

Commentary on the Book of 1 Peter

1 Peter 1

1Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen

The apostle Peter writes to those who have been scattered throughout the far reaches of the Roman empire (particularly what is modern day Turkey) because of the dispersion and persecution under the Roman emperors, particularly Nero. Yet God used this dispersion for good in that the gospel was spread. By nature we tend to get comfortable in our familiar zones around friends and family, and sometimes it takes a move of God to advance His kingdom by moving us out of our comfort zones. That is what happened here in the first century. Peter is writing to the believers who reside as aliens. They are foreigners in an unfamiliar country or city and with unfamiliar people. They are in essence hiding out in an effort to preserve their lives. Yet Peter reminds them that they are chosen of God, chosen to be saved, chosen to experience persecution, and called to persevere despite the difficulties, suffering, and hardship.

2according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

Peter makes it clear that God knew who would be saved before the foundation of the world. God's merciful nature was manifest even before man fell into sin. Those who are saved only come to Christ because of the sanctifying work of the Spirit drawing them to salvation. The work of the Spirit continues after salvation, conforming believers into the image of Christ. The work of all three members of the Trinity is to create those who obey the Godhead. All work in unison to call men to obedience. The key element of obedience is to believe on Him whom God has sent, namely Jesus Christ. When a person receives Christ and is justified by faith through repentance from sin, they are sprinkled with His blood which was shed on their behalf. His blood is for the cleansing and washing away of their sins. Peter gives a common apostolic greeting of grace and peace to the believers to whom he is writing. We all could use additional grace in our lives. Indeed, we accomplish nothing save for the grace of God in our lives and upon our lives.

3Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Peter praises God the Father who is the author of our faith. He in His foreknowledge, sovereignty, and omnipotence caused us to be born again. He is the One ultimately responsible for our salvation and for our new nature. We are born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Christ. Just as we were crucified with Christ being baptized into His death, we are also raised to new life in Christ. Thus our lives can be filled with

hope, for though the body will one day die, the spirit will go on to live forever with Christ, even being given a new immortal body.

**4to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,
5who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**

Part of God's salvation plan is that those who believe obtain an inheritance that is perfect and will not pass away. Peter gives four descriptive terms of the believers' inheritance: imperishable, undefiled, not able to fade away, and reserved in heaven. The message is clear. We are guaranteed an inheritance as sons and daughters of God. We cannot "unbecome" a son or daughter of God. We either are or we are not. When we received Christ we were declared sons and daughters of God. He will never cast us away. Our inheritance is certain. Indeed, we ourselves are protected by the power of God for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. One day the books will be opened and it will be made clear who is in the Lamb's Book of Life and who is not. Creation is eagerly waiting this day of revelation. We, too, ought to look forward to this day in great expectation and anticipation. It is not as if we are eager for the day because we want to see if we are in. We know we are in because our inheritance is reserved for us. We have a heavenly reservation. We are eager because we are confident of what we will find that day when we are received formally as sons and daughters of God. We are protected by the power of God for that day, and nothing can separate us from the love of God.

6In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

In these truths we greatly rejoice. Life is difficult and fiery trials come our way, so we must remember what is yet to come. Our inheritance is promised to us, so being mindful of that, we can stand firm and keep our joy strong during the persecutions of our stay on earth. Trials are but for a little while, given that our stay on earth is so brief compared to eternity. We can be assured that any trial that God does ordain to come our way is necessary, resulting in further sanctification and the proving of our faith. No trial is meaningless and an issue of God not paying attention or being unloving. Trials are designed and purposeful.

7so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

The main purpose of trials (Romans 5:3-5, James 1:2-4) is for refining us, giving us perseverance, and thus proving our character. When our character and faith are proven, God is honored, we are made to be like Christ, God keeps His promise of finishing our faith, and we have more confidence in our hope to come that we have indeed been changed and adopted as children of God. Our faith is what the enemy desperately tries to destroy. Our faith, says Ephesians 6:16, is our shield against the deceit and attack of the

devil. If he can get us to lose faith and lower our shield, he can get any attack through and destroy us. Faith is the victory, and faith is what we must continue bring to the Lord. We must continue to believe the Word of God and the promises of God. He will finish our faith (Hebrews 12:2), He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5), and He will meet our needs and give us the strength we need each day (Philippians 4:13, 19). Faith is so precious to God and important for us to live the Christian life as we ought. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Whatever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:13). Those who come to God must believe that He exists and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). What is the work of God that He calls us to? We must believe upon the one Whom He has sent (John 6:29). Faith moves mountains (Matthew 17:20). Faith is more precious than gold which is perishable. Our outer bodies may perish under fiery trial, but the inner person is preserved by faith. When a believer perseveres under trial and thereby proves their faith, it is found to be further evidence that they will indeed be revealed as children of God on the day of Christ. Holiness in the life of the believer serves to further the believer's confidence in his security and future revelation as a child of God.

8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

We have not literally seen Jesus Christ since He has walked the earth and established His church. Yet we are convinced of His reality and testimony, and we love Him and believe in Him. Faith is evidence of things not seen which includes Christ (Hebrews 11:1). We have plenty of evidence for His existence and sacrificial death, but we do not see Him. Yet we believe in Him, and thus we are able even under trial to experience joy inexpressible and full of glory. The believer has his mind and heart fixed upon what is to come, and thus he can maintain his joy and faith despite even the most adverse circumstances. God has called us to holiness and thus He gives us all things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

The outcome of faith is the salvation of our souls. Faith in Christ is the only way a person can be justified. The certainty of our salvation gives us more reason to maintain faith even after our salvation experience. We can be sure that our souls will be saved.

10 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries,

11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

The Old Testament prophets foretold of this grace that was to come through the Messiah to the world, Jew and Gentile alike. They searched the prophecies carefully and inquired of God for wisdom, desiring to know and better understand how all of these things would be. They didn't know when Christ would come or many of the other details surrounding

the Messiah. Yet the Spirit of Christ within them (note that Christ was actively working in the Old Testament even though He had not been incarnated yet, taking on bodily form) was moving them to predict the sufferings of a Messiah who was to come. They were trying to discern what time the Messiah would come and figure out just Who He might be. Yet it was not for them to fully understand, for it was a mystery. What was clear was that the Messiah would suffer and then be glorified. When and exactly how these things would take place would have been impossible to fully understand before the fact.

12It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things into which angels long to look.

A full understanding of the mystery of the prophecies concerning the Messiah didn't make full sense until the coming of the Holy Spirit Who gave the apostles insight into the Old Testament prophecies as related to the coming of the Messiah and His death and resurrection. The Book of Acts is full of instances where the apostles quoted the Old Testament prophets and tied them to Christ. What was revealed through the prophets was ultimately for us, and through the Spirit of Christ within them, they understood that the full disclosure of the implications of their own prophecy was not for them to know and understand but for us. These are things into which angels long to look. How much understanding the angels have is not clear. What is clear is that God knows things that even they don't know (e.g. when Christ will return to the earth). They, like us, are trying to discern how God's Word is exactly going to come to pass.

13Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The believer is to prepare his mind for action, despite whatever difficulty he may be encountering. Trials are no excuse for apathetic living and a lack of Christian commitment and service. 1 Corinthians 15:58 tells us to always be "abounding in the work of the Lord." Such labor is not in vain, and thus we ought to be steadfast and immovable, both in our convictions and our actions. We must also be sober in our spirits because Satan will work to make us feel unsteady. He will try to overwhelm us or make us succumb to emotions and circumstances. We must keep meditating upon the Word of God and staying in the fight and in the moment of conflict. We must stand firm and resist Him so that He will flee (James 4:7). Peter gives us a powerful exhortation which is a major theme in his writing of this epistle. He tells us to fix our hope completely on the grace that is yet to come to us. We will be getting an inheritance and we will be revealed as the children of God that we are. As such and despite difficult circumstances, we are to focus on eternity, for only with such a perspective will we be able to stand firm, maintain our faith, and continue in holiness, thereby proving our faith.

14As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,

15but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;

16because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

Peter tells us to not use trials as excuses for disobedience. In such times, obedience is what will sustain a person's faith. Children are to obey their parents, and we are to obey our Heavenly Father. We are not to be conformed to the lusts that were formerly ours before we came to know Christ. Back then we were ignorant of the gospel message, though fully aware of God and His just wrath. But now having been enlightened, we are to be holy in our behavior just as God is holy who called us.

17If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth;

18knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,

19but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

Since Peter knows that Christians struggle because of hardness of heart and lack of faith to be holy and obey, he gives two reasons for holy living. First, we are to be mindful of the fact that the Father is an impartial judge and will reward us according to how we live the Christian life. Thus we are to conduct ourselves in fear and reverence during our time on earth. The day of Christ can be a day of honor or a day of shame, depending upon how we have lived. I know I would fear the day of Christ if I had wasted the gifts and callings that He had placed upon Me. I wouldn't fear being sentenced to hell (though my sin would make me feel less confident in my salvation), but I would fear disappointing my Savior. I believe that our level of faithfulness on the earth is a sort of measuring stick of how God will honor us in heaven. We want our time before the judgment seat of Christ and in the presence of the Father to be a time of great joy. The second reason Peter gives for holiness is that we were bought with a price. The price for our souls was not mere dollars and cents but the life of God's own Son. God doesn't take a spurning of His gift lightly. He knows that we were born into sin with an inherited sin nature, but He has set us free from that nature unto holiness. To not live in holiness is to minimize and mock the powerful work that Christ accomplished on the cross. If we love our Savior, we ought to not want to mock Him by our unholy living. His blood is precious to God and it ought to be to us, for it is our only means to escape hell and be declared righteous before God.

20For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you

21who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

God knew since the foundation of the world that Christ would come to the earth and die for the sins of man. Sending Christ was not a reactionary move on God's part because of man's disobedience and fall. God is sovereign over all things and outside of time. Christ

appeared roughly two thousand years ago in Peter's time for our sake that we might be made believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him. As such, our faith and our hope is in God because God is over all things and perfectly in control. He knew we would need saving and He did just that because of His great love and mercy.

22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,

23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

24 For,

"ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,

AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS.

THE GRASS WITHERS,

AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,

25 BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER "

And this is the word which was preached to you.

The outworking of salvation is a being born again to a life characterized by obedience. Of course, believers can and do fail to obey, otherwise Peter would not have exhorted them to obey. But given that they have obeyed the truth by responding in faith to the gospel, their souls are purified and enabled to sincerely love their brothers and sisters in Christ. Now that God has given them a new heart which is able to love others as Christ loved them, they ought to do just that and do it fervently. Fervency implies passion, zeal, commitment, energy, and devotion to one another. That we put others before ourselves is absolutely essential for a child of God and for the sake of God, His Son, and the kingdom. We can do this because it is something that our new nature enables us to do. If we still were born of Adam in our spirit, then we couldn't possibly love. But since we are born of a seed that is imperishable, namely Christ through His Word, we are able to love as He loved. We are not like grass that is here and then gone, but we will live forever. Thus we need to view our lives as that which doesn't stop at the grave but as that which extends into eternity. As eternal beings, we are to love one another as those who will be active in caring for one another forever. We may as well do it now well since we will be doing it for a good long time. We are born anew, and we need to live like it as if we are the citizens of heaven as we are.

1 Peter 2

1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

In light of the fact that we have been given new spirits within us that are able to be holy and clean temples of God, we ought to make our outer members conform to our new inward reality. We are to lay aside any evil speaking of another person, seeking rather to

speaking words that are wholesome, kind, tender, and that seek to build others up (Ephesians 4:29, 31-32). We are to lay aside any deceit and lies so that we can be trusted and keep our word to others. We are not to manipulate or use others for our own advantages and purposes. There ought to be no hypocrisy. The church of God cannot explain to the unsaved that it is acceptable before God that the church is full of hypocrites. Peter says that it ought not to be so. God has given us all things pertaining to life and godliness, so it is we who are at fault if we do not lay aside our hypocrisy. The world has reason to laugh at our testimony when we live like hypocrites. We are not to envy the things that the world envies, becoming materialistic and never being content with what God has given us. Never are we allowed to have evil intent towards another person, despising them and seeking to avenge ourselves or do them in. Having laid all of the garbage aside that is common for any community group, club, or association made up of human beings who are not reborn of Christ, believers are to long for the pure milk of the Word of God just like a baby does. A baby will fuss, cry, panic, and throw a fit if they do not get their milk. They long by instinct and because of pangs in their stomach for their food. We are to be like them, longing for the pure Word of God. Through the Word of God, we can grow in respect to salvation. Yet only the person who has truly been reborn can understand the Word of God by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit must give illumination of the heart and mind which He will do for any who seek God with their whole heart. We as believers have tasted the kindness of the Lord in terms of our salvation, and it is His kindness that has caused us to repent and continue in a life of obedience.

**4And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God,
5you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

The believer has come to Christ and received Him as the truth even though most of the world rejected Him. Christ is precious in the sight of God. We also, having received Him, are being built up as living stones into a spiritual house. Spiritually, we are being built up into a corporate temple of Christ who indwells His church and is Himself the foundation and cornerstone. We are given the role of priests to serve in the temple of God ministering in the presence of God as we offer up spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God, namely a life of obedience (Romans 12:1-2).

**6For this is contained in Scripture:
"BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER
stone,
AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."
7This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve,
"THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,"
8and,
"A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE";**

for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

9But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

10for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

Those who receive Christ and become part of His temple are promised to not be disappointed. They become grafted in as God's chosen people, as a holy nation, and as a royal priesthood. This is all in addition to have been adopted as sons of God and having an inheritance coming. There is an entire identity change. As such we are to live like it, being consecrated in all of our behavior. Those who do not receive Christ do so because they disobey the Word of God. It is only the Word of God which contains the hope of their redemption in that faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Since God knows beforehand who will fail to receive Christ because they love their sin and the approval of man over the approval of God, the unbelievers are appointed by God for doom in hell for eternity. Just as sure as our inheritance is as believers, the destiny of the unbelievers is just as certain. We need to be mindful that if it wasn't for the mercy of God Who chose us by His will and design as He did the people of Israel in the Old Testament, we would have no chance at being saved. Only those who believe can become the true chosen race of God, whether Jew or Gentile. Since this marvelous adoption has taken place, we ought to be praising God for His marvelous and excellent works. If it wasn't for His mercy in calling and choosing us to be His own, we would still be destined for hell. Thus we are to proclaim His greatness.

11Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

12Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

In light of our new calling and place as the people of God, we are to live like it, keeping our behavior excellent among the world which is watching us to see if we are indeed different and changed. This is why hypocrisy has the devastating effect that it does. We cannot as Christians accept hypocrisy as normative. This must change if we are to recover an effective witness and testimony. Hebrews 12:14 says that without holiness, no one will see God. We must live like we are aliens and strangers in the world since we are citizens of heaven. Thus we are not to indulge in the fleshly lusts that those around us indulge in. Peter's audience literally was made up of those who had been displaced from their homeland. When entering a new area it is easy to adopt new customs and behaviors, especially to fit in and gain a foothold in the society. Peter is saying that the believers must guard their behavior so that they keep a pure testimony and do not let the lusts of the flesh destroy their soul by polluting their mind and tarnishing the desires of their heart. No believer is exempt from the power and lure of sin and being led away by its lusts. If believers keep a good testimony, then it doesn't matter what accusation anyone

might bring against them. They unbeliever will be moved to glorify God because of the good deeds of the believers as they observe them. Good deeds are a visible manifestation of God's love to the watching world and they are to be done so that others can see. Someday God will return, and it is important that man glorify God now so that they will glorify Him then and not be sentenced to hell. How we live has great implications for whether or not those watching us will end up in heaven or hell. Sin is a serious issue.

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,

14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

Submission is a key part of holiness. Believers are to submit themselves to every human institution, whether in government or at work or in any other hierarchical system. Submission doesn't mean that we sin against God if we are told to do something that violates our conscience or the Word of God. It simply means that we do not act unruly and that we honor the person in charge. It is easy to speak evil of a supervisor behind their back or to not do a good job because one doesn't like his boss, but God tells us to submit and do as they say, even if we think it is dumb. Government is an institution that God honors because generally speaking those who are good will be praised and those who do evil will be punished, though that is not always the case. A government can be evil, and as such it must be defied.

15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

One universal application of the will of God is that we do right and thereby silence the objections to faith and any credible mockery of foolish men. It is tough to ridicule a person forever when it is obvious that they are innocent and especially when they do not retaliate. Many times people revile Christians just to provoke them. If they can provoke them to anger, then they feel justified in their unbelief. We must understand that some people just don't know the truth, having never been given an opportunity to respond to the gospel of Christ. We must be mindful of this ignorance, keep a pure testimony, and seek to share the message of the gospel with them as we earn their respect and trust. At other times, we must simply declare the gospel, not worrying about having a rapport established.

16 Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.

We are freed from the power of sin and death, but that does not mean that we can let grace be an excuse to do evil. We cannot sin that grace may abound. Grace frees us to live for God, as willing slaves who submit to His Lordship and will.

17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

Part of holy living is that others are honored and esteemed more highly than ourselves. Brothers and sisters in Christ are treated as family and with Christlike love. God is feared, knowing that He disciplines those Whom He loves and does deal with wickedness. The whole church in Acts 5 is said to have feared God because of God's judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira. God doesn't tolerate sin, and we must remember that. We are told to honor the political leaders as well. Though we are ultimately citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20), we are to render unto earthly authorities the respect that is due them. As Jesus said concerning taxes, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Matthew 22:21).

18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

Servants are to submit to their masters and employees to their employers. Now if a master was beating and abusing his slave, that is a different matter. It is just that some authorities are tough to handle, being unfair, demeaning, impersonable, and so on. If God has placed a person in such a position and they know that they are where God wants them to be, then they must submit unconditionally, doing their work to the best of their ability. This is the testimony that could cause an unjust master to repent. A rebellious slave only encourages further unjust treatment. We are fortunate that in our day and age many people can simply switch jobs if they have a difficult boss. This is fine and Biblical if God leads that way. Yet while a person is still under the unfair authority, they must be sure to give him honor simply because of his position of authority, even if there is nothing honorable in his character or business practices. God is honored when a person endures unjust treatment with a good attitude and unrebelling heart. There is credit before God for suffering unjustly and being treated harshly while enduring it with patience. This requires fixing one's hope completely on the grace to come. Such suffering is different altogether from suffering when a person deserves it. This is undeserved suffering when a person is doing right. We must patiently endure the unfair treatment, honoring the authority, and trusting God to take up our case.

21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;

23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

Christ is our example in how to suffer unjustly. He was without sin and did nobody any harm, yet He was executed on our behalf. While He was reviled, He did not taunt back and curse in return. He didn't threaten anybody that He would get revenge. He simply

entrusted Himself to God who is the Avenger of unrighteousness and the righteous Judge Who sees all (Romans 12:19). God will not let wickedness go unpunished, so we can rest in His hands when suffering unjustly. The key is that we understand that suffering is part of the calling of the Christian. The Christian will be taunted, reviled, and discriminated against at times in his life, and he must not threaten in return. He must just submit and be obedient, honoring the unjust supervisor even if everybody else speaks in a reviling manner.

24and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

25For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

Christ died so that we would die with Him and to sin and live to righteousness. The calling of the Christian is righteousness and holiness despite suffering and persecution. 2 Timothy 3:12 says that “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” Persecution and suffering is part of the definition of being a Christian. The world hated Christ, and they will hate His followers. Yet Christ has enabled us to live to righteousness. No amount of persecution, suffering, or unjust treatment allows us to continue in sin. We have been healed from the damage of the enslavement to sin and Satan so that we can be free to submit to Christ. Before we knew Christ, we had been straying like sheep which needed a Shepherd, but now we have come to the true Shepherd and Guardian of our Souls. He leads us where we need to go, protects us along the way from succumbing to evil, and He preserves our inheritance and sonship.

1 Peter 3

1In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,

2as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

Just as an unjust master is won by the holy behavior of the servant, so too are unbelieving husbands won by the chaste behavior of their wives. A nagging wife or a wife who incessantly preaches at them will not help to convert them. Such behavior will be taken as subversive and unruly and disrespectful. No man is impressed by that. A man is touched when a woman gives him respect and honor, even if it isn't due him. That is something to marvel at. An unbelieving husband can be won without a word, merely because of the holy and respectful behavior of the wife.

3Your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses;

4but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

There is a tendency among women to try to use their bodies and their appearance to influence men and draw attention. Peter is saying that the way for a believing wife to influence her man is to do it through her inner person, through a gentle and quiet spirit. This means that she lives out her femininity, not trying to usurp her husband's place as the head of the home, even if he is not doing a good job. She rather comes alongside him, submitting to him (and first and foremost God), and giving him the respect he needs. She is not nagging, contentious, or hard to live with. She is not boisterous or clamorous, but ladylike in her demeanor. There is nothing wrong with outward adornments, from earrings and jewelry to styling hair and to donning a beautiful dress. If there was, it would be wrong for a man to dress manly. God makes a provision for women to dress womanly. Ezekiel 16:11-12 is God speaking metaphorically to Israel saying, "I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck. I also put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head." If God is not concerned about describing His love for Israel as piercing her ears or nose, it is fair to conclude that God doesn't have an issue with jewelry in and of itself. God's issue is when it is used seductively as a prostitute might use it or as that which is more important than the state of the heart. The issue is not jewelry or not jewelry or perms or no perms. The issue is the hidden person of the heart. How the woman is on the inside is far more important than what she wears on the outside (off course all things must be done in modesty). A gentle and quiet spirit is an imperishable quality, something that only God in Christ could bring about inside a woman's heart. Any woman can put on a necklace, but only a woman of God can have a heart that is beautiful. Such an attitude is precious to God and to a believing husband.

5For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands;

6just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

The holy women of old adorned themselves on the inside by being submissive to their husbands. This is the essence of beauty in God's eyes. It is not outward charm or beauty, but whether or not the woman fears God. As Proverbs 31:30 says, "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised." In other words, charm can be feigned and beauty doesn't last, but a heart which fears God is a quality that endures. There is nothing wrong with outward beauty or a charming personality that is genuine, but they are vain if the fear of God does not rest in the heart. If she does fear God, then she will submit to her husband, just like Sarah did to Abraham, giving him the honor and respect due her head. This is to be the attitude taken, not fearing what others will think or say but trusting God to be the protector of one's soul. It is always better to honor God even if we feel that it makes us more vulnerable. Abraham was a man of God who loved his wife, which made it relatively easy for Sarah to submit to him. Women should look for such godly men to lovingly lead them, but the call for women to submit is irregardless of the spiritual condition of the husband, though she must never dishonor God.

7You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Wives are supposed to submit to their husbands' loving leadership in a way that is similar to Abraham's wife Sarah. Husbands are to be as Abraham was, doing what is right without fear. It can be difficult to step up and lead, show initiative, carry responsibility, and make decisions, but such is the call of the husband. Just as the wives must trust God in all things, so too must the husbands trust God entirely in order to be able to lead as they ought. Men and women are different, yet sometimes men want to treat women like they might other men. Women need romance more than men, they need emotional connection more than men, and they need affection more than men. Thus, men must understand how God made women, and then they need to treat them accordingly. The word for "understanding" literally implies possessing intelligence about something. Men must understand what women need. Some men treat women as if they are inferior, not as smart, not as able, or not as strong. They may be physically weaker, generally speaking, but women certainly are just as able as men. When Peter says that men must be understanding of women being weaker, he doesn't mean that women are inferior. He is pointing out that women are physically weaker as a general rule. The word for "weaker" means "feeble," and the word for "vessel" is a Greek word that implied the physical body. Thus, Peter's message is to treat women with a certain delicateness, knowing that they need more gentle words, more affection, and that they don't need harsh or intimidating words or body language. The way to a woman's heart is not through intimidation but through gentleness and affection. Furthermore (and I believe this to be the main emphasis of Peter) husbands should make their wives feel safe and secure, as a protector. If the husband is living afraid of everything and everybody, the wife will have to act out of her natural role and be the strong leader and provider. This is not good. The husband needs to be the one who is confident in the Lord and steadfast in his ways and Christian walk. He cares for his wife as if he is the caretaker of his most prized possession. Some men care more for their golf clubs or truck than they do their wives. The wife needs to feel that she is safe and secure because she is always on the mind of her husband who is thinking about her needs, safety, and best interests. When they are in public, he might show his care by putting his arm around her. He might open doors for her. Whatever he does, he makes it clear that she is honored by him and that he is honored to be with her and call her his own. He doesn't treat her as baggage or as an interference but as a fellow heir of the grace of life. She is not inferior in any way. She is simply made to be cared for by the husband whereas the husband needs more respect than he does affection. As Ephesians 5:33 says, "Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband." If the husband is not treating his wife properly, he cannot expect God to answer his prayers. To treat his wife with less honor than what is due her is to sin against God. God takes how men treat their wives seriously.

8To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

After speaking to men and women in particular, Peter now addresses all believers, challenging them to true oneness and unity. The word for harmonious means “of one mind.” Sympathetic means that we are to feel what others are feeling. As Romans 12:15 says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” Christ Himself is the great sympathizer, understanding what we are feeling and going through. Hebrews 4:15 says, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” Christ understands what it is to be on this earth and to deal with temptation and difficulty. Sympathizing doesn’t mean accepting or condoning sin, but it means to be compassionate and gracious, knowing that we are capable of falling also. By brotherly, Peter means that we are to live as family, unconditionally showing love to one another and forgiving one another. There is to be a visible unity that shows the world that we are indeed a family of God. If we succeed at this unity as Jesus and the Father are One, then the world will know that the Father sent the Son (John 17:21). This has great evangelistic impact. We are grafted in as joint heirs with Christ so our community life as a church and in our own earthly families should be evidence that we are also members of Christ’s family as we love Him and submit to the Father’s authority. By kindhearted, Peter is commanding us to be compassionate and tender of heart, bearing with one another in love. We are all imperfect and people who need to mature. Thus, we will make mistakes, and we have weaknesses. A kindhearted person however is able to endure some hurts so as to not give up on encouraging another even after having been wronged. We are not to gloss over wrongs, for repentance and reconciliation should be sought. But we will need some tough skin if we are to be able to handle family life. In a day and age where people readily abandon husbands, wives, and children, we cannot abandon our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to be humble in spirit which implies that we are not arrogant, ranking ourselves among each other, keeping records of performance, or self-righteous and self-reliant. Humility puts the interests and welfare of others before our own.

9not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

The people of God are not to be those who seek revenge or like to fight or quarrel. When we are wronged, we are not to attack others, revile them, or insult them. We are to turn the other cheek, let them carry out their sin before a God who will avenge the wrong, and gently go on about our business. We even actively pray for them and hope for the best for them. We don’t walk away so that we can talk about them behind their back and spread rumors about them, whether true or not true. The way to deal with those who sin against us is found in Matthew 18:15-17. We humbly and in a mindset that seeks reconciliation go to them and tell them of their wrong. If they refuse to own up to it and repent, then we need to take one or two others who can confirm our testimony. Sadly, few like to get involved in something like this because too often nobody trusts anybody and therefore doesn’t want to take sides. Thus, we should take others who know both parties well enough to have a meaningful say. If the person or persons still won’t repent, then the issue needs to be brought before the church. If the person still doesn’t repent, then they are to be put out of the fellowship. The goal is always reconciliation and the restoration of the sinner. This last statement by Peter is very interesting. He lets us in on

a little secret. The reason that God has called us to be His own in the first place is so that we could inherit a blessing. God's plan and desire for all people is to bless them through Christ and give them eternal life. They are born as those who are cursed into a cursed world. Yet God wants to bless them. Thus, it makes sense that believers in the family of God should always seek to bless one another, for that is what we are called to.

10For,

**"THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS,
MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM
SPEAKING DECEIT.**

**11"HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD;
HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT.**

**12"FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS,
AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER,
BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."**

Peter quotes Scripture to emphasize his point that God's desire is indeed for blessing, life, and joy. If we want to receive this and take part of God's blessing, then we must do good by faith in Christ, having repented from our evil ways. We are not to be those who like division, strife, and insult but rather peace. We are to do all that we can to be at peace with all men. As Romans 12:18 says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." God is a good God Who readily takes care of His children and longs to answer our prayers offered according to His will. When Scripture says that God's face is toward us, it means that we are in a position of blessing. If He turns His face against us or away from us, then we can expect a loss of His blessing. As 2 Chronicles 16:9 says, "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His." God sees all, and though injustice may be evident on earth, ultimately the righteous will be blessed for their righteousness in Christ. The wicked will ultimately pay for their wrongs.

13Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?

Generally speaking, people don't attack and hurt those who have done nothing to them. People, even selfishly, don't want to harm someone who is doing them no harm.

14But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,

Yet Peter is not so naïve as to think that this is always the case. The reality is that sometimes innocent and good people get killed, hurt, and insulted by the wicked. In fact, there are times that the righteous are persecuted for the sake of their righteousness. You would think that people would want to get back at evil people, and indeed revenge is common. But the righteous are not exempt from attack because the aroma of Christ to some is an aroma of death (2 Corinthians 2:16). They will hate us because they hated Him, and therefore they will seek to do us harm. Yet we must remember that when we are persecuted for righteousness sake and for Christ's sake that we are blessed (Matthew

5:10). In fact, persecution goes hand in hand with taking on the name of “Christian.” 2 Timothy 3:12 says, “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” But how we handle our persecution is to be a witness to those watching us suffer. Rather than revile, since Christ didn’t revile, we are to forgive and bless. Our attitude and hope should be evidence to them of their own destruction. If we fight back and insult, then we show them that we are no better than they. If we suffer without fear or being intimidated, we demonstrate Christ in our lives. If we let our hearts not be troubled because we know that Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33), then we will be a testimony to them that indeed we have the Son of God in our hearts.

15but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

As we bear up under persecution and suffering well, others will see our hope, faith, and purity. If we can remain steadfast and morally pure through our trials, we will succeed at sanctifying the Lord in our hearts. This will open the door to conversations about why we have such hope when all has gone wrong. Many will wonder how and why we will still love God when “God has betrayed us.” When the prosperity gospel fails us, and all we have left is the promise of Christ’s love for us, we must stand firm. Others will likely ask how we do this, and that is our chance to explain to them why we believe what we believe and why we have the hope that we have. We may not be able to explain all things about theology, philosophy, and apologetics, but the account that we must be able to give is the gospel. We must be able to give this account when we are called upon to do it. We can rely upon the Spirit to bring to remembrance that which we have studied, believed, and meditated upon (John 14:26).

16and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

If someone tries to bring an accusation against us as if to justify their malicious behavior, it should be clear to all that we are innocent. Our good behavior and clear conscience should make it evident that we are being persecuted unjustly. This can only lead to their future shame, and it may or may not result also in a present embarrassment of the accuser.

17For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

Sometimes we bring ourselves harm because we sin. This is not good, but we should expect to suffer when we sin. It is much better to suffer well when we are innocent, for this brings blessing and reward in the life to come. It also opens up opportunities to share our faith.

18For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

Christ modeled what it is to suffer unjustly and to not revile against His persecutors. He, the holy and righteous One, died for the sins of those who were evil, even those who put Him to death. The whole point of His suffering was to reconcile us to God, crucifying our old man with Him on the cross so that we could be raised to new life in the Spirit. Even if we are killed in body, we will still be alive in spirit. We will even get a new body. Christ Himself was killed in the body, but His spirit was still alive. The person, essence, and nature of Christ was never dead.

**19in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison,
20who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.**

Jude 6, 2 Peter 2:4, and Luke 8:31 are necessary for understanding these two verses. Luke 8:31 records the legion of demons cast out of the man who lived in the tombs. The demons asked not to be sent into the abyss. It seems that they were bothered by the thought because they knew that this bottomless pit would be inescapable. Otherwise, what would be the big deal. They could always come back unless they were bound. Jude 6 also speaks of such a place for demons. It says, “And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.” So there are some demons who are locked up under eternal chains until, of course, they are bound in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). Perhaps the legion of demons were afraid that they would suffer the same fate as the angels that didn’t keep their proper abode that Jude refers to. These were likely the Nephilim in Genesis 6 which lusted after human women and had intercourse with them. They disobeyed God by not staying in their proper domain, and God, according to 2 Peter 2:4 sentenced them to chains in darkness. 2 Peter 2:4 says, “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment.” The word for hell is “tartaroo,” meaning to thrust down into Tartarus, which was a word borrowed from the Greeks to imply the deepest and darkest pit of hell. Their judgment would be sure. These angels who disobeyed were again likely the Nephilim from Genesis 6, though they could also include some of the demons who were thrust out of heaven in Satan’s rebellion. Either way, the point is that the spirit of Christ approaches and preaches to these fallen angels as to the certainty of their future doom. Their penalty is eternal chains, so we know that He is not going there for the purpose of evangelizing them. His purpose is to declare His victory and their sealed doom. Psalm 16:10 says, foretelling Christ’s death, “For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.” Christ’s time in this deep pit of hell was purposeful for the sake of declaring victory. Even the deepest, darkest pit of hell never had any power over His spirit.

God was being patient with Noah so that he could finish the ark, preserve his family and the animals, and perhaps win a convert during that time. We know from 2 Peter 3:9 that God wants none to perish and is patient with the righteous to give us time to evangelize. It says, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient

toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” God’s patience allowed Noah to be saved, and as soon as the ark was completed, God promptly (after seven days after entering the ark) blotted out man from the face of the earth. People could have even repented during those seven days, but likely they were jeering Noah right to the end. But God saved the righteous and put an end to the wicked. The subplot that was happening was the binding of the fallen angels.

21Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you--not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Peter is not saying here that baptism is necessary for salvation or a means to it. In fact, he makes it abundantly clear what he means by baptism. He says that he is not referring to a mere removal of dirt from the body by water, but by doing what the disobedient spirits didn’t do. The way to get “baptized” into new life is to receive the message of repentance that Jesus preached and Noah preached. It is to become obedient to the God of creation. The person who becomes clean is the person who realizes his sin in light of a holy God. This is why a person should appeal to God for a clean conscience. They may be lonely and need a companion in Christ. They may be tired, and need strength in Christ. Christ does supply these things, but those who are truly saved come to Him first and foremost for cleansing. This is the essential component of the salvation message which gives us a good conscience before God so that we don’t have to struggle with guilt and clinging wickedness. This is only possible because of the fact that Christ was raised from the dead.

22who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

Christ ascended into heaven and is now seated at the right hand of God in heaven. But before He ascended, He first subjected all authorities and powers in the heavenly places. Satan and his demons know that their time is short (Revelation 12:12) because Christ has already guaranteed their full defeat. Hebrews 2:8 confirms that Christ’s reign is established, and nothing can change it. It says, “‘YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET.’ For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.” Yet we see that practically we do not yet see all things subjected to Him. 1 Corinthians 15:28 says, “When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.” Thus, we can be sure that one day Jesus Christ will Himself establish the right and power that He already has as He sets up His kingdom on earth. All that are on the earth will one day bow the knee before Christ and confess that He is Lord (Philippians 2:10). Sadly, for some it will be too late.

1 Peter 4

1Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

2so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

Christ “suffered” in the flesh. This word literally means that He endured, felt, experienced, and was affected by life in human flesh. He undoubtedly suffered, which is part of the meaning of this word as well. The thing that separates Christ from our human experience is that He didn’t sin while He was in the flesh (i.e. bodily form). Peter’s call is that, regardless of persecution and suffering, we as believers are to let Christ live out His life in and through us in a pursuit of holiness and purity. We are not to continue in our former ways in which we sought after the lusts of men. Our objective, pursuit, passion, and goal is to be holy in our behavior for the rest of our time on the earth. Will we succeed? We should be doing better and better, walking persistently and consistently by faith in a way consistent with holiness and modeled by the example of Christ. Some act as if they are doomed to be enslaved to sin forever. Peter’s call is to live the rest of our days in holiness. Sure, we will stumble, but we need to set our goals and standards at the mark of holiness rather than failure.

3For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

It doesn’t take long to figure out that sin doesn’t satisfy. In fact, it becomes a vicious master, enslaving us to get more and more of it to get the same diminishing level of pleasure. Thus, Peter says that we should have already figured out that the pleasures of sin aren’t worth the effort. Before we were saved, we lived out the desires of the unsaved, sinning sexually, by getting drunk, by reveling, by late night intoxicating parties, and by honoring idols and the devil more than God. The time is past for this behavior to occur. It is time that we live as those who are different, like Christ.

4In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you;

Yet the unsaved are surprised when a Christian stands up against the worldly flow and follows Christ. It is such a statement and shock because so few do it. There is great pressure to not stand for Christ, and even though we all know what is right and wrong, it is still shocking to see a person actually do right. When we do this, not joining them in their consuming sin that carries them away, they will mock and malign us.

5but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

They will be held accountable for their behavior as they sin against God, indulge their flesh, and insult the true followers of Christ. One day, they will be confronted by Christ of their sin and its consequences. They will have to own up to their sin and declare that

Christ is Lord. God will judge both those who are living and who have been long dead. No one will escape.

6For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

I don't believe that this is drawing a parallel to the discussion of the spirits in prison in the previous chapter. The word for "preached" is not the same as the word for "proclamation" in the previous chapter. The word here is not speaking of a public declaration and announcement but of a sharing of good news. The word is literally "euaggelizo," which is similar to the word "evangel" and not coincidentally has a similar meaning. The gospel is preached for the purpose of calling dead men to life. In light of the fact that God is going to judge the living and the dead, we had better share the gospel with those who are still physically alive, though spiritually dead. Ephesians 2:1 makes it clear that before we came to Christ we "were dead in our trespasses and sins." We were destined for eternal judgment before God for our sin. But Christ through the working of the gospel has raised us from the dead, spiritually speaking. When we do trust Christ we will be judged in the flesh for being followers of Christ. There will be a division made between us and the world, and we will be mocked for it. We may even be killed for it as Christ was. But, though this is the case, if we know Christ, we can be sure that we will be alive in our spirits by the will of God.

7The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

In light of the fact that Christ could come any day and in light of the fact that our time on earth isn't very long, we need to be those who think clearly, choose wisely, and stay steadfast in terms of our faithfulness to Christ. We are to remain faithful so that we can continue to pray. This emphasis on prayer demonstrates just how important and powerful it is. The word for prayer means to pray and to go to a place of prayer, gathering with others to pray. Thus, what Peter is saying is that even when things are tough, we must continue to fellowship with one another and pray.

8Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

Yet, even more important than prayer is maintaining a fervent love for one another in Christ. We are to do this because love "veils the knowledge of" sin, which is what "covers" means. And it does so for not just a sin or two but for a multitude of sins. We are imperfect people who make mistakes. But if we are also those who take sin seriously and repent when we are wrong, asking the forgiveness of others, we will be able to maintain a pure testimony to the watching world. The world understands imperfection, and they don't expect perfection in the church. They know better than that. They do, however, expect love. Love is more than mere tolerance of hypocrisy and sin. It is confronting a brother or sister of their sin lovingly. It is not keeping a record of wrongs.

It is forgetting what is behind and pressing on toward the goal. Love always receives back a person who has gone astray. Love is always willing to forgive. Love is gracious, kind, and tender. It is patient and longsuffering, not giving up on people. The world can go to the local bar or country club to feel accepted as they are in their sin. What they need to see is a place of love, for this is the mark of God's people. They need to see people to are serious about living righteous lives, who bear with one another, and who spur one another on to love and good deeds. This is a rare find indeed. Love does not gloss over failure for the sake of preserving "community" or relationship or keeping someone on the membership roll. Love hides sin by not gossiping about others sin, by helping others to overcome sin patterns, and by being a place of forgiveness.

9Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

The church is to have "all things in common." This doesn't mean nobody owns anything or that the church owns everything. It means that we hold what we have lightly, always being willing to support somebody in need. This hospitable nature of the body of Christ invites all to share what they have, whether food, shelter, possessions, or whatever else others might need. The remarkable thing is that this is done not grudgingly or with complaining but readily and eagerly. The true family of God is not trying to compete to store up as many treasures as they can, but they understand that all that they have is God's. They are willing to part with it, knowing that God will provide for their needs (Philippians 4:19) and that He does love a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).

10As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

All believers are gifted in some way by the Holy Spirit, though in diverse ways and for diverse ministries (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4). God had made us all unique creations. These gifts are not ours to flaunt or boast because they are gifts from God. Grace allows us to have a gift and to be able to use it. We are to put our gifts to work and not waste them. We are to use our gifts for the purpose of edifying others. We are gifted not for the purpose of serving ourselves or drawing attention to ourselves, but we are gifted for the sake of others. They are gifted, in turn, for building us up. Thus, by God's design, there is an interdependency between brothers and sisters in Christ. When one doesn't use their gifts, we all feel it. The goal is that God's glory and grace is made manifest as He works in and through us to build up His people and advance His kingdom. If we do things by our own power or for selfish reasons, the glory of God won't be seen. If God works powerfully in and through us, showing Himself strong through our weakness, He will be glorified, and His grace will be made manifest.

11Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Peter emphasizes the point that the function of gifts is to minister and manifest the grace of God working in and through us by the power of Christ. Those who have a gift that is related to speech are to be speaking as if it is Christ speaking through them. Those who serve as to serve as if their hands and feet are Christ's hands and feet. We are not Christ and our bodies do not become His body literally. But spiritually the goal is to let Christ live out His desires and provide His strength through us and in us. When this happens as we yield and surrender to Christ in obedience, it will be clear that we are beings dependent upon grace. When grace does its work, God is glorified through the work of Christ in us. Christ subjects all things to the Father by using us, His church, as His instruments. What a powerful role we play by the mercy of God!

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

Some people act surprised when they suffer as if God has betrayed them. Peter tells us to not be surprised because God indeed does test His people. As Proverbs 17:3 says, "The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the LORD tests hearts." God is looking to make manifest the true state of our hearts so that we have a chance to prove our love for Him or to see for ourselves where are hearts really are. God already knows, of course, but the point is that He wants us to excel in His tests. Testing and suffering are not abnormal experiences. Not all suffering might be testing, but some of it is. Our calling is to be steadfast and holy throughout all of our suffering.

13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

When we suffer for Christ's sake and share His suffering (see Colossians 1:24), we should rejoice for we have a chance to experience the fellowship of His suffering (Philippians 3:10). If we handle suffering well, we will know that our faith is genuine. This will give us great joy and hope for the even greater joy that is to come at the revelation of Christ when we are revealed as His sons.

14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

Peter reminds us again that we are blessed if we are persecuted for Christ's sake because that means that God has chosen to glorify Himself through us. We can be sure that, if we are persecuted for the sake of Christ, that we are indeed Christ's and blessed by Christ.

15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;

16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

Peter again reminds the Christians to not get into trouble and create suffering because of sin and evil-doing. We are not to be like the unsaved, looking for trouble, murdering,

hating, stealing, lusting, or committing any other sin for that matter. When we suffer as Christians, however, we should not be ashamed. Our persecution for Christ's sake is a chance to praise and glorify the name of Christ for counting us worthy to suffer for His name (see Acts 5:41). It is easy to be shaken or discouraged after suffering. The right response is to feel privileged and to praise God genuinely. But if we suffer because of our own wrongdoing, we should be ashamed.

17For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

18AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?

19Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Peter's point here is that the righteous are allotted testing and suffering in life as a means of God refining and purifying His people. 2 Corinthians 5:10 teaches us that we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be evaluated based upon how we built upon the foundation of Christ in our lives. Were we faithful? Did we continue in sin or decrease in sin? Did we utilize our gifts for the kingdom or spend our time and energy on selfish pursuits? This will be our reckoning, though we will finish in glory and hopefully with many rewards, if we have served well. Thus, if even the godly have to be refined, suffer, and be judged by Christ, how much more will the unrighteous have to suffer eternally and be condemned to hell. Our suffering here on earth is temporary; theirs will be forever. Our judgment can bring forth rewards. Theirs can only bring forth death. Peter quotes from Proverbs 11:31 to emphasize this point. Thus, we who suffer for the sake of Christ or because of suffering ordained by God for our purification need to submit to God and continue to do right, knowing that our souls will be preserved into eternity with God. Living in light of future judgment should motivate us to godliness and good deeds.

1 Peter 5

1Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,

2shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

3nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

In light of the fact that we will be judged for how we served Christ, the role of the shepherd in the local church becomes extremely important because he is responsible for how many are serving Christ, not merely himself. Peter, as an elder who had witnessed the shepherding of Christ firsthand, exhorts the elders to oversee, care for, and watch over those whom God has entrusted to them. They are not to lead because they have to or against their will. They are to fulfill their calling as shepherds willingly from the

heart. They are to do it because God has called them to do so, and they are to shepherd in a way honoring to God. This includes not shepherding for what they might get out of it from a selfish, earthly perspective such as money, fame, notoriety, or power. These things are powerful motivators for carnal men. But Peter is saying to have the same level of passion, eagerness, and drive but for the honor of Christ and for the sake of His kingdom. A godly shepherd will not abuse his authority and suppress those who are “below” them by elevating their position in Christ over theirs. Peter makes it clear that all believers are fellow partakers of the grace to come. Peter understands the importance of believers understanding their priesthood and the fact that they can understand the Scriptures and approach God individually for prayer. Some religious leaders want to make others dependent upon them as if they have some unique gift that sets them apart from the rest. We are all gifted uniquely but not so that any one is better than another. Shepherds should enable and empower their sheep rather than trying to prove their worth or by becoming micromanaging. A shepherd needs to be a godly example, otherwise he will lead many astray and certainly not be respected as he ought to be. Some are so worried about success and appearances that they lose their testimony and place their focus on themselves rather than upon God or the welfare of others. Peter reminds elders to simply focus on the Lord and the calling to shepherd. The only evaluation that will matter will be Christ’s.

4And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Those who serve willingly and for the honor of God, not becoming self-consumed or seeking selfish gain, will be rewarded at the coming of Christ. The Chief Shepherd, Christ, will give faithful shepherds a crown of glory that will never fade. This is further reason not to chase earthly glory that is fading but to seek the approval only of the Lord.

5You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

Sometimes it is tempting for a young man to want to prove himself or take charge in an improper fashion. Young men must show proper respect and submission to the authorities that God has sovereignly placed in their lives. Yet the fact that the older men are to be respected does not give them the right to be above confrontation or correction. It all comes down to how it is done. Peter emphasizes that both young and old must be of a humble spirit toward one another, always being teachable and correctable, never thinking that they have “arrived.” Such an attitude is prideful which God resists, but He promises to honor and strengthen the humble. We are beings who are dependent upon grace which alone can make us sufficient. This is why pride is opposed by God because it is refusing His grace, a very offensive thing to God.

6Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

7casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

If we want to receive the honor of God by grace, we must make the choice by faith to humble ourselves, bowing the knee in submission to Christ and His Word. A shepherd is in a dangerous position when he thinks that he could never be wrong. If we want to grow, increase in our usability before God, and enjoy the blessing of God, we need to remain humble. It is God's hand that will exalt at the proper time, not our own or anyone else's. Those who try to build a ministry on their own power will only get so far. As Psalm 127:1 says, "Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain." The worst part is that they will have built up their pride in the process, drawing all attention to themselves and their ability. God will build and exalt, and we must wait for Him, yield to Him, and let Him carry out His good and perfect work in and through us. We may have to wait, we may be criticized, and we may suffer. But we must wait for the proper time, whether in this life or the next. God will honor those who honor Him; we can count on this fact. As 1 Samuel 2:30 says, "Far be it from Me--for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed." There might be worry and stress that will be felt in light of surrendering control to the Lord, but we have the opportunity to go before the Lord in prayer. We can cast our cares and worries before the throne of God, knowing that He understands, sympathizes, and cares for us. Thus, we can have joy at all times, knowing that God is in control, working on our behalf, and promising to honor us in due time. When we have burdens, it makes no sense to carry them on our own. We are not able to do so. We need Christ, Who will gladly carry our burdens to the Father Who is never over-burdened.

8Be of sober spirit, be on the alert Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Peter again returns to one of his main emphases that we must be sober in spirit. He is calling us to stand fast to sound doctrine, to keep praying, and to stay alert. We are not to let suffering, waiting, or any kind of hurt or temptation keep us from being faithful, patient, and persevering. Satan is hunting and seeking his prey. He tries to intimidate us with his roar, feigning the authority and power that only belongs to the Lion of Judah, Christ Himself. He wants to make us stop in our tracks and cease laboring for the Lord. He wants us to become doubtful and unstable. He wants us to mistrust God. If he can get us to turn our back on God or not draw our strength from Him, then we will be vulnerable and able to be devoured by the power of sin. He wants us to say that, when it comes to suffering and hardship, enough is enough so that we give into sin and quit serving the Lord.

9But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

Our adversary can intimidate us, tempt us, and harm us as God allows, but He cannot force us to sin. We are only devoured if we are first led away by our own lusts. Thus, we have the power in Christ to resist his intimidation and draw. We can resist him, standing firm in our faith. Ephesians 6:16 reminds us to put up our shield of faith to resist the

flaming missiles of the evil one. This is why doubt and the mistrust of God are so dangerous. It lowers our defenses and makes us vulnerable to the devil's attacks. If we stand firm despite our suffering and hardship, knowing that it is totally normal for believers to suffer, we can resist him. Believers suffer everyday throughout the world. Satan buffets us, tormenting us physically and mentally, but God's grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). God may allow us to go through some dark valleys, even valleys that make us think we are near to death and despair, but He will always be there with us guiding us with His rod and staff to comfort us (Psalm 23:4). This is what shepherds must do. They must stand firm themselves, being rock solid in their faith, trusting God, and resisting the devil. This example, then, will enable them to faithfully lead and instruct their sheep to do the same. If the sheep see the shepherd waffle and falter, then they might become afraid and wander to their own destruction. But if the shepherd can stand strong, then he can keep the sheep heading in the right direction of faith and firmness. This is why it is so important for the shepherd to be able to teach and to refute those who contradict sound doctrine. If he is able to do this, Satan will be hard-pressed to deceive the sheep and make them fall away.

10After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

11To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

We must remember that suffering will only last as long as we are on this earth, a mere 70 or 80 years for most (Psalm 90:10). Not all will be full of suffering, and each of us will suffer to different degrees. But suffering is a part of a cursed world with a body that must die. Our hope comes in the fact that this is only a little while in light of eternity. Furthermore, we have the promise that God Who called us to be His children and be glorified with Him in eternity will perfect us in holiness and confirm our sonship. We can have strength for today and stand firm for tomorrow if we remember that God will finish the good work that He started in each of us. He is the author of faith and the finisher of it. We have great hope in these truths which will encourage us by God's grace to stand firm through life's trials. Christ will have dominion forever, and we will rule with Him. This should bring us great joy and hope.

12Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God Stand firm in it!

Paul writes through Silvanus, who many believe is Silas, who along with Paul, understood suffering, having been imprisoned with him. Paul affirms his faithfulness, giving him credibility before the saints. The true grace of God is grace that sustains us during trials so that we can remain faithful, if even unto death. Grace does not mean freedom from difficulty and persecution but the ability by God's grace to have joy through it. Furthermore, we can count on God's grace to bring us home. It is this in which we must stand firm.

13She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.

Babylon likely refers to Rome. Many think that Peter may have used it as a “code word” to keep believers from being identified and sought out during times of persecution. The church there also sends on greetings to these believers along with Mark (John Mark who likely wrote the gospel according to Mark). Mark had abandoned Paul in Acts 13:13, but he later served faithfully in ministry (2 Timothy 4:11).

14Greet one another with a kiss of love Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

It was common practice for those in the Middle East region to greet one another with a kiss. We in the western world use hugs or handshakes. Thus, we need to warmly show our love for our brothers and sisters with appropriate cultural means such as hugs or handshakes. It should be clear that we are family who really cares for one another. Peter ends by asking God to give peace to all the believers, which is a fitting end to this dictated letter in light of their circumstances and difficulties.

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