the word of God today are often accused of being the troublemakers who cause problems in society. Some have even compared us to terrorists or have claimed that we are more dangerous to society than foreign enemies. They even say that we may cause the downfall of the nation. Such claims, foolish as they may be, have been repeated against the people of God throughout history, so why should we be surprised to hear them now? Our responsibility is to live such God-fearing, decent, respectable lives that those who make such claims should clearly be seen to be the ones who are in error.

We are free men in Christ in that we are now free from sin and from the bondage of the Old Testament law (John 8:32; James 1:25). Nevertheless, we are not justified in thinking we are free from civil law as though we do not have to obey rulers, nor are we free to just do as we please. We are still subject to God's law; we are His servants (Romans chapter 6). So, do not use our freedom as a cloak of wickedness – i.e., do not use the fact we are free in Christ as excuse to sin (Galatians 5:13; 1 Corinthians 8:9).

Yet many do exactly what Peter here forbids. They argue that we are free in Christ so they don't have to submit to the commands God gave in such matters as the worship or organization of the church. Others use similar reasoning to conclude they do not even need to obey the conditions of salvation.

It is true in a sense that everyone is free, but it is also true that everyone is a servant. The only question is whom we serve and from what we are free (see again Romans chapter 6). Christians are free from sin, but not free from subjection to God, to His law, or to civil rulers. Sinners are free from the gospel in that God allows them to choose to disobey; but if they do, they become servants of sin and condemnation.

**Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.**

So Peter tells us to treat other people right in all our relationships. In particular:

*Have respect for all men*

Christians should show respect for all, honoring those to whom honor is due (Romans 13:7). Various people deserve respect in specific ways. Civil rulers should be honored for their position as leaders, as has already been discussed. Other people in positions of leadership as ordained by the Scriptures should be honored. And those who practice what is good and right should be honored for their uprightness. But Christians should also love all people, even their enemies. So, in a sense we should show respect for all.

Honor (τιμᾶω) – “1. to estimate, to fix the value... 2. to honor ... to have in honor, to revere, venerate...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

*Love the brethren*

We also should learn to have proper love in particular for our brethren as already discussed in 1:22 (see notes there).

*Fear God*

Note some passages that show the importance and proper role of fear of God:

Psalms 33:8,9 – God’s power of creation should cause all the earth to fear the Lord and stand in **awe** of Him.

Psalms 89:6-9 – God is so great that no one can be compared to Him. He is greatly to be feared by His saints and held in **reverence** by those around Him.

Revelation 15:3,4 [19:5] – God’s works are great and marvelous. His judgments are manifest. Who should not fear Him and glorify His name?

Ecclesiastes 12:13 – Fear God and keep His commands, for this is the whole duty of man.

Acts 10:34,35 – In every nation whoever fears God and works righteousness will be accepted by Him.

2 Corinthians 7:1 – We should perfect holiness in the fear of God.

Hebrews 12:28 – Serve God with reverence and godly fear.

1 Peter 1:17 – Conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear.

This fear does not cause God’s people to want to run and hide. We want to be around God. Yet we stand in awe and reverence of His incredible greatness.

No one can serve God properly without godly fear. Do you stand in awe and serve God with reverence for His great wisdom, power, and judgments? But godly fear means we must do His will without changing it and must speak out against sin wherever it is found, in our lives, in the church, or in society. Then we must actively live the life that God commands. Do your life and mine show proper fear of God?

“Fear” (φοβέω) – “1) to put to flight by terrifying (to scare away) 1a) to be put to flight, to flee 1b) to fear, be afraid 1b1) to be struck with fear, to be seized with alarm 1b1a) of those startled by strange sights or occurrences 1b1b) of those struck with amazement 1b2) to fear, be afraid of one 1b3) to fear (i.e. hesitate) to do something (for fear of harm) 1c) to reverence, venerate, to treat with deference or reverential obedience” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

*Honor the king*

See notes on 2:13,14.

**2:18 – Servants should submit to their masters with fear, not just to good masters, but also to those who are harsh.**

### **Submission to masters**

Here Peter discusses another subjection relationship: that of servants to masters. He tells servants to be subject to their masters with proper respect. This and many other New Testament passages require servants to be obedient to their masters, not to rebel against them. They must serve diligently, truly seeking to please those in authority. Other passages show that they must serve masters like they should serve the Lord and remember that their ultimate reward will come from the Lord.

These principles would apply likewise to employees who work for an employer. A freeman may have the advantage that he is able to resign from a job if he chooses; but as long as he continues to accept pay from an employer, he is obligated to obey when he is on the job just the same as a servant.

Compare Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22; 1 Timothy 6:1,2; Titus 2:9,10.

### **Application to cruel authorities as well as to those who are kind**

Further, Peter tells servants to be subject, not just to good and gentle masters, but to those who are harsh. “Harsh” (NKJV) is translated “froward” (KJV, ASV), “unreasonable” (NASB), “unjust” (ESV), or “crooked” (MLV).

Christians often suffer unjustly at the hands of those who have authority over them, yet they must remain faithful to God and submissive to the authorities despite the hardships. As already mentioned, this appears to me to be one of the main points Peter is trying to make in the context.

The principle is especially difficult, yet it applies in all authority relationships, not just masters and servants. We will see in chapter 3 that Peter makes the same application with regard to wives

when submitting to husbands who are not obeying the word of God. Likewise, Christians must obey civil rulers even when the rulers are wicked.

Some people are much easier to submit to than others. Some treat those who are subject to them with respect and genuine concern for their well-being, making decisions for the good of the group. Such authorities are generally much easier to obey. However, some authorities are harsh, even cruel, and show little or no concern for the well-being of those who are subject to them. They make decisions simply for their own desires, profit, or exaltation. Some are simply naturally selfish.

While this is true, it is also true that people in positions of subjection often tend to be critical and find fault with those in authority over them. No matter how hard those in authority attempt to sincerely care for those who are subject to them, some people will criticize. If we justify people in disobeying authority simply because they claim those who are over them are being unreasonable, then all people will find a way to justify their disobedience! Consider for example how the people of Israel treated Moses, continually complaining about him and accusing him of poor leadership.

Peter here clearly shows that we sin when we try to excuse ourselves in disobeying authorities because we claim they are cruel or unreasonable. When people in authority appear to be unreasonable, or even if they clearly are mistreating us, that does not justify us in disobeying them. We must disobey only when they require us to commit something sinful (Acts 5:29). This instruction is especially needed in the case of persecution and suffering at the hands of those who are in authority, as is discussed in context here.

Consider as a specific example the respect that David showed for King Saul even as Saul was persecuting David and attempting to slay him. Yet when given the opportunity to take vengeance on Saul or even take his life, David refused on the grounds that he should not harm the anointed ruler of God's people.

When those in authority persecute us, and especially if they seek to harm us and take our lives, Bible examples show that we may flee for our own safety. And we may respectfully admonish the authorities on the basis of the word of God and tell them that they are wrong (2 Samuel 12:1-15; Matthew 14:1-4; Acts 24:25; 1 Kings 13:1-9; Acts 22:24-29; Esther 7; Daniel 4).

We may also appeal to others who have higher authority over those who are mistreating us, or use our rights that have been granted us to protect ourselves or our loved ones from mistreatment, harm, or evil (Esther 4:8-16; Acts 22:24-29; 23:12-33; 25:10-12).

But as long as we are still subject to authorities, we must do the best that we can to obey them. We must not seek to harm them or to rebel against them.

## 2:19-25 - Imitate Jesus in Suffering Persecution.

***2:19,20 – There is no credit in being punished for wrongdoing. But God commends those who suffer wrongfully for serving Him.***

### **Suffering wrongfully for doing good**

God is pleased when we suffer wrongfully – i.e., when we do not deserve it. Often God's people are afflicted even though we have done nothing wrong. Yet people may punish or mistreat us because they resent our stand for truth. Notice how Peter again returns to this theme.

Good lives often make people feel guilty, so they resent the example and teaching of Christians. When no one else around them is doing right, people feel justified for their own wickedness. But when they are compared to those who defend truth and live by it, sinful people are shown to have no excuse. They may show their resentment for this by persecuting godly people, perhaps hoping at least subconsciously that this will cause the good people to cease living godly lives or at least discredit them in the eyes of other people.

Specifically, we should be willing to obey those who have authority even if they mistreat us. Peter shows throughout the context that, not only should we obey those who have authority over

us, but we should obey even when they mistreat us. See again the notes on verse 18. This appears to be the connection between the discussion of submission to authorities and suffering for Christ. Citizens must submit to civil authorities, servants to masters, and wives to husbands even when we suffer because they misuse their authority. This may cause suffering even as Christ suffered. Yet we must endure even as He did.

Notice that the passage expressly says that suffering for having done good is commendable before God. That is, God appreciates it and will reward us for it. We may think that the suffering we endure is unnoticed or unappreciated. At the time, we may see little benefit from the hardship. But we must realize that God recognizes all that happens and will reward us for our faithfulness, if not in this life, then in eternity.

Such suffering often has come to Christians and will continue to come to us.

See Matthew 5:10-12; 13:21; Mark 10:30; John 15:19,20; 16:1-4,33; 2 Timothy 3:12; Acts 9:16; 14:22; Romans 5:3; 8:17-39; 1 Corinthians 4:9; 2 Corinthians 1:4-10; 4:17; 7:4; 2 Timothy 3:12; Hebrews 10:32-36; 1 Peter 2:19-23; 3:14-18; 4:1,15-19; 5:10.

### **Suffering for one's faults**

However, if we have rebelled against those in authority or have otherwise sinned and are punished for it, wherein can we claim to have done anything worthy of commendation? There is nothing commendable in this. We are simply suffering because we did wrong.

Consider, for example, a person who commits a crime against the government. He is caught, convicted in a court of law by clear evidence, and punished for his crime. What right does he have to claim that he is being mistreated or that his suffering is in some way commendable? The fact is that he is receiving the due retribution for his evil. There is no credit or commendation, especially not before God.

Some people today like to think of themselves as being persecuted when they are just suffering the consequences of their evil. Homosexuals play on sympathy in this way. They claim that they are somehow victims of unfair discrimination, that those who oppose their practice are guilty of hate, and that the whole problem has been caused by those who speak out for the truth of God's word. Of course, we should not justify people in taking personal vengeance or violence against them. The fact is, however, that receiving godly rebukes is simply the consequences of their evil. There is nothing commendable in their conduct or their suffering as a result of it.

Likewise, members of some false religions claim they are being persecuted when their errors or immorality are exposed. Some members of the church claim they are being persecuted when they are disciplined by the church for their sins.

Peter here clearly shows there is no commendation for such sins. We please God only when we do right and yet suffer.

***2:21-23 – We are called to follow the example of Jesus who suffered for us without committing sin. Rather than returning harm on those who reviled or caused Him to suffer, He committed Himself to the righteous judge.***

### **Jesus gave an example of suffering that we should follow.**

Jesus called us to do right, and to do it even when it is not easy and when we are mistreated. He gave us an example of this, for He suffered for our sakes even though He did not deserve to suffer. He did not do harm to those who caused Him to suffer, though He surely could have done so. Yet He bore this mistreatment patiently. This is the example He set for us. So, the example of Jesus illustrates the point that Peter has been making throughout the context that we should be faithful and submissive even when mistreated.

We tend to want to find ways to justify wrong doing. We claim we are justified in rebelling against those in authority because they did wrong or mistreated us. We claim circumstances were too hard, or some other extenuating circumstance excuses us. But how many of us have continued

to do right under such hardships as Christ faced? If He could do right under such difficulties, what excuse is there for us?

Jesus is our example, not just in suffering, but in all things. The original word used here refers to the method used to teach beginners how to write the letters of the alphabet. A teacher would write each letter, then the student would trace the letter in order to learn how to write it for himself. So Jesus gave us an example by living a life that we should imitate.

His life exemplifies in every way the principles we should follow in life (Matthew 10:24,25; 16:24; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 4:32-5:2; etc.). We ought to carefully study His life and determine to live as He did, following in His footsteps. In all decisions of right and wrong we ought always to ask, "What would Jesus do?" He is the Master, we are the disciples. We should learn from Him and not press our own desires.

"Example" (υπογραμμος) – "1. a writing-copy, including all the letters of the alphabet, given to beginners as an aid in learning to draw them ... Hence, 2. an example set before one..." – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

**Jesus committed no sin and did not return evil for evil upon those who caused Him to suffer. Rather, He trusted in the righteous judge.**

Jesus deserves to be our example because He never sinned. Not once did He do anything in violation of God's will for His life (Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:9; 1 John 3:5). Not once did He even speak deceitfully. We tend to justify at least lying or deceiving people who are mistreating us. Not Jesus.

Surely such a sinless life is worthy of our complete imitation. If we imitate other people, sooner or later their example will fail to live up to God's perfect standard. By imitating Jesus, we know we will always be right.

Specifically, when He was mistreated, Jesus did not try to harm those who harmed Him. Nor did He even speak with hate or a desire to hurt those who hurt Him. Jesus was often reviled both during His lifetime and at His crucifixion. He was accused of blasphemy, rebellion against the law, casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, violating the Sabbath, being a glutton and winebibber, and even Himself possessing a demon. He was mocked and ridiculed mercilessly during His trials before the Jews, by the Roman soldiers, and by those who observed His death on the cross.

And the physical and mental suffering that He endured, because of those who opposed Him and eventually killed Him, is well documented in Scripture and generally well known. Yet in all this, He made no effort to speak hatefully or to seek the harm of those who so mistreated Him. He had the power to do so, for He could have called down twelve legions of angels. But instead He set an example for us of suffering without retaliation.

His example included the fact that He trusted God to bring the vengeance that was needed. This is an important lesson to be learned by all people who are suffering. We tend to want to get even with those who cause us to suffer. We plan ways to hurt them, or at least we want them to be hurt and we rejoice when they fall. Rather, we should hope and seek for them to learn the truth, repent, and be saved. We may tell them they are wrong, but we must do so for their good, not to hurt them.

Notice that the passage does not say that those who sinfully mistreat us should be allowed to escape punishment. We should hope for their repentance; but if they refuse to repent, it is still not our place to personally bring suffering upon them. We should leave this in God's hands. We can be sure that He will bring the proper consequences in the proper way and at the proper time. This is a difficult lesson to learn, yet the example of Jesus shows us how to treat those who persecute or mistreat us.

For other passages on taking personal vengeance, see Luke 6:27,28,31-33; Matthew 5:21,22,38ff; Romans 12:17-21; 1 Corinthians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; Leviticus 19:17,18; 1 Peter 3:8,9; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60; Proverbs 24:29.

“Reville” (λοιδορεω) -- “to reproach, rail at, revile, heap abuse upon...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

**2:24,25 – In His suffering, Jesus bore our sins so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. We were like sheep that were straying but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.**

**Through Jesus’ suffering on the cross, we are healed so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.**

Jesus suffered wrongfully, yet in this He bore our sins so that we could be forgiven. We are healed by His stripes – i.e., His suffering was a suffering we deserved to endure, but He endured it so we could go free. (Isaiah 53:4-12; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Hebrews 9:28; Romans 4:25; 5:6-9; John 1:29; Galatians 1:4; 2:20; Matthew 20:28)

Jesus was the perfect, sinless sacrifice who died for the sins of others. This is the ultimate example of suffering unjustly. We deserve to be punished, at least by God if not by men. Jesus deserved no suffering at all, yet He paid the supreme price in order that we could avoid the suffering we deserve! This is described as our being healed by His stripes. That is, His suffering brought us healing. (Similar language for the Old Testament is found in Leviticus 10:17; 16:22; Ezekiel 18:20.)

Having been forgiven, however, we have no right then to live as we please. If He died as the supreme sacrifice for us, we must be willing to make sacrifices for Him and live our lives to please Him, not to please ourselves. This is called dying to sin or being separated and cut off from it, so that we can live a righteous life (Romans chapter 6; 12:1,2; Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:14,15). The incredible thing is that so many of us want to be saved by Jesus’ sacrifice, but then we want to make little or no sacrifice for Him!

As described above, the healing that Jesus promises to those who follow Him is spiritual healing by forgiving us of our sins and thereby offering us the solution to the problems created by sin. Some seem to think that Jesus offers physical healing from physical diseases for those who are His children. However, the context here clearly shows that the reference is to spiritual healing, not physical. As the passage says, He bore our **sins** so we might live to righteousness, and He is the Shepherd and Overseer of our **souls**. Other passages confirm this, and some even show faithful Christians who nevertheless did have health problems. See 2 Corinthians 12 7-10; Philippians 2:25-27; 1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20.

**We were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.**

All of us need the salvation that Jesus offers because we were like sheep straying from our Shepherd and from the safety He provides. Yet by His grace we can return to Him who provides all that we need as a shepherd provides for his flock.

The Bible often uses the illustration of a shepherd with his sheep to help us understand the blessings we receive through God and also our responsibilities toward God (Psalm 23; John 10:1-16; Luke 15:4; Matthew 9:36). God is so good and so concerned for our wellbeing that He offers provision for all of our needs even as a shepherd provides for his sheep.

But sadly, far too often we stray from the shepherd. A sheep that wanders from its shepherd no longer has the blessings that it needs. It cannot find the food and protection that it needs. It is defenseless against enemies, such as wolves and bears. And it often cannot find its way back even to the flock from which it wandered. Its only hope then is if the shepherd will find it and bring it back (Luke 15).

This is what the Lord did for us even as He suffered on the cross. He provided the means whereby we could return to God even though we been separated from Him by our own sins. We did not deserve any longer to benefit from the shelter and protection that the Lord provides. But

a shepherd would often give his own life for the sheep in order to save them from danger and harm. Jesus gave His life on the cross that we might return to the fold.

So Jesus is here called the Shepherd and Overseer or bishop of our souls. Just as Jesus is the shepherd who offers us spiritual guidance, protection, and provision for our needs, so He is also our spiritual guide, supervisor, and overseer. Both of these terms, we will see, are used in 1 Peter 5:1-4 to refer to elders in the local church. However, they simply serve under Jesus Christ as the Chief Shepherd. He is the ultimate supervisor to whom all must be subject.

## 1 Peter 3

### 3:1-7 - Husbands and Wives Treat One Another Properly.

**3:1,2 – Wives should submit to their husbands so, even if they do not obey the word, they will be won by the conduct of their wives.**

#### **Wives be submissive to your own husbands.**

These verses introduce another relationship in which people have authority over other people: wives should be subject to their husbands. The discussion begins with “likewise” because it is similar to what has already been said regarding citizens submitting to rulers and servants to masters. The point in all three cases is that subjection is demanded by God, even if the one in authority is misusing the authority (though this in no way justifies the one who misuses the authority).

The idea of women submitting to their husbands is anathema to feminists and others in our society. Men are viewed as bumbling incapable of leading, so women should have the right to equal leadership (at least). However, both Old Testament and New Testament teach that women should be subject to their husbands.

#### **The Role of Male Leadership**

Genesis 2:18 – And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”

Genesis 3:16 – To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.”

Ephesians 5:22-25 – Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. – Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Colossians 3:18 – Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 11:3 – But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

1 Timothy 2:12-14 – And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

Titus 2:4,5 – that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

1 Peter 3:1 – Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,

1 Peter 3:5,6 – For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

1 Corinthians 14:34 – Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.

Some dismiss this teaching as the personal opinion of Paul, who was an unmarried man. Yet Paul was an inspired apostle guided by the Holy Spirit, as is even emphasized in the context of women’s submission to men (1 Corinthians 14:34-37). Further, 1 Peter 3 is written by Peter who, to the disappointment of the Catholic church, was a married man (Matthew 8:14; 1 Corinthians 9:5). Likewise, Genesis 3:16 was written by Moses, also a married man.

But above all, these men were all inspired by God. So, the teaching is the inspired requirement of the Creator and Ruler of the universe, regardless of the opinions and desires of human beings.

### **Even if some do not obey the word**

Specifically, women are told, as were servants (2:18), that they are not justified in disobeying the one in authority even if he is disobeying God. Many wives think that they do not have to submit if their husbands have mistreated them or misused their authority. This passage clearly contradicts such an idea. Instead, the husband's disobedience to God is just more reason why the wife should obey him, so she can set a good example for him and may thereby even convert him.

This is exactly what Peter has said about citizens and servants. Even if those in authority over you are persecuting you, your submission to them will silence any possible basis for claiming you are not the Christian you should be. This may lead them to glorify God (2:11,12,15,18-20).

### **The importance of influence and example**

There is a lesson here that is important for all of us to learn, especially in this context for wives. We need to speak the truth to those around us. Peter is not denying or contradicting that. However, when it is obvious that people are not listening and will not accept teaching, we must instead emphasize teaching by our example. This is especially important when others around us vigorously oppose our efforts to do right.

In such cases, many people – especially wives in their marriages – become extremely frustrated and angry with other people whom they are convinced, rightly or wrongly, need to change. So they react with nagging, anger, or venting their frustrations with insults and ridicule. Such approaches are completely wrong, first because they are ungodly, and second because they almost never work.

God's instruction, through the inspired apostle Peter, is that such cases should instead be approached with a good example. If we persist in doing right despite their opposition and hindrance, yet we do so with respect and calm patience, the impact of our example will have more effect on them than anything we could say.

As time passes, their hearts may be softened to the truth and then they may be willing to listen to teaching. Then we may be able to speak to them or even to encourage them to speak to others who may be more able to instruct them than we are. But it is the example that may bring this about.

Nothing here is an excuse, as some people seem to think, for not standing up for the truth in our teaching. Jesus and his apostles and faithful Christians in the New Testament obviously and repeatedly spoke the truth to those around them. But when we must continue to be around people who have shown resistance to truth, then we must emphasize our example. But if it is to be a good example, then it is especially important that we not compromise in any way with error, no matter how much they may want to pressure us to do so.

For other passages about the importance of proper influence and example see 1 Timothy 4:12; Matthew 5:13-16; 18:6,7; Titus 2:7,8; 1 Peter 2:11,12; 2 Corinthians 6:3; 8:20,21; 1 Corinthians 8:9-13; 10:23-33; Romans 16:17.

### **Chaste conduct accompanied by fear**

The conduct of the wife should be chaste, accompanied by fear. The passage does not say exactly whom she should fear. Doubtless there should be respect for her husband as taught in Ephesians 5:33. But even more important, she should have fear in the sense of respect and awe for God, which would lead her to submit to her husband in order to be obedient to God. See notes on 2:17.

But notice that the conduct required of her includes that she be chaste. A godly woman should practice chastity. This is described further in the following verses, and is also required of women in Titus 2:5; 2 Corinthians 11:2. Like subjection to the husband as the leader of the family, chastity is largely lost as a virtue of women in our society.

This word is quite similar in meaning to our modern word “modest.” It is translated “chaste” (NKJV, KJV, ASV, NASB) or “pure” (ESV). It refers to the idea of purity and decency such that one avoids the impropriety of being sexually suggestive. Women should learn to practice chastity before marriage and then be true to their vows after marriage. This includes not being sexually suggestive in word, dress, or conduct. Of course, the same applies to men, but the instruction here is addressed to women.

Our society continually views chastity as old-fashioned and no longer needed in our modern society. As a virtue it is continually violated and even ridiculed in TV, movies, music, etc. Yet God requires it of women, as well as men. We must learn to practice it regardless of society around us if we seek to please God, have a good marriage, and receive eternal life.

“Chaste” (αγνος) – “...pure ... a. pure from carnality, chaste, modest ... – b. pure from every fault, immaculate...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

### **Application to clothing**

We will note in the following verses that Peter is especially emphasizing chastity as regards clothing and manner of dress. The way we dress matters. The gospel addresses the subject of clothing. We need to understand the teaching and the proper application in our own lives.

The Bible shows that, not only is it wrong to commit the physical act of fornication, it is also wrong to dwell on that act in our mind, desiring to do it with someone we are not married to. This harmonizes with the Bible principle that the **inner attitudes**, not just the outer actions, must be right. To control our conduct, we are required to first control our thinking.

Mark 7:20-23; Matthew 5:27,28; Proverbs 6:25 – A person should not only avoid physical sexual union with someone other than his Scriptural spouse, he should also avoid “fantasizing” about improper sexual activities with someone other than his spouse. If it would be wrong to do the act, then it would be wrong to take pleasure in thoughts of doing the act.

Since the Bible teaches us not to tempt other people but to set a good example for them (Matthew 18:6-9; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7,8; etc.), then it follows that clothing is sinful if it is sexually suggestive. It puts before people of the opposite sex, whom we are not married to, the temptation to think evil and improper thoughts. Such conduct is not “chaste.”

Consider again 2 Corinthians 11:2. Women should be chaste like the bride of Christ. If you were literally engaged to Christ, would He be pleased with the way you dress? If you were to sit beside Him in worship or walk the streets beside Him or go to a place of recreation with Him, would the clothes you normally wear cover you adequately, or would you feel the need to change your way of dressing?

Chastity is opposed to lasciviousness or licentiousness (Mark 7:21-23; Romans 13:13,14; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Peter 4:1-4). This word is translated: lascivious, licentious, lewd, sensual, wanton, indecent, lustful, filthy, impure, shameful. Here are some definitions of these English words: “inclined to lustfulness,” “arousing or exciting sexual desire,” “inclined to, characterized by, or inciting to lust,” “obscene or indecent,” “[sexually] suggestive,” “causing or intended to cause sexual excitement or lust.”

A definition of the Greek word is: “wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females” (Fritzsche via Grimm-Wilke-Thayer).

As applied to clothing, we should not wear anything that has the **effect** of arousing or exciting the sexual desires of others. Our dress should not be sexually suggestive. But it should be chaste or pure.

**3:3,4 – Beauty should emphasize, not hair, gold, or apparel, but the inner person of the heart with a meek and quiet spirit that is precious to God.**

**Emphasis should be on character, not on outward appearance.**

Peter further admonishes wives, as in 1 Timothy 2:9,10, that the inner person – the spiritual character – is far more important than outward appearance. This is a matter of emphasis or

priority. For many women, outward beauty is of prime importance. One must follow the latest fashions, wear the latest styles, have beautiful make-up, hairdo, and jewelry. God is saying these things are not what is most important.

This does not mean it is inherently wrong to arrange the hair or wear gold, any more than it is wrong to wear apparel (the word “fine” is added in the NKJV). Godly women of the Old Testament are specifically cited as examples for women today (see verse 5). If they offer more gold, ornaments, or good clothes. The worthy woman in Proverbs 31 clothed herself and her family with fine linen and purple. Abraham's servant gave a gold nose ring and gold bracelets to Rebekah when he sought her to be Isaac's wife. See Genesis 24:22,53; Job 42:11; Proverbs 25:11,12; 31:21,22; Ezekiel 16:8-14; Luke 15:22; Jeremiah 2:32.

The point is the proper emphasis must be on the heart. This is an example of a “not ... but” phrase in the Bible in which the activity labeled “not” is not intended to be absolutely forbidden. Rather the point is to emphasize the activity labeled “but,” so that the first is of far lesser importance by comparison. Other examples are John 6:27; 12:44; 1 Cor. 1:17; 15:10; 1 Peter 3:3,4; Mark 9:37; Matt. 10:20; Acts 5:4; 1 Thess. 4:8; Genesis 45:8.

### **Meek**

“Meek” (KJV, ASV) is translated “gentle” (NKJV, NASB, ESV).

“Meekness” is the opposite of pride, but especially, of self-will. A meek person is willing to submit to the will of others, first to the will of God and then to the will of other people. In this context, the emphasis is especially on the woman's responsibility to submit to her husband.

Meekness does not mean a woman should allow her husband to lead her into sin. But first she must be meek toward God, then she is meek toward others. This leads to subjection to God's will, even when men object (Acts 5:29).

So, meekness is a sign, not of weakness, but of strength of character. In fact, the strength to control one's own desires so as to submit rather than cause strife, is a fundamental form of strength that many people lack. It is much easier to selfishly insist on our own way. The meek person gives in for the good of the group. And a meek wife will submit to the will of her husband.

This instruction is a further abomination to the modern feminists. Instead of a submissive, unassuming attitude, the modern idea is that women should be self-assertive. Yet self-assertiveness is the express opposite of the definition of meekness. The loud, boisterous, domineering spirit is clearly forbidden.

See Numbers 12:3; Matthew 5:5; 11:28-30; Galatians 5:22,23; 6:1; Ephesians 4:2,3; Colossians 3:12,13; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Titus 3:2; James 3:13-18; 1:21-25.

“Meek” (Gk. πραυς) – On the related noun (πραυτης) Vine says: “...‘It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting; it is closely linked with ... [humility] ... This meekness, however, being first of all a meekness before God, is also such in the face of men, even of evil men, out of a sense that these, with the insults and injuries which they may inflict, are permitted and employed by Him for the chastening and purifying of His elect’ (Trench) ...”

“...‘It must be clearly understood, therefore, that the meekness manifested by the Lord and commended to the believer is the fruit of power. The common assumption is that when a man is meek it is because he cannot help himself; but the Lord was “meek” because he had the infinite resources of God at His command. Described negatively, meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all” – Vine.

### **Quiet**

Quietness does not mean a wife never has anything to say. All Christians are commanded to be quiet in manner of life (1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:12), but this does not mean we never speak. Nor does it mean we can never express our viewpoints, for we have been granted the right to express ourselves even to God in prayer.

Likewise, a godly wife should be meek and quiet, yet she may often give helpful advice to her husband. And she has the right to express her views provided she does so in a proper attitude. She must especially speak out against sin. However, she must speak respectfully and patiently without repeated nagging. She must speak for the good of others, not from stubborn self-will. And having made her point, she must remember that her primary influence will be through her example, as Peter has already described.

A meek and quiet woman is “precious” to God. She should likewise be precious to Christians, especially to her husband.

“Quiet” (Gk. ἡσυχίος) – “...quiet, tranquil” – Thayer. “...indicates tranquillity arising from within, causing no disturbance to others...” – Vine.

**3:5,6 – Sarah illustrates Old Testament women who properly adorned themselves while she obeyed Abraham and called him a Lord.**

### **Holy women in former times**

Peter further says that godly women in former times also were modest in adornment, and submitted to their husbands. This teaching is not something new. The Old Testament often has served as useful examples (compare 1 Corinthians 10:1-12; Hebrews chapter 11) for us today. The teaching about women’s modesty and subjection, as stated above, is an Old Testament teaching as well as a New Testament teaching. In these areas, the teaching of Scripture is the same in the old as in the new law, so there is much for women to learn from Old Testament women.

Notice what Peter says about these women:

Godly women should be **holy**. That is, they should be dedicated and set apart to the service of God. They should be spiritually minded, not overemphasizing material things such as possessions and physical beauty, but emphasizing instead the godly spirit that Peter has described. This will lead to good conduct as described in the next verse.

They should also **trust in God**. Their lives should be characterized by faith, and that faith should demonstrate itself in trusting God to care for them and meet their needs whatever circumstances in life they may face. This would be especially difficult and important in the situation in which a woman’s husband was not serving God as he should.

Nevertheless, rather than allowing hardship and suffering to lead her to fail to serve God, she should be determined to continue on to do right and set a godly example. This will lead her to act correctly, not allowing herself to be overly intimidated by fears of the hardships she faces. She will continue to do right despite the hardships. See the notes below on verse 6.

She should also **adorn herself with a meek and quiet spirit** that Peter is described in the previous verses.

And she should be **submissive to her own husband** as Peter is also described. Again we have here an application of the principle of suffering even when one who has authority is not acting properly, perhaps even mistreating the one who was subject to the authority.

### **The example of Sarah**

A specific example is Sarah, wife of Abraham. Sarah was by no means a “wall flower.” She demonstrates that, when Scripture teaches godly women to be modest, meek, and quiet, this is not intended to say that women must be plain or shallow. Nor does it mean that women who are homemakers will have nothing to contribute to their families or to society.

Sarah was beautiful and influential. Yet she was modest and submissive, even to the point of calling Abraham “lord” (Genesis 18:12). Notice that the passage specifically uses the word “obey” in referring to the submission of women to their husbands. Proper submission includes obedience.

Furthermore, godly women not only obey their husbands, but they do so with respectful speech. Proper submission does not involve outwardly following the husband’s decisions while pouting, nagging, and generally making the husband’s life miserable.

Modern women, who imitate Sarah's example and learn to follow the Bible principles that we have been describing, will be good yet strong, not timid and fearful. They are not characterized by weakness and constant fear of their husbands. Nor are they afraid of life and its hardships (compare 2:14). The worthy woman of Proverbs 31 possessed courage because she was well prepared to meet the needs of her family.

Women who imitate the example of Sarah are referred to as her "daughters." The words "sons" or "children" are often used to indicate those who have a character similar to the one spoken of as their parents. In particular, those who serve God faithfully are spoken of as children of Abraham – Galatians 3:29; Romans 4:12-16. The Jews thought they should be accepted by God simply because they were physical descendants of Abraham. But the New Testament teaches that those who live by obedient faith are those whom God will bless as the spiritual children or descendants of Abraham. In the same way, women who imitate the example of Sarah are viewed as her spiritual daughters.

"Obey" (υπακουω) – "...to hearken to a command, *i.e.* to obey, be obedient unto, submit to ..."  
– Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

"Lord" (κυριος) – "...he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has the power of deciding; master, lord; used a. universally, of the possessor and disposer of a thing, the owner ...b. κυριος is a title of honor, expressive of respect and reverence, with which servants salute their master ... by citizens toward magistrates...; by anyone who wishes to honor a man of distinction ..."  
– Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

### ***3:7 – The husband should exercise understanding, honoring the wife as the weaker vessel, heirs together of the grace of life.***

Peter, however, does not leave the men without instruction. God does not just tell women to be in subjection, He also repeatedly warns the husband to have the right attitude toward his wife (Ephesians 5:25-33; Colossians 3:19). Feminists love to assail the Biblical teaching of women's subjection to man, but they overlook the teaching to men to use their authority for the good of all. Do we husbands also overlook this teaching?

#### **Dwell with wives with understanding.**

Man should love his wife to the point of striving to understand her needs. In my view, this is one of the most challenging responsibilities that we have as husbands.

Too many husbands think they are the boss, so they get to do what they want without regard for the wife's needs or interests. Such is not love. Is this the way Jesus loved the church? Hardly! He loved the church so much that He considered carefully what our real needs are, then He sacrificed Himself to the point of giving His life to meet those needs (Ephesians 5:25ff). That is the example of love the husband should have for the wife.

Love leads one to sincerely want to understand and meet the needs of the other person. Women are not like men. They are made differently for a purpose. Often the man expects his wife to think and feel like he does, so he acts accordingly. But when she does not think as he does, he is offensive and upsetting toward her.

Let me give just one simple example. When men interact with other men, they often use harmless physical aggression as a means of expressing companionship and even affection. They slap one another on the back, hit one another on the arm, push one another around, etc. When done among friends, such acts are accepted as simply friendliness among men. But if a man assumes his wife is like his men friends, he may slap and hit and push her as an expression of companionship and even affection. But most likely the wife will not understand at all and will be highly offended. The relationship will be seriously damaged. This is just one of many examples of how men must learn to understand their wives and treat them differently than men treat one another.

How does a man learn to properly understand his wife? This is the challenge of a lifetime of marriage. One thing is sure: he must learn to listen to her express her needs. You cannot understand a person if you are not willing to listen. This does not grant the wife the right to nag and harass her husband if she thinks he is not being properly respectful. Such an approach most likely will simply anger the husband. But he must be willing to ask and listen to her concerns.

If he would learn to consider her views and try to understand her real needs, he would find he could meet them as this passage demands. But the husband who does not care, or who thinks he does not have to give in to her needs, is a man who will have a very unhappy wife. He will also have an unhappy eternity unless he repents. God will not even hear his prayers, the passage teaches.

(Caton takes a different view of this passage. He thinks the emphasis on understanding here refers, not to a man's understanding of the needs of his wife, but to his understanding of Scripture and of the application of God's word in order to be the proper head of his family. In the end, the applications would appear to be similar since no one can properly apply Scripture in his treatment of his wife without a proper understanding of the needs of the wife.)

### **Honor the wife as the weaker vessel.**

The "vessel" here refers to the human body. It can be compared to a vessel in that it is a physical container for the soul of man. See 1 Thessalonians 4:4; Acts 9:15; Romans 9:21,22; 2 Corinthians 4:7; 2 Timothy 2:21.

To my knowledge, the only sense that the wife is weaker than the man refers to physical strength. She is not weaker in intellect, devotion to God, or ability to be of useful service to others. But generally the average wife would be less strong physically than the husband. He should not expect her to do labors that require great physical strength, but should do these works for her.

To "honor" the wife is not just to help her by doing "man's work," but to respect, praise, appreciate, and value her. God views her as "precious" ("of great price" – ASV, verse 4). A husband must cherish his wife as his own body and as the Lord does the church (Ephesians 5:28-30). A husband should praise a worthy wife for her goodness (Proverbs 31:28-31). One who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor of the Lord (Proverbs 18:22; 19:14).

The husband must continually remind himself of the value of the wife's work. It is easy to become critical and think everything could be done in a better way. But do we look for the good that is done? And do we express to the wife the value that we place on her? Do we tell her and show her that we appreciate and value her?

MacKnight points out that "honor" and the related verb are used to refer to supporting or providing for a person's material needs (1 Timothy 5:17,3; Matthew 15:4,5; Ephesians 6:2; etc.). So he concludes that, for the husband to honor the wife, includes the responsibility to provide for her. This would fit with the other passages that show that the husband should be the provider for the family (1 Timothy 5:8; etc.). Peter explains that this should be the case because she is the weaker vessel. That is, he is more fit and able to do the difficult physical and mental labors required to work outside the home and provide income for the family.

"Honor" (Gk. τιμη) – "...1. a valuing by which the price is fixed; hence the price itself ... 2. honor which belongs or is shown to one: the honor of one who outranks others, pre-eminence ... veneration ... deference, reverence ... praise of which one is judged worthy..." – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

### **Joint heirs of the grace of life**

Finally, the husband should realize the wife is a joint-heir with him of the grace of God (compare Galatians 3:28). She will be saved by the same Savior, according to the same gospel, and have the same eternal reward as man. While the difference in authority does affect the roles of man and woman in the church, this does not in any way mean the man will be more favored in receiving eternal life. He should not treat his wife as being spiritually inferior or less important

than him in any way. He should realize she was given by God as his helper. Husband and wife should help one another serve God and receive eternal life.

### 3:8-22 - Conduct Oneself in Holiness toward All.

**3:8,9 – All disciples should be like-minded, having compassion and love for one another, tenderhearted and courteous. We should not return evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but should bless knowing that we were called to this so we may inherit a blessing.**

Instructions now follow to encourage us in general to be like-minded (compare Romans 12:16; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 12:12-27; Philippians 2:2-5; Ephesians 4:3-6,16), and to love one another as brethren (see notes on 1:22; 2:17). Consider the following terms that Peter uses:

#### Compassion

This is also translated “sympathetic” and related words (NASB). Compassion is the ability to see and feel things as others do. “Walk a mile in his moccasins.” This is a vital part of being like-minded.

See also Luke 10:27-37; Romans 12:15; Hebrews 4:15; 10:34.

“Compassion” (Gk. συμπάθησις) – “suffering or feeling the like with another, sympathetic...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

#### Tender-hearted

This is also translated “kind-hearted” (NASB). Our hearts should not be hardened to others, especially to our brethren, but we should be able to feel for them and with them. See also Romans 12:15; compare Ephesians 4:32.)

“Tender-hearted” (Gk. ευσπλαγχνος) – “compassionate, tender-hearted” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

#### Courteous

This is also translated “humble-minded” (ASV) or “humble in spirit” (NASB). We should not seek our own self-exaltation, but be concerned for others to the point we show an interest in them and subject our will to theirs as we can according to God’s will for their good (Philippians 2:3; Ephesians 4:2).

“Courteous” (Gk. φιλοφρων) – “friendly, kind...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

#### Not returning evil for evil but blessing

Further, these attitudes will lead us not to take personal vengeance, or to return evil for evil, but to bless when others revile us (see notes on 2:23). Jesus set the example in these things, but we must imitate His example. We were called to this kind of life, even though we suffer for it. In this way we inherit the eternal blessing.

**3:10-12 – Control speech, avoid evil and do good, and pursue peace. God hears the prayers of the righteous, but His face is against evildoers.**

These verses quote Psalm 34:12ff. They teach us, if we would have a truly good life, not just here but in eternity, we must live by the rules God has revealed. Some people think God has made rules to make us miserable or just for His own good regardless of any impact on us. Here we are told that the laws are really for our good that we may have a good life (and eternal life afterward).

These rules include:

#### Refrain the tongue from evil, and the lips from speaking guile.

James 3:2-8 likewise discusses at length control of the tongue. We are warned how hard it is to control the tongue, and therefore how important it is to work at controlling it.

We all sin at times, as other passages teach (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8,10). But sins of speech are so common that, if you can control your speech to avoid sin, you can control your whole life! This is another way of saying that nothing is more difficult to control than speech. So, we need to

guard our speech carefully (James 1:19). We will be judged for our speech as well as our conduct (Matthew 12:35-37).

James uses various illustrations to show how a small thing, like the tongue, can have a great impact and power. A bridle controls only the horse's mouth, but the result is that his whole body is turned. Likewise, a rudder of a ship is small, and when the pilot turns it, only a small part of the ship has been turned, yet the result is that the whole ship turns. This illustrates how small things can be very powerful and influential.

The same is true of our speech. Though it may seem relatively insignificant, yet it can have a powerful impact on our lives and those around us. It can change lives, the course of nations, and the destiny of souls. God chose to lead the world to salvation by the message He gave us to teach. This is a powerful message (Romans 1:16). Surely there is power in words, for good or evil.

Again, the tongue is like a fire. A small fire kindles much wood. A little spark can destroy a whole forest. So our tongue, though small, can produce sin leading to the defilement or condemnation of the whole body.

Many kinds of sin can occur by speech: lying, slander, cursing and profanity, filthy jokes, false doctrine, blasphemy against God, mockery of what is good, encouraging people to sin, etc. Such speech of itself can cause us to be condemned. Or speech can cause us or others to practice evil and be condemned. Speech can arouse passions, anger, sinful desires, and evil of all kinds.

Men have tamed all kinds of animals, birds, and fish. Huge animals such as elephants and whales, powerful animals such as lions and tigers have been tamed. But James said the little tongue can never be tamed. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison (Psalm 140:3; Romans 3:13).

The tongue can be controlled to some extent, of course, else there is no point in this instruction. But no one reaches the point at which he need not be concerned about the tongue. Even if you can control it most of the time, yet at unexpected times it will break out with evil and harm.

Specifically, we must not speak guile. Guile is deceit. We must not speak deceitfully whether by overt lies or any other speech intended to mislead people to believe other than what we know to be the truth.

Other passages regarding deceit or lying are: 1 Peter 2:1,22; Matthew 15:18-20; Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9; Revelation 21:8,27; 22:14,15; Proverbs 6:16-19; 19:22; Psalm 24:3-5; 40:4; Exodus 20:16; John 8:44; Acts 5:1-9.

Other passages regarding speech in general are: 1 Peter 2:1; Matthew 12:34-37; Ephesians 4:29; James 1:26; Colossians 4:6; Psalm 141:3; Proverbs 18:21.

“Guile” (Gk. δολος) – “...prop. bait, ...; a lure, snare; hence craft, deceit, guile...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

### **Turn away from evil and do good.**

The Bible repeatedly teaches us we must be willing to work to do good for the Lord.

Acts 10:35 – In every nation whoever fears Him and **works righteousness** is accepted by Him.

Ephesians 2:10 – We are created in Christ Jesus for **good** works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 4:28 – Instead of stealing, man should work with his hands that which is **good**.

Hebrews 10:24 – Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and **good** works.

Hebrews 13:21 – The author prays that God may make you complete in every **good** work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight.

Titus 3:8,14 – God's people should be careful to maintain **good** works.

2 Timothy 3:16,17 – The Scriptures provide us to **all good works**.

Romans 2:6-10 – God will reward men according to works. To have eternal life we must continue is doing **good**. All who work what is **good** will have glory, honor, and peace, but wrath and indignation will be on those who do not obey truth.

Some people seem to think God will be pleased with almost anything we do as long as we are doing it for religious purposes or because we want to please God. But working for the Lord is doing **good** works, and all good works are revealed in the Bible.

Living a good life for the Lord requires us to be both positive and negative. It is not enough just to resist error, but we must actively practice what is good. On the other hand, it is not enough just to practice good works but we must also oppose and resist that which is sinful.

Other passages about good works are: Titus 2:7,14; 3:1; 2 Timothy 2:21; James 4:17; Galatians 6:10; Colossians 1:10.

Other passages about evil include: Luke 10:16; 7:30; 1 Samuel 15:22,23; John 12:48; 1 Thessalonians 4:8; Mark 7:7-13; 2 Samuel 12:7-10; Numbers 15:27-31; Ezekiel 2:3-7; 3:9; 12:1,2; Daniel 9:5,6; Isaiah 65:2; Deuteronomy 9:23,24.

### **Seek peace and pursue it.**

Christians by nature should be peace-loving people. This is essential in order to treat others right. The context of 1 Peter would require us to seek peace with those who have authority over us and even those who mistreat us. If we avoid vengeance and retaliation, peace may eventually result.

However, it is not always possible to have peace with all men, no matter how hard we try. In fact, Christians are not likely to have peace for long at a time with people who are not serving God. Neither Jesus nor His apostles had it for long. We should surely never compromise truth to achieve peace: Matthew 10:34-39; Luke 12:51-53; James 3:17; etc.

The lesson is that we should **seek** peace and **pursue** it. That is, we should diligently work to obtain peace. The idea of pursuing implies that it may not easily come to us, but we must go actively hunting it to obtain it. There should be peace “if it is possible, as much as depends on us” – Romans 12:18. **We** must not be the cause of strife. If we teach truth and others oppose it, they are fighting against God. This is not our fault.

Many passages show that Christians should desire to have peace with others: Matthew 5:9; James 3:13-18; Romans 12:18; 14:19; Genesis 13:8; Proverbs 20:3; Psalm 133:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; Ephesians 4:2-6; Galatians 5:19-21; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Mark 9:50; Hebrews 12:11, 14:19.

### **The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.**

If we practice the principles Peter has described here, the Lord will be pleased with us so that He willingly hears our prayers, though He will not hear those who do evil. God will bless us, even though we suffer in this life, if we will live the godly lives He teaches. If we boldly come to Him, we have assurance that we will receive what we ask if we keep His commands doing what pleases Him. Again, we see the emphasis on the need for obedience.

Note also that God does want to answer His children’s prayers and has repeatedly promised to do so (1 John 5:14,15; 3:21,22; James 5:16; Matthew 7:7-11; 21:22; 18:19; 1 Peter 5:7; John 14:13,14; cf. 1 Samuel 1:10-28; 7:5-11; 2 Kings 20:1-7; 2 Chronicles 7:11-14).

However, there are conditions we must meet. He has never promised to answer prayer for just anybody and everybody. Many verses teach that God will hear the prayers of those who serve Him, but not the prayers of those who reject His words and refuse to serve Him: James 5:16; 1 John 3:22; Proverbs 28:9; 15:8,29; Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 1:15-17; 59:1,2; John 9:31.

### **3:13,14 – Who would harm those who do what is good? But if we suffer for righteousness sake, we are blessed and should not be afraid or troubled.**

Peter asks the logical question, “Who would harm people who are practicing what is good?” Generally, it is people who practice violence who receive violence. If a person is guilty of burglary, mugging, murder, drug dealing, rebellion against the government, etc., he is likely to receive violence at the hand of the people he has mistreated or at the hands of the government. But if one

is peaceable and refuses to do violence even to those who try to hurt him, people are less likely to do violence to him.

However, the emphasis of verse 13 may tie back to verse 12 and God's promises that He will hear the prayers of the righteous. So the point would be that God protects His people in answer to their prayers, not primarily that people around us will be unlikely to harm us. If so, then the point would be that, whatever harm the people in this world can do to us, that harm is only temporary and cannot affect our eternal destiny if we are faithful. See Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4,5; Romans 8:31-39; Isaiah 8:12ff.

Nevertheless, Peter warns that righteous people will sometimes suffer at the hands of evildoers. If this happens, we should view it as a blessing and not be afraid of their threats. The blessing comes, not simply because we suffer, but because we know we are pleasing to God. God will honor and reward those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. (The last part of verse 14 is a reference to Isaiah 8:12.)

This does not mean we should feel no fear at all. But we should not have such fear that we compromise the truth or fail to do God's will. We should realize that God is with us and that we have an eternal reward in a much better home when this life is over. We should always put our lives in the hands of the God who created us and trust Him to protect us, to meet our needs, and to provide our eternal reward. Such faith is not easy to achieve, but we should grow as Christians to develop this attitude.

Compare 2:19-23; 4:15,16; Acts 5:40-42 Matthew 5:10-12; 10:28; 2 Timothy 3:12; John 16:1-3; 15:18-22.

***3:15 – Sanctify God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to those who ask about the reason for our hope, with meekness and fear.***

Not only should Christians be sanctified by God to His service, but we should also sanctify Jesus in our hearts. To sanctify means to set apart or make holy (see notes on 1 Peter 1:2,15). It is a form of the word for "holy." So, we should be set apart to God's service, but we should also set Him apart in our hearts as our Lord and Master. We should truly honor Him and respect Him as the one true God. We should realize the authority He has. Notice again how important proper attitude of heart is, especially our attitude toward God.

Even though we may be persecuted for our faith, we should not refuse to stand up for this Lord to whom we have dedicated our service. He spoke out for truth even though He knew He would die for it. So, we should always be ready to give a defense to those who ask about the reason for our hope.

Many people have the idea we should not "argue about religion," meaning they will not discuss religion with you if you disagree with their views and try to tell them they are wrong. This view simply becomes an excuse to refuse to listen to any views which differ with their past beliefs. But God here demands that we be willing to defend our views to others. (See also Revelation 3:19; Galatians 6:1,2; James 5:19,20; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Ephesians 5:11; 2 Timothy 4:2-4.)

It follows from this passage and others that members of the church who go into error must be willing to defend their practice and their views to other members who sincerely seek to help them be faithful to God (Galatians 6:1; Matthew 5:23,24). Those who refuse are wrong for refusing to defend their practice regardless of whether or not the practice itself is proper.

Such a passage demands that we be willing to "debate" religious views with others. Many today claim that such is "un-Christ-like," yet Jesus and His apostles and other early Christians often did this in their discussions with others (Matthew 22; John 8; Acts 6 and 7; 17:1-3; etc. Colossians 4:6; Jude 3; Hebrews 5:12-14).

Note that this requires us to give a "defense" and a "reason." We should not offer as evidence our feelings or experiences, nor what our parents believed or some well-known preacher teaches. We are required to provide reasonable proof for our views (compare Acts 17:2,3; John 20:30,31). This is not to say that we do only that which makes reasonable good sense to us personally. The

point is that we must teach or instruct by giving Scriptural proof, for the Scriptures provide to all good works (2 Timothy 3:16,17). We should reason from the Scriptures. If we cannot show such evidence, then we should either find it in Scripture or cease the practice.

Yet this should be done with meekness and fear (see notes on 1 Peter 3:2-4; James 3:13-18; compare 2 Timothy 2:25; Galatians 6:1). This does not mean weakness and timidity, for such is clearly the opposite of the example of Jesus and His apostles who were often said to be “bold.” The point is that we are not motivated by stubborn self-will, to win our own advantage or appear to be smarter or more worthy of the praises of men. We should speak out of genuine submission to the Lord, to honor and praise Him, and from a sincere desire to help other souls be saved and serve God faithfully.

Note that the instruction here does not mean that we are required to discuss and answer the questions of anyone who asks us, no matter what ulterior motives they may have nor how stubbornly persistent they are in rejecting the truth. Jesus often did not answer questions that were asked Him. He said we should not cast our pearls before swine – Matthew 7:6. So the teaching here must refer to answering those who sincerely seek truth or have not been given the answer of truth and so have not had the opportunity to know what is right. When one has been given an answer yet is obviously just being argumentative or worse yet seeking ways to harm us and the truth, we need to move on and teach others.

See Nehemiah 6:1-4; Matthew 21:23-32; 26:59-63; 27:12-14; John 19:9; Luke 23:7-10; Isaiah 53:7; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:14-18; Titus 3:9-11; Acts 13:45,46; 18:4-7.

“Defense” (Gk. ἀπολογία) – “verbal defence, speech in defence” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

“Reason” (Gk. λόγος) – This word has many meanings, but here it means: “...account, i.e. answer or explanation in reference to judgment...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

***3:16,17 – We should always have a good conscience so that those who defame us as evildoers should be ashamed. If we suffer, it should be for doing good, not evil.***

Again Peter warns us to have a good conscience. We should live such that, if people accuse us of wrong, we can rest assured in our hearts that we are not really guilty and need not feel guilty. It should be evident there are no grounds for the accusation others may make against us. Our conduct should be so obviously good that those who accuse us should be the ones who are ashamed, rather than us. See our notes where Peter previously discussed this point in 2:11,12,15.

Notice that this is a continuation of verse 15. This shows that the good conduct in Christ mentioned here must be associated with the answer that we give to those who question our hope in verse 15. Instruction by word of mouth, to be convincing, must be accompanied by proper example. The two go together, and neither will ultimately be effective unless associated by the other.

People often accuse those who are righteous of doing wrong, hoping that their accusations will take us feel so guilty that we will cease rebuking the accusers for their wrongs. It is a trick that has been used from time immemorial. See, for example, the accusations that Satan made against Job in Job chapters 1 and 2. Wicked people dearly love to accuse good people of evil.

Those who frequently tell lies will often accuse other people of lying. Thieves will call, “Stop, thief!” Hypocrites will accuse others of hypocrisy. And those who have left the faith to go into error will often blame those who remain faithful as being in the wrong; especially they will criticize those who have done the most to help them. It is a well-worn path.

Again we are reminded, as in 2:19-23, 3:14; etc., that the suffering that pleases God is not suffering because we did wrong but because we do right and others oppose us for it. There is no blessing in doing wrong and suffering for it. Peter will continue to emphasize this point in other places in the book.

**3:18-20 – Christ himself suffered, though He was innocent, that he might bring us to God. He even preached to those who were disobedient in the days of Noah.**

**Christ suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.**

Verse 18 reminds us again that Jesus suffered for us. The context is showing that, if He so suffered for us, we should be willing to suffer for Him. He was just, not unjust, but He was suffering for the sake of those of us who are unjust, that He might bring us to God (see notes on 1:18,19; 2:24).

His suffering involved His crucifixion in which He was physically killed (put to death in the flesh). But by the power of the Spirit, He was brought back to life. (Woods believes that “spirit” here refers, not to the power of the Holy Spirit as the means that brought Jesus back to life, but rather to the spiritual life that Jesus Himself possessed despite the fact He died physically. Although he died physically, He was raised and then changed to a spiritual form in which He now exists in heaven for eternity. Both views harmonize with other Scriptures.)

**Christ suffered for sins once.**

This is one of many passages that say quite clearly that Jesus suffered this death only once. He gave Himself “**once for all**,” unlike Old Testament priests. The Old Testament priests offered yearly sacrifices, monthly sacrifices, weekly sacrifices, daily sacrifices, and other sacrifices anytime someone sinned. This had to be done again and again because none of those sacrifices could take care of all sins for all people for all time. In truth, no Old Testament sacrifice ever forgave any sin to the point it would never be held against the sinner again (Hebrews 10:1-4). Jesus’ sacrifice met this need fully so it was offered “once for all.”

The emphasis on “once” shows that the sacrifice of Jesus was so perfect as to not need to be repeated. Because He was the sinless Son of God, His sacrifice was done one time for all people for all time. It will never be repeated.

This contradicts the view of Catholicism which teaches that, in the Mass, Jesus is sacrificed repeatedly throughout history at the hands of the priests. So, it is claimed that those who participate in the Mass are eating the actual blood and body of Jesus Christ. This is erroneous in many ways. One way is that the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus was sacrificed only one time. That sacrifice cannot be repeated. (Catholicism claims that the sacrifice is repeated in an unbloody way; but if it is unbloody, then again they must be wrong when they claim that it is the same sacrifice. Either way, the doctrine of transubstantiation contradicts Scripture.)

See also Hebrews 7:27; 9:12,26-28; 10:10.

**Christ preached to the spirits in prison.**

Some folks (such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) claim this means that, after people die, they can have another chance to hear and submit to the gospel. Mormons even argue that people living on earth must be baptized so these dead people, when they hear the gospel, can be forgiven by the baptism of someone else on their behalf. Response:

1. This cannot be the meaning here since it would contradict other clear passages. People must obey the gospel while they live on earth, and their eternal destiny will be determined on the basis of what they do in the body. When a person dies, his eternal destiny cannot be changed. See 2 Corinthians 5:10; Luke 16:26; Hebrews 9:27.

2. Further, no one can obey the gospel in the place of someone else. Everyone who is saved, will be saved because they themselves obeyed, not because someone else obeyed in their place – Ezekiel 18:20; Philippians 2:12; Romans 2:6-11; Hebrews 5:9; Revelation 22:12; Matthew 16:27; James 1:22-25; 2:14-26; Acts 2:40; Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10.

3. In particular, one who wishes to receive the forgiveness of sins in baptism must himself obey by being baptized. The only one who receives the saving benefits of baptism is the one who **is** baptized – Acts 2:38,39; Mark 16:15,16; Acts 22:16; Galatians 3:26,27; Acts 8:12; Romans 6:3,4.

4. Now, in 1 Peter 3, **how** did Christ preach to the spirits in prison? “**By the Spirit**” (note: “...by the **Spirit; by whom** also He went and preached...” – verses 18,19). So, Christ preached to the people in Noah’s day by the Spirit. But the Spirit of Christ was in the Old Testament prophets (see 1:10,11). And one of those prophets was Noah, a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5). So, when Noah preached to people, the Spirit of Christ was in him, and was preaching to people through him. So, Christ, by the Spirit, went and preached to the people through the preaching of Noah. It’s just that simple!

Compare Ephesians 2:17,18 which says Christ preached peace to Jews and Gentiles who were in Ephesus. But Christ Himself was never personally in Ephesus during His lifetime. Yet He preached to them through the Holy Spirit who guided the apostles and prophets who preached to them (compare Nehemiah 9:30). Note also Genesis 6:3 in which, shortly before the flood, God said His Spirit had been striving with those evil men. So, in this way and at this time, Christ was preaching to these people by the Spirit.

5. Now **when** did this preaching in these verses occur? “**When** once the longsuffering of God waited **in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared**” – verse 20. So, when Noah preached to these people while the ark was being prepared, that is **when** and **how** Christ, by the spirit, preached to them. The preaching referred to here was done, not after these people died, but while they and Noah were alive before the flood actually occurred.

6. In what sense were these people “spirits in prison”? Every person who is guilty of sin, is spiritually a bondservant of Satan, even while he is alive on earth – John 8:34; Romans 6:16; 2 Peter 2:19; 2 Timothy 2:26. So the people, who were disobedient in Noah’s day, were at that time spiritually in prison to Satan. When Noah preached to them, Christ, by the spirit, was preaching to spirits who were at that time prisoners of Satan.

Nothing here says the people were taught the gospel after they died. And to hold such a view contradicts many other clear Scriptures. (Note that it could be that Peter is saying these spirits had been preached to – past tense – referring to Noah’s day. But that they were in prison in Peter’s day, present tense. Either this explanation or the one given above would fit the truth.)

7. When Jesus died, He did not go to the place of torment (as affirmed by the doctrine we are examining), but instead went to **paradise** – Luke 24:43 (same as Abraham’s bosom – Luke 16:19-31). And since there was a great gulf between the two, He was not in the place where the wicked were. The passage could not mean that Christ personally taught wicked people after He and they had died, simply because He was never in the place where they were. (Even the book of Mormon agrees that paradise is a place for **righteous** people – Alma 40:12.)

So, as the passage says, Jesus taught them by the Spirit (through Noah), and He taught them in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared.

8. The passage also does not say that anyone will now or in the future preach to dead men to give them a chance to be forgiven.

9. If these spirits of people who have died **could** hear and believe the gospel, and repent of sins, why could they not also be **baptized** (either in spirit form or at the resurrection of the dead)? Why make their salvation dependent on whether or not someone else performs an act of obedience on their behalf? The passage surely says nothing about anyone being baptized for them – only that they were preached to.

Nothing here supports the Mormon view of baptism for the dead nor the Catholic view of purgatory.

### **Eight souls saved by water in the days of Noah**

Peter then tells how, at the time of the flood and as a result of the preaching done then, just a few people (eight of them) were saved by water. This then leads to the discussion of baptism in the following verse.

Note that those who receive the word of God and truly obey it are almost always in the minority – a “few” compared to the “many” who disobey (Matthew 7:13,14). Noah’s day was an extreme example of that, yet there has almost never been a time when most people served God.

Yet God cared for His faithful servants, even during times of extreme wickedness and spiritual indifference.

**3:21 – In likeness to the salvation of Noah, baptism now saves us, the answer of a good conscience toward God through the resurrection of Jesus.**

**Noah’s salvation (verse 20) is used as a figure or illustration of the fact that “baptism doth also now save us” (KJV).**

Hebrews 11:7 also says that Noah’s salvation illustrates our salvation. Noah was rewarded “by faith,” but that faith required obedience: he had to build the ark or he would have perished along with all the others. So we are saved by baptism just as he was saved “by water” (verse 20).

We are not saved without faith any more than he could have been, but faith must express itself in **obedience**. His obedience involved building the ark, which was then borne up by the water and thus saved him. Our faith must lead us to be baptized, thereby leading to our salvation.

### **Baptism: Necessary to Salvation**

Mark 16:15,16 – And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned...”

Acts 2:38 – Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 22:16 – And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Romans 6:3,4 – Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Colossians 2:12 – Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Galatians 3:27 – For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

1 Peter 3:21 – There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

Surely all people should realize that water, of itself, has no power to remove sin like physical washing removes dirt. So, as the verse says, the purpose of baptism is not the washing of filth from the body. The point is that, in baptism, we are relying on Jesus’ resurrection to save us so we can have a good conscience. Salvation by faith includes baptism, it does not exclude it as some folks claim. The power to forgive is in Jesus’ death and resurrection, but we reach that power in baptism, if we really trust Jesus. So, baptism saves us (i.e., it is an essential condition to our salvation), and this is similar to Noah’s salvation by water.

We may also compare this to the cleansing of Naaman from his leprosy in 2 Kings 5:1-14. Surely no one would believe that dipping in the Jordan River has, of itself, the power to cure leprosy. The power was not in the physical act of dipping. The power was in God, who chose to heal Naaman if he would obey. The dipping in the river was the test of his faith, yet it was necessary in order to receive the healing. So likewise with baptism, dipping in the water is necessary to receive forgiveness of sins, but the power is in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But in the case of Noah, some point out that Noah was never in the water, so they claim water did not save him. But it cannot be denied that the Bible expressly says he **was** saved by water (verse 20 – KJV). As in all illustrations, the two things compared are not identical in every respect, else it would not be an illustration but the same thing. Noah was saved by water in that the water destroyed the evil that surrounded him in the world, yet at the same time it raised up Noah in the ark and so separated him from the evil. Likewise, baptism saves us from evil, separating us from evil, and leaving in condemnation those who refuse to obey.

Remember, God’s own explanation of the illustration expressly says that baptism saves us. No one would ever deny that were it not for the fact that their church doctrine and practice teaches that baptism is not essential to salvation.

Someone else says that “baptism is just a **figure** of salvation – it pictures our salvation, but it is not necessary to receive it.” This flatly contradicts the passage. The passage says baptism does save us. Such an argument makes baptism the illustration and something else the thing being illustrated, thereby leaving Noah’s salvation completely out of the illustration. But the passage says Noah’s salvation is the figure and the thing that it illustrates is the fact that “baptism doth also now save us.”

Specifically, the NKJV and other translations make clear that baptism is the “antitype” – not the figure but the thing being illustrated. “Antitype” means “something that is foreshadowed by a type or figure.” The type is the symbol, illustration, or shadow that is used to represent or illustrate something else. The thing being illustrated is the antitype. The book of Hebrews often refers to shadows or symbols in the Old Testament that serve as types, and the activities or events in the New Testament that were foreshadowed or symbolized by those Old Testament types are referred to as the antitype.

An example may help. In the Lord’s Supper, we eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine. These are symbols that memorialize or remind us of something else. They are the types. That for which they remind us is the body and blood of Christ. These are the antitypes.

So 1 Peter 3:20,21 says baptism is not the figure or type, but is the thing **being illustrated** – the antitype. “In it [the ark] only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also” (NIV). Salvation by faith includes baptism, it does not exclude it. (Other examples of the use of the word “type,” as compared to an antitype, include: Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:5; 9:24; 1 Corinthians 10:6,11; Romans 5:14; Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7; 1 Peter 5:3.)

“Antitype” (ἀντίτυπος) – “...In the N.T. language ἀντίτυπον as a substantive means: 1. a thing formed after some pattern ... 2. a thing resembling another, its counterpart; something in the Messianic times which answers to the type ... prefiguring it in the O.T ... as baptism corresponds to the deluge: 1 Peter 3:21” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

**So, baptism is “an appeal to God for a good conscience” (NASB).**

One who is guilty of sin cannot have a truly clean conscience until he has been cleansed of sin. If he is not aware of the condition of the soul, his conscience will not bother him. But he is still guilty before God. When he learns the truth, he will realize his guilt. Then, in order to have his conscience cleansed before God, he must learn the truth and meet the gospel conditions of forgiveness.

The point in context here is that the conditions he must meet to receive forgiveness include baptism. So, when one is baptized, he is appealing to God for a good conscience. It is the answer that one gives who seeks a good conscience before God. Having received the forgiveness of his sins, then he has a good conscience toward God.

**By the resurrection of Jesus Christ**

Compare Romans 6:3-7 and Colossians 2:12. In baptism the Christian reenacts three aspects of Christ’s crucifixion:

We **die** to sin like He died to the world on the cross (Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:3,5).

We are **buried** in baptism as He was buried in the tomb (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).

And we are **raised** from the water to walk in a new life, like He was raised from the tomb (Romans 6:4ff; Colossians 2:12).

The gospel ties every condition of forgiveness to Jesus' resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 – To be saved, we must **hear and believe** the gospel. But the gospel includes the message of the resurrection.

Acts 17:30,31 – All are commanded to **repent** because we will be judged. The assurance of this is the fact Jesus was raised. Just as surely as Jesus was raised from the dead, just that surely all men must repent of their sins in order to be ready for judgment.

Romans 10:9,10 – We must believe in the resurrection and **confess** Christ as Lord to be saved. It is not enough to believe that Jesus is the Son of God who **died** for your sins. You must also believe that He arose from the dead! Then you must confess Christ as your Lord.

1 Peter 3:21 – In likeness to Noah's salvation, baptism saves us **by the resurrection** of Jesus. If you believe that Jesus' resurrection is essential to our salvation, that you should also understand that you must be baptized in order to be saved by the resurrection. (Colossians 2:12,13; Romans 6:3-5)

This clearly shows that baptism is an essential condition in order to receive forgiveness of sins.

***3:22 – Christ has gone into heaven at the right hand of God, angels and the powers being made subject to Him.***

Having died and been raised to make salvation possible, Jesus then was raised to God's right hand (Hebrews 1:3). There angels, etc., are subject to Him (compare Ephesians 1:19-23; Matthew 28:18).

What is the connection between verses 18-22 and the context? Peter had said we must be willing to suffer for the cause of Christ. He said that Jesus suffered for us to make our salvation possible, so we should be willing to suffer for Him. This means we must stand up for Him in times when people oppose God's will.

In Noah's day, people were wicked, yet Jesus through Noah defended the truth to them (compare verse 15 to verses 19f). In the end, God spared Noah, and so will spare us if we have obeyed the gospel in baptism. After suffering, Jesus became victorious despite the opposition and so will we (verse 22).

## 1 Peter 4

### 4:1-19 – Live a Holy Life Despite Sufferings and Hardship.

4:1-6 -Expect to Be Ridiculed by Those Who Know Our Past.

**4:1,2 – We should have the same mind toward suffering that Christ did. We should cease from sin and live for God, not for the lusts of men.**

As Peter ended chapter 3 he showed that Jesus suffered for us so we should be willing to suffer for Him (verses 13-22). He continues now by showing that Christ suffered for us in the flesh (3:18), so we should also be willing to live for Him (4:1). Since He suffered for us, if His sacrifice atones for our sins, then we too die spiritually in His death, since His death was a sacrifice for us (2:24; Romans 6:12,13,3,4; Colossians 3:3).

Notice once again the importance of a proper pattern of thinking in order to properly sacrifice for Christ. We must arm ourselves with the mind that Christ had. The attitude that Christ possessed led Him to willingly give Himself for the sins of others. He was willing to suffer wrongfully rather than rebel against the will of the Father. The same is true of us. Peter is teaching us in context that we too should be willing to suffer for the cause of Christ, and possessing the attitude that Christ possessed is essential to do so properly. See also Philippians 2:5-8.

If we have suffered in the flesh (imitating His example of suffering), then we must cease sin. We owe it to Him to live our lives for Him since He gave His life for us. We have lived long enough in the past in the sins of the flesh, and now we should live the rest of our time on earth doing God's will, not serving man's desires (compare 2 Corinthians 5:14,15; 1 Corinthians 6:19,20; Romans 6:2; Colossians 3:3). But the passage also says there is a sense in which we have ceased from sin. Perhaps the meaning here is that those who have reached the point of being willing to suffer persecution, even death, have matured in their dedication to Christ so that they can be expected to live upright lives in other areas as well.

**4:3 – We have spent enough time doing the will of the Gentiles in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and idolatries.**

Peter then names some sins, typical of Gentiles, in which we have participated enough in the past.

#### Lewdness

“Lewdness” or “licentious” (NKJV) is also translated “lasciviousness” (KJV, ASV), “sensuality” (NASB, ESV), “carnal indulgences” (MLV).

English definitions of these words are:

“Lewd – characterized by or intended to excite crude sexual desire; obscene” – [www.collinsdictionary.com](http://www.collinsdictionary.com).

“Lascivious – lustful; lecherous; exciting sexual desire” – [www.collinsdictionary.com](http://www.collinsdictionary.com).

“Licentious – sexually unrestrained or promiscuous” – [www.collinsdictionary.com](http://www.collinsdictionary.com).

These terms by definition refer to anything that causes or tends to arouse sexual excitement, desire, or lust between people not married to one another. This would include indecent clothing, mixed dancing, mixed swimming (in modern swimwear), suggestive jokes and speech, petting, and other forms of sexual suggestiveness.

Even if no actual sexual intercourse occurs, it is still sinful to fantasize and entertain thoughts about doing it with someone not your lawful spouse, or to want to see or touch that which is intimate or private. Anything that encourages the desire to do these is forbidden by this term.

Compare Mark 7:22; Jude 4; 2 Peter 2:2,7,18; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 4:19; Romans 13:13.

“Lasciviousness” (ασελγεια) – “...unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence ... ‘wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy

words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc.’ (Fritzsche) ...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

“excess, licentiousness, absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness” – Vine.

### **Lusts**

“Lusts” (NKJV, KJV, ASV, NASB, MLV) is also translated “passions” (ESV).

Lusts refer to those passions or strong desires which in Scripture generally refer to desires that would lead us to violate the will of God. Gentiles, who worship idols, were generally known for indulging their desires in wickedness and evil of all kinds, including those listed by Peter in these verses. The word is somewhat general rather than identifying specific kinds of evil.

The point is that Christians should not allow their desires to control their conduct. All of us have desires which are somewhat natural. Our physical appetites would lead us to participate in activities that please ourselves in food, drink, sexual activities, etc. All these desires have proper outlets when properly controlled, but they have no inherent sense of right or wrong. So, people who are controlled by their appetites are quickly and easily and often led into wickedness that violates Scripture.

The lesson is that, however much time we have spent in such activities in the past, it is too much. We need to learn to control our desires to do what is right, not allow them to dominate our choices regarding how we live.

“Lust” (επιθυμία) – “...denotes ‘strong desire’ of any kind, the various kinds being frequently specified by some adjective ... The word is used of a good desire only in Luke 22:15; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 2:17. Everywhere else it has a bad sense. In Rom. 6:12 the injunction against letting sin reign in our mortal body to obey the ‘lust’ thereof, refers to those evil desires which are ready to express themselves in bodily activity. They are equally the ‘lusts’ of the flesh, Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:16, 24; Eph. 2:3; 2 Pet. 2:18; 1 John 2:16... Such ‘lusts’ are not necessarily base and immoral, they may be refined in character, but are evil if inconsistent with the will of God.” – Vine.

### **Drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties**

These three terms describe, in decreasing order, various degrees of drinking alcoholic drinks.

#### **“Drunkenness”**

“Drunkenness” (NKJV, NASB, ESV, MLV) is also translated “winebibblings” (ASV) or “excess of wine” (KJV). The term (οινοφλυγία) refers to “extravagant indulgence in potations long drawn out” (Trench). The meaning refers to obvious and extreme forms of drunkenness.

#### **“Revelries”**

“Revelries” (NKJV) is also translated “revellings” (KJV, ASV), “carousing” (NASB), “orgies” (ESV), and “acts of reveling” (MLV).

It refers to what we would call wild parties, with feasting, drinking, and sexual looseness (immodesty, dancing, etc.). Notice that this refers to drinking, but not necessarily as extreme as drunkenness.

“Revel” (κωμος) – “...excessive feasting, ... carousing, revelry...” – Arndt & Gingrich.

“Revel” (κωμος) – “a revel, carousel, i.e., in the Grk. writ. prop. a nocturnal and riotous procession of half-drunken and frolicsome fellows who after supper parade through the streets with torches and music in honor of Bacchus or some other deity, and sing and play before the houses of ... friends; hence, used generally of feasts and drinking parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry ... Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

#### **“Drinking parties”**

“Drinking parties” (NKJV, NASB, ESV) is also translated “banquetings” (KJV), “carousings” (ASV), “tippling” (NEB), and “drinking-bouts” (MLV). It is less excessive than “drunkenness” or “revelries” listed previously in the verse. “Potos [drinking parties] does not necessarily imply excessiveness, though it does provide an opportunity for excess” (Trench). “...a social gathering at which wine was served...” (Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich).

This is what we would call “social drinking.” Even if one does not drink to excess as society views it, he is nevertheless tempting himself and those around him by participating in a practice that hinders his inhibitions and moral judgment.

So, Christians should avoid any kind of drinking that could even possibly lead to intoxication, even if some who are involved in it do not become obviously intoxicated. This is so because God wants our minds to be sober so we can distinguish temptation and have the will to resist it. One of the main reasons that the Lord has condemned the use of drinking and drugs is that their very first effect is to weaken inhibitions and moral judgment. Even before speech or motor skills are noticeably impaired, moral judgment and self-control are diminished.

What concerns God about the use of alcoholic beverages, including the use of recreational drugs, is the effect it has on the brain. In order to avoid temptation and control oneself to practice what is right, one needs his full mental capacity to recognize right from wrong and the strength of will power to do the right. All of this is hindered by alcoholic beverages, and that problem begins long before any outwardly noticeable evidence of physical effects. See 1 Peter 5:8; 1:13-17; 1 Corinthians 9:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8; Proverbs 4:23.

Proverbs 23:29-35 describes specific aspects of the dissipation that comes from drinking alcoholic beverages. The solution that the wise man Solomon gives by inspiration is to treat wine like one would a serpent or adder that seeks to bite him. He should avoid the wine from the very beginning.

“Wine is a mocker” (Proverbs 20:1).

“Drinking parties” (ποτος) – “...a social gathering at which wine was served, *drinking party*...” – Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich.

### **Idolatries**

“Idolatry” is the worship of images or heathen deities other than the true God of the Bible. The Gentiles, to whom Peter expressly refers, were deeply involved in worship of all kinds of false gods. These practices were associated with drunkenness, sexual immorality, and wickedness of all sorts, even in their forms of worship. This included their banquets in which they served their idols by all these forms of wickedness. Peter shows that any past participation in such practices is too much, and those who seek to be Christians must turn from them all.

See also Deuteronomy 4:19; 5:7-9; 17:2-5; 2 Kings 21:1-6; 23:4,5; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 10:7,14; 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 John 5:21.

“Idolatry” (ειδωλολατρεία) – “...the worship of false gods, idolatry: ... in plural, the vices springing from idolatry and peculiar to it, [1 Peter 4:3](#). ...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

**4:4,5 – People speak evil of Christians because they no longer live in dissipation as before. They will give account to the judge of the living and the dead.**

When we refuse to participate in these sins (spoken of here is a flood of dissipation), as we once participated, people will think this is strange. They will not understand why we do not practice these sins with them as we once did. As a result, they will speak evil of us (compare 2:11,12; 3:16; Matthew 5:10-12). This kind of thing is what leads to much of the persecution Peter is discussing in context.

Notice the expression “run with them.” This is similar to our common expression today of running with a bad crowd. The idea involves, not just the fact that we are acquainted with the people, but that we are actively involved with them in close association and participation in their activities. The people with whom we have close companionship will become a significant influence on us. We will soon find ourselves participating in the things they enjoy. This is why our choice of friends is so important. See 1 Corinthians 15:33. When we become Christians, we must take care that we do not run with those who lead us into sin.

When Christians refuse to sin, especially if we have been guilty in the past, people become upset. Our conduct rebukes them for their sin and shows there is no excuse for them. They don't

want to be around us because it makes them feel guilty. But if they can pressure us to participate, then they feel justified: They think we are no better than they are, so they see no reason to change.

Consider, for example, how the Jews hated Paul after he left Judaism to become a Christian. The same kind of thing often happens today to people who leave the religion in which they grew up, such as Islam, to become Christians. Even those who leave so-called Christian denominations to accept the truth of God's word are often pressured and even shunned by their family and former companions. See Matthew 10:21,22,34-37; John 15:18-23; 16:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16; compare the book of Hebrews.

Those who so treat us, however, will give account to God in the judgment for their conduct. We need not seek personal vengeance. They will be punished if they do not repent. Notice that the passage here refers to the judgment of the living and the dead. This is an expression showing, as often stated elsewhere, that all people will be judged. This includes both those who are still alive at the time when Jesus returns and those who have previously died. All will be judged, none will escape. (Compare 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15; Hebrews 9:27.)

***4:6 – So the gospel was preached to those who are dead, so they may be judged according to men in the flesh but live according to God in the spirit.***

Mormons tie this verse to 3:19, saying this means that Jesus preached to the people of Noah's day, but He preached to them after they were dead. So, He gave them a chance to repent after death (provided someone here on earth had been baptized for them – see notes on 3:19). However:

(1) Peter is no longer talking about people who sinned in Noah's day. He is talking about people who suffer because they do God's will, and their former companions in sin speak evil of them (verses 1-5). This has nothing whatever to do with the people in Noah's day.

(2) In order to encourage these sufferers, Peter talks about people who ***are*** dead" (present tense) – i.e., they "are dead" at the time Peter wrote. But the gospel ***was preached***" to them (past tense) – i.e., the gospel had been preached to them ***prior*** to the time Peter wrote. They "are dead" when Peter wrote, but the gospel "was preached" to them prior to the time Peter wrote.

Nothing says these people were dead at the time the preaching was done. The distinction in tenses shows these things happened at two different times. They heard the gospel when they were alive and then later they died. To claim that the passage teaches that people had the gospel preached to them after they died is to totally misunderstand the language of the passage and misuse the point Peter is making.

The conduct of these people "in the flesh" was judged according to man's judgment, just like the Christians Peter is comforting were judged by evil men (verse 4). But according to God they live in the spirit. There is a difference between God's judgment of these people and man's. Men condemn them, but God approves them – they live to Him.

(3) So, Peter is pointing out people in the past who also suffered like the people to whom he speaks. At the time Peter wrote, the people about whom he speaks were dead and had gone on to their reward. But while alive they had the gospel preached to them (gospel preaching can benefit people only while they are alive – see notes on 3:19). When they obeyed the gospel, people condemned them just as was being done to the people to whom Peter is talking. Nevertheless, despite the opposition of people, God approved of them.

This passage, like Hebrews chapter 11, is intended to encourage people who are suffering by reminding them of faithful people of the past who suffered and yet endured.

(4) Finally, observe that the passage nowhere says anything about living people being baptized for dead people. Such a concept not only is not taught here, but it flatly contradicts the teaching of Scripture elsewhere. See again the notes on 3:19.

So, this passage has no reference to anyone who lived in the past before the gospel age began, let alone to people in Noah's day. The point is that, before the time when Peter wrote this letter, there were people who, while they were living, had heard the gospel and had become Christians.

Since then, they had died and gone on to their reward. But while they were alive they had heard and obeyed the gospel and were persecuted even as the people to whom Peter wrote were being persecuted.

Understanding that others have also suffered for the cause of Christ should help the people to whom Peter wrote – and us – to understand what to expect as Christians.

(MacKnight suggests an alternative view. He suggests that those who are dead were not physically dead but spiritually dead – Ephesians 2:1ff; etc. So the gospel was preached to them, and when they were converted men would condemn them as in verses 1-5. However, they would live before God spiritually. This view does not contradict any other Scriptures.)

#### 4:7-11 - Serve God and One Another As Faithful Stewards.

**4:7-9 – Since the end is at hand, we should be watchful in prayer, fervent in love for one another, showing hospitality without grumbling.**

**The end of all things is at hand; so be serious and watchful in prayer.**

Peter now encourages them to realize that the end of their sufferings is close. No matter how old you are or how long you may live, life is temporary and short so the end of all things for you is at hand. So, Peter warns them to be diligent in many ways and not let the problems they were suffering to lead them to disobey God.

It should be clear that the word “all” cannot possibly be used in an unlimited way here. Would the end of heaven be at hand? What about love, the Scriptures, angels, etc.? Yet, it is not clear to me what else Peter may be referring to when he says the end of all things is at hand.

One possibility is that he refers to the fall of Jerusalem and therefore the end of the power of Judaism. This explanation would certainly fit the language, and it would help explain why their times of persecution might be coming to a close. Much of the persecution that Christians suffered in the first century came at the hands of Jews, as described in the book of Acts. When Judaism fell, this would relieve a significant portion of the suffering to which Peter refers. However, the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish system would of itself constitute a time of great suffering, especially for those who were Jewish in nationality, even if they had become Christians. So it is possible that Peter is referring especially to the days of suffering ahead.

On the other hand, the language may sound like a reference to the second coming of Jesus and the destruction of the earth. However, it seems highly unlikely to me that Peter would refer to this as at hand in any sense that would be of comfort to the suffering Christians. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, Paul went to great lengths to admonish the Christians to not think that the second coming of Jesus and the destruction of the earth was so close that they should expect it immediately. Surely Peter’s teaching should not be taken to in any way contradict that.

The most likely meaning seems to me, as I have described above, to be that the time of their suffering would soon be over. No matter by what means it would end, whether by the end of this earthly life or by the fall of Jerusalem, in any case it was at hand. The suffering of this life is short compared to our eternal reward. So for all of us it can be said that the end of suffering is at hand. See 2 Corinthians 4:17,18; Romans 8:18.

He says to be sober and watchful in prayer. Since the suffering was continuing but would be over in a relatively short time, they should continue to take their responsibilities of serving the Lord seriously and be carefully on guard to avoid temptation. In this way they could be faithful and receive God’s eternal reward when the time of trial on earth is over. In 5:8 Paul discusses in greater detail the importance of being watchful and sober because of Satan’s temptations– see our notes there. And also see notes on 1:13 regarding sobriety.

**And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”**

Peter then urges them above all else to have fervent love for one another (see notes on 1:22 regarding brotherly love). Christians always need to love one another, but it is especially needed

when we are suffering. We need to support and encourage one another since we will surely not be supported by those who are not Christians. See Hebrews 10:32-34; 2 Corinthians 1:3-10.

Love covers a multitude of sins (compare Proverbs 10:12 see also Proverbs 17:9; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; James 5:19,20). This does not mean that godly people just overlook the sins of others and do nothing about them.

Other passages teach our need to oppose sin. James 5:19,20 expressly says sins are covered when we help a brother to see his sin and repent of it. Love does not lead us to keep quiet about sin, but rather leads us to warn others so they can turn from it. (See Revelation 3:19; Galatians 6:1,2; James 5:19,20; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Ephesians 5:11; 2 Timothy 4:2-4.)

The proper lessons to learn are: (1) We should not react by seeking vengeance, but should return good for evil (Romans 12:14,17-21). In this sense we “cover” their sin with love. (2) We speak to them out of real concern for them so they will repent and be forgiven (James 5:19,20). (3) When they repent, we forgive them and cease to treat them as wrongdoers (Luke 17:1-4, etc.).

Love covers sin in the sense that love leads sin to be corrected so that it can be forgiven.

### **Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.**

“Hospitable” (Gk. φιλοξενος) literally refers to love of strangers. From that it came to mean generosity to guests. It involves an interest and concern for helping even people we don’t know well.

Hebrews 13:1,2 and various Old Testament passages show that, in Bible times, travelers had relatively few options where they would stay to spend the night. Inns were not common like motels are today in most areas. And some sources I have read indicate that even the inns that existed were often dangerous, immoral, and otherwise unpleasant places to stay, especially for those who were moral and upright. Likewise, staying in the homes of people who were not Christians – especially if one did not know them – might be dangerous in times of persecution. So, it was especially important for Christians to practice hospitality to one another as they traveled.

While circumstances may not be quite the same today, nevertheless hospitality is still important. It would include helping Christians who are fleeing or suffering from persecution (taking them into our homes), Christians who are traveling (such as preachers), helping new converts, people who are new in the community, etc. We should try to get to know them, invite them for a meal, etc.

The emphasis in hospitality is in helping *needs*, not just doing what people want done or what we enjoy for our own pleasure (having friends over for parties, etc.). It also emphasizes using one’s home to help the needs of people.

Peter emphasizes that this should be done willingly, not with complaint and grumbling. As with some other good works, it is easy for people who practice hospitality to begin to resent the inconvenience and trouble caused. Some think they must keep the preacher for the gospel meeting since no one else will do it. Or they think, “We had them last time, so it is their turn to have us over.”

Or they may resent the hard work of preparing a meal or cleaning up afterwards. Or perhaps the family they invite has small children who are perhaps irritating or leave the house disorganized. Or they may be concerned about possible harm done to their furnishings. Such attitudes, if we are not careful may lead us to avoid practicing hospitality altogether. Or if we are hospitable, we complain and grumble. Peter admonishes us to improve our attitudes. Compare the teaching on giving in 2 Corinthians 9:6,7. See also Philippians 2:14.

Others passages about hospitality are Hebrews 13:1,2; Matthew 25:34-36,40; Genesis 18:1-8; 19:1-3; 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:9,10; Romans 12:13; Acts 16:15; Luke 14:12-14; 2 Kings 4:8-11; 3 John 5ff.

**4:10,11 – As good stewards, use the gifts given us by the grace of God. Speak as the oracles of God, minister with the ability God gives, and in all things give God the glory.**

Peter continues to admonish Christians how to live, even when we are suffering.

### **Good stewards of the manifold grace of God**

Peter says we are all stewards of the various gifts God has given us by His grace. A steward is a servant who has been entrusted by his master to use the master's possessions to accomplish work that the master has assigned to the steward. The possessions are put under the care of the servant, but he is not free to use them to please himself or serve his own ends. He must use them to accomplish the intentions of the owner.

So, all Christians are stewards because God has given us gifts to use in accordance with His instructions to please Him and do His will (compare 1 Corinthians 4:1; Titus 1:7; 1 Corinthians 9:17; Luke 12:41-46; Matthew 24:45). The owner or master accomplishes His will through us. But we must be sure that we use those gifts properly, and God will judge us for our use of them.

Peter says these gifts are manifold – that is, there are many different kinds and varieties of gifts (compare Romans 12:6ff; 1 Corinthians 12:12ff). Each of us has more than one gift from God to use. And different people may have different gifts.

This does not mean we should neglect any of the various kinds of good works that God has instructed. But some have greater abilities in certain areas, so God expects them to use those gifts more productively in those areas compared to others who may have greater abilities in other areas. We should not resent the fact that other people have abilities we may not have, nor should we neglect to use the abilities that we do have. Rather we should all work together, appreciating one another and the work that others do, so together we can accomplish God's purpose for the gifts that He has given us.

Notice the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30.

Some commentators think that the gift referred to here means the supernatural miraculous gifts granted by the Holy Spirit. While it is true that the word for "gift" used here is used in 1 Corinthians 12 to refer to such miraculous gifts, it is also true that the same word is used elsewhere to refer to other blessings from God which are not miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 7:7; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Romans 6:23; 11:29; etc.).

In this context, verse 11 describes specific examples of gifts that Peter refers to: speaking the word of God, and ministering to others. These gifts do not require or necessarily refer to miraculous powers of the Spirit. Then the verse says that it refers to giving glory to God in **all** things. So, while the use of miraculous spiritual gifts by those who possessed them might have been included, there is no reason to think that is the exclusive or even the primary meaning here.

"Gift" (χάρισμα) – "...a gift of grace; a favor which one receives without any merit of his own; in the N.T. ... the gift of divine grace ... used of the natural gift of continence, due to the grace of God as creator, ... the gift of faith, knowledge, holiness, virtue ...; the economy of divine grace, by which the pardon of sin and eternal salvation is appointed to sinners in consideration of the merits of Christ laid hold of by faith, ... extraordinary powers, distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit..." – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

"Steward" (οικονομος) – "...the manager of a household or of household affairs; esp. a steward, manager, superintendent ... to whom the head of the house or proprietor has intrusted the management of his affairs, the care of receipts and expenditures, and the duty of dealing out the proper portion to every servant and even to the children not yet of age ...; the manager of a farm or landed estate, an overseer ...; any and every Christian who rightly uses the gifts intrusted to him by God for the good of his brethren ... 1 Peter 5:10..." – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

## **Speaking as the oracles of God**

Peter then lists some specific examples of the gifts God has given of which we are stewards and for which He will hold us accountable to use properly. As Peter has stated, there are many such gifts, but we will notice more closely the ones that he specifically mentions.

One such gift is the message or oracles God has revealed to us (Acts 7:38; Romans 3:2; Hebrews 5:12). "Oracles" refers to "the words or utterances of God" (Thayer). So, one of the blessings or gifts that God has given us which we must use properly is the message that He has revealed in His word. This is a great gift or blessing, and we should truly appreciate God for having revealed His will to us.

In order to use the oracles of God properly, we must take care that our speech or teaching is always in accord with this message. To do otherwise is to fail to be good stewards. Yet far too many are negligent in how they handle the word of God; some even deliberately pervert the teachings for their own purposes. The Scriptures repeatedly warn us about the danger of false teaching.

In particular, many people teach things they cannot find in God's oracles. They advocate practices nowhere advocated in God's word, saying God will accept practices He never said He wanted. Such is a clear failure to speak as God's oracles (see Matthew 15:9,13; Galatians 1:8,9; 2 John 9-11; Colossians 3:17; Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12; 3:5,6; Revelation 22:18,19).

On the other hand, there are those even in the church who will sometimes criticize teachers who faithfully speak what God's word says. Sometimes they object to certain topics being discussed at all, even though they are topics taught or discussed in Scripture. Other times they object to the manner or language used to discuss a subject, even though the Scriptures themselves use that manner or language. Those who teach God's word should allow the Scriptures to serve as their guide regarding what they teach and how they teach it. When they do so, others should appreciate and not object when teachers speak as the oracles of God.

How careful are we being as stewards of the oracles of God?

## **Ministering with the strength that God supplies**

We also receive from God our strength and ability to live and work. We should use this strength to minister or serve according to His will. This too is a stewardship.

Far too many fail to realize the great blessing God has given them with their health and the many gifts necessary to sustain life and health. All these are gifts from God which we must use properly. He did not put us here to use our lives and strength for our own ends and desires; rather, we should minister or serve to care for others and accomplish God's work. As the passage says, we must use our ability to give glory to God.

Yet many people neglect the work of God and instead live their lives in pleasure, seeking to obtain wealth and the enjoyments of this life. Many live in the kind of riotous living that Peter mentioned earlier in verses 3,4. Others may not be involved in wickedness as such, but they neglect or waste opportunities that God gives them to use their abilities to accomplish His work. They do not use their time or abilities to worship God, study His word, raise their children to know the will of God, or teach the gospel to others. They live for themselves rather than for God.

Still others destroy their own strength and ability by practicing selfish indulgence in habits that ruin their health but have no value in God's service. This includes drinking, smoking, drug abuse, etc. The end result has the definite tendency to destroy the health and life that God has given us.

All such conduct is a failure to realize that we are stewards who will give an account for the abilities that God gave us to serve Him.

So, Peter concludes by emphasizing that all our gifts should be used to give glory to God through Christ, the one who deserves glory and dominion forever.

**4:12-14 – Trials are not something strange, but are partaking of Christ's sufferings and a blessing because God's Spirit rests on us.**

Peter now admonishes further a right attitude in our suffering.

**We should not think it strange that we undergo such fiery trials.**

We have been told several times that we ought to expect such problems (compare 1:6,7). For other Scriptures showing that Christians will suffer for Christ, see notes on 2:19,20.

When Christians suffer because they have been serving the Lord, it is easy for us to feel sorry for ourselves and think we should not have to undergo such hardships. We tend to think that living good lives should lead to blessings in this life, so good people should not have to suffer. This, in effect, is saying that suffering should be strange to a Christian. Peter says this simply is not so but is a misconception we should avoid.

He then shows that, on the contrary we should realize that there is good that can come even from suffering.

**We ought to rejoice realizing that we are partakers of Jesus' suffering.**

To partake is to have fellowship or to share in something. In this case, we share in the suffering of Jesus. Christ suffered for us; now He requires us to live for Him. When we do, we will suffer, and should be willing to suffer for His cause. A disciple who lives like his Master will surely suffer as did his Master. If people persecuted Christ, they will persecute us. So, we share in His sufferings.

Consider how ungrateful it is of us to be unwilling to suffer for Him who suffered so for us.

(See also Matthew 5:10-12; 13:21; Mark 10:30; John 15:19,20; 16:1-4,33; 2 Timothy 3:12; Acts 9:16; 14:22; Romans 5:3; 8:17-39; 1 Corinthians 4:9; 2 Corinthians 1:4-10; 4:17; 7:4; 2 Timothy 3:12; Hebrews 10:32-36; 1 Peter 2:19-23; 3:14-18; 4:1,15-19; 5:10.)

**When He returns, we will have special cause for rejoicing for then we will be rewarded with Him.**

The reward for the Christian life does not come here on earth. It comes in eternity after this life is over. Now is a time of trial in which we must prove ourselves to be truly dedicated to our Lord, willing to suffer for Him even as He did for us. First comes the labors and hardship, then afterward comes the reward. Then we can be glad with exceeding joy.

So if we suffer reproach for Him, we know we are blessed (happy) because God's Spirit rests on us. For God's spirit to rest on us is probably simply another way of saying that we have fellowship with God. Other passages speak of the Spirit dwelling in us, not literally, but in the sense that we have a close and proper relationship with God rather than being alienated from Him as when we were in sin. See 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; Romans 5:5; 8:9; Acts 2:38; 5:32; James 4:5; Ephesians 5:18; compare the indwelling of the Father and Son - John 17:20-23; 15:1-6; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 5:17; 1 John 1:3,6,7; 2:3-6; 4:14-16; Ephesians 3:17; 2:1-5,11-22; Romans 8:1; 6:3,4; Galatians 3:27.

Those around us blaspheme God, but we glorify Him. Our different way of looking at Jesus should lead us to have a different way of looking at suffering (compare 2:4ff). When we realize all that Christ has done for us, we realize it is a small thing for us to suffer for His cause.

The natural tendency is to reject suffering, resenting it, seeking at all costs to avoid it. But some suffering is necessary and worthwhile. We may seek to avoid it if we can, yet we should never disobey God to avoid suffering. If we suffer for His cause, it is a privilege and a blessing. We ought to rejoice that we can suffer for Him.

**4:15,16 – So we should not suffer for doing evil. But if we suffer as a Christian, we should not be ashamed but should glorify God.**

We have repeatedly been told not to suffer because we do wrong (2:19f; 3:17), but if we suffer let it be because we have done good.

**We should not suffer for doing evil.**

Here Peter lists some specific things which, if we are guilty, we would deserve to suffer. Such conduct may lead to our suffering, but we cannot say we are suffering for God or that there is any reward for it. So, we should not commit these sins. Here are some specific sins that he lists:

*Murderer*

This word (φονεὺς) refers to one who takes the life of another human being. People are in God's image; so killing a man (male or female, regardless of age or physical condition) is sinful, whereas killing a plant or animal is not (Genesis 9:2-6). This would forbid the modern practice of abortion, since the unborn is considered by God to be a child or baby just the same as those who have been born.

Others have as much right to live as we do. So, killing another is not doing good, but is unloving (Romans 13:8-10). We would not want others to do it to us, so we ought not do it to anyone else.

See Genesis 9:2-6; Matthew 15:19,20; Revelation 21:8; 22:15; Romans 13:8-10; Exodus 23:7; 20:13; Proverbs 6:16,17; Deuteronomy 27:25.

*Thief*

"Thief" (κλεπτῆς) refers to one who takes other people's property without their permission. Christians realize that people have a right to keep what they worked for. This is called "property rights." Of course, God ultimately owns everything, but we "own" what is "ours" in contrast to other people. We want others to respect our property and not steal from us. So, we ought to love our neighbor and not steal his property.

Stealing takes many forms, not just one or two. Besides the obvious forms of armed robbery or shoplifting, there are dishonest business practices, "white collar" theft (juggling the books, extortion, etc.), employee theft, and refusal to pay debts. All these are stealing because one takes for himself that which belongs to others, without their permission.

Clearly stealing is a common problem in modern society. Many people simply are not content to earn their income by an honest occupation.

See Matthew 7:12; 15:19,20; Romans 13:6-10; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Exodus 20:15; Isaiah 6:18; 1 Peter 4:15,16; Titus 2:9,10; Psalm 37:21; Ezekiel 33:15.

*Evildoer*

This word (κακοποιός) is simply a general term for one who does evil. Peter uses it here, apparently, to make the point in general that, when Christians suffer, it should not come as a consequence of practicing what is wicked, but as a consequence of persecution when they serve God faithfully.

*Busybody*

This word is translated "busybody" (NKJV, KJV) or "meddler" (ASV, NASB, ESV).

The word does not refer simply to one who slanders or gossips about others. The idea refers to one who interferes in the affairs of others, seeking to control the conduct of others, when that conduct in no way is their own proper business or affair. The original word used here is the word which elsewhere is translated "bishop" or "overseer," combined with the word for others. So, the idea is one who seeks to take the supervision of the affairs of other people.

Some people think we are meddling when we simply seek to teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ or to rebuke them for their sins. The Bible shows clearly that it is our responsibility to help other people see how to correct their lives to please the Lord. However, some attempt to tell other people how to live their lives in matters that are simply personal opinion or judgment. Some seem

to think they always have a better idea about everything and cannot keep their opinions to themselves. This often leads to conflict. Peter says such conduct should not characterize Christians and therefore should not be a cause of suffering to us.

See also 1 Timothy 5:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:11.

“Busybody” (αλλοτριοεπισκοπος) – “...one who takes the supervision of affairs pertaining to others and in no wise to himself (a meddler in other men’s matters)...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

**Do not be ashamed to suffer as a Christian but glorify God in that name.**

It would be a shame to suffer for evil. Many people would think it is also a shame to suffer for Jesus. They would be ashamed to admit they serve Him and allow people to make fun of them. But Peter says that, if being a Christian makes people want to create problems for us, then we should be willing to suffer and then give God glory for it. Mark 8:38; Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:8,12

This is one of only three verses in the Bible that use the term “Christian” (compare Acts 11:26; 26:28). Some people claim the term was always used derisively, but the word here is unquestionably used in a good sense, a name we should be pleased to wear. We should be willing even to suffer for this name.

The disciples in Antioch were for the first time referred to by a new name, “Christian” (Acts 11:26). Disciples are followers, learners of the Lord (cf. John 8:31). So “Christian” is simply another term for those who adhere to or follow Christ and so are Christlike.

Names matter to God. In particular, Christians should call ourselves by terms we can find in Scripture, not exalting men or doctrines or factions (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). We should just be Christians as were Jesus’ disciples in the first century.

***4:17-19 – Judgment begins at the house of God and the righteous are scarcely saved, so what will be the end of the ungodly? Those who suffer according to God’s will should trust Him as a faithful Creator.***

God’s house, the church, (compare 2:4ff; 1 Timothy 3:15) will be judged (“has come” is added by the translators). Do not think that we will escape judgment just because we are His people. We will be saved only after great difficulties and hardships, such as the suffering that has been described. “Scarcely” saved (NKJV, KJV, ASV, ESV, MLV) is also translated “with difficulty” (NASB).

No one should believe serving God will be easy or that salvation will come with little problems. The Christian life is difficult to live (Matthew 7:13,14; Hebrews 2:2-4). People who are considering becoming Christians should be warned of the difficulties before they become Christians so that they may count the cost as Jesus taught in Luke 14:25-33. This does not mean it is impossible, however, for God will help us in many ways (1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 6:10-18). That is why we must put our faith in Him.

Verse 18 appears to refer to Proverbs 11:31, which says (NKJV): “If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner.” This appears at first to have a somewhat different significance. The idea is that even those who live faithfully for God will face hardships and difficulties in this life.

Compare this to Acts 14:22 – “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” If this is meaning here, then the “judgment” mentioned in verse 17 refers, not to the final day of judgment, but to chastisements that we face in this life. These serve to judge us or even discipline us. Suffering at the hands of persecutors has this effect.

In time of hardship, some will fall away and will not remain faithful. Those who remain faithful will do so only by trusting in God’s strength, so in that sense we are scarcely saved. If great hardship is required for us to remain faithful, then what hope is for the therefore those who are not willing to live godly lives? Compare Malachi 3:5; Matthew 3:10.

The point seems to be that some may be tempted, in time of suffering, to just give up and live like ungodly people around us. But if we do that, there is surely no hope for salvation. We will scarcely be saved if we continue to be faithful. If we give up serving God, our case is hopeless.

Therefore, let us give our souls into the keeping of God, being willing to suffer for Him. He created us and is the all-wise and faithful God to whom we entrust our souls. Let us do good and be willing to suffer as necessary to please Him.

“Scarcely” (μολις) – “...a. with difficulty, hardly ... b. not easily, *i.e.* scarcely, very rarely...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

## 1 Peter 5

### 5:1-14 – Relate Properly with Leaders, Trusting God and Resisting Satan.

#### 5:1-5 - Proper Relations Between Elders and Members

#### **5:1 – Speaking as a fellow elder and apostle, Peter specifically discusses the duties of elders.**

Peter begins a discussion of the work and role of elders, being himself an elder. “Elder” literally refers to older men, but the way it is used demonstrates that these are men who have certain special qualifications and are therefore appointed by the church to serve in a special capacity (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2,4,6,22f; 20:17,28-30; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17,19; Titus 1:5-9). The work of these men will be discussed further in verses 2-5.

Peter classes himself as a “fellow-elder.” This shows us that he was an elder serving alongside other elders. There is no hint here, anywhere else in Peter’s epistle, or in any inspired writing that Peter was the Pope, Supreme Pontiff, or head of the universal church on earth. He classes himself as a witness of Jesus’ suffering (an apostle just like other apostles) and a fellow-elder (just like other elders).

Further, the qualifications of elders require that they be married men (Titus 1:5-9; compare 1 Timothy 3:1-7). Peter was a married man (Matthew 8:14; 1 Corinthians 9:5). This creates serious problems for the Catholic view that Peter was the first Pope or head of the church, since they require that Popes and all bishops be unmarried. Their rule would eliminate from office the very man they say was their first Pope! This also proves they have bound that which Christ has not bound when they require bishops to remain unmarried (compare 1 Timothy 4:1-3).

Besides being an elder, Peter was also a witness of Jesus’ suffering, and therefore qualified to be an apostle. Peter had affirmed his apostleship in the very first verse of the letter (1:1). See our discussion there about the significance of the role of apostles. However, the emphasis here is on the work of elders, as the following verses show.

Peter also said that he was a partaker of the glory to be revealed. Since the glory had not yet been revealed, it follows that Peter had not yet ultimately entered into it. Peter was a Christian, and as such he had a glorious reward awaiting him in heaven. So, he was a partaker of it in the sense of having it as a glorious future inheritance. This is also true for all of us. He had discussed this glorious reward in greater detail in 1:3,4 (see our notes there).

#### **5:2 – Elders shepherd the flock among them, serving as overseers, willingly and eagerly, not by constraint for dishonest gain.**

##### **Terms for elders**

God often describes things – especially things pertaining to man’s spiritual service – using terms that describe various aspects of those things in God’s plan. He often uses various different terms for the same thing to teach us different aspects of it. This is true for the church, for Christians, Jesus, salvation, sin, Satan, the gospel, etc. It is also true for the office of elder. To understand the work and value of elders, it will help us to study the words God uses for it.

“Elder”/“presbyter” (πρεσβυτερος)

This term emphasizes the age of the men, referring to the wisdom, experience, and dignity of maturity, which ought to be useful to these men in leading the congregation. In both the old and new Testaments, the term “elder” refers to older men who were respected for their age and wisdom as leaders among the people of God. Examples:

Acts 14:23 – Paul and Barnabas led churches to ordain elders in every church.

Acts 20:17 – Paul called to him the elders of the church in Ephesus. [1 Pet. 5:1; etc.]

1 Timothy 4:14 - “Presbytery” refers to the body of elders or “eldership.”

“Elder” (πρεσβυτερος) – “...elder; used 1. of age ... advanced in life, an elder, a senior: ... 2. a term of rank or office; ... a. among the Jews ... b. among Christians, those who presided over the assemblies (or churches) ... they did not differ at all from the ... bishops or overseers...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

“Elder” (πρεσβυτερος) – “...an old man, an elder, is used (a) of age ... (b) of rank or positions of responsibility ... (3) in the Christian churches, those who, being raised up and qualified by the work of the Holy Spirit, were appointed to have the spiritual care of, and to exercise oversight over, the churches. To these the term bishops ... or overseers, is applied ... The Divine arrangement seen throughout the N.T. was for a plurality of these to be appointed in each church ... They were appointed according as they had given evidence of fulfilling the Divine qualifications...” – Vine.

“Bishop”/“overseer” (επισκοπος)

The elders should serve as “overseers” of the flock. The word used here is the verb form of the word for “bishop,” and means to be an overseer, superintendent, supervisor, etc. This word emphasizes the nature of the work as involving authority – the right to supervise and oversee the work of others, to guide them and watch for their well-being. This shows us that elders have authority to lead the flock, making decisions which others are expected to abide by. Some deny that elders have authority, but these terms clearly show they do have.

Examples:

Philippians 1:1 – Paul wrote to the church with its bishops and deacons.

1 Timothy 3:1,2 – A man who desires the position of a bishop desires a good work.

Acts 20:28 – The word is translated “overseer.” [1 Peter 5:2]

“Bishop” (επισκοπος) – “...an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent ... spec. the superintendent, head or overseer of any Christian church” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

“...overseer ... 2. of persons who have a definite function or a fixed office within a group ... superintendent, guardian, bishop ...” – Arndt and Gingrich.

“Pastor”/“shepherd” (ποιμην)

The word used here is the verb form of the word for a shepherd. It emphasizes that the work involves guidance, protection, and nourishment. Just as a shepherd cares for his sheep with personal attention and concern for each one, so the elders must lead the local flock where they have been appointed. They protect the members from false teachers, seek those who go astray, provide the necessary spiritual nourishment, and give the flock guidance.

Examples:

Ephesians 4:11 – Pastors are among the works God placed in the church.

Acts 20:28 – Elders should shepherd (verb form) the church of God. [1 Pet. 5:2]

Various Old Testament passages refer to those who were spiritual leaders of the people of God as shepherds – Psalm 78:70-72; Jeremiah 23:1-4. We will shortly see here in 1 Peter 5 that Jesus Himself is referred to as the Chief Shepherd.

“Pastor” (ποιμην) “...a herdsman, esp. a shepherd; ... b. metaph, the presiding officer, manager, director, of any assembly; ... of the overseers of the Christian assemblies...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

“Pastor” (ποιμην) – “a shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks (not merely one who feeds them), is used metaphorically of Christian ‘pastors,’ Ephesians 4:11. Pastors guide as well as feed the flock; cp. Acts 20:28, which, with ver. 17, indicates that this was the service committed to the elders (overseers or bishops); so also in 1 Peter 5:1,2 ...; this involves tender care and vigilant superintendence” – Vine.

### **These terms all refer to the same office**

Peter’s use of these terms “elder,” “pastor,” and “bishop” show that they all refer to the same office. Some religious groups distinguish these terms claiming bishops are different from elders which are different from pastors. But the Bible often uses different terms to refer to the same

thing. The dictionaries we have cited claim that the terms “elder,” “bishop,” and “pastor” all refer to the same office or function. But consider the proof from Bible contexts.

### **Elders = Bishops = Pastors**

#### **Acts 20:17,28-30**

Verse 17 – Paul addresses the **elders** of the Ephesian church.

Verse 28 – The Holy Spirit made them **bishops** (ASV; “overseers” – KJV). Their job was to **shepherd** (NKJV; “feed” – KJV; “tend” – ASV) the flock. This uses the verb form of “pastor”.

Verses 29,30 – Their duty to act as shepherds (pastors) is further described.

All three terms are used to describe the same men doing the same job in the local church.

#### **Titus 1:5-9**

Verse 5 – Titus was told to appoint **elders** in every city.

Verses 6-9 – Qualifications for elders immediately follow, but we are told they must have these qualities “for” **bishops** must be the kind of men described in the qualifications given.

The context discusses one office, giving the qualifications for it, but the terms “elder” and “bishop” are used interchangeably to refer to it.

#### **1 Peter 5:1-3**

Verse 1 – Peter addresses **elders**.

Verse 2 – Their work is to **shepherd** (NKJV; “tend” – ASV; “feed” – KJV) the flock - the verb form of “pastor” or shepherd. And they serve as **overseers** (NKJV; exercise or take the “oversight” – ASV, KJV), which is the verb form of “bishop.”

So the terms “elder,” “pastor,” and “bishop” in these passages are used interchangeably, referring to the same men in the same work. All three terms refer to the same office in the local congregation: the same men having identical qualifications, work, and extent of jurisdiction.

And since the term “pastor” refers to the office of elder or bishop, it is not the same as a preacher or evangelist. Many men may do the work of a preacher, but not be qualified to do the work of an elder or bishop. So, it is incorrect to call a man a “pastor,” just because he is a preacher. Pastors are the same as elders or bishops but not the same work as preachers.

So, all these terms refer to older men who oversee or lead a local church in serving God, acting as shepherds to guide and nourish the members. This is a leadership role, which means it is an important and valuable work. Since the church is the only institution that God ordained that is essential to salvation, surely the role of leaders in that body should be very important and appreciated.

### **Plurality of elders in each congregation**

Every Scripture that mentions elders in connection with local churches, shows that there were plural elders in each church.

Philippians 1:1 – The church in Philippi had bishops (plural) and deacons.

Acts 15:4,22 – There were elders (plural) in the church at Jerusalem (compare verses 2,6,23; 16:4; 21:17,18).

Acts 20:17,28 – Paul sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders (plural) of the church (singular) – verse 17. He continues to address them throughout the discussion, in the plural. They were to take heed to themselves (plural) and to the flock (singular) where they had been made overseers (plural) – verse 28.

1 Peter 5:1-3 – Peter speaks to the elders (plural) and tells them to tend the flock (singular) which is among them.

Acts 14:23 – Elders (plural) were ordained in every church (singular).

Notice that other passages show that men who are appointed to this position must first possess the qualifications or characteristics as described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Each

congregation, then, should appoint a plurality of qualified men to serve as elders. No one man alone ever had oversight of a congregation. This shows the error of considering one man as “the pastor” of a congregation, as is often done in denominations.

### **Work of elders**

#### *Oversee and rule the work of the local church*

Peter said that the elders should serve as overseers and shepherd the flock. As we have seen in the definitions, the terms refer to those who lead, guide, govern, manage, preside, direct, and rule. They are responsible to give direction to the local church. See 1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28; and notice also 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17.

This shows the proper role of the elders’ authority. Elders are entrusted by Jesus with the duty to lead the members, so the members should submit to them. But as mentioned in verse 2, the elders serve as shepherds over the flock of **God**. It is not their flock, it is God’s flock. The elders are responsible to oversee it subject to the law of God. So, the elders’ authority is subject to that of Jesus; they can lead the church to do only activities that Jesus authorized the church to do (Matthew 15:1-9; Galatians 1:8,9; 2 John 9; etc.). Elders must remember they are stewards (Titus 1:7), not lords (1 Peter 5:3).

But in carrying out authorized activities, there are many decisions needing to be made. As God’s appointed overseers or stewards, it is the duty of the elders to see that these decisions are rightly made. As long as these decisions are within the realm of authorized activities, the members are required to cooperate and submit to the decisions made.

Some people deny elders have authority to make decisions that the congregation is required to follow. We are told elders only teach God’s word and set examples for the congregation. Surely there are limits on elders’ authority, as we have discussed, nevertheless the Scriptures involved show that they do have authority in the sense of making decisions that the church must follow, subject to the rules of Christ.

#### *Set good examples*

1 Peter 5:2,3 – Elders should make themselves examples to the flock. All Christians should be good examples, but this is especially true of elders. They are like shepherds leading the sheep by going before so the sheep can follow (John 10:3,4).

Acts 20:28-30 – Elders must take heed to themselves first, then they can take heed to the flock.

Hebrews 13:7 – Members should follow or imitate the faith of those who rule over them and speak God’s word to them. Elders should realize that God expects them to live lives such that the members can imitate them.

#### *Watch on behalf of members’ souls*

Hebrews 13:17 – Elders also watch on behalf of souls. They should be involved in the lives of the members, concerned for the spiritual well-being of each member. (Compare Luke 15:3-6 and the concern shepherds have for each individual sheep, so much they will go after one that wanders away.)

Ezekiel 34:1-6 – God rebuked Old Testament shepherds who did not strengthen the weak, bring back what was driven away, or seek what was lost. They simply let the sheep wander away. So it is today in many congregations.

John 10:11-13 – Fighting wolves is an unpleasant job, and some shepherds avoid it. Jesus is the example showing that shepherds who love the sheep will fight the wolves, even to the point of giving their own lives. They should endure great hardship and personal sacrifice for the good of the sheep.

Elders will “give an account” for how they handled problems in the church.

(See also Acts 20:28-31; Titus 1:9-14.)

#### *Teach the truth & rebuke error*

1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28 – Elders “feed” the flock, as shepherds do. This involves all aspects of tending the flock, including providing nourishment. The shepherd leads the flock to green pastures and still waters (Psalm 23:1,2).

Hebrews 13:7 – Those who rule should also speak God’s word. Elders have a teaching responsibility that goes beyond just setting a good example. Surely they should be among the more active teachers in a congregation.

1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9-14 – Elders must have sufficient teaching ability to be able both to exhort members and to rebuke false teachers. This may often involve private teaching with individuals, but at times it would necessarily involve speaking to the whole congregation (1 Timothy 5:20).

### **Oversee the flock among you.**

Elders are also limited in “jurisdiction.” Each local church should have its own elders (Acts 14:23), and their oversight is limited to the “flock among them” – that is, the one local church where they have been appointed – 1 Peter 5:1-3; Acts 20:17,28.

Local churches in the New Testament supervised their own work and made their own decisions about what needy people would be cared for with their funds and what preachers they would support, etc. Elders have no authority to oversee several churches nor to oversee a combined work of several churches. There should be no centralized governing body, no hierarchy, no area-wide officers or institutions of any kind – just local churches.

It is a perversion of the Bible pattern for churches to simply make donations to a man-made institution and let the board or directors of that organization decide who will be helped or supported with the funds of the local churches. Likewise, there should be no centralization or pooling of funds or resources of many churches under the oversight of some body of men, not even the elders of one church, as is done in the “sponsoring eldership” arrangement.

Each local church had the oversight of its own work under its own officers. The result of the teaching of these passages is complete congregational independence.

### **“Not of constraint, but willingly”**

The purpose of this statement is not to say that, if a man just doesn’t want the job, then he is free without consequence to refuse to serve (and as a result the church has no elders), even though he could qualify himself. The choice of whether or not a man will serve is not left up to man’s whim or personal preference.

Consider as a parallel 2 Corinthians 9:5-7. God does want people to give, not grudgingly or of necessity, but cheerfully. But that doesn’t mean we are free to just **not** give at all and expect God to be pleased. The purpose of the teaching is to instruct us that we should give, but we should do so with a right attitude.

The same is true with regard to becoming a Christian in the first place. A person should not attempt to obey the gospel by constraint or compulsion, but should realize the value and need to obey in order to please God and receive the blessings involved. Likewise, the point of the instruction is that men ought to work to qualify themselves as elders, then they should be willing to serve but do so with a right attitude.

### **Not for dishonest gain but eagerly**

This right attitude also requires elders to not serve for their own financial profit. This does not mean it is wrong to pay elders, since 1 Timothy 5:17 clearly shows this is acceptable. The point is the man should be willing to serve because it is a work that needs to be done and because he wants to please God and benefit the church, not for the sake of selfish purposes.

The reference to dishonest gain can refer to the possibility that men might seek the office or use the office to achieve a dishonest income for themselves. This may include, for example, one who would misuse for his own purposes the money collected by the church. Since the elders are in charge of the church funds, they may be tempted to misappropriate those funds in a way that

would benefit themselves, rather than accomplishing the purpose of the church. Religious leaders throughout history, including in our own time, have often sought religious leadership for their own gain, rather than for the purpose of saving souls (1 Timothy 5:5; see also 2 Peter 2). Such is dishonest, even if there is no actual thievery involved.

Finally, all this is to be done “according to the will of God.” Churches today have invented all manner of arrangements regarding the organizational structure of the church. These are man-made schemes different from what God says. They are forbidden in passages such as Matthew 15:9; 2 John 9-11; Galatians 1:8,9; and in this very passage. This must be done according to **God’s** will, not man’s ideas.

### **5:3 – Not as lords over those under their care but as examples to the flock.**

Now elders are told not to lord it over the flock, but to set good examples. The members are taught to imitate the examples of these men (Hebrews 13:7). The qualifications of the men are designed to assure that men are put into the office only if their lives are worthy of imitation. As we have already discussed, these men do have authority to make decisions in leading the local church, but they are not there just to direct others by making demands. They are to show people by their lives the kind of conduct a Christian is expected to live.

#### **Lording it over the flock**

Some have used this passage to try to deny that elders have authority to make decisions that the other members are expected to obey. They say that such an arrangement constitutes “lording” it over the flock. However, we have seen already several references that show elders do have authority in the local church, though they may only act in accord with God’s will. They may make decisions and others must follow, but they may not lead the church to do things unauthorized by the Bible. Only in this way could their work fit the definition of “overseers,” “shepherds,” etc. And the New Testament expressly says that they “rule” over others (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:17; compare 1 Timothy 3:4,5).

The word used here for “lording” (κατακυριεω) is a strengthened form of the word for lord or master (κυριος). κυριος is used for Jesus but never for elders. κατακυριεω is always used for those who rule for their own benefit and gain or to accomplish their own purposes (see Matthew 20:25ff; Mark 10:42). Acts 19:16 uses it to refer to the power of a demon over men. The ESV translates “not domineering over those in your charge.” The ASV and NASB say not “lording it over” the flock.

“This is a strong word denoting that tyranny which the men of this world often exorcise, when they have obtained offices of power.” – MacKnight.

Note especially the passage in Matthew 20:25-28, where Jesus shows His people should not lord it over one another, but serve one another. Yet this cannot be taken as an absolute restriction forbidding Christians from having any authority, else husbands could not have authority over their wives, nor parents over children, etc. Furthermore, Jesus uses Himself as the ultimate example of the lesson He is teaching. He surely exercised authority, but He used it as service for the benefit of those whom He led.

Elders do have authority, but not the kind of authority exercised by tyrants, dictators, or overlords who do as they please. The authority of elders is that of **stewards** (Titus 1:7; compare Luke 12:42ff). Stewards may have authority in that there are people subject to them who must obey them. But they have this authority only as **delegated** to them by their master who is over them (see notes on verse 4 below). So, they may use the authority only in the way that is directed by and pleasing to the Master.

In verse 2, Peter had instructed the elders not to seek dishonest gain as a result of their role as elders, but to serve eagerly. In parallel with that instruction, here in verse 3 he instructs the elders to not lord it over the flock, but to set good examples. The instruction to avoid dishonest gain did not forbid elders from receiving financial support for their work; rather it forbade them

to use the funds dishonestly or to pervert their office or teaching for the sake of their own gain. Likewise, the instruction here regarding not lording over the flock does not deny that elders have authority. It simply forbids their perversion of that authority to seek their own purposes rather than to accomplish the work that God has required an authorized church to do.

As Woods explains: "... to deny to elders the proper exercise of authority in the oversight of the church is as much a perversion of New Testament teaching as it is for the elders to abuse their rights and privileges through improper seizure of authority."

Elders are "lording it" over the flock, in the sense forbidden, if they use their authority to simply get their own way regardless of what is good for the flock, or if they make decisions to please themselves or for their own honor or profit, or if they disregard Jesus' will and lead the church to do things Jesus never authorized it to do.

A good example of those who lord it over the flock would be the scribes and Pharisees in Jesus' day. They taught the truth on many things, so Jesus said to obey them when they did so. However, they often led for their own glory and praises in the eyes of men, seeking people to exalt them for the sake of their own pride. Such leaders were severely condemned by the Lord – Matthew 23:1-12.

Ezekiel 34:4 describes shepherds in Israel saying they did not care for the needs of the sheep, but "with force and cruelty you have ruled them." This illustrates the meaning of "lording it over the flock."

Another example is Diotrophes in 3 John 9,10 who loved to have preeminence and put out of the church those who received faithful teachers sent from John.

Examples of those who lord it over the flock after the New Testament was completed would include those bishops who sought dominance over others in the perversions of church organization that eventually led to the beginning of the Catholic church. Elders in various churches would compete for preeminence, and those who excelled would be called bishops in contrast to elders. These bishops then took control of churches in an area or region. Soon bishops began meeting in councils to discuss doctrine and make church laws that they would bind on the churches. This led eventually to worldwide councils and ultimately to the Pope. These are obvious and extreme examples of those who profess to be elders but who lord it over the church.

Even in the Lord's church, elders may isolate themselves from the individual members who they ought to be leading as shepherds. They simply make decisions in their ivory towers without communicating with the members or considering their real needs. They have very little personal involvement in the lives of the members, so they often are unaware of how to care for them. They act like the board of directors of a corporation, emphasizing financial issues and caring for the property but without considering the spiritual well-being of souls. God's shepherds should care for the members like loving shepherds would care for their sheep.

### **Those entrusted to you**

Note: Who are those who are "entrusted to" the elders (NKJV)? Other translations say "God's heritage" (KJV), "the charge allotted to you" (ASV compare NASB), "those in your charge" (ESV), "his inheritance" (MLV).

Verse 2 shows that those who have been entrusted to the elders would be the flock of God which is among them. This is illustrated by specific examples as being the local church where the elders serve (Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; Philippians 1:1; etc.). So, this passage confirms that there is a specific group of people who have been entrusted to each group of elders. It is the members of the congregation where they have been appointed, and each congregation should appoint its own men to serve as elders. Elders have no authority in any other congregation.

The expression also emphasizes that the ultimate owner of the flock is the Chief Shepherd. The elders have been put in charge of this group that has been allotted to them. But they act on behalf of the Master who serves over them. This again emphasizes the concept of stewardship.

The flock has been put into their trust, but it is not their flock. The flock belongs to Christ, the Chief Shepherd, and is the responsibility of the elders to lead that flock for the good of the Master.

***5:4 – At the coming of the Chief Shepherd, elders will receive the unfading crown of glory.***

Now elders are told about their reward if they serve faithfully. They are shepherds (verse 2), but they serve under a higher shepherd, the Chief Shepherd. This, of course, is Jesus (compare 2:24,25; John 10:1ff; Hebrews 13:20). As we have explained, elders are stewards. They too have a Master to whom they must submit. They must remember that they are not the highest authority, but must always submit to Christ who is the true Head of the church.

When Jesus comes to judge His servants, these men will receive as a reward for their work, a crown of glory or eternal life. The eternal reward of the righteous is often spoken of in the New Testament as a crown. Victors in athletic contests were given crowns or wreaths in honor for their victory. So, those who are victorious over temptation and hardship by serving the Lord faithfully, likewise receive a crown. But that crown is an eternal reward in heaven. See 2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 2:10; 1 Corinthians 9:25; James 1:12. As he did in 1 Peter 1:3,4, so Peter again assures us that this reward will not fade away.

Peter has just said that elders should serve willingly, not by constraint. Nevertheless, their role will involve serious responsibility as they seek to watch for the souls of the members and guard against the wolves who teach error and seek to lead astray the flock. They are often subject to abuse and even persecution from those outside the church, as well as criticism and complaints from the members. They are continually dealing with problems that cause frustration and heartache. They need strong motivation to maintain their own diligence and dedication. Here Peter assures them that they have an eternal reward.

Note also that, contrary to Catholicism, the Chief Shepherd is Jesus, not the Pope. And this is explained to us by Peter himself, whom the Catholic church says was the first Pope! Peter places himself, not as the Chief Shepherd, but as a “fellow-elder” along with the other elders (5:1).

***5:5 – Those who are younger should submit to their elders, and all Christians should submit to one another with humility. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.***

***Submit yourselves to the elders.***

Having told the elders to serve properly in their role, Peter now tells the members to submit themselves to the elders. (This word is not “elder,” singular, as the KJV could be taken, but it is the plural form of πρεσβυτερος, the word for elders as used in verse 1, etc.) It is true, in a sense, that younger people are to respect older people in general, not just if they have been ordained to an office. But the fact the word “elders” is used in this context of verses 1-4, surely indicates this same word as used here in verse 5 refers to the men ordained to the office.

This again demonstrates that elders do have leadership authority. They do have the power to make decisions which the other members must respect and follow, unless the elders instruct the members to do that which is sinful. See also Hebrews 13:17.

***Be submissive to one another, clothed with humility.***

The last part of the verse, however, proceeds to show that humility is a characteristic we should have toward all Christians in our treatment of others. (The word for “submissive” in this part of the verse is not found in some texts. The ASV just says “all of you gird yourselves with humility.”)

Having shown the need for submission to the elders, Peter shows our attitude toward our brethren in general should be one of humility, never seeking to force our own way on others but always standing for God’s will without pride or self-exaltation. Jesus illustrated the concept of clothing oneself with humility when He tied a towel around Himself and washed the disciples’ feet (John 13:10-17).

Some may wonder if the general humble submission to one another in the last part of the verse means that submission to elders in the first part of the verse does not really involve authority. But we have already shown in our discussion of the previous verses that elders do possess authority in the sense of the right to make decisions that others must follow, subject to the teachings of Christ. The fact the author goes on to discuss general submission where authority is not involved, does not prove elders possess no authority. Compare Ephesians 5:21 which discusses general submission, then 5:22-6:9 proceeds to discuss authority of the husband, of Jesus, of parents, and of masters. Surely this does not mean there is no authority in any of these relations.

It seems to me that the point here is that, in order for the church to function, there are times when we must be willing to submit our will to the will of others even when they have no authority over us. We must not think, "This man outranks me, so I will submit to him. But these other men are my equals, so I can ignore what they think." A local church needs cooperation, unity, and a mutual determination to work together with a spirit of like-mindedness. This often requires giving in to the will of others though they may have no more real authority than we do.

Furthermore, the elders in the congregation must practice mutual submission among themselves. They will not always agree in matters of personal judgment and opinion. So, they must learn to humbly work together with cooperation and goodwill to achieve the peace and unity that God requires. This requires each one at times to be willing to give in to the judgment of the other elders.

And furthermore, the elders must often give up their own personal desires and preferences to accomplish what is best for the congregation. The fact that they possess a realm of authority does not give them the right to ignore the needs of the group or to force their own preferences to the detriment of the group. As we have already discussed above about lording it over the group, they must always be willing to act for the best interests of everyone involved.

### **God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.**

This is also quoted in James 4:6. The original passage being quoted is apparently Proverbs 3:34, though the language is somewhat different.

Worldly people tend to be proud people. The world encourages selfishness and self-exaltation. People pursue their own pleasures, wealth, power, honor, beauty, and anything that pleases them or exalts them above others. Such attitudes will cause people to be resisted and opposed by God.

God repeatedly warns that He hates pride, yet His people frequently and regularly struggle with the problem. The pride that surrounds us in the world far too often infects our own hearts. Jesus repeatedly had to warn His own apostles to humbly serve one another and others rather than seeking exalted positions for their own honor. God's people must learn the same among ourselves. We learn this humility from the example of Jesus as described in Matthew 20:25-28; Philippians 2:1-8.

But God is a God of grace. He offers His blessings to men who do not deserve them. None of us deserve God's favor, yet by His love and mercy He offers many rich gifts, even the hope of eternal life. This cost the death of His Son to accomplish. Such grace is extended even to those who have been worldly.

However, to obtain the blessings of this grace, God's people must cease being proud and worldly and must instead humble themselves before God. We must recognize our lowly position, that we have been sinners who do not deserve God's blessings. This should lead us then to humbly serve those around us, caring for our brethren and seeking their well-being, rather than insisting on our own way and seeking to exalt ourselves.

This thought continues in the next verse, though Peter appears to somewhat change the direction and begin describing the Christian life in general, not just relationships to elders.

Other verses on pride include Romans 12:3-5; Philippians 2:2-5; Proverbs 6:16-19; 16:5,18; 13:10; 1 John 2:15-17; Romans 1:30,32; 1 Corinthians 13:4,5; 2 Timothy 3:2; Luke 14:7-11; Galatians 6:1; Colossians 3:12,13.

And other verses on humility and meekness include Numbers 12:3; Isaiah 57:15; Matthew 5:5; 11:28-30; Galatians 5:22,23; 6:1; Ephesians 4:2,3; Colossians 3:12,13; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Titus 3:2; James 3:13-18; 1:21-25.

“Proud” (υπερηφανος) – “...1. showing one’s self above others, overtopping, conspicuous above others, pre-eminent ... 2. especially in a bad sense, with an overweening estimate of one’s means or merits, despising others or even treating them with contempt, haughty ...: Rom. 1:30; 2 Tim. 3:2; ... James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5 ... Luke 1:51...” – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

“Humble” (ταπεινος) – “...1. pert. to being of low social status or to relative inability to cope, *lowly, undistinguished, of no account* 2. pert. to being servile in manner, *pliant, subservient, abject* ... 3. pert. to being unpretentious, *humble*...” – Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich.

## 5:6-11 - Trust for God but Resistance for the Devil

**5:6,7 – Humble yourselves before God so He may exalt you. Cast your cares upon Him, for He cares for you.**

**Humble yourselves before God that He might exalt you.**

The discussion of elders concluded in verse 5 with emphasis on the humility that we all need toward one another (see notes there). Here Peter proceeds to show the need for humility toward God, then expands it to describe other responsibilities we have in order to serve God faithfully and oppose Satan. If we are willing to be lowly toward Him, He will exalt us in eternity (compare James 4:10; Luke 18:14; Matthew 23:12; Luke 14:11).

**Cast your cares upon Him, since He cares for you.**

Peter now reminds us of the value of prayer. He is introducing his closing remarks in the book. He has discussed at length the dangers we face in suffering, and how to handle them. Now in his closing admonitions, he reminds us of the value of prayer and the need to be on guard for what Satan can do to us.

People who are suffering for the cause of Christ need to remember the power of prayer. Of course, we need to remember the power of prayer always, not just when we suffer. Prayer is a powerful force that we all too often neglect. Instead of letting God be our source of strength, we tend to want to do things alone or to forget the strength He can provide.

God has promised that He truly will answer prayers. The result changes the course of events from what would have happened. He promises to answer because He really cares about us. Rather than carrying our burdens ourselves, we need to cast them upon Him. God is not distant from His people, indifferent or unconcerned about our needs. He knows our needs, cares about us, and truly desires to help us. Why carry our burdens ourselves when He desires and offers to help us? And in fact, far too often we fail because we do not trust Him.

Note, however, that there are conditions. God promises that He will hear and answer our prayers if we are righteous and obedient in our service to Him (James 5:16; John 9:31; 1 John 3:22). Further, we must pray fervently and sincerely, meaning what we pray. There is no promise of an answer for a prayer that is offered negligently and indifferently.

See also 1 John 5:14,15; 3:21,22; James 5:16; Matthew 7:7-11; 18:19; 1 Peter 5:7; Philippians 4:6,7; John 14:13,14; cf. 1 Samuel 1:10-28; 7:5-11; 2 Kings 20:1-7; 2 Chronicles 7:11-14.

**5:8,9 – Be sober and vigilant because the devil is an adversary like a lion seeking whom he may devour. Resist him steadfastly in faith knowing that other disciples are likewise suffering.**

**Satan is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.**

Satan should be remembered as the ultimate cause of all the suffering we endure. While we need the admonitions Peter has given about suffering, we must always remember who is ultimately to be blamed for it. And we must realize the great danger he is to us. Having himself been guilty of denying his Master three times, Peter would be well aware of the danger of Satan's temptations.

Satan is real. He is not just a figment of someone's imagination nor is he just a symbolic expression for evil; he is a real living being who is fundamentally evil. He opposes the work of God and therefore seeks to lead astray all those who would serve God. He is not just an innocent little man in a red suit who can do little or no harm, but is extremely dangerous even to the point of causing people to be lost eternally.

He is here compared to a roaring lion seeking to devour whomever he can. A lion is an extremely dangerous animal that can cause great harm, even death. One of its greatest dangers is that it attempts to sneak up on its prey, catching it off guard and capturing it when least expected. This is the point of the illustration here. Satan does not come in obvious ways, but seeks to catch us unprepared by temptations that lure us unexpectedly into sin. So, he is a true "adversary" or enemy in the worst sense.

For other passages about Satan, see 1 John 3:8; Matthew 25:41; 13:19,39; Job 1:6-2:7; Genesis 3:1-6; Matthew 4:1-11; John 13:2; Acts 5:3; Revelation 12:9; John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Acts 10:38; Luke 13:16; 2 Corinthians 12:7; Hebrews 2:14.

**Be sober and vigilant.**

This does not mean, however, that Satan is beyond being dealt with. We need not fall to his devices, but we need God's help to avoid them. First, we must be sober and watchful (compare 1:13; 4:7; Matthew 24:42). We must be of a clear mind, with our guard up and having a strong sense of determination and strong inhibitions. We must have a good understanding of the word of God accompanied by good judgment to avoid tempting situations, to recognize evil, and to resist it.

This sober vigilance requires clear thinking and spiritual watchfulness. Many problems can hinder this sobriety, including apathy and negligence. Perhaps one of the greatest dangers is that people simply do not take evil seriously so they simply ignore the danger.

Another one of the greatest dangers that hinders sober vigilance would be modern alcoholic beverages and drug abuse. One of the first effects of using such drugs is that it hinders and weakens the ability of the mind to think clearly, thereby hindering the ability to distinguish right from wrong and weakening inhibitions. Surely this is one of the main reason why the Scriptures so often warn against the use of alcoholic beverages. See notes on 4:3,4.

"Sober" (σνϕω) – "...to be free from the influence of intoxicants;' in the NT, metaphorically, it does not in itself imply watchfulness, but is used in association with it..." – Vine.

"...to be sober; in the N.T. everywhere tropically, to be calm and collected in spirit; to be temperate, dispassionate, circumspect..." – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

"Watch" or "be vigilant" (γρηγορεω) – "1) to watch 2) metaph. give strict attention to, be cautious, active 2a) to take heed lest through remission and indolence some destructive calamity suddenly overtake one" – Grimm-Wilke-Thayer.

**Resist him steadfast in faith.**

Having such sobriety and vigilance, we must then have the strength of faith to actively **resist** the Devil. We must believe that he can be resisted, so we must resist with firm resolve (compare

James 4:7; Colossians 2:5). In particular, faith is the means by which we quench the fiery darts of the devil – Ephesians 6:16.

In Jesus' day, some people were so possessed by demons that they could not evade them except by miraculous powers. Today, however, we can resist Satan without miracle by trusting in God and being firm in faith.

God has provided the means for Satan to be defeated through the power of Jesus Christ. We must have the faith in Christ and in His provisions to believe that we can be victorious. Many Scriptures describe the specific blessings that God provides, but especially Ephesians 6:10-18 pictures the armor of God as our means whereby we can defeat the power of Satan. When we use this armor, there is no temptation that has overtaken us that is beyond our power to resist – 1 Corinthians 10:13.

This means that, if we give in to Satan's temptations, it is our own fault. We cannot blame others or say we could not help it, since we could have resisted had we tried properly. Further, we cannot resist him successfully by superstitions, chanting certain phrases, wearing a cross, etc. We must work at it. It takes diligence, commitment, and hard work.

Then Peter encourages us by reminding us that Satan's attacks are not unique to us. Other of our brethren have suffered at his hand throughout the ages. This can be seen in the case of Job and many others. Do not think God is to blame for suffering. Do not think we ourselves are always necessarily to blame (though we can bring it on by our misconduct). But throughout this letter Peter shows that righteous people often suffer for doing good. When this happens, remember that others have endured faithfully and so can we. (Compare James 5:10,11; Acts 14:22 Hebrews 12:1-3,8; etc.)

For other passages assuring us that we can successfully overcome Satan's temptations, see Ephesians 6:10-18; Philippians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 10:13; James 4:7; Psalm 121:7; Matthew 6:13; John 17:15; 10:28,29; 2 Timothy 4:18; 2 Peter 2:9; Jude 24; Romans 8:31-39.

***5:10,11 – May God perfect, establish, and strengthen you after you have suffered a while. Glory and dominion be to Him forever and ever.***

Finally, Peter reminds us that, though we may suffer in this life as he has repeatedly stated, yet there is a reward for our suffering: eternal glory. Further, God is a God of grace and mercy. He is not unaware of our suffering nor is He indifferent. He cares about us and wants to help us as discussed in verse 7. He will help us have strength to endure the suffering. He will establish and settle us (see verse 9). But understand that the reward comes after we have suffered a while. We must be patient and endure.

If we trust in our own strength, we may be defeated, but if we truly trust in the Lord, we will be victorious. In fact, the very promise of eternal glory itself can strengthen us to endure this suffering, as discussed in 1:3-5. And again, as in 1:6,7, the suffering can make us better people, perfected and strengthened, etc.

#### 5:12-14 - Concluding Remarks

***5:12-14 – Paul wrote by means of Silvanus to exhort and testify that this is the true grace in which we should stand. He sent greetings from Babylon and from Mark, and said to greet one another with a kiss of love.***

These closing verses conclude Peter's letter. He has written by the hand of Silvanus. And his goal has been to remind them that, in these teachings we learn of the true grace of God and we should therefore stand fast in it. Do not fall away by giving in to temptation.

He wrote from Babylon (see introductory notes) and sent greetings from the elect there and from Mark. He concluded by praying for God's peace to be on them.

#### Notes on Silvanus

That Silvanus refers to Silas is made clear by the fact that Silas was with Paul and Timothy when Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, according to Acts 18:5. But he is listed as Silvanus in the

introduction to that epistle. (McGarvey explains that Silas is just an abbreviated form of Silvanus. That explanation is as good as any, although other commentators attempt other explanations.)

Here are some other facts about Silas:

\* Silas had been entrusted by the church in Jerusalem to carry its letter to the church in Antioch after the meeting about circumcision (Acts 15:30-35).

\* When Barnabas and Paul separated because of their disagreement about taking Mark, Paul chose Silas to accompany him (Acts 15:36-41).

\* Silas accompanied Paul on his second journey (Acts 16-18), enduring with him many of his persecutions and hardships.

\* Called “Silas” throughout the book of Acts, he is called “Silvanus” in 2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Peter 5:12.

### **Notes about Mark**

Other New Testament passages tell us the following information about Mark:

\* He is also called John Mark.

\* His mother’s name was Mary. She owned a house in Jerusalem, where Christians met on one occasion to pray for Peter when he was in prison (Acts 12:4,5,12).

\* He was related to Barnabas (cousins or uncle and nephew depending on translation – Colossians 4:10).

\* He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first preaching trip, but for some insufficient reason he deserted the company. This later became a cause of strong disagreement when Paul and Barnabas wanted to go on a second journey. The disagreement was so strong that they separated, Barnabas taking Mark and Paul taking Silas (Acts 12:25; 13:5,13; 15:37-39).

\* Nevertheless, Mark did work with Paul again later, and Paul viewed him as being useful to him in the work (2 Timothy 4:11; Colossians 4:10).

\* Mark was a close associate of Peter, who referred to him as his son (1 Peter 5:13). This could mean that Peter taught and converted Mark. But in any case, it surely refers to very close association.

\* He was the inspired author of the record of the life of Christ that bears his name. Many people believe that, because of Mark’s close relationship with Peter, his record of the life of Christ was based primarily on Peter’s testimony of his own firsthand experiences.

### **What is the significance of the “kiss of love”?**

Compare 2 Corinthians 13:12; Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:26. Consider the following points:

1. Kissing was a common, customary form of greeting among people in that society, even among people of the same sex: see Luke 7:45; 22:48; 15:20; Acts 20:37; Genesis 27:26; 33:4. (See also Matthew 26:49; Mark 14:45; Matthew 26:48; Mark 14:44; Luke 22:47; Genesis 48:10; 50:1; Exodus 4:27; 18:7; Ruth 1:14; 1 Samuel 10:1; 20:41; 2 Samuel 14:33; 15:5; 19:39; 20:9; 1 Kings 19:20; Genesis 29:13; 45:15; Song of Solomon 1:2; 2 Samuel 20:9; 1 Kings 19:18; Job 31:27; Proverbs 24:26. The Greek word is φιλημα (a kiss – other verses use verb forms φιλεω or καταφιλεω.)

2. In these passages, the apostles are not commanding Christians to institute a religious ritual or ceremony, for the practice was already an existing customary greeting having no religious significance. The Scriptures simply regulate a custom that already existed.

The emphasis should be on the words “of love,” or “holy.” Christians will naturally want to greet one another and show affection. One common means of that day was by a kiss. Apostles approved of the practice as a custom, but insisted that it be kept holy and a sincere expression of love. It should not be allowed to degenerate into an occasion of sensuality or hypocrisy, but should be kept pure and sincere.

3. The holy kiss is mentioned only in the **closing** of letters along with salutations and other customary greetings. It is never discussed in any doctrinal part of any book like other regular ordinances that God has ordained for New Testament religious service (baptism, the Lord's Supper, etc.).

It is a **greeting**, not a **command**. It is like telling someone, "Say Hello to \_\_\_\_\_ for me." Or "Give \_\_\_\_\_ a hug for me." If the person forgets to do so, has he done something terrible? If an inspired apostle said to do such a thing, would that change the nature of it? Would every such request made by an inspired writer automatically cease to be a personal request and become instead a command of God, under penalty of sin? If an apostle wanted someone to just say "Hi" for him, like we do, how would he tell people to do so? Isn't that all this really is?

Study other greeting portions of Paul's letters and you will find many other statements instructing those who received the letters to do things, yet we naturally take them to be personal requests for those specific people to whom the letter is addressed in that particular time. They are not universal commands to be practiced by all other people in all other times who read the letters. They are not requirements which would constitute sin if neglected, nor would they incur an eternal penalty. These are simply requests or advice.

Note these examples:

Romans 16:3,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15 – If these are requests from Paul in giving greetings, not commands such that neglect of them constitutes sin, why view any differently the greeting of the holy kiss in Romans 16:16 and parallels elsewhere?

Titus 3:15 – Must **we** greet everyone who loves Paul? If Titus missed some, did he sin?

2 Timothy 4:13 – Must we take books and parchments with us when we travel? Would Timothy have sinned if he left one behind?

Philippians 4:21 – Does this mean all of us must salute every saint everywhere, or even every saint we ever meet? If one visits a congregation and greets some of them but not all, is that a sin? See also Colossians 4:15; 2 Timothy 4:19.

4. We are never given any **purpose** for the practice that attaches any reason why it should be a universal practice for all time. It is never based on any principle of universal application, as are the command to be baptized or remember Jesus' death in the Lord's supper, etc. We are never given any regulations about time or place or circumstances in which to do it (as is done with baptism, Lord's supper, etc.). Rather than giving us a command to do this and to start it if we have not been doing it, the implication seems to be: Since you are doing this, when you do it, do it like this.

5. A parallel is found in 1 Peter 2:17: "Honor the king." This is not a command to them to institute a king if they did not have one. It simply tells them how to treat a king if society already has one. If another custom existed regarding civil authority, then we should honor those in authority according to the custom as it existed. So it is with the kiss. The instruction is not to start the practice even if it does not exist. The point is that if it already does exist, then make sure it is done in a holy way. But if some other customary greeting exists, then use it in a pure and sincere manner.

6. Other forms of greeting existed in Bible times (compare 2 Corinthians 13:13), and were used by Christians. Kissing was nowhere emphasized as a unique greeting among Christians. Other people besides Christians used it, and Christians used other greetings besides it. So why must we use it today?

7. Never is any other social custom of those days bound on God's people for all times. If this is done here, then it would be the only instance of it. Compare foot-washing, slaves and masters, tearing garments, wearing sackcloth, etc. God never gave instructions instituting these as being things required by His will. He did, however, give regulations restricting them where they existed. This is what is being done with the kiss.

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