

1 PETER

**An Explanation
with Notes and Quotes,
Illustrations and Applications**

G. Michael Cocoris

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PREFACE

The purpose of this commentary is to provide a practical explanation of 1 Peter. The objective is a balanced exposition—explaining the passage in context and applying its truths to life with illustrations. Some commentaries are, by design, of a technical nature, delving into the meanings of words and phrases even outside their use in the book under consideration. Those commentaries tend to ignore the context of the book and its application. Other commentaries go to the other extreme and concentrate on the application, often not fully expounding the passage. Commentaries should do both. They should offer a contextual exposition of the book and apply the truths of that book to life. Adding illustrations facilitates clarity.

First and foremost, this is a contextual exposition. The context is not just the paragraph or the chapter but the whole book. In studying any book of the Bible, the first question that should be asked is: “What is the subject of this book?” Each natural literary unit, whether a paragraph or a narrative, develops a subject. A legitimate exposition will show how the author develops his subject. That, and only that, is contextual Bible study. All details in a book must be explained in light of the message and structure of the entire book. Words only have meaning in a context. A detailed explanation of words and phrases ripped from their sentence and the broader context is not exposition. The flow of the thought of the passage in the context of the book is the message the author intends to convey.

The Bible was written for living (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Even the most brilliant explanation that stops short of the applications is an abortion of what God intended. Thus, the practical ramifications of every passage must always be considered.

The procedure of study I use is to first divide the biblical book into its natural literary units (narratives or paragraphs). Then, I analyze each unit. The analysis includes an outline of the development of thought in that unit (major points and sub-points), an explanation of each sentence, and a summary statement. After I have personally analyzed each unit, I read commentaries, deliberately reading commentaries from different theological perspectives. I credit commentators’ comments by putting their names in parenthesis, even if I had seen that point in the text during my study before I read their comments. Thus, each chapter of this material expounds a natural literary unit of the book of 1 Peter.

In the process of study, I also wrote a tentative title, introduction, and conclusion as if what I was working on was a sermon. If I stumble across an illustration, I include it, but, at this point, I do not search for illustrations. I write all of this for each literary unit in the book before preaching the first sermon in the book. As a result, when I begin speaking through the book, I have the whole book in mind.

As I prepare to preach each literary unit, I may change the tentative title, introduction, and/or conclusion. I rarely change the explanation of the text. It is as I preach each unit that I search for illustrations. Again, having studied the whole book first is helpful here. I sometimes found an illustration I knew would fit better later in the book.

The introduction of each chapter briefly relates that section to life and/or the context. The captions throughout the chapters are divisions of that portion of Scripture and correspond to the main points of a sermon. The italicized headings correspond to the sub-points of a sermon. Rather than footnotes, the author’s name is in parenthesis in the text. While applications are made throughout the exposition, the passage as a whole is summarized and applied at the end.

I wish to thank Fredericka Meek for proofreading this material.

May the Lord be pleased to use this approach to the Scripture to enlighten, encourage, and edify believers, thus glorifying His Son.

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INTRODUCTION

First Peter has been called “the epistle of the living hope,” “the Job of the New Testament” (Boa), and could be called the epistle of suffering. Farrar says, “of all the writings of the New Testament, the First Epistle of Peter is perhaps the most anciently and most unanimously attested” (Scroggie).

Author

First Peter 1:1 says that Peter penned this portion of the New Testament. Furthermore, there are similarities between 1 Peter and Peter’s sermon in Acts. The early church had no doubts concerning the authorship and authenticity of 1 Peter. However, the critics of the 19th century had many doubts, including 1) Someone turned an anonymous address or baptismal sermon into this epistle. 2) There is a lack of personal reminiscences of Jesus. 3) The persecution mentioned in 1 Peter cannot be fitted into Peter’s lifetime. 4) The quality of the Greek of this epistle is too high for a Galilean like Peter. Frankly, there is no basis for these arguments. One scholar called these arguments “an excessive bit of doubting criticism” (Hiebert, p. 110).

Recipients

The book repeatedly mentions suffering. Some scholars, impressed by the statement that the readers were suffering as Christians (4:16), conclude that 1 Peter was written after the outbreak of the persecution of Nero in the fall of 64 AD. Others, however, point out that there is no evidence in the epistle that the persecutions had resulted in martyrdom. Therefore, the epistle was written on the eve of the outbreak of Nero’s persecution. The date, then, is either late 63 or early 64 AD.

Was the epistle written to Jewish or Gentile Christians? First Peter 1:1 says, “To the pilgrims of the dispersion.” This, plus the injunction to keep their behavior “excellent among the Gentiles” (2:12), gives the impression that the readers were Jewish Christians. Yet the letter’s content indicates that they were Gentiles (2:9, 10, as well as 1:14, 18; 4:3, 4). Both positions are right. The readers were of mixed origin, composed of Jewish and Gentile Christians. The Gentiles were probably in the majority in most of the churches. These Jewish and Gentile believers lived in Asia Minor in regions not mentioned in Acts, namely Pontus, Cappadocia, and Bithynia (1:1).

The occasion of the letter was the news of growing opposition (1:6; 3:13-17; 4:12-19; 5:9-10). These believers were being slandered and attacked because of their faith (4:14-15). They were hated because of their withdrawal from sinful practices. There were also charges of disloyalty to the state (2:13-17). Peter calls these “fiery trials” (4:12).

Message

First Peter is about salvation, not in the initial sense (justification), but in the progressive sense (sanctification). They had been regenerated (1:3), yet salvation was the *goal* of their faith. They were in the process of receiving it (see the present tense, 1:9). Thus, the subject of the book is the

“salvation of the soul,” meaning the salvation of “life” (1 Pet. 1:9). The message is that believers save themselves from spiritual damage by living a holy, loving, submissive, serving life, even in the midst of suffering.

Structure

First Peter is a letter. It begins with a standard salutation, followed by a thanksgiving. After the body of the book, there are personal greetings and a benediction. Only the customary “prayer” is missing.

I. Salutation	1:1-2
II. Thanksgiving	1:3-12
III. The Body of the Letter	1:13-5:9
A. Salvation of the Soul in Relation to God	1:13-21
1. Hope	1:13
2. Holiness	1:14-16
3. Heavenly Fear	1:17-21
B. Salvation of the Soul in Relation to the Church (believers)	1:22-2:10
1. Love the Brethren	1:22-25
2. Desire the Word	2:1-10
C. Salvation of the Soul in Relation to the World	2:11-3:7
1. Through Abstinence from Lust	2:11-12
2. Through Subjection	2:13-3:7
D. Salvation of the Soul in Relation to Life	3:8-4:6
1. Through Blessing	3:8-12
2. Through Suffering	3:13-4:6
E. Salvation of the Soul in Relation to the End	4:7-5:9
1. Through Service	4:7-11
2. Through Suffering	4:12-19
3. Through Shepherding	5:1-4
4. Through Submission	5:5-9
IV. Personal Greetings and Benediction	5:10-14

Purpose

Peter says he wrote to exhort (5:12). There are 34 imperatives. Peter exhorts believers to holiness, love, growth, submission, service, etc., all of which can be summarized as salvation (1:9) or the grace of God (5:12).

Peter also wrote to testify (5:12). His exhortation to stand fast in the faith constitutes his testimony to the fact that this is the true grace of God (5:12). They were facing persecution (3:14), suffering, and fiery trials (4:12) and would face the same in the future. Such pressure would undoubtedly tempt them to experience doubt, faintheartedness, and failure. Peter assures them that they are right despite the opposition they are experiencing.

Summary: Peter wrote to the Jewish and Gentile Christians to testify concerning God's true grace and exhort them to save themselves from a life of fleshly lust by submitting to the will of God, even in the face of suffering.

Believers save themselves from spiritual damage by living a holy, loving, submissive, and serving life, even while suffering.

DO YOU EVER FEEL LIKE A STRANGER?

Have you ever had to go to a meeting alone and when you arrived, you felt like a stranger? You didn't recognize anyone in the room when you first arrived, so you felt uneasy, a bit uncomfortable. So, you immediately started looking for someone, anyone you knew. If you were unsuccessful in your search for a familiar face after a few moments of panic, looking over the crowd while trying to appear cool and calm, you would surely become apprehensive. It would not take much longer to feel like you didn't belong. You'd just go somewhere, anywhere you fit. Some people feel out of place in a church or where they work. Some feel like visitors in their own homes. Some people feel like strangers in their marriage. Then, some feel like outcasts no matter where they are. Everywhere they go, they do not exactly fit. To some degree, every human being sometimes feels that way. Christians have that experience. In the first century, Christians over a wide area began to feel like strangers. There is a passage of Scripture that addresses that and has a profound message for believers who feel that way.

The occasion of 1 Peter was the news of growing opposition and persecution of believers in Asia Minor (1:6; 3:13-17; 4:12-19; 5:9, 10). Hostility and superstition were mounting. These believers were being slandered and attacked because of their faith (4:14-15). They were being hated because of their withdrawal from sinful practices. Apparently, there were also charges of disloyalty to the state (2:13-17). Boa says, "They were being reviled and abused for their lifestyles and subversive talk about another kingdom" (Boa, p. 175). Peter calls these "fiery trials" (4:12). In such a situation, they undoubtedly felt like strangers in a foreign land. The danger, of course, was that the pressure of persecution would push them back into sin.

Selwyn points out that there is no hint of false teaching anywhere in the book (Selwyn, p. 53). "The trials besetting the readers were spasmodic and particular rather than organized on a universal scale, a matter of incidences rather than policy" (Selwyn, p. 55). It was not the Roman law court, but the Roman police, and the ebb and flow of public feeling which precipitated these persecutions, a police administration which could be tightened or relaxed anytime (1:6; 3:13-19; 4:12-19; Selwyn, p. 55). "The fact that he has much to say to slaves, but nothing to their masters suggests perhaps, that many of the readers were of a servile station" (Selwyn, p. 49).

The Author

His Name Ancient letters began with a salutation consisting of an identification of the author, an identification of the recipients, and a greeting. In the New Testament, the salutation often contains clues about what will be said later in the letter. First Peter begins with a salutation, which conforms to the ancient format and contains hints of things to come.

The author of 1 Peter identifies himself as "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1a). Peter was named Simon until he met Jesus, who changed his name to Cephas (Aramaic) or Peter (Greek; see Jn. 1:41-42). Peter says that he wrote about the true grace of God (5:12). He was an example of true grace. His name change is an illustration of the grace of God in his life.

His Office Later, the Lord called Peter a disciple (Mt. 4:18-22) and, after that, an apostle (Mt. 10:1-2). These are also manifestations of the grace of God in Peter's life. The office of apostle was the most important gift (1 Cor. 12:28) and office (Eph. 2:20) in the New Testament. It is the only ministry in the New Testament, which is followed by the phrase "of Jesus Christ," "indicating the

unique relationship in which it stood to the historic Christ” (Selwyn). Apostles were given oversight over a single congregation and the whole church (Johnstone). As an apostle, Peter had the authority to write such a letter as this (Stibbs/Walls). Although he addresses the recipients of this letter as an apostle in the epistle itself, he keeps it “out of sight” (Hort). In fact, he addresses the elders not as an apostle but as a “fellow elder” (5:1).

Thus, contrary to modern style but conforming to the custom of antiquity, Peter signed his name first. He was a believer who was also a disciple who served Jesus Christ. Are you a believer? Are you a disciple? Are you serving Jesus Christ? If you say, “I’m a believer, but I cannot serve; I have failed miserably,” I say to you, remember Peter. Grace made him a believer. Grace made him a disciple, and grace restored him. “Thus, we have in our Apostle a singular instance of human frailty on the one side and of the sweetness of Divine grace on the other. Free and rich grace it is indeed, that forgives and swallows up multitudes of sins, of the greatest sins; not only sins before conversion, as to St. Paul, but foul offenses committed after conversion, as to David, and this Apostle” (Leighton).

In his book *No Wonder They Call Him Savior*, Max Lucado writes, “Longing to leave her poor Brazilian neighborhood, Christina wanted to see the world. Discontent with a home having only a pallet on the floor, a washbasin, and a wood-burning stove, she dreamed of a better life in the city. One morning, she slipped away, breaking her mother’s heart. Knowing what life on the streets would be like for her young, attractive daughter, Maria hurriedly packed to go find her. On her way to the bus stop, she entered a drugstore to get one last thing. Pictures. She sat in the photograph booth, closed the curtain, and spent all she could on pictures of herself. With her purse full of small black-and-white photos, she boarded the next bus to Rio de Janeiro.

“Maria knew Christina had no way of earning money. She also knew that her daughter was too stubborn to give up. When pride meets hunger, a human will do things that were before unthinkable. Knowing this, Maria began her search. Bars, hotels, nightclubs, and any place with a reputation for street walkers or prostitutes. She went to them all. And at each place, she left her picture—taped on a bathroom mirror, tacked to a hotel bulletin board, fastened to a corner phone booth. And on the back of each photo, she wrote a note.

“It wasn’t too long before both the money and the pictures ran out, and Maria had to go home. The weary mother wept as the bus began its long journey back to her small village. It was a few weeks later that young Christina descended the hotel stairs. Her young face was tired. Her brown eyes no longer danced with youth but spoke of pain and fear. Her laughter was broken. Her dream had become a nightmare. A thousand times over, she had longed to trade these countless beds for her secure pallet. Yet the little village was, in too many ways, too far away. As she reached the bottom of the stairs, her eyes noticed a familiar face. She looked again, and there on the lobby mirror was a small picture of her mother. Christina’s eyes burned and her throat tightened as she walked across the room and removed the small photo. Written on the back was this compelling invitation. ‘Whatever you have done, whatever you have become, it doesn’t matter. Please come home.’ She did” (Lucado, pp. 158-159).

The Addresses

Scattered First Peter is addressed “to the pilgrims of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1:1b). The word “dispersion” is used in the New Testament of Jews living outside Palestine (Jn. 7:35). Does that mean that 1 Peter was written to Jewish Christians? He does exhort them to conduct themselves honorably “among the Gentiles” (2:12).

Moreover, James was written to Jewish believers and in his salutation, he says, “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (Jas. 1:1). The Greek word rendered “scattered” in James 1:1 is the same as “dispersion” in 1 Peter 1:1.

The problem with the conclusion that 1 Peter was written to Jewish Christians is that the content of the book indicates the recipients were Gentiles (1:14, 18; 2:9, 10; and esp. 4:3-4). As for the parallel between 1 Peter 1:1 and James 1:1, Peter does not use the definite article (he does *not* say “the” dispersion) or mention the twelve tribes. So, while Peter’s audience no doubt included some Jewish believers, he wrote primarily to Gentile converts, who, like Jewish believers, were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. They were God’s people scattered throughout the Empire, a sort of “spiritual Diaspora” (Hodges).

These five names, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, designed five Roman provinces in Asia Minor, modern Turkey. Jews from Pontus, Cappadocia, and Asia were present on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9). Paul established churches in Galatia (Acts 13:13-14:23) and in the province of Asia (Acts 19:10; Asia in this verse is the Roman province, not the continent of Asia, nor Asia Minor). He was, however, divinely restrained from laboring in Bithynia (Acts 16:7).

The order in which these provinces are listed has evoked considerable discussion. It is not alphabetical, nor is the order arranged according to how a person would have begun and concluded a trip through them in coming from either Rome or Babylon (Hort). From Rome, a traveler would have begun in Asia or Pontus. From Babylon, one would have come through Cappadocia first. To compound the confusion, at the time of writing, the provinces of Bithynia and Pontus were merged for administrative purposes, yet Peter mentions them separately, one first and the other last!

In the 18th Century, Hort suggested, “For some reason or other, the epistle itself was to enter Asia Minor by a seaport of Pontus and thence to make a circuit ‘til it reached the neighborhood of Euxine once more” (Hort, pp. 168-169). He also surmised that Silvanus delivered the letter (5:12) and that he might have begun in Pontus either because it was his native land or he had some private business there. Selwyn says, “his hypothesis, viz. that the names occur in the order in which the hearer of the letter planned to visit the provinces seems still to be without adequate rival” (Selwyn, p. 119). Stibbs and Wall concur: “the old suggestion of Hort has not yet been bettered” (Stibbs/Walls, p. 64).

First Peter was initially addressed to believers who were sojourners in the Roman providence of Asia Minor. Yet the book was intended for all believers of all time. Peter concludes the book by saying, “Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus” (5:14).

Sojourners The recipients of 1 Peter are called “pilgrims.” The writer of the book of Hebrews also speaks of believers being “pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13). The English word “pilgrim” does not convey the exact meaning of the Greek word. The English word denotes travelers passing through a country on their way to their destination. The Greek word translated “pilgrims” means “staying for a while in a strange place, “sojourning in a strange place.” It indicates a temporary resident in a place, not a person’s permanent home (Stibbs/Walls). It has been rendered as “refugees” (Adams). The recipients of 1 Peter were strangers and considering what was going on in their lives, they surely felt like strangers.

If the recipients were only Jews, the reference to them being sojourners would probably be literal. Having been scattered, they were literally not in their homeland; they were aliens in a foreign land, but if the recipients were Gentiles and Jews, the significance of them being sojourners is figurative. They were sojourners spiritually. Their citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). This earth is not their home.

Believers are resident aliens. They are visitors on earth; their home is heaven. We are temporary aliens on planet earth living beside the natives, but not an actual part of them. “Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind by either country, speech, or customs.... They reside in their respective countries but only as aliens. They take part in everything as citizens and put up with everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their home, and every home a foreign land.... They find themselves in the flesh but do not live according to the flesh. They spend their days on earth but hold citizenship in heaven” (*Epistle to Diognetus*, cited by Hiebert in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, p. 67).

We do not call it home when we stay in a motel for a night or two. Likewise, our “home” is not our “home.” Believers in Jesus Christ are resident aliens. Someone has said, “Pilgrims, don’t drive your stakes too deep; we’re moving in the morning.”

In the Greek text, the word “elect” appears before “pilgrims.” The Greek text reads “elect sojourners of dispersion” (see “to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout.” In the NASB and “To God’s elect, strangers in the world” in the NIV). The expression “according to the foreknowledge of God” modifies all that is said in verse 1, which implies that their status as sojourners and their hostile environment were per God’s foreknowledge (Grudem). So, Believers are selected by God to be sojourners according to His foreknowledge.

Hudson Taylor said, “It does not matter where He places me or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me. For the easiest positions, He must give grace, and in the most difficult, His grace is sufficient. So, if God places me in great perplexity, must He not give me much guidance? In positions of great difficulty, much grace? In circumstances of great pressure and trial, much strength? As to work, mine was never so plentiful, so responsible, or so difficult, but the weight and strain are all gone. His resources are mine, for He is mine!”

Selected Peter further identifies the recipients as “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1:2). They were scattered throughout Asia Minor, but they were also selected, sanctified, and sprinkled by the blood of Christ. Each member of the Trinity had been involved in the process. There are different interpretations for each of the phases in verse 2. A common approach views the phrase as a description of the believers’ spiritual life from eternity past to the end of their earthly life. Election is to salvation and according to foreknowledge, which is interpreted to mean foreordination. Sanctification is the process of making people holy and obedience is the means. The blood of Christ is sufficient to cleanse us till the end of our earthly pilgrimage (Stibbs/Walls). However, A careful analysis indicates that what Peter had in mind was slightly different.

Believers are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. What exactly does that mean? In the Greek text, the word “elect” appears in verse 1 before the word “pilgrims” and not in verse 2. Furthermore, it is a verbal adjective. While it could serve as a noun, it is more natural to accept it as an adjective (Hiebert). Their “character in the world is due to God’s foreknowledge, that is, His eternal purpose” (Hodges).

The Greek noun “foreknowledge” occurs only twice in the New Testament, here and in Acts 2:23. The Greek verb appears five times (Acts 26:5; Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:20; 2 Pet. 3:17). This Greek word means “to know beforehand in advance.” In several of the passages, it does not and cannot mean foreordination (Acts 26:5; 2 Pet. 3:17). In the other passage, it seems to imply more than advanced knowledge. Here, God’s foreknowledge involves the favorable regard for believers as part of His plan and purpose (Hiebert). God the Father foreknew us. God who foreknows has loving fatherly concern for His children.

Sanctified Believers are “in sanctification of the Spirit” (1:2). The Holy Spirit sets us apart to God. The question is, “Is this a reference to what He does at or after conversion?” The word sanctification here is *not* being used in the theological sense of the processes whereby we are being set apart more and more to God (Adams, p. 8 ft.). This is the setting apart *at conversion* (2 Thess. 2:13; see also Heb. 10:10; 13:12). In short, it is to become “a special person” (Adams).

Sprinkled Believers are selected and set apart to God “for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1:2). The Greek word translated “for” suggests “goal.” The aim of the work of the Spirit was that believers would be obedient to the command to trust Christ (Rom. 1:5; 10:16; 15:18; 16:26; 2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 1:22; Hiebert; Hodges) so that they could be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ, that is, be cleansed of our sins by the redemptive work of Christ. This interpretation is preferred to the more common one mentioned earlier because obedience is coupled with sprinkling and comes before sprinkled.

Thus, 1 Peter 1:2 does not describe the believer’s experience from eternity past to the end of his life. It describes his salvation from eternity past to the point of his conversion. The point Peter is making is that believers are scattered sojourners, but they are also selected, set apart, and sprinkled. In the world, they are but foreigners, strangers, refugees, aliens, but in light of eternity, they are chosen, consecrated, and cleansed. They are strangers here because they belong to God.

All of this is the work of the Trinity; it is all of grace. Someone has said, “When a person works an eight-hour day and receives a fair day’s pay for his time, that is a wage. When a person competes with an opponent and receives a trophy for his performance, that is a prize. When a person receives appropriate recognition for his long service or high achievements, that is an award. But when a person is not capable of earning a wage, can win no prize, and deserves no award—yet receives such a gift anyway—that is a good picture of God’s unmerited favor. This is what we mean when we talk about the grace of God (source unknown).

You may be a stranger here, but there is someone who loves you. He chose you, knowing all about you; He chose you for Himself. Furthermore, He knew you’d be in the mess you are in now.

After winning the NBA championship three years in a row, in 2003, the Los Angeles Lakers finished fifth. The problem was that during the off-season, Shaquille O’Neal, one of the greatest players ever to play the game, had a toe operation and was not at his best at the beginning of the season. However, the Lakers made it to the playoffs. Their first playoff game was Sunday, April 20, 2003, in Minneapolis against the Timberwolves.

The problem was that Shaq’s wife was expecting. Would Shaq go to Minneapolis for the game or see his first child, a boy, born? Shaq stayed with his wife. On Saturday, April 19th, his wife had the baby. Saturday night, Shaq flew to Minneapolis on a friend’s private jet. In Sunday’s game, Shaq scored 32 points, had ten rebounds, and five blocked shots in 44 minutes. Can you imagine how that little boy will feel someday when he is told that his father, one of the greatest basketball players who ever lived, attended his birth at the risk of missing a very important game? You are that important to the Lord. He would miss an important game for you. You are special to Him.

The Address

Their Possession Peter concludes the salutation with the greeting “grace to you and peace be multiplied” (1:2). His desire is that the benefits of grace and peace be multiplied, that is, increased, but he implied that they already have them, at least to some degree. When people obey the gospel, they experience grace and peace (Rom. 5:1-2).

Peter's Desire Peter recognizes that they possess grace, peace, and desire and what they have will grow. He wanted them to have grace and peace “in even greater measure than they had heretofore experienced” (Adams).

Grace is God’s favor. Peace is the “antithesis of every kind of conflict and war and molestation, to enmity without and distraction within” (Hort). In the midst of their trials, Peter knew that peace was not only possible but that more grace and peace were possible! May grace and peace can be yours in ever greater measure. God is able to give you peace in the midst of your trouble.

1. We are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8-9)
2. We stand in grace (Rom. 5:2).
3. We serve through grace (1 Cor. 15:10).
4. We are sustained by grace (2 Cor. 12:9).
5. We speak grace (Eph. 4:29).
6. We grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18).

The grace of God that saved us is multiplied to us. Billy Graham was stopped by a policeman in a small southern town and charged with speeding. Graham was told he would have to appear in court. The judge asked, “Guilty or not guilty?” When Graham pleaded guilty, the judge assessed a fine and then recognized the famous minister. Declaring that the fine must be paid, the judge paid it himself. Then he took Graham out to a steak dinner! God not only saves us by grace, He bestows blessings on us by grace.

Summary: Peter, a recipient of grace, wrote to scattered sojourners who were chosen, consecrated, and cleansed by the grace of the triune God, greeting them with the wish that their grace and peace be increased.

Believers are strangers in the world because this world is not their home. They belong to the Lord. They have been chosen and set apart to Him. In the midst of your mess, you need to know that God has put you there and will give you grace and peace.

Jay Adams captured the spirit of these verses when he said, “Peter opens new interpretive horizons for those who have become bogged down in the pressures of the moment. God knows about everything; indeed, He has always known. There are no surprises in all of this; it is a part of His purposes. Moreover, as your Father, He cares. He has chosen you to suffer for His name’s sake and to honor and glorify His Son. You are refugees in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia not because of some tragic setback in God’s plans; you are there at His bidding.”

A large sum of money was given to Rowland Hill to dispense to a poor pastor. Thinking that the amount was too much to send all at once, Hill forwarded just a portion along with a note that said simply, “More to follow.” In a few days, the man received another envelope containing the same amount and with the same message, “More to follow.” At regular intervals, there came a third and a fourth. In fact, they continued, along with those cheering words, until the entire sum had been received. C. H. Spurgeon used this story to illustrate that the good things we receive from God always come with the same prospect of more to follow. He said: “When God forgives our sins, there’s more forgiveness to follow. He justifies us in the righteousness of Christ, but there’s more to follow. He adopts us into His family, but there’s more to follow. He prepares us for heaven, but there’s more to follow. He gives us grace, but there’s more to follow. He helps us to old age, but there’s still more to follow.” Spurgeon concluded, “Even when we arrive in the world to come, there will still be more to follow.”

PRAISE GOD; I'M IN TROUBLE AGAIN

The sign advises, "Praise God anyway." Whoever dreamed that up didn't have my experience or my emotions. When life gets tough, really tough, the last thing I feel like doing is praising God. Let's get realistic. I'm hundreds of dollars away from balancing the check book and I'm supposed to praise God? I just had a wreck, which means no end to hassle, my insurance rates rising, and I'm to sing the doxology? I lost my job and I'm commanded to rejoice? When a close friend gets cancer, I may feel like praying, but not like praising. When a member of my family has a heart attack, I'm not in the mood for a praise service. When a mate dies, I'm to rejoice evermore?

Should I praise God when there is more trouble? For what should I praise Him? James instructs us to count it all joy when trials come our way (Jas. 1:2), but Peter goes a step further and tells us to praise God when there's more trouble. He also tells us why we should do that. In 1 Peter 1:3-12, Peter tells us to bless God, that is, praise Him (1:3), and rejoice greatly (1:6) amid trials that grieve us. We felt that being a Christian would be like driving down a scenic highway, but now, it seems more like pushing the car up a hill.

Praise God

God has Begotten us Peter proclaims, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1:3). Peter praises God, whom he identifies as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is the God (Jn. 20:17 and Eph 1:17) and the Father of Jesus Christ. Perhaps this means that God is the God of Jesus according to His human nature and the Father of Jesus according to His divine nature, that is, God since the incarnation and Father from all eternity (Lenski). Whatever the explanation, the designation speaks of the submission of Jesus Christ to God the Father (Jn. 14:28; 1 Cor. 15:28). The Jews blessed God as the creator of the world and the redeemer of Israel from Egypt. Christians bless God as the one who sent His Son to become their ("our") Savior.

The God and Father of Jesus Christ has begotten us. Being born of God, we actually partake of His divine nature. (2 Pet. 1:4). God did not make us His children because of our merit, but according to His mercy, which is abundant. In fact, when making us His children, God did not consider our merit or demerit but His mercy.

God has Begotten us to a Living Hope The new life God has given us is "to a living hope." As God's children, we have a living expectation of the future. The false hope of the world is a deception; it is dead. The believer's hope is alive. Some connect the following phrase, "the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," with the verb "begotten" and take it to specify how God has begotten us (Stibbs/Walls), but it is more natural to connect it to the immediately preceding word in the Greek text, namely "living." In other words, our hope is alive because Christ is alive (Hodges). Without His resurrection, there is no hope (1 Cor. 15:13-19). Christ is risen and we do have hope, a living hope. God has begotten us to a living hope. The resurrection of Christ in the past gives believers bright hope for the future!

God has Begotten us to an Inheritance God has not only begotten us to a living hope, but He has also begotten us "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1:4). The two phrases, which begin with "to" ("to a living hope" in

verse 3 and “to an inheritance” in verse 4), are grammatically parallel to each other, yet they are intrinsically related. “Inheritance” explains and elaborates on our hope. Hope is the present experience of our hearts. Inheritance is our future experience when we get home.

The Greek word translated “inheritance” originally meant “the portion was received by lot,” hence, the position one received as an inheritance. In the New Testament, every child of God is said to have an inheritance (Gal. 3:18, 26-29; Rom. 8:17). There is also an inheritance that is earned (Mt. 5:5; 19:29; Heb. 6:12; Rom. 8:17; Col. 3:24).

Is this the inheritance that is earned? The structure of the passage supports such a conclusion. In the Greek text, it is clear that Peter is saying that God has begotten us *to* a living hope, *to* an inheritance, and *to* salvation (in all three instances, the same Greek word for “to” is used, but in the English translation, the last “to” is rendered “for”). All three, hope, inheritance, and salvation, are future. In other words, Peter is talking about the believer’s *future* hope, inheritance, and salvation. As will be shown, salvation here is not deliverance from eternal damnation but the salvation of one’s life. Hence, the inheritance is what we earn.

Moreover, Peter’s description is reminiscent of what the Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount about laying up treasure in heaven (Mt. 6:19-20). Selwyn says the whole passage recalls Lk. 12:22-40. “Christians are to bend all their efforts toward the acquisition, not of earthly but of heavenly goods, beyond the reach of thief or moth or times decay.” Inheritance here, then, is the portion of the faithful (Hodges).

Peter describes the inheritance he has in mind with three adjectives. “Incorruptible” is the translation of a Greek word that means “imperishable, immortal.” It describes something not subject to decay and dissolution. This inheritance is indestructible! The Greek word rendered “undefiled” means “free from contamination.” The word rendered “unfading” was used of a flower that never fades. This inheritance is not subject to destruction, defilement, or even deviation. It is death-proof, sin-proof, and time-proof (MacDonald). As someone has said, “rust does not corrupt it, decay does not consume it, and death does not destroy it” (Hort and Selwyn made the first two external and the third internal. Hiebert, however, rejects that at least the first is from an external source, p. 49.) An earthly inheritance can be destroyed, defiled by sin, and diminished in value and pleasure. Heavenly inheritance cannot be corrupted, contaminated, or changed. So, lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven.

The inheritance of which Peter speaks is “reserved in heaven for you” (1:4). The word rendered “reserved” means “to watch, guard, keep, preserve.” Our inheritance is being protected and preserved in heaven for our arrival. Thus, our hope consists of a safe inheritance.

The plot is so trite that it would never make a best-selling book. Little old lady meets polite young policeman; polite young policeman befriends little old lady; little old lady leaves entire estate to the polite young policeman. Big deal, huh? The plot thickens when it is learned that the little old lady is an heiress to the fabulous King Ranch of Texas, worth millions, and that the little old lady’s lawyer has already embezzled about \$6 million of the inheritance. As a result, policeman Michael DeBella still walks a beat in Chicago. After three years, he still hasn’t received a cent and maybe never will. His inheritance has been corrupted by lawsuits, defiled by lawyers, and so faded away that nothing is reserved for him.

Could this ever happen to our inheritance in heaven? Could some embezzler steal our heavenly home or have someone else move into it so that we find it gone or already occupied when we get to heaven? Or, worse yet, might God change His mind ten years from now because of some sin on our part and give it to someone else instead?

This world is not my home; I'm just a passing thru,
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue;
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door,
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

God is Keeping us to Salvation In the meantime, while God has reserved and is protecting our inheritance in heaven, back on the earth, we are described as those “who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1:5). God has reserved (perfect tense) our *inheritance* (1:3) and He is keeping (present tense) *us*. The Greek word translated “are kept” comes from the word for a guard and means “to protect, to keep by guarding.”

We are protected “by the power of God through faith.” Technically, the Greek text says “in,” not “by.” Power is the sphere (not the means), the garrison, in which we are guarded. God’s power “is all around them; it is the sphere in which they live and more; no harm can reach them in that all-embracing shelter” (Caffin). God’s part is power; our part is faith. We lay hold of God’s power by faith (Hodges). God is able to keep us from stumbling (Jude 24), but we must build ourselves up in the faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, and keep ourselves in the love of God (Jude 20-21). We, like Peter, fail and fall when we self-confidently think we are self-sufficient.

By faith in the realm of God’s power, we are kept “for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1:5). The Greek word “for” indicates the goal toward which we move. From what has been said, one would expect Peter to say we are being kept for the inheritance reserved for us in heaven (1:4), but instead, he says we are kept for salvation. The salvation here is in the future (Stibbs/Walls).

The Greek word “salvation” is a comprehensive term in the New Testament. In describing spiritual salvation, it is past, present, and future. Believers have been saved (Eph. 2:5, 8; Lk. 7:50; Acts 16:31; 2 Tim 1:9), yet they are also in the process of being saved (Rom. 5:9, 10; Phil. 2:12; Jas. 1:21) and full and final salvation awaits the Second Coming of Christ (Rom. 13:11; Heb. 9:28). The passage is clearly talking about future salvation, for it is “ready to be revealed in the last time” (1:5).

Our future salvation is “ready,” a Greek word that means “prepared to be uncovered at the last time.” It is veiled now; it will be unveiled later, at the last time, that is, the climax of the present age, which is at the coming of Christ (Hodges).

Hodges says that the picture presented in this passage is that of born-again believers living a life of faith, which lays hold of God’s power for the salvation of their life. As they strive by faith to attain their full birth-right—the whole inheritance which can be theirs—whatever they have laid up of heavenly treasure is safely protected for them.

Note also that while the inheritance is kept for us, *we* are guarded for salvation. In an ordinary anchor chain, only one link in every ten is X-rayed for correct forging and strength. That’s considered a sufficient guarantee for boats used only for fresh-water or coastal sailing, but greater certainty must be assured for the oceans’ mighty waves and raging storms. If just one link breaks, a magnificent sailboat could capsize or crash on the rocks, and the occupants could perish. Therefore, owners of large ships ensure their safety by using anchor lines that have had every link X-rayed and proven strong.

Believers are to praise God. This is not a flippant, “praise the Lord anyway” attitude. It is a heart-felt praise to God that, as His children, we can expect to be rewarded in heaven when we trust Him during trials. When trials come, believers who understand this concept do not just “grin

and bear it,” go to pieces, or question God. They praise God that He will give them grace in the present circumstance and reward them for trusting Him later.

Praise God, who keeps me now and reserves my inheritance in heaven.

Rejoice In God

Faith is Rewarded Believers have much for which to praise God (1:3-5), but what do they do when trouble comes their way? Do they still praise God? The answer in 1 Peter 1 is, “In this you greatly rejoice though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials” (1:6). The original recipients of 1 Peter were experiencing trials. This is the first explicit reference to trials in this epistle, but the subject of suffering is of major concern to Peter. Peter calls these trials “various,” a Greek word that means “many-colored.” Trials come in colors from light pastels to dark blue and black. We speak of “blue Monday” and “black Tuesday.” Peter also says that these trials had grieved these believers. The Greek word rendered “grieved” means “distress, pain.” Trials are painful, often because they involve a loss or a potential loss. In fact, the Greek word translated “grieved” here is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 of the sorrow of saints at the death of a loved one.

Peter’s startling point is that when all kinds of trials grieve believers, they are to “greatly rejoice!” They are to be glad when they are sad (Adams). The Greek word rendered “greatly rejoice” denotes intense joy, “to exult, to be overjoyed.” Peter uses this word three times in this epistle (1:6, 1:8; 4:13). Paul does not use it at all, but it does appear in the Lord’s statement, “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven” (Mt. 5:12).

How can believers rejoice when grieved? The phrase “in this” can be interpreted in several different ways. 1) We are to rejoice in the last time (1:5). The problem with connecting “in this” to the last phrase of verse 5 is that it refers to the coming of Christ, but the rejoicing of verse 6 is to be done in the present. 2) We are to exult in our privilege, inheritance, and security. The relating “in this” to the whole thought of the preceding subsection (1:3-5) is possible, but it is more likely a reference to God. 3) We are to rejoice in God. There is abundant biblical precedent for such a concept. Believers can greatly rejoice in trials because, in light of eternity (1:4-5), trials are only “for a little while.” These trials are short-lived; they are for a limited duration. As compared to the “eternal reward,” earthly trials are for a “short duration” (Stibbs/Walls).

A man from a small town gave up life’s comforts to work among a tribe of poor, illiterate people in South America. Twenty years later, the missionary returned to his hometown for medical treatment, but he was planning to return to the field of his labor as soon as possible. When asked if he ever regretted giving up so much for Christ, he replied, “No, because the apprenticeship is short.” To him, this life is a brief training period in preparation for eternity.

Moreover, “if need be” suggests that the trials have a purpose. The purpose (see “that”) of grievous trials is “that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:7). Gold is precious, but it ultimately perishes. Our faith is more valuable than gold, but like gold, it too is tested. Trials test our faith. The purpose of putting gold through fire is not to see whether or not it is genuine. It is to purify and refine it; the fire burns out the dross. The purpose of the test is to bring out the true nature of the object tested. God tests, that is, tries saints to bring out (see “found;” God uses trials to “find” our genuine faith) and develop their faith. Satan tests, that is, tempts us to bring out and develop our flesh. The purpose of these grievous trials is to develop our faith.

Goldsmiths kept the metal in the furnace until they could see their faces reflected in it. Likewise, the Lord keeps believers in the furnace of suffering until His reflection can be seen in them (Wiersbe).

The faith that is developed will be rewarded. The reward will be praise, honor, and glory at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Praise is the verbal recognition and approval that will be given. It will be the “well done, good and faithful servant” from the Lord Himself (Mt. 25:21; 1 Cor. 4:5). Honor is the position of distinction, the rank, which will be bestowed (Jn. 12:26). “Glory” means “opinion, reputation, brightness, splendor.” Hence, glory is the reputation or splendor that will be enjoyed. Pain properly handled now produces praise later. Suffering now results in glory later. When in the midst of a trial, it is hard to rejoice when we look around at the situation, but we can rejoice when we look ahead (Wiersbe).

Someone was once taking a tour through a great furniture factory when the guide pointed out a superbly grained, exquisitely figured sideboard in natural wood. “I want you to observe the beauty of this oak,” he said. “It is the finest selected timber of its kind, and the secret of the intricate and lovely grain is just this: The trees from which it was taken grew in a spot exposed to almost constant conflict with storms.” So, too, the human life beset by sorrows, trials, and tests is enriched and strengthened by them until the beauty of Jesus leaves its indelible print upon the grain of their innermost being.

A sign on a sun dial said, “Without the shadow, I am nothing!”

A diamond looks like an ordinary pebble in the rough, but its hidden beauty emerges after it is cut. Even then, the stone must undergo a finishing process to bring out its full radiance. This is accomplished by a skilled craftsman who holds the gem against the surface of a large grinding wheel. Diamond dust is sprinkled on the wheel since no other substance is hard enough to polish the stone. This process may take a long time, depending on the quality desired by the one who will wear it. If the diamond is prepared for a king or some other prominent person, great care and many hours are spent perfecting it.

A gem cannot be polished without friction, nor can a person be perfected without adversity.

Faith Saves My Life As we rejoice despite grievous trials, so we love and believe despite the fact we do not see. Peter goes on to say, “whom having not seen you love” (1:8a; the T.R. and the MT read “knowing” instead of “seeing”). The recipients of 1 Peter did not know Christ in the flesh, yet they loved Him. By accepting the witness of those who, like Peter, had seen Him die and been raised, they entered into a relationship with Him and that relationship had grown to the place where they genuinely loved Him.

In his essay on “The Changed Life,” Professor Drummond tells of a young girl who practiced living in the presence of Christ. Her perfect grace of character was the wonder of all who knew her. She wore on her neck a golden locket, which no one was ever allowed to open. One day, in a moment of unusual confidence, one of her companions was allowed to touch the spring and learn its secret. She saw written these words: “Whom having not seen, I love” (Cowman, p. 27).

Consequently, during their trials, they are still trusting Him. Thus, Peter adds, “though now you do not see Him yet believing you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1:8b). Their love relationship with Him was not nurtured by being able to see Him visibly, yet they continued (present tense) to trust Him.

Years ago, a believer flew from Chicago to Miami. When the plane stopped in Tampa, he had an opportunity to speak to the pilot. During the conversation, the believer said, “Do you realize that we placed our confidence and trust in you during the flight, 31,000 feet up, at a speed of 575 miles per hour? Well, in the same way, we can put our trust in the Great Pilot Jesus Christ to take

us to Miami and heaven!” The pilot hesitated momentarily and said, “Yes, but we have never seen Jesus Christ—how can we have faith in Him?” The believer said, “Neither had I ever seen you when we boarded the plane in Chicago. We had never met you, yet we placed our lives in your hands.”

As a result of their continuing to trust Him, they were able to rejoice with joy, inexpressible and full of glory (1:8). This was no ordinary joy. It was so great words were not adequate to express it. It was “full of glory,” a foretaste of coming glory. James teaches, as does Peter, that a life of faith enables us to rejoice in trials (Jas. 1:2-3).

As they were believing and rejoicing, they were “receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls” (1:9). As we have seen, salvation is past, present, and future (1:5). The question is, “Which phase of salvation is in view here?” Several factors in the passage indicate that the salvation here is present salvation.

In the first place, it is the salvation of the soul. The Greek word translated “soul” means “life” (Hort). Jesus and James teach that about the salvation of life (Mt. 16:24-27; Jn. 12:25; Jas, 1:21). Furthermore, the Greek word rendered “receiving” means “to receive back.” Hort says that the word “often in all Greek and always in New Testament means not simply to receive, but to receive back, to get what has belonged to oneself and has been lost or else promised but kept back or to get what has come to be one’s own by earning” (Hort, p. 47; also Mouton and Milligan, p. 354). It has “special reference to what is deserved or earned” (Selwyn). Hence, as believers trust God and rejoice in God even during trials, God is paying them back. They are earning the salvation of their life by his faith and rejoicing. The revelation of that salvation awaits the coming of Christ (1:5, 7).

The Greek word rendered “receiving” is in the present tense, which has been taken as the future reward is as good as enjoyed already, or that it is realized and enjoyed here and now (Stibbs/Walls). It is both. Living by faith issues in a “salvation realized in part here and now” and “at the same time” there is “an eschatological element” (Selwyn). Hodges says that the salvation of the soul is “the triumph of faith in the present trials for which glory is received in a future day.”

When believers seek to preserve their life for themselves, they lose, ruin, or waste it, but if they lose their life for Christ, they save it (Hodges, who says that Lk. 12:15-21 is an illustration).

Suffering Results in Glory First Peter 1:10-12 seems unrelated, but it becomes apparent that it is indeed relevant. Peter says, “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you” (1:10). The Old Testament prophets intensely investigated the salvation Peter just mentioned in verse 9 (Hiebert, p. 62; Hodges). They “inquired and searched diligently” into it. If there is a difference between these two Greek words, it is that the first implies prayer (Heb. 12:17) and the second implies study (Jn. 5:39; 7:52; Hodges). They desired to know about the grace that would come to us. What does that mean? Were they not saved? (Jn. 3:10). Did not they know about the grace of God (Gen. 6:8)?

Peter explains: “searching what or what manner of time the spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” (1:11). Verse 11 elaborates on verse 10. Except for a prefix, the word “searching” in 1 Peter 1:11 is the same as the one translated “searched diligently” in 1 Peter 1:10. The Spirit of Christ, that is, the Holy Spirit, who was in the prophets, testified beforehand concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. For example, Isaiah foretold the sufferings (plural) of the Messiah (Isa. 53) and the glories of the Messiah (Isa. 11). Is “glories” not a reference to the kingdom (1 Pet. 5:1; Mt. 24:30; 25:31; MacDonald)? In other words, the Old Testament prophets desired to know about the grace of salvation, that is, participation in the Messianic experience, namely, His suffering and glory.

The prophets sought to know “what or what manner of time” this would take place. Those who understand “what” and “what manner of time” to be two different issues translate “what” as “who” and interpret the verse to be saying that the prophets were seeking to know the personal identity and time of the Messiah (see “seeking to know what person or time” in the NASB), but most English versions and the majority of the commentators (Hiebert, p. 86) take their phrase to mean a single question, namely the question of time. The issue of time is the problem stressed in the context. (see Dan. 12:4, 9, 13). They inquired into the precise date and characteristic features of the Messiah’s coming. They longed to be part of the Messianic era.

Nevertheless, “to them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit and from heaven—things which angels desire to look into” (1:12). The Old Testament prophets desired to be part of the Messianic age (Hodges), but it was revealed to them that the Messiah would not come in their day (Dan. 10:14; 12:4, 8, 9). The things they wrote about had been preached “to you” (the TR says “us” and the MT says “you”).

The Greek word rendered “preached” is used throughout the New Testament for evangelism. Those who evangelized the recipients of 1 Peter did this “in” the Holy Spirit, who was sent from heaven. The Holy Spirit used the Old Testament prophets to predict the Messiah’s coming and the New Testament preachers to proclaim He had come. This statement implies, although it does not demand, that Peter was not one of those evangelists. Not only the prophets but the angels desired to “look into” what we have experienced. The Greek verb translated “look into” means “to stop and look.” It was used of the disciples bending over to peer into the sepulcher (Lk. 24:12; Jn. 20:5). Like the prophets of old, the angels are (present tense) taking “an intense, wondering interest” in our salvation (Stibbs/Walls).

The Old Testament prophets were saved, but they did not participate in either the sufferings of the Messiah or the glory that followed. Peter is suggesting that we do. We are experiencing something the prophets and angels didn’t. He is calling this our salvation (1:10), our grace (1:10), our salvation of the soul (1:9). We suffer for Christ’s sake. (4:12-13; 1:6), and we will experience glory (4:13; 1:7). Peter’s point is that “suffering for God leads to glory from God” (Adams). Peter’s ultimate point is to rejoice in God (1:6).

The poet Milton said, “Some things indeed the good angels know by revelation, and others by means of the excellent intelligence with which they are gifted, but of much they are ignorant. An angel is introduced, inquiring, ‘How long shall be the vision?’ (Dan. 8:13); and again, another inquires, ‘How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?’ (Dan. 12:6). In Matthew 24:36, we read, ‘But of that day ... knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven.’”

Summary: Praise God because He has begotten us to a salvation that will be revealed later and rejoice in Him because even though you are being tried and tested, as you trust Him, you are being saved now and will be rewarded later.

Although you are experiencing grievous trials now, you should praise God and rejoice because as you trust Him, you are being saved now and will experience glory later. Simply put, praise God because the cross now means the crown later. If you respond to sufferings with faith and praise, you will accomplish the salvation of your soul. Since this is nothing less than part and parcel of the Messiah’s sufferings and glory, it has attracted the diligent attention and admiration of the prophets and angels. This becomes the book’s major theme: as Christ won glory through suffering, so do we. If we triumph in it, as He did, we save our souls.

Queen Elizabeth I of England once commissioned a wealthy merchant to go on an important mission for the crown, promising rich rewards for his services. The merchant sought to decline because his business would suffer during his absence. The Queen assured him, “You go and look after my business, and I will look after yours.” He went and upon his return, he found that he was richer than ever.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11).

To win the game, athletes endure the grind of practice. To be victorious, soldiers must eat dust and face death. To gain votes, politicians endure the hardship of travel and the sting of criticism. They do it to obtain a trophy, a medal, or for glory.

RELATING TO YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

If you have trusted Jesus Christ, you have been born again, which means you are a child of God and He is your heavenly Father. The Bible repeatedly uses the designations of Father and child to describe our relationship to God. Jesus said when you pray, say “Our Father who art in Heaven” (Mt. 6:9). Throughout his first epistle, John calls Christians “Little children” (1 Jn. 2:18; 3:7; etc.). He is the one who says, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! ... Beloved now we are children of God” (1 Jn. 3:1-2). Believers are called brethren because they have the same Father. (1 Jn. 2:7). How do you, as a child of God, relate to your heavenly Father? You need to know that for several reasons. For one thing, you are a member of the family. Beyond that, this family has a wealthy Father with an inheritance to distribute, not at His death, but yours. How do you relate to your heavenly Father not to be disinherited but to receive the maximum inheritance?

The person who answers that question is Peter, and the passage in which he answers it is 1 Peter 1:13-21. Before this paragraph, Peter refers to God as Father (1:2-3), believers as having been begotten (1:3), and to our inheritance (1:4). He retains that analogy in 1 Peter 1:13-21 saying, “as obedient children” (1:14), “If you call on the Father” (1:17). In this portion of his epistle, he tells us how to relate to our heavenly Father in light of our future inheritance. He tells us three things to do.

Hope: Fully Fix Your Hope on Future Glory

Discipline your Mind Having established that being born in God’s family, we now have the possibility of glory through suffering (1:3-12), Peter concludes, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:13). The word “therefore” indicates that what is about to be said is built on what has been said. This “therefore” is not connected to verse 12 but to everything said in verses 3-12. It “is best understood to summarize all that has been said in vs. 3-12” (Hiebert; see Cranfield; Hort). We have been begotten into God’s family with the possibility of an eternal inheritance. Therefore, what should we do?

The English translation of 1 Peter 1:13 sounds as if it contains three imperatives: gird up, be sober, and rest your hope. That is not accurate. In the Greek text, there is only one command: hope. Gird up and be sober are participles. To be sure, all three are to be done. Participles are grammatically related to the imperative and receive an imperatival force, but hope is the central thought. The participles designate the activities that support hope. They are either subordinate to or continue with hope (Hodges).

“Gird up the loins of your mind” then is best translated “having girded up the loin of your mind” (aorist participle). In the East, men wore long flowing robes, which hindered fast movement. They also wore a broad belt or girdle around the waist. When strenuous action was necessary, they shortened the long robe by pulling it up under the belt to give them freedom of movement. Today, We would say, “roll up one’s sleeves or take off one’s jacket” (Barclay). Peter applies this metaphor to the mind. Believers must not allow their thoughts to impede them. They must be ready for the most strenuous mental activity. Wandering thoughts tangle you up and impede rapid progress. So, don’t let your mental skirts drag. Tuck in vague, loosely flowing thoughts. Loose

thinking is the forerunner to loose living. A disciplined mind is essential to disciplined living. Discipline your mind. Don't daydream about sin. Set your mind on the things above.

Adams observes, "The Christian cannot expect to please God if he is not willing to work hard at thinking. The great emphasis upon experience and emotion that is overwhelming Western society (and many evangelical churches too!) is sheer poison because it leads to the interpretation of God's truth through experience rather than the interpretation of experience through God's truth. The Bible must interpret experience; it may not be interpreted by it. The believer who refuses to think, who takes the course of least resistance (drifting with the crowd or circumstances) or follows his feelings, sins against God." In short, believers are to "gather in" their wandering thoughts and focus their attention on the consummation of their experience at the coming of Christ (Hodges).

Be Levelheaded "Be sober" is best rendered "being sober" (present participle). The Greek word translated "sober" means "abstain from wine," but it was used in a figurative sense of moral alertness, that is, "be sober, serious, circumspect," which is the idea here. It is "sobriety generally in conduct, speech, and judgment" (Selwyn). The attitude of self-discipline is in contrast to the "reckless irresponsibility of self-indulgence on the one hand, and of religious ecstasy on the other." A spirit-filled believer is not carried away like a drunk man into "abnormal extravagance" but acts as one "in full possession of himself" (Stibbs/Walls). It is "level-headedness ... a calm, steady state of mind that evaluates things correctly so that it is now thrown off balance by new and fascinating ideas" (Hiebert). It forbids "any laziness of mind which lulls Christians into sin thought carelessness" (Grudem). "The levelheaded Christian doesn't let feelings overcome thought" (Adams).

Fix your Expectation Having disciplined your mind and having become levelheaded, "rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:13). The Greek word translated "hope" is much stronger than "wish for;" it is "confident expectation" (Grudem). "Fully" translates this Greek word that means "completely perfectly." "Grace" refers to the inheritance, the reward we will receive (1:4, 7, 10; see Arudem). Actually, grace refers to the fact that God graciously gives us suffering (Phil. 1:29) so we can be tested, strengthened, and rewarded. The revelation of Christ is, of course, His Second Coming (1:7). Hodges says that grace brought us into the Messiah's experience, which makes this experience possible.

The thrust of this command is to fully fix your hope on the reward coming to you (present tense) at the coming of Christ (1:7). Don't be halfhearted: be completely consumed with the expectation of what's coming. The all-consuming expectation of our hearts is to be the glory awaiting us. (1:7, 11). Discipline your mind, be levelheaded, and fully fix your expectations in sharing Christ's glory. Doesn't that sound like Fatherly advice? Can't you just hear your Father saying, "Be disciplined? Be levelheaded. Fix your sights on the future."

The famous evangelist Bob Jones used to say, "Don't sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate." Peter would say, "Don't sacrifice the eternal on the altar of the temporal." Is the greatest aim of your life something in this life or something in the next? Are you living for this age or the age to come? Are you living for time or for eternity?

Holiness: Be Holy

Not Conforming to Former Lust Peter has a second piece of advice for God's children concerning their relationship to their heavenly Father, namely, "Be Holy" (1:14-16). He states this admonition first negatively (1:14) and then positively (1:15-16).

Negatively he says, “As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lust, as in your ignorance” (1:14). One of the most basic principles of our relationship with God is obedience. If we are to be obedient children, we will have to not be conformed to our former desires; we have to be holy. We will be obedient children as we firmly fix our hope on future glory. The Greek word translated “conforming” is only used twice in the New Testament, here and in Romans 12:2. In Romans 12, Paul urged believers not to conform to this world. Peter exhorts them not to be conformed to their former lust. “Former lust” simply means their desires before their conversion (Grudem). “Desires” is neutral in meaning, denoting either good or bad desires. Here, bad desires are meant, including sexual lust, materialism, worldly ambition, rivalry, and jealousy.

In the Greek text, the phrase “in your ignorance” stands between “the former” and “lust,” implying that the former event was due to their spiritual ignorance of God (Stibbs/Walls). Their ignorance of God, a description of Gentile converts, stimulated their depraved desires (Acts 17:30; Eph. 4:17-30). The fact that Peter gives such a command “and implies that he knew that such desires still remain and have some power in the hearts of true Christians” (Grudem).

Be Holy The positive side is “but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (1:15). Obedient children do not conform to the cravings of their pre-conversion days but to the character of God Himself. God is holy, which means He is set apart from all that is evil and He is righteous. Believers are to be set apart to Him, separated from evil to righteousness.

The called ones are to be holy “because it is written ‘be holy for I am holy’” (1:16). The Holy One has commanded His children to be holy. The children are to be like their Father. That command appears three times in Leviticus. In Leviticus 11:44, it occurs in connection with dietary regulations. In Leviticus 19:2, it concerns social and religious duties. In Leviticus 20:26 it refers to dietary law and demonic dangers (Hiebert). A Holy God has called us to Himself to be His children and commanded us to be holy in every area of life, personal, social, and spiritual.

As a human Father would say to his children, “Behave,” so God as a heavenly Father commands His children to “Be holy.” As a king would say to his son, “Remember, you have royal blood in your veins, “act dignified.” So, our Heavenly Father reminds us that we belong to Him and, therefore, we should act accordingly. First and foremost, we should be holy not because of the benefits but because God is Holy, and we are His children.

Our relationship with God is the primary reason for doing what is right. He is holy and wants us to be holy. Many years ago, I had a sermon for young people in which I gave all the reasons they should avoid sexual immorality, such as they might get a venereal disease. From a biblical perspective, the reason to abstain from sexual immorality is not that we might get a disease or get caught but because our Heavenly Father said not to do that. College students should avoid cheating not just because they might get caught and have their careers ruined but because the right reason for doing right is always the desire to obey God.

Heavenly Fear

Conduct your Life in Fear Peter has a third admonition for believers as God’s children: “and if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear” (1:17). There is a sense in which you ought to fear your Father with a heavenly fear. The fear of your God is not inconsistent with loving Him (Grudem). Children who love their father fear disappointing him, being disapproved, and being disciplined by him.

God has called you (1:15) to be His child (1:14). As His child, you can call on Him for help (1:17). The Greek word translated “call” in verse 17 means “to invoke, appeal to” and was used for calling for aid. This is a reference to calling on God for help (Hodges). As children often ask their father for aid and assistance, so do the children of God call on their heavenly Father.

Remember, our Father is also a judge (Grudem). Just because you are His child will not help you when you stand before Him as a judge because He is an impartial judge who rewards according to one’s works. The word “work” focuses on the deeds that were done (the singular views all works as a unit, whereas the plural individualizes deeds; 2:12; 2 Pet. 2:8). The Greek word translated “partiality” means “to receive by face.” God’s judgment is *without* partiality; He does not decide by outward appearance alone; He also judges the heart. God is concerned with actions and attitudes, with what was done and why it was done. Although some consider this a reference to present judgment and discipline in this life (Grudem), the context indicates that Peter is speaking of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Therefore, Peter advises conducting this temporary sojourn here in heavenly fear of your Father/judge. Remember, you are not a permanent resident here; you are a pilgrim (1:1) and a sojourner (1:17). The Greek word rendered “sojourner,” which is a different word than “pilgrim” used in verse 1, means “alongside the house” (Greek: “para-house”). Sojourners are not members of the house; they are outsiders (see this word in Acts 13:17). They are not citizens (Eph. 2:19); they are foreigners and aliens. As a believer, you do not belong here and you are only here for a short time. Then you get home, where you face your Father/judge. So, live here in fear so you will have nothing to fear then (1 Jn. 2:28). The fear you are to have is not the dread of a slave but the reverential awe of a son.

In a letter to Ann Landers, a woman thanked her for a comment that had made her quit shoplifting. The lady was referring to a statement about new sensor equipment, which causes a buzzer to sound if anyone leaves the store with an item that a cashier hasn’t handled. She declared that she had become an expert at avoiding detection, but this new electronic alarm frightened her. So, she decided that shoplifting wasn’t worth the risk. Similarly, we should behave ourselves for fear of being caught, not by an electric detector, but by our Father/judge. If her fear of getting caught by a security guard was her only motivation, she might start taking things again when she figured out how to outsmart the detection device.

Because You have been Redeemed Peter adds, “knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your father but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1:18-19). “Knowing” is a participle that relates to the verb of verse 17. Believers are to conduct themselves here in fear, knowing that the precious blood of Christ redeemed them. Notice the elements involved in this redemption. They were redeemed from “aimless conduct.” The Greek word translated “aimless” means “vain, useless.” Their lives before coming to Christ were empty, futile, and unprofitable. Their lives were “empty, worthless, having no meaningful or lasting results” (Grudem).

They learned this lifestyle from the tradition of their fathers. Their beliefs and practices were handed down from their ancestors. Antiquity is not the criterion for truth. This expression implies a Gentile audience. In the New Testament, the legacy of the fathers for the Jews is usually regarded positively. (Acts 22:3; 24:14; 28:17; 2 Tim. 1:3; Rom. 11:28).

They were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold. All corruptible things, that are perishable (subject to decay and destruction), are excluded as a basis for redemption.

Slaves were redeemed by silver and gold. Silver and gold, two of the most durable and valuable materials, are particularly eliminated.

They were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, who died as a lamb without blemish and spot. The requirements for the Passover lamb and the other sacrificial lambs of the Mosaic Law were that they be without blemish and without spot. As applied to Christ, the Lamb of God, “without blemish and without spot,” corresponds to internal character defect or flaw and not to external defilement. The blood He shed was precious, of high value, and highly esteemed, and the purchase price paid for our redemption is our release from the slaving of sin. Price determines value. If a jeweler placed a number of one-carat diamonds on the counter and said the prices greatly differed, you would know that the highest-priced one was the most valuable one. No wonder you ought to fear God. Think of the price He paid to have us redeemed!

An Englishman was watching a group of African prisoners as they marched in front of a tribal leader. The chief singled out one of them because he had headed up a rebellion against him. Displeased with the man’s crime, the tribal leader ordered that the rebel be killed. The visitor’s heart went out to the victim, so he offered to purchase his freedom with a large sum of money. “I need nothing,” replied the angry chief. “I have sufficient. All I want is this traitor’s blood.” As the bowman prepared to shoot, the Englishman raised his arms to defend the condemned man. The next moment, an arrow was buried in his flesh. Removing it, he walked up to the chief and said, “Here is blood, my blood; I give it for this poor slave and claim his life.” The chief had never seen anyone defend another in this way, released the victim, saying, “Yes, white man, you have bought him with your blood, and he shall be yours.”

The Purpose of Redemption Not only was the price of redemption expensive, but the purpose of redemption was also eternal. Peter goes on to say, “He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory so that your faith and hope are in God” (1:20-21). Christ and especially His death were foreordained before the creation of the world. The Greek word translated “foreordained” means “to know beforehand” and is translated “foreknowledge” (1:2). While in some passages, it has no shade of predetermination (2 Pet. 3:17), in this passage, there seems to be more than knowledge beforehand. Christ’s death as a sacrificial lamb was part of an eternal purpose that finds its fulfillment “at the ends of the times.” Christ’s death was not an afterthought; it was a forethought. It was planned before creation and prophesized by the prophets (1:11). God’s eternal plan was not only that Christ should die (1:19) but that Christ should be raised (1:21) and glorified (1:21).

When individuals come to Christ, “through Him believe in God who raised Christ from the dead and gave Him glory” so that their “faith and hope are in God” (1:21). The result of God raising Christ from the dead and giving Him glory is that our faith and hope are in God. This is faith in a God of resurrection and glory.

Johnny watched the man changing the theater sign advertising a motion picture. Questionable scenes from the film are plastered on the walls. A neighbor passing by greeted him, “Hello, Johnny, are you going to see the show?” “No sir,” answered the boy. “Father doesn’t like ‘em.” “I’ll give you the money if you want to go,” offered the man. “No sir, my father would give me the money if he thought it best. Besides, I have enough money of my own.” “You’ve had a rather sheltered life, son, and haven’t had a chance to learn about the world today,” the neighbor continued. “Besides, your father needn’t know about it.” “I can’t,” the boy stated firmly. “Why?” asked the man. “Cause,” Johnny explained, “after I’d been there, I couldn’t look Father in the eyes, but I can now.”

Summary: As God's children, believers should firmly fix their expectations on future glory and, in the meantime, live holy lives in fear of their impartial father. You should relate to your heavenly father with hope, holiness, and heavenly fear.

This passage encompasses the believer's past, present, and future. As members of God's family, we have a family heritage that extends back to the past when God planned His family. Our family tree includes the prophets of the Old Testament and our roots are planned in a tree called Calvary. As members of God's family, we have a glorious future to which we can look. It will not be revealed until Christ's coming and will involve judgment. Therefore, as members of God's family, we should be obedient children, living holy lives in heavenly fear. Obey your Father, for Father knows best. So, the way to relate to your heavenly Father is to love Him (1:8), be grateful (1:3), trust Him (1:8, 21), obey Him (1:14), and fear, that is, respect Him (1:17).

Billy Graham talks about a time when Albert Einstein traveled on a train from Princeton. The conductor came down the aisle and punched each passenger's ticket. When he came to Einstein, Einstein reached into his vest pocket. He couldn't find his ticket, so he reached into his other pocket. It wasn't there, so he looked in his briefcase but couldn't find it. Then he looked in the seat by him. He couldn't find it. The conductor said, "Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. We all know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket. Don't worry about it." Einstein nodded appreciatively.

The conductor continued down the aisle, punching tickets. As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist on his hands and knees, looking under his seat for his ticket. The conductor rushed back. "Dr. Einstein, don't worry," he said. "I know who you are. No problem. You don't need a ticket. I'm sure you bought one." Einstein said, "Young man, I, too, know who I am. What I don't know is where I'm going."

We forget who we are, or we know who we are and we forget where we are going. The way to save our lives from being wasted and receive an abundant inheritance is to relate to our Heavenly Father in confidence expectation because we are living holy lives.

RELATING TO YOUR SPIRITUAL FAMILY

My immediate family is small. I have one brother and no sisters. I have known people from large families with as many as five to ten siblings. I have wondered if there was any difference relating to a large family. Are there different dynamics simply because there are more people involved? Or do the same primary principles apply? It seems to me that the only difference between being in a large family versus being in a small family is that in a large family, you apply the same basic principles of getting along with others to more people.

If you have trusted Jesus Christ, you are a large family member. God is your Father and His children are your brothers and sisters. How does a child of God live harmoniously with so many brothers and sisters? How do you relate to your spiritual family? The apostle Peter teaches us the most fundamental principles of family living.

In the first paragraph after the salutation, Peter speaks of believers as begotten of God (1:3) and God as being a Father (1:3). In fact, the subject of that whole passage is how to relate to your heavenly Father. The subject of the following paragraph is how to relate to your spiritual family. The principle Peter preaches in this passage applies to all family relations, but there is no doubt he has your spiritual family in mind. It should also be kept in mind that Peter is telling believers how to save their lives from being wasted to their lives being rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Love the Brethren

Purification Peter proclaims, “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart” (1:22). Peter’s point is simple and obvious. Believers are to love one another, but clustered around that command are several other concepts. “Obeying the truth” is usually taken as obeying the truth of the gospel and purification as the cleansing at conversion (Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls; Hodges). Before trusting Christ, our lives were dirty with such sins as envy, jealousy, backbiting, hypocrisy, and malice. Christ shed His blood so that we might be cleansed from just such sins (1:18-19; also 1 Jn. 1:7). Believers have been purified, that is, cleansed in obeying the gospel. When they heard the gospel, the Holy Spirit convicted them of their sin and enlightened them as to what Christ did for them. It was then that they trusted Christ and He purified their lives.

Conceding that “obeying the truth” could mean “believing the gospel” and, therefore, be a reference to conversion, Grudem argues that it is obedience to God’s command in daily living and, thus, a reference to moral purity after salvation. Among the arguments that he uses are: 1) In this context, Peter uses the word “obedience” of conduct, not conversion (1:2, 14). 2) The context is about Peter’s call to holiness (1:15). 3) This purification is something the readers are to have done themselves. He concludes that purification is progress in gaining more purity from moral pollution.

Love God cleansed believers so that, among other things, they could love one another. Two different Greek words are used for love. The Greek word translated “Love of the brethren” is the word from which we get the English word “Philadelphia.” It describes a love of emotion and friendship, a “brotherly affection” (Grudem). The Greek word rendered “love” is another word. The word *agape* does not refer to an emotion but rational goodwill that deserves the highest good for the one loved, even at the expense of self.

What is Love?

It is silence—when your words would hurt.
It is patience—when your neighbor's curt.
It is deafness—when a scandal flows.
It is thoughtfulness—for other's woes.
It is promptness—when stern duty calls.
It is courage—when misfortune falls.

Love Sincerely The phrase “in sincere love of the brethren” in verse 22 expresses the goal and, in that sense, the purpose of our cleansing. The word “in” is the Greek word “into” or “unto.” Sin blocks love. The Greek word rendered “sincere” means “unhypocritically.” We can love now without pretense, “without play-acting” (Stibbs/Walls). We can be genuinely caring and concerned about members of the family.

Have you ever fake loving a family member just because he or she was in the family and you wanted to keep the peace? “We’re going to the reunion (family get-together), and your brother and his wife will be there; now be nice and civil, dear,” your wife admonishes. So, you go and fake it. The more you fake it, the more difficult it becomes to feel and practice it genuinely. God cleanses us from that kind of dirt. He gave us a new birth with a new heart and new relatives so that we could love sincerely. You can now love sincerely, not superficially.

Dearest Jimmy,

No words could ever express my great unhappiness since breaking our engagement. Please say you’ll take me back. No one could ever take your place in my heart, so please forgive me. I love you; I love you. I love you!

Yours forever,
Marie.

P. S. And congratulations on winning the state lottery.

Pascal observed, “If a man loves a woman for her beauty, does he love her? No, for smallpox, which destroys her beauty without killing her, causes his love to cease. And if anyone loves me for my judgment or memory, does he love me? No, for I can lose these qualities without ceasing to be.”

Years ago, Father John Powell told the story of Norma Jean Mortenson: “Norma Jean Mortenson. Remember that name? Norma Jean’s mother, Mrs. Gladys Baker, was periodically committed to a mental institution and Norma Jean spent much of her childhood in foster homes. In one of those foster homes, when she was eight years old, one of the boarders raped her and gave her a nickel. He said, ‘Here, Honey. Take this and don’t ever tell anyone what I did to you.’ When little Norma Jean went to her foster mother to tell her what had happened, she was beaten badly. She was told, ‘Our border pays good rent. Don’t you ever say anything bad about him!’ At the age of eight, Norma Jean had learned what it was to be used, given a nickel, and beaten for trying to express her hurt. Norma Jean became a very pretty young girl, and people began noticing. Boys

whistled at her and she began to enjoy that, but she always wished they would notice she was a person too—not just a body—or a pretty face—but a person.

“Then Norma Jean went to Hollywood and took a new name—Marilyn Monroe and the publicity people told her, ‘We are going to create a modern sex symbol out of you.’ And this was her reaction, ‘A symbol? Aren’t symbols things people hit together?’ They said, ‘Honey, it doesn’t matter because we are going to make you the most smoldering sex symbol that ever hit the celluloid.’

“She was an overnight smash success, but she kept asking, ‘Did you also notice I am a person? Would you please notice?’ Then, she was cast in the dumb blonde roles. Everyone hated Marilyn Monroe. Everyone did. She would keep her crews waiting two hours on the set. She was regarded as a selfish prima donna. What they didn’t know was that she was in her dressing room vomiting because she was so terrified. “She kept saying, ‘Will someone please notice I am a person? Please.’ They didn’t notice. They wouldn’t take her seriously.

“She went through three marriages—always pleading, ‘Take me seriously as a person.’ Everyone kept saying, ‘But you are a sex symbol. You can’t be other than that.’ Marilyn kept saying, ‘I want to be a person. I want to be a serious actress.’

“And so on that Saturday night, at the age of 36, when all beautiful women are supposed to be on the arm of a handsome escort, Marilyn Monroe took her own life. She killed herself. When her maid found her body the next morning, she noticed the telephone was off the hook. It was dangling beside her. Later investigation revealed that in the last moments of her life, she had called a Hollywood actor and told him she had taken enough sleeping pills to kill herself. He answered with the famous line of Rhett Butler, which I now edit for church, ‘Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a care!’ Those were the last words she heard. She dropped the phone—and left it dangling.

“In a very sensitive article, Claire Booth Luce asked, ‘What really killed Marilyn Monroe, a love goddess who never found any love?’ She said she thought the dangling telephone was the symbol of Marilyn Monroe’s whole life. She died because she never got through to anyone who understood.”

Love Steadfastly Peter exhorts believers to love one another fervently with a pure heart. The Greek word translated “fervently” can and does mean “fervently earnestly.” If that is the idea here, Peter is saying we are to love intensely. However, it is also possible that “constantly” or “steadfast” is the meaning (see Arndt and Gingrich on 1 Pet. 4:8). The thought of constant is more in line with Peter’s support that follows (Hodges).

This constant love is to be “with a pure heart” or, better translated, “out of a pure heart.” “Heart” in the Bible denotes the inner life of a person. This love is to come from within and not just from the mouth or lips. It is also to be mutual, flowing in both directions between two believers. Christian love in the Christian family is not supposed to flow one way. It is not to be a one-way street. Ideally, this is a duet, not a solo, but if no one else joins the cheer, you sing a solo if necessary.

Peter says that since we were cleansed to genuinely love, we should love one another sincerely, not superficially, steadfastly, and not spasmodically.

I have known people like the fountain James describes: “Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing” (Jas. 3:10). One day, they were warm and friendly, and the next, cool and hostile. One day, they were gracious; the next, they were griping about everything. Our loving attitude and actions need to be consistent and steadfast,

Because You Have Been Born Again

The New Birth Peter then adds, “Having been born again not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1:23). Why does Peter mention this? It is vital for he develops it extensively (1:24-25). The participial phrase “having been born again” is an adverbial circumstantial participle of cause (as in 1:18). In other words, verses 23-25 assert why we should love one another with a sincere, steadfast love. Let me explain. We were born again into God’s family by the Word of God, which is alive, incorruptible, and abides forever. This is the second time the believer’s new birth is mentioned in this chapter (1:3 and also “children” in 1:14). The new birth relates us to God as our Father and to each other as brothers.

The Word The Word of God is the means of regeneration (Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls). It is the seed by which we were born into God’s family and this seed, unlike the seed out of which natural life springs, is alive, not dead, incorruptible, not subject to decay, and it abides forever, that is, it is durable. The Word of God by which we were born spiritually possesses life and is permanent.

To support his claim, Peter quotes the Old Testament: “because all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers and the flower falls away but the word of the Lord endures forever” (1:24-25a). This is a quotation from Isaiah 40:6-8. “All flesh,” that is, all humans are like grass; they are transitory. All that humans glory in—physical strength or beauty, apparel, learning, talents, wealth, rank—are like the *flower* of the grass, the most short-lived part of the grass, but the Word of God is eternal. Grass and glory are “dead and gone,” which is the exact opposite of “living and abiding” (Stibbs/Walls). Like grass, human greatness and glory will disappear (Grudem).

“Now, this is the Word which by the gospel was preached to you” (1:25b). Peter reminds his readers that the eternal Word evangelized them. God has made His Word indestructible!

Dr. R. A. Torrey once wrote: “The omnipotence of the Bible against all man’s attacks is one of the many proofs of its divine origin. It is not only the most intensely loved Book in the world but also the most bitterly hated. When men discovered it condemned sin, laid human pride in the dust, and demanded the renunciation of worldliness and the self-life, they rebelled against it. Their resistance has been determined, relentless, and even violent. All attempts to assign the Scriptures to oblivion, however, have failed. Celsus tried with the brilliance of his genius; Porphyry assailed it with the depths and subtlety of his philosophy; and Lucian attacked it with the keenness of his satire—all were equally unsuccessful. Diocletian, the ruler of the world’s mightiest empire, exerted all the power of Rome against the Bible. He issued edicts that every scrap of it should be burned, but his scheme failed. Then he commanded that all who possessed it should be put to death, but again his plan did not work. For 19 centuries, every device of destruction that human philosophy, science, and reason could bring to bear has been arrayed against the Scriptures; yet the Bible stands absolutely unshaken today.”

Steadfast Love Keep in mind that 1 Peter 1:23-25 were added and give the reason why believers should love one another with sincere love. Peter seems to be suggesting that our love for each other ought to be as steadfast and dependable as the Word by which we were begotten. Our love ought to be like the Word that was the seed for our new birth, alive, incorruptible, and permanent (Hodges).

Is your love like the grass, fading and failing, or is it like the Word, lasting forever?

Summary: As members of God’s family, believers are to love one another sincerely and steadfastly.

Our love ought to be steadfast and dependable (Hodges).

“A young man cowered in the corner of a dirty, roach-infested death row cell in a South Carolina prison. His body was curled in a fetal position. He seemed oblivious to the filth and stench around him. His name was Rusty, and he was sentenced to die for the murder of Myrtle Beach, a woman who died in a crime spree that left four people dead.

“Police arrested twenty-three-year-old Rusty Welborn from Point Pleasant, West Virginia, in 1979, following one of the most brutal slayings in South Carolina history. Rusty was tried for murder and received the death penalty for his crime. Bob McAlister, deputy chief of staff to South Carolina’s governor, became acquainted with Rusty on death row. Bob had become a Christian a year or so earlier and felt a strong call from God to minister to the state’s inmates—especially those spending their last days on death row.

“Bob’s first look at Rusty revealed a pitiful sight. Rusty was lying on the floor when he arrived, a pathetic picture of a man who believed he mattered to no one. The only signs of life in the cell were the roaches who scurried over everything, including Rusty himself. He made no effort to move or even to brush the insects away. He stared blankly at Bob as he began to talk but did not respond.

“During visit after visit, Bob tried to reach Rusty, telling him of the love Jesus had for him and of his opportunity—even on death row—to start a new life in Christ. He talked and prayed continuously, and finally, Rusty began to respond to the stranger who kept invading his cell. Little by little, he opened up until one day, he began to weep as Bob shared with him. On that day, Rusty Welborn, a pitiful man with murder and darkness behind him and his own death closing in ahead of him, gave his heart to Jesus Christ.

“When Bob returned to Rusty’s cell a few days later, he found a new man. The cell was clean and so was Rusty. He had renewed energy and a positive outlook on life. McAlister continued to visit him regularly, studying the Bible and praying with him. The two men became close friends over the next five years. In fact, McAlister said that Rusty grew into the son he never had, and as for Rusty, he had taken to calling McAlister ‘Pap.’

“Bob learned that Rusty’s childhood in West Virginia had been anything but ‘almost heaven.’ His family was destitute, and Rusty was neglected and abused as a youngster. School was an ordeal both for him and for his teachers. Throughout his junior high years, he wore the same two pairs of pants and two ragged shirts. Out of shame, frustration, and a lack of adult guidance, Rusty quit school in his ninth-grade year, a decision that was to be just the beginning of his troubles. His teenage years were full of turmoil as he was kicked out of his home many times and ran away countless others. He spent the better part of his youth living under bridges and in public restrooms.

“Bob taught Rusty the Bible, but Rusty was the teacher when it came to love and forgiveness. This young man who had never known real love was amazed and thrilled about the love of God. He never ceased to be surprised that other people could actually love someone like him through Jesus Christ. Rusty’s childlike enthusiasm was a breath of fresh air to Bob, who came to realize how much he had taken for granted, especially with regard to the love of his family and friends.

“In time, Rusty became extremely bothered by the devastating pain he had caused the family and friends of his victim. Knowing that God had forgiven him, he desperately wanted the forgiveness of those he had wronged. Then a most significant thing happened: the brother of the woman Rusty had murdered became a Christian. God had dealt with him for two years about his

need to forgive his sister's killer. Finally, he wrote Rusty a letter that offered not only forgiveness but love in Christ.

“Not long before his scheduled execution, this brother and his wife came to visit Rusty. Bob was present when the two men met and tearfully embraced like long-lost brothers finally reunited. Rusty's senseless crime ten years earlier had constructed an enormous barrier between himself and his brother. The love of Christ obliterated that barrier and enabled both men to realize that, because of Him, they truly were brothers reunited on that day. It was a lesson Bob would not forget.

“Not only did Rusty teach Bob McAlister how to love and forgive, he also taught him a powerful lesson about how to die. As the appointed day approached, Rusty exhibited a calm and assurance like Bob had never seen. Only his final day, with only hours remaining before his 1:00 a.m. execution, Rusty asked McAlister to read to him from the Bible. After an hour or so of listening, Rusty sat up on the side of his cot and said, ‘You know, the only thing I ever wanted was a home, Pap. Now I'm going to get one.’

“Bob continued his reading, and after a few minutes, Rusty grew very still. Thinking he had fallen asleep, Bob placed a blanket over him and closed the Bible. As he turned to leave, he felt a strong compulsion to lean over and kiss Rusty on the forehead. A short time later, Rusty Welborn was executed for murder. A woman assisting Rusty in his last moments shared this postscript to his story: As he was being prepared for his death, Rusty looked at her and said, ‘What a shame that a man's gotta wait ‘til his last night alive to be kissed and tucked in for the very first time’ (Young, pp. 3-5).

TO BE MORE SPECIFIC

The Bible repeatedly exhorts believers in Jesus Christ to love one another. In his first epistle, Peter gets specific. He says that we are to love one another sincerely and steadfastly. In other words, we are to love when things are going wrong for a person as well as when things are going well, and we are to love full-time, not just part-time. Have you had a hard time loving someone sincerely and steadfastly? Who hasn't? How do you love someone like that? Peter gets even more specific in discussing how we are to love one another.

Lay Aside Unloving Attitudes

If we are to love one another sincerely and steadfastly because we were cleansed for that purpose and have been born again by an eternal Word, several conclusions naturally follow. Peter mentions two, one negative and the other positive. He says, "Therefore laying aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking" (2:1). "Therefore" relates what is said to the preceding. It signals the conclusion of the discussion (Adams). If love is to be the goal of the purified soul, all that is inconsistent with it must be laid aside. "Laying aside" translates a Greek word used for taking off clothes. Peter lists five sins that must be removed so that the purified soul can love sincerely and steadfastly. There are three groups of sins listed in the five sins listed. The word "all" divides the list into these three groups or types of sins (see Selwyn).

Malice The first sin Peter mentions, "malice," is a Greek word that can mean either wickedness (Selwyn; Barclay) or malice (Stibbs/Walls; Adams). "All" means "all kinds." Thus, the first sin is either all kinds of wickedness or all kinds of malice, that is, ill-will, an attitude of desiring to get even. The context favors the latter meaning. If believers are to love, they must put away all attitudes and actions of ill will.

A lady told me about how she dreamed of getting even with a woman she knew. Her "friend" called where she worked to tell them she would not be there that day because she was sick. That was the truth; she was sick. The lady telling me the story said what she wanted to do but didn't was call the sick lady's place of employment and say that she was the receptionist at the beauty salon and wanted to confirm the "sick" lady's appointment for that day! That is a "getting even" attitude.

Deception Guile, hypocrisy, and envy are grouped by the second "all." Guile comes from a Greek word that means "bait, craft, deceit." It was used to bait fish and denotes "deception for personal gain." It describes a person whose motives are never pure (Barclay). The Greek word translated "hypocrisy" means "To play a part, pretend." It denotes actors playing a role that hides their true identity. A hypocrite's actions, words, and even apparent attitudes conceal his selfish motive. This describes people whose faces are different from their hearts and whose words differ from their feelings (Barclay). A hypocrite has been defined as a good example—when there is an audience.

A couple was in a fight when another couple came to call. The couple fighting put on a smile and were polite the whole time the other couple was there. As the visitors left, the fighting couple, arm in arm, smiled and waved goodbye. The departing couple remarked, "Boy, they're a happy couple. I wish we were that way." Meanwhile, the fighting couple shut the door and went at it again.

Envy is the feeling of displeasure over someone else's prosperity. It was present among the disciples (Mk. 10:41). It has been said that envy is the last sin to die (Barclay). Selwyn says that it is the "constant plague of all voluntary organizations," including religious organizations and Cranfield says, "We do have to engage in what is called 'church work' very long to discover what a perennial source of trouble envy is" (Cranfield, cited by Barclay). If the sincere love commanded in 1 Peter 1:22 is to be realized, all deception must be put away. One cannot be displeased over someone else's prosperity and seek their best simultaneously.

There is an ancient tale about two people, one envious of the other. The envious person was once given an opportunity to ask a favor from the king, with the provision that his rival would get twice as much of whatever he requested. This puts the envious person in a difficult position. After much consideration, he asked that one of his eyes be plucked out (Steinsaltz, p. 126).

Evil Speaking The last category of sins Peter mentions is every kind of evil speaking. The Greek word translated "evil speaking" means "to speak down, to speak against, to slander." Envy usually results in "running down" the other person. Love does not speak evil; it speaks well (see Rom. 12:14, where "bless," a word which means "speak well of," is a characteristic of love). Barclay observes that this sin is "almost always the fruit of envy" and usually occurs when the victim is not there to defend himself (Barclay). Perhaps we should ask ourselves, "Is what I am about to say an improvement on silence?"

Frankly, this is a problem in many marriages. When they disagree, they fight and speak down to each other. Some marriages could be improved with duct tape! I'm not serious about the duct tape, but Peter is serious about not talking down to people.

Well-dressed believers do not wear malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, or slander. For them, these garments went out of style when they were born again. In the context of 1 Peter, the point is that since the goal of the purified soul is sincere and steadfast love, believers must put away all that is inconsistent with it (Hodges). Take off the old rages of the old life.

Those who practice deception will get caught. If not here, then at the Judgment Seat of Christ. A lady was shopping for a chicken. When the butcher showed her his last one, she asked if he had a larger one. He immediately said, "Yes." He took the chicken, walked into the back, turned around, and returned with the same chicken. He said to the lady, "Here is a larger one." She responded, "Good, I'll take both of them."

Desire Milk so You Can Grow

Desire First Peter 2:1-3 consists of a single sentence. The negative action of 1 Peter 2:1 precedes the positive action of 1 Peter 2:2. The point is having laid aside sin "as newborn babes desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (2:2-3). The one command is to desire the Word. The mentioning of babes desiring milk does not mean that this refers to the length of time that the readers had been believers (Selwyn; Grudem, who says that they had been believers for thirty years). Nor is this a reference to spiritual immaturity (Adams; Grudem). In 1 Corinthians 3:2 and Hebrews 5:12-13, the milk of the Word is said to be suitable for babes but not for the mature. Peter does not make that distinction here. Here, milk is used because it supplies nourishment. All believers are to desire the milk, the Word of God.

The Greek term translated "word" only occurs here and in Romans 12:1, where it is translated "reasonable." Its meaning here has been greatly debated (Selwyn). It means reasonable (Stibbs/Walls) or spiritual (Grudem). These two meanings are not mutually exclusive (Hodges).

God's Word is spiritual, non-literal, milk that feeds man's mental and rational faculties. This spiritual milk is also "pure," meaning "genuine, guileless, unadulterated." Feeding on genuine, guileless milk produces a clean heart without deception (2:1), so there can be sincere love (1:22).

The milk is to be pure and unadulterated (2 Cor. 4:2). For some people, the Word has to be mixed with something else before they will drink it, like a mother who has to mix chocolate syrup in the milk to get her children to drink their milk. There is nothing wrong with devotional books or commentaries, but beware of relying on aids and not just absorbing the unmixed Word of God. Some Pastors feel compelled to mix the Word with entertainment to get their congregation to drink it. Believers are to desire pure, spiritual milk like a newborn desires his mother's milk. The imagery suggests eagerness and intensity. Newborn babies do not indulge in malice, deception, or slander; they demand milk! A baby desires milk insistently and regularly. We are to crave the Word of God like babes crave and cry for their mother's milk.

Years ago, the South Central Bell Telephone Company put an ad promoting using their Yellow Pages in the paper. It said, "Born to be battered ... the lovin' phone call book. Underline it. Circle things. Write in the margins. Turn down page corners. The more you use it, the more valuable it gets to be."

Growth The purpose of consuming milk is "that you may grow thereby" (2:2). As milk enables babes to grow, spiritual milk enables spiritual newborns to grow.

The more we learn about foods, the more we realize the truth of the axiom, "We are what we eat." If you "feed" your mind on unloving attitudes, you will become unloving. You will become a loving person if you feed your mind on the Word. There is a Brazilian parrot whose color changes from green to yellow when it eats certain fish.

A few Greek manuscripts add "into salvation" to the end of verse 2. Following those manuscripts, *The New International Version* translates 1 Peter 2:2: "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Pet 2:2). That addition certainly fits the overall subject of 1 Peter, but the addition is not in the vast majority of Greek manuscripts.

A medical doctor once wrote: "The best way to begin gaining weight is on a simple diet of milk. I once was on a diet of nothing but milk for nine months and gained weight. For nine months, I did not eat one particle of food other than just milk, and I doubled my weight. It was the first nine months after I was born!" (M. R. DeHaan).

A person committed to a diet that eliminated all dairy argued that drinking milk was the way to gain weight. He went so far as to say that you should drink milk if you wanted to go from 50 to 300 pounds. According to him, milk was intended for babes, not adults *and in the case of caves, they went from 50 to 100 pounds by drinking milk.*

Gracious The incentive for consuming milk so that you can grow is "if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (2:3). "If" does not imply doubt. In the Greek text, it is a first-class conditional, indicating that Peter assumes they have tasted that the Lord is gracious. The Greek word rendered "gracious" is the word for "goodness, kindness, benevolence." These words are an allusion to Psalm 34:8. The taste of that grace ought to excite the appetite for more. Perhaps there is also the indication here that the believer draws nourishment from the Lord Himself (Stibbs/Walls).

Believers are to change clothes (2:1) and eating habits (2:2).

God is Good

Peter commanded believers to grow since they had experienced the Lord's goodness and grace. Now, he embarks on an extended explanation of the Lord's goodness as it has been bestowed on believers collectively, that is, in the church (Hodges).

Believer's Position Believers are a Temple. Peter begins his exposition of God's grace on the church by saying, "coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also as living stones are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (2:4-5). This passage contains two metaphors for believers. On the one hand, they are the spiritual house itself (a temple) and, on the other, they are the holy priest in the spiritual house.

First, Peter proclaims that Jesus Christ is a living stone. We speak of being "stone dead." Jesus is "stone alive" (1:3). As a living stone, men rejected Jesus, a phrase adapted from Psalm 118:22. The stone failed to "measure up to their expectations and demands; they cast it aside as useless" (Hiebert, p. 120), but God chose this stone. He selected it to be the cornerstone in a building He plans to erect (2:6). It was "precious," honored, prized, and highly valued.

When we come to Christ, the living stone, through the living Word (1:23), we are born again (1:3, 23) to a living hope (1:3). We become living stones being built up in a spiritual house. Believers are not isolated stones scattered over a field. Collectively, they are forming a house. A house is not just a pile of rocks. The image implies an orderly and purposeful arrangement of individual stones, each shaped and fitted to an assigned place. Furthermore, this house is not a material house; it is a spiritual house. It is not a domestic house but a temple, a place of worship. "Christianity is a community." Bricks by themselves are useless. However, they become useful when built into a building (Barclay).

Believers are priests. The original readers were holy priests in contrast to the heathen priests of Asia Minor, who were, at best, idolatrous and, at worst, immoral (Selwyn). There are two functions of priests. Priests have access to God and offer sacrifices to God. These holy priests (1:14-16) are set apart to the Lord to offer spiritual, not literal, sacrifices to God. These sacrifices are not sacrifices for sin; they are expressions of gratitude.

In the Old Testament, thanksgiving (Ps. 50:14), contrition (Ps. 51:17), praise (Ps. 107:22), and prayer (Ps. 141:2) are described as sacrifices. Spiritual sacrifices of a New Testament priest include 1) the offering of the body in acts of obedience (Rom. 12:1), 2) the offering of money for the Lord's work (Phil. 4:18), 3) praise and good work (Heb. 13:15-16). When such sacrifices are offered through Jesus Christ, they are "acceptable to God."

Believers are a Temple. They are to grow not in isolation but in a community (Selwyn on 2:1).

Believer's Privilege Believers are honored. Peter adds, "Therefore it is also contained in the scripture 'Behold I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious and he who believes in Him will by no means be put to shame'" (2:6). Peter now returns to the imagery of Jesus Christ as a stone and develops another way in which the Lord has been gracious to believers. In 1 Peter 2:4-5, Jesus Christ was a living stone. In 1 Peter 2:6-8, Peter pictures Him as the chief cornerstone and points out the possible responses to Him as the cornerstone. First, Peter establishes that Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone by quoting Isaiah 28:16. God promised to lay a chief cornerstone in Zion, Jerusalem. The Isaiah passage is not an explicit prophecy of the church. It only proves that Christ is a chief cornerstone. The cornerstone was not a buried foundation stone. It was a large visible stone at one of the corners that controlled the lines of the building. The cornerstone was "elect," chosen by God (1:4), and previously, the same term was used for the living stone in 1 Peter 2:4.

A cornerstone implies a building. Christ is God's great cornerstone for the church. The Old Testament prophesied that Christ would be the cornerstone, which leaves room for a building without explicitly prophesying a building. By Him, God establishes a standard and by Him measures all things (Hodges).

The one who trusts in this selected, highly valued cornerstone will not be put to shame, that is, will never be disappointed, personally shamed, and disgraced because the stone failed him. Hiebert explains that Peter used the LXX translation of the Hebrew, which reads "shall not be in haste," that is, flee in confusion and terror. The one who trusts in this stone shall never hasten away in shame and confusion because his misplaced faith ended in disappointment. He also suggests that the negative is an understatement. In the hour of crisis, the believer will stand firm and unshaken (unashamed and unshaken) on the stone (Hiebert, p. 127). If you put your trust in Mohammed, you will be disappointed. If you put your trust in Buddha, you will be disappointed. If you put your trust in Joseph Smith, you will be disappointed. If you put your trust in Christ, you will not be disappointed.

Next, Peter contemplates responses to the stone. He writes, "Therefore to you who believe, He is precious" (2:7). The "He" of the NKJV is in italics, indicating it is not in the Greek text. The Greek text reads, "You, therefore, the Honor, to the one who believes" (Grudem). He is precious, that is, honored (2:4, 6) and when we come to Him, we share His Honor (2:7). Believers share the honor of being part of the building of which Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone (Hodges).

On the other hand, Peter continues, "but to those who are disobedient the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense" (2:7-8a). Alluding to Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14, Peter says unbelievers were disobedient to the command to believe. They rejected the chief cornerstone, and therefore, the cornerstone became a stumbling stone and a rock of offense. When Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22, He applied it to the scribes and Pharisees (Mt. 21:42; Mk. 12:10; Lk. 20:7). When Peter quoted it in the Acts, he applied it to the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:11).

According to tradition, during the construction of the Temple, the builders rejected an unusually shaped stone as useless. Later, they discovered it was the very stone they needed to complete the Temple. Peter pictures the chief cornerstone being rejected and the rejecters colliding with it, damaging themselves. By rejecting God's stone, men bring injury and destruction to themselves.

Peter adds, "They stumble being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed" (2:8b). Unbelievers stumble because they are disobedient to the gospel message, which commands people to believe. Yea, those who reject the gospel are destined to stumble. Once they disobey the command to believe, they are appointed to stumble. In the words of the Gospel of John, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (Jn. 3:36). Jamison, Fausset, and Brown quote Cappel, who says, "God ordains the wicked to punishment, not to crime." A. T. Robinson says, "They rebelled against God and paid the penalty" and quotes Bigg, who says, "Their disobedience is not ordained, the penalty of their disobedience is." Clark explains, "They who believe not the word were appointed to stumble and fall by it... Their stumbling, falling, and being broken is the consequence of their disobedience or unbelief, but there is no intimation that they were appointed or decreed to disobey, that they might stumble, and fall, and be broken. This seems to be the meaning our Lord attaches to this very prophecy, which he quotes against the chief priests and elders" (Mt. 21:42-44).

Believer's Purpose Believers purpose is to praise God. Finally, Peter states, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people that you may proclaim

the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (2:9-10). Again Peter lists ways God has been good and gracious to believers and, this time, he declares that the purpose is that they should proclaim His praises. Although the word “church” does not appear in this paragraph (or for that matter anywhere in Peter’s epistles), what is said in 1 Peter 2:9 is a description of it, for Peter is speaking of believers corporately as God’s house. Peter *applies* to the church terminology originally referring to Israel in the Old Testament. That does not mean that Israel is the church (Blum). Similarity does not prove sameness (Hodges).

The “you” of 1 Peter 2:9 is emphatic. Believers who are emphatically in contrast to those who stumble are a chosen generation, a name drawn from Isaiah 43:20. For the fourth and final time in this epistle, Peter uses the word “elect” (1:1; 2:4, 6). God’s sovereign selection made believers a distinct people.

Believers are also a royal priesthood, a designation borrowed from Exodus 19:6. In 1 Peter 2:5, Peter called the priesthood “holy.” Here, he declares it royal. As holy priests, believers are set apart to the Lord and, as royal priests, they are children of the King destined to rule as well as serve. Furthermore, believers are a holy nation, another title taken from Exodus 19:6. A nation is a group of people under the same government in the care of God’s rule. Thus, there is a holy nation, a group of people separated from the nationals of the world and consecrated unto God. Finally, believers are designated “His own special people,” another Old Testament expression (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; Isa. 43:21; etc.) Believers are God’s private possession, a people belonging exclusively to Him. The Greek word for people denotes “Community” (Selwyn).

First Peter 2:9 describes the goodness and grace of the Lord, which believers have tasted (2:3). God chose them, set them apart for Himself, and possessed them. The purpose of this goodness was “that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (2:9). God designed Israel to set forth His praise (Isa. 43:21). He now intends for the church to do the same.

The Greek verb translated “proclaim” occurs only here in the New Testament and means “to tell out” “to make known” (Selwyn suggests “advertise”). Believers are to exhibit and extol the Lord’s moral and spiritual excellencies, glories, and praises, and they should. They were in darkness, a symbol of sin and spiritual ignorance, and God called them into His light. He Himself is light (1 Jn. 1:5) and He makes believers “children of light” (1 Thess. 5:5). In other words, believers were saved by God’s grace and goodness so they could proclaim His praise.

God’s grace is highlighted with the addition of “who once were not a people but are not the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (2:10). When Israel departed from the Lord, they were described by Hosea as “no people,” that is, like Gentiles (Hosea 1:6-10, esp. 2:23 and Rom. 9:25-26 where Paul applies Hosea’s picture to Gentiles as well as Jews). Before their conversion, these Gentiles to whom Peter is writing were “no people.” They were not a community of God’s children who were useful to God’s program. They were also without mercy, but now, by God’s grace, they have obtained mercy and they are God’s people.

Concerning verse 10, Wiersbe states, “Each of these four pictures emphasizes the importance of unity and harmony.... Unity does not eliminate diversity. Not all children in a family are alike, nor are all the stones in a building identical. In fact, it is diversity that gives beauty and richness to a family or building. The absence of diversity is not *unity*; it is *uniformity*, and uniformity is dull. It is fine when the choir sings in unison, but I prefer that they sing in harmony.”

Barclay comments, “It frequently happens that the value of a thing lies in the fact that someone has possessed it. A very ordinary thing acquires a new value if it has been possessed by some

famous person. In any museum, we will find quite ordinary things—clothes, a walking stick, a pen, books, pieces of furniture, which are only of value because they were once possessed and used by some great person. It is the ownership that gives them worth. It is so with the Christian. The Christian may be a very ordinary person, but he acquires a new value and dignity and greatness because he belongs to God. The greatness of the Christian lies in the fact that he is God's."

Since we are God's people, priesthood and temple, we should desire the Word so that we may fulfill the purpose for which we were chosen, called, and cleansed, namely, proclaim God's praises and love one another.

Remember your high calling and take the high road. In the days of the French monarchy, a tutor was hired to instruct the prince of the reigning royal family. The young heir, who led an undisciplined life, often misbehaved. The teacher was frustrated because he didn't dare punish the prince. How could he correct the successor to the French throne? After much thought, the tutor purchased a short piece of purple ribbon, symbolizing royalty and the color of old France. He pinned the ribbon on the lapel of the young prince's coat. Looking his student in the eye, he said respectfully, "Sir, whenever you behave in a manner unbecoming of the French throne and of the French king, I shall point to the royal color on your coat and make my appeal by that" (*Our Daily Bread*, 9/17/82).

Summary: Since believers have been purified and born again by the Word of God, they should put away all unloving attitudes and desire the Word because God has been gracious to them.

People who have been mistreated mistreat others. A book title I once saw said *Hurt People, Hurt People*. If you have been treated in an unloving way, you will probably dwell on it and, as a result, treat others in an unloving way. Peter's solution is for you to dwell on the Word and see that God is gracious, good, and kind so that you will treat others with grace and mercy.

A church or individual believers filled with malice, deception, and evil speaking will not grow through the ministry of the Word. If believers are to desire the Word and grow, they must lay aside attitudes that create friction and ill-will toward the brethren and concentrate on God's grace to them (Hodges). The critical issue is to crave the Word.

Pat Summerall, the well-known sports announcer, overcame alcoholism and became a Christian in his late sixties. About prayer meetings and Bible studies, Summerall comments: "It's like an alcoholic looking for a drink. If he wants it bad enough, he can find it—no matter what. I'm like that when finding prayer services and Bible studies. No matter where I am working, I know that they're out there and I can find them" (Art Stricklin, *Sports Spectrum*, Nov/Dec 2001, p. 27).

FACING A HOSTILE WORLD

Holding the baby in my arms, I thought, “He is so innocent. All he wants to do is drink milk and sleep. He has a loving, caring family and father who provides for him and protects him.” Then I thought, “As he grows, life will get difficult. He will have to learn how to relate to his father and family. Although there may be some rough spots, that will be relatively easy because he’s a member of the family and they love each other. The difficult task will come when he faces a hostile world. The world outside the family doesn’t love; it doesn’t care. It can even be downright hostile and hateful. To complicate matters, sometimes in the world, a person can be his own worst enemy.” The same biography could be written concerning God’s children. Believers in Jesus Christ are born again. They become God’s children. They have a loving Father who provides for them and protects them. They have a caring family. As they grow, they must learn to relate to their father and family, which is relatively easy because they love each other. Eventually, God’s children have to face a hostile world.

Peter’s first epistle traces the believer’s spiritual pilgrimage from birth through the family to facing the hostile world outside the family of God. He began his book by teaching that we were begotten again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1:3), yet he acknowledges that there is trouble and trials in life (1:6) and he desires that the lives of believers not be damaged by them (1:7-9). So, he informs believers how they might save their souls, that is, their lives (1:9). First, he tells them how to relate to their heavenly Father (1:13-21) and their spiritual family (1:22-2:10). Then, he tells them how to face the hostile world (2:11-12).

In 1 Peter 2:11-12, there are two hostile forces to the believer’s spiritual life and, thus, two ways to face the hostile world. Peter applies those principles to our relationship to government (2:13-17), to our relationship to slave owners (2:18-25), to our relationship to an unsaved mate (3:1-7), and to life in general (3:8-4:6).

Have you faced a hostile world lately? Because of your commitment to Christ, have people withdrawn from you? Have they slandered you? Have you lost a promotion? If so, this passage will be of interest to you.

Abstain from Evil

Sojourners With tender affection, Peter addresses his readers, saying, “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (2:11). The first hostile force is not the outside world. It is the inside world, the “fleshly lust.” In the previous extended paragraph, Peter urged his readers to love one another (1:22). He now warmly addresses them as those he loves. As one who loves them, he appeals to them; he does not command them. The expression “I beg” has the sense of “I strongly urge you will” or “I strongly appeal to you” (Grudem). The basis of Peter’s appeal is that his readers are “sojourners and pilgrims.” Both of these designations have appeared separately in 1 Peter. “Sojourners” occurred in 1 Peter 1:17. It denotes a people living in a foreign country where they do not have the rights of citizenship (Stibbs/Walls). In Ephesians 2:19, it is used for those who are without citizenship in God’s kingdom. Believers are foreigners, aliens in this world. Their citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). They are also described as pilgrims (1:1), that is, temporary residents in a place that is not their

home (Stibbs/Walls; Grudem). As a Southern gospel song says, “This world is not my home. I’m just ‘a passin’ thru.”

The combination of sojourner and pilgrim appears in the Greek translation (LXX) of Gen 23:4 (see also Ps. 39:12). Abraham’s application of these terms to himself may have been in Peter’s mind. These two terms are “almost identical” (Selwyn), “probably virtual synonyms” that have the idea of “aliens and strangers” (Hodges). A proper relationship with the world begins with a realization that we do not belong to it (Hodges).

Fleshly Desires Believers, who are aliens and strangers, have “fleshly lust that wars against the soul.” “Fleshly lust” refers to our selfish, indulgent, and potentially vicious natural appetites (Stibbs/Walls). The passions or strong desires characterized the sinful nature, any desire for things contrary to God’s will (see Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Jn. 2:16; Grudem; see also Barclay). Hedonism is the fleshly desire for pleasure and materialism is the desire for possessions.

The Greek word translated “war” carries with it the idea of a “military campaign.” “We do not win one battle and the war is over. It is a constant warfare, and we must be on our guard” (Wiersbe). The Greek word rendered “soul” means life (see 1:9). Sensual desires wage war against the spiritual life, the “spiritual devotion” (Stibbs/Walls) of the believer. These desires cause spiritual damage; such believers are “spiritually weak and ineffective.”

Notice that Peter speaks about fleshly *desires*, not fleshly behavior. It is not just the action but the mental attitude that wars against our spiritual life. The believer will be taken captive and spoiled if these desires win the struggle. His life will be robbed and plundered of its eternal reward. Physical death can result (Hodges).

The problem is the desire. Two Buddhist monks were walking in a drenching thunderstorm when they came to a swollen stream from its banks. A beautiful young Japanese woman stood there wanting to get to the other side but was afraid of the currents. One of the monks said, “Can I help you?” When the woman told him she needed help crossing the stream, the monk picked her up, put her on his shoulder, carried her through the water, and put her down on the other side. Then, he and the other monk went on to the monastery. That night, the other monk said to him, “As Buddhist monks, we have taken vows not to look at a woman, much less touch her body. Back there by the river, you did both.” The first monk said, “My brother, I put that woman down on the other side of the river. You’re still carrying her in your mind.”

D. L. Moody said, “I have more trouble with D. L. Moody than with any man I know” (Moody, cited by Wiersbe).

Abstain Since believers do not belong to the world, they should abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul. The Greek word rendered “abstain” means “to hold back, to be away; distant.” Hiebert says it means “to be holding yourselves off from” (see “lay aside” in 2:1).

This command implies that fleshly desires are not uncontrollable; they can be consciously restrained (Grudem). Of course, that can only be done by depending on the Lord, but it can be done. The question is, “Do you want to abstain from fleshly lust?”

In his book *Don’t Park Here*, C. William Fisher talks about driving in his car with his 4-year-old son. “Byron, what do you want to be when you grow up to be a man?” he asked. The youngster replied, “I don’t want to grow up to be a man.” Surprised, his father asked, “Why not?” Byron replied, “Because then I couldn’t ride my tricycle. Fisher wrote, “As I drove on, I thought, “I’m sure I enjoyed my tricycle when I was 4, but I’m also sure that I enjoy much more the power and performance of my Olds today.” Fisher made this spiritual application: Many Christians cling to “their religious tricycles when they should be enjoying the surge of power and effectiveness of an Olds relationship.”

Do Good

The World Peter continues, “having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (2:12). The second hostile force is described as the world. Peter speaks of “Gentiles,” referring to the world of unsaved people (Grudem; Wiersbe). The phrase is probably equivalent to “the heathen” (Hodges). Unsaved people “speak against you as evildoers.” The Greek word rendered “speak against” means “to speak down.” It means “to speak evil of, “slander, “revile” (the noun appears in 2:1). Hiebert says that it “denotes critical and derogatory speaking with the malicious intention of harming those spoken against by turning others against them” (Hiebert, p. 146). Christians will be mocked or hated and often slanderous lies are spread about them (Adams).

The world is hostile, very hostile, to Christianity. Did you ever feel that you were rowing “against the stream of world opinion” (Selwyn on 2:8)? Barclay writes about the slander against the early Christians. “The Christians were accused of cannibalism. This accusation took its rise from a perversion of the words of the Last Supper, ‘This my body. This cup is the new covenant in my blood.’ So, the Christians were accused of killing and eating a child at their feasts. The Christians were accused of immorality and even of incest. This accusation took its rise from the fact that the Christians called their meeting the *Agapa*, the Love Feast, and the heathen perverted that name to make it mean that the Christian feasts were sensual orgies at which nameless and shameless deeds were done.

“The Christians were accused of damaging trade. Such was the charge of the silversmiths of Ephesus (Acts 18:21-41). They were accused of ‘tampering with family relationships’ because often homes were, in fact, broken up when some members of the family became Christians and others did not. They were accused of turning slaves against their masters, and Christianity indeed did give every man a new sense of worth and dignity. They were accused of ‘hatred of mankind,’ and indeed, the Christians did speak as if the world and the Church were entirely opposed to each other. Above all, they were accused of disloyalty to Caesar, for no Christian would worship the Emperor’s godhead, and burn his pinch of incense, and declare that Caesar was Lord, for to him Jesus Christ and no other was Lord.”

I received an email from a friend who was passing along a message he had received from someone else. Whether or not this happened, I do not know, but it is the type of thing that happens. Jim Neugent, a coach in Childress, Texas, wrote to ABC (on-line) concerning a program called “The Practice.” In one episode, one of the lawyer’s mothers decided she was gay and wanted her son to go to court and help her get a marriage license so she could marry her partner. The next day, he sent the following letter to ABC, not expecting a reply, but he got one.

His letter said, “ABC is obsessed (or should I say abscessed) with the subject of homosexuality. I will no longer watch any of your attempts to convince the world that homosexuality is OK. The Practice can be a fairly good show, but last night’s program was so typical of your agenda. You picked the “dufus” of the office to be the one who was against the idea of his mother being gay and made him look like a whiner because he had convictions. This type of mentality calls people like me a ‘gay basher.’ Read the first chapter of Romans (that is in the Bible) and see what the apostle Paul had to say about it. He, God, and Jesus were all ‘gay bashers.’ What if she’d fallen in love with her cocker spaniel? Is that an alternative lifestyle? (By the way, the Bible speaks against that, too.) Jim Neugent”

Here is ABC's reply from the ABC on-line webmaster: "How about getting your nose out of the Bible (which is *only* a book of stories compiled by *many* different writers hundreds of years ago) and read the Declaration of Independence (what our nation is built on), where it says 'All men are created equal,' and try treating them that way for a change! Or better yet, try thinking for yourself and stop using an archaic book of stories as your lame crutch for your existence. You are in the minority in this country and your boycott will not affect us or our freedom of statement."

Do Good In the face of slander from a hostile world, Peter instructs believers to have "conduct honorable among the Gentiles." The Greek word translated "honorable" means "fair, beautiful, good, excellent." It is good in the sense of right, noble, and honorable. The same word is used later in this verse to the phrase "good works." In short, when being spoken against, believers are to do that which is good among the Gentiles, that is, among the unsaved people around them. When a believer is misunderstood and slandered, the proper response is not withdrawal from the world, nor contemptuous disregard of the opinion of one's opponents, but simply to do what is honorable and good.

John Wesley said,

Do all the good you can
By all the means you can
In all the ways you can
In all the places you can
To all the people you can
As long as ever you can.

The purpose for doing good is "that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they observe glorify God in the day of visitation" (2:12). In this case, the good works need to be seen of men. The Greek word translated "observe" only occurs here and in 1 Peter 3:2. It pictures a close scrutiny. A close, careful scrutiny should convince their enemies of their error.

Once convinced, their enemies will glorify God in the day of visitation. In the Scripture, a day of visitation is the day God drew near to men for blessing or for judgment (Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls; Grudem). Peter could be referring to either the unbelievers' salvation (Stibbs/Walls; Grudem; Wiersbe) or judgment (Hort). This salvation or judgment could take place now. If the Second Coming is in view, Peter has judgment in mind. It has even been suggested that this could refer to either the time when they are saved or judged (Hodges). The point is that believers are to live in such a way that all criticism may ultimately be reversed to the glory of God.

Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Mt. 5:16). Peter, no doubt, had that in mind. When Plato was told that a man had been making slanderous charges against him, he answered: "I will live in such a way that no one will believe what he says." Peter is saying that there is only one way to deny these charges: to live in such a way that the Christian life demonstrates that these charges are not true.

Barclay says that is what the early Christians did and it worked. "The amazing fact of history is that by their lives, the Christians actually did defeat the slanders of the heathen. In the early part of the third century, Celsus made the most famous and the most systematic attack of all upon the Christians in which he accused them of ignorance and foolishness and superstition and all kinds of things—but *never* of *immorality*. In the first half of the fourth century, Eusebius, the great Church historian, could write: 'But the splendor of the catholic and only true Church, which is

always the same, grew in magnitude and power, and reflected its piety and simplicity and freedom, and the modesty and purity of its inspired life and philosophy to every nation both of Greeks and barbarians. At the same time, the slanderous accusations which had been brought against the whole Church also vanished, and there remained our teaching alone, which has prevailed over all, and which is acknowledged to be superior to all in dignity and temperance and in divine and philosophical doctrines. So that none of them now ventures to affix a base calumny upon our faith, or any such slander as our ancient enemies formerly delighted to utter' (Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History* 4.7.15). It is true that the terrors of persecution were not even then ended, for the Christian would never admit that Caesar was Lord, but the excellence of the life of the Christians had silenced forever the calumnies and slanders against the church. Here is our challenge and our inspiration. It is by the loveliness of our daily life and conduct that we must commend Christianity to those who still do not believe" (Barclay, italics his).

Mark Twain said, "Always do right; it will gratify some people and astonish the rest." John Wooden, the former UCLA basketball coach, said, "Be more concerned with your character than with your reputation because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are."

A. C. Green is a basketball player whose faith in Christ and commitment to remain abstinent from sex until he gets married is no secret. In an interview with Rick Reilly, a columnist for *Sports Illustrated*, Green told Reilly, "I promised God this, and I'm not going to break it. I love myself and my future wife too much." Reilly dubbed Green "The NBA Player Who Has Never Scored."

Green said his teammates respected him and were curious about how he [remained abstinent]. "They asked me privately or threw questions at me in the locker room. "One teammate, Anthony Mason, who had off-court troubles, began to pay attention to spiritual leadership more. In the *Miami Herald*, Mason was quoted as saying, 'You would think of Green as a goody-two-shoes, but to see [his convictions] up close, you realize that's the way you're supposed to live.'" Green has had the thrill of leading a teammate to Christ (Steffen, pp.18-25).

Summary: When facing a hostile world, believers should abstain from evil and do good that God may be glorified.

In relationship to the believer's spiritual family, the salvation of the soul is by sincere and steadfast love. In relationship to the world, the salvation of the soul is by abstaining from world lust. In the previous paragraph, Peter urged believers to love one another and the ultimate reason was that as God's special people, they were to proclaim His praises (2:9), that is, glorify Him. He tells them not to sin but do good so that God will be glorified (2:12; 1:7, 8, 11). When God is glorified in every area of our experience, our soul (life) is saved (Hodges).

Doug Nichols says, "While serving with Operation Mobilization in India in 1967, tuberculosis forced me into a sanitarium for several months. I did not yet speak the language, but I tried to give Christian literature written in their language to the patients, doctors, and nurses. Everyone politely refused. I sensed many weren't happy about a rich American (to them, all Americans are rich) being in a free, government-run sanitarium. (They didn't know I was just as broke as they were!) "The first few nights I woke around 2:00 a.m. coughing. One morning, during my coughing spell, I noticed one of the older and sicker patients across the aisle trying to get out of bed. He would sit up on the edge of the bed and try to stand, but in weakness, would fall back into bed. I didn't understand what he was trying to do. He finally fell back into bed, exhausted. I heard him crying softly.

“The next morning, I realized what the man had been trying to do. He had been trying to get up and walk to the bathroom! The stench in our ward was awful. Other patients yelled insults at the man. Angry nurses moved him roughly from side to side as they cleaned up the mess. One nurse even slapped him. The old man curled into a ball and wept. The next night, I again woke up coughing. I noticed the man across the aisle sitting up and trying to stand again. Like the night before, he fell back whimpering.

“I don’t like bad smells, and I didn’t want to become involved, but I got out of bed and went over to him. When I touched his shoulder, his eyes opened wide with fear. I smiled, put my arms under him, and picked him up. He was very light due to old age and advanced TB. I carried him to the washroom, which was just a filthy, small room with a hole in the floor. I stood behind him with my arms under his armpits as he took care of himself. After he finished, I picked him up and carried him back to his bed. As I laid him down, he kissed me on the cheek, smiled, and said something I couldn’t understand.

“The next morning, another patient woke me and handed me a steaming cup of tea. He motioned with his hands that he wanted a tract. As the sun rose, other patients approached and indicated they also wanted the booklets I had tried to distribute before. Throughout the day, nurses, interns, and doctors asked for literature. “Weeks later, an evangelist who spoke the language visited me, and as he talked to others, he discovered that several had put their trust in Christ as Savior as a result of reading the literature. What did it take to reach these people with the gospel? It wasn’t health, the ability to speak their language, or a persuasive talk. I simply took a trip to the bathroom” (*Leadership*, vol. 15, no. 2).

Some events leave an indelible impression on your mind. I vividly remember where I was the moment that I heard that John F. Kennedy had been shot. I recall the moment I heard that two planes had crashed into the World Trade Center. I don’t mean to imply that this is as important as either of those two, but I remember the moment a baseball player came to bat. Let me tell you the story.

At the time, Kirk Gibson had played baseball for 17 years, often playing hurt. On this particular day, Gibson had a sprained ligament in his right knee, a strained left hamstring, and had taken a cortisone injection in his right knee an hour before the game. Nobody, not even Gibson, thought he would play that day. During the pre-game introductions, he was in the training room. After the seventh inning, he advised his wife, JoAnn, to leave. He wasn’t going to play, so why risk getting caught in traffic?

In the ninth inning, with the Dodgers trailing 4-3, Gibson got dressed, hit ten balls off a tee and had a batboy tell manager Tom Lasorda that he was available. In the bottom of the ninth, Mike Davis walked. That meant there was one man on, but there were two outs. Trailing 4-3, with two out and one man on, Tom Lasorda put Kirk Gibson in as a pinch hitter. Out of the dugout came the gritty Gibson, limping to the plate on two bum legs, carrying a bat he called “Thumper.” His season numbers that year were less than eye-popping: 290 batting average, 25 home runs, 76 runs batted in. With a beat-up body and two outs in the bottom of the ninth, Gibson stood at the plate. The thunderous roar of the Dodger Stadium crowd pushed adrenaline ahead of pain in Gibson’s mind.

A few pitches later, Gibson was facing a full count, three balls and two strikes. Gibson stepped out of the batter’s box. He recalled a scouting report from Mel Didier, who’d said Eckersley, the pitcher, favored the backdoor slider on full counts. Gibson stepped back into the box. Such enough, Dennis Eckersley threw a full-count slider. Gibson swung. Here came the slider and there it went, deep to right field. On October 15, 1988, Kirk Gibson hit a game-winning home run! He hobbled

around the bases, pumping his fists as he completed the Dodgers' stunning victory over the Oakland A's in Game 1 of the 1988 World Series. The A's never recovered from the 5 to 4 Game 1 loss. The underdog Dodgers won the series in five games, even though Gibson had only one at-bat.

That home run is one of the unforgettable moments in Dodger history. It is one of the unforgettable moments in baseball history. In the words of broadcaster Vin Scully, "the impossible" happened.

Gibson himself said, "Treat every game like a war." As for that home run, he said, "The whole lesson of that is to keep fighting and fighting and fighting and don't predetermine your outcome because that's proof crazy things can happen."

LIVING UNDER AN UNRIGHTEOUS GOVERNMENT

Once a year, we proudly celebrate the founding of our country. Perhaps, periodically, we ought to contemplate, not just celebrate, our relationship with our government. Regarding a citizen's relationship with the government, there are two extremes: subversion and blind loyalty. Historically, Christians have not been in favor of overthrowing the government. "It is not Christian to advocate the overthrow of the government to set it straight. Christians are opposed to anarchy because they recognize God as a God of law and order" (Adams). Does that mean that Christianity teaches blind loyalty to the government? What is the biblical position concerning government?

The Requirement: Submit to the Government

In 1 Peter 2:11-12, Peter teaches the broad principle that believers should abstain from fleshly lust and do what is good in a hostile world. Now, he applies that principle to three areas: 1) the relationship of the believer to the government. (2:13-17), 2) the relationship of a believing slave to a harsh master (2:18-25), 3) the relationship of a believing wife to an unsaved husband (3:1-7).

Submission Having established that believers should do good, Peter concludes, "Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (2:13). The Greek verb translated "submit" means "to place or rank under." In the Greek text, the word "submit" is in the aorist tense, which indicates "a decision by which this policy of submission is adopted" (Selwyn). Although it is the passive voice, it is generally accepted that it has a middle force here. Hence, the translation, "submit yourselves." Submission to constituted authority is a voluntary acceptance of a position of obedience (Grudem). Submission consists of respect and obedience (*cf.* Eph. 5:22 with 33). The Lord submitted to Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate. He was respectful to them and He obeyed them.

The believer is to submit to "every ordinance of man voluntarily." The Greek word rendered "ordinance" is the Greek word for "creation." It was the regular Greek word for the founding of a city (Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls). That is the meaning here. Believers are to voluntarily submit to every human institution, that is, institutions founded and formed by men, not necessarily explicitly established by God.

In Romans 13, Paul teaches that all government has a divine origin. Is Peter suggesting that government is purely a human development? Hiebert says Peter would have agreed with Paul's teaching that all government is of divine origin, but he was "not dealing with the source of governmental authority but with the existing institutions, whatever their form, that are, indeed a human creation" (Hiebert, p. 153). Selwyn says that Paul emphasized the divine origin of the state and Peter speaks of its divinely ordained function.

Voluntary submission to every human institution is "for the Lord's sake." Paul lists several reasons for submission to the government, including avoiding punishment (Rom. 13:5), but Peter focuses on the spiritual reason. He would not have denied that the believer should obey the government to avoid punishment (2:14). The expression "For the Lord's sake" can mean 1) out of regard for His authority or 2) out of concern for His cause (2:15-16). At any rate, submission to government is "not merely an outward submission, but an inward loyalty" (Selwyn). There is obedience because of duty and obedience out of devotion (Wiersbe on 2:11).

To Supreme Rulers At this point in the passage, Peter indicates two classes of government officers to whom believers are to submit: kings and governors. This two-tiered structure is undoubtedly drawn from the Roman government's structure, but a graded power structure is characteristic of all human government.

Peter says, "Whether to the King as supreme" (2:13). The word "King" denoted the Roman Emperor, but it was also freely applied to the emperor in Greek-speaking provinces. "King," includes all higher government authorities.

To Subordinate Rulers Peter adds, "or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good" (2:14). Believers are to submit to supreme rulers and to subordinate government officials, those sent by the higher officeholders. The term "governors" is used in the New Testament of governors in the provinces, such as Pilate (Mt. 27:2), Felix (Acts 23:24), and Festus (Acts 26:30). Governors no doubt include all government officials commissioned by a higher level of government. Believers are to obey all levels of government, from the traffic court to the Supreme Court, from city hall to the halls of Congress. The purpose of sending governors is the two-fold function of all government, namely the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do what is good. The purpose of government is to punish vice and praise virtue.

Grudem observes, "Though some theories of criminal punishment maintain that reforming the criminal and protecting society from further crimes are the only legitimate purposes of punishment, Peter here includes retribution, the inflicting of just desert on the one who has harmed others, as a legitimate purpose (note the similar statement in Rom. 13:4: the civil authority is "the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer"). However, what Peter expects governments to do is forbidden to people acting not as representatives of governments but as individuals: they must not inflict retribution for a wrong done to them (vv. 19-23; cf. Rom. 12:19-21; Mt.5:38-48). By contrast, governments that fail to punish wrongdoers disobey God's purpose for their existence."

Government officials should not only punish vice, they should also praise virtue. This implies that government officials must have a sense of what is good and what is evil. Ideally, they should be individuals who hate evil and love that which is good. "Moral behavior, not economic status or political favoritism, is to be criterion" (Grudem).

The subject of submission to government raises a number of questions, such as, what if the ruler is evil? Is this submission absolute? And how does this apply to a democracy? Submission is not conditioned upon the righteousness of the ruler. Christ called a ruler, Herod, a fox (Lk. 13:32), but He did not resist Herod's authority (Adams). The state has been called "organized selfishness" (Emil Brunner, cited by Selwyn). Nevertheless, some form of government is needed to avoid anarchy to a greater or lesser degree. Bad government is better than no government.

When Peter wrote these words, the king was Nero (Barclay), who reigned from AD 54 to 68 and under whose persecution Peter himself would later be put to death (Grudem). He was an ungodly and unrighteous man. He was a cruel, vicious, amoral tyrant. He came to the throne because of his mother. Agrippina scratched to get him there, pushing aside the son of Claudius, the legal heir. Her son rewarded her by having her banished and murdered. He also killed Claudius' son, who was still the heir apparent. The personal character of the officeholder does not release the believer from obeying the king.

Defense counsel at the Nuremberg trials argued that the Nazi leaders who killed over 6 million Jews had done so in obedience to their governments, but the court found them guilty because they should have disobeyed the government in obedience to a higher law, that of humane treatment for their fellow man.

Submission to authority is not absolute because the authority God has given is not unlimited (Adams). Sometimes, a believer must obey God rather than man (Acts 4:19; 5:29). Believers are to obey, except when commanded to sin (Grudem). “Civil disobedience may occur only when rulers acting on purely human authority *require* Christians to sin” (Adams). This, however, does not warrant all civil disobedience. Apart from being forced to sin, civil disobedience by believers cannot be justified by the Scripture.

As for submission in a democracy, “To prevent abuses of God’s purpose for the government, it is right for Christians to pray and work for governments that act according to God’s will (1 Tim. 2:1-4; Ps. 82:1-4; 125:3)” (Grudem). Barclay says, In a democratic state, the keynote must not be *subjection*, but *cooperation*, for in a democratic state, the duty of the citizen is not only to submit to the ruled but to take the necessary share in ruling. Hence, if the Christian is to fulfill his duty to the state, he must take part in the government of the state.”

Be all that as it may, the critical issue for a Christian is to submit to the government *for the Lord’s sake*. Years ago, a Bible teacher admitted that for many years, if there was no police officer in sight, he had been careless about the speed laws. One day, when his wife was at the wheel, she meticulously observed every traffic sign and every rule of the road, which caused him to complain. She replied that she felt compelled to drive that way as a Christian. She told him, “I look at it as worshiping the Lord with my accelerator foot!” Soon thereafter, the Bible teacher made a trip and he obeyed the speed limit. He was determined that he, too, would “worship the Lord with his accelerator foot.” He was amazed at the spiritual joy he experienced. When he arrived, he was more relaxed and ready for his appointment.

Reason: The Will of God and to Silence those Hostile

The Will of God The reason believers are to voluntarily submit to government is “For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” (2:15). Earlier, Peter pointed out that the reason for submission to the government was “For the Lord’s sake” (1:13). He now says it is the will of God. Paul elaborates on this concept (Rom. 13:1-7). He argues that God ordained government, so we should submit to it. He goes so far as to say that to resist government is to resist the ordinances of God. The Greek word rendered “good” means “doing well, acting rightly.” In this context, it at least includes submission to the government. In fact, it has been argued that since this is the reason for verses 13 and 14, “the specific kind of doing right Peter has in mind is submission to human authorities” (Grudem).

This passage and several others in the New Testament are very clear about God’s will. In this case, it is doing good. Everything you need to know about the will of God is in the Word of God (1 Tim. 3:16-17). The problem with the will of God is that people try to determine the will of God apart from the Word of God.

“A bishop of a century ago pronounced from his pulpit and in the periodical he edited that heavier-than-air flight was both impossible and contrary to the will of God. Oh, the irony that Bishop Wright had two sons, Orville and Wilbur! Wright was wrong. Sure of himself, but wrong” (Dugan Jr., p. 38). Reggie White was one of the greatest defensive players in pro football history and an ordained minister. One year, he became a free agent. Every team in the NFL would have liked to have signed White. He said he would go where God wanted him to go. Holmgren called White and left a message on his answering machine. “Reggie, this is God,” the message said. “I want you to go to Green Bay” (*Parade Magazine*, August 24, 1997, p. 5). Reggie White was not offended by Holmgren’s humor or Wolf’s offer: \$17 million for four years.

Jessica Hawn was the church secretary who committed immoral acts with Jim Bakker, former host of the PTL Club. Later, she posed topless for *Playboy Magazine* and said that God gave her “real peace” about it. Paul Little said, “It sounds terribly spiritual to say ‘God led me,’ but I am always suspicious of a person who implies that he has a ‘personal’ pipeline to God. When no one else senses that what the person suggests is the will of God, then we had better be careful. God has been blamed for the most outlandish things by people who have confused their own inverted pride with God’s will” (Little, “Affirming the Will of God” in *Great Sermons of the 20th Century*, edited by Gunther). John Wesley said, “Do not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose dreams, voices, impressions, visions, or revelations to be from God. They may be from Him. They may be from nature. They may be from the Devil” (Wesley, cited by Johnson, p. 102).

The Westminster Confession of Faith says, “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life is either expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing at any time is to be added whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of man.”

Silences Slander Peter traces the practical result of submission to the government. By doing good, the believer will “put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” The Greek word rendered “ignorance” means “without knowledge,” but the one translated “foolish” means “without reason, senseless, foolish.” It is “want of mental sanity, and sobriety, a reckless and inconsiderate habit of mind” (Hort). It is more than a lack of knowledge. It “suggests a possible obstinate unwillingness to learn or to accept the truth” (Stibbs/Walls). The backdrop is the hostility of the world toward Christianity. Christians were thought of as being subversive radicals, troublemakers, and revolutionaries because they refused to submit to Caesar as a divine being (Adams). The world slanders believers, speaking against them as evildoers (2:12). The Greek word translated “put to silence” means “to muzzle.” Peter says that by doing good, believers will muzzle the unfounded charges of senseless men. These opponents of Christianity have their mouths open when they should have their eyes open. Vicious verbal attacks are the first and foremost responses to a virtuous life.

Jesus was dragged through an illegal, unjust court procedure, yet no murmur slipped from His lips. A centurion who stood at the foot of the cross said, “Truly, this was the Son of God!” (Mt. 27:54). There is no article (“the”) in the Greek text. The centurion said, “This is a son of God.” There is something about Him that can’t be explained merely in human terms. God must be in this man.

Free to Serve Peter inserts a personal reminder to believers: “as free yet not using your liberty as a cloak for vice, but as servants of God” (2:16). Spiritually, believers are free, free from sin (Jn. 8:36) and free from the Mosaic Law (Gal. 5:1, 13). Their freedom from sin, however, was not to be used as a veil for vice. The Greek word translated “vice” occurs in 1 Peter 2:1, where it was rendered “malice.” Here, it is used in the general sense of wickedness. Christian freedom is not a license to practice wickedness. It is not “freedom to do wrong” (Grudem). It is the freedom to be a slave of God. As a slave of God, believers submit to government because it is God’s will.

Adams takes “free” to mean free from all human authority and all human institutions (Mt. 17:24-27, where “free” means “exempt”). Believers do not take orders from human beings; they submit to Christ. That does not mean that believers are set free from all authority; the freedom that they have actually made them God’s slaves. Freedom doesn’t mean anarchy. It means the freedom to be God’s slaves, obey Him, and do what is right and good (Adams).

Believers should be submissive, not of necessity, but gladly, and out of obligation to God rather than men (Stibbs/Walls).

Result: Honor, Live, Fear

Peter has urged believers to do good (2:12, 15), but as of yet, he has not said anything especially about what good things he has in mind. He concludes this paragraph with a list of specifics: “Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king” (2:17). Four commands are issued without any connective particle between them. What is their relationship with each other? Some commentators point out that the first imperative is in the aorist tense and the other three are in the present tense (in the TR and in the critical text, “love” is in the present tense, but in the MT, it is in the aorist tense) and conclude that the first command is the all-encompassing duty and the other three explain it (Alford; Lenski; Hiebert). The aorist has been described as “the moment of decision” and it has been suggested that it might be rendered “Let your motto be” (Selwyn).

Grudem argues that this is “unpersuasive” and concludes that these are four separate commands. Following the Majority Text, where the first two commands are both in the aorist tense, Hodges contends that the form of the commands consists of two couplets. In the first duet, general respect for all men is deepened to love for the brotherhood. In the second couplet, the fear of God is extended to honoring the King.

Honor all People Peter does not say honor all rulers or all to whom honor is due (Rom. 18:7). He simply says honor all. All humans are made in the image of God (Jas. 3:9-10) and all humans are individuals for whom Christ died (1 Jn. 2:2). Humans are not things to be exploited but creations of God to be honored. Honor means “to show proper regard whatever it is due” (Adams). People are to be “highly esteemed” (Stibbs/Walls). Believers should be “courteous and respected to all people” (Grudem).

Love the Brotherhood The Greek word translated “brotherhood” only occurs in the New Testament here and 1 Peter 5:9. It denotes all believers considered as a collective unit. It is Peter’s term for the church, a word that does not appear in his epistle. It is “the people of God in the church” (Wiersbe). Thus, Peter exhorts believers to “express love not towards one another individually but towards the church as a distinct body or fellowship (Stibbs/Walls). Christians are not only God’s creatures, they are His children. Believers should love all in the family of God. All are to be honored; the brotherhood is to be loved.

Fear God Earlier, Peter urged believers to live their lives in reverential respect before God as the Father and impartial judge (1:17). Fear is not terror but reverence and respect.

Honor the King Peter began this list of four commands with “honor” all; he concludes it with “honor” the king. This is an appropriate conclusion to a paragraph that began with the command to submit to the king as supreme as well as his subordinate rulers (2:13-14). Honoring the king includes praying for the king (1 Tim 2:1-2).

When the government prohibits something God Himself commands or the law of our land commands something God prohibits and believers are forced to disobey, they must do so respectfully.

Peter began by saying, “honor all.” He concludes with “honor the king.” “In what is apparently mild irony, Peter has put the emperor on the same level as ‘all people’” (Grudem). Contrary to the claims of Roman emperors, they are not “equal to God or worthy of the fear due to God alone.” Believers have obligations to the state, but their obligations to God and to the brotherhood are higher. The government is to be obeyed and the governor is to be honored, but the government is not to be obeyed above God and the governor is to be honored like all other men. Honor to all, especially the king, love for believers, and fear toward God are good works that will silence the

slander of sinister, sinful men. The king is not necessarily honored and certainly not feared as God, but he is to be honored, that is, respected.

Jokes about politicians are often harmless, but sometimes, they cross the line into disrespect. Certainly, outright lies and defamation of character should not be among believers, no matter how strong their political feelings.

Summary: Believers should submit to civil authorities and, for that matter, do good works such as honor all men and love each other because God's will will silence the slander of unbelievers.

If we resist rulers and work wickedness, we violate the will of God and cause needless reproach on the cause of Christ. If we submit to civil authorities and do what is beneficial, we do God's will and silence slander.

This passage introduces a section that deals with submission. Submission is built into the fabric of the universe. There is an authority among sinless angels (1 Thess. 4:16; Jude 9), the redeemed in heaven (Lk. 19:17, 19; 1 Cor. 6:3), and even the members of the Trinity "for all eternity" (1 Cor. 11:3; 15:28; see Grudem). Submission is part of being a mature believer. Daniel Webster said, "Whatever makes men good Christians makes them also good citizens."

Diocletian bitterly persecuted the church. Actors often included a parody on baptism, the Lord's Supper, and other items of the Christian faith. One day an entertainer named Genesius, who had been reared in a Christian home, was doing a pantomime on baptism when suddenly conviction pierced his heart. To the amazement of the crowd and the consternation of the emperor who was seated in a box near the stage, Genesius cried out, "I want to receive the grace of Christ that I may be 'born again' and be set free from the sins which have been my ruin!" Turning fearlessly toward Diocletian, he said, "Illustrious Emperor, and all of you who have laughed loudly at this parody, believe me, Christ is the true King!" The enraged Roman demanded a slow and torturous death for the actor and Genesius died a noble witness for Christ, but did you notice how he addressed the temporal ruler? He called him "Illustrious Emperor."

To every ordinance of man
Be sure that you give heed
And honor those who bear the rule
By word as well as deed

WORKING FOR AN UNREASONABLE BOSS

If you had met her, you would have thought she was wonderful. If you worked for her, you would think she was a witch. When she interviewed prospective employees, she promised to train them, but she didn't. Then, because of a lack of training, she would demean and degrade the employee when an employee did not perform to her standards. For example, without any instructions concerning a format, she told an employee to write a report. Then, when the report was handed in, she said, "How do you expect me to accept this; you didn't follow the format?" When the employee responded, "I didn't know there was a particular format I needed to follow," the boss replied, "Why didn't you look at past reports in the file? I thought you had worked in an office before you came here."

Have you ever worked for an unreasonable boss? Sometimes, when there are less than satisfactory working conditions, you can simply change jobs, but there are situations when that is impossible or, at least, practical. What do you do then? To say the same thing another way, did you ever complain, "My boss treats me like a slave?" God has something to say about the way slaves should respond to such treatment.

Servants should submit to their Master

Submit with Fear Turning his attention to another area of the believer's life in the world, Peter says, "Servants be submissive to your master with all fear" (2:18). In 1 Peter 2:13, Peter told believers to submit themselves to every institution of man. Using the same word, he now instructs servants to be submissive to their masters.

The Greek word translated "servants" is not the usual word for servant in the New Testament, nor is it the word for slave. It is, however, "nearly synonymous" to the Greek word for slave (Grudem). The Greek word for servant that is used here denotes a household servant, a domestic, including freemen as well as slaves. The servants and slaves employed in the house were more exposed to the vicious temper and vices of the master than those in the field. It was "one of the most demeaning and difficult of all working relationships" (Adams).

No English word adequately describes what slaves/servants were because no comparable institution exists in modern Western society. First-century slaves were acquired through war or kidnapping from foreign lands. They were not only unskilled laborers, they were often managers and members of various professions, including doctors, nurses, teachers, musicians, and artisans. They were generally well treated, usually paid for their services, and could expect to purchase their freedom eventually, but their service was involuntary. Although there is no exact parallel, today's employee relationship is appropriate (Grudem). The Greek word rendered "masters" is the term from which we derive the English word "despot." It denotes "absolute ownership and unlimited power" (Stibbs/Walls). According to Roman law, despots possessed the power of life and death over their slaves (Adams).

Aristotle writes, "There can be no friendship nor justice towards inanimate things; indeed, not even towards a horse or an ox, nor yet towards a slave as a slave. For master and slave have nothing in common; a slave is a living tool, just as a tool is an inanimate slave." Varro divides the instruments of agriculture into three classes: the articulate, the inarticulate, and the mute, the articulate comprising the slaves, the inarticulate comprising the cattle, and the mute comprising

the vehicles.” The only difference between a slave and a beast or a farmyard cart is that a slave happens to be able to speak. Peter Chrysologus sums up the matter, “Whatever a master does to a slave, undeservedly, in anger, willingly, unwillingly, in forgetfulness, after careful thought, knowingly, unknowingly, is judgment, justice, and law.” Barclay adds that regarding a slave, his master’s caprice was the only law. The context, including what has been said in general (2:12, 15) and what Peter says about these masters in particular (2:18 b), suggests that Peter has unsaved people in mind.

Servants are to be submissive “with all fear.” This is fear of God rather than fear of people (1:19; 2:17; also Col. 3:22). “All” intensifies the concept. Paul told slaves, “Be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ” (Eph 6:5). Servants are to perform their duties with reverence and respect for God, fearing His disapproval if they don’t. Their attitude should be respectful, not resentful. (Grudem takes the fear here as fear of human authority, but in a footnote, says there are “weighty arguments” for it being the fear of God, including the previous verse, which says fear God and 1 Peter 3:6 and 1 Peter 3:14 that say not to fear men.)

To the Fair and Unfair Peter adds “not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.” (2:18). Submission with the right attitude is to be rendered to all masters regardless of their treatment of the servant. Some bosses are good and gentle. They are kind and benevolent. The Greek word translated “gentle” includes the concepts of being considerate, fair, and reasonable (Stibbs/Walls). Others are “harsh,” a Greek word that means “crooked, bent.” It is the opposite of straight. It describes crooked, perverse, unjust treatment. Such people are unkind, unfair, unreasonable, and unjust. They have been said to be “dishonest” and “morally evil,” which suggest “only physical mistreatment but also dishonesty regarding pay, working conditions, expectations, etc.” (Grudem).

When treated harshly, the human tendency is to complain, be insubordinate, hate the perpetrator, and even want to get even. The modern American response is to demand our rights and sue. According to Peter, regardless of the treatment received, the servant is to be submissive with a “respectful attitude” (Adams) toward God. Bad treatment is no excuse for a bad attitude or bad behavior.

With a frying pan in her hand, an angry woman ran after James Taylor, an ancestor of Hudson Taylor, seeking to provoke him into a quarrel. Because he was a Christian, he did not threaten nor revile her. Seeing she was getting nowhere, she rubbed the dirty pan on his light-colored overcoat. The soot on the frying pan soiled the coat badly. Turning around with a smile, he suggested that if it afforded her satisfaction, she might also grease the other side of his coat. The woman, surprised and confused, just walked away, but the gracious attitude of James Taylor was not easily forgotten in that town (*Our Daily Bread*, 3/11/65).

Suffering is Commendable

Why should a believing servant be submissive to harsh treatment? Peter explains, “For this is commendable if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God” (2:19-20). These two verses mention two types of suffering.

Deserved Suffering There is deserved suffering. Peter asked what credit people receive if they endure the suffering they deserve. The Greek word translated “fault” is the Greek word for sins.

The one rendered “beaten” means “struck with the fist, beaten.” They do not get applauded if they patiently endure punishment for something they did wrong. Endurance of deserved punishment is not meritorious.

Underserved Suffering There is a second kind of suffering, undeserved suffering. Peter uses words that elaborate the harsh treatment mentioned in verse 19. The Greek word translated “grief” means “grief, sorrow” and refers to pain of body or mind. The Greek word translated “wrongfully” is the word for unjustness or unrighteousness. Peter has unfair, painful treatment in mind, but why should servants submit to it? The charge from “one” in 1 Peter 2:19 to “you” in 1 Peter 2:20 suggests that Peter knew his readers were experiencing such suffering. The beating of slaves was a common occurrence.

Commendable The key to the servant’s response is “because of conscience toward God.” Peter asserts that, as he has taught, if you do good in a hostile world (2:12, 15), suffer for it, and endure it with the right attitude, that is commendable before God. The enlightened conscience of believers is aware that he or she is accountable to God. Thus, believers are to do everything as unto the Lord, knowing that from the Lord, they will either be rewarded or repaid for the wrong they do (Col. 3:22-25). Because of their conscience toward God, believers can endure undeserved, unfair treatment.

Endurance because of conscience toward God is “commendable before God.” The Greek word translated “commendable” in these verses is the Greek word for “grace,” but in this passage, it means “favor.” Believers who endure because of conscience toward God have God’s favor, that is, approval (Hodges). It wins “God’s approval and reward” (Stibbs/Walls). This has been called “a gracious act pleasing to God” (Selwyn). “For with God, it is impossible that anything, how small soever, if only it be suffered for God’s sake, should pass without its reward (Thomas à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, xix. 3, cited by Selwyn).

Suffering is the Believer’s Calling

The Model of Christ Peter now develops a second reason why believing servants should submit to undeserved, unjust ill-treatment from their masters. He says, “For to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us an leaving us an example that you should follow his steps” (2:21). Believers are to submit to undeserved suffering because they were called to suffering! Notice Peter says “to this,” that is, suffering, “you were called.” Christ taught that being His disciple involved cross-bearing (Mt. 10:38; 16:24; Lk. 14:27). Paul preached that “through many tribulations, we enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

Christ suffered. Peter uses the word “suffered” rather than “died” to focus on Christ as our example in enduring suffering. The Greek word rendered “example” only occurs here in the New Testament and means “underwriting, a writing, copy,” hence, “an example.” It was used of a “copy-head” that the teacher placed at the top of a page to be copied by the student (Selwyn; Barclay). Christ is the copy believers are to reproduce in their lives. The “copy-head” included all the letters of the alphabet. From Christ’s example, believers learn the A-B-C’s of godly suffering (Hodges). In the words of Peter, believers are to follow in His steps. Believers are to walk as He walked (1 Jn. 2:6). They are to step in His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). Like a child following in his father’s footsteps, believers are to imitate and emulate Christ.

Through the centuries, thousands of believers have faithfully followed their Lord by enduring similar persecution. One of these gallant saints was Bishop Hugh Latimer, who suffered martyrdom in 1555. After being sentenced to death for his convictions, he wrote an open letter in

which he declared. “Let us consider all the dear friends of God, how they have gone after the example of our Savior Jesus Christ, whose footsteps let us also follow, even to the gallows if God’s will be so.” A short time later, he and his friend Ridley were tied to a stake. As the leaping flames began to touch their bodies, Latimer called out, “Be of good cheer, Brother Ridley, and play the man; we shall see this day light such a candle by God’s grace in England as I trust shall never be put out!” Use suffering to light a candle.

The Manner of Suffering If we are to suffer like Christ, how did He suffer? In the remaining verses of this chapter, Peter explains the manner of Christ’s suffering (2:22-23) and the motive of His suffering (2:24-25). The manner of Christ’s suffering consists of what He did not do and what He did do. What He did and did not do could be called the two steps to Christ-like suffering.

Step one: No sin. Concerning Christ’s suffering, Peter says, “**who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth**” (2:22). This is an allusion to Isaiah 53:9. Peter personally witnessed this part of the trial of Christ. Yet, he used the words of Isaiah to describe it. Christ was unjustly arrested, tried, condemned, and executed, yet through it all, He did not sin, nor was there any deceit coming out of His mouth. According to James, “He is a perfect man” who does not stumble in word (Jas. 3:2). When being treated harshly, it is easy to sin, especially with the mouth. That was particularly true of the slaves of the first century. Deceitful speech was one of their notorious characteristics, evasions and excuses often being their sole means of self-protection. Christ did not do that and believers are to follow in His steps.

Peter continues, “**who when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered He did not threaten**” (2:23). This is probably an allusion to Isaiah 53:7. The Greek word translated “revile” means “to revile, to abuse.” Christ suffered vicious verbal abuse and painful physical abuse. He was called a glutton, a winebibber, a deceiver, a blasphemer, and a demoniac. He was slapped in the face, crowned with thorns, beaten, scourged, forced to carry His own cross, and crucified. Yet through it all, He did not answer back (Stibbs/Walls), used insults or abusive speech (Grudem), or reviled or threatened to get even later. He did not even attempt to convict them of their error. He did not predict that they would be punished. Paul was not as perfect (Acts 23:3). Mistreated slaves sometimes threatened revenge. Some martyrs threaten their executioners with divine punishment. Christ did not revile or threaten. He is our example.

Step two: Commitment. The manner of Christ’s suffering consists of what He did do. Peter adds, “**But committed Himself to Him who judges righteously**” (2:23). The Greek word rendered “committed” means “to hand over.” Christ handed Himself over to God. There is no object (“Himself” is in italics in the NKJV). He handed over Himself and His circumstances (Hodges). He committed all to the righteous Judge (1:17). He believed that He was righteous and, therefore, the righteous Judge would vindicate Him and reward Him for what He endured and would punish evildoers or forgive them when they trust Christ because Christ died for their sins (Grudem).

Grudem says of natural human responses to suffering, “These responses are natural only to people who depend on themselves and believe that God does not have control of the situation. To the suffering person who trusts deeply in God and believes that God is indeed in control of every situation, there is another response, one perfectly exhibited by Jesus: *he trusted him who judges justly*. It is important to note that Peter here commends neither the supposed therapeutic value of expressing one’s anger when wronged nor merely holding the anger in and trying to suppress it (both are self-dependent solutions), but rather repeatedly and continually committing the situation into God’s hands” (Grudem, italics his). Hodges points out Christ handled suffering with clean character, calm conduct, and complete commitment.

The Motive of Suffering Peter's description of Christ's suffering not only depicts the manner of it, it also covers His motive. Peter pens, "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed" (2:24). Christ patiently silently suffered for us. His suffering was vicarious. Christ "bore" our sins. The Greek word translated "bore" means "to carry, bring to an altar." In the Septuagint, it was used of being a sacrifice and laying it on an altar (Gen. 2:20; Lev. 14:20; 17:5; 2 Chron. 25:16; etc.). In James 2:21, it appears to refer to Abraham bringing Isaac to the altar. Peter no doubt had Isaiah 53:12 in mind, which says Christ carried our sins to the altar of the cross, here referred to figuratively as a tree (the "tree" was the instrument of death for slaves) and He did it "in His own body." The One who suffered for sin was no docetic Christ who only seemed to have a human body; He was the incarnate Christ (Hiebert, p. 177).

Christ's suffering was vicarious. It was for "our sins." This is the heart of the gospel (Grudem). In the Old Testament, the sheep died for the shepherd, but in the New Testament, the Shepherd died for the sheep (Wiersbe). The purpose of Christ's death was that we might live for righteousness. Through Christ's death, we died to sins and we are raised to walk in righteousness (Rom. 6:1-14).

As a result, we can say that by His stripes, we are healed, an allusion to Isaiah 53:5. This is not a reference to physical healing; it is about spiritual healing (Grudem; Wiersbe). That is clear from the Isaiah passage as well as from the context of this passage in 1 Peter. Isaiah said, "He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes, we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:5-6). Notice that both before and after the statement about His stripes healing, there are references to sin, called "transgressions," "iniquities," and "iniquity." The context in Isaiah is about sin; nothing is said about physical sickness. As in Isaiah, both before and after the statement about being healed by His stripes are references to sin, not sickness. Peter says Christ "bore our sins" and the expression "by whose stripes you were healed" is an explanation of that. The following verse speaks about "going astray," a reference to sin, not sickness.

When Christ was scourged and crucified, He received "stripes," that is, bruises and bloody wounds that result from blows to the flesh. "Stripes" was used of the wounds produced by the punishment of slaves. Christ was wounded; we are healed. Theodore (393-458 AD) exclaimed, "A new and strange method of healing; the doctor suffered the cost and the sick receive the healing!"

Peter explains the healing process by saying, "For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls" (2:25). Comparing unbelievers to sheep going astray is another allusion to Isaiah 53; this time, Isaiah 53:6. Sheep are notoriously prone to wandering away. Likewise, all humans naturally go astray from God. Peter's readers were silly, straying sheep, but now they have returned to the shepherd and overseer. They were headed away from God, but now they have turned to Him. Having come to the Shepherd, they have a Bishop to oversee their lives (see "salvation of your souls," which means the deliverance of your life in 1:9, 22). The bodies of these servants may have been subject to the abuse of harsh masters, but their lives are under the care of the Shepherd. We are led through suffering to salvation as we yield to His oversight. People who lack a "guide, a guardian, and a goal" now have one who cares, provides, and supervises their lives (Stibbs/Walls).

The point of 1 Peter 2:24-25 is that Christ suffered so we might benefit. Because He suffered, we can experience spiritual healing, life, and righteousness. Although these verses do not apply this to our suffering, the implication is that our suffering, like Christ's suffering, is vicarious. A

Christian slave might be motivated to potentially suffer an undeserved punishment in the hope of winning either his master or fellow slaves to Christ. (2 Cor 1:6; Col. 1:24; 2 Tim 2:10; 1 Jn. 3:11; so, Hodges).

At any rate, believers are called to suffering and Christ is to be our example. Who is your model: an unbeliever, another believer, or Christ Himself?

In his book, *I Never Promised You a Disneyland*, Jay Kesler shares a story his father told him, which illustrates how important it is to use an accurate pattern. When Kesler's father was a young man, he took part in a neighborhood barn-raising. He was one of the workers asked to cut rafters for the new barn. It seemed like a simple assignment, his father said. All they had to do was follow the pattern of the first rafter, but instead of using the original rafter each time, they would mark one, cut it, and use it to make the next one. Each time they marked a rafter, they gained one pencil width in length, that is, 1/32 of an inch. That doesn't sound like much, but it kept compounding until they were off one-half inch on the sixteenth rafter. By the thirty-second rafter, they were off an inch. Eventually, they recognized their error and had to re-cut the rafters. We make a similar mistake when we pattern our lives after someone other than Jesus Christ. Even though we select a Christian who patterns his or her life after Christ, that is not good enough. The Bible tells each of us to go back to the original pattern—Christ himself. He is the only perfect pattern.

Summary: Servants should submit to even harsh masters because patiently enduring unjust suffering is commendable to God and believers are called to suffer like Christ. Besides, it just may be vicarious; our suffering may help someone else.

Max Lucado writes in his book *No Wonder They Call Him the Savior*, "The dialogue that Friday morning was bitter. From the on-lookers, 'Come down from the cross if you're the Son of God.' From the religious leaders, 'He saved others, but He can't save Himself.' From the soldiers, 'If you're the King of the Jews, save yourself.' Bitter words. Acidic with sarcasm. Hateful. Irreverent. Wasn't it enough that He was being crucified? Wasn't it enough that He was being shamed as a criminal? Were the nails insufficient? Was the crown of thorns too soft? Had the flogging been too short? For some, apparently so.

"Peter, a writer, not normally given to using many descriptive verbs, says that the passer-bys hurled insults at the crucified Christ. They didn't just yell or speak or scream; they hurled verbal stones. They had every intention of hurting and bruising. We've broken the body, now let's break the spirit. So they strung their bows with self-righteousness and they launched their stinging arrows of pure poison. Of all the scenes around the cross, this one angers me the most. What kind of people, I ask myself, would mock a dying man? Who would be so base as to pour the salt of scorn upon open wounds? Who would mock and pick on Him? How low and perverted to sneer at one who's laced with pain. Who would make fun of a person who is seated in an electric chair? Or, who would point and laugh at a criminal who has a hangman's noose around his neck? You can be sure that Satan and his demons were the cause of such filth.

"And the criminal on the cross, number two, throws his punch. 'Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us.' The words that were thrown that day were meant to wound. And there is nothing more painful than words meant to hurt. That's why James calls the tongue a fire. It burns as every bit as destructive and disastrous as those of a blow torch.

"But I'm not telling you anything new. No doubt, you've had your share of words that wound. You've felt the sting of a well-aimed jibe. Maybe you're still feeling it. Someone you love or respect slams you to the floor with a slur or a slip of the tongue and there you lie, wounded and bleeding. Perhaps the words were intended to hurt you. Perhaps not. That doesn't matter. The

wound is deep. But the injuries are internal—a broken heart, wounded pride, bruised feelings. Or maybe your wound is old. Though the arrow was extracted long ago, the arrowhead is still lodged, hidden under your skin. The old pain flares up unpredictably and decisively, reminding you of harsh words yet unforgiven. If you have suffered, or are suffering, because of someone else's words, you'll be glad to know there is a balm for this laceration.

“Meditate on these words from 1 Peter 2:23. ‘When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him Who judges justly.’ Did you see what Jesus did not do? He did not retaliate. He did not bite back, nor did He say, ‘I’ll get you. Come on up here and say that to my face. Just wait ‘til after the resurrection, Buddy.’ No, these statements were not found on Christ’s lips. Did you see what Jesus did do? He entrusted Himself to Him, Who judges justly. Or, more simply, He left the judging to God. He did not take on the task of seeking revenge. He demanded no apology. He hired no bounty hunters or sent out a posy. He, to the astounding contrary, spoke on their defense, ‘Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’ Yes, the dialogue that Friday morning was bitter. The verbal stones were meant to sting. How Jesus, with a body wracked with pain, eyes blinded by His own blood, lungs yearning for air, could speak on behalf of some heartless thugs is beyond my comprehension. Never, never have I seen such love. If ever a person deserved a shot at revenge, Jesus did. But he didn’t take it. Instead, He died for them. How could He do it? I don’t know. But I do know that all of a sudden, my wounds seem very painless. My grudges and hard feelings are suddenly childish. Sometimes, I wonder if we don’t see Christ’s love as much in the people He tolerated as in the pain that He endured. Amazing Grace!”

COPING WITH AN UNSAVED HUSBAND

Three-legged races are fun to watch because they are funny. Two grown men with their legs tied to each other hobble, stumble, and sometimes fall, trying to make it to the finish line before the others in the race. Even more entertaining is a father-son three-legged affair. A tall, bony father is hitched to his short, cuddly son. They are mismatched in size and stamina. Running in a three-legged race is unnatural and uncomfortable, especially when men and boys are tied together. The first thing every pair does when they drop out or cross the finish line is untie the cord that bounds them at their ankles and knees.

Imagine being tied together for the rest of your life. Being permanently unequally yoked is the plight of a Christian wife who is married to an unbeliever. United in marriage to an unbeliever is unnatural and uncomfortable. Being in such a harness can be hard, very hard, and heartbreaking.

An unequally yoked wife forces numerous problems and pressures. Almost all wives married to unsaved men agree that their greatest heartache is the spiritual need of their husbands. “What can I do to win him to Christ?” they ask. Many feel they are responsible for winning their husbands to Christ. Then, there is the problem of their relationship with each other. She and her husband may differ sharply over what their lifestyle together should be. She is a spiritual widow at church. He may want her to do things her convictions won’t allow. He may even be jealous—not of other men but of the Lord. An unsaved husband may not understand his wife’s commitment to the Lord and may deeply resent the time she spends at church. Unequally yoked wives also have other concerns, like the influence of their unsaved husbands on their children. His example, not attending church and not being a spiritual leader at home can be hard to overcome. Wives married to unbelievers crave assurance that God looks upon their marriage with favor.

These are questions every unequally yoked wife asks. When the unbelieving husband is verbally or physically abusive, the questions get more complicated. Does God expect a wife to tolerate vicious belittlement? If she or her children are in physical danger, should she move out, separate, or divorce? How does a Christian wife cope with an unsaved husband?

In his first epistle, Peter addresses the whole issue of a believer’s relationship to the world. His basic advice is that even when the world speaks against you as an evildoer, you should abstain from fleshly lust and do good work (2:11-12). More specifically, he admonishes believers to have a submissive spirit to those in authority, such as the government (2:13-17) and their boss (2:18-25). In chapter 3, he speaks specifically to a Christian wife married to a non-Christian husband. He tells her two things she should do to live with such a man and illustrates his advice.

Be Submissive

The Problem Turning from servants to wives, Peter says, “Likewise you wives, 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, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear” (3:1-2). Peter has been writing concerning the believer’s relationship to the unsaved world. He has referred to unsaved men who speak against believers as “evildoers” (2:12). He has described unbelievers as “ignorant” and “foolish” (2:15). He has spoken to slaves who have harsh masters (2:18). Now, he addresses wives whose husbands “do not obey the word.” The term “word” is a technical designation for the gospel (Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls). God has commanded all to believe in

His Son so that they can be saved. To not believe in Christ is an act of disobedience (Jn. 3:36; Rom. 1:5). To obey or disobey the Word means to trust or reject the gospel (Adams).

The phrase “do not obey the word” indicates that the husband has heard the gospel, perhaps repeatedly, and has definitely and deliberately rejected it. Peter teaches that wives of unsaved husbands are to win them “without a word” (3:1), which also assumes that he has heard and rejected the gospel. The husband has listened to the gospel either from his wife or someone else (Adams). “Obey not” may also denote those who deliberately and persistently set themselves against the gospel (Stibbs/Walls; see Grudem).

At any rate, Peter addresses wives of unbelieving husbands (Hodges). If your husband has not heard the gospel, go home and tell him about the Lord, but if your husband has heard the gospel and has rejected it, there is another procedure to follow.

The Procedure Peter first admonishes wives of unsaved husbands to “Be submissive to your own husbands.” A cartoon pictured a preacher who had prepared the pulpit area like a fortress. He was peering through the crack of a machine gun nest. The caption read, “Today my text is (1 Peter 3:1), ‘Wives submit to your husbands.’” Several issues concerning submission need to be clarified. Submission involves two elements: obedience (3:6) and respect (3:2). “Christians must respect the uniform with which God clothed husbands, even if they poorly fit it” (Adams).

“Submission is not subjugation. Subjugation turns a person into a thing, destroys individuality, and removes all liberty. Submission makes a person become more of what God wants him to be; it brings out individuality; it gives him the freedom to accomplish all God has for his life and ministry. Subjugation is weakness; it is the refuge of those afraid of maturity. Submission is strength and the first step toward true maturity and ministry” (Warren Wiersbe in *Leadership*).

Submission is to be the “lifestyle” of all believers (Howard Hendricks). It is in keeping (“likewise”) with Peter’s advice to believers in relating to the unsaved world (2:13, 18; Stibbs/Walls). Submission is to permeate every area of life, public (to the government), professional (to your master), and private (to your husband). As Peter develops these three areas, each becomes more personal and difficult (Hodges; Stibbs/Walls).

Submission is voluntary. When Peter says that wives are to submit to their husbands, it is written in the Greek text in such a way that it means, “submit yourselves.” Submission is limited to the home and the church. Peter says that the wives are to be submissive to their *husbands, not to men*. Other passages say that *all* believers must submit to godly leaders in the church. Nothing in the Bible says women cannot be leaders in business or government.

Submission may involve suffering. That’s the point of this whole section. The unregenerate world will speak against believers as evildoers (2:12). Unsaved masters may be harsh (2:18). Christ is the example of suffering to which His followers are called (2:21-15). Submission does not mean that a wife is inferior to her husband (Grudem). Peter says they are “heirs together” (3:7). Besides, submission does not imply inferiority. Jesus was submissive to the God the Father, but He was equal with God (Phil. 2:6).

Submission is not absolute. As with submission to the government, the limit is when the husband asks the wife to sin. Peter says that husbands are to observe the “chaste conduct” of their wives (3:2), which means “pure, free from moral defilement” (Grudem). So, at the point of sin, she must say, “I must obey God rather than man” (see Acts 4:19-20). “God never gave a husband (or anyone else) the authority to require another to sin” (Adams).

Peter adds that this submission is to be “without a word” (3:1). There is a play on words in this verse. When the unsaved husband disobeys the Word, the wife is not to say a word. The meaning, of course, is she is not to preach. If the husband does not obey the authority of the Word of God in

the gospel, he will not listen to the words of the wife. Do not attempt to coax or argue with your husband into becoming a Christian.

What is she to do? Peter's answer is don't talk—walk. He speaks of the husband observing “your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.” The Greek word translated, “observe,” is used only here and in 1 Peter 2:12. This is still another indication of the link between the various paragraphs of this section (2:12-3:7). An unsaved husband needs to see, not hear, his wife's Christianity. Be sure he will “watch attentively.” He needs to see her “chaste conduct accompanied by fear,” a pure, holy, godly life motivated by her reverence for God (1:17; 2:17).

The wife of an unbelieving husband is to silently submit to him and live a godly life before him. You say, “But you don't know my husband,” and that's true, but when God wrote this, He knew your husband (and every husband who ever lived), and He still said it. He also knew He had a purpose.

The Purpose The purpose for silent submission to an unsaved husband is that “they may be won by the conduct of their wives” (3:1). The addition of the expression “even if” implies that Peter expected most wives among his readers to have Christian husbands (Grudem), but for those who have an unsaved husband, being godly before him and good to him may just win him. The Greek word translated “win” means “to gain.” It has been suggested that here it means “win over to the point of view” and so almost “convert” (Selwyn). The wife's conduct may convince the pagan husband of the reality of Christianity and his own need for Christ. Peter is not saying that the conversion of the husband is guaranteed. He says if the wife silently submits, she *may* win her husband to Christ. If she is to have an impact on him, it will be by her life, not her lip, her conduct, not her conversation. The Christian wife will generally have a better chance to win her husband to Christ if she minimizes the witness of her words and maximizes the witness of her ways. “A man who lives right and is right has more power in his silence than another by his words” (Phillips Brooks).

Jill Briscoe says, “Stuart (her husband) and I brought our families and religious heritages to our marriage. My father, a quiet gentleman, considered himself the head of his home: protector, defender, and provider. My mom was a sweet, Scottish-born Presbyterian. She believed in the sovereignty of God and her husband. My father adored my mother, put his considerable business assets into her name, and looked to her to raise the children. When my sister came of age, my father supported her when she became an excellent car mechanic and raced cars. Eventually, she took her place at his side as a partner in his successful car business.

“Stuart's family was strict, conservative evangelical. His father was an elder in a small local assembly of believers, and he took seriously his responsibility to rule the household well. He considered himself the authority in his family, while his wife, a bright, articulate, efficient lady, considered herself in subjection to her husband in everything, carrying those convictions to her dress, her hairstyle, and silence in the presence of men at the church.

“Newly converted at a college in Cambridge and having just been introduced to Stuart's family, I remember wondering greatly about this amazing mode of doing things. I sensed an unconscious frustration of unexplored desires and frustrated gifts in my mother-in-law. It was as if those gifts sat meekly inside her heart with eyes downcast and wearing a hat. “In that moment as a new believer, I believe I stumbled on an important truth of what submission isn't. Submission isn't sitting down on the outside while you're standing up on the inside” (Jill Briscoe, “Hilarious Hupotasso,” *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 117).

Be Godly

Not Outwardly Peter's second imperative is "Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, or wearing gold, or of putting on *fine* apparel" (3:3). Peter says that the wife's primary appeal and attractiveness should not be her outward, external adornment. Peter specifically mentions three types of external adornments, all of which are alluded to in the satire of Isaiah 3:18-24 (Selwyn).

"Arranging the hair" (Greek: "braiding the hair") denotes not just the use of braids or the fixing of the hair but a highly artificial and ostentatious hairstyle. Barclay said, "Hair was waved and dyed, sometimes black, more often auburn. Wigs were worn, especially blonde wigs, which are found even in the Christian catacombs and hair manufactured, even imported from Germany, and even from as far away as India. Hairbands, pins, and combs were made of ivory, boxwood, and tortoiseshell, and sometimes of gold studded with gems."

The "wearing of gold" may refer to the ancient practice of putting costly combs and gold hairnets in towering hairdos. It can also include wearing gold objects such as chains around the neck, arms, anklets, and fingers and suspending glittering gold ornaments from the ears. Barclay says that earrings were made of pearls and that Seneca speaks of women with two or three fortunes in their ears.

The phrase "putting on fine apparel" does not directly refer to costly clothes (the word "fine" is in italics, indicating it is not in the Greek text). However, that is the implication. (1 Tim 2:9). The phrase denotes an extravagant display.

Is Peter teaching Christian wives not to fix their hair or wear jewelry? No! Peter is no more forbidding the arrangement of the hair or wearing of gold any more than he is forbidding the putting on of clothes (Hodges; Grudem; Wiersbe). He is warning against an extravagant, self-centered display. A woman can call attention to her external appearance by wearing too little and too much. Peter is concerned about a Christian wife preoccupied with her outward maternal adornment. An overexposed woman on the outside is probably undeveloped on the inside.

Oh, grieve not, ladies, if at night
Ye wake to feel your beauty going
It was a web of frail delight
Inconstant as an April snowing
Anna Hempstead Branch (1875-1937)

Someone has said that little girls used to want to dress like their mothers, but now the mothers want to dress like little girls.

Inwardly Peter says, "but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God" (3:4). A Christian wife's adornment and attractiveness are to be inward and spiritual. The believing wife, especially those married to unsaved men, is to adore the inner person of the heart with incorruptible ornaments. Instead of being preoccupied with external material adornment (3:3), she is to be preoccupied with internal spiritual adornment. "This beauty cannot be hung around the neck like a flashing pendant. It grows neither like a lonely flower" (Rees, cited by Hiebert, p. 188). Inner beauty is something no picture can express. Spiritual ornaments are not subject to corruption.

Internal spiritual ornaments include pictures such as a "gentle and quiet spirit." The Greek word translated "gentle" means "gentle" or "meek." It describes a gentle, considerate, unassuming

manner. A gentle wife submits to her husband's demands and intrusions with gentle cooperation. "Quiet" pictures a quiet, tranquil disposition rather than a noisy, boisterous manner. A wife with a quiet spirit does not react, resent, or rebel against her husband. Bengel distinguishes "meekness" as an attribute of the character that does not cause a disturbance and "quietness" as that which bears with serenity disturbances caused by others (see Selwyn). Such a lady would not be angry, argumentative, or aggressive.

A boy was once asked, "Who are the meek?" He thought for a moment and replied, "They are the people who give soft answers to harsh questions!" His definition, though limited, expresses the spirit of this virtue. An unknown author has given another summation of this virtue: "Humility is to have perpetual quietness of heart. It is to have no trouble. It is never to be fretted or vexed, irritated, or angry. I am to wonder at nothing done to me and be at rest when nobody praises me. When I am blamed or despised, I am not to be rebellious; instead, I should retire to my inner closet, kneel to my Father in secret, and find rest even though all around may be trouble" (*Our Daily Bread*, 3/20/76). Adlai Stevenson said: "Do you know the difference between a beautiful woman and a charming one? A beauty is a woman you notice; a charmer notices you."

A gentle and quiet spirit is "very precious in the sight of God" (3:4). An unassuming and mild disposition may not be of much value as far as the world is concerned, but in the eyes of God, it is very costly. Throughout this section on the believer's relationship to the world, Peter's ultimate appeal has been the believer's relationship with God. He began by urging believers to abstain from fleshly lust and do good so that Gentiles who speak against believers would glorify God in the day of visitation (2:11-12). He commands believers to submit to government "for the Lord's sake" (2:13) because it was the will of God (2:15). He also told servants to submit to their harsh masters because it is commendable to God for a believer to endure the grief of suffering wrongfully (2:19). Now, he tells wives to live godly submissive lives with a gentle and quiet spirit before their husbands because it is, in the eyes of God, a precious sight.

Not every woman is good-looking.
But every woman can look good—especially to God.

Thus, what a non-Christian husband should see when he looks at his Christian wife is not her clothes but her character and charm. The attractiveness of a Christian woman is her inner beauty, not her outward beauty. She should cultivate and express "a clam and imperturbable spirit, placid and gentle in relation to both people and circumstance." She should show no sign of "rebellion or resentment, fuss or flurry" (Stibbs/Walls). Barclay summarizes what Peter is saying when he points out that Christian wives are not to live in "senseless extravagance;" but in "selfless service, in goodness, and serene trust; that could be the best season which she could preach to win her husband for Christ."

Be Dependent on the Lord

Women in General Peter concludes his discussion of unequally yoked wives with an illustration. He says, "For in this manner in former times the holy women who trusted in the God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands" (3:5). Peter points to unspecified women in the Old Testament as an illustration of what he has been teaching. The phrase "in former times" vaguely refers to the Old Testament. Three things characterize the unnamed women Peter has in mind. First, they "trusted" in God. The Greek word translated

“trusted” is “hoped” (1:3, 13, 21; 3:15). Second, they were “holy.” They adorned themselves with a “gentle and quiet spirit” (3:4). Third, they were submissive to their husbands. These three characteristics sum up and illustrate what Peter has been saying. He told unequally yoked wives that their conduct should be motivated by fear of God (3:2), pure with a gentle and quiet spirit (3:2, 4), and submission (3:1). These three items are related. Fear of and hope in God motivates believers to live holy, pure lives and wives to be submissive.

Sarah in Particular Peter singles out one Old Testament wife: “as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror” (3:6). According to the rabbis, Sarah was the model of submissiveness. Genesis 18:12 is the only time Sarah called her husband “Lord.” That passage in Genesis does not record an actual act of submission. Apparently, Peter suggests this was Sarah’s customary way of addressing Abraham. Calling him “lord” was simply acknowledging him “with due deference, as her husband or master” (Stibbs/Walls).

Peter assures his readers that they will be the daughters of Sarah if they “do good” and are not afraid with any terror. Isaiah exhorted the ancient Israelites to look to Abraham and Sarah as examples. The New Testament repeatedly holds up Abraham as the model of faith (Rom. 4:11-12; Gal 3:7, 16, 29; Heb. 2:16; etc.). Now, Peter characterizes godly submissive wives as the daughters of Sarah. Abraham is the father of the faithful; Sarah is the Mother of the obedient (Stibbs/Walls).

To qualify as a daughter of Sarah, a believing wife must “do good,” a Greek word that means “to do good for another’s benefit.” In this context, this word probably refers to a wife submitting to her husband. She submits by obeying him (3:6) and by serving him (3:6). Furthermore, she must not be afraid with terror, an “echo” of Proverbs 3:25 (Stibbs/Walls). The Greek word rendered “terror” means “a fluttering excitement caused by any emotion, but especially fear/terror.” It refers to “alarm” or “agitation.” The character of a Christian’s wife’s action or reaction towards her husband and toward life, in general, should be free from panic and alarm (Stibbs/Walls). She will “not be terrified by circumstance or by an unbelieving or disobedient husband” (Grudem).

The true daughters of Sarah will fear God (3:2), not man (3:6). They will hope in God and will not be intimidated by ill-treatment from an unbelieving husband. They will not allow the threats of an unsaved husband to deter them from trusting the Lord to make themselves godly and submissive. They have a “quiet confidence and steadfast hope in God” (Stibbs/Walls).

Summary: When a Christian wife copes with her unsaved husband by trusting the Lord, living a godly life, and submitting to her husband, what she does is highly valued in the sight of God and may win her husband to Christ.

First Peter 2:11-3:6 focuses on the believer’s relationship to the world. Several threads run through this section. Peter repeatedly exhorts believers to do good (2:12, 15, 20; 3:6) as unto the Lord (2:13, 15, 19, 20; 3:2, 6) is to have an impact on unbelievers (2:12, 15; 3:1). Wives of unbelievers tend to fasten their attention on their husband or their relationship with their husband. They need to see that relationship from the vantage point of the believer’s relationship to the unsaved world. They need to focus first and foremost on the Lord and then on their spiritual lives, as should all believers in their relationship to the unsaved of the world.

The mother of the famous Augustine was a lady named Monica, after whom the city of Santa Monica is named. She was married to a heavy-handed Roman pagan who cared nothing about spiritual things. Addressing the Lord, Augustine said of his mother, “As soon as she was of marriageable age, being bestowed upon a husband, she served him as her lord, and did her diligence to win him to You, preaching You to him by her behavior, by which You have

ornamented her, making her reverent and amiable and admirable unto her husband. And she so endured her wronging that she never had any quarrels with her husband. For she looked for Your mercy upon him, that, believing in You, he might be made chaste. And besides this, he was fervid—not only in his affection but also in his anger. But she had learned not to resist his anger—not in deed only, but not even in word. Her husband, at the end, at the very end of his earthly life, did she gain unto You. Nor had she to complain of that in him as a believer which she had borne from him before he was a believer.” That is, not only was he gained to the Lord, he was gained to her. He became in every way the husband she had looked for. Every abuse was set right, although they had only a few months together.

A lady at Church of the Open Door told me about her difficult, unsaved husband. I told her about 1 Peter 3. Several months later, she said, “My husband has not gotten any better, but I have changed.”

LIVING WITH A UNIQUE PERSON—YOUR WIFE

Years ago, a wise Bible teacher wrote, “Being a husband is difficult because very few husbands understand their wives” (M. R. DeHaan, *Our Daily Bread*, 6/3/58). Would you agree? Is it true that few husbands understand their wives? In their more honest moments, many men would confess that they do not understand their wives, sometimes or much of the time. Perhaps a majority of the wives would concur. They do not feel that their husbands understand them personally. Can anyone offer husbands any help? Is there any practical advice husbands need to hear? The Apostle Peter gave Christian men two pieces of down-to-earth, practical advice that works. His instructions for living with that unique person you call your wife are in 1 Peter 3:7.

First Peter 3:7 is a “footnote” (Hodges) at the end of an extended discussion of the believer’s relationship to the world. (2:11-3:6). Throughout the section, Peter instructs believers concerning unsaved people, including government officials (2:13-17), masters (2:18-25), and husbands (3:1-6). The key command is submission (2:13, 18; 3:1). For example, 1 Peter 3:1 and 1 Peter 3:7 begin with “likewise,” but apparently, Peter is not addressing believing husbands who are married to unsaved wives. These wives are heirs together with these saved husbands of the grace of life, probably eternal life (3:7). If that is the case, Peter makes no mention of a Christian husband living with a non-Christian wife (Paul does in 1 Cor. 7:12). The believing husband usually has his wife follow him in accepting the gospel (although there are exceptions).

Nor does Peter continue the topic of submission. The word “likewise” here simply has the sense of “also” (Grudem). While this passage does not continue the theme of submission, the deference and honor admonished suit the basic spirit of submission (Hodges).

Why did Peter mention husbands at all? His comment is exceptionally brief. Either Peter did not want to pass the husbands by without an admonition (although he did bypass masters), or he desired to urge Christian husbands not to take advantage of the submission command of their wives.

First Peter 3:7 contains two participles: dwelling and giving honor. In the Greek text, each of these is modified with a clause. The verse should be translated “Likewise, you husbands dwell with them with understanding as to the weaker vessel, giving honor to the wife being heirs together of the grace of life.” Peter offers two pertinent practical pieces of advice and a purpose for doing what he says (Hodges).

Know Your Wife

Dwell with Understanding The first admonition Peter gives is to “dwell with them with understanding” (3:7). The Greek verb translated “dwell with” occurs only here in the New Testament. In the Septuagint, it usually means “to live together as husband and wife to cohabit.” A few say this verse refers to sex in marriage (Moulton and Milligan, p. 611; Hodges). Most, however, prefer not to see this term as a mere euphemism for sexual relations. They view it as covering all aspects of a shared home life (Selwyn). Thus, the way a man is to live with his wife is with knowledge and understanding. This intellectual element must not be “underestimated” (Selwyn). She is unique and must be studied until there is a thorough understanding of her.

The Greek word translated “women” is rare (Greek: ‘the feminine one’). It suggests that the husband should look at the characteristic nature of womanhood or femininity (Grudem). In other

words, men and women are different and a husband must understand those differences. Someone has summarized some of the gender differences like this:

1. **NAMES** If Laurie, Linda, Elizabeth, and Barbara go out for lunch, they will call each other Laurie, Linda, Elizabeth, and Barbara. If Mark, Chris, Eric, and Tom go out, they will affectionately refer to each other as Fat Boy, Godzilla, Peanut-head, and Scrappy.

2. **EATING OUT** When the bill arrives, Mark, Chris, Eric, and Tom will each throw in \$20, even though it's only for \$32.50. None of them will have anything smaller and none will actually admit they want change back. When the girls get their bill, the pocket calculators come out.

3. **MONEY** A man will pay \$2 for a \$1 item he needs. A woman will pay \$1 for a \$2 item she doesn't need, but it's on sale.

4. **BATHROOMS** A man has five items in his bathroom: a toothbrush, shaving cream, a razor, a bar of soap, and a towel from the Marriott. The average number of items in the typical woman's bathroom is 337. A man would not be able to identify most of these items.

5. **ARGUMENTS** A woman has the last word in any argument. Anything a man says after that is the beginning of a new argument.

6. **CATS** Women love cats. Men say they love cats, but men kick cats when women aren't looking.

7. **FUTURE** A woman worries about the future until she gets a husband. A man never worries about the future until he gets a wife.

8. **SUCCESS** A successful man is one who makes more money than his wife can spend. A successful woman is one who finds such a man.

9. **MARRIAGE** A woman marries a man expecting he will change, but he doesn't. A man marries a woman expecting that she won't change, and she does.

10. **DRESSING UP** A woman will dress up to go shopping, water the plants, empty the garbage, answer the phone, read a book, and get the mail. A man will dress up for weddings and funerals.

11. **NATURAL** Men wake up as good-looking as they went to bed. Women deteriorate during the night.

12. **OFFSPRING** Ah, children. A woman knows all about her children. She knows about dentist appointments, romances, best friends, favorite foods, secret fears, hopes, and dreams. A man is vaguely aware of some short people living in the house.

13. **THOUGHT FOR THE DAY** Any married man should forget his mistakes. There's no use in two people remembering the same thing.

A significant gender difference is women are global thinkers and men are linear thinkers. Think of a circle with three boxes in a row in the center. Linear thinking begins with the first box and logically moves from one box to another. Global thinking looks at the whole and has difficulty thinking about the first box without considering all three. This is not to say that the global thinker is not logical. It is a different kind of logic. Linear thinking begins with a piece and global thinking begins with the whole (the conclusion).

Husbands need to understand the personality of their wives. Some wives are protectionists. The most extreme example of this I have ever heard is the case of a wife who edged the grass with her scissors. Some wives are devoted to a routine. If you are married to such a wife, you must give her six months' notice before making any changes. Some wives are spontaneous. They talk a lot and change things a lot. They do not need to have six months' notice for a change. In fact, they make changes every six minutes!

Husbands need to understand the primary love language of their wives. According to Gary Chapman, author of *The Five Love Languages*, people express love in five ways. The language we learned from the family we grew up in became our primary love language. The problem is that we marry someone who grew up with a different love language. When that happens, you may think you are communicating love, but your spouse doesn't understand that language. Larry's love language was gift-giving. So, he brought his wife a rose. Her love language was not gift-giving. So she simply plopped the rose in a 7-11 big gulp cup.

Husbands must understand their wives' fears, feelings, frustrations, needs, desires, moods, hopes, etc. (Grudem; Adams; Wiersbe). They need to listen with their heart (Wiersbe) and be sensitive to their feelings (Barclay).

As to the Weaker Vessel There is one area in which the husband is to have specific knowledge. As was suggested earlier in the Greek text, the phrase "as to the weaker vessel" modifies "dwell with them with understanding." What is the meaning of a weaker vessel? What is the area the husband must know? The comparative term "weaker" implies that Peter considered both husbands and wives weak. The wives, however, are weaker (Selwyn). Vessels, of course, are simple containers and instruments. The imagery of human beings being vessels for God's service appears in the Old and New Testaments (Jer. 18:1-6; Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:21-23; 2 Tim. 2:20-21).

How is the wife a weaker vessel than her husband? She is certainly not weaker spiritually, morally, or intellectually. Most commentators have concluded that this refers to physical strength (Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls; Wiersbe), although it may refer to any kind of weakness (Grudem). A recent suggestion is that she is considered weak because of her role as a wife. As a wife, she must submit to her husband, which places her in a vulnerable position, open to exploitation. The expression means nothing more than fragile, delicate, and sensitive. All humans are fragile; they all have a breaking point. Women are weaker in that they are more easily broken, more fragile. Wives are more fragile than men, as a teacup is more fragile than a coffee cup.

Robert L. Russell puts it this way, "There's a coffee mug worth probably twenty cents. I can bang it and drop it and be rough with it. This is a Laura Ashley teacup that costs twenty-five dollars if you buy it in a set. It's the weaker of the two vessels. If I bang it around very much, I could chip it easily. It is more easily damaged but the more valuable of the two. Men can be rough with each other. 'Hey, gained a few pounds there, didn't you?' Guys just slough it off. 'Yeah, man.' You say that to your wife, and you'll discover she is not made the same way. She's more easily damaged. So, you have to be respectful of your wife as the weaker vessel. Treat her with tenderness and understanding."

When my wife, Patricia, was a teenager, she had mono twice. Consequently, she does not have a great deal of physical stamina. She must have plenty of sleep, which means we cannot stay out late at night without it affecting her for the next several days. That factor is her weakness. Peter tells me that as her husband, I need to live with her according to the knowledge of where her breaking point is. In other words, when we are out at night, it is my responsibility to see to it that she gets to bed on time.

Give Honor

Give Honor Peter's second admonition is "giving honor to the wife" (3:7). In a sense, this is an elaboration on how to live with a wife "according to knowledge," but grammatically, it is a separate and second piece of advice. The Greek word translated "honor" appears only here in the New Testament and means "to assign, to apportion" to someone. In a papyrus document, it was

used to describe an officer who is commended for giving his just dues. The husband is to honor his wife; he is to give her just due. Giving honor means respecting her feelings, thinking, and desires (Wiersbe). He is not to take liberties with her rights. Honor includes “kind and affirming words both privately and in public” (Grudem). Honoring would certainly exclude name-calling, put-downs, or sarcasm. Husbands must treat their wives with “perfect courtesy” (Barclay). Honor has to do with courtesy, respect, politeness, and kindness. Billy Sunday said, “Try praising your wife even if it does frighten her at first.”

Heirs Together of the Grace of Life Peter modifies the injunction to give honor with the clause “as being heirs together of the grace of life” (3:7). The reason husbands should honor their wives is that they are joint heirs together of the grace of eternal life (Stibbs/Walls). Wives are equal to their husbands “in spiritual privilege and eternal importance” (Grudem). Both individuals were chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Both trust Christ, walk with Christ, and are being conformed to Christ. They have the same sovereign, same savior, and same sustainer. As a member of any profession or institution would honor an equal member of his group, so should a husband honor his wife.

One out of every three women who seek emergency medical treatment at a doctor’s office or hospital is the victim of domestic violence, and so is one out of every four women seeking prenatal care. Constance Duran, a Christian psychologist, says, “Typically, the violence pattern begins with the wife’s first pregnancy and is really directed toward the fetus. There will be another sibling in the family, and the husband is jealous.” For women between the ages of 15 and 44, domestic violence is the most common cause of injury, and 50 percent of all female murder victims have been murdered by either their husbands or a boyfriend.

The tragic truth is that wife battering occurs in Christian homes as well. Generalizing from all of the studies done in churches among Christian women, one can conservatively estimate that for every 60 married women in a church, their husbands are verbally abusing ten, and two or three are being physically beaten as well.

Reverend Joy Bussert, director of the Battered Women Project for the Minnesota Council of Churches, says, “Batterers are often pillars of our churches, men who teach Sunday school and serve on the church council. Statistically, men who batter often work in highly respected professions such as medical doctors, psychiatrists, policemen, human services people, and somewhere near the top of the list, ordained clergymen.”

“Husband must be the “thermostat” in the home, setting the emotional and spiritual temperature. The wife often is the “thermometer,” letting him know what the temperature is” (Wiersbe).

To Prevent Hindered Prayers

To Prevent Hindered Prayers Peter concludes with a purpose for knowing and honoring your wife. He says, “that your prayers may not be hindered” (3:7). The question is whose prayers will be hindered. “Your prayers” could be a reference to the husband’s personal prayers (Barclay; Adams), or it could refer to prayers between the husband and wife (Selwyn), that is, family prayer. Both are true. Either way, the husband doesn’t pray. Since the passage, however, is addressed to the husband, his prayers will be hindered (Grudem).

There is a textual variance concerning the word “hindered.” The difference is the prefix. The Greek word in the *Textus Receptus* contains a prefix (*ek*), which means “to be cut off.” The one in the *Majority Text* has a prefix (*en*), a military metaphor meaning “to cut up a road, to throw

obstacles in the way” so that normal movement is impossible. Domestic relations can have a profound impact on relationships with God. A husband’s relationship with God can never be right if his relationship with his wife is wrong (Barclay).

To Maintain your Relationship with God Peter’s stated purpose is negative. The positive point is a husband should dwell with his wife with knowledge and honor her to maintain his relationship with God. Once again, in this section that began in 1 Peter 2:11, the ultimate motive for conduct is the Lord Himself. (2:12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20; 3:2, 6).

Granted, the Bible teaches that the husband is the head of the wife, but the husband should not let his headship go to his head. He should remember that he also has a head—the Lord! Paul says, “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God” (1 Cor 11:3). There is a joke that says it well, “My husband and I divorced over religious differences. He thought he was God and I didn’t!”

Summary: A husband should live with his unique wife with knowledge and honor to prevent his prayers from being hindered.

Someone has said that any wife would be pleased if her husband, instead of only giving her gifts on special occasions, would serve her each day a slice of “Happiness Cake” prepared according to the following recipe: “Take 4 cups of love, 3 cups of understanding, 4 tablespoons of thoughtfulness, and 3 teaspoons of helpfulness. Sift these together thoroughly, add appropriate amounts of work and play, season with security and mutual planning, and place in a pan, well-greased with a sense of humor. When the cake is done, top it off with a thick coating of true spirituality and serve on a platter of friendliness garnished with smiles.”

Howard Hendricks tells of a Dallas Cowboy football player who came to Christ. The player came to Hendricks one day and said, “Howie, I’m going out to Thousand Oaks for the training camp and need an assignment.”

“I said, ‘Okay. I want you to read the Book of Ephesians.’

“‘The what?’

“‘The Book of Ephesians.’

“‘How you spell it?’

“‘I said, ‘Have you found Matthew?’

“‘Yeah, yeah,’ he said, ‘I got it right here in the front.’

“‘I said, ‘Okay, find Matthew, go right, and you’ll run into it.’

“So he gets out to Thousand Oaks, California. I found out later he read the Book of Ephesians six times a day. When he came back, he called me up and said, ‘Hendricks, I’ve got to get together with you. You know that assignment you gave me?’

“‘I said, ‘Yeah.’

“‘Man,’ he said, ‘it blew my mind! That’s a wipeout.’

“‘I said, ‘Okay. Come on over.’

“So he comes over, he opens the book—isn’t it wonderful to work with people who have no idea what you know? ‘Here ... here it is right here! Here: ‘Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church.’ Whooo!’ he said. ‘That’s impossible!’

“‘I said, ‘Fantastic, man! You have made the greatest discovery in your Christian life, which is that the Christian life is not difficult but impossible. Let me ask you a question. What does your wife do that you appreciate?’

“In typical male fashion, he says, ‘Oh, lots of things.’ ‘Well,’ I said, ‘name one.’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘for example, she’s a good cook.’ I said, ‘Great. That’s your assignment. I want you to go

home and tell her how much you appreciate her cooking.’ ‘Oh, man,’ he said, ‘I—I couldn’t do that. That’d take a miracle.’ I said, ‘Great. That’s what God specializes in.’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘We’d better pray about that.’

“We got down. I’ll never forget this guy’s prayer, ‘Oh, God, you’ve got a rough assignment here.’ Then—you know, the Lord’s so beautiful—the guy gets up from his knees and goes home. His wife knocked out the best meal he’d ever seen: six courses, a beautifully spread table, candlelight, the works.

“I said, ‘How’d you enjoy the meal?’

“‘Aw,’ he said, ‘it was horrible.’

“I said, ‘Why? What’s the matter?’

“‘Oh,’ he said, ‘I just sat there saying ‘God, you gotta do it.’

“‘Well,’ I said, ‘what happened?’

“He said, ‘Well, finally, the Lord encouraged me, and I got up, ran around to the other side, and grabbed her.’

“I said, ‘What happened?’

“‘She went as white as the tablecloth,’ he said. ‘I really think she thought I was gonna clip her’ And he said, ‘I lifted her up so that I could talk to her eyeball to eyeball, and I said, ‘Woman, that was wonderful!’ And I knew we were off the ground.’

“He gave his testimony last Friday in Dallas. It just blew the minds of the guys. He said, ‘Man, I want you to know I was the most yellow man in America behind a closed door. I’ll take on anybody in the NFL. It usually takes two or three in the pits. But, you put me behind a closed door, and I’m yellow.’ Then he said, ‘Jesus Christ came into my life. How do I know it’s real? I’ll tell you. He took a self-centered, great-big football stud like me, who had all of his life revolves around him, and he began to deliver me from myself.’”

THE ULTIMATE IN RELATIONSHIPS

What is the key to good relationships with other people? From a biblical point of view, the answer is love. Jesus said, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Mt. 22:37) and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt. 22:39). He also said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another” (Jn. 13 34-35). According to Jesus, we are to love God, one another, and even our enemies (Mt. 5:44).

Are there any other things we can do to help develop relationships? The answer is, of course, “Yes.” The Bible is full of specific attitudes and actions that promote good relationships with others. For example, it repeatedly tells us to “be patient.” In a sense, all other suggestions are an extension of love. In describing love in detail, Paul says love is patient and kind (1 Cor. 13:4). All human relationships are summed up in love.

With that in mind, I would like to suggest that there is something that could be called “the ultimate in love.” It is described in 1 Peter 3, but before we look at that passage, reflect for a moment on what appears before it. Peter begins his first epistle by discussing the believer’s relationship with God (1:13-21). After that, he writes about specific relationships with others, including other believers (1:22-2:10), the world in general (2:11-12), government (2:13-17), servants (2:18-25), and marriage (3:1-7). In this section concerning relationships with others, Peter begins with love (1:22) and repeatedly speaks about submission (2:13, 18, 3:1). Two of the greatest concepts for developing good relationships are love and submission. Beyond those, it is the ultimate way to relate to others. Now, consider 1 Peter 3:8-12.

Bless Others

Generally Addressing believers corporately, Peter says, “Finally all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another, love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous” (3:8). The Greek expression translated “finally” introduces a “fresh point” and here serves as a transition from specific duties to a more general statement of Christian character (Selwyn). After addressing believers individually as citizens, servants (employees), and mates, Peter speaks to believers corporately (see “all of you” in 3:8). After dealing with their public, professional, and private lives, Peter discusses life in general (see the general commands in 3:8). In the next verse (3:9), Peter seems to be referring to all of these virtues as blessings to others. So, in short, this verse gives five ways to “bless others.”

1. Be of one mind. Unity is not uniformity. It does not mean that everyone has the same opinion about everything. It means having the same thoughts and feelings about a particular issue, a “common interest” (Stibbs/Walls). Believers should have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5), who submitted to serve. “Unity does not mean uniformity; it means cooperation in the midst of diversity” (Wiersbe). It is “thinking harmoniously” (Grudem). Believers should be united in purpose, objectives, and goals. This is a reoccurring theme in the New Testament (Rom. 12:16; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2; also 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3; Phil. 1:27, 3:15).

Someone said, “The mark of community—true biblical unity—is not the absence of conflict, but the presence of a reconciling spirit.” Barclay says unity only comes when believers take it more

seriously than their self-importance. Adams suggests that this is the positive way of saying, “Don’t quarrel” and adds that unity comes when believers put others first and focus their concerns on the welfare of others.

2. Have compassion for one another. The Greek word translated “compassion” is a compound word (it combines “suffer” and “with”) that means “affected by like feelings, sympathetic.” It is the Greek word from which we get our word “sympathetic.” It denotes “sharing the experience of another” (Moulton and Milligan), and “suffering together” (Stibbs/Walls). Compassionate people suffer together with others (Rom. 12:15).

People are hurting and simply need a little compassion. Actor and comedian Jim Carrey said: “If we all acted the way we really felt, four out of eight people at a dinner table would be sitting there sobbing.” One of the reasons that we do not feel the pain of others is that we are so self-centered. Barclay says, “Sympathy and selfishness cannot co-exist. So long as the self is the most important thing in the world, there can be no such thing as sympathy.”

Another reason we are not sensitive to others is that our sensitivities have been dulled by overexposure to tragedy. C. E. B. Cranfield says, “We got used to hearing on the radio of a thousand-bomber raid as we ate our breakfast. We have gotten used to the idea of millions of people becoming refugees. We can, for instance, read of the thousands of casualties on the roads with no reaction at all within our hearts, forgetting that each one of them means a broken body and a broken heart for someone. In the conditions of modern (twentieth-century) life, it is easy to lose the cutting edge of pity, and it is still easier to be satisfied with a sentimentalism that feels a moment’s comfortable sorrow and which does nothing about it. Pity is of the very essence of God; compassion is of the very being of Jesus Christ; a pity so great that God sent His only Son to die for men, a compassion so intense that it took Christ to the Cross. There can be no Christianity without compassion” (Cranfield, cited by Barclay).

Perhaps many men do not develop compassion because they feel it is for women. In August 1984, after ten seasons with the Chicago Bears as a placekicker, Bob Thomas was notified by the Bears’ management that he was being cut. Thomas, a Christian, waited until he knew the locker room would be cleared of players to clear out his things. He didn’t have the emotional strength to face the players he’d grown to love. His celebrated teammate, Walter Payton, another believer, had learned of Thomas’s termination and waited alone at the kicker’s locker after the others had left. When Bob saw Walter, he buried his face in the running back’s chest, allowing his friend and fellow Christian to comfort him. After Walter Payton’s death in the fall of 1999, Bob Thomas recalled that emotional moment in the Bears locker room. “To share your grief with a Hall of Fame running back with that kind of compassion, empathy, and ability is really my fondest memory of the guy we called Sweetness.”

Do you weep with those who weep?

3. Love as brothers. The noun form of this Greek verb occurs in 1 Peter 1:22. It means “loving one’s brother.” It is used figuratively to show believers loving each other because they are now members of the same spiritual family. I have one brother and no sisters. I love my brother dearly. I certainly love him more than many other people in my life. Peter tells me I am to love others, especially fellow believers, like I love my biological brother because they are brothers in the Lord.

4. Be tenderhearted. The Greek word translated “tenderhearted” appears twice in the New Testament, here and in Ephesians 4:32. In passages outside the New Testament, it means to be “good-hearted,” “forgiving,” “affectionate” (Selwyn). Here, it depicts a warm, tender spirit, an affectionate sensitivity toward others. It means “being affectionately sensitive, quick to feel and show affection” (Stibbs/Walls). Adams says it “denotes a warm and tender attitude. It speaks of

rich emotion. It is easy to become self-centered during trials and sufferings, nursing one's own wounds. One can become callous without even recognizing it. The Christian may not do so and will not if he cultivates tenderheartedness. This is done by taking an interest in others and learning to be sensitive to their emotions."

Are you hard-hearted or soft-hearted? Are you cold-hearted or warm-hearted?

5. Be courteous. There is a textual variance here. The *Textus Receptus* and the *Majority Text* contain "courteous," but the Critical Text says, "be humble-minded." The Greek word translated "courteous" is a combined word (loving/friendly and heart/mind) that means "friendly, kind." It is the Greek word from which we derive the English term "philanthropy," which means "to give one's self to benefit another."

Courtesy is love in action—in the social realm! It's a way of saying, "Watch your manners!" Someone has said, "The mark of refinement and culture is courtesy." Webster defines courtesy as "politeness combined with kindness." It is not just an outward show of false refinement but an inward attitude of regard for others.

"A test of good manners is to be able to put up pleasantly with bad ones. In this self-seeking age of rush and bustle, it is easy to forget that courtesy should ever mark our actions as Christians. All of us are guilty at times of being "pushy" and thoughtless of others. Even as self-seeking is the root of such rudeness, humility is the fertile soil from which courtesy blossoms. When one loves his neighbor as himself, he shows him consideration and understanding" (*Our Daily Bread* 1/4/69).

Courtesy always involves little things. It lets the other car in line. It holds the door open for the person who is behind you. It turns off the mobile phone in a restaurant. In church, it gives the visitor a hymnal turned to the page to be sung. In the grocery store, it lets a person have a few items ahead of you when you have a full basket. A little boy prayed, "O Lord, make the bad people good and the good people nice."

The following illustrates a group having unity, compassion, brotherly love, tenderheartedness, and courtesy. Chush is a school that caters to learning-disabled children in Brooklyn, New York. At a Chush fundraising dinner, the father of a Chush child delivered an unforgettable speech. After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he said, "Where is the perfection in my son Shaya? Everything God does is done perfectly, but my child cannot understand things as other children do. My child cannot remember facts and figures as other children do. Where is God's perfection?" The audience was shocked by the question. "I believe," the father answered, "that when God brings a child like this into the world, the perfection that he seeks is in how people react to this child." Then he told this story: One afternoon, he and Shaya walked past a park where some boys Shaya knew were playing baseball. Shaya asked, "Do you think they will let me play?" Shaya's father knew most boys would not want him on their team, but he understood that if his son were chosen to play, it would give him a comfortable sense of belonging.

Shaya's father approached one of the boys in the field and asked if Shaya could play. The boy looked around for guidance from his teammates. Getting none, he said, "We are losing by six runs, and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team, and we'll try to put him up to bat in the ninth inning." Shaya was told to put on a glove and play center field. In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shaya's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shaya's team scored again. With two outs and the bases loaded, Shaya was scheduled to be up. Surprisingly, Shaya was given the bat. Everyone knew it was all but impossible because Shaya didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, let alone hit with it. However, as Shaya stepped up to the plate, the pitcher moved a few steps to lob the ball in softly. The first pitch came in, and Shaya swung clumsily and missed. One of Shaya's teammates approached Shaya,

and together, they held the bat and faced the pitcher. The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly toward Shaya. Shaya and his teammate swung the bat as the pitch came in, and together, they hit a slow ground ball to the pitcher. The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and easily could have thrown the ball to the first baseman. Instead, the pitcher threw the ball high to right field, far beyond the reach of the first baseman. Everyone started yelling, “Shaya, run to first. Run to first!”

Never in his life had Shaya run to first. He scampered down the baseline, wide-eyed and startled. By the time he reached first base, the right fielder had the ball. He could have thrown the ball to the second baseman. Instead, he threw the ball high and far over the third baseman’s head. Everyone yelled, “Run to second, run to second!” Shaya ran towards second base as the runners ahead of him circled the bases towards home. As Shaya reached second base, the opposing shortstop ran to him, turned him toward third base, and shouted, “Run to third!” As Shaya rounded third, the boys from both teams ran behind him, screaming, “Shaya, run home!” Shaya ran home, and all 18 boys lifted him on their shoulders and made him the hero, as he had just hit a “grand slam” and won the game for his team. “That day,” said the father softly, with tears rolling down his face, “those 18 boys reached their level of God’s perfection.”

When *Mistreated* Believers are to be loving, sympathetic, tenderhearted, and friendly, but what do they do when they receive unfriendly treatment? Peter continues: **“Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing” (3:9a)**. Believers are sometimes mistreated. What is done to them can be described as evil (4:3-4). They can be reviled, a Greek word that means “abuse, rail.” Do not return evil for evil. The Greek word rendered “returning” means “to give back, restore, return.” Here, it contains the idea of recompensing. When injured in any way, we naturally return evil in full measure or more. Jesus taught (Mt. 5:38-48; Lk. 6:27-36) and practiced (2:22) non-retaliation (also Rom. 12:17; 1 Thess. 5:15).

Do not revile when reviled. The believer should not retaliate by deed or word. Jesus is our example. When He was abused and reviled, He did not revile in return (2:23). We should follow in His steps (2:21). This has been called the “right reaction to insult” (Selwyn). Do not retaliate with verbal abuse, vengeance, or violence. Don’t treat others the way they treat you. Don’t wash off dirt with dirt (Trapp, cited by Hiebert, p. 280). As someone has said, “Instead of putting others in their place, put yourself in their place.”

The believer’s response to hostile treatment should be positive, not negative. In a word, believers should bless, a Greek word which means “speak well of, praise.” Speak well of those who speak ill or ill-treat you (2:20-21). This includes “intercession for enemies, beneficence toward them, and speaking well of them” (Selwyn).

The sum is, “bless others; don’t blast them.” Paul said, “Being reviled, we bless” (1 Cor. 4:12). Someone has said, “To return evil for good is devilish. To return good for good is human; to return good for evil is godlike.” Wiersbe put it like this: we live on one of three levels: The Satanic level returns evil for good. The human level returns good for good. The divine level returns good for evil.

Bruce Thielemann told this story. Al Masters was married, had a little boy, and had a small business. He considered himself very blessed. And then, just before Christmas, some years ago, his little boy was killed by a 15-year-old kid driving a car without a license. Al Masters was filled with a deep desire for revenge. And even though that youngster—15 years old—could not be brought before the full power of the law because he was a juvenile, Al Masters wanted the book thrown at him. Then, on Christmas Eve, his wife got him to attend church. He recognized that he was one of the world’s ungodly and began to weep. The next day, on Christmas, he set out to find

out more about the boy who killed his son. He found that he came from a broken home where he lived with his mother, who was an alcoholic. He went to meet the boy. He gave the boy a job in his shop and later took him into his home. And that boy, now a young man, says that Al Masters is the most saintly person he has ever known.

You were called to Bless

Your Calling The reason for blessing others, even if they do evil to you, is “knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing” (3:9b). “To this” either looks backward (believers should bless others because they were called to that kind of life) or forward (believers were called so they could inherit a blessing). The former is preferable (Hodges; Grudem). Believers were called to suffer (2:21) and to bless (3:9).

To Bless In this context, the blessings believers are called to give to others include the things commanded in verse 8. They include unity, compassion, love, tenderness, and courtesy.

Paul says, “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Rom 8:29-30). Believers are called to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Have you ever decided that being like Christ is the goal of your life?

You will be Blessed

Your Inheritance Peter says when believers bless others, they may *inherit* a blessing. The use of the word “inherit” *may* refer to eternal reward (1:4; Col. 3:24). The facts that Peter quotes Psalm 34 to explain what he has in mind and Psalm 34 speaks of blessings in this life suggest that eternal blessing is not what Peter has in mind. Peter refers to being blessed in this life (Grudem; Adams). On the other hand, what is done in this life as unto the Lord will be rewarded in the next. At any rate, the extent of the blessing we receive is determined by the extent of the blessing we give (Lk. 6:36-38).

Your Blessing Peter explains by quoting Psalm 34:12-16. The quotation contains two parts: The believer’s behavior (3:10-11) and God’s blessing (3:12).

First, the believer’s behavior: “For he who would love life and see good days let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile. Let him turn away from evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it” (3:10-11). The believer who is described here loves life. Some hate life (Eccl. 2:17). To love life suggests “an enjoyment of life and contentment in the life God has given, no matter what the outward circumstances” (Grudem). You can decide to escape, endure, or enjoy life (Wiersbe).

If you love life, you will see good days. Wiersbe explains good days. “They are not necessarily days free from problems, for the psalmist wrote about fears (v. 4), troubles (vv. 6, 17), afflictions (v. 19), and even a broken heart (v. 18). A “good day” for the believer who “loves life” is not one in which he is pampered and sheltered, but one in which he experiences God’s help and blessing *because of* life’s problems and trials. It is a day in which he magnifies the Lord (vv. 1-3), experiences answers to prayer (vv. 4-7), tastes the goodness of God (v. 8), and senses the nearness of God (v. 18). The next time you think you are having a “bad day,” and you hate life, read Psalm 34 and you may discover you are really having a “good day” to the glory of God.” This passage

for Psalm 34 contains three couplets (see the three times “let” appears in 1 Pet. 3:10-12). In each case, the second part of the couplet is greater than the first (Hodge).

Don’t speak evil or deceive. Evil speaking includes all speech that is bare, degrading, impure, and slanderous. Guile, deceit (the same word used in 2:1), is a more subtle form of evil speaking. That kind of evil speaking says something that appears to be truth, but it is actually a lie intended to deceive. “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips” (Ps. 141:3).

Don’t do evil; do good. Instead of doing evil, the believer is to do good, that is, bless others (3:9).

Don’t seek conflict; seek and pursue peace. Harmony must not only be sought; it must be eagerly pursued. It can be lost; therefore, it must be sought. It can be elusive; it must be pursued (Hodges). “Track it down until you find it” (Adams). “If possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom 12:18).

Believers who desire *good* days must not sin in word (3:9) or deed (3:9) and must zealously pursue peace with others.

As for the Lord, Peter explains, “For 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” (3:12). God sees and hears the one who does what is right in blessing others. God sees more than we see. He knows what we need before we ask. A human father often hears before he sees and has to be told the need to know it (Hodges). The Lord’s eyes refer to His protection and His ears to His provision (Hodges). Believers who do righteousness have God’s protection and provision. Thus, they will experience “good days” (3:10). Believers who bless others will be blessed by God with good days (3:9-10).

Psalm 34:12-16 has been called “an ancient recipe for a happy life” (Mullins, cited by Hiebert, p. 201). With God in control, even persecution can be good days in this life and for the kingdom (Hiebert, p. 202). On the other hand, God’s face and favor are against those who do evil. There is a frown instead of a smile on the Lord’s face when He sees you. When the Lord’s face is against you, He will not hear your prayers (3:7).

“Our relations with others determine the character of our life.” If we cultivate a gracious, benevolent spirit toward others, we will inherit a blessing (Hodges).

Summary: The ultimate in relationships is to bless others, even when they do evil to you. As a believer, you were called to that lifestyle and will be blessed and benefited by God Himself when you do.

Peter is teaching that if the believer is rightly related to God, the church, and the world, they are ideally prepared for a life and good days. Even if they suffer, they can triumph in Christ (Hodges).

“Life is lengthened and days are made happy by our gracious behavior towards others. Conversely, life is shortened and days are marred by sin (Hodges).

The parents of a small boy in Burma sent him to a mission school so he could learn to read. As a result, the boy began to lose faith in the idols. So, the father took him to a temple where the fragrance of incense filled the air. The father showed his son the glittering images covered with gold and silver ornaments and surrounded by flowers and candles. “Here,” said the father, “is a god you can see! The Christians cannot show you their God! “Yes,” said the son, “We can see your god, but he cannot see us. We cannot see the Christian’s God, but He always sees us!” (*Our Daily Bread*, 4/21/68).

DEALING WITH SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

One of the most persuasive arguments for living a righteous life is you are personally better off if you do. If you live an unrighteous life, you will suffer the consequences. A life of drugs/drunkenness produces devastating results in the body. A life of immorality will wreck a marriage. A life of crime ends in jail. Doing what is good is a good idea—you avoid suffering the consequences of sin.

Does living a righteous life, however, guarantee peace and blessing? Doesn't the Bible say that those who live godly shall suffer persecution? Does living godly always mean persecution? If I'm going to suffer for righteous living, why live right? That's only the beginning. Anytime anyone does what is right and suffers, it is hard to take. How does a person deal with suffering for righteousness' sake? How do you deal with the fear and possible terror in your heart? How do you handle those who are hurting you? Is there a danger to be avoided in this particular kind of situation?

Peter answers these questions in an extended passage in his first epistle. The passage is 1 Peter 3:13-4:6 and includes three distinct subsections. Each subsection will be considered separately.

The Suffering for Righteousness

Goodness In 1 Peter 3:8-12, the apostle urged believers to bless others, assuring them that if they did, God would bless them (3:9). Now he asks, “and who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?” (3:13). If believers do what is good, which in the context means blessing others (3:8-9), God is on their side (3:9-12). The expression “followers of what is good” means “enthusiasts for goodness” (Selwyn), zealots for good (Adams). It describes the “passionate intensity with which the most fanatical patriot loves his country” (Barclay). Sir John Seeley said, “No heart is pure that is not passionate, no virtue safe that is not enthusiastic” (Seeley, quoted by Selwyn). “It is only when a man falls in love with goodness that the wrong things lose their fascination and their power (Barclay).

Usually, a good life of being a blessing and being beneficial to others disarms those who might otherwise be hostile and harmful. Peace, harmony, and tranquility (3:11) usually result from refraining the tongue and feet from evil and earnestly seeking peace (3:10-12). Blessing others wins blessing from God. What will it win from men? (Hodges). Who would want to do evil to people doing good? The Greek word translated “harm” is the verb form of the noun rendered “evil” in 1 Peter 3:9, 10, 11. Here, it takes up the end of Psalm 34, quoted in verse 11 and “applies it to the actual situation of the readers (Selwyn).

Righteousness Nevertheless, although usually doing good protects one from the evil of others, it does not always happen that way. Some suffer for righteousness. So Peter adds, “But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed” (3:14a). Perhaps there is a slight distinction between doing good things (3:13) and living righteously (3:14), but righteousness (3:14) is probably synonymous with “good” (3:13), which in this context includes living a life that refrains from evil and returning blessing for evil.

Suffering In Greek, this is a fourth-class conditional sentence in the optative mood, indicating that suffering for righteousness' sake is “less probable.” It is not the normally expected fruit of doing good (Hodges). For believers living a righteous life, the likelihood of suffering is small. It

is a remote possibility (Stibbs/Walls). It is “unlikely” (Grudem). Nevertheless, it does happen. It would be normal for parents to be pleased if their teenager began to live for Christ, but there are cases of parents persecuting their teenagers because they decided to follow Christ. Years ago, I knew a teenage girl with a highly educated mother. When the teenager came to Christ and began to walk with Him, her mother became more of an opponent and gave more opposition than her friends at school.

Paul, however, says suffering is to be expected. He writes, “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim 3:12). Peter says suffering may happen. Do they disagree? No. From one point of view, suffering is a necessary part of the Christian life. Peter agrees with that (1:3-12; 4:12). Yet, on the other hand, suffering is not the usual, normal result of a righteous life. To say the same thing another way, the life of the sinner is filled with trouble; the life of a saint need not be (Hodges).

What does Peter mean by suffering? Later, he speaks of threats (3:14b), being defamed as evil doers (3:16), being reviled (3:16), and being evil spoken of (4:4). A simple example would be a believer beginning to live for the Lord at work and being told (threaten) that if he continued, he would not fit in; he would not be promoted and maybe even fired.

The Blessing

Blessing Peter says those who suffer for righteousness’ sake will be blessed (3:14). When suffering for righteousness does occur, there is blessedness in it (Hodges). According to Selwyn, three Greek words connote “happiness.” *Eudaimwn* is the Greek word for the person who is happy or fortunate in the secular sense. (It does not appear in the New Testament.) *Makarios* connotes happy or successful prosperity. It has religious connotations. Such people are religiously fortunate; they enjoy divine favor or blessing (it is the one that is used in 1 Pet. 3:14). *Euloghtos* always has a religious meaning. It is used in the LXX and the New Testament of God and those He blesses. Happy in the New Testament sense of the word does not mean to “feel delighted” but to be “highly privileged, the object of special divine favor” (Stibbs/Walls).

Now In the context of 1 Peter 3, the blessing is now (3:9-12). Suffering contributes to spiritual growth (Phil. 3:10).

Later In 1 Peter 4, the blessing is future (4:13). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke of being persecuted for righteousness’ sake (Mt. 5:10) and “for my sake” (Mt. 5:11). Such believers are blessed. Jesus taught suffering would be rewarded in heaven (Mt. 5:12).

The Proper Response

To be blessed in suffering for righteousness, the believer must respond properly. The proper response has both a negative and positive side.

Do not fear “and do not be afraid of their threats nor be troubled” (3:14b). These words are not an exact quotation, but they are drawn from Isaiah 8:12. They are an application of Isaiah (Grudem). When one is threatened, it is natural to fear and be agitated. Peter commands the believer suffering for righteousness’ sake not to do that. They should not allow feelings of fear, fright, and terror to grip them. They should not be intimidated. Nor should they be troubled, a Greek word which means “to stir up, disturb.” It conveys the picture of agitation, like water in a

glass that has been shaken. In John 5:4, it is used to trouble the waters of the pool of Bethesda. Agitating, the surging to and fro of thoughts and feelings, results from fear.

Sanctify the Lord Instead of fear, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” (3:15). These words are an allusion to Isaiah 8:13. Some manuscripts have the word “Christ” instead of “God.” Commentators who follow those few manuscripts translate this “Christ as Lord” (Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls), but the majority of Greek manuscripts read “lord” not “Christ” and no Greek manuscript contains the word “as.”

The ancient Israelites in Jerusalem were terrified because of an impending invasion. Isaiah told the people not to “be afraid of their threats nor be troubled. The Lord of Hosts, Him you shall hallow. Let Him be your fear and let Him be your dread” (Isa. 8:12-13). In other words, don’t fear man; fear God, or if you fear man, you will not fear God, but if you fear God, you will not fear man.

Instead of allowing fear to fill their heart, the persecuted believers are to set apart, “enshrine as supreme” (Johnstone) the Lord God in the innermost part of their being. The Lord is to be the focus of the heart, not fear of the threats of men.

Setting the Lord apart in your heart and focusing on Him is the solution to not allowing fear to fill your heart. It is also the way to be blessed. Suffering for righteousness’ sake can be the means of causing us to purge the fear of man from our hearts (Hodges). The solution to fear is the Lord. The Psalmist put it like this. “God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, even though the earth will be removed and the mountains will be carried into the midst of the sea, though its waters will roar and be troubled, and the mountains will shake with their swelling. Selah” (Ps. 46:1-3).

A pastor pointed out, “There are several Hebrew words translated “refuge.” One means “a place of flight” to which you run when chased. Another means “high ground,” where the “swirling floods can’t reach you. A third means “a restricted place where you alone can go” and yet another has the idea of warm habitation where you can stay as long as you want. God is all of these. He is the high ground we flee to, to escape people and problems, and where we can remain until the danger disappears, the flood recedes, and an answer is found. So, when persecution imperils you, make Christ your refuge by making Him first in your affections. That’s the answer to fear and the way to find happiness and peace amidst persecution” (source unknown).

Be Ready to give a Defense There is one other thing that needs to be done. “And always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (3:15). When you suffer unjustly without fear, people will ask, “What is your secret?” (Hodges). On every such occasion, you need to be prepared to give a defense. Believers must *always* be ready because opportunities to witness for Christ often come unexpectedly. The Greek word translated “reason” has the connotation of “rational account” (Selwyn). Our response is not to be an emotional reaction or a theological discourse but a reasonable explanation. This does not mean that a believer must always be able to answer all the critical questions leveled against Christianity. It means you should be able to give a reasonable answer for the hope you have in the midst of this suffering. This verse is not calling for a defense of *the faith*, only an answer to inquiries concerning *your hope*. “Our faith must be a firsthand discovery and not a secondhand story” (Barclay).

The answer is to be given with meekness and fear. The reasoned explanation of hope should be given with gentleness and reverence toward God and respect toward man. Meekness is not weakness; it is strength under control. An attitude of arrogance or belligerence must be avoided (Barclay). There must be gentleness and meekness. There should also be “fear,” which may not

only include reverence toward God and respect toward man but caution that the testimony of God not be ridiculed.

If you live a changed life, people will ask questions. In John 9, the Lord healed the blind man. He said nothing about it, but the neighbors noticed a change. In John 9:8, they ask, “Is not this he that sat and begged?” Peter learned the lesson the hard way. When asked an unexpected question, he was not ready and did not answer with gentleness. He cursed.

In 1987, the City of Los Angeles unjustly declared the old Church of the Open Door building in downtown L.A. a historical monument. That decision prevented us from selling the property for six months (and maybe a year). It costs us time and a great deal of money. A Jewish lady who, as an expert, had testified on our behalf saw the way my associate and I handled that unfair treatment and asked, “What makes you guys tick?” Peter predicted that would happen and told us to be prepared to explain that our hope was in the Lord, whom we had sanctified in our hearts.

Maintain a Good Conscience Peter adds, “having a good conscience that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed” (3:16). Peter speaks of being “defamed” and “reviled.” The Greek word translated “defame” (katalalos in 2:12; 3:16; Jas. 4:11; see also 2:1; Rom. 1:30) means “to speak evil of, rail at.” The Greek verb rendered “revile” (ephreazw) means “to revile.” The noun means “spiteful, abuse.” It has been said that this word conveys a vicious attitude, an element of “meanness” (Johnstone), a spiteful action (Selwyn). It implies insulting or threatening speech (Grudem).

Throughout the ordeal, believers must maintain a good conscience and conduct. A good conscience approves rather than condemns a person’s attitudes and actions (Adams). The good conscience comes from sanctifying the Lord God in your heart (3:15), not sinning in the process of suffering (3:21; 4:1-6). The good conduct includes answering those who speak slanderous lies against you with gentleness and respect. A good conscience grows out of good conduct (Adams).

We appease our conscience, or, at least, we try to appease it. There is an often-told story of the man who wrote a letter to the IRS. In it, he said, “Enclosed is a check for the taxes I did not pay last year. If my conscience bothers me, I will send you the rest of it.”

Then, those who slander and revile may be put to shame, discredited, dishonored, or disgraced. Our accusers and our abusers will be humiliated by the demonstration that their charges are false.

When “Ole Bull,” the great Norwegian violinist, visited the United States, he was assailed by much hostile criticism. The editor of the *New York Herald*, feeling the talented musician had been done a grave injustice, offered him newspaper space to reply to the charges that had been made. In broken English (which we have taken the liberty to correct), he thanked the editor, saying, “I think it is best they write against me, and I play against them!” He believed his most appropriate response to their false accusations was his music (*Our Daily Bread*, 8/19/71).

Peter explains, “For it is better if it is the will of God to suffer for doing good than for doing evil” (3:17). While this verse may be connected to verse 16 as a reason for maintaining a good conscience, that is, a good conscience is to be maintained because of the superiority of suffering with it, it is also an appropriate climax and close to the thought begun in verse 14. Suffering for righteousness is not God’s usual will, but if the unlikely happens (see the 4th class condition in verse 17, which means it is very unlikely that it will, Toussaint), it is not a matter of blind chance. If it comes, it is the will of God that you take it and handle it properly. Luther said, “Go on in faith and love; if the cross comes, take it; if it comes not, do not seek it” (Luther cited by Hiebert, p. 288).

You are better off suffering for doing good than for doing evil. “Better” means advantage or usefulness. There is no merit in suffering for evil; there is in suffering for righteousness. Peter’s

point is also that this suffering must be done with a good conscience. Failure to hold on to a good conscience, even though the suffering is for righteousness' sake and not evil, will lead to a loss of blessedness in the experience, that is, a loss of communion with Christ (Hodges).

Summary: If it is the will of God for you to suffer for righteousness, you will be blessed if you do not fear, sanctify the Lord in your heart, and are prepared to give a reasonable explanation for your hope.

A pastor referring to more verses in 1 Peter 3 than are covered here summarized his remarks by saying, "These, then, are the four great qualities that Christians ought to exhibit in times of stress. We are to be gracious and forgiving and return good for evil. Secondly, we are to have an untroubled, unruffled heart. We are not to fear or to give way to anxiety. Third, we are to be able to present a rational defense of the hope that we have in Christ. And finally, we are to maintain a good conscience" (David H. Roper, "Loving Life").

The central issue in the passage, though, is Christ. The way to deal with suffering for righteousness is to sanctify the Lord in your heart. In February 2001, John Oros spoke to an audience at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary about his experience as a church leader in Romania during the Communist era: "During communism, many of us preached ... and people came at the end of a service, and they said, 'I have decided to become a Christian.' We told them, 'It is good that you want to become a Christian, but we would like to tell you that there is a price to be paid. Why don't you reconsider what you want to do, because many things can happen to you? You can lose, and you can lose big.'

"A high percentage of these people chose to take part in a three-month catechism class. At the end of this period, many participants declared their desire to be baptized. Typically, I would respond, 'It is really nice that you want to become a Christian, but when you give your testimony ... there will be informers here who will jot down your name. Tomorrow the problems will start. Count the cost. Christianity is not easy. It's not cheap. You can be demoted. You can lose your job. You can lose your friends. You can lose your neighbors. You can lose your kids who are climbing the social ladder. You can lose even your life.'

"Let me tell you my joy—when we looked into their eyes, and their eyes were in tears, and they told us, 'If I lose everything but my personal relationship with my Lord Jesus Christ, it is still worth it.'"

HOW TO SUFFER WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

When someone sins against us, our natural response is to sin. When we are threatened, we get defensive and we threaten in return. When we are slandered, we get angry. When someone rails at us, we rail back. If we are doing what is right, it is worse. In his first epistle, Peter talks about believers who are suffering for righteousness' sake and in the process speaks of threats (3:14b), being defamed as evildoers (3:16), being reviled (3:16), and being evil spoken of (4:4). According to him, our proper response ought to be: not to fear, but to sanctify the Lord in our heart and gently respond with a reasonable answer for the hope we have in Christ. How is such a response possible? That is certainly not the natural way to respond. Peter answers that in 1 Peter 3:18-22.

The Bible is an easy book to understand. The Bible is also a difficult book to understand. The basic message of the Bible is simple: a holy, loving God created humans who sinned, so God sent His Son to die for sin and be raised from the dead so that those who trust Christ can have eternal life and live a loving life. The major themes of the Bible are clear. God is righteous and just, loving, and merciful. Humans are sinful creatures who need to have faith, love, and hope. The Bible can be difficult to comprehend. It teaches that there is only one God, who exists in three persons. Jesus Christ is 100% God and 100% man. God elects, and people have free will. Some passages are difficult to understand.

For example, Paul says, “Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?” (1 Cor. 15:29). The argument is clear. Baptizing people for the dead proves the resurrection of the dead. The problem is, what does Paul mean by “baptism for the dead”? What makes this verse so challenging to interpret is that this is the only reference to baptism for the dead in the New Testament. More seriously, no reason for such a practice that fits the truth of Scripture can be imagined. Everything the New Testament teaches about baptism and death militates against such a practice. Paul is not endorsing baptism for the dead. Baptizing for the dead was not something Paul did; it was something *they* did. Notice verse 29 says “they,” but verse 30 says “we.” Nor is Paul approving of the practice. To prove his case, he sometimes assumes something he did not approve of (1 Cor. 10:8; 10:14-22).

First Peter 3:18-22 is simple and very complex all at the same time. It speaks of Christ preaching to spirits in prison and baptism saving us. It has been called “one of the most difficult portions of the New Testament” (Wiersbe; also Barclay). It has been said that what Peter wrote has “perplexed many” (Adams).

Christ Suffered

In 1 Peter 3:18-22, Peter discusses Christ, His death, preaching, resurrection, and ascension, but what Peter has in mind relates to believers, as they suffer for righteousness (4:1-6). He writes, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God” (3:18a). The word “for” relates this and what follows to what has proceeded. Don’t suffer for evil (3:17); Christ has done that (3:18) and, therefore, we should not (4:1).

For Sin Christ was just, that is, righteous, yet He suffered “for sins ... for the unjust.” He did not suffer because He sinned but because someone else sinned. He suffered for well-doing (Wiersbe). His suffering was “vicarious” (Selwyn; Barclay; Stibbs/Walls), “substitutionary”

(Adams; Stibbs/Walls), “atoning or propitiatory” (Stibbs/Walls). Believers who suffer for righteousness’ sake, do not suffer because of their sin but because someone else sins.

During the war between Britain and France, men were conscripted into the French army by a kind of lottery system. When a person’s name was drawn, he had to go to battle. There was one exception to this, however. A person could be exempt if another were willing to take his place. On one occasion, the authorities came to a man and told him he was among those who had been chosen. He refused to go, saying, “I was shot two years ago.” At first, they questioned his sanity, but he insisted that this was true. He claimed that the military records would show that he had been conscripted two years previously and that he had been killed in action.

“How can that be?” they questioned. “You are alive now!” He explained that when his name came up, a close friend said to him, “You have a large family, but I am not married, and nobody is dependent upon me. I’ll take your name and address and go in your place.” And that is indeed what the record showed. This rather unusual case was referred to Napoleon Bonaparte, who decided that the country had no legal claim on that man. He was free. He had died in the person of another! (*Our Daily Bread*, 10/30/80).

Once Christ suffered for sin, once for all. The Jewish High Priest offered an annual sacrifice for sin once every year. Christ’s sacrifice was absolutely sufficient; it need not, it cannot be repeated. This is the key to Peter’s argument: Christ suffered for sins *once*. Why should we suffer for sin ourselves (3:17; 4:1)? For us to suffer for evil is entirely out of harmony with what He did for us (Hodges).

Peter’s ultimate point is that believers have shared Christ’s once-for-all experience of death in relationship to sin. Thus, living in sin should have no place in our experience (4:1-6), but he illustrates how believers were placed into Christ before he explains that.

To Bring Us to God The purpose of Christ’s suffering was to bring us to God. The expression “bring us to God” was used to gain access to the king. In ancient times, there was an official in the king’s court called the “introducer,” the giver of access. It was his function to decide who should be admitted and who should be kept out of the king’s presence. He held the keys of access. Jesus Christ, through what He did, brings people into the presence of God; He gives them access to God (Barclay). Those who come to Christ have open access to God (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18, 3:12).

This implies that when believers suffer, they might bring others to God.

Christ Arose

Christ not only died, but He also rose. “Being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit” (3:18b). The expression “being put to death in the flesh” means that He was genuinely human and His death was truly physical (Adams).

The phrase “made alive by the Spirit” has been taken to mean “by the Holy Spirit” (Adams) or in the sphere of the spirit (Hodges; Grudem). The support for the latter view is that the verse says in the sphere (or realm) of the flesh, Christ suffered death; in the sphere of the spirit, He rose to life (Hodges). Furthermore, in the Greek text, both flesh and spirit are without an article, which is best understood as references to two consecutive conditions of the Lord’s human nature (Stibbs/Walls).

Christ Preached

Peter adds, “By whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared in which a few, that is, eight souls were saved through water” (3:19-20). The overall point is plain—Christ preached (“also,” that is, Christ suffered, 3:18 and Christ also preached 3:19), but the details are difficult (Selwyn). For example, when did Christ preach? To whom did He preach? What did He preach?

Numerous answers have been given to each of these questions. In an appendix to his commentary, Grudem explains the five most common views. Since ancient times, there have been two *basic* interpretations: 1) Christ preached to the spirits in hell between His death and resurrection. 2) Christ preached through Noah to those who, because they rejected that message, are now spirits in prison. Those who hold to the view that Christ preached in hell have various explanations as to whom and what He preached, hence, the five different common views.

Not between His Death and Resurrection Is Peter saying that Christ preached in hell between His death and resurrection? Those who say “Yes” claim that “by whom” (Greek: “in which”) is related to “in the sphere of the Spirit” (3:18) and means while Christ was in the spirit before His resurrection, He preached. Some holding this view say He preached to fallen angels because “spirits” alone and without qualification is not used anywhere else in the Bible to describe departed human spirits but is used for supernatural beings, both good and bad (Selwyn; Grudem calls this the “dominant view today”). Others who hold this view insist that “spirits” refer to people and, therefore, Christ preached to people in hell (Lenski). The problem with this position is that the passage relates the preaching of Christ to the time of Noah, not the time between the death and resurrection of Christ. A further difficulty is that even if it is true that Christ preached in Hades between His death and resurrection, why bring that up here?

In the Days of Noah Peter is teaching that the pre-incarnate Christ preached through Noah. “By whom” (Greek: “in which”) is related to “in the sphere of the spirit” (3:18), and it simply means that as Christ rose from the dead with reference to the spirit (that is, He entered a spiritual sphere of life, 3:18), so “in spirit” He preached (3:19; Hodges; Wiersbe). Simply put, the pre-incarnate Christ preached through Noah (see “Spirit” in Gen. 6:3 and “Spirit of Christ” in the prophets in 1 Peter 1:11 and “He came and preached” in Eph. 2:17; Selwyn contends that “by whom” cannot be related to “spirit” in 3:18, but Grudem has answered Selwyn’s objections).

Most Disobeyed According to this view, “spirits” can either be the people of Noah’s day (Grudem) or fallen angels (Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls). In either case, they were *not* in prison when Christ preached to them through Noah, but they are *now* in prison (see “made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison” in the NASB). It is natural to refer to people by their present status, even if the time referred to was before that status was acquired. For example, Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs (Acts 7:8). I knew the President when he was in Congress (Hodges). Queen Elizabeth was born in 1926 (Grudem).

Ryrie argues that the spirits are people. He says, “Most likely, this is a reference to the pre-incarnate Christ preaching through Noah to those who, because they rejected that message, are now spirits in prison” (*Ryrie Study Bible*). On the other hand, the argument that the term “spirits,” when used in the New Testament without an article, is a reference to spirit being is compelling. Fallen angels are indeed in prison because of their pre-flood disobedience (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Hodges). Hence, Christ in the Spirit preached through Noah to fallen angels now imprisoned.

The point is that the ones to whom Christ preached disobeyed. They disobeyed the preaching they heard.

A Few were Saved Meanwhile, while the ark was being prepared, God was patient. When the Ark was finished, a few, namely eight souls, were saved *through* water. They were not saved *by* water, but, as the Greek text indicates, they were saved *through* water (in the Greek text, the word “saved” has the prefix “through;” see also Stibbs/Walls). Besides, the water did not save them. The ark did (Hodges).

Peter now applies what he has said: “There is also an antitype, which now saves us, namely 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” (3:21). The salvation of Noah and his family corresponds to our salvation. The Greek word translated “antitype” can either mean “type” (copy) or “antitype” (the original). The term is ambiguous (A-G, p. 75). Thus, verse 21 could be translated “to this there is an *antitype*, which also now saves us, namely baptism” or “a *type* of that which now also saves us, namely, baptism.” Either way, the idea is that present-day baptism corresponds to what has gone before in Noah’s situation. Probably, “antitype” is preferable. Baptism is the spiritual reality (the antitype, the original), which was foreshadowed in Noah’s day (the type, the copy), that is, “the entire Noahic picture” (Hodges).

What is the meaning of baptism in 1 Peter 3:21? Many commentators interpret baptism here to be water baptism (Selwyn; Barclay; Grudem). The problem with that view is that the water did not save Noah and his family; the ark did. The ark is an appropriate figure of Christ into which individuals are placed to be saved. Therefore, baptism in this verse is not water baptism but spiritual baptism.

Our spiritual baptism into Christ (the ark) now saves us (Hodges; Adams; see also Gill). “God’s way of salvation from judgment for sinners is found in the story of the ark and the flood. The ark passing safely through the flood provides a figure of God’s method of saving man out of inevitable judgment” (Stibbs/Walls). That interpretation fits the context, which is saying that believers are “in Christ” (3:16; 1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:3) and should, therefore, cease from sin (4:1). It is the baptism of the Spirit that places believers into Christ (Rom. 6:3-5).

Peter adds two appositional clauses that further define and describe the nature of this baptism that is saving us. These two statements “make unmistakably plain that it is not the mere participation in the outward form of baptism that saves” (Stibbs/Walls). First, it is not the removal of the filth of the flesh. This baptism is not a physical bath (Hodges). Second, it is the answer of a good conscience toward God. The word “answer” has been interpreted to mean “question, request, appeal, pledge.” Most understand this as either a question asked a new convert (Cranfield) or the pledge made by a new Christian at baptism (Selwyn), but this statement is in contrast (“but”) to outward cleansing, which seems to indicate that “answer” means something like “the realization of” a good conscience. There is some evidence that this word means “divine response.” It is “the response toward God of a good conscience” (Hodges, who says that the NKJV translation “the answer of a good conscience toward God” is substantially correct). It is a “sincere response of the heart to God, and particularly in one’s personal confession of faith in Christ crucified and risen” (Stibbs/Walls). It is another way of saying “a request for the forgiveness of sins” (Grudem).

Furthermore, baptism is the response of a good conscience toward God through Christ’s resurrection. This is all possible because Christ arose from the dead.

Hodges thinks it is no accident that Peter uses the word “souls” here. He suggests that this is an allusion to the soul’s salvation and that the soul’s salvation requires a good conscience. He says, “Possessing a good conscience as we suffer for righteousness’ sake, we pass safely into the new

world to come—preserving our souls for the glory of God at the coming of Christ.” We stand before Him as those who share His death to sin and who share His present life toward God (Hodges).

Christ Ascended

His Ascension Actually, it is all possible because Christ not only rose from the dead, but He is the one “who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God” (3:22a). Having risen and ascended so that He is at the right hand of the Father, a place of privilege and power (Grudem).

His Dominion “Angels and authorities and power having been made subject to Him” (3:22b). Christ exercises dominion over every hostile angelic power. Because of our relationship to Christ, we share His death to sin, we share life before God, and we enjoy victory over every hostile angelic power (Hodges). Paul told the Ephesians, “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4-6).

Summary: Christ suffered once because of someone else’s sins, rose, and ascended, and since, by spiritual baptism, believers have been placed into Him, they should cease from sin and live unto God.

Peter discusses two truths that make it possible for a believer to suffer for righteousness: Christ is our example (2:21-23) and Christ is our empowerment (3:18-22).

Earlier, Peter said, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth, who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously” (1 Pet. 2:21-23). Christ is our example. When we suffer, even for righteousness, Christ is an example of how to suffer.

Timothy Keller, the pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, writes, “Christianity does not so much offer solutions to the problems of suffering, but rather provides the promise of a God who is completely present with us in suffering. Only Christians believe in a God who says, ‘Here I am alongside you. I have experienced the same suffering you have. I know what it is like.’ No other religion even begins to offer that assurance. After the World Trade Center tragedy, between 600 and 800 new people began attending Redeemer. The sudden influx of people pressed the question, ‘What does your God have to offer me at a time like this?’ I preached, ‘Christianity is the only faith that tells you that God lost a child in an act of violent injustice. Christianity is the only religion that tells you; therefore, God suffered as you have suffered’” (Tim Keller, “Preaching Amid Pluralism,” *Leadership*, Winter 2002, pp. 34-35).

Christ is not only our example, He is also our empowerment. Our being in Christ saves us. The Greek word “saves” in 1 Peter 3:21 is in the present tense. We are being saved because we are in Christ. Because we are in Christ, we are entirely new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17). As the following paragraph demonstrates, we have to cooperate, but our position in Christ is the basis for our victory over sin (see “therefore” in 4:1).

When someone sins against us because we are in Christ, our supernatural response is not to sin. Because we are in Christ, when we are threatened, we do not get defensive and we do not threaten in return. Because we are in Christ, we do not get angry when we are slandered. Because we are in Christ, we do not rail back when someone rails at us. In Christ, we do not have to sin;

we live unto God. As Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

A 28-year-old lady feared going to her ten-year High school reunion because she was ugly. She had all but decided not to go and who would have blamed her. In her life, when image was most important, she was called Dumbo because her large ears jutted out from her head. Her protruding odd-shaped nose provoked some to also call her Pinnochio. It seemed to her that she had no redeeming physical features. Her small breasts made her feel inferior to the other girls. Her mousy, nondescript hair was less than her crowning glory. After giving birth to her now elementary school-age son, she was never able to get rid of the “baby fat” around her tummy area. If there was ever a “before” picture needing an “after” picture, it was hers.

Then, she applied to and was selected to participate in *Extreme Makeover*, a TV program that pays to have surgeons, dentists, hairstylists, etc., do extreme makeovers on people. What happens to these people is truly remarkable. When her face first flashed on the screen, I said to my wife, I have never seen many women I would call an ugly duckling, but she fit the bill. After a cosmetic surgeon worked on her ears, nose, breasts, and tummy and a hairstylist fixed her hair, this ugly duckling was transformed into a nice-looking lady. She looked like a different person.

Because she had an extreme makeover, she could go to her reunion without fear. Believers have had an extreme makeover. Only the difference is internal, not external; it does not result in looking different, but in being different. Because of our makeover, we can face suffering like Christ.

ARM YOURSELF

Anytime anyone speaks evil of you, defames you, and reviles you, it is hard to handle. When you have done what is right and that happens, it is worse, but it is especially hard to take when your friends do it. That seems to be the situation that Peter addresses in his first epistle. Peter talks about suffering for righteousness' sake (3:14), being threatened (3:14), being defamed (3:16), and reviled (3:16). Later, he speaks of people speaking evil of you (4:4) and indicates that those people are your friends (4:4)! He also instructs those who are suffering for righteous sake. He tells them how they ought to respond, namely, not to fear, but to sanctify the Lord in their heart and gently respond with a reasonable answer for the hope they have in Christ (3:15). He also explains that such a response is possible because, as believers, we have been placed in Christ. In light of all of that, what are we to do? What practical suggestions would Peter give us? He answers that question in 1 Peter 4:1-6.

Arm Yourself with the Right Attitude

Arm Yourself Peter now concludes this extended treatment of suffering for righteousness' sake by saying, “Therefore since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind” (4:1a). In light of what has been said concerning Christ (“therefore”), Peter urges believers to arm themselves with an attitude that comes from their relationship to Christ. Clearly, the phrase “Christ suffered for us in the flesh” refers back to “Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God,” being put to death in the flesh (3:18). Actually, 1 Peter 4:1 resumes the thought of 1 Peter 3:18 (Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls). The material between 1 Peter 3:18 and 1 Peter 4:1 used typology to establish the believer's identification with Christ by means of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Hodges; see Barclay). By the Baptism of the Spirit, the believer is in the ark, a type of Christ. He suffered for sin once for all.

Being in Christ, believers should arm themselves with the same mind. “Arm” is a Greek word that means “to equip,” “to arm” with a tool or weapon. The believer is in a ceaseless, truceless war with sin. The weapons of the warfare are a mindset. The Greek word rendered “mind” means “to think, consider.” It denotes “the result; thought, realization, insight, disposition” (NID NTT, 3:123). There is the connotation of determined action.

The Mindset What exactly is the mindset, the determined action, we are to have? Peter explains, “For he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin” (4:1b). This seems to imply that Christ ceased from sin and, therefore, believers should do the same, but Christ never sinned, nor did He “cease from sin.” “The expression here has a proverbial aspect and seems to have meant something like this: “When a man is dead, he will sin no more;” referring, of course, to the present life” (Barnes). Believers who have been placed into Christ and His death by the baptism of the Holy Spirit have died to sin (Rom. 6:1-13, esp. 6:7). Simply put, since Christ died for sin once and believers are in Him by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they should reckon themselves to be dead to sin (Rom. 6:10-11; see Stibbs/Walls).

Adams says it well. “If we have been identified with Christ by baptism, and Christ has suffered (died) in the flesh, so have we. Arming ourselves with that thought can help us to part ways with sin and strike out on new paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. Here, Peter continues the thought begun in 3:18 (Christ suffered and died for sins fully and finally... being put to death in

the flesh) that was interrupted by illustrational and explanatory material (vss. 19-22). Picking up the thread again, he says Christ's death means that He is done with sin (never again must He bear them to a cross and die for them). So, too, he continues, you who have died (in Christ) have come to a parting of the ways with sin (conversion is a fork in the road, a crossroads, where we take a new direction in Christ)."

The Aim The aim of believers arming themselves with the attitude ("determined action") of being dead to sin is "that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lust of men, but for the will of God" (4:2). "The lust of men" refers to the desires and cravings of ordinary sinful men (see the lust of the flesh in 2:11; Gal. 5:16, 19-21). To live life for the lust of men is to have the varied cravings that characterize fallen men control one's life. Christ died for sin once for all and believers are placed into Christ so that they could cease from sin and commence to do the will of God, which means living a righteous life, even if that should involve suffering. God's will should become our hearts' earnest desire ("lust"). God's Son is our example and God's Spirit is our enablement. God's will should be the pole star for the believer.

The point is that we are to arm ourselves with this attitude. Simply put, you are in the ark, not the water of sin and judgment. Remember, when others speak evil of you, you are in the ark! They are in the water!

Not the Will of the Gentiles

The Will of the Gentiles Peter further explains, "For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties and abominable idolatries" (4:3). Peter's plea is simply that before their conversion to Christ, the time they spent in sin was *sufficient*, the meaning of the Greek word that is translated "enough!" Before their conversion, Peter's readers had walked in the will of the Gentiles. The Greek word rendered "walked" is not the usual word for walk. This one means "to go, proceed, travel." Their life of sin was like a journey. They planned to make the trip and, with eagerness, made it from sin to sin. Their journey was in the will of the Gentiles, not the will of God (4:3).

Six sins delineate the will of the Gentiles. Lasciviousness is an excess of all kinds. Sin does not become lasciviousness until it shocks public decency (Lightfoot on Gal. 5:20). This word pictures "inordinate indulgence of appetite to the extent of violating a sense of public decency" (Hiebert). It refers to outward sexual immorality of a shocking sort (Adams). It is living without any regard for moral restraint (Grudem). Lust is desire, but this lust is a *sinful* desire, which no doubt includes sensual desire and sexual lust. The Greek word translated "drunkenness" only occurs here in the New Testament. It means "to bubble up, overflow." Thus, it depicts one who is soaked to overflowing with wine. Perhaps it denotes "habitual drunkenness" (Selwyn; Hiebert). It is a life bent on following physical desires (Grudem).

A policy research group called Drug Strategies has produced a report that calls alcohol "America's most pervasive drug problem." It claims that alcohol-related deaths outnumber drug-related deaths four-to-one. Alcohol is a factor in more than half of all domestic violence and sexual assault cases. Researchers estimate that between accidents, health problems, crime, and lost productivity, alcohol abuse costs the economy \$167 billion a year. In 1995, four out of every ten people on probation said they were drinking when they committed a violent crime, while only one in 10 admitted using illicit drugs (Anna Quindlen, "The Drug That Pretends It Isn't," *Newsweek* 4/10/2000, p. 88).

The Greek rendered “revelries” means “to revel, carouse.” It was used of festivities “in honor of a god, particularly, Bacchus, and ending usually in the party’s sallying forth from their banqueting-room to parade the streets and indulge in whatever folly or wickedness suggested itself” (Johnstone). It was used of banquets given to “wild immorality” (Grudem). Drinking parties refer to a drinking bout. These often end in drunken orgies (Adams). The Greek word translated “abominable idolatries” means “lawless idolatries.” Although permitted by human law, idolatry is contrary to divine law.

Our past is buried in the deepest sea. It is gone, buried under the flood. I should not get my scuba gear and try to find it. It is gone and buried.

The Opinion of the Gentiles Peter adds an interesting sidelight saying, “In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you” (4:4). Before their conversion, the believers to whom Peter wrote had unsaved friends with whom they ran around in excessive sin. They ran with the crowd. “Run” pictures the eagerness with which they pursued vices, here called a “flood of dissipation.” The Greek word rendered “flood” means “to pour out, overflowing, excess.” These had been an overflow, a flood of excessive, wasteful indulgences (4:3). There was a euphoric stampede of pleasure-seeking (Kelly).

Apparently, at conversion or, at least, because of their conversion, these believers had ceased participating in idolatry, drinking parties, and carousing. They no longer got drunk or participated in immorality. Their former pagan partners in these practices were “genuinely surprised” (Stibbs/Walls). They thought all of this was strange. They were astonished at the change in their former companion of sin.

Mark Twain said, “Always do right; it will gratify some people and astonish the rest.”

The Attack of the Gentiles Their unbelieving friends were not only surprised; they spoke evil against them. When the believers ceased their overindulgence in sin, the unbelievers unjustly said malicious and slanderous things about them (Stibbs/Walls). The unbelievers became hostile, using verbal abuse and slander (Grudem). These believers were misunderstood, opposed, reproached, reviled, and defamed—all because they ceased their excessive sinful ways. They were suffering for righteousness’ sake.

Peter’s point is that these believers have spent enough time sinning, even if their former friends didn’t think so (Hodges). Their former friends thought the believers were missing out on the good times.

An unbeliever said, “I don’t see what you Christians get out of life. You say you’re happy, but you’re missing so much!” This unsaved man had ability, an excellent position, and great possessions, but he loved indulging in sin’s pleasures. One day, this fellow failed to report for work. Eventually, when the police forced open the door of his locked apartment, they found his body sprawled grotesquely on the floor alongside several empty liquor bottles! When the tragic news of his death reached the Christian, he said with discernment, “Yes, thank God, I *am* missing a lot!”

The Will of God

Unbelievers will be Judged Peter’s response to the reactions of their pagan friends is, “they will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (4:5). In other words, these people are judging you, don’t mind that (don’t judge them). God will judge them. The picture is a court scene. Those slandering and defaming believers are called to give an account to a divine judge. The implication is that they will find it difficult to defend their actions. Also, they cannot

escape judgment because the Judge will judge the living and the dead. He is ready to judge now (perhaps a reference to the coming of Christ; 1:5), but if one or more of these antagonists dies, he will not escape being judged. The Divine Judge judges all.

A Catholic Priest convicted of molesting children appealed his sentence. While the appeal was pending, he was murdered in prison. In the state of Massachusetts, if someone dies before all appeals are finished, all charges are dropped. The person dies innocent as far as the law is concerned. People in Massachusetts were outraged. In the ultimate Supreme Court, there will be none of that. God judges the living and the dead.

If you are suffering for righteousness' sake, be ready to answer for the hope in you (3:15). Those persecuting you will give an account later.

Believers can live unto God Thus, Peter concludes by explaining, "For this reason, the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit" (4:6). Some insist that the word "dead" in verse 6 must have the same meaning as dead in verse 5 (Selwyn), but there is a play on words in verses 5 and 6. In verse 5, "the dead" is literal; God will judge the living and the dead. In verse 6, "dead" is figurative. The gospel has been preached to those who are spiritually dead (Hodges). The believers to whom Peter is writing were spiritually dead. The gospel was preached to them and they trusted Christ. Therefore, they have been judged! (Hodges). Having been placed into Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they have been united to a dying Savior and are thus judged like men in the flesh. United to a risen Savior, they live in the Spirit to God. Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, believers are dead to sin and judgment are alive to God to do His will (Hodges).

William Gargan was a well-known movie star who made a movie called "They Got What They Wanted." It was so well received he thought he'd win an Oscar for it, but he never did. Instead, he got cancer of the throat. His larynx had to be removed and his melodious voice was stilled. Then he was told that there was a method by which an artificial voice box could be inserted and the patient was taught how to speak. Although his voice never was what it used to be, his life inspired millions. Later, the motion picture industry made a TV program that paid tribute to him. In his rasping mechanical voice, he recalled that he once played in the picture "They Got What They Wanted." He had wanted an Oscar but did not get it. "I was deeply disappointed," he said, "but God permitted me to have a part in a far greater production, which I call "I Got What God Wanted."

Summary: The way to handle suffering for righteousness' sake is to arm yourself with the attitude that now that you are in Christ, you do not have to live according to the will of the Gentiles, but you can live unto God.

This passage delineates the benefits of knowing Christ, including escaping judgment, ceasing from sin, and living a life alive to God. Even under the most severe trials (remember Christ's suffering), believers need not sin. Victory over sin is possible because believers are in Christ. When the pressure is severe, it is not necessary to revert to pagan responses (following one's own desires and wishes). It is possible (instead) to live as God directs. While we live in the flesh, we no longer need to follow the flesh. Christ has opened the possibility for entirely new responses. It is possible to endure suffering as Christ did, living according to God's will regardless of pagan insults over your refusal to indulge in sinful practices. Temptations can be thwarted by arming your mind with these truths, knowing that, at length, God will turn the tables (Adams).

As was mentioned earlier in this series, two Buddhist monks were walking in a drenching thunderstorm when they came to a stream swollen out of its banks. A beautiful young Japanese woman stood wanting to get to the other side but was afraid of the currents. One of the monks said,

“Can I help you?” The woman said, “I need to cross this stream.” The monk picked her up, put her on his shoulder, carried her through the water, and put her down on the other side. That night his companion said to him, “As Buddhist monks, we have taken vows not to look on a woman, much less touch her body. By the river, you did both.” The first monk said, “I put that woman down on the other side of the river. You’re still carrying her in your mind” (John Claypool, “The Future and Forgetting,” *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 109).

IF YOU ONLY HAD A WEEK TO LIVE

Suppose a doctor told you that you had a terminal illness and you only had a week to live. What would you do? I imagine some would want to live it up, like a kid who is spending the day at Disneyland when he realizes that the day is about to come to an end, panicky heads for the rollercoaster for one more ride or the bridegroom and all his men who want to live it up one last time before the wedding. What would you do? Would you withdraw to your house and only see family and close friends? Would you do all the things you always wanted to do and never did? If you knew you only had a short time to live, what would you do with the remaining days and hours?

Be Sensible and Alert to Pray

The End is at Hand Beginning with 1 Peter 4:7, a new subject, namely prophecy, is introduced. Peter writes, “But the end of all things is at hand” (4:7). The Greek word translated “but” is the Greek word “and,” which is the way it should be translated in this verse. The context does not contain a contrast. Instead, 1 Peter 4:7 begins a new train of thought connected to the preceding by mentioning judgment in 1 Peter 4:5-6. The judgment of which Peter speaks is not distant; it is at the door (Selwyn). In the Greek text, the phrase “all things” is emphatic. Some have suggested that the “all things” to which Peter refers is “the end of the temple, of the Levitical priesthood, and of the whole Jewish economy” (Adams). The impending death of believers in martyrdom has also been suggested, but it is not just the end of the Temple or the end of a few people’s lives, but the end of “all things,” that is, all the things believers experience now in this age (Grudem).

Terminating everything we currently experience is “at hand;” it is pending. The expression “at hand” is used of the impending nature of the Kingdom of God, that is, the first advent (Mt. 3:2; 10:7; Mk. 1:15; Lk. 10:9, 11) and the coming of Christ, that is, the rapture (Rom. 13:12; Phil. 4:5; Jas. 5:8-9). The end of all things is “at hand;” it is imminent (see Selwyn), has drawn near, is impending, in a position to break in upon us. This age will end. Life as we know it does not go on forever. There is a termination.

Be Serious Based on the termination of life as we know it, Peter exhorts, “Therefore be serious” (4:7). The Greek word translated “be serious” means “to be sensible and self-controlled.” It connotes a “cool head and balanced mind” and has been rendered, “keep your head” (Selwyn), “keep your mind steady and clear” or “keep cool” (Wiersbe), be “level-headed” (Adams), “preserve your sanity (Barclay). It faces things realistically, free from delusion. It describes sound judgment that exercises restraint and is not impulsive. Several ancient secular authors said that it was the opposite of the Greek word from which we get the English word “mania,” that is, “frenzy, madness” (Wiersbe; Acts 26:24). It does not allow emotion to take over; it keeps cool under pressure. Balanced thinking, calmness, and self-control are inherent in the word (Adams). It is thinking about and evaluating situations maturely and correctly (Grudem).

The use of this word in its various forms in the New Testament indicates that it means to be in one’s right mind in control of one’s self (Mk. 5:15). It is the opposite of being beside oneself or mad (2 Cor. 5:13) and thinking too highly of oneself (Rom. 12:3). In other words, it is in contrast to being out of control, experiencing “uncontrolled excitement or frenzy” and conceit (Stibbs/Walls). Trench says that the noun form of sensible “is properly the condition of an entire command over the passions and desires so that they receive no further allowance than that which

the law and right reason admit and approve.” He quotes Jeremy Taylor, who said, “It is reason’s girdle, and passion’s bridle.” Trench concludes his article by saying that this word “is the habitual inner self-government, with its constant rein on all passions and desires” (Trench, pp. 69-72).

Barclay says that this verb characterizes a man who is pre-eminently sane and adds, “The great characteristic of sanity is that it sees things in their proper proportions; it sees what things are important and what things are not important; sudden and capricious and transitory enthusiasms do not sweep it away; it is prone neither to unbalanced fanaticism nor to unrealizing indifference. It is only when we see the affairs and the activities of earth in the light of eternity that we see them in their proper proportions and their proper importance. It is when God is given His proper place that all things take their proper places.” The expectancy of the Lord’s imminent return must not turn us into lazy dreamers or zealous fanatics (Wiersbe).

Be Watchful in Prayer Also, based on the impending end, Peter adds, “**And watchful in your prayers**” (4:7). The Greek word translated “watchful” means “to be sober, abstain from wine.” When used figuratively, it refers to being sober, calm, and morally alert. The idea here is to “be free from every form of mental and spiritual drunkenness” (A-G, p. 540) that results from befuddled views about the future. Such people are not frivolous and irresponsible (Barclay). Knowing that the end is impending, remain alert in full possession of your faculties and feelings to give yourself to prayer (Stibbs/Walls). Be alert to events and evaluate them correctly to pray more intelligently (Grudem). The plural (prayers) suggests specific prayers throughout the day (Grudem). Also, technically, the Greek text does not say “watchful *in* your prayers.” It denotes “with a view to, to, for prayers. Be alert with control of your faculties to give yourself to prayers. Believers must keep themselves alert and all their faculties under control to give themselves to prayer (Stibbs/Walls).

Peter learned this lesson the hard way. In the garden of Gethsemane, he failed to watch and pray; he fell asleep (Mk. 14:37-41). Shortly after, he failed to withstand temptation (Mk. 14:66-72).

It was Wednesday night, and two members of the church had gone off on a fishing trip. One of them said, “You know we really shouldn’t be here; we ought to be at the prayer meeting.” The other replied, “Even if I were home, I couldn’t go.” “Why?” “Well, my wife is sick!”

Practice Earnest Love

Practice Earnest Love Peter adds, “**and above all things have fervent love for one another**” (4:8). “And” connects this injunction to the preceding. In fact, 1 Peter 4:8-11 consists of a series of participles, all of which are grammatically dependent on the imperatives of 1 Peter 4:7. All of the instructions of 1 Peter 4:7-8 are based on the concept that the end is imminent. Because the end is impending, believers should practice love, an attitude, and action that seeks the welfare of the one loved.

The words “above all things” indicate that love is the supreme priority. Love is to be above everything else. While 1 Peter 4:7 consists of personal responsibilities in light of the impending end, 1 Peter 4:8 begins a list of responsibilities that involve others. At the top of the list of responsibilities toward others is love. In the first part of this epistle, when Peter first speaks of the relationship of believers to one another, he first mentions love (1:22; 1:8; 2:17; 3:8).

Love for one another is to be fervent, a Greek word that means “stretched, strained.” The idea is to be outstretched in the sense of constant and consistent, never failing (Barclay). It was used of a horse made to go full gallop (Stibbs/Walls). It is the picture of the strenuous effort of an athlete,

straining to reach the goal (Wiersbe). Applied to love, it suggests intensity, earnestness, and effort to the full extent. (Stibbs/Walls; see the adverb of the word in 1:22). Love must be worked at, as an athlete works on his skill. Because the end is pending, believers should actively, earnestly, and fervently cultivate mutual love at its highest level. Barclay observes, “Christian love is not an easy, sentimental reaction. It demands everything a man has got *of* mental and spiritual nerve and muscle and sinew. It means loving the unlovely and the unlovable; it means loving in spite *of* insult and injury; it means loving when love is not returned but is spurned.”

The reason Peter gives for earnestly practicing mutual love is “For love will cover a multitude of sins” (4:8). The source of this concept is Proverb 10:12 (see also Jas. 5:20). The Greek word translated “cover” means just that, “cover.” Covering sins does not mean condoning sin (Selwyn). Figuratively, it means to veil, conceal, and forgive. The primary emphasis here is probably forgiveness (Stibbs/Walls; Wiersbe). However, there is no doubt that there is also the idea of finding ways “to shelter the wrongdoer from exposure and condemnation” (Stibbs/Walls), of refusing “to deliberately expose the sins it encounters to the gaze of all” (Hiebert, p. 358). Love covers it in the sense that it does not spread it abroad (see Wiersbe).

Love does not condone sin; it may confront the sin. If people refuse to deal with their sin, the loving thing to do is confront them with it, and if necessary, with others (Mt. 18:15), but if sin is properly dealt with, the loving thing to do is cover it like Shem and Japheth, who threw a covering over their father’s shame (Gen. 9:20-23). Such love will promote unity and peace within the Christian community.

When love is present, some offenses are overlooked and forgotten. Love overlooks faults. It bears with foolishness and endures unkindness (Barclay). When love is lacking, “every word is viewed with suspicion, every action is liable to misunderstanding, and conflict abound—to Satan’s perverse delight” (Grudem).

When Alexander the Great became a world conqueror, he decided to have his portrait painted. The finest artist in the realm was called to produce the masterpiece. Arriving at the court, he was told that a full-faced pose rather than a profile was desired. This filled him with great distress, for one side of the general’s countenance was disfigured by a long, hideous scar, the result of a battle wound. After studying his subject for some time, the painter thought of a way to cover up this ugly blemish. He seated Alexander at a table; then, placing the general’s elbow on it, he asked him to cup his chin in his hand. As a final thoughtful touch, the artist skillfully arranged the fingers in such a way that they completely hid the scar. At last, fully satisfied with the effect, he went to work with his paint and brushes and produced a flattering likeness of his famous subject (*Our Daily Bread*, 6/30/73). Love covers blemishes.

Practice Hospitality A specific application of love is to “Be hospitable to one another without grumbling” (4:9). The Greek word translated “hospitable” means “lover of strangers.” They were to not only love one another (4:8) but also love believers from other places by showing them hospitality. However, the reciprocal pronoun “one another” implies (but does not demand) that hospitality with the local group was also included. Perhaps opening one’s home to the church meeting is included. If so, this is a natural transition to the exercise of gifts mentioned in the next several verses (Adams).

The Greek word translated “grumbling” means “murmuring, muttering.” Its presence here seems to indicate that the demands for hospitality were frequent. Hospitality can be burdensome (Selwyn) and costly. The temptation is to become irritated and resentful and then complain and murmur. The Greek term “murmuring” refers to repeated expressions of complaint, often spoken

to others with the result of stirring up rebellion. It is ultimately a complaint against God and His ordering of our circumstances (Grudem).

Peter urges believers to practice hospitality with a loving heart and cheerful spirit, with graciousness, not grumbling (Selwyn), with pleasure, not displeasure. Loving hospitality is to be practiced without complaining (Stibbs/Walls; Wiersbe; Adams).

Perform God Honoring Service

Serve One Another There is more to be done in light of the coming end of all things. Peter continues: “As each one has received a gift minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (4:10). Peter moves from mutual love to mutual service. Within the church, those with earnest love will use their spiritual gift to benefit others, not for self-advancement or to draw attention to themselves (Grudem). Every believer has received a spiritual gift. The Greek word translated “gift” comes from the same root as grace and denotes a favor bestowed, something graciously and freely given. All gifts are sovereignty bestowed upon believers “out of grace, not merit” (Grudem). A spiritual gift is a God-given ability to perform some function that benefits other believers. Possessing a gift is the only “call to ministry” mentioned in the New Testament (Hodges).

Believers are to use their gift to minister to others as a good steward of God’s grace given to them. Stewards are not owners; they are servants. A steward in the first century was someone, often a slave, to whom property or wealth was entrusted to be administered according to the direction of the owner. This responsibility was not given to him for his personal pleasure or enjoyment.

The Greek word translated “manifold” means “many-colored.” Spiritual gifts are not all alike. They come in a variety of colors. There are five lists of gifts in the New Testament (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:7, 12:28-30; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 4:10). It has been suggested that since the lists are different (no one gift is on every list; no list includes all the gifts) and two gifts are not on any list (see marriage and celibacy in 1 Cor. 7:7), that the lists are not exhaustive (Grudem). That may or may not be accurate, but it does seem that each gift has various types. People with the gift of evangelism do not all do evangelism the same way, or, for that matter, they do not all do the same kind of evangelism (public preaching, personal evangelism, etc.). A little girl watched her mother pour hot liquid into gelatin dessert molds of various shapes. She knew each serving would have its own unique pattern and expressed her wonder by saying, “Oh, Mother! It fits them all!” (*Our Daily Bread*, 5/11/92). Gifts fit all kinds of molds.

Whatever gift you have, you are to use. Remember, “It is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). So, make sure you serve others according to the spiritual gift God has given you. “To be nobody, but yourself, in a world that is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else, means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight” (E. E. Cummings, 1894-1962, quotes in *Glad to Be Me*, edited by Dov Peretz Elkins).

By Speaking The New Testament contains three catalogs of spiritual gifts: sign gifts, speaking gifts, and serving gifts. Peter mentions the latter two.

First, he says, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (4:11). Speaking includes all the speaking spiritual gifts such as prophecy, which apparently has since ceased, teaching, evangelism, and exhortation. The expression “the oracles of God” was used in classical Greek to denote the utterance of some deity. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it was used of “the word of the Lord” (for example, Isa. 5:24). In the New Testament, it refers to

the Old Testament (Rom. 3:2; Acts 7:38; Heb. 5:12). Those with a speaking gift are not to give their own opinion or propagate their own prejudice (Barclay). They are to speak so that they become God's mouthpiece, speaking God's message, not purveyors of their own "notions, but the transmitter of the utterances of God" (Selwyn)

Or by Doing Then, Peter says, "If anyone ministers let him do it as the ability which God supplies" (4:11). The Greek word translated "ministers" in 1 Peter 4:11 is the same as the word minister in 1 Peter 4:10, where it is used of all ministry of spiritual gifts. However, the contrast between speaking gifts and ministry gifts limits the statement to "doing." Thus, "ministries" include all non-speaking, doing (serving) gifts such as helps, showing mercy, giving, etc.

If you have a serving gift, perform it "as the ability God supplies." The Greek word rendered "supplies" originally meant "to lead a chorus" or "pay the expenses for training a chorus," then, generally, "to defray the expenses of something, to provide, to supply" (Selwyn). We expend energy and "God defrays the expenditure" (Hodges) by supplying the "ability, a Greek word which means "strength, power." The service is to be done "in humble dependence upon God (Selwyn), in the strength that God supplies (Barclay).

For God's Glory The purpose of all service is "that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (4:11a). Actually, this clause applies not only to all services but "all things." Everything the believer says and does is to be for God's glory (1 Cor. 10:31). The immediate purpose of the use of spiritual gifts is the edification of believers (1 Cor. 14), the ultimate end to glorify God (4:11). Only by being reconciled to God and rendering service to God "through Jesus Christ" can we truly glorify God (1:21; 2:5; 3:18).

Peter burst forth with a doxology: "to whom belong glory, that is, the majesty of deity and the dominion, that is, sovereign rule over all forever" (4:11b). The order of the words "strongly favors" the explanation that this doxology refers to Christ (Selwyn; see also Stibbs/Walls). Peter knew Christ as a man, but he wrote: "words of praise appropriate only to one who is also fully God" (Grudem). The word "forever" is the translation of a Greek expression, which means "unto the ages of the ages." Eternity will be a series of endless ages. "Amen" is the seal of approval on what has been said and does not mark the end of the body of the book (Selwyn). It simply expresses Peter's emotion at the moment.

In her book *Today's Good Word*, Ethel B. Sutton tells the story of a young British soldier who was blinded in battle. A trained musician, he later spent much of his time playing the piano for the wounded, who had been sent to a London hospital. Although he often heard the tramping of feet through the corridors as visitors came and went, he never let that distract him. He always put his best effort into his playing, hoping to comfort those depressed by their painful injuries. One day, when he paused to rest, he heard someone nearby heartily clapping his hands. Turning his sightless eyes in that direction, he asked with a smile, "Who are you?" The astonishing reply was, "I'm your King!" Without realizing it, the young man had been using his talent to entertain royalty, for the British monarch was visiting the wounded to cheer them up and strengthen their morale (*Our Daily Bread*, 7/8/75).

Summary: Realizing the impending end of the age as we know it should motivate us to pray, practice love, and perform God-honoring service.

Prophecy should not motivate us to withdraw. I once met a highly educated, well-informed fellow who was convinced that the end was near, the Russians were coming, and America was doomed. So, he was stockpiling food and planning to retreat to one of the less populated areas of

the U.S. Knowledge of the future, even if that knowledge is that all is coming to an end, should not motivate us to retreat or withdraw from life.

Prophecy should not motivate us to spend our last days in self-indulgent pleasure. The first thing Peter says is abandon self-indulgence and practice self-discipline (4:7). If the doctor told you that you have a terminal disease and you had 30 days to live, would you spend those 30 days “living it up,” or should you spend those 30 days “storing up” treasure in heaven.

Prophecy should motivate us to serve. The sum of this passage is the end of all things is at hand. Therefore, serve others to the glory of God. Such service should flow out of a sensible, self-controlled life of prayer and love.

A lady once asked John Wesley how he would spend the intervening time if he knew he would die at midnight the next day. He replied, “Why, madam, just as I intend to spend it now. I would preach this evening at Gloucester, and again at five tomorrow morning; after that, I would ride to Tewkesbury, preach in the afternoon, and meet the societies in the evening. I would then go to Martin’s house ... talk and pray with the family, as usual, retire myself to my room at 10 o’clock, commend myself to my Heavenly Father, lie down to rest, and wake up in glory.”

Once, while Francis of Assisi was hoeing his garden, he was asked, “What would you do if you suddenly learned that you were to die at sunset today?” He replied, “I would finish hoeing my garden.”

SUFFERING FOR CHRIST'S SAKE

All of us experience difficulties all the time. When that happens, we ask, “Why does this happen? Why does this happen to me?” There are times when you do right and things go wrong. You try to do what is right and live for Christ, yet suffer negative consequences. It is then that you think, “This is strange. I expect to suffer the consequences when I do something wrong, but not when I do something right. Why is this happening?”

What should believers' attitudes and actions be when they suffer for Christ's sake? The Apostle Peter, who personally suffered for Christ by being jailed, answers that question in his first epistle. First, Peter addresses Christians in ten or more major churches scattered through four provinces in Asia Minor. From the first, there had been *hostility* and even *violent opposition* in many places—sometimes opposition stirred up by unbelieving Jews (Acts 4:1-3; 5:17-18, 40-41; 7:57-60, and 8:1-3 in Jerusalem; 13:50-52 at Pisidian Antioch; 14:4-6 at Iconium; 4:19 at Lystra; 17:5-9 at Thessalonica; 17:13 at Berea; 18:12-17 at Corinth; 20:3 probably again at Corinth; 21:27-36 at Jerusalem); and sometimes *persecution* by local officials, whether for political purposes (Acts 12:1-3) or because of false accusation from Gentiles whose profits from sin were threatened (Acts 16:19-25 at Philippi, and Acts 19:23-20:1 at Ephesus; Grudem).

In a general letter to a spread-out group of churches, there were no doubt varying degrees of formal and informal persecution. Some passages regard persecution as a possibility (1:6-7; 2:12, 21; 3:14; 4:1-2, 14, 16), while others suggest that it was happening (2:15, 18-20; 3:9, 14, 16; 4:4, 17, 19; 5:9-10).

When people suffer for Christ, two issues always nag them. First, isn't it strange that children of God should suffer? If they know God and are doing His will, shouldn't they, of all people, be exempt from hardship? Secondly, what about the persecutors? They look like they are getting away with sin and injustice. Why are they not being punished? Peter answers both of these questions. He exhorts readers not to think it strange that they are suffering for Christ and, for that matter, not to be ashamed either (4:12-16). He explains what will happen to unbelievers and why believers suffer first (4:17-18). He then draws a conclusion. (4:18).

Don't Think It Strange

Don't Think It Strange With a tender tone, Peter addresses his readers. “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you” (4:12). For the second and last time in this epistle, Peter calls his readers beloved (2:11). They were recipients of God's matchless love. They belong to a fellowship whose members were to be knitted together by love (1:22; 2:17; 3:8) and Peter loves them and has heartfelt sympathy for them. They were truly beloved. In the midst of suffering, they need to know that if they respond properly, they will realize they are loved (Rom. 5:3-5).

These beloved believers were experiencing “fiery trial.” The Greek word translated “fiery” means the “process of burning.” The only other two times this word occurs in the New Testament is in Revelation 18:9, 18, where it is used for the burning of Babylon. Here, it is used figuratively to describe the severity of the experience these believers were undergoing. Their trial was like the experience of being exposed to fire. Fire destroys, but that is not Peter's point. The phrase “which

is to try you” (that is, to test, to prove) indicates that this is to be the purifying fire of the refiner’s furnace (1:6, 7; Prov. 27:21; Ps. 66:10; Rev. 3:18). Their trial is a refining process (Wiersbe).

These fiery trials consisted of suffering for Christ’s sake. Throughout this paragraph, Peter spoke of being a “partaker of Christ’s sufferings” (4:13), being reproached for the name of Christ (4:14), suffering “as a Christian” (4:16), and suffering “according to the will of God” (4:19).

The Greek word rendered “strange” in the expression “as though some strange thing happened to you” means “foreign or alien.” Suffering is not considered “foreign” (Hodges) to the Christian experience. Christ suffered! Jesus said the world hated Him and that the world would hate His followers (Jn. 15:18-20). “To suffer reproach for Christ’s sake is not a misfortune to be resented in self-pity but a privilege for which to thank God and to congratulate oneself (cf. Acts v. 41)” (Stibbs/Walls).

They were not to think these trials were strange, as though some strange thing had happened to them. The phrase “Do not think it strange” means “to surprise, to be astonished by strangeness.” Unbelievers were surprised that these believers were no longer running with them “in the same flood of dissipation” (4:4), but believers should not think it strange that these believers were “speaking evil” of them (4:4).

Rejoice Because of Reward Later Rather than thinking that suffering for Christ was a foreign experience, Peter says, “But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s suffering” (4:13). Instead of causing bewilderment, their suffering should prompt them to rejoice, not because they are suffering, but because they are suffering for Christ (Adams). The extent of their rejoicing depends on the extent of their suffering. Not all had been called to suffer to the same extent.

When I think of Christians who have suffered for Christ throughout history, I can’t help but wonder if we have any right to claim we suffer for Christ in America. Believers have been thrown to the lions, burned at the stake, and tortured and tormented for simply being identified as a followers of Christ. When I remember Christians who are suffering for Christ today in various parts of the world, I can’t help but think that we in America don’t know what it is to suffer for Christ. At the moment, there are places in the world where it is illegal, socially unacceptable, or politically unwise to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. You can be executed, jailed, fired, beaten, interrogated, ridiculed, and ostracized for nothing more than living for Christ. Americans do not suffer for Christ as other believers have in history or as other Christians are now in this world. Yet believers do suffer for Christ. The suffering is not as physically severe, but it is there and it can be painful. Some have been ostracized by their family and by their friends. Others have been fired (although that was not the stated reason) or frozen in a position without promotion. Ridicule is probably a daily occurrence somewhere in this land.

The purpose of rejoicing now is “that when His glory is revealed you may also be glad with exceeding joy” (4:13). If believers do not abide in Christ, they will be ashamed at the coming of Christ (1 Jn. 2:20), but if they abide in Christ and rejoice in suffering for Christ now, they will be glad with exceeding joy when Christ returns in glory (Mt. 5:11-12). To share in Christ’s suffering now is to be on the road to sharing in His glory later (Stibbs/Walls; Grudem). “The cross is the way to the crown” (Barclay).

Because of Blessing Now Believers suffering for Christ have every right to rejoice because they are being blessed. Peter says, “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rest upon you” (4:14). For the first time in this paragraph, Peter speaks specifically of suffering for Christ’s sake. Earlier in the epistle, he spoke of suffering for righteousness’ sake (3:14). Because these believers were living righteous lives in the name of Christ, unbelievers were speaking evil of them (4:4) and reproaching them (4:14). There is no

evidence of physical suffering, just verbal abuse. These verbal attacks consisted of slander and defamation of character (4:4). Calvin said there was more bitterness in such suffering than in the loss of goods or in the torments or agonies of the body. The believer who suffers reproach for Christ's sake is blessed.

The glory of God belongs to Christ (4:11) and rests on persecuted believers, as the *Shekinah* did on the Tabernacle and the Temple (Selwyn; Barclay; Wiersbe; Grudem). When the people stoned Stephen, they saw Jesus in heaven and experienced God's glory (Acts 7:54-60). This is the "joy unspeakable and full of glory" Peter wrote about in 1 Peter 1:7-8 (Wiersbe). The Spirit of God is with those reproached for Christ's name. This suggests that the Holy Spirit is present to strengthen the believer (Grudem).

Thus, Peter can say, "on their part, He is blasphemed, but on your part, He is glorified" (4:14). Unbelievers were slandering believers and blaspheming Christ. The believers, however, were glorifying Christ by rejoicing in their trials. They were manifesting His nature. The world believes the absence of suffering is glory. The Christian outlook is that suffering for Christ is glory (Wiersbe). Furthermore, God does not *replace* suffering with glory; He transforms suffering into glory. Jesus used giving birth as an illustration (Jn. 16:20-22). The same baby that gave her pain also gave her joy. The pain was *transformed* into joy by the birth of the baby. Paul's thorn in the flesh gave him power and glory (2 Cor. 12:7-10). The cross that gave Jesus shame and pain also brought power and glory (Wiersbe).

Believers can rejoice when they see God's purpose behind their difficulties. A small boy made a boat and put it in the lake. After a few minutes, it drifted beyond his reach. An older fellow answered his cry for help. Picking up some pebbles, his newfound friend began tossing them directly at his treasured craft. As the boy watched, all hope of retrieving his boat faded. Then he noticed that instead of hitting the tiny vessel, each stone fell beyond it, creating a wave that moved it toward the shore. By carefully aiming each stone, the older fellow was able to get the floating toy back within reach.

Don't Suffer for Sin Peter adds, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busy body in other people's matters" (4:15). Believers have the blessing of having the Spirit of Glory glorify Christ in their lives when they are suffering for Christ's sake, but this does not apply to all suffering (Grudem; Adams). It does not apply to suffering for sin's sake. It is manifesting the nature of Christ, not the sin nature, that brings blessing and glory.

Peter lists four sins for which a believer should never suffer. They are given in descending order of seriousness and are divided into two groups by the word "as." Murderers, thieves, and evildoers, those in the first group, are to be taken literally. Murder and stealing are specific crimes. Doing evil is a general term. In this context, it no doubt refers to any crime punishable by the government. Part of the purpose of government is to punish "evil-doers" (2:14).

Notice Peter does not consider it inconceivable that a believer might suffer for murder or theft (Hodges). A believer can commit murder! (David did), steal (Acts 5), and do evil. "The necessity to warn Christians against committing such crimes as these is some indication of the character of the social environment, and the previous history and habits of these converts to Christianity" (Stibbs/Walls, who go on to say that "such things could now be done by them no more." It would be more accurate to say, "These things *should* not be done anymore.").

The second "group" consists of one infraction: being a busybody in other people's matters. Because of its connection with crimes, some have considered this a punishable legal offense, but "as" differentiates this offense from the other and introduces a new category (Stibbs/Walls). Being a busybody is an unwarranted intrusion into other people's affairs. It is "meddling in affairs which

are not properly one's concern" (Grudem). Such a person is a social menace prompting irritation and provoking hostility.

Peter continues his instructions "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed" (4:16). Suffering as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a busybody brings shame. Suffering as a Christian should not. The Greek word "Christian" only occurs three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28; and here). It originated with non-Christians (11:26) and was said by Agrippa in scorn (26:28). Its use here implies that it was being employed in an unfriendly way (Stibbs/Walls). No one who is suffering because he or she is identified as a member of the "Christ party" should ever be ashamed.

In recording how the Christians were made Nero's scapegoats in 64 AD, Tacitus (*Annals* sv 44) refers to them as "a class of people loathed for their vices, who were commonly styled Christians after Christ, who was executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberius was emperor" (Hiebert, p. 272, fn. G 42).

Don't be Ashamed "but let him glorify God in this matter" (4:16). In other words, the experience of suffering is the grounds for praising God. Christ suffered for you (3:18). Praise God you can suffer for Christ.

Some difficulties are a part of life that are common to everyone. Some difficulties we bring on ourselves are because of our disobedience. Some difficulties come because we are following the Lord. Make sure that you are suffering as a Christian and not as a criminal.

Unbelievers Will Suffer More Later

God's Begins in His household Peter now explains ("for") "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God" (4:17a). This verse explains what was said, not just in 1 Peter 4:16, but all of 1 Peter 4:12-16. Peter's readers were experiencing severe discipline from God. Peter calls it a "fiery trial" (4:12), suffering (4:13, 16), and reproach (4:14). He now calls it judgment and says that believers should not think it strange that fiery trials are coming upon them because divine judgment begins within and goes out from the church (Grudem).

The Old Testament prophets repeatedly mentioned this order of divine dealings. God always begins with His own. "Therefore it shall come to pass when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, that He will say 'I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks'" (Isa. 10:12). "For behold, I begin to bring calamity on the city which is called by My name, and should you be utterly unpunished? You shall not be unpunished, for I will call for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth", says the Lord of hosts" (Jer. 25:29). "Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and being at My sanctuary. So they began with the elders who were before the temple" (Ezek. 9:6).

Unbelievers Will Suffer More Later Based on the fact that God always begins with His own, Peter asks two questions. The first is "and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God" (4:17b). The expression "who do not obey the gospel of God" refers to those who "knowingly reject" and "refuse to believe" the gospel (Stibbs/Walls). God's judgment is not limited to believers. Those who do not obey the command to believe in Christ will also be judged, but the clear implication is their judgment will be more severe. If the judgment (discipline) on believers is rough and tough, the judgment on unbelievers will surely be even harsher and harder. "If the sons are chastised, what have the most malicious slaves to expect?" (Augustine).

Secondly, Peter asks, “Now if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (4:18). This question is couched in the words of the Septuagint translation of Proverbs 11:31. “Scarcely” leaves no doubt as to whether the righteous one will be saved in the end. The Greek word means “with difficulty.” It describes the severity of the ordeal of the righteous. If a righteous man who knows God is doing His will is saved only through trials and tribulations, what will happen to those who do not know God and do not do His will? Both questions establish the same emphatic point: if believers suffer now, unbelievers will certainly suffer more later (see Grudem).

Commit Yourself to God

Commit Yourself to God Peter now draws a conclusion. “Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator” (4:19). The word “therefore” indicates this is a conclusion. This is the conclusion of the immediate section, but it also summarizes the basic message of the epistle, namely that if believers suffer for righteous sake, they may trust their souls to the Creator (Hodges). If you are suffering according to God’s will, that is, not because you did something wrong (4:15), but because you did something right (you were suffering for righteousness’ sake, for Christ’s sake—4:14), trust yourself to God by doing good in every area of your life. Once again, “salvation” (4:18) and “soul” (4:19) are brought into “proximity.” It is through suffering that the righteous realize the salvation of their souls (Hodges).

Throughout this epistle, Peter has exhorted believers to do good. They are to submit to government (2:11-17, esp. 2:15) and submit to their human masters (2:18-25, esp. 2:20). Wives are to submit to husbands who don’t know the Lord (3:1-6, esp. 3:6). All believers are to do good in all of life (3:8-12, esp. 3:11), especially when suffering for righteousness’ sake (3:13-4:6, esp. 3:17). Doing good, then, includes submission and service. It is doing what is right and helpful. This verse summarizes the basic message of the epistle. Believers are to commit their souls (1:9, 22) to God in doing good (2:15, 20; 3:6, 3:11, 3:17).

God can be Trusted One other word. The One to whom you are to commit yourself is described here as the “faithful Creator.” Only here in the New Testament is the noun “creator” used of God. God created the world and life. He knew when He did it would include the suffering of believers, but He is a faithful Creator. He is a reliable Creator who can be trusted. These sufferings did not come by chance. Behind these vicious activities is the wise will of the Creator Himself. If you commit your soul to the trustworthy Creator of everything, it will be safe. He will preserve it and save it so that it will survive death and appear in the world to come to His eternal glory. Since God is the Creator, He can do all things and all things are under His control (Adams). Therefore, as Job said, “But He knows the way that I take; *When* He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10).

The Greek word rendered “commit” was the one used by Jesus when He said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Lk. 23:46). It is a technical word for depositing money with a trusted friend. In ancient times, there were no banks and few safe places to deposit money. So, before a man went on a journey, he often left his money in the safe-keeping of a friend. Such trust was regarded as one of the most sacred trusts in life. The friend was bound by all honor and all religion to return the money intact (Barclay).

Herodotus (6: 86) tells the story of a Milesian who came to Sparta because he had heard of the strict honor of the Spartans. He trusted his money to a man named Glaucus and said that his sons

would reclaim the money and bring tokens that would establish their identity beyond doubt. Sometime later, the sons came. Glaucus treacherously said that he had no recollection of any money being entrusted to him and wished to think about it. They warned him that he must return the money, which he did. Soon after that, he died and all his family died with him. In the time of Herodotus, not a single member of his family was left alive because the gods were angry that he had even contemplated breaking the trust reposed in him. Even to think of evading such a trust was a mortal sin (Herodotus, cited by Barclay).

If such a trust is sacred to men, how much more is it sacred to God? The persecuted believer can trust the Lord. The Lord will not fail him.

God has not promised skies always blue,
Flowers-strewn pathways all our lives thru
God has not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.

God has not promised we shall not know
Toil and temptation trouble and woe
He has not promised we shall not bear
Many a burden, many a care.

God has not promised smooth roads and wide,
Swift, easy travel needing no guide;
Never a mountain, rocky and steep,
Never a river turbid and deep:

But God has promised strength for the day
Rest for the labor, light for the way,
Grace for the trials, help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.

Annie Johnson Flint

Summary: When you suffer for Christ, don't think it strange and don't be ashamed; just commit yourself to the Lord by doing what is right. Rejoice. Glorify God. He can be trusted to take care of you and He will eventually take care of those who hurt you. In the end, you will be glorified and glad (5:13) and they will be more severely judged and sad (4:17-18).

1. Suffering for Christ is not foreign to the Christian experience. Conformity to Christ includes reproach, suffering crucifixion, and glory. Rejoice.

2. Don't fret over the persecutors. God will judge them in due season.

3. Commit yourself to the Lord by doing what is right.

No one likes to be criticized, especially when the judgment is unjust and arises from wrong motives. The natural reaction is to retaliate. However, if a person is right, he doesn't have to worry about defending himself. And if he's wrong, he has no business trying. When Christians come under fire, they should just keep on doing what's right and not be concerned about what others say. What God thinks is all that really matters. Besides, time is too precious to waste in explanations. In the face of evil accusations, it is better to be doing good than to become defensive.

From the *Choice Gleanings Calendar* comes the story of a judge who a conceited lawyer had frequently ridiculed. When asked by a friend why he didn't rebuke his assailant, he replied, "In

our town lives a widow who has a dog. Whenever the moon shines, it goes outside and barks all night.” The magistrate shifted the conversation to another subject. Finally, someone asked, “But Judge, what about the dog and the moon?” “Oh,” he replied, “the moon went on shining—that’s all.”

The point made by that judge is captured in these words by Norman Macleod.

Some will hate you; some will love you
Some will flatter, some will slight
Cease from man, and look above you
Trust in God and do the right.

AN EXHORTATION TO THE ELDERS

If a pastor stood in the pulpit, pointed his finger at an individual or a small group of individuals, and preached to them, the people present would think it strange. Some might even be offended. In essence, that is exactly what Peter did in the first century. He wrote to a number of churches and at one point in his letter, he paused, pointed his finger at a small group in each church, and preached just at them. In 1 Peter 5:1-4, he leveled an exhortation at just the elders. Come to think of it, that is not all that unusual. Earlier in his letter, he singled out servants, wives, and husbands. Why not elders?

Why should everyone have to hear this? The elders need to be reminded of these things, but does everyone need to be reminded? Yes. Believers need to know about the function of leadership because they are told to submit to it and know what they are to submit. Elders are examples; therefore, all need to hear what Peter says to them.

Peter's exhortation to elders consists of three parts. He identifies the one communicating the exhortation and gives its content and consequences if followed.

The Communicator of the Exhortation

Before giving the exhortation itself, Peter identifies himself as the communicator of the message. He says, "The elders who are among you, I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed" (5:1). Peter identifies himself in three ways.

Fellow Elder First, he calls himself a fellow elder. This is significant in light of what he could have said about himself. Peter could have said, "I am an apostle, one of the original twelve apostles." Paul was an apostle, but he was chosen to be an apostle after Christ died. He said that he was "one born out of due time" (1 Cor 15:8). Peter could have proudly pointed to his status as one of the original apostles, or he could have said, "I am a leading apostle." There were twelve original apostles, but three of the twelve were in the inner circle, namely Peter, James, and John. No less than Paul himself called them pillars (Gal. 2:9). Peter could have claimed inside, intimate information. Or he could have said, "I am the chief apostle." Of all the apostles, he was the only one to whom was given the keys of the kingdom. He could have said, "I am the leader of the leaders." He didn't. He did not speak down to them as a superior to an inferior.

He simply says, "I am an elder, just like you." He did not come as one *over* them. He approached them as one *of* them. He did not come pointing a finger but as one putting his arm around them one by one. This designation expresses his modesty and sympathy toward the elders addressed (Selwyn). He is practicing what he preaches when he says later in the passage (5:3) not to lord it over others (Stibbs/Walls). He knew what they were experiencing firsthand. He knew from experience the difficulties of an elder. When you exhort someone, first identify with them.

The Greek word "elder" signifies one who is experienced and mature in the faith (Adams). Here, it refers to the office of elder within each local church.

Witness Second, Peter identifies himself as a witness of the sufferings of Christ. The gospels do not record that Peter was personally present at the crucifixion. Only John is specifically said to have been present. The word "sufferings" here is in the plural. The sufferings Peter refers to are no doubt of Christ's life, and maybe some are the sufferings of His death. He saw firsthand the

rejection of the Pharisees. He watched them reject Christ's preaching and His person. He experienced the desertion of the disciples. He observed the agony of Gethsemane. He lived through the arrest and the injustices heaped upon Him during His trial.

Why did Peter mention this? The sufferings of Christ are relevant to the hardship being endured by the readers (Selwyn; Grudem; Adams). The elders were under-shepherds. Peter tells the under-shepherds, "I saw the chief shepherd (5:4) suffer. I saw Him suffer ridicule, rejection, insult, injustice, denial, and desertion. I understand what it is like to be a shepherd from being one and watching the greatest one of all."

Partaker of the Glory Third, Peter indicates he will be a partaker of the glory that will follow. Believers who suffer now partake of glory later (Rom. 8:18). They who suffer now experience reigning later (2 Tim. 2:12). They who are cross-bearers on earth will be crown-wearers in the kingdom. Peter had denied the Lord, but he had repented and been restored and now says that he will share in the glory to be revealed. This demonstrates that restoration after a grievous sin is possible (Grudem).

Thus, the communicator of this exhortation is one experienced elder who knows the sufferings and sorrows of service and yet also knows the future glory. He does not approach them with authority but with experience and understanding.

The President of a large welding company could call all the welders together and say, "As President, I want you to do this job this way." Or he could change his blue pin-stripped suit and winged-tipped shoes for big overalls and say to the men, "I know what your job is like. I used to be a welder. As a fellow welder, permit me to share something with you."

The Content of the Exhortation

The content of the exhortation is "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers" (5:2). The Greek word translated "shepherd" means "to act as a shepherd, tend flocks." It is used figuratively of "to tend, shepherd, govern" (A S). The job is further described as "serving as overseers," a Greek word that means "to look upon," "observe," "take care of," "care for." The word refers to a superintendent, supervisor. It was used in Plato's ideal state of the function or ruler or guardian and always connotes administrative responsibility (Selwyn). Elders are to govern and guide, supervise, and superintend the church. Peter gives the elders the same command that the Lord gave him (Jn. 21:16; Stibbs/Walls; Grudem).

To describe how this responsibility is to be carried out, Peter employs three couplets—each containing a negative and a positive statement.

Right Mental Attitude The first is "not by constraint, but willingly" (5:2), that is, do not discharge your responsibility because you are forced to or because you are compelled to, but do it voluntarily, not as a pressed burden worker, but as a volunteer, not as a reluctant draftee, but willingly. God does not want elders to serve out of obligation or a sense of duty but as a willing leader (Adams). In other words, do it with the right mental attitude. Elders should serve because they want to, not because they have to (Wiersbe).

One day during the Civil War, General Lee sent a message to Stonewall Jackson. The message simply said that the Commander in Chief would like to see him for a moment the next time he rode toward headquarters. General Jackson received the message and immediately prepared to leave the following day. Rising early, he rode the eight miles to Lee's headquarters against a storm of wind and snow and arrived just as Lee finished breakfast. Much surprised, Lee inquired why Jackson

had come through such a storm. General Jackson replied, “But you said you wished to see me. General Lee’s slightest wish is a supreme command to me!”

Right Motive The second couplet describes how the elder tends the flock “not for dishonest gain, but eagerly” (5:2). Elders received remuneration, and it was possible to advise that right. The leader should perform his duties readily and eagerly, certainly not for money, especially not for money dishonestly gained. Elders should work with the right motive (Stibbs/Walls).

Peter is warning elders not to work as an elder for material gain. Elders are to work eagerly and zealously for the love of the Lord and His people, not for the love of personal gain (Adams). Elders are paid, but they are not to work for pay. They must not do it for the wages but for the work. Elders should be enthusiastic about ministry, not money (Adams).

Barclay says the Greek word “dishonest gain,” which he renders as “a shameful profit,” was a characteristic the Greeks loathed. He says that Theophrastus, the great Greek delineator of character, describes this kind of person as “the mean man is the man who never sets enough food before his guests, and who gives himself a double portion when carving the joint. He waters the wine; he only goes to the theatre when he can get a free ticket. He never has enough money to pay the fare and always borrows from his fellow passengers. When selling corn, he uses a measure in which the bottom is pushed up, and even then, he carefully levels the top. He counts the half radishes leftover from dinner in case the servants eat any. Rather than give a wedding present, he will leave home when a wedding is in the offing.”

Many years ago, a missionary earning \$500 a year was offered \$5100 to work for an American company. He said, “No.” The field representative offered him \$10,000. Again, he said, “No.” When the job was offered at \$15,000, the missionary again declined. The field rep wired New York. Headquarters said, “Get him at any price.” When told that, the missionary replied, “You offer me a big salary to do a little job. I have a small salary for doing a big job.

Elders are missionaries, not mercenaries.

The Right Manner In the last couplet, Peter says, “Nor as being Lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (5:3). The Greek word translated “entrusted” means “lot,” either that which is cast or drawn or that which is obtained by casting. It is used here of the sphere of care of the flock. It is the word from which comes the English word “clergy,” although that sense is not found before Tertullian (Selwyn).

Elders are not to be domineering lords, demanding compliance to their desires (Mt. 29:25-27; Mk. 10:42-44; 3 Jn. 9-10). For some men, prestige and power are more attractive than money. They love authority, even if it is exercised in a narrow sphere. Milton’s Satan thought it better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven. Shakespeare spoke about a proud man dressed in a little brief authority, playing such fantastic tricks before high heaven as would make the angels weep (Barclay).

Instead, the great characteristic of the shepherd is his “selfless care and his sacrificial love for the sheep” (Barclay). Elders should be models people will follow, “a pattern to be followed by the flock (Stibbs/Walls). They are not to be slave drivers who drive the flock but shepherds who lead the flock. As Athanasius said, “The life should command, and the tongue persuade” (Athanasius, cited by Hiebert, p. 287). In short, they are to have the right manner.

Two tourists in Israel saw a man driving sheep. With a stick in his hand, he beat the sheep as he ran them. One of the tourists said to the other, “I have always been told that Shepherds lead. Why is he driving the sheep?” His traveling companion suggested that they ask. When they did, the man replied, “Oh, you misunderstand, I’m not the shepherd. I’m the butcher.” Elders are not to be butchers who drive the sheep but shepherds who lead the sheep.

Leadership is not lordship. Don't elders have to exercise authority? Yes, but when they do, they are to speak with authority without being authoritarian. An elder's authority is his explanation of the Scripture and his example. Elders not only teach giving; they give. They not only preach witnessing; they witness (Adams). If he is an example of what he expounds, people will be much more likely to listen.

A lady on a mission field came to hear a missionary speak. As he was speaking, she slipped out of the meeting only to return a short time later and remain for the rest of the service. When asked later where she went, she replied: "I liked what I heard and I went to ask his neighbor if he practiced what he preached. The neighbor said, 'Yes,' so I returned for more."

"An example is worth a thousand arguments."

The Consequences of the Exhortation

Peter concludes his exhortation to elders with the consequences of obeying it. He says, "and when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away" (5:4). If elders perform the duties of an elder with the right attitude, motive, and manner, they will be rewarded.

Not in the Present but in the Future The reward for being a good elder is not in the present. It is in the future when the Chief Shepherd appears. "Jesus Christ is the *Good* Shepherd who died for the sheep (John 10:11), the *Great* Shepherd who lives for the sheep (Heb. 13:20-21), and the *Chief* Shepherd who comes for the sheep (1 Peter 5:4)" (Wiersbe). The chief shepherd, Jesus Christ, will reward under-shepherds when He returns.

In this life, work and winning are usually rewarded immediately. Work is rewarded with wages at the end of the week or the end of the month. Immediately after the World Series or the Super Bowl, the winner is rewarded with a trophy. Working as an elder is different. Elders are paid and praised, but that is not their reward. The real reward does not come until Christ comes. We labor by faith, believing that when He shall appear, we will be rewarded.

Not the Praise of Men but of God The reward is not the praise of men but of God. As Peter says, elders who perform their jobs well will receive a crown of glory. What is a crown of glory?

Christ was crowned with glory and honor. (Heb. 2:9). He suffered and entered into glory. (1 Pet. 1:11). Believers who are tried by fire will be found to the praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:7). Elders will be partakers of the glory that will be revealed (5:1). Service for Christ now entitles one to share in the glory of Christ later. The idea is that of reward for "victorious achievement" (Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls), and closely associated with it are "pride and honor and rejoicing which the achievement evokes" (Selwyn).

Men give crowns of praise. God gives crowns of glory. The elders' reward is not just the praise of men; it is the praise of God.

Not perishable; it is Eternal The elder's reward which they receive, not now but later and not by men but by God, will be eternal, not perishable. Peter says the crown of glory "does not fade away" (5:4). The Greek word translated "does not fade away" means "not made of amaranth," a flower which was supposed to never fade and so be eternal (1:4). The victor's crowns, as well as garlands worn on festal occasions, were made of leaves and flowers, which, of course, faded. In contrast, the "reward of the faithful and humble minister is that he will be given a share in the glory and joy of the Lord (Selwyn).

Unfortunately, some Christian leaders today are building personal empires. Others strive for the applause of men. Still others seek promotion in their denomination. All these will fade away (Wiersbe).

Men's rewards perish. Athletes, for example, labor long and hard to establish a record and be rewarded by men, but the records are soon broken and glory fades away. God's reward does not perish; it is eternal. As Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

Summary: An experienced elder exhorts elders to tend the flock with the right attitude, motive, and manner so that God can reward them in the future with an eternal crown of glory.

People tend to glamorize and glorify leaders. The President of the U.S. arrives on a private personal plane and rides in a limousine with an entourage and bodyguards. With pomp and ceremony, we celebrate his presence. To a lesser degree, we treat lesser leaders in the same vein. We view the top executive or the most successful leader in any field with awe and respect. So, many dream of being the leader.

However, leadership isn't the glitter, glamour, or glory most think it is. The daily grind is downright hard work. It can quickly become discouraging and even depressing. Ever-present problems are often enormous and beyond solutions. On a day-by-day basis, people only come to see the leader when there is a problem. Constant criticism cuts to the bone. No one can please all the people all the time. It's easy for a leader to ask, "Why am I doing this? Why should I continue?" There is the temptation to figure out how this position can benefit you and continue the wrong way for the wrong reason.

Spiritual leadership is beset with the same problems. All the problems, pressures, trials, and temptations that leaders face in other fields and elders face in their jobs. What should be the right way to go about the job of spiritual leadership and what is the motive?

The coin of your labor is an investment that will have eternal returns. You may not see the interest of your investment growing. You may not know the value or the worth of your total eternal assets, but they're there and better than anything you imagine. Wesley said, "The real value of a thing is the price it will bring in eternity." Osler spoke of medicine to his students, so the minister: "The practice of medicine is an art, not a trade; a calling, not a business; a calling in which your heart will be exercised equally with your head."

THE MESSAGE ALL NEED TO HEAR

Did you ever hear a sermon and feel left out? A message to men about being good husbands hardly applies to women. A word to wives doesn't fit men. An appeal to young people leaves older saints feeling "that doesn't apply to me." You could have a similar experience reading your Bible. In several books of the Bible, individual groups are addressed. Those passages do not necessarily apply to everyone. For example, in Titus 2, Paul addresses the older men and then, older women. He speaks to the young men, Titus himself, and slaves. Peter does something similar. He directs his remarks to servants, wives, husbands, and elders. Then he says that he wants to say something to all of you (5:5). Thus, immediately after exhorting elders (5:1-4), Peter exhorts everyone else (5:5-9). The message of 1 Peter 5:5-9 applies to every believer. No one should feel left out of this one.

That sounds simple, but it is more complicated than it seems. What message applies to everyone? Not even a message on salvation applies to all—some are already saved. A sermon on loneliness, joy, or service does not fit everyone because some are joyful serving and are not lonely. This message appropriately applies to every individual.

Submit Yourself to Others

Submit to Elders After addressing elders, Peter says, "Likewise you younger people submit yourselves to your elders" (5:5a). As in 1 Peter 3:7, the word "likewise" introduces another "similar exhortation" (Stibbs/Walls; see also Grudem). This apparently clear statement may not be as plain as it appears. Who are the elders? Who are the younger people? In verse 1, Peter addresses "the elders," a Greek word that can be used of an older person (Lk. 15:25) or can be used in the official sense of an officer of the church (1 Tim. 3:1). In 1 Peter 5:1-4, the word "elders" is used of an officer of the church. Does that mean it is used as an officer in verse 5? Some have argued that the elder in 1 Peter 5:5 is an older person (Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls) and that Peter is exhorting young men to respect and submit to older men (Adams; Wiersbe), but the connection of verse 5 with verse 1-4 makes the other interpretation more natural. Peter urges younger people to submit to the church elders (Grudem).

If that is the case, why are only the younger people told to submit to the elders? Who are the younger people? To us, younger people are teenagers, but that was not the case in the New Testament. Paul divided the congregation into older and younger (Titus 2:1-8). The word both Paul and Peter use for "younger" was used in the ancient world for someone 49 years old or younger. When Paul told Timothy to "Let no one despise your youth," Timothy was probably about 39 years old. So, being younger here does not mean being a teenager; it applies to virtually all adults (Grudem). Although Peter focuses on "the younger," he quickly moves to all (5:5b). All believers are to submit to the elders (Heb. 13:17), especially the younger ones.

Submit to Each Other Peter adds, "Yet all of you be submissive to one another" (5:5b). The inclusive phrase "all of you" draws together the younger and the older, the shepherds and the sheep. Not only are all believers to submit to the elders, but all believers are also to submit to one another. Peter has pressed this point here repeatedly throughout his epistle (2:13, 18; 3:1, 5). The Greek word "submit yourselves" might be rendered "subordinate yourselves." It is a word that frequently occurs in the epistles. Believers must learn to subordinate their wishes, not only to God

but also to others within the Christian community and even to secular authorities “for Christ’s sake” (Rom. 13:1-5; 1 Pet. 2:13). Wives are to subordinate themselves to their husbands (Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:22; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet 3:1; see also 1 Cor. 14:34), servants to their masters (Titus 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18), younger people to those who are older (1 Pet. 5:5). The Corinthians are urged to subordinate themselves to those leaders among them who have proved themselves men of Christian quality (1 Cor. 16:16), and in Ephesians 5:21, the instruction is to subordinate ourselves to “one another.”

As we grow, we learn to submit. When a child is born, there is only one authority he or she recognizes—mother. Then dawns the day when the baby says “dada.” What a day! Daddy is finally recognized, and the child begins to understand that there is another authority besides the mother. The child then acknowledges older brothers and sisters, aunts, and uncles. With the first day of school comes recognition of the teacher’s authority. Later, the child discovers that there is a policeman, a mayor, and a governor, and that child submits to doctors, dentists, and mechanics—different people in various areas of life. When children are born into the Kingdom of God, they need one person to mother them, but soon they need more authorities. God wants multiplicities of submission and mutual submission within the church. One person is in submission to another and in a different circumstance, the second submits to the first.

Humble Yourself to God

Clothe Yourself with Humility Peter continues, “and be clothed with humility” (5:5c). There is no doubt that the humility Peter has in mind is expressed to one another, but it is basically toward God (5:6). So, in a sense, verse 5 is teaching believers to submit to each other and humble themselves before God.

Paul describes humility in Philippians 2:3-4, where he says, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition (that is, self-seeking) or conceit (that is, envy, conceit), but in lowliness of mind (that is, humility), let each esteem others better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3). Humility is defined as considering another better than oneself. In those cases where someone is superior, we ought to regard them as better without envy. In cases where someone is not necessarily superior, humility considers the other person’s needs ahead of its own. Paul goes on to say, “Let each of you look out not only for his interests but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4). Humility does not mean never looking out for one’s interest. It means being concerned for the interests of others. As Wiersbe says, “Humility is not demeaning ourselves and thinking poorly of ourselves. It is simply not thinking of ourselves at all!

Humility is the opposition of self-exaltation. It is an attitude of mind willing to assume a low position to serve others. Adams says humility involves recognizing one’s true place in life (“neither thinking nor pretending to be more than one is”) and putting other’s interests first. Grudem concurs, “The term *humility* speaks of an attitude which puts others first, which thinks of the desires, needs, and ideas of others as more worthy of attention than one’s own.”

Andrew Murray said, “The humble man feels no jealousy or envy. He can praise God when others are preferred and blessed before him. He can bear to hear others praised while he is forgotten because ... he has received the spirit of Jesus, who pleased not Himself, and who sought not His own honor. Therefore, in putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, he has put on the heart of compassion, kindness, meekness, longsuffering, and humility.” Humble people are not conscious of being humble.” As Dr. M. R. DeHaan used to say, “Humility is something we should constantly pray for, yet never thank God that we have.”

Believers are to clothe themselves with humility. The Greek word translated “clothed” comes from a Greek root which means “knot.” Hence, it was used of a garment that was tied over another one especially, of an apron worn by slaves (Barclay). The picture is that of putting on the apron of humility to serve others. Just as Jesus put on a towel to become a servant, believers are to put on the apron of service to others.

Because God Exalts the Humble The reason you should clothe yourself with humility is “For God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (5:5). This is a quotation or, at least, an allusion to Proverbs 3:34 (see also Jas. 4:6). Proud individuals are self-centered, self-sufficient, and self-serving. They regard themselves as the standard of excellence and disdain those who fall short of the standard. They display an attitude of haughty superiority toward others. They think of themselves as more important than anyone else, trust in themselves, and seek their glory (Grudem). God resists such people. The Greek word rendered “resist” means “to rage in a battle against.” God persistently sets Himself against the proud. He hates pride (Prov. 6:16-17; 8:13). Pride turned Lucifer into Satan (1 Tim. 3:6). God gives grace to the humble. Humble individuals gladly acknowledge their need for and dependence on God. Instead of feeling self-sufficient, they rest in God’s sufficiency. God constantly bestows His unmerited, undeserved favor upon the humble. They receive a richer supply of grace than they would otherwise (Selwyn).

Dwight L. Moody said, “A man can counterfeit love, he can counterfeit faith, he can counterfeit hope, and all the other graces, but it is very difficult to counterfeit humility. You soon detect mock humility. They have a saying among the Arabs that as the tares and the wheat grow, they come to show which God has blessed. The ears that God has blessed bow their heads and acknowledge every grain. The more fruitful they are, the lower their heads are bowed. The tares, on the other hand, lift their heads erect, high above the wheat, but they are only fruitful of evil. The lesson is clear: If we only get down low enough, God will use us to His glory” (*Our Daily Bread*, 12/1/58).

Peter concludes, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God” (5:6). Humility is primarily toward God. To humble oneself “under the mighty hand of God” is to do so, by realizing and recognizing His controlling providence. In the Old Testament, this expression was repeatedly said of God’s ability to deliver His people and judge His enemies (Ex. 3:20; 7:5; Deut. 5:15; 1 Kings 8:42).

The purpose of humbling oneself to God’s mighty hand is “that he may exalt you in due time” (5:6). Jesus taught that those who humbled themselves would be exalted (Mt. 23:12; Lk. 14:11). The nature of the exaltation is not specified. It may be increased spiritual blessing, a deeper fellowship with the Lord, increased responsibility, honor, and reward (Grudem).

The exaltation will come in due time, that is, at the proper time, a propitious season. The phrase is general and may include at least partial fulfillment in this life, but complete fulfillment awaits the return of the Lord (Selwyn; Hiebert, p. 234).

Casting All Care on Him Part of this humbling yourself before God is “casting all your care upon Him for He cares for you.” (5:7). The first part of this verse is a quotation and interpretation of Palms 55:22. “Casting” depicts a deliberate, decisive act. It also suggests effort (Stibbs/Walls). The Greek word translated “care” means “care, worry, anxiety.” Accurately, it comes from a verbal root that means “divide.” Worry is undue concern, disturbs our peace, distracts and divides the mind, and discourages us. It prevents wholehearted devotion. We cannot get rid of the trouble that comes our way, but we can throw off the anxiety it provokes (Stibbs/Walls). We can throw it on the Lord. God tells us to burden Him with whatever burdens us. Throwing our care upon the Lord is because He cares for us. Throwing our cares and concerns on the Lord is not misplaced

confidence. He genuinely cares about what happens and has the mighty hand to do something about it.

Peter knew firsthand about God's concern for Him. Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law (Mk. 1:29-31), gave him a great catch of fish (Lk. 5:1-11), helped him pay his Temple tax (Mt. 17:24-27), enabled him to walk on water (Mt. 14:22-33), repaired the damage he did to the ear of Malchus (Lk. 22:50-51; Jn. 18:10-11), and even delivered Peter from prison (Acts 12).

On the other hand, God does not always remove the problem. If He does not remove the problem, He has a purpose for allowing the trouble to remain. He works *for* us and *in* us (Wiersbe). God shows His care for us by 1) giving us wisdom (Jas. 1:5), 2) giving us the strength to do what we must do (Phil. 4:13), 3) giving us the courage to face our cares honestly and not run away (Isa. 41:10), and 4) giving us peace (Isa. 26:3; Phil. 4:6-7).

Cast your care on the One who cares. He will either solve the problem or take off the pressure. Masterman well observes, "It is the belief that God cares that marks off Christianity from all other religions, which under all varieties of form are occupied with the task of making God care, of awakening by sacrifice or prayer or act the slumbering interest of the Deity. But amid the crushing burdens or the burning trials that often befall the saints, it is the cross and resurrection of Christ that remains the unshakeable demonstration of God's love and concern (Masterman, Hiebert, p. 295).

A hymn on this theme, "Does Jesus Care?" by Frank E. Graeff, has brought comfort to thousands. In his book *101 More Hymn Stories*, Kenneth Osbeck wrote, "Mr. Graeff was a pastor in the Philadelphia area. Throughout the district, he was known as 'the sunshine minister.' C. Austin Miles, author of the popular hymn, 'In the Garden', paid this tribute to Mr. Graeff: 'He is a spiritual optimist, a great friend of children; his bright sun-shining disposition attracts him not only to children but to all with whom he comes in contact. He has a holy magnetism and a childlike faith.'

"In spite of his cheery disposition and winsome personality, Graeff was often called upon to go through severe testing experiences. While enduring one such test—he faced severe despondency, doubt, and physical agony—Graeff turned to the Scriptures for solace and strength. The words of 1 Peter 5:7, 'He cares for you,' spoke deeply to him, and the hymn 'Does Jesus Care?' was born" (*Our Daily Bread*, 4/13/86).

O yes, He cares— I know He cares
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are dreary, the long nights weary,
I know my Savior cares.

Graeff

In the stock market crash of 1929, J. C. Penney's dry goods business was financially secure, but he had made some unwise personal commitments that troubled him deeply. A combination of circumstances had so completely broken him physically and mentally that he had to be hospitalized. He was so overwhelmed with the fear of death that one night, in his room, Mr. Penney wrote farewell letters to his wife and son, for he did not expect to live through the night. The next morning, he awakened and heard singing in the hospital chapel near his room. He pulled himself together and slipped into the chapel as the congregation began to sing, "God will take care of you."

"Suddenly, something happened," J. C. Penney recalled many years later. "I can't explain it. I can only call it a miracle. I felt as if I had been instantly lifted out of the darkness of a dungeon

into warm, brilliant sunlight. I felt as if I had been transported from hell to paradise. I felt the power of God as I had never felt it before. I am now 71, and my life has been worry-free since that glorious moment in the chapel when I really heard, “God will take care of you.”

Resist the Devil

Be Clear-Headed and Alert Peter’s next admonition deals with the devil. He commands, “Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour” (5:8). Believers must be sober. The meaning of the Greek word rendered “sober” is, of course, “not drunk,” but this word is used figuratively to mean “moral alertness.” In the figurative sense, it means “to be calm, circumspect” (A-S), “to be clear-headed, self-controlled, well balanced” (Gingrich/Dankarp, p. 132; see 1:13; 4:7). Believers must also be vigilant, a Greek word that means “be awake, to watch.” Believers must be level-headed and wide awake. “The opposite of this sober watchfulness is a kind of spiritual drowsiness in which one sees and responds to situations no differently than unbelievers, and God’s perspective on each event is seldom if ever considered” (Grudem). They must be awake and alert because of the danger Satan poses. The Greek word “Satan” means “adversary” and the word “devil” means “accuser, slander.” Satan appears before God as an accuser of the brethren (Job 1:6; Rev. 12:10).

The devil roams around on the earth with restless energy (Job 1:7) like a roaring lion. The roar indicates a ravenous hunger. Indeed, this hungry lion seeks and searches for prey he may devour, a Greek word that means “drink down,” swallow, and consume (“gulp down”). The lion is intent on not just harassing or injuring but on destroying its victim. “A prowling lion attacks suddenly, viciously, and often when its unsuspecting victim is engaged in routine activities” (Grudem).

A missionary in Africa says that three beasts lie in wait for their prey: the lion, the leopard, and the hyena. The hyena does not devour but attacks only the vitals and quickly leaves after partaking of a few meager mouthfuls. The leopard desires only its victim’s blood. The lion devours its helpless victim completely, leaving not a single portion! (*Our Daily Bread*, 8/26/67).

Some blame Satan for things he does not do. They blame him for their “headaches, flat tires, and high rent” (Wiersbe). Satan’s purpose is to destroy believers by killing their faith (Hiebert). He is an active and aggressive foe out to destroy the believer’s faith and testimony (Stibbs/Walls). He is out to see who he can ruin (Barclay).

Resist the Devil Peter continues, “Resist him, steadfast in the faith” (5:9a). Not only must believers be awake, calm, clearheaded, and alert, but they must also resist Satan. The Greek word rendered “resist” means “to stand against,” hence, “to withstand, oppose, resist.” It was a military metaphor. The Greek word translated “steadfast” describes something hard, firm, solid, like a rock. When Satan approaches and attacks, it will be “in regards to the faith.” In their inner attitude of faith, believers must stand firm (Selwyn), unyielding, and unbending like granite.

The Bible commands believers to flee from sin (1 Cor. 6:18; 10:14; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22), but it never suggests fleeing from Satan. When he comes, the believer must stand (Eph. 6:10-18) and resist. James reminds us that if we resist the devil, he will flee. (Jas. 4:7). Jesus resisted the Devil with the Word of God (Mt. 4:1-11; see Eph. 6:17-18).

Peter encourages believers to resist the devil “knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (5:9b). Experiences of suffering and Satan’s assault of faith that accompanies suffering are common to believers everywhere (1 Cor. 10:13). If you think your situation is unique, you open the door to self-pity and despair (Adams). Adams makes the insightful comment, “There is nothing in the passage about rebuking the devil or about employing

any other ritualistic form (“pleading the blood”) in resisting the devil. Resistance grows out of strong Christian living! In James 4:7, as well as here, resistance is closely connected with humble submission to and reliance upon God.” “Before we can stand before Satan, we must bow before God. Peter resisted the Lord and ended up submitting to Satan!” (Wiersbe). When we are humble, we have Satan as an adversary, but when we are proud, we have God as an adversary.

Summary: All believers everywhere, at all times, should humble themselves before God, submit to each other, and resist the devil.

Suppose believers do not humble themselves before God and resist the devil. In that case, they will be destroyed by the devil (5:8). If believers do not submit to one another and love each other, they will devour each other (Gal 5:15). Thus, the survival of the individual and the (unity) group depends on compliance with these commands.

A few years ago, at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash. They all started out at the gun, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run the race to the finish and win. All that is, except one little boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over several times, and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. Then they all turned around and went back ... every one of them. One little girl with Down’s syndrome bent down, kissed him, and said, “This will make it better.” Then all nine linked arms and walked together to the finish line (and “they” are called retarded). Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story. Why? Because deep down, we know this one thing: what matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What matters in this life is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course.

“A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle.”

How does he do that? Paul says, “We are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11). Satan tempts believers to sin (1 Cor 7:5). He tempts us to pride (1 Tim. 3:6), to be hypocritical (Acts 5:1-4), to lie (Acts 5:3, 5), to sexual immorality (1 Cor. 7:5), etc. That is only the beginning. In the Scripture, Satan is pictured as an angel of light seeking to deceive (2 Cor. 11:14; see also 2 Tim. 4:1.), as a snake, soliciting doubt as well as disobedience (Gen. 3:1-6), and as a roaring lion, seeking to destroy (1 Pet. 5:8).

Genesis 3 illustrates just how Satan works. He attempts to get believers to doubt the Word of God (Gen. 3:1), distrust the goodness of God (Gen. 3:2-5), and disobey the will of God (Gen. 3:6). The disobedience can be in the form of pride, lying, immorality, etc.

The danger, then, is that believers will listen to the devil and replace God in their lives.

CLOSING COMMENTS WITH A COLOSSAL CONCEPT

Have you ever worked for a harsh boss? Have you ever been married to a difficult husband? Have you ever been threatened, slandered, defamed, and spoken evil against? Have you ever had any of those things happen to you and you did not handle it correctly? Have you ever had any of those things happen to you and you wondered, “Where is God in all of this?” or “What does God want of me in this situation?”

I have just described something that happened not last week, last month, or last year but in the first century. In his first epistle, Peter speaks about a harsh boss (2:18), a difficult husband (3:1), being threatened (3:14), being defamed (3:16), and being spoken evil against (4:4). He ends the letter with instructions on how to handle all of this, even if you did not do it right, and he also explains what God desires in those situations.

On numerous occasions, I have attended a long meeting, when finally it was announced that someone would deliver a few closing comments and the meeting would be dismissed. Most of the time, those closing comments are insignificant. By the time they are given, people are tired and just want to go home, so they yawn through them. All the important issues have been discussed by the end of the meeting. Many have a similar attitude toward the closing remarks of the epistles of the New Testament. All the significant information has been delivered by the time one gets to the last few sentences. We often skip the verses at the very end.

On the other hand, all Scripture is inspired and profitable. Concluding remarks are there for a purpose. Besides, in some cases, colossal concepts are in the closing comments. First Peter is an example. First Peter 5:10-14 are the final verses of the letter. They contain a powerful point we dare not miss.

The Closing Promise: God Will Give Grace

The Promise Peter closes with, “But may the God of all grace who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus after you have suffered a while perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you” (5:10). The New King James translation follows the *Textus Receptus*, rendering this verse as a prayer/wish. The majority of the manuscripts, however, contain all future verbs, not optatives (Stibbs/Walls). Thus, this is a promise, not just a prayer. It is not that God may; it is that He will. The word “but” indicates that this promise is connected to what precedes. The connection may be that Satan attacks all believers (5:9), but God has called us to glory and, even though we suffer for a while, God will give us the grace to perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle us (Grudem).

God will perform the promise because He is the God of all grace, the only time He is so designated in the New Testament. This phrase characterizes God as the source of all undeserved favors. His grace is “sufficient for every occasion and need” (Selwyn). It “covers every need” (Stibbs/Walls). Peter has already mentioned that believers have tasted that the Lord is gracious (2:3) and that His grace is “manifold” (4:10). God gives more grace (Jas. 4:6). He gives grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16). He gives grace to the humble (5:5). The God who will perform the promise because He called us to His eternal glory by (Greek: “in”) Christ Jesus. Peter has repeatedly referred to glory (1:7; 5:1, 4; see also 4:11, 13). God called us *through* the gospel “for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:13-14).

Once in Christ, believers are invited *through* suffering to glory. Like Christ, we must bear the cross before we wear the crown. “If we depend on God’s grace when we suffer, that suffering will result in glory” (Wiersbe). “For the Lord God *is* a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good *thing* will He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Ps. 84:11). The degree of suffering determines the degree of glory.

The suffering now is for a “little while” (1:6), a “short time” (Adams). The expression “suffered a while” is intentionally vague in the amount of time it implies, allowing for this present life or later (Grudem). Even the greatest suffering now (which is brief compared to eternity) is not worthy of being compared to the eternal glory later (Rom. 8:18).

This gracious God who has called us to glory will perform four works in us as we obey Him (5:5-9). In the Greek text, the word “He” appears empathically before these four works, indicating “God’s own active intervention and personal presence” (Selwyn). The emphasis is on the direct personal character of God’s ministry to His people (Stibbs/Walls).

God will perfect us, a Greek word that means “to fit, equip, complete.” It was used for mending broken nets, setting broken bones, and even outfitting a ship for a voyage (Eph. 4:12; Gal. 6:1). It has been rendered “make whole” here with the suggestion that the idea is to reestablish rather than perfect (Selwyn) or restore “with respect to any resource or ability which they have lost through this suffering” (Grudem; see Barclay). It has also been taken to mean “equip,” that is, by His Word and Spirit with wisdom, direction, and insight (Adams). The Word equips believers (see 2 Tim. 3:16-17, where “thoroughly furnished” means “fully equipped”).

God will also establish us. The Greek word rendered “establish” means “to fix, set fast, make fast” and is used figuratively to mean “to confirm, establish.” God makes believers “stable” (Selwyn), “steadfast” (Stibbs/Walls). In his second epistle, Peter says that they were “established in the present truth” (2 Pet. 1:12). “The believer who is established will not be moved by persecution or led away by false doctrine (3:17)” (Wiersbe).

God will strengthen us. God gives believers the strength to “meet the demands of life” (Wiersbe).

God will settle us, a Greek word meaning to lay a foundation under us to give us a firm basis (see Eph. 3:17, where this word is rendered “grounded”). He confirms our faith (Adams).

The sequence suggests that God restores/equips, makes us stable/steadfast, gives strength. Then we are settled/grounded. Hiebert says this is not “redundant rhetoric” “God will supply believers with the needed support so that they will not topple and fall, impart the needed strength so they will not collapse, and set them upon an immovable foundation so that they will not be swept away” (Hiebert, p. 301).

The Doxology Contemplating what God will do, Peter explains, “**To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen**” (5:11). This is a slightly abbreviated form of the doxology found in 1 Peter 4:11. The Greek word translated “dominion” means “strength power, might.” In the New Testament, it is only used of God. Realizing God has called us to glory and will work to prepare us for glory (5:9) provokes Peter to praise God for His glory and power forever (5:11). This glory and power belong to God now and for eternity (Stibbs/Walls). “Overwhelmed by what he has written, he breaks forth into doxology” (Adams).

In his commentary on 1 Peter, Barclay writes, “Sir Edward Elgar once listened to a young girl singing one of the solos from one of his own works. She had a voice of exceptional purity and clarity and range, a voice like that of a boy soprano. She had an almost perfect technique that made light of the technical difficulties of the solo. When she had finished singing, Sir Edward said softly, ‘She will be really great when something happens to break her heart.’ Barrie tells of how his mother

lost her favorite son, and then he says, ‘That is where my mother got her soft eyes, and that is why other mothers ran to her when they had lost a child. Suffering had done something for her that an easy way could never have done.’ Suffering is meant by God to add the grace notes to life.”

A lady with a very fine voice took lessons for years from one of the country’s outstanding teachers. While she sang with tonal perfection, she never seemed to move her audience. There was always something cold and mechanical about her presentation. One day, her teacher spoke very frankly to her: “My dear,” he said, “I have taught you all I know, Yet you lack one thing which I cannot supply. Something will have to come into your life that will break your heart and make you sure—only then will you be able to sing with the necessary feeling and understanding!”

The Concluding Greetings: Greet with a Loving Kiss

Silvanus Following the format of an ancient letter, Peter concludes with personal greetings and a benediction. First, he says, “By Silvanus our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand” (5:12). Peter’s concluding remarks pose several questions.

Who was Silvanus? He is usually identified with Silas of Acts (Lightfoot; Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls; Grudem; Barclay), a co-worker of Paul on the second missionary journey (Acts 15:22; 2 Cor. 1:29; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1). Peter definitely knew Silas (Acts 15), but it has been argued that the connection between Silvanus here and Silas in Acts is conjecture without proof. Silvanus was a common name (Hodges).

What did Silvanus do? It has been suggested that “the position of ‘to you’ and the use of the definite article suggest that Silvanus was well known to Peter’s intended readers and that Peter is referring to his faithful ministry among them” (Stibbs/Walls). It is widely believed that Silvanus was the bearer of the letter (Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls; Adams). The fact that there is no greeting from him, but there is one from Mark (5:13), supports that theory. Peter says that he wrote *through* (see “by”) Silvanus. Silvanus then was the amanuensis (Adams), that is, the stenographer, “draftsman” (Selwyn), scribe” (Stibbs/Walls), “secretary” (Grudem).

What Peter dictated to him is called “exhorting and testifying.” First Peter is a hortatory letter. There are 34 imperatives in it. It is not a doctrinal treatise but a powerful appeal to believers to love, growth, submission, service, etc.

This exhortation is also Peter’s witness to the grace of God. Trials might have caused them to doubt. Peter urges them to continue in the faith (5:9), assuring them that they are in the grace of God, even though they are experiencing trials. They just need to remain in God’s grace. The grace they had experienced in their conversion in their Christian life was not a “delusion, as they were tempted to suppose by their troubles, but the genuine grace of God” (Bennett, quoted by Selwyn). “The entire Christian life is one of grace—God’s daily bestowal of blessings, strength, help, forgiveness, and fellowship with Himself, all of which we need, none of which we ever deserve” (Grudem).

Those in Babylon Peter then sends greetings: “She who is in Babylon elect together with you, greets you and so does Mark my son” (5:13-14). Again, these statements pose questions. Who is the lady from Babylon? While “she” could refer to a literal lady (Hodges suggests Peter’s wife; see Stibbs/Walls), that is not likely. Most take it figuratively to mean a local church where Peter was at the time he wrote this letter (Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls; Grudem). Peter begins by calling his readers “pilgrims of the Dispersion” (1:1). He uses the same imagery here. When the Jews were dispersed, Babylon was the center of world power and opposition to God’s people. So now, Rome,

here called “Babylon” (see below), is the center of the world power in Peter’s day (Grudem). Also, Peter began by calling his readers “elect” (1:2) and now says that they are “elect together” with the church in Rome. Thus, the church in Rome sends greetings to the recipients of this letter.

Babylon has been interpreted literally (as either the famous city on the Euphrates or a town in Egypt) and figuratively as Rome (Hodges; Stibbs/Walls; Grudem; Barclay). Tradition favors the figurative view. Rome was the universal interpretation both in the East and West until the Reformation (Selwyn, but McBirnie says the tradition of the Eastern churches is united that Peter went to Babylon from where he wrote his first epistle, McBirnie, pp. 62-63). Only since the Reformation have some preferred to take it literally. Rome, as Babylon, does fit the image of believers being of the dispersion (1:1).

She, who is in Babylon, refers to the church in Rome, where Peter resided when he wrote this letter (Selwyn). Those at Rome were elect, as were those to whom Peter wrote (1:1; 2:10).

Mark Who was John Mark? Again, some have taken “my son” literally and concluded that John Mark was Peter’s son (Hodges). Tradition, however, closely connects Peter with John Mark, the author of the second Gospel, during the later years of Peter’s life (Papias; so, Selwyn; Stibbs/Walls; Grudem; Barclay). According to that view, “son” is used here figuratively, as a “natural expression of affection between Apostle and pupil” (Selwyn) or a “close associate and assistant” (Grudem). Other possibilities are that Peter either led John Mark to Christ or he was like a stepfather to him.

Peter instructs those to whom he wrote to “greet one another with a kiss of love” (5:14). What is a kiss of love? Paul calls this a holy kiss (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26). Thus, this expression has no romantic overtones (Grudem). It was men kissing men and women kissing women on the cheek. The practice did not originate with Christians. It was a common form of greeting among friends (Lk. 7:45), as common as shaking hands today. “It was a standard form of greeting or farewell in that part of the world at that time, just as it is in many Latin countries today” (Wiersbe), but a “holy hug” that is a genuine expression of love is closer to the ancient practice than a handshake. “It is much harder to get mad at someone you have just hugged or kissed, and it is much easier to feel accepted in a fellowship which has given such a warm welcome!” (Grudem).

At the end of their first date, a young man in a bygone era took his favorite girl home. He decided to try for that important first kiss. With an air of confidence, he leaned his hand against the wall, smiled, and said, “How about a good night kiss?”

“Are you crazy?” she said. “My parents will see us!”

“Oh, come on! Who’s gonna see us at this hour?”

“No, please. Can you imagine if we get caught?”

“Come on, they’re all sleeping!”

“No way. It’s too risky!”

“Please, please, please. I like you so much.”

“No, no, no. I like you too, but I just can’t!”

“Oh yes, you can. Please?”

“No, no. I just can’t.”

“Pleeeeeease?...”

Then to their surprise, the porch light went on, the door opened, and there stood the girl’s sister, hair disheveled, in her pajamas. In a sleepy voice she said, “Dad says to go ahead and give him a kiss. Or I can do it. If need be, dad will come down himself and do it. Whatever you do, tell your date to take his hand off the intercom button.”

Our heavenly Father approves of a holy kiss.

The Customary Benediction: Peace

Peter's final comment is the customary benediction: "Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen" (5:14). Peter opened the letter with a greeting of peace (1:2) and now concludes with "peace." Peter desires that all who are in Christ enjoy peace. Paul usually closed his epistles with "grace." The believers Peter was writing to needed peace, "peace within for troubled minds and hearts, and peace without when God grants them rest from their sufferings" (Grudem).

There once was a king who announced a painting contest. He was building a new palace and wanted the main entrance hall to be decorated with a large work of art. The king envisioned his kingdom as a peaceful land. So whoever's painting best symbolized peace would win a large cash prize. Over the next few months, hundreds of paintings arrived at the palace. The king decided on the top two. Before announcing a winner, he hung both paintings in the palace for public viewing.

The first painting was of a majestic lake, so tranquil and still that the lush hills behind it were perfectly mirrored in its reflection. The sky was a brilliant blue with soft, puffy clouds floating above. Wildflowers bursting with color outlined the lake, and a family of deer calmly grazed in a far meadow. All who saw it felt peace and happiness.

The second painting portrayed a tall mountain cliff, rugged and strong. A few small trees grew out of the cracks of the face of the cliff, with gnarled roots clinging for life. A foamy waterfall angrily crashed down the cliff and into the rocky land below. Above, dark, ominous clouds loomed, and, in the distance, lightning flashed. Halfway up the cliff grew a small bush. A bird sat in a nest in its branches, apparently warming her eggs.

After several weeks, the king declared the second painting the winner. Confused and upset, the people asked the king to explain his decision. He said, "Peace is not the absence of conflict. Peace is a state of mind. Those who experience peace have love in their hearts even when turmoil surrounds them."

Summary: Peter concludes with a promise, personal greetings, and a benediction in which he says that God will give grace to humble believers so they can be equipped and established, strengthened and settled, loving and peaceful.

Is it possible that although these items are not connected in the text, they are, in reality, related? If believers are established and strengthened as God intended, they will love others and be at peace with themselves. The process includes several steps.

First: there will be suffering (5:10, see also 4:12). It is part of the process of making us mature now and partakers of glory later. (5:1).

Sir Malcolm Sargent was an outstanding musician. His famous recording of Handel's "The Messiah" has received wide acclaim. To look at him—a man with a light step and ready smile—one might think he was a person life had treated well. Such an assumption, however, would be widely off the mark. Just when his career seemed to be off to a successful start, he collapsed with tuberculosis and battled for his life while facing financial ruin. Finally, upon returning to the world of music, Pamela, his beloved thirteen-year-old daughter, was stricken with polio. Desperately, he searched for medical help, but the doctors could do little. One night, just as he was about to begin a "The Messiah" performance, he was handed a note that struck inconsolable grief in his heart. It read, "Your daughter Pamela is dying!" He walked to the platform with tears and directed the orchestra and choir through such tender passages as "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." Yet out

of his sorrows came a deeper sympathy. Sir Malcolm Sargent found the strength to live and endure suffering in the music of God's Word (*Our Daily Bread*, 1/6/68).

Second, there must be obedience. This passage (5:10-14) is connected to the previous one (5:5-9). As believers humble themselves before God, submit to other believers and resist the devil, God tests them and strengthens them in love and peace.

Third, as believers are obedient, God supplies the grace for them to be strengthened and established in love and peace.

On the island of Trinidad is the famous Pitch Lake, a mineral deposit filled with asphalt. Although gas bubbles escape from its surface here and there, the substance is hard enough for people to walk on. Workers dig great chunks from the tar-like lake and load train cars full of it to pave the world's roads. For over 70 years, Trinidadians have been taking asphalt out of this crater, yet it never runs empty. It is said that no matter how large a hole is made in this great crater, no cavity will remain after 72 hours, for it immediately fills up from below. Workers have drilled as far as 285 feet into the lake and have found that this black, gum-like substance is at least that deep. There seems to be an unlimited supply. This seemingly endless deposit of pitch can be seen as a picture of God's grace. No matter how great your need, you can't exhaust His love (*Our Daily Bread*, 4/10/86).

HERE'S HOW TO SAVE YOUR LIFE

When I was young, I was a Boy Scout. As a Boy Scout, one of the things I learned was how to save my life. I was taught how to save my life in the woods and the water. Fortunately, I never had to use what I learned. Since then, I have forgotten what they taught me.

Now that I am a pastor, I believe we all need a course on saving our lives. The Boy Scouts taught me how to save my life physically. We need a course on how to save our lives spiritually. When we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, all we have done will be tested by fire (1 Cor. 3:11-15). Then, we will know whether or not we saved or wasted our life. How do we save it?

One whole book in the Bible is written to tell us how to save our lives. The subject of 1 Peter is the salvation of our souls (1:9), which means our life. Peter discusses our future hope (1:3), our future inheritance (1:4), and our future salvation (1:5). He teaches that Christ had to suffer and then enter glory (1:11) and that believers can be like Christ and share that experience (5:10).

The book follows the format of an ancient letter. It begins with the standard salutation (1:1-2), followed by a thanksgiving (1:3-10). Then comes the body of the book (1:13-5:9), after which there is the customary personal greeting and a benediction (5:10-14). Only the customary "prayer," usually after the thanksgiving, is missing.

In the salutation, Peter, a recipient of grace, says he is writing to scattered sojourners who were chosen, consecrated and cleansed by the grace of the triune God and he greets them with the wish that their grace and peace be increased.

In the thanksgiving, Peter exhorts believers to praise God, who has begotten them to a salvation that will be revealed later and rejoice in Him because even though they were being tested, as they trust Him, they are also being saved (1:3-12). To say the same thing another way, you are being tried and tested and if you trust the Lord, you are being saved now and will be rewarded later.

The structure of the body of the book deals with three main topics, namely, relationships (1:13-3:7), suffering (3:8-4:6), and the fact that the end is coming (4:7-5:10). Peter is teaching believers how to save their lives in their relationships, in the midst of suffering, and in light of the end.

Save Your Life in Your Relationships

Your Relationship to God (1:13-21) As God's children, believers should firmly fix their expectations on future glory and, in the meantime, live holy lives in fear of their impartial father. You should relate to your heavenly father with hope, holiness, and heavenly fear.

Peter urges believers to discipline their minds, to be level-headed, and to firmly fix their hope on future glory. Believers are not to be conformed to their former lust, but they are to be holy because God is holy. Holiness is to be "in all of your conduct" (1:15), in every area of life. Believers are to conduct their lives in fear because their heavenly Father is also their heavenly Judge. After all, the price of redemption was expensive, and the purpose of redemption was eternal.

In short, relate to your heavenly Father with hope, holiness and heavenly fear. Obey your Father, for Father knows best.

Your Relationship to the Brethren (1:22-2:10) Since believers have been purified and born again by the Word of God, they should put away all unloving attitudes and desire the word because God has been gracious to them. As members of God's family, believers are to love one another sincerely and steadfastly.

Believers have been purified so they can love sincerely and steadfastly (1:22). Furthermore, they have been born again by the Word of God, which endures forever (1:23-25). Love for each other ought to be as steadfast and as dependable as the Word by which they are begotten. The Word is the seed (1:23). The fruit of that seed ought to be like the seed. Therefore, to love like we ought to, we must lay aside unloving attitudes (2:1) and desire the milk of the Word so that we might grow (2:2-3). Believers should be motivated to do that because they have tasted that God is good and gracious. Indeed, believers are the Lord's temple and priesthood (2:4-5); they share His honor (2:6-8) and show forth His praise (2:9-10).

To say the same thing another way, since we are God's people, priesthood, and temple, we should desire the Word to fulfill the purpose for which we were chosen, called, and cleansed, namely, proclaim God's praises and love one another.

I think that I shall never see
A church that is all it ought to be:
A church whose members never stray
Beyond the straight and narrow way
A church that has no empty pews,
Whose pastor never has the blues,
A church whose deacons always deak,
And none is proud, and all are meek;
Where gossips never peddle lies,
Or make complaints or criticize;
Where all are always sweet and kind,
And all to others' faults are blind.
Such perfect churches there may be,
But none of them is known to me.
But still, we'll work, and pray and plan
To make our own the best we can.

Your Relationship to the World (2:11-12) Believers facing a hostile world must remember that they are foreigners here and, therefore, abstain from fleshly lust and do good, so that God will be glorified in their lives. In short, when facing a hostile world, the believer should abstain from evil and do good so that God may be glorified.

Your Relationship to Government (2:13-17) More specifically, they should be submissive to authority (2:13-3:6). Believers should submit to civil authorities and for that matter, do good works like honor all men and love each other because it is the will of God that will silence the slander of unbelievers (2:13-17).

Your Relationship to a Harsh Master (2:18-25) Servants should submit to even harsh masters because patiently enduring unjust suffering is commendable to God and believers are called to suffer like Christ. Besides, it just may be vicarious; our suffering may help someone else.

Your Relationship to a Disobedient Husband (3:1-6) When a Christian wife copes with her unsaved husband by trusting the Lord, living a godly life, and submitting to her husband, what she does is highly valued in the sight of God and may win her husband to Christ.

Your Relationship to Your Wife (3:7) A husband should live with his unique wife with knowledge and honor to prevent his prayers from being hindered.

Thus, in public life (2:13-17), professional life (2:18-25), and private life (3:1-6), believers should be submissive to authority. “Submission is not subjugation. Subjugation turns a person into a thing, destroys individuality, and removes all liberty. Submission makes a person become more of what God wants him to be; it brings out individuality; it gives him the freedom to accomplish all God has for his life and ministry. Subjugation is weakness; it is the refuge of those who are afraid of maturity. Submission is strength and the first step toward true maturity and ministry” (Warren Wiersbe, *Leadership*).

This section is about relationships. We waste our lives on things. We save our lives when we live loving, submissive lives. A lady named Joyce wrote something she called “Stuff.” “I have dolls, lamps, books, paintings, quilts, silver, porcelain, silk, crystal, tools, hats, cars, pottery, china, docks, flutes, carvings, tables, chairs, rugs, leather, jewelry, rings & things. I have searched for them, bid on them, collected them, obsessed over them, refinished them, researched them, appraised them, dusted them, bell-jarred them, secured them, safe-deposited them, bubble-wrapped them, boasted about them, coveted them, broken them, inherited them, and willed them. And after all that care, they never smiled at me, held my hand, laughed with me, danced with me, listened to me, celebrated me, consoled me, grieved for me, fought hell with me, birthed with me, lamented for me, shared victory with me, loved me, surprised me. Nor did they let me pull them in a wagon, push them in a swing, teach them to read, laugh at their jokes, listen to them breathe, give them a back rub, kiss their hurt away, prepare them a feast, hold them, hug them, help them, surprise them, thank God for them, or hear their words unspoken. And that’s because what can be searched for, bid on, collected, obsessed over, refinished, researched, appraised, dusted, bell-jarred, secured, safe-deposited, bubble-wrapped, boasted about, coveted, broken, inherited, or willed is just stuff.”

Save Your Life in the Midst of Suffering

Introduction to Suffering (3:8-12) The ultimate in relationships is to bless others, even when they do evil to you, because as a believer, you were called to that lifestyle and you will be blessed and benefited by God Himself when you bless others.

A number of years ago, I read a story by Watchman Nee about a Chinese rice farmer. There were a number of fields arranged in terraces up the side of the mountain, and this farmer’s was located a good way up. He had to water his rice field by pedaling a bicycle-like device that pumped water from a stream up through an irrigation system to his field. It was quite an exhausting procedure. He had to go down the side of the mountain, get on this contraption, and pedal it rapidly for about an hour to flood his rice paddy. To his consternation, he discovered that every night when he had finished doing this, his neighbor, whose field was directly below his, would put a hole in the dike and drain the water into his field. Every morning, this poor farmer would repair the break in the dike and pump his field again, which was full of water. And every evening, his neighbor would breach the dike and let the water run down into his field.

This went on for several weeks. The farmer talked to his neighbor, asked him not to do it, and did everything he could to persuade him to stop. The man refused. There was nothing the farmer could do to change his mind. So, do you know what he did? The next morning, he hooked up the pipe to his neighbor’s field and pumped his neighbor’s rice paddy full of water. He then pumped his own rice paddy full of water. Now, that is grace! That is being kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Peter says it is truly grace when we do everything we can to please our master, and he still beats us, but we take it patiently and are kind to him. That is grace.

When the world pushes you to your knees, you're in the perfect position to pray.

A layman named Charlie Hainline at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida radiates the love of Christ and is serious about sharing his faith with others. One year, his goal was to lead 1650 people to faith in Christ (5 a day)! Once, he was out witnessing with a couple of other folks. Although he didn't share the gospel, he sat there and smiled broadly as a teammate did. When the teammate was finished and asked if the person would like to trust Christ and receive the gift of eternal life, the person replied, "If being a Christian would make me like him (point to Charlie), I want it!" Charlie's life wasn't a bed of roses by any means. His daughter was kidnapped, killed, and her head was found floating in a canal. When the murderer of his daughter was caught and convicted, Charlie went to jail to witness to him.

Suffering (3:13-4:6) If it is the will of God for you to suffer for righteousness, you will be blessed if you do not fear, sanctify the Lord in your heart, and are prepared to give a reasonable explanation for your hope. Christ suffered once because of someone else's sins, arose, and ascended. Since by spiritual baptism, believers have been placed into Him, they should cease from sin and live unto God. The way to handle suffering for righteousness' sake is to arm yourself with the attitude that now that you are in Christ, you do not have to live according to the will of the Gentiles, but you can live unto God.

Unfortunately, I do not know who wrote this, but to a great degree, it speaks to the issues in 1 Peter. "We tend to justify our misbehavior when people do not behave the right way toward us. If we are young people growing up in a family and our parents are harsh and unloving, we can easily justify rebellion. We feel it is only right and proper. 'That's the sort of treatment I'm getting, and so I can respond the same way.' Or if we are a husband or a wife, and our mate is not responding the right way, we can justify misbehavior. Or if our government is unrighteous, we think we can justify a little cheating on our income tax. If our employer is unfair in his business practices, we justify a little corner-cutting here and there. But Peter says, "No, we cannot. No matter how adverse our circumstances may be or how unrighteous those in authority over us might be, we must be sympathetic and kindly."

Save Your Life in Light of the End

Service (4:7-11) The realization of the impending end of the age as we know it should motivate us to pray, practice love, and perform God-honoring service.

Suffering (4:12-19) When you suffer for Christ, don't think it strange, and don't be ashamed, commit yourself to the Lord by doing what is right. Rejoice. Glorify God. He can be trusted to take care of you and He will eventually take care of those who hurt you. In the end, you will be glorified and glad (5:13) and they will be more severely judged and sad (4:17-18).

Shepherding (5:1-4) As an experienced elder, Peter exhorts elders to tend the flock with the right attitude, motive, and manner so that God can reward them in the future with an eternal crown of glory.

Submission (5:5-9) All believers everywhere at all the time should humble themselves before God, submit to each other, and resist the devil.

Closing Remarks (5:10-14) Peter concludes with a promise, personal greetings, and a benediction in which he says that God will give grace to humble believers for them to be equipped and established, strengthened and settled, loving and peaceful. Is it possible that although these items are not connected in the text, they are, in reality, related? If believers are established and strengthened as God intended, they will love others and be at peace with themselves.

John Ruskin said, “I believe the first test of a great man is humility. I do not mean by humility, doubt of his power, or hesitation in speaking his opinion. But really great men have a feeling that the greatness is not in them but through them; that they could not do or be anything else than God made them” (*Our Daily Bread*, 2/23/88). In a letter to J. S. Mill, Thomas Carlyle commented: “‘Walk humbly in well-doing’—there is no other road for one. It is long years since I first saw the meaning of humility (of self-killing, of antigen, as the Germans call it), and it came on me like water on one dying of thirst, and I felt it and still feel it to be the beginning of moral life.”

Summary: The way to save your life is by trusting God and obeying Him in the relationships of your life, in the midst of suffering, and in light of the end. More specifically, fear God, love the brethren, abstain from evil, do good, submit to authority, and bless others with service to them.

“[T]here you have advice that, if followed, would save one from becoming a censorious whiner. Doing friendly acts to others always develops a lovely and fragrant personality. If tens of thousands in our institutions today had developed scriptural attitudes, they would not be kicking out their last tantrums in asylums and nursing homes” (McMillen in *None of These Diseases*).

Once upon a time, a rich king had four wives. He loved the fourth wife the most, adorned her with rich robes, and treated her to the finest of delicacies. He gave her nothing but the best. He loved the third wife very much and always showed her off to neighboring kingdoms. However, he feared that one day, she would leave him for another. He also loved his second wife. She was his confidant and was always kind, considerate, and patient with him. Whenever the king faced a problem, he could confide in her, and she would help him get through the difficult times.

The king’s first wife was a loyal partner and had greatly contributed to maintaining his wealth and kingdom. However, he did not love his first wife. Although she loved him deeply, he hardly noticed her! One day, the king fell ill. He knew his time was short. He thought of his luxurious life and wondered, “I now have four wives with me, but when I die, I’ll be all alone.” Thus, he asked the fourth wife, “I have loved you the most, endowed you with the finest clothing and showered great care over you. Now that I’m dying, will you follow me and keep me company?”

“No way!” replied the fourth wife, and she walked away without saying another word. Her answer cut like a sharp knife into his heart. The sad king asked the third wife, “I have loved you all my life. Now that I’m dying, will you follow me and keep me company?” “No!” replied the third wife. “Life is too good! When you die, I’m going to remarry!” His heart sank and turned cold. He then asked the second wife, “I have always turned to you for help and you’ve always been there for me. When I die, will you follow me and keep me company?” “I’m sorry, I can’t help you out this time!” replied the second wife. “At the very most, I can only send you to your grave.” Her answer came like a bolt of lightning, and the king was devastated. Then a voice called out: “I’ll leave with you and follow you no matter where you go.” The king looked up, and there was his first wife. She was so skinny because she suffered from malnutrition and neglect. Greatly grieved, the king said, “I should have taken much better care of you when I had the chance!”

In truth, we all have four wives in our lives: Our fourth wife is our body. No matter how much time and effort we lavish in making it look good, it will leave us when we die. Our third wife is our possessions, status, and wealth. When we die, it will all go to others. Our second wife is our family and friends. No matter how much they have been there for us, the furthest they can stay by us is up to the grave. And our first wife is our soul, often neglected in pursuit of wealth, power, and pleasures of the world. However, our soul is the only thing that will follow us wherever we go. So cultivate, strengthen, and cherish it now, for it is the only part of us that will follow us to the throne of God and continue with us throughout eternity.

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