

DIGGING DEEPER
1 PETER



Digging Deeper 1 Peter

Study Guide

Acknowledgments

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INTRODUCTION TO 1 PETER

In **2 Timothy 3:12**, we read, *“Yes, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”* A quick overview of the book of Acts will reveal stonings, beatings, imprisonments, murderous plots, and executions—all for spreading the truth about Christ. The apostle Peter wrote this letter to encourage believers who would likely face similar trials and persecutions. They could expect social and economic persecution from three main sources: the Romans, the Jews, and their own families. All Christians would very likely be misunderstood; some would be harassed; a few would be tortured and even put to death. However, the theme of this letter is Christ-centered, endurance and hope, as well as Christ-confident assurance in Jesus Christ.

1 PETER

Chapter 1

Read 1 Peter 1:1.

- Peter was one of the twelve disciples chosen by Jesus (**Mark 1:16-18**) and, along with James and John, was part of the inner circle Jesus had singled out for training and fellowship. Peter's given name was Simon, but upon meeting Jesus, Jesus had said, "***You are Simon the son of John. You will be called Cephas***" (**John 1:42**). Cephas is an Aramaic word that means "stone" or "rock." It appears Jesus called him Peter because he would become a pillar and a foundation stone in the first-century church (**Galatians 2:9; Ephesians 2:20**).
- Peter was an "***apostle***," the title Jesus had given to the twelve disciples (**Luke 6:13**). The word "***apostle***" referred to one who had been sent on a mission and had authority.
- The recipients of this letter were "***God's elect***," which refers to those chosen or "called out." God's choosing of us is not based on our character or conduct but on his own merciful purposes. All believers have been chosen by God or we would not believe (**Romans 3:10-11; John 6:44**). All true Christians are God's special chosen ones.
- When we, by faith, accept Jesus Christ as Savior, God transfers our citizenship from the world to heaven (**Philippians 3:20**). Thus, while we live on this earth, we are pilgrims—strangers or aliens in the world. Christ's followers in the first century were also strangers on earth as they awaited their real home with Him (**Hebrews 11:13**).
- The church began in Jerusalem, but before long it had spread across the Roman Empire and beyond. It's interesting to note that persecution had a role in the

spread of the gospel. In Acts we read that, after Stephen was martyred, “*a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria [...] Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went*” (Acts 8:1, 4 NIV), resulting in Jews and Gentiles alike hearing and believing the message of grace. Thus Peter wrote this letter to both Jewish and Gentile believers in churches scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, Roman provinces in Asia Minor.

- Believers during this time could expect persecution from at least one of the following three sources:
 - **The Jews.** The first believers and leaders of the early church were Jews. When they became Christians, many did not give up their Jewish heritage. As the book of Acts frequently records, some Jews harassed and persecuted Christians, often driving them out of their towns or attempting to turn Roman officials against them. Saul of Tarsus, who later became the apostle Paul, was an early Jewish persecutor of Christians.
 - **The Romans.** The legal status of Christians in the Roman Empire was unclear. Many Romans considered Christianity to be a Jewish sect; because the Jewish religion was legal, they considered Christianity legal also, as long as Christians obeyed the Roman laws. However, if Christians refused to worship the emperor or join the army, or if they were involved in civil disturbances (such as is noted in Acts 19:23-41), they could be punished by the civil authorities.
 - **The family.** Another source of persecution was the Christian’s own family. Under Roman law, the head of the household had absolute authority over all its members. Unless the ruling male became a Christian, the wife, children, and servants who were believers could face extreme hardships. If

they were sent away, they would have no place to turn but the church; if they were beaten, no court of law would uphold their interests.

- And so Peter began his letter with words of comfort. Despite the growing threat of organized persecution, he reminded the Christians that they were, and would remain, God's selected and loved people who, although strangers in this world and often persecuted by it, would eventually find their eternal rest and home with Christ.

Read 1 Peter 1:2.

- This verse mentions all three members of the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. All members of the Trinity work to bring about our salvation and provide a threefold assurance to believers. Because of His grace and love, the Father chose us (**Ephesians 1:4**). Jesus Christ the Son died for us while we were yet sinners (**Romans 5:6-10**). The Holy Spirit applies Christ's sacrifice to our lives, bringing us the benefits of salvation and setting us apart (sanctifying us) for God's possession and use (**2 Thessalonians 2:13**).
- Although Christians are "strangers in the world" (1:1), they take comfort in the fact that they are "God's elect"—God's "chosen ones."
- It might be good to ponder the following two questions regarding the issue of "election." How are God's people chosen? Don't people make their own choices? God alone originates and accomplishes our salvation because of His love and grace. We do nothing to earn it. God's choice of each believer is based on:
 - His gracious mercy, so there is no room for pride.
 - His decision in eternity past, so there is no room to doubt our salvation or our future in heaven.

- His sovereign control; some are saved, some are not, yet this does not make God unjust, for God owes mercy to no one. We should marvel not that He withholds mercy from some but that He gives grace to any.
- His love for us as provided in Christ, so there is no room for apathy. God's incredible love, when realized, actually compels us to willingly honor, glorify, and move toward Him (**2 Corinthians 5:14**).
- Being chosen according to "***the foreknowledge of God the Father***" in no way removes the necessity for people to respond to Him by faith. The fact that God knows all events and decisions beforehand, even ordains them beforehand, does not mean that He forces the actions of His creatures. The word "foreknowledge" means much, much more than God knowing ahead of time who would respond to his call. It goes much deeper into God's grace and sovereignty (**Numbers 16:5; Deuteronomy 7:6-8**). God's choice has more to do with His love and generosity. **First**, God's foreknowledge means He took the initiative and chose people before they had done anything good or bad. **Second**, God had intimate knowledge of these future believers; He knew them personally from eternity past. God is not trapped in time; what He knows is from eternity past into eternity future. **Third**, God makes His choice through the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who believe. The wording indicates the possibility that the phrase "***according to the foreknowledge of God***" has a direct effect on "God's elect, strangers in the world, and scattered . . ." If Peter meant this, he was telling these scattered and persecuted believers that God knew their situations, and He had known this from the beginning of time. Everything was happening in accordance with God's foreknowledge; He was not surprised. Salvation and assurance rest in the free and merciful choice of

almighty God; no trials or persecutions can take away the eternal life He gives to those who believe in Him.

- It's interesting to consider **1 Peter 1:20**. Peter describes Christ as being “*chosen before the creation of the world.*” God chose Christ, knew Christ intimately, and did not force Christ to pay the penalty for sin. Christ freely accepted the task assigned to Him by the Father.
- These people are God's chosen only because of His grace and mercy and through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. Only the Spirit can draw people to a saving relationship with God (**John 6:44**). “*But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*” (**1 Corinthians 2:14**). The Spirit comes to the chosen people to sanctify (set apart for His possession and use) them. Sanctification goes beyond justification and may also refer to the process of “Christian growth” through which the Holy Spirit makes us like Christ. We cannot, in our own power, become like Christ; sanctification is a gradual, life-long process that will be completed when we see Christ face-to-face (**1 John 3:2**).
- The result of the chosen status of God's people and the sanctifying work of the Spirit is obedience to the gospel, which proclaims the saving act of Jesus Christ. “*Sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*” refers to the past, present, and future forgiveness that is available to each believer because of Christ's shed blood on the cross (**Hebrews 10:22**).
- Peter greets the pilgrims with “grace,” God's unmerited favor, and “peace” which refers first to the peace that Christ made between sinners and God the Father through His Son's death on the cross (**Romans 5:1**). It also makes reference to “*Peace from God*” (**Romans 1:7b**). And finally it includes the “*Peace of*

God” (Colossians 3:15). Only God can grant such wonderful gifts; only He can give them in abundance. Peter wanted these believers, scattered as they were, to know and experience God’s wonderful grace and peace in their daily lives. The world offers a temporary and counterfeit version of each of God’s wonderful gifts (for grace, good luck; for peace, a lack of conflict). For believers, life’s great blessings are not good luck but God’s grace; and even hardships have a gracious purpose behind them. For believers, Christ’s peace does not mean prevention of problems or turmoil, but it does mean an inner, joyful calm that permeates life itself. To these persecuted believers, these words held deep meaning and great comfort.

THE HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE—1 Peter 1:3-12

- Peter opened this letter by thanking God for the salvation He gives, because of His mercy, to believers. Peter looked to their future reward, reminding them God saw their present suffering and was protecting them and spoke of the believers of the past (the prophets) who longed to see and understand the new birth these believers now experienced in their daily lives. Even as these Christians faced persecution, they could remember God’s grace and continue to live dependant on Him. Peter’s words echo through the centuries, reminding us of God’s grace and sovereignty over all of life and encouraging us to glorify Him and to live our lives occupied with and abiding in Him.

Read 1 Peter 1:3.

- **“*Praise be to God*”** (or “blessed be God”) was an Old Testament phrase that Peter gave New Testament meaning. (For examples of Old Testament praises to God, **Genesis 9:26; 14:20; 24:27; Ruth 4:14; 1 Samuel 25:32; 1 Kings 1:48; Psalms 66:20; 72:18.**)

The Old Testament believers praised God, but the New Testament believers praised Him with an entirely new name which was never used in the Old Testament: ***“Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** (Romans 15:6; 2 Corinthians 1:3; 11:31; Ephesians 1:3). God is ***“Father,”*** the first person of the Trinity, but He did not exist before the Son, for the Son has always existed (John 1:1-3; 17:5, 24).

- Salvation is all completely from God; we can do nothing to earn it. Salvation is given to us because of God’s great mercy alone. Peter’s words offer joy and hope in times of trouble. He finds confidence in what God has done for us in Christ Jesus, Who has given us hope of eternal life. Our hope is not only for the future; it is “living.” Eternal life begins when we trust Christ and join God’s family. Regardless of our pain and trials, we know this life is not all there is. Eventually we will live with Christ forever. The term ***“begotten us again”*** or “new birth refers to spiritual birth (regeneration), the Holy Spirit’s act of bringing believers into God’s family. In the new birth, we become dead to sin and alive to God with a fresh beginning. People can do no more to accomplish their “new birth” than they could do to accomplish their own natural birth. Believers are reborn into a living hope. The “hope” refers to our confident expectation of life to come. “Living” means that it grows and gains strength the more we learn about our Lord. Hope looks forward in eager anticipation to what God will do. We have hope based on our conviction that God will keep His promises. We base our hope in a future resurrection on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is living because Christ is alive (1:13, 21; 3:5, 15). Christ’s resurrection makes us certain that we too will be raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Read 1 Peter 1:4.

- There are two results of the new birth: the living hope (1:3) and our inheritance. The word translated “inheritance” (*kleronomia*) is also used in the Old Testament to describe the inheritance to which the Jews had looked forward in the Promised Land of Canaan (**Numbers 32:19; Deuteronomy 2:12; 19:8-10**). God gave the land of Canaan to His people as an inheritance (**Exodus 15:17; Joshua 22:19; Psalm 79:1**). Christians can look forward to another “inheritance”—eternal life with God, described in various ways in Scripture. Jesus Christ is God’s only Son; thus He is sole heir (**Mark 12:7**). As children of God, believers become heirs with Christ. *“If [we are] children, then [we are] heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together”* (**Romans 8:17**).
- An inheritance comes freely to the heirs; they cannot obtain it by their own efforts. Peter used three words, each beginning with the same letter and ending with the same syllable in Greek, to describe this inheritance. It can never perish (*aphthartos*), meaning it will never pass away, disappear, or come to ruin as the result of hostile forces. Neither can it spoil (*amiantos*), meaning it will never become unfit for us or polluted by sin. And it won’t fade (*amarantos*); it won’t lose its glory or freshness, nor will it die away.
- These words contrast this inheritance with all earthly, human possessions. Nothing in the natural order—catastrophe, sin, age, evil—can affect it. God has made it indestructible, existing for all eternity. The inheritance is kept in heaven for us. The word “kept” is in the perfect tense in Greek, expressing a past activity with results that continue in the present; God has been keeping and still keeps the inheritance there—prepared, reserved, certain, and waiting. No matter what harm might come to believers on earth, the inheritance awaits, for it is kept safe with God.

- “Heaven” is where God dwells – untouched by the evil and corruption of the natural world; therefore, an inheritance in heaven is in the safest possible place (**Matthew 6:18-21**).

Read 1 Peter 1:5.

- In these words, Peter answered concerns that might have arisen in the minds of persecuted believers: Will we be able to endure if persecution becomes more intense? What good is an inheritance in heaven, if we are not able to persevere here on earth? Peter explained that, in spite of persecution and even violent death, believers are being protected. The word translated “kept,” (protected, guarded, shielded) is a military term used to refer to a garrison within a city (**2 Thessalonians 3:3; Jude 24**). It’s an inner area of protection; though the city wall is taken, the garrison is not. No matter how the world persecutes Christians or kills the body, God will guard the souls.
- Peter refers to a double-locked security for believers. First, our inheritance is protected (1:4); second, we are protected. Like a safe within a safe, nothing could be more secure. We have this continuous protection by the power of God, and the goal of that protection is salvation. Believers have already received salvation through their acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior, but the fullness of that salvation, will be revealed in the last time. The “last time” comprises the period (however long it will be) between Christ’s first and second comings. The last act of history has begun. What has started will be fully disclosed when He returns.

Read 1 Peter 1:6.

- “*In this*” (referring to the entire future hope of believers discussed in verses 3-5), the believers greatly

rejoice. This type of rejoicing remains unhindered and unchanged by what happens in this present life. Peter mentioned suffering several times in this letter (**1:6-7; 3:13-17; 4:12-19; 5:9**); he was not referring to natural disasters or God's punishments, but rather to the response of an unbelieving world to people of faith. The words "***for a little while [...] you have been grieved by various trials***" are literally translated "if (or since) it is necessary." Peter made the point that God uses suffering according to His infinitely wise plan for each individual person. Grief and suffering do not go unnoticed by God, nor does it occur without cause or reason. While it may never be clear to us, God must be trusted to carry out His purposes, even in times of trial which often occurs when believers are shining lights in the darkness. We must accept trials as part of the refining process that burns away impurities and prepares us for ministry to others.

- Peter made it clear to these suffering believers that even as they grieved now (in their present existence), it was only for a little while compared to the glorious eternity awaiting them. Because of this, they could rejoice in the midst of their present suffering.

Read 1 Peter 1:7.

- While God may have different purposes in the trials that face His people, one overriding result of all trials is clear: Suffering refines and purifies faith. Peter described the genuineness of believers' faith as being more precious than gold, the most valuable substance of the time. As gold is heated, impurities float to the top and can be skimmed off, leaving extremely valuable "pure gold." Yet gold is not eternal; like everything else on earth, it too will eventually perish. Genuine faith, on the other hand, is indestructible for all eternity. However, it may take the "fire" of trials, struggles, and persecutions to remove impurities. God

values a fire-tested (or “stress-tested”) faith. All of us have faith that may be mixed with improper doubts or sinful motivations (sometimes even the good we do is for selfish reasons). In the crucible of life, God our Goldsmith skims off our impurities. Through trials, God burns away our doubts, self-confidence, and self-serving attitudes, so that we become genuinely Christ-like and reflect His glory which ultimately brings praise to Him. If believers can trust God and rejoice when surrounded by persecution, and when they cannot see the outcome or understand the reason, then their faith has been proved genuine. Their genuine faith will result in praise, glory, and honor bestowed upon them by God Himself when Jesus Christ returns (is revealed) (**James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 5:10; Psalm 66:10-12**).

Read 1 Peter 1:8.

- Peter had known Jesus Christ personally and had talked with Him, walked with Him, questioned Him, professed faith in Him (**1 John 1:1-3**). However, Peter understood that most of the believers to whom he was writing had not known Jesus in the flesh. He commended their faith because they believed and loved without having personally seen the object of their faith. Certainly, Peter remembered Jesus’ words to another disciple: “*Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*” (**John 20:29**). The word “*love*” is in the present tense, indicating a normal and continual activity. They continually loved Christ, even though they had never seen Him in the flesh.
- The word “*believe*” means “to trust,” “to put one’s confidence in,” “to depend upon.” Christian faith does not focus on some abstract idea or some fallible person; it focuses on one lone individual, Jesus Christ, who was sent by God to live in a fallen world and then to

die for that world in order to save it. On that day when Christ returns to take us home, we shall see Him face to face (**Revelation 22:3-5**). Until then, we live by faith with hope and joy. Peter says believers can rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy in this present life. Christians rejoice despite trials and suffering, have faith in someone they have never seen, and stake their lives on promises. Why? It is because they know the Lord Jesus Christ. The word “*inexpressible*” (or “*unutterable*” used only here in the New Testament) describes joy so deep and profound that words cannot express it. Our joy is also described as “*glorious*,” infused with a heavenly glory.

- While we await Christ’s return, we are already experiencing a touch of heaven through the joy of our relationship with God.

Read 1 Peter 1:9.

- Believers express joy (1:8) because of their belief in and love for Jesus Christ. Peter explained that his readers are receiving the outcome of their faith as they believe and come to a full and complete salvation. The present tense, “*are receiving*” brings to mind not only what we received when we accepted Jesus Christ, and what we already possess as believers, but also what we will yet receive when Christ returns. As we continue growing in the Christian life, we will experience more and more of the blessings of salvation. As we continue to believe and rejoice, we also continue to grow toward maturity in Christ and to our promised salvation.

Read 1 Peter 1:10-11.

- “*This salvation*” makes reference back to verse 9. “*The grace that would come to you*” refers to the

suffering Messiah, who has made salvation by grace available to all who believe. Both had been foretold by God's prophets in the Old Testament. The prophets were so amazed by the prophecies God gave them that they wanted to know more about what they had been told. They wondered when the Messiah would come, what circumstances would surround His coming, why He would have to suffer and die, and what glories would come after His death. They not only wondered, but they also actively searched (through earlier written Scriptures and their own prophecies) to learn more, to find answers to their questions, to understand the far-reaching implications of God's words through them. Jesus once said to His listeners, "***For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it***" (Matthew 13:17; Luke 10:23-24). The believers of Peter's day, as well as believers today, have had the privilege of understanding the prophets' writings better than the prophets themselves. All of the prophets' predictions regarding the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ have been completely fulfilled. Throughout the rest of 1 Peter, the apostle shows that sufferings are the path to glory. In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, we see Jesus as the model for us to follow. "***Spirit of Christ***" is another name for the Holy Spirit.

- The Old Testament prophets wrote under the Holy Spirit's inspiration; the Spirit of Christ was within them as they spoke and wrote God's words (**2 Peter 1:20-21**). The prophecies describing various aspects of the Messiah's birth, life, death, and resurrection revealed that everything that would happen to the Messiah had been ordained by God. As Jesus prepared to leave His ministry on earth to return to heaven, He promised to send the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, to teach and guide His followers (**John 14:15-17, 26; 16:7**). The Holy Spirit would explain the prophecies

that told about Jesus (**John 15:26; 16:14**). The New Testament apostles, through the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, then went out to preach the crucified and risen Lord.

Read 1 Peter 1:12.

- The Spirit revealed to the prophets that the prophecies would not be fulfilled in their lifetimes. Therefore, as the prophets continued to speak and write God's words, and as they labored and faced persecution, they were serving not themselves; instead, the words were for another era, to be understood by the believers in Peter's day, as well as believers today. The prophets had the great honor of having Christ's Spirit speak through them, but the privileges of our understanding are even greater and should move us to a deeper occupation with Christ. The coming salvation that the prophets had so wanted to see and hear has now been announced by those who brought the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ. As the Spirit inspired the prophets, so He inspired the apostles and missionaries in the first century. The persecuted believers scattered across Asia could take comfort in the fact that the believers to whom Peter wrote were living what the Old Testament prophets had only desired to experience.
- ***"Things which angels desire to look into."*** Angels are spiritual beings created by God who help carry out His work on earth. Peter explained that even the angels long (strongly desire) to understand the mysteries of salvation. The angels want to watch the mystery unfold in the lives of believers and in the church. The word *parakupto* (translated "to look") means to peek into a situation as an outsider. The angels watch (and often are sent to minister to) believers as they struggle and face ridicule or persecution. The two major figures whom Peter's readers looked up to were the prophets

and the angels. Both were intensely interested in seeing the plan of salvation unfold.

Read 1 Peter 1:13.

- The word “*therefore*” ties Peter’s following encouraging words with the previous passage. Because the prophets had foretold what was to come (the great and wonderful gospel), with even the angels longing to understand it better, believers should be encouraged and motivated with a similar earnestness and alertness regarding the way we live. It’s interesting that Peter now begins to detail the ethical response of those who have experienced the blessings of salvation. Believers do not need to be holy in order to be saved, but we are all called to holy living in order to portray God’s nature and His grace to an unbelieving world (1 Thessalonians 4:7). Peter challenged these scattered believers to prepare their minds for action. In Greek, the phrase is “*gird up the loins of your minds*” (1 Kings 18:46; 2 Kings 4:29; 9:1). The word “*mind*” refers to “mindset,” spiritual and mental attitudes. To lead holy lives in an evil world, the believers would need a new mindset. As the Israelites ate the Passover meal with their “loins girded,” sandals on their feet, and staff in hand to be ready when God called, so believers must also live life with a Christ-conscious readiness, being willing and available to follow Him wherever He leads.
- “*Be sober*” is a rather interesting phrase which implies a clear mind that is not influenced in any way by the deception of the flesh. Even “good” things in life can influence our thinking and take control, such as one’s career, education, or creative pursuits. Peter wanted the believers to remember that they should be so Christ-centered and Christ-focused so as not to be enticed away from God. Peter used the same word, “sober,” in two other verses:

- *“Be sober [serious] and watchful in your prayers” (4:7).*
- *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (5:8).*
- *“Rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* This sentence forms a bridge from the first section to the remainder of the letter. Peter has described true faith in 1:1-13, and in 1:14 he begins a series of moral commands that stretch throughout the rest of his letter. In these few words, Peter explained how believers can reflect God’s character and priorities and follow God’s commands. As they set all their hope fully on the grace to be given them, they will be encouraged to change their thinking to be in line with God’s plans for them, to change their lifestyles to glorify God, and to persevere during difficulties and persecutions. Believers’ “hope” is not a hazy desire we wish would come true. Instead, it is a confident expectation of what God has promised; it is our sure destination. The grace that Jesus Christ will bring to believers is all encompassing. We have already received salvation through our acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior. However, the fullness of the grace given to us in Christ, with its complete blessings, will be revealed when He is revealed; that is, when He returns. Therefore, we can place our hope, our confidence fully, completely, and unreservedly on that grace to be given; we know we will receive our promised inheritance (1:4).

Read 1 Peter 1:14.

- All believers are part of God’s family; we are His children. Children all have different character traits; parents often marvel at how different each of their own children are. Yet despite the many differences among

God's children, we ought to all have one common characteristic—"obedient children."

- An interesting thought to ponder is that God does not have orphan children; He only has delinquent children. We have been chosen (1:2) and saved (1:9), which is intended to result in obedience to the Savior. Believers ought not to live in the same manner that we lived before we were saved. At that time, we lived in ignorance, giving in to evil desires, insensitive to sin or to God's desires. But when Christ saved us, we became "**new creations**" (**1 Corinthians 5:17**) complete with a new mindset, a new sensitivity to sin, a new desire to please God, and the door was opened into an altogether new way of living. (Always keep in mind the sanctification process which Paul so wonderfully reveals to us in **Romans 6-8**.) The word for "**conform**" (the only other use is in **Romans 12:2**) means "to pattern one's life or actions after." Unbelievers pattern their lives after their selfish desires, with no power to conquer or control them. But believers' lives are to be radically different. The evil desires still exist (the flesh), but believers have a new power source for life. They must, by faith, rest in their co-crucifixion with Christ which breaks with the desire for the past life as well as breaks the power of sin, and then we will experience the Holy Spirit's power and desire to overcome evil desires, and ultimately conform us into the image of Christ.

Read 1 Peter 1:15.

- After people come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, there is still a pull to return to the old ways. Peter wrote to the first century believers that they were not to conform to the old ways and desires (1:14), but rather to be like their heavenly Father Who had called/chosen them. God initiated their salvation not only to be saved, but to live lives that are godly/God-like. Holiness

pervades God's character—He is holiness. He is the opposite of anything sinful or evil. Holiness for God's people means being in His image, set apart from sin and its influence by our co-crucifixion with Christ and the ongoing maturing work of the Holy Spirit. The God of Israel and the God of the Christian church is holy; He sets the standard for morality and integrity. Unlike the Roman gods, He is not warlike, adulterous, or spiteful. Unlike the gods of the pagan cults popular in the first century, He is not bloodthirsty or promiscuous. He is the God of mercy and justice who cares personally for each of His “born again” children. Our holy God has made a way for us to be holy as He is holy. We are not merely to imitate His holiness, for imitation is fake; but as the flesh is set aside at the cross (**Romans 6:6**), and the Holy Spirit draws our attention to Christ, we are changed into that same image (**2 Corinthians 3:18**). But notice that it is done by the Spirit of the Lord. Believers are set apart by God and different because of Christ in us. We have already been declared holy, positionally, because of our faith in Christ, but we must patiently endure while the Holy Spirit works out that divine family likeness in our day-by-day walk, attitudes, and behavior. We cannot become holy on our own, but God gives us His Holy Spirit to perform His end result of “*holiness*” in His time.

Read 1 Peter 1:16.

- Peter quoted the Old Testament Scriptures, which would be familiar to the Jewish Christians in his audience, to confirm his words in 1:15. These words are from **Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7**. Originally this command applied to the Jews, God's chosen nation, but Peter applied it to the Christians, God's chosen people from all nations.

Read 1 Peter 1:17.

- The word “*if*” could also be translated “*since*.” Peter assumed these believers already did constantly call upon or appeal to God, praying regularly to Him and habitually calling upon Him in time of need. God was their loving Father, yet He was also the impartial Judge of the universe. This judging could refer to the Judgment Seat of Christ where believers will be rewarded for all that Christ did through them; however, the present tense of the word “*judges*” makes more sense if it is applied to God’s present Fatherly correction and discipline of His children during their lives on earth (“*as strangers here*,” Hebrews 12:5-11). Peter explained that just as these believers constantly called on God because they knew He loved them, they should also be careful how they lived: “Live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear/respect toward God.” Reverent respect or fear is not the fear of a slave for a ruthless master but the healthy and fervent respect of a believer for the all-powerful, all loving, gracious, and merciful God. Because God is the Father/Judge of all the earth, believers dare not ignore Him or treat Him casually, and we ought to truly respect God’s child-discipline. We should live as pilgrim-tourists who are passing through, with no thought of a permanent stay or becoming assimilated into the culture. We should not be spoiled children, but grateful children who love and respect our heavenly Father.

Read 1 Peter 1:18-19.

- Peter again reminds us of the blessings of salvation from 1:3-12. The word “*redeemed*” was used when someone paid the purchase price for a slave’s freedom. However, no amount of money could buy our freedom/salvation. It had to be done God’s way, not

with money, but “*with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish or spot.*” That Christ “*redeemed*” us means that He paid the price to set sinners free from slavery to sin. Christ paid the debt we owed—“*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23). Christ purchased our freedom, and it cost Him His life. The word “*precious*” means flawless, unblemished. The Old Testament saints sacrificed lambs without defect or blemish in order to atone for their sins, but New Testament believers have had their sins covered by the blood of a sinless Savior. But why blood? From the very beginning God said, “*For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life*” (Leviticus 17:11). But the blood Peter mentions here is the precious blood of Christ. Only the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross was an effective atonement/payment/satisfaction for our sins. Christ stands in our place, having paid the penalty of death for our sin, having completely satisfied God’s demands. We could not escape from sin on our own; only the sacrifice of God’s own Son on our behalf could buy us back and set us free.

Read 1 Peter 1:20.

- Christ’s sacrifice for the world’s sins was not an afterthought, not something God decided to do when the world spun out of control. This plan was set in motion by the all-knowing, eternal God before the creation of the world. In eternity past, God chose his own (1:2) and planned that Christ would redeem them. Christ has always existed with God (John 1:1), but was revealed in these last times to the world through his incarnation. The “*last times*” refers to the time between Christ’s first and second comings. The redemption God accomplished for believers through

Christ, which was not understood even by the prophets who wrote about it (1:10-11), should cause us to overflow with thanksgiving as we consider Peter's words "*for your sake.*"

Read 1 Peter 1:21.

- Only through the death of Christ on the cross could sinful humanity approach the holy God. Jesus had told His disciples, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*" (**John 14:6**). It is through Christ that we can know and believe in God. The fact that God raised Him from the dead and glorified Him is the foundation for our faith. Through Christ's resurrection and glorification, God openly declared that He has accepted Christ as our righteous substitute, thereby giving us access to God. Because Christ redeemed us, we no longer fear God's judgment; instead, we set our faith and hope in Him, trusting in the one who planned our salvation from eternity past.

Read 1 Peter 1:22.

- Peter continued his focus on holy living (1:15-16). We believers ought to be holy because of who God is and what He has done for us, and what He is doing in us. Always keeping in mind that human beings cannot, on their own, be holy in conduct, because of the struggle between the flesh and Spirit mentioned by Paul in **Galatians 5:17**. We received the sin nature at birth, and it will be with us until death; it will never change (**Romans 7:14-25**). However, because of the work of the Spirit, who holds the flesh in the place of death as we rest in the truth of our co-crucifixion with Christ (**Romans 6:6**), we believers can grow toward holiness, and move in the direction of purity as the Holy Spirit does a work of maturing in our lives. "*Obeying the*

truth” could refer to the time of conversion, when the gospel message was believed; or it could refer to daily walking in the truth. In either case, Peter was pointing out that conversion changes lives. The transformation that Christ had made in the lives of these “*scattered*” believers was toward purity and holiness. This change was not meant to be internal only; it was to produce change in the daily behavior, attitudes, and conduct of the believers. This is one of the strongest statements of brotherly love in the New Testament, for it virtually makes brotherly love the goal. Peter expected that growth in purity and holiness would result in deeper love among Christians. Not merely an outward appearance of love, but rather a genuine love for the Christian brothers and sisters that comes from a “*pure heart*.” It’s interesting to give thought to the fact that the word “*heart*” in the Bible most often refers to the soul (mind/will/emotions). In **Galatians 5:17**, we are told that the flesh wars against the Spirit, and the Spirit wars against the flesh. The battle is over influence and eventual control of the soul. Therefore, we could say that a “*pure heart*” is a soul (mind/will/emotions) that is not influenced or controlled by the flesh but by the Spirit. Peter used the word *philadelphia* (love of the brothers) in the phrase “*genuine mutual love*,” and then changed to the more intense form of the word love, *agapao* to describe strong and deep love in the next phrase “*love one another deeply*.” Despite our differences and disagreements, we can have genuine affection for one another, and as we grow in holiness, we can actually love one another deeply because of the Holy Spirit’s work within us. Peter no doubt remembered Jesus’ words to him and the other disciples at their last supper together: “*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” (John 13:34-35).

Read 1 Peter 1:23.

- Our new birth was not of perishable seed, meaning not of human origin, so that we will one day wither and die; rather our new birth originated from imperishable seed, the living and enduring Word of God. The contrast between “perishable” and “imperishable” is key to verses 23-25. Our physical lives and earthly pursuits are temporary (1:24), but the Word is eternal (1:23, 25). God’s Word lives and endures forever because God who gave it lives and endures from eternity past to eternity future.

Read 1 Peter 1:24-25.

- Quoting **Isaiah 40:6-8**, Peter reminded believers that everything in this life—possessions, accomplishments, people—will eventually fade away and disappear. All flesh refers to every person, all human existence. As the grass and flowers bloom for a season then wither and fall, so all of this life is perishable in nature; it will pass away. “**Glory**” refers to all earthly attainments. Only God’s will, word, and work are permanent. We are mortal, but God’s word is eternal and unfailing. Peter’s readers would face suffering and persecution, but that would be only temporary. As the word of the Lord endures forever, so their salvation and subsequent eternal glory would endure forever.

1 PETER

Chapter 2

LIVING BUILDING STONES FOR GOD’S HOUSE—2:1-10

In describing the church as God’s spiritual house, Peter drew on Old Testament texts that would be familiar to his Jewish Christian readers: **Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14; 28:16**. They would have understood the living stones to be Israel; then Peter used the image of the “cornerstone” for Christ.

Read 1 Peter 2:1.

- The word “*therefore*” ties Peter’s following words with the end of Chapter 1, specifically 1:22, where Peter had explained that believers’ new lives in Christ should result in genuine mutual love one for another. Such love binds believers together, producing unity in the body which is so needed as they face struggles and persecution. “*Lay aside*” is also translated “rid yourselves” or “put off.” The same phrase is used in other New Testament passages, always indicating removing one’s former life of sin as one would take off a garment (**Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:22, 25; Colossians 3:8; James 1:21**). Peter addressed this command to rid oneself of sin only to born-again Christians (1:23) who, knowing the old man had been crucified (**Romans 6:6**) and having a new God-given nature within as well as an indwelling Holy Spirit, now have the power and desire to break with the past life. Peter listed several types of sin to be removed from our lives. The sins Peter listed here fight against love and cause dissension among believers. The first two sins mentioned refer to general categories. The last three sins refer to the specific acts that flow out of them.

- Malice means doing evil despite the good that has been received; the desire to harm other people. (**Colossians 3:8; James 1:21**).
- Deceit means deliberately tricking or misleading by lying (3:10).
- Hypocrisy is saying one thing but doing another; presenting good motives that mask selfish desire.
- Envy is desiring something possessed by someone else causing discontentment and resentment.
- Slander destroys another's good reputation by lies, gossip, rumor-spreading, etc. Malice often manifests itself through slander.

Read 1 Peter 2:2.

- As newborn babies crave milk, so born-again believers should long for pure spiritual milk (truth) that will nourish them and grow them to maturity. The Greek word translated “*spiritual*” is *logikos* and means “logical, reasonable, and spiritual.” The Word of God, as described by Peter in 1:23-25, is living and enduring and is like milk, the essential nourishment for babies which sustains life and gives growth. The psalmist described God's words as pure: “*The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times [...] The commandment of the Lord is pure*” (Psalm 12:6; 19:8). The purity of God's Word means that there is no imperfection, no dilutions, and that it will not deceive or lead people astray. By using the term “*newborn babies*,” Peter was not implying that his readers were young believers; indeed, some of them had been Christians for as many as thirty years. This verse should not be compared to **1 Corinthians 3:2** and **Hebrews 5:12-13** where the writers employed a similar metaphor but used milk, in contrast to meat, as depicting the diet of immature believers. The Holy

Spirit of God uses the Word of God to grow us into the likeness of God (**2 Peter 3:18**).

Read 1 Peter 2:3.

- Peter may be referring to **Psalm 34:8**: “*Taste and see that the Lord is good.*” The believers that Peter was writing to had already taken that first step in tasting that “the Lord is good” by personally experiencing God’s goodness and kindness at salvation. As they lived out their Christian lives, growing to maturity in the faith, they were tasting more and more of the Lord’s goodness. Now that they had tasted God’s goodness, they would continue to crave the spiritual milk of God’s words. Most likely, Peter had all of **Psalm 34** in mind as he wrote these words; he would refer to it again in 2:12-16. The theme of **Psalm 34** is that God’s people can call upon Him during their distress and troubles, knowing that He will deliver them; this is also the theme of Peter’s letter to God’s scattered people as they faced problems and persecutions. The more we taste God’s goodness, the more tasteless other worldly options become.

Read 1 Peter 2:4.

- Using a new metaphor here, Peter employed Old Testament imagery (physical picture) to describe believers’ relationship with God. The words “*coming to*” do not refer to initial salvation, but to constantly drawing near and coming into Christ’s presence. In the Old Testament, only the priests had that privilege; under the new covenant, all believers can enter into God’s presence at any time (**Hebrews 10:19**). Peter described the one to whom believers come, Christ, as a living stone; the “stone” imagery is taken from **Psalm 118:22**.

- Jesus had applied these words to Himself when He spoke of being rejected by His own people (**Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17**). In fact, rejection by the world signaled spiritual victory to believers in the early church. Also, Peter had quoted **Psalm 118:22** in his speech on the day of Pentecost, *“Jesus is ‘the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.’ There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:11-12). Peter adds the adjective *“living.”* Christ lives and imparts life to those who believe in Him; He is the author and finisher of our faith. The phrase *“though rejected by mortals”* continues the thought from **Psalm 118:22**: *“The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.”* Although rejected by many, Christ is the “cornerstone” of the church. Paul had written to the Ephesian believers: *“You are [...] fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit”* (Ephesians 2:19-22).
- Although rejected by many people, Christ is chosen and precious in God’s sight. The word “chosen” echoes back to 1:2 where Peter called God’s people *“chosen.”* The word *“precious”* means highly valued or esteemed. Although chosen and precious to God, Christ had to suffer greatly in order to accomplish God’s will; it was His *“precious blood”* (1:19) that redeemed us. Therefore, believers are also very precious to God.

Read 1 Peter 2:5.

- Peter carried the Old Testament physical picture of a New Testament spiritual truth further by describing believers also as living stones because Christ is being reproduced in them through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. (It is interesting to note that many of Christ's names in the singular are also assigned to Christians in the plural: Son/sons, High Priest/priests, Lamb/lambs, Living Stone/living stones.) These are stones that are being cut into shape and used as a living stone for God's purposes, not just fieldstones randomly gathered.
- ***"Being built into a spiritual house."*** Because God is spirit (**John 4:24**), He lives in a spiritual house among His people, not in a physical building. All believers are a part of the spiritual building that God is constructing—a ***"house"*** made up of ***"living stones"*** (**1 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6**). Believers are not only the stones that make up God's spiritual house, but they also serve there as a "holy priesthood [offering] spiritual sacrifices." This is a twofold metaphor. We are both the temple (**1 Corinthians 6:19**) and the priests who serve in it. Peter used words from **Exodus 19:6** where God told Israel they would be ***"a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."*** All who believe in Jesus Christ have become this holy priesthood. The Old Testament priests entered God's presence at specific times and only after carefully following ritual cleansing instructions; God's people enter God's presence at any time, for they have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus (**Hebrews 4:16; 10:19**). The Old Testament priests offered animals sacrifices in the temple; God's people, by God's grace, offer "spiritual sacrifices" (**Romans 12:1; Philippians 4:18**).

- We see from Scripture that every area of our lives—our jobs, activities, attitudes, outlook, goals, etc., are to be given as a spiritual sacrifice to God. These sacrifices are “spiritual” because we can only give ourselves to God through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Just as the aroma of the Old Testament sacrifices pleased God, so our crucified lives are a sweet aroma to God. The sacrifice of oneself is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ. We are imperfect and sinful, yet we are made acceptable to God because of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice of Himself on our behalf. Only because of Christ have believers received this high and holy calling to be living stones and a holy priesthood in the spiritual house of God.

Read 1 Peter 2:6.

- To support his words in 2:4-5, Peter quoted from words in Scripture which stand forever and can be trusted completely. First, Peter quoted from the prophet Isaiah (**Isaiah 28:16**). In these words, God promised to establish a cornerstone. A cornerstone, the first stone laid in a building, begins a new work and therefore holds a place of honor. The cornerstone makes the foundation stable and the walls plumb and square. Christ, our cornerstone, is our solid foundation and guideline for all of life. Peter, like Paul, described this cornerstone as a person. Peter promised those who believe will not be put to shame. He did not mean that Christians will never face shame in this life; however, that shame will not come because their trust in God was misplaced. These words greatly comforted believers facing persecution. As a building rests on its cornerstone, so believers rest on Christ.

Read 1 Peter 2:7.

- The word “*therefore*” refers back to the “Living Stone” in 2:4 and the “chosen and precious cornerstone” in 2:6, both referring to Jesus Christ. “*To you who believe*” addressed the Christians to whom Peter wrote. Jesus Christ is indeed precious. The word “*precious*” means highly valued or esteemed. Not only is Christ precious to the Father (2:4), He is also precious to us Christians. “*But for those who do not believe, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner.’*”
- While believers are aware of the preciousness of Christ and honor Him, unbelievers see it differently. They do not regard the Stone as precious and chosen; instead, they reject Him. Jesus referred to these words when He spoke of being rejected (**Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17**). Peter used the word “builders” to refer to all people across the ages who toss Christ aside like an unwanted stone, choosing to build the foundations of their lives on something else. However, they were mistaken to reject Him because God took the rejected stone and made it the very head of the corner, the cornerstone.

Read 1 Peter 2:8.

- Quoting once again from the prophet Isaiah (**Isaiah 8:14**), Peter further explained that not only were the builders who rejected the stone humiliated when it later became the cornerstone, they also had stumbled and fallen over this stone. The word “*stumbled*” can mean tripping and falling, or it can mean taking offense at or rejecting something or someone. Some stumble over Christ because they reject Him or refuse to believe that He is who he claims to be. They have stumbled over the one person who could save them and give meaning

to their lives. Their stumbling was “*appointed*” or “destined” by God. Peter’s point is that God has predestined punishment for all who disbelieve. The Amplified Version translates this verse in this way: “*They stumble because they disobey and disbelieve God’s Word, as those who reject Him were destined (appointed) to do.*” Keep in mind **2 Peter 3:9**: “*He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9).

Read 1 Peter 2:9.

- This verse contrasts the privilege and destiny of believers with that of the unbelievers described in 2:8. Believers are a chosen generation, a distinct group from the rest of the world, unified by the Holy Spirit.
- Isaiah prophesied God’s blessings on those God called “*my people, my chosen*” (**Isaiah 43:20**). Just as the nation of Israel had been God’s chosen people, Christians have become God’s people, not by physical birth into a certain race but by spiritual rebirth into God’s family through Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 2:19**). Peter goes on to say that believers also are a royal priesthood, a holy nation (**Ephesians 2:19**). At Mount Sinai when the nation received God’s laws, Moses had told all Israel: “*And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*” (**Exodus 19:6**). In 2:5, Peter referred to believers as “*a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*” Being part of a “*priesthood*” is a high honor for believers. In Old Testament times, people did not approach God directly. Instead a priest would act as intermediary between God and sinful man. With Christ’s victory on the cross, that pattern changed. Now believers can come directly into God’s presence (**Hebrews 4:16**). Also they have been given the privilege of bringing others (**2 Corinthians 5:18-21**).

- United with Christ as members of His body, believers join in His priestly work of reconciling God and people. This priesthood is called “*royal*” because we are members of God’s family, brothers and sisters of Christ, the King of kings. As members of the King’s family, we are royalty. This phrase “*holy nation*” is more literally translated “*a people for His possession.*” Similar language is found in **Exodus 19:5** and **Malachi 3:17**. The remainder of the **Isaiah 43:21** verse quoted in the preceding paragraph reads, “*that they may proclaim my praise.*” This ties in with Peter’s explanation of what God’s special people are to do: “*proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*” Christians are not redeemed so they can live for self, enjoying their redemption, and proclaiming their own praises; they are redeemed with a purpose—to glorify and praise the one who has called them out of the darkness of their hostile surroundings and sinful life into the light of eternal life with God almighty Himself. The word “*praises*” is also translated “*wonderful deeds*” or “*excellencies.*” We are called to “*proclaim*” who God is and what He has done and is doing.

Read 1 Peter 2:10.

- This verse is an adaptation of **Hosea 1:9-10** and **2:23**. Hosea, God’s prophet, was describing God’s rejection of Israel, followed by future restoration. Paul used these same verses from Hosea and applied them to the Gentile believers (**Romans 9:25-26**). Peter now applies these verses to the New Testament church. Just as Israel had at one time been rejected by God without any hope of forgiveness for their sins, so Christians had also at one time been rejected by God without any hope of mercy. However, all believers are now God’s people; they have been chosen by Him (2:9) and have received mercy. The word “*mercy*” could be defined

in this way: “not receiving what we deserve.” God was not obligated in any way to gather a people together to whom He would show mercy; not one of us deserves His slightest concern (**Romans 3:10-12**).

OBEY THOSE IN AUTHORITY/ 2:11-25

In this section, Peter offers practical advice for holy living in an unholy and often hostile world. It centers on the Christians’ relationship to non-Christians.

Read 1 Peter 2:11.

- The phrase “*dear friends*” or “*dearly beloved*” reveals the love Peter had for these brothers and sisters in the faith (1:22) because of their mutual bond in Christ. Peter “strongly urged” the believers to remember their status as aliens and strangers in the world. The word “*aliens*” (pilgrims) refers to people living in a place that is not their true home. The word “*strangers*” (1:1) is slightly different, describing a visitor staying briefly in a foreign land (**Genesis 23:4; Psalm 39:12**). The world is not the Christian’s true home; our real home (positionally) is in Christ. However, we are here physically temporarily, awaiting the return of Christ when He will take us to our true home in heaven. We are passing through this world on the way to our real and eternal home in glory; therefore, we ought to remain untouched by the world system (keeping in mind that the “world system” is built on satanic principles such as power, lust, greed, etc.). And so Peter says, “*abstain from fleshly lusts*” because we will not escape our sinful surroundings until Christ returns and because there remains within us this wretched flesh that continually is drawing our attention away from Christ and all that is eternal. This battle within, between the flesh and spirit (**Galatians 5:17; Exodus 17:16**) will continue until the day we

physically die. However, we can “**abstain**”—that is, we can see victory over our sinful desires by resting in the truth of **Romans 6:6** and **Galatians 2:20**. Why does it matter that we keep away from sinful desires? Because those desires “war against our soul” (mind/will/emotions). Once we become believers, the battle begins. The verb tense literally means “continually waging war.” The flesh with its evil desires is “continually waging war”; the battle will continue throughout our lives on this earth. For most of us, sinful desires seem much less evil than sinful actions, but Peter explained that sinful desires “**war against our souls**.” How so? Entertaining evil desires, even if those desires are never acted upon, takes our focus from Christ and turns our hearts from Him. An interesting Scripture to consider is **Matthew 5:27-28**.

Read 1 Peter 2:12.

- This thought follows from 2:11; the believers were to have their inner selves (soul–mind/will/emotions) under the control of the Holy Spirit so that their outer lives (behavior) would be honoring to God. “**Live such good lives**” refers to daily living a “Spirit influenced and controlled life” which is filled with good deeds (**Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:1, 8, 14; James 3:13**). Believers are meant to honor God by living morally upright and holy lives in an unholy world. Peter’s progression of thought has three steps:
 - The unbelievers slander us as evildoers.
 - Our good deeds prove their slander a lie, convicting them of their wrongdoing.
 - Unbelievers are converted and “**glorify God**.”
- Peter’s advice is similar to the advice of Jesus recorded in **Matthew 5:16**: “**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven**.” Attractive, gracious, and

upright behavior on the part of Christians may win some of the unsaved critics to the Lord's side.

- The phrase “*on the day he visits us*” or “*on the day of visitation*” has caused much discussion among scholars. At first reading, it sounds like Peter was referring to the final Day of Judgment when unbelievers will have no option but to glorify God. However, arguments against this understanding are:
 - There is no definite article in the Greek, so most likely no definite “day” is meant. Peter’s exact phrase occurs nowhere else in the Old or New Testament, so he probably was not quoting a reference to the last judgment.
 - The “*visitation*” most likely is referring to the times when God brings mercy to unbelievers, offering them salvation.
 - At that time, unbelievers will “*glorify*” God.
- What are some of the “*good deeds*” mentioned in verse 12 that Christians can live out? Peter offers some of these in the following verses.

Read 1 Peter 2:13.

- Peter commands believers to submit to human authority (2:18-3:1). The phrase “*of every ordinance of man*” broadens the scope to refer to more than just governmental authority (2:13-17)—to other institutions of authority established for orderly relations among people, such as household slaves to masters (2:18-20) and mutual submission one to another (**Ephesians 5:21**), particularly in the husband wife relationship (3:1-7). The word “*every*” leads us to conclude that not in these situations alone, but in every area where authorities have been placed (parents/children, employer/employee, church leaders/church members). God is honored when we accept and respect those in

authority. We do this for the “*Lord’s sake*” so that He is glorified by our humble submission.

- Some thoughts regarding why submitting to human authority is important:
 - The authority is divinely ordained; thus, we are doing God’s will (**Romans 13:1-7**).
 - Christ accepted the Father’s authority; we are to follow His example.
 - Our humble submission commends Christ to others.
- Peter’s meaning seems to go even deeper. The word “*authority*” (*ktisei*) literally means “creature” or “that which is created.” Thus, Peter explained that believers should, in a sense, accept every other person as an authority because God was their Creator. Believers are to defer to others, willingly putting them first (**Philippians 2:3-4**), showing respect whether it be friend or foe. In telling his readers to accept the authority of the emperor, Peter was speaking of Emperor Nero, a notoriously cruel tyrant who ruled from A.D. 54-68. The emperor was the supreme ruler over all Roman provinces, including the areas to which Peter addressed this letter. Nero was considered the supreme authority by his subjects, even worshiped by them. Christians are never to worship human rulers, but they are to obey his laws because he is an authority put in place by God. Again, consider **Romans 13:1-2**. But here is a word of warning: Peter was not telling believers to compromise their Holy Spirit-directed consciences. Remember, Peter had told the high priest years before, “*We must obey God rather than any human authority*” (**Acts 5:29**). At other times, God had approved disobedience to human authorities (**Exodus 1:17; Daniel 3:13-18; 6:10-24; Acts 4:18-20; Hebrews 11:23**). In these situations, the government had called upon God’s people to sin against God and God’s people had to submit to the higher power—God Himself. If Christians are to be

persecuted, it should be for obeying God, and not for breaking moral or civil laws. Peter himself would later be put to death for his faith during Emperor Nero's intense persecution of Christians.

Read 1 Peter 2:14.

- The king or ruler, with supreme authority, delegates responsibility to representatives in the territories under the king's control. These representative/governors carry out the emperor's commands, enforce the laws, and keep the peace in the provinces. Both Pontius Pilate and Felix had the title of "**governor**" (**Matthew 27:2**; **Acts 23:24**). The words "**by him**" could mean that these governors were sent out by the ruler, or the phrase could be translated "**through him**," meaning God was actually sending the governors "through" the emperor. Peter outlined the God-ordained functions of those in authority. They had been given authority in order to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. Scripture does not recommend one form of government over another. Rather, it simply asks Christians to accept the government under whose authority they find themselves and to cooperate with the rulers as far as their Holy Spirit-directed conscience will allow (**Titus 3:1**).

Read 1 Peter 2:15.

- "**Well doing**" or "**doing good**" refers to the submission that Peter just described in 2:13-14. The "**foolish**" described here are unbelievers who "mouth their ignorance" toward Christians. Peter exhorted the believers to live so righteously that even those foolish people's lies and slander would be silenced. The word "**silence**" is more literally "to muzzle," repeating the idea of 2:12.

Read 1 Peter 2:16.

- Here Peter outlines a paradox of the Christian life. Christians are free, yet servants, living as free people but not free to use that freedom as a cover-up for evil. We cannot use freedom and forgiveness as a cloaking device for self-indulgence, adultery, materialism, etc. **2 Peter 2:19** states, “*People are slaves to whatever masters them.*” Jesus said, “*I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin*” (**John 8:34**). If people yield to their own sinful desires, they will be slaves to those desires. However, if people “yield” to God, they receive freedom from sin (**Romans 6:13-18**). Christian freedom ties inseparably to the Christian life. By God’s grace, Christ freed us for the purpose of serving Him (**Galatians 5:13**).

Read 1 Peter 2:17.

- These four short sentences summarize the Christian’s attitude toward all. First, “*honor all people.*” The word “honor” means to respect, value, or esteem. Because man is made in God’s image, we should show proper respect toward His creation.
- “*Love the brotherhood (family of believers).*” While all believers are called to “respect” everyone, they have an added obligation to those brothers and sisters in the family of God.
- “*Fear God.*” The word “fear” means to show deep respect and awe. It actually means to acknowledge Him, to reverence and honor Him, to prefer Him, to esteem Him, to defer to Him, to praise and worship Him, to love and admire Him. We see next that we believers are to “honor the king” but we “*fear*” God.
- “*Honor the king.*” The word “honor” is translated “respect.” The respect due to “everyone” must also be given to those in authority, whether we agree with

them or not. Peter placed the emperor on the same level as “everyone else.” While Rome’s emperors claimed to be divine, God’s people were only to respect the emperor as they would respect any other human being. They should “fear” God alone.

Read 1 Peter 2:18.

- Peter had already shared with the believers to accept authority (2:13). Here he specifically addresses Christian servants and slaves (**Ephesians 6:5-8; 1 Timothy 6:1-2; Titus 2:9-10**). Believers who were slaves were not set free from serving their masters, but they were set free from slavery to sin. While their masters may not be Christian, that did not permit the servant to be disrespectful or lazy. We must all remember that our ultimate Master is God Himself (**Colossians 3:23-24**). Peter explained that God’s desire is for Christian slaves to fulfill their responsibilities with the right attitude—with all respect. Slaves played a significant part in this society, with several million in the Roman Empire during this time. Slavery was sanctioned by law and part of the empire’s social makeup. Because many slaves and slave owners had become Christians, the early church had to deal straightforwardly with the question of master/slave relations. **Colossians 3:22-4:1** and **Ephesians 6:5-9** explain how Christian masters and slaves should live together in harmony. In Paul’s day, women, children, and slaves had few rights. In the church, however, they had freedoms that society denied them. Paul explained how masters and slaves should live together on different social levels yet equal in Christ. Like Paul, Peter neither condemned nor condoned slavery. To attempt to rebel against the system would only bring the wrath of the powerful Roman Empire and would hurt the cause of the gospel. So the apostles suggested that the believers should live within the system, hoping

to transform it by first transforming lives through salvation in Jesus Christ. Thus, Peter teaches that believing slaves serve well and show respect, not just to Christian masters or to those who were good and considerate, but also to masters who were harsh. Harsh masters might use their power to inflict severe punishments, withhold wages or not pay fairly, force slaves to live in squalor, and have unreasonable expectations. Only by God's grace could Christian slaves be loyal and submit to such a master. Peter encouraged loyalty and perseverance even in the face of unjust treatment.

Read 1 Peter 2:19.

- The word “*for*” refers back to the topic of submission in 2:18. Keep in mind that many of the early church members were slaves, and Roman law regulated the treatment of slaves; but ultimately masters had power over their slaves. Many masters were good and considerate, especially those who were Christian, but many were harsh. Harsh masters could inflict cruel punishments upon slaves. Many slaves died from mistreatment or imprisonment, and in some cases, a master might take out his anger on his slaves, even though the slaves had done nothing wrong. Many of the readers of this letter would have known all too well what it meant to bear up under the pain of unjust suffering. Peter had learned about suffering from Jesus. He knew that Jesus' suffering was part of God's plan (**Matthew 16:21-23; Luke 24:25-27, 44-47**) and was intended to save people (**Matthew 20:28; 26:28**). He also knew that all who follow Jesus must be prepared to suffer (**1 Peter 2:21**). Thus, it would be commendable or praiseworthy if these believers trusted in God as they endured “pain” caused by unjust suffering. By acknowledging God and resting in Him

in the midst of the suffering, there would be peace and contentment (**Isaiah 26:3**).

Read 1 Peter 2:20.

- While bearing the pain of unjust suffering is commendable before God, there is no special commendation for patiently bearing punishment that is deserved (**Mark 14:65**).
- ***“But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.”*** This repeats the thought of 2:19. Christian slaves who patiently endured suffering when they had done no wrong and endured the suffering, patiently taking it rather than lashing out in revenge or hatred is behavior approved by God. It demonstrates His grace and mercy to sinful man. In **Exodus 33:17-19**, Moses asked God to show him His glory. God answered. ***“I will make my goodness pass before you.”*** In the **Exodus 34:6**, when God is passing before Moses, He proclaims, ***“the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth.”*** By our patiently enduring unjust suffering, we are following the example of Jesus Christ, as Peter will explain in the following verses.

Read 1 Peter 2:21.

- The phrase ***“for to this you were called”*** refers back to suffering for doing good. Why have believers been ***“called”*** (1:15; 2:9) to unjust suffering? Because such suffering was endured by Christ, and He had told Peter and the other disciples at the Last Supper that ***“No servant is greater than his master; if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also”*** (**John 15:20**). When we patiently suffer injustice, we are following Christ’s example.

- He endured the unbelief of His own people (**John 1:11**).
- He endured a trial by religious leaders already committed to putting Him to death (**Mark 14:1**).
- He endured the lies of false witnesses (**Matthew 26:59-60**).
- He endured beating and mockery from His people and from the Roman soldiers (**Mark 14:64-65; 15:16-20**).
- He endured merciless flogging (**Mark 15:15**).
- He endured an excruciatingly painful death by crucifixion (**Mark 15:22-37**).
- He endured the insults of bystanders as He suffered on the cross (**Mark 15:29-32**).
- He endured a time of separation from God (**Mark 15:33-34**).
- That the believers were “*to follow His steps*” does not mean that they would die for the sins of the world or die by crucifixion (although some first-century believers may have been crucified). Instead, the example to follow is Jesus’ complete peace and trust in God while facing injustice and persecution. Peter exalted Christ as the model for believers to follow; His example greatly comforts all believers who are persecuted for their faith.

Read 1 Peter 2:22.

- Verses 22-23 explain Christ’s response to unjust suffering. Peter quoted from **Isaiah 53:9**—Isaiah’s prophecy about the suffering of the coming Messiah. Christ’s suffering was completely unjust because He never committed any sin or spoke any lies; there was no good reason for His being condemned to death; even Pilate saw that (**John 19:4**). From personal experience Peter knew Jesus for he had lived and traveled with Him for three years. Close relationships often reveal the worst in people, but Peter had seen the

truth of the prophet's words; Christ was completely sinless (**2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 3:5**).

Read 1 Peter 2:23.

- This is another reference **Isaiah 53**: “*He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.*” Christ faced horrible abuse and suffering. The word “*reviled*” refers to insulting and abusive speech which is clearly seen in **Matthew 26:67-68; 27:27-30**. Jesus did not return abuse nor did He threaten. Had it been us, how tempting it would have been to expose the liars at His trial, to come down from the cross in a great display of power as the hecklers suggested (**Mark 15:30**) or to blast His enemies with God's wrath.
- “*But committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.*” Jesus suffered patiently because He knew God, being sovereign and just, would have the final say and His Heavenly Father would never make a mistake. On His behalf, therefore, Jesus could put the outcome of His life in God's hands. As Jesus kept entrusting Himself and His sufferings to God, so all believers can entrust themselves and their suffering into God's hands as well, knowing that God will ultimately right all wrongs.

Read 1 Peter 2:24.

- This phrase also comes from **Isaiah 53**: “*He bore the sin of many*”; “*by His wounds we are healed.*” Only Christ Himself, the sinless Son of God, could bear our sins on the cross, taking the death penalty for sin and dying in our place, so that we would not have to suffer

the punishment we deserve. In a transaction we cannot comprehend, God placed the sins of the world on Jesus Christ. God knew from eternity past that sin would enter creation; He also knew the solution. In the Old Testament, people would offer unblemished animals as sacrifices for their sins. Eventually Jesus, God's only Son, entered this sinful world as a sinless human being. This sinless, unblemished "Lamb of God" offered Himself for the sins of all people. He suffered for our sakes, bearing our sins to make us acceptable to God. Only He could bridge the gap between the sinless God and sinful mankind. Jesus took our past, present, and future sins upon Himself so that we might die to sin and its power and live for righteousness. Sin still exists, the sinful flesh still rears its head, and temptations still come, but believers have been placed into Christ (**1 Corinthians 1:30a**); when He went to the cross, we went to the cross, and now we have the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin (**Romans 6:6**). Our evil desires, our bondage to sin, and our love of sin died with us, in Christ, on the cross. Furthermore, when He went to the grave, we went to the grave, and when He came out of that grave and ascended to the right hand of the Father, so did we—in Him. Now, united by faith with Him in His resurrection life, we have unbroken fellowship with God and freedom from sin's hold on us. We should regard our old, sinful nature as dead and unresponsive to sin. Because of our union and identification with Christ, we are no longer obligated to carry out those old motives, desires, and goals. We are "dead to sin." But to be simply dead to sin would leave a vacuum; we are now alive to righteousness. Because believers no longer need to live under sin's power, we are free to live for Christ. Paul wrote similar words to the Romans and Galatians:

- ***"Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in***

your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin...but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life” (Romans 6:11-13).

- *“For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:19-20).*
- Christ is our all-sufficient Savior. Having suffered the ultimate injustice and pain on our behalf, His suffering accomplished our salvation; His wounds healed ours. As we trust Him for salvation, we can also trust Him with every step of our lives, through joy and through suffering.

Read 1 Peter 2:25.

- This verse also echoes **Isaiah**: *“All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isaiah 53:6)*. Sheep need the constant protection of a shepherd or they will wander away and end up destroying themselves. People can be like that, wandering through life in whatever direction circumstances might lead them. But that was in the past; now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. Peter describes God as a *“Shepherd”* who tirelessly looks after the sheep, guiding and protecting them (**Psalms 23:1-4; Ezekiel 34:11-16; Luke 15:5-7; John 10:11-16**). Whatever trials and difficulties we may face, the *“Shepherd”* will always be by our side, leading, guiding feeding and protecting, and the *“Overseer of your souls (mind/will/emotions)”* will continually be reproducing the life of Christ within, ultimately producing right thoughts, godly desires, and emotions that are coming from Him.

1 PETER

Chapter 3

WIVES AND HUSBANDS—3:1-7

In 2:11-25, Peter had explained that believers are to live their lives in an exemplary manner before the unbelieving world. He told them to be subject “to every authority instituted among men” (2:13); he then described three areas of that authority: citizens to the government (2:13-17), slaves to masters (2:18-20), and now in Chapter 3 wives to husbands (3:1-7). Anarchy (disorder, confusion, every man “*doing what is right in his own eyes*” (**Deuteronomy 12:8**) results if there is no authority. As Christians, we should not rebel against authority but work within the God-ordained system.

Read 1 Peter 3:1-2.

- The phrase “*in the same way*” or “*likewise*,” refers back to 2:21-23. The idea here is that marriage will just naturally include some suffering and difficult times, and just like Christ, who is our example and who suffered unjustly, the wife can expect the same in life. However, her response during these difficult times of suffering can be just like Christ. Not reviling or threatening but rather abandoning herself to the One Who “*judges righteously*.” The One Who loves her has her best interest at heart and will never make a mistake on her behalf. Christian wives are to accept the God-given authority of their husbands which will go a long way toward keeping harmony in the family, and encouraging unbelieving and wayward husbands.
- Submission of the wife to the husband is an often misunderstood concept, although it is taught in several places in the New Testament (**Ephesians 5:24; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:5**). When a Christian wife is married to an unbelieving husband or to a carnal

Christian, she must be submissive according to God's Word. But she ought not participate in her husband's pagan religion or submit to actions that dishonor God. However, the wife should respect the God-given authority of her husband, while trusting the Lord for the husband to exercise his authority in a loving and gentle manner. For marriage and family relationships to run smoothly there must be one appointed leader; and God has appointed the husband. The wife should willingly follow her husband's leadership in Christ, acknowledging that this is his responsibility. Submission does not mean blind obedience, nor does it mean inferiority. A wife who accepts her husband's authority is accepting the relationship that God has designed in giving her husband leadership and responsibility (**1 Corinthians 11:3**).

- In the first century, when a man became a Christian, he usually brought his whole family into the church with him (**Acts 16:29-34**). By contrast, a woman who became a Christian usually came into the church alone. Under Roman law, the husband and father had authority over all members of his household, including his wife. A wife who demanded her rights as a free woman in Christ could endanger her marriage and her life if her husband disapproved. Instead, she should live her new faith quietly and respectfully. Peter reassured Christian women that their husbands could be won to the Lord through witnessing by their behavior (**1 Corinthians 9:19-22**). By loving service, the wives could show their husbands the kind of self-giving love that Christ showed the church. Their lives should reflect both "***purity***" and "***reverence***."
- It might be good to stop here a moment and consider the Amplified version's translation of this scripture: "***When they observe the pure and modest way in which you conduct yourselves, together with your reverence (for your husband; you are to feel for him all that reverence includes: to respect, defer to, revere***

him—to honor, esteem, appreciate, prize, and, in the human sense, to adore him, that is to admire, praise, be devoted to, deeply love, and enjoy your husband.)”

By being exemplary wives, the wife would please the husband. At the very least, the husband would then permit his wife to continue practicing her “strange” religion with hope that her husband would join her and become a Christian also.

Read 1 Peter 3:3.

- Writing directly to Christian wives, Peter took particular note of their concerns. Like the woman of today, these women wanted to be attractive. Although there were no television stars and magazine models setting the standards for beauty, worldly beauty was achieved in the same way—hairstyle, jewelry, and clothes. But Peter contrasted putting beautiful “things” on the outside to revealing the natural inner beauty that a Christian woman could have because of Christ (3:4). This passage is teaching that a woman’s true beauty does not come from outward adornments, not that women can’t braid their hair or wear gold jewelry or nice clothes, but that Christian women should not be obsessed by fashion or outward appearance (**1 Timothy 2:9-10**). On the other hand, neither should they be so unconcerned that they do not care for themselves. Hygiene, neatness, and grooming are important. Beauty and adornment have their place, but true beauty begins inside (**Proverbs 31:30**).

Read 1 Peter 3:4.

- Rather than focusing on external beauty and adornment, the focus of true beauty in Christian women should be the inner self, the soul (mind, will, emotions) complete with personality, attitudes, thoughts, and motivations that are manifested by her

words and actions. For believers, this inner self is being changed into the image of Christ by the Holy Spirit. While styles and fashions change, hair becomes gray, jewelry tarnishes, and clothes wear out, there is an inner beauty that is not corruptible. Peter wrote that the characteristic of this inner beauty is a ***“gentle and quiet spirit.”*** The word ***“spirit”*** here refers to the disposition, temperament, or frame of mind. To be ***“gentle”*** or ***“quiet”*** refers to manifesting meekness, humility, consideration of others, not inflated with self-importance or demanding one’s own rights, not being pushy or overly assertive, and not causing dissensions with inappropriate words or gossip. Not only is such a temperament a blessing to these women’s husbands, but it is also very precious in God’s sight. God is pleased when His child manifests Christ-likeness. As Christ suffered wrongly but bore it patiently, so believers are to be patient in suffering (2:20). As he was ***“gentle”*** and ***“quiet,”*** also translated ***“meek”*** (Matthew 5:5; 11:29; 21:5), so believers are to be gentle and quiet.

Read 1 Peter 3:5-6.

- ***“For in this manner”*** makes reference back to being adorned with a gentle and quiet spirit (3:4). Peter explained that the ***“holy women”*** of the past were both holy and beautiful, not because they lived perfect lives and had perfect appearance, but because they trusted in God. Solomon, the writer of the book of Proverbs, also understood this: ***“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised”*** (Proverbs 31:30). These women trusted in God and submitted to the authority structure that God had established (1 Corinthians 11:3). Peter used the plural word ***“women,”*** referring to many Old Testament ***“holy”*** women, but then he singled out one woman in particular as an example—Sarah. We read

that Sarah was submissive to her husband Abraham; she obeyed and called him lord. It's interesting to note that the Bible records a few incidents in which Sarah's actions and attitudes were far less than "**holy**" (**Genesis 16:2, 6; 18:15**). She even doubted and ridiculed Abraham (**Genesis 18:12**). However, Peter commended her attitude of obedience and submission, hanging his argument on Sarah's use of the word "**lord**." Why did Peter use Sarah as an example when her submission was far less than perfect? It could be because Sarah was considered the mother of God's people as Abraham was the father (**Genesis 12:1-3**). The prophet Isaiah wrote, "**Look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was but one, and I blessed him and made him many**" (**Isaiah 51:2**). Not only was Sarah an example because of her faithfulness to God and to her husband, but also because she was the mother of all believers; under the old covenant, the mother of the Jewish nation; under the new covenant, the mother of all who believe (**Galatians 4:22-26**). "**Whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror**." Peter saw Christian women as true spiritual daughters of Sarah, and thus true children, "**daughters**" of God.

- Finally, Peter called upon Christian wives to do well, and never to give way to fear. It might be good to consider **1 John 4:18** and the words "**there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear**." Knowing of and by faith trusting in God's perfect love for us casts out fear. Another verse to ponder is **2 Corinthians 5:14**: "**The love of Christ compels (controls) us**." If we only knew how much Jesus loves us, we would have no fear. A Christian woman's faith in God's love for her will cast out all fear. In context, this could refer to not fearing the physical harm that might come from an ungodly husband or not fearing the result of submitting to her husband or not fearing what might

happen if she must disobey her husband. It could also refer to the theme of persecution throughout this letter. In this context, a wife's hope in God (3:5) allows her both to reverence her husband (3:2) and to live with him free from fear (3:6).

Read 1 Peter 3:7.

- ***“Husbands, likewise,”*** again refers back to 2:21-23 and to the words ***“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.”*** Remember that we saw a similar phrase written to the wives in 3:1, ***“Wives, likewise.”*** Just like Christ who suffered unjustly and did not revile or threaten, the wife in verse 1, and now the husband in this verse 7, are instructed to do likewise. Just as the wives were to abandon themselves to the only one who judges rightly, and submit to their husbands, so the husbands (in the same way) were to abandon themselves to God and live with their wives in an understanding way and grant them honor. The phrase ***“dwell with them with understanding”*** is literally translated ***“living together according to knowledge.”*** A husband who is considerate of his wife means more than just a kind attitude; it goes deeper, implying that his consideration of her is based on his knowledge of her needs, desires, gifts, and abilities. A husband who acts on his knowledge of his wife will greatly enrich her life as well as his own. This is the message of Paul in **Ephesians 5:25-27**. Peter also explained that a husband must acknowledge and respect his wife as the weaker partner. The word ***“weaker”*** is not meant to diminish women but to build a case for honoring and

respecting them. Women had less authority in the marriage, so the husbands were encouraged to use their authority with respect for their wives. Male authority does not excuse abuse of power. A man who respects his wife will protect, honor, and help her. He will remain with her. He will respect her opinions, listen to her advice, be considerate of her needs, and relate to her both privately and publicly with love, courtesy, insight, and tact.

- ***“Being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”*** Even though God gave husbands authority in the marriage and family, wives are equal to their husbands in spiritual privileges and eternal relationships. Both men and women who are believers are ***“heirs”*** of the gracious gift of eternal life. The actual word means ***“joint heirs”*** and signifies equality. Paul had written to the Galatians, ***“There is no longer Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave nor free, there is no longer male nor female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus”*** (Galatians 3:28). Peter added the admonition to husbands ***“that your prayers be not hindered.”*** Would we say that if a man is not considerate and respectful to his wife, then his prayers will be hindered? The answer is yes, and here is why. If a man is insensitive to his wife and mistreating her, he is in the flesh; and if he is in the flesh and praying, then we could safely say that he is praying in the flesh. In **Isaiah 59:2** we read, ***“your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear.”*** A right relationship with God depends on our ***“walking in the Spirit”*** and will ultimately produce right relationships with others. If men use their position to mistreat their wives, their relationship with God will naturally suffer.

SUFFERING FOR DOING GOOD–3:8-22

Peter knew the believers would soon face persecution and reminded the believers they would need unity, love, and support from one another. He also assured the believers that no matter what sufferings they might have to face, their response was to quietly trust in their God and they would not be shaken by anything the persecutors may do.

Read 1 Peter 3:8.

- In using the word “*finally*,” Peter was not concluding the epistle; rather, he was summing up a series of exhortations concerning submission which began in 2:18. After speaking to slaves (2:18-25), wives (3:1-6), and husbands (3:7), Peter now addresses “*all of you*,” referring to all believers and lists five Christ-like qualities which build unity in the body of Christ.
 1. “*Be of one mind*” is also translated “*have unity of spirit*” and has the idea of walking together in the same direction (**Romans 12:16; 15:5; Philippians 1:27; 2:2**).
 2. “*Having compassion*” means sharing in others’ needs and being sensitive to their feelings. The believers to whom Peter wrote, although scattered across the world and unknown personally to each other, understood and appreciated one another because of their mutual relationship with Jesus Christ (**Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 12:26; Hebrews 4:15**).
 3. “*Love as brothers*”—the Greek word is *philadelphos* referring not only to family love but to the special love that should draw all Christians together (**1 Thessalonians 4:9-10**).
 4. “*Be tenderehearted*” refers to one’s deepest feelings and, like “*sympathy*” or “*compassion*,” implies being conscious of others’ needs but includes a motivation to alleviate the need. Believers who are

abiding in Christ will be deeply touched and moved by the hurts, pain, needs, and joys of fellow believers.

5. “*Humble in spirit.*” (NASB) Humility is having an honest estimate of oneself before God. Humility does not negate one’s own worth or abilities, nor does it inflate them. The essences of true Christianity is not to have either high or low thoughts of oneself, but rather not to be thinking of self at all (**Matthew 11:29; Ephesians 4:2; Philippians 2:3-8**).

- Peter developed the qualities of compassion and humility the hard way. In his early days with Christ, these attitudes did not come naturally to his impulsive, strong-willed personality (**Mark 8:31-33; John 13:6-9**). But the Holy Spirit changed Peter, molding his strong personality into the compassionate and humble image of Christ.

Read 1 Peter 3:9.

- Peter now describes how Christians should act toward those in pagan cultures—cultures that can be very hostile toward Christians. While it would be most natural to repay evil with evil and to return insult with insult, Jesus had taught and exemplified otherwise: ***“But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also [...] Pray for those who persecute you”*** (**Matthew 5:39, 44**). When Jesus ***“was reviled, He did not revile in return”*** (2:23), not repaying abuse for abuse or insult for insult. Peter had already encouraged his readers to follow Christ’s example: ***“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps”*** (2:21). These words are similar to Paul’s words for believers who are persecuted for their faith:
 - ***“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse”*** (**Romans 12:14**).

- *“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody” (Romans 12:17).*
- *“When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it” (1 Corinthians 4:12).*
- *“Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else” (1 Thessalonians 5:15).*
- Evil and abuse are to be repaid with *“blessing.”* The phrase *“you were called”* suggests that Peter was referring to his previous words about believers being called to non-retaliation, to repaying their persecutors with gracious words instead of cursing. Finally, *“that you might inherit a blessing”* has caused much discussion. What does *“blessing”* mean? The word *kleronomeo* can mean to obtain or inherit something in this life (**Hebrews 12:16-17**). Believers already know they have the inheritance of the blessing of eternal life. However, as Peter makes clear, there are spiritual blessings in this life as well as physical blessings.
- We could paraphrase this verse in this way: *“With the grace that God has given to us, we no longer repay evil with evil or insult with insult. Instead, we have the God-given power and desire to bless them that curse us, knowing that this is God’s will for us, and will result in our enjoying this blessing.”*

Read 1 Peter 3:10.

- Verses 10-12 are a quotation from **Psalm 34:12-16**. The theme of **Psalm 34** is that God undertakes for those who are afflicted or in trouble, which fits very well with the theme of Peter’s letter. Peter quoted these verses as his “proof text” for his words in 3:8-9, thus he began verse 10 with the word *“for.”* The phrase *“the one who desires life, to love and see good*

days” may refer to people who have found contentment in Christ and can have “*good days*” no matter how bad their situations might be. Keep in mind that “righteous living,” which includes not speaking evil or deceit, is of the Spirit. People who desire to love life and good days, by God’s grace, keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit. As reported by James, people who don’t guard their tongues cause themselves, as well as others, all kinds of problems (**James 3:3-12**). Thus, Peter encourages believers never to return insult for insult (3:9), and to rid themselves of malice, deceit, and slander (2:1).

Read 1 Peter 3:11.

- Those who “*keep their tongues from speaking evil and their lips from telling lies*” (3:10) have turned away from evil. Thus, Peter called upon believers to be sympathetic, compassionate, and humble (3:8), to return good for evil (3:9), and emphasized good words in 2:12, 14-15, 20; 3:1. This verse sums up that emphasis. Peter was calling upon the believers to live in harmony and to love one another (3:8) as well as to accept and submit to authority (2:13-20; 3:1-7).

Read 1 Peter 3:12.

- Those who do not retaliate, as described in 3:10-11, are relying on God for protection. Most times in this world, we think that we just have two choices—either “vengeance” or “justice.” We often pride ourselves on not “getting even” (vengeance) because we know that vengeance is not the way for Christians. But we do have “our rights,” you know (justice). If someone does something to us, we immediately want to get them back. This is a very pagan, uncivilized way to live which many of us seem to be going back to today—

taking the law into our own hands. Often, this is a **lose/lose** situation—one is dead and the other ends up on death row.

- As for the second option, justice, most of us in America today pride ourselves on having “our rights.” We really enjoy blaming someone else. But blame-shifting goes all the way back to the Garden (**Genesis 3:9-12**). When something goes wrong, we may not want to get even, but we sure do know whose fault it is. If something is missing, we immediately think we know who took it. In the Old Testament, on the Day of Atonement, the blame was transferred to a “scapegoat” (**Leviticus 16:8-10**). We often use that term today in our justice system; however, it’s a win-lose situation—one wins and one loses. The idea is for the right one to win. However, in the book of Habakkuk, it speaks of justice being perverted (**Habakkuk 1:4**). So now, many times, the good guys get punished, and the bad guys go free. It becomes, not a matter of right and wrong, but who has the best lawyer. In most law schools today, right and wrong are not the major issue, but rather, can you win the case.
- But how do we get to a win/win situation? There is only one way and that is through “grace.” When we move up to grace, we find the key word is “forgive” while the key phrase for vengeance is “get even.” The main word for justice is “blame.” Instead of lose/lose or win/lose, there is now potential for win/win. However, the cost is death, death to self. All rights are set aside, whether they are scales of justice or swords of vengeance because vindication is left to the Lord (**Isaiah 54:17**). It’s coming to the cross—to the throne of grace—naked and unashamed, no accusations or thoughts of getting even. Therefore, grace offers a third option: rather than “vengeance” or “blame,” by God’s grace, we can now “forgive.”

- ***“Those who do right”*** or ***“the righteous ones”*** are those who are declared righteous by faith in Jesus Christ. ***“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous”*** means He not only sees them but also watches over them for their good. Keep in mind God created us, He bought us with a price, and He has set us apart for His possession and use. He loves us and has our best interest at heart. Whatever happens, God’s child can know that His promises, whether in this life or in the life to come, are sure.
- Not only are the Lord’s eyes open and watching, but ***“His ears are open to [our] prayers.”*** These words would have been a great comfort to the suffering Christians to whom Peter was writing. Not only were they seen, heard, and ultimately protected, but those who hurt them would be dealt with by God Himself.
- ***“But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”*** This warning implies a threat of imminent judgment, not just God’s disapproval (**Leviticus 17:10; Psalm 34:16; Ezekiel 14:8**). Therefore, there is no need for believers to retaliate; instead, we trust that God will avenge the wrongs His people have suffered (**Romans 12:19**).

Read 1 Peter 3:13.

- Up to now in this letter, the theme of persecution facing these young churches has been in the background. At this point, however, it becomes a prominent theme. After describing the attitudes and actions that should characterize God’s people (3:8-12), Peter now begins to explain how believers could live in an evil world in the face of persecution. The word for ***“harm”*** (*kakoun*) plays off of the word ***“evil”*** (*kaka*) in 3:12.
- This is a rhetorical question. Common sense tells people, ***“who would want to harm you if you are doing right.”*** It is always the wise thing to do what is good

and to follow the authorities and laws. Keep in mind Peter was not teaching that if believers behaved well, they would escape persecution; he had already stated that they might do well and still suffer for it (2:20). The next verse restates this possibility of suffering for doing right.

Read 1 Peter 3:14.

- Usually people are safe if they live lawfully and carefully, but that is not always the case. Occasionally persecution comes with no logical reason. Christians who were living morally and lawfully in the Roman Empire still suffered. The atmosphere was charged with suspicion and hostility toward Christians. The phrase “*even if you should suffer*” speaks of an event that is considered highly unlikely. They might have to suffer even though they were “*doing what is right.*” This phrase is also translated “*for righteousness’ sake.*” When believers absorb the full cost and hurt of being mistreated for their faith, they are suffering for doing what is right. “*You are blessed.*” These believers who suffered for “*doing what was right,*” who “*suffered for righteousness’ sake,*” were blessed, meaning “highly privileged.” Jesus had said, “*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:10).
- “*And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.*” Alluding to Isaiah 8:12-13, Peter counseled the believers not to fear persecution. Evil threats are empty because they can not harm the eternal souls of God’s people. The Greek word for troubled means shaken up or disturbed and refers to emotional turmoil. God alone is to be feared. When people respect and honor Him, they have nothing else to fear. Peter remembered Jesus’ words: “*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be*

afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

Read 1 Peter 3:15.

- Instead of being occupied with fear, believers are encouraged to focus on Christ himself. This is also translated ***“reverence Christ”*** or ***“sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts.”*** Biblically speaking, the ***“heart”*** is the emotional part of the soul where fear dwells. Peter wanted these believers to replace fear with faith and reverence. By acknowledging and depending on Christ, they would be able to rest in him, and have no place in their hearts for fear. This is possibly a reference to **(Isaiah 8:13)**.
- ***“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.”*** Peter called upon the believers to fear not, but he didn’t stop there. Their faith in Christ would be an active faith, producing a God-given power and desire to speak out. While Peter may have been thinking about believers speaking in a courtroom, he seems also to have had in mind the everyday informal inquiries that might be directed at believers from either hostile or friendly neighbors. The words ***“a defense”*** can also be translated ***“an answer”*** and usually refers to responding to an accusation **(Acts 22:1; 25:16; 1 Corinthians 9:3)**. Whether it be formal charges or informal accusations, believers are ready to explain the reason for the hope that is in us. Paul certainly took advantage of these opportunities **(Acts 22:1-21; 24:10-24; 26:1-23)**. God desires for Christians to be ready and able to give a reasonable defense of their faith. They need not be apologists or theologians, but every mature Christian should be able to clearly explain his or her own reasons for being a Christian. It is true we ought not be arrogant or obnoxious in sharing our faith, but we should be

prepared to give an answer, gently and respectfully, when asked about our belief, our lifestyle, or our Christian perspective. Peter had already said they should be sympathetic, tender, loving, and humble (3:8); he had explained that they were not to return insult for insult (3:9).

Read 1 Peter 3:16.

- A clear conscience refers to one's personal integrity before God, as he or she lives life open and honest before Him. Unbelievers also have consciences to guard their morality and actions (**Romans 2:14-15**); but a Christian's conscience has been transformed by God. The Holy Spirit works in each believer to know and understand God's will and to reprogram over a lifetime his or her conscience according to God's desires. How can believers follow Peter's advice to keep a clear conscience? Many would say, "do what you know is right; avoid willful disobedience." However, if we do disobey, they would say, "repent and ask forgiveness." Keep in mind that all these are good things but not God's way to keep a "*clear conscience*."
- So how do we keep a clear conscience? "*The blood of Christ* (**Hebrews 9:14**). In the first half of **Romans 1 to 8**, we see the reference to the blood of Christ twice. As we look a bit deeper, we see that the blood deals with what we have done,(our sins). Let's briefly look at the blood and its value to us in dealing with our sins (**Romans 3:23-25; 5:8-9**):
 - The blood is primarily for God. When sin occurs, it causes death/separation (**Romans 6:23; Isaiah 59:1-2**).
 - The blood is for "atonement"—payment, satisfaction, or reconciliation (**Leviticus 17:11**). We need forgiveness for the sins we have committed, and they are forgiven—not because God

overlooks what we have done but because He sees the blood. The blood then is primarily for God. If we want to understand the value of the blood, then we must see the value God places on it (**1 John 1:7; Hebrews 9:22**). All throughout the Old Testament the word “blood” is used in connection with the idea of atonement, and it is used in this way over 100 times.

- In the Old Testament there was a day that had great bearing on the matter of the people’s sins, and that day was the Day of Atonement. On that day, no one could enter the tabernacle itself except the high priest. It was he alone who took the blood and, going into “the most Holy Place,” sprinkled it there to make atonement for the people. You see, the high priest was a type of Christ (**Hebrews 9:11-12**). We must remember that God is the one who demands that the blood be presented in order to satisfy His own righteousness, and it is He who says, “*when I see the blood, I will pass over you*” (**Exodus 12:23**).
- **THE BLOOD OF CHRIST WHOLLY SATISFIES GOD.** The blood must also satisfy us. It has, therefore, a second value and that is toward man. When sin occurs it brings with it a sense of guilt, and the blood cleanses our consciences (**Hebrews 10:22**). This verse can be confusing. Let’s look carefully at what it says; it does not say that the blood of Jesus cleanses our hearts. We are told in **Jeremiah 17:9** that the heart is desperately wicked, and in **Ezekiel 36:26** that God does more than cleanse it—He gives us new hearts. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that the blood cleanses our hearts. The cleansing work of the blood here in **Hebrews 10** refers to the heart, but it is in relation to the conscience: “*Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.*”

- We shouldn't be shocked if we sin because the very nature of the flesh is to sin. It is because we have not come to realize how helpless we are that we still have some expectations in ourselves, in our flesh (**John 6:63; Mark 14:38**). There is nothing more helpless and hopeless than a man living in guilt because such a man is not trusting in the blood. When we trust in the blood, our conscience is at once cleared and our sense of guilt removed.
- A Scripture that has meant so much to so many is **1 Timothy 1:17-19**. The Phillip's translation of the Bible translates these verses this way: ***"Sending Timothy out to battle armed only with faith and a good conscience."*** Faith and a good conscience are interdependent of each other. As soon as we find our conscience is uneasy, our faith leaks away and immediately we can no longer face God. Guilt weakens our faith, but the walk of faith produces a good conscience. In order for us to keep walking with the Lord, walking with a clear conscience, we must know the value of the blood. Our basis of approach must always be the blood of Christ. God's acceptance of that blood is the ground upon which we may enter; there is no other (**Hebrews 10:19, 22**).
- Some additional Scriptures to ponder regarding the conscience are **Acts 23:1; Romans 9:1; 2 Corinthians 1:12; and 2 Timothy 1:3**.
- ***"When they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed."*** Why is there all this concern about right living and clear consciences? It is because we live in a fallen and hostile world. Just by being Christians, we often find ourselves facing persecution. Peter says do not supply our enemies with more ammunition by breaking laws or acting and speaking in an inappropriate manner. If Christians' lives are above reproach, unbelievers would be ashamed of their slanderous remarks against

God's children. The word "slander" means to speak evil of another in order to destroy his or her good reputation. This verse is similar in content with 2:12 where Peter urges believers to act honorably before unbelievers. In 2:12, Peter wrote that if unbelievers see the "*honorable deeds*" of believers, they may in the end glorify God. In this verse, however, the reaction of the accusing unbelievers is quite different. Instead of glorifying God when they see the good behavior of believers, they appear to persist in their slander. Thus, these evil people will be "ashamed" or be "put to shame" or be "disgraced."

Read 1 Peter 3:17.

- Peter referred to the advice he had given servants in 2:19-20, suggesting that if Christians were to suffer, it should never be for wrongdoing. Here he expanded the teaching to all believers: If there was to be suffering in a Christian's life, it should never be for doing evil. Peter reveals the reason for this in the next verse. Because Christ suffered unjustly so that people might be saved, so believers ought to patiently endure unjust suffering because such an attitude is a powerful witness that could lead unbelievers to Christ. Those who deservedly suffer are poor witnesses for Christ.

Read 1 Peter 3:18.

- The results of Christ's innocent suffering confirm Peter's point in 3:13-17, that unjustly persecuted believers can consider themselves blessed. Christ suffered and died, and although He seemed to have been defeated, He rose again to greater glory (**Philippians 2:5-11**). The believers could be confident and trust God for the outcome of their suffering as well. Jesus Christ, God's Son, "*the righteous*" ("righteous" is singular), died for the sins

of “*the unrighteous*” (“unrighteous” is plural). Peter had previously quoted from **Isaiah 53:9** that Christ “*committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth*” (2:22). Only because Christ was perfect and righteous could He be an acceptable sacrifice for our sins. Only by paying the penalty that sin deserved could Christ bring sinners to God. Only by having our penalty paid can we sinners approach the holy God. Only by Christ’s sacrifice can unholy people have a relationship with the holy God. Christ’s death was “*once for all*.” His sacrifice was sufficient. No one else will have to die for our sins; Christ will not have to die again.

- “[*He was*] put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.” Christ’s death for sins was not the end of the story. While He had been put to death in the flesh, He was afterward made alive in the Spirit. Jesus Christ was both human and divine throughout His life (**Luke 3:31; 2 Timothy 2:8**). Maintaining a clear emphasis on both Christ’s human nature and His divine nature is important. In Christ’s humanity, we see His identification with us and His excellent moral example. In Christ’s divinity, we have one capable to take our place, to receive the punishment for sin that is due us. Christ lives “*in the Spirit*,” and in that state He opens the way and ushers us, who are positionally placed in Him, into God’s presence.

Read 1 Peter 3:19-20.

- The words “*by whom also*” form a break in thought here and refer back to “*in the Spirit*” in the previous verse. The meaning of making a proclamation to the spirits in prison is not completely clear, mainly because the word translated “spirits” (*pneumata*) can be used to refer to human spirits, angels, or demons (the singular *pneuma* is also used to refer to God’s Holy Spirit). The passage further indicates that these “*spirits in prison*”

are those “*who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.*”

- Three main questions arise: (1) Who were the “spirits” to whom Christ made His proclamation? (2) When did Christ make this proclamation? (3) What was the content of this proclamation? To answer the three questions: (1) The fallen angels were the spirits. (2) The time of the proclamation is not known for certain, but either it was between Jesus’ death and resurrection or at the time of his ascension. (3) The content of Christ’s message was to proclaim His victory to the fallen angels. The passage shows that Christ’s glorious reign extends over all the evil authorities and fallen angels that had wreaked havoc on the earth and still do. Yet Peter offered his readers a vision: While the forces of evil could not yet be completely silenced, the believers could rest assured that Christ had already won the battle (**Colossians 2:15**). One day this will be evident to all, and the forces of evil will receive their final judgment. Even today, believers must not be surprised by suffering because Jesus Himself was put to death in the flesh before He was made alive in the spirit. Christ became the true victor over what seemed apparent defeat. In our suffering, we are blessed, because our defeat is not final. The purpose of this reference to disobedient spirits is not to identify these spirits directly with the slanderers and accusers of Christians in the Roman Empire in Peter’s time. Instead, Peter wrote to reassure the readers that if Christ can “subdue” the fallen angels, how much more easily can He deal with their persecutors. In Jesus, we have the assurance of final victory.

Read 1 Peter 3:21.

- Speaking of water led Peter to explain that Noah was saved “**through water**” (3:20). The Greek word *dia* can indicate “by” water or “through” water. Scholarly arguments have gone both ways, but most likely Peter had a double meaning in mind. The waters of the flood buoyed the ark to rescue Noah and his family, but they also destroyed the evildoers. This water corresponds to that baptism. It was neither the ark nor the water that “saved” Noah but the power of God. The flood came as a judgment upon evil people, but for Noah it brought deliverance from their mockery and sin, ushering him into a new life. In baptism, believers identify with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which separates us from the lost and gives us new life (**Romans 6:4**). The water of baptism does not “wash away sin,” instead, water baptism is an outward public display of our faith, as well as a physical picture of the spiritual truth that not only Christ died and rose again for us, but that we died and rose positionally with Him (**Romans 6:3-5; Galatians 3:27**). Water baptism does not save anyone, but the belief it represents results in salvation and points toward sanctification. Peter explained that this “**baptism that now saves you**” results in a good conscience toward God. By identifying themselves with Christ’s death and resurrection through baptism, Peter’s readers could be progressively saved or set free from sin’s power (**Romans 6:6**), and therefore stand before God with a clear conscience. Public baptism is a proclamation to others of our faith, as well as a reminder to ourselves of our co-crucifixion with Christ. The water of baptism has no spiritual power in itself; the rite of baptism does not save anyone. However, spiritual baptism is something quite different (**Colossians 2:11-13; Romans 6:3-5**).
- “[**Baptism saves you**] **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ**.” Continuing from his previous thought, Peter explained that baptism saves you only because

Jesus Christ has made that salvation available. Paul explained how believers are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection: ***"How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord"*** (Romans 6:2-11).

Read 1 Peter 3:22.

- Peter now exalts Christ; he is raising the value of Jesus by pointing to His victory over all opposition, whether it be spiritual opposition or cruel treatment by earthly human government.
- ***"Who has gone into heaven."*** Peter had been an eyewitness as he saw Jesus ***"lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight"*** (Acts 1:9). When Jesus ascended, He went to a place where God is. Throughout the New Testament, this is described as ***"heaven"*** (Mark 16:19; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 4:14). In heaven, Jesus is at God's right hand. In

ancient cultures, to sit at a sovereign's "right hand" indicated a position of great favor and authority. At God's right hand, Christ has royal power and dignity as a result of his resurrection (**Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Acts 2:34-35; Romans 8:34; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:13**). Christ's authority includes submission to Him by angels, authorities and powers; all spiritual beings in the universe, both good and evil; everything on earth and heaven is presently subject to Christ. One day in the future, when He returns to judge, His power and authority will be made known to everyone.

1 PETER

Chapter 4

LOVING ONE ANOTHER IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING—4:1-11

Peter wrote much regarding Christian living and how it should differ from the ordinary pattern of the world.

Read 1 Peter 4:1.

- The phrase “*arm yourselves*” is a military metaphor. With what were the Christians of Peter’s days to arm themselves? They were to arm themselves with the same intention, the same courageous attitude and mind-set that Christ had toward suffering. This does not mean that believers should actively seek martyrdom; nevertheless, they should “*arm*” themselves for death if necessary (**John 15:20-21**). Those who are armed with this intention have an unswerving resolve to do God’s will in every situation; those so armed will be able to stand strong in the face of any persecution. They can persevere because of their personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Peter went on to explain that whoever has suffered in the flesh has “*ceased from [finished with] sin.*” The question arises, if the believers were to arm themselves to suffer in order to stay away from sin, how could that be suffering as Christ suffered? How did Christ’s suffering accomplish His being “finished with sin”? Taken alone, this phrase sounds as though Peter was saying that suffering cleanses people from sinning. We know that is not true, because many people have suffered for the Lord, yet are not completely without sin (**1 John 1:8**). We will not be sinless until Christ returns. In addition, Jesus did not need to be cleansed from sin by suffering, for He was

without sin in His nature and never sinned in His behavior. The most likely interpretation is that Christians, having died in Christ (**Romans 6:6**) are one with Him. They are in union with Christ, so they, by faith, regard themselves as dead to sin and are no longer in bondage to sin's power (**Romans 6:14**); however, there is a growth process where there are days of sunshine as well as days of storm. Some days are very difficult, and suffering is all a part of the necessary growth process. Keep in mind that when we, by grace through faith, say "no" to the flesh, it can be extremely painful (suffering). Just as Christ's sufferings led to death and resurrection, so our suffering can move us closer to the cross where sin and selfishness are left behind and we enter more fully into a new life in Christ. Christ's suffering made Him victorious over Satan; believers' suffering, strengthens our faith and solidifies the Christ-life within. In light of all that has been said, because we have been crucified with Christ, and He is being formed in us, we can make this statement: "believers '*arm*' yourselves to be Christ-like in the face suffering."

Read 1 Peter 4:2.

- When believers have so "*armed*" themselves (4:1) with the same intentions and attitudes of Christ, their strengthened faith in the fact that they have been crucified with Christ, will cause them to live no longer "*in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.*" This describes the difference between believers' lives without Christ and their new lives in Him. The following quote by Andrew Murray seems rather appropriate: "*There is a great difference between sloth and rest; between deadness and quietness. There is also a vast difference between constant nervous business and spirit-controlled*

activity; between working for God and having Him do His work through us. It is the infinite difference between self and Christ.”

- Before conversion, they lived only to satisfy their human desires; after conversion, they are concerned with living by God’s will, not their own. “**Human desires**” or “**lusts of men**” is used here in a negative sense and are desires that war against our souls (2:11). These desires are coming from the flesh and are in opposition to “**the will of God.**” A good example could be Sarai, Abram’s wife, whose desire was to have a child. When she was unable to conceive, she sent her husband to her handmaid Hagar. Hagar’s child, Ishmael, was unacceptable to God, and therefore God did not recognize him as a child of Abraham (**Genesis 22:2a**).

Read 1 Peter 4:3.

- Peter urged the believers to no longer live as they had in the past. These believers had new lives in Christ, so the idea was to spend the rest of their earthly lives putting aside their sinful human desires and following “**God’s will**” (4:2). Peter reminded them of the shameful activities of their past when they lived like pagans (the Gentiles). Jews often referred to the pagan world as “Gentiles.” Peter’s list of evil actions, activities, and attitudes resembles Paul’s in **Romans 13:13**. These have no place in believers’ lives:
 - **Licentiousness** (debauchery) is open and excessive indulgence in sexual sins. A licentious person has no sense of shame or restraint.
 - **Passions** (lusts) are fleshly, sinful human desires.
 - **Drunkenness** refers to excessive use of wine and strong drink.
 - **Revels** (orgies) are drunken parties often filled with sexual promiscuity.

- **Carousing** is one's active involvement in the above-mentioned revels.
- **Lawless idolatry.** Peter culminated his list with these words, indicating that many of the above acts were associated with the worship of pagan gods.

Read 1 Peter 4:4.

- When a person becomes a Christian, often his or her lifestyle changes drastically. This was especially true for first-century believers who had come out of the morally corrupt pagan world. Many of Peter's readers were Jewish Christians, but, as 4:3 indicates, others had come from a pagan background. Former Jews would have at least led a morally upright life, while former pagans had been involved in the activities that Peter just listed (4:3). Christians no longer desire to plunge into the same flood of dissipation (**Romans 7:15**). "*Plunge with them*" is also translated "*join them*" or "*run with them*," referring to the Christian's former group of friends and their common activities. "*Flood of dissipation*" is also translated "*unrestrained indulgence*." Believers no longer desired to be involved in these activities and communicated it to their friends. Not only did the former friends think it strange that the Christians had suddenly stopped joining them, but they also became the persecutors: "*they heap abuse on you*" or "*speak evil of you*." This is "peer pressure." A believer's refusal to participate in an activity is a silent condemnation of that activity. Unbelievers then react with hostility, often because they want to justify their actions or silence their own consciences.

Read 1 Peter 4:5.

- Unbelievers who live self-centered, immoral lives (4:3), and who “*heap abuse*” on Christians (4:4) will one day give an account to the one whom they are ultimately slandering: God Himself (**Psalm 73**). Scripture makes clear the certainty of judgment (**Revelation 20:11-15**). Believers need not fear eternal punishment because Jesus paid it all.

Read 1 Peter 4:6.

- “*For this reason*” refers back to the subject of 4:5, the final judgment. Peter’s words that the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead have caused much debate among scholars. Most likely, however, Peter was referring to those physically dead at the time of his writing who had heard and accepted the gospel. Many people in the early church had concerns about life after death. In Thessalonica, Christians worried that loved ones who died before Christ’s return might never see Christ (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**). They wondered if those who died would be able to experience the promised eternal life. Peter explained that these believers, though they had been judged in the flesh as everyone is judged—that is, they died physically as everyone dies physically—will still one day live in the spirit as God does.
- Perhaps some of the “abuse” heaped on the believers (4:4) included unbelievers’ scoffing that it meant nothing to be a Christian because the Christians died just like everyone else. Peter’s readers needed to be reminded that the dead (both the faithful and their oppressors) would be raised—the faithful to eternal reward, the unfaithful to eternal punishment.

Read 1 Peter 4:7.

- The fact that God is “ready to judge” (4:5), indicates that the end of all things is near. These early Christians who faced persecution took great comfort in the fact that their suffering would one day end and that the evil ways of the wicked would be judged. Peter, like the other apostles, was always aware that Christ could return at any moment (**Romans 13:11-12; 1 Corinthians 7:29; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:3; 1 John 2:18**). Likewise, believers today must always remember that “the end of all things is near, for Christ can come at any time. Peter explained that the shortness of time remaining should encourage believers to be “*clear minded*” and “*self-controlled*.” “*Clear minded*” or “*sober-minded*” is the opposite of drunkenness and Biblically refers to not having any fleshly influence in our thinking. Keep in mind that there is a spiritual battle taking place between the flesh and the spirit (**Galatians 5:17; Romans 7:23**), and the battle is to influence and control the mind, as well as the will and emotions (soul). “*Self-controlled*” refers to restraint and is actually a fruit of the spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**). We are to be clear/sober-minded and take Christ’s return seriously. Peter reminded his readers that the time was short and they must keep clear minds, maintaining self-control so that they could pray in the spirit (**1 Thessalonians 5:6; Romans 8:26**). Certainly, Peter remembered the Lord Jesus’ words to him in the Garden of Gethsemane: “*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*” (**Matthew 26:41**). Peter had proclaimed loyalty to Christ, but instead of praying in the Garden with Jesus, he fell asleep. When the time of trial had come, Peter had betrayed his Lord. Peter did not want his followers to face the same weakness but to be ready and strengthened through a prayerful relationship with the Father.

Read 1 Peter 4:8.

- The words “***above all***” indicate that mutual love, support, and encouragement are a great defense for troubled Christians. The word “***fervent***” or “***deep***” means sustained, eager, earnest love which is at full strength. (The same word was used in 1:22.) No Christian is an island; no one is to live alone in isolation. When believers experience deep love from the fellowship, they have the human network of support that can help them through times of crisis. Jesus said, “***Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength...Love your neighbor as yourself.***’ ***There is no commandment greater than these***” (Mark 12:30-31); Paul had explained that believers should have faith, hope, and love, “***but the greatest of these is love***” (1 Corinthians 13:13); John also wrote, “***This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another***” (1 John 3:11; John 13:34; 15:12-17). The same thought as “***love covers a multitude of sins***” is found in Proverbs 10:12: “***Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.***” This does not mean that love ignores, overlooks, or hides sin. Instead, Peter probably was thinking back to his words in 4:1-2, that as believers, we are “***finished with sin.***” The “***covering of sins***” then is the God-given grace that is available to us believers for the purpose of forgiving one another as Christ has forgiven us. So, “***love covers a multitude; of sins***”; it not only forgives, but forgets. It is patient and kind and it does not take into account a wrong suffered, nor is it easily provoked; it kindly and sweetly puts up with everything. Love is an over-riding, motivating factor in the lives of all believers that patiently ride out the storms of life.

Read 1 Peter 4:9.

- Being hospitable is different from social entertaining. Entertaining focuses more on the host; the home must be spotless; the food must be well prepared and abundant; the host must appear relaxed and good-natured. Hospitality, in contrast, focuses on the guests and their needs—whether for a place to stay, nourishing food, a listening ear, or acceptance. Hospitality can happen in a messy home; it can happen around a dinner table where there is very little to eat; it can even happen while the host and the guest are doing chores together. Believers should not hesitate to offer hospitality just because they are too tired, too busy, or not wealthy enough to entertain. Hospitality is a strong expression of love, which Peter mentioned in 4:8. The early Christian church depended on hospitality. There was not a network of motels and wayside restaurants for travelers as we would picture today. Traveling preachers and teachers depended on Christians to give them a place to stay, and churches needed homes in which to meet. Also, hospitality draws people together and allows them to build enduring relationships. The young church needed this interdependence. Jesus had counted on this for His disciples (**Mark 6:10; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:1-2; 3 John 5-8**). The addition of the words “*without grumbling*” gives a tinge of realism to the well-known command to be hospitable. Hospitality can be hard work: Some guests can be more demanding and difficult than others, and there may be times when it is more of a duty than a joy. In light of all this, Peter recommends that believers serve their guests as though serving the Lord himself, “*As you did it to one of the least of these who are members of My family, you did it to Me*” (**Matthew 25:40**). Again, the focus is on Christ (**2 Corinthians 4:5**).

Read 1 Peter 4:10.

- Each person has received one or more spiritual gifts from God. A spiritual gift can be a motivational gift as stated in **Romans 12** or a ministerial gift or talent/ability given by the Holy Spirit to be used in the ministry of the church. Spiritual “gifts” are given by God for the purpose of loving and serving the body of Christ. Paul wrote, *“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them”* (**Romans 12:4-6**). Differing lists of gifts given to God’s people are listed in **Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-31; and Ephesians 4:11-12**; these lists are by no means exhaustive. God gives spiritual gifts for the purpose of building up His church. The gifts were not meant for self-serving motives; instead, each believer has received at least one gift from God in order to serve others. When we use our gifts in humble service to others, we are actually administering God’s grace in its various forms. The gifts God gives believers are as varied and multi-faceted as are we believers ourselves.

Read 1 Peter 4:11.

- The words *“speak as the oracles of God”* set this apart from everyday conversation. All believers, who are walking in the Spirit (the flesh being held in the place of death through our co-crucifixion with Christ and the Spirit is reproducing the life of Christ in us (**Galatians 2:20**), will indeed speak the very words of God because it is no longer I, but Christ. Remember, Peter encouraged believers to use their gifts (4:10). Therefore, men and women with gifts that require speaking must be walking in the Spirit, as well as those

gifted with serving must also serve, not in their own strength, but with ***“the ability which God supplies.”*** Believers who are not serving in the Spirit and are not taught to do so, will find serving a wearisome task. But to serve with God’s strength is to go above and beyond, and for one purpose—so that ***“God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ.”*** When believers are using their gifts as God directs to edify and build up the church, others will see Christ in them and glorify God. Peter may have been thinking of Jesus’ words, ***“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”*** (Matthew 5:16).

- ***“To Whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen”*** is a brief doxology and refers to Jesus Christ. It is through Jesus Christ alone that believers have a relationship with God that allows them to receive gifts from a gracious God and use those gifts to serve Him and others.

Read 1 Peter 4:12.

- As he had done in 2:11, Peter again addresses his readers as ***“beloved”*** or ***“dear friends,”*** emphasizing the unity of believers. It’s interesting to consider that unbelievers may be surprised at Christians’ behavior (2:12; 3:9, 16; 4:4). But we Christians ought not be surprised at the behavior of the unbelieving and the trials they inflict upon us. The word ***“surprise”*** or ***“strange”*** refers to a bewildering astonishment. Just like Jesus, Christians should expect to face persecution. The question arises, Why was Peter seemingly speaking of a singular trial, and how could that jointly affect the believers scattered across the Roman province of Asia? We must remember that the gospel faced opposition from the very beginning; the book of Acts records persecution and even martyrdom of the believers who witnessed for Christ. Therefore,

it is reasonable to think that such persecution was not the exception but the rule, wherever the gospel went. The period of persecution under Emperor Nero stood out for its organization and horrible intensity. Peter's warning that the believers not be surprised at "*the fiery trial*" should be seen as a general term, implying varying degrees of persecution occurring at different times in different places. "Whatever trial your church might be facing at this time should not come as a surprise," Peter was saying, "this is not something strange, persecution has followed the gospel from the time of Jesus' crucifixion." Give some consideration to this, we should expect persecution and suffering because they are part of God's plan, not only as a natural consequence for living in a fallen world in a cursed body, but also to perfect and mature Christians. The words "*fiery trial*" or "*fiery ordeal*" appear here and in 1:6-7. Peter had described these trials as a means of purifying faith in the same way that fire purifies metals. By its very nature, a trial is painful, but Peter had already challenged the believers to rejoice (1:6), and now he repeats it in the next verse.

Read 1 Peter 4:13.

- Instead of being bewildered by trials, Peter exhorted the believers to rejoice (**James 1:2**). What is the reason? Because suffering for one's faith in Christ is a way of "participating" in Christ's sufferings. To suffer for the faith proves we truly belong to Christ; Jesus said, "*Servants are not greater than their master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you*" (**John 15:20**). The book of Acts records how Peter and the apostles, after being flogged for teaching about Christ, "*rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the Messiah*" (**Acts 5:41-42**). Servants of Christ must expect to participate in His sufferings as well as in His future glory. Paul

wrote to the Romans: “***We are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him***” (Romans 8:16-17). In suffering, we show our identification with Christ. Keep in mind that not all suffering is the result of good Christian conduct.

Read 1 Peter 4:14.

- Peter offered a specific example of the type of suffering believers might face. To be reproached refers to verbal abuse, to being reviled, ridiculed, insulted, or slandered. Peter brought to mind Jesus’ words: “***Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me***” (Matthew 5:11). Not only will suffering believers find great joy when Christ returns (4:13), but they will also be blessed in this world (3:14, 16). That blessing takes the form of the glorious Holy Spirit resting on them to strengthen all who are persecuted for their faith. When Stephen became the first martyr for Christianity, the Bible tells us that he was “***a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit,***” whose “***face was like the face of an angel,***” and who upon his death, “***looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God***” (Acts 6:5, 15; 7:55). Believers have the glorious Holy Spirit, and Peter here indicated that those who suffer for Christ receive an even greater measure of the Spirit to strengthen, empower, and to give them peace.

Read 1 Peter 4:15.

- Peter has made the point that not all suffering results in blessing: “***If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that?***” (2:20). If believers must suffer, it is because of their faith. They ought not

to be counted among those who murder, steal, do evil, or meddle in other people's affairs. Such people deserve the punishment and suffering they receive, and there is no blessing from God in such suffering.

Read 1 Peter 4:16.

- Peter reminded his readers that it was not shameful to suffer for being Christians. No one wants to suffer, and there is a certain amount of disgrace in any sort of public suffering. But to be insulted publicly for one's faith, to be put in jail or beaten for being a Christian, should not be considered a disgrace. While we ought not to seek out suffering, neither should we try to avoid it. Instead, Peter encouraged all believers to keep on doing what is right regardless of the suffering it might bring. In that suffering, God will be glorified. As bearers of Christ's name, Christians are His representatives on this earth; therefore, in everything we do, including what might seem like shameful suffering, we can glorify God.

Read 1 Peter 4:17.

- “*The time has come for judgment*” refers both to final judgment and also to God's refining discipline (**Hebrews 12:7**). In **1 Peter 1:17**, Peter warned that God judges all people, including believers/the household of God, in order to refine them as Peter has explained in 1:6-7. Also consider **Psalms 66:10-12**. Peter asked a rhetorical question, “If this judgment is difficult for us believers, who know its reason and our future, what will it be like for unbelievers, especially those who are actively hostile toward Christians?” The inescapable response: It will be terrible (**2 Thessalonians 1:5-10**).

Read 1 Peter 4:18.

- Reinforcing his rhetorical question in 4:17, Peter continued by quoting from **Proverbs 11:31**. If the righteous ones (the believers) experience difficulty in their refining process, how much more horrible will be the greater disaster experienced for eternity by the ungodly and the sinners who chose to reject Christ. Peter was not introducing doubt regarding “assurance of salvation” for believers, because in 1:4-5 he referred to the inheritance kept in heaven for us. Instead, he was speaking of the difficult road believers must travel. The phrase “*to be saved*” refers not to God’s work in salvation nor to the initial step of our coming to faith (new birth), but to the entire process of salvation (past, present, and future) with specific emphasis on persevering to the end.

Read 1 Peter 4:19.

- With the word “*therefore*,” Peter drew a conclusion to his words in the previous verses. He consistently encouraged his readers that their suffering was under God’s control. If they suffered for the faith, they were suffering in accordance with God’s approval and will. Their suffering was not because God had lost control; rather, all that happens to believers is according to His will and under His control. While it is difficult to accept that one’s suffering is part of God’s plan, we can find comfort in understanding that, as part of God’s will, suffering has a reason, a goal, and an end. For believers, suffering is a necessary purifying process which is designed by God to draw us closer to Himself. Thus, in times of suffering, a believer’s response is to entrust oneself to a faithful Creator. The word “*entrust*” or “*commit*” has the idea of giving over to someone for safekeeping. Jesus used the word on the cross when he said, “*Father, into your hands I commit*

my spirit” (Luke 23:46). (Also consider 2:23). As believers entrust their lives to the one who created them, there is nothing to fear. Even in suffering, as Peter had mentioned throughout his letter, Christians are to continue in doing good. Peter often recommended “*doing good works*” as a response to persecution (2:12, 15, 20; 3:1-2, 13, 17). Paul also recommended this response (**Romans 12:14-18; Titus 3:1, 14**). In the early church, doing good would have been a tremendous counteragent for the hostility they faced in society. When believers “*do good*,” even in the face of injustice, they reveal that they have truly entrusted themselves to God and that they are suffering for their faith alone, which is commendable before God (2:20). This attitude toward suffering is often used of God to draw others to faith as well (2:12). God created the world, and he has faithfully ordered it and kept it. Because we know God is faithful, we can count on Him to fulfill His promises to us. If God can oversee the forces of nature, surely, He can see us through the trials we face. We must never doubt His loving concern for us or His ability to rescue us.

1 PETER

Chapter 5

SHEPHERDING GOD’S PEOPLE IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING—5:1-11

Peter wrote this letter just before Emperor Nero began cruelly persecuting Christians in Rome and throughout the empire. About thirty years earlier, Peter, fearing for his life, had three times denied even knowing Jesus (**John 18:15-27**). Since then, and after receiving an indwelling Holy Spirit, Peter now had the power and desire to stand firm in an evil world, and Peter encouraged other Christians who were facing pressure to hold fast by faith.

Read 1 Peter 5:1.

- Elders provide supervision, protection, discipline, instruction, and direction for the believers. Modeling the role of elders in the Jewish synagogue, these “elders” were the appointed leaders in the churches (**Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5-6**) and were to lead the churches by teaching sound doctrine, and equipping the saints to live for Jesus Christ despite opposition. This letter is addressed to all believers, but Peter included a special message for the elders among the people. The term “elder” implies mature or older. Both Greeks and Jews gave positions of great honor to wise older men, and the Christian church continued this pattern of leadership. Elders carried great responsibility, and they were expected to be good examples. It’s interesting that Peter appealed as a fellow elder, thereby identifying with the church leaders, although he had authority as one of the apostles. Since God’s judgment of sin would begin with the believers (4:17), Peter could speak from personal experience. These fellow elders knew Peter’s story—how he had denied the Lord three times, and yet

Peter had been forgiven and placed in a position of leadership.

- ***“A witness of the sufferings of Christ.”*** Had Peter been a witness of Christ’s sufferings? Actually he did not witness Jesus’ crucifixion because he had denied and deserted Jesus; the word “witness” in this verse does not mean “eyewitness.” Neither he nor all these elders had been eyewitnesses; however, they had all been called to “witness” (testify or bring news about) Christ’s sufferings.
- ***“And also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed.”*** Peter described himself as one who (along with the other elders, as well as all believers) will also share in the glory to be revealed at the last day (the Second Coming).

Read 1 Peter 5:2-3.

- Peter’s word to elders ***“feed the flock of God”*** echoes Jesus’ words to Peter himself: ***“Feed my sheep”*** (**John 21:16**). The same Greek word is used in both places: *poimaino* means ***“to shepherd”*** or ***“to pastor.”*** The ***“flock”*** is the believers; ***“elders”*** are shepherds who lead, guide, feed, and protect the sheep under their care; believers (the flock) need good leaders (shepherds) as they face persecution. The shepherds always remember that the church is God’s. It’s interesting to note, that all throughout **Ezekiel 34:1-16**, God refers to the flock as ***“My flock.”*** As Jesus’ disciple, Peter became a pillar of the Jerusalem church. But writing to the elders, he asked them to be shepherds of God’s flock, exactly what Jesus had told him to do (**John 21:15-17**).
- ***“Not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”*** This passage describes three possible problems that elders might face and how they should respond:

- **Wrong motivation.** “*Not by compulsion but willingly.*” The correct motive for any leader is a willing, selfless, servant heart that freely presents himself to the Lord for the purpose of taking on leadership responsibilities, rather than leading out of obligation. Furthermore, motivation to serve must be pure, not colored by social pressure or self-gratification. In **2 Corinthians 5:14**, we read “*the love of God constrains (compels, controls) us.*” This is the pure motive for leadership service—God’s love for us (**Ephesians 3:16-19**). If we had a godly old grandmother that we knew loved us, we would do anything for her. Thus, it is with God (**1 John 4:19**). When we begin to comprehend, in the spirit, the length, breadth, height, and width of God’s love for us, we will serve Him willingly.
- **Wrong goals.** “*Not for dishonest gain but eagerly.*” In many of the churches, elders are paid for their services; both Peter and Paul explained that elders are to be paid adequately (**1 Timothy 3:8; 5:17-18; Titus 1:7, 11**). Instead of focusing on money, elders are to focus on selfless serving. The word for “eager” is very strong in the Greek, expressing great zeal and enthusiasm. An interesting thought to ponder is that not having money can lead to as much preoccupation with finances as having a lot of money (**Proverbs 30:8-9**).
- **Wrong methods.** “*Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*” Elders lead by example, not force. “*Lording it over*” means forcefully domineering or subduing. The formula Jesus used was always that those who led were to be humble servants (**Mark 10:42-45**). Such leaders always seek the good of their flock (**Philippians 2:3-4**).

Read 1 Peter 5:4.

- Peter had already referred to Jesus as a Shepherd in 2:25. Here he calls him the “**Chief Shepherd.**” Elders are to be shepherds of God’s flock, but they are answerable to the “**Chief Shepherd**” (“**the Good Shepherd**” in **John 10:11** and “**great Shepherd**” in **Hebrews 13:20**). Elders were not to expect great wealth or to be greedy for gain (5:3), but they could expect to receive the “**crown of glory**” at the return of Christ. “**The crown of glory**” does not refer to a literal crown that each faithful person will wear but to a common glory that all believers will share. Paul spoke of receiving the “**crown of righteousness**” (2 **Timothy 4:8**); James wrote of believers receiving the “**crown of life**” (**James 1:12**), as did John (**Revelation 2:10**). The “**crown,**” while metaphorical, pictures the laurel-wreath crown that was given to winners in the Greek and Roman athletic games, and was a symbol of triumph and honor. The laurel-wreath crown will eventually fade, dry up, and wither, but the glory believers will receive is eternal, unending, unchanging. All believers will be declared winners and will receive a wonderful, everlasting reward.

Read 1 Peter 5:5.

- Peter’s word “**likewise**” focuses on attitude, not the action. Those who were younger were to accept the authority of the elders. To accept the authority of the elders means to submit to their decisions and to treat them respectfully. Peter continues his theme of right relationships for the purpose of glorifying God in a hostile environment.
- “**All of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’**” Here Peter stressed the horizontal application of humility (one another),

while he stressed the vertical application in 5:6 (under God). All of us, whether young or old, church leader or not, have a God-given role in the body of Christ. Peter told both young and old to be humble in their dealings with one another. The Greek word here *egkombasasthe* actually means to put on a servant's apron. Thus, to clothe ourselves with humility means to put on the apron and go to work, humbly serving one another. "Humility" puts others' needs and desires ahead of our own (**Philippians 2:3-4**). Young people should follow the leadership of older people, especially those flocks who have been put in authority over them. The elders, in turn, should lead by example. All should actively serve one another. No doubt Peter remembered how Christ clothed himself with humility as He washed the disciples' feet (**John 13:1-17**). Peter quoted from **Proverbs 3:34** to make his point. The believers are to interact with one another in humility because "***God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble***" (**James 4:6**). Humble people receive God's "grace" giving them the ability to live Christ-like lives on earth. The verbs are in the present tense; God continually opposes those who are proud, and continually gives grace to those who humbly listen, love, and serve Him.

Read 1 Peter 5:6.

- Therefore, because God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble (5:5), Peter admonished the believers to humble themselves. Keep in mind that humility does not come naturally. When we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, we are actually submitting to His care and protection. The reference to God's "***mighty hand***" was often used in the Old Testament to describe God's power (**Exodus 13:3, 9, 14, 16; Deuteronomy 9:26; Job 30:21; Psalm 32:4; Ezekiel 20:34**). To truly humble ourselves, we

must accept life's struggles as part of God's purpose and plan (5:7). The exalting may be in this life or in the next. In any case it will be in due time—that is, in God's perfect time. Never forget that Jesus humbled Himself when He died on the cross (**Philippians 2:6-11**) and God exalted Him to the highest heaven.

Read 1 Peter 5:7.

- Here Peter explains what it means for us saints to humble ourselves (5:6). It is not negative and reactive; but rather, it is positive and active.: Casting all our care upon Him because He cares for us. Peter explained that the believers who continued to carry their worries, anxieties, stresses, and daily struggles by themselves showed they could not trust God. It takes humility, however, to turn everything (literally, “throw your anxieties”) over to God and leave the outcome to Him. God is not indifferent; He knows what He's doing in our lives. Sometimes we think that struggles caused by our own sin and foolishness are not God's concern (**Proverbs 19:3**). When we turn to God, He will bear the weight even of those struggles. Don't submit to circumstances but to the Lord who controls circumstances. Peter surely remembered Jesus' words: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”* (**Matthew 11:28; Psalm 55:22; Matthew 6:25-34; 10:29-31; Philippians 4:6-7**).

Read 1 Peter 5:8.

- The words “*sober, vigilant, alert*” are also translated, “*pay attention, wake up!*” Peter had given the same admonition in 4:7 regarding prayer: *“The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.”* Likewise, Paul urged the Thessalonians to “*be alert and self-*

controlled’ (1 Thessalonians 5:6). Both words refer to not being complacent in one’s faith, but maintaining a steadfast endurance. As soldiers wait and watch for their physical enemy, so believers must be alert for their spiritual enemy. All of the persecution facing believers ultimately comes from our three enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil—and is the source of all evil in the world. Satan hates God and is God’s archenemy; thus, he also hates God’s people and is our enemy as well. While Satan has no power against God, he does what he can to harm God’s people. Peter described him as a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Lions attack sick, young, or straggling animals; they choose victims who are alone or not alert. Lions prowl quietly, watching and waiting, suddenly pouncing when their victims least suspect it. They use fear caused by their roar to drive their prey into the jaws of another lion. Peter warned believers to be alert for Satan, especially in times of suffering and persecution, for he walks up and down the earth (Job 1:7) seeking “*whom he may devour.*” Therefore, Peter and Paul urged the believers to always be alert for Satan’s tricks. Paul used a similar image in 2 Timothy 4:17 where he wrote that he had been “*rescued from the lion’s mouth.*” Most likely, both men were using a common biblical metaphor describing deliverance from danger (Psalm 22:21; 57:4; Ezekiel 22:25).

Read 1 Peter 5:9.

- James wrote that if believers resist the devil, he will flee from them (James 4:7). Once we have identified the devil as our enemy, we need to understand who he is and how he operates in order to effectively resist him. Satan is the leader of angelic beings who revolted against God and were banished from heaven (Isaiah 14:12-16). His primary purpose now is to separate

people from God. Destined for destruction, Satan wants to wreak as much havoc as he possibly can. We need to realize, however, that Satan's power over us is only as strong as the illusion that he is more powerful than God or His care for us (5:7). We must trust that *"the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). The word "*resist*" is a term of defense rather than attack. The way to resist Satan is by remaining steadfast in our faith. It's interesting to consider that in **Ephesians 6:10-11**, Paul tells us to be *"strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and put on the full armor of God"* so that we *"may be able to 'stand' against the schemes of the devil."* Paul goes on in verse 13, *"Take unto you the whole armor of God that you may be able to 'withstand' in the evil day, and having done all to 'stand,' 'stand' therefore."* The word "*stand*" has the idea that the ground has already been taken, and our only part is to hold our ground *"steadfast in the faith."*

Read 1 Peter 5:10.

- When suffering, we often feel as though our pain will never end and that there is no good that could possibly come out of all this. Peter gave these faithful Christians the wider perspective. In comparison with eternity, their suffering would last only a *"little while."* This repeats what Peter had said in 1:6. God is described as the God of all grace. God supplies grace to believers sufficient for every situation they face. While their suffering will be only for a little while, their glory in Christ will be eternal (**Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18**). Peter's final words promise victory and vindication, perhaps in this life but certainly in the next. Not only does God care and give grace, but he also promises to restore and set right what has gone wrong, put in order, complete, support, strengthen, and establish. In life or in death, God's

purposes will be accomplished and His promises to believers will be fulfilled because believers have been called into God's eternal glory. "God called"—this was His initiative; therefore, he will do as he promised.

Read 1 Peter 5:11.

- Peter glorifies "*the God of all grace*" who alone holds ultimate power forever and ever.

PETER'S FINAL GREETINGS—5:12-14

Many of the letters in our Bible close with the writer's personal greetings to friends and colleagues in the letter's destination. Because Peter's letter would be carried to various churches, he greeted no one in particular, but rather sent greetings from those in Rome. No doubt the letters of Peter, Paul, James, John, and Jude offered great comfort to the Christians scattered across the world.

Read 1 Peter 5:12.

- Silas, or Silvanus in some versions, apparently served as secretary to Peter, writing this letter as Peter dictated it. He may then have carried this letter to the churches of Asia Minor. Silas was a faithful brother to Peter and to other church leaders as well. Silas was one of the men chosen to deliver the letter from the Jerusalem Council to the church in Antioch (**Acts 15:22**). He accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey (**Acts 15:40–18:11**), was mentioned by Paul in the salutation of his letters to the Thessalonians (**1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1**), and ministered with Timothy in Corinth (**2 Corinthians 1:19**). Peter described the reason for his brief letter: to encourage believers and to testify that the glory they would soon enter was the true grace of God. They could rely on this fact. The troubles they faced should

never cause doubt; instead, they should stand fast in that grace. Grace would give them the power and desire to stand fast, by faith, and by standing fast, they would receive the reward of that grace—glory with Christ.

Read 1 Peter 5:13.

- Babylon has been broadly understood by believers to be a reference to Rome. Most scholars suggest that Peter was in Rome when he wrote this letter and was sending greetings from the church there. Peter may have been disguising his location to protect the Roman church in this time of persecution, or he may have been comparing the nation of Israel's past captivity in Babylon to the Christians' exile in a foreign land, the Roman Empire. The power and might of Babylon, as well as its sinfulness, could be compared to Rome. In **Revelation 14:8**, the name "Babylon" was the name of both an evil city and an immoral empire, a world center for idol worship. Just as Babylon had been the Jews' worst enemy, the Roman Empire was the worst enemy of the early Christians. Mark, also called John Mark, was known to many of this letter's readers because he had traveled widely (**Acts 12:25–13:13; 15:36–41**). Peter looked on Mark as a "son," a close associate in Christ's service. Tradition holds that Peter was Mark's main source of information when Mark wrote his Gospel. Paul had mentioned that Mark was with him at an earlier time in Rome (**Colossians 4:10**), so it is likely that he returned there at one time and was with Peter at the writing of this letter.

Read 1 Peter 5:14.

- This kiss of love was a cultural form of greeting that the Christians used for one another. It expressed the love and unity among the believers. Compare Paul's

closing words in **Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26**. Peter ended as he began—with peace (1:2). Peter’s final words, “*peace be with you*” underscore what was most needed by the Christians—peace in the middle of turmoil. They could not count on worldly peace, for it was not to be. Instead, they would find peace within by resting in God’s grace. Only those who are abiding in Christ can have such peace (**Isaiah 26:3**).



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