

1 Peter

The letter of 1 Peter is an encouragement to all believers who are suffering in the world as a result of their covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Peter seeks to encourage the believers by reminding them of their identity and significance in the New Covenant of Christ. He then calls them to live a life that is worthy of this identity by living holy and self-sacrificing lives that call the people of the world out of the darkness and into the light, just as they had formerly been called.

This epistle claims that the Apostle Peter wrote it (1 Pet. 1:1). Since there is only one Peter who was an apostle, we may be confident of the identity of the writer. This has been the consistent, unquestioned belief of the Church and scholars until the last couple of decades when destructive biblical criticism became popular. Peter first sent this letter to believers, a mix of Gentile and Jewish Christians (1 Pet. 1:14; 2:10), living in the northern regions of Asia Minor (1 Pet. 1:1).

According to reliable traditions, Peter died in the mid 60s AD and spent the last decade of his life in Rome. Many scholars have regarded his reference to Babylon in 1 Pet. 5:13 as a reference to Rome, as Babylon is often a reference to Rome throughout the books of the Second Testament. Thus, it is most likely that Peter wrote this epistle from Rome about 64 AD.

Purpose

The purpose of 1 Peter can be found in 1 Pet. 5:12 where Peter states, “I have written to you briefly, in order to encourage you and testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.” Thus, the purpose of the epistle is threefold: first, to encourage the believers who are going through various trials to stay focused on Christ in their faith and obedience through the trials and to look toward the glory to come. Second, to assure them of the true grace of God, in that He is sufficient in the trials they face and will bless them now and in heaven one day. And third, to urge them stand fast in their dependence on and righteousness in God, for He is using these trials to make them more holy and to be an example to those around them.

Themes

There are many themes in 1 Peter, but the major themes are found in the idea that as children of God, His grace is sufficient to sustain the believers in the suffering and trials of living as foreigners in the fallen world. Thus, believers endure suffering for His sake, knowing that an inheritance awaits us.

The Believers Identity in Christ

Like many other epistles in the Second Testament, Peter begins his letter not by commanding the believers to live an obedient life but rather by reminding them of and rooting them in their new and true identity in Christ. Peter begins with the role that the trinity had in their salvation (1 Pet. 1:1-2) and then unpacks what the trinity has given them, having made them into adopted children of God (1 Pet. 1:3-2:2). Then he places them in the greater community of the body of Christ, who is the foundation upon which their new identity and lives are being built (1 Pet. 2:4-10). For the remainder of the letter Peter calls them to live in the world in light of their new identity in Christ and calling from God. Peter does not expect them to behave in a moral way because they are expected to, but to live righteous lives because they are motivated by a

transforming love and desire to please the God who has adopted them out of a life of darkness and called them children of God. As children of God, they are to act like their Father.

Suffering for Christ

Suffering is the result of living in a fallen world; believers will suffer as a result of being human in a fallen world, but they will also suffer at the hands of the world because they are children of God and because the world hates them. Peter implores them to live righteously in the midst of their suffering for the Lord's sake (1 Pet. 2:13), which will bring Him glory and bring others out from the darkness (1 Pet. 2:9).

God does not cause suffering, but He allows it so that the believer's character may be refined, that they may draw closer to God in dependence on Him and be reminded of what really matters (1 Pet. 1:3-9; 2:13-17; 3:13-17; 4:1-6, 12-19). The believer, knowing this, is able to endure the suffering and also as they follow the example of Christ, who Himself suffered and was vindicated by God (1 Pet. 4:1-2). In remembering that they too are children of God, the believers know that God will deliver and vindicate them just as He did His Son Jesus Christ. This deliverance is fully realized when we enter the glory of God's presence and receive that inheritance of our salvation that has been kept for us by God the Father (1 Pet. 1:4-5). These truths give us peace and joy and allow us to endure the suffering (1 Pet. 1:6).

The Sufficiency of God's Grace

The epistle reveals above all else that God's grace is sufficient for all the believer's needs (2 Cor. 12:9). The believer first experienced God's grace when He chose us as His children (1 Pet. 1:1). This gives the believers confidence, knowing that God has united them with Christ, who suffered and then received glory, then they have hope that they too will experience glorification in the future.

God's grace gives the believers the courage they need to face the world, to resist the devil (1 Pet. 5:8-10), and to serve the world in humility as they are persecuted (1 Pet. 4:10; 5:5). Thus, God's grace is proclaimed through their conduct (1 Pet. 2:19-20) as they live as the children of God and reflect His character (1 Pet. 1:15-16). Their conduct, patience, and submission in difficult circumstances manifest God's grace in a human life.

Outline

- I. The Identity of the Believers (1:3–2:10)
 - A. Greeting (1:1-2)
 - B. The Believer’s Great Salvation (1:3-12)
 - C. The Believer’s New Way of Life (1:13–2:3)
 - D. The Believer’s Priestly Calling (2:4-10)
- II. The Submission of the Believers (2:11–3:7)
 - A. Submission to Authorities (2:11-25)
 - B. Husbands and Wives (3:1-7)
- III. The Suffering of Believers (3:8–5:14)
 - A. Suffering for Doing Good (3:8-22)
 - B. Living for Good (4:1-11)
 - C. Suffering as a Christian (4:12-19)
 - D. To the Elders and the Flock (5:1-14)

I. The Identity of the Believers (1:3–2:10)

In this first division, Peter begins by addressing and reminding his readers that they have been chosen to be children of God and are included in His covenant community. This makes them foreigners in the world; thus, their identity and hope should be found in God just as it was with Jesus. Jesus was in the world, but He did not place His identity in the world or lay His hopes on the world. As children of God, they also have been given a great salvation that has been unfolding throughout history. This salvation gives them the ability to endure their current suffering because they know that they have a greater inheritance that is awaiting them in heaven with God, giving them joy and hope in their current circumstances.

Though Peter does not specifically use the language of adoption and children of God, he does develop this concept by stating that the believers are chosen (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:4, 6, 9; 5:13), referring to God as “Father” (1 Pet. 1:2, 3, 17), and by applying the foundational adoption of Israel’s passage (Ex. 19:3-6) in 1 Pet. 2:9-10. Here he states that the believers once did not belong to God, but now they do.

Peter’s readers have belonged to the world for a very long time, and their identity has been found in the world. Thus, their worldview and behavior are a result of an identity found in the world. The way that you think of yourself will directly affect the way that you act. Imagine a child who has been abused by his parents and constantly told that he is worthless, that nobody cares about him, and that he will never amount to anything. Eventually, he is abandoned by his parents and kicked out onto the street to fend for himself. He resorts to stealing to survive and is likely doomed to enter a life of crime, believing that he could never be anything more.

Later he is found, rescued, and adopted. Yet he constantly acts out in anger, steals, and closes himself off from his adopted parents. When taken to places like the grocery store, he is overwhelmed by the amount of food that is displayed before him. His first instinct will be to take the food and stuff it into his pockets. The ideas of parents who will provide for him and of stealing being wrong are foreign to him.

The parents could respond by educating him on the laws and consequences of his actions, or they could punish him until he learned. However, this only changes his behavior through fear of consequences. It does not change his identity and worldview. What he needs is to be convinced that he is a legitimate and unconditionally loved child of this new family who will provide for his needs, protect him, and never abandon him. When he has truly believed and claimed this new identity, his worldview will shift, and he will act differently as the child of these new parents.

This is what God has done with us and what Peter is teaching. Our identity is not found in the world, our nationalities, hobbies, or even in false statements that parents or other children repeated to us growing up. Our identity is found in the Father, who has adopted us while we were still sinners and loves us unconditionally, and who will provide for all our needs. When we fully believe and claim this identity as children of God, then our worldview will shift and we will begin to act like our Father. Our conduct will reflect Him because we know Him from spending so much time with Him, because we believe what He says about us and the world, and because we want to please Him. Obedience is the result of wanting to be intimately close to God, not based on a fear of punishment or having to measure up to an expectation.

A. Greeting (1:1-2)

In this section, Peter unpacks what it means to belong to and participate in the New Covenant initiated by Jesus Christ's blood, into which the believers have entered by the choice of the Father and the consecration of the Holy Spirit.

1:1 The word *apostle* means “messenger,” yet Jesus gave it a richer meaning (Lk. 6:13) when He attached it to His twelve disciples. The supreme importance of the apostles is suggested by the fact that the phrase “of Jesus Christ” is attached to no other First Testament office. Those who held this office had the authority at least equal to the Second Testament prophets, for the apostles could speak and write God's very words (Acts 5:3-4; Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 2:13; 14:37; 2 Cor. 13:3; Gal. 1:8-9; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:8; 15:2; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; 2 Peter 3:2). An apostle is one who has the authority to bear authentic testimony to the identity, life, and ministry of Jesus Christ.

The believers (the readers) are called both chosen of God and foreigners in the world in which they live. Peter describes them using the First Testament language of God's covenant people. *Election* and *diaspora* were used of Abraham, Moses, and the Israelites while in exile. Peter introduces a concept of Christian identity that is based first on one's relationship to God and then their connection to the world.¹ We will first unpack the meaning of the word *foreigner* and then the word *chosen* in relation to the “foreknowledge of God” in 1 Pet. 1:2.

The word *foreigner* (*parepidemos*) was used in the first century to designate someone who did not hold citizenship to the place they were living and thus were viewed as a foreigner. Their lack of citizenship meant that they did not have all the rights of citizenship. Likewise, they were not expected to hold the values and customs of the citizens of the land. Because of this, foreigners were often looked on with suspicion as potentially subversive to the established social order.²

This word appears again in the First Testament only in 1 Pet. 2:11 and Heb. 11:13. The word occurs only in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew First Testament) in Gen. 23:4 and Ps. 38:13 (Ps. 39:12 eng.) describing Abraham and the psalmist as foreigners in respect to God. The point is that just as with Abraham, our true home and citizenship are not of this world but of the kingdom of God in heaven (Phil. 3:20). That is where we belong, and that is the culture in which we should find our identity and what we should strive to build in this life.

The word *foreigner* used with the word *scattered* (*diasporas*) literally means “foreigners of the diaspora.” The diaspora refers to the Jews who were scattered all over the Mediterranean world in the exile after the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions in 722 and 586 BC. Peter's use of this phrase reminds the readers of the impact of the exile but also of the promises of God to restore them, which began to be fulfilled in the coming of Christ (Isa. 11:11-12; Jer. 31:8-14; Ezk. 11:17-21; 37:21-22; Zech. 10:6-12).

The five locations Peter mentions were in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) and had been recolonized by Rome under Emperor Claudius. By referring specifically to the diaspora in Asia Minor, Peter may be referring to Jewish and Gentile Christians who had been forcibly sent there in order to give them a sense of dislocation; there, they would have felt like they were in exile.

Just as the prophets preached the promise of restoration and redemption to the Jewish exiles, so Peter is preaching that the hope of restoration and redemption has begun in the coming of Jesus

¹ See Karen H. Jobes. *1 Peter*, p. 59.

² See Karen H. Jobes. *1 Peter*, p. 61.

Christ. Just as God had honored His promises to the prophets by sending His Son, so will He honor His promise of giving them their great inheritance in the second coming of Christ.

Some see this phrase “foreigners of the diaspora” as referring to the transitory life of the believers on earth as a journey towards heaven. However, this does not fit the context of 1 Peter or the other books in the Second Testament, which emphasize the hope of the future inheritance but also the necessity of the believer to be in the world in order to transform it into the kingdom of God. Peter is describing our relationship with an unbelieving society as we live in the world to fulfill the great commission and build the kingdom of God on earth. Peter will not call the believers to withdraw from society but to maintain their identity and allegiance to God as they engage the culture and transform it. We tend to make the mistake of either withdrawing from the culture or conforming to the culture. Rather, we should be inserted into the culture in order to transform it into reflecting the image of the kingdom of God.

“The sociological effect of being a foreigner is in view: Christians distance themselves as nonconformist from handed-down life-styles (1:17f.); therefore, those around them are “estranged” regarding them (4:3f.). In both Christians and those around them the effects of this foreignness can or should be felt—the letter speaks of this in the parenthesis [moral exhortation]—but the foreignness is established by election.”³

The word *foreigner* in connection to the obedience and the sprinkling of blood in 1 Pet. 1:2 invokes the language of the Mosaic Covenant made at Mount Sinai in Ex. 24. Peter implies that we should understand ourselves as foreigners in this world due to our covenant with God in connection with the Mosaic Covenant. Peter grounds our identity in terms of our relationship to God by defining the roles of the Father, Holy Spirit, and Son in our conversion and inclusion in the covenant of God.

1:2 The believers are called “chosen” or “elect,” which can focus either on God’s act of choosing them or on their status as “special” or “chosen ones.” On one hand, we are foreigners and rejected by the world; yet on the other hand, we are the chosen children of God, who is sovereign and eternal over all things compared to the temporary world.

The believers are chosen in connection to three prepositional phrases that further describe this:

- They are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.
- They are chosen by being set apart by the Spirit.
- They are chosen for obedience and for sprinkling with Jesus Christ’s blood.

Peter begins his letter by emphasizing that all three members had a role in the believers being chosen as a part of God’s covenant community, yet each member had a different role in choosing the believer. The order of the trinity here may reflect the logical order of one’s conversion. It is the Father who pursues us and reveals Himself to us, which is made operative by the Holy Spirit and is evidenced through a personal expression of faith in Jesus Christ.

The word *chosen* is best understood in its connection to “the foreknowledge of God the Father.” The noun “foreknowledge” (*proginosko*) only appears one other time in the Bible—in Acts. 2:23 where Jesus is handed over to crucifixion by God’s will and foreknowledge. The verbal form appears twice in the Second Testament with God as the subject and His people as the object

³ Leonhard Goppelt. *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, pp. 67-68.

(Rom. 8:29; 11:2). The word *foreknowledge* refers to the Father knowing His people with a personal, loving, fatherly knowledge (Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Peter 1:20; cf. ‘know’ in John 10:14; 1 Cor. 8:3; 2 Tim. 2:19). It carries the idea of God’s providential care over us or His eternal intention to bless us. He knows of our circumstances and is working in our lives. In the uses of both the verb *to foreknow* and the noun *foreknowledge* outside the Second Testament, the meaning of prior knowledge prevails. Thus, a good translation is “according to God’s fatherly care of you before the world was made.”⁴

God did not just have some knowledge of His people but was actively involved in their choosing in order to make them His covenant people. Before creation, God had chosen the people who would be redeemed and the agent that would redeem them (1 Pet. 1:2, 20). Regardless of your view of individual election, the essential point is that Christians are in the Church not merely by their own initiative but by the initiative of God who has called them. God has been involved in their lives long before they were aware of Him.⁵

Not all people are entitled to call God “Father” simply because He is the Father of all humanity. Peter roots the term “Father” in two ideas. First, that God is the Father of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:3), which is the theological foundation for Him being the Father to all believers in Christ. Second, God has become the Father of Christians because they have been regenerated, or reborn, by the imperishable seed of God’s Word (1 Peter 1:3, 23).⁶

The word *sanctifying* (NIV, NASB) or *sanctified* (RSV) has the idea of “being set apart” (NET) for a unique purpose. The continuous action (“being”) shows that it is a constant process and that God is using everything around us to sanctify us (Jn. 15:2; Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Heb. 12:10-11; Jam. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:14). Sanctification is the process whereby the Holy Spirit transforms us more and more into what God intended us to be—the image of God that bears the likeness of God’s character. God chose us in order that we would look like Him in our character and be set apart from the mundane world in order to be used for His sacred and unique purpose, to build the kingdom of God.

Peter states that we are set apart for two reasons: “for obedience” (1:14, 22; 3:6; Rom. 5:19; 6:16; 2 Cor. 7:15; 10:5-6; Heb. 5:8) and “for sprinkling with Jesus Christ’s blood.”

Because of the difficulty of the Greek grammar of this phrase, the question is whether “obedience” is connected to or separate from “Jesus Christ.” Those who see them as connected translate the phrase to read “for the purpose of obedience to Jesus Christ and the sprinkling of His blood.” Thus, one obeys by responding to the Gospel and then is sprinkled with the blood of Christ. They see this as a higher or second stage of commitment to God. However, this seems forceful when it comes to the grammar and stretching when it comes to the theology.⁷

It is better to see it as a hendiadys (two words expressing a single idea) translated as “for [the purpose of] obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” This is an allusion to the covenant that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai after the exodus from Egypt (Ex. 24). There,

⁴ See William W. Kline. *The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election*, pp. 236-41.

⁵ See Karen H. Jobes. *1 Peter*, p. 68.

⁶ See Karen H. Jobes. *1 Peter*, p. 69.

⁷ See Charles Bigg. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, p. 93 for a defense of this view. And see Karen H. Jobes. *1 Peter*, pp. 71-72 and D. A. Carson “1 Peter.” In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, pp. 1016-1017 for the problems with this view.

Moses sprinkled half the blood of the sacrifice on the altar of God, which represented the forgiveness of God grounded in the acceptance of the sacrifice. Moses then read the book of the Covenant to the people, who vowed that they would obey all that Yahweh commanded in it (Ex. 24:7). Then, Moses took the rest of the blood and sprinkled it on the people, bringing them into the covenant where their blood would be required if they broke it.

Thus, Peter is saying that believers today have been brought into a new birth, into a new covenant wherein we are to be obedient to God, established on the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. The Law was powerless to transform the hearts of the people to help them obey. Our obedience, however, is now made possible through the blood of Jesus Christ. The Israelite people wanted to obey God, but the animal sacrifices did not enable them to do so. In contrast, our desire to obey God is made possible through the sprinkling of Christ's blood.

The Holy Spirit does not bring people into a generic, feel-good spirituality; rather, the work of the Holy Spirit brings the believer specifically into the New Covenant founded in the blood of Jesus Christ so that we can offer our lives up to God in obedience (Rom. 12:1-2). This is the purpose for which we have been saved: to be in Christ with the ability to obey through the power of the Holy Spirit. God chose us to be part of His covenant community that would set us apart from the world for His purpose. The Israelites were saved from Egypt and were expected to leave their old identities behind in Egypt and take on a new identity in the covenant with God. They could not enter the Promised Land and dwell with God and receive His promises until they first entered the covenant of God, which demanded their obedience in building God's kingdom in Canaan. Likewise, Christians enter into the New Covenant of Christ, which demands that we die to ourselves and our old identity (Luke 9:23) and trust and obey (John 14:15-16) as we build the kingdom of God on earth (Matt. 6:10; 28:18-20; Acts. 1:8). Whatever worldly identity we are tempted to return to should be thrown off so that we can fully enter the new covenant community and become Christlike.

Peter closes this section with a greeting to his readers. Peter's desire is that as children of God we would experience the full grace of God, which is the only thing that can bring true peace in the midst of the trials and suffering due to living in a fallen world.

It is very important to understand that Peter is and will be emphasizing the point that our identity is not found in our jobs, skills, hobbies, sports, nationalities, groups of friends, and so on, for these things do not last or bring any true meaning. And some of these, especially nations, stand in opposition to the will of God. Eventually, these things will either fail you or pass away, as all things do (1 Pet. 1:24-25), leaving you with a vacant, meaningless identity. Only Christ and his kingdom are eternal (1 Pet. 1:4-5), therefore He is the only thing worth finding your identity, and He is also the only one who can truly bring you meaning and satisfaction. God began the redemption of His people by removing Abraham from his culture and people and taking him to a land where he was a foreigner with no identity. God then began to give him a new identity, even changing his name. No longer would he be Abram, which means "my father [Terah] is exalted," referring to the greatness of his ancestry and culture. Instead, God named him Abraham, which means "father of a multitude," referring to the promises of God (Gen. 12:1-14; 17:3-8). This was his new identity, and Abraham gave up the world for the promises and inheritance yet to come (Heb. 11:9-10). Abraham is thus our model as we find our new identity in Christ and the promises Abraham was looking forward to. We are called to transform the world, not identify with it or belong to it.

B. The Believer's Great Salvation (1:3-12)

In this section, Peter describes in three different ways the great salvation that believers have. First, salvation is a future hope made available through the power of God the Father (1 Pet. 1:3-5). Second, salvation brings a present joy that we can have in Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 6-9). And third, salvation has been unfolding throughout history through the work of the Holy Spirit and is now finally revealed to us (1 Pet. 10-12).

Peter began his letter by reminding us (his readers) of our identity as Christians. He did this to enable us to rejoice in the midst of our present suffering. We are able to do this since we will ultimately experience glorification with Christ in heaven one day that has been revealed to us through the working of the Holy Spirit.

1:3-4a Breaking this sentence down, Peter states that God is the cause of a new birth that is made possible through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is a new birth into a living hope, which is our future inheritance. Then, Peter describes this inheritance as imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.

We are given a “new birth” into a “living hope” which is placed in apposition to “inheritance,” which means that they have the same function and the same relation to other elements in the sentence, the second expression (“inheritance”) identifying or supplementing the first. The “new birth” has past tense quality; the “living hope” has a present continuous action quality; and “inheritance” has a future tense quality to it. The salvation that God has provided was begun in us in the past and continues on into the future; it is never ending.

Here, God is the Father of believers, not in that He is the Creator of all things but by His role in a new birth into His New Covenant community that He has given to those He has chosen. This new birth comes as a result of God's great mercy, which is made possible by the fact that Christ died when God poured His wrath out on Christ for our sin and rebellion. This occurred so that we could experience this new birth out of death and darkness and into a life of light. Likewise, Christ's conquering of death and His resurrection from the dead (the birth of the New Covenant) make possible our new birth into the New Covenant of salvation.

We are given a living hope, as it is rooted in the resurrection of the living Jesus Christ into whom we are built as our foundation that gives us life (1 Pet. 2:4-5). In Scripture, hope is not just a desire for something to happen, whether possible or wishful thinking. Hope is rooted in the promises of God who has demonstrated Himself to be trustworthy and faithful throughout history. Just as God has fulfilled His promises in the past, we know that He will fulfill His promises for us in the future. Thus, hope is a desire plus an expectancy for things to come based on the objective and trustworthy promises of God. This hope is in contrast to the dead hope of the pagan and the world philosophies, which are based on the dead things of the world (Eph. 2:12; 1 Thess. 4:13). As believers going through trials, one's sense of hope is being threatened. Yet we hope not in this world but in greater things from the living God, which gives us a continuous, sustaining, living hope in the midst of temporary trials.

This inheritance is far greater than anything that our earthly fathers could ever provide (Matt. 6:19-21), for this is a salvific, eternal inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. The word “imperishable” means it is not subject to death or decay, unable to be worn out with the passage of time. This is used of God Himself (Rom. 1:23; 1 Tim. 1:17), God's Word (1 Pet. 1:23), and our resurrection bodies (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Pet. 3:4). All earthly things will be destroyed

(Lk. 12:33; Rom. 1:23; 2 Cor. 4:16; Col. 2:22; 1 Pet. 1:18). The word “undefiled” (NET, NASB, RSV) or “[never] spoil” (NIV) relates to defilement of body and spirit that separated one from God (Ex. 20:25; Lev. 11:24, 43; 13:3; Num. 19:13). The word “unfading” means it will never wither, grow dim, or lose its beauty or glory (1 Pet. 5:4) unlike the earthly wealth (James 1:11).

1:4b-5 The verb “kept” (NIV, RSV) or “reserved” (NET, NASB) is a perfect passive participle, which indicates completed past action (by God) with results that are still continuing in the present. God has made provisions for the inheritance in the past at the cross, and it is now continually “reserved” for us in heaven. This inheritance is already complete and will always be there.

The point that Peter is emphasizing is that this new birth ultimately leads to the inheritance that is being kept for us in heaven. We have not only been given a new birth into salvation, but we and our inheritance are being guarded by God for salvation as well since we have been birthed into God’s covenant community through the blood of Jesus Christ. It is God’s *power* that is protecting us and is what drives and sustains the whole process. *Protected* can mean to keep from escaping and from being attacked. *Through faith* is the means by which He guards His people and seems to imply that God’s power energizes and continually sustains the individual and personal faith. Peter was not saying our faith keeps us saved, rather God’s power keeps us saved. It is our faith, which is the means by which we receive salvation initially and, therefore, our inheritance. Paradoxically, it is their faith in Christ that has put their social status in jeopardy, but it is that very faith in Christ that makes them heirs of God, whom God protects with His divine power, which gives them hope.

The benefits of the new birth are a present reality but are also being guarded by God until they are ready to be revealed in the last times, which is at the second coming of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:7). It is important to note that Peter does not teach that we will receive our inheritance when we die and go to heaven; rather, our salvation will not be complete and we will not fully receive our inheritance until Christ comes back at the final judgment.

“The Christians to whom Peter writes participates in the eschatological kingdom, whose fullness is still future, by allowing their present life of faith in God to be informed and energized by the unseen reality into which they have been reborn. Their self-understanding and resulting conduct are no longer to be shaped primarily by their society and culture, and hence they belong no longer solely to the society and culture in which they reside but the society and culture of God’s kingdom.”⁸

Though Peter has invoked the language and picture of the Mosaic Covenant at Mount Sinai after the exodus (Ex. 24), he moves beyond it to show how, through Christ, we have received a greater covenant and inheritance than the land of Canaan.

“The ‘inheritance’ of the New Covenant Christian is thus shown to be far superior to the earthly inheritance of the people of the Israel and the land of Canaan. That earthly land was not ‘kept’ for them, but was *taken from them* in the exile, and later by the roman occupation. Even while they possessed the land, it produced rewards that *decayed*, rewards whose glory

⁸ Karen Jobes. *1 Peter*, p. 89.

faded away. The beauty of the land's holiness before God was repeatedly *defiled* by sin (Num. 35:34; Jer. 2:7; 3:2)."⁹

1:6 Peter now shifts from the future glories of salvation to the present trials associated with salvation. The phrase "great joy" (NET) or "greatly rejoice" (NIV, NASB, RSV) is a continuous action and could be seen as a command; however, in light of the previous verses, rejoicing would be the natural response of the blessing. Furthermore, this section is devoted to declaring facts about the believers' lives, whereas his commands do not begin until 1 Pet. 1:13.

It is when we understand and look forward to our eternal inheritance that we are able to have joy despite the current and temporary trials that we face. However, the joy of a great future salvation does not make the present trials any less real or painful. One does not sadistically find joy as a result of the suffering; rather, we experience joy knowing how God uses trials to grow us despite the suffering.

The contrast here is between the joy that we experience of having a living hope and the suffering that we might have to endure. The suffering is described as lasting a short time and as a possibility that it might happen. The "short time" shows that, in the light of eternity, what we endure here is insignificant compared to the eternity of blessing we will enjoy in our inheritance. You may have to suffer grief, but it is for a short time in light of the inheritance awaiting us. Also, the type of the trials and how intense they are may vary from believer to believer.

"Peter thus shows simultaneous grief and joy to be normal in the Christian life. Grief arises because of many difficulties encountered in this fallen world, but faith looks to the unseen reality beyond this present brief existence and rejoices."¹⁰

1:7 God the Father allows these trials to come into our lives in order to prove or demonstrate the genuineness of our faith. Gold is one of the most valuable items in the ancient world, yet Peter states that genuine faith is more valuable than gold; for gold will eventually pass away, but faith will endure forever. There are two major ways that the Father uses trials to refine our faith. The first is like the refining of gold. In the ancient world, gold was refined by being subjected to intense heat in order to burn away the impurities in it; some of the impurities rise to the top and are scraped off, and what is left is pure gold. Similarly, we are subjected to intense trials so that the flaws in our character can be revealed through our obedience to God in the midst of the trial. We can either blame other people for making us react this way, or we can surrender to God and allow the Holy Spirit to scrape it out of us, refining our character.

If you place a grain of sand in your eye, eventually it will get infected, and if it is left untreated, you will lose your eye. If you place a grain of sand in an oyster shell, the oyster will cover the grain with layers of nacre that are then polished by the muscles of the oyster, creating a pearl. The problem was not the grain of sand (the trial); it was the way that the eye responded in contrast to how the oyster responded. When facing trials, do you become bitter and blame others and God? Or do you rest in God and allow Him to refine your character into something precious and valuable that will last for all eternity?

The second way is that trials and suffering can strip us of worldly things that we would normally depend upon for rescue, like money, skills, right connections, physical strength, etc. This forces

⁹ Wayne Grudem. *1 Peter*, p. 58.

¹⁰ Wayne Grudem. *1 Peter*, p. 63.

us to turn to God and thus draw nearer to Him in a deeper relationship. When He brings us through, it is a testimony to others and a reminder of what He can accomplish in our lives for when we face future trials.

No Christian seeks trials, nor does God set them up as obstacles, like an entrance exam into faith, but rather trials are used to draw us closer to God, for no genuine faith exists without trials. The result is that suffering justly will bring praise, glory, and honor. The praise seems to be the praise that God gives to His people for enduring the trials and coming out tested and approved. It is the “well done, good and faithful servant” that Jesus bestows upon us. This does not always come immediately, but rather the great praise is when Christ returns to give us the full inheritance of our salvation.

1:8-9 The contrast is that, despite the fact that we do not see Jesus now, we still love and believe in Him as a God and Redeemer because we experience Him every day in our lives. What draws us to him and allows to know and trust Him more is our obedient submission to Him during the trials that come into our lives. When we see Him work in our lives and experience Him in powerful ways, we are filled with joy because we are getting a deepening taste of the glorious salvation that is yet to come. This is the goal of our faith: to be complete in Christ.

The word “rejoice” here is a joy so profound as to be beyond the power of words to express. It is the joy of heaven before heaven, experienced now in fellowship with the unseen Christ. Even though we are not with Christ, we can still experience joy because we are in the process of attaining our inheritance now. Even though we will not receive our inheritance fully until the second coming of Christ, there are benefits Jesus provides for us now in this life through the Holy Spirit.

1:10-11 Peter shifts here from the present trials associated with salvation to how God has been unfolding His salvation plan throughout history in order to reveal it now through the sending of His Son Jesus Christ. The prophets were chosen by God to communicate His will to the people of Israel in a special way—even though they did not fully understand the message about the Christ they were preaching. Peter says that they longed for, searched, and investigated the words of God that they spoke in order to understand the person and coming of the Messiah. The “sufferings appointed for Christ” refers to His death, and “his subsequent glory” refers to His resurrection, exaltation, and the kingdom that He is bringing to earth one day.

“The Spirit of Christ” refers to the Spirit’s activity, not to the prophets, and shows that the predicting of the coming Messiah was the primary focus of His activity through the First Testament prophets. The spirit that descended and affirmed Jesus as the Messiah was the same spirit that was at work in the lives of the prophets. Peter is building the unity between the First and Second Testaments.

1:12 Though the prophets did not understand fully the message that they delivered from God, they preached it obediently because they knew one day its meaning would be revealed to future generations. We are blessed to have the message of Christ revealed in the Bible because of their obedience to God and despite their lack of understanding.

The point of the phrase “things angels long to catch a glimpse of” is that not even the angels who are in heaven with God fully understood the purpose of Jesus’ ministry and what it would accomplish until it was all said and done. Even though they are divine beings who are closer to God than we are, they still did not have the knowledge and ability that Jesus had concerning

salvation. As stated in Hebrews 1–2, Jesus is superior to the angels. He is the *Son* of God who holds a position superior to the angels. Likewise, He did not come to redeem angels, nor did they come to redeem us.

However, today we understand the person and coming of Jesus Christ, for He has revealed Himself to us in His incarnation, death, resurrection, and exaltation. Thus, we are more privileged than the great prophets and the angels, which should increase their joy in the midst of suffering.

Peter’s point in 1 Pet. 1:10-12 seems to be that we can rejoice in our sufferings even though we cannot see exactly how or when our present trials will end. We should find encouragement by looking at the prophets’ limited understanding of their own prophecies regarding the suffering and glorification of Christ. God would bring their own experiences to a glorious completion just as He would the Christ’s, though in both cases the details of fulfillment were not yet clear. Notice how many times *praise*, *joy*, or *rejoice* are mentioned in this section; “blessed be” (1 Pet. 1:3), “brings you great joy” (1 Pet. 1:6), “will bring praise [from God]” (1 Pet. 1:7), “so you rejoice,” “glorious joy” (1 Pet. 1:8).

C. The Believer's New Way of Life (1:13–2:3)

Peter's desire is for the believers to live joyfully in the midst of sufferings, which has as much to do with our character and conduct as understanding our identity. In this section, Peter emphasizes that the result of fully understanding our identity in Christ and being sanctified by the Holy Spirit is that we begin to reflect God's character in our words and deeds just as Christ demonstrated in His life. Peter unpacks five outcomes that a believer should be demonstrating in their lives.

The five outcomes of salvation are hope (1 Pet. 1:13), holiness (1 Pet. 1:14-16), godly fear and trust (1 Pet. 1:17-21), love (1 Pet. 1:22-25), and growth in redemptive life of God (1 Pet. 2:1-3). Though these are commands on how we are to act in word and deed as Christ did, they are also the natural and expected outcomes of a believer who is in Christ and being transformed by the Holy Spirit. If one is truly dwelling in Christ and walking in the Word of God, then he will begin to see these outcomes made evident in his life. Not that these are fully manifested instantaneously, but one can see growing evidence of their presence over time. These responsibilities are our duties to God, to other believers, and to the world.

1:13 The “therefore” makes the point that 1 Pet. 1:13 is the response that the believer should have in light of the salvation that has been revealed in 1 Pet. 1:3-12. The first outcome of salvation is that you are to “set your hope completely on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed.” The first two actions—“get your minds ready for action” and “be fully sober”—are what produce hope.

The first task—“get your minds ready for action”—literally says in the Greek, “gird up the loins of your mind.” This comes from an ancient Near Eastern custom of gathering up one's long robes, pulling them up between the legs, and then wrapping and tying them around the waist, so as to prepare for running, work, or battle. The way we prepare our minds for action is by being in the Word of God and understanding who God is and how He is working out His plan of redemption in the world. If we do not understand what God is doing and how we are a part of it, then it is hard to be ready to execute His will in the kingdom of God.

The second task—“be fully sober” or “self-controlled”—is one of restraint and moderation, which avoids excess in passion, rashness, or confusion. This means we are not to allow the ideas, desires, or pursuits of the world to intoxicate and control us. We cannot hope to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be effective in the kingdom of God if we are constantly distracted by temporary and meaningless values and pursuits. We must remember that our identity is in Christ and in His kingdom, not in the things of this present world.

These two disciplines are what allow us to be filled with and hope in the inheritance that awaits us in the second coming of Christ. Our focus on this reality is what allows us to face the trials that come into our life. Jesus' return at the end of 1 Pet. 1:13 is connected to that salvation, which will be revealed in the last time in 1 Pet. 1:5. Thus, it is the pleasure of Christ that should be the motivation for our actions.

1:14-15 The second outcome of salvation is that of being holy. Peter commands us to be like obedient children in that we want nothing more than to please our heavenly Father. Though children do not always obey their parents, children do desire their parents' approval and pleasure more than anything else. If we truly understand who God is and what He has done, then we will

want nothing else but to please Him so that we can experience and enjoy Him in an ever-deepening relationship.

The contrast is between our old state of being controlled by evil desires and our new state of being holy as obedient children. We are not to live like we used to when we were unsaved and, in our ignorance, conformed to the evil of the world. The reason we are to be holy is because our Father in heaven is holy and because we are His children, who are a reflection of Him. This is the reason for which we were redeemed and the only way we can have a relationship with Him.

But what does holiness mean? The Bible often communicates holiness as a communicable attribute of God (that is, characteristics of God that we as His image bearers can share—love, gentleness, etc.). Yet the Bible also seems to communicate different concentric circles of meanings of holiness in that it is one of God's non-communicable attributes (that is, characteristics of God that we as His image bearers *cannot* share—omnipotent, omniscient, etc.). The question is, what does the holiness of God mean at its most concentrated center?

Some have understood holiness by its etymology, or what it means. Holiness is then defined as being separate, as in God is separate from all things. But this is very lacking in its meaning when you get to the throne room of God in Isa. 6 and the angels are declaring God as separate, separate, separate. Others define it in terms of morality. But once again are the angels declaring God as moral, moral, moral.

In its most concentrated meaning, holiness is an adjective reserved for God alone. The angels are declaring that Yahweh is holy, holy, holy. Only He is truly God, and He is God in a way unlike anything in all of creation. He is utterly unique and supreme in His holiness.

As you then move out from the core of its meaning, that which peculiarly belongs to God is declared to be holy. It may or may not be moral; the shovel that was used to remove the ashes from the altar was declared holy (Ex. 27:23; 29:37), not because it is moral but because it is reserved peculiarly for God's service and nothing else. Anything else is common.

So, if God's people are declared to be holy because we are reserved peculiarly for God's service, then it is going to affect how we think, which bears on how we behave and speak and relate to others in our relationships. This is because as His image bearers we can reflect the holy character of God in ways that the articles of the temple could not. Thus, a moral element is introduced to the way we think about ourselves as our lives align with the character of God and we reflect the Master's holiness to the world.

The idea of holiness is then defined in two ways. We are definitionally and positionally holy, for we have been set aside for God's use. If we do not live like we belong to God, then we are contradicting the very nature of what God has called us to be through the blood of His Son. If we are positionally His, then the work and character of God flow out of us, and we are functionally holy in the way that we behave and relate to others.

Thus, holiness is at its core a non-communicable attribute. Only God is God. But we are declared to be holy because we are associated with Him and are used by Him. The minute we step away from Him and His will, we become common and profane.

Inevitably, as we find our identity in Him, more and more this will set up conflicts with the other types of categories with which we associate ourselves. There will be overlaps covered by common grace, but ultimately there will be conflicts. One cannot completely be holy in God and find any identity in the nations, institutions, hobbies, or values of the world; all these things are

passing away (1 Peter 1:22-25). How we reconcile these earthly identities with our identity in Christ all depends on how much we understand God and draw close to Him. Ultimately, to truly be holy as God is holy is to be weird and peculiar in the world's eyes, and thus a foreigner.

1:16 Peter gives the reason we are to be holy: in Lev. 19:2 God says we are to be holy. In the context of Lev. 19:2, God tells the Israelites that they are to meet the requirements of His Law in order to have fellowship with Him. It is now through our acceptance of and obedience to Jesus, who is the new Law/Covenant, that we become holy so that we can have a relationship with the Father. This is the only way we can have intimate fellowship with God. In quoting Lev. 19:2, Peter preserves the authority of God's Word to ancient Israel as binding on Christians but does not prescribe the specifics of the Levitical Law code as necessary for Christians to follow. Peter confirms the continuity of authority and principles between the First Testament and New Covenant Christians but also recognizes the differences in the particulars pre- and post-resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christians are just as much the people of God and under His authority as ancient Israel, but they are to express their holiness in different forms.¹¹ These different expressions will be developed in the chapters to come.

1:17 The third outcome of salvation is that of living in reverent fear of God. The "if" clause in the Greek assumes that you do consider God your Father, which means that you will naturally revere Him as your sovereign creator as much as your redeemer. Peter not only portrays God as a loving father who has redeemed us but also as a sovereign, impartial judge over all creation. To revere God is to have a deep respect for Him and even a fear of how great and powerful He is as a sovereign king, causing us to stand in awe of Him. Yes, He loves us unconditionally and no longer condemns us, but we still need to remember that though He is good, He is not safe, and He does not tolerate evil.

The very knowledge that brought us into a relationship with God also brings a knowledge of sin and God's wrath poured out on it. If we truly know Him more, we will gain a deeper understanding of His abhorrence for sin and evil as we do for His love and grace for us. "Our knowledge of Him as Father must not dispel our dread of Him as our judge."¹² The pagan life that He abhors will be no less abhorred as lived by the professing Christian than it was when we were pagans. Since the child shares in the character of the father, the Christian life is to conform to God the Father's moral standard. The believer is informed by Scriptures (1 Pet. 1:10-12) and transformed and empowered by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:2). We need to remember that this life is temporary, and just as we await an inheritance, there is also an accounting.

However, the judgment is associated with the consequences of life and not a final judgment with the possibility of going to hell, for there is no condemnation for those who are found in Christ (Rom. 8:1). We are called to revere God as sovereign and holy and to live an obedient life so that when we stand before Him in the last days, with His approval.

1:18-19 The contrast is between the believer's former empty way of life and the new life in Christ. In the Greco-Roman world, the "ancestral way of life" (*patroparadotos*) was venerated as the basis for a stable society, yet Peter views it in a negative way (Phil. 3:4-9). This empty inheritance is what they were ransomed from and into the inheritance that comes with the new birth in Christ.

¹¹ See Karen Jobes. *1 Peter*, pp. 114-15.

¹² F. W. Beare. *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes*, p. 100.

The word *redeem* was used in the Greco-Roman world for the manumission of a slave. The slave would give his money to the temple, which was then used to pay the slave owner with the thought that the gods had paid for his freedom (Isa. 52:3; Ps. 34:22). The contrast here is between being redeemed with the gold and silver of the world and being redeemed with the blood of Jesus Christ. Though gold and silver are typically seen as imperishable, they do not compare to the blood of Christ, which covers our sins. No amount of money was sufficient to buy us back from sin. Only the precious blood of Jesus had the value necessary to redeem us back because He was perfect and holy.

Peter does not connect redemption directly with freedom from sin and guilt, nor does he portray redemption in contrast to the way that the world around them was living. Rather, redemption is defined in contrast to the way that they formerly lived, which is venerated by the world but considered useless by God.¹³ To continue to live in one's sinful ways is to deny the value of Christ's death. Christ paid a high price to redeem us to so much more than anything we could inherit from the world.

1:20-21 The word “foreknown” (NET, NASB) or “chosen” (NIV) or “destined” (RSV) has the idea of prior knowledge rather than prior determination. The idea is that before the foundation of the world, it was God's plan to send Christ to redeem the world, though it was not known to the angels and the prophets (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Today, he has been made known specifically for “our sake” of being redeemed from a false inheritance. It is “through” Christ that we are able to trust God, whom we did not previously have access to because of our sins. God knew, sent, and raised Christ from the dead so that we could have faith and hope in God. No other person or institution has done so much and offered so much to us so that we could have this incredible inheritance.

1:22 The fourth outcome of salvation is that of demonstrating love. Peter now shifts the focus from how we are to live rightly in relationship to God to how we are to live rightly in relationship to others in Christian community.

Once we have been saved by the work and blood of Jesus, it is through our continual obedience that we purify ourselves in order to maintain our relationship with God. Our obedience is demonstrated by our desire to please Him and know Him relationally and not because we fear Him and His punishment. This can only happen when you rightly understand the first three outcomes. This is done so that we can sincerely love one another. The command is to love one another from a pure heart. The point is that obedience is necessary in order to love God and others sincerely and earnestly. For if we are not obedient to God both in our conduct and our repentance, then how can we truly love others unconditionally and selflessly like God does?

1:23 Once again, Peter goes back to our new birth and contrasts the ideas of that which is perishable with what is imperishable. Whereas before it was the redemption blood of Christ, now it is the seed of Christ that produces an eternal genealogy. We are not of the physical seed descending from our earthly fathers, which produces a continual genealogy of death; rather, we have been born again of the eternal seed of our Father in heaven, which produces an eternal life and genealogy in Christ. Whatever connection and loyalty we feel to our earthly families and communities, they are nothing compared to the connection we should have with our new eternal family and community in Christ into which we have been born.

¹³ Karen Jobes. *1 Peter*, p. 118.

This imperishable seed that has given a new birth comes through the living and enduring word of God. The word of God here is more than just the Bible; it is the totality of God's living word that brought all things into existence, sustains creation, sent Jesus Christ and raised Him from the dead, and has given birth to God's imperishable community. This is the seed and word of God.

1:24-25 To make his point, Peter quotes Isa. 40:6-8, which contrasts the power of God with the powerlessness of idols. The contrast is that humans and their glory, honor, and pride are like grass and flowers that do not last very long, for they wither and die. Peter shows that everything about past lives and identities (1 Pet. 1:14, 18) is empty and will pass away, but now we have significance and will endure forever because we have the seed of Jesus planted in us (1 Pet. 1:23). This is the contrast: that unlike our human lives, God's word endures forever.

To those who are tempted to renounce the Christian faith under the pressure of persecution or the rejection of the world, Peter reminds them with the Isaiah passage that apart from Christ all will inevitably perish.

“The contrast between what is transitory and what is permanent embodied in the quotation [of Isa. 40:6-8] would be highly appropriate for the beleaguered community of Christians facing what gave every appearance of being the permanent, even eternal, power and glory of the Roman Empire. In such a situation, the announcement that the glitter, pomp, and power of the Roman culture was as grass when compared to God's eternal word spoken in Jesus Christ, available through the gospel preached to and accepted by the Christians of Asia Minor, would give them courage to hold fast to the latter while rejecting the former. Even the hostility of that overwhelming power becomes more bearable when its ultimately transitory nature is revealed and accepted.”¹⁴

However, one must understand that Peter is not calling us to abandon the people of the world, for then how can we call them into the light (1 Pet. 2:9-12)? The point is to not find our identity or connections in the things of the world because we do not belong to the world. Thus, when we truly understand who we are in Christ and where our true home is, our joy and hope in the midst of trials can truly become evident to others, and they then desire to join this new covenant community. The goal is to live our identity in Christ so powerfully that we draw others into this new identity.

2:1 The fifth outcome of salvation is that of growing in the new redemptive life into which you have been born. The phrase “putting off” (*apothemenoi*) was used for the taking off of clothes and is used idiomatically for the removal of behavior that is not reflective of God's character (Rom. 13:12; Eph. 4:22, 25; Col. 3:8; Jam. 1:21). Since we have become children of God through a new birth, we are expected to get rid of the behaviors that do not reflect our Father's holiness. These are the behaviors that are incompatible with God's covenant community, for they destroy relationships, which Christ redeemed through His relationship. To continue in such behavior is to destroy what Christ died for.

2:2-3 Just as newborn babies constantly crave milk and will drink nothing else, so we also are to crave only *spiritual* milk so that we can grow into what Christ has redeemed us to become and to receive our complete salvation at the coming of Christ (1 Pet. 1:5, 7, 9). The phrase “spiritual milk” comes from the Greek word *logikos*, a very difficult word to translate. Some have made a connection to the Greek word *logos*, which means “word.” Thus, they say that the “spiritual

¹⁴ Paul J. Achtemeier. *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, p. 142.

milk” is a metaphor for the Word of God. However, if Peter had wanted to make that connection, he would have used a different word.

In 1 Pet. 1:23 Peter clearly defines the word of God as the imperishable seed. Likewise, he develops this spiritual milk in the context of newborn babes, which is connected to the idea of the seed, developed in 1 Pet. 1:23. Though reading and understanding the Word of God (Bible) are important for growing, this is too limiting for what Peter has been developing up to this point. As discussed in 1 Pet. 1:23, the word of God is God’s imperishable community life and the culmination of salvation into the kingdom of God. We are to crave the totality of this life into which God has birthed us. A mother’s milk is life for the baby; likewise, spiritual milk is the life of God for His children.

The phrase “now that you have tasted that the Lord is good” is a quotation from Ps. 34:8 connecting the idea of a baby craving milk and tasting the goodness of God. The context of Ps. 34 says nothing of the Word of God but is entirely about the community of God and about His sustaining life that He infuses into His community. Peter has been discussing this new life and community of God into which we have been birthed and that we have tasted. And though some may be tempted to return to old identities, they have also tasted that this new life is good and thus should crave more of God’s sustaining life—just as a newborn baby craves the sustaining life of its mother’s milk.

“The Word reveals God’s mind, so we should *learn* it; God’s heart, so we should *love* it; God’s will, so we should *live* it. Our whole being—mind, will, and heart—should be controlled by the Word of God... We do not study the Bible just to get to know the Bible. We study the Bible that we might get to know God better. Too many earnest Bible students are content with outlines and explanations, and do not really get to know God. It is good to know the Word of God, but this should help us better know the God of the Word.”¹⁵

These are just as much commands for obedience as they are outcomes of salvation. Often, we focus too much on the need to obey God, becoming fixated on right behavior and thus legalistic, trying to become righteous through our own efforts. This ignores the fact that we can only become righteous through the work of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, we can tend to focus so much on the work of the Holy Spirit that we become apathetic, putting no effort into obeying and being transformed. The answer is in the tension, and how much it is of one or the other is a mystery. God has called us to desire and pursue obedience, for this is the reason we were saved. Yet we cannot do this in our own effort. The key is to acknowledge this, to cry out to God and surrender to the transformation of the Holy Spirit in every moment of our failings. This may sound easy, but the most difficult act of obedience is that of surrender. The focus of our obedience is not in being better but in surrendering to the will and work of the Holy Spirit in the acceptance that we cannot do it. The more we experience the life of God, the more we will crave it, and the more we will surrender to Him since we know that God is good. It is then that the Holy Spirit produces these outcomes in our life, not because we did it but because we surrendered to Him. If you do not see these outcomes in your life, the key is to get back into Christ through prayer, reading the Word, and being involved in the life of the community—not by trying harder to behave correctly.

¹⁵ Warren Wiersbe. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. 2 vols. p. 2:397.

D. The Believer's Priestly Calling (2:4-10)

In this section Peter changes his metaphor from an organic, relational growth in our identity to our being a building (temple) with a purpose in the world. And he changes the metaphor from an individual focus to a corporate focus. Peter moves from identity and conduct of the individual believer to our corporate identity and purpose as the priesthood of God. When we find our identity (1 Pet. 1:1-5) in God and are refined by trials (1 Pet. 1:6-9), we will produce the outcomes of our salvation (1 Pet. 1:13-2:2) for the purpose of declaring the praises of God (1 Pet. 2:9) as God's living priesthood and temple (1 Pet. 2:4-6).

2:4-5 Peter now calls us to not just “taste that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:8) but to “*come to Him* and be enlightened” (Ps. 34:5). The wording here of “come to Him” employs a verb frequently used in the LXX of “drawing near” to God, either to hear Him speak (Lev. 9:5; Deut. 4:11; 5:27) or to come into His presence in the tabernacle to offer sacrifices (Ex. 12:48; 16:9; Lev. 9:7-8; 10:4-5). It is also used in Hebrews as a specialized term for “drawing near” to God in worship (Heb. 4:16; 7:25; 10:1, 22; 11:6; 12:18, 22).

The living stone is Christ, who has been rejected by men but chosen by God. Jesus referred to Himself as the foundational rock (Matt. 7:24-27); He prophetically referred to Himself as the rejected stone several times in the Gospels (Matt. 21:42-44; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17-18). By calling Jesus the living stone, Peter was alluding to the temple, where Yahweh dwelt and to which the people had limited access under the old covenant. Christ declared Himself to be the new temple in John 2:18-22. As the living stone, He is not merely a stone building for Yahweh but is the living God and the fleshly temple that has been resurrected so that we may dwell in Him with Yahweh (John 14:4). This is the exact language that Paul uses in Eph. 2:18-22 when he refers to us dwelling with Yahweh in Christ at the living temple of God.

Though humanity has rejected Christ as the true living temple, Yahweh has not. It is Yahweh who declared the tabernacle and temple as His, and now He has declared His precious Son as His true living temple. Rather than coming to the temple and the altar in Jerusalem, we now come “to Him” in whom “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:9).

Because we are chosen in Christ (1 Pet. 1:1) we also are living stones, because our nature is derived from the nature of the resurrection of the living Christ. Thus, we become living stones because He made us, and we are being built into Him as the temple of God. The word “house” (*oikos*) can also refer to a dynasty as well as to a building in which a deity lives.¹⁶ Thus, we are not only the temple of God, but we are also the household of God. The fact that we are all being built into Christ together as a single temple implies that our significance and purpose as Christians cannot be realized apart from the community of other believers. We can no longer be self-centered but must reinterpret ourselves by the values of sacrificial love of this new community.

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

¹⁶ Karen Jobes. *1 Peter*, p. 149.

individual purpose we also have a corporate purpose that we cannot fulfill unless we take our place in the community of Christians that is the church.”¹⁷

Our purpose in becoming the temple of God is to be a holy priesthood and to offer spiritual sacrifices. Peter has already called the believers to be holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16), but now we are also called a priesthood. The priests were the only ones who had access to the temple. Their job was to teach the people about God and to offer sacrifices that would cover the sins of the people in order to provide forgiveness. Since we are in Christ, we become priests because we now have total access to God (Matt. 27:51; Heb. 4:14-16) in a way the priests of the old covenant never had.

Since Christ is the final and only acceptable sacrifice (Heb. 7:27; 9:12; Heb. 10:10), we are to offer spiritual sacrifices, which is our obedience, becoming more Christ-like through the transformation of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:1-2). As priests, we are to maintain our holiness by entering the presence of God through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, not with the blood of bulls and goats. And we are to go out into the world and make disciples of all people, for we are the living stones being built into Jesus Christ as a spiritual priesthood. If we pursue this life of obedience, repentance, and mission, then we will be acceptable to God through the blood of Jesus that makes our obedience and repentance possible.

2:6 Peter supports his statement by quoting Isa. 28:16. The context of Isa. 28 is that God is condemning Israel for failing to be God’s chosen nation and holy priests to the world around them. He then declares that a day is coming when He will lay a true and solid stone in Israel that will be the foundation to a truly righteous temple, and all who rely on it will never be disappointed. A cornerstone was the first, largest, and most important stone laid for a building. It had to be perfectly level and plumb, for every other stone was laid off of it (Isa. 28:17). Peter quotes this in connection to Christ but also sees the Christians as the building project upon the stone. Our lives are made righteous and true because we are built into the true cornerstone.

2:7-8 Peter then quotes Ps. 118:22 and Isa. 8:14 to make the point that there will be those who reject Christ as the true cornerstone, and they will stumble over Him into judgment because they ignore His significance. The context of Ps. 118 is that the psalmist is declaring that God is the ultimate refuge and hope and that it is better to take shelter in Him than in anything in the world. God used Israel to build the great city and gates of God (Ps. 118:19-20), but they rejected his chosen salvation (Ps. 118:21), and it is that stone (Messiah/Christ) that God has made the cornerstone to His true city.

The context of Isa. 8 is that God is condemning Israel for their rebellion and is pronouncing great and terrible judgments that will come upon them for their sins. God declares that He will no longer be a stone of refuge but one that will cause them to stumble and fall. The first passage points to the Christ as the stone that Israel will reject, and the second declares that when they do, it will be their judgment for doing so. With Peter’s application, *builders* becomes broader than Israel in the First Testament, now referring to anyone who attempts to build a society or their own lives by their own means, without Christ as their cornerstone.

Peter encourages the believers that the rejection they experience now should not be surprising, for God predicted this long ago through the prophets. And Peter clearly presents Christ as the only means of salvation, so there should be no question of whether the believers should remain

¹⁷ Thomas Constable. *Notes on 1 Peter*, p. 24.

in their faith. Those who reject this salvation will face a greater judgment than any persecution and rejection one might experience at the hands of the world.

Peter then states that they stumble because they disobeyed the word of God, which is what they were destined to do. Does Peter mean that they were destined to disobey and stumble into judgment or that all who chose to disobey are destined to stumble into judgment?

2:9 In contrast to this, Peter declares the believers to be four things that emphasize our identity as believers. The first statement declares us to be chosen by God and alludes to Isa. 43:3-4. In the context of Isa. 43, God is declaring Himself to be Israel's only Savior, for He has chosen them and therefore will ransom them. By alluding to this, Peter connects back to 1 Pet. 1:1-2 and declares that this promise of God has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in our being chosen. No matter what nation, race, or group you previously belonged to, now you belong to the covenant community of God.

The other three statements that emphasize our identity as believers are a quotation from Ex. 19:5-6, where God had just brought them out of Egypt and to Mount Sinai and promised that if His people were faithful He would use them to make His glory known and to bless the world (Isa. 61:6). He states that if they obeyed Him, they would be a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people of His own. This is considered by scholars as one of the most important passages for the identity of Israel and the main theological idea of the Torah and the rest of the First Testament.

The second statement declares us to be a royal priesthood. In the First Testament, in some sense all of Israel were to be priests to the world, yet only the Levites were to have access to God and truly function as priests. Functionally, the priests were able to enter the presence of God and were to mediate the forgiveness of God to the people through the animal sacrifices. Positionally, the priests were especially sanctified and were to commit themselves to a higher level of holiness and righteousness compared to the rest of the nation.

Peter thus declares us all to be priests, not based on nationality or tribal divisions but by the fact that we are being built into the temple of God on the foundation of Jesus Christ as our great high priest (Heb. 4:14-16). Jesus is the priesthood, and the members of the Church are His priests. Thus, we all are to help communicate the grace and forgiveness of God to the world through the sacrifice of Christ and to pray for others as their mediators. But Peter, in light of the previous chapter, has the idea of us all being priests, which means all believers are to commit themselves to a higher level of holiness and sanctification. We should never use the excuse that the function and position of priesthood are only for the pastor and missionary and not for us.

The third statement declares us to be a holy nation. In the ancient world, the word *nations* has the idea of regional empires, with tribes and people under that authority. It also can carry the idea of ethnicity. So what kind of nation are we if Christianity transcends all political boards and ethnicity? We are a *holy* nation that is under the regional empire of God, who is sovereign over the entire universe. For a discussion of what holy means, see 1 Pet. 1:15-16. The identity that marks us now is not those identities that we find in the world but the identity that makes us truly the image of God as we belong to Him and seek to please Him.

The fourth statement declares us to be God's special possession. Though all the nations are God's, we who belong in Christ are His special people (Ex. 19:5). Just because we are chosen in a special way does not disqualify all the other nations from belonging to God. Everyone is invited to be in the kingdom of God, whether you like it or not. But to be a part of the living

kingdom of God, you must be born again (John 3). This gives us special value and makes us feel special when we know that He initiated and executed the plan of redemption to make us so. However, just because we are His special possession out of all the nations does not mean that we are to exclude all the other nations from being able to be chosen. For Peter will go on to make it clear that we are to bring the world into this New Covenant just as we once did not belong but now do.

By quoting Ex. 19:5-6, Peter is applying all the language and blessings of the old covenant to the New Covenant people, under new conditions. We are the chosen people of God for the purpose of expanding His kingdom. What Israel could not do, we are now able to do through the blood atonement of Jesus Christ and the indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit.

In the second half of 1 Pet. 2:9, Peter gives believers their purpose, which flows out of our identity. Our purpose is to declare the praises of how great and loving this God is, who chose us and redeemed us into His covenant community. We praise Him because He redeemed us out of the darkness in which we lived, which brought death, and into the light, which is life. The reason God has chosen us and done all this for us is not for our own pride but for the glory of God. We are to make Him known to all people so that they may know how great He is, experience His amazing love, and be redeemed out of their own darkness and into His light. This is why we are chosen—not to be special at the expense of others but to be brought into the community of God in order that they may be special as well. Therefore, there is no room for people being “called” to be missionaries, for we are all missionaries. Yes, some may be called to go to other countries, but we are all called to missions, whether in our jobs, families, or neighborhoods. Our primary purpose is to declare the praise of God everywhere we are and so build the kingdom of God.

Some may look at this and ask whether God is not egocentric by demanding that we praise Him all the time or that all things be done for His glory. If humans act like that, they are considered egocentric. In part, the reality is that He *is* so much more than we are and has done more for us than any other being has. He is unlike anything else in creation and deserves our praise.

But it is more than that, because we have been made by this God and for this God. And because our very self-identity, when we are right with God, is to love Him supremely, to adore and worship Him. It is a supreme act of love on His part to keep demanding it. Because it is for our good.¹⁸ There is no insecurity in this God. He is the best possible good for our lives, and to know Him and praise Him draw us closer to Him, which is the best thing that could ever happen to us. For He is life, love, joy, and the Sustainer of all things. It does not do any good if God humbly says, “No, do not give me too much worship.” This reduces Him in our eyes, and we see no real need for a God who lowers Himself, and then we do not experience the full life that we can have in Him. His humility may satisfy the idolater philosophically, but it leaves us disconnected from the ultimate good. If you want to see humility, then look to the cross, where God gives His only Son to die for our sins. His focus on Himself is not to fill a need in Himself. Rather He demands our praises not only because He is a holy God but, because out of love for us, that is what we need. Our adoration must come from our need for Him.

2:10 Peter ends this section with the foundation of how we are God’s chosen people. Peter quotes Hosea. 1:6 and 2:23, which are the key to correctly understanding this verse, as well as Paul’s meaning in Rom. 9:25. In Hosea 1:6, God declares that Israel is no longer His people and

¹⁸ See D.A. Carson. *A Holy Nation*, audio lecture from the “Holiness of God” Ligonier Conference in 2009.

is no longer chosen. But at the end of Hosea 2:23, God declares that Israel is His people. In Rom. 9:25 and 1 Pet. 2:10, Paul and Peter use this Hosea passage to extend being the people of God from Israel (the original context) to the Gentiles. The point that God is making in Hosea is that Israel acts and looks no different from the Gentiles, so both Jew and Gentile are all damned under the Mosaic Law. That is also the point that Paul is making in Rom. 1-2; all humans are damned, no matter if you are Jew or Gentile. Our only hope is Christ, who died for the whole world regardless of nationality (John 3:16). Now there are only those who are a holy nation being built into Christ and those who have rejected the stone and have stumbled.

When we truly understand this as our identity in Christ, then all other identities that the world has to offer pale in comparison, for they are from the darkness of the world. It is not about oneness with humanity or world peace because we are all humans. The world does not have what is necessary to create peace and oneness, but the Holy Spirit, made available through the death and blood of Jesus Christ, does. When we truly get the reality that it is the cross that makes us a people of eternal significance, then all our other corporate identities can simply bring diversity to the kingdom of God and no longer be our idols.

II. The Submission of the Believers (2:11–3:7)

Since Peter is interested in encouraging the believers who are going through trials, in this division he addresses those who are already in lowly servant positions in the Greco-Roman world. He addresses the marginalized Christian under the Roman government, slaves, and wives. Since cultural revolution is unlikely, Peter instructs his readers on how to behave as Christians inside of this expectation of submission in order to further the kingdom of God.

Peter makes the point that the believers' allegiance to God in Christ does not exempt them from submitting to the pagan governments; rather, they are to live as Christ did—in servanthood—in order to win the world through sacrificial love. Sacrificial love is better than rebellion, for it changes lives and worldviews, not just laws and behaviors. Peter is not interested in making the world more comfortable and idealistic for the believers; rather, he wants to transform the world for Christ through sacrificial love. The Christians cannot change others through revolution; they can only change themselves by being transformed by the Holy Spirit into the image of Christ. Then they can influence others through the same sacrificial love that Christ demonstrated, which brought them into the kingdom of God. As they live righteous lives (1 Pet. 1:13-2:3), they are to live submissively and sacrificially toward each other and the world with the self-confidence that they belong to God (1 Pet. 1:1-12) and that they are a part of a greater kingdom (1 Pet. 2:4-10).

A. Submission to Authorities (2:11-25)

Peter begins by laying out what the Christian's role is relation to their government and their masters. Then he reminds them how Christ lived submissively to the point of death. He did this not because He was inferior or weak but because He wanted to redeem the world. As was Christ's, our desire should be to redeem the world, not to protect our rights or stick it to those in authority (whether they deserve it or not). If we truly fear God as Judge over creation (1 Pet. 1:17), then we will entrust our lives to Him for vindication just as He vindicated Christ.

2:11-12 Peter began his letter by referring to the believers as foreigners in relation to their identity in Christ and not in the world. Now he refers to them as foreigners as they live in the world and interact with others with this new identity. As they interact, they must remember they do not share the same Father or worldview with the world.

First, Peter commands them to maintain their holiness by staying away from the desires of their old nature of sin (flesh) and what the world condones as acceptable. The desires of the world do not bring lasting satisfaction but rather destroy the soul. Second, he commands them to live lives that demonstrate good conduct.

The purpose for doing this is that the world would see their good deeds and thus see a different kind of conduct and sacrificial love to hopefully lead them into the light, even though now they do not understand it and attack the believers. This is the main idea for how a believer interacts with the world. A believer cannot change the world or people; all they can do is allow the Holy Spirit to change them. Then, as they conduct themselves in a more righteous and loving way that can only come from God, others will be attracted to that and want to know God the Father.

Nowhere does Peter encourage or condone rebellion or protesting against the government and culture. Nor is this seen in the life of Christ in the Gospels or the lives of the apostles in Acts. Believers influence others and the culture in the way they conduct themselves as sacrificial servants of Christ.

2:13-15 Peter commands all Christians to submit to all government authorities, whether it is a dictatorial and tyrannical king or a republic governed by the people. The reason Christians submit to the governments is not because the governments are worthy, but for the sake of the Lord, who is infinitely worthy.

Likewise, God has placed governments in power in order to punish those who violate His Law and to distinguish those who do good works. The good works have to be more than just obeying the law, for governments do not praise or distinguish those who just obey the law.¹⁹ Peter must have in mind a Christian benefactor who is publicly honored for doing good works that benefit the city. As we live holy lives and work hard to benefit the culture we live in, then the culture will take notice and may begin to praise our Father who is in heaven. This is what silences the arguments of foolish men who criticize Christianity. This is how we expand the kingdom of God.

2:16 Living as a free Christian does not mean that we can do anything we want; rather, we are free from being enslaved to sin, where we would have no choice but to obey Satan and do what is contrary to the will of God. “Christian freedom rests not on escape from service but on a change of a master.”²⁰ Being free from sin, the Christian is now free to live a life that honors God, whom they serve in the midst of a pagan society, and the Christian desires that they too will come to know God as their Father. We are also free to serve God because we love Him, not because we fear the consequences. We should not use this freedom to sin but to refrain from sinning. We know that even if the government punishes us and society restricts us based on our identity or perceived identity, we are redeemed in Christ and so much more that transcends society.

2:17 “Honor all people” does not mean you have to agree with or like them, but it does mean that you treat them with respect and dignity, as ones created in the image of God. Our primary responsibility to other Christians is to show them love (1 Pet. 1:22; John 13:35). For if we cannot love Christians, with whom we have the most in common, then how can we love and honor those outside of Christianity?

We are not to fear God in the sense of being afraid of what He will do to us for how we behave, but rather to have a reverence for who He is as sovereign Creator and Redeemer. We revere and obey Him because He is our God, and He is a good God of love. This is why we submit to Him and to our governments—because we trust Him and believe He will take care of us as our sovereign God.

Peter added a final word about the king. He probably did so because his readers found it especially difficult to honor the Roman emperor, evidently Nero at the time Peter wrote this epistle (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

Believers are not permitted to disobey the government when it does things that are unbiblical and contrary to the will of God. The only time believers are permitted to disobey the government is when it tries to force *us* to directly disobey the will of God (Acts 4:13-22). However, nowhere in the Bible are we permitted to rebel against the government. Peter disobeyed the government in Acts 4, but he also accepted the consequences, as the government later crucified him for it.

¹⁹ See Willem Cornelis Van Unnik. p. 99.

²⁰ Edward Gordon Selwyn. *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 174.

Christians should be primarily known as those who serve others out of love, not as people of self-assertion and mutual exploitation (Rom. 12:10; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 3:3-10).

2:18 The first group of Christians that Peter addresses are slaves. In the Greco-Roman world, slaves were not considered full persons with rights and thus did not have moral responsibility. In Christianity, however, slaves were full and equal persons, and thus quite appropriately addressed as such. No matter the circumstances, whether a master is good or bad, slaves are to be submissive to their masters because this is pleasing to God. Since slaves were already expected to serve and were not seen as public benefactors, then they were expected to do good works that would go beyond what was expected of them. This over-and-beyond service would demonstrate the nature of Christ in hopes of winning the master to Christ. Though the Bible makes it clear that slavery is wrong, a slave could not change his circumstances, thus it was better to serve with love in the hopes of changing the master than to rebel and accomplish nothing. If this is what was expected of Christian slaves, then how much more would be expected of Christian employees in relation to their bosses?

2:19-20 The reason slaves are to submit is that it is pleasing to God when one serves or endures suffering for His sake. There is nothing admirable about enduring a punishment that one deserves. But the one who trusts God while suffering unjustly, in hopes of demonstrating the love and forgiveness of God while suffering, is worthy of God's pleasure.

“Yet he [Peter] does not say that it is pleasing to God merely to endure unjust suffering and the accompanying sorrow. Rather, it is only such action endured while one is *mindful of God*, or, more accurately, ‘because he is conscious of God’ (NIV). It is not a stoic self-motivated tenacity which holds out against all opposition but rather the opposite, the trusting awareness of God's presence and never-failing care, which is the key to righteous suffering. It is the confidence that God will ultimately right all wrongs which enables a Christian to submit to an unjust master without resentment, rebelliousness, self-pity, or despair.”²¹

2:21-23 As Christians, we are called to obey God (1 Pet. 1:2) in the same way that Christ obeyed by being a suffering servant. Christ is the ultimate example of one who suffered unjustly, since He was without any sin or deceit. Yet even while He suffered, He never cursed or retaliated, for He suffered in order to redeem us. The focus is not on the death of Christ but on how He lived during the suffering. Peter quotes Isaiah 53 in order to make the point that this was God's will for Christ and for the redemption of humanity from the very beginning.

First, Christ was able to do this because He entrusted Himself to God as His judge. Not that God is judge over Christ for His sins but that God is His judge who would justly right all the wrongs that were committed *against* Christ. We need to love others vulnerably even to the point of getting hurt or persecuted, trusting that God is sovereign and good and will right all the wrongs committed against us.

2:24-25 Second, Christ was able to do this because of His love for us. He died in order to bear our sins so that we may be healed. His purpose in both life and death was to cleanse us of sin through His example and His sacrifice. Just as Christ viewed the suffering as worth it, we must also see our temporary suffering at the hands of unbelievers as worth it if it will lead them into the light of the kingdom of God.

²¹ Wayne Grudem. *1 Peter*, pp. 126-127.

B. Husband and Wives (3:1-7)

Peter does not spend as much time addressing the role of the husband as Paul did in Ephesians 5, as his concern is more for those who were in a more cultural position of submissiveness. In the Greco-Roman world, women were expected to be submissive to their husband since the men led in all ways of life and were the only ones who had the right to make political and greater social decisions. Peter neither condones nor challenges this way of thinking. Once again, since cultural revolution is not coming soon or even likely, Peter instructs women how to behave as Christians within this expectation so as to further the kingdom of God.

“Although both the Greek moral philosophers and the NT speak of ‘submission,’ the apostolic definition of it and foundation for it are completely different. The Greco-Roman worldview was concerned with the pragmatic benefits of social stability; the Christian view of submission is concerned with honoring transcendent theological values that ought to capture the heart of the believers and transform them within all of their relationships.”²²

The relationship that God desires between the Christian husband and wife is one of mutual love and sacrificial servanthood to each other. Gen. 1:26-28 shows that the husband and wife are equal, made in the image of God in order to partner together in the expansion of God’s kingdom on earth. Gen. 2:7-25 shows that a husband’s authority over his wife is rooted in the creation of man and woman before the fall (1 Tim. 2:13-14) as a spiritual leader who is submitted to the will of God as His image bearer. Gen. 3:16 shows that sin is what disrupted this healthy relationship between a man and a woman, is the reason a woman struggles to submit, and is why a husband abuses his authority. The book of Ruth demonstrates a relationship of mutual respect, and Song of Solomon demonstrates a relationship of passion in the midst of a fallen world. Eph. 5:22-33 shows a picture of the wife’s respect for and submission to her husband and the husband’s love and affection for his wife. 1 Peter and Ephesians are not the remedy for a failing marriage, rather the test of a healthy marriage. The remedy is one’s identity being transformed by the great salvation that God has given us, made possible through the blood of Jesus Christ and worked out in us through the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:2).

3:1-2 “In the same way” goes back to 1 Pet. 2:13, where the wife is called to submit for the Lord’s sake and for the love of others. The purpose of the wife’s submission is to show respect to the man, since he has been created by God to desire respect more than a woman does; a woman desires affectionate love more than she desires respect. This is a consistent theme throughout the Bible and is also revealed in psychology studies.

The submission of the wife does not mean that she is inferior to the man and not his equal. Christ was submissive to the Father, and yet they are equally God as part of the trinity. Christ was also submissive to the Jewish authorities during his trial and crucifixion. The man is not greater than the woman, but he does have headship, which we can trace back to creation where Adam was allowed to name Eve (Eph. 5:23). This also does not mean that the man has the right to boss the woman around or disregard her value and input. It means that is the man’s responsibility to lead the family spiritually as he follows the leading of the Holy Spirit. Eph. 5:25-29 makes it clear that the husband should serve and love his wife to the point of total sacrifice in order to build her up. Biblically speaking, the man and the woman are both to sacrificially serve the other in genuine love for each other.

²² Karen Jobes. *1 Peter*, p. 210.

However, even if the husband is disobedient to God, the wife is still to submit to him in order to win him over through her servanthood, just as Christ served us. It is debated among commentators of whether Peter is talking about Christian or non-Christian husbands. However, I do not think it matters since the command is to serve and love for the sake of drawing the husband to God. The point is that the husband is drawn to God through the wife's sacrificial love, not through her nagging.

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

3:3-4 The focus of the woman should not be on her outward appearance in order to make herself attractive and acceptable to others and thus win their approval. The translation “adorning” refers to the focus of attention for one's attractiveness—the thing one uses to make oneself beautiful to others. Some translations read, “fine clothing,” but the Greek text does not include an adjective modifying “clothing.” The text literally says, “or the putting on of clothing.” The focus is not on a particular appearance that Christian women are to have, rather what their attractiveness is rooted in.

The beauty of the woman should come from a heart that reflects the character of Christ (1 Sam. 16:7; Prov. 31:30). Beauty eventually fades, but the genuine character of one's faith is what lasts and is pleasing to God. The adjective *gentle* (*praus*) means “not insistent on one's own rights,” “not pushy, not selfishly assertive,” or “not demanding one's own way.” It occurs only three other times in the Second Testament (Matt. 5:5; 11:29; 21:5), twice referring to Christ, but its related noun, translated “gentleness” or “meekness,” is more frequent (Gal. 5:23; 6:1; Jas. 3:13, etc.). Once again, the point is not to degrade women but to be like Christ.

3:5-6 Women who conduct themselves in this way follow in the example of all the great women of the Bible who went before them, including Sarah. Although there were times that Sarah disobeyed Abraham, Peter must have in mind her willingness to follow Abraham when he told Pharaoh that she was his sister (Gen. 12:13). Though Abraham was disobedient, she submitted and entrusted herself to God, and He took care of her and delivered her.

3:7 The husband is instructed to “live in all knowledge of their wives” or “treat your wives with consideration.” The “knowledge” that Peter intends here is the knowledge that would be beneficial to the husband-wife relationship; for example, the knowledge of God's purpose for marriage, of her desires and frustrations, of her strength and weaknesses, and of her emotional, spiritual, and physical needs. Such knowledge can only be gained through regular study of God's Word and regular, unhurried times of fellowship together as husband and wife. In other words, he is to treasure her, listen to her, and sacrifice for her. He is to be Christ to her in his servant, affectionate love for her, even as she is to be Christ to him in her servant, respectful submission to him.

The word translated “partner” or “sex” (*skeuos*) often means “vessel, jar, container.” It is also used in the Second Testament to speak of human beings as “vessels” created by God and

²³ Thomas Constable. *Notes on 1 Peter*, p. 40.

intended for His use (Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:21; 2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:21). There is nothing derogatory about the word since it is used of men as well. It is a rare word meaning “the feminine one.” Peter has in mind the characteristic nature of womanhood or femininity.

In the Greco-Roman world, the woman was considered the “weaker partner” in that she was physically weaker and less courageous or aggressive. Peter most likely is referring to the woman being weaker physically and warning the husband to not be aggressive with her, for he is to deal with her gently. The husband is to treat his wife with love not only because she is his wife but also because she is a child of God. “Since they are joint heirs of the grace of life” means that the husband and wife are equal spiritually, both as the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and as heirs to Christ (Rom. 8:17). God takes the husband’s love for the woman so seriously that his relationship with God will be hindered if he fails to live obediently with his wife. He is not to take advantage of her submission and mistreat her.

III. The Suffering of Believers (3:8–5:14)

In this final division, Peter comes to the heart of why he is writing this letter: to encourage the believers in the midst of their suffering. Peter first needed to develop the foundation of one's identity in Christ before he could help the believers know how they ought to conduct themselves in the midst of suffering. Now Peter unpacks what it means to suffer unjustly at the hands of others and how believers are to respond in love to the world so that God will be glorified. We can do this if we trust that God will one day vindicate us and bring us into our inheritance, as He demonstrated in the life of Christ.

A. Suffering for Doing Good (3:8-22)

In this section Peter makes the point that the believers must maintain their identity in Christ as God's holy people and thus be prepared to suffer unjustly and not retaliate. They are able to persevere because of the hope they have in Jesus' death and resurrection, which not only saved them from the darkness and sin but also conquered the darkness and evil powers of the world.

3:8-9 Peter lists five adjectives that should describe the Christian community. The Christian community is to be an alternate society where believers can find refuge and do not have to face hostility. To be "harmonious" or "like minded" is sharing the same thoughts and attitudes, and a common heritage of faith. To be "sympathetic, affectionate, compassionate" means to be gentle and loving with others, not quick to condemn or to ignore. Finally, "humility" would have been countercultural, for in the Greco-Roman world, humility was disdained and shameful and was associated with the lowly and an inability to defend one's honor.

Retaliation was common in the Greco-Roman world, an honor-based culture wherein one was expected to defend his own honor or attack another's in order to get ahead in life (like American election campaigns). Since Christians are children of God reflecting Christ's character, as described in 1 Pet. 2:21-24, then this behavior is inexcusable no matter what the other person has done. Refusal to attack someone's character or to return hostility breaks the vicious cycle of retaliation.

Instead, we are to bless others whether they deserve it or not. Blessing means to speak well of someone or to invoke a blessing upon him from God. We should have this attitude towards others because it is God who first blessed us even while we were still sinners. Likewise, we were called to inherit His blessing; thus we bless others. We do not do this for a blessing, rather the blessing we already have compels us to return the blessing to others. Those who refuse to act in such a loving manner call into question their new identity in Christ, on which the eschatological blessings depend.

Loving your enemies is not easy, but the love to which God has called us is not the same as love is defined by our culture today. Today, love is associated with feelings and emotions of attachment whereas Peter, and the rest of the Bible, uses love in connection with acting rightly towards others regardless of the emotions you may feel at the moment. Even if you do not feel affection towards someone or even like him or her, you still can still respect them and treat them rightly. The best place to start is praying for them. It is hard to hate someone for whom you are praying. Oftentimes, God will change your heart as you act rightly towards that person in love.

"When I asked students in class one day to come up with specific, practical examples of how someone might bless an adversary, the story was shared of a Christian soldier living in a

barracks with his unit. Each evening, when he would read his Bible and pray before retiring, he was reviled and insulted by the soldier across the aisle. One night a pair of muddy combat boots came flying at the Christian. The next morning, the hostile soldier found his boots at the foot of his bed, cleaned and polished and ready for inspection. Several soldiers in this company eventually became Christians as a result of the inner strength of one who could return blessing for insult.”²⁴

3:10-12 Peter quotes Ps. 34:12-16 to clarify his point about Christian love. Peter already quoted Ps. 34 in 1 Pet. 2:3 in order to make the point that we are to crave the Christian community and the experience of which we have already gained a taste. Now he makes the point that this is what the Christian community and experience looks like for “the one who wants to love life and see good days.”

The reason we live this way with others is because “the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.” This means that God is looking out for us and taking care of our needs when we are obedient to Him in our lives. Once again, we can live a life of blessing others when they hurt us because we entrust ourselves to God who will provide for and vindicate us at the appropriate time (1 Pet. 2:23), for “the Lord’s face is against those who do evil.”

3:13-14 Even though you may be persecuted, generally speaking most people are not going to harm you if you are doing good for others in the community you serve.

“...Christians have an incredible contribution to make to the society in which they live by breaking the cycle of people returning evil for evil. As we begin to do good, most people will return that good by doing good. What a marvelous ministry—with very immediate and measurable results. Just as people tend to return evil for evil, they usually return good for good. Indeed, when you do good, blessing comes to everyone involved.”²⁵

However, people are perverse and do sometimes inflict suffering on others for doing good. In such cases we need to focus our attention on the fact that God is sovereign and on the blessing that will come to us for enduring persecution when we do good (Matt. 5:10; Luke 1:48). Peter quotes Isa. 8:12 to encourage the Christians that they are not the first of God’s people to be threatened and not to fear “for the Lord is with you” (Isa. 8:10).

3:15 The focus of the Christian should not be on the injustice of the trial they are going through, rather on Christ who has saved us and is with us. This verse can be pushed to refer to our being equipped with the apologetic answers necessary to answering questions others may ask you. However, the context of this verse is referring to the fact that people will want to know how you can have hope and joy in the midst of your suffering and not retaliate as many others do. It is then that you are ready to tell them of the new identity you have in Christ and how He is good in taking care of you.

In the midst of trials and persecution, Peter does not allow for either the attacking of others or the withdrawing from society. Rather, as Christians, despite what we are going through, we are to remain open to others in love and hope. The question is how we can articulate our faith and hope in Jesus with Biblical and experiential reasons and without Christian jargon. Often, our testimonies are given to believers about how we became Christians and not about how we are

²⁴ Karen Jobes. *1 Peter*, p. 218.

²⁵ Paul A. Ceder. *James, 1, 2 Peter, Jude*, p. 164.

experiencing Jesus on a daily basis as He carries us through trials. These are the testimonies that speak of our hope in Christ and speak to others who see the hope in us that they do not see in others.

3:16-17 But the important part about our response is that it must be done with love and not with bitterness. What good does it do when someone notices the hope in us and we respond to them with bitterness? We not only need to walk rightly, reflecting the deeds of Christ, but we also need to speak rightly with others. It is the way we act and speak with a clear conscience that puts them to shame when they persecute us. We need to entrust our lives to the Holy Spirit, believing He will use us to do His work in others.

Suffering wrongfully for righteous behavior is so remarkable that it becomes a powerful form of witness, leading unbelievers to salvation (1 Pet. 2:12; 3:1-2). Jesus did not suffer so that we would not. He suffered so that we would not be condemned. Suffering has a purpose and is only for a short time.

3:18 This is the third Christological passage in 1 Peter (1 Pet. 1:18-21; 2:22-25). Whereas the first two emphasized the redeeming power of Christ's crucifixion, this passage emphasizes the conquering power of His resurrection and ascension.

1 Pet. 3:18-22 is one of the most debated and written about passages in the Bible since the earliest days of Christianity. It is one of the most difficult passages to understand because of its grammatical difficulties and because of the cultural references it makes that are foreign to modern scholars.²⁶

However, even if the meaning of this passage is unclear, we can know two things for sure from the context. First, that 1 Pet. 3:18 begins with the word "because," which grounds its meaning in the previous paragraph of 1 Pet. 3:13-17, which is about suffering unjustly. 1 Pet. 3:18-22 is the reason for or explanation of why it is better to suffer unjustly unto death for doing good rather than for doing evil. Second, the main point of 1 Pet. 18-22 is that even though Christ suffered unjustly, His suffering was not a defeat but a victory over all angels, authorities, and powers (1 Pet. 3:22).

Thus, this passage functions as encouragement to those who are suffering unjustly. The connection between 1 Pet. 3:17 and 3:18 is that even if a Christian were to suffer to the point of death for the sake of Christ, that suffering is both purposeful and victorious because through Christ's resurrection, death is not final. And once again, the point of suffering is to refine our character and to bring others to Christ.

The first problem in this passage is the question, what does it mean for Jesus to be "put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit"? Some have seen the words "flesh" and "spirit" as a dichotomy between the material and immaterial realms of existence or the two parts of Jesus' human nature. The contrast is between the death that Jesus experienced in the body ("flesh") and the resurrection of His immaterial nature ("spirit"). The problem with this view is that nowhere does Peter speak of a body-soul dichotomy. This body-soul dichotomy did not arise in Christianity until later in the medieval period, during which Platonic thinking became prominent.

²⁶ For a much more exhaustive and grammatically in-depth discussion on the issue, see Karen Jobes. *1 Peter*, pp. 235-251.

And most importantly, Jesus' resurrection involved both the material and immaterial parts of His person, not just His spirit.

Others see the "flesh" and "spirit" as the agents of Christ's death and resurrection—that the world ("flesh") put Jesus to death, but the Holy Spirit ("spirit") raised Jesus from the grave. The problem in this is that the context is not at all about *who* was responsible for Jesus' death and resurrection but about *how* Jesus suffered death and experienced resurrection. Moreover, if "spirit" means the Holy Spirit, its meaning is not parallel with "flesh."

The best understanding is between Jesus' two states of existence. "Flesh" refers to the realm of Jesus' earthly and human life that ended in His crucifixion, and "spirit" refers to His glorified existence after His resurrection and ascension. Peter used the same terminology in 1 Pet. 4:6, where he referred to Christians who had died but were now alive. Jesus suffered in the realm of earthly limitations just as we suffer unjustly. Jesus was resurrected into the sphere of power of vindication and a new life just as we persevere to the inheritance that is awaiting us (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

"As in Rom. 1:3f.; 1 Tim. 3:16, *flesh* and *spirit* do not here designate complimentary parts of Christ, but the whole of Christ regarded from different standpoints. By *flesh* is meant Christ in His human sphere of existence, considered as a man among men. By *spirit* is meant Christ in His heavenly spiritual sphere of existence, considered as divine spirit (see on 1. 11); and this does not exclude His bodily nature, since as risen from the dead it is glorified."²⁷

This is what gives the believer hope that God will honor His promise: that although we now suffer unjustly in this life, He will resurrect us into a new life of glory because He did it for His Son Jesus who suffered and was resurrected for our sake (1 Pet. 1:19; 2:21-24; 4:1; Isa. 53:11; Matt. 27:19; Luke 23:47; Rom. 5:6-10; 1 John 2:1, 29; 3:7). Jesus Christ became the Victor rather than a victim because He remained faithful to God's will. Therefore, we should remain faithful with the confident hope that God will also vindicate us.

3:19 1 Pet. 3:19-20 presents the next difficulty in this passage. Four questions need to be answered: Who are the spirits in prison? Where did Jesus go? When did Jesus preach? What did Jesus preach?

One view of this passage is that the spirit of Christ preached a message of repentance through Noah before the days of the flood. The problem with this is that if "spirit" refers to Jesus' post-resurrection state, then He could not have preached through Noah in the "spirit" since Noah's days were before the resurrection of Christ. This also does not fit the context of the point that Peter is making. Peter's focus right now is on enduring suffering, not on preaching the gospel.

Another view is that Christ, between His death and resurrection, preached a message of second-chance repentance to the dead unbelievers of Noah's generation who are now in hell. People look at the Greek word *poreuomai*, which means "to go," and translate it as descended and then assume it meant into hell. The problem with this is that *poreuomai* simply means "to go" with no direction implied. If Peter wanted to communicate "descend," he would have used the word *katabaino*. Even if it was "descend," this does not necessarily mean hell; it could be earth. The second problem is that nowhere does Peter ever refer to the place of the dead, Hades, Tartarus, Sheol, or Hell in his writings. Nowhere does the Bible ever mention or hint at Jesus going to hell.

²⁷ J. N. D. Kelly. *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude*, p. 151.

The third problem is that nowhere in the Bible is postmortem conversion ever mentioned. And even if that is what Peter meant, why was only Noah's generation who are in hell allowed postmortem salvation? Jesus did not offer this to any other generation, so one cannot say this is available to all. Why would we need to persevere in the faith or preach the gospel if one could just repent after they die? Likewise, how is this an encouragement to believers to endure persecution in this life if they could just conform to the world to avoid the suffering and then repent after they die and still get the inheritance?

The final view is that Christ, after His ascension, proclaimed condemnation and victory over the demons who were imprisoned in the days of Noah. Gen. 6:1-3 says that the one of the main reasons God judged the world was because the "Sons of God" took the "daughter" of men" to be their wives. The title "Sons of God" always refers to angels in the First Testament. Thus the "Sons of God" were demons (fallen angels sins they were disobeying God) who sleep with human women. These demons were then imprisoned in the abyss, as described in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. This was the only understanding of Genesis 6 until the medieval period and is still the predominant view in Christianity today.²⁸

The Greek word *pneuma* in its plural form is used overwhelmingly to refer to evil supernatural beings. The souls of dead humans are, in the Second Testament, typically referred to by the term *psyche*.²⁹ The Greek word *kerysso* simply means "to proclaim" and does not necessarily always refer to preaching. Thus, Jesus did not preach the gospel but proclaimed victory over the demons. Whereas the demons sought to pervert and destroy the human race, Christ redeemed the humans by conquering the devil and death (Heb. 2:14-15). Just as God delivered Noah and his family from the disobedient, so Jesus has delivered believers today from the disobedient. Therefore, we have nothing to fear at the hands of evil, for evil has been defeated ultimately by Christ. This is the point of Peter's closing statement in 1 Pet. 3:22.

Some argue against this view because it says the spirits disobeyed while the ark was being built, while Gen. 6 says that the demons disobeyed before Noah was called. The problem with this is that Gen. 6 does not restrict the disobedience to just before the calling of Noah, nor does it say when the demons were thrown into prison. This could have happened at the same time as the flood.

3:20-21 Noah's deliverance through the water unto life foreshadowed our baptism that leads to our salvation. Peter is not saying that the act of being baptized physically in water is literally what saves you; rather, it is a symbol and confession of having been baptized in the Holy Spirit, made possible through the blood of Jesus (Rom. 8:9; Eph. 1:13; 1 John 3:24; Titus 3:5).

You must be very careful to not build a definition of salvation (which is one of the most important theological points of Christianity) on one unclear verse in the Bible, especially when such a definition is contradicted by every other verse on this subject. Nowhere else does the Bible say that baptism is necessary for salvation. The Bible makes it overwhelmingly clear that only faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ grants salvation (Rom. 3:25-26; 4:5; 5:1; 10:13; Eph. 2:8; Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10). Likewise, the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43) and Cornelius (Acts 10) are good examples of people who were saved without baptism or died before they were baptized.

²⁸ For a more exhaustive discussion on the Genesis 6 see the "Son's of God" article at www.knowingthebible.net.

²⁹ Karen Jobes. *1 Peter*, p. 250.

First, Peter states that Noah was “delivered through” the waters, not that the waters saved Noah and his family. The context of Gen. 6-9 makes it clear that it was God, not the water, who saved Noah. Noah received salvation by faith, not by being in the water (Heb. 11:7).

Second, Peter states that Noah’s being saved through the waters “corresponds to” or “prefigures” baptism, meaning that it is a foreshadow or type of salvation, not that it is equal to salvation. The flood was a foreshadow of the salvation of Christ in the same way that the Red Sea crossing was a foreshadow of the salvation of Christ (1 Cor. 10:1-4).

Peter then makes two points about how baptism does not literally save and what baptism is. First, baptism is not the literal water we use for washing physical dirt. And second, it is the “pledge” or “confession” of a clear conscience, which is consistent with what Paul said in Col. 2:11-12, where he equates baptism with the circumcision of the heart. Baptism is a symbol for the indwelling and cleansing work of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). He states once again that this is made possible “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” It is not literal physical baptism.

3:22 The resurrection is what allowed Christ to ascend into heaven and sit on the right hand of God as sovereign over all angels and authorities. Peter brings the readers back to the main point of what he has been saying: that the resurrection not only saved us but conquered the enemy. Believers can have assurance that God will care for them, not just because of their great inheritance that gives them hope and joy, but also because Christ has conquered the evil that persecutes them. Yes, we may suffer and die, but that is temporary and insignificant compared to the victory and eternal life that we will inherit. Christ gained this victory through suffering and in sacrificial love, so we must also endure in suffering and sacrificial love, knowing the suffering is temporary and bears no real threat to us.

B. Living for Good (4:1-11)

In this section, Peter calls the believers to live a life of righteousness that not only glorifies their Father in heaven but also causes the non-believers to take notice of something attractive about the Christian life. While this may also bring public ridicule and suffering, it should not deter the Christian from living for good.

4:1-2 After repeatedly taking the believer back to the example of Christ, Peter once again commands us to have the same attitude as Christ's as we pursue righteous living in the world. The specific use of "arming" oneself emphasizes that it is spiritual warfare in which we are involved. The phrase "one who has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin" does not refer to Christ but to the believer who suffers for living a righteous life.

Paul often uses the term "flesh" (*sarx*) to refer to the fallen sinful nature. However, one must not interpret Peter's uses of the word through the way that Paul uses the word. Peter consistently uses the term "flesh" (*sarx*) to refer to the physical life on earth before death (1 Pet. 3:18; 4:1, 2, 6). Thus, he does not mean that believers are suffering because of sin. On the contrary, the context makes it clear that the believers are suffering unjustly as a result of their righteous conduct. Nor does he mean that the believer does not sin anymore or has achieved some kind of atonement or perfection through suffering (1 Ki. 8:46; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; James. 3:2; 1 John. 1:8). The point is that those who suffer unjustly have demonstrated that they are willing to suffer in order to avoid sin. So in a sense, they are done with sin. Obedience will bring suffering, but obedience also results in great rewards with Christ. This is the attitude with which the believers are to arm themselves.

Christians in the Greco-Roman world were often criticized for being killjoys who lived gloomy lives because they would not participate in the pleasures of the Roman world, like the risqué theater events and gladiator fights. Peter reminds the believers that human judgments are not the last word because God will judge everyone, believers or not. We are to be more concerned with the will of God rather than the opinion or acceptance of the world. Jesus continually chose obedience even when it resulted in suffering.

4:3-4 Peter sarcastically makes the point that believers had plenty of time to follow their sinful desires before they became Christians. The main idea is that they have lived that life and found it to be empty and is the reason they came to Christ—for joy, peace, and hope. Why would they want to be tempted back into that way of life and emptiness?

The first five terms Peter uses to describe their pre-Christian life refer to unrestrained desires for sex, food, and drink. The last term refers to wanton acts practiced during pagan rituals and worship. This final term was never used of non-believers in the Greco-Roman world to describe the religious practices of other religions, even the ones they did not approve. In our pluralistic time, we are returning to a worldview that anything spiritual is all right and that to declare another religion as idolatrous is offensive.

Their normality of following one's desires and of all ways of living being equal to each other is why the world does not understand us and is shocked that that we do not share the same worldview or pursue the same desires they do. Therefore, because they do not understand it, they mock and reject us.

4:5-6 Whether or not the world acknowledges God, they will all be judged by God one day. The judgment of God comes to those who are alive and those who are dead; no one escapes. The idea

of accountability after death was not widely taught in the Greco-Roman world. People claim that beliefs are only true or relevant for those who believe it. But Peter declares that the truth of Christ is true for everyone, whether they accept it or not, and they will all be judged according to this truth.

The hope is that those who seem to go unpunished for their sins here will one day face the judgment of God for their actions. They may escape for a time, but this is nothing in light of eternity (Dan. 3:15 [LXX]; Acts 21:13; 2 Cor. 12:14). Likewise, the believer's righteous example may be the reason that someone else comes to Christ.

The phrase "the gospel was preached to those who are now dead" does not mean a postmortem preaching of the gospel, as already discussed in 1 Pet. 3:19-20. The context is not the preaching of the gospel for the sake of repentance but rather a facing of judgment because of rejecting the gospel and mocking the believers. Peter is saying that the gospel was preached to people while they were alive, but they are now dead. The point is that those Christians were judged by the world while they were alive; they are now living in the inheritance of God because they received the gospel that was preached to them while they were alive. This is why they received the gospel—to escape the ultimate judgment and the only one that matters. The gospel was preached in order to save people from the eternal wrath of God, not physical death. That those who have accepted Christ have died is not a basis upon which to judge the value of the religion.

4:7 Peter echoes the themes in 1 Pet. 2:11-12, of avoiding evil as an exemplary life that results in the glory of God and receiving the inheritance. "The end is here" does not mean the termination of all things; rather, since the resurrection has happened, we are in the last stage of God's redemptive plan (1 Pet. 1:20; 5:10). Judgment is near because the resurrection has already happened, and everything will be judged in light of the resurrection. Thus, because believers are living in the last days of God's redemptive plan, and its outcome has been guaranteed as a result of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, their behavior should reflect this reality. The Christian faith is not just a theological idea or cultural custom but a reality that affects everything from worldview and the way we think to our behavior in word and deed.

Peter gives four practical ways that believers are to live out Christ's victory in Christian community. The first way that believers are to live is by being clear minded, thinking rightly, and being self-controlled. Peter is telling them to have a sound mind and to be conformed to the mind and will of God, not given over to the irrational ways of the world. The idea is not simply "so that you can pray" (NIV) but in order to pray more effectively, more appropriately. The knowledge that we live in the last days should encourage fervent prayers, not lead to a complacent fatalism. This also should encourage us to join God in the redeeming of creation for time in running out.

4:8 The second way that believers are to live is with persistent love that covers sin (Prov. 10:12; James 5:20). This does not mean that love hides or forgives sins, but rather that it overlooks or bears with the sin because of a person's love and understanding for the other person. No matter what the other person has done or deserves, we are to pursue and persist in loving them with no thought of giving up, for this is what Christ did for us.

4:9 The third way that believers are to live is by being graciously hospitable to others without complaining. This is not possible without the kind of love Peter commands in the previous verse. The key here is to truly be hospitable to others without complaining. For the early Christians, opening their house to other believers may have gained the attention of the government and

brought extra persecution. Even today, having guests can bring social and personality conflicts, which should be dealt with in love and not complaining.

4:10 The fourth way that believers are to live is by serving others with the gifts of grace that you have received. This does not refer to specific gifts of the Spirit that Paul refers to (1 Cor. 12); rather, it more generally refers to the gift of God's grace in the fullest sense (Rom. 5:15-16; 6:23). This is the grace of God that has been given to all believers and should be communicated and bestowed upon others. As we show grace to the non-believers, even when they do not deserve it or are persecuting us, we show love that may lead to their glorifying our Father in heaven.

4:11 Finally, we are to conduct ourselves in word and deed that are in accordance with the revelation of God (Col. 3:17). As the image of God, we are to reflect God's character in our own lives and into the lives of others. Therefore, when we speak and serve others, they should see Christ in us, which will hopefully bring them into the kingdom of God. This is only possible if we are totally reliant on God and doing it in order to please Him. The point is that God should get the glory for all things.

C. Suffering as Christians (4:12-19)

Peter concludes his discussion on suffering by reminding the believers, first, that God uses suffering to refine their character; second, that they are to respond to suffering as Christ did and bring all glory to God; third, that they persevere through suffering by entrusting themselves to their just and caring Father in heaven.

4:12-13 Peter reminds them that they should not be surprised when they suffer. The natural tendency is to be surprised, to question God, and to try to avoid it. However, they *will* suffer because the world does not understand them, but God will use their trial to refine their character (Prov. 27:21; 1 Pet. 1:7).

In contrast to this, the believers are to rejoice in the trial, knowing that they share in Christ's suffering. This does not mean that we rejoice in that we are suffering; rather, we rejoice in the knowledge that God is using the trial to refine our character. Likewise, we will share in the same resulting glory as Christ did after His suffering.

4:14-16 The believer should not focus on the fact that the ignorant world is insulting them but on the fact that they are blessed because the Holy Spirit is in them and they can find rest in this. The Spirit brings now a portion of the full glory that the believer will receive someday.

Once again, Peter reminds the believers that they should not be suffering for their sins against others, rather that their lives should reflect the righteousness of God. Peter does not assume that they are murderers and criminals but is warning them to not go down that path.

In contrast, they are to glorify their Father in heaven when they suffer, forgiving others as a righteous Christian. This is the ultimate focus the believer should have while suffering. Countless stories throughout history tell of people coming to Christ because of the Christ-like way in which a Christian suffered.

4:17 Many Christians do not realize that even though they are Christians, they will face a judgment before God one day for the way that they lived here on earth (Rom. 14:10). However, plenty of places in Scripture also make it clear that we do not have to fear condemnation if we are in Christ (Rom. 8:1-2).

Some scholars see the judgment of God in this verse connecting to First Testament passages about Israel's judgment (Jer. 25:29; Ezek. 9:5-6; Amos 3:2; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:1-5). But in these passages, Israel is being condemned for idolatry and is exiled by God. This is not the context of 1 Peter, which has never mentioned a judgment on Christians for their sins; rather, Peter has focused on the judgment on the world for their rejection of Christ and of His followers. The word "judgment" (*krima*) here does not necessarily mean "condemnation" (*katakrima*) but is a broader term referring to "the action of a judge" that can result in a good or bad outcome for the one being tried.

Here, the judgment that starts with the house of God is the judgment that determines who really belongs to Christ (Matt. 25:31-46) and who really is a living stone built into the house of Christ (1 Pet. 2:4-5). The unjust suffering that the believers are facing is an integral part of God's eschatological judgment, which all humans will face, but because of their faith in Christ they need not fear it. If believers face judgment and only escape through their connection to Christ, then what hope is there for the world? Peter quotes Prov. 11:31 to make this point. This is encouragement for the believer, that the world will answer for the way they have responded to

Christ and His children, but is also a motivation for us to lead others to Christ so that they can escape this judgment.

4:19 The result of what Peter has been saying is that the ultimate response of the believers to their suffering is that they should entrust themselves to the care and justness of God, who is sovereign and righteous above all things. This requires us to be in the will of God and to truly believe that He is just and is refining us into godlier people.

“God allows us to suffer to demonstrate our character (v. 12). Those who identify themselves with Jesus Christ will share in the sufferings of our Savior (v. 13; cf. Phil. 3:10). Our sufferings will be an occasion of God blessing us (v. 14). In addition, our suffering will glorify God (v. 16). He then redirected our perspective on suffering by reminding us of the time and intensity of our sufferings compared with those of unbelievers (vv. 17-18). Finally he concluded with an exhortation to trust God and do right (v. 19). Peter thus encouraged his readers by revealing God’s perspective on their sufferings.”³⁰

³⁰ Thomas L. Constable. *Notes on 1 Peter*, p. 61.

D. To the Elders and the Flock (5:1-14)

Peter closes his letter with a final warning and call to persevere to both those who are in the church and those who lead the church. The warning is that they would resist the temptations of the world to abandon the faith and to escape temporary suffering only to fall into eternal judgment. Peter also encourages them to entrust themselves to God and to stand fast in their hope—that their suffering is temporary and their inheritance is eternal.

5:1 Peter switches from the time of judgment (1 Pet. 4:17) to address the elders because they are responsible for leading the church and thus are held to a higher standard of accountability (Ezek. 9:5-6).

Peter first addresses the elder or leaders of the church. By referring to himself as a fellow elder, Peter is showing his solidarity with them as a community of believers. He is not asking them to do anything that he would not do. The elders find strength that they are all suffering together for Christ's sake and will share in the future glory. Courageously leading the church in perilous times rather than renouncing Christ is itself a form of witness that Peter has demonstrated, and he encourages them to persevere.

5:2-3 The elder is reminded that his primary job is to watch over the church as a shepherd in the same way that Christ was a shepherd over the church. Peter commands elders to avoid three things. First, they are not to be leaders who are apathetic or resentful of what they have to do. They will have times of frustration and doubt, but they are to lead because they have a heart for the people. No one should take on ministry positions that they do not really want—God wants our ungrudging service.

Second, they are not to be leaders for dishonest gain. Peter does not forbid that the elders get paid (1 Tim. 5:17-18), but he does warn the leaders against cheating or taking advantage of his people financially. They are not to be in ministry for the money but ought to have a heart and eagerness for serving the people sacrificially.

Third, they are not to be leaders who desire to have power over the people and dominate them into their agenda. The term “lording” or “domineering” (*katakyrieuo*) means “forcefully ruling over, subduing” and can carry the idea of harsh or excessive use of authority. They are to be examples of sacrificial love and servanthood, not leaders whom the people fear.

It is during times of suffering that a church needs godly leaders and examples. If the elders are corrupt and ungodly, then the people will have that same character. Furthermore, the people need someone strong who can help them and encourage them.

“If I have any counsel for God’s shepherds today, it is this: cultivate a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, and share what He gives you with your people. That way, you will grow, and they will grow with you...The effective pastor . . . must be ‘among’ his people so that he can get to know them, their needs and problems; and he needs to be ‘over’ his people so he can lead them and help them solve their problems.”³¹

5:4 The motivation and goal for the leader is that if the leader truly reflects the character and leadership of Jesus Christ, then one day, when Jesus Christ the Chief Shepherd returns, he will receive a crown that never fades. The crown was an image that was well known in the Greco-

³¹ Warren W. Wiersbe. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, pp. 2:428-9.

Roman world. It was a wreath of leaves worn around the head, awarded to those who won athletic competitions. A similar wreath of gold was given for civic benefactors.³² Several passages suggest that some kind of “crown” will be given to believers (2 Tim. 4:8; Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10; 3:11, also the degrees of reward 1 Cor. 3:12-15; 9:24). This passage, however, seems to use the metaphor for the heavenly life in general. The point is that your reward is found in Christ, not in the money or power toward which the world tempts us.

With the image of the Chief Shepherd, Peter is alluding to Jer. 23:1-6, which condemns the Jews’ leaders for their corruption and promises a day when God would put righteous shepherds over His people, and the people would submit to and follow the Great Shepherd from the line of David.

5:5 Peter now addresses the people who serve in the congregation. Peter is not referring to people who are physically younger, or he would have used the term *neanias*. Peter uses the term *neoteroi*, which refers to all the people of the church who are not elders. The contrast is not between the older and younger men of the church but between the leaders and the congregation.

The congregation is to submit themselves to the leaders in the same way that Christians were to submit to the government, slaves to their masters, and wives to their husbands. They were to submit in sacrificial love for the Lord’s sake. They were to clothe themselves in humanity (Rom. 13:12, 14; Eph. 6:11, 14; Col. 3:12, 14; 1 Thess. 5:8) just as Christ demonstrated in His own life. Peter quotes Prov. 3:34 in order to show that God has always opposed the proud and blessed the humble.

5:6 Peter gives three commands in 1 Peter 5:6-9 of how the Church is to act in all areas of life. The first is that believers are to humble themselves. 1 Pet. 5:5 was about the congregation’s submitting to the elders in humility. Here, Peter is commanding them to maintain a state of humbleness in all areas of life. In the context of Peter’s promising that God will lift you up, the “mighty hand of God” has less to do with discipline (Ex. 3:19; 6:1; Job 30:21; Ps. 32:4) and more to do with deliverance (Deut. 9:26; Ezek. 20:34). Variations of the phrase “the mighty hand of God” are used repeatedly in the exodus story to describe God’s deliverance of Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land (Ex. 13:9; Deut. 3:24; 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:26; 11:2). The promise is that God will be our deliverance if we live humbled lives rather than lives of pride and dominating or manipulating people.

To “be humbled” implies a decision to remain faithful to Jesus Christ even knowing that one will be humiliated publicly for that faithfulness. Christians do not have a choice of whether they will be humbled or not. That will happen simply because they are Christians. The question is how the Christian will respond when their situation has become difficult due to their faith in God.

5:7 The second command is that believers are to cast all our anxieties or worries on God. The question is whether we really believe that God is all powerful and loving, that He will truly take care of us, and that He will provide for us both in good times and times of suffering. When we worry, we show that we do not truly trust God, and then we begin to take matters into our own hands. Not only does this rob us of experiencing the blessing of God’s miracles in our lives, but it also robs others of seeing the power and love of God in our lives.

³² Karen Jobes. *1 Peter*, p. 306.

5:8-9 The third command is that believers are to be alert and sober minded. Peter has already addressed in 1 Pet. 1:13 what this looks like in connection to being obedient and holy as God is holy. But now he ties it directly to spiritual warfare, where we have an enemy in the devil and his demons who are seeking to destroy us. Peter reveals that the true enemy is not nonbelievers, the government, slave masters, or husbands, but the devil. Satan's desire is to get the believer to doubt, to deny, and to disobey what God has said.

We are commanded to resist the devil and his temptations and worldviews. The Greek word translated "resist" means to defend oneself against, not to attack. We resist the devil not in our own strength but by being firmly rooted in our faith in God. One must be dependent on God in faith, prayer, self-control, and right conduct. God is using the threat of Satan as seen through the suffering of the world and the persecution of the government to prove those who truly belong to God (Job. 1:6-12).

We are able to resist not only because of our faith but because we know that we are not alone in our suffering. Peter reminds them again to persevere as many others have and are doing. Despite the temptation to walk away from Christ, persevering brings a much greater blessing of life than does giving in. Rather than going to the world, believers are to be reminded that they have a community to which they can turn for comfort, strength, and encouragement.

"The opposition the Christians face from their non-Christian contemporaries is not something they can avoid by modifying their behavior or adapting their beliefs in such a way as to escape such opposition. Only by completely abandoning the gospel and the community shaped by it, only by submitting to the satanic forces that stand in total opposition to God, can they escape the persecutions they otherwise face."³³

5:10-11 Peter ends by reminding believers that the one who is all powerful, who has gained victory over all things through Christ will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish them in the kingdom to come. Peter uses four synonymous verbs to describe what God will do for the faithful. The four verbs together emphasize that God will complete the consummation of all things. At that time, it would have looked like the Roman Empire had an eternal dominion. However, Peter reminds them that no matter how large and powerful the world powers seem, they are temporary, just as all powers before them have eventually fallen. The kingdom of God, however, is eternal and will stand forever. This is where we find our strength, encouragement, joy, and hope.

5:12 Peter wrote this letter with the help of Silas (Silvanus in the Greek). This most likely means that Peter either dictated the letter to Silas or wrote the letter and gave it to Silas for editing and polishing. Peter's desire in writing the letter was to encourage us to stand fast in the true grace of God and not to give up and return to the empty ways of the world.

5:13-14 The "she" to which Peter refers is the Church, since he states that she is "chosen with you." He has already stated that the chosen are the believers in Christ (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:4, 9). Peter uses the name Babylon to refer to the current power in the world that opposes God (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18). Just as in the First Testament Babylon was the center of worldly power and opposition to God and His people, so in the Second Testament Rome was the center of worldly

³³ Paul J. Achtemeier. *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, p. 341.

power, and the Church was in the midst of it. Peter is also continuing the imagery that the Church is the new Israel (1 Pet. 2:4-10) as the chosen people of God (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:4, 9).

Peter concludes by reminding us to receive each other in hospitable love (1 Pet. 4:8-11) and that despite the chaos and suffering we experience, Christ came so that we can have peace with Him and with those in the Church.

The final words of Peter both confirm the truth and encourage the believers that despite what their suffering and circumstances seem to suggest, they have been born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through His sufferings, not only did Jesus redeem them, He has conquered all evil that seems to overwhelmingly stand against them. Therefore, they are to live without fear and persevere in the faith, following in the example of Jesus Christ. And just as Jesus was vindicated and glorified, they are to entrust themselves to God, believing that He will sustain them and bring them into their own inheritance; this gives them joy in the midst of their present suffering. God is the only just Judge over all creation, having brought them into an eternal covenant initiated in the blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are to stand fast in this knowledge, for everything will end soon.

Bibliography

- Achtemeier, Paul J. *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.
- Beare, F. W. *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes*. Third edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 1970.
- Bigg, Charles. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*. International Critical Commentary series. 2nd ed. and reprint ed. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1961.
- Carson, D. A. "1 Peter." In *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*. Edited by G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Cedar, Paul A. James, 1, 2 Peter, Jude. The Communicator's Commentary series. Waco: Word Books, 1984.
- Constable, Thomas L. *Notes on 1 Peter*. Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 2001.
- Davids, Peter H. *The First Epistle of Peter*. New International Commentary on the New Testament series. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990.
- Fanning Buist M. "A Theology of Peter and Jude." In *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, pp.437-471. Edited by Roy B. Zuck. Chicago: Moody Press, 1994.
- Goppelt, Leonhard. *A Commentary on 1 Peter*. Edited by Ferdinand Hahn. Translated and augmented by John E. Alsup. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993.
- Grudem, Wayne. *1 Peter*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries series. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988.
- Jobes, Karen. *1 Peter*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.
- Kelly, J. N. D. *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude*. Thornapple Commentaries series. Reprint ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981.
- Klein, William W. *The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election*. Grand Rapids: Academic, 1990
- Marshall, I. Howard. *1 Peter*. IVP New Testament Commentary. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991.
- Michaels, J. Ramsey. *1 Peter*. Word Biblical Commentary series. Waco: Word Books, 1988.
- Morris, Leon. *New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986.
- Raymer, Roger M. "1 Peter." In *Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, pp. 837-58. Edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck. Wheaton: Scripture Press Publications, Victor Books, 1983.
- Selwyn, Edward Gordon. *The First Epistle of St. Peter*. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1964.
- Stibbs, Alan M. *The First Epistle General of St. Peter*. Tyndale New Testament Commentary series. Reprint ed. London: Tyndale Press, 1966.

Wiersbe, Warren W. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. 2 vols. Wheaton: Scripture Press Publications, Victor Books, 1989.