

1 Peter 1

1), 2) The very name, Peter, conjures up so many images - the big fisherman, outspoken apostle, the Pentecostal preacher, and now a Scripture-writer. He writes to believers whom he characterizes as "chosen," "transients," and in the "*diaspora*." Peter probably had no idea that his letter would travel far beyond the five places he mentioned here, literally around the world in the Scripture. Formerly only Israel could be called "elect" among men, but now that title is shared by the church. In concert with His foreknowledge, God chose us believers through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for the purpose of obedience. The mention of Christ's blood completes a Trinitarian reference. He wishes for them ***grace, the fountain of all good things***, and ***peace, the crown of all earthly blessings***.

3) Peter bursts into a doxology to God, Whom he identifies in His relation to Christ. He calls Him the God and Father of Jesus. There is an eternal relationship between Father and Son ("the Word was with God"). He is, first, Lord - Sovereign over all. He is also Jesus, "Savior," Who took away sins. As "Christ," He is God's anointed One - the Messiah of Israel. Instead of judging us as we deserved, God has caused us to be born again, resulting in our having a hope that is alive. We have this hope because Jesus rose "out from among" the dead. Praise the Lord!

4) In addition to our hope, we also are promised an inheritance. As heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, we shall receive, not upon ***His*** death, but rather upon ***our own***, an inheritance that Peter describes as having 3 unusual characteristics: 1, "imperishable," meaning nothing can ruin it; 2, "unspoilable," that is, nothing can cheapen it; and 3, "unfading," which says it cannot grow old or wear out. This beats any earthly inheritance by far! And best of all, God has it on reserve in heaven for us right now, and the reservation can never, ever, be cancelled.

5) The inheritance is kept, and so are the heirs! "Shielded" represents a military idea - a garrison surrounding to protect. What good news to the suffering saints who read Peter's letter! Look at the prepositions in this sentence. "Through" faith - trust in God is the channel of blessing. "By" God's power - the only force that can so protect the beleaguered saint is God's *dunamis*. "Until (better "unto")" a deliverance (from persecution?) that stands waiting for men to see it, and it will most fully be revealed in the last days, that is when God manifests Himself.

6) Peter now introduces a paradox - that believers undergoing suffering should rejoice, and not just rejoice, but rejoice greatly, is indeed a strange thing. And yet he has pulled back the veil and let us see the future in such a way that we recognize that we do have rejoicing material ahead! He then talks about suffering: he says 1, suffering is temporary, "for a little while" (cf 2 Corinthians 4:17); 2, suffering is necessary - here see the NASB and KJV; 3, suffering takes many different shapes - "all kinds of trials" (cf James 1:2). "*Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning*" (Psalm 30:5).

7) One of the great questions of the faithful is, "Why do the godly suffer?" Peter offers here an answer. There is a Divine purpose to be accomplished, and it has to do with the believer's faith. Proven faith is a more valuable possession than gold, which at its best is still perishable. God desires to "test the metal" of our faith. Such tested and approved faith will glorify Christ when He is manifested, and it will allow us to share in that glory. How sad it is that some do not see the value of suffering, and they often question the love or power of God when Christians suffer. What a big mistake that is!

8) Some might scoff at the "pie in the sky by and by" approach they see here. But Faithfulness to Christ in suffering has present effects and benefits as well. No, we cannot see Jesus with physical eyesight; but without seeing Him we can love Him. And the love-life is the best life. Our link to Christ goes a step beyond love to faith. We accept as true what Scripture says about Him, and our lives are so changed that we are filled with a humanly inexpressible joy. No Christian would trade his glorious life for anything that his senses might find credible and enjoyable.

9) A further basis for joy is shared here - it is that we are presently receiving and enjoying the end result of faith, that being the salvation of our souls. While the world looks for God in the sparing of a life from physical suffering, the believer experiences God's higher deliverance from deeper suffering - the suffering of the soul. How could we not rejoice completely when recognizing that we have been saved from sin and delivered from its penalty and power through the work of Christ! Remember, *the soul is always infinitely more important than the body.*

10), 11) What powerful teaching there is in these two verses, both doctrinal and practical! Peter writes that our salvation was a topic of concern for the Hebrew Scripture era prophets. They who lived under law wrote about the grace that was intended for us. So interested were they in these future things that they searched with great earnestness to discover all they could about them. Peter reveals that it was the Holy Spirit in them telling them about these future things - which we call revelation and inspiration. These prophets of God told not only of the glory that Messiah would bring to His people as well as enjoy Himself, but also of the sufferings that He would endure before this glory could be revealed. Read Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, and Daniel 9 concerning His suffering and being "cut off." The practical application here is that if Messiah suffered before His glory, must we not also expect life to hand us some difficulties before we enter into the uninterrupted blessings of God's grace? Suffering always precedes glory.

12) While the truth was revealed to these prophets, it was also made known to them that some of those things were not for them or their generations personally. Rather they were to be used by those who would proclaim the gospel to us as ministry for us. The same Holy Spirit who worked in the prophets would work in the evangelists to help them communicate the life-giving Word of truth to us. This was not only of interest to the prophets, but the angels in heaven were said to be looking into these matters as well. We should also study these things!

13), 14), 15), 16) These statements contain 2 commands and a series of other expressions related to those commands. The imperatives are "set your hope" in 13 and "be holy" in 15. We are to look ahead to Jesus' return with trust, and we are to separate ourselves unto God from this world in the meantime. To do this we must have our minds prepared with His Word, and we must not be controlled by circumstances. The imagery that Peter uses in 13 is a mixed metaphor, "girding up the loins of your mind." The girding is tying up things that are loose so they will not impede your progress. So the distractions of the mind (the second part of the metaphor) must be dealt with in a way as to not pull us to the side in our thinking. This done, we must now (imperative) set our hope in a single direction. Our hope is not in things of this world, but in things to come. The arrival of Jesus to manifest His grace in this world is where our forward look should be - not retirement, or attaining riches, or reaching some position among men! When we hear the Word and place ourselves under it (the meaning of the word "obedience," vs 14), we will not be shaped as this world would have us (Romans 12:2). Our pattern for holiness is not a weak brother; it is the sinless Savior! Peter quotes from Leviticus 11:44, reminding us Christians to separate ourselves from this world even as God called Israel to separate from their wicked neighbors in Canaan. The secret to detachment from the world is attachment to God. Cling to Him as a drowning man clings to a life-raft! To let go is to perish.

17) The themes here are impartiality and reverence. God is impartial in His dealings with men. We are only in this life for a short while, and we are strangers who are away from home. Let us view men without bigotry or favoritism, and thus reverence the God on Whom we call, and not some men.

18), 19) These verses bring our attention to the great redemptive work of Christ. Peter is so practical as he mentions the passing nature of this world, contrasted here with the enduring character of the price of our redemption - the blood of Christ. We think of silver and gold as lasting in value, but Peter calls them "perishable things." Earth's most valued metal, made into trinkets of

jewelry, will be the pavement on at least one street in the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:21) . We often sing, "Lord, you are more precious than silver, Lord, you are more costly than gold." He reminds us that our redemption was not just from hell to heaven, but it was also from an empty way of life. Attaching ourselves to the passing things of this world is vain in God's estimation. We should be looking back to the cross and ahead to the crown.

20), 21) So much is here! Peter looks into the incomprehensible past and there sees God planning our redemption in Christ; this reaches back to before He "threw down" the foundations of the earth. Looking there, Peter sees God revealing His plan for us in the Person of Christ. Christ was appointed in eternity and revealed in time. All of that was for our sakes! Imagine that - God thought on us enough to make and execute such a plan at such a cost! Now we can believe in God, and that faith and hope are funneled to Him through Christ - the One Whom He has raised from the dead and then glorified! The long view is this: pre-incarnate existence, incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection in glorification, and ascension. Our faith is in His past work; our hope is in what He will do in the future.

22) When one obeys the truth of the gospel, there is a permanent initial cleansing from the penalty of sin. As one continues to obey the truth, there is a daily cleansing from sin's defilement. See Psalm 119:9,11. Such cleansing makes for unhypocritical love of other believers. Since this is now possible, it is natural that Peter should command us to love each other. This love has a fervency, an intensity.

23) Ah, the blessed new birth! We do not enter God's family by adoption, but by birth (adoption is about placing the believer as an adult son with rights and privileges). The seed of the second birth has no fatal gene as does our earthly birth; it is imperishable. And we are born of the Spirit when we believe the Word of God (the imperishable seed!), the eternal Word that lasts forever (Psalm 119:89, Isaiah 40:8).

24), 25) Peter, a good Hebrew Scripture student, refers here to Isaiah 40:7, 8 to undergird his teaching about the transiency of human flesh and the permanence of God's Word. Our culture seems all about the perishing and very little about the lasting. In yesteryear, barns and other farm buildings were often built of cypress wood, because it resists deterioration. We can build our lives on something that lasts longer than cypress lumber. To have Christ and His Word as the foundation of our lives is to build wisely. Thankfully, this Word has been preached to and taught to us.

1 Peter 2

1) Our lawns often need a product called "weed and feed." This combination of chemicals helps rid the yard of unwanted plants while nourishing the good grasses. Peter prescribes such spiritual "treatments" here. Five sins he names must be set aside. 1, malice - our intentions to do evil; 2, deceit - when we are deliberately dishonest; 3, hypocrisy - we are found wearing a false face, pretending to be what we are not; 4, envy - "grieving at the good welfare of another" (M. Henry), discontent with our lot and resentment at the lot of others; 5, slander - saying unkind things about another behind their back. Good seed must reside in soil that has been weeded by genuine heart repentance.

2) Having pulled from our lives sins of heart and lips - like weeds from a garden, Peter now commands believers to long for and seek spiritual nourishment. Newborns cry out for milk, and Christians should act like them in their desire for spiritual milk. My son was once advised in an internet chat that he should look into some other religions. His instant retort was that, having the truth, one does not need to seek elsewhere. The unadulterated Word is all the food we need to grow to maturity in our salvation. Pity those who think they need more and look elsewhere to find it.

3) The old version here uses "if," which could imply doubt. Peter's thought is better rendered

"since," or some construction like we have here. It was certain that they had, as the Psalmist had said in 34:8, tasted the goodness of the Lord. This goodness means that He bestows pleasant things for the believer, and He does so only in kindness and beneficence. Even the present suffering is beneficial for their spiritual growth, and therefore it is seen as a kindness. Sin is malignant; the Savior is benignant. Romans 8:28 reminds us of the good that God intends toward us.

4), 5) Peter shifts his metaphor from *weeds in a garden*, then *hungry newborns*, and moves to *stones and a building* to show relationship to Christ. When men come to Christ in faith, they approach One Who was disapproved in His life and ministry by the men of His day, but Who was highly valued as precious by God. God was constructing a building for His glory, and Jesus was the first Stone in it. He was a living Stone, and His building would be a living structure as well. He was also a chosen Stone, chosen by God. Peter's readers were familiar with the Temple and priesthood. He now uses those familiar things to teach New Testament truth to them. As God dwelt in the Temple in times past, now He chose to dwell in the believer individually, and the church corporately. We are called here a "holy priesthood." Christ is our Great High Priest, and He has offered the final blood sacrifice in His own death. We now may offer spiritual sacrifices of praise and obedience to God, which He will accept because they are offered through Jesus Christ!

6) Some false Messiahs had come along; their followers had been put to shame in their error. Scripture had not commended them, and they were proven false. With regard to Jesus these things could never happen. First, He is commended by the Hebrew Scriptures - Peter makes several references to Old Testament texts in these verses, showing that Christ is indeed Scripture's Messiah. He identifies Christ as the Chosen Stone on which the building is being built - a Stone that is Precious, and one that is the Cornerstone on Whom the entire building rests. To trust in Him is to be confirmed, not confounded - established, not made to be ashamed. "Don't let suffering shake your faith."

7), 8) Peter continues to use Hebrew Scripture quotations to support His argument that Jesus is Messiah. Now from Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14, he points out that what Jesus becomes to us is dependant upon what we think of Him. To those believing Him, He is of inestimable value. The poet said, "Whom have I on earth beside Thee, Whom in heav'n but Thee?" He is all in all to all the ones trusting Him. But even though men may doubt, God has made Jesus the Head of the Corner - the Chief Cornerstone - in this building called the Church, this living edifice. And the doubters will have no part in the building, but rather will stumble and fall in the disobedience of unbelief. In the days of Christ's flesh, the religious leaders found Him to be a stumbling Stone, a Rock at which they were offended. Those who reject Christ today will find Him the same, and they, too, will sadly stumble over Him headlong into hell. As surely as God saw Christ crucified before the foundations of the world, He also appointed beforehand that those who reject Him would be forever lost. In Matthew 16, Jesus had said, "I will build my church." This is the living habitation of God on earth. Be sure by faith that you are a stone in that building! The eternal alternative is absolutely unthinkable!

9), 10) Peter's description of the believer sets him in stark contrast to the perishing unbeliever. He describes us in four ways, 1, A chosen people: Isaiah 43:20 attributed this title to the nation, Israel. Here Peter applies it to all believers; 2, A royal priesthood: Jesus is Priest and shall be King. He joins these offices together in the believer, too; 3, A holy nation: Matthew Henry says this means "one nation, collected under one head, agreeing in the same manners and customs, and governed by the same laws." "Holy" means "set apart unto God;" 4, A people belonging to God: believers are God's cherished possession. This had not always been the case. Once upon a time, they (and I might add, we) were not God's people. Before grace captured our hearts, we were outsiders, strangers. God's mercy has spared us from the fate that was ours in sin, and it has granted us the favors that are ours in Christ. "The people of God," what a glorious calling! And the purpose for

which all this came to pass is that we might demonstrate the praise and glory of Him who called us to leave the darkness and enter the light. Lord, we do evermore praise thy name!

11) Addressing them with a strong term of endearment, “agapetoi,” Peter urges his readers, whom he calls aliens and strangers in this world, to demonstrate their transient status by refraining from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh - which lusts are at war with the believer’s soul. We “foreigners” must reject the value-system of the world.

12) Shunning fleshly lusts helps us have peaceful souls, but there is another issue at stake - the witness that we have in this world. Lost men may mock our lifestyle, even accuse us of doing wrong because we are different. But there is coming a day when they will sing a different tune - at least we will have tried to win them to the Lord.

Among the responsibilities of Christians are those to the society in which they live. Jesus said that we should “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.” Paul gave to the Romans (chapter 13) clear instructions on submission to human government. The Apostles in the early church taught us by their example that we can disobey man’s laws when those laws make us violate God’s instructions. Even then we are not resisting the power, for if they prosecute us, we take the punishment. Even our Lord Jesus submitted to corrupt government and its decision to execute Him in His innocence. So now Peter adds his voice to those voices, instructing us to live and act responsibly in our society.

13), 14) In Jeremiah 29:7 God told Israel to seek the good of the cities into which He sent them as exiles because of their sin. This certainly speaks to Christian believers today; we are strangers and pilgrims, but living in this world. We should seek the welfare of our community, state, and nation. We can do that by being law-abiding citizens. We are to be in submission to authorities at the highest and lowest levels. They are here for our good in that right laws punish the wicked and provide a peaceful environment in which we can live and serve the Lord. See Romans 13:3, 4 about punishment of the wicked.

15) See Job 5:16, Psalm 107:42, Titus 2:8 for texts about shutting the mouth of the naysayer. God is about truth, and when evil men speak evil of God or His children, it is good to live so as to make them out for the liars they are. In real terms, even the “intelligent” who mock God are mindless and ignorant.

16) Peter tells these “freemen” to willingly obey men’s laws, limiting their liberty by their responsibility. While they have civil liberty and Christian liberty, they were servants to Christ. Their freedom must not be a veil under which to hide any evil act. We are free, free to do right, to please God by obeying man.

17) Four terse imperatives direct the conduct of the believer. We are to value all men, they are made in God’s image. We are to keep on loving the brotherhood of believers, seeking their welfare at our cost. Fearing God and honoring the king can work together, so thought Solomon - see Proverbs 24:21.

18) These 3 verses speak not to freemen, but to slaves. Unjust suffering was common among those who served in their masters’ houses. Christian slaves were to respectfully submit, even to masters who were cruel and unreasonable. Though a man’s slave, the believer was God’s freeman.

19) It is truly commendable, and it shows much grace, if a man can bear up under unjust suffering. How often even today do people feel justice has been abandoned in their case! And yet God will one day balance all the books. A good conscience toward Him will trust Him to take care of our wrongs.

20) There is no merit in being knocked about because one did wrong! Don’t complain about suffering you bring on yourself by bad choices. But God’s grace is clearly seen when believers endure suffering because they obeyed God. Notice Paul and Silas singing in the Philippian jail, Acts 16:25.

21) If we suffer some, Christ suffered much. If we think we were in the right, He was always in the right. We didn't just stumble into suffering - it is a calling from God! Suffering is part of the process of becoming like Christ, our Supreme Example. We can only be like a Sufferer by suffering ourselves! Our suffering cannot match His - "the soul of His suffering was the suffering of His soul" - Calvary!

22) "But I didn't do anything wrong!" we cry. O, but we have done things wrong. Jesus, on the other hand was sinlessly perfect. No acts of sin, no deceit in His mouth. Ask demons, "You are the holy One of God." Ask Pilate, "I find no fault in Him." Ask the thief, "This man has done nothing amiss." Ask the Father, Who always speaks the truth, "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

23) Men crucified are said to have cursed their observers, spat upon passers-by, and done other things too vile to share in polite society. And who could blame them in such agony? But not so Jesus, O no! He said only good in forgiving His murderers and pardoning a crucified thief. He remembered His mother, charging her care to the beloved John. He left the evildoers to God, the righteous Judge.

24) That the thrice holy God would in my place die, that he Who knew no sin would become sin for me (2 Corinthians 5:21), is knowledge too wonderful for me! And yet I know it is true, and I bask in the sunshine of His loving act of my redemption. Yes, He bore my sins in His own body, just as Isaiah (53:6) had said He would. And because He became sin, I can become righteous in Him. Praise His name!

25) Again Isaiah's words from Peter's pen - "all we like sheep had gone astray." The verb describing our turning is passive, "we were turned about!" Blessed Shepherd Who turns His wayward sheep toward home. Then He becomes our "overseer," ceaselessly watching over our souls for eternity!

1 Peter 3

The passage before us is quite practical in nature. It speaks to wives about their behavior toward their husbands, and to husbands about their respect for their wives. It concludes with general instructions for all Christians about how to live together in peace, ending with the motivational presence of the Lord, watching us, listening to us, and also judging us. What incentive for holiness!

1), 2) Scripture places a high value on the family. It shows up in Eden, is regulated at Sinai, was honored by Jesus in Cana, and is guided by the Apostles in their epistles. First the wives are instructed to be submissive to their own husbands, especially in the case where the husband is unsaved. Submissive behavior goes a long way toward winning them, more than mere words can. Many a woman has driven her husband farther from the Lord with nagging; the wise woman uses her purity of life and reverential spirit as tools in the hands of the Holy Spirit to bring a lost husband to faith in Christ. Titus 2:5 shows that the Word of God is honored when the qualities of quietness, purity, and submission are seen in a wife. It is that Word which will bring him to faith more than her words.

3), 4) From where does true beauty come? From the inside, or from the outside? That is the issue addressed in these verses. Where does the magnetic appeal originate that draws a man to Christ? Is it hair-do's, jewelry, make-up, and fashionable clothing? Or is it something else altogether? Peter says that a woman's true beauty cannot be in cosmetology; the words for "adorn" and "adornment" in verses 3 and 5 ("beauty" in the NIV) give us our words "cosmetics" and "cosmetology." He is not forbidding efforts to make oneself attractive; rather he is putting greater emphasis on the "inner man" than on outward appearance. God places high value (same word used of Mary's ointment in Mark 14:3) on the "unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit" in a woman. So will any right-thinking man. The word for "gentle" is only used 4 times in the NT. Here, twice of Jesus, once in a

beatitude in Matthew 5:5 ("meek").

5), 6) How often have we seen the allure of physical attraction fade with the passing of time. Yet we have also noticed that men and women of character became more attractive over the years. Did their looks change, or did the observers just adopt higher values? Peter reaches back to Genesis to use Sarah as a pattern. Like other "holy women of the past," she made herself beautiful by submitting to Abraham. He says that she obeyed her husband, calling him "lord" ("master"). Sarah has daughters in the church today, not women who call their husbands "master," but those who by the conventions of the day show deference and respect to their husbands. Fear God, not the pressures of society.

7) "Live" or "dwell" with your wives is literally "housing together." A "husband" is a "male" here, as he is in 1 Timothy 3:2, 12 (of pastors and deacons). Peter addresses the men in two participial exhortations (not imperatives, as our English versions might suggest), requiring of us consideration and respect for our wives. We should study our wives and study life itself. In order to live according to knowledge, we must gain knowledge. Respect is self-explanatory. Such living will lead to a better prayer life.

8) Verses 8 and following include the home and family, but go beyond to all Christians in all their relationships. He describes our behavior with five adjectives: 1] *same-minded*, suggesting harmony in life; 2] *co-suffering*, literally "sympathetic" (Romans 12:15); 3] *brother-lovers*, literally "Philadelphians" (Romans 12:10); 4] *well-affectioned*, deep inner feeling for others (Ephesians 4:32); 5] *humble*, see Jesus in John 13:4-17.

9) Jesus taught that we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44). Peter passes similar teaching on in his letter here. It is natural to "give as good (or as bad) as we get," but believers are to take evil and insults and return blessings. This is not natural, it is supernatural. This is like Jesus, as Peter wrote in 2:23,24. When Jesus was insulted, persecuted, He just gave His life for others.

10), 11) Here and into verse 12 Peter quotes from Psalm 34:12-16. Suffering saints such as Peter's readers might not be loving life. "But **you can!**" he insists, "and here is **how** you can." He then shares 6 commands, enforcing the will of God on the wills of the saints. 1] our tongues must cease speaking evil; 2] our lips must cease their deceit; 3] we must turn away from evil, 4] we must do good; 5] we must seek and 6] pursue peace, harmony with others. We must follow after it like thirst pursues water. Jesus said, "blessed are the peacemakers," my mother's favorite beatitude. This is how to love life.

12) Here Peter motivates us to right behavior by reminding us of the ever-present vision of the Lord - and His never-failing ear. God sees and hears all we do and think. He is for us, but sets His face against evil-doers. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31). So, let us DO RIGHT!

13) The zealous doing of good may have made Peter's readers targets of persecution, but it also robbed the persecutors of any justification in their evil work. Furthermore, doing good put the believers under the care of God, Who would not let any real harm come to them. "If God be for us, who can stand against us?" We are protected by God.

14) And when doing right brings suffering (and it will), remember that you are blessed, even in the suffering. The world hated Christ, and it will hate those who follow Him. We must not let the world frighten us, but must rather stand firm in our faith in Christ. Our fear should be a reverence for God, not an intimidation by men.

15) Reflecting on Ps 27:1, Alexander Maclaren wrote, "Only he who can say, 'The Lord is the

strength of my life' can go on to say, 'Of whom shall I be afraid?'" So, the "don't fear" of 14 rests upon the "set Christ apart as Lord" of 15. When others strike at us, we may respond by defending our faith in Christ to silence them. It is not blind, illogical trust that we have in Christ, but a reasoned faith that bears examination and explanation.

16) "Apologetics" is the science of defending one's faith. The word "answer" in 15 is the Greek "*apologia*." While we are called upon to defend our faith, we are instructed to do it with a proper spirit. If we are sweet-spirited and respectful of our detractors, our conscience is clear. And when they speak against us, our good behavior gives the lie to their accusations. Mean-spirited arrogance gives credibility to those who would accuse us.

17) Is it ever the will of God for Christians to suffer? Some would argue that it is not - that righteous living leads away from the path of suffering. Logic, Scripture, observation, and experience teach us differently. We live in a hostile world that will make us suffer if it can. Jesus suffered in this world. Paul, Peter, James, John the Baptist, Elijah, and others suffered. Our text tells us that sometimes it is God's will for us to suffer, but that it should be for doing good, not evil. David lost a child for evil - a bad episode. John the Baptist died for doing good - which is better.

18) Peter soars here into great redemptive truth. "Christ died for sins" - that is **sacrifice**. "Once for all" - **finality** of Christ's work in contrast to the oft-repeated sacrifices of the Hebrew Scripture era. "Righteous for the unrighteous" - that is **substitution**. "To bring you to God" - the work of **reconciliation**. "Put to death..." - the **incarnation** and **crucifixion**. "Made alive by the Spirit" - **resurrection**, a work shared in by the 3rd Person of the Trinity. Does your heart soar with his?

19), 20), 21), 22) This passage is admittedly difficult. I do not pretend to fully understand it, but I know that it cannot teach some things that people think they see here - like a 2nd chance for dead people to be saved; like baptism being essential to salvation. Taken phrase by phrase, interpreted in the light of clearly understood passages, the mystery disappears. There are imprisoned spirits, demons or men, to whom a message has been proclaimed. If men (most likely), probably the idea is Noah preaching through the Holy Spirit for 120 years while he built the ark. Noah and his family were saved, cut off from the old sinful world and kept alive in a time of floods of waters. Today men are saved through faith in the risen Christ, which faith is symbolized by the waters of baptism. These waters do not remove any sin, but rather display God's work in the heart which imparts life to the one believing. A good rule of interpretation is, "If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense." Here the sufferers are helped to see the big picture, putting the present in perspective. Verse 22 is a great doctrinal statement about the risen Christ; it tells of His ascension into heaven (see Acts 1:11), and that He is seated in the place of honor and power at the Father's right hand. There, angels are subjected to Him, along with "authorities" (those with the right of control) and "powers" (those with ability to enforce control).

1 Peter 4

In the Roman Empire Christianity was singled out for extreme ostentation and abuse. Even Judaism was given more respect and kind treatment than its "new offshoot," as some saw our faith. Peter's epistle is addressed to the recipients of Rome's ill treatment. In the verses before us he gives Spirit-guided advice on how to handle the persecution they received.

1) "Therefore" looks back to 3:18 and the suffering of Christ for our sins. As Paul did in Philippians 2:5, Peter encourages (commands) believers to have the mind of Christ. Here Christ's mind is actually armor for the saint in a warfare of persecution. Suffering as a Christian demonstrates a

break with the sinful life of the past. As Paul wrote to the Romans, since we are crucified with Christ, we are no longer slaves to sin. This, a blessed liberty!

2) While we do not covet persecution, there is something purifying in it. In certain eras of church history, her persecution has made her pure and has built a fire under her that impacted the world. These verses should be consulted here: 2:15, 3:17, 4:19. Suffering seems also to dull the senses of earthly desires, guiding us to and in God's will.

3) There must have been a mixture of feelings as Peter's readers were reminded of their past. The six areas of gross sin he described as part of their past would be humbling to the point of humiliation. *Debauchery* is absence of restraint; *lust* = evil desire; *drunkenness* is being overcome with alcohol; *orgies* = sensual living; *carousing* is a drinking party; *detestable idolatry* violates the Law's first and second commandments. It was however, their PAST! Thank God for redemption from sin, regeneration to spiritual life, and the cleansing of forgiveness and sanctification!

4) What a testimony these believers now have! Their old associates stand in awe of the change that has come to them! These readers no longer join their long-time friends in the sinful behavior of their pasts. Former friends are now hostile foes, speaking ill of the new saints whose light in Christ shows up the darkness of their sinful ways.

5) While our baser nature and our sense of justice may lead us to desire that those who verbally and/or physically abuse us for our faith be judged, that is not our job. It is sufficient to know that those who commit such acts will be called into account. God is always at the ready to judge the living and the dead; see also Acts 10:42, 2 Tim 4:1.

6) Much misunderstood and often misinterpreted, the verse is really fairly simple and straightforward in its meaning. The gospel was preached to some who have died, but while they were still alive (the plain sense). They may have been misjudged, persecuted, even slain by adversaries ("judged by men according to the body"); but they live before God in heaven ("in the spirit"). One is reminded of Christ's words in Mt 10:28: And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

7) Very interesting, 2,000 years ago Peter was proclaiming the arrival of the completion, the climax and culmination of all things. Then and now Christians should view life in the light of that approaching end. Compare the sentiment of these texts - Romans 13:11; Hebrews 10:25; James 5:8,9; 1 John 2:18. Peter, Paul, James, and John all viewed human history as winding up. We join good company when we live as though Christ could come at any time. His coming will end the opportunity for service as we know it here. It will be the time of judgment for living and dead.

8) Peter joins others in proclaiming that love to the brothers is of the highest importance. "Above all, love each other deeply." Is love then more important than doctrinal perfection, than the gathering of possessions, than building great works, even for God? Yes, it is! "Constantly having intense love for each other" is a reliable rendering of the original. Love must be long, and it must be deep. The last of the verse comes from Proverbs 10:12 (see also James 5:20), and can mean our covering the sins of those we love, or God's covering the sins of us, whom He loves.

9) In the ancient world, people would offer hospitality to one another since Christian travelers needed safe lodging. This was true throughout the Mediterranean world; many traveled due to persecution, while others went out seeking new fields in which to sow gospel seed. All of these needed to be cared for, and hospitality ("stranger-love") was a command for believers. This was one of the qualifications for being a pastor (1 Tim 3:2). "Without grumbling," suggests an uncomplaining

and cheerful spirit. “Grumbling” is onomatopoeia, *gongusmou* in the Greek NT.

10) Peter has this brief statement concerning spiritual gifts; it is consistent with Paul’s teaching in Romans, 1 Corinthians and Ephesians. First he says these abilities are received by men, given by God, thus they are “gifts.” They are universal in their bestowment (every believer participates), “each one.” No believer is left out in the distribution of spiritual gifts. They are received from heaven to be used in serving others, not for self-edification. The members of the body need the various gifts of their fellow members. We are incomplete without each other. So using them, we fulfill our duty as good stewards, managers, of the grace of God that comes to us in various forms.

11) One is reminded here of Acts chapter 6, where men were called to serve in the body so that other men could fulfill their calling to minister the Word of God and pray. Both were important, and without the former service gifts, the latter speaking gifts would have been less effective. Preachers and teachers must proclaim only the “words of God,” not the ideas of man. Those who serve do so in dependence on the strength God provides, and when they do, it is God (not themselves) Who receives the glory and acknowledgment of power. This should be the goal in all our serving.

The first two and a half centuries of the Church’s existence (born on Pentecost, just after Christ’s ascension) were characterized largely by persecution. The Roman Empire had no love for this “sect” that taught men to worship a God higher than Caesar, or to imagine that there were a power and glory greater than those of Rome. It is well-known that the wicked Emperor Nero used the Christians of Rome as scapegoats for the widespread destruction suffered because of a fire during his reign. The writer of this letter, Simon Peter, would later die on a cross himself; his later contemporary, Paul, would be beheaded by Nero - both dying for nothing other than being propagators of the “heresy of Christianity.” In fact, church historians record that of the 12 apostles (Paul counted here instead of Judas), only the Apostle John died in old age of natural causes - all the others having been martyred for their faith. So when Peter wrote to his readers about suffering, he communicated with saints who lived in an era of much Christian persecution.

12) While the world tolerates religion, it abhors righteousness. We who know Christ shine as lights in this dark world, exposing its wrong. Therefore it hates us as it hated Him Whose lights we are. We should not be startled at persecution. In any age, especially the present, believers are no strangers to sufferings. Even in this 21st century, when men are supposed to be “enlightened,” believers are being persecuted, often unto death, at the hands of religionists called “Moslems.” The world turns a blind eye and a deaf ear to those atrocities. It seems that any faith is tolerated in the world today except true Bible Christianity. They want to “put out the light.”

13), 14) If this statement seems strange to you, so will Acts 5:41, *“So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.”* Peter states that believers should find joy in suffering for Christ. In Christianity, “joyful suffering” is not an oxymoron, but rather a principle of life. Peter lists some reasons for this: 1] When we suffer, we share in the sufferings of Christ (not certainly in the sense of adding to His finished redemptive work, but being made into the image of Christ by the privilege of suffering alongside Him); 2] He says there is a sense in which present sufferings prepare us for future glory (see Rom 8:17,18, which conclude like this, *“the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”*); 3] A blessing is pronounced on those who suffer for Jesus. While the nature of that blessing is not revealed, we remember that Jesus spoke in the sermon on the mount, “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The deacon-turned-evangelist, Stephen,

showed us that in suffering we may behold the glory of Christ in heaven while still on earth (Acts 7:55). Jesus stood at the Father's right hand to welcome him home.

15) Peter returns to the idea of 3:17 - that as believers we should not suffer for doing wrong. There are blessing and honor in suffering for doing good, but if we suffer for doing evil, we only get what we deserve. Bad actions naturally should have bad consequences. Let us not confuse that circumstance with Christians who can nobly suffer for having done good. Suffering is what murderers, thieves, criminals, and meddlers deserve. Our Lord Jesus suffered more than any man, and He suffered because He did good, not for doing evil. If our suffering is to mirror His, it must be only because we also endure difficulty because we live righteous lives in a wicked world.

16) Suffering for doing wrong should make a believer ashamed. In some circles today, it is taught that suffering means either the presence of sin or the absence of faith. I find such teaching quite sad, especially in view of the fact that Jesus suffered, having never sinned once! Peter uses two imperative verbs in this verse, commanding us to a proper response on our part to suffering. If you are doing right and still you suffer for it, he says to **"stop being ashamed."** He commands us rather to **"keep on glorifying God"** Who counted us worthy to suffer for Him! Never let the "prosperity gospel" vendors cause you to be ashamed of suffering because of Christ.

17), 18) God disciplines His own; the son whom He loves, He chastens. We believers need God's discipline to grow into what we ought to be. When we stray from the fold, the little sheepdogs of "goodness and mercy" run down behind us to chase us back into the right path. If this is true of the saints (and it is - the Greek grammar here requires it), those who are yet outside the family have more difficult things to face yet. And why are they outside the family? Because they have not obeyed the gospel - they have not trusted the crucified, risen Son of God. While our path here may be plagued along the way with persecutions from the enemy, and we may find ourselves uncomfortably under the chastening hand of God, we know that our end is with Christ, in the bliss of heaven. Not so for the unbeliever, and sadly so. "What will be the outcome, the end..." reminds of Psalm 73:17. Asaph was bewildered at the prosperity of the wicked, until he understood "their outcome, their end." It is far less important how things **appear** to stand now than how they shall **really** stand in the end.

19) Could it be more clear? Sometimes suffering **is the will of God!** No more "prosperity theology!" And when in God's will we are called upon to suffer, let us do as did Jesus in His passion, and entrust ourselves to "the faithful Creator" - as Peter described what Jesus did in the face of wrongfully inflicted suffering in 2:23, "He entrusted Himself to Him Who judges righteously." As Jesus did, we must remember when we suffer that God is on the throne, and He will sort it all out in the end. Let us seek to glorify Him even in times of suffering and pain.

1 Peter 5

1) This portion parallels Paul's pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus, for Peter addresses the leadership of the church under the title of "elders," one of the synonyms for pastor in the NT. "Elder" emphasizes the maturity needed in the office. "Bishop" relates to the high responsibility of the office in oversight. "Pastor" deals more with the work of the man in the office. Peter identifies with these men as one of them, and further shares the credentials as one who personally witnessed Christ's passion (having seen His glory at the Transfiguration), and anticipating a share in the glory yet to come when Christ will be manifested. Surely these elders must listen to and heed his appeal.

2), 3) Peter reminds the pastors that the flock - the church - belongs to God. It is not "Pastor So and

So's church!" A minister is simply a steward, sent to the field to tend the flock. To "be shepherds" is an imperative - a command, not a suggestion. One cannot help but think here of Jesus' challenge to the delinquent Peter in John 21. Peter here employs the 3rd word for pastoral work - "overseer." You will also find all three ideas joined in Acts 20 in Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders. Three sets of contrasting exhortations are given by Peter relating to their responsibilities to the flock. The first two relate to motive of service. Pastors must serve God in ministry to the flock because He has given them a desire to do so - not because they feel some inappropriate obligation. God will make us willing to do His will. Pastors must not be guilty of greed in their work, but rather be driven by a passion to serve. God give us such men! Finally, Peter encourages pastors toward an exemplary life before the people, and away from trying to be their lords and masters. A pastor is in the yoke with his people, not driving the cart with a whip. The life cycle of a dictator in the pulpit is usually short-lived. People are sheep, not cattle; lead, not drive.

4) Peter declares that Christ is the Chief Shepherd, making the rest "undershepherds." (Jesus is also called the "Good Shepherd" {Jn 10} and the "Great Shepherd" {Heb 13}) Jesus has left us in the pasture with the flock, and He is coming back to call us into account. Those who have served faithfully will be the recipients of the special "Pastor's crown" - the unfading crown of glory. This is one of at least 5 crowns for believers mentioned in the NT, but one apparently reserved for those who have exercised pastoral ministry. The other crowns are 1, incorruptible (1 Cor 9:25), 2, rejoicing (1 Thess 2:19), 3, righteousness (2 Tim 4:8), 4, life (Rev 2:10).

5), 6) Being past 70 years old and a veteran of nearly 60 years of preaching, and having fallen into the trap about which Peter warns here, I feel at least partially qualified to speak on the subject of pride in the ministry. There is a great danger here - the call of God on a life, spiritual leadership, kind words of praise from hearers, and now the promise of a crown unique to pastors. A carnal mind could easily tend to pride. Peter says don't let it happen. Ministers (and their flocks) are challenged here to walk humbly before God and one another. He uses 3 expressions to urge humility - 1, "be submissive," a command to place ourselves under the authority of others; 2, "put on the garment of humility," also an imperative to shed the trappings of pride; and 3, a 3rd command is to make ourselves low - following the example of the condescending Christ. Some reasons are clear for this adjustment of attitude: 1st, God says do it; 2nd, God opposes the proud; 3rd, He gives grace to the humble; 4th, it is God Who knows the proper time for any exaltation of His servants, and He promises to take care of it.

7) Now comes one of Peter's best-known statements. This word of comfort has been a challenge and this word of challenge has been a comfort to us all. Psalm 55:22 and Matt 6:25-32 should be read here. We must let God handle our burdens, and we can because we matter to Him. Peter's own experience with Christ had proven this to him - how often Jesus had sustained, soothed, and strengthened the disciple, especially when he had failed!

8), 9) Submitting to others and placing our burdens on the Lord in no way allows us to become passive in our walk with Christ. We must remain alert and watchful because we have an enemy - the Devil! He constantly prowls and growls, ever looking for some weakened believer whom he may injure in some way. Those readers of this letter familiar with the lions in the Roman Coliseum would have vivid pictures of Satan's efforts against them. Vs 8 calls for us to Recognize Satan, 9 says to Resist him. James 4:7 should be read here. Dr. Wiersbe wrote, "Before we can stand before Satan, we must bow before God." Recognizing and Resisting Satan must be accompanied by Resting in the Savior. The Word will produce in us the faith we need to resist Satan. Finally, we are to

Remember that we are not alone in the fight. Others endure the same trials we do. Encouragement. 10), 11) Peter closes with a promise of grace and glory - welcome and comforting words for suffering believers. His grace is sufficient for all our trials. Peter contrasts the glory to be revealed (which is eternal) with the sufferings (which he says are limited in duration). Four things God will do for the suffering believer when the period of testing is over: 1, Restoration - like strained fish nets, we may be torn, but God will mend (Mt 4:21); 2, He will give us strength, 3, firmness, and 4, a solid foundation. Trials may diminish our resources, but in Christ they will be replenished to full supply - even beyond our former estate. Such a glorious prospect for the suffering believer elicits a doxology, a word of praise! Peter praises God by ascribing to Him power forever. It may appear in our suffering that God can't help, but the truth is that He can, and He does! Such knowledge strengthens us sufferers.

12) It appears that as Paul often had a secretary, an *amanuensis*, to actually pen his words for him, so Peter employed Silas as a scribe for this letter. He calls his letter brief, and states its intent was to encourage and witness to them of the genuine grace of God. They needed this encouragement because they were a people of suffering. His testimony to the genuineness of the gospel of grace strengthened them in their faith in it. He then commands them to hold fast in that grace. Believers under fire might be tempted to abandon the faith that made them suffer. Peter bids them stand firm in it!

13) As in 2 John 1:1, it seems that Peter uses a feminine pronoun to describe a church. The church was probably located in Rome, as scholars think "Babylon" was a cryptic reference to that city. John may have done this also in the Revelation. Perhaps the times of persecution made it prudent to exercise unusual care in protecting the identity of Christians. Peter's mentorship of John Mark surfaces here; tradition links these two in ministry, with Peter aiding in writing Mark's gospel.

14) In closing, Peter urges them to two great Christian virtues - love and peace. Where Paul mentioned a "holy kiss," Peter calls it a "kiss of love." He wishes for them Christ's peace in a time of suffering and anxiety. The shepherd (pastor Peter) loved the sheep.