



EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERS
• EAST AFRICA •

1 PETER

by

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1 Peter was written by the apostle Peter, probably in AD 62-63. The themes of salvation, Christian living (i.e., applying our salvation), the church, suffering, and important aspects of the person and work of Jesus Christ are prominent in *1 Peter*. Salvation is discussed from God's perspective, from our perspective, historically, theologically, and in relation to how we live as Christians (i.e., practically). Our salvation should affect us mentally and behaviorally. Peter addresses how all Christians should live and gives specific instructions to different groups within the church, including servants, wives, husbands, elders, and younger believers. He discusses different aspects of suffering and our individual and corporate responses to suffering. Each of these themes is viewed from different angles, they are all interrelated, and each one is tied to the person and work of Christ. Peter frequently quotes from or alludes to the OT, and he sees the church as the new, true, spiritual Israel.

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I. Introduction

A. The Author

The author identifies himself in the first line of the book: “*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet 1:1). In 2 Peter he says, “*This is now the second letter that I am writing to you*” (2 Pet 3:1). Polycarp, in his *Epistle to the Philipians*, written about AD 135, quotes or alludes to statements in 1 Peter over a dozen times. Early church historian Eusebius says that 1 Peter “is acknowledged as genuine” and was “used by the ancient fathers in their writings, as an undoubted work of the apostle” (Eusebius 1988: 83 [*Ecclesiastical History* 3.3.25]). J. Ramsey Michaels concludes, “Aside from the four Gospels and the letters of Paul, the external attestation for 1 Peter is as strong, or stronger, than that for any NT book” (Michaels 1988: xxxiv).

Interestingly, Peter’s full name was Simon Barjona (Matt 16:17) or Simon son of John (John 1:42; 21:15-17).¹ Jesus renamed him Cephas, Aramaic for the Greek Petros (Peter), which means “rock” or “stone” (Matt 16:18; John 1:42). He is called Simon Peter in John 1:40 and Simeon (a variant of Simon) in Acts 15:14. Peter was the evident leader and spokesman of the Twelve and, along with James and John, was called one of the “pillars” of the early church (Gal 2:9). By trade, he was a fisherman with his brother Andrew (Mark 1:16). He was married (Mark 1:29-30), and his wife accompanied him on missionary trips (1 Cor 9:5). Tradition holds that he was martyred in Rome in AD 64-66 as part of the persecution against Christians begun by Emperor Nero, after the great fire of Rome, by being crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy to die in the same manner as the Lord had died (“Saint Peter” 2022: 5.3.1).

B. Date and themes

Assuming the traditional view of the timing of Peter’s death, and allowing for the time for him to write 2 Peter, the most probable dating of 1 Peter is AD 62-63 (see Grudem 1988: 37; Carson and Moo 2005: 646).

The themes of salvation, Christian living (i.e., applying our salvation), the church, suffering, and important aspects of the person and work of Jesus Christ are prominent in 1 Peter. Salvation is discussed from God’s perspective, from our perspective, historically, theologically, and in relation to how we live as Christians (i.e., practically). Our salvation should affect us mentally and behaviorally. Peter addresses how all Christians should live and gives specific instructions to different groups within the church, including servants, wives, husbands, elders, and younger believers. He discusses different aspects of suffering and our individual and corporate responses to suffering. Each of these themes is viewed from different angles, they are all interrelated, and each one is tied to the person and work of Christ. Peter frequently quotes from or alludes to the OT, and he sees the church as the new, true, spiritual Israel.

C. Structure and Outline

The book may be outlined as follows:

I. Salutation (1:1-2)

A. From—Peter, an *apostle*

B. To—the *elect exiles*

C. Basis of their election:

1. according to the *foreknowledge* of the *Father*,
2. in the *sanctification* of the *Spirit*,
3. for *obedience* to *Jesus Christ* and for *sprinkling* with his *blood*

D. Greetings—*Grace and peace* in the fullest measure

II. Salvation (1:3–2:10)

A. Salvation from God’s perspective (1:3-5)

1. According to his great mercy
 - a. He has caused us to be born again
 - b. To a living hope
 - c. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - d. To an imperishable inheritance kept in heaven for you
2. You are being guarded by God’s power
 - a. Through faith

¹ “Jonah” in Aramaic was an abbreviated form of “John” (Carson 1991: 156).

b. For salvation

(1) which will be revealed in the last time

B. Salvation from our perspective (1:6-9)

1. We rejoice despite various trials

a. so that the genuineness of our faith will result in praise, glory, and honor

b. at the revelation of Jesus Christ

(1) Whom we have not seen

(2) But we love, believe and rejoice in

(A) which leads to the outcome of our faith, the salvation of our souls

C. The greatness of our salvation (1:10-12)

1. The prophets carefully inquired when the predicted sufferings and glories of Christ would occur

2. It was revealed that they were serving you

a. In the things that have been announced to you

b. By those who preached the gospel to you

c. By the Holy Spirit

d. Into which things angels long to look

D. The implication of salvation for our conduct (1:13-2:3)

1. Mentally, we are to:

a. Prepare our minds for action

b. Be sober-minded

c. Set our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ

2. Behaviorally, we are to:

a. Be obedient

b. Do not be conformed to the passions of our former ignorance

c. Be holy in all our conduct

(1) because God is holy, and

(2) God judges impartially

d. Conduct ourselves with fear

(1) knowing that you were ransomed from your futile ways, not with perishable things, but with the precious blood of Christ, who was:

(A) foreknown before the foundation of the world

(B) made manifest in the last times for your sake

i. who, through him, believe in God

(a) who (God) raised him from the dead, and

(b) gave him glory

(i) so that your faith and hope are in God

e. Love one another earnestly from a pure heart

(1) since you were born again

(A) not of perishable seed, but imperishable

(B) through the living and abiding word of God

i. for all flesh is like grass and withers

ii. but the word of the Lord remains forever

(2) so put away all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, anger, and slander

3. Like newborn infants, long for pure spiritual milk

a. that you may grow up into salvation

E. Salvation described theologically (2:4-10)

1. Jesus is a living stone

a. rejected by men, but

b. chosen and precious in God's sight

2. As you come to him, you are like living stones, being built up:

a. as a spiritual house

b. to be a holy priesthood

- c. to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ
- 3. Because Jesus is the cornerstone
 - a. and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame, but honored
- 4. But he is a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to unbelievers who disobey the word
- 5. But you are:
 - a. a chosen race
 - b. a royal priesthood
 - c. a holy nation
 - d. a people for his own possession
 - (1) that you may proclaim the excellencies of him
 - (A) who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light
 - e. once you were not a people, but now you are God's people
 - f. once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy

III. Live righteous lives in whatever station you are or circumstance you face (2:11–4:11)

A. All believers (2:11-17)

- 1. Abstain from the passions of the flesh
 - a. They wage war against your soul
- 2. Keep your conduct honorable
 - a. So that when "Gentiles" speak against you they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation
- 3. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every governmental authority
- 4. Live as free people
 - a. not using your freedom as a cover for evil
 - b. but living as servants of God
- 5. Honor all people:
 - a. love the brotherhood
 - b. fear God
 - c. honor the emperor

B. Servants (2:18-25)

- 1. Be subject to your masters with all respect
 - a. both to the good and gentle and to the unjust
 - b. for it is a gracious thing when, mindful of God, you endure sorrows while suffering unjustly
 - (1) for there is no credit for enduring a beating when you sin
 - (2) but is a gracious thing in God's sight when you endure suffering for doing good
 - (3) for to this you have been called
 - (A) because Christ also suffered for you
 - (B) he left you an example to follow in his steps
 - i. he committed no sin
 - ii. no deceit was in his mouth
 - iii. when he was reviled, he did not revile in return
 - iv. when he suffered, he did not threaten
 - v. he continually entrusted himself to God who judges justly
 - vi. he bore our sins in his body that we might die to sin and live to righteousness
 - (C) we have been healed by Christ's wounds
 - i. for we had been straying but now have returned to our Shepherd and Overseer

C. Wives (3:1-6)

- 1. Be subject to your own husbands
 - a. so that if they do not obey the word, they may be won by your conduct
 - (1) which should be respectful and pure

2. Your adorning:
 - a. should not be external (braided hair, gold jewelry, clothing)
 - b. but internal (the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit)
 - (1) which is very precious in God's sight
 - (2) for this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands
 - (A) as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord
 - i. you are her children, if you:
 - (a) do good, and
 - (b) do not fear anything that is frightening

D. Husbands (3:7)

1. Live with your wives in an understanding way
2. Show honor to her as the weaker vessel
 - a. since she is an heir with you of the grace of life
 - b. so that your prayers may not be hindered

E. All believers: summary (3:8-12)

1. Have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind
2. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but bless
 - a. for to this you were called
 - (1) that you may obtain a blessing
 - (A) for whoever desires to love life and see good days should:
 - i. keep from speaking evil and deceit
 - ii. turn from evil
 - iii. do good
 - iv. seek and pursue peace
 - b. for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
 - c. the ears of the Lord are open to the prayer of the righteous
 - d. but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil

F. The suffering of the righteous (3:13-4:6)

1. Who is there to harm you if you are zealous for doing good?
2. But if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed
 - a. have no fear of those who cause you suffering
 - b. do not be troubled
 - c. but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy
3. Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope within you
 - a. do it with gentleness and respect with a good conscience
 - (1) so that when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame
4. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if it is God's will, than for doing evil
5. For Christ also suffered, the righteous for the unrighteous
 - a. that he might bring us to God
 - b. he died in the flesh but was made alive in the spirit
 - (1) in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison
 - (A) because they formerly did not obey
 - i. when Noah was building the ark in which eight people were brought through the water
 - ii. which corresponds to baptism which now saves us
 - (a) as an appeal to God
 - (i) for a good conscience
 - (ii) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - c. he has gone to heaven and is at the right hand of God
 - d. all angels, authorities, and powers have been subjected to him
 6. Since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourself with the same way of thinking
 - a. for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin

- b. live no longer for human passions but for the will of God
- c. for the time that is past sufficed for living sensuously in lawless idolatry
- 7. Now the “Gentiles” are surprised that you do not join them in their debauchery
 - a. they malign you
 - b. but they will give an account to God who is ready to judge the living and the dead
- 8. This is why the gospel was preached to those who are dead
 - a. that though they are dead in the flesh, they might live in the spirit the way God does

G. The end of all things is at hand (4:7-11)

- 1. Therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded
 - a. for the sake of your prayers
- 2. Love one another earnestly
 - a. since love covers a multitude of sins
- 3. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling
- 4. Use your gifts to serve one another
 - a. as good stewards of God’s varied grace
- 5. Speak as one speaks the oracles of God
- 6. Serve by the strength that God supplies
 - a. in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ
- 7. To him belong glory and dominion forever

IV. The church’s response to suffering (4:12–5:11)

A. Do not be surprised when fiery trials come upon you, as though they were something strange (4:12-19)

- 1. Rejoice as you have shared Christ’s sufferings
 - a. that you may rejoice when his glory is revealed
- 2. When you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed
 - a. because the Spirit of glory and of God rest upon you
- 3. Let no one suffer as an evildoer
- 4. Do not be ashamed if you suffer as a Christian
 - a. but glorify God in that name
- 5. It is time for judgment to begin with the household of God
 - a. and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome of those who do not obey the gospel of God?
 - b. and if the righteous are scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?
- 6. Therefore, those who suffer according to God’s will, entrust your souls to the faithful creator while doing good

B. Elders (5:1-4)

- 1. Shepherd the flock, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you
 - a. not for shameful gain, but eagerly
 - b. not domineering, but as examples to the flock
- 2. When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory

C. Younger people (5:5a)

- 1. Be subject to the elders

D. All believers (5:5b-11)

- 1. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another
 - a. for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble
- 2. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God
 - a. so that at the proper time he may exalt you
- 3. Cast all your cares upon him
 - a. because he cares for you
- 4. Be sober-minded and watchful
 - a. because your adversary, the devil, prowls around, seeking someone to devour
- 5. Resist the devil, firm in faith

- a. knowing that your brothers throughout the world are experiencing the same kind of sufferings as are you
6. After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you
7. To him be the dominion forever. Amen.

V. Concluding salutation (5:12-14)

A. By Silvanus, I have written you (5:12)

1. Exhort you
2. Declare that this is the true grace of God

B. Greetings (5:13-14a)

1. Greetings from
 - a. She who is in Babylon who is likewise chosen
 - b. Mark, my son
2. Greet one another
 - a. with the kiss of love

C. Peace to all of you who are in Christ (5:14b)

II. Commentary on 1 Peter²

A. Salutation (1:1-2)

¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ”

“Apostle” refers to someone who has been commissioned and sent out with authority for a specific purpose. It is the noun form of the Greek word *apostellō* (“to send”). The essential meaning of “apostle” is conveyed by such terms as “ambassador,” “delegate,” or “messenger.” The NT recognizes two basic types of apostles: (A) *foundational* apostles; and (B) *church-commissioned* apostles. “Foundational” apostles like Peter were those apostles who were companions of Jesus, witnesses to the resurrection, and were specifically called to be apostles and witnesses by Jesus (see **Matt 10:1-5; Mark 6:7, 30; Luke 6:13; John 15:27; Acts 1:21-22**). They were able to attest to their special status by performing signs (see **Matt 10:1-8; Mark 6:7; Acts 2:43; 2 Cor 12:12**). Foundational apostles were the leaders of the early church and the “foundation” of the church itself (**Eph 2:19-20**). As such, those with the authority of foundational apostles have not existed since the original apostles died (only one foundation can be laid for a building). “Church-commissioned” apostles are those men and women who have been delegated by a church to go out and preach the gospel, plant new churches, and build up the church (see **Acts 13:1-3; 14:14; Rom 16:7; 1 Cor 9:5-6; 12:28; 1 Thess 1:1; 2:6**). Christ has ordained the church and given it His authority (**Matt 16:18-19**). Consequently, Christ can be expected to act through His church, not independently of it. By commissioning apostles, the church also provides them with credibility and accountability, both with respect to the church itself and in the eyes of the world.

When Peter calls himself an apostle “*of Jesus Christ*,” the wording implies that he “belongs to” or is “owned by” Jesus Christ. This is consistent with **1 Cor 6:19-20** which says, “*You are not your own, for you were bought with a price*,” and with **1 Cor 7:23** which reminds us, “*You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men*” (see also **Rev 5:9**). By paying the price for our redemption, Christ frees us from our slavery to sin and binds us to himself.

“To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion”

The three key descriptors of the recipients of Peter’s epistle are “elect,” “exiles,” and the “dispersion.” “Elect” tells us that the recipients (and, by extension, us) were not volunteers, but were chosen by God. The ESV translates the next word as “exiles.” Some translations (e.g., the NIV) translate it as “strangers.” Both translations are somewhat misleading. To be an “exile” might imply that the person was forced against his or her

² Unless otherwise noted, the English Standard Version will be used in this commentary.

will be residing in a particular place. To be a “stranger” might imply that the person was not known by his or her neighbors. Neither of those situations was the case. The Greek word is *parepidēmos* which means a sojourner, “not simply one who is passing through, but a foreigner who has settled down, however briefly, next to or among the native people” (Zodhiates 1993: *parepidēmos*, 1118). The phrase that probably best captures the sense of the word is “resident aliens.” This implies that, for all Christians, the world is not our true home; rather, “*our citizenship is in heaven*” (Phil 3:20). This further implies that, as “resident aliens,” we are not really “at home” in the places we are. This, in turn, should cause us to assess how deeply we draw our self-worth, identity, and fulfillment from such things as our position in the world, our nationality, tribe, or any other station or circumstance in which we find ourselves. What Peter is saying, right in the first sentence of his epistle, is that our identity, meaning, and purpose are derived from Christ. Consequently, he is to be the primary focus of our lives.

The word translated as “dispersion” is a form of the word *diaspora*, which usually refers to Jews who were scattered among the Gentile nations and living in exile outside of Israel. In this case, however, Peter specifies that the diaspora he is referring to is people living in “*Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia*,” which were provinces of the Roman Empire in what is today northern Turkey. The significance of that is that there is no evidence of any Jewish presence in Cappadocia in the first century or of any Jewish churches in any of those provinces. Peter was writing to a predominantly if not exclusively Gentile audience. This is clearly indicated in Peter’s description of those to whom he was writing in **1 Pet 1:14, 18; 2:10; 4:3-4**, all of which denote Gentiles. In other words, Peter is saying that the church, which largely consists of Gentiles, is the true people of God, the new, true, spiritual Israel.³ He even contrasts the church with “the Gentiles,” i.e., nonbelievers (**1 Pet 2:12; 4:3**). He is saying that we, the church, are the true diaspora, wherever we are in the world and whatever our ethnic, racial, or tribal background might be. This reinforces our status as “resident aliens.” It also reinforces the fact that, our status as resident aliens in the world because of our special relationship to God through Jesus Christ has important attitudinal, moral, and behavioral implications for our lives—a point which Peter discusses and emphasizes throughout this epistle.

“According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood”

We see that our status as resident aliens of the diaspora in the world is the work of the Trinity. The distinct, although related, roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are stated here. The first thing to note is that the Father’s “foreknowledge” is not merely his passively knowing in advance that we would believe in Christ. Instead, as used in the Bible, God’s foreknowledge denotes “prior acknowledgement, favorable recognition or consideration beforehand (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:2). It is used to denote the foreordained fellowship of God with the objects of His saving power.” (Zodhiates 1993: *prognosis*, 1216) In other words, we are resident aliens in this world by God’s predetermined design which he, in his grace, has brought about. The noun “foreknowledge” is used only here and **Acts 2:23**, which discusses Jesus’ crucifixion (“*this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death*”). As is the case here, God’s foreknowledge of Christ’s crucifixion was far more than his simply knowing in advance that people would crucify him; the choices people made to crucify him were all part of God’s predetermined plan.

The same meaning of foreknowledge occurs when the verbs “know” and “foreknow” are used. For example, **Rom 8:28-30** says, “²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.” John Piper points out that “if all the called are justified, and if justification is only by faith, then the call must secure the faith because it secures the justification. But if the call of God brings about faith, then it is not the self-determining power of man that brings him to salvation. . . . For God to predestine someone on the basis of faith which he himself creates is the same as basing predestination on the basis of election. . . . The words ‘know’ and ‘foreknow’ commonly mean ‘choose’ or ‘set favor upon’ or ‘acknowledge.’ Therefore we do not need to add any phrase to limit whom God foreknows, because the word itself limits the group—it is those whom he chose or set his favor upon.” (Piper 1985: 2.22-.23) This is seen in multiple OT and NT texts (see, e.g., **Ps 1:6; Hos 13:4-5; Amos 3:1-2; Matt 7:23; Rom 11:1-2; 1 Cor 8:3; Gal 4:8-9; 2 Tim 2:19; 1 Pet 1:20**).

³ The church as the new, true, spiritual Israel is discussed in detail in Menn 2021: 49-59.

There are three aspects of sanctification: (1) initial separation or setting apart (**Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Cor 1:2, 30**); (2) progressive holiness during life (**Rom 8:13; 2 Cor 3:18; 7:1**); and (3) the final act whereby God makes people completely holy through eternity (**Eph 5:26-27; Rev 3:12, 21; 21:3-8, 23-27**).

The present aspect of our lives, i.e., the “progressive holiness” aspect of our lives as resident aliens, is emphasized in the purpose for which we have been chosen or elected by God: “*for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.*” Our lives should be heading toward greater and greater obedience to Christ as we mature and draw upon his means of grace. The word for “obedience” elsewhere is used by Peter and other NT writers as signifying the daily obedience of believers (see **Rom 6:16; 2 Cor 7:15; 10:5-6; Phlm 21; 1 Pet 1:14**). The same thought is found in **Eph 2:8-10**, which points out that we are saved purely by God’s grace, but for a *purpose*, namely, “*we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*”

However, Peter knows that even the most mature Christians can never escape their indwelling sin; hence, God’s purpose for us—*obedience to Jesus Christ*—will never fully be realized in this life. That is why he adds the final clause about “*sprinkling with his blood.*” There are three situations in which blood was sprinkled *on individuals* in the OT: (1) when God initiated the Mosaic Covenant on Mount Sinai (**Exod 24:5-8; Heb 9:19-20**); (2) when Aaron and his sons were ordained as priests (**Exod 29:21**); and (3) in the purification ceremony for a leper who has been healed from leprosy (**Lev 14:6-7**). Since Christians have already been initiated into the New Covenant when they came to faith in Christ, and since Peter already sees us as a royal priesthood (**1 Pet 2:9**), it is unlikely that he was thinking of the first two OT examples, since he is speaking of our being sprinkled with Christ’s blood *after* his reference to our sanctification and *after* we have been initiated into the covenant and been ordained as priests. That Peter probably has the third OT example of people being sprinkled with blood makes sense. The reason is that the purification ceremony applied to any kind of skin disease which would render a person ceremonially unclean and thereby exclude him from the community (see **Lev 14:54-57**). Wayne Grudem comments, “Leviticus 14:6-7 is an excellent passage to represent cleansing from any defilement that would disrupt fellowship with God and his people. . . . This ‘sprinkling with blood’ fits 1 Peter 1:2. Although God intended these ‘chosen sojourners’ to live ‘for obedience to Jesus Christ’, they were frequently ‘defiled’ by sin. Peter reminds them that their future includes continual sprinkling with the blood of Christ, that is, continual restoration of fellowship with God and his people through the sacrificial blood of Christ figuratively sprinkled over them, a continual reminder to God that their sins are forgiven and that they are welcome in God’s presence and among his people.” (Grudem 1988: 53-54) A similar thought is found in **1 John 1:7**.

“May grace and peace be multiplied to you”

This is an expanded form of Paul’s frequent greeting to the recipients of his epistles, “*Grace to you and peace*” (**Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; Titus 1:4; Phlm 3**). This actually flows from the reference to the sprinkling of Christ’s blood. It is in the passive tense, which indicates that God is the agent of the action.⁴ The wording actually is “Grace to you and may peace be increased.” In other words, as God by his grace figuratively sprinkles us with Christ’s blood when we confess and repent of our sins, our sins are forgiven, and fellowship with God and others is restored; hence, our peace is restored and increased.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. There are many self-proclaimed “apostles” today.

- For at least some of them, do you see any differences between their character and activities and the apostles of the Bible?
- To the extent that they do not match up with the character and activities of the apostles of the Bible, what can and should we do about it?

2. How can we take and apply the fact that we, as Christians, are “resident aliens” in the world (including the fact that we are resident aliens in our own countries)?

3. What is the significance of the fact that Peter has used a term (*diaspora*) that had applied to Jews and now

⁴ This is known as the “divine passive.”

applies it to the church, which consists primarily of Gentiles?

4. How can the church help brothers and sisters who become defiled by sin find cleansing, purification, forgiveness, and be restored to fellowship and right relationship with God and with the rest of the body?

B. *Salvation* (1:3–2:10)

- Salvation from God’s perspective (1:3-5)

³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* ⁴ *to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,* ⁵ *who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

These verses are similar to **Titus 3:5-7** and reveal several important aspects concerning the nature of our salvation:

(1) The ground or basis of our salvation is God’s mercy. Further, he caused us to be born again; we did not cause ourselves to be born again. This is consistent with and reinforces **v. 1** which spoke of God’s electing us. This is also consistent with the rest of Scripture which stresses that God is primary in salvation. Thus, Jesus said that *“unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”* (**John 3:5**). In **John 3:6, 9** he then specified that one must be *“born of the Spirit.”* That is an explication of **Ezek 36:25-26**—the only passage in the OT that links water and the Spirit: *“²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”* Note that it is God who is doing the work in us, not we ourselves doing any of the work.

(2) The instrument through which God was able to save us was *“the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”* It was his resurrection that demonstrated that Jesus was more than just a man; he was God come to earth as a man. In his life, he had lived the life we should have lived, perfectly obeying the Father in everything (**Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 8:29; 14:31; Rom 5:19; Phil 2:8; Heb 4:15; 10:7**). That qualified him to “step into our shoes” and make the one sacrifice necessary to atone for our sins (**Heb 10:11-14**). His resurrection from the dead demonstrated both who Jesus was and that the Father had accepted his sacrifice on our behalf.

(3) The result of our salvation is a *“living hope.”* This indicates that our new birth is both present and future oriented. This is in accord with **John 3:3, 5**, which speak both of “seeing” (present) and “entering” (future) the kingdom of God. The fact that our hope is “living” means that it is present and active now. This follows from our being “born again,” i.e., we have passed from death to life and are now spiritually alive (see **John 5:24; Rom 6:4, 13**). The fact that we have “hope” points us to the future consummation of our faith and new life in Christ.

(4) The object of our living hope is our *inheritance*, which is *“imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away.”* This inheritance is our portion of the kingdom of God and Christ, i.e., the new creation and all its blessings, which will last forever (see **1 Cor 15:23-24, 50-58; Eph 5:5; Col 3:24; Heb 9:15; Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:1-7, 10-26; 22:1-7, 12-14**). Further, this inheritance is *“reserved in heaven for you.”* This, again, is a “divine passive.” The form of the of the verb translated “reserved” (or “kept”) indicates “a completed past activity (by God) with results that are still continuing in the present: God himself has ‘stored up’ or ‘reserved’ this inheritance in heaven for believers and it continues to be there, ‘still reserved’ for them” (Grudem 1988: 57). That is why our hope is living and certain to be realized by us—because just as God is the one who elected us for salvation in the first place, did what only he could do to secure our salvation (by living the life we could never live and paying the price we could never pay), demonstrated that all was accomplished when he rose from the dead, so he is the one keeping and reserving our inheritance for us. This is a powerful application of what Paul said in **Rom 8:38-39**, *“³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

The last line of these verses (*“who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”*) shows us that it is not just our inheritance that is protected by the power of God, but we ourselves are being protected by the power of God. Peter does not say that God protects us *“as a result of our faith,”* but he protects us *“through our faith.”* In other words, just as our faith itself is *“the gift of*

God” (**Eph 2:8**), so his power and presence energize and sustain our faith. There is something of a mystery in this. *We* are the ones who must exercise our faith; God does not do that for us. *We* are the ones who must “*press on toward the goal*” (**Phil 3:14**) and “*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*” (**Phil 2:12**), yet it is “*God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure*” (**Phil 2:13**). Similarly, **2 Cor 13:5** says, “*Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.*” Yet it then adds, “*Do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!*” The Bible is full of passages that exhort us to remain faithful, warn us of the perils of falling away, and encourage us of the rewards of faithfulness (see, e.g., **Matt 10:22; 24:13; 1 Tim 1:17-18; Heb 3:14; 10:32-39; Rev 2:10**). Yet it also assures us that we have been “*sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it*” (**Eph 1:13-14**), and “*he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ*” (**Phil 1:6**).⁵

This relationship between God’s sovereignty and our responsibility is mirrored in what Peter says at the end of **v. 5**, that our salvation is “*ready to be revealed in the last time.*” This recalls the “*living hope*” he spoke of in **v. 3**. Just as our “*living hope*” revealed both a present and a future aspect of our salvation, his reference to our salvation being “*ready to be revealed in the last time*” speaks of the future aspect of our salvation. However, in **v. 3** he said that God “*has caused us to be born again,*” i.e., our salvation already is present. Similarly, **v. 4** points us to “*an inheritance . . . kept in heaven for you*” (future), whereas **Eph 1:11** says “*In him we have obtained an inheritance*” (present). In the same way, the kingdom of God has been inaugurated and is present now (see **Luke 11:20**), yet we are to pray for the coming of God’s kingdom (**Matt 6:10**) since it has not yet been consummated in all its fullness and glory. In short, neither Peter nor the Bible as a whole encourage passivity or “*resignation to our fate,*” even though our destiny is clear and has been preordained.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the present and future aspects of our salvation.
2. Discuss the interaction between God’s sovereignty and our responsibility.
 - Salvation from our perspective (1:6-9)

⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Rejoicing in trials

Verse 6 relates to the entire thought of **vv. 3-5**. That is particularly clear in the Greek, since **v. 5** really should not end with a period, and **v. 6** begins “*in which you rejoice.*” (To make following and understanding easier, translations often break up what in the original are extremely long sentences.) Peter’s thought is similar to that expressed by James in **Jas 1:2**, “*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.*” In James, the reason for joy in the face of trials is, “³*for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing*” (**Jas 1:3-4**). Peter does two things here:

(1) He acknowledges that our trials in this life may, indeed, “grieve” us. Nevertheless, we can have great spiritual joy, knowing that, as he just stated in **vv. 3-5**, we are secure in Christ, have a “*living hope*” of an inheritance that is being kept for us, and that all of this will be revealed at the coming of Jesus Christ. This is akin to Paul’s statement in **Rom 8:28** that “*we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*” He is not saying that all things, in and of themselves, are good. Rather, all things—including the bad things—are part of God’s plan and work together for our ultimate good. This is important, since some Christians think they have to put on a “*happy face*” all the time; they wrongly think, “*If I am not happy, then that shows I lack faith.*” Peter is saying that it is all right to grieve or be distressed by our trials; that is not inconsistent with God’s purpose for us and with genuine faith.

(2) In **v. 7** he goes on to state the reason for our trials and suffering. Peter echoes James that trials are a

⁵ The relationship between God’s sovereignty and human responsibility is discussed at some length in Menn 2021: 116-22.

testing of our faith, but he goes beyond that. Whereas James emphasizes the effect of testing of our faith on *us*, Peter is emphasizing the value of our genuine faith (“*more precious than gold*”) to *God*. Our tested, genuine faith is so precious to God because such faith shows that we trust him in all things and in all circumstances. And, as Grudem points out, “since God’s evaluation of something is the ultimate standard of meaning in the universe, Peter’s readers have a secure basis for a sense of ultimate meaning and importance for their own lives.” (Grudem 1988: 64). Finally, as he did at the end of v. 5, Peter concludes v. 7 by repeating that all this—the genuineness of our faith and the praise, glory, and honor that it merits—will be manifested “*at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*”

Trials and suffering were necessary for Jesus (see **Mark 8:31; Acts 17:3**); they are, therefore, a divine necessity for us (see **Mark 10:30; John 15:20; Acts 14:22; 1 Thess 3:3; 2 Tim 3:12; 1 Pet 2:21**). It is not that trials and suffering are the *direct* cause of joy or rejoicing, but our Christian perspective “relativizes” our trials and suffering and enables us to see them in the much greater context of God’s overall plan, his plan for our lives, how the trials and suffering are ordained by God as part of the means for us to become like Christ himself, and how our faithful response to the trials and suffering is precious and praiseworthy to God. Thus, we can love Jesus and rejoice in him and in all he has done and will do for us even in the crucible of suffering.

Our relationship to Christ

The thought of vv. 8-9 completes the thought of vv. 6-7 and is akin to the “*living hope*” Peter mentioned in v. 3. Particularly by using the present tense (not the future), by repeating the word “glory,” and by saying that even now we are “*obtaining the outcome of our faith, the salvation of your souls,*” Peter is emphasizing that our “inheritance” and the “*praise and glory and honor*” which will be manifested at “*the revelation of Jesus Christ*” are present *now*. When our love and faith in Christ remain our focus, our entire lives and our perspective of our circumstances is transformed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How are we able to “rejoice” in our trials even though they “grieve” us?
2. How can we get to the point where, more and more, our focus is on Christ in all of our circumstances?
 - The greatness of our salvation (1:10-12)

¹⁰ *Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹ inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

We often do not realize the infinite importance of salvation and the uniqueness of the gospel. Every other religion in the world essentially says that, if you want to be accepted by God and go to heaven or nirvana or paradise, it is up to *you*—to do enough good deeds and make enough sacrifices. Only Christianity recognizes that it is impossible for anyone to save himself or herself. The reason is that God is morally holy and perfect, and that is the standard to which he holds us (**Matt 5:48**). Further, God is infinite: infinitely holy; infinitely lovely; infinitely good. Thus, our obligation to him is infinite (**Deut 6:5; Matt 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27**). Therefore, our sin against him amounts to an infinite evil. In short, there is no such thing as a finite offense against an infinite God. Consequently, no temporal, finite, and imperfect deeds of ours can ever hope to atone for the infinity of our sin. Indeed, even good deeds and sacrifices do not transform corrupt, sinful people into righteous, sinless people; at their core, they remain sinful people. As John Stott concludes, “If we are ever to be forgiven, we must repay what we owe. Yet we are incapable of doing this, either for ourselves or for other people. Our present obedience and good works cannot make satisfaction for our sins, since these are required of us anyway. So we cannot save ourselves.” (Stott 1986: 119)

That is where the gospel is unique. The word “gospel” is a Greek word (*euaggelion*) which means “good news” (Danker 2000: *euaggelion*, 402; Green and McKnight 1992: 282). “The Greek term ‘gospel’ (ev-angelion) distinguished the Christian message from that of other religions. An ‘ev-angel’ was news of a great historical event, such as a victory in war or the ascension of a new king, that changed the listeners’ condition and required a response from the listener. So the gospel is news of what God has done to reach us. It is not

advice about what we must do to reach God.” (Keller n.d.: 1) The gospel is the good news that God has done for us what we never could do for ourselves. God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus lived the life we should have lived *as a man*; he perfectly obeyed God the Father in everything; he was “*tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin*” (**Heb 4:15**). That qualified him to be our representative, to take upon himself our sin and pay the penalty that otherwise we would have to pay but never could (**Rom 8:1-4; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; Col 2:13-14; 1 Tim 2:5-6; 1 Pet 2:24**). At the same time, Jesus Christ was God. “God did not, then, inflict pain on someone else, but rather on the Cross absorbed the pain, violence, and evil of the world into himself. . . . This is a God who becomes human and offers his own lifeblood in order to honor moral justice and merciful love so that he can destroy all evil without destroying us. . . . Why did Jesus *have* to die in order to forgive us? There was a debt to be paid—God himself paid it. There was a penalty to be borne—God himself bore it. . . . On the cross neither justice nor mercy loses out—both are fulfilled at once. Jesus’s death was necessary if God was going to take justice seriously and still love us.” (Keller 2008: 192-93, 197)

In these verses, Peter is observing that the gospel—“*the grace that was to be yours*” (i.e., our salvation could not be worked for or earned by us but could only be received as a gift of God’s grace) as a result of “*the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories*”—had been prophesied in the OT and is so unique and wonderful that even “*angels long to look*” into it. The word “sought” (v. 10) is the same word used in **John 5:39; 7:52** to refer to searching through the OT Scripture. Following his resurrection, Jesus pointed out to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus that the entire OT concerned Christ and the gospel: “²⁶ *Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?*” ²⁷ *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*” (**Luke 24:26-27**)⁶ The “Spirit of Christ” (v. 11) is the same as the “Holy Spirit” (v. 12; see **Rom 8:9**). Verses 10-12 can be viewed something like a footnote or appendix to vv. 3-9 in that they reveal the greatness of the salvation that awaits us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the gospel?
2. Why is Christianity unlike any other religion in the world?
3. What can help us to understand and internalize or fully appreciate the wonder and greatness of our salvation in Christ?
 - The implication of salvation for our conduct (1:13–2:3)

¹³ *Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

¹⁴ *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” ¹⁷ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

²² *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ²⁴ for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you. ² ¹ So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.*

² *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

⁶ This is discussed in detail at Menn 2021: 26-93. For 25 OT prophecies that were fulfilled in the crucifixion, see Menn 2020: 16n.21.

Implications of salvation for us mentally

“Therefore” relates back to the great blessings of our salvation which Peter has discussed in **vv. 3-12**. This is the second time he has mentioned our “hope” (see also **v. 3**) and the second time he has used the phrase “*at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (see also **v. 7**). This verse is the transition to living the life of holiness which is the focus of the rest of the epistle.

Peter exhorts us to “prepare our minds,” be “sober-minded,” and “set our hope.” The reason for doing this is because we have been chosen (elected) and set-apart, we have an incorruptible inheritance reserved for us, we are protected by God and so will receive that inheritance, our faith is being shown to be genuine by the trials we face and endure, and our salvation even was written about in advance by the prophets and is held in great awe by the angels. While Peter exhorts us now, in the present, to “prepare our minds” be “sober-minded,” and “set our hope,” the focus is on our future life. Hope, by its very nature, looks to the future. He makes that explicit by saying that the object of our hope is “*the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” Peter has already said, our hope in Christ is a “living hope” (**v. 3**) that is fully grounded in God’s grace. Our hope in Christ is not merely a vague wish but is a confident expectation that we will receive the grace we need to successfully complete the journey of this life and of the praise, glory, and honor we will receive when our journey is complete. We are to prepare our minds “for action,” i.e., how we will live our lives in light of having been born again. That new life will continue until “*the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” Peter is saying that being born again is necessary in order for people to live a life pleasing to God and edifying to other people. The reason is that unredeemed people are enslaved to an empty, worthless life (**v. 18**) and are impure (**v. 22**).

Implications of salvation for us behaviorally

The “action” for which we are to “prepare our minds” in **v. 13** is specified in **vv. 14-16**, and it is two-fold, like two sides of a coin: negatively, we are no longer to be “*conformed to the passions of your former ignorance*”; positively, we are to “*be holy in all your conduct.*” These verses are similar to Paul’s exhortation in **Eph 4:22-24**. In **v. 14**, Peter is pointing out that our former lusts were the result of the ignorance of our mind. It is important to understand that “*the passions of your former ignorance*” are not simply sexual lusts, but can include anything, e.g., the drive to succeed, lust for power, lust for wealth. Now, however, when we come to Christ and have the Holy Spirit within us, we also have “*the mind of Christ*” (**1 Cor 2:16**). Therefore, we must use it, since real change begins in the mind. Jesus knew that. Hence, in the Sermon on the Mount he pointed out that anger and despising someone is the equivalent of murder (**Matt 5:21-22**), and lust is the equivalent of adultery (**Matt 5:27-28**). The importance of the use of our minds is highlighted by Peter’s use of the word “conformed” in **v. 14**. The only other place in the NT where that word appears is **Rom 12:2**, which again highlights the centrality of mind: “*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*” Paul focuses on not being conformed to this present age and its values; Peter focuses on not being conformed to our past lives as nonbelievers. We should keep both in mind: nonbelievers can only get their values from this age and this world; that is what we used to do. Thus, we need to remember what we were like and need to assess what this world (through what we read, see, hear, are taught in school, etc.) is telling us and how it is trying to mold us.

The reasons why we are to live holy lives are two-fold: primarily, we are to be holy because that is God’s moral character. **Lev 11:44** says, “*You shall be holy, for I am holy*” (see also **Lev 11:45; 19:2; 20:7, 26**). This charge to “*be holy, for I am holy*” is significant in that it was originally given to OT Israel before it entered the promised land. Peter’s re-applying it to the church is another indication that he is viewing the church as the new, true, spiritual Israel. Secondly, we are to be holy because, as **v. 17** reminds us, God “*judges impartially according to each one’s deeds.*”⁷ This should lead us to “*conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of*

⁷ Both by precept and example God judges people and nations and repays them “according to their deeds [or “ways” or “works”]” (**Judg 1:6-7; 9:22-24, 56-57; 2 Sam 12:9-12; 1 Kgs 2:32-33; 20:35-42; 21:17-19; 2 Chron 6:23, 30; Job 34:11; Ps 18:24; 31:23; 62:12; Prov 24:12; Eccl 12:13-14; Isa 59:18; Jer 17:10; 25:14; 32:19; Ezek 7:3, 8-9, 20, 23-24, 27; 9:10; 11:21; 16:43, 59; 18:30; 22:31; 24:14; 33:20; 35:6, 11, 15; 39:24; Hos 12:2; Joel 3:5-7; Obad 15; Zech 1:6; Matt 16:27; 25:14-30; Luke 12:47-48; John 5:28-29; Rom 2:1-6; 12:19; 1 Cor 3:8, 11-15; 2 Cor 5:10; 11:15; Gal 6:7-8; Eph 6:8; Col 3:25; 2 Tim 4:14; Heb 10:26-27; 1 Pet 1:17; 2 Pet 2:20-22; Jude 14-15; Rev 2:23; 14:13; 20:11-13; 22:12**). It should be understood that what we do in this life—especially how we treat people—will be the standard by which we are judged at the final judgment. We cannot work our way to heaven but are saved only by God’s grace through faith in Christ (**John 3:16-18; 6:28-29; Rom 2:16-17; 10:8-13; Eph 2:8-9; Gal 3:1-14**). “Works are an index of the spiritual condition of a person’s heart. We are not told whether these books [in **Rev 20:11-15**] contain either good and evil works or only the latter. Yet the judgment is not a balancing of good works over bad works. Rather, works are seen as unmistakable

your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers . . . with the precious blood of Christ.” The “fear” Peter mentions relates to our knowledge that everything we do in this life will be judged. We need to remember that membership in God’s family does not mean that God will overlook our sin. Consequently, “fear” in this context means “a deep and reverential sense of accountability to God” (Zodhiates 1993: *phobos*, 1450).

The reference to “*the time of your exile*” is reiterating the fact that we are only “resident aliens” on the earth during this life. That should help us to keep in the forefront of our mind the fact that our relationship with Christ and our life in him is primary. The depth of our salvation and new life is indicated by what it took to ransom us: the most precious things on earth like silver or gold could not do it; the only thing that could save us was “*the precious blood of Christ*” (vv. 18-19). This means that our deliverance is everlasting, just as Jesus is. Underlying all blood sacrifices of the OT sacrificial system was the substitution of an innocent life (the sacrificial animal) for that of the guilty party. The monumental effect of the blood of Christ is seen in the fact that Christ fulfilled the entire OT sacrificial system because he alone had the capacity to act as our sacrificial substitute since only He was without sin (Isa 53:4-12; Luke 23:41, 47; Acts 3:14-15; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet 2:21-24; 1 John 3:5). Thus, in Rom 3:25 Jesus’ death was described as a “propitiation” or “atoning sacrifice.” That is the same Greek term (*hilastērion*) used for the “mercy seat” which covered the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies (Exod 25:17 LXX; see also Heb 9:5 which refers to the mercy seat as the *hilastērion*) and was particularly associated with the Day of Atonement. “When this is combined with Paul’s references elsewhere to Christ’s ‘blood’ [see Rom 3:25; 5:9; 1 Cor 11:25; Eph 1:7; 2:13; Col 1:14, 20] and his description of Christ as ‘our paschal lamb’ (1 Cor 5:7), it is evident that Paul saw Christ’s work as integrally connected to the two chief festivals associated with the Temple: Passover and Yom Kippur [“Day of Atonement”]. . . . Jesus’ death is seen in cultic terms, and it is clear that it replaces what would otherwise have been the function of the Temple and its sacrifices.” (Walker 1996: 123)

Not only did the “*precious blood of Christ*” remove our guilt before God and propitiate his wrath, but also:

- cleanses our conscience (Heb 9:14)
- gives us the ability to confidently have access to God (Heb 10:19)
- progressively cleanses us from sin as we go through our lives (1 John 1:7)
- enables us to overcome the devil (Rev 12:11)

The depth and scope of our salvation is indicated in Peter’s wording in v. 18. Our former life was both “futile” and “*inherited from your forefathers.*” “Futile” indicates that life was “empty and worthless.” “Inherited” indicates that our problem was deeper than just indwelling sin, but involved generational patterns, habits, and traditions. In other words, our futile ways of life were reinforced and deeply ingrained in us in every possible way. That is why we had to be “ransomed.” “Ransom” indicates that we had been *slaves* to our sin and our futile ways of life and could not free ourselves (see Rom 6:16-17, 20); only Christ’s blood was able to free us.

Verses 20-21 go on to discuss the nature of Christ. The fact that Christ was “*foreknown before the foundation of the world*” indicates, as was discussed above in connection with v. 2, that Christ was esteemed and in an intimate love relationship with the Father for all eternity. In this context, the phrase describing Christ’s being foreknown describes “an act of God in eternity past whereby he determined that his Son would come as the Saviour of mankind” (Grudem 1988: 85). In this entire passage from v. 17 to v. 21, we are seeing that the same God we are to fear and revere as our judge is also the God we can trust as our savior.

In v. 14-15 Peter had said that our salvation should cause us to no longer being “*conformed to the passions of your former ignorance*” but instead “*be[ing] holy in all your conduct.*” Now he begins his conclusion of this section by discussing our post-conversion life. He argues that growth in holiness will lead to growth in love. Hence, he states that our new life should be one of growth in moral purity, characterized by purified souls, obedience to the truth, and sincere brotherly love (v. 22). Interpersonally, this should result in “*lov[ing] one another earnestly from a pure heart*” (v. 22). The word for “love” here is *agapaō*, which goes beyond the “brotherly love” (*philadelphia*) in the first part of the verse. *Agapaō* (the noun form is *agape*) means great “esteem, love, indicating a direction of the will and finding one’s joy in something or someone. It differs from *phileō* [the verbal form of *philadelphia*], to love, indicating feelings, warm affection.” (Zodhiates 1993:

evidence of the loyalty of the heart; they express belief or unbelief, faithfulness or unfaithfulness. The judgment will reveal whether or not people’s loyalties have been with God and the Lamb or with God’s enemies.” (Ngundu 2006: 1576) As the Apostle James says, “*But someone may well say, ‘You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. . . . For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.’*” (Jas 2:18, 26) Consequently, just as what we do is the test in this life that proves what we really think of God, that same test is found in the context of the final judgment. This is seen many times and in many ways throughout the Bible.

agapaō, 64) To *agapaō* someone is to discern their true needs and meet them, to serve with fidelity and joy, to put the needs of others first. It is epitomized by **John 3:16**, “For God so loved [*agapaō*] the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” Jesus had summarized the implications of the entire Bible in two commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”³⁸ This is the great and first commandment.³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (**Matt 22:37-40**) Peter is summarizing that the born again life should be characterized by earnestly loving one another from a pure heart, because it is through loving others that we demonstrate that we really love God. The apostle John made this clear in **1 John 4:20** when he said, “If anyone says, ‘I love [*agapaō*] God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love [*agapaō*] his brother whom he has seen cannot love [*agapaō*] God whom he has not seen.” The reason is that all people are made in the “image of God” (**Gen 1:26-27; 5:3; 9:6; Jas 3:9**), and how we treat God’s image shows what we really think of him.

Peter points out that just as we were ransomed from our futile lives by the imperishable blood of Christ, so the basis of our new, born again, lives in Christ is not perishable seed but “*imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God*” (**v. 23**). He emphasizes this by quoting **Isa 40:6-8**. In other words, he is telling us: (1) Both our ransom and our new life are imperishable; and (2) The written and spoken word of God is the means the Holy Spirit uses to awaken unbelievers to the truth of the gospel and then to apply the truth of gospel to believers in order to mature and mold them into Christlikeness. Consequently, we should live according to our new nature: We have been born again and so are a “*new creation*” (**2 Cor 5:17**). We have been born again of an imperishable seed, and have been empowered to live new lives by “*the living and abiding word of God.*” How can we continue living and treating people like the transient, grass-like unregenerate people do?

Peter concludes this section in **2:1-3**. In **v. 1**, “So” (or “Therefore”) relates back to what he has just said, and ultimately to the command to “*love one another earnestly from a pure heart*” (**1:22**). He is telling us that, in light of the fact that we have been born again of imperishable seed and are empowered by the living and abiding word of God, we must put away all the attitudes, actions, and habits that are harmful to others and that are incompatible with love.

The relationship of believers to the word of God and the means of grace

Verse 1 also is linked with **vv. 2-3**. Although many versions translate “*put away*” as an imperative, it is actually a participle, i.e., “*putting away*,” that is subordinate to the verb “*long for*” (or “*crave*”) “*the pure spiritual milk*” in **v. 2**. Newborn infants do not have to be told to drink milk; they naturally want it. Peter’s comparison of believers to newborn infants is something of a test: A person’s interest in the word of God, fellowship with other believers, prayer, faithful service and obedience, and all that nourishes one’s growth in Christ is evidence that he or she is a believer, but if a person is not interested in the word of God and the related means of grace and growth, one must question whether he or she is truly a Christian, even if the person claims to be born again. All of these means of grace help us “*grow up into salvation*,” i.e., become mature, Christlike believers. **Verse 3** also indicates that; it is saying that “*if [or ‘since’] you have tasted that the Lord is good*,” then you desire the pure spiritual milk like a newborn infant desires its mother’s milk. The converse would also be true, i.e., “*if you do not desire pure spiritual milk like a newborn infant desires its mother’s milk, then you have not tasted that the Lord is good.*”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is being born again necessary to be able to live a life that is pleasing to God and edifying to other people?
2. Why is it necessary to “prepare our minds,” what are we to prepare our minds for, and how do we do it?
3. What does living a holy life involve, and why is it necessary?
4. Why does the way we treat other people ultimately reveal what we think of God?
5. What are the means of grace and growth that are available to believers to help them “grow up into salvation”?

- Salvation described theologically (2:4-10)

⁴As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”⁸ and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Grammatically, Peter has been using plural nouns and verbs, but what he has been saying clearly has individual application. Now, he explicitly talks about the church as a corporate body. In vv. 4-5, just as Jesus is a “living stone,” so are we all “living stones.” Both we, the living stones and the “spiritual house” (i.e., the church) are being “built up” by God. That is another example of the “divine passive.” Jesus as the “living stone” draws from quotations from Isa 28:16 in v. 6, Ps 118:22 in v. 7, and Isa 8:14 in v. 8. Whereas Jesus quoted from Ps 118:22 in Matt 21:42 and Peter used the same quotation in Acts 4:11, and in each case they applied it to the Jewish leaders who rejected Christ, here Peter is applying it to all people who reject Christ. Peter is contrasting “you who believe” and “those who do not believe.” The difference is in their responses to Jesus Christ. Just as their responses to Jesus Christ are different, so are their ends: “honor” versus “stumble.”

Theologically, this section is incredibly important. The language Peter is using is drawing on OT descriptions of the nation of Israel and the temple and applying them to the church. This is similar to what he did in 1:1 when he called the church the *diaspora*. In other words, he is rejecting the nation of Israel and its entire religious system as the vehicle for spreading God’s truth and is rejecting Israel as the true, people of God. Instead, he is saying that those roles are fulfilled in the church. He is, in effect, calling the church the new, true, spiritual Israel.

We see this throughout vv. 5-10. In v. 5, when Peter calls the church a “spiritual house,” he is saying that the temple is no longer the house of God. This is in accord with the apostles Paul and John who explicitly call the church the “temple of God” in 1 Cor 3:16, 17a, 17b; 2 Cor 6:16a, 16b; 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 3:12; 7:15; 11:1, 19. Note that both Peter and Paul were calling the church the true temple of God even before the physical temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70.

Peter’s calling the church a “holy priesthood” is saying that the OT Levitical priesthood has been replaced by the church. This is discussed in some detail in the book of *Hebrews*. Jesus is a priest “according to the order of Melchizedek, and not . . . according to the order of Aaron” (Heb 7:11; see also 5:6). In fact, Jesus is called both a “priest” and a “high priest” (Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-15; 7:11, 15-17, 24, 26, 28; 8:1-2; 9:11). That indicates that the entire OT sacrificial system and priesthood have been replaced because, according to the OT law, Jesus was not able to be a priest at all since he was not descended from Aaron or the tribe of Levi but from the tribe of Judah (Heb 8:4; see Matt 1:2-3; Luke 3:33-34). Instead of an entire priesthood acting as mediators between God and mankind, now there is “one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). In contrast to the OT priesthood being limited to the tribe of Levi (Num 18:1-24; Jer 33:19-22), as a result of the sacrifice of Christ all believers in Jesus Christ are now priests in the eyes of God (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10). Heb 7:12 adds that because the coming of Christ resulted in a new priesthood, “when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.” T. D. Alexander summarizes that “the reference here to ‘a change in the law’ indicates that the regulations associated with the Levitical priesthood were no longer in force once the church became the new temple of God” (Alexander 2008: 150).

As God’s “holy priesthood,” the church offers “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (v. 5). This indicates that the entire OT sacrificial system has been replaced. This is necessarily the case, because “when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” (Heb 10:12-14) The finality and perfection of Christ’s Atonement—and thus the complete and permanent elimination of the entire OT sacrificial system and priesthood—is seen in the fact that he “sat down at the right hand of God” in the true heavenly holy of holies

(**Heb 1:3; 10:12, 14**; see also **Ps 110:1; Mark 16:19; Luke 22:69; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20-21; Col 3:1; 1 Pet 3:21-22**). “Because sacrificial service entailed the posture of standing before God or at the altar (10:11; Deut 10:8; 18:7), the contrasting act of sitting down indicates the termination of Christ’s sacrificial act (10:12).” (Nelson 2003: 257) By his death, resurrection, and ascension Christ now enables every believer to do what only the OT priests could do. In the OT only the priests could enter the holy place of the Temple. Jesus has enabled all of his people with “*confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus*” all of the time (**Heb 10:19**). The nature of the “sacrifices” we make as God’s holy priesthood are now to “*present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship*” (**Rom 12:1**). In other words, our entire lives are spiritual. Everything we do is done in his presence and is (or should be) a form of sacrifice to God.

Following the OT quotations in **vv. 6-8**, Peter continues his description of the church by again applying to the church passages from the OT that had described Israel. Thus, the church is a “*chosen race*”; that alludes to **Deut 7:7; 10:15; Isa 43:20**. The church is a “*royal priesthood*”; that alludes to **Isa 61:6**. The church is a “*holy nation*” that is a quotation from **Exod 19:6**; see also **Deut 7:6; 14:2**. The church is a “*people for his own possession*”; that is a quotation from **Deut 4:20; 7:6; 14:2**; see also **Exod 19:5; Isa 43:21; Mal 3:17**. The statement that God “*called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*” alludes to **Ps 36:9; Isa 9:2; 42:16**. The statement in **v. 10**, “*Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy*” quotes from **Hos 1:6, 9-10; 2:23**. In its OT context, Hosea was speaking of the northern kingdom of Israel. Now Peter is applying this to the church. Paul does the same thing in **Rom 9:24-26**. In short, OT Israel was a “type” and “shadow” that pointed to and finds its fulfillment in the church. And in the church Christ has ended any concept of physical lineage or heritage: whereas in OT Israel only people from the tribe of Levi could be priests and only certain people could inherit royal status, in Christ *all people in the church* have been granted the highest status available in Judaism: kings and priests!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How was OT Israel a “type” and a “shadow” of the church?
2. What does it mean that we are a “*holy priesthood*” that offers “*spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*”?

C. Live righteous lives in whatever station you are or circumstance you face (2:11–4:11)

- All believers (2:11-17)

¹¹ *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.* ¹² *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

¹³ *Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme,* ¹⁴ *or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.* ¹⁵ *For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.* ¹⁶ *Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.* ¹⁷ *Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.*

This section begins Peter’s focus on living righteous lives while we are “resident aliens” in the world. The next section continues the theme. Both this section (**2:11-4:11**) and the next section (**4:12-5:11**) are marked with “beloved” at the beginning and “amen” at the end.

Verses 11-12 echo **1:14-16**. Here, as there, Peter exhorts us to abstain from the *passions* of the flesh. And here, as there, he summarizes how our conduct should be: first negatively (“*abstain from the passions of the flesh*”) and then positively (“*keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable*”). In **1:14** his exhortation regarding controlling our passions was based on the fact that they were the passions of our “*former ignorance*.” Now he points out that those passions “*wage war against your soul*.” This builds on what he had said in **2:5** and highlights the fact that our entire life is spiritual. His calling unbelievers “Gentiles” reinforces what he had said in **vv. 5-10** that the church is the new, true, spiritual Israel. Peter realizes that we can expect opposition from the world, just as Jesus warned (see **Matt 5:10-12; John 15:20**). Thus, he says “*when they speak against you*,” not “*if they speak against you*.” He also continues his future orientation (see **1:7, 13**) by speaking of the “*day of visitation*.” He is making clear that opposition should not cause us to withdraw from the world but should cause

us to redouble our efforts to positively engage with the world as a force for good. That is true for Christians individually and the church corporately. Christians and the church should be at the forefront of building up, healing, and making society better.

Verses 12-17 focus on our relationship with society. They parallel **Rom 13:1-7**. “*Every human institution*” (v. 13) is broader than the civil government, but would include such institutions as employment, marriage, voluntary organizations, the parent-child relationship, and the church. The commands in **vv. 13-14** and **17d** (and those of **Romans 13**) concerning submitting to governmental authorities and honoring the nation’s leader were *not* given in the context of a totalitarian state whose laws were evil. Peter himself recognized the need to disobey the laws of government and the commands of rulers when they contravene the requirements of the gospel. Hence, when he was told that he could not teach in the name of Jesus, Peter said, “*We must obey God rather than men*” (**Acts 5:29**). God commended other examples of disobedience to unjust laws. See, for example, the midwives who refused to kill newborn Hebrew boys and then lied to Pharaoh (**Exod 1:15-21**) and Rahab who hid the Israelite spies and lied to the authorities about that (**Josh 2:1-7**).

Additionally, in many countries today, a person may have a constitutional or legal right to protest, disobey, or oppose the government in ways that were not possible in Roman society. To do that in appropriate ways should not harm the gospel. In fact, Richard Bauckham states, “Only a purified vision of the transcendence of God that can effectively resist the human tendency to idolatry which consists in absolutizing aspects of this world. The worship of the true God is the power of resistance to the deification of military and political power (the beast) and economic prosperity (Babylon).” (Bauckham 1993b: 160) Thus, Christians have a responsibility to be aware of what is happening in their society and, when necessary, oppose injustice even when (or especially when) that injustice is perpetrated by the government. Multiple examples of this in history can be given (in addition to the midwives and Rahab). For example, John Chilembwe led a rebellion in January 1915 in Nyasaland (modern Malawi) against the British colonial authorities because of injustices and exploitation of the colonial system; Chilembwe himself was a Baptist minister (see Jenkins 2015: 45). Schüssler Fiorenza gives three other notable examples of such a perspective and witness drawn from the eschatology of Revelation: “In his Letter from a Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King, Jr., echoes the language and images of Revelation when interpreting experiences and hopes in the struggle for the civil rights of African-Americans; Allan Boesak’s commentary *Comfort and Protest* contextualizes Revelation in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa; and Daniel Berrigan penned his reflection on Revelation, *Nightmare of God*, while imprisoned for his activities in support of antinuclear-war protests.” (Schüssler Fiorenza 1991: 11) In short, when all of Scripture, our particular society, and the specific circumstances we face are considered, we are not being counseled by Peter merely to tamely submit to government at all times and in all ways.

Verses 14-15 build on what Peter said in v. 12. He is talking about more than simply not doing wrong, but doing positive good and positive good *for society*. Christians should be positively engaged with society for the welfare of society. He is saying that “*the will of God*” is enacted by the exemplary conduct of Christians doing what is good. This will lead to public recognition and commendation by government officials and will silence those who otherwise would oppose Christianity. Bruce Winter observes that the regions of the eastern part of the Roman Empire “had long been supported by public benefactors who saved the community from famine, deflated prices of essential commodities in time of scarcity, paid for the installation of water supplies, enhanced the life of the city with fountains, widened roads, erected theatres and public buildings, and provided for child allowances. . . . In 2:14–15 Christians of substance were called upon to continue to observe [this method of providing for the needs of the city]. Being a benefactor was declared to be ‘the will of God’ and public recognition by rulers the means of silencing the rumours of ill-informed men.” (Winter 1988: 92)

In v. 16 Peter describes Christian freedom as acting in obedience to God’s will: “True freedom, true ability to choose and do what one really *wants* to do, comes paradoxically in entire submission to God as his obedient *servants*” (Grudem 1988: 121). True freedom, therefore, results in the great joy of doing right. He concludes in v. 17 by stressing that our lives should be ones of love and honor. Our highest obligation is to fear God (see **1:17**). Next, we are to “*love the brotherhood*” (see, e.g., **Gal 6:10**). Finally, we are to honor all people, including the emperor. Note that Peter has placed the emperor at the same level as everyone else. Jesus said that the only one we are to fear is God (**Matt 10:28**). It is, therefore, no accident that Peter says we are to “*fear God*” but “*honor the emperor*.” “Christians have obligations to the state, but their obligations to God and to the brotherhood of believers are higher” (Grudem 1988: 123).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Some people think that Christians should not get involved in politics or other aspects of society. How would

Peter respond to such thinking, and why?

2. How is our behavior related to our proclamation of the gospel?

- Servants (2:18-25)

¹⁸ *Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.* ¹⁹ *For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.* ²⁰ *For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.* ²¹ *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.* ²² *He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.* ²³ *When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.* ²⁴ *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.* ²⁵ *For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

Servants were generally born into the household. They were slaves who did not have legal freedom, but some had the prospect of purchasing their freedom. This was the most common kind of employer-employee relationship in the ancient world. Consequently, what Peter says here may be applied to employer-employee relationships today. However, we must bear in mind that what he is saying is, to a large degree, culturally relative and therefore does not necessarily have a one-to-one or exact correspondence to modern reality.⁸ There is an analogy (i.e., a significant similarity) between slavery and modern employment: in each case someone (slave/employee) is working for someone else (master/employer). However, every analogy breaks down at some point. Today, employees are not born into the household, cannot be beaten, can quit their employment and seek other employment, and have various other legal rights. As with not obeying unjust government laws, Christian employees today should not obey an employer if ordered to do something that is sinful, illegal, or otherwise wrong. Servants in Peter's day did not have the right to disobey. When the Bible discusses situations that are not identical to contemporary situations, we can still look for the transcultural principles that exist and apply such principles by analogy. When doing this we must be careful not to stretch the analogy too far (i.e., we must be aware of the *differences* between the biblical situation as well as the similarities). We must account for the differences between *ownership* of the employee by the employer (slavery) and *contractual relationships* between employee and employer (modern employment). Thus, application today may be different compared to Peter's time and place.

The command in v. 18 to “*be subject to*” grammatically is a participle (i.e., “*being subject to*”); it is a further specification of the command in v. 13, “*Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution.*” The reason for being “*subject to your masters [or employers] with all respect*” is that we are to put *God* first. We are to be “*mindful of God.*” This goes back to v. 16 where Peter said we are to be “*living as servants of God.*” Our endurance in difficult situations finds favor with God, as it shows that we are trusting him for our ultimate wellbeing. The principle of honoring God in the way one relates to authority/management in the modern workplace might be expressed along the following lines: “Fulfill the terms of your contract to the best of your ability, that is, in a manner that glorifies God and brings unbelievers closer to the kingdom” (Webb 2001: 54).

We are to follow in the footsteps of Christ, who is the foundation or basis for all we do. **Verses 21-25** have Christ at the very center. And in the center of that is Christ's *suffering*, which is an example for us (v. 21). Enduring unjust suffering has value, not as a heroic act of endurance, but only “*when you do good and suffer for it*” (v. 20). This goes back to v. 12 where Peter stressed that “*they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*” Christ is the one who suffered the ultimate penalty for doing good (**Luke 23:41, 47**). Christ's suffering for doing good clearly is to be the paradigm for our lives, not merely our employment. Scot McKnight puts it this way: “While there are times when the Christian ought to assert himself or herself or when Christians ought to fight for their rights, there is another way—the way of suffering that follows the life of Jesus. The path of suffering injustice is not for the feeble or the weak-kneed, it is for those who are willing to pick up their cross daily and follow Jesus.” (McKnight 1996: 179) Ultimately, our conduct on the job and in every other area of life primarily should be because what we do is a witness of the gospel.

⁸ The issue of how to deal with culturally relative texts is discussed in depth in Menn 2017: 44-56.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the differences between the cultural circumstances concerning employment in Peter's day and today.
 - How might those differences affect how we apply what Peter is saying in this section?
2. Have you encountered situations where the demands of your job went against the gospel and your obligation to obey Christ?
3. How did you handle those situations? And what was the result?
 - Wives (3:1-6)

¹ Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, ² when they see your respectful and pure conduct. ³ Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— ⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. ⁵ For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

In this section, Peter is continuing his use of examples of types of people who need to be subject to various authorities (“*be subject to*” again is a participle, i.e., “*being subject to*”). Peter’s exhortation to wives to “*be subject to your own husbands*” (3:1) is an almost verbatim parallel to Paul’s exhortation to wives in **Eph 5:22**. The term “*be subject*” is the same Greek verb used by Paul in **Eph 5:21, 24**. The phrase “*your own husbands*” is making clear that wives, and women in general, are not under the authority of someone else’s husband or men in general. He is speaking of relationships within the marriage bond itself. In **vv. 1-2** he is continuing to emphasize a person’s honoring those in authority by demonstrating a life of doing good (“*your respectful and pure conduct*,” **v. 2**; “*if you do good*,” **v. 6**). Peter’s instructions to Christian wives are based on three appeals: (1) An appeal to *expediency* (3:1-2)—the evangelical effect of the wives’ behavior. (2) An appeal to *motive* (3:3-4)—in marriage, as in employment and our relations with the government and other institutions, a wife’s submission and the way she conducts herself is primarily motivated by her relationship with God: “*that they may be won*” (**v. 1**); “*in God’s sight*” (**v. 4**); “*holy women who hoped in God*” (**v. 5**). (3) An appeal to *precedent* (3:5-6)—wives should follow the examples of holy women in the past.

The specific situation addressed by Peter in **3:1-2** includes the possibility of a Christian wife who has an unbelieving husband. The phrase in **3:1**, “*so that even if some do not obey the word*,” implies that most Christian wives had Christian husbands, although some did not (Grudem 1988: 137; see also Michaels 1988: 157). When Peter says in **3:1** that an unbelieving husband “*may be won without a word*” he is not forbidding all verbal testimony by Christian wives. Rather, he is suggesting that such testimony is not obligatory, and sometimes may not be helpful (e.g., if the husband has demonstrated his great hatred or anger at the mention of Christ). Thus, a Christian wife should not continually nag or preach to her hostile husband about the gospel. Instead, her behavior is the means that Peter says God will use to win her husband. This indicates a high view of God’s sovereignty over the process of salvation. It also should increase prayer “for the grace to live rightly and for God’s working in the husband’s heart” (Grudem 1988: 138). According to **3:2** the wife’s behavior should be “*pure*” (“free from moral defilement”) and “*respectful*” (“reverent”). Pure behavior reminds us that submission does not include obedience to demands to do something that is morally wrong. These virtues are directed primarily to God (see **2:12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 21, 23, 25**), but are visible to the husband, and therefore are for her husband’s benefit.

As in the case of government and employment, marriage is tremendously influenced by our culture, and there are great cultural differences between marriage in Peter’s time and place and many of our cultures today. In many ways, wives in Peter’s culture were “second class citizens.” Many had little or no formal education and did not have the opportunity for employment outside the home. Many were in a state of almost total dependency on their husbands. In many cultures today, none of those factors are present any longer. Further, a woman taking a different religion than her husband’s would have been seen as an act of insubordination. That may be one reason why Peter stresses that a wife should keep her conduct submissive and without reproach even though her religion is different from that of her husband.

Verses 3-4 echo **1 Tim 2:9-10** (“*women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire,¹⁰ but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works*”). These verses, like **1 Tim 2:9-10**, are based on the specific situation of first century culture, which was unlike most cultures today. The issue is not braided hair, *per se*. There is nothing wrong with Christian women braiding their hair. Many Christian women all over the world braid their hair, and no one thinks anything of it. In Peter and Paul’s culture, however, elaborate braided hair styles connoted something that braided hair does not connote today. In commenting on **1 Timothy 2**, Craig Blomberg states, “This ‘dress code’ is a sign that the wealthy women at Ephesus [and also to those to whom Peter was writing] were the primary offenders addressed. They alone would have been able to afford the elaborate hair-dos described. In fact, the Greek text reads more literally, ‘not with braided hair *and* gold or pearls . . .’ There was nothing wrong with braided hair as such, but the ornate coiffure in which jewels were interwoven into the braids, as one way of hold a woman’s hair together, involved hours of attention to one’s external appearance and was often accompanied by lavish, costly attire.” (Blomberg 1999: 207) Ralph Earle adds, “At worst, this is what the prostitutes did. At best, it shows pride and self-centeredness, both of which are contrary to the spirit of Christ.” (Earle 1978: 361) Further, in **3:3** there is no adjective that modifies “clothing” (the NIV incorrectly says “fine clothes”). As Grudem says, “It is incorrect, therefore, to use this text to prohibit women from braiding their hair or wearing gold jewelry, for by the same reasoning one would have to prohibit ‘putting on of clothing’ . Peter’s point is not that any of these are forbidden, but that they should not be a woman’s ‘adorning’, her source of beauty.” (Grudem 1988: 140) In **3:4** Peter’s phrase “*a gentle and quiet spirit*” ties together his twin themes of wifely submission and wifely adornment. That kind of spirit that the holy women, including Sarah, “adorned themselves” and were submissive to their husbands (**3:5-6**). Beauty in God’s eyes, and true submission, are not simply matters of external looks or outward obedience, but stem from a heart and spirit that above all put their trust and hope in God. It is that “*hidden person of the heart*” that has “*imperishable beauty*”, which in God’s sight “*is very precious.*”

In **3:5-6** the reference to “*holy women*” and, specifically, Sarah and Abraham indicates that Peter’s instructions to wives includes women with Christian husbands. Interestingly, the only occasion in the Bible in which Sarah referred to Abraham as “lord” is **Gen 18:12**. In that verse Sarah laughed and was speaking to herself. That is significant because it shows her inner attitude. Sarah’s example further gives godly women hope, because in **Gen 21:10-13** Abraham listened to Sarah and did as she requested by sending Hagar and Ishmael away. Thus, Abraham showed consideration for Sarah’s feelings over the interests of his own son. It is doubtful if Abraham would have done that if Sarah had not lived in a chaste and respectful way, both internally and externally. By living that way, Christian wives today demonstrate that they have become “*the children of Sarah*” (**3:6**).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is marriage in our culture today different from marriage in Peter’s time and place?
2. In light of those differences, how should we apply what Peter is saying here?

- Husbands (**3:7**)

⁷ *Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor 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.*

The specific context of **v. 7** is Peter’s instruction to all believers to “*be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution*” (**1 Pet 2:13**). Peter then uses three participles—servants “*be[ing] subject to your masters with all respect*” (**1 Pet 2:18**), wives, “*be[ing] subject to your own husbands*” (**1 Pet 3:1**), and husbands “*liv[ing] with your wives in an understanding way*” (**1 Pet 3:7**)—which draw their imperatival force from the verb (“*be subject*”) in **2:13**. Peter also exhorts us to follow the example of Christ’s suffering to illustrate the concept of Christian submission (“*Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps,*” **1 Pet 2:21**). Consequently, our obligations and responsibilities as husbands must be seen as specific ways in which we demonstrate Christ-likeness. His instructions to husbands are parallel to Paul’s instructions to husbands in **Eph 5:25-33**.

The word “likewise” or “in the same way” (**1 Pet 3:1, 7**) renders the responsibilities of the husband and wife reciprocal. The instruction to the wife (“*be subject*”) is given only to the wife; the husband is *not* told to

“make” his wife be submissive, or to “make sure” that she is—that is ultimately her responsibility to God. In one sense, the wife’s responsibility to be subject to her husband can be said to be “relativized” by the corresponding responsibilities of the husband. As McKnight says, “What submission means can only be understood by asking the question of what love means” (McKnight 1996: 189n.33). The wife is not told to “make” her husband live with her in an understanding way, or grant her honor, or to “make sure” that he does those things—that is ultimately the husband’s responsibility to God. However, the “submission problem” *invariably* has “a controlling husband at its root” (McKnight 1996: 189). McKnight adds this: “When the Christian wife is seeking to love her husband with her whole being and the husband is seeking to love his wife with his whole being, the issue of submission never emerges. . . . The focus of biblical marriage is on love and service of one another. . . . Husbands too frequently resort to demanding submission when they are unable to ‘get their way’; that indicates selfishness, not loving and devoted service to one’s wife (which is the way Christ loved the church). What the husband ought to be saying to himself is, ‘Why do I have to use force to get this done?’ Often he has decided that his own desires and ideas have to be fulfilled and that his wife’s do not matter. Such behavior is not loving. Marriages that are full of love, respect, and honor rarely, I believe, need to resort to the issue of submission.” (McKnight 1996: 189-90)

As the “dominant” partner, the husband’s responsibility—and therefore his accountability and judgment—are greater. Husbands are to “*live with your wives in an understanding way.*” In other words, husbands are to live with their wives, not apart from them. Many husbands, including church leaders, spend so much time away from their wives at their churches or offices that they are effectively married to their jobs, not to their wives. The word for “live together” (*sunoikountes*) implies both the sexual and social aspects of a marriage relationship. The Christian husband “is neither demanding nor selfish in his sexual and marital relations; he is instead considerate, sensitive, and serving” (McKnight 1996: 186).

“*In an understanding way*” indicates that living with one’s wife “is not a mere physical function but something a man must *know how* to do” (Michaels 1988: 168). In the Greek, the phrase literally is “*according to knowledge.*” Such “knowledge” preeminently is the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, because only by such knowledge can a man rightly understand the nature of men and women, the significance of marriage, and can rightly order his life. Grudem observes, “The ‘knowledge’ Peter intends here may include any knowledge that would be beneficial to the husband-wife relationship: knowledge of God’s purposes and principles for marriage; knowledge of the wife’s desires, goals, and frustrations; knowledge of her strengths and weaknesses in the physical, emotional and spiritual realms; *etc.* A husband who lives according to such knowledge will greatly enrich his marriage relationship—yet such knowledge can only be gained through regular study of God’s Word and regular, unhurried times of private fellowship together as husband and wife.” (Grudem 1988: 143).

Husbands should be “*showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since she is a woman, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life.*” “Woman” translates a rare word meaning, literally, “the feminine one.” This indicates that “Peter looks to the characteristic nature of womanhood or femininity and suggests that a wife’s ‘femaleness’ should itself elicit honour from her husband” (Grudem 1988: 143). “Weakness” typically refers to the relative physical weakness of women compared to men; this is also indicated by the use of the word “vessel” which often refers to a body. However, “the context also shows that women are ‘weaker’ in terms of authority in the marriage (vv. 1, 5-6), and Peter therefore directs husbands that instead of misusing their authority for selfish ends they should use it to ‘bestow honour’ on their wives” (Grudem 1988: 144). Husbands should remember that “honor in God’s sight belongs to those who are (or who make themselves) ‘last’ or ‘least,’ in the eyes of the world (e.g., Mark 9:33-37; 10:42-45; Matt 18:1-4, 10-14; 19:30; 20:16; 23:11-12; 25:40, 45; Luke 14:7-11; cf. 1 Pet. 5:5-6)” (Michaels 1988: 170). Hence, both because of her status *under* you, and her difference *from* you, husbands must adopt God’s attitude toward those who are less in man’s eyes (i.e., God’s pattern throughout the Bible, God shows favor to those who are, or who make themselves, lesser). Honor should include kind and affirming words both privately and in public, spending quality time with her, acts of service for her, not keeping secrets from her, and a high priority in the use of money.

Just as her status as a woman (her femaleness, and relative weakness, i.e., her status *under* you, and her difference *from* you) was one reason for showing honor to one’s wife, Peter then provides a second (and essentially opposite) reason for showing honor to one’s wife: her status as an *equal* to you, and her everlasting *similarity* to you, i.e., wives are “*heirs with you of the grace of life.*” This essential similarity and equality is indicated by the use of the term “*heirs with you,*” which is also used in **Rom 8:17**, **Eph 3:6** and **Heb 11:9** to show the equal inheritance and participation together of all of the promises and benefits that come with being members of Christ’s body and family. Because God has chosen and honored the wife *on exactly the same basis* as he has chosen and honored the husband, a husband must accord honor to his wife. Otherwise, the husband will be dishonoring that which God honors.

Peter ends his instructions to husbands by giving another important reason why they must honor their wives: “so that your prayers may not be hindered.” How you treat your wife is a sign of, and affects—either positively or negatively—your own relationship with God and your spiritual development. The “your” may refer only to husbands, or to the prayers of husbands and wives together. Michaels believes that the final “your” “draws together the whole unit dealing with marriage (vv 1-7) so that even wives married to unbelieving husbands (vv 1-2) may have a glimpse of what marriage can become in Christ—a household church, with husband and wife living together as a praying community and ‘co-heirs’ of salvation” (Michaels 1988: 171). The other view is stated by Grudem: “‘Your’ must refer to the ‘you’ to whom Peter is writing, namely, the husbands, and the reference therefore is to the husbands’ prayers generally. . . . No Christian husband should presume to think that any spiritual good will be accomplished by his life without an effective ministry of prayer. And no husband may expect an effective prayer life unless he lives with his wife ‘in an understanding way, bestowing honour’ on her.” (Grudem 1988: 145-46). Regardless of whether “your” refers to husbands alone, or to husbands and wives together, this last clause of **3:7** again demonstrates the essentially *spiritual* nature of marriage. As Grudem concludes, “To take the time to develop and maintain a good marriage is God’s will; it is serving God; it is a spiritual activity pleasing in his sight” (Grudem 1988: 146).⁹

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Culture often leads us to act in ways that are contrary to the Bible. How does our culture cause husbands to act toward their wives in ways that are contrary to what Peter has instructed in **v. 7**, and what can and should we do about it?
2. In different ways **v. 7** indicates the spiritual nature of marriage. How does it do that, and how would viewing our marriages as a spiritual union change the way we do marriage?

- All believers: summary (3:8-12)

⁸ *Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. ¹⁰ For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; ¹¹ let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹² 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.”*

3:8-12 summarizes what Peter has been saying in the previous section. “Finally” in **3:8** makes that explicit. Peter has been making specific applications of the general principles of **2:11-12** (“*abstain from fleshly lusts*” and “*keep your behavior excellent*”) and the example of Christ (**2:21-25**). Peter’s language in **3:8-12** is broad enough to include all believers and has particular application to the relationship between wives and husbands and the family. The center of **1 Pet 3:8-12** is **3:9b**: “*bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.*” That phrase gives the reason why believers should live the way Peter instructs in **3:8-9a**. In order to receive God’s blessing, we must be a blessing to others. We are to live a life of blessing because that is the purpose for which God has called us. **3:10-12** then explain the practical and spiritual consequences and implications of the life of blessing of **3:9b**.

In **3:8** Peter begins by listing five *attitudes* that should characterize believers: “*unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.*” These are all *inner* attitudes that have *outward* manifestations. This is consistent with Jesus’ recognition that the person’s inner self is the source of defilement

⁹ Important spiritual and practical consequences flow from this: (1) Marriage is built into the creation order (**Gen 2:24**). (2) Because marriage is built into the creation order, it is an institution of great value, a part of creation that God called “very good” (**Gen 1:31**). (3) Because marriage is an institution of great value to God, we must value our own marriage as a relationship of great value—and therefore give them the time, attention, and effort necessary to demonstrate that we consider our marriage to be of great value to us. (4) Marriage is a reflection of the relationship between Christ and his church (**Eph 5:22-32**). (5) Because marriage is a reflection of the relationship between Christ and the church, marriage, at root, primarily is a *spiritual* relationship. (6) Because marriage is a reflection the relationship between Christ and the church, our attitude toward, and how we relate to, our spouse really is a reflection of our attitude toward and relationship with *Christ* and the Father. (7) Because our attitude toward and relationship with our spouse is a reflection of our attitude toward and relationship with Christ and the Father, we may expect to see *practical outworkings* of God’s chastisement or blessing in our lives, depending on how we treat our spouse (**1 Pet 3:7-12**).

(see **Mark 7:14-23**). The corollary to this is that the Christian life is about changed *lives*, not merely changed beliefs or attitudes—our beliefs don’t matter if they don’t affect how we live, and if we are not devoted and determined to live them out.

Peter heads the list of attitudes with the word “*unity of mind*.” The Greek word translated “*unity of mind*” (Greek = *homophrones*) means “being like-minded; united in spirit; harmonious” (Danker 2000: *homophrones*, 709-10). Harmoniousness is *mutually enriching*. In essence, Peter is calling for *unity* or *oneness* to head the list of characteristics that describe all of our relationships. This unity of mind highlights the spiritual nature of our lives. Jesus’ “high priestly prayer” of **John 17** stressed the importance of the unity of believers (“*that they may be one even as we are one*,” **John 17:22**). The other four terms Peter uses might be seen as defining or describing “*unity of mind*” itself. The other four characteristics certainly will be present when two people are like-minded. “*Sympathy*” implies addressing the “feelings” more than simply agreement of mind.

“*Brotherly love*” is important in that it is the language of *family*. Families care for, and take care of, and support each other. Family relations should be different, closer, more intimate, than relations with the outside world. There is something unique about a family that cannot be duplicated by those outside the family. It is significant, therefore, that God has not merely “saved” his people, but also has “adopted” them into his family (see **Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:4-7; Eph 1:5**). Indeed, the church *is* a family. The NT repeatedly uses the language of family to describe the church: bride or wife of Christ (**2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-32; Rev 21:2, 9**); sons or children of God (**Rom 8:14, 16; 9:26; Gal 3:26; 1 John 3:1-2**); people of God (**Rom 9:25; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 2:9-10**); household or family of God (**Matt 12:49-50; 2 Cor 6:18; Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15; 5:1-2**).¹⁰ Since we *are* a family, we need to treat each other like the beloved members of a family.

“*A tender heart*” extends the ideas of “*sympathy*” and “*brotherly love*” by implying *actions* of a kind nature motivated by oneness and sympathy. Consequently, God’s plan for relationships encompasses togetherness of thought, feeling, and behavior. None of the foregoing characteristics can be achieved without “*a humble mind*.” Humility does not vaunt oneself or seek to dominate the other; rather, humility first seeks the best welfare of the other. One who exhibits “*a humble mind*” has the spirit of Jesus who “*did not come to be served but to serve*” (**Matt 20:28**).

In **3:9a** Peter then goes on to show the *practical outworking* of the Christ-honoring attitudes discussed in **3:8**. That practical outworking represents a stark contrast between the nature of human interaction according to the world and the nature of human interaction according to Christ. These are separate, and opposed, principles. The world’s plan for relationships is a “performance-based” relationship. Acceptance is based on *performance* (“you do your part; I’ll do mine”); giving is based on *merit* that is *earned*; affection is given only when one feels that it is *deserved* (“if you do/don’t do, then I will do/not do”), or in order to get something from the other; motivation is based on how one *feels*. The world’s plan is destined to self-destruct because of: (1) my inability to meet unreal expectations; (2) the impossibility of knowing the other person has done his/her share; (3) my tendency to focus on weaknesses in the other person; and (4) my disappointment in the other person which paralyzes my performance. The result is, as indicated in **3:9a**, an “*evil for evil*” and “*reviling for reviling*” relationship, which focuses on “*my rights*” and “*my feelings*.” Such a relationship is rooted in an unforgiving and hardened heart. Such a relationship naturally follows where acceptance and affection are based on performance and have to be earned, and where the focus is on oneself (and, thereby, the necessity to always “get even” when a perceived light occurs) (Campus Crusade 1993: 20, 156).

Christ’s plan for relationships is a “grace-based” relationship. It is based on the nature of God himself, is rooted in creation, and reflects the relationship of Christ and his church. Such a relationship is predicated on the subordination of the self to the needs and best interest of others, primarily out of love for and gratitude to Christ. In such a relationship, love, acceptance, and affection are *freely given*, not earned, because Christ has first loved us and the other person is worthy of such love, acceptance, and affection merely because he or she is a child of God and bears the image of God. When the other person does not meet our expectations, we can *freely forgive* because we were forgiven by Christ and reconciled to God while we were his enemies (**Rom 5:8-10**). The result is a “*blessing for insult*” relationship which has its focus on God and his Word, draws upon his strength, and responds with grace and forgiveness when wronged. Such a relationship is destined to succeed, because it flows out of the character and commands of God himself (Campus Crusade 1993: 157).

Thus, **3:9a** tells us to “stop living the way the world lives, stop living according to the basis upon which

¹⁰ Dharti Lewis points out, “Of all the word pictures and metaphors used to describe the church, one stands out above the rest: family. In fact, it is so much of the essence of the church that it cannot even properly be called a metaphor. Metaphors describe what the church is like or similar to—light, flock, field, building—but family is not metaphorical; it is a literal description of the phenomena we know as church.” (Lewis 2015: n.p.)

the world orders its relationships, and live according to how Christ lived and how he orders relationships.” How we actually *act* (especially how we *react* when provoked, insulted, or are subjected to evil) is the outward, visible sign of whether we have the attitudes Peter called for in **3:8**. To consistently give a blessing when insulted and exhibit the attitudes stated in **3:8** means that we *are* a blessing.

In **3:10-12** Peter describes what “giving a blessing” (**3:9a**) looks like when practically applied, and comments on the “*obtain a blessing*” (**3:9b**) phrase with which he ended **3:9**. These verses all constitute a quotation from **Ps 34:12-16**.

A family blessing in the OT involved five elements (see **Gen 17:1-8; 27:26-29; 32:24-32; 48:9-20; 49:1-27**). Since Peter is speaking about being a blessing to others, and is not limiting himself to the family, the principles behind the five aspects of the OT family blessing apply to our relationships with others, particularly our brothers and sisters in Christ. They are: (1) *Meaningful touch*. Affectionate touching, hugging, or the laying on of hands provided a caring background to the words that were to be spoken; touch communicates warmth, personal acceptance, and affirmation. (2) *A spoken message*. Words of love, acceptance, and affirmation are vital for communicating blessing to others. (3) *Attaching “high value” to the one being blessed*. The words of the blessing itself must convey that the person is valuable and has redeeming qualities, based on *who they are*, not simply based on their performance. (4) *Picturing a special future for the one being blessed*. Although we cannot predict someone’s future, we can encourage and help them, give them hope and security by assuring them that we are for them and will be with them. (5) *An active commitment to fulfill the blessing*. This is the responsibility that goes with giving a blessing. It is said that “actions speak louder than words.” However, when your actions confirm your words and help to put them into effect, the result can be very powerful—especially when the words and actions are ones of affirmation, love, and blessing given to a member of your family. (Smalley and Trent 1986: 21-116)

3:9a is somewhat different from an OT family blessing, and is perhaps more difficult to do to those outside the family and to those who oppose us. Nevertheless, Peter says we are to “give a blessing” when we have been subjected to evil conduct or insulted. As described in **3:10-11**, blessing others involves our *speech*, our *actions*, our *motives*, and our *goals*. Regarding *speech*, we are to refrain from speaking evil or speaking with guile (i.e., speaking with treacherous cunning, deceitfully, craftily in order to trick others). Regarding *actions*, we are to “turn away from evil and do good.” Regarding *motives and goals*, we are to “*seek peace and pursue it*.” The goal of “peace” requires effort, i.e., “pursuit.” Living a life of blessing is not easy in the face of conflict and others who are focused only on themselves. Nevertheless, true peace—peace that is internal as well as external, the peace that flows from two people who both are living the attitudes listed in **3:8** and are doing the things listed in **3:9-11**—best captures the divine quality of a Christ-centered relationship. It is those qualities that God desires in all of our relationships, particularly in our spiritual and earthly families, but also with our co-workers, neighbors, friends, and others.

Peter concludes in **3:12** with a promise and a warning. Wayne Grudem explains, “The phrase *the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous* implies not merely that God sees what the righteous are doing . . . but that he is looking after them for good, recognizing and meeting their needs. . . . By contrast, the statement *But the face of the Lord is against those that do evil* is, in the context of Psalm 34, clearly a verdict of judgment, for the verse continues, ‘to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth’ (Ps. 34:16).” (Grudem 1988: 150) In short, **3:8-12** presents “a bold affirmation of the relation between righteous living and God’s present blessing in this life. As such it provides a needed corrective to careless, half-hearted Christians living in any age, and a powerful motivation to the kind of holy living to which Peter says all Christians have been ‘called’ (v. 9).” (Grudem 1988: 150)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the difference between performance-based and grace-based relationships.

- To what extent do you see performance-based relationships among Christians, and what steps can be taken to turn them into grace-based relationships?

2. How can the church help its members develop the attitudes Peter mentions in **3:8** and live the life of blessing he mentions in **3:9**?

3. Inasmuch as, according to the Bible, the church is a family, do outsiders see us as a good, well-adjusted, loving family?

4. Do we see ourselves as a family?

5. What can and should we do to help all members of the church feel and be treated like beloved members of the family?

- The suffering of the righteous (3:13–4:6)

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

¹⁸ 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, ¹⁹ in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ 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.

²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

⁴ ¹ Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. ³ For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.

⁴ With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; ⁵ but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

Suffering for righteousness' sake

Verses 13-17 form the transition from righteous living to Christian suffering. The theme of suffering, directly or indirectly, forms the major theme of the rest of the book. Thus, **3:18-22** focus on the theological basis for our suffering, namely, Christ's suffering and victory. **4:1-6** consider our responsibility in light of the gospel and Christ's suffering. **4:7-19** consider preparing for the coming fiery trials: **4:7-11** is a specific exhortation in light of coming persecution, and **4:12-19** concentrate on our response to the "fiery trial" when it comes. **5:1-11** considers the responsibilities of the church, particularly in light of the context of suffering and persecution.

Verses 13-14 are the specific transition from what Peter has been discussing about righteous living from **1:13–2:12**. **Verse 13** is a rhetorical question, the answer to which is "no one is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good." Some take the view that the essence of Peter's question in **v. 13** is that if a Christian is zealous for doing good, then "he or she will likely not excite the enmity and anger of others" (Davids 1990: 130). However, the better position is probably that of John Elliott, who states that "since v 14 allows for the possibility of suffering, it is likely that he is speaking of 'harm' to one's ultimate status and favor with God" (Elliott 2000: 620). That seems to be the essence of **v. 14**, which is Peter's answer to the rhetorical question of **v. 13**. Those who do good are "blessed" even in suffering; their lot is better than evildoers, even when the evildoers oppress them. Again, consider the example of Christ (**2:21-23**). Such a position is consistent with Christ's admonition in **Matt 10:28** ("do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.") and Paul's statement in **Rom 8:31** ("If God is for us, who can be against us?"). As Paul Achtemeier observes, "The intention of the verse is not to make a statement about absence of social rejection or even persecution [the existence of which is assumed throughout the epistle], but about a far more grievous harm, one that can separate them from God" (Achtemeier 1996: 229). In short, nothing can bring lasting harm to the person who does what God wants (see **Rom 8:38-39**).

In **v. 15**, since in the Bible the "heart" is "the seat of volition and emotion . . . the core self of the person" (Davids 1990: 131), the defense Christians should be prepared to give for "*the hope that is in you*" should be the expression of our deepest convictions. The verse assumes that "*the hope that is in you*" is noticeable to others. That should cause us to ask ourselves, "Is my hope in Christ noticeable to others?" If a

Christian is never asked about their hope and faith in Christ, one should seriously reflect on why not. Being “*prepared to make a defense*” ultimately goes back to **1:13** (“*preparing your minds for action*” and setting “*your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*”). The way we can do that, and so be able to give a good defense of the hope that is in us, is to know the gospel so thoroughly (**1:10-12**) that it has become a part of us so as to change our attitudes and actions (e.g., **2:11-12; 3:8-9**). The “gentleness,” “respect,” and “good conscience” mentioned in **vv. 15-16**, which should characterize our lives and our defenses to others, should have as their basis our attitude toward God. That is indicated by the words “*in Christ*” at the end of **v. 16**. **Verse 17** concludes that the point is: “*God wills doing what is right rather than doing what is wrong . . . even if and when this results in suffering*” (Elliott 2000, 635, *emph. in orig.*). God in Christ, and faithfulness to him, should be our focus in all of our circumstances; if that leads to suffering, then so be it. Our Christlike response to suffering is, itself, a witness for the presence of Christ and the truth of the gospel.

The suffering, resurrection, and ascension of Christ

Verses 18-22 begin with Christ’s suffering and end with his ascension back to the right hand of the father in heaven. These verses are a companion to **2:21-25** and, in effect, pick up where that passage left off. Their relationship to **2:21-25** is signaled by the words “*for Christ also*” (**v. 18**, which is the same wording in the Greek in **2:21**). Both passages show Christ as our example who, by his redemptive work, makes it possible for us to follow in his steps. **Verse 18** is a clear summary of Christ’s work on the cross: the substitutionary atonement. The word “once” signifies “once and for all time.” It is so used in **Heb 9:26, 28** where Christ’s one sacrifice is contrasted with the appearance of the high priest in the temple every year on the day of atonement and with the priests offering sacrifices again and again (see **Heb 9:25; 10:11-14**). The main point is that just as Jesus suffered as a righteous man and ultimately was vindicated, so the church must endure suffering, but it, too, will be vindicated.

There is debate about what is actually being referred to in **vv. 19-20**. There are three main views concerning what is going on in these verses: (1) the “descent to hades” view, i.e., after Jesus died, he descended to hell and proclaimed his victory and judgment on the fallen angels of **Gen 6:1-4**; (2) the “pre-existent Christ” view, i.e., Christ—in the person of Noah—proclaimed the gospel before the Flood to people who were then alive (imprisoned in their sins) but are now in prison in hades; (3) the “triumphal proclamation” view, i.e., after his resurrection (i.e., after he was “*made alive*,” **v. 18**) and during his ascension, Jesus proclaimed his victory to the fallen angels of **Gen 6:1-4** (see McKnight 1996: 215-17; Blum 1981: 241).

In **vv. 20-21**, the ark of Noah is seen to be a type or a shadow of baptism. The water of the Flood brought death to sinful people, but the ark was a place of refuge for all those who were in it (i.e., the ark was a type of Christ). Likewise in baptism, “*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life*” (**Rom 6:4**; see also **Col 2:12**). Baptism is the outward, visible sign of our inward, spiritual transition from death to new life in Christ. **Verse 21** says, “*Baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience.*” Peter is saying that it is not the water of baptism itself that saves us. That is just a ritual that removes dirt from the flesh. Rather, baptism is significant for what it stands for, namely, union with Christ (see **Rom 6:3-11**). The basis for baptism *as an appeal to God for a good conscience*” (**v. 21**) is our honoring Christ as holy in our hearts (**3:15-16**), and baptism is the sign that we have been cleansed by Christ and our sins have been forgiven, which results in a good conscience and a new heart (see **1 Tim 1:5; Heb 9:14**). Ultimately, Peter says that it is “*through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*” that we are saved (**v. 21**). The reason for that is that the resurrection validated who Jesus is and demonstrated that the Father accepted his sacrifice on our behalf. We appropriate that all through our faith in Jesus Christ. John Piper concludes by describing salvation’s relationship to baptism: “The movement of the body in water [**1 Pet 3:21**] save(s) only in the sense that [it gives] expression to the single justifying act, namely, faith (Rom. 3:28). Baptism is the outward appeal of faith to God in the heart.” (Piper 2013: 158) **Verse 22** describes the ascension (see also **Matt 22:42-44; Eph 1:20-22**).

Arm yourself with the attitude of Christ

This section concludes with **4:1-6**. Grammatically, the words “*Since therefore*” connect these verses with what has just been said; substantively, the statement “*Christ suffered in the flesh*” ties these verses back to the subject which began in **3:18**.

The “whoever” in **v. 1** (“*whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin*”) is generic, i.e., “*anyone* who suffers in the flesh.” It cannot mean that a person who suffers in the flesh cannot or does not sin thereafter, since **vv. 2-5** indicate that the rest of our lives will be spent as a battle against sin and temptation (see

also **Rom 7:15-25; 1 John 1:8-10**). It is probably referring to habitual sin or a life characterized by sin, inasmuch as we have made a clear break from sin by repenting of our sins and receiving Christ, although it may be referring to our transfer from a sinful to a saved state. We are able to “arm ourselves with Christ’s way of thinking,” because, when we become united with Christ, “*we have the mind of Christ*” (**1 Cor 2:16**). We are able to no longer live for “*human passions but for the will of God*,” because God’s will is revealed to us in the Bible. As Jesus said, “*If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free [e.g., from sin]*” (**John 8:31-32**). Peter is telling us that, since Christ suffered in the flesh, we can expect to suffer in the flesh because he is our example and we follow in his steps (**2:21; 3:14-17**): our suffering for righteousness reflects our new life in Christ (**vv. 1-2**); we already sinned enough in our past lives as nonbelievers (**v. 3**); and we are aware that all that we do will be included in Christ’s judgment at the end of the age (**v. 4**). Again in **v. 3**, Peter is calling all nonbelievers “Gentiles.”

There are two main views concerning the statement in **v. 6** about the gospel being “*preached even to those who are dead*.” One view holds that it refers to the *spiritually* dead (see **Eph 2:1**), not preaching the gospel to people who are now in hades. The reasons are: (1) grammatically, the word “for” relates back to the unbelievers (the “Gentiles”) about whom Peter was speaking in **vv. 3-5**; and (2) the second part of **v. 6** opens the possibility that “*they might live in the spirit the way God does*.” The second view holds that it refers to those who were alive when the gospel was preached to them and who came to Christ as a result of hearing the gospel, but are now physically dead.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Many Christians seem to think that, when a person comes to Christ, he or she should no longer face physical, financial, or other forms of suffering.

- How does that view compare to what Peter has been saying?
- Why do you think people have that view?

2. How can a person be “blessed” who is suffering for righteousness’ sake (see **3:14**)?

3. What has Christ done for us, as Peter relates in **3:18-22**?

4. How can we “arm ourselves with the same way of thinking” that Christ had, especially when it comes to suffering?

- The end of all things is at hand (4:7-11)

⁷ *The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.* ⁸ *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.* ⁹ *Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.* ¹⁰ *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace:* ¹¹ *whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

This section builds on what has come before. **3:18-22** focused on Christ’s suffering, resurrection, and ascension; **4:1-6** then drew the ethical implications of those facts for our lives. Now, **v. 7** picks up where **3:22** left off, and **vv. 8-11** draw the ethical implications of the fact that “*the end of all things is at hand*” for our lives. “*The end of all things is at hand*” is equivalent to “*the last days*” (**Acts 2:17**) and “*the last hour*” (**1 John 2:18**). This is a present reality which was inaugurated by Christ’s first coming, his ascension back to the father, and his pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. This will continue until Christ returns. Peter is saying this to encourage us. In other words, all major events have occurred in God’s plan of redemption, and now things are ready for Christ’s return and rule.

“Therefore”—in light of the fact that “*the end of all things is at hand*”—Peter exhorts us to be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of our prayers, in other words so we can pray more effectively. “*Above all*” we are to keep loving one another. Throughout his epistle, he reminds us of the importance of eschatology for Christian ethics and behavior (see **1:3-5, 7, 9; 2:12; 3:15; 4:5-7, 13, 17-19; 5:1, 4, 6**). **Verses 7-11** essentially summarize what our lives should look like, since we will be judged on how we did what these verses

exhort us to do.

Just as Peter has invoked eschatology as a basis for how we should live, throughout his epistle he also emphasizes the church (see **1:1-2, 10-12, 22; 2:1-10; 3:8-12; 5:1-4**). Not only is our behavior to be Christlike, but since the church is the house or household (family) of God (see **3:8; 4:17**), it should be a mutually supportive community. **Verses 8-11** highlight this with their stress on mutuality, i.e., love–show hospitality–serve “*one another*,” and their description of the use of spiritual gifts. When he says, “*love covers a multitude of sins*” (v. 8), we should understand this in light of **2:24** and **4:1-2** (Christ’s love for us caused him to bear our sins so that we should no longer live in sin but in righteousness). Since Christians have renounced sin in principle, we should be done with sin in practice. Earnest love is the key, because love is demonstrated in practical ways for the benefit of others. Further, the fact that love “*covers a multitude of sins*” indicates that one of the important manifestations of love is to *forgive* those who have sinned against us. Finally, since every believer has received certain spiritual gifts (v. **10-11**; see also **Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:7-11; Eph 4:11**), earnest love should find expression in the use of our gifts for the edification and building up of the body of Christ. Note that the gifts Peter mentions are in two categories: speaking and serving. Serving obviously is to be done for the edification and building up of others, but so are the “speaking” gifts, since those exercising those gifts are to speak the “*oracles of God*.” When the body of Christ is edified and built up, God is glorified.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How or why should eschatology affect how we live?
2. When many people think of spiritual gifts they tend to think of miraculous gifts. Peter does not specifically mention miracles here but stresses gifts that edify and build up others. What should we do to get a more “others centered” perspective on spiritual gifts like Peter has?

D. The church’s response to suffering (4:12–5:11)

- Do not be surprised when fiery trials come upon you, as though they were something strange (4:12-19)

¹² *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.* ¹³ *But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.* ¹⁴ *If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.* ¹⁵ *But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.* ¹⁶ *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.* ¹⁷ *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?* ¹⁸ *And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”* ¹⁹ *Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*

In this passage, Peter speaks in a more concentrated way about suffering. A “*fiery trial*” refers to something major. The list is practically endless, e.g., loss of a child; betrayal by a spouse; great physical injury or illness; loss of job or home; wrongful incarceration; persecution. When great ordeals of suffering happen to us, we should not be surprised “*as though something strange were happening to you*,” because God has always used fiery trials to “test” us, which indicates that he uses them as refining fires (see, e.g., Job). Particularly in such times, we need to “*walk by faith, not by sight*” (**2 Cor 5:7**). We need to continue to trust in the Lord—that he is sovereign, that he still loves us, that what is happening is part of his overall plan, and that we “*are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you*” (v. **14**)—even though we do not know why the “fiery trial” is happening, and there is no promise that we will even survive (see **Heb 11:36-39**).

This passage actually gives us reasons (explicit or implicit) why we can rejoice in suffering (see Piper 1994):

- **v. 12:** The suffering is not random or meaningless but is part of God’s plan for testing and refining our faith.
- **v. 13a:** Our suffering is evidence of our union with Christ.
- **v. 13b:** When Christ comes again, we will rejoice with exultation with him.
- **v. 14:** In suffering we are blessed, because the Holy Spirit rests upon us.
- **v. 16:** Rejoicing in suffering glorifies God.

- **v. 19:** God is faithful to care for our soul.

There are a few more things that should be said about this passage. **Verse 14** says, “*If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*” First, the Spirit’s “resting upon you” indicates more than just indwelling. That phrase is specifically used of Christ in prophecy (**Isa 11:2; 42:1; 61:1**); it found its fulfillment at Jesus’ baptism (**Matt 3:16; John 1:32-33**) and when Jesus quoted **Isa 61:1** and applied it to himself (**Luke 4:18**). This suggests something deeper is happening spiritually when we “*share Christ’s sufferings*” and suffer for his name. It may be hinted at in **Col 1:24**, where Paul said, “*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.*”¹¹

Second, with respect to judgment beginning at the household of God (**v. 17**), the word translated as “household” is *oikos*, which is the word for “house,” although it may be translated as “household.” J. Ramsey Michaels states that “as in the case of the ‘spiritual house’ of 2:5, the operative metaphor here is that of the Jerusalem temple” (Michaels 1988: 271). This reinforces the fact that the church is the new, true, spiritual Israel. Dennis Johnson comments that believers “may be assured that their present sufferings—far from being an indication of God’s abandonment or of the failure of the hope promised in Christ’s resurrection—are in fact another indication that Christians are the new temple of God on which the Spirit rests and in which his fiery presence is purifying and proving his dwelling place. . . . Their present troubles are the inauguration of the messianic baptism of Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16-17), which cleanses those who bear Messiah’s name that they may rejoice at the revelation of his glory and which will finally consume his enemies (2 Thess 1:7-8—where, as in 1 Pet 4:17, the enemies are described as those who do not obey the gospel). From this perspective afflictions for the name of Christ become themselves an occasion of joy, a cause for gratitude for the present resting of the Spirit of glory and of God on the new, living sanctuary.” (Johnson 1986: 291, 293) Additionally, as the true temple of God and the new, true, spiritual Israel, “the church faces the same moral demand as Israel did, to ‘put to death what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry’ (Col. 3:5, author’s translation). Paul knows that Israel’s besetting sin of idolatry is an option for the church too, disguised, as always, as inordinate desire which is not longing and love for God.” (Motyer 2000: 596)

Finally, **vv. 18-19** point out that, while God does not play favorites (even when he has an elect people), judgment comes from God, is inevitable, and will affect everyone. The difference is that, while God’s judgment on the “household of God” refines, purifies, and strengthens us, the judgment on unbelievers will destroy them (**v. 18** quotes **Prov 11:31**). Hence, **v. 19**, which conclude this section, in many ways summarizes the entire epistle.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think that many Christians are surprised when “fiery trials” come upon them?
2. Have you ever been able to rejoice in the midst of a severe ordeal? If so, how were you able to do that?
3. How can we help believers get a better understanding of God’s judgment (not only the final judgment, but his judgments now)?

- Elders (5:1-4)

¹So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ²shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

The word “So” (or “Therefore”) that begins this section relates back to what Peter has just said concerning fiery trials and the judgment of God that have come, are coming, and will come upon the church. He is pointing out that in times of suffering and persecution, the support of the church is particularly important. He is also continuing a pattern he began at least beginning in **3:13**, namely, he has alternated focusing on the

¹¹ For a brief article that looks at possible meanings of this verse, see Thompson 2020.

church's relationship to *outsiders* and then the *internal* life of the church. Thus, **3:13-17** focuses primarily on the church's relationship with outsiders, **3:18-22** on the internal life of the church; **4:1-6** (outsiders), **4:7-11** (internal); **4:12-19** (outsiders), **5:1-5** (internal). Further, **5:1-5** shows a parallel structure, with interesting points of contrast, with the "household duty codes" of **2:18-3:12**. There, he began by addressing those of least authority (servants/slaves) and worked his way up the ladder of authority to wives and then husbands; the amount and specificity of his instructions were greater for those with less authority; he then gave general instructions to all; and he concluded with an OT quotation. In **5:1-5**, Peter begins by addressing those with the most authority (the elders), his instructions to them are considerably longer and more detailed than his brief address to the younger people; he then gives brief instructions to all; and he closes with an OT quotation. Although the instructions to the church in **vv. 1-5** apply generally, since that section is sandwiched between two sections that primarily deal with suffering, what Peter is saying in **vv. 1-5** is particularly important for the church to prepare for and deal with suffering when it occurs.

In **v. 1**, Peter describes himself as a "*fellow elder*." This affirms solidarity and collegiality with the leaders of the churches and underscores "the unity and cohesion [so necessary when persecution looms] of the community that is such a prominent concern of the author" (Achtemeier 1996: 322). His next statements about being "*a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed*" may allude to Peter's denial of Christ and also show that his restoration is complete. This should encourage us that restoration, even from the worst of sins, is possible with Christ.

Verses 2-3 make explicit the pastoral functions of the elders. That Peter may be drawing from his own experience is indicated in his use of the word "shepherd," since that is the same word Jesus used in **John 21:16** when he told Peter to "*tend my sheep*." How to "*shepherd the flock*" is described in three pairs of contrasting phrases: "*not under compulsion, but willingly*"; "*not for shameful gain, but eagerly*"; and "*not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock*." The first two pairs of contrasts deal primarily with inward motivation; the last contrast deals primarily with outward behavior. These injunctions are of great importance. The NT describes greed or covetousness as "idolatry" (**Eph 5:5; Col 3:5**). Further, as Peter makes clear, the fact that church leaders must live lives worthy of imitation is not optional but is a major part of their job. These injunctions should cause not only elders but the church as a whole to assess church leadership, e.g.: Are the leaders primarily in it for the money? Do the leaders demand that the congregants accept what they say, or leave? Do the leaders seem to be teachable, or not? Do the leaders play favorites, or only associate with a few people in the congregation, or do they seem to care about all? Are our leaders examples of humility and servanthood, or not?

Verse 4 concludes this discussion by promising the "*unfading crown of glory*" to faithful elders when Christ appears, in keeping with the eschatological emphasis Peter has maintained throughout the epistle. Interestingly, the word "appears" is used here of Jesus' second coming, but the same word in **1:20** (translated there as "*made manifest*") was used of his first coming. Further, in his first coming, Jesus came as a "lamb" (**1:19**), but in his second coming he will appear as the "*chief Shepherd*." Since he has not yet appeared as the "chief Shepherd," our role as elders and church leaders is to continue following his example of humility and servanthood (see **John 13:3-15**). The principles that Peter discusses regarding elders would apply to all Christian missionaries and other workers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How united are most elders and church leaders and their congregations?
2. What can we do to deal with elders and church leaders who do not demonstrate the motivations, behavior, and character Peter discusses in **vv. 2-3**? Do we have formal structures in place to deal with this?

- Younger people (5:5a)

Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.

"*You who are younger*" implies those who are "younger in the faith" (see Elliott 2000: 838-40). As was true at the beginning of **3:7**, the word "Likewise" at the beginning of **5:5** implies that, like elders, others in the congregation also have responsibilities. Peter describes that responsibility as being "*subject to the elders*." This recalls his instructions to wives in **3:1-6**. As McKnight said in connection with that passage, "What submission means can only be understood by asking the question of what love means" (McKnight 1996: 189n.33). The

situation is similar here: elders are to “*shepherd the flock.*” Elders must live lives worthy of imitation, examples of humility and servanthood, who teach by the example of their lives as well as by what they say. Those who are younger should not be made to feel like they are “second-class citizens,” but should be built up and matured in the faith. The apostle Paul makes that clear when he gives church leaders their “job description” in **Eph 4:1-16**. When they do that, those who are younger in faith will have no problem being subject to the leadership of the elders, any more than wives will have a problem being subject to their husbands if those husbands are full of love, respect, and honor for their wives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What seems to cause the most problems between leaders of the church and the congregants?
2. What should be done to solve those problems in a loving, intelligent, wise, Christian way?

- All believers (5:5b-11)

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

These verses conclude the last of the three major substantive sections of this epistle (**1:3–2:10; 2:11–4:11; 4:12–5:11**). As Michaels notes, they are “most appropriately understood as Peter’s exposition of the text of Prov 3:34 LXX quoted in 5b” (Michaels 1988: 293). There are also marked similarities between **vv. 5-9** and **Jas 4:6-10** which also quoted **Prov 3:34**), although similar material is used to make very different points: “James in a condemnation of the Christian community for its lack of Christian virtues, 1 Peter as comfort for those caught up in suffering due to the world’s opposition to the Christian community” (Achtmeier 1996: 337). Similar to **5:2-3**, Peter here frames his exhortation as a series of contrasts. All situations, problems and adversaries are set against the sovereignty and power of God, i.e., the believers being humble versus God’s lifting them up; our anxieties versus God’s care; the devil who seeks to devour us versus God who will establish and strengthen us. Peter wishes us to know that we do not suffer alone, but our earthly troubles are part of a great cosmic struggle. In God’s proper timing, he will establish us in the glory to which he has called us and which he has promised us.

The quotation from **Prov 3:34** in **v. 5** acts as a hinge that changes the focus of humility from one another to God. In **v. 6**, the Greek translated “*humble yourselves*” is actually a passive imperative (“be humbled”). This is another example of a “divine passive,” i.e., it is the sovereign God who does the humbling; our responsibility is to accept and allow this God-ordained status. This indicates that one of the reasons for suffering is that it is a method God uses to humble us. Consequently, when we suffer we should realize that God is still in control of our lives. Suffering is not a sign that God has abandoned us (see **Heb 13:5**); instead, it is a sign that God is actively working in our lives. That is a hard lesson to learn and accept, but it helps us walk by faith and not by sight (**2 Cor 5:7**). **Verses 6-7** confirms this: we are being humbled “*under the mighty hand of God,*” not arbitrarily or for no reason; God has a purpose that will result in our good (“*so that at the proper time he may exalt you*”); therefore, instead of railing at God, we should be “*casting all our anxieties on him*”; and we should cast all our anxieties on him precisely because, although we may see it in the midst of our suffering, he confirms that “*he cares for you.*”

Verse 8 begins with what Michaels characterizes as two “strong imperatives,” i.e., “*be sober-minded*” and “*be watchful*” (Michael 1988: 297). Peter may again be drawing on his own personal experience, since in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus used the same word when he told Peter, “*Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation*” (**Matt 26:41**). This strength of these imperatives is indicated by their virtually synonymous meaning. The opposite of spiritual watchfulness is a spiritual drowsiness in which God’s perspective on events is never considered. The use of such verbs elsewhere in the NT is in an eschatological context, as is indicated here both by the object or reason for which believers must stay alert (“*your adversary*

the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”) and by the eschatological time references in **5:6, 10**. Thus, Peter places Christians’ suffering firmly in a cosmic context. Because the devil is behind persecution, Achtemeier makes the excellent point that, “the opposition the Christians face from their non-Christian contemporaries is not something they can avoid by modifying their behavior or adapting their beliefs in such a way as to escape such opposition” (Achtemeier 1996: 341).

Although Christians may not be able to escape opposition, persecution, and suffering, we are to *resist* the devil and remain “*firm in your faith*” (**v. 9a**; see also **Jas 4:7**). This should encourage us, because Peter is telling us that we have the power to successfully resist the devil. **Eph 6:10-18** is a good commentary on how we can resist the devil. Resisting the devil of necessity would include resisting his human agents who do his will. This recalls our discussion of **2:12-17** above concerning those who disobeyed governmental authorities to remain true to God. This is in accord with what Peter said in **vv. 6-7** about God’s using suffering to humble us. Specifically, our being humbled through suffering and resisting the devil-inspired forces that oppose us are the outward, visible aspects of the much greater spiritual battle in which we are engaged. We, like Job, can only perceive the physical events, not the underlying spiritual context. However, by using the divine passive in **v. 6a** and by referring to the devil in **vv. 8-9a**, Peter is assuring us that the events of this world, including the “fiery trials” we must endure, indeed take place as part of a great, cosmic, spiritual drama.

That also is hinted at in **vv. 10-11**. **Verse 10** contrasts the “little suffering” we must now endure with “*his eternal glory*” (see also **2 Cor 4:17-18; Heb 11:24-26**). This perspective—that the temporal things of earth are “little” compared to those things that are eternal—applies not only to temporal suffering and sin but to everything, including good things (see, e.g., **Matt 6:1-6, 16-21; 10:42; 19:21; 25:21, 23; Mark 9:41; Luke 12:16-21; 16:10; 19:17; 1 John 2:17**). In short, everything we do, including how we respond to hardship, has consequences far beyond what we can see or probably even imagine.

That God will act on our behalf is confirmed by the four-fold repetition of the verbs “*restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish*” and by the intensive pronoun that he will do this “*himself*.” All of this is reassuring us that our suffering is not in vain but is part of a great cosmic drama of which God is the author. We must observe, however, that the four things that God will do for us do *not* include a reference to our succeeding physically, financially, or in other ways in this world, or even that we will avoid being killed by our persecutors. In fact, the book of Revelation is replete with examples that both warn believers of coming persecution and exhort them to be faithful witnesses to death (see, e.g., **Rev 3:10; 6:9-11; 7:13-17; 11:3-12; 12:1-17; 13:7; 17:14; 19:7-10; 20:4-6**). Thus, in Revelation, “*following the Lamb wherever He goes*” (**Rev 14:4**) may lead to death and apparent defeat in this world but, as with Christ Himself, that is the means by which God triumphs over sin and evil. In fact, God’s identifying with and vindicating his people follows the pattern of his identifying with and vindicating Christ: believers will suffer, die, and appear defeated in this world, but their faithfulness to death results in their eternal victory and vindication (**Rev 2:9-10, 13; 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 11:7-13; 12:11; 14:1-5, 13; 17:14; 18:20-24; 19:1-9; 20:4-6**). The paradoxical or counter-intuitive nature of this is discussed in depth by Richard Bauckham: “When the beast puts the martyrs to death, who is the real victor? The answer, in Revelation, depends on whether one sees the matter from an earthly or a heavenly perspective. From the earthly perspective it is obvious that the beast has defeated the martyrs (11:7; 13:7). . . . The apocalyptic visions, however, reveal that from a *heavenly* perspective things look quite different. From this perspective the martyrs are the real victors. To be faithful in bearing the witness of Jesus even to the point of death is not to become a helpless victim of the beast, but to take the field against him and win. . . . The martyrs conquer not by their suffering and death as such, but by their faithful *witness* to the point of death (cf. 12:11).” (Bauckham 1993a: 235, 237)

Everything we are going through is ultimately for our good and will be brought to its conclusion by God himself. The doxology of **v. 11** confirms that what we are experiencing on earth will glorify him. This should give us a much better perspective in which to see and assess the opposition, difficulties, persecution, and suffering we may experience now.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it so difficult for many of us to see that God is still with us when we are suffering greatly, and that what we are experiencing is part of his plan?
2. What can we do, and what can the church do, to help people develop a better perspective on suffering?
3. What can we as individuals do, and what can the church do, to help people who are going through great

suffering?

E. Concluding salutation (5:12-14)

¹² *By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.* ¹³ *She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.* ¹⁴ *Greet one another with the kiss of love.*

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

“Silvanus” is thought to be the “Silas” referred to in **Acts 15–18; 2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thess 1:1; and 2 Thess 1:1**. It is likely that he was the one who delivered Peter’s epistle to the first point of entry for the churches to whom Peter was writing. It is somewhat ambiguous what “*this is the true grace of God*” is referring to. The two primary views are: (1) It refers to the entire epistle itself. His letter has been one of “*exhorting and declaring [teaching].*” God’s “grace,” both that manifested now and that to be revealed when Christ returns, has been prominent throughout the epistle (**1:2, 10, 13; 3:7; 4:1, 10; 5:5, 10, 12**). His readers are to “*stand firm in it.*” (2) Another potential candidate for what constitutes the “*true grace of God*” may be the suffering and persecution the readers were experiencing and were likely to experience. This seems counter-intuitive, yet a major emphasis of the entire epistle has been the fact of persecution and suffering, our response to it, and the blessing that will flow to the faithful through it. In **v. 12** his “*Stand firm in it*” suggests this and is consistent with his “resist” in **5:9**. Elsewhere, Peter had said that one finds favor with God for suffering for doing good (**2:19-20; 3:14; 4:14, 16**), and he had emphasized Christ’s own suffering as the example for us (**2:21-25; 3:18; 4:1, 13**).

In **v. 13**, Peter’s reference to “*She who is at Babylon*” is clearly not referring to the city of Babylon, but is probably a symbolic reference to Rome. By the first century, Babylon had become a small and obscure place, and there is no evidence of a Christian church located there or that Peter (or Mark) had ever visited it (Grudem 1988: 201). On the other hand, there is good evidence that Peter was in Rome about the time the epistle was written (Grudem 1988: 34-36). Indeed, early church historian Eusebius said that *1 Peter* was written from Rome (Eusebius 1988: 65 [*Ecclesiastical History* 2.15.2]). In a similar way, the worldwide, anti-Christian, socio-economic and religious culture or civilization is referred to as “Babylon” in the book of *Revelation* (**Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21**). The “she” who is at “Babylon” refers to the church at Rome. Peter’s calling Rome “Babylon” is ending his epistle on the same note with which he began it, namely, by implying the church’s experience of alienation in the world by alluding to the OT Jews who were in exile in literal Babylon. Implicit in this allusion is the warning not to become Babylonians, i.e., we are *in* Babylon but are not *of* Babylon; the culture and values of the world should not become our culture and values.

In **v. 14**, Peter says that we should greet one another with the *kiss of love*.” The implication is that our greetings should not merely be perfunctory but should reflect true attachment and love that should characterize relationships between believers who are, you will recall, the adopted brothers and sisters in Christ’s family. His last line, “*Peace to all of you who are in Christ,*” ends the epistle the way he began in **1:2**, “*May grace and peace be multiplied to you.*”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Peter symbolically refers to Rome as “Babylon”?
2. He concludes the epistle by again alluding to the fact that the church is a family and by mentioning “grace.” Why are both of these concepts important, especially given the context of suffering?

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