



PETER
FIRST
FAITHFUL ENDURANCE: FUTURE GLORY

A COMMENTARY BY
MATT KIMBROUGH



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PREFACE

This commentary on 1 Peter was written as a labor of love for Springhill Baptist Church. I have enjoyed the privilege of studying this glorious letter as a student of Scripture and as a pastor, and I wanted to share the fruits of my labor with my church family. Also, people constantly ask me what Bible study resources to use. I heartily endorse a number of commentaries on individual books of the bible, but the truth is they are often overly complicated and expensive. So, I thought I'd write my own commentary to coincide with our 1 Peter series. I hope it is as beneficial for those who read as it was for me as I wrote.

As you use this resource, I would encourage you to read the passages thoroughly, write out questions, think through the implications, etc. Only after you have allowed God to teach you through his Word should you come to a secondary resource like this commentary. Use it to get you thinking about what the text might mean. I rarely try to apply the passage to life, so you **MUST** do so after you discover what the words meant for their original audience. Pray and ask God how he wants to change you in light of 1 Peter.

I want to offer a quick caveat: the opinions and interpretations presented in this work are solely my own and do not necessarily represent those of Springhill as a whole or other leadership. First Peter is a difficult book, and people who love God have differing opinions on certain passages. Such is the joy of living in Christian community—iron sharpens iron. So, don't be afraid if you notice that not everyone interprets everything exactly the same. Use these areas of divergence to spark gracious conversations.

Finally, I would like to thank several special people who have made this work a possibility. I want to thank Dr. Craig Price of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary whose class on 1 Peter opened my eyes to the beauty of the epistle. Thank you to my fellow staff members at Springhill who have helped me complete this commentary. Thank you to Stacey Johnson and her family for

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May God bless you as you study 1 Peter!

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BACKGROUND

Introduction

Although the Apostle Peter is one of the primary characters in the New Testament story, the letters attributed to him have typically received less attention than those of other New Testament writers. Eugene Boring (M. Eugene Boring, 1 Peter, 13) refers to the letters of Peter as the “exegetical stepchildren” of NT scholarship. At least two factors contribute to the diminished influence Peter’s epistles have had in the church. First, some consider Peter more practical than theological. Second, in the western world, Peter’s themes of persecution and suffering for one’s beliefs don’t seem applicable, limiting the perceived value of 1 Peter for many Christians.

Yet, those who read 1 Peter easily recognize its significance as a Gospel-centered response to life’s struggles. Peter presents Jesus’ suffering as an example for his followers. For Peter, the Gospel is not simply a set of beliefs someone may choose to accept. Rather, it is the story of every Christian who is called to imitate Christ.

Authorship and Date

One of the most debated questions for 1 Peter is the identity of the epistle’s author. The traditional view is that the historical Apostle Peter wrote the letter within a few years of his martyrdom under Nero, who died in AD 68. The other most common suggestion, developed only in the critical scholarship of recent centuries, is that an author wrote 1 Peter in the spirit of Peter’s teaching not intending to be deceptive but simply using a common literary method of the time. With these two options in mind, let’s first examine the case against the apostle Peter’s authorship before turning to arguments in support of the traditional view.

There are several arguments for non-Petrine authorship. First, commentators throughout the years have noticed that 1 Peter has an advanced literary style in comparison to the other New Testament works. Therefore, scholars point to the historical traditions of Peter in the Gospels and Acts, who is depicted as an uneducated fisherman, and claim that the style of 1 Peter could not

have come from such a man. A second argument is that 1 Peter was written by someone influenced by Paul who chose to write a letter under the authority of Peter. In a related argument, Steven Richard Bechtler (*Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community, and Christology in 1 Peter*, 43) submits that Peter would never have exerted authority over Christians in a region of Pauline influence such as Asia Minor.

Other scholars use government letters from the time to suggest that the persecution of Christians—a subject common throughout 1 Peter—did not occur during Peter’s lifetime. Therefore, Peter could not have written the letter.

All of these arguments present a strong case for non-Petrine authorship. However, there are numerous reasons to believe Peter wrote the letter. First, with regard to 1 Peter’s advanced literary style, scholars point to the very common practice of employing an amanuensis (secretary) to compose a letter. Peter mentions Silvanus, who could have easily put Peter’s words into a more advanced style.

Second, it was noted above that some scholars think 1 Peter was dependent on Pauline literature. Yet, if the letter is not written by Peter or Paul, but is dependent upon Paul, why would someone claim to be Peter. Thus, there must be some reason that the early church attributed the epistle to Peter instead of Paul, and that reason is that Peter genuinely authored the epistle that came to bear his name.

Regarding Peter’s willingness to address those in Paul’s domain, the letter of 1 Peter betrays an author who is cautious about his authority (see especially 5:1). First Peter does not contain the argumentative tone of 2 Corinthians or Galatians, where Paul is fighting for control of his churches. Thus, even if Peter wrote to people in the same area as Paul, he did not overextend his authority.

In response to dating issues, a careful examination of 1 Peter reveals that the type of persecution in 1 Peter is not government-mandated physical torture but rather “verbal slander, malicious talk, and false accusations.” (Karen Jobes, *1 Peter*, 9) This type of persecution occurs in Acts during Peter’s lifetime.

Finally, nearly every early manuscript contains Peter’s name as the

author in 1:1. Also, the early church would have never accepted a document as Peter's that was written after his death. If the reasons for doubting Petrine authorship have been adequately addressed above, there is no reason to distrust what has been the church's position since the beginning: that the apostle Peter wrote this letter.

Peter likely wrote the letter while in Rome (see the note on 5:13 with regards to Babylon as code for Rome). Church tradition suggests Peter was crucified upside down in Rome during the reign of Nero. If the historical Peter did write from Rome, the dating scheme becomes much simpler. Based upon the traditional date of Peter's death under Nero, who died in AD 68, and Peter's relationship to Silvanus, scholar Peter Davids (*The First Epistle of Peter*, 10) rightly dates the epistle to AD 64-68.

Audience

Other than authorship, the most debated question is the makeup of Peter's audience. On the surface level, Peter appears to be writing to Jewish Christians living in Asian minor (modern day Turkey) undergoing persecution from their neighbors. Yet, few commentators argue that 1 Peter is addressed solely to ethnic Jews. Rather, Peter's audience probably includes Gentiles who are suffering persecution at the hands of fellow Gentiles for abandoning worship of the gods or Rome. And, as the narratives in Acts prove, Jews could be quite harsh toward fellow Jews who brought shame to their religion (for instance, by proclaiming a condemned criminal as God). Thus, Jews could easily have endured persecution from their ethnic brothers just as Gentiles did. It is best, then, to assume that Peter wrote to Christians of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. These believers were not literal exiles and sojourners who had been removed from their homeland. But, they did live as exiles—as people who could no longer relate to their neighbors—because of their holy, hopeful living.

Purpose

Considering that Peter's audience comes from geographically, economically, and socially diverse backgrounds, it is no surprise that Peter remains broad in his exhortations. At the same time, he addresses Christians who, no matter where they live,

have similar experiences of social ostracism and rejection for their faith. Thus, his purpose for writing is to promote faithful endurance in light of their future glory. Although temporary suffering seems never-ending at the time, Peter constantly reminds his audience that they have a better future, a heavenly inheritance awaiting them. If they remain hopeful, they will weather their present trials.

Themes

One of Peter's focuses is the future judgment. He does not emphasize the exact details of the "end," but he does exhort his audience to be future-focused. Peter does not dismiss the value of life now, but he believes a glorious future inheritance should motivate Christians to live in obedience now.

Another emphasis is suffering. Scholar J. Ramsey Michaels (1 Peter, Ixx) aptly states, "The path of Christ from suffering to resurrection to heaven is the path intended for Christians as well." The Gospel of Jesus is not simply a set of beliefs, but a way of life the Believer must imitate. Slaves, for example, should trust in Jesus, but they should also respond to their unjust masters as Christ responded to his persecutors. The blood of Christ saves Christian wives, but they are still called to imitate Jesus' selfless submission to authority. Similarly, it seems that Peter's entire audience would have likely encountered persecution to some degree. Christians acted differently and avoided the imperial cult (worshiping the emperor), around which public life revolved. These Christians would have suffered thoroughly even if persecution was not yet physical because they lost the most important commodity of the time: the honor and respect of their neighbors.

Finally, Peter consistently calls for holiness. How should suffering Christians live out the Gospel in their response to pain? Peter's answer is that they should live holy lives in obedience to God. One of the ways Peter challenges his audience to live in holiness is to love one another in the church family. Another aspect of holiness is by not offending non-Christians, whether they deserve such consideration or not. Third, Peter highlights the role of God as the one who will judge the deeds of all people, even his "chosen" ones. Fourth and finally, Peter shows that Jesus bore the sin of humanity, removing the sins of those who follow him.

Consequently, Peter sees no place for nagging sins of the flesh in the present experience of the believer.

Outline

I. LET SALVATION PRODUCE OBEDIENT ENDURANCE (1:1--2:10)

- A. ENDURE BY HOPING IN FUTURE SALVATION (1:1-12)
 - 1:1-2 ***Trinitarian Greeting*** Grace to the exiles given the power of obedience by the Trinity
 - 3-5 Praise for future eschatological benefits
 - 6-7 Praise that current trials may result in God's glory in the future
 - 8-9 Their love for and faith in Christ leads to future salvation
 - 10-12 The angels and OT prophets longed to understand your salvation
- B. OBEY IN LIGHT OF FUTURE SALVATION (1:13-21)
 - 13-16 Future eschatological blessings should motivate us to be holy as God is.
 - 17-21 Take obedience seriously knowing what salvation cost.
- C. LET THE ETERNAL GOSPEL PRODUCE BROTHERLY LOVE (1:22--2:3)
 - 22-25 Since, like Christ, you're imperishable, love one another now.
 - 2:1-3 Seek spiritual growth, not hurtful behavior
- D. ENDURE AS GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE (2:4-10)
 - 4-8 We are like Christ, who is a blessing to his people and annoyance to others.
 - 9-10 You are God's people for his glory

II. HUMBLY SUBMIT FOR THE GOSPEL, NO MATTER WHAT (2:11--3:18)

- A. THE CALL: HAVE HONORABLE CONDUCT (2:11-12)
 - 11-12 Live with purity that outsiders can recognize.
- B. EXAMPLES: SUBMIT EVEN TO BAD AUTHORITY (2:13--3:7)
 - 13-17 Submit to authority to remain blameless to

outsiders

18-25 Servants submit to harsh masters to reflect the innocent suffering of Christ that brought you to God

3:1-6 Wives of unbelievers should win over their husbands through gentile submission

Caveat 7 Husbands should honor wives

C. GENERALIZATION: SHOW LOVE AND PURITY TO ALL FOR THE GOSPEL (3:8-22)

8-12 The church is called to bless persecutors

13-17 Only suffer for what is right to shame persecutors

18-22 Christ's suffering ended in victory, which should cause his people to vow obedience.

III. BE HOLY AND STEADFAST BECAUSE ALL WILL BE JUDGED (4:1-19)

A. FUTURE JUDGMENT SHOULD PRODUCE RIGHT CONDUCT (4:1-11)

4 :1-6 Don't live sinful lives like you did, even if sinners hate you since, since they will be judged.

7-11a Also because of judgment, live lovingly as a servant of the church.

11b *Doxology*

B. FUTURE JUDGMENT SHOULD PRODUCE ENDURANCE (4:12-19)

12-14 Rejoice because suffering can result in glory.

15-19 Don't suffer as a sinner but as a Christian, knowing that others will receive their judgment.

IV. ENDURE AS A UNITED COMMUNITY (5:1-14)

A. RIGHTLY RELATE TO FELLOW CHURCH MEMBERS (5:1-7)

5:1-4 Church leaders should be willing servants

5-7 Those under leadership must demonstrate humility, relying on God, not self.

B. HUMBLY ENDURE ALL TRIALS AS THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH (5:8-14)

8-11 Resist the devil's plans for persecution--
which is to defeat all Christians.

12-14 *Closing* Remember the true grace of God.

SUMMARY: As you remember what the future holds, you must faithfully endure suffering by imitating Christ's suffering, relying on the church body, and living in holiness before God and persecutors.

COMMENTARY

I. LET SALVATION PRODUCE OBEDIENT ENDURANCE (1:1--2:10)

This first broad section is rooted in Peter's explanation of salvation and its future, eternal benefits. He begins and ends the section with unashamed calls for endurance (see 1:1-12; 2:4-10). Yet, merely enduring is not enough, for the Christian is called to imitate the holiness of God (see especially 1:15). One important aspect of holiness is brotherly love within the church, a subject Peter will return to throughout the letter.

A. ENDURE BY HOPING IN FUTURE SALVATION (1:1-12)

Peter begins with a theme that permeates the letter: endurance. Believers will enjoy God's glory and receive an inheritance in the future, which should motivate present endurance. One must endure life's trials while maintaining a love for and faith in Jesus. The fact that angels long to experience what believers have highlights the magnificence of salvation.

1:1

Peter addresses his letter to the "elect exiles of the Dispersion." The Dispersion (also Diaspora) literally refers to Jews who have been 'dispersed' to regions beyond Judea. In other words, the Diaspora are people who live outside of their homeland. Here, Peter may use the 'Dispersion' because his audience members are Jews living outside of Judea. Or more likely, he writes to the universal Church all around the world who feel like outsiders where they live.

Specifically, Peter addresses the residents of modern day Turkey. He calls them both the 'elect' and 'exiles,' meaning that even though they feel like outsiders, they are God's elect—a positive reassurance that God will also care for his chosen ones. Thus, even though they feel like 'exiles' in their relationships with other people, they're the 'elect' in relationship to God.

1:2

Peter introduces a Trinitarian formula relating the functional roles of the Father, Son, and Spirit to the work of election. God the Father knew them ‘before.’ Before what? Peter doesn’t specify here, but 1 Peter 1:20 states that God chose Jesus before the foundation of the world. The point is that God has always had a sovereign plan. He isn’t surprised by circumstances in the lives of His people.

The Spirit’s role is to produce holiness. Peter calls this process sanctification (see 1 Thessalonians 4:7). He gives God’s people a holy status, and He also works to transform lives to display outward holiness.

The purpose of God the Father’s knowledge, and the Spirit’s holiness in us is to bring us into obedience to the Gospel, meaning that we fully accept the sacrifice of Jesus and all of its implications. We don’t like the word obedience much anymore, but submission to every aspect of the Gospel is ‘believing’ the Gospel. Here, then, obedience does not mean we earn salvation. Actually, in the Greek, obedience and sprinkling of Jesus’ blood are two separate phrases that refer to one concept: fully believing the Gospel that Jesus sacrificed Himself for our sins.

Finally, Peter wishes for increasing grace and peace—the tangible presence of the Triune God—in the midst of their trials.

1:3-5

These three verses make-up a single sentence of praise (see also Paul’s expressions of praise in Ephesians 1:3-14 and Colossians 1:3-7). Peter praises God for granting us salvation though we don’t deserve it (“born again because of his mercy”). Our salvation comes with two benefits. 1) We have hope in a future resurrection that will demonstrate that God has defeated death forever. Christ’s resurrection has already taken place, guaranteeing that God is able to raise us as well.

2) Salvation comes with a heavenly inheritance. The word ‘inheritance’ calls to mind the land given to Israel in the Old Testament (see Numbers 26:53-56). Even though Peter’s audience members are landless exiles, they will inherit a heavenly land that has four characteristics. It cannot be destroyed. Sin cannot touch

it. The inheritance does not diminish over time. And, it is heavenly. Peter's persecuted church may lose property, their homes, or their lives. But, God's power preserves an incredible inheritance for them to experience at the end when they are saved from Hell.

1:6-7

After vividly describing the Believer's future heavenly reward, Peter exhorts his audience to rejoice in whatever kinds of trials come their way. He doesn't demand happiness in response to pain. Yet, Peter began his letter by discussing the glorious future hope because those who rejoice in such hope ward off discouragement. Trials are painful now, but pain is temporary and a future bliss is guaranteed!

Still, present suffering is necessary because it provides the opportunity to prove that faith is genuine. If we don't suffer, how do we know our faith isn't just talk? Peter says that faith is precious because he believes this truth: only when we value our faith above all comfort and happiness are we able to appreciate our trials. Peter alludes to the metaphor of a purging fire that reveals what is valuable (compare 1 Corinthians 3:12-15). All worthless things are burned away, leaving behind only what is precious. Unfortunately, we constantly desire the things that burn! Peter assumes, though, that if your faith is real, suffering will produce even greater glory at the return of Christ (in other words at the revelation of Jesus Christ). Jesus receives praise, honor, and glory when his people value him over comfort and believe in him in spite of pain. So, Peter points toward the future, hoping that his audience longs for Jesus to receive glory through their lives.

1:8-9

Peter has appealed to the future benefits of faith in Christ to motivate his audience to endure trials. Now, he appeals to their love for Christ, which seems to be genuine. When we experience pain, we want to know we don't suffer in vain. Peter's audience is suffering for Jesus. And, though they could assume he is absent, they have three responses that prove their faith is real. First, they love him, even though they cannot see him. Second, they believe in Him even though they are almost certainly tempted

to doubt. And third, they overflow with “inexpressible joy,” which reflects God’s glory by denying the defeating effects of their circumstances. What a beautiful description of what worship looks like!

Loving Jesus, believing in him, and rejoicing in Christ guarantee that a Believer will cross the finish line of salvation. They are the hallmarks of faith. We often speak of salvation in the past tense, as in, “I was saved when I was nine.” Yet, Peter typically refers to salvation as the future moment when we see the full glory of God and fully understand his grace. Thus, salvation is both present now and waiting to be fully realized in the future. Peter emphasizes the future element of salvation because he wants to motivate people to endure by reminding them of the big picture. Though they suffer now, they will enjoy the fullness of salvation at the end.

1:10-11

Peter says that the salvation we enjoy is something the prophets of old, our heroes of the faith, sought to understand. What’s fascinating is Peter’s understanding of inspiration here. It’s not that the prophets spoke about God or even for God. Rather, the Holy Spirit personally inspired them. Still, while doing the work of God, the prophets didn’t fully understand what they spoke or wrote. That’s why they had to search to try to understand who the Messiah would be and when he would come.

Through the Spirit, the prophets predicted the sufferings of Christ. The death and resurrection of Jesus was a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, seen especially in passages like Isaiah 53.

1:12

Completing the argument of the previous two verses, Peter considers his audience as more blessed than the Old Testament prophets and even the angels. First, the prophecies of Israel weren’t meant for the prophets, but for the church (compare Hebrews 11:39-40). Second, those who share the gospel are messengers of the whole truth of God, so Gospel witnesses have a higher calling

and a fuller empowerment of the Holy Spirit than the prophets.

Third, Believers experience the Gospel more fully than even the angels. Hebrews 2:16 states that Christ's death benefits the true sons of Abraham (in other words, true Believers), not the angels. Jesus died to save his human brothers and sisters, not purely spiritual angelic beings. Surely, then, our privileged position above the prophets and angels should motivate us to endure when the going gets tough!

B. OBEY IN LIGHT OF FUTURE SALVATION (1:13-21)

Believers are called to live with a heavenly perspective and an understanding of the holiness of God. If God is holy, his people should be holy. Therefore, Christians should strive to follow God's standard, especially considering the price he paid for our salvation.

1:13

With all the eschatological blessings available to the Believer and with their privileged status in mind, Peter challenges the church with a call for hope. Peter tells them to gird up the loins of their minds. A man in the ancient world would take the bottom of his robe and tuck it into his belt to keep his long garments from inhibiting his running, especially during a battle. Peter's point, then, is that his audience must prepare their minds.

He also tells them to be sober-minded, a call away from irrational, careless decision-making. Only with a prepared, focused mind can the audience fully place their hope upon the return of Jesus, when they will experience abundant grace (in other words, the fullness of salvation). Peter's point is that that the grace of salvation should remain the focus of our minds so our hope will endure.

1:14-16

As we endure suffering, our holy actions should prove that we have hope of a glorious future. Obedient children don't desire the things they wanted when they didn't know any better. Rather, since they know what is truly valuable, they should have

new desires and passions. So, in relation to v.13, Peter no longer wants his audience to desire the comfort, security, or simplicity of life before Christ. Instead, Believers should long to imitate God's holiness.

Peter cites Leviticus 19:2, where God told His people to be holy because He is holy. Would God have such an unreachable expectation? Yes! The fact that we are still sinners does not mean God lowers his standard of holiness (see also Matthew 5:48). Consequently, we should strive to be fully separated from sin.

Peter recognizes that when we suffer, we often let our guard down or excuse our sin. "My spouse is ignoring me, and God knows that I need affection. So, he won't mind if I flirt with someone at work." Or, "My family member died, so God will understand if I drown my sorrows at the bar." Yet, no matter our circumstances, God's intention remains: we are to imitate his holiness.

1:17-19

In this section of his letter, Peter calls for moral rightness, but he expresses it as a response to salvation—being redeemed (in other words, purchased out of slavery) by Christ's blood. Believers should strive for conduct that reveals their reverence for the God who judges impartially.

I thought we were saved by grace, so why does God judge each individual's work? Peter absolutely affirms that only the blood of Christ redeems Believers. However, because Peter writes to the church, not to the lost, he states that God will judge the works of the redeemed. For Believers, the purpose of this judgment is not to determine if they will be saved. Instead, Scripture indicates that God will reward each Believer based upon the life lived (see 1 Corinthians 3:13-14; Rev 22:12). But, the reward is not salvation, since Christ paid for our eternal life with his blood.

The main clause of this section appears at the end of v. 17: "Conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile." Again, the exile (other versions translate this word as sojourning or stay on earth) refers to time on earth, when Believers are separated from their heavenly home.

Interpreters also suggest that Peter's audience was affected by the edict of Claudius in AD 49 (see the commentary by Karen

Jobes, pages 28-41). At that time, the emperor Claudius expelled all Jews—and consequently many Jewish Christians—from Rome because of the conflict between Christians and Jews. If Peter's audience suffered under the emperor's edict, they would feel like exiles even from their original earthly homes.

While a future judgment for rewards motivates some to endure difficulties, the ultimate motivation is the past sacrifice of Jesus. Peter paints Jesus' blood as the currency paid for his audience's former idolatry to gain their release from that useless lifestyle. Believers are released not by their own merit or even by the most precious of currencies (gold and silver) but by the most valuable commodity: the precious blood of a perfect sacrifice. This Gospel truth should generate joy, thanksgiving, and a commitment to holy living in spite of suffering.

1:20-21

In v. 19, Peter described Christ as a spotless lamb, clearly evoking Old Testament sacrifice imagery. Now, Peter calls Jesus one who was known before the world's foundation but who didn't appear until the "end times." Although Peter often focuses on the future, he believes that the pre-ordained ministry of Jesus initiated the end of time (see also Peter's sermon in Acts 2:17, where he applies the end time prophesy of Joel to the day of Pentecost, when God poured out His Spirit).

Yet, Jesus didn't appear for his own sake, but on account of "you." Through Christ, we believe in a God who is not a distant, impotent God. Rather, He is the powerful One who enacted Christ's resurrection. God also glorified Christ by seating him at the right hand of the Father—meaning that Jesus now reigns over all. The result of Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection, and enthronement is that all Believers overflow with faith and hope in God. God's glory is always the purpose!

C. LET THE ETERNAL GOSPEL PRODUCE BROTHERLY LOVE (1:22--2:3)

The ministry of Jesus has changed his people, giving them an imperishable faith. Thankful believers should love God by loving the church. They should also focus on spiritual growth, not petty

disagreements and conflicts.

1:22-23

The final exhortation of chapter one is that Believers must love one another. Peter notes that they have already purified their souls, almost certainly a reference to their belief in the work of Christ and to their faith in God—both noted in the previous verse. Truth refers to the Gospel, and obedience means full acceptance of the Gospel (see the comments on 1:2 above).

The result of receiving the Gospel should be brotherly love. Thus, Peter exhorts his audience to live it out by fervently loving one another. Fervent love is genuine, not an act we fake on Sunday morning. Believers love each other not through sheer determination, but out of a pure heart. In other words, brotherly love comes as a result of the purifying effect of the Gospel. By implication, those who fail to fully understand and embrace the grace of Jesus will never love others well.

Again, what motivates our love is not our own past obedience, but our salvation. The term Peter uses here to describe salvation is rebirth. This birth comes not through a perishable seed (human mother) but by means of an imperishable one (Christ). Christ, the imperishable, is forever alive as the word of God. And since we have been born of the imperishable seed, we have the hope of an imperishable life. So, Peter appeals to the glorious future as a motivation for brotherly love.

1:24-25

To illustrate the previous verse, Peter quotes from Isaiah 40:6b-8. The analogy is that human values, institutions, and even bodies are transitory, but God's word endures (see a similar analogy in James 1:9-11). Isaiah had in mind the commands of God spoken through Moses when referring to "the word of the Lord," but the New Testament authors often refer to Christ as God's living Word (see John 1). The person of Jesus and his Gospel are so intertwined that Peter may speak of them almost synonymously as the word that was preached to you. Again, the Gospel of Jesus is motivation enough to love others well, since we have all been saved by no work of our own.

2:1

In light of the call for Christian love in 1:22, Peter exhorts his audience to throw away actions that inhibit brotherly love. Three of the terms denote deliberate harm done to another in conversation: malice, deceit, and slander. Malice is speaking with intent to hurt. Deceit is the language of falsehood. And, slander refers to hurtful words spoken about one person to another.

Hypocrisy and envy are private sins that hinder Christian love. Hypocrites don't necessarily intend harm, but they are selfish and insecure. Likewise, an envious person wants what another person has. Hypocrisy and envy can be more dangerous than outward sins because private struggles are often difficult for others to detect. Consequently, Peter's next exhortation is for each Believer to pursue personal spiritual growth.

2:2-3

Returning to the metaphor of new birth, Peter exhorts his audience to long for spiritual growth. In the same way that a newborn is desperate for milk, Believers should desire God's Word--his instruction for their lives, seen most fully in the person of Jesus. Although the author of Hebrews refers to the spiritually immature as babies in a negative sense (Hebrews 5:12-14), Peter uses the metaphor to convey positive desires.

Although all who have experienced a new birth enjoy the hope of Christian faith, Believers can continue to grow in their understanding and enjoyment of salvation. Similarly, when I get a new phone, I immediately have access to numerous tools and apps. However, only after months of working with the phone do I begin to fully enjoy all of its bells and whistles. Peter's point, then, is that he wishes for all Believers to seek growth, allowing them to enjoy the bells and whistles of their salvation.

To further motivate his audience to pursue spiritual growth into salvation, Peter reminds them that they have already tasted of God's goodness (a reference to Psalm 34:8). Peter may also emphasize that spiritual growth is enjoyable. Faith is not a joyless journey. It is the pursuit of ultimate pleasure in a right relationship

with God.

D. ENDURE AS GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE (2:4-10)

While persecuted Christians may be tempted to think their suffering is a result of something they did wrong, the truth is that Jesus was persecuted. The Gospel is a blessing to those who accept, but an annoyance to those who do not. Thus, while others may reject the church, believers should be confident they are God's people for his glory!

2:4-5

Peter offers the theological rationale for living holy lives in the midst of persecution. He compares the church to the temple. First, he calls Jesus a living stone chosen by God. In spite of Christ's status before God, he has been (and often continues to be) rejected by men. The primary time of rejection Peter refers to is almost certainly the crucifixion. Like a builder casting away an unworthy foundation stone, Jesus' own people executed him like a murderer.

Like Jesus, Peter's audience members are living stones. Peter does not explicitly draw the comparison to their rejection, but it is likely implied. Christ builds his church into a spiritual house, not a material temple. But, the church also acts as the priesthood serving in the temple (see Revelation 1:6). Priests exist to serve God as his holy, set-apart servants.

More specifically, the church serves as a priesthood by offering spiritual sacrifices. Based on 2:9 below, these sacrifices are proclamations of God's greatness (in other words, sharing the Gospel). In light of the whole letter, the audience's obedience in the midst of trials is also an act of sacrificial worship.

2:6-8

In v. 6, Peter quotes Isaiah 28:16, where God promises to respond to injustice by laying a trustworthy cornerstone in Zion (the site of God's temple). Peter understands Isaiah 28:16 to refer to Jesus as the foundation stone. He is God's answer to injustice, especially the persecution of the church. Although evil seems to control the world, the Believer will not be disappointed in the end, for Christ will have the final victory.

Peter next quotes Psalm 118:22, a psalm of victory, praising God for defeating the Psalmist's enemies. In Psalm 118:21, the author gives thanks for his salvation. Thus, Peter uses this passage to emphasize that Christ is the source of salvation. Those who believe in Him bask in his precious value. But, the church's persecutors fail to believe in Jesus for salvation.

Peter then describes the fate of unbelievers using Isaiah 8:14. Isaiah refers to a remnant of believing Jews who, after returning from exile, would enjoy the benefits of faith in the Lord. But, those who fail to fear God have a predetermined punishment: they will stumble and break. Thus, instead of Christians fearing their non-Christians persecutors, those who do not know Christ should be afraid.

Our interpretation of the phrase "to this doom they were also appointed" (NASB) will greatly impact our understanding of God's sovereignty and character. Some theologians understand Peter to say that God chose who would not believe. Just as God choose some to believe, He choose others to reject Him. On the other hand, I believe this passage teaches that those who disbelieve are destined to stumble. In other words, what God appointed was a punishment for the sin of disbelief. He did not choose certain people to reject Him.

Whatever the case, Peter emphasizes that those who know Christ need not fear, while people who reject him will face inevitable doom.

2:9-10

Unlike those who are destined to be tripped up by Christ, Peter's audience has a special status. Peter offers six descriptions of their status, all rooted in descriptions of Old Testament Israel. First, the church is an elect race, elect being one of Peter's favorite terms for the church. Peter does not refer only to ethnic Jews who believe in Jesus, but to the whole church.

Second, the church is a royal priesthood (see the comments on 2:5 above). A royal priesthood may refer to both the Levite tribe (priests) and the tribe of Judah (kings), meaning that the church fulfills both roles.

Third, the audience is a holy nation, indicating their status

before God in relation to the Roman Empire. Within the Roman nation, the church is a people set apart for God.

The fourth description uses relational language indicating that God favors his church. Yet, God did not elect them so they could wander to other lovers. He wants full commitment from his people.

All of these elements of the church's privileged status serve a purpose: God's people will proclaim to others the incredible transformation of their status. Peter refers to his audience's past as darkness. Now however, they enjoy the illumination of God's amazing light like vacationers take pleasure in a beautiful sunset over a majestic mountain range. God is excellent and amazing, and His people should proclaim it to the world.

Verse 10 reiterates the status of the church. Individual members came from various nations. Jews, Greeks, Romans, and people from many other cultures worshiped together in the early church. But, through the work of God, they became God's nation and people. Thus, the church should offer allegiance to God and not give in to the idolatry of their persecutors.

Furthermore, before God changed their status, His people received no mercy from him--they simply got what they deserved. However, Believers now benefit from God's incredible mercy.

II. HUMBLY SUBMIT FOR THE GOSPEL, NO MATTER WHAT (2:11--3:18)

In the second major section of 1 Peter, the subject of submission under persecuting authorities takes center stage. Peter begins and ends with generalizations about maintaining honorable conduct toward all people. In the central section, Peter gives three examples of potentially bad authority to which the Christians should submit: government, slave-masters, and unbelieving husbands. In each case, Peter at least implicitly suggests that righteous suffering may draw persecutors to the Gospel.

A. THE CALL: HAVE HONORABLE CONDUCT (2:11-12)

This brief introduction to section two offers some initial exhortations for believers living in an unbelieving society.

2:11-12

As the descriptions in the previous verses make clear, Peter's audience members are foreigners in this world. Consequently, their only allegiance is to a holy God, whose people should imitate his holiness. In other words, since Peter's audience is not at home in this world (and its sinful values), they must live by the ethical standards of their real, heavenly home. Therefore, they must resist fleshly desires. Here, flesh means the carnal, basic, sinful drive present in human beings. Those who indulge this drive destroy the hub of vitality and life: the soul.

Yet, proper conduct and obedience before God does not only protect Believers. In fact, the church's holy living can lead to the salvation of others. The way Christians live among the nations (meaning those not part of the holy nation) should be worthy of respect and honor. Yet, Peter also understands that, in spite of their conduct, they will be accused of doing evil.

In the early centuries of the church, Believers suffered under sporadic times of persecution when Christians were accused of atrocities by people who simply misunderstood Christian faith. Peter expects, though, that unbeliever's will examine their own accusations and recognize the good deeds of Peter's audience.

How will the church's persecutors glorify God on the Day of Visitation (which refers to the final time of judgment)? In 1 Peter, those who glorify God are always Believers (see 1:8; 4:11, 16). Also, the only other New Testament occurrence of this Greek word observe is in 1 Peter 3:2, referring to husbands who are won over by observing their wives' behavior. Furthermore, the next section in 1 Peter elaborates what good deeds look like in the midst of suffering, even referencing Jesus' righteous suffering and its saving effect. What Peter means, then, is that the persecutors might be saved (see Matthew 5:16) as they watch Christians remain holy and faithful under persecution.

B. EXAMPLES: SUBMIT EVEN TO BAD AUTHORITY (2:13--3:7)

In the central part of section two, Peter uses three examples to illustrate the nature and power of righteous submission to human authorities. The example of Christ shines forth as the ultimate pattern for believers to follow.

2:13-14

Peter's audience may have thought of themselves as countercultural or even opposed to the Roman Empire. For Christians, if Jesus is King, Caesar is not. As a result, critics probably accused these churches of sedition and subversion. Yet, Peter commands submission to earthly authority. His point is that the Gospel is offensive enough on its own (see 2:4, 8 above), so why intentionally provoke those in authority? For the sake of Jesus' (i.e., the Lord's) reputation, the church must conduct itself with honor to the point that its enemies are silenced.

Peter calls for self-submission to all authority and then clarifies two institutions with which his audience would have had contact. First, they must submit to the king: Caesar. Every emperor in the first century practiced idolatry, and several were known as truly evil leaders (e.g., Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero). Why would Peter demand submission to evil pagans? In John 19:11, Jesus claims that Pilate's authority ultimately derives from God. Similarly, Romans 13:1 notes that God establishes all authorities and, in Romans 13:7, Paul commands his audience to "render to all what is due." We may conclude, then, that God created an orderly world with authority and rules. Although sin has certainly corrupted authority, Christians are not released from respecting God's created order. Yet, we only render to our leaders "what is due," and no human authority deserves worship.

A second authority deserving submission is the governor. Unlike Caesar, governors have direct contact with their subjects. Peter elaborates the role of such men, describing them as ones who punish evildoers and who praise those who do right. Such leaders merely do their God-given job, so if Christians act accordingly, they will earn the praise of the authorities.

2:15-17

In v. 15, Peter clarifies the reasons his audience should submit to authority. First, submission is God's will. Second, by complying with all authority, Believers will silence their naysayers. These opponents display their ignorance by slandering God's holy people. Thus, the church's only response is godly conduct.

Verse 16 clarifies the mindset behind the command to submit.

First, Christians are free people, in spite of their governmental or social circumstances. Some Believers are even slaves. Yet, Peter suggests that the type of freedom Christ gives trumps all other circumstances. God's people are truly free.

Unfortunately, freedom can become a cover for evil. Specifically, Peter likely has in mind blatant insubordination to authority. Yet, true freedom is slavery (i.e., full and total submission) to God, who demands honorable conduct in all arenas of life.

Peter summarizes vv. 13-16 with four imperatives. First, honor everyone, not only those who deserve respect. Second, love the Christian community. Peter likely hoped that each local church would be known for its love and not for insubordination. Third, Peter says to fear God, meaning that, in light of God's holiness, we must recognize the consequences of disobedience. Peter may also imply that God alone should be feared, not the threats of persecutors or the emperor. Finally, the audience is again commanded to honor (probably synonymous with submit in v. 13) the emperor, who was the ultimate symbol of secular authority.

2:18-20

The call to submission in v. 18 governs the next three verses, which all elaborate on the nature of submission (notice that the explanatory conjunction for appears at the beginning of each verse). Here, Peter focuses not on governmental authority but on social authority--specifically, master-slave relations.

Modern readers must keep in mind that ancient slavery was vastly different than American slavery in the 19th century. For example, freed Roman household slaves often remained with their masters rather than be 'free' and starve to death. We are tempted to think Peter should have suggested that all Christian slaves seek freedom. Yet, their spiritual freedom before God trumped all other freedoms. Consequently, the Gospel was Peter's priority.

Peter emphasizes that Christian slaves are called to do what is right in spite of their masters' behavior. Whether one has a caring, gentle master or an abusive and harsh one, believing slaves should submit.

In v. 19, Peter explains why slaves should submit. God's gracious favor rests on those who endure unjust treatment in

obedience to God. By implication, God does not honor one who fights back or who seeks revenge by sabotaging his master. Yet, slaves who willingly become a living parable of Jesus' death find favor with God.

In v. 20, Peter clarifies what he means by unjust suffering. God only honors the endurance of one who remains steadfast during suffering that results from faith in Christ. A sinful slave merely gets what he deserves when punished. Peter reiterates, however, that godly slaves who endure suffering gain the favor of God.

2:21

Peter makes a profound declaration at the beginning of v. 21: every Christian has been called to innocent suffering. Peter already noted that Christians are the elect recipients of an inheritance (see 1:1), but here he says Believers have been called (or elected) for suffering. God's people are called to be living parables of the Gospel message. Thus, when we endure persecution and suffering, we paint an unforgettable picture of Christ's righteous sacrifice for sin.

Peter emphasizes that Christ suffered "for you," which should illicit an attitude of thanksgiving and obedience. Unlike Jesus, Peter's audience cannot impart salvation through their suffering and death. Yet, Christ's selfless sacrifice is an example that all should follow. Thus, while we cannot provide salvation, we can put the Gospel above our own safety, even our lives.

2:22-24

In this beautiful and concise summation of the suffering of Jesus, Peter describes the Gospel in light of Isaiah 53. In vv. 22-24, Peter emphasizes five aspects of Jesus' suffering.

1) Jesus did not sin. By implication, he did not deserve death but suffered unjustly (Isaiah 53:11 refers to the suffering messiah as the Righteous One).

2) Referring to Isaiah 53:9, Jesus was not killed for being a fraud or for lying. Christ truly was the sinless Son of God.

3) When Jesus was verbally abused, he did not verbally abuse in return (Isaiah 53:7). Neither did Jesus threaten his attackers with future punishment.

4) Rather, his focus continued to remain on the just Judge, knowing that if God is truly just, he will punish those who deserve it. Christ placed himself in God's hands because he knew that to manipulate the situation was to disbelieve in the justice of God.

5) Verse 24 depicts the impact of Jesus' death two different ways, following each with a positive result. First, Jesus bore our sins in his body when he was crucified. He did not merely die as an example, but as a substitution for our sin. The two results are that we would die to sin, meaning that it would no longer hold effect on us, and that we might live in righteousness--in the joy of right standing before God.

Second, Christ was wounded. To modern readers, it does not make sense that someone else's physical wound could spiritually heal another. Yet, Isaiah 53:4-6 predicts that one would suffer for the sins of others and justify the many (53:11). Hebrews 9:11-14, 22 further describes Jesus as an unblemished lamb who perfected the sacrifice system of the Old Testament. God required Jesus' death because without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

2:25

Finally, Peter presents the metaphor of sheep and shepherd. Peter tells his audience that they were wandering away from God like sheep foolishly straying from their shepherd. Yet, because of his death, Jesus has claimed his sheep. Now, Christ acts as the shepherd and guardian of our souls.

Shepherd is a term Peter applies to church leadership in 5:2. Jesus is the ultimate shepherd who protects the sheep from attackers and from wandering into danger. Christ is also the overseer, pastor, or bishop of their souls--meaning that he exercises authority and guards his followers. Consequently, those suffering persecution can patiently endure their trials, knowing that Jesus himself guards their souls.

3:1-2

Peter turns from addressing slaves with harsh masters—who are presumably unsaved—to offering advice for wives of (mainly) unbelievers. As in the previous section, the Gospel remains

Peter's center focus, for the wife's hope is that her husband will turn to Christ. But why does Peter demand Christian wives to submit (or 'be subject') to unbelieving husbands? Doesn't that seem unfair? If only women had to submit to unsaved authorities, submission might seem unfair. However, Peter uses the same word in 2:13, telling all Christians to submit to human authorities, and in 2:18, where Peter commands slaves to submit to their masters. Peter hopes that humble submission will demonstrate the truth of the Gospel to all types of unsaved authorities.

For Peter, the phrase 'obey the word' does not refer to works of salvation but is rather a metaphor for accepting the Gospel. Ironically, unbelieving husbands may accept the word without hearing a word, since their wives' behavior is so uniquely praiseworthy. The husband will take notice of his wife's upright conduct, her purity, and her submission to him and, hopefully, be changed in response.

3:3-4

Since Christian women are expected to model the Gospel to their husbands, Peter also points out that they must have different priorities than unbelieving women. In v. 3, Peter describes the typical woman of the Greco-Roman world. Her focus is hair, accessories, and clothes—the outward appearance. Peter begs Christian women to avoid shallow adornment.

Verse 4, then, is the positive side of the coin—what a woman should focus on. Rather than outward appearances, the believing woman should focus on the hidden person. The same word 'hidden' is translated as 'secret' in Matthew 6:4, 6, where Jesus tells his followers to give and pray secretly, not to draw attention to themselves. The hidden person refers to one's private thoughts that no one hears or knows about. Thus, Peter's emphasis is not that the Christian woman should fake kindness or submissiveness, but that her inward disposition should be peaceful (the meaning of 'gentle and quiet,' similar to 1 Timothy 2:2). To properly submit, she must show grace and gentleness, not begrudgingly obeying as if her husband has finally worn her down. Instead, she should remember that a gentle spirit is precious to God—the ultimate motivation for her submission.

3:5-6

Peter qualifies his understanding of wifely submission with an OT example of submission: Sarah. Although her husband was not an unbeliever, he was often a bonehead, even trying to pawn her off to save himself (see Genesis 12:11-20). Yet, Sarah obeyed Abraham, treating him with respect by calling him 'sir,' which could also be translated master or lord. Peter seems to assume that husbands often don't deserve their wives' submission, but God does. Those who submit to God but submitting to their husbands' God-given authority imitate Sarah's obedience and become her children, following in her footsteps. Specifically when they are obedient and courageous (two of the main themes of 1 Peter), they emulate the holy women of old. Even though submitting to an ungodly man is frightening because his actions can be unpredictable, God is the only authority worthy of fear (see 2:17, 3:14).

3:7

After six verses about wives, Peter throws in a sentence of instruction for husbands. It doesn't fit the theme of submission to those who may lead poorly (seen in 2:13—3:6), so Peter probably felt it necessary to include these instructions as a compliment to 3:1-6. He gives men a command followed by two reasons/results.

First, men are to live with their wives with understanding by honoring them—an unpopular concept in the 1st century world. Just because women must submit does not imply that husbands may rule with an iron fist. Rather husbands honor wives like an expensive, fragile vessel. Such a vessel would receive a place of honor on a mantel and only be accessible for special occasions. In other words, don't treat your wife like she is common. Instead, realize that women also have a privileged spiritual status, possessing an equal share of salvation (or 'the grace of life') as their husbands. The man functions as a leader, but his wife is a spiritual equal.

Second, honoring one's wife keeps the husband's prayers from being hindered. Simply put, God cares about how we relate to one another, so a man's relationship with God suffers when he hurts his wife.

C. GENERALIZATION: SHOW LOVE AND PURITY TO ALL FOR THE GOSPEL (3:8-22)

The final part of section 2 generalizes based on the examples presented previously. Christians must bless their persecutors, knowing that the shame of wrongly persecuting someone will be the only punishment the believer may inflict. Yet, in light of 1 Peter's future emphasis, one must remember that Jesus received victory after he suffered, so the Christian should wait with hope.

3:8

After addressing slaves, wives, and (briefly) husbands, Peter issues instructions for all believers. Similar to 2:1, Peter first calls for attributes that build unity in the body (unified minds and brotherly love would not apply to outsiders). The first and fifth attributes emphasize the thought life as it relates to others. Like-mindedness is essential if a church wishes to move in the same direction. Yet, without humility, unified thinking is impossible.

The second and fourth attributes relate to the emotions. Rather than disconnecting from one's brothers and sisters, Christians should overflow with tenderhearted sympathy, caring for one another with compassion. The middle, and most important, attribute is brotherly love. In the ancient world, the relational bond between brothers was considered stronger than that between husband and wife. Thus, a community of people who loved one another like brothers would stop at nothing to protect their unity.

3:9

In v. 9, Peter shifts his attention from relationships within the church to interactions with outsiders, basing his instruction on Psalm 34:12-16. Much like Peter's explanation of Psalm 53 in 1 Peter 2:21-25, Psalm 34 emphasizes the Christian's obligation to respond to persecution peacefully. Exodus 21:23-25 gave the Israelites freedom to seek retribution equal to the offense. However, much like Jesus, Peter argues that one act of evil is enough and that the Christian need not return it.

Instead, Peter says they were elected (or called) by God to be blessers. The word 'bless' is a command, yet the blesser also receives his own benefit: blessing. Peter fails to define the nature

of the blessing one might receive, though the quotation in v. 12 suggests that the Lord is especially concerned with petitions of peacemakers. Disrespectful husbands may hinder their own prayer lives (v. 7), but the Lord listens to those who bless their persecutors.

3:10-12

Peter next refers to Psalm 34:12-16 to illustrate the correlation between righteousness and godly speech, especially in response to evil. The Psalm of David reflects a time of oppression and fear when David desperately needed the Lord to rescue him. Peter quotes a portion of the Psalm where David teaches others how to rely on the Lord.

First, the petitioner must not attack his persecutor with words. And second, the righteous person should do what is right by pursuing peace, not merely waiting for the other party to initiate reconciliation. The motivation for acting in such a godly manner is that the Lord is attuned (ears and eyes represent God's attention) to those who act rightly, but he ignores the wicked. Rejection of the wicked is both a warning for his servants to act properly and a promise that God is the ultimate judge.

3:13-14a

Peter has instructed his audience to remain righteous even in response to persecution. In v. 13, Peter makes a broad generalization—that those who do good typically avoid the wrath of others—by asking a rhetorical question. In the tradition of wisdom literature (for example, Proverbs in the Old Testament), Peter assumes that if you live right, life will go better. Still, as the entirety of Peter's letter makes clear, bad things happened to the best people, even Jesus. Therefore, if someone does suffer even while doing what is right, that person will be blessed (v. 14a).

3:14b-17

Verses 14b-16 form one long sentence in the original language. In addition to blessing (v. 14a), another motivation for righteous responses to suffering is that, even though godliness did not prevent the suffering of God's people, such behavior will vindicate them before their slanderers. Here, Peter's instructions

don't primarily deal with physical suffering but rather verbal abuse and slander.

At the same time, even nonphysical persecution can be frightening and harmful, so Peter offers two pieces of advice. First, try not to be afraid or worried (v. 14b). Peter doesn't want his audience to be defeated by circumstances. Second and more importantly, make Christ the priority of your hearts (v. 15a). In the first century, people considered the heart the center of intellect, not emotion. Pain often consumes the minds of suffering people, so the best medicine is to worship Jesus in spite of their circumstances.

Making Christ their priority results in faithfulness to the Gospel (v. 15b). Believers—even those who are mocked for their faith—should not be caught off guard when asked to explain why they endure without retaliating. The world wonders why they are willing to forsake comfort and worldly pleasure, and their explanation is that they have real rewards waiting for them in the end. Such is the Christian hope. Yet, even as they confess their hope, Peter stresses two qualities that are quite important to their testimony: gentleness and respect. One must not hinder the Gospel by presenting it with an attitude of superiority.

Prioritizing Jesus above all else should also result in a clear conscience (v. 16). Only when one can be confident suffering is undeserved does endurance honor Christ and shame the persecutor. Peter even implies that the persecutors know Christians are innocent; yet, those who are sinful despise good behavior. As a result, the Believer's righteous conduct—done in honor of Christ—will shame the persecutor, whether in this life or at the final judgment.

Verse 17 sums up the previous verses. If God's people are to suffer, it should be for doing good, not evil. The phrase "if that should be God's will" suggests that sometimes (though not always), God chooses for his people to suffer even though they did no wrong. See Isaiah 53:10 for a similar concept regarding Jesus, the suffering servant.

3:18

Peter appeals to the Gospel story as the ultimate example of righteous suffering (just as he did in 2:18-25). Verse 18 represents

the main idea of vv. 18-20. Although we get hung up on vv. 19-20, Peter's main point is simple: Christ suffered once for sins. The death of Jesus—a righteous man—paid for the sins of the unrighteous. The purpose of his sacrifice was to bring us into a relationship with God. By implication, Peter's audiences should willingly suffer to bring their persecutors to Jesus.

Next, Peter describes Jesus' post-mortem experiences, first referencing Christ's death and resurrection. Jesus' flesh (which refers to the unglorified, mortal body in 1 Peter) died, but he was made to live again—which refers to Jesus' resurrection—by God (compare the same verb in Romans 8:11). The phrase "in the spirit" is one way the early church described the glorified body that all Believers will receive on the last day (see 1 Corinthians 15:44-46). However, the "spiritual" resurrected body is not a soul without a physical body; rather, it refers to the perfected whole person. Thus, Jesus was made to live again at his resurrection, when he was given a spiritually glorified body.

3:19-20a

These verses are some of the strangest and most difficult in the whole New Testament. The Catholic Church traditionally claims that Jesus descended into Hell between his death and resurrection to preach either to demons or to the lost. However, v. 18 indicates that the time period Peter addresses is after Jesus' resurrection, not during the three days he was in the grave. So, what did Jesus proclaim after his death? And, to whom did he speak?

The phrase translated "he went" in v. 19 is actually the third item in a list that began in v. 18 (being put to death... being made alive... going). The first phrase referred to Jesus' death, the second to his resurrection, so this phrase likely refers to his ascension. Furthermore, the same exact word for "he went" in v. 19 is used in v. 22 about the ascension. Therefore, we may conclude that Jesus' ascension is the event in view in v. 19.

In the New Testament, Jesus' ascension is associated with his sovereign ability to rule and with victory over his enemies (for example, Hebrews 10:12-13 and Ephesians 1:20-21). In 1 Peter 3:19, then, Jesus proclaimed his sovereign victory over the enemies of God by ascending to power at the right hand of God.

Peter's audience members desire vindication for being righteous in the midst of persecution, so to remain hopeful, they should look to the example of Jesus. He was killed, but demonstrated his righteousness as he ascended to Heaven.

Who are the spirits in prison? Well, the New Testament never uses "spirits" to refer to humans who are alive, dead, saved, lost, or anything else. So, the spirits are not people. But, what spiritual beings were disobedient at the time of Noah? A Jewish tradition common when Peter was writing closely associated the strange events in Genesis 6:1-4 with the flood story that begins at Genesis 6:5. The Jews of Peter's day thought the "sons of God" in Genesis 6:2 were angelic beings who disobeyed God and contributed to the wickedness that led to the flood. We see this tradition in Jude 1:6-7 also. So, Peter referred to this tradition as an example of evil spiritual powers ("angels, authorities, and powers in 1 Peter 3:22). To these beings, Jesus proclaimed his authority as he ascended. For Peter's audience, then, no human authority or spiritual power will have the final say because Jesus is above them all!

3:20b-22

Peter also uses the Noah story to associate water and salvation. Noah and his family were saved (or "rescued") from death by drowning by floating through the water in the ark. They were spared because Noah was obedient to God even when everyone turned against him. He was mocked and harassed by others, but he remained steadfast. Similarly, baptism rescues (in other words, "saves") the harassed people of God from their persecutors.

So, is Peter saying that baptism is a part of salvation? No. Water did not actually save Noah, and it does not save the believer. Noah was only saved because he heard God and responded. In a sense, he and his family were "saved" long before the flood came. But, when God flooded the earth, it was an outward indication to everyone that Noah truly had a relationship with God. Similarly, followers of Jesus are saved when they appeal to God for a clean conscience. In other words, someone who recognizes his sinfulness and asks God to change him is saved. Baptism, like the flood, is an outward indication to the world that someone is God's child. And only because Jesus was raised from the dead can the

believer have hope that God will give life to his children.

The final reminder in v. 22 is that Jesus has authority over all of creation. In heaven, he sits next to God in the seat of power, so all who follow him can trust that he has not lost control of their circumstances.

III. BE HOLY AND STEADFAST BECAUSE ALL WILL BE JUDGED (4:1-19)

The third main section of 1 Peter focuses on the final judgment of God, when he will punish unbelievers. Since the evil will suffer, Christians should not long to imitate the evil deeds from their lives before Christ. Believers should also endure, knowing that God will bring about justice in the end.

A. FUTURE JUDGMENT SHOULD PRODUCE RIGHT CONDUCT (4:1-11)

Peter recognizes that his audience members did not always know Christ, but that many lived wicked lifestyles in the past. But, rather than return to those lifestyles in hopes of ending persecution, Christians should rejoice that they will not experience God's eternal punishment. Believers should also enjoy their church family, rather than long for the company of sinners.

4:1-2

In light of Jesus' vindication after his death, described in the previous verses, Peter again connects the Gospel with the everyday life of a Christian. Jesus is not merely one in whom we believe, but is one whom we imitate. Christ suffered "in the flesh," referring to his unglorified body (in other words, prior to his resurrection), but he had victory in sight. Peter believes that those who face persecution with the same future-oriented thinking as Jesus have already won the battle against sin, selfishness, and pride. The word "has ceased" does not mean a believer becomes sinless but that sin no longer seems enjoyable. Like Christ, resolute believers focus on the will of God, not their fleshly desires.

4:3

Peter draws a distinction between the past and present morality of his audience. He says there was plenty of time in the past to follow sinful desires, whether partying or sleeping around. But, these behaviors in no way correspond with the Christian lifestyle. Following Christ and gratifying one's sinful inclinations are mutually exclusive. They cannot co-exist. Thus, the time has come to live according to the will of God (v. 2).

4:4-5

According to Peter, the response of the Gentiles (probably here meaning non-believers) to the righteous living of his audience is negative. First, they're shocked that some choose not to join their partying. Yet, the surprise doesn't end with mere shock, but rather turns into public, verbal abuse. Unbelievers run Peter's people down, probably because they find their purity unnerving. Again, Peter's focus with respect to this persecution turns to the future, noting that these sinners will be judged. They will answer to God someday, so there's no reason for the audience to seek punishment or retribution. So, Peter's audience shouldn't wish they could join in, because such evil will lead to judgment.

4:6

This passage is difficult to interpret because of Peter's terminology. Who are "the dead," and what does he mean by "flesh/spirit"? Yet, one must remember that the average person in Peter's society did not believe in any type of life after death. Consequently, unbelievers probably mocked believers for living with a future hope in mind. Unbelievers thought, "Today is all we have, so why not do what we want?" Most Christians believed in a better future after death, but some probably struggled to move beyond their old mindset.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul addresses young believers who think that those who have died have missed out on the plan of God. But, Paul assures them that they will receive a future resurrection, just as Jesus rose again. Peter probably faces a similar problem. So, he says that even believers who are now dead heard the Gospel. And, although the death of believers seems like God's

final judgment against them by human standards, God's standard are different. His will is that they might live "in the spirit," which is a reference to the resurrected life (see comments on 3:18). Thus, the best translation of 6b is as follows: "though they are judged in the flesh according to the standards of men, they live in the spirit according to the standards of God."

4:7-9

As we begin a new paragraph, Peter begins to issue commands. He has just described the judgment process and now reiterates that the end has drawn near (and it continues to impact the present). With this eternal perspective in mind, he begins his commands by calling for self-control and sober thinking. Rather than join the "Gentiles" in their sin, believers should dedicate themselves to prayer.

Yet, Peter's command to pray should not give the impression that one's faith is a private, individual thing. The church must love one another, and you can't love someone with whom you have no relationship. So, these suffering Christians are not to withdraw from one another, but are to find solace in the church.

Interestingly, Peter states that love covers sins. Who are the sinners and what are the sins? Like James 5:20, Peter seems to mean that loving someone who failed makes it so they don't have to endure the stigma of their sins. Yes, some believers may have been adulterous or violent before Christ, but true Christian love does not dwell on past mistakes.

Love should also lead to hospitality, a necessary attitude when members of the church are experiencing rejection and persecution. Peter expects the church to take care of one another, letting people stay in their homes if needed. Yet, the attitude matters because God is not pleased when his people go through the motions of obedience while complaining.

4:10-11

Another way Peter wants his audience to display love is through their charismatic service. Some neglect using their gifts, or possibly use them in a way that does not benefit the church. Either example is not good stewardship of God's diverse gifts of

grace. The two gifts mentioned are speaking and serving. Each gift is supposed to be used as if God is the one working, not the individual. Peter emphasizes the gift giver, not the receiver, since the purpose of these gifts is to glorify of God. And the agent who makes God's glory possible is Jesus, whose sacrifice allows man to glorify God. As the brief doxology at the end of v. 11 makes clear, God is deserving of all the glory he could ever receive.

B. FUTURE JUDGMENT SHOULD PRODUCE ENDURANCE (4:12-19)

Present suffering can result in future glory when believers endure, as long as suffering is not a result of sin but of faith. Again, the wicked will be punished, so Christians need to be patient and endure.

4:12-14

Following the brief doxology in v. 11, Peter returns to the issue of persecution, but from a different perspective. For Peter, fire provides an opportunity for refinement, just as precious metals are rid of their impurities by fire (see Zechariah 13:9). Peter outlines two responses to a "fiery event." In v. 12, the wrong response is surprise, thinking that nothing bad should ever happen or that following Jesus should always be easy. Believers often assume that negative circumstances and suffering are unnatural. Yet, pain allows the Christian to test his or her faith and determine if it is genuine.

The better response appears in v. 13: rejoicing. We are rarely happy to undergo difficulty, whether resulting from persecution or not. But, Peter points to the future and says that those who share Christ's suffering will be very excited when his glory is revealed (at Christ's return). Those who endure God's fiery refinement receive the blessing of maturity now (see James 1:2-4) but, more importantly, they will share Christ's glory in the end.

In v. 14, Peter further describes the blessings awaiting those who endure. The specific trial mentioned here is social rejection, when others hate you for your faith. For Jesus—and thus for the Christian—suffering and glory are inseparable. Consequently, Jesus' crucifixion is his greatest moment of glory. For believers,

following in Christ's suffering produces the blessing of the Spirit's presence and provides tangible assurance that their faith is real.

4:15-16

Peter returns to an earlier theme (see 2:16, 20): that suffering because of one's own sin is not honorable. Rather, only suffering for Christ is beneficial. Peter names four roles the Christian must not play: murderer, thief, evildoer, or meddler. The last role may have been Peter's emphasis. Meddlers are those who attempt to oversee (or, in other words, boss around) someone who is not in their charge, claiming responsibility that God did not give. Meddling and the more traditional sins should not exist in the lives of Believers and should not be the source of their distress. On the other hand, the one who suffers for his faith should not be ashamed, but should use his trial to glorify God.

4:17-19

Again, Peter returns to judgment as motivation for endurance and right living. Peter indicates that God's people will be judged first, then those who "disobey the Gospel." But, why does God judge believers at this time? Well, 4:12 noted that present suffering is a time of testing for those who claim a relationship with God. In a sense, then, God has begun to judge his people already (in other words, to separate the wheat from the weeds, as in Matthew 13:24-30).

So, if God allows difficulty into the lives of his own people, how much more harsh will he be with those who refuse to "obey the Gospel,"—a term meaning full acceptance of the Good News. Peter asks what their outcome will be with the clear indication that it won't be good. He then cites the Greek version of Proverbs 11:31 (not the Hebrew version, which appears in your Bible). For Peter, the difficulties the righteous experience are persecution and testing. The true believer will endure all suffering with steadfast dependence upon God and will enjoy salvation at the final judgment. The godless person, on the other hand, will most certainly experience suffering exponentially greater than the momentary trials believers must endure now. Peter's words have a negative tone, yet his intent is to encourage those who feel as if their persecution is unbearable by pointing out that God will make all things right in the end.

Thus, v. 19 reiterates that the audience must trust God. It may be his will that they suffer in this life, but he is faithful with their souls. Therefore, the audience should remain faithful to the good works their Faithful Creator designed for them.

IV. ENDURE AS A UNITED COMMUNITY (5:1-14)

The final section of 1 Peter includes the letter's closing exhortations and greetings. Yet, the emphasis is on a healthy, functioning church-life full of mutual submission, humility, and encouragement. By remaining united, individuals will repel the attacks of the devil.

A. RIGHTLY RELATE TO FELLOW CHURCH MEMBERS (5:1-7)

Peter establishes first that leaders must approach their role with a godly attitude and approach. Yet, the church also has responsibilities to submit to leaders and demonstrate humility to one another.

5:1

Peter begins this section by finally stating his credentials, with three specific references. First, he is a fellow elder. The term "elder" is synonymous with "pastor" or "overseer" in the New Testament, all referring to the primary church leaders. Second, he is a witness of Christ's sufferings. Peter has not been stating what he had heard about Christ based on tradition. He's been sharing what he saw and experienced during Jesus' passion. Third, Peter includes himself as a sharer in the future glory that will be revealed and, therefore, as one who must also maintain hope now.

5:2-4

After identifying with his audience in v. 1, Peter now gives a command for elders to shepherd the sheep. Peter qualifies this role with four instructions. First, shepherds must oversee voluntarily in accord with God's will for them. This pastoral role of "overseer" is like an administrator who makes sure progress continues as expected. Yet, one who fulfills the role of overseer should not do so merely because people expect it of him. He must serve willingly, considering it a joy and a privilege. Furthermore, he must serve

because he believes it is the will of God.

The second instruction relates to the elder's motivation. Many take positions of leadership for their own gain, whether financial or social (such as gaining respect). Elders should not be selfish, but should be eager to benefit his church.

The third instruction expresses the manner of leadership, not heavy-handed but servant-hearted. Elders don't bark out orders for the church to follow. Instead, they lead through example, believing the flock will follow as the elders follow Christ.

Fourth, elders must remember that Christ is the ultimate shepherd of his church and that he will return to hold his servants accountable for their work. While ministry may feel inconsequential at times, God's leaders will receive a victor's crown that lasts.

5:5

After giving advice to the elders, who are almost certainly church leaders (not just older men), he offers some advice for younger men (probably referring to those who are not leaders) and for the congregation as a whole. It is likely that the young men in Peter's churches struggled with thinking they know everything. Yet, they are called to submit to the social order (much like the slaves in chapter 2) and follow their leaders.

Speaking to the whole church, Peter calls for humility across the board. No member of the community should exalt himself above the others. Rather, humility should be the garment we always wear, putting the needs of others first. The Scriptural reason comes from Proverbs 3:34. Those who focus on self will meet the opposition of God, who values selfless behavior. As a result, the humble get to experience his grace, not because they earned it but because only they will appreciate it.

5:6-7

Peter uses the theme of "humility" to transition into his closing exhortations. As is apparent in James 4:10, humility is something that a person is supposed to instigate in his own life. Specifically, Peter calls for humility under God's right hand (a symbol of his power) with the implication that God can take care

of his people. The temptation of pride is to try to take care of and promote one's self. But, such an attitude will not only keep one from experiencing victory over persecution, but it will also keep a person from experiencing the exaltation that only God can bring. Yet, waiting on God's timing to be exalted requires great patience and faith.

For Peter, part of what it means to humble oneself before God is that the Christian offers God his worries. Instead of attempting to take care of ourselves and bear our own burdens, we must depend on God's sovereignty. Peter wants his audience to trust God to take care of them and their situation. Thankfully, God cares for his people. He is not distant and doesn't leave them hanging.

B. HUMBLY ENDURE ALL TRIALS AS THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH (5:8-14)

Peter offers a final call to endurance, girded by a trust in the care of God and understanding of the worldwide Church's struggles. He ends by exhorting the community to fully understand his letter as representative of the grace of God.

5:8-9

While verses 6-7 stressed God's role in our suffering, v. 8 emphasizes the Christian's obligation to recognize potential pitfalls around him. Peter expects God's people to have minds that are undistracted and that actively watch for dangerous situations. Peter also wants them to recognize that their true enemy is the devil, not their persecutors. The devil is prowling, waiting for a weakness he can exploit. Those who ignore the warning signs will suffer his attack.

Yet, the Christian should not respond to the roaring lion with paralyzing fear, but rather should stand firm. The devil is not impossible to repel, so resist him through firm faith in God's care. Also, as Peter has appealed throughout the letter, Christian community is vital in the midst of persecution and suffering. The hurting believer should never stand alone, and he should never believe that nobody has gone through what he's going through. In fact, Christians all around the world are suffering while maintaining their faith. Their success should motivate endurance.

5:10-11

Not only is mutual suffering a motivation to endure but, as Peter has stressed throughout the entire letter, pain is temporary and the glory of God's future blessing is the bedrock of endurance. God's character matters when we're suffering. So, Peter notes that God is gracious, a truth difficult to accept during hard times. Yet, his grace is obvious because he saved us when he called us into the eternal glory of Christ. God also demonstrates his grace by promising that he will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish. Clearly, his people will be complete, safe, and satisfied by him.

All of these truths bring Peter in v. 11 to praise God for his might. God is powerful, able, and willing to care for his people. Thus Peter in essence proclaims, "May he reign forever."

5:12-14

Peter ends his letter with several practical points. First, Silvanus—who is an example of faith—wrote what Peter dictated to him. Second, Peter sums up his letter, stating that he hoped to exhort (meaning challenge) and testify to the Gospel (the true grace of God). One final time, he challenges the audience to stand firm in the Gospel and in all of its promises for the future.

Third, the church in Babylon (a common symbol for Rome) has supported the writing of the letter and probably the apostle Peter. He reiterates that the sending church is uniquely linked to his audience, being chosen together with them.

Fourth, Peter encourages a symbol of unity common in the non-Western world, a kiss of love. Again, the unity of the church is vital to faithful endurance. Finally, Peter closes by wishing peace upon those who are in Christ.



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