



THE BOOK OF 1 PETER

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INTRODUCTION

Peter addresses his letter to the ‘pilgrims of the dispersion,’ 1 Peter 1:1, those Christians who were scattered and living in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, which are provinces in what is now called Turkey.

He reminds the Christians in Asia Minor of the persecution they experienced, 1 Peter 1:6, and he tells them that more persecution is on its way, 1 Peter 4:12-19. However, whilst all this persecution is taking place, he encourages them to remain faithful, 1 Peter 1:13 / 1 Peter 4:16 / 1 Peter 5:8-9.

He also reminds them of their duties and the blessings they have because they are God’s elect, 1 Peter 1:2, and he reminds them that they are God’s special people, 1 Peter 2:9.

AUTHOR

Now there is no doubt about the apostle Peter being the writer of this letter because he tells us himself, 1 Peter 1:1, and he reminds us that he was a witness of Christ’s sufferings, 1 Peter 5:1.

This is the same Peter whose brother’s name was Andrew, John 1:35-42, both of whom were fishermen, John 1:40-42. Peter was married, Matthew 8:14-15 / Mark 1:30, and later became an elder of the church, which also implies he had children, 1 Peter 5:1 / 1 Peter 5:13 / Titus 1:6.

DATE

Most commentators say that Peter wrote this letter around 63-64 A.D.

OUTLINE

- Salutation. 1 Peter 1:1-2
- The method and nature of salvation. 1 Peter 1:3-12
- A demand for holiness. 1 Peter 1:13-2:3
- A description of the people of God. 1 Peter 2:4-10
- The Christian witness in the world. 1 Peter 2:11-3:12
- Submission to the governing powers. 1 Peter 2:13-17
- Subjection to masters in imitation of Christ’s example. 1 Peter 2:18-25
- Relationships between wives and husbands. 1 Peter 3:1-7
- Compassion and forgiveness among all Christians. 1 Peter 3:8-12
- Appeals and promises to the persecuted. 1 Peter 3:13-4:19
- Assurance for faithful servants. 1 Peter 5:1-9
- Praise God and greetings to the church. 1 Peter 5:10-14

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect who are pilgrims of the dispersion.” 1 Peter 1:1

Peter was the name that Jesus gave him, and it is the Greek form of the Aramaic name meaning ‘stone’ or ‘pebble.’ Peter introduces himself as an apostle of Christ, one who was sent out directly by Christ to preach the Gospel, one who met the qualifications to become an apostle, **Acts 1:21-22**.

Throughout the New Testament, there are various phrases used to describe those people of God who make up the Lord’s church. Individually, they are referred to as disciples, saints, believers, priests, and Christians.

Collectively, they are called the church, the church of God, churches of Christ, the body of Christ, the temple of God, the family of God, etc. Each of these terms describes various relationships maintained by those who are Christians.

Peter addresses them as ‘the elect who are pilgrims of the dispersion’. The word dispersion simply means scattered, and the word pilgrim means someone who is living in one place for a while, but that place isn’t their real home, **Hebrews 11:13**. Some versions say, ‘to God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. These were the provinces lying south of the Black Sea and west of the Taurus Mountains, ‘including the whole of what we call Asia Minor.’

Peter is basically telling us that the Christian life really is but a journey. Our journey began when we first became Christians, **Acts 2:38**, ending only when we reach our true destination.

This life is not an unending journey, **Hebrews 9:27**; this life is not the end within itself. Our journey as Christians is only temporally based here on earth until we get to our final destination.

Our lives as Christians here on Earth may be the end of our journey here on Earth, but it’s not the end of our lives. It’s not the end of our lives but the beginning of eternity in our true home.

And whilst we’re on this journey, we become like our spiritual father Abraham, **Hebrews 11:8-10**. The Hebrew writer is saying if we live like this, the world is not our home, then God is not going to be ashamed to be called our God, **Hebrews 11:13-16**.

Jesus says we may well be in this world, but we are not of this world, **John 15:18-19 / John 17:15-16**. But as we know, with all blessings come responsibility, **2 Corinthians 6:14-18 / 1 Peter 2:11-12 / 1 Peter 4:3-4 / 1 John 2:15-17**. The world needs examples of Christ-likeness, but the reason they need an example is so that by our example we can point them to what they really need most of all, a Saviour. And we need to live here on earth like we’re waiting for our Saviour to return, **Philippians 3:20-21 / Colossians 3:1-4**.

“You were chosen according to the purpose of God the Father and were made a holy people by his Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be purified by his blood. May grace and peace be yours in full measure”. 1 Peter 1:2

Some translations use the word ‘elect’, **John 15:16 / John 15:19**, but the word elect simply means chosen, and it’s the same word that Peter uses in **1 Peter 2:9-10**. All Christians are a part of God’s predetermined plan, but just because He predetermined it doesn’t mean that we don’t have a choice to say, ‘no thanks, God’, we have a choice.

This plan was already arranged even before the Earth began, **Ephesians 1:4-5**. So the plan was in place before the world began, and God chose us so that we would be holy and without blame and to make us His children through adoption. And as His children, we say, ‘thank you’, God says, ‘it’s my pleasure.’

If God has done all those wonderful things for us by choosing us, then surely common sense tells us that He chose us for a purpose. God says we were chosen to live a life of good deeds, **Ephesians 2:10**. That was His goal for you since the beginning of time.

And so, not only are we special enough for God to choose us, but we are also special enough to be chosen to be holy. Peter says that we become God's chosen people through the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

Some translations use the word 'sanctification', which means 'set apart'. And this is the process by which we are 'set apart' for God's purpose and is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, **2 Thessalonians 2:13**.

The Holy Spirit sanctifies us simply through the Word of God, which we call the Bible, **John 16:12-13**. The Spirit says that He would reveal the Word to the apostles, **John 17:17**. The Spirit says that through this revealed Word, we are 'sanctified', that is, set apart.

In other words, when people obey the Word of God, which has been revealed by the Holy Spirit, they become 'chosen to salvation'. The Holy Spirit's work is the Divine side of conversion, **John 3:5**, as the Spirit has revealed the Word and convicted men of sin through it, **John 16:8-11**.

That's what He does, but in return, he wants something. This is what we might call our side of the deal, the human side of conversion, and that is, simply to believe the Word of God, **2 Thessalonians 2:13-14**.

If we believe the Bible and believe we have been 'set apart' by belief in the truth. If we take the Holy Spirit at His word and truly believe that we are God's chosen people who are now a part of His eternal plan, **Romans 5:6**.

He chose, saved us and set us apart to do good works, and yet we still struggle with the concept of obedience, **Ephesians 2:10**. We cannot and do not earn salvation by doing good deeds, but we do our good deeds because we already have salvation in Christ Jesus, **Titus 2:11-14**.

Notice how many times Peter refers to obedience in his letter. In **1 Peter 1:14-16**, he reminds us that as obedient children of God, we are to be holy. In **1 Peter 2:13-16**, he reminds us to be obedient and submit to civil authorities, that we might silence the ignorance of foolish men. In **1 Peter 2:18**, he reminds servants to be obedient to their masters.

In **1 Peter 3:1**, he reminds the wives to be obedient to their husbands. In **1 Peter 4:17**, he reminds us that there are grave consequences to those who are not obedient to the Gospel of God. In **1 Peter 5:11**, he reminds the younger people to be obedient to their elders.

In other words, if we want to stay in the household of God and enjoy the privileges which come from God, then we need to be obedient to His Word, **John 14:15**.

As Christians, we enjoy the forgiveness of our sins, **Acts 2:38**, or as Peter says, we enjoy being 'purified by the blood of Jesus Christ.' John says the same thing in **1 John 1:7**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'This also has reference to a post-conversion quality leading to a greater degree of sanctification. Practically all scholars agree that this "refers back to the establishment of the Mosaic covenant in **Exodus 24:7**.'

We are truly blessed as His children, and if that's not enough of a reason to feel privileged and blessed, Peter tells us about two other privileges, grace and peace.

"Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Because of his great mercy, he gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from death. This fills us with a living hope." **1 Peter 1:3**

Peter praised God and told us why our hope is a living hope. He says our hope is a living hope because God is merciful. Peter says our hope is not based on ourselves, **Romans 3:23**; our hope doesn't lie in our own perfection or righteousness. Our hope is a living hope because our hope is based on God's mercy, **1 John 1:8-10**.

The basis for our hope doesn't lie in our abilities; our hope is a living hope because it totally relies on the abundance of God's mercy, **Romans 5:6-8 / Acts 2:36-38 / 1 John 1:9**.

Peter says that we have a living hope because Jesus is alive. The resurrection of Jesus is absolutely crucial to our hope. Paul says, if Christ is not risen from the dead, then the apostles were liars, and our faith is vain, it's a waste of time, we have no hope, **1 Corinthians 15:17**.

Paul says, if Christ is not risen from the dead, we are still held guilty for our sins, and we haven't been forgiven, **1 Corinthians 15:14-15**. He also says, if Christ is not risen from the dead, then those who have died as Christians have perished, they are lost, **1 Corinthians 15:18**.

And finally, he says, if Christ has not risen from the dead, then we do not have a living hope, instead we are to be pitied by others, **1 Corinthians 15:19**. But praise God, Jesus did rise from the dead and it's through Jesus' resurrection that we have been born again to a living hope, **John 3:5 / John 11:25 / 1 Corinthians 15:20-23**.

It's totally by the abundant mercy of God, and upon the basis of Jesus' own resurrection, that we have been born again into a living hope. But there's one more reason why our hope is a living hope: our hope goes beyond the grave.

“And so we look forward to possessing the rich blessings that God keeps for his people. He keeps them for you in heaven, where they cannot decay or spoil or fade away. Through faith, you are being protected by God's power for a salvation that is ready to be revealed at the end of time.” **1 Peter 1:4-5**

Peter says our hope is a living hope because of the nature of our inheritance. If our inheritance is a good one, built on God's Word, then our hope is strong and living, **Ephesians 1:14 / Colossians 3:24**. But if our inheritance is a poor one, built on man's own words, then our hope is weak or dead.

Peter says our inheritance is unique because it's incorruptible, **1 Peter 1:4**. The only thing which will go on forever are the souls of the people around us. He says, unlike the present heavens and earth in which we now live, and which will one day be destroyed, the new heaven will go on forever, **2 Peter 3:10-13**.

Not only that, but our inheritance is undefiled, **1 Peter 1:4**. The world in which we live now is defiled, and it's defiled by us because of our sin. But John says that our hope is a living hope because where Christians are going to spend eternity in a place where those who are defiled and impure will not be allowed in, **Revelation 21:27**.

Not only is our inheritance unique because it's incorruptible and undefiled, but it's also eternal, **1 Peter 1:4**. Our inheritance won't rust, it won't blemish, it won't decay, and it won't fade away. Peter says it is reserved in heaven, and we need to know that no one, not even Satan himself, can steal that from us.

Not only is our inheritance safely guarded in heaven, but we, too, as Christians, are kept safe, **1 Peter 1:5**. Peter says that Christians are kept for salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

The word 'kept' is an interesting word; it's used in the military sense. It means to guard, protect by a military guard, either to prevent hostile invasion or to keep the inhabitants of a besieged city from flight.

Peter is saying that while our inheritance is being kept guarded in heaven under the watchful eye of God, we as Christians are also being guarded by God's protecting care for it, **Matthew 5:10-12**.

Notice that our inheritance, our very salvation, being kept in heaven, involves two things.

Peter says first of all, our inheritance and salvation are kept by the power of God, **1 Peter 1:5**. Now, what does that mean? It means we have a God who understands investment, we have a God who knows the market.

His investment was sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us. His market was you and me and everyone who is willing to admit they are sinners. In other words, what Peter is saying is that God's power equals God's help. After all, God knows we are sinners, and He knows we have temptations.

God knows how to deliver people from temptation, **1 Corinthians 10:13 / 2 Peter 2:9 / Ephesians 6:10-13**. So God's part of the deal is that He will guard our inheritance and keep our salvation, but we have a part to play too; our inheritance and our salvation need faith.

We cannot expect God to guard our inheritance and our salvation if we don't treasure them ourselves. We cannot expect God to keep them safe in heaven if we are just going to live our lives however we please. We need to live and walk by faith because if we don't, then our inheritance and salvation will be lost, **Hebrews 11:6 / Revelation 2:10**. There is no such thing as 'once saved always saved' in the Bible, you can fall from grace, and you can give up your inheritance and your salvation, **Galatians 5:4 / Hebrews 3:12-13 / Hebrews 3:14-4:3 / Hebrews 6:4-6 / Hebrews 10:26**. So the key is faith, the key to ensuring that we receive our inheritance and our salvation in heaven is faithfulness to God and His word to the very end.

The Christian hope is a living hope because God is merciful. The Christian hope is a living hope because Jesus is alive. The Christian hope is a living hope because of the nature of our inheritance. The Christian hope is a living hope because we are safely guarded.

Wheaton, in his commentary, says the following.

'In these verses salvation is seen in all its tenses (past, present and future), Christians have been born anew by the mercy of God, are being guarded by the power of God, and look forward to obtaining complete deliverance from all evil in the last time.'

And if that doesn't bring joy into our lives, I don't know what will. We have a hope that isn't dead, but very much alive and active both in heaven and in our lives, **1 Peter 3:15**.

"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed." **1 Peter 1:6-7**

In what do we greatly rejoice? Peter says there are past things which are worth rejoicing in. In **1 Peter 1:2**, he says we have been 'set apart' by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. In **1 Peter 1:2**, he says we have been 'sprinkled' with the blood of Jesus Christ. In **1 Peter 1:3**, he says we have been 'born again' to a living hope.

Not only are there past things worth rejoicing in, but there are also present things which are worth rejoicing in. In **1 Peter 1:2**, he says we are God's 'elect' people. He says in **1 Peter 1:5** that we are 'kept' by the power of God through faith.

Not only are there past things worth rejoicing in and present things which are worth rejoicing in, but there are also future things which are worth rejoicing in. In **1 Peter 1:4**, he says, we have an 'inheritance' reserved for us in heaven. In **1 Peter 1:5** and **1 Peter 1:9**, he says we look forward to the 'salvation' which will be revealed in the last time. All these blessings, past, present and future, should serve us well as the basis for the inexpressible joy we should have as Christians.

And because of those blessings that we can 'greatly rejoice' in any situation, we may find ourselves in, **1 Peter 1:6**.

No matter what degree of suffering we may experience in our lives, in Christ, there is a joy to match it.

And when the time of trials and testing comes our way, we shouldn't be asking ourselves what on earth is going on?

We should know that being a Christian means you're going to get it tougher than most other people, **1 Peter 4:12-13**.

Everyone in life suffers to some degree or another, but if we're suffering because of our faith in Christ, then we should rejoice in Christ. Why? Because we're sharing in Christ's sufferings, but because God is doing a work on us, **1 Peter 1:7**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'By Peter's striking this note of suffering early in his letter, he was only stressing that which had been stressed by the Master himself, **Mark 8:31-38**; and Peter would return to this, again and again, throughout the epistle, **1 Peter 2:21 / 1 Peter 3:14-22 / 1 Peter 4:12-19 / 1 Peter 5:1 / 1 Peter 5:10**.'

God is working on us to make us look more like His Son, Jesus, but for that to happen, we need to allow Him to do that. Trials are good for us because they help get rid of all the ungodly things in our lives.

Any trial or suffering we go through in life, when looked at through the lens of eternity, is but a moment. Paul says our troubles compared to the glory we shall receive in the future are small and temporary. What matters most are the things we can't see, the things which last forever, **2 Corinthians 4:17**.

Our Potter is a perfect Creator, **Jeremiah 18:2-4**; any mistakes or flaws in the moulding process of our Christian lives are of our own doing. These 'flaws' occur when we refuse to allow Christ to mould us into the image He has designed for us, the image of Christ-likeness. Just knowing what trials in our lives can produce makes it possible for us to rejoice in those trials, **James 1:2-4**.

In other words, suffering, trials and troubles all have a purpose; they are there to help us grow in our faith and to help us look more like Jesus, **Romans 5:1-3**. The word 'various', **1 Peter 1:6**, which Peter uses, includes all kinds; it includes those trials which come as a result of living for Christ.

So we are to expect some sort of trials because we're Christians, but we need to know that because he uses the word 'various', this means we can also rejoice in the everyday afflictions of life, **Matthew 5:10-12**. We can still rejoice even amid such trials, then surely you have a joy which is 'inexpressible and full of glory', **1 Peter 1:8**.

The biblical principle is that we are to look beyond any problem, suffering, and confusion of this time and look to the future reward. We can live with present problems because of their temporal nature, **Romans 8:18**.

"You love him, although you have not seen him, and you believe in him, although you do not now see him. Because you are receiving the salvation of your souls, which is the purpose of your faith in him". **1 Peter 1:8-9**

Do you love Jesus? Peter asks. He says if we want to truly rejoice in our sufferings, we first must love Jesus even though we haven't ever seen Him, **1 Peter 1:8**.

If we are to rejoice anywhere, we are to rejoice in Jesus our Lord because it's Jesus who is our ultimate source for being able to rejoice in all things, **Philippians 4:4**.

God Himself has promised us that we can rejoice no matter what life throws at us because Jesus has promised to be with us, **John 14:23**. We have never seen Jesus, we've never had the privilege of sitting at His feet or touching His scarred hands. But can we, who have never seen Jesus, love Him? Yes, we can. How can we come to love Someone we have not seen?

Peter says simply through studying His Word. When we study the Old Testament, we see that many prophecies were telling us that Jesus was coming. When we read the Gospels, they tell us about His life, teachings, compassion, suffering, death, and glorious resurrection.

When we read the Book of Acts, we see that it's action-packed with events concerning Jesus working together with His church. When we read the letters, we learn of the many blessings which can be found in Christ, we read about His ministry as High Priest pleading on our behalf. When we read the Book of Revelation, we see the glorious victory to be won by the Lamb and His followers.

So not only are we to love Him as we read about Him, but we also need to believe in Him, **1 Peter 1:8**. When the Bible uses the word 'believe', it's never used in the passive sense; it's always used in terms of doing something with it. The word 'believe' involves the key element of faith itself, which is 'trust', **Acts 16:31**.

What a blessing that joy is, and it's a blessing that can stand the test of time if we continue to believe. A blessing that can sustain us till we reach the end goal of our faith, which is salvation, **1 Peter 1:9**.

Most people are Christians because they don't want to go to hell; they want to go to heaven. People are Christians because they want to go to heaven, and they want to receive the salvation of their souls.

“It was concerning this salvation that the prophets made careful search and investigation, and they prophesied about this gift which God would give you. They tried to find out when the time would be and how it would come. This was the time to which Christ’s Spirit in them was pointing, in predicting the sufferings that Christ would have to endure and the glory that would follow. God revealed to these prophets that their work was not for their own benefit, but for yours, as they spoke about those things which you have now heard from the messengers who announced the Good News by the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. These are things which even the angels would like to understand.” 1 Peter 1:10-12

Peter says that we as Christians have been served by the prophets. He says when the prophets prophesied, they were often intrigued by what they revealed, 1 Peter 1:10. But how were they intrigued? The prophets were inspired or moved by the Holy Spirit, and not by their own will, 2 Peter 1:21.

In other words, even though they spoke the very words God told them to say, they didn’t fully understand the meaning behind those words sometimes, Daniel 7:28 / Daniel 8:26-27.

Daniel was confused because he didn’t fully understand what God was telling him, but as time went on, he soon discovered he wasn’t serving himself but for us, even today as Christians, Daniel 12:8-9.

Peter is telling us that Christians have been served by people such as Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. These men and many others spent their lives, and in many cases, even gave their lives, in service to you and me. They were willing to die to bring us the Gospel, Hebrews 11:36-38.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The prophets perceived that in their communications there were some great and glorious truths which they did not fully comprehend; and they diligently employed their natural faculties to understand that which they were appointed to impart to succeeding generations.’

Not only did the prophets serve us, but we were also served by the Holy Spirit, 1 Peter 1:11-12 / Romans 8:9. In what way does the Holy Spirit serve us? It was the Holy Spirit who inspired the prophets to proclaim things to come. It was the Holy Spirit who inspired David and Isaiah to foretell the sufferings of Christ in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.

It was the Holy Spirit who moved the prophets to proclaim the glories to follow, 1 Peter 1:11. He moved them to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 1:12 / Psalm 16:9-11. The Holy Spirit moved them to proclaim His ascension and coronation, Daniel 7:13-14. And it was the Holy Spirit who inspired the apostles to reveal the Gospel. Through His ministry of inspiration and revelation in the lives of the prophets and apostles, we have been served by the Holy Spirit. And it’s because of His work that we have today the completed revelation of God’s Word in our hands, the Bible, 1 Peter 1:2 / Jude 3.

So we have the prophets who served us and the Holy Spirit who served us, but there is another group of people who have served us, ‘those who preached the good news’, 1 Peter 1:12.

Who are ‘those who preached the good news to you’? Those people who preached the good news were the apostles of Jesus Christ. Peter is reminding us that the apostles also served us. After all, they were the ones who were commissioned to preach the Gospel in the first place, Matthew 28:19-20 / Mark 16:15-16.

And make no mistake about it, when they were given this great commission from Jesus, they saw themselves as servants to those very people they were preaching to, 1 Peter 1:12. They didn’t see themselves as super-apostles; they saw themselves as servants, who had different roles to play but were always equal, 1 Corinthians 3:5-7.

Caffin, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Peter claims for those who evangelised Asia Minor (Paul and his companions) the same authority which was possessed by the ancient prophets. The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets; the same Spirit worked and preached through the apostles.’

Just like the apostles who were working together to serve us when they preached the Gospel, we too should be working together to serve everyone we preach the Gospel to. Because in a very real way, the apostles understood that they were serving as servants of Christ, **1 Corinthians 3:21-4:1 / 2 Corinthians 4:5**.

In other words, Peter is reminding us that we, as Christians, have been served by men. Men like Peter, James, John, and Paul gave their lives for our sake, to convince the world that our faith in their testimony is not speculative, but that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead, **2 Corinthians 11:24-29**.

So the prophets served us, the Holy Spirit served us, the apostles served us, but there's another group of people who have served us. Peter reminds us that we have been served by angels, **1 Peter 1:12**. In what way did the angels serve us?

In two ways, firstly, they served us in the things they prophesied by the prophets. Remember, it was the angel Gabriel who appeared to Daniel and revealed to him about our glorious future salvation, **Daniel 8:9**.

Secondly, the angels served us in the things they proclaimed by the apostles through the Gospel. It was the angel Gabriel again who appeared to Zacharias and Mary to reveal to them about our ultimate salvation, **Luke 1:11-19**.

However, just like the prophets, angels were also in the dark concerning the details of the coming salvation, **Hebrews 1:13-14**. In other words, just like the prophets, just like the Holy Spirit, just like the apostles, the angels understood that they weren't serving themselves but they were serving us, **Hebrews 1:14**.

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep a clear head, and set your hope completely on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.” **1 Peter 1:13**

Notice that Peter uses the word ‘therefore.’ This is important because what he's about to say is based on everything we've already looked at. Because of all those blessings, because this world is not our home, because we're privileged but responsible, because we have a living hope, because of our joy and glory, because we have so many people serving us.

Because of all that, Peter wants to encourage us even more to think about the hope we have as Christians. He basically wants us to tune up our focus on the hope we have as Christians. Our faith enables us to look over and above every trouble to God, who is our help, **1 Peter 5:7**.

And what Peter is saying is, never lose sight of that, set our hope perfectly, unchangeably, without doubt, and keep looking towards Jesus. He's trying to encourage the saints to make their hope a hope which is complete, strong, and not wavering.

Peter is saying, we need to develop our faith because it's essential if we want to live a life full of joy so that we can be victorious in Christ Jesus, **Revelation 3:14-16**. He wants to encourage us to fine-tune our faith in order to make it stronger.

Peter says to focus on ‘grace’, that unmerited favour that we will receive when Jesus comes again. That same grace he alluded to when he spoke about our inheritance kept in heaven for us, **1 Peter 1:4**.

That same grace he alluded to when he spoke about our salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time, **1 Peter 1:5**. That same grace he alluded to when he spoke about our praise, honour and glory which we shall receive at the revelation of Jesus Christ, **1 Peter 1:7**. That same grace he alluded to when he spoke about the salvation of our souls, **1 Peter 1:9**.

Some translations use the words, ‘girding up the loins of your mind’. What does that mean? The word ‘gird up’ is an oriental expression; it refers to the act of gathering up around the waist the long, loose robes worn by those in the east.

In other words, Peter is saying we must put out of the mind everything and anything that would impede the free action of the mind in connection with developing our hope. We need to put out of our minds such things as worry, fear, or obsession with material possessions.

We need to remove anything and everything that is not helping us to have a strong hope in the coming of our Lord, **Luke 8:14 / Luke 21:34-35**. Instead of filling our minds with thoughts of food or drink or clothes, we should fill our minds with hope, with heavenly things, **Colossians 3:1-2**.

Not only does Peter want us to gird up our minds, but he also says if we want to develop and fine-tune our hope, then be sober. The word ‘sober’ means ‘to be calm and collected in spirit, to be pleasant, cool, careful’. It is the state of mind in which a person is self-controlled and able to see things without the distortion caused by worry or fear.

Worry and fear cause us to forget our future hope in Christ Jesus. Worry and fear cause us to abandon the ship of which Jesus Christ is the captain. And so for us to develop and fine-tune our hope we need to be calm and serious about what we’re doing, **Luke 21:36**.

We cannot develop and fine-tune a strong hope if we are so ‘weak-minded’ that we allow things to divert us away from our true calling. And what is our calling? To journey through this life as strangers in a strange land, **1 Peter 2:11**, but with a hope that is resting fully upon the grace, we will receive when Christ comes again.

“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former lusts.” **1 Peter 1:14**

Peter says don’t conform to former lusts. Although the KJV uses the word ‘fashion’ other translations use the word ‘conform’ which is an interesting word, it basically means to conform oneself to another’s pattern.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A noble principle is in view here. Through the practice of wickedness, people fashion themselves in the likeness of the sins they commit; and thus they become ‘sons of disobedience’, **Ephesians 2:2 / Ephesians 5:6 / Colossians 3:6**, the very opposite of what Peter required for Christians here.’

When Peter uses the phrase ‘former lusts’, he is referring to those evil desires and behaviour in which we once engaged, and in which the world continues to engage.

Peter is telling us not to act like we once did, or like those still in the world. Do not adopt their sinful habits, mannerisms, dress, and speech, which we did before we became Christians. We need to remember that Christians are not to be ‘conformists’, but true ‘non-conformists’, or as the Bible calls us, ‘transformists’, **Romans 12:1-2**.

The problem with ‘conformists’ is that they simply imitate others, sometimes claiming to do so only outwardly, but the ‘transformists’ are those who have undergone a true change on the ‘inside’. The ‘true transformists’ are those who manifest the difference on the ‘outside’.

Peter is telling us if we are claiming to be obedient children of God, then we need to live like it, we need to dress like it, we need to speak like we’re children of God, **Philippians 3:20 / 1 John 2:15-17**.

“Instead, be holy in all that you do, just as God who called you is holy. The scripture says, “Be holy because I am holy.” “You call him Father, when you pray to God, who judges all people by the same standard, according to what each one has done; so then, spend the rest of your lives here on earth in reverence for him.” **1 Peter 1:15-17**

Peter says as obedient children of God we need to be holy, **1 Peter 1:15**. The word ‘holy’ is closely related to the words ‘sanctify’ and ‘sanctification’, which carry with them the idea of being set apart. In other words, to be holy means to be set apart or dedicated to God.

Notice that Peter says, ‘be holy in ALL that you do’, **1 Peter 1:15**. In other words, holiness is not an option; it’s a command, **Hebrews 12:14**. Holiness is not something we put on when it’s convenient, like on Sundays. Our whole

lives, our daily lives, our speech every single moment of every single day, we're supposed to be set apart in service to the Lord, **Romans 12:1**.

Why is holiness important? The God who has called us through His Gospel is a holy God, **1 Peter 1:16 / Leviticus 11:44-45 / Leviticus 19:2**. He Himself is 'set apart' from sin and wickedness, and His very nature demands a similar holiness on our part.

We cannot expect people to know that our God is a holy God if our lives aren't reflecting His holiness, **Hebrews 12:14**. Holiness is important because our God is a holy God, but holiness is also important because Jesus died for that very purpose, **Ephesians 5:25-27**.

We must understand that God is our Father, but also one with all authority to punish His children. Jesus understood this principle, **Matthew 10:28**. The apostle Paul understood this principle, **Philippians 2:12**, and Peter himself understood this principle.

He says first of all we should fear our heavenly Father because He is the one who is going to judge us, **1 Peter 1:17**. We need to know that God is not partial when it comes to judgement. He will judge us individually and personally according to what we have done. In other words, there are not going to be any special favours; no one will escape His discerning eye.

"For you know what was paid to set you free from the worthless manner of life handed down by your ancestors. It was not something that can be destroyed, such as silver or gold; it was the costly sacrifice of Christ, who was like a lamb without defect or flaw. He had been chosen by God before the creation of the world and was revealed in these last days for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from death and gave him glory; and so your faith and hope are fixed on God". **1 Peter 1:18-21**

The second reason we should fear our heavenly Father is because of what it cost to redeem us, **1 Peter 1:18 / Mark 10:45 / 1 Corinthians 6:20 / 1 Timothy 2:5 / Revelation 1:5**.

To forgive is to accept within ourselves the consequences of the sins of others. It means to accept the pain, the problems and the burden that comes when someone sins against us. Forgiveness is neither easy nor a frequent gift.

What did God give for our forgiveness? Peter says it wasn't money or anything of wealth or value in worldly terms. We were not redeemed from our sins with silver or gold but only by the precious blood of Christ, **1 Peter 1:18**. Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'This does not mean that their faith was more precious than gold (though of course it is), but that the testing of it was a much more important and valuable process than that of testing gold by fire.'

He gave His Son, Jesus, who took upon Himself the burden of our sins. Peter says Jesus is the One who was without blemish and without spot, **1 Peter 1:19**.

Polkinghorne, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Passover lamb (Exodus), as the sacrifice whereby Israel was delivered from bondage and separated to the Lord, is richly significant in context, as is also the lamb of **Isaiah 53**, the passage so largely quoted in **1 Peter 2:22-25**.' He was the one who was foreordained to die for our sins before the world began, **1 Peter 1:20 / Ephesians 4:16**. He was the one who came to this earth for our sakes, and He is the one by whom our faith and hope are in God, **1 Peter 1:21**.

Christians need to know that any child of God who doesn't conduct themselves in a manner appreciative of the price paid for his sins can expect a fate worse than death if they don't repent, **Luke 13:3**.

If we truly claim to be God's children, we mustn't conform ourselves to former lusts, **Hebrews 10:26-31**. We are to be holy in all our conduct, and we are to conduct ourselves in fear. Paul said much the same thing when he was writing to the church at Corinth, **2 Corinthians 7:1**.

Holiness is given by the redeeming grace of God. Forgiveness is given by the precious blood of Christ. And as Christians, we can be strengthened by the power of His Spirit to live the sort of lives pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. For through the living and eternal word of God, you have been born again as the children of a parent who is immortal, not mortal. For “All human life is like grass, and all its glory is like a flower in the grass. The grass dries up, and the flower drops off, but the word of the Lord lasts forever.” Now this word is the good news that was announced to you.” 1 Peter 1:22-25

Peter says, if we truly want to continue in the blessings which come from being God’s children, then we need to ‘love one another deeply, from the heart’, 1 Peter 1:22.

Is it possible to truly love like Christ? Peter says it is possible because our souls have been purified, 1 Peter 2:22.

Peter says it is possible because we have obeyed the truth.

In other words, if we truly claim to love Jesus, we need to love others as He loves us, John 13:33-35 / 2 Corinthians 3:2. This is not an optional extra; Jesus says it’s a command, and the reason we are commanded to love one another is to convince the world that we are truly His disciples.

Showing the world this deep love for one another is also a demonstration of our spiritual life. Becoming a Christian means we moved from one place and entered another. Spiritually, we were dead, cut off from God because of our sins, but now we’re alive spiritually in Christ, Ephesians 2:1-5 / 1 John 3:14.

Showing the world this deep love for one another also demonstrates our relationship with God. We love because God loves, and whatever our heavenly Father does, we too should be in the habit of doing, 1 John 4:7.

John says if we fail to love as God loves us, then we leave each other and the people in the world with the impression that we really aren’t true Christians, 1 John 4:8.

Some translations use the words ‘fervent love’ in 1 Peter 1:22, and it might help if we can understand what the word ‘fervent’ means. It’s the same word that is used in reference to praying earnestly in Acts 12:5. The word ‘fervent’ means ‘constant’ or ‘earnest.’ So what Peter is telling us is that we are to demonstrate the type of love that is constant and earnest.

But not only is it to be constant and earnest, but Peter also reminds us that our love for each other needs to be sincere, 1 Peter 1:22. Some translations use the word ‘unfeigned’ and other translations use the word ‘sincere’. The Greek word literally means ‘not hypocritical.’

This is important because Peter is telling us that this is not some kind of show, this is not some kind of performance we put on for each other whenever we meet together. This love needs to come from the heart, Romans 12:9 / 1 John 3:17.

And finally, for us to love each other fervently, we also need to keep our love pure, 1 Peter 1:22. This means that our love for each other must always be kept in the context of moral purity, Ephesians 5:2-3. In other words, under no circumstances is our love to be a cover for sexual immorality.

Loving someone with the pure love of the Lord doesn’t agree with anything which is impure. Pure, sincere, fervent love is a love that imitates Christ’s love, a sacrificial love.

Because we have obeyed the truth, we have been forgiven. So we are born again at our baptism, 1 Peter 1:23 / John 3:5 / James 1:18, we are forgiven at our baptism, Acts 2:38, and as we continue to obey the truth, we are taught over and over again that we need to be pure, Ephesians 4:20-24.

Loving one another with the love of the Lord is possible because we’ve been born again by the incorruptible Word of God, 1 Peter 1:23. Sometimes we run across scoffers, people who sneer at divine revelation, who say that they cannot feel much enthusiasm about the Bible.

But we need to remember that the Bible is not on trial. Whether people believe it or not, it is the Word of God, which lives and remains forever, as Peter tells us, 1 Peter 1:23.

It's through the Word of God that we come to know what true love really is because it's the Word of God that tells us of the love of Jesus, **1 John 3:16**. It's the Word of God that tells us of the love of God, **1 John 4:9-10**.

In other words, we can have this sincere, deep love for one another because we have been purified and understand the need for a sincere, pure love of the brethren. We can have this love because the love of Jesus and God motivates us, **Ephesians 3:17-19 / 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 / 1 Peter 4:8**.

Peter says God's Word is wonderful because of its nature, **1 Peter 1:24**. He says God's Word is wonderful because it is not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible. He says God's Word is wonderful because it lives and abides forever, and he says God's Word is wonderful because it is the Word of the Lord that endures forever.

In a world where things are passing away all the time, things that are here today and gone tomorrow, Peter says God's Word isn't like that, God's Word endures forever, and this is the same Word which was preached to them, **1 Peter 1:25**.

When we look back in time and see the efforts of people who try to rid the world of the Word of God, we shouldn't be surprised that they failed. People come, and people go, people make claims which never come to fruition, hence why Peter, in **1 Peter 1:24**, quotes from **Isaiah 40:6-8**. The Bible is wonderful because it stands the test of time and will forever stand the test of time.

But the Word of God isn't just indestructible, it's also very powerful, powerful enough to change people's lives or in the words of Peter, it causes people to be born again, **1 Peter 1:23**.

There is a law of science known as the Law of Biogenesis, which states that 'life produces life', and because the Word of God is what it is, it too is able to produce spiritual life, **Mark 4:26-29**.

Not only is God's Word living, but it's also active, **Hebrews 4:12**. God's Word is alive and active, and it reaches the very parts of our being that only God can reach. What the Hebrew writer is telling us is that it's only God's Word that can tell us how to remove sin from our lives.

When a person receives the Word of God and obeys it, he or she is truly brought to life again, **John 6:63 / James 1:18**.

The Word of God actually purifies the soul; that word 'purify' basically means to get rid of all impurities.

How does the Word of God do that? Simply through obedience, in other words, because the truth contains the Gospel when the truth is believed and obeyed, the result is the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Christ, **John 17:17**.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it, you may grow up in your salvation. As the scripture says, "You have found out for yourselves how kind the Lord is." **1 Peter 2:1-3**

Peter begins by using the word 'therefore', in relation to what he wrote about holiness in **1 Peter 1:23-25**. He says, if we want to grow, then get rid of all malice, **1 Peter 2:1**. In other words, get rid of anything within us which wants to cause trouble.

The Pulpit Commentary says the following, concerning the words 'rid yourself', 'put away', KJV.

'Paul connects the putting on of Christ with baptism, **Galatians 3:27**; and Peter, when speaking of baptism in **1 Peter 3:21**, both used the Greek word which corresponds to the word here, 'laying aside.'

He says, if we want to grow, then get rid of all guile, 1 Peter 2:1. Get rid of anything within us that goes about craftily trying to deceive people. Peter says if we want to grow, then get rid of all hypocrisies. Get rid of anything within us which is stopping us from practising what we preach.

He says if we want to grow, then get rid of all envy, 1 Peter 2:1. Get rid of anything within us which is causing us to be unhappy because someone else has something we want for ourselves.

Peter says if we want to grow, then get rid of all evil speaking, 1 Peter 2:1. Get rid of anything within us which is causing us to talk slanderous words and defamatory statements about others.

Peter says that for the Word of God to flourish in our lives, we must rid ourselves of these things. If we want to grow by the Word of God, we first need to prepare the soil of our hearts, and second, we must have the proper desire for the Word.

We know that healthy babies don't stay babies, they begin to talk and crawl, they grow a little more and become youngsters with temper tantrums, and then they become teenagers with their hormones going nuts, and then they grow into young adults and eventually get elderly if God permits.

We can see that growth, and everyone else can see that growth, but there is another type of growth that isn't so visible. Just like a newborn baby needs regular feeding to help with their continual growth, a newborn again Christian also needs regular feeding.

Peter says God's Word is compared to 'pure spiritual milk', 1 Peter 2:2, which causes young Christians to grow, 1 Corinthians 3:2. Satan doesn't want us to grow and sadly that's what many Christians choose to do, they don't want to grow, but growing is not an option, it's a command, 1 Peter 3:18.

We have nothing to do with our justification, just like a baby has nothing to do with its conception, but a baby has something to do with its development, and we have a lot to do with our spiritual fitness. We must train ourselves; we can't stay a little baby, we're supposed to grow up and work out our salvation, 1 Peter 2:2 / 1 Corinthians 3:1-2 / Hebrews 5:11-14.

The best spiritual food for us is the food that causes us to love God more, love others more, and dedicate our lives to doing right. Because spiritual growth as a Christian is totally dependent upon the Word of God.

Peter is saying that there is no way we can destroy it, and if we desire to be born again and grow spiritually, it is impossible without the incorruptible seed of the Word of God.

Peter says just as babies 'crave' for milk, we are to 'crave' for the Word of God, 1 Peter 2:2. Remember, we're not just physical beings, we're spiritual beings, Matthew 4:4 / Psalms 119:165 / Jeremiah 15:16. Christians who don't overcome sin in their lives are in danger of dying spiritually, 1 John 2:14. Notice the Word of God tastes too good, 1 Peter 2:3 / 1 Peter 3:10.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'In this verse from Psalms 34, Peter applied to the Lord Jesus the great Old Testament word for God, 'the Lord.' The writer of Hebrews, Hebrews 6:4-5, also mentioned 'tasting' as a metaphor of understanding and appropriating to one's own needs the word of God.'

The Word of God is too wonderful for Christians to neglect, but sadly, there has been a wholesale neglect of the Word of God among Christians in the Lord's church today. The very thing we've been looking at contains the Gospel, it contains the good news, 1 Peter 1:25.

THE LIVING STONE AND A CHOSEN PEOPLE

‘As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message, which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.’ 1 Peter 2:4-

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Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Peter here combined the thought of Isaiah 28:16 / Isaiah 8:14, and Psalms 122:18, in his presentation of Christ the Stone, living, elect, foundation, precious, rejected, the chief corner, and the stone of stumbling, in one of the most beautiful metaphors of the word of God.’

Peter says that Jesus Christ is the living stone that was rejected by men, 1 Peter 2:4 / John 1:10-11. Instead of seeing Jesus as their Saviour, they rejected Him to the point where they crucified Him, 1 Peter 2:4.

We are a privileged people because none of us has the right to worship God; we’re permitted to offer acceptable worship only by the grace of God, and because it’s upon Jesus Christ, our cornerstone, upon whom we all are being built up, 1 Corinthians 3:9-11 / 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

Wheaton, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Both the foundation stone of Isaiah 28:16 and the rejected keystone of Psalms 118:22 are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is both the Foundation on which the church is built and the Keystone into whom it grows up.’

In other words, Jesus Christ is not the cornerstone of a physical building, but of a spiritual one. His people, His church, you and I are a part of that spiritual house, 1 Peter 2:5 / 1 Corinthians 3:16 / Ephesians 2:19-22.

We are truly blessed, but with those blessings come great responsibility. Peter reminds us that, as this spiritual house is built upon the Christ, we need to fulfil certain responsibilities, 1 Peter 2:5.

He reminds us that we are to serve as a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices to God, 1 Peter 2:5 / Revelation 1:6, and so, the first thing we need to offer God is our very bodies, Romans 12:1-2. The second thing we need to offer God is our praise, Hebrews 13:15.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Under the old law, sacrifices were dead, bloody, burned with fire, smeared with fat, carnal, temporal, and salted with salt, Leviticus 2:13 / Mark 12:49. By contrast, in the church, sacrifices are spiritual, living, clean, pure, holy, and acceptable to God. They are described as ‘better sacrifices’, Hebrews 9:23.’

The third thing we need to offer God is our good works, Hebrews 13:16. The fourth thing we need to offer God is our very lives, 2 Timothy 4:6-8. In other words, we truly are a blessed people who serve and worship God in a very special way.

Even though He was chosen by God and considered to be precious, they rejected Him, 1 Peter 2:6 / Psalms 118:22. The cornerstone is the most important stone in the whole building because everything else is built in and around it. Peter is saying that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone not of a physical building but a spiritual one. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of a great spiritual house or temple, 1 Peter 2:6 / Isaiah 28:16 / 1 Corinthians 3:11.

Jesus Christ is not only the cornerstone of His church, 1 Peter 2:7 / 118:22, but He is also the rock upon which we build our lives. As builders who build physical buildings, we too must choose our materials carefully and work them into the structure of our lives wisely. We must be positive that it is built on a good foundation.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenges each one of us to build for eternity. He urges us to cast aside such material as selfishness, hypocrisy, lust, and hatred; these can only lead to failure and ruin.

Christ prescribes the materials that will stand throughout time and eternity. He stresses humility, meekness, righteousness, mercy, and purity. The quality of this material has been tested and tried through the centuries.

Jesus says by following His teachings, we are able to establish our lives on solid ground, Matthew 7:24-27, and when we build on His Word and obey His every word, then we as Christians can withstand the storms of life. Jesus is truly a cornerstone to those who believe in Him and follow Him.

Peter says to those who don't believe, Jesus is a stumbling stone, 1 Peter 2:7 / Psalm 118:22. He came into the world for the very purpose of removing the dividing wall, and all that it represented of exclusiveness, bitterness, inhumanity, and religious bigotry and pride.

Either Jesus is the cornerstone, upon which we are being built as stones in His temple, the church, and upon which we are building our lives by following His teaching, or He will be the stumbling stone over which we will meet our doom, 1 Peter 2:8 / Acts 4:11.

Jesus being a stumbling block, 1 Peter 2:8, shouldn't surprise us, after all, God said this would happen when He spoke through His prophet Isaiah, Isaiah 8:13-15.

We also need to remember that God said this was going to happen through Simeon when he presented Jesus in the temple as a newborn, Luke 2:34. The apostle Paul himself understood that many a Jew wouldn't accept Jesus, Romans 9:30-33 / 1 Corinthians 1:23.

Jesus was a stumbling block to many of the Jews because they thought that they could attain righteousness by keeping the Law, 1 Peter 2:8 / Isaiah 8:14. They could not accept the need for a suffering Messiah to atone for their sins. Pride prevented them from accepting Jesus on His terms, 1 Peter 2:8 / Isaiah 8:14. They were unwilling to turn their lives over to Jesus and to do His Will.

I think there are times when we forget who we are and just how special we are. Peter says, just in case we forget who we are, he says let me remind you that we are a chosen people, we are a royal priesthood, Revelation 1:6, we are members of a holy nation, we are a people that belongs to God, 1 Peter 2:9.

Hunter, in his commentary, says the following concerning 'God's special possession', 1 Peter 2:9.

'The phrase literally means 'a people for (God's) possession.'

As Christians, we are what Israel as a nation was supposed to be in the first place. A race or chosen people who are people that have been bound together through common origin, a nation is a group of people who have been bound together through common law.

Israel of old was supposed to be an object lesson; they were supposed to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, Exodus 19:5-6. They were supposed to bring the world back to God by acting as mediators between the world and God, but they messed up.

When Moses was up the mountain, the people remained below and ended up building a golden calf under Aaron's instructions; they messed up. Moses stood where Aaron should have stood and asked the question, 'Who is on the Lord's side?' and only the tribe of Levi came forward, Exodus 32:29.

And so instead of all the Israelites being priests and mediators between God and the world, the tribe of Levi was chosen to mediate between the Israelites and God. We are what Israel as a nation was supposed to be in the first place.

We are now the chosen people, we are now the royal priest, we are now the holy nation, and we are now a people that belong to God, 1 Peter 2:9. And it's our responsibility to be the mediators between the world and God, like it was supposed to be at the start. We've got the job of trying to reconcile the world to God.

Jesus says that Israel, as a nation, will have the kingdom taken away from them and it will be given to another nation, Matthew 21:43. He's taking it away from the Jewish nation because they messed up and He has now given it

to His church, [Galatians 3:26-29](#) / [Galatians 6:16](#). And just like the Israel of old who were responsible for proclaiming the praises of God, we too have the same task.

Peter says we have been called out of darkness into His marvellous light by His grace, [1 Peter 2:9](#) / [1 Timothy 6:16](#). By His grace, we, who were not a people, are now the people of God. By His grace, we who didn't know of God's mercy have now obtained mercy, [1 Peter 2:10](#).

LIVING GODLY LIVES IN A PAGAN SOCIETY

“Beloved, I beg you as foreigners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having good behaviour among the nations, so in that of which they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they see, glorify God in the day of visitation.” [1 Peter 2:11-12](#)

Because we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and God's own special people, it should be of no surprise to us that Peter urges us to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of our calling.

Notice in the KJV, Peter begins his plea by reminding us that we are loved, [Romans 1:7](#). God loved us so much that He sent His one and only Son to die for us, even before we were Christians, [Ephesians 2:1-5](#) / [Romans 5:8](#). We are strangers in a strange land, on a journey to our heavenly home, [1 Peter 2:11](#), but we need to remind ourselves that we haven't made it home yet.

Mason, in his commentary, says the following concerning ‘foreigners and exiles,’ [1 Peter 2:11](#).

‘These words, when compared with [Psalms 39:12](#), Septuagint (LXX), from which Peter drew them, prepare for the description of distress which is to follow.’

And that's why Peter begs us to keep living right until we get there, because if we don't live right, we might never make it to heaven. The minute we become a Christian is the time when we become a soldier, with Christ as our commanding officer, and ever since that day, we have been engaged in spiritual warfare.

It's a war in which ‘fleshly lusts’ wage war against the ‘soul’, [1 Peter 2:11](#), and it's the outcome of this war that will determine whether or not we will reach our heavenly home.

The word ‘abstain’, [1 Peter 2:11](#), means ‘to hold oneself constantly back’. And so what Peter is saying is, hold yourself back from fleshly lust. Fight against them all the time, don't give in to them.

We might be wondering what kind of fleshly lusts he has in mind. Well, Paul gives us a more definite answer to that question in [Galatians 5:19-21](#). Notice that Paul's list covers more than just sexual sin; he also includes sins of the ‘emotions’ such as hatred, outbursts of wrath, jealousy, envy, etc.

And so, it's these very things which we must ‘hold ourselves constantly back’. Why? According to Peter, they wage war against the soul, but also according to Paul, they can keep us out of the kingdom of God. The good news is that God doesn't leave us in the dark on how to help ourselves in this spiritual fight.

To win the fight, Paul says, keep our minds on the things of the Spirit, and not on the things of the flesh, [Romans 8:5-6](#). Now, how do we do that? Pray regularly, read your Bible regularly, meet as often as you can with other Christians, and listen to Christian music in the car or at home.

To win the fight, Paul also says, grow in Christ, and don't provide opportunities for the fulfilment of fleshly lusts, in other words, watch the places we go and the company we keep, [Romans 13:13-14](#).

And so if we want to win the ‘war’ between the flesh and soul, and successfully complete our journey to heaven, we need to stay clear of anything and any situation which may cause us to fall, [2 Timothy 2:22](#).

There will be times when we're winning this inner war, and there will be times when we are losing the war miserably. Paul says his mind wants to do one thing, and please God, but his flesh wants to give in to sin. He says there are times he gets it right, but there are also times he gets it wrong, Romans 7:22-25.

But abstaining from fleshly lusts is not the only thing expected of God's pilgrims. Peter begs us to have honourable conduct, 1 Peter 2:12. What he means by that is that our conduct is to be good, beautiful, harmonious, and lovely. I'm sure we're all aware that most people in the world don't read the Bible; they read our lives, and Peter says, make no mistake about it, we are being observed by others.

In other words, the way we act towards other people is to be something which is refreshing, and we do that by fleeing from fleshy lust and pursuing good deeds, 1 Peter 2:12.

James says there are people all around us who are poor, fatherless, widowed, sick, and otherwise afflicted. He says those are the people we can help with good deeds, James 1:27.

The Hebrew writer says that we all know how to make someone feel welcomed and at home. He says we can demonstrate love and hospitality to our brethren, friends, neighbours, and even strangers, Hebrews 13:1-3.

Our good deeds go far beyond the good deed, as we saw earlier, people are watching, people are observing, and some people will make up their minds about Christianity through your good deeds.

But what about those who speak evil against us? What about those who constantly want to mistreat us? There are times when we just want to strike back at our enemies, but when we remember Jesus and His words, it can actually bring our enemies to Christ. Jesus says we need to react kindly to our enemies, Luke 6:27-31 / Hebrews 11:7.

Peter is telling us that if we listen to this plea and live right, it is possible to cause those very people who speak evil of us to glorify God on the 'day of visitation', 1 Peter 2:12.

Some believe that this 'day of visitation' might refer to the 'Day of Judgment' while others believe it's referring to the 'day' when God's grace is shown through a presentation of the Gospel to them. In either case, the point that Peter is trying to get across is that we will have an opportunity to bring glory to God by the way we act towards nonbelievers.

Barclay, in his commentary, says the following.

'Here is our challenge and our inspiration. It is by the loveliness of our daily life and conduct that we must commend Christianity to those who do not believe.'

'Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour the emperor.' 1 Peter 2:13-17

Whether we like our government and those who represent our government or not, Peter has one word to say to us: submit, 1 Peter 2:13-14. We are to submit for the Lord's sake, Acts 4:19.

Some translations use the word 'subject', and other translations use the word 'submit', but it really makes no difference, as Peter is saying, as Christians we need to place ourselves under subjection or submit to every ordinance of man, 1 Peter 2:13-14.

And this is not the only time Peter is going to ask us to be in subjection to others, 1 Peter 2:18 / 1 Peter 3:1 / 1 Peter 5:5. But when we are told to submit to every human authority or ordinance of man, as some translations render it, the word 'ordinance' literally means 'a creation'.

We are not used to this type of language today, but the Greeks and Romans were accustomed to describing the appointment of officers as the creation of them. So what Peter is actually telling us is that as Christians, we're to submit not to a particular law passed by the government but to the civil government or institution itself.

This is where it gets tough for some of us because he says we are to submit to every human authority or every human institution, as some translations have it. Whether it is a monarchy, democracy, or totalitarian state, Peter says, we've got the responsibility to simply submit.

All these authorities are sent by God to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right, 1 Peter 2:14. The apostle Paul reminds us of the same thing over in Romans 13:1.

We may not like it at times, we may not agree with certain government policies, but there are certain policies we must adhere to, and we have to submit to them, such as paying our taxes, Romans 13:5-7.

And so, we're reminded that our responsibility as strangers in a strange land, travelling through the earth until we get to our real home in heaven, is to submit to the governments of men under which we live.

Peter says first and foremost, the reason we must submit to the authorities is that it's God's will, we're to submit to the authorities 'for the Lord's sake', 1 Peter 2:15.

Peter says by submitting to the authorities, we can actually silence certain people by doing good, 1 Peter 2:15, and because of our allegiance to a heavenly King, Christians are often falsely accused of troublemaking or treason, Acts 5:28-29 / Acts 17:5-8.

Not only is it God's will, but Paul gives us another reason as to why we have to submit to our governments. Paul says have no doubt about it, the governing authorities that exist are there because God put them there, Romans 13:1.

Daniel said long ago, It is God who removes kings and raises kings, Daniel 2:20-21 / Daniel 4:17 / Daniel 4:25. God is the One who controls and rules the world, Revelation 19:16.

We must remember that God doesn't appoint certain people; it's God who ordained the idea of people being governed. Most countries are blessed with democracy, where the people have the right to vote for who their new leader will be.

However, sometimes those who are elected as leaders can turn out to be evil, but God can use evil authorities for His divine purpose and replace them when He decides to replace them, Exodus 9:16 / Isaiah 10:5-12.

Paul says if we resist our governments, we're actually resisting God Himself, Romans 13:2-4. And Peter is saying that when we do submit, we will also silence those who might falsely accuse us of wrongdoing, 1 Peter 2:15.

Is there a time when we don't have to submit to their ruling? First of all, we need to understand that even when a government is oppressive, like we see happening in some parts of the world, that's not a get-out clause for us not to submit to their rule.

Put yourself in Peter and Paul's situation for a moment, and their ruling authorities and governments. The government was oppressive, with Nero as ruler, an evil, cruel emperor, and it was under his reign that Christians suffered greatly, 1 Peter 4:12-13.

We know from history that even Peter himself was crucified, and Paul was beheaded, but Peter and Paul would both say to us today, even under such oppressive governments, our responsibilities remain clear; we are to submit.

Many Christians complain about our government; they complain about their leadership skills and motives, but Paul says to his young friend Timothy that Christians should not be complaining but praying, 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

Paul says we are to pray for our rulers, that peace may prevail. If we want a godly government, Paul says to pray for it; if we want the people who run our country to use godly wisdom, Paul says to pray for it.

Now I believe we shouldn't obey our governmental authorities when they want us to disobey God. It's only when the government tries to force us to disobey God that we must then disobey the government, Acts 4:18-20 / Acts 5:27-29. But even at that, it is only the particular laws designed to force us to disobey God that we have a right to break. We have no authority to break other laws in protest, but we are asked to pray for those in authority and submit to them in all other areas.

We do have a responsibility as strangers in a strange land under whatever government we may find ourselves under as we travel here on earth on our way to heaven.

And even though we have freedom in Christ, we should use that freedom in serving the Lord and show honour and respect to those in authority, 1 Peter 2:16. We who live in countries that allow freedom of religion should be especially quick to show our respect and submission to our government, 1 Peter 2:17.

We are to show proper respect to everyone, Philippians 2:3, love the family of believers, Galatians 6:10, fear God, Ecclesiastes 12:13, and honour the emperor, 1 Peter 2:17 / Matthew 22:11.

“Servants, be in subjection to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the wicked. For it is commendable if someone endures pain, suffering unjustly, because of conscience toward God. For what glory is it if, when you sin, you patiently endure beating? But if, when you do well, you patiently endure suffering, this is commendable with God.” 1 Peter 2:18-20

We’re all servants, some have earthly masters whilst others have a heavenly master, and some may even have both, 1 Peter 2:18 / Ephesians 6:509 / Colossians 3:22-4:1, but what is commendable conduct before God? Peter says if we want our behaviour to be commendable before God, then we need to suffer patiently when being mistreated for doing good, 1 Peter 2:19.

Mason, in his commentary, says the following, concerning our ‘conscience toward God’, 1 Peter 2:19.

‘The point of its inclusion here is that of forbidding the notion that patient suffering is in itself pleasing to God, which is not the case at all, ‘unless it is grounded on consciousness of God’s presence.’

Imagine there is a slave who is trying his best to serve his master well, but for one reason or another, his master mistreats him. Peter says it’s then that the slave finds favour in God’s sight, as some translations have it, if he patiently and submissively endures the mistreatment.

Let me put it another way, when we are doing something that is good, and despite doing those good things, we are still being mistreated, but we continue with the unjust treatment patiently, it’s then that Peter says that our patient tolerance is commendable in the sight of God, 1 Peter 2:20.

But it’s not simply suffering patiently that is commendable, but suffering patiently when we do good, and yet we are still badly treated for it, Matthew 5:10-11. It’s one thing suffering because we’re a Christian, but it’s another thing when we’re a Christian, and we get all sorts of grief from people when all we want to do is help.

Please don’t think that this only applies to the master and servant relationship; Peter speaks of this in the general sense to all Christians, 1 Peter 2:13-14 / 1 Peter 3:17. In other words, although he is addressing servants here, Peter is applying a general truth to a specific application and the general truth is to submit.

This is a general truth of submission concerning our government, 1 Peter 2:13. This is a general truth of submission again concerning our marital relationships, 1 Peter 3:1. Paul also gives us that general truth of submission concerning our relationship with each other, Ephesians 5:21.

And so, whenever we do good and suffer for it, don’t give up. Endure that suffering patiently because if we do, then Peter says this is commendable conduct before God, 1 Peter 2:20.

“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow his steps, who did not sin, “neither was deceit found in his mouth.” Who, when he was cursed, didn’t curse back. When he suffered, didn’t threaten, but committed himself to him who judges righteously.” 1 Peter 2:21-23

The word example in Greek is ‘hupogrammos’, and it means ‘a writing copy,’ that is, a pattern for a copybook, Acts 7:44 / Hebrews 8:5. Christians are called to follow the example of Jesus. He suffered for us and bore our sins, 1 Peter 2:21 / Isaiah 53:4.

Just as Jesus suffered patiently when He was mistreated without cause, so should we. He had no sin, and nothing sinful came from His mouth, 1 Peter 2:22 / Isaiah 53:9.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Jesus, despite the perfection of his life, suffered, and the thought. For the slaves is that even if they could be sinless, there would still be occasions of suffering. And how shall the soul endure such injustice? By remembering that the Sinless One also suffered for us.’

Jesus was beaten literally, and his precious body was marked with the stripes that redeemed us. Jesus didn’t retaliate when insults were thrown at Him, 2 Peter 2:23 / Isaiah 53:7. As Christians, we’ve been called to respond with good, even when someone treats us badly, 1 Peter 2:23 / Luke 6:27-36 / 1 Peter 3:9.

“Who his own self bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed. For you were going astray like sheep; but now have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls”. 1 Peter 2:24-25

Peter says, when we think about Jesus Christ Himself and how he patiently endured being treated badly for doing good, all the way to the cross. He says it was all worth it because we now have the forgiveness of our sins.

1 Peter 2:24 tells us that Jesus bore our sins, Isaiah 53:12, and we’ve been healed by His stripes, Isaiah 53:5. I’ve often heard some groups claim that the healing which is mentioned in 1 Peter 2:24 refers to physical healing.

They claim this is the miraculous healing that people can perform and experience today. However, I’m sure you noted that the context of this healing is spiritual; it has to do with the forgiveness of sins, Isaiah 53:5.

Peter says it was all worth it because those who were straying away have now been brought back to their Shepherd, the Overseer of their soul, 1 Peter 2:25 / Isaiah 53:4-6 / John 10:14.

Snively, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is no symbol upon which the early church seems to have dwelt with more delight than that of Christ as the Good Shepherd, bringing home to the fold the lost sheep. It was engraved on gems; it furnished the legends of seals; it gives today an almost fabulous value to fragments of broken glass; it was painted upon the chalice of the Holy Communion; and it was carved upon the tombs of the martyrs in the catacombs!’

And so following Jesus’ example can have a positive effect for the good. The apostle Paul also reminds us that returning good for evil can actually help us overcome evil, Romans 12:19-21.

In other words, just as we were moved by the sacrificial death of Jesus for our sins, so we might best move others to change their evil ways by patiently doing good even when they mistreat us. And this is why we have been called to follow the example of Jesus, Matthew 5:10-12 / Acts 5:41 / 1 Peter 4:12-14.

The point that Peter is trying to make is that the very fact of knowing that we are blessed in the sight of God, the very fact that we have joined the company of a great group of prophets, apostles, and disciples in suffering for Christ. The very fact that we know we’re going to suffer as Jesus can actually help us to have the proper attitude.

It can help us have the attitude which says, ‘praise the Lord’, instead of, ‘I know I’m right and I’m going to get my own back’. We know that God is always behind the good things, but the devil himself is behind the bad things. And he really wants us to retaliate in the way the rest of the world does.

When we suffer as Christians and are treated badly by others, Satan is behind it all, 1 Peter 5:8-9. Peter says we must be on our guard, resist the devil, and resist our fleshly desires, especially our pride and cling to God. The devil would love nothing more than to hinder our walk with God, His people and those in the world.

He would love it if we retaliated just as people in the world do, proving that Christians are no different from sinners of the world. However, when someone treats us badly, we do more good back, Romans 12:20-21.

Peter is reminding us that there is nothing commendable about stopping when ‘the going gets tough’ but when ‘the tough get going’, and going about doing good, now that is commendable. Jesus didn’t retaliate but left God to deal with it.

And if our Christ-like behaviour does not change the behaviour of those who mistreat us, we know that God will one day do what is right, Romans 12:19 / 2 Thessalonians 1:6.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

“Likewise, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the Christian message, they may be won over without a message by the way their wives live when they observe your pure, reverent lives.” 1 Peter 3:1-2

WIVES

Up until now, Peter has been reminding us about the importance of relationships. In 1 Peter 1:14-16, he reminded us regarding our relationship with God that we are to be holy as He is holy.

In 1 Peter 2:11-12, he reminded us regarding our relationship with the world that we are to live honourably while we do good works. In 1 Peter 2:13-17, he reminded us regarding our relationship with our governments that we are to submit to them and their authority.

In 1 Peter 2:18-25, he reminded us regarding our relationship with others around us that as servants we are to do good and suffer patiently, even though we get treated badly by others.

And here, he reminds us of our responsibilities in another relationship. He says wives submit yourselves to their husbands, 1 Peter 3:1 / Ephesians 5:22-24 / Colossians 3:18 / Titus 2:4-5.

Because he uses the word ‘likewise’, he’s obviously referring back to the previous chapter. And so what he’s saying is, all those principles he taught us previously apply to the wife and husband relationship.

In other words, if a wife suffers wrong from her husband when she was doing good, it is commendable before God if she bears that mistreatment patiently, 1 Peter 2:18-19. The real value of the wife submitting to her husband, in this case, would be where a Christian wife is married to an unbeliever.

Peter says that through their conduct, she may actually convert the unbelieving husband, 1 Peter 3:1-2. And notice something important here, he says, even though they may not have obeyed the Gospel previously, the wives’ conduct may just do it.

And notice something else, when he says, ‘they may be won over without a message’, 1 Peter 3:1, he’s saying wives don’t need to nag them all the time, their conduct may just be the thing which brings them to Christ.

I don’t believe it’s biblical to tell anyone to become a Christian. I think we have a responsibility to share the Gospel with them, Matthew 28:19-20 / Mark 16:15-16, but not force them to become Christians.

If none of us was forced to become a Christian, why should we force or nag anyone else to become a Christian? **Proverbs 27:15**. It's a fine line between encouraging someone to make a decision and constantly nagging them to make that decision.

If a Christian woman is married to an unbeliever and wants to encourage them to become a Christian, then stop the nagging and win them over by your conduct. And the way they do that, according to Peter, is by living pure in all areas of your life and living in reverence towards your husband.

“Do not let your ornaments be those of the body, such as dressing of the hair or putting on of jewels of gold or fair clothing; But let them be those of the unseen man of the heart, the ever-shining ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great price in the eyes of God.” 1 Peter 3:3-4

Peter says let the wives' inner beauty shine. Now, these verses are interesting because Peter is using what we call a Hebraism. A Hebraism is a form of speech that is often used in the Scriptures; we would call it contrasting. In other words, we would say, 'not this but this', in order to make an emphasis, **John 6:27**.

Peter is using a similar contrast here concerning wives. In other words, he's saying, don't let your emphasis on beauty pertain to outward adornment, **1 Peter 3:3**.

He is not saying that it is always wrong to arrange your hair, wear gold, or put on nice clothes, but what he is saying is that your emphasis should always be elsewhere.

Your emphasis should always be on the beauty of your heart, **1 Peter 3:4**. Christian women should be living in such a way that their inner beauty just shines out. The Christian woman should be living in such a way that people notice who she is rather than what she wears.

Peter says it's a gentle and quiet spirit that represents true inner beauty, **1 Peter 3:4**, and all women need to know that living like this is very precious in God's eyes, **1 Peter 3:4 / Isaiah 66:1-2**. And so Christian women must let their inner beauty be their most noticeable feature, **Proverbs 11:22**.

“And these were the ornaments of the holy women of the past, whose hope was in God, being ruled by their husbands: As Sarah was ruled by Abraham, naming him lord; whose children you are if you do well, and are not put in fear by any danger.” 1 Peter 3:5-6

Peter says, if women need a role model, think about the holy women of the past who submitted to their husbands, **1 Peter 3:5**, think about Sarah, **1 Peter 3:6 / Genesis 20:10-12**. Remember that Sarah was so beautiful outwardly.

In **Genesis 12**, we read that Pharaoh wanted her even though she was over sixty five years old.

In **Genesis 20**, we read that the king of the Philistines wanted her even though she was over ninety years old and long past the age of childbearing. But her true beauty was demonstrated by her submissive spirit because she called Abraham her lord, **Genesis 18:12**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Sarah calling Abraham lord, **1 Peter 3:6**.

‘The significance of Sarah's doing this lies in the fact that this is what she called him in her own heart, not merely when others might hear her. The real test of what one is, or what one thinks, lies in the content of what they say to themselves, not in what they might say to others, **Genesis 18:12**.’

Peter's point is that Christian women can become the daughters of Sarah, provided they do good in being submissive to their husbands. Christian women can become the daughters of Sarah, provided they are not afraid of any terror; in other words, they need to be composed with a gentle and quiet spirit, **1 Peter 3:4**.

HUSBANDS

“Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honour to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered”. 1 Peter 3:7

Peter now turns his attention to Christian husbands, **Ephesians 5:25-33** / **Colossians 3:19** and what he says is very important. Peter says, ‘live with your wives in an understanding way,’ the King James Version says, ‘with knowledge’.

In other words, Peter is saying that husbands are expected to know and understand certain things. Husbands are expected to know and understand their responsibilities in their marriage relationship.

Christ loved the church so much that He died for her, **Ephesians 5:25**, and remember this is not the wishy-washy butterflies in the stomach kind of love, this is ‘agapao love’, the kind of love between a husband and a wife that loves unconditionally and encourages us to be totally devoted to them.

Husbands are expected to know and understand the nature of their wives as weaker vessels, but please don’t misunderstand what Peter means here. He’s not saying that women are less intelligent than men; he’s not talking about women having less courage than men or even having less spiritual strength than men.

He is referring to women being weaker in terms of physical strength, and husbands, we should know and understand these things if we are to live with our wives properly. We should live with our wives with love and understanding.

Plato said the following.

‘Lighter tasks are to be given to women than to men because of the weakness of their sex.’

The word ‘give’ means to ‘assign’ and the word ‘honour’ involves the idea that our wives are precious and of high value. Sadly, husbands don’t always see the real value in having a godly wife, **Proverbs 31:10-31**.

Peter says another good reason to consider our wives in such a way is to remember that they are truly ‘heirs together of the grace of life’. If our wives are Christians, they are our sisters in Christ, and they are worthy of respect just as much as any other brother or sister in Christ.

And Peter says if you don’t treat our wives like we should, ‘our prayers may be hindered’. The word ‘hindered’ is an interesting word; it literally means ‘cut off’. And what Peter is telling us is that if we treat our wives in any way which isn’t Christ-like, then our access to God by prayer may be cut off.

In other words, God won’t listen to our prayers anymore, which is exactly what happened to the Old Testament priests who treated their wives badly, **Malachi 2:13-14**.

SUFFERING FOR DOING GOOD

“Finally, be all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brothers, tender-hearted, courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or insult for insult; but instead blessing; knowing that to this were you called, that you may inherit a blessing”. 1 Peter 3:8-9

Peter says first and foremost, for the church to function properly, he wants us all to be ‘like-minded’, 1 Peter 3:8.

Please don’t misunderstand what he’s saying here; he’s not saying that everyone should think alike. Whenever you get a bunch of people together, you will never get everyone to think alike.

But what he is saying is that we all need to be united in the same purpose, we all need to be united in the same goals, **John 17:20-21**. One of the things which the early church possessed was this ‘like-mindedness’, **Acts 4:32**.

And the only way to get that oneness of mind, as some translations have it, is to totally ‘submit to the will of God’. In other words, we need to make God’s will our will, we need to make God’s purpose our purpose, **John 5:30**.

The second thing we need to have if we want the church to function properly is ‘compassion for one another’, **1 Peter 3:8**. This is exactly what Jesus did whilst He was here on earth, **Matthew 9:35-36**. Jesus showed compassion whilst He was here on earth, but that compassion continues today even whilst He is in heaven, **Hebrews 4:15**.

Peter continues and reminds us that if we want the church to function properly, then thirdly we need to ‘love as brothers’, **1 Peter 3:8**. Literally speaking, this means to be ‘brother lovers’.

This is so essential for each of us, especially if we want to ‘grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’, **2 Peter 3:18**. Brotherly love is so essential if we want to ‘convince the world that we truly are disciples of Jesus Christ’, **John 13:35**.

The truth of the matter is, if we don’t love each other like this, then John tells us that we don’t even love God, **1 John 4:20**. John also says we don’t even know God back, **1 John 4:7-8**.

This brings me to the fourth requirement we need if the church is to function properly. Peter says be ‘tender-hearted’, **1 Peter 3:8**, it’s the kind of heart that is full of compassion and capable of loving your brethren.

It’s the total opposite of being cold-hearted, where we are insensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Peter says we need to be ‘tender-hearted’ towards each other, and then he gives us another requirement if we want the church to function properly.

He says he wants us to be ‘courteous’, **1 Peter 3:8**; in other words, he wants us to be humble in spirit, and he wants us to be kind to each other. People who possess an arrogant or proud spirit do not bother to be courteous because God can only fill those who are not filled with themselves, **Revelation 3:15-17**.

Christians are supposed to imitate their Lord and Saviour, and not think so highly of themselves that they cannot be kind and courteous to others, **Philippians 2:3-5**. Jesus Himself said that He came ‘not to be served but to serve’, **Mark 10:45**, and He is the example we should follow.

Another requirement we need for the church to function properly is to have the attitude that ‘returns a blessing for evil’, **1 Peter 3:9 / Luke 6:27-28 / Romans 12:17 / 1 Thessalonians 5:15**.

Remember, Peter is talking about our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ here. When a brother or sister in Christ does us evil, we are to respond with a blessing, and he gives us two reasons as to why this is important.

He says number one, we are called to follow the example of Jesus Christ Himself, **Luke 23:34**. He says number two, when we return a blessing for evil, then we too may be blessed in turn from God Himself, **1 Peter 3:9**.

“For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” **1 Peter 3:10-12**

Peter has just given us six things that we need to have toward one another if the church is going to function properly. They are part of what constitutes the Christ-like character that we are to develop as His disciples.

And to help us fulfil those duties, in order to help us to keep motivated, Peter quotes from **Psalm 34:12-16**. He says in order to keep us focused on having the proper relationship with each other, he says that we might ‘love life and see good days’, **1 Peter 3:10 / Psalm 34:12**.

I don’t know of a single human being who doesn’t want to enjoy life to the full every day, but the problem is that too often, many people make their own lives miserable by their own self-seeking, self-destructive attitudes.

People who are constantly complaining, contentious, retaliating to evil with evil, people who only make a situation a lot worse, but Peter says, don’t get involved in slander, don’t get involved in backbiting, don’t get involved in complaining, lying, murmuring, and grumbling, **1 Peter 3:10 / Psalm 34:13 / Proverbs 6:16-19**.

Christians don't act that way. Christians should know and understand that fighting back and getting involved in these things doesn't solve anything; all it does is make the situation worse.

Christians should know what to do, and Peter says we should not be pursuing any of those evil things, but what we should be pursuing is to do good and seek peace, **1 Peter 3:11 / Psalm 34:14**.

How do we pursue doing good and seeking peace? Peter says, make the best out of difficult situations, make good situations even better. Because when we do these things, then we have the assurance that the Lord Himself will be open to us, **1 Peter 3:12 / Psalm 34:15**.

“For who is going to harm you if you are devoted to what is good? But in fact, if you happen to suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. But do not be terrified of them or be shaken. But set Christ apart as Lord in your hearts and always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope you possess. Yet do it with courtesy and respect, keeping a good conscience, so that those who slander your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame when they accuse you. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. Because Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring you to God, by being put to death in the flesh but by being made alive in the spirit”. **1 Peter 3:13-18**

We need to realise that there are times when Satan will make every effort to bring harm to those who try to follow the will of God, **1 Peter 5:8-9 / Revelation 12:17**. So we need to be aware that the devil is real and he will attack anyone who's trying to do the will of God, **1 Peter 3:13 / Luke 21:16-19**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Peter begins in this paragraph to speak guardedly about the terrible persecution coming upon them. He did not mean by this question that Christians were not in any danger of bodily harm from their enemies; what it meant was that no matter what might happen to their bodies, nothing, really, could happen to them.’

Peter shares with us five early warning systems to help us prepare for persecution whilst we're still living here on earth as strangers in a strange land, **1 Peter 3:13**.

And the first one is this: as Christians, we need to remember that ‘we are blessed if we suffer for Christ’, **1 Peter 3:13-14 / 1 Peter 3:17 / 1 Peter 4:14**. We're blessed because we have the promise that God is with us as we go through that suffering.

Jesus says we're blessed because our reward will be great. He says we're blessed because we're in the company of God's Old Testament prophets, **Matthew 5:10-12**. The alternative is the opposite, and we need to understand that we are far better off suffering for Christ than suffering for evil, **1 Peter 3:17**.

Suffering for evil is what will happen if we are not willing to stand up for Christ but remember that suffering for Christ is only temporary, but the suffering for evil is eternal.

The second way to help prepare ourselves for persecution whilst we're still living here on earth as strangers in a strange land, according to Peter, is to ‘set apart the Lord in your hearts’, **1 Peter 3:15**.

Peter is saying that we are daily bombarded with attacks on our faith, but as Christians, the Lord Jesus should be firmly seated on the throne of our hearts, **Isaiah 8:13**.

The Lord Jesus should be the Lord and ruler of our very lives. The Lord Jesus should be ruling over our desires to the point where His will becomes more important than our will.

And when he talks about facing persecution without fear or without being troubled, **1 Peter 3:14**, he's telling us that if Jesus isn't set apart in our hearts, then we will be afraid of what man might do, we will be troubled by the threats we receive but if Jesus truly is Lord of our lives then we won't be afraid of anyone.

Many times, as believers, we wrestle with the problems we face, not realising that God has been with us all the time, but for this to be our hope, we must realise God is in control, **Hebrews 13:5-6**.

The third way to help prepare ourselves for persecution whilst we're still living here on earth as strangers in a strange land, according to Peter, is to 'always be ready to give a defence for the reason for your hope', 1 Peter 3:15.

This is one of those passages which is taken out of context so many times. Peter is not saying that we need to be ready to give an answer for every religious question that someone might ask; he is not saying that.

I think it's good that we're able to explain why we do what we do in matters of religion, but that's not the point Peter is making here. Peter is saying that we should always be ready to give a reason why we have the 'hope' we do, 1 Peter 3:15 / Romans 8:24.

In other words, when someone asks us why we're a Christian, we share with them our strong desires and expectations which come from being a Christian. Peter is saying that our desire and confidence for the future is so strong that it is seen in our lives by others, 1 Peter 1:6 / 1 Peter 1:8.

But we should demonstrate this in our lives with the spirit of gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3:15 / Matthew 5:5. We shouldn't be arrogant about it, we should be humble about it but we should also demonstrate this in our lives with the spirit of fear.

The fourth way to help prepare ourselves for persecution whilst we're still living here on earth as strangers in a strange land, according to Peter, is to 'keep our conscience clean', 1 Peter 3:16.

Peter says together with our good conduct we will likely cause our enemies to be ashamed for mistreating us, 1 Peter 3:16. A guilty conscience will not enable us to face the threat of death without fear and trembling because not only should we be able to stand before men without fear, but we also need to be able to stand before God without fear, 1 John 3:21.

The guilt is removed by prayer, God forgives when we ask, but we need to remember that God removes that feeling of guilt through the fellowship of confession, 1 John 1:9 / James 5:16.

The fifth way to help prepare ourselves for persecution whilst we're still living here on earth as strangers in a strange land, Peter says, 'remember the example of Christ', 1 Peter 3:17.

Peter says, Remember that Jesus suffered for our sakes, not only to bring us to God but also to help us understand that suffering for good can sometimes accomplish much good in the long run, Romans 8:17.

We often feel that we're suffering alone, but we're not alone. When we suffer, He suffers, 1 Peter 2:21 / 1 Peter 4:1. Just knowing that Jesus suffered in so many ways, just knowing that He suffers with us, should help and comfort us greatly.

Paul knew that some things were difficult to understand. Paul knew that people would twist the Scriptures because of their ignorance, and I'm sure the apostle Peter himself would agree, 2 Peter 3:15-16.

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water." 1 Peter 3:18-20

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning 1 Peter 3:18.

'Once' is the great New Testament word from the Greek hapax, meaning 'once for all.' It is used of: One. Christ's coming in human form, Hebrews 9:26; Two. Christ's death, Hebrews 9:28; Three. The deliverance to mankind of the faith, Judges 1:3; Four. The offering of Christ's blood in heaven, Hebrews 9:12 / Hebrews 9:26; Five. the appointment to die, Hebrews 9:27; Six. God's shaking the earth and the heavens so as to remove them, Hebrews 12:27; and Seven. The suffering of Christ for sins, 1 Peter 3:18.'

These few verses are considered by some to be some of the most difficult passages in the Bible to understand, and there have been many books and articles written about what Peter means.

Some teach that Jesus proclaimed the message of salvation to the souls of sinners imprisoned there since the flood, but this is totally contradictory to Peter's own words, **2 Peter 2:4-5 / 2 Peter 2:9**.

Notice that the 'spirits' that Peter is talking about were 'disobedient in the days of Noah', **1 Peter 3:19-20**. To say that the Spirit of Christ, **1 Peter 3:18**, went to release the souls of the righteous who repented before the flood is a misunderstanding because at the time of the flood, there were no righteous people around, only Noah and his family, **Genesis 6:5-13 / Genesis 7:1**.

Christ in His Spirit, **1 Peter 3:18**, didn't go anywhere to save those who were righteous before the flood because there were none, just Noah and His family. Remember our Bibles are split into books, chapters and verses, and sometimes that is helpful, and other times it's not so helpful. To keep these verses in their context, we must go back to **1 Peter 2:18-24**.

Peter reminded us that if suffering should come our way, then Christians should make sure they are suffering for the right reasons. In other words, if you're going to suffer, suffer for doing good, not for doing evil.

And then when we go to **1 Peter 3:13-22**, where he returns to the theme of suffering again, and he informs us about three different suffering situations. In **1 Peter 3:13-14**, he reminds us about the possible suffering of Christians, in **1 Peter 3:18**, he reminds us of the suffering of Christ, and finally, in **1 Peter 3:20**, he reminds us of the suffering of the disobedient souls before the flood.

What Peter is telling us is that those who rebelled against God in the days of Noah suffered at the hand of God for doing evil, but the end result wasn't a blessing but imprisonment after they had died, **1 Peter 3:19**.

Fanning, in his commentary, says the following concerning 'the spirits'.

'A more probable explanation is that these 'spirits' were the unbelievers who disobeyed God in Noah's day by rejecting his preaching.'

Peter is telling us that Jesus suffered whilst He was alive, but He did it for the good, and the reason He did it for the good was that He did it for God. And what was the end result? Jesus was resurrected and enthroned at the right hand of God.

"In it, only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him." **1 Peter 3:20-22**

We need to choose what it will be. **1 Peter 3:14** gives us the choice to suffer for doing good, and the end result will be salvation beyond the grave; that's why Peter talks about being raised with Christ. That's why Peter talks about baptism being a commitment to obedience.

But those who were baptised during Noah's time with the flood, figuratively speaking, were imprisoned beyond the grave because of their commitment to their disobedience, **1 Peter 3:19-20**.

Nicholson, in his commentary, says the following concerning **1 Peter 3:20**.

'The passage holds out no hope for the impenitent; it forbids the notion that those who during their earthly life refuse the gospel of God's grace may have a second chance in the world beyond, and may be ultimately saved.'

What Peter is doing is comparing the two; he's saying back in Noah's day, those who didn't listen to God, their flood baptism resulted in death and imprisonment, **1 Peter 3:19**.

But the Christian baptism results in life; it results in renewed life to God through the resurrection and glorification of Jesus Christ. He's saying if we're going to suffer Christian, even to the point of death, at least we didn't die at the hand of God like those who were around at Noah's time.

Peter says that the spirits are those to whom Noah preached when Noah and they were very much alive, but by the time Peter writes this letter, those very same spirits are long gone, and they are now spirits who are in prison, **1 Peter 3:19 / 1 Peter 4:6**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We must refer the words ‘spirits in prison’ to their present status at the time of Peter’s writing. They, like the fallen angels, were then ‘spirits in prison.’

They were dead whilst Peter wrote this letter, but they were very much alive whilst the Gospel was being preached to them through Noah. But didn’t Jesus preach to these spirits when He was in the grave for three days?

Peter is saying that the Spirit of Christ, in other words, the Holy Spirit, spoke through the prophets to the people when they were alive, **1 Peter 3:19 / 1 Peter 1:10-12**.

And what he’s saying here is that the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, spoke through Noah to the people when they were alive, **1 Peter 1:11-12**. Remember that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, **2 Peter 2:5**.

He’s not talking about what happened when Jesus was in the grave, and we shouldn’t make a text mean something it doesn’t say. Jesus spoke through the prophets of old for centuries, but only a few listened to Him. He spoke through Noah for one hundred and twenty years, but no one except his family listened to Him.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God is so patient that he waited for 120 years before sending the Flood in Noah’s day, **Genesis 6:3**. Today He also waits, so patiently that some people conclude that He will never judge, **2 Peter 3:3-4**. Relatively few will escape God’s coming judgment, just as only eight escaped His former judgment. The rest will die.’

After talking about how the Spirit of Christ preached through Noah to those who were disobedient, Peter makes a statement that is as plain as the nose on our face concerning salvation.

When Peter uses the word ‘baptism’, **1 Peter 3:21**, he is using it in a way which we call an antitype, which basically means ‘a thing formed after some pattern, that which corresponds to a type’.

You have two things that somehow relate or correspond to each other, one is a type, the other is the antitype, **1 Corinthians 10:1-2**. In other words, Peter says the waters of the flood are the ‘type’, and the waters of baptism are the ‘antitype’, **1 Peter 3:20-21**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The meaning here is, that baptism corresponded to, or had a resemblance to, the water by which Noah was saved; or that there was a use of water in the one case which corresponded in some respects to the water that was used in the other; to wit, in effecting salvation.’

Baptism is an important part of our salvation, so please allow me to share a little history on the subject of baptism. For thirteen hundred years after the church was established on the day of Pentecost, baptism was uniformly practised by the immersion of a person underwater. In other words, for thirteen hundred years after the establishment of the church, baptism was practised as we still practice it today.

Every single person who became a Christian in New Testament times was immersed in water. Notice what I said, every single person was immersed, not a single one of them was sprinkled or poured upon.

John Calvin, says the following.

‘In the early days, baptism was administered by immersion, but the church did grant unto herself the liberty to change the rite somewhat.’

He's saying that the Roman Catholic Church changed the rite, changed the practice of baptism, from full immersion to sprinkling or pouring. And in the year 1311, the catholic council met in France and decided that sprinkling or pouring may be used as an alternative mode for baptism.

If baptism was important for Jesus to preach, if it's important for the writers of the New Testament to practice it, then it should be important for us to preach and practice it too.

Did you know that the Bible speaks about baptism one hundred and twenty-six times? And in every instance in the Bible, it means to dip or immerse or plunge, and not once does it mean to sprinkle or to pour.

I don't believe in infant baptism, and I don't even believe in adult baptism, but what I do believe in is believer's baptism. The Gospel is designed for people who have the ability to believe or not to believe, **Mark 15:15-16**. It's a believer's baptism; someone who believes and is baptised will be saved, and someone who doesn't believe will be condemned. We're not saved simply by believing; if we believe that we were saved before baptism, it doesn't matter when we were baptised, then our belief is wrong.

If our sins were already forgiven before our baptism, then what was the purpose of our being baptised? Because Peter says we're baptised in order to be forgiven and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, **Acts 2:38**.

Scriptural baptism is the immersion of a believer in water to receive the forgiveness of their sins, acceptance by Christ and addition to the body of Christ, the church.

I find it amazing these days that many people don't preach about the importance of baptism in some religious circles, but did you know some of their best teachers used to?

The Church of England, for example, in their prayer book, says the following.

'Baptism is the ordinance whereby a person becomes a child of God, a member of Christ and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven'.

And if that doesn't tell us that baptism is important, I don't know what does. A child of God, a member of Christ and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven is what you become by means of baptism.

What about John Wesley? We know what the Methodists today practice and preach, but John Wesley, in his notes on the New Testament, says the following.

'All who believed in New Testament Times were baptised.'

Wow, that's certainly not true today, is it?

Campbell Morgan, who was a Congregationalist, says the following.

'In the rite of baptism, there are two movements, an immersion and an emergence. Immersion is the symbol of death and burial, and emergence is the symbol of the resurrection and life of that work of the Holy Spirit. There is no symbol so perfect as that of water baptism.'

Harry A. Ironside, who was an active member of the Plymouth Brethren, says the following.

'To the lover of the Lord Jesus Christ, there can be nothing legal about baptism. It is simply the glad expression of a grateful heart recognising its identity with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection. Many of us look back to the moment when we were thus baptised as one of the most precious experiences we have ever known.'

Martin Luther says in answer to the question, 'What gifts or benefits does Baptism bestow?' He says the following.

'It affects forgiveness of sins.'

He also wrote the following, concerning the sinner.

‘Through baptism, he is bathed in the blood of Christ and is cleansed from sins.’ And finally, he said, ‘To put it most simply, the power, effect, benefit, fruit, and purpose of baptism is to save.’

And for those who argue by saying that baptism is working for our salvation, he says the following.

‘Yes, it is true that our works are of no use for salvation. Baptism, however, is not our work but God’s.’

The point is that sprinkling and pouring to replace full immersion is a relatively new thing, and because its practice has only been around for three hundred years or so, it should warn us that this is a manmade ordinance.

Peter makes it very clear that ‘baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you’, **1 Peter 3:21**. In what way does baptism save us? It’s all to do with the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **1 Peter 3:21**.

There is nothing special about the water we get plunged under; salvation in baptism is not found in the water.

Salvation in baptism is only possible because of the blood of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. Because if He had not shed His blood on the cross, if He had not been raised back to life, we would still be in our sins, **1 Corinthians 15:17**.

But thanks be to God Jesus did rise from the dead, and because Jesus was raised from the dead, we who are united together in the likeness of His death in our baptism can share in the power of His resurrection as we also rise to walk in newness of life.

Paul tells us that baptism identifies us with Christ’s death on the cross and His resurrection into a new life, **Romans 6:3-5**. This identification is not only with Christ but also in the name of the Father and Holy Spirit. And this is significant because it shows that our lives are to be totally encompassed by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, **Colossians 2:12-13**.

In other words, it is the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead, which saves us in baptism so we can be made alive. Paul says that by God’s saving grace and resurrecting power, baptism can indeed save us, **Ephesians 1:19-20 / Ephesians 2:4-6**.

Not because of any cleansing power in the water, but because of what God is doing at that moment. What Peter is telling us is that our baptism is an appeal to God for a clear conscience, **1 Peter 3:21**.

And if anyone should know the significance of baptism, it’s Peter, after all, he was the one who preached the very first Gospel message, **Acts 2:38**. Why would he tell them to repent and be baptised if repentance and baptism weren’t important for salvation?

Why would Ananias say to the apostle Paul, ‘And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptised and wash away your sins, calling on his name,’ as Paul records it in **Acts 22:16**? Why would he tell him to hurry up and be baptised if baptism wasn’t important for his salvation?

Baptism was and still is for the remission of sins, to have our sins washed away by the blood of Christ and to have a good conscience before God is to have our conscience cleared by the blood of Christ, **Hebrews 9:14**. A person is baptised so their sins can be washed away and they can rise to a new life through the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead.

Peter says that Jesus the Christ has now gone into heaven and that all things have been made subject to Him, **1 Peter 3:22**. Jesus says when you step out in faith in the waters of baptism that’s your way of saying, ‘I promise to love you and stay with you forever’, **Matthew 28:18-20**.

And Jesus says, when you’re baptised into the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, ‘I promise to stay with you forever too, and to help you along, my Holy Spirit will live in you to help you keep to your promise’.

In other words, baptism isn't only us acting out the Gospel, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, but it's also a spiritual marriage ceremony between us and the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wouldn't tell us that baptism saves if it really didn't.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

“Forasmuch then as Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind; for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” 1 Peter 4:1

LIVING FOR GOD

In this chapter, Peter reminds us to arm ourselves in our service to the Lord, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 / Ephesians 6:12. He has been focusing on suffering throughout his first letter, and here, he is reminding us that we need to have the mindset of a willingness to suffer for being a Christian.

In other words, we need to have the attitude or mindset of Christ Himself, Philippians 2:5-11 / 1 Peter 2:21-23 / 1 Peter 3:18. Peter has already said to us that we should be willing to suffer for Christ because He willingly suffered for us.

He was willing to die for us so that we might live for righteousness' sake, 1 Peter 2:24. When we endure hardship for Christ, we're not likely to allow sin to dominate our lives, 1 Peter 4:1.

“That you no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past time doing the desire of the Gentiles, and having walked in lewdness, lusts, drunken binges, orgies, carousings, and abominable idolatries.” 1 Peter 4:2-3

We struggle when we see people in the world caught up in sin and see the damage it causes and Peter understood this but he says this is where the real battle begins, this is where the real battle is fought, it's a battle between God's will and our own, a person's soul and a person's fleshly lusts, 1 Peter 4:2.

And what he is reminding us of is that unless we first win the battle for our own souls, we have ultimately no chance of winning the souls of others. He's saying we seriously need to take a good, long look at ourselves before we can help anyone else, Matthew 7:3-5.

We need to get ourselves spiritually right first before we can help others. What matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What truly matters in this life is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course for a moment.

Paul says we must work on our own faults, and when we're spiritually mature enough, we go out and seek to help others in a spirit of gentleness. Because if we go in too soon and we're not spiritually mature enough, there is a real danger that we may end up getting caught up in the sin, too, Galatians 6:1.

Peter says as a Christian we've spent more than enough time in the world doing what the non-Christians do, and the list of sins mentioned by Peter isn't exhaustive, 1 Peter 4:3. Paul has another long list of them, Galatians 5:19-21.

The point Peter is trying to make is that now is the time to live out the rest of our lives for the will of God, 1 Peter 4:2. And so when we as Christians live out the rest of our lives for the will of God, we need to be prepared for the fact that we will likely be criticised by others.

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following, concerning 1 Peter 4:1-3.

‘Peter is saying much the same thing as Paul in Romans 6:1-11, but in a different language.’

“And they are wondering that you no longer go with them in this violent wasting of life and are saying evil things of you. Who will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For to this end, the Good News was preached even to the dead, that they might be judged indeed as men in the flesh, but live as to God in the spirit.” 1 Peter 4:4-6

Many Christians, especially new Christians, struggle with ridicule for a while, but the struggles soon disappear when they realise it’s actually a time to rejoice, Matthew 5:11-12 / 1 Peter 4:13-14.

But what do we say and do to these people who are having a go at us and calling us all sorts? 1 Peter 4:4. We respond with love and good conduct, and who knows, maybe one day, because they’re watching how we respond, this may lead them to come to know God and glorify Him, Matthew 5:44 / 1 Peter 2:12.

The biggest lesson that Christians can learn when being ridiculed is that they need to allow God to be the judge, 1 Peter 4:5. Notice that God is the Judge of the living and the dead, 1 Peter 4:5 / Matthew 25:31-46 / Acts 10:42 / 2 Timothy 4:1.

What does Peter mean when he writes that ‘the gospel was also preached to those who are dead?’ 1 Peter 4:6. He certainly doesn’t mean that Jesus or Peter preached the Gospel to them when they were dead.

What he means is that the Gospel was preached to them when they were very much still alive, but by the time Peter writes this letter, they are now well and truly dead.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It was natural in such a connection to speak of those who had died in the faith, and to show for their encouragement that, though they had been put to death, yet they still lived to God.’

Peter’s point is quite simple: God is the judge, and not only is He going to judge us as Christians, but He will also judge all those who aren’t Christians, 1 Corinthians 5:12-13. He is ready to judge all those who live according to the flesh, whether they are still alive or not.

Wheaton, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The apostle said, ‘Those who have died (the dead) may be judged in the flesh like men, by suffering physical death; but because the gospel was preached to them (while alive, when they responded), they are now living in the spirit like God.’

And so if God is ready to judge us all, as Christians we must be willing to let Him do just that, judge, Romans 12:19. God will deal with people justly when it’s time but until then we need to keep offering peace and mercy and we do that through preaching the good news, telling people that they don’t have to live with their lives full of sin anymore, Jesus is here to help.

We offer peace and mercy to those who live according to the flesh through us living lives which are full of kindness and mercy, Romans 12:20-21. We have to fight sometimes in this world, but not with guns and tanks, but with the mindset or attitude of Christ Himself.

Yes, wars are going on throughout the world, but there are more important wars to win, and that’s the war of sin which we battle with every day within ourselves, Romans 7:21-25. And when we begin to win that war, we can then begin to win others over for Christ.

“But the end of all things is near. Therefore, be of sound mind, self-controlled, and sober in prayer. And above all things be earnest in your love among yourselves, for love covers a multitude of sins.” 1 Peter 4:7-8

Peter warned these Christians that trouble was coming, and he told them in advance so that they would have a prior warning to get themselves ready. Now there are a few theories about what Peter has in mind here in 1 Peter 4:7. Some believe that he is speaking about the end of the world, but I’m not convinced by the arguments. Some believe that he’s talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and although this is a strong possibility, I’m still not convinced.

Now remember who Peter is writing to, he writes to the Dispersion, 1 Peter 1:1. He’s writing to those who are scattered throughout the Roman Empire. And so this is a general letter which was intended to be passed around from church to church.

The point is this, if Peter were writing about the destruction of Jerusalem, that would bring some comfort to the saints in Judea, but what about the rest of the saints living in other areas of the Roman Empire?

I believe that Peter is saying to all the saints living throughout the Roman Empire that the destruction of the Roman Empire as a whole is at hand, 1 Peter 4:7.

If Peter is talking about the end of the world or the destruction of Jerusalem or even the end of the Roman Empire, we need to make sure we don’t miss the main thrust of the text, which is quite simply, make sure you’re living a holy life even when this terrible time comes.

Peter reminds us that when we’re praying, it’s not so much what we do with our bodies that is important, but what we do in our minds. He says because of the suffering, which is going to come, he wants them to be sound in mind, he wants them to be self-controlled, and he wants them to be sober in prayer, 1 Peter 4:7.

In other words, if we’re serious about our Christian lives, then we need to stay serious in our prayer lives too. We need to pray when our minds are clear, and we need to discipline ourselves to pray regularly while we’re praying and making our requests known to God. We should also be watching around to see what’s happening, Luke 21:34-36 / Ephesians 6:18.

And what Peter is telling us is that we need to be serious about the way we live our Christian lives, and we need to watch what is happening around us as we pray. And if we don’t discipline ourselves in this way, then we won’t be ready for any suffering which may come our way.

But not only are we to be serious and disciplined for prayer, but we also need to have the right attitude towards one another, 1 Peter 1:22. Notice that Peter here says, ‘above everything else I want you to love one another sincerely,’ 1 Peter 4:8.

He says I want you to love one another from the heart, and I want you to make that your number one priority, Colossians 3:14. He’s saying when we finally love each other sincerely, not just lip service, but real love, real concern, real wanting nothing but the best for each other.

He says when we really love each other as we should, then that love will give us the power to forgive, 1 Peter 4:8. Peter is referring to Proverbs 10:12, and he is saying that real love for each other will do whatever is necessary to restore and forgive the sinner, James 5:19-20.

Wheaton, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The meaning is that love will overlook its neighbour’s faults.’

If we love one another as we should, this will encourage us to live right for God and get rid of any sin which may be in our lives.

“Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, employ it in serving one another, as good managers of the grace of God in its various forms”. 1 Peter 4:9-10

Peter says that praying right, loving right and living right for God will also help us in our hospitality towards each other, 1 Peter 4:9 / Matthew 25:35-40 / Galatians 6:10.

There is always a need for hospitality because Jesus says the non-

Christians will know that we truly belong to Him through our love for one another, John 13:34-35.

Hospitality is very important, but so is our attitude whilst we're doing it. If our hospitality is real hospitality, then it needs to be shown without grumbling, 1 Peter 4:9. If we give and help each other out whilst grumbling about it at the same time, that's not real love for one another.

So not only do we have to show the proper service to each other, but we also need to show the proper service which glorifies God. Peter says every single member of the Lord's church can serve God in various ways. By God's grace, he says, each of us is to be a good manager of whatever gifts or abilities we may have, 1 Peter 4:10.

Yes, we may all have different abilities and gifts within our number, but they need to be used, and we need to encourage each other to use them in service to the Lord. We all have different abilities to serve the Lord and each other, and they are all designed to bring glory to God, Romans 12:6-8.

“If anyone speaks, let it be as it were the very words of God. If anyone serves, let it be as of the strength which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen”. 1 Peter 4:11

Peter gives us two examples to think about, which will bring glory to God. Sometimes we can read this text and think those words only apply to preachers and teachers, but even if Peter did have preachers and teachers in mind, everyone who shares the Bible with anyone should understand they are speaking for God.

And when they do, and this is important, they should only speak that which God Himself has revealed. It needs to be ‘thus said the Lord’ and not ‘thus says the preacher’ or ‘thus says my opinion’, 1 Corinthians 4:6. And when we truly do that, then no one can come along and condemn what we say, Titus 2:7-8.

So we need to speak for God, only speaking where God speaks, and we all need to serve. Notice how this ties in with what we've just said about service to the Lord and each other. We all have different abilities, but those abilities come from God Himself.

There's no room for bragging about our gifts because it is God who has given us the ability to do what we're doing. He is the one who gives us the ability to do what we're doing. He is the one who gives us the strength to serve.

SUFFERING FOR BEING A CHRISTIAN

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange was happening to you. “But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” 1 Peter 4:12-14

Peter has already reminded us that the people he's writing to were going through various trials back in 1 Peter 1:6.

And he tells them how to prepare themselves for difficult times, 1 Peter 3:13-18.

And in these verses and the verses to follow, he continues with the theme of persecution, but from a different angle. He tells us how to persevere through difficult times, and the first thing he says is this, ‘expect persecution’, 1 Peter 4:12.

Mason, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The fiery trial was not future but present; already the Asiatic Christians are enduring a fierce persecution.’

We're Christians, and we should expect difficult times of persecution. The problem is we sometimes think we're the only ones who are experiencing difficult times.

And maybe Peter realised that when he was writing to these saints, and so a little later he is going to remind them that they are not the only Christians who are suffering, 1 Peter 5:9.

Peter is reminding them and us today that we are never alone when we suffer; other Christians are suffering too, 1 Peter 4:12. Jesus Himself warned His disciples that hard times were going to come, John 15:18-21.

When difficult times come, we shouldn't be wondering why on earth this is happening to us. Maybe the question we should ask is, why does God allow difficult times to come our way?

Well, Peter doesn't leave us in the dark as to why God allows difficult times to come our way; he says, 'the trials that we go through actually help to test our faith', 1 Peter 4:12. Peter earlier says just as gold is tested by fire, so our faith is tested by persecution, 1 Peter 1:6-7.

We will never know if we have a faith that is strong if we experience nothing but good times. This is why God allows the devil to bring such persecution into our lives.

Remember Job and all the trials he experienced? God allowed the devil to test him in ways we cannot even begin to imagine, and we were talking about Job; we sometimes just focus on his trials.

But we need to read on because when Job's trials were over, the Bible says at the end of the book of Job 42:10-16, that God blessed him in so many ways for his faithfulness.

And what we need to remember is that just as God blessed Job richly after his trial, God will also bless us richly after our trials, 1 Peter 5:10. Notice that the suffering has an expiry date, Peter says, 'after you have suffered a little while,' 1 Peter 5:10. And after your suffering, he says, God will bless you richly.

When our focus is on the crown of life, no matter how much suffering or injury comes our way, this shouldn't stop us from continuing the race to reach our goal of eternal life.

Christians in the Bible died for the sake of Christ, and Christians in times past have died for the sake of Christ. Paul and Barnabas understood that as Christians, we need to go through hard times before we can get to heaven, Acts 14:22 / 2 Timothy 3:12.

We should expect difficult times as Christians, but we should also know that God allows them into our lives to help strengthen our faith. When difficult times come, what we should be doing is rejoicing, 1 Peter 4:13.

We sometimes struggle to rejoice because we struggle to understand, but when we fully begin to understand why difficult times come our way, it's then that we too can begin to feel better within ourselves, and we too can begin to rejoice again.

Paul says for us to have hope in our lives, we first need to have character in our lives, but for us to have character in our lives, we need to first have endurance in our lives, but for us to have endurance in our lives, we first need to have suffering in our lives, Romans 5:3-5.

In other words, without suffering in our lives, we won't be able to keep going and endure to the end. Without suffering in our lives, we won't be able to develop character in our lives. Without suffering in our lives, we won't have any hope in our lives.

Difficult times call us to believe in the goodness of God and to trust that He is not only willing but able to accomplish His purposes, no matter what comes our way.

Any difficulty, whether great or small, is an occasion for joy, but only when we remind ourselves of the nature of God who loves us and wills only the best for us.

James says suffering produces patience, and patience can help us be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. James 1:2-4. In other words, we can't grow unless we go through trials.

Peter says we can rejoice in our sufferings because when Jesus comes back, we will rejoice as we've never rejoiced before. Peter says we can rejoice in our sufferings because when we do, Christ is glorified, 1 Peter 4:13 / 1 Peter 1:7. Peter says we can rejoice in our sufferings because when we suffer, God is with us, 1 Peter 4:14. The point is simply this: when you suffer, make our suffering worthwhile.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the 'Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God, 1 Peter 4:14. 'These are apparently synonymous, and, if so, they mean the Holy Spirit. It was one of the glorious fruits of the indwelling Spirit in Christian hearts that produced the vast spiritual strength enabling the Christian to go on wearing the name, go on being a Christian, go on loving and believing Christ, in spite of being reviled and persecuted for it.'

"But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner? Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good". 1 Peter 4:15-19

Peter says a lot of people bring suffering by themselves, 1 Peter 4:15. If someone goes out and murders someone, they should expect to suffer the consequences of their actions.

If someone goes out and breaks into someone's home and steals all their possessions, they should expect to suffer the consequences of their actions. If someone goes out and does harm to property or people around them, they should expect to suffer the consequences of their actions.

Even if someone goes out and starts sticking their nose in someone else's business, they should expect to suffer the consequences of their actions. But as Christians, Peter says when you suffer, make sure it's only because you wear the name Christian, Isaiah 62:2, not because of something you're doing you shouldn't be doing, 1 Peter 4:16.

When we suffer, we need to self-examine ourselves and make sure our suffering will bring glory to God. When we suffer, we need to self-examine ourselves and make sure our suffering demonstrates the grace God gives us to endure it.

Peter reminds us that people are not the only ones who are watching us; he reminds us that the Lord is watching us, and it will be the Lord's church that will be first to be judged by God, 1 Peter 4:17.

But what is scarier is this: if God is willing to judge His own faithful children, what about those who are disobedient? If God's children are heaven-bound, if we're just strangers living in a strange land, travelling through the earth until we get to our real home in heaven, what about those who aren't Christians? 1 Peter 4:17.

Where are they travelling to? Paul says those who are not Christians will be punished with eternal destruction, 1 Peter 4:18 / Proverbs 11:31 / 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9.

Peter is saying that we can only make it to heaven, even through our sufferings, if we continue to commit ourselves to God, who is our Faithful Creator, 1 Peter 4:19. He says we can make it to our goal by committing ourselves to God in doing good, no matter what the circumstances, Romans 8:28.

When people are doing evil things to you, respond by doing good, 1 Peter 4:19 / Luke 6:27-28 / Luke 23:34 / Acts 7:59-60. Even though we have to go through the fire of suffering sometimes, God continues to bless us. Peter is saying, Don't let persecution be an excuse for sinful behaviour, don't let suffering be the reason for us missing out on our salvation.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

“So as your fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings and as one who shares in the glory that will be revealed. “Give a shepherd’s care to God’s flock among you, exercising oversight not merely as a duty but willingly under God’s direction, not for shameful profit but eagerly. “And do not lord it over those entrusted to you but be examples to the flock. “Then when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that never fades away.” 1 Peter 5:1-4

TO THE ELDERS AND THE FLOCK

Notice that Peter could have commanded them using his apostolic authority, but he didn’t; he simply says as your fellow elder, 1 Peter 5:1. As one who has all the qualities of an elder, as one who is qualified as an apostle of Jesus Christ and as one who will share in the glory when Jesus returns, 1 Peter 1:5. Selwyn, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Peter had experienced and was known to have experienced the special revelation of the glory that had been restored to Jesus at the Ascension and would be manifested to all when he came again at the End.’

All churches are required to have elders appointed, Acts 14:23 / Titus 1:5. Notice he addresses the ‘elders’, plural, 1 Peter 5:1 / Acts 14:23 / Acts 20:17 / Philippians 1:1 / James 5:14. There is no such thing as a congregation having only an elder overseeing a congregation.

He wants the elders to tend to the people of God and for an elder to do that, he must have the quality of being able to teach, 1 Peter 5:2 / 1 Timothy 3:2 / Titus 1:9.

This tells us that their responsibility is for the sheep in the congregation where they serve and their job is to willingly oversee the flock of God, John 21:16.

Paul says an elder may also be financially supported for all his hard work, 1 Timothy 5:17-18, and Peter says the real motive for service is not to be money, but an eagerness to save souls, 1 Peter 5:2.

Peter says the oversight is a position of service, which is not to be abused by assuming a dictatorial role. Elders are supposed to set an example for the rest of the flock to follow.

Peter is saying that just as sheep are best led, and not driven, so it is with the people of God and qualified elders who will have less of a problem getting people to follow them and submitting to their care if they lead by example and not by lording it over people, 1 Peter 5:3.

And these men, if they shepherd the flock correctly, like all of us, will be greatly rewarded for their efforts when the Chief Shepherd appears, that is Christ, 1 Peter 5:4 / 1 Peter 2:25 / John 10:10.

Elders' Rewards		
Task	Responsibility	Reward
Be Impeccably Clean	Not leading a disordered life	1 Corinthians 9:27
A Crown of Rejoicing	For teaching and discipline	1 Thimothew 4:16
A Crown of Righteousness	For being the last to apostatize	2 Timothy 4:8
A Crown of Life	For enduring trials	James 1:12 / Revelation 2:10
A Crown of Glory	For shepherding God's flock faithfully	1 Peter 5:4

“In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because “God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time”. 1 Peter 5:5-6

When Christians obey the elders and submit to them, then they in turn can watch out for our souls with joy and not with grief, [Hebrews 13:17](#). Peter has already reminded us to submit to the government authorities, [1 Peter 2:13-14](#). He has already reminded us that Christian slaves need to submit to their masters, [1 Peter 2:18](#). He has already reminded us that Christian wives need to submit to their husbands, [1 Peter 3:1](#).

And here Peter reminds the younger people to submit to their elders, [1 Peter 5:5](#). It's worth noting that Peter may be referring to the elders mentioned earlier in this chapter, or he may be referring to older Christians. But whoever he is referring to, the message is the same: submit.

And true submission can only happen when we follow Peter's advice. To clothe ourselves with humility means to have a humble opinion about ourselves, [1 Peter 5:5](#).

Humility doesn't look at self; humility looks at others as being better than yourself. It's the very same mindset of Jesus Christ Himself. Paul says we need to show humility with each other so that we can maintain peace and unity in our relationships with each other, [Philippians 2:3-5](#).

Peter goes on to say humility is needed if we want to keep that relationship right with God. He opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble, [1 Peter 5:5](#) / [Proverbs 3:34](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Throughout the holy Scriptures, proud and haughty spirits are condemned. Pride leads the list of all of the sins, [Proverbs 6:16-18](#). This passage echoes the very words of the Saviour, [Luke 14:11](#). Humility is such a wonderful virtue that all of the publican's sins did not destroy him because he had it; and all of the Pharisee's righteousness could not save him because he did not have it, [Luke 18:1-14](#).'

God deeply respects the humble in spirit, [Isaiah 57:15](#) / [Isaiah 66:1-2](#). God loves those who have a humble and contrite spirit, and the reason He does is simply that those who are humble will always trust in Him to lift them up when the time is right, [James 4:6](#) / [James 4:10](#).

Remember, these Christians whom Peter is writing to have or will be going through some scary times of persecution. And so Peter is saying, even in times of persecution, we need to be humble and trust that God is working in our lives. We need to trust and know that His hands are more than big enough to help us through any situation we may find ourselves in.

God guarantees that the tasks shall be balanced with the precise strength we possess. He knows the exact pressure we can stand, for He has made us, He knows the utmost load we can lift, and will not suffer us to be tried, tested, above what we are able.

“Casting all your worries on him, because he cares for you”. 1 Peter 5:7

Peter says don't worry about things over which you have no control, he says, When things are out of our control, let our Heavenly Father worry about such things. Jesus uses the word 'anxious' in [Matthew 6:31-34](#), but it's the same Greek word Peter uses for 'worry'.

We need to know that God doesn't see worry the way we see worry. The Greek word for 'worry' or 'anxious' is the word 'merimna', which simply means distraction.

And so what Peter is telling us is this: don't be distracted by things you don't have any control over because our God isn't easily distracted. Jesus is saying don't be distracted by a lack of food or drink or clothes. I know what you need, and I won't be easily distracted from supplying those needs.

Being distracted is a sin because we forget who God is and what He can do with His mighty hands, and what worry or anxiety does is steal from us the blessings of today.

We can't seek first His kingdom and His righteousness if we're being distracted by something which may happen tomorrow, Matthew 6:33. We can't seek first His kingdom and His righteousness if we are being distracted by something we have no control over.

“Be sober and self-controlled. Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Withstand him steadfast in your faith, knowing that your brothers who are in the world are undergoing the same sufferings.” 1 Peter 5:8-9

Worry distracts us from focusing on God, Hebrews 12:2, and so Satan comes along and tries to steal your salvation in Christ Jesus. Peter says, Be careful, ‘be sober and alert’, 1 Peter 5:8, don't get distracted by the worries of this world because the devil is on the lookout.

When Christians are going through difficult times, some stop praying, some stop reading the Bible, and some stop meeting with God's people. They've lost sight of the goodness of God, they forget how God helped them in times past, and they get distracted from the truth, and it's then that they are at their most vulnerable spiritually and prone to attacks from the devil himself.

Peter says the devil is like a ‘roaring lion’, 1 Peter 5:8, looking for distracted Christians so he can destroy them.’ In other words, he wants to steal our salvation, and we need to be aware of that, Luke 21:34-36.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Satan is represented in Scripture under various figures: 1. the roaring lion; 2. the angel of light, 2 Corinthians 11:14; and 3. the serpent, 2 Corinthians 11:3 / Revelation 20:2.’

Peter says, ‘we must resist him and stand firm,’ 1 Peter 5:9, and James says we must ‘resist the devil, and he will flee from you,’ James 4:7. We withstand him and resist him by holding onto our faith, we withstand him and resist him by holding onto our hope, Colossians 1:21-23.

Peter tells us that we are never alone in our struggles, 1 Peter 5:9. Christians all over this planet are going through struggles, some physical, some mental, some emotional, some spiritual, but they are struggles. Paul tells us that our struggle is not unique; we're not the only one who struggles with certain sins, 1 Corinthians 10:13.

“And, after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen”. 1 Peter 5:10-

11

Peter is going to end his letter on a positive note; he tells these early Christians that no matter how terrible the fiery trials may become, Christians can always have hope. And one of the reasons we have hope is because we have God's grace, 1 Peter 5:10.

When we think of grace, we usually just think about salvation, but there is more to grace than just salvation. Yes, our salvation is because of His grace, Ephesians 2:8-9 / 1 Peter 1:10, but remember that Peter has already reminded us that God's grace is varied or manifold, as some translations have it, 1 Peter 4:10.

In other words, God's grace comes in all shapes and forms, Hebrews 4:16. We receive grace in times of need, and according to Peter, we also stand in the true grace of God.

Not only do we have the hope of knowing that God's grace will help us through difficult times, but we also have the hope of knowing where we are going. Peter says we are going to glory, we're going to His eternal glory, 1 Peter 5:10.

Notice when difficult times come, God will restore us, make us strong enough to stand firm again, 1 Peter 5:10 / Matthew 5:48. As a result, all the glory goes to Him because He is the One with all the power, 1 Peter 5:11.

FINAL GREETINGS

“Through Silvanus, whom I know to be a faithful brother, 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. The church in Babylon, chosen together with you, greets you, and so does Mark, my son”. 1 Peter 5:12-13

One of the best ways to encourage people who are suffering is to remind them of the many other people who are thinking about them and praying for them. That’s what Peter is doing here: these Christians are going through trials that we may never be able to imagine, and they need to be encouraged.

It appears that Peter used someone else to write the words of this letter as he dictated them, 1 Peter 5:12. Silvanus is the same name as Silas, and he is possibly the same Silas who was Paul’s travelling companion, Acts 15:22 / Acts 15:32 / Acts 15:40 / 1 Thessalonians 1:1 / 2 Corinthians 1:19.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the word ‘testifying’ in 1 Peter 5:12.

‘Again, it is clear that ‘testifying’ in apostolic times was not merely sounding off in public meetings, as the word is often understood today. It was exhorting and commanding the people to obey the word of God.’

Notice that Peter says we are to stand fast in God’s grace, 1 Peter 5:12. In other words, we don’t go outside of God’s grace, or we will find ourselves in trouble. And so what Peter is telling us is that when we remain faithful to Christ, we’re actually standing in the true grace of God. And if we continue to stand in His grace, we can get comfort even through hard times, for the God of all grace will be with us all the way.

Mark, whom Peter calls his son, is John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas, and author of the Gospel of Mark. Peter says, ‘the church in Babylon, chosen together with you’, 1 Peter 5:13.

We don’t really know who or what Peter is referring to here, but it’s likely a congregation. A congregation either in literal Babylon, located in modern-day Iraq or a figurative Babylon, which could be a reference to either Rome or Jerusalem.

As strangers travelling through a strange land on our way to heaven, God is with us for the journey, and He has got enough grace for all of us to help us along the road until we get there.

God’s gracious love and compassion will never run out because they are new every morning, Lamentations 3:21-24. And so, because of His great faithfulness, not ours but His, we’re going to trust Him today even when times of suffering come our way.

“Greet one another with a loving kiss. Peace to all of you who are in Christ”. 1 Peter 5:14

How many times is the Holy Kiss mentioned in the scriptures? Besides this reference in Romans 16:16, we find it also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:20 and 2 Corinthians 13:12. In these verses, the same words are used.

We also have it mentioned as a holy kiss in 1 Thessalonians 5:26, and described as a kiss of love in 1 Peter 5:14. And so, it is mentioned five times. But what is it that these verses teach?

1. We must remember that throughout Bible times, this was the customary, familiar mode of greeting.

We find it as early as Genesis 27:27, when Isaac greeted Jacob. It was the manner in which family members greeted each other when they were either meeting or parting.

And we have an example of the degree of importance they attached to observing this custom, when we see how deeply offended they must have felt when he complained bitterly that Jacob and his family had slipped away secretly, without allowing him to bid his daughters and grand-daughters farewell, Genesis 31:28.

2. Outside of the family relationship, it was the way in which men greeted men and women greeted women.

In 1 Samuel 10:1, the prophet Samuel kissed the young king Saul. 1 Samuel 20:41, when David had to flee from King Saul, he and Jonathan kissed in parting. This incident is sometimes used by homosexuals to justify their unnatural

behaviour, but they use it because they are in grave ignorance of the familiar, long-established social customs of that time.

David kissed the aged Barzillai, who had helped him when he was a fugitive, being hunted by Absalom, 2 Samuel 19:39. This incident is also sometimes used by homosexuals to support their perversion, but they make such a claim because they are ignorant of the ancient Eastern social custom of that time. Ruth 1:9 records that Ruth kissed her two daughters-in-law farewell after the deaths of her two sons.

3. But this ancient, familiar custom could hold hidden dangers, as we see in the account of the treachery of Joab, David's uncle, 2 Samuel 20:9.

Joab regarded Amasa as a rival for the then post of commander of David's army, and so, when the two met, Joab extended his right hand, apparently in friendship, and, according to ancient custom, he took hold of Amasa's beard, as though he was about to kiss him. But, with his left hand, he thrust a sword into Amasa. The deception worked because Joab was left-handed, and Amasa was caught by his treachery.

4. The kiss was also a familiar mode of greeting in New Testament times. Consider the following.

The father's greeting of the returning Prodigal, Luke 15:20. The kiss with which Judas betrayed Jesus, Matthew 26:48-49. The shame of the appalling action of Judas is revealed in the reproachful response of Jesus Himself, Luke 22:48.

After the establishment of the Church, the kiss was still used when friends were parting. When Paul met with the Elders of the Ephesian church who had come to meet him, knowing that this was to be their last meeting with him, they 'fell on his neck and kissed him', Acts 20:37.

5. Furthermore, this was the expected mode of greeting in the days of Jesus.

It was the traditional act of courtesy and welcome which expressed respect. Jesus rebuked Simon, the Pharisee for failing to offer Him the kiss of welcome when he accepted the invitation to visit Simon's house, Luke 7:44-45. It must have been a particularly ungracious invitation!

6. In those days, it was not the custom to shake hands in greeting or parting.

It would have been better for Amasa if they had! Instead, the use of the kiss followed rules which had been set by custom. Family members and Friends would kiss on the cheek, or both cheeks, as in certain countries, even today, France, Russia, and Italy, e.g.

Young people would kiss the hand of an older person, whilst the older person would kiss the young person/s head or forehead. It is important to notice that whilst men greeted men, and women greeted women with a kiss, it was not the practice for men and women to greet each other in this way.

Obviously, the kiss as a token of love between men and women was also practised, as is shown in 'The Song of Songs', which is an Eastern love song, Song of Songs 1:2 / Song of Songs 8:1, but the kiss of greeting was something quite different and distinct, and free from any romantic associations.

7. The Holy kiss and the church.

History records that the early church continued to use this mode of greeting, as Paul's letter makes plain, so we understand that he is not introducing a new revelation or imposing a new practice on the church.

Justin Martyr, who was born about 100 A.D., and lived during the 2nd Century, when describing the Church's worship, wrote, 'Prayers being ended, we salute one another with a kiss, and then the bread and wine are brought to the president.'

It is interesting to notice his use of the term ‘president’. He merely describes the brother, usually an elder, who ‘presided’ at the Lord’s Table. The older congregations in the UK adopted that term and used it when they referred to the brother who ‘presided’ at the Lord’s Table on the Lord’s Day worship. Also worth noting is that.

1. The kiss was given during the service.
2. It is before the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.
3. It was intended to show that those who met at the Lord’s Table meet in harmony and love.

So, this is what we have seen so far. The kiss was an Eastern mode of greeting of very great antiquity. It is found throughout Old Testament times and in the days of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Christians used it among themselves after the Church was established. In his letters, Paul commended it to the churches as the usual greeting of members of the Family, and he stresses the word ‘holy’, although he does not describe the kiss as something that has been expressly commanded by God. That is, he does not describe it as ‘the holy kiss’ in a way that would imply that it was a distinct ceremony or ritual.

My personal view is that if Paul were writing today, he would probably say, ‘Greet each other with a warm handshake!’ Let me stress his use of the word ‘holy’ because it indicates something pure and free from defilement.

There is nothing suggestive or promiscuous about the kiss of fellowship. It is ‘hagios’, holy, separated from sin and therefore consecrated to God. It is godlike in character.

Another early writer, Cyril of Jerusalem, who lived about 350 A.D., wrote, ‘Do not think that this kiss is like the kiss given to each other by mutual friends in the marketplace.’

Historically, this mode of greeting continued for several centuries, as the last quotation reveals. There is evidence to show that it remained in the Western Church, that is, the church in the western part of the world, until about the 13th Century, and it remains in the Eastern Church up to the present time and is especially widely practised by congregations at so-called ‘Easter-time’ when it is described as ‘the kiss of love’.

Why did it die out as a regular practice in Western Christianity? There may be several reasons.

1. There is the simple fact that the kiss, as a form of greeting, belongs to the East rather than to the West.

Here, as every woman knows, it is more usual to shake hands, and when you examine ‘hand-shaking’ closely, you see that it is a very significant gesture. There was a long period in our history when men wore sidearms.

They carried swords, and the practice of extending the right hand in greeting showed that the hand was empty; it carried no weapon, and this implied a friendly greeting.

Remember that the sword was usually carried on the man’s left side, and was used in his right hand, the hand he extended in greeting. In those days, also, men would embrace each other in greeting and would kiss the hands of ladies.

2. Another plain fact is that the kiss of greeting fell out of use because it was clearly liable to abuse and could degenerate into something dangerous and harmful.
3. The enemies of the Church were always ready to seize on anything that might be construed as immoral or suggestive behaviour.

From Roman times, Christians were falsely accused of all kinds of excesses in their worship. The Lord's Supper was actually said to be a time when Christians 'ate human flesh and drank blood' by people who were not interested in learning what the Lord's Supper really is!

It is not difficult to see that those who spread such reports were capable of putting the wildest interpretation on the Christian's kiss of fellowship. It was to disprove and dispel such stories that the kiss was probably discontinued.

4. No doubt, also, the growth of the church and the size to which congregations grew would make it difficult to continue the practice.

There is no doubt that, although the number of Christians grew rapidly, they did not form the very large congregations that are seen in some places today. So long as the congregation remains within a manageable size, it is not difficult to maintain the intimate sense of 'family'.

The sad reality is that, here in the West, where size and number are regarded as desirable, it is not unusual to learn of congregations that are so large that the Shepherds do not know their sheep! And the sheep do not know each other!

Growth is fine, but we need to ensure that the close bond of family is not lost. I am not arguing either for or against very large congregations. I am merely pointing out that it is possible for a congregation to become so large that it loses its character as a family in which the members know and care for each other.

However, if the practice of greeting with the Holy Kiss has died out, the brotherly love created by the love of Christ Himself should never die. But, even if today we do not 'greet one another with a holy kiss', there should be other tokens of brotherhood.

I believe that when we meet as a church, we should make an effort to greet as many of our brethren as possible. I say, 'make an effort', because in most congregations, when the church meets for worship on the Lord's Day, there are some members who never make a move to greet their brothers and sisters.

If you wish to greet them, you will find it necessary to go to them, because they will never make the effort to come to you. And it is not unusual for these brethren to complain that they 'feel neglected' in the church, or that they feel 'left out'.

Well, just as it takes two to kiss, it takes two to be friendly. Fellowship is not a one-way street. As congregations, we need to make a greater effort to show ourselves interested in people.

When visitors and strangers attend our services, what do we do? Do we sit or stand around speaking to our special friends? Or do we realise that, as members of the Lord's Body, it is both our responsibility and privilege to extend a welcoming hand to someone who may be finding it both unfamiliar and strange to be in our Service?

I am thankful that there are many friendly people in our congregations, but if it were to be left to others, visitors may well form a poor opinion of us! Be friendly! Make an effort.

It is not necessary to become involved in a theological discussion, much less an argument with visitors. Just remember that if at some time, someone had not made an effort to speak to you, you probably would not be in the church today.

Peter encourages these saints who have and are suffering for being Christians and leaves them with a prayer of peace, [1 Peter 5:14](#) / [Matthew 10:12](#) / [Mark 5:34](#) / [Luke 2:14](#) / [Luke 2:29](#) / [John 20:19](#) / [John 20:21](#) / [John 20:26](#).