In the Shadow of Babylon

WRITTEN BY TOM KELBY

In the Shadow of Babylon

A STUDY OF 1 PETER

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handstotheplow.org

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Sarah and I dedicate this book to the saints at Cornerstone. You excel in faith, love, and flexibility. Your partnership in the gospel is grace from heaven to us. May our Father's face continue to shine brightly on you!
– Tom

To my dear friend in Christ, Jon DeWitt. You let the love of Christ shine through you each and every day. You've been a blessing to me, and to those around me, for so many years! Thank you for your dedication and passion to all-things Jesus! Love you, brother.
– Mark

INTRODUCTION

As Christians, we are currently citizens of the New Jerusalem. Our physical address, however, is not in the Blessed City. It is, at least for the present, in the shadow of Babylon. How does a follower of Christ live in a hostile world? How can a citizen of heaven maintain joy when walking in the valley of the shadow of death?

1 Peter is grace for weary "elect exiles of the dispersion". Drink it in. Receive the help granted by Christ's Spirit here. The Father's desire isn't to see you beaten down and absorbed by Babylon. Rather, he would have you conquer.

Grace,

November 11, 2013

ABOUT THE COVER

The artwork on the cover isn't my favorite. I don't like dirty city walls, and I'm not overly fond of pink flowers. Yet this combination seems to be very fitting for a study of 1 Peter. The wall and the flower simply do not belong together. Yet there they are, standing side-by-side.

The wall, it is clear, has been standing for a long time. While it is old and dirty and has no beauty, it is very solid. It appears to be immoveable. The flower, on the other hand, is beautiful, but it is fragile. There is no soil. Beyond this, there is no protection. The flower is exposed and would appear to be in imminent danger of being trampled. Yet, at least at the present moment, the flower is not being trampled. It is thriving.

This strange combination, we must know, cannot continue forever. That's part of the pain of seeing this picture. The flower, we naturally assume, cannot survive in these harsh growing conditions. It will soon be destroyed and its beauty and fragrance forgotten.

Such would appear to be the condition of the church. Like the flower, we are out of place. Our home is in the New Jerusalem, that is the environment for which we were created. But we are currently living, as Peter says, as "elect exiles of the Dispersion". To put it another way, we are living "In the Shadow of Babylon"—a city devoted to rebellion against God.

One would think that the oppressive nature of such a city would destroy the fragile beauty of the church. But the church isn't as fragile as it might appear. Babylon, likewise, isn't as strong as it might appear. Thankfully, this strange combination will not continue forever.

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. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 5:10-11

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

There are four parts to this eight-week study: Scripture reading, study questions to answer, study notes to read, and a weekly journal to record insights the Holy Spirit has taught you. All four are important. You will not get nearly as much out of this study if you skip any of the four. Here's how I would recommend using this book:

On day one of each week, read the verses in 1 Peter we have printed in the book. We have printed the actual verses in this study book for two main reasons. First, we believe you will be able to more freely write notes and questions in the margins, which is something you may not be comfortable doing in your "everyday" Bible. Second, many Bibles include study notes. These are helpful, but they can keep you from "wrestling" with the passage yourself.

Read the passage slowly. Once you have read through the passage, read it through a second time. God has a great deal he would like to show you in his word. As you read, ask the Lord for wisdom. Why is this passage significant? What is the truth the writer is trying to get across in this passage? How do the thoughts in this passage relate to those in the verses before it? We have printed the passages with enough spacing so that you have the room necessary to write your thoughts and questions regarding the passage, however, do no writing your first time through the passage. Simply read the passage slowly. Your second read-through of the passage should be different. This time, pay close attention to the themes the writer is developing. Circle repeated words or phrases. Underline major themes. Avoid the use of a Bible commentary or the notes in a study Bible at this point. Do the work yourself. The Lord will give you wisdom.

On days two through five, answer the study questions. The questions will often bring you to other passages that will further illuminate the verses you are studying.

On day six, read the study notes. These notes will give you my perspective on the passage. Sometimes in the notes you will find verses referred to, but not printed. These verses are important. Please take the time to look these verses up. It will help you in your overall understanding of Scripture.

Finally, after you've read the notes, write down any truths the Holy Spirit has taught you over the previous week.

Week One

1 PETER 1:1-2

WEEK ONE

1 Peter 1:1-2

DAY ONE

1. Read 1 Peter, preferably in one sitting. When you are finished, complete the following:

1 Peter ...

DAY TWO

2. Carefully read and mark-up the text printed below. Underline or circle key words and phrases. Note any patterns. Draw lines connecting words or phrases that are related. Define any words you don't know.

1 PETER 1:1-2

1 ***Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,***

To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 ***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:***

May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

3. After studying these verses, complete the following:

In these verses, Peter ...

DAY THREE

4. Peter introduces himself as an Apostle. What do the following verses teach about the identity, function, significance, and authority of these men?

Matthew 10:1-4

Acts 1:21-22

Matthew 19:27-28

Ephesians 2:19-21

Revelation 21:10-14

5. How did the early church relate to the teaching of the Apostles? *Acts 2:42*

6. How can the church relate to the teaching of the Apostles today?

7. The Holy Spirit was to do something significant, according to Jesus, for the Apostles. What was it?

John 14:26

John 16:12-15

8. Why, based on John 14:26 and John 16:12-15, can we trust the writings of the Apostles?

9. Based on the verses we have just considered, how should a Christian approach a book that has been written by an Apostle?

DAY FOUR

10. Peter calls his readers "elect exiles of the Dispersion". The "Dispersion" refers to the scattering of God's people that was promised if they were to disobey God. The following passages are all related to the Dispersion. For each passage note God's promises. What does he promise to do if Israel disobeys? What does he promise to do after he disperses them?

Deuteronomy 4:15-31[1]

Deuteronomy 28:25[2]

1 The noun translated "Dispersion" isn't used in this passage. The verb, however, translated "to disperse" is used in verse 27.

2 The Hebrew (MT), which is the primary text our English Old Testaments are based upon, states that Israel "shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth". The LXX (Greek translation—the translation from which Peter tends to quote) doesn't use this language. Instead, it says, "and you will be in dispersion in all the kingdoms of the earth".

Deuteronomy 30:1-10

Nehemiah 1:8-9

Psalm 147:1-3[3]

Isaiah 49:6

11. Now that you've considered the Old Testament background of "the Dispersion", carefully read James 1:1 and reread 1 Peter 1:1. Both of these letters are written to the church (which is made up of both Jews and Gentiles). What do James's and Peter's introductions tell you about how they saw the church? In other words, what do they consider the church (again, made up of Jews and Gentiles) to be?

DAY FIVE

12. Peter mentions each of the members of the Trinity in these verses. What does Peter say that each member does or accomplishes?

God the Father

The Spirit

Jesus Christ

13. According to verse 2, how are people made "elect exiles" and why are they made "elect exiles"?

3 This verse is like Deuteronomy 28:25. The LXX uses the term "Dispersion".

14. How might a description of the Trinity's work bring comfort or help to a group of "elect exiles of the Dispersion"?

DAY SIX

15. Read the study notes printed below and then complete the following sentence.
This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

1 PETER 1:1-2

I don't like suffering. Suffering is, however, the life that I have chosen. Or, more accurately, it is the life that has been chosen for me. In turning to the Lord Jesus Christ, I have turned my back on the world in which I live and have embraced the life and values of a foreign power. Because of that, I suffer.

Others have suffered far worse things than I have suffered. I don't suffer like believers in many other countries. I don't suffer like believers in my own country. And I certainly am not currently suffering like Peter or the believers to whom Peter was writing. But nonetheless, because of my love of the Lord Jesus, I suffer.

The world is, for the believer, a very dangerous place. It is crawling with enemies: we battle the passions of the flesh that are "waging war" against our soul, we live among unbelievers who are walking in sin and who (sometimes) love to heap scorn on us because we are attempting to live holy lives, we (at least some of us) are married to unbelieving spouses who refuse to obey the gospel, we (again, at least some of us) work for employers and with fellow employees who heap scorn on us because of our belief in Christ, and, as if that wasn't enough, the devil is actively looking to devour us.

How, in such a world, can a follower of the Lord Jesus make it to the end? This little letter was written to provide answers ... and hope.

Peter begins the letter by telling his readers who he is.

> ***Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ* … 1 Peter 1:1a**

Peter writes with the conscious awareness that he is an apostle. The apostles carried (and still carry) unprecedented authority—authority that was, in many ways, equivalent to that of the Old Testament prophets. Read carefully Jesus' promise to the original apostles. Notice, particularly, the promise regarding what the Holy Spirit would do in their lives.

> ***"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."*** **John 14:26**

The Holy Spirit, Jesus went on to say, would guide the apostles "into all the truth".

> ***"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."*** **John 16:12-15**

As an apostle, Peter's words can be trusted. He writes with authority that was given to him by the Lord Jesus himself. The Holy Spirit helped Peter and we can have confidence that Peter did not, in anything he wrote here, make a mistake. He said everything that should have been said. He left nothing out.

But Peter's words aren't just true. They are also binding. Peter's words in 1 Peter must be obeyed. They are as binding upon believers as words that are spoken by our Lord.

While he doesn't say it in the introduction (he saves this information for the conclusion), it's important to know that Peter writes from a place he calls "Babylon".

> ***She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings …*** **1 Peter 5:13**

Even though Peter says that he is writing from Babylon, it is likely that he is writing from Rome. He calls Rome "Babylon" because Rome was, at that time, the city at the center of world power, and, thus, a fitting symbol of mankind's opposition to God.[4]

It's worth considering, for a moment, the idea of "Babylon", for it will help us understand Peter's mindset as he writes. The city Babylon (then known as Babel) makes it entrance into the biblical story early in the book of Genesis. Babel was the city that was founded in defiance of God's plan for mankind to multiply and fill the earth with his image.[5]

> ***Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."*** **Genesis 11:4**

Babel was built for rebellion. And while Babel was destroyed, the love of Babel was not. The world is always rebuilding new versions of Babel. For this reason, believers came to see Babylon as a symbol of mankind's defiance against God.

4 The same comparison between Rome and Babylon is made in Revelation.
5 See Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 9:7.

Babylon represented mankind's attempt to "make a name for [itself]" rather than, as was the original purpose for mankind, making a name for God.

In some ways, the story of the world can be summarized as the story of two cities: Zion and Babylon. Zion is the city of God—the place where he is loved and worshiped. Babylon is the city of man—the place where man is loved and worshiped.

Like the fruit that was held out before Adam and Eve, Babylon looks inviting. It entices people to worship anything but God. That is why, in the book of Revelation, Babylon is compared to a prostitute; Babylon leads people into spiritual adultery.

> ***And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations."*** **Revelation 17:5**

It is not until the book of Revelation that we see Babylon completely destroyed.

> ***After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. And he called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living."*** **Revelation 18:1-3**

Peter, even though he is in Rome, feels like he is living in Babylon. He is not (as I am right now), writing from a lakeside cabin. He is among wolves. What an appropriate place from which to write a letter about suffering and how to successfully live as a Christian in a world that is rabidly opposed to God.

Peter writes to the church in Asia.

> ***To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia …*** **1 Peter 1:1b**

If you look at a map in your Bible, you will see that Peter is writing to believers scattered across an entire region (modern day Turkey). While Paul often wrote to believers in a particular city (i.e., Rome or Philippi), here we find a much larger area referenced. Suffice it to say that Peter's audience today covers an even larger territory (the earth!).

The phrase "elect exiles of the Dispersion" demands close attention. Let's start with the last word first. *Dispersion* refers to the "state or condition of being scattered".[6] This is a general term and could refer to anyone being scattered. This is not how Peter is using this term. He has a very specific dispersion in mind—"the Dispersion". The editors of the ESV help the readers see this by capitalizing the word "Dispersion".[7]

6 F.W. Danker, et al., eds. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd ed.* (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 236.

7 Interestingly, "Dispersion" is capitalized in the 2011 text edition of the ESV. It was not capitalized in the 2007 text edition of the ESV.

The same word also appears in John 7:35 and James 1:1. In these passages, the term also refers to a very specific dispersion:

> ***The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?"*** **John 7:35**

> ***James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion …*** **James 1:1**

What is the Dispersion? The term "Dispersion" is taken from an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint.[8] It refers to the scattering of Israel that was to take place if Israel disobeyed Yahweh and worshiped other gods.[9] (You won't find the word "Dispersion" in the passage below. You will, however, find a description of the Dispersion.)

> ***"When you father children and children's children, and have grown old in the land, if you act corruptly by making a carved image in the form of anything, and by doing what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, so as to provoke him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess. You will not live long in it, but will be utterly destroyed. And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. And there you will serve gods of wood and stone, the work of human hands, that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell."*** **Deuteronomy 4:25-28**

While the word "Dispersion" doesn't frequently appear in the Old Testament (at least in the Hebrew), the idea of "the Dispersion" is a dominant theme. Because of sin, God's people would, like Adam and Eve, be driven from the land. They would be forced to live, like Adam and Eve, away from "Eden". But that's not the end of the story! God also promised to bring the people back! This, too, is a dominant theme.

> ***"But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to the LORD your God and obey his voice. For the LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them."*** **Deuteronomy 4:29-31**

> ***"I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land."*** **Ezekiel 36:24**

The word Dispersion is not positive. It points to sin. If Israel had obeyed, there would have been no Dispersion (the same is true of Adam and Eve). However, Peter is not thinking about sin when he uses the word Dispersion here. He is not thinking, when he uses the word, about a sinful people who are far from God.

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8 Also referred to as the LXX.

9 The term "Dispersion" is relatively common in the Septuagint (see, if you have access to one, the LXX of Deuteronomy 28:25; 30:4; Nehemiah 1:9; Psalm 146:2 (corresponds to 147:2 in the Hebrew); Isaiah 49:6; Jeremiah 15:7; 41:17), however, it is not common in English translations like the ESV. In fact, "Dispersion" appears just once in the ESV (Jeremiah 25:34). The ESV, like other English translations of the Old Testament, is primarily based on the Hebrew. Peter, as was common of believers in the early church, relied heavily on the Septuagint.

Rather, when he uses the word Dispersion he is thinking about a cleansed people who are living in a strange place because they have not yet received all that has been promised to them by God. These believers in the Lord Jesus (called "elect exiles" here) are living in a time period when all of God's promises haven't been fulfilled. They "already" have been forgiven and have received many blessings from God. But some of God's promises have "not yet" been granted.

The saints, even though they are cleansed, live in the foreign lands of the Dispersion (see 1 Peter 1:17). They are still outside of "Eden". That is why Peter calls them "exiles".[10] They are living as strangers in a strange land. This has always been the mark of the saints.

> ***These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.*** **Hebrews 11:13-16**

Peter is not thinking of the saints as people who just happened to become exiles. The exiles in the Dispersion to whom Peter is writing are not like confused tourists who have, because of a freak accident, washed ashore on a strange island. Rather, Peter calls them "*elect* exiles". The word "elect" is used to refer to "those whom God has chosen from the generality of mankind and drawn to himself".[11]

If you are a believer, it is only because God chose you. True, you chose him. But you only did this in response to his choosing of you. Regardless of your denominational background, you should celebrate this truth. The fact that God chose you should lead to joy and confidence. God wanted you!

> ***What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn?*** **Romans 8:31-34a**

How do the elect exiles of the Dispersion—people whom God has called (from before time began!), people who have been cleansed and forgiven, people who are, right now, considered sons and daughters of God—live in this strange "not yet" time period? How do they live in the foreign lands in which they have been called to lived? That's the subject of this great book. Peter is going to tell us how we can make it in this dry and weary land.

But before Peter addresses the "how" in many words (1:3-5:11), he summarizes the whole state of the "elect exiles of the Dispersion" in just a few words (1:2). Take some time to soak in these words. There's nothing like this verse in Scripture.

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10 See also 1 Peter 2:11.
11 BDAG, 306.

Former rebels were made "elect exiles of the Dispersion" ...

> *… 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 …* **1 Peter 1:2**

There's a distinct pattern in this verse. There are three phrases. Each of the phrases here begins with a preposition:

> *… 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 …* **1 Peter 1:2**

And each of the phrases concludes with the mention of a member of the Trinity (the ESV, for stylistic reasons, has moved "Jesus Christ" forward):[12]

> *… 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 …* **1 Peter 1:2**

Bookended between the preposition and the name of the person in the Trinity, Peter inserts, with just a few words, a great deal of theology. Here's what we find in these three phrases:

"according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" - Why does Peter call his readers "elect"? It is not because of their own righteousness. It is not because God saw something worthy of election within them. It is because God the Father "foreknew" them.

Paul declares this same truth about the Father in Romans 8.

> *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son …* **Romans 8:29a**

God the Father chose specific people from before the foundation of the world (see Revelation 13:8 and 17:8). He chose them before they had done anything worthy of choosing. He chose them for his own purposes.

The verb related to the noun translated "foreknowledge" in verse 2 is used in relation to Jesus in 1 Peter 1:20. Jesus was "foreknown before the foundation of the world". The way this verb is used in relation to Jesus helps us understand how the noun relates to believers. God the Father didn't just know that Jesus would come. He also chose the Son for a specific task. He did this for his own purposes (ultimately, to bring himself glory). In the same way that he knew his Son, he knew and chose others before the foundation of the world.

"in the sanctification of the Spirit"[13] - How are former rebels—people who have actively resisted God's will and who have committed crimes worthy of eternal punishment—able to come to God? They are able to come to God because the Spirit sanctifies them; he makes them holy.

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12 A more literal rendering of this third phrase would be "for obedience and sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ".
13 Another possible preposition here would be "by".

Again, we see the same truth proclaimed by Paul.

> ***But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.*** **2 Thessalonians 2:13**[14]

What is the purpose of the Father's foreknowing and of the Spirit's sanctifying? He does this so that we can be brought into covenant with him!

"for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood"[15] - The obedience part of this phrase is easy to understand. The people of God are called to obey him.[16] But what about the sprinkling? What does this mean?

This "obedience" and "sprinkling" language is taken from the Old Testament (as is much of the language in 1 Peter). Notice what took place after the people of Israel heard the Law from Moses (notice the words underlined below):

> ***Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and <u>we will be obedient." And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people</u> and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."*** **Exodus 24:7-8**

The "obedience/sprinkling of blood" combination is used to declare the establishment of a covenant— a strong agreement between the people and God. The people, for their part, proclaim that they will obey. This is not optional. The people must obey, for obedience is one of the terms of the covenant. Blood is shed sealing the covenant. This blood covers the people, signifying that a covenant has been enacted and that they are a part of the covenant. Everyone upon whom the blood is sprinkled is considered to be part of the covenant.

Unfortunately, as the writers of the Old Testament are careful to chronicle, the terms of the covenant weren't kept. God kept his promises, but the people never kept their promises. Like Adam and Eve, from the moment they received the commandments, they disobeyed God's Law. There was no golden age of obedience in Israel.

But if they failed to keep the covenant, what hope do we have? After all, they had Moses and the Prophets. They had the Ten Commandments. They had the blood of bulls and goats. They had the temple.

We have great hope! The Father chose us to be saved! The Spirit sanctified (and is sanctifying) us! We have a New Covenant that has been enacted and sealed by the blood of Christ!

Notice how the writer to the Hebrews speaks of this New Covenant.

> ***But you have come … to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*** **Hebrews 12:22,24**

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14 The preposition used by Paul in relation to the Spirit here—"through"—is the same preposition as is used by Peter in relation to the Spirit in 1 Peter 1:2. In that verse, however, the ESV uses the preposition "in".

15 As indicated earlier, a more literal translation of this verse puts "Jesus Christ" last. This is done for stylistic reasons. This more literal rendering of the Greek would read, "for obedience and sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ".

16 The Greek here does not say that obedience is "to Jesus Christ". Obedience to Jesus is, of course, a truth proclaimed elsewhere in the New Testament (see, for instance, John 14:15, 23). Here, however, the emphasis seems to be on obedience to God in general.

In the same way that Abel's blood, at least figuratively, cried out to God for judgment against his brother Cain,[17] the sprinkled blood of Jesus—the blood that was shed and that is a guarantee of the New Covenant—speaks mercy over the people of God so that they might walk in obedience without fear of being driven from God's presence.

Cain lived his life as a wanderer because Abel's blood was constantly testifying against him. Believers are able to live as God's children because the blood of Christ is constantly testifying for them!

Because of the work of God the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ, God's people are able to live as elect exiles of the Dispersion. The saints are, even in a wilderness that seems better suited to snakes and scorpions, able to resist temptation and to, like their Lord, walk in holiness. They are able to obey God![18]

As he concludes his introduction, Peter blesses the saints. His blessing isn't a desperate cry for a reluctant God to have mercy on his drowning people. Peter has already testified to the great mercy that has been poured out on God's people. His blessing is a request that God would pour out even more grace upon his people so that they would thrive in an even greater measure!

> ***May grace and peace be multiplied to you.*** **1 Peter 1:2b**

May this blessing be yours as well.

17 See Genesis 4:10.

18 Like Christ in the wilderness (or, more precisely, because of Christ's victory in the wilderness and, ultimately, on the cross), they are able to withstand the temptations of the devil and to live at peace with the wild beasts that inhabit the dangerous place of their wandering. *And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.* **Mark 1:13**

Week Two

1 PETER 1:3-12

WEEK TWO

1 Peter 1:3-12

DAY ONE

1. Carefully read and mark-up the text printed below. Underline or circle key words and phrases. Note any patterns. Draw lines connecting words or phrases that are related. Define any words you don't know.

1 PETER 1:3-12

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so 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. 8 Though 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, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

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.

2. There are no commands in these verses. Peter doesn't tell his readers to do anything. What, instead, does he do?

3. Why might Peter begin the main portion of his book in this way?

DAY TWO

4. How does Peter describe God in verse 3a?

5. This phrase appears in a different form throughout the Old Testament. Here are just three of many verses employing a related phrase. Write out the "Blessed be" formula as it appears in the verses below.

Genesis 9:26 - Blessed be ...

Genesis 24:27a - Blessed be ...

Psalm 41:13 - Blessed be ...

6. What do you notice about the way this phrase is used in the Old Testament?

7. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, the "Blessed be" formula appears in a new form. Write out the "Blessed be" formula as it appears in the verses below.

2 Corinthians 1:3 - Blessed be ...

Ephesians 1:3 - Blessed be ...

1 Peter 1:3 - Blessed be ...

8. What does this change tell you about how the Apostles saw Jesus? What does it tell you about how we are to relate to God?

9. In both the Old and the New Testament, the "Blessed be" formula seems to be used in places where theological truth of massive importance is being proclaimed. This is why this phrases appears at the start of the main teaching portion of 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, and 1 Peter. Why, when they are about to proclaim truths of great importance, would the writers begin with this formula? What should the "Blessed be" formula cause us, as readers, to do?

10. As we have already considered, in 1 Peter 1:3a, Peter declares that God is "Blessed" (i.e., supremely great and worthy of the highest praise). In verses 3b-12 Peter outlines why he considers God to be "Blessed". Outline these reasons below.

According to verses 3b-12, God is blessed because ...

DAY THREE

11. Peter says that we have been caused to be born again (1:3). This phrase is drawn from Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3:1-15. What importance does Jesus place on being "born again"?

12. Jesus' words in John 3 about being "born again" are drawn, it appears, from Ezekiel 36:25-27. How do these verses describe the spiritual work God performs in his people?

13. How, according to 1 Peter 1:3, does a person become "born again"?

14. Describe the inheritance that those who are born again are to inherit.

1 Peter 1:4

15. How would this give hope to "elect exiles"?

DAY FOUR

16. According to verse 5, how can the saints know that they will make it to the end?

17. Verse 6 describes something the believer rejoices in. What is it?

18. Why, according to verses 6 and 7, is the believer "grieved by various trials"?

19. In verses 8 and 9 Peter speaks of emotions believers have and actions believers take because of Christ. What are they?

20. Often, faith is proclaimed as something that is purely mental. In other words, it is made up of truths we mentally accept to be true. Peter's description of the faith in verse 8 goes far beyond mere "mental assent". How would he describe the faith of a believer? What is it like?

21. This expanded view of faith is seen throughout the Bible. How is "faith" described in the following passages?

Luke 7:41-42

John 14:15, 23-24

1 Corinthians 2:9

2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

James 2:5

22. Does this describe your kind of faith?

DAY FIVE

23. Carefully consider verses 10-12. What do these verses teach about the writings of the Old Testament prophets?

24. The following passages all speak of the Old Testament Scriptures. Summarize each verse below:

Matthew 13:17

Luke 10:24

Luke 24:25-27

Luke 24:44-47

John 5:39, 46-47

John 8:56

Acts 3:18, 24

Romans 1:1-5

Hebrews 11:13

25. Based on the verses you have considered today, complete the following sentence:

The Old Testament prophets wrote about ...

26. Based on 1 Peter 1:10-12, who is the Old Testament written for? Who is it meant to benefit?

27. In what ways should this change how you relate to the Old Testament Scriptures?

DAY SIX

28. Read the study notes printed below and then complete the following sentence.

This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

1 PETER 1:3-12 - THE BLESSED GOD

Peter begins the main portion of this letter by stating that God is "blessed":

> ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!*** **1 Peter 1:3a**[19]

God—specifically defined here as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"—is celebrated by Peter as magnificent and worthy of all praise. This is the exact same way Paul begins the main portions of both 2 Corinthians and Ephesians.

> ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ …***
> **2 Corinthians 1:3**[20]

> ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ …***
> **Ephesians 1:3**

Theological truth, we learn from these two apostles, is, first and foremost, a testimony to the blessedness of God. Everything we will learn from Peter in this book is meant to shine a light upon God's greatness.

Before we move on to consider why God is considered magnificent and worthy of praise, we need to pause and consider these "Blessed be" statements. The "Blessed be ..." formula appears frequently in Scripture. However, both Peter and Paul have made a massive change to the formula.

Note how the "Blessed be" phrase is used in the following Psalms.[21] Notice, particularly, the phrase immediately following "Blessed be the LORD":

> ***Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.*** **Psalm 41:13**

> ***Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!*** **Psalm 72:18-19**

> ***Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the LORD!***
> **Psalm 106:48**

Do you see the pattern here? The Psalmist, after declaring that "The LORD" (Yahweh) is blessed, notes that he is "the God of Israel". In other words, Yahweh has set his affection on Israel. For one to relate to Yahweh, he must, somehow, be related to Israel, for Yahweh is Israel's God.

John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, uses the same formula when he praises God regarding the birth of John the Baptist.

> ***"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel …"*** **Luke 1:68**

After Zechariah's words, however, it is significant to note that the formula changes. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, the saints no longer declare that God is "the God of Israel". Instead, they proclaim that he is "the God

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19 Peter's introduction here is the answer to the question the high priest asked of Jesus when he was arrested: *Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"* **Mark 14:61**

20 See also 2 Corinthians 11:31.

21 The book of Psalms is divided into five separate sections called "books": 1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, and 107-150. It is noteworthy that the first four "books" of the Psalms conclude with a statement that Yahweh is blessed (41, 72, 89, 106). The final "book" of the Psalms doesn't conclude with a "Blessed be the LORD" statement. However, the entire Psalm is a call for the people of God to praise Yahweh. Thus, this Psalm, also, calls people to bless Yahweh.

and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". The focus has been taken off of God's relationship with Israel as a whole and has been placed on God's relationship with Jesus. Why is this?

The statement seems to be used, throughout Scripture, as a way of defining the people of God. Or, to put it another way, the "Blessed be" formula is used, in part, to define the people upon whom the Blessed God's favor rests.

The first time the phrase is used, it is used by Noah in regard to his son Shem:

> ***He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem …"*** **Genesis 9:26a**

Noah's statement reveals that God relates to Shem in a very particular way—a way in which he does not relate to Noah's other two sons. Noah's other two sons, if they are to know God, will have to come through Shem.

The next time we see the "Blessed be the LORD" formula, it refers to one of Shem's descendants—Abraham. This statement is, once again, being used to identify the people of God.

> ***"Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master."*** **Genesis 24:27a**

Abraham's descendants, of course, went on to form the nation of Israel. That is why the Psalmists, can, without contradicting the earlier Scriptures we have considered, note that Yahweh is the God of Israel. There has been a direct line from Shem to Abraham to Israel.

But why do both Paul and Peter replace "Israel" with "Jesus Christ"? They are not replacing Israel with Jesus. Rather, they are, helpfully, defining Israel for us. In the same way that Noah declared that God's favor rested on Shem (and those outside of Shem would need, somehow, to come to God through Shem) these apostles are indicating the "people" upon whom God's favor rests. That people is Jesus. He is the people of God!

To put it another way, Jesus, rather than the nation of Israel at large, is Israel.[22] God relates to Jesus in a particular way—a way in which he does not relate to any other people. The rest of the planet, be they Jews or Gentiles, if they are to know God, will have to come through Jesus.

In the same way that a Gentile, during Old Testament times, couldn't come to God unless he, somehow, became part of Israel, we cannot come to God unless we, somehow, become part of Christ. This is why the phrase "in Christ" is so important.

But there's even more here than this! Peter (like Paul), notes that he is the God and Father of "our" Lord Jesus Christ. We have not been left out of this formula! God's affection is set on the one who is "our" Lord! And "our" Lord's affection is set on him! If all of God's affection is set on Christ, and it is, and if all of Christ's affection is set on him, and it is, and if Christ is our Lord, then we are assured of God's love and acceptance![23]

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22 Isaiah 49:3 says as much, referring to the "Servant of Yahweh" (the Messiah) as "Israel".

23 But this is not the only change the writers of the epistles have made. They have indicated that God is the "God and Father" of Jesus. Calling God the "Father" of Jesus reminds us that he is God's "Son"—in other words, the anointed King (see Psalm 2 and 2 Sam 7:1-17). This should also also remind us of God the Father's words to Jesus at his baptism.

WHY IS GOD BLESSED?

Why does Peter say that God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is "Blessed"? One reason he is blessed—magnificent and worthy of all praise—is because of his great mercy.

> ***According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again …*** **1 Peter 1:3b**

While it may appear that we are the subjects of this sentence (and the following sentences), we are not. We are the objects of God's great mercy. The subject is still the blessed God.

How does the blessed God demonstrate his great mercy? He takes spiritually dead people and he causes them to be "born again". This same spiritual rebirth was described by Jesus in his conversation with Nicodemus.

> ***Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*** **John 3:3**

> ***Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*** **John 3:5-6**

Jesus' language about being "born again" (which, based on verses five and six, is equivalent to "born of water and the Spirit") appears to be drawn from Ezekiel 36:25-27. In these verses, God describes the things he, because of his great mercy, will do to his people.

> ***"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. 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. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."*** **Ezekiel 36:25-27**

This is what it means to be born again. If you have never reflected on these truths, read them again ... and again. These are the changes God works in all those who have been "born again".

We are "born again" to something which we have never known before ... hope. The word hope is used by Peter not as a description of something which may or may not happen (i.e., "I hope it doesn't rain"), but to describe something that is assured of coming to pass:

> ***… to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead …*** **1 Peter 1:3b**

Those who are "born again" have "a living hope". The word "living" is key here. It means, at the very least, that the hope is real, vibrant, and ongoing. Far beyond this, the word "living" points to the fact that our hope rests upon a living person. Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead. He is, right now, alive. Every breath he takes (after all, he lives in a real human body!) is proof that our hope in his death and resurrection will not be in vain. He is our living hope. When we, by faith, "see" him today, we are seeing the guarantee of our future as well.

Peter describes the "living hope"of the believer in another way in verse four. We have been born again ...

> *… to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you …* **1 Peter 1:4**

The word "inheritance" is often used in the Old Testament to refer to the land that the people of God were to one day possess. The promise was first given to Abraham.

> *Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land."* **Genesis 12:7a**

This promise of an inheritance was repeated to Isaac, then to Jacob, and then to all Israel. But the idea of "an inheritance" for the people of God didn't die with the early Israelites. Jesus makes it clear that there is still an inheritance for the godly.

> *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."* **Matthew 5:5**

"The earth" is no small inheritance—it encompasses everything! Imagine the hope this promise brought to the weary group of "elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia". They couldn't call anywhere home. They were the outsiders. One day, however, they would receive their inheritance.

This inheritance, we must know, is ultimately Christ's inheritance. This is seen, among other places, in Psalm 2.

> *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.* **Psalm 2:8**

Everything—all the nations and all that may be in them—belongs to Christ. However, because we are "in Christ", we are counted as his co-heirs.[24] Therefore, his inheritance is also ours. Notice how Peter describes this inheritance. It is "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading". As Peter wrote these words, I wonder if he was thinking about the words Jesus spoke during his "Sermon on the Mount":

> *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* **Matthew 6:19-21**

Peter is calling the believers not to give up and to settle for a "hopeless" earthly inheritance. He is encouraging the saints not to trade their heavenly inheritance for rotten Babylonian fruit.

But how can a group of powerless saints do this? How can the saints know that they will make it to the end when so many who are far stronger and more intelligent—Adam, for starters—have fallen?

24 See Romans 8:16-17. See also, in regard to the promises made to Christ in Psalm 2, Revelation 2:26-27. These verses declare that the promises made to Christ in Psalm 2 also relate to his people.

Here is Peter's assurance that the saints will receive all that has been promised:

> ***… who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*** **1 Peter 1:5**[25]

The saints will make it because they are being guarded by God! His power is working in the saints because they have faith in Jesus. Of course, faith alone isn't what guards the saints. Positive thinking, while helpful at times, doesn't guarantee success. It is God who guards the saints. We trust that God is powerful and that he will keep us to the "the last time"—the time when our salvation will be revealed.

Notice Peter's "incomplete" definition of salvation. This forms a major part of his—and any healthy believer's—theology. We must not, as believers, live as if we have received everything already. There is a part of our salvation that is waiting for us! Funerals must not be the only time we think about this "not yet" part of our salvation. Even while we rejoice in the "already" part of our salvation (forgiveness, fruit of the Spirit at work in our lives, God's grace being shown to us, joyful fellowship with the saints today, etc., etc., etc.) we must, like Peter, live in eager anticipation of the day when our salvation will be fully revealed.

Beyond simply anticipating that day, Peter says that believers are to rejoice in it.

> ***… In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials …*** **1 Peter 1:6**

Do you ever do this? Do you ever rejoice in the salvation that will be revealed in "the last time"? I'm not sure this is so common. But it's a mark of healthy believers. If a bride never talks about her rapidly approaching wedding, it should worry the groom. It's a sign that she might not want to get married. In the same way, if we fully understand our salvation, we should be rejoicing in all aspects of it—the things we have received and the things we are yet to receive.

This rejoicing in our coming salvation should be evident in our prayers—"Father, I can't wait for the day I see Jesus face-to-face!". It should be evident in our conversations. In the same way that citizens of a particular country, when they meet in a foreign country, love to talk about their homeland, believers should love talking about their coming inheritance.

But the rejoicing, Peter notes, is currently mixed with grief.

> ***… In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials …*** **1 Peter 1:6**

Until our salvation is revealed in "the last time", Peter says that "various trials" are "necessary". Peter appears to be borrowing his language here from the Old Testament book of Daniel. In this key Old Testament book, Daniel records visions which detail "what is necessary to be in the last days".[26] These visions focus a great deal of attention on the trials the saints will experience "in the last days". Daniel says that the saints will be "worn out" and will be "given into the hands" of unbelievers (see, for instance, Daniel 7:25).

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25 See also 1 Corinthians 2:5.

26 My translation of the LXX of Daniel 2:28. See also Daniel 2:29. Jesus uses the same language in Matthew 24:6 and Mark 13:7. The Apostle John also borrows heavily from Daniel in 1 John and in Revelation.

This is the time period in which the saints are living right now. From the day of Christ's death, the saints have been suffering "various trials". The "if" Peter uses in verse six ("if necessary") is not stating that "various trials" may or may not happen. They are already happening! The "if" here is a "marker of strong or solemn assertion".[27] Peter is saying that various trials are necessary and that they will happen.

Why would a good God allow this? After all, God could prevent them. Why are "various trials" deemed necessary?

> ***… so 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.*** **1 Peter 1:7**

Trials prove that our faith is genuine. They are witnesses (like a witness on a witness stand at a trial) declaring that we love God more than we love, for instance, our comfort. Trials boldly display that we love the reputation of Christ more than we love our own reputation. Trials declare that we love the laws of God more than we love our own appetites.[28]

In the same way that a swimmer far beneath the surface of a lake can see the light even as he swims toward the surface, believers can see Christ now—but not fully. He must be seen, right now, by faith. But there is a day coming when Jesus will be revealed in all his glory. On that day, only those who have loved him in the midst of "various trials" will be counted worthy of loving him in the midst of an age in which they will experience no trials.

In the same way that the swimmer longs for the surface, believers long to see Christ, for only when they see him will their salvation be complete.

> ***Though 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, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*** **1 Peter 1:8-9**

Peter says, concerning the elect exiles, that they "love" Christ. They "believe in him" and "rejoice with joy" because of their relationship with him and because they are being saved. It is evident that faith, for Peter, is far more than a cerebral act. For Peter, there is no faith in Christ that does not include love of Christ. Faith and love are inseparable.

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27 BDAG, 278.

28 Of course, the "various trials" do more than test our faith and prove that it is genuine. They are the very instruments God uses to make us stronger. God graciously allows us to go through those things that are "necessary" in order for our faith to be found to be real "at the revelation of Jesus Christ".

James, who, like Peter, describes his intended audience as those who are in "the Dispersion", demonstrates how trials serve to refine us:

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. **James 1:2-4**

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, says the same thing:

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope **... Romans 5:3-4**

Based on these verses, it is clear that suffering has many good purposes. The one Peter focuses on here is suffering's "testing" purpose; it serves to demonstrate the genuineness of faith.

I wonder how many people believe that they are Christians because they have prayed a certain prayer. They believe this even though they have no love in their hearts toward Christ. They believe this even though they never rejoice with joy regarding his coming. They have been told that their prayer to God for salvation was faith. But, again, there is no love of Christ. If there is no love, how can it be said that there is faith? We must be very careful that we do not promote a "kind" of faith which will be proved false at the day of Christ's revelation.

Jesus is not a benefit which we can take or leave. When the waiter asks if you would like a lemon in your water, you say something like, "Sure, that would be nice." The lemon is a pleasant addition to the water. But you don't, upon receiving the lemon, base your whole life around the lemon. You don't sing songs about the lemon. You don't base all your joy on the fact that you have the lemon.

Christ in the believer is not the spiritual equivalent of a lemon in a glass of water. He is to be loved, not in a romantic way, but in the way that a man loves the general who, risking all, pulls him from the enemy's grasp.

Consider the following verses. None of them describe the believer's relationship with Christ in a "lemon in the water" sort of way:

> *"A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?"* **Luke 7:41-42**
>
> *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."* **John 14:15**
>
> *But, as it is written,*
>
> *"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,*
> *nor the heart of man imagined,*
> *what God has prepared for those who love him"* ... **1 Corinthians 2:9**
>
> *... and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* **2 Thessalonians 2:10-12**
>
> *Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?* **James 2:5**

THE TESTIMONY OF THE PROPHETS

The salvation Peter preaches is not new with him. In fact, he insists that the prophets in the Old Testament wrote about this salvation.

> *Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 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.* **1 Peter 1:10-12**

These verses are absolutely critical to our understanding of the content and purpose of the Old Testament. A right understanding of these verses will send us to our Old Testaments with renewed vigor, anxious to see the prophecies of Christ found in so many places.

The Old Testament is not, we learn from Peter, like one of those "Find Waldo" books. Christ isn't difficult to find. He doesn't just pop up in random places. And he is not one theme among hundreds of themes. Instead, Christ is THE theme of the Old Testament. Everything points, in some way, to him. The prophecies point to him. The poetry points to him. The stories point to him. The laments point to him. The praises point to him. Somehow and in some way, everything is about Christ.

This "Jesus is the theme of the Old Testament" teaching isn't new with Peter. He learned this from Jesus himself:

> ***Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."*** **Luke 24:44-47**[29]

Peter indicates that the prophets were prophesying "about the grace that was to be yours". This means that Moses, David,[30] Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, and all the other prophets weren't just speaking and writing about things that applied to the Israelites before Christ. They were writing about today. They were speaking and writing about the grace we have in Christ! This should greatly impact how we read the Old Testament!

Peter says that the prophets knew that the Christ was coming. This is evident because they wrote about his suffering and the glory that would come about because of his suffering.

What they didn't know, Peter says, is who the Christ would be. In other words, they knew, to a far greater extent than most have been willing to admit, the "what". They just didn't know the "who".

Beyond this, the prophets didn't know when the Christ would come. They searched carefully, Peter says, but they weren't given the answer for which they searched. Rather, the answer given to them was that they were serving a future generation.

The prophets were serving us! Have you ever thought about this? Hosea, for instance, served the church by writing his book. The book of Hosea is a gift to us about the grace of God! Amos, likewise, served the church. Samuel served the church. And there aren't just a few prophets who served the church in this way. All of them, Peter says elsewhere, were speaking of the Christ.

> ***"But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled."*** **Acts 3:18**

29 See also Luke 24:25-27.
30 See Acts 2:30-31.

All the prophets wrote of the Christ. This is stunning! What do we do with this information? We rejoice! The entire Bible, we learn here, is a Christian document. It is all about Christ and the gospel event. But we do more than just rejoice. We also study. For we have an obligation to learn how the Old Testament is about Christ and how it is about the grace that is to be ours. But what a gift! We have been given, in addition to the New Testament, 39 books that are all about our Savior and the grace that has come to us through him! All 39 books are meant to strengthen us and confirm us in the faith. All 39 books are meant to help us make it through our sufferings!

Paul's words to Timothy are based on this same understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures.

> ***But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*** **2 Timothy 3:14-17**

The trials we are to face won't disappear simply because we study the Scriptures. Our weakness, however, will disappear. Thousands of years ago, the Holy Spirit moved men to write God's words so that we might, as we'll see next week, prepare our minds for action. What a gift these Scriptures are to us! As Peter stated in verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Week Three

1 PETER 1:13-25

WEEK THREE

1 Peter 1:13-25

DAY ONE

1. Carefully read and mark-up the text printed below. Underline or circle key words and phrases. Note any patterns. Draw lines connecting words or phrases that are related. Define any words you don't know.

1 PETER 1:13-25

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. After studying these verses, complete the following:

In these verses, Peter ...

DAY TWO

3. What command do you find in verse 13? *(the command is found in the second half of the verse)*

4. What might be signs that you are not keeping this command?

5. This is now the second time Peter has referred to "the revelation of Jesus Christ". How does Peter refer to this event in verses 3-12?

6. Consider carefully the way Peter refers to Jesus' second coming. What, to him, is the significance of this event?

7. Is this how you think of this event?

DAY THREE

8. How are we to keep the command in verse 13? *(hint: see the "ing" words in the first half of verse 13)*

9. "Preparing your minds for action" and "being sober-minded" (13a) appear to be summary statements referring to the truths found in verses 1-12. In other words, when we are meditating on the truths of verses 1-12, we are preparing our minds for action and we are being sober-minded. With this in mind, describe the mind that is prepared for action and that is sober-minded.

10. At the beginning of verse 14, Peter tells his readers that they are to be like something. What is it?

11. When, according to verse 15, are believers to be holy?

12. Why, according to verses 15-16, are believers to be holy?

13. Write out the verses below:

Leviticus 11:44-45

Leviticus 19:1-2

Leviticus 20:7-8

Leviticus 20:26

DAY FOUR

14. In verse 17, Peter gives his readers another command. What is it?

15. Fear is normally portrayed in a negative light, but here it is used in a positive sense. What, according to verse 17, are we to be fearing?

16. Summarize Acts 5:1-11 (a story in which Peter plays a leading role!).

17. In this story, where do you see fear of God in ...

... Ananias and Sapphira?

... Peter?

... the rest of the church?

18. What happened in the church after this event? *Acts 5:12-16*

19. Summarize Acts 19:11-20.

20. In this story, where do you see fear of God in ...

... the seven sons of Sceva?

... the believers before this event happened?

... the believers after this event happened?

21. What happened in the church after this event? *Acts 19:20*

22. How should 1 Peter 1:18-19 contribute to our fear of God?

DAY FIVE

23. In verse 19, Christ is compared to something. What is it?

24. Summarize the following passages:

Genesis 22:13

Exodus 12:3-6

Exodus 12:12-13

Leviticus 4:32-35

25. Thousands and thousands of lambs died for the sins of God's people. Why, then, was it necessary for Jesus to come? What, if anything, didn't these earthly sacrifices accomplish? *Hebrews 10:4*

26. How does Isaiah describe the Messiah?

Isaiah 53:7

27. How does John the Baptist describe him?

John 1:29

28. According to Peter, Jesus was "foreknown before the foundation of the world". What does this tell you about God's plan? *See also Acts 2:23*

29. Why would God plan to do this to Christ?

1 Peter 1:21

Acts 2:36

Philippians 2:8-11

30. In verse 22, Peter gives his readers another command. What is it?

31. How is it possible for people to "love one another earnestly from a pure heart"? *(see verses 23-25)*

DAY SIX

32. Read the study notes printed below and then complete the following sentence.
This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

1 PETER 1:13-25

Now that Peter has reminded the "elect exiles of the Dispersion" of the truths of their great God and of the salvation he has brought to them via Jesus, he is ready to tell them how they ought to live.

To this point, none of the verbs that Peter has used have been imperatives (i.e., commands). He has not told the believers to do anything. He has simply told them truths about their God and their salvation.[31] Now, however, the apostle uses the truths he has proclaimed in verses 1-12 as the basis for commands he will give.

31 This is also typically true in Pauline epistles. He begins the letter by stating the truths that are (i.e., Ephesians 1-3). He then tells the believers what to do based on those truths (i.e., Ephesians 4-6).

PETER'S FIRST COMMAND

> ***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.*** **1 Peter 1:13**

Peter's first command is found in the second half of verse 13: "set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ". The reason the command is in the second half of the verse is Peter uses the first half of the verse to tell the readers the means by which the command is to be performed. Peter does this by employing two participles.

Here's how a participle used in this way functions: I could give my daughter a simple command like, "Drive your brother to school." Or, like Peter here, I could add a participle to my command defining the means by which the command is to be kept: "Keeping two hands on the steering wheel, drive your brother to school." Admittedly, this sounds a little awkward in English, but that is what Peter is doing here. He is telling us two ways we are to "set [our] hope fully on the grace that will be brought to [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ".

The initial participial phrase ("preparing your minds for action") is, in the Greek, an extremely colorful expression. Peter literally says, "having girded up the loins of your mind". The reason many English translations (like the ESV) don't use this phrase is the idea of "girding up your loins" doesn't make sense to people today. However, to a people who wore long garments that got in the way when they ran or when they worked (like Peter's original audience), these words would have made great sense.

When the Old Testament prophet Elisha needed his servant Gehazi to run on an urgent errand, he told him,

> ***"Tie up your garment and take my staff in your hand and go. If you meet anyone, do not greet him, and if anyone greets you, do not reply."*** **2 Kings 4:29**

Loose garments would have slowed Gehazi down. He might have gotten his feet tangled up in them. He couldn't stretch his legs out as far if his robes were close to his legs. That's why, before he ran, he was instructed to tie up his garments.

Because of the urgency of their flight from Egypt, this, also, is how the Israelites were to eat the Passover meal. Even while eating, the Israelites were to be ready for their exodus at any moment. They could not afford their loose garments to slow them down.

> ***In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover.*** **Exodus 12:11**

We—like Gehazi and the Israelites—are to, metaphorically speaking, tie up the loose garments that are flapping around in our minds and keeping us from effectively living in this age. Jesus gave a similar command to his followers.

> ***"Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning …"*** **Luke 12:35**

The second participle, translated "being sober-minded", seems similar in meaning to "gird up the loins of your mind". We are to be spiritually alert—"free from every form of mental and spiritual 'drunkenness'".[32] But Peter means more than just not being spiritually drunk. He also means something positive here. I would suggest that Peter's definition of a sober-minded believer may be found in 1 Peter 1:1-12. It is the believer who is constantly thinking about the things we have been studying.

By preparing our minds for action and by being sober-minded, we are able to set our hope fully on the grace that will come "at the revelation of Jesus Christ". Believers with minds that are tangled-up in the affairs of this life will not be able to focus on the life that is to come.

This is now the second time that Peter has referred to "the revelation of Jesus Christ". Peter is calling believers to see Christ's return in power and the things that will happen at his return as the finish line. That day is to color how the believer lives every day. Do you ever think of this day? If you do not, the garments of your mind need to be tied up and you need to be sober-minded. Do this by reflecting on verses like 1 Peter 1:1-12.

PETER'S SECOND COMMAND

Peter's first command relates to how we, as believers, are *to think*. His second command relates to how we are *to behave*. This second command is found in verse 15: "be holy in all your conduct".

As with his first command, Peter doesn't get straight to the "be holy" command. He begins, once again, by describing the means by which the command is to be kept.[33]

> ***As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct …*** **1 Peter 1:14-15**

The command "be holy in all your conduct" is stunning. Don't pass over it quickly. In *all* of our conduct we are commanded to be holy—completely dedicated to what is good and right and true and completely separated from what is evil. We are to be holy in everything we think, everything we say, and in everything we do.

How are we to do this? The first way we do this is, as verse 14 explains, by not being "conformed to the passions of [our] former ignorance".

Formerly, our ignorant passions were our standard of behavior. We did what we wanted. But now, our standard is to be God himself. We don't walk in our old way. We choose, instead, to walk in conformity to God.

> ***… since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."*** **1 Peter 1:16**

The command to be holy because of God's holiness is not new with Peter. Consider the following verses from Leviticus:

> ***"For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the LORD who***

32 BDAG, 672.

33 In verses 14-15, Peter begins, as he did in verse 13, with a participle explaining the means by which the command is to be kept. The ESV translates this participle in verse 14 as a command.

> ***brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."*** **Leviticus 11:44-45**

> ***And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."*** **Leviticus 19:1-2**

> ***"Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. Keep my statutes and do them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you."*** **Leviticus 20:7-8**

> ***"You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine."*** **Leviticus 20:26**

As "obedient children", we must not disobey our Father. Instead, as the author of Hebrews declares, we are to "strive ... for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). The warning in this verse should not be taken lightly.

PETER'S THIRD COMMAND

In addition to holiness, we are commanded to "conduct [ourselves] with fear". This, given what Peter has already written about rejoicing, sounds strange. But that is exactly how we are to live.

> ***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 …*** **1 Peter 1:17**

The judgment of God is a fact from which I cannot escape. I should always be remembering that God will judge me according to my deeds.[34] I am to live in "fear" of this.

In the same way that a good electrician never forgets that he is working with something that can kill him, the Christian should never forget that he will be judged.

How does the electrician live "in fear"? He never forgets the basic principles of electricity and how he relates to them. He never thinks that he can ignore the rules of electricity. How do we live in fear? Much the same way! We live in fear by remembering the basic principles of our faith and how we relate to them.

> ***… knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 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.*** **1 Peter 1:18-21**

We were once slaves to sin. We must not forget this! Our lives didn't accomplish anything worthy of merit. We did nothing to earn heaven's favor. All that we did, and we inherited this rebellious way of life from our forefathers, was find new and creative ways of resisting God. But, in a shocking turn of events, a stunning price

34 The Father exercises his judgment through Christ. That's why Paul is able to say, without contradicting what we have seen here, *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.* **2 Corinthians 5:10**

was paid to deliver us from our fruitlessness. Nothing in the history of the world has ever cost more!

What was this stunning price? Peter begins (and, as we learned in verse 14, he likes to do this) with what it wasn't. It wasn't a great deal of silver or gold. Our redemption cost far more than that. We were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ". We must remember this! Keeping this constantly in our minds is how we fear God.

Peter compares Christ to a lamb "without blemish or spot". He does this because lambs were used, from the beginning of the Old Testament, as sacrifices which were deemed acceptable to God. These sacrifices, among other things, served to "cover" the sins of God's people.

After Adam and Eve sinned, they attempted to cover their nakedness by making clothing for themselves out of fig leaves. However, it is clear that their leafy clothing, while it covered their nakedness, did not "cover" their sin, for just 14 verses later we are told that "the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). It is highly likely that these skins were of a sheep or goat. As early as the third chapter in the Bible, we see hints that sin cannot be covered by any means other than by blood and by a sacrifice that has been approved by God.

When Abraham is told to sacrifice his son Isaac, God supplies a ram that dies in Isaac's place:

> ***And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.*** **Genesis 22:13**

When the Israelites are about to flee from Egypt, they are told that they must, for each household, kill a lamb if they are to escape the punishment that Yahweh was to bring on Egypt. Notice, in the following passage, that the lamb is to be "without blemish"—the same description Peter uses when he describes Christ!

> ***"Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight."*** **Exodus 12:3-6**

Yahweh goes on to tell the Israelites that the blood of the lamb that has been killed will be the reason he will not strike them down with the Egyptians. The implication here is that the Israelites, too, are guilty of sin against a holy God. They, too, deserve to die for their sin. That's why they need to kill a lamb. The lamb will take the punishment that should have fallen on the people.

> ***"For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt."*** **Exodus 12:12-13**

After the tabernacle was built, lambs were used as sin offerings by the people. Here is one of the relevant passages. Once again, notice that the lamb to be offered is to be "without blemish".

> ***"If he brings a lamb as his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring a female without blemish and lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and kill it for a sin offering in the place where they kill the burnt offering. Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out all the rest of its blood at the base of the altar. And all its fat he shall remove as the fat of the lamb is removed from the sacrifice of peace offerings, and the priest shall burn it on the altar, on top of the LORD's food offerings. And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven."*** **Leviticus 4:32-35**

When the people of God sinned, their sins were, symbolically, transferred to a lamb. The lamb would then die in place of the person (or people) deserving death. We saw this hinted at with Adam and Eve. We saw this more clearly with Isaac. And we have seen it clearly explained with the people of Israel.

But there is a problem here. The blood of an *animal*, as the author of Hebrews notes, can't truly take away the sins of a person:

> ***For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*** **Hebrews 10:4**

There was a need for a better sacrifice to come ... a better "lamb" to deal with the sins of the people. The prophet Isaiah declares that the coming Messiah will be that lamb.

> ***He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.*** **Isaiah 53:7**

John the Baptist, when he sees Jesus, declares that he is that lamb:

> ***The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*** **John 1:29**

Notice the definite article "the" here. John calls Jesus "*the* Lamb of God". He is the lamb that God has selected. In times past, the people of God, based on God's pre-defined requirements, selected their own lambs. Now, however, God has selected the lamb. The definite article indicates that Jesus is the one "Lamb of God". There are and will be no others.

In Old Testament times, people (both the one bringing the offering and the priests who would be offering the sacrifice) were to examine the lambs that were to be killed for imperfections. Only after a thorough examination would an animal be declared "clean". Thus, imperfect people were determining whether a sacrifice was fit for God. For the ultimate sacrifice, however, God the Father doesn't use people to examine the sacrifice. He himself examines the Lamb and declares that he is "without blemish or spot". He does this when, after Jesus' baptism, he declares "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). There was nothing in Christ that brought displeasure to God.

All the sacrificial blood that was spilled during Old Testament times may make it appear that Christ was an after-thought—almost as if God noticed, after many attempts, that the sacrifices were not working and he needed to take new and drastic measures. Peter declares that this is not the case.

> ***He was foreknown before the foundation of the world …*** **1 Peter 1:20a**

The sacrifice of "the Lamb of God" was always God's plan. The eternal Son of God was chosen[35] before there were people (or sin) as the one who would bring mankind into right relation to God. All of the sacrifices that God ordained, all the blood that was spilt, were glimpses of the chosen perfect sacrifice. They were meant to prepare the people for "the" sacrifice that was to come.

And so the people of God waited, longing for the one perfect sacrifice that would put an end to their many imperfect sacrifices. Finally, after gallons and gallons of blood had been spilt and after hundreds of years of waiting, "in the last times", the sacrifice came.

> ***… but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 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.*** **1 Peter 1:20b-21**

Peter says that Christ was revealed "in the last times". From Peter's perspective, the "last times" began with the coming of Christ. The gospel event (the death and resurrection of Jesus) ushered in a new age. But, at the same time, the old age continues on. This "overlap of the ages" is what Peter calls "the last times".

At this point, it's worth asking why Christ was "foreknown" before the foundation of the world. After all, why would God create a world in which sin will flourish and in which Christ—the eternal Son of God—will need to die? The answer is found, at least in part, in verse 21. All of this world exists, we learn, for the glory of Christ. God "gave him glory" when he "raised him from the dead".

Since this—the display of the glory of Christ (that is, the display of the weightiness of his splendor)—is the plan of God, we are able to, with great confidence, place all of our faith and hope in him. We can trust God because he is working out the ONE plan he has been working from before time began.

Remember, Peter is talking about how we "conduct [ourselves] with fear throughout the time of [our] exile". We conduct ourselves with fear by remembering and meditating on God's plan.

35 The participle translated as "He was foreknown" here is related to the noun used in the phrase "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:2). In the same way that the people of God were chosen before they had done anything righteous, Christ was chosen before there was sin—or even a world!

PETER'S FOURTH COMMAND

As people of faith, people who have been purified by Christ, we are called to live in a very specific way:

> ***Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God …*** **1 Peter 1:22-23**

Because of Christ's death and resurrection (in other words, what God has done), and because of our "obedience to the truth" (which seems to be another way of referring to our trust in the gospel message), we are commanded to love each other "from a pure heart". This is the fourth command we find in this chapter. We are commanded to love our fellow believers because we have been born again.

We are to love our fellow believers "earnestly". This means that we are to try hard in our loving. Our best effort must be put into loving our brothers and sisters. Of course, this command begs me to examine my life. Am I loving my fellow believers earnestly? If I rarely fellowship with other believers, I cannot say that I am doing this. Love demands contact.

But we are not to just love earnestly, we are also to love "from a pure heart". This means that we are loving not so that we might get something in return (that's a worldly kind of love), but because our very nature has changed because of the preaching of the gospel—"the living and abiding word of God". In other words, because we have been born again, we are now able to love earnestly from a pure heart. But, again, I must ask myself if I am doing this.

PETER REFLECTS ON THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL … FROM AN OT TEXT!

Peter's comment about the "living and abiding" gospel makes him think about several verses from Isaiah 40. These verses may have been in Peter's mind because they talk about the fading power of sinful man ("All flesh is like grass ...") and the abiding power of the gospel ("the word of the Lord remains forever"). As believers, we need to be reminded of both.

There is no command in these verses. As with 1 Peter 1:1-12, these are simply things that are true. And these truths should impact how we live.

> ***"All flesh is like grass***
> ***and all its glory like the flower of grass.***
> ***The grass withers,***
> ***and the flower falls,***
> ***but the word of the Lord remains forever."*** **1 Peter 1:24-25a**

Isaiah 40, like 1 Peter, was written during a time when God's people needed encouragement. They had many strong enemies. Those enemies, Isaiah insisted, would not prevail. The enemies of God's people were like grass and would soon wither. God's word (ultimately, the word regarding the Messiah), however, was not like grass and would not wither. The people who had been saved by God's word could trust in God's word and obey God.

Likewise, the people to whom Peter was writing were suffering. They needed to know that their enemies would not triumph. Peter assures them with his statement that "All flesh is like grass" that those enemies will soon wither away. They also needed to know that they would make it to the end. Peter assures them with his statement that "the word of the Lord remains forever" that they will make it.

Because God's word is true and will never fail, believers, even in the midst of various trials, are able to: (1) set their hope fully on the grace to be given them at Christ's return, (2) be holy in all their conduct, (3) conduct themselves with fear of God, and (4) love their fellow believers.

If you know Christ, you have no option other than to obey. After all, the "living and abiding word" was also preached to you.

> ***And this word is the good news that was preached to you.***
> **1 Peter 1:25b**

This word should make a massive difference in how you live.

Week Four

1 PETER 2:1-10

DAY ONE

1. Carefully read and mark-up the text printed below. Underline or circle key words and phrases. Note any patterns. Draw lines connecting words or phrases that are related. Define any words you don't know.

1 PETER 2:1-10

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.

4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you 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. 6 For 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."

7 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.

9 But 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. 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.

2. After studying these verses, complete the following:

In these verses, Peter ...

DAY TWO

3. In verses 1-3 we find two commands. Grammatically, these commands are tied together (this connection is difficult to see in the ESV)—the second command (verse 2) cannot be kept if the first command (verse 1) is not kept. What are these two commands? Why would command number 2 require command number 1?

4. What is the goal behind these commands? *(see 2b)*

5. Peter doesn't say what pure spiritual milk is. However, it appears that 1 Peter 1:1-12 and 2:4-10 are examples of pure spiritual milk. Read these two passages and complete the following:

Pure spiritual milk is ...

6. Verse 3 refers to Psalm 34:8. Peter also quotes this Psalm in 1 Peter 3:10-12. Read Psalm 34. What encouragement for suffering Christians do you find in this Psalm?

7. In verse 3, notice that Peter says that "you have tasted that the Lord is good". Based on verse 4, which member of the Trinity is Peter referring to as "the Lord" in verse 3?

8. Look, again, at Psalm 34:8. This verse says "taste and see the LORD (i.e., Yahweh) is good". Whom does Peter consider Jesus to be?

9. How did Jesus get this name? *Philippians 2:8-11*

10. Why has Jesus received this name? *Philippians 2:10-11*

DAY THREE

11. Read 1 Peter 2:4-8. In these verses Peter, drawing from the Old Testament, refers to Christ as the Cornerstone. What Old Testament passages does he quote?

12. What does Peter teach about Christ in these verses?

13. How does God the Father relate to the Cornerstone?

14. How do believers relate to the Cornerstone? What happens to them as a result of their belief?

15. How do non-believers relate to the Cornerstone? What happens to them as a result of their lack of faith?

16. Peter does not merely say that those who reject Christ have a lack of faith. What does he say in verse 8 regarding these people?

DAY FOUR

17. Review verses 9-10. In these verses Peter, drawing from the Old Testament, refers to the nature of those who are in Christ. What Old Testament passages does he refer to here?

18. *Why* has God caused us to be these things? *(verse 9b)*

19. *How* has God caused us to be these things? *(verse 10b)*

20. If you are a Christian, do you see yourself in the way described in verses 9-10?

21. In what ways should your life change because of these truths?

DAY FIVE

22. Memorize the following verses.

> ***But 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. 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.*** **1 Peter 2:9-10**

DAY SIX

23. Read the study notes printed below and then complete the following sentence.
This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

1 PETER 2:1-10

Why do we study God's word? Why do we care, for instance, about word choices and how sentences are constructed? We care because we love God and we want to hear—with great clarity—what he has said. Little details matter. When Peter makes a choice to use, for instance, a participle rather than a verb, we need to ask why. When he quotes a passage from the Old Testament, we need to ask why.

At first glance, the passage we'll be looking at today seems fairly simply. In verses one through three we find two commands. In verses four through ten we don't find any commands. Rather, as he did in 1 Peter 1:1-12, Peter outlines truths about the faith.

Here are the two commands:

> ***So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*** **1 Peter 2:1-3**

And here are the truths:

> ***As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you 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. For 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,"***
>
> ***and***
>
> ***"A stone of stumbling,***
> ***and a rock of offense."***
>
> ***They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.***
>
> ***But 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. 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.*** **1 Peter 2:4-10**

In both of these sections, there's much more going on than first meets the eye. Let's look at the command section first:

> ***So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*** **1 Peter 2:1-3**

The little particle "So" is Peter's way of telling us that we are at a turning point in the letter. He wants us to know that he is, based on what he has said up to this point in the letter, moving on to something new and significant.

On the face of things, it appears that we have two equal commands here: (1) "put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander", and (2) "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk". This is NOT how Peter wants us to read these verses. Rather, Peter has constructed these verses in such a way so that all attention is focused on the command in verse two: "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk".

Peter's focus on command number two is, unfortunately, impossible to see in the English. While the ESV, like most English translations, has translated verse one as a simple command (and there are good reasons it has been translated in this way), it is important to note that Peter doesn't build these two commands in the same way.

Command number one actually does not include any imperative verbs. Instead, Peter makes the choice to use, as may be seen in my translation that follows, a participle (underlined) in this verse:

> ***<u>Putting away</u>, therefore, all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander ….*** **1 Peter 2:1**

The choice to use a participle here is Peter's deliberate signal that this verse is not the priority in this section. The priority is on the command to "long for the pure spiritual milk".

But this doesn't mean that verse one is insignificant. It is very significant. Peter is outlining the circumstances in which the command in verse two is to be kept. In other words, those who "long for the pure spiritual milk" are to be living lives that are free from "all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander". We can't focus on God's word about Christ if we are, at the same time, hating our brothers and sisters!

On close examination, it should be noted that verse one is not new. All of the things mentioned in verse one ("put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander") are explanations of what it means to "love one another earnestly from a pure heart" (see 1:22). After all, you can't love your fellow believers if you hate them, or are lying to them, or are envying them. Verse one, therefore, appears to be a summary of the command to love one another earnestly. Peter's use of the participle here serves to tie the previous section together with this new section.

The command in verse two—the one upon which Peter focuses his attention—is that we, "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk". Notice, Peter doesn't say what this pure spiritual milk is. His command assumes that we know where we'll find it.

What is it? What is the "pure spiritual milk" for which we are to, like a hungry infant, be constantly crying? Perhaps the best place to start is by considering what it isn't. We can rest assured that Peter is not talking about spiritual baby food. The baby analogy only goes so far here. Peter is not telling us to long for the spiritual equivalent of Gerbers.

It is clear, based on Peter's words here, that "pure spiritual milk" is something that is essential. Without it, we won't "grow up into salvation". Once again, we see that Peter has an understanding of salvation that goes far beyond an "event" that happened at a particular point of time. That would be a strange way to talk about a child. If all we ever talked about was the day of birth, something would be wrong with our perspective. We all know that babies are supposed to grow up. In the same way, believers are to grow up! For Peter, salvation is something that happened, but it is also something that is happening, and something that will happen. In the same way that a baby longs for the very thing that will cause it to grow up, we are commanded to long for the thing that will cause us to grow up.

The baby doesn't need to be told to do this. It will do it naturally. We, however, are commanded to do this. Whether we feel like it or not, we are to long for pure spiritual milk. If we don't long for it, we can assume that we will, at the very least, become very weak.

But again, what is this pure spiritual milk? Peter doesn't tell us what it is. He shows us. Verses four through ten are "pure spiritual milk". These are the truths we are to be longing for. They're not, as you'll soon see, baby food. No one, upon reading these verses, would say that they're the spiritual equivalent to pureed squash.

These are the kind of truths that demand deep reflection. They leave us scratching our heads, wondering what they mean. And these are the kind of verses that cause us to think about Christ and to love him more. These are the kind of verses that cause us to ponder—and to celebrate—our relationship with him.

Before we look at the pure spiritual milk in verses four through ten, there's something else we need to consider in this first section. Take a close look at verse three (see the portion underlined below):

> ***Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you <u>have tasted that the Lord is good.</u>*** **1 Peter 2:2-3**

The portion underlined is a quote from Psalm 34. It is evident, based on this quote and another quote in chapter 3 (verses 10-12) and several allusions scattered throughout the book, that Peter has been thinking deeply about this Psalm as he writes this letter. He has been obeying his command to long for pure spiritual milk himself!

Peter has been thinking about this particular Psalm because it concerns a persecuted man (careful reading of the Psalm reveals that, ultimately, Christ is THE persecuted man) who is delivered by God. The persecuted (and now delivered) man in the Psalm has experienced God's goodness. He has delighted in God's care for him. Based on his experience with God, the delivered man calls his audience to "taste and see that the LORD is good" (Psalm 34:8).

This verse, Peter thinks, applies to his audience and to their situation. He doesn't repeat the verse verbatim. He doesn't command his readers to taste and see the goodness of the Lord. He is confident that his readers have already "tasted" the goodness of the Lord. Now that they've done this, however, there's a need to keep eating!

The verb translated "tasted" in 1 Peter 2:3 means "to have perception of something either by mouth or by experience, especially in reference to relatively small quantity".[36] It can be used to refer "to the initial phase of dining".[37]
The Psalmist calls his readers to the table so that they might do this. Peter acknowledges that his readers have tasted Christ. They have had a "relatively small quantity" of him. He calls them to stay at the table and to keep eating. He says, in effect, "Now that you have had a taste of Christ and have found him good, ask for seconds! Like a baby who won't be satisfied with anything but more milk, keep crying out for more of Christ."

To put it another way, Psalm 34:8 is a command—"Taste and see that the LORD is good". Peter doesn't use a command[38] because his readers have already obeyed the Psalmist's command. The Psalmist called his readers to an initial meal. Peter calls his readers—who have already tasted that meal—to keep eating.

36 BDAG, 195.
37 BDAG, 195.
38 Peter uses an indicative verb in his quotation of the Psalm.

We have been commanded to "long for the pure spiritual milk". This pure spiritual milk is the truth about Christ—who he is and how we relate to him. Peter fills the next seven verses with truth after truth about Christ. It is almost as if, upon calling his readers to long for more of Christ, he brings out the most mouth-watering temptations he can bring. He is wanting his readers to drink deeply of Christ and to grow up into salvation.

As a final note regarding verse 3, it is significant to see that Peter considers the Lord whom his readers have tasted to be be Christ.

> ***… if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*** **1 Peter 2:3**[39]

Again, Peter refers to his readers tasting Christ. The Psalmist, however, tells his readers to "Taste and see that Yahweh is good" (in English translations, the name Yahweh appears in all capital letters as "LORD"). In other words, Peter applies the name Yahweh to Christ! How does he do this? He is able to do this because he understands that God has, because of Christ's death and resurrection, given Christ this name! Paul proclaims this same truth. Consider the passage below.

> ***And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*** **Philippians 2:8-11**

THE TRUTHS

In these seven verses, Peter quotes from Exodus, the book of Psalms, Isaiah, Hosea, and Malachi. Surely, if you want evidence of Peter's spiritual health, this is it. These are the words of a man who is drinking deeply at the well of Christ! He has a pure spiritual milk mustache! As I mentioned earlier, there are no commands here. This is the truth of Christ—the truth we are to be consuming all of our days.

To make the feast which Peter has laid out for us a little more manageable, let's divide it into two smaller meals. We'll begin with verses four through eight.

> ***As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you 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. For 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,"***

39 Peter, as we noted earlier, is using the Septuagint (LXX). The LXX doesn't use the word Yahweh. It says, "the Lord".

and

"A stone of stumbling,
and a rock of offense."

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. **1 Peter 2:4-8**

When we drink "pure spiritual milk", we are drawing near to Christ. But who is he? Why is he worth our longing?

He is worth our longing because he is the foundation stone of the "temple" that God is building so that people might freely worship him. But Christ is not like an inanimate stone—cold and lifeless. He is a "living" stone.

The idea of the Christ being a stone is not new with Peter. This was, as we'll see below, a well-known description of the Christ. The description of him as a living stone, however, appears to be original with Peter. He takes the stone metaphor from the Old Testament and sharpens it even further. It means that he is a real man who is alive. Beyond this, it reminds us of the gospel event. Jesus died and rose again in three days. Everything, for Peter, hinges on Christ's life, death, and resurrection from the dead.

It is not surprising to see Christ described as a living stone in the temple that God is building. What is surprising, however, is Peter's description of those who trust in him.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you 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. **1 Peter 2:4-5**

While it's not translated in the ESV, it's significant that Peter uses the Greek conjunction "kai" (a word often translated as "and") at the start of verse five. This conjunction is used when the author wants to join items but doesn't want to differentiate between them in terms of quality. The items are to be seen, at least in the author's presentation of them, in the same light. This does not mean that Peter sees believers as equal with Christ. It means that Peter is saying that we, just like Christ, are living stones in the temple of God.

Do you see yourself in this way? Do you see yourself as a "living stone" in the temple that God is building? If Christ is the Cornerstone of the true temple, the implication is that there must be more to build. Something rests upon the Cornerstone. What is it? It's us! Believers are the living stones that rest upon the living Cornerstone!

It is significant that believers are called "living" stones. We weren't always living stones. In fact, all of us were born into spiritual death. We have been brought from death (a state we inherited from Adam number one—see Genesis 2:17) to life (a state we inherited from the last Adam—Jesus Christ!). As living stones, we are, just like Christ, chosen and precious building blocks in the temple that God is building.

But, Peter says, we're more than just part of the temple. We're also holy priests who serve in the temple. As holy priests, we are offering "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ". What a privilege to be brought into the presence of God! He has decreed that we might serve him! Beyond this, we see here that he will accept our sacrifices because they come "through Jesus Christ".

This is why we were created! We were created to declare that God is great. We were created to love and to worship him. We were created to enjoy him!

Are Peter's astounding claims true? Peter insists that they are. To prove that this is the case, he quotes Isaiah 28:16:

> ***For 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."*** **1 Peter 2:6**

The promise is that the one who trusts in the cornerstone "will not be put to shame". The implication is that the one who believes will be accepted by God.

The honor of being accepted by God and of being his holy priesthood isn't for everyone. It is "for you who believe". But what about those who refuse to believe in the Cornerstone that has been laid in Zion by God? Their destiny, also, "stands in Scripture". Peter uses two passages from the Old Testament to talk about the "heritage" of those who refuse to believe:

First, Peter quotes from Psalm 118:22:

> ***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 …"*** **1 Peter 2:7**

Then, Peter quotes from Isaiah 8:14:

> ***… and***
>
> ***"A stone of stumbling,***
> ***and a rock of offense."***
>
> ***They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*** **1 Peter 2:8**

In spite of God's designation of the Christ as the Cornerstone, and there was an abundance of evidence during Christ's life on earth that he was that Cornerstone, the people rejected him. Christ applied these words from Psalm 118 to the Jewish leaders who rejected him. They were "the builders" who rejected the Cornerstone. As was prophesied in this Psalm, the people who should have been eagerly waiting for this "stone"—the spiritual leaders in Israel—refused to accept him. This means that they saw Christ, considered him, and rejected him as the true Cornerstone of the temple.[40]

However, it's not just the Jewish leaders who rejected Christ. They are not the only ones who are guilty of looking upon the Christ and of refusing to

40 See Matthew 21:42.

acknowledge his God-given role as the Cornerstone of the true temple. Peter applies these prophecies to all "those who do not believe". People who refuse to come to Christ and see him as God's chosen and precious Cornerstone are, like the Jewish leaders 2,000 years ago, actively rejecting him.

For those who refuse to believe, Christ becomes a "stone of stumbling". Like a blind person tripping on a large stone in the middle of the path, these people stumble over Christ. They do not see him and his greatness.

But their blindness cannot be chalked up to ignorance. Rather, Peter says that this stumbling happens because "they disobey the word". The word they are disobeying is God's word concerning the Christ. Because people refuse to believe what God has said about his precious and chosen Cornerstone, they will be broken by that Cornerstone.

Peter doesn't spend long focusing on the fate of those who "do not believe". His desire is to encourage the "elect exiles". That's why, in verses nine and ten, Peter turns his attention to the elect exiles once again. In these two verses, Peter piles on the encouragement. He doesn't quote long verses here. Rather, he takes phrase after phrase from various Old Testament passages and applies them to the "elect exiles of the Dispersion".

> ***But 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. 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.*** **1 Peter 2:9-10**

Notice the poetic rhythm in these verses. These verses are, because of this rhythm, easy to memorize. Peter starts with four descriptions of the "elect exiles". He then summarizes the purpose of the elect exiles. He concludes with four more descriptions of the elect exiles.

The first four descriptions include no references to sin or mercy. The second set, however, clearly point to the former sinfulness of the people and to the mercy they had received.

Here are the first four descriptions that Peter applies to the "elect exiles of the Dispersion":

> ***But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession …*** **1 Peter 2:9a**

Because Peter's words summarize so many promises that were made to the people of God, it is hard to limit the Old Testament passages Peter was thinking of here to just a few. However, there are specific passages Peter clearly had in mind. Here is the first one:

> ***"The wild beasts will honor me,***
> ***the jackals and the ostriches,***
> ***for I give water in the wilderness,***
> ***rivers in the desert,***
> ***to give drink to my chosen people,***
> ***the people whom I formed for myself***
> ***that they might declare my praise."*** **Isaiah 43:20-21**

The words translated "chosen people" here are, in the LXX,[41] which Peter is quoting from, translated "chosen race".

Here's the second passage from which Peter quotes:

> ***"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."*** **Exodus 19:5-6**

Notice, God makes a promise to the Israelites that they will, if they obey him and keep his covenant (and we'll return to this condition in a moment), be his "treasured possession" (the LXX, which Peter is quoting from, reads "special people"), and a "kingdom of priests" (the LXX reads "royal priesthood") and a "holy nation".

And here's the third passage from which Peter quotes:

> ***"They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him."*** **Malachi 3:17**

Again, Peter quotes from the LXX here, which doesn't say "my treasured possession" but "my possession".

God's promises to the people of Israel are stunning. Why does he make these promises? He does so, as Peter makes clear when he is describing God's purpose for his people, so that they might bring him glory:

> ***… that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*** **1 Peter 2:9b**

The purpose of the people of God is to display God's greatness. This is why mankind was created.[42] Adam, as we know, didn't do this. Israel, a nation that was to be a "second" Adam,[43] never did this. But this didn't nullify God's purposes. His purpose for his people was that they might "proclaim the excellencies of him who called [them] out of darkness into his marvelous light".

It is not entirely clear where Peter draws this purpose statement from. This thought—but not the exact words—appears throughout the Old Testament. One possibility is (again, from the LXX) Isaiah 42:12:

> ***Let them give glory to the LORD, and declare his praise in the coastlands.*** **Isaiah 42:12**

After summarizing God's purpose, Peter describes the "elect exiles of the Dispersion" in yet four more ways.

> ***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.*** **1 Peter 2:10**

41 Again, English translations are generally based on the Hebrew text.
42 See Genesis 1:26-28.
43 The land of Israel was a "type" of Eden.

Peter draws all four of these descriptions from the same book in the Old Testament. These descriptions can stand on their own. They make sense without having read them in the Old Testament. In fact, as is certainly true in the church today, I'm sure many of the "elect exiles" to whom Peter was writing had no idea that these words came from an Old Testament book. However, their meaning becomes even richer when we learn the background of these verses. These are all drawn from the first two chapters of Hosea.

In this book, God hands Israel its "divorce papers". He tells them, because of their idolatry, that they are no longer his people. The prophet Hosea is called to demonstrate God's attitude toward the people of Israel by naming his own children horrible names.

> ***She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to him, "Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all. But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen."***
>
> ***When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. And the LORD said, "Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God."*** **Hosea 1:6-9**

Fortunately, this is not the end of the message in Hosea. We also find a promise of restoration.

> ***"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' it shall be said to them, 'Children of the living God.' And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.***
>
> ***"Say to your brothers, 'You are my people,' and to your sisters, 'You have received mercy.'"*** **Hosea 1:10-2:1**

This promise of restoration is repeated later in the second chapter.

> ***"And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD,***
> ***I will answer the heavens,***
> ***and they shall answer the earth,***
> ***and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil,***
> ***and they shall answer Jezreel,***
> ***and I will sow her for myself in the land.***
> ***And I will have mercy on No Mercy,***
> ***and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people';***
> ***and he shall say, 'You are my God.'"*** **Hosea 2:21-23**

Because of sin, God had said that his people were not his people. He also said that he was no longer their "I Am". But he also promised that a day would come when he would have mercy on his people. They would no longer be called "Not My People". Their new name would be "God's people". They would no longer be called "No Mercy". Now, they would be a people who, as Peter says, "have received mercy".

The verses Peter draws from in 1 Peter 2 demand hard thinking. He quotes a passage (Exodus 19:5-6) where God makes a conditional promise to Israel. He says, "if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples ... and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation". But Israel never did this! They never, from the very beginning, obeyed God. They never kept his covenant!

This should give us great pause. How, can Peter say that these verses are true of the elect exiles when the condition was never met by Israel?

Ahhh! But the condition was met by Israel. Not the Israel that, after passing through the Red Sea, grumbled against God, worshiped false gods, sinned mightily, and perished in the wilderness. Not the Israel that, immediately after crossing over the Jordan River, ignored God's command regarding Jericho. Not the Israel that ran after Baal and built altars under every shady tree and on every green hill.

No, the conditions of obedience and covenant keeping were met by the "Israel" that, after passing through the Jordan (via baptism), went into the wilderness and, when tempted by the devil with all the treasures of the world, chose to obey God! This "Israel" not only kept the outward law, he also kept the law in his heart.

In the way they tell the story, the gospel writers clearly present Jesus as the "people" of Israel. He, from the beginning of his life, obeys God's voice and keeps his covenant. He does what the nation as a whole never did. His actions are done so that he might, as he makes clear at his baptism, "fulfill all righteousness" (see Matthew 3:15). God, in response to Jesus' obedience and covenant keeping, declares, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (see Matthew 3:17). This means that he is, as the obedient Israel, the inheritor of all of God's promises to Israel.

Peter is able to take what has been given to Jesus and apply it to the church because the church is counted as "in Christ". The path he walked is counted to all those who, by faith, are "in him". The death he died to sin is, by faith, counted to all those who are "in him". This "in Christ" language rings throughout the New Testament. Because we are "in him" we are inheritors of all that he has inherited!

He is the reason why the church can be called "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession". He is the reason we are able to "proclaim the excellencies of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light". He is the reason we can be called the people of God. He is the reason we have been shown mercy.

None of the descriptions here apply to the church without being mediated through Christ. He truly is the Cornerstone of all that God is doing!

Week Five

1 PETER 2:11-3:7

WEEK FIVE

1 Peter 2:11-3:7

DAY ONE

1. Carefully read and mark-up the text printed below. Underline or circle key words and phrases. Note any patterns. Draw lines connecting words or phrases that are related. Define any words you don't know.

1 PETER 2:11-3:7

2:11 *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.*

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.*

3:1 *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.*

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.*

2. After studying these verses, complete the following:

In these verses, Peter ...

DAY TWO

3. Verses 11-17 pertain to all believers. What specific command do you find in verse 11?

4. Prior to giving his command in verse 11, Peter reminds the believers that they are sojourners and exiles. How might this reminder help the believers to obey the command in verse 11?

5. What is the danger to yourself, according to verse 11b, of disobeying this command?

6. What specific command do you find in verse 12?

7. Why, according to verse 12b, should you keep this command?

8. What specific commands do you find in verses 13-14?

9. What does the little phrase "for the Lord's sake" have to do with the command in verses 13-14?

10. Carefully consider verse 17. What four commands do you find here?

11. How are you doing in regard to keeping each of these commands?

DAY THREE

12. Read verses 18-25. What does Peter command to servants here?

13. Two different times in verses 18-25, Peter refers to something that is "a gracious thing". What is this thing that is gracious in God's sight?

14. Why, according to verses 21-25, is this a gracious thing in God's sight?

15. According to verse 23b, Christ did something instead of reviling and threatening those who were against him. What was it?

16. Do you find yourself doing this when you are slandered? What do you generally do?

17. Why, according to verse 24, did Jesus bear "our sins in his body on the tree"? Do you see these things as realities in your life?

18. Basing your answer on 2:11-24, what are some signs that a person is doing this?

19. These commands are directed toward servants. What application do they have to employees? How would you use these verses to counsel an employee working for an unjust employer?

20. If you are an employee, reflect on your attitude and performance on the job. How are you doing in regard to Peter's commands here?

DAY FOUR

21. Read 1 Peter 3:1-2. What does Peter command to wives here?

22. What is this command intended to do?

23. What does Peter command in verses 3-6? How can a wife keep this command?

24. Why would a wife keep this command?

25. What does Peter command to husbands in verse 7?

26. How might a husband keep this command?

27. Why would a husband keep this command?

28. If you are married, reflect on your marriage. How are you, if you are a wife, doing in regard to Peter's commands in verses 1-6? How are you, if you are a husband, doing in regard to Peter's commands in verse 7?

DAY FIVE

29. Memorize the following two verses:

> ***Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 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.*** **1 Peter 2:11-12**

DAY SIX

30. Read the study notes printed below and then complete the following sentence.
This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

1 PETER 2:11-3:7

We have reached another major turning point in the letter. This one is introduced by the word "Beloved".[44] This title appears frequently in the New Testament Epistles[45] where it typically refers to a group of believers. In the Gospels, however, the title is typically used in the singular in reference to Jesus:

> ***… and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."*** **Matthew 3:17**

Notice what has happened between the Gospels and the Epistles. God's beloved One (Jesus!) has, by his death and resurrection, created a whole class of people who are, like himself, called "Beloved"!

44 Peter introduces another section with "Beloved" in 1 Peter 4:12.

45 The use of "Beloved" in the Old and New Testaments demands more study. Two significant Old Testament uses of this title for the people of God are in Psalm 60:5 and Psalm 108:6. These Psalms, while one is in book 2 of the Psalms and the other is in book 5, are virtual echoes of one another. They both demonstrate that deliverance of God's people rests on God answering the petition of the Anointed King. Jesus is the one who fulfills these Psalms. (The "us" in Psalm 60:5 probably should be rendered "me" as in the LXX (59:7), the marginal reading of the MT (Hebrew text), and in Psalm 108:6. Both the HCSB and NET translate the verse in this way.)

The writers of the Epistles typically use this introduction when they're introducing warnings or commands. In these two verses we find both.

> ***Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 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.*** **1 Peter 2:11-12**

Peter reminds his readers, once again, that they are strangers living in a strange place (see 1:1). Clearly, this perspective frames up the way Peter sees the world. Is this the case with you? Do you consider yourself to be a stranger? If you are a believer, you cannot afford to become too comfortable. Like a scuba diver 100 feet under the water, you must constantly remember that you are living in an alien environment.[46]

But the environment in which you live is more than just alien. It is also hostile:

> ***Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.*** **1 Peter 2:11**

Peter is not warning us to abstain from all passions. We are, for instance, to be passionate about Christ (see 1 Peter 1:8). Rather, he is warning us to be careful about the focus of our passions. We are to "abstain from the passions of the flesh".

What is the flesh? As with the word "Beloved", this word is a favorite of New Testament writers. Flesh, in this context, does not refer to skin. It refers to the sinful nature that spread to all men because of Adam's rebellion.

The "passions of the flesh", then, are those things that bring delight to the sinful nature. Like a dog drooling over a piece of poisoned meat, the passions of the flesh are those rancid things that promise great joy to the darkened hearts of men, but which lead to future misery.

The passions of the flesh show up repeatedly in the biblical narrative. They are those things that cause mankind to turn from God and his laws and to become, in a sense, little gods who are governed by their own wants and needs.

The passions of the flesh never produce good fruit. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve choose a piece of fruit over God's good word. In Genesis 11, the post-flood generation is captured by the dream of building a tower that reaches to the heavens and, thus, making great names for themselves (rather than making a name for God). In Joshua 7, Achan chooses "a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels" (Joshua 7:21) over obedience to God's command. In Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira crave the praise of the church so greatly that they're willing to lie to the Holy Spirit to get it. And in 2 Timothy 4:10, we learn that one of Paul's coworkers has deserted him because he was "in love with this present world".

It's worth noting that our Lord was tempted by the passions of the flesh, but he, unlike the rest of mankind, never—not even for a single second—yielded to them.

46 It is interesting that Paul says that we are no longer "sojourners" (the word is translated "aliens" in the following verse): "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God ..." (Eph 2:19). Paul is not contradicting Peter. Rather, he is referring to the fact that the Gentiles are no longer "outsiders". They are now, because of Christ, "insiders".

He was governed, instead, "by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

Jesus is the firstborn of a new kind of people who abstain from the passions of the flesh. Because believers have been "born again" (1 Peter 1:3) and are, thus, new creations, they no longer have to walk "according to the flesh". Rather, believers are called, like their Lord, to "walk by the Spirit". Notice how Paul contrasts the flesh and the Spirit in the following passage.

> ***But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*** **Galatians 5:16-24**

If you are a believer, is this how you are living? Are you governed by the Spirit? Do you, like Christ, reject the passions of the flesh and, instead, live "by every word that comes from the mouth of God"? Or are you constantly looking at, handling, considering, pricing, buying, and, ultimately, eating strange fruit? As Adam, Achan, and Ananias would tell you, you cannot give in to the passions of the flesh without being, in some way, seriously damaged. Your very soul is at stake.

This was Peter's warning. Now to the command:

> ***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.*** **1 Peter 2:12**

Peter's command pertains to the believers' conduct "among the Gentiles". However, the people to whom Peter is writing are, most of them, Gentiles. Peter knows this. Why, then, is he referring to his readers as if they are not Gentiles?

Once again, Peter is referring to the Christians as if they are part of Israel. The "Gentiles" Peter refers to here are those who do not know God. The people to whom Peter is writing (made up of both Jews and Gentiles) are not Gentiles because they are part of the true Israel—Christ.

In the same way that the Israelites in the Old Testament were to live in a way that was different from the Gentile nations around them, Christians are to live in a way that radically differs from that led by non-believers.

We have already been told (in 1 Peter 1:15) that believers are to be holy because God is holy. Here, Peter provides another reason why believers are to be holy. That reason is something that will happen on "the day of visitation". On that day, because the "Gentiles" have seen the "honorable" conduct of Christians, these former God-haters will glorify God.

> ***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.*** **1 Peter 2:12**

Why are they glorifying God? Peter doesn't say it here, but it would appear that they are glorifying him because they have turned from their sins and have become worshipers of him!

At first glance, this passage doesn't seem to say anything about the "conversion" of the "Gentiles". It merely pictures the "Gentiles" glorifying God. However, for a number of reasons, it is likely that this passage is talking about the conversion of the Gentiles.

First, the verb translated "glorify" here is also used in 1 Peter 1:8, 4:11, and 4:16. In each of these other uses, Peter ties the verb to Christians who are bringing glory to God. He doesn't, in any of these uses, use the word in relation to non-believers.

Even stronger evidence that Peter is referring to the conversion of the "Gentiles" is found in Peter's words to wives in 1 Peter 3. This passage is very similar to 1 Peter 2:12.[47]

> ***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, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.***
> **1 Peter 3:1-2**

Finally, and perhaps most convincingly, Jesus said the same thing in his Sermon on the Mount. In fact, Peter's words seem to be an echo of this passage:

> ***"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."***
> **Matthew 5:16**

Why will non-believers give glory to the Father? They will do this because the "light" of Christ shining through the people of Christ has caused them to turn to Christ.

Believers will be called evildoers. This should not surprise us. We are not to be offended and protest. Rather, we are to do what is right. Our actions are to be a proclamation of the gospel. How we work, keep our house, raise our kids, buy items, sell items, worship, eat, visit, entertain ourselves, interact with others, etc., etc., etc., are all to a proclamation of the gospel.

The world may hate what we believe and refuse to listen to an explanation of our beliefs. But our conduct may cause them to see things in a different way. Peter seems to be saying here that some non-believers—even those who have openly mocked Christians and called them evildoers—will be won over to Christ by the honorable behavior of Christians.

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47 Both 1 Peter 3:2 and 1 Peter 2:12 use the same verb to describe the non-believer "seeing" the behavior of the Christian. This verb, which is only used in the New Testament in these two passages, doesn't refer to merely "seeing" something. Rather, it means "to pay close attention to, watch, observe" (BDAG, 387.). Peter, in both of these passages, is referring to non-believers carefully watching what believers are doing, and, based on these careful observations, coming to God in faith with the result that he is glorified by them.

It's worth noting the words Peter repeats in this letter. The word translated "conduct" here is one of his favorite words. He uses it in 1:15, 1:18, 2:12, 3:1, and 3:16. Clearly, Peter thinks a great deal about what believers do. For him, our deeds are to be governed by our faith. Our deeds themselves are to be a proclamation of the gospel!

Do you see your behavior in this way? Do you see it as a proclamation of the gospel? If we are not careful in the way we live, we are providing "the Gentiles" with a false picture of our Lord and of our faith. Why would they turn to Christ when they have a false picture of him?

If, however, we are careful in the way we live, we may, as Peter says in his instructions to wives, win unbelievers "without a word". Would this ever happen based on the way you live your life?

How, beyond not sinning, is the Christian to do this? Peter provides his readers with concrete instructions in the next verses.

Peter begins by addressing all believers:

> ***Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.*** **1 Peter 2:13-17**

This paragraph applies to every believer. Peter starts with a sweeping statement regarding the Christian's relation to "human institutions". Christians are not, because they are now followers of Christ and are "sojourners and exiles" in this world, exempt from obedience to human institutions. Rather, as Christians, we are to be the best of citizens.

Peter refers to the emperor here. This does not give a free pass to all those who are not under an emperor! Notice what he says immediately before he refers to the emperor. He says that we are to be subject to "every human institution". This applies to all believers in all situations!

If you are in a country with a president, then you are to be subject to the president. You are to honor the president and to submit to his or her authority. It also applies to "lesser" authorities. If you are in a school setting, then you are to be subject to the school board. If you are in prison setting, then you are to be subject to the administration and the prison guards.

It's important that we don't miss the reason why Christians are to "be subject" to these authorities! We are to do this "for the Lord's sake". In other words, we are to do this because we are followers of Jesus.

As believers, we recognize that God has put human institutions in place and has given them authority within a certain sphere. This is what Jesus was saying when asked about paying taxes.

> ***He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*** **Luke 20:25**

Caesar, according to Jesus, had a certain realm of authority. Jesus told the Jews that they needed to recognize that authority. In the same way, as believers today, we need to be subject to our authorities.

But what, specifically, does Peter mean when he says that we are to "Be subject" to our authorities? His meaning goes far beyond mere deeds. It includes, as we see in verse 17, how we think about the authorities. We are to honor them. If we do not do this, we are going against God's will. If we do not honor, for instance, the president, we are not "doing good" (v. 15) in the eyes of God.

This does not mean that we are to obey sinful commands by the authorities. If we were to do so, this would demonstrate that we consider these human institutions to have authority over God. Human institutions do not have authority over God. Their authority is within the sphere which God has granted. Thus, a sinful command is not to be obeyed by the believer.

Peter himself, the one telling us to honor "every human institution", defied the authorities in Jerusalem when they told him that he and John were no longer to preach in the name of Jesus.

> ***So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."*** **Acts 4:18-20**

Even in his defiance, Peter honored those authorities with his words. He demonstrated, by his courteous behavior, that he recognized their authority within a certain sphere. They did not have authority to keep him from doing what God had commanded him to do. However, they did have authority, again, within a certain sphere.

Paul demonstrated the same attitude when he was brought before the "chief priests and all the council" in Jerusalem. In fact, when Paul, after being struck in the face, called the high priest a "whitewashed wall", he later apologized:

> ***Those who stood by said, "Would you revile God's high priest?" And Paul said, "I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"*** **Acts 23:4-5**

When we honor those who are, in some way, over us, we "silence the ignorance of foolish people". Once again, we see that our actions matter. God uses them to accomplish his purposes. We must never forget that we are "servants of God". We are, it is true, not slaves to any human institution. But as God's free "servants" we are to serve him in the way he wants and where he wants. We "Honor everyone" because we are seeking to honor him!

Now that Peter has spoken to believers in general, he addresses believers in specific situations. He addresses servants, wives, and husbands. How are believers in these circumstances to honor God? It is significant to note that Peter does not, because of the difficulty of the circumstances in which the believer is living, alter the command he has just given. These believers, also, are to "be subject" to those who are, in some way, over them.

Here are Peter's words to "Servants":

> ***Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 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. 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. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 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. 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. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*** **1 Peter 2:18-25**

Peter refers two different times in these verses to something that is "a gracious thing" before God. What is this "gracious thing"? It is when we endure suffering because of our good deeds.

Why does God love it when we endure suffering because of our good deeds? I would suggest that the reason is himself. God loves his name and his glory. He loves showing off his greatness. And one of the ways he demonstrates his greatness is when his servants suffer for doing good and endure it.

There are several reasons why suffering for doing good and enduring it, particularly, shows off God's greatness. First, when we suffer for doing good and endure it we show that we consider God to be of greater worth than our own comfort. If God always did what pleased us and put us in the most comfortable situations all of the time, the world would argue that we serve God only because of the things that he does for us. In other words, the argument could be made that *we* are the real reason that we follow God.

However, what does it say to the world when we love and praise and admire and obey and long for the very One who is putting us in the most difficult of situations? What does it say to the world when we love and admire the One who could keep us from suffering and yet, for his own purposes, doesn't do it? By our reaction to suffering we powerfully demonstrate, like Christ, that we trust the One "who judges justly". Thus, God proves the greatness of his person by putting his character to the test. His greatness is such that his people still love him when they suffer!

Second, when we suffer for doing good and endure it we are demonstrating the power of God's word. We show that his commands are of more importance to us than our "comfort" or our "rights" or our "dignity" or our "sensibilities". We demonstrate that his word is trustworthy when we choose to obey it even when obedience doesn't seem to make sense. Thus, God proves the greatness of his word by allowing its hold over his people to be tested in the severest of circumstances.

Third, when we suffer for doing good and endure it we are demonstrating the greatness of God's power because we are doing something that is not natural. A natural response to a cruel master, for instance (see 1 Peter 2:18), would be to try

to get back at him. But what kind of internal power allows a person to live under a cruel master and, rather than hating the master, choose to honor the cruel master and to serve him wholeheartedly? That kind of power must be supernatural. Thus, God proves the greatness of his power to change people by allowing them to be tested in the severest of circumstances.

Finally, when we suffer for doing good and endure it we are demonstrating that we love God's Son and consider his life to be good and to be worthy of emulation. We demonstrate that the manner in which the Son lived on this earth was good when we choose to live in the same way. Thus, God demonstrates his greatness when his children imitate the life of the One upon whom God placed all of his favor.

Peter's reference to the Son's suffering brings all of this talk about suffering into focus for the believer. Christ is our example—an example not just to see, but to follow. We are called to walk "in his steps". We are called to do as he did.

> ***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. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 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.*** **1 Peter 2:21-23**

How do we know what to do when we are reviled? We do what our Lord did. We do not "revile in return". What do we do when we suffer? Again, we do what our Lord did. We entrust ourselves "to him who judges justly". We do not use hard circumstances to justify sin or deceit. Rather, we walk, as he did, in holiness.

Just look at what our Lord accomplished by his suffering!

> ***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. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*** **1 Peter 2:24-25**

Surely, if you've ever wondered if suffering has a redemptive purpose, you should wonder no longer. You were saved because of Someone's suffering!

Christ's suffering resulted in our healing. We were, and Peter quotes extensively from Isaiah 53 here, like lost sheep. But we are no longer lost. Now, because of Christ, we have a "Shepherd and Overseer" watching over our souls.

Christ's example is to fill us with love for him and courage for our lives. We are, like Christ, to entrust ourselves to God. He will do with us what is best. If this means suffering, then we are to suffer as our Lord suffered.

Before we move on to the next specific situation Peter addresses, we should consider that Peter's words concerning servants and masters applies to those of us who are employees. We are to treat our employers (or supervisors) with respect—even those that are difficult. We are to honor them for the position they hold. This does not mean, of course, that you have to keep a job where you are routinely mistreated. You can go and look for other work! But you must not use mistreatment as a basis for grumbling or complaining or poor performance. We must not return evil for evil. Christ, remember, set an example for you to follow. You must walk as he walked.

Peter has completed his instructions to servants. Next, he addresses wives. How should they relate to their husbands?

> ***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, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—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. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.*** **1 Peter 3:1-6**

Peter starts these verses with the word "Likewise". This means that much of what Peter has said in the previous verses is to be imported into these verses. Wives, in the same way that the general population of believers is to be subject to "every human institution" and servants are to be subject to their masters, are to be subject to their husbands. While the mere mention of subjection in marriage makes many people today nervous (or mad), the biblical writers had no problem saying this. This is not because they were cultural neanderthals. We must not think this! "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Timothy 3:16). Therefore, verses about wives being subject to husbands aren't jokes or mistakes. They are gifts to us from the God of heaven!

The ordering of a marriage (i.e., "the husband is the head of the wife"—see Ephesians 5:23) says nothing about the relative worth of the participants in the marriage. The Bible doesn't teach that men are more valuable than women or that women are more valuable than men. It does teach, however, that husbands and wives are different and that they fill different roles. It should not surprise us that the world doesn't understand this. After all, if they do not believe there is a Creator, why would they believe that the creation has order to it?

But if we believe in a Creator, we should, also, believe that the Creator was intentional in his creation. He ordered things as he saw fit. Marriage is the first human institution seen in the word of God. It was created by God so that Adam might have strong help in fulfilling the mandate to fill the earth with God's glory.[48]

Marriage is far more significant than most understand. It is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church. When we see a healthy marriage we see a picture of how the Church functions with Christ. That's why Paul, when he talks about how wives are to relate to their husbands, can't help but speak of how the Church relates to Christ.

> ***Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*** **Ephesians 5:22-24**

48 God demonstrates Adam's place in the marriage not only by virtue of the fact that Adam was created first. It is important to note that God speaks to Adam first after Adam and Eve eat the fruit. Adam, as the "head" of the marriage, was accountable for the marriage itself.

Paul's reason that the wife should submit to the husband is "the husband is the head of the wife". Peter, based on his words in verse one ("wives, be subject to your own husbands") would clearly agree with Paul. But he focuses on another reason here. He tells wives to submit because unbelieving husbands may be won to the faith "without a word by the conduct of their wives". This demands faith!

When you graciously submit to your unbelieving husband, you are preaching the gospel. If you have an unbelieving husband, always keep this thought in mind—your respectful and kind behavior toward your husband is how you are preaching the gospel to him. Even if he won't listen to the gospel, he may be won "without a word" by watching the effects of the gospel in you and the effects of the gospel through you.

Peter goes on to tell wives that they should pay more attention to what they wear (but not in the way that clothing catalogs suggest!). Wives are commanded to focus on clothing the "hidden person of the heart". Peter's words here are worth much thought. Do you give as much attention to this "hidden person" as you do to your "outer person"? Would your husband say that you are clothed with a "gentle and quiet spirit"? Do you demonstrate your hope in God by the way you clothe this inner person?

How do you clothe this inner person? It probably happens in many ways. One of those ways is to do what the holy women have always done. These "holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands". Do you, based on your relationship with your husband, demonstrate that you are related to these old-time saints? Or would these godly women, if they saw your marriage, tell you that you are very different from them in this regard?

Before we move on to the way believing husbands are to relate to their wives, I'd like to make three final notes about the submission of believing wives to husbands:

(1) It should be noted that it's typical to equate submission with weakness in character. We must not think that this is the case. Peter uses the term in an entirely positive manner. The standards of the world are not to be the standards of believers. Christ was not weak when he submitted to the authorities. In fact, his submission was one of the ways he demonstrated his strength.

(2) It is counterproductive to constantly make jokes about submission in terms of husbands and wives in marriage whenever the topic is addressed. This isn't a joke. What if we made jokes about other commands every time they were brought up—wouldn't this have the tendency of eroding those commands? If we believe that God's word is "breathed out" by him (again, see 2 Timothy 3:16), we will not make jokes about any portion of his word.

(3) We must not avoid this topic. Future generations of believers will face catastrophic results if they do not hear how the holy men and women of God are to behave toward one another. Pastors, you must preach these things! Parents, you must talk about these things with your children!

Peter concludes this section by addressing husbands.

> ***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.*** **1 Peter 3:7**

Wives, don't get tripped up by the designation of the wife as the "weaker vessel" here. Peter is not demeaning women. He is not saying that wives are inferior to their husbands in any way. He is saying, however, that they are different. Husbands are to live with this in mind.

As with Peter's words to servants and to wives, the command to husbands here—"live with your wives in an understanding way"—doesn't stand alone. It is grammatically linked to the command in 2:13.[49] Thus, this command to husbands is a specific way that the command 2:13 is fulfilled.

Here, again, is that overarching command:

> ***Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution …*** **1 Peter 2:13**

Peter is telling husbands how they are to obey this command. The way a husband demonstrates his subjection in the institution of marriage is by treating his wife with special honor, recognizing that she is the weaker (not inferior!) member of the marriage and that she is an heir with him "of the grace of life".

Notice what happens when the man does this.

> ***… so that your prayers may not be hindered.*** **1 Peter 3:7b**

This is a stunning result! This verse is often pictured as a negative, but it's framed positively here. The result of a husband obeying this command is unhindered prayers.

It's a strange to think, isn't it, that the prayers of some Christian husbands are hindered and the prayers of others are not? Why would any prayers be hindered? How does this benefit the kingdom? They would be hindered, I would suggest, because, when we pray, we lay something before the Lord. We tell him, in effect, that this is an "issue on the table" demanding his attention. But if we are sinning toward our spouse, we must know that our sin, rather than our prayers, becomes the "issue on the table". Hindered prayers are a way that God gets our attention regarding sin.

Husbands, love your wives. Your prayers will be unhindered. Beyond this, the world is watching. Do you, you must ask yourself, preach the gospel to the world by the way you relate to your wife?

Frequently, people say that their faith is private. It's a matter between that one person and God. In these verses, however, we see that true faith is very public. It spills over into all areas of life. Something, you must know, is spilling over from your life. What is it?

49 The commands in 3:7 are actually participles. Thus, these participles rely on a verb found somewhere else to complete their meaning. That verb is found in 2:13.

Week Six

1 PETER 3:8-22

WEEK SIX

1 Peter 3:8-22

DAY ONE

1. Carefully read and mark-up the text printed below. Underline or circle key words and phrases. Note any patterns. Draw lines connecting words or phrases that are related. Define any words you don't know.

1 PETER 3:8-22

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."

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.

2. After studying these verses, complete the following:

In these verses, Peter ...

DAY TWO

3. According to verse 8, what attributes are all Christians to have in common?

4. How can these things be true of those who are suffering? What does it say about God when such beauty is present in a people even when they are being treated in an evil manner?

5. Would those who know you best say that these things are true of you?

6. How can these things become increasingly "normal" in a local church?

7. Verses 9-12 relate to our responses when we are treated in an evil manner or are reviled. Peter's concern here isn't about how the believer is treated, but about how the believer responds. What is a Christian to do when he or she is treated in an evil manner or is reviled?

8. Why, according to verses 12, should the Christian respond with blessing to those who curse?

9. Do you ever think of this when you are treated in an evil manner? What do you generally think of when you are treated in this way?

10. What is the danger, according to verse 12, of responding with evil toward those who treat us in an evil manner?

DAY THREE

11. We are not to be afraid of those who treat us in an evil manner. We are not to be troubled in our minds as we think about those who hate us. What instead, are we to do? *1 Peter 3:13-15a*

12. How, practically, can we do this?

13. When is this to happen?

14. We are always to "be prepared to make a defense". How can a Christian "always" be prepared? What does this say about the way a Christian lives? What does this say about the way a Christian thinks?

15. How is the Christian to respond to those who question his or her faith? *1 Peter 3:15b*

16. Why is the Christian to respond in this way? How does this reflect on Christ?

17. What happens when Christians do not respond in this way? How does this reflect on Christ?

DAY FOUR

18. Compare 1 Peter 3:18 with 1 Peter 3:22. What was Jesus' position when he was on earth? What is his position now? *See also Ephesians 1:15-22 and Philippians 2:5-11*

19. How does this compare to the position of the Christian? *See also 2 Timothy 2:11-13*

20. What confidence should Christ's position at the right hand of God give to the Christian even as he or she suffers today? *See also Romans 8:18-38 and Philippians 3:17-21*

DAY FIVE

21. Memorize the following two verses:

> ***Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 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.*** **1 Peter 3:8-9**

DAY SIX

22. Read the study notes printed below and then complete the following sentence. *This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...*

1 PETER 3:8-22

Peter has given specific instructions to servants, wives, and husbands. Here, he turns his attention, once again, to all Christians.

> ***Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 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.*** **1 Peter 3:8-9**

Just imagine how these attitudes, if they were deeply ingrained in the people of a local church, would impact life for that people. Life would be rich. Relationships would be significant and would result in great satisfaction. Apologies, when needed, would be quickly given. Forgiveness would be even more quickly extended. Mistakes would be covered by grace. People would grow in gifts because they wouldn't be afraid to take risks.

This richness in fellowship isn't meant to be something that we taste only in heaven. Because of the Spirit, we are to exhibit and enjoy the attributes of Christ now.[50] Peter is describing what is to be normal in the church.

But Peter's words here don't just apply to life within the church. His words in verse nine, particularly, seem to be pointed toward life outside the church. Peter indicates that, at times, we will be treated in an evil manner. People will say wicked things about us because of our faith. What do we do when we are treated unfairly?

We do not, because we're being mistreated, suddenly stop walking by the Spirit. In every circumstance we are to reflect Christ. This means that our desire must be to see God's blessing rest upon those who persecute us.

Peter does not mean that we are to approve of the evil done to us and to call it "blessed". Nor is he telling us to become emotionless machines that see and feel no pain. Rather, he is telling us that we are to respond to evil with faith. When we are mistreated, we are to think of the merciful God—the God who has had great mercy upon us—and we are to ask him to bring his blessings upon those who are mistreating us.

This is exactly what Stephen did when he was stoned.

> ***And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*** **Acts 7:59-60**

We are, like Stephen, to bless those who persecute us. We are to do this, Peter says, that we "may obtain a blessing".

"Wait a minute," you might say. "That makes it sound like we're blessing because of what we'll get!" That is precisely what Peter is saying. He is telling us to respond to persecution in faith.

Faith is looking ahead to the reward. When we suffer persecution and, instead of retaliating, bless those who are persecuting us, we are demonstrating that we have faith in God and in his promises. Thus, our non-retaliation demonstrates

50 See Philippians 2:1-11 and Galatians 5:22-23.

the greatness of God and the greatness of his promises. It also demonstrates the firmness of our faith.

But what promises can possibly be great enough that they will move us to respond with blessing when we are treated poorly? Peter doesn't use his own words to describe these promises. Instead, he quotes Psalm 34:

> *For*
>
> *"Whoever desires to love life*
> *and see good days,*
> *let him keep his tongue from evil*
> *and his lips from speaking deceit;*
> *let him turn away from evil and do good;*
> *let him seek peace and pursue it.*
> *For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,*
> *and his ears are open to their prayer.*
> *But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."* **1 Peter 3:10-12**[51]

Do you see the promises waiting for those who trust God? The reason we bless when we are cursed is because we're looking ahead to a greater reward. There is something better than retaliation. It is life, good days, the warm gaze of God upon us, and the knowledge that he listens when we pray. It should be noted that, for Peter, "life" and "good days" are equivalent to "eternal life". He is not saying, "If you keep your tongue from evil, you will have life and good days right now", for that would run counter to his argument that we will suffer now. Rather, he is saying that we should be looking ahead to "life" and "good days"—in other words, eternal life.

Peter says, in effect, "You can choose to retaliate. Or you can choose something far better!" Retaliation feels good for a moment. God's pleasure, however, is for eternity. If you have trouble controlling your mouth when you are cursed, perhaps you need a clearer vision of God's promises.

Walking by faith has always been the way of the people of God.

> *These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.* **Hebrews 11:13-16**

Turning back to Peter's words here and his quotation of Psalm 34, it is important to see that Peter talks about keeping our tongue from evil. In context, he is talking about our responses when we've been wronged. Did you ever consider that it is evil to respond poorly? To put it another way, to retaliate is sin.

> *Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling …* **1 Peter 3:9**

51 Any time an Apostle quotes the Old Testament it's worth careful study. It is evident that Psalm 34 has been on Peter's mind for quite some time. He also refers to it at the start of 1 Peter 2.

Beyond this, Peter indicates that we are to bless when we are cursed. To not bless when we are cursed is sin.

By God's grace, even in this sin-filled world, we will normally be treated well if we do what is right.

> ***Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?*** **1 Peter 3:13**

We don't need a lot of instruction telling us how to respond when we are treated well. However, we do need instructions for those times when we "suffer for righteousness' sake". What are we, as believers, to do then? How do we honor our Lord in those times?

> ***But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 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, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.*** **1 Peter 3:14-16**

This is a remarkable passage and demands our attention. Peter draws his words and thoughts from Isaiah 8. As with Psalm 34, Peter is quoting something that he has been thinking about for some time. He also quoted Isaiah 8 (v. 14) in 1 Peter 2:8, when he referred to Christ as "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense". Once again, we are confronted with Peter's knowledge of the Scriptures. Oh, that we would know God's words like Peter knows them ... that we would be able to use them as adeptly as he does!

Peter's use of Isaiah 8 here demands some hard thinking. However, before we turn there, let's consider what these words say about how we are to respond to suffering.

First, we are to know that when we suffer, heaven's blessing rests on us. Again, we see that we are to respond to suffering in faith. We are to endure suffering knowing that God is smiling upon us and that he will continue to bless us. Peter's words are an echo of Jesus' words in his Sermon on the Mount.

> ***"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*** **Matthew 5:10-12**

Notice Jesus' words here. He says that blessing rests on those who are persecuted "for righteousness' sake". What does this mean? Fortunately, he makes this clear in the next verse. He says that persecution happens "on my account". Thus, "for righteousness sake" equals "on [Jesus'] account". Our suffering is tied to Jesus. We are suffering for him. We are suffering for his kingdom. We are suffering for his name. We are suffering for his glory. We are suffering for his beauty and splendor. That kind of suffering, Jesus says, leads to great reward.

When we are slandered we must respond to those who are persecuting us "with gentleness and respect". Our gentle and respectful responses demonstrate the confidence we have in Christ. They also have a redemptive purpose. When we respond in this manner, those who have slandered us might be filled with shame and they might repent.

Christ modeled this for us. The Apostles modeled this for us. Remember how Paul, for instance, spoke with the kings and governors who unfairly kept him in prison?

> ***And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind." But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe." And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?" And Paul said, "Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains."*** **Acts 26:24-29**

We have been given a model that we are to follow. It helps to know that others have gone before us and have suffered greater things than we will ever suffer. It also helps to know that it is God's will, at times, that we suffer.

> ***For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.*** **1 Peter 3:17**

Peter doesn't have a fatalistic view of the universe. He sees nothing happening to the believer by chance. It helps, greatly, to know that every attack against us has, before it ever reaches us, gone through the gracious hands of God. God's will isn't always pleasant. But it is always good.

Before we move to verses 18-22, we need to take a closer look at Peter's use of Isaiah 8. What is stunning is how Peter quotes this passage. Here is Isaiah 8:12-13:

> ***"Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread."***

Peter quotes these verses as follows:

> ***Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy …"*** **1 Peter 3:14b-15a**

Do you see what Peter has done here? He has used the name Christ in a passage where the name Yahweh was used! As we considered earlier, this is not because Peter has confused God the Father and God the Son. It is because he sees Christ as filling the role of Yahweh! Christ has inherited this name. This is the truth Paul boldly declares to the Philippians:

> ***Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name …*** **Philippians 2:9**[52]

Again, this is not the first time in this letter that Peter has taken something said about Yahweh and applied it to Christ. In 1 Peter 2:8, Peter says that Christ is "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense". This is a quotation from Isaiah 8:14. These words, in their original context, were written about Yahweh. But Peter has no trouble saying that they refer to Christ!

This is your Lord! He has gone ahead of you! If you are suffering for righteousness sake, it is critical that you know that your Lord also suffered—far beyond anything you will every face. It is also critical to know that Christ didn't just suffer. He conquered!

> ***For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. 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, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*** **1 Peter 3:18-22**

These verses are difficult, but they are God-breathed and they are meant to help us. To thoroughly discuss various interpretive options will, I'm afraid, take too long and will divert attention from the topic we have been considering. Here, then, are a few thoughts about these verses:

1. These verses do not introduce a sudden change of topic. Peter has been writing about the suffering and subsequent deliverance of the righteous. Peter has been telling the righteous to persevere—their deliverance will come. These verses must be seen as advancing or confirming Peter's argument in some way. In other words, the saints should be left feeling encouraged after reading these verses. If we read these verses and suddenly begin thinking about something unrelated to what we have been reading, we can assured that we have missed the point.

2. These verses encourage the saints by pointing to the victory Christ had after he suffered. The first words—"For Christ also..."—confirm this. Even though Christ suffered to the point of death, Peter affirms that he overcame. He was "made alive in the spirit".[53] Christ has been vindicated. He, by the Holy Spirit, has been raised from the dead. Reflecting on the sufferings and deliverance of Christ should bring great help to the saints.

3. These verses proclaim that after Christ was "made alive in the spirit", he dealt with his enemies. Christ's former enemies are firmly ensconced under his feet. Christ's victory over his enemies wasn't silent, either. He himself declared his victory when he "proclaimed to the spirits in prison". It appears that Peter is saying that Jesus went to the place where some particularly notorious enemies are currently locked up and declared his victory over them.

52 For further confirmation of this, compare Philippians 2:10 with Isaiah 45:23. This is another instance where something said of Yahweh is applied to Jesus.

53 This could also read, "but made alive by the Spirit".

This is similar to Colossians 2:15: "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him". The triumph of the righteous man over his adversaries is a common theme in the Psalms. As readers of the Psalms, we must know that Christ is the righteous man par excellence. Note, for instance, the following verse in Psalm 112:

> ***His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.*** **Psalm 112:8**

What joy and strength it should give us to know that Christ has already declared his victory over his foes! All those who are suffering for Christ can take courage, knowing that their full vindication is coming! They will, like Christ, look in triumph on their adversaries.

4. These verses remind the reader that God is, even in the face of great evil, extremely patient. His patience should never be taken to mean that he has forgotten about the righteous. After all, he saved Noah and his family. It does mean, however, that he is not in a hurry to bring judgment. As Peter says elsewhere,

> ***The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*** **2 Peter 3:9**

5. These verses remind readers of the deliverance Noah and his family experienced after the decades of persecution they endured before the Flood.

This is not the only time Peter's thoughts turn to Noah when he thinks of the suffering of the godly. Note Peter's words in 2 Peter 2:

> ***For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.*** **2 Peter 2:4-10**

6. These verses reassure believers that they, like Noah, will be saved. Peter compares water baptism to Noah and his family being "brought safely through water". He goes on to say, "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you". This doesn't mean that the act of immersing a person in water actually causes regeneration. Peter has already declared that "the salvation of [our] souls" is from "faith" (see 1 Peter 1:9). Baptism is an expression of faith. That is what Peter seems to mean when he says that baptism is "an appeal to God for a good conscience". This appeal is not based on an empty work (i.e., "If I am plunged in water, I will be cleansed from my sin"). Rather, it is based on the "resurrection of Jesus Christ".

With all this said, however, about the importance of faith, we must not minimize the importance of baptism. To say that "Baptism ... now saves you" is true, for it is part of the salvation "package" (see Acts 2:38). In New Testament times, there simply wasn't a category of unbaptized believers (nor should there be today). To say that one was baptized was another way of saying that one had faith. This is why Paul could say, for instance, to a small group of "disciples" in Ephesus, "Into what then were you baptized?" (Acts 19:3).

As believers in the Lord Jesus, we will suffer. However, we must remember that our Lord also suffered. He is suffering no longer. Like the Lord before us, we can suffer in confidence, knowing that our day of full deliverance will come quickly.

Week Seven

1 PETER 4

DAY ONE

1. Carefully read and mark-up the text printed below. Underline or circle key words and phrases. Note any patterns. Draw lines connecting words or phrases that are related. Define any words you don't know.

1 PETER 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.*

*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.*

*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.*

2. After studying these verses, complete the following:

In these verses, Peter ...

DAY TWO

3. In verse 1, Peter tells us to do something specific because Christ suffered. What is it?

4. What, according to verses 1-2, is the benefit of doing this?

5. How do you think we can do this? What role would a book like 1 Peter play in doing this?

6. In verse 3, Peter, once again, refers to something that the "Gentiles" are doing. Again, Peter's readers are mainly Gentile Christians. What does this tell you about the way he sees the world?

7. In verse 3, Peter describes the actions of the "Gentiles". What do they do?

8. Why do the Gentiles persecute Christians?

9. How will God deal with them? *1 Peter 4:5*

10. What does this say about the God you serve?

DAY THREE

11. What is the command in verse 7?

12. Why is this command so important?

Mark 11:20-25

Luke 18:1-8

John 14:12-14

13. What is the command in verse 8 and what does this command accomplish?

14. How do you think that love does this?

15. What is the command in verse 9? Do you do this?

16. Spiritual gifts are discussed in verses 10-11. What is the Christian to do with his or her gift?

17. Peter is assuming that a person would know the gift he or she has received. How would a person know this?

18. What role might the church have in helping a person discover his or her gifts?

19. Why must gifts be used? What is their ultimate purpose? *1 Peter 4:11*

20. Christians are called something at the end of verse 10. What is it? Do you think of yourself in this way?

DAY FOUR

21. What is the Christian not to do when he or she encounters "the fiery trial"? *1 Peter 4:12*

22. What, instead, is the Christian to do? *1 Peter 4:13*

23. Reread verse 12. Why do fiery trials come upon Christians? *See also 1 Peter 1:6-7*

24. Verses 12-19 are, in a way, a summary of the entire book of 1 Peter. Summarize these verses below.

DAY FIVE

25. Memorize the following verse:

> ***The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.*** **1 Peter 4:7**

DAY SIX

26. Read the study notes printed below and then complete the following sentence.

This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

1 PETER 4

Peter's words in verse one go back to 3:18 where he says that "Christ also suffered". Here, he says that this fact should causes us to do something very specific.

> ***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, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.*** **1 Peter 4:1-2**

As he wrote these words, I wonder if Peter's thoughts turned to the night of the Last Supper. At that time, Jesus emphasized the fact that the Apostles would suffer as he had suffered.

> ***"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you."*** **John 15:18**

> ***"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you."*** **John 15:20**

We, like the Apostles, will suffer because of Christ. We are to "arm" ourselves with this "way of thinking". We are to mentally prepare ourselves for suffering. We are to expect it. We are not to fear it. Suffering should not surprise us. It is normal for the Christian.

And suffering, Peter emphasizes, has great benefit. It has a cleansing effect on the people of God. It drives sin from them. Peter is not saying that Christians who are ready to suffer never sin. He is saying, however, that sin does not dominate them, because suffering, strange as it may sound, actually increases their desire to live "for the will of God".

This is another reason we can praise God for suffering. God uses it to further deal with our sin! He uses it to increase our desire to please him. He uses it so that "the rest of the time in the flesh" will be spent doing "the will of God".

But why will we suffer? After all, if we are good citizens, why should we expect suffering? We've seen this question before, but in the following verses, Peter provides another reason why.

> ***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. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.*** **1 Peter 4:3-5**

The "Gentiles" (once again, we see that Peter considers his mostly Gentile audience to be non-Gentiles, in other words, children of Abraham) persecute the people of God because of sin. They cannot bear the fact that Christians do not participate with them in their "flood of debauchery".

The recent demand for unquestioning approval of same-sex marriage should be seen in this light. Christians are maligned because of their refusal to endorse this particular sin. But, Peter makes it clear, there is a Judge who is watching: "they

will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead". No one is getting away with anything. A day is coming when every sin will be accounted for.

> ***Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*** **Revelation 20:11-15**

But not only will "the Gentiles" be judged. God will judge all people. Peter's reference to God's readiness "to judge the living and the dead" causes him to think of believers who have already died. What will become of them? After all, it appears that their flesh has been judged ... and God has found that they are not fit for heaven! This very well may have been an argument used by "the Gentiles" against Christianity: "How can you say that God has saved you? You die like everyone else! God doesn't treat us any different from how he treats you!"

> ***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.*** **1 Peter 4:6**[54]

Peter acknowledges it is true that the bodies of those believers who have died have been judged. Their bodies, because they are related to the first Adam and are perishable, have been, at least in their present state, deemed unworthy of eternal life. This is precisely what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15.

> ***I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*** **1 Corinthians 15:50**

However, even though the bodies of believers have been "judged in the flesh the way people are", these same people are, because of their acceptance of the gospel, living (and their bodies will be "renewed" at the return of Christ)! Because of the work of the Holy Spirit, believers who have died, even though their bodies have been judged, are, right now, very much alive in heaven and will experience a "rebirth" of their flesh at Christ's return.

We live in a time period when we haven't yet experienced all of the effects of the gospel. Even though we have already been made new on the inside, our flesh is passing away. We already have received salvation internally, but we haven't experienced it externally.

The world is hurtling toward judgment. We are living, right now, in a time of great tribulation. Since this is true and the end is in sight, how should we live?

> ***The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.*** **1 Peter 4:7**

54 See similarities in 1 Peter 3:18.

Notice the end of this verse. The commands here are given so that we might be able to pray. We need to be people of prayer. God answers prayer. We are to be diligent in prayer. We are to pray according to God's will. But we can't do this if we are not "self-controlled and sober-minded".

"Self-controlled" is not just referring to what we do. It is, first and foremost, referring to how we think. We are commanded to be disciplined in the way we think. The command to be "sober-minded" is similar. We are to "be free fr[om] every form of mental and spiritual 'drunkenness', fr[om] excess, passion, rashness, confusion, etc.".[55]

If your house was on fire and your kids were still sleeping in bed, you would not be thinking silly thoughts. You would be very sober-minded and would act accordingly. In the same way, we are to know what time it is in terms of the earth's lifespan ("The end of all things is at hand"), and we are to think and to live accordingly. Only when we do this will we be able to pray.

Believers, these are commands! I wonder if our difficulty in praying is related to the sloppiness of our thought-lives. In other words, if you can't pray, maybe the problem is that you can't think. One area in which we need to be particularly watchful, and Peter's generation didn't have this problem, is in regard to digital devices. If we lack self-control in how we use smartphones, tablets, computers, etc., we will not be able to pray. We need to be able to think. We need time to reflect. If this describes you, repent of your sloppy thinking—the kind of thinking that disregards the very late hour in which we live, start thinking soberly, and then pray.

Peter's next command[56] relates to how we are to treat our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

> ***Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.*** **1 Peter 4:8**

This verse (and a related verse in James 5:20) is an echo of a Proverb:

> ***Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.*** **Proverbs 10:12**

Believers, at times, sin. We don't have to sin, but we're not perfected yet. What's the answer to this? It's to love one another with the love of Christ. When we do this, we are not causing sin to be forgiven. Only God may do that. Nor are we excusing sin. We are not pretending that it doesn't exist. Rather, we are extending the same mercy that has been shown to us.

The attributes of God are to be the attributes of God's people. Notice how Yahweh describes himself in the passage below. This is the love you are to reflect to your fellow believers.

> ***The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin …"*** **Exodus 34:6-7a**

55 BDAG, 672.
56 This is not written as a command in the Greek.

This is the substance of the "new commandment" Jesus gave to his Apostles on the night of the Last Supper:

> ***"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*** **John 13:34-35**

We are able to love because God's love has been poured into our hearts. This outpouring of love is fruit (i.e., evidence) of the Spirit's presence in our lives.[57]

The next verses (9-11) also relate to the love we are to show to our fellow believers.

> ***Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.*** **1 Peter 4:9**

Again, these are commands. We must do these things! But we are able to obey these commands only because we have the Spirit of Christ living within us. When we show hospitality to our brothers and sisters, we are showing hospitality to Christ himself. Alternatively, when we refuse to show hospitality, or when we grumble about showing hospitality, we are refusing to show Christ hospitality, or we are grumbling about serving him!

> ***"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'"*** **Matthew 25:34-40**

Spiritual gifts, also, are tied to love. We use the gifts we receive from God to serve one another.

> ***As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 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.*** **1 Peter 4:10-11**

It is important to note that spiritual gifts have nothing to do with building ourselves up. They are ways we steward God's grace and direct his grace toward fellow believers. When we do this, when we rely on God to work through us, he receives glory. His "weight"—the abundance of his goodness, power, strength, patience, wisdom, love, mercy, etc., etc., etc.—is seen and appreciated by those in the body of Christ.

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57 See Romans 5:5 and Galatians 5:22-23.

It is stunning to think that we must use our gifts. But this is exactly what Peter is saying. We must believe that we are stewards of a slice of "God's varied grace". As stewards of his grace, we are to pour that grace out to our fellow believers. To withhold God's grace would be to withhold the love of God from our fellow believers. To withhold God's grace is to withhold glory from him, because people can't appreciate something that they have not seen and appreciated.

Surely, there is something in Peter's words here that stirs your heart! We must love our brothers and sisters. When we do this, we are truly loving God, for we are showing off "the unsearchable riches of Christ".[58]

Peter is modeling what he has told us to do. He is using the slice of God's grace which he received (a large slice!) to serve us. That's why we have this letter! And that's why he refers to his readers as "Beloved". This letter is the way he is stewarding the grace of God in him so that we might benefit and so that God might be glorified:

> ***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. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And***
>
> ***"If the righteous is scarcely saved,***
> ***what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"***
>
> ***Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*** **1 Peter 4:12-19**

As with so many other parts of 1 Peter, Peter draws from different Old Testament passages in these verses.[59] The sum total of these passages is this: suffering is normal for Christ's people. It is not strange. Insults are a sign that we are part of the family of the Christ and that, when he returns, we will join in his victory.

Suffering (and Peter reminds us that he's not talking about suffering when we've sinned) isn't a sign that God has abandoned us. Indeed, it is a sign that his glory rests on us.

Currently, Peter notes that "the household of God" is being judged. This means God is not absent in our sufferings. He is doing something through them. He is causing us to rely on him. He is causing us to love him more. He is bringing glory to himself. And, if this is what he does for those who love him—his own family members!—what will happen to those who hate him? Peter proves that this is true by quoting Proverbs 11:31:[60] "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" The point isn't that the righteous are barely saved.

58 See Ephesians 3:8.
59 See Psalm 89:51, Isaiah 11:2, Ezekiel 9:6, Jeremiah 25:29, Proverbs 11:31.
60 LXX.

It is that the righteous are saved in the midst of great difficulty. It is hard for the righteous to be saved. And if this is true of the righteous, just imagine how much worse it will be for the ungodly and for sinners.

There is no path, whether for the righteous or the unrighteous, that is pain free. All will suffer. Christians will suffer in this life (mixed with great amounts of joy and covered by the love of Christ). The "Gentiles" will suffer in this life and for all eternity (mixed with great amounts of shame and regret and pain and bitterness).

Take courage, Christian. It is true. You will suffer. But trust God to deal kindly with you in the midst of your sufferings and keep doing what is right. He, most assuredly, will do the same.

Week Eight

1 PETER 5

DAY ONE

1. Carefully read and mark-up the text printed below. Underline or circle key words and phrases. Note any patterns. Draw lines connecting words or phrases that are related. Define any words you don't know.

1 PETER 5

1 So 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: 2 shepherd 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; 3 not domineering
over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when
the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of
glory. 5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. 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.

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.

2. After studying these verses, complete the following:

In these verses, Peter ...

DAY TWO

3. In 1 Peter 5:1-4, Peter addresses the elders in the church. Complete the following:

The elder is to ...

4. Summarize the following verses pertaining to the work of elders in the church:

Acts 20:17-38

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Titus 1:5-9

5. How might verse 4 encourage elders to persevere in difficult times?

6. Consider, again, the theme of this entire book. How might elders play a role in helping Christians navigate through times of suffering?

7. How are Christians to respond to their elders? *1 Peter 4:5, Hebrews 13:17*

DAY THREE

8. Verses 5 and 6 have the same theme. What is it?

9. What happens if we don't do this?

10. What happens if we do do this?

11. How does Peter describe the devil in verses 8 and 9?

12. What are we to do about his attacks?

13. Verse 9 indicates that "the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world". How might this knowledge help the saints when they are suffering?

14. Write out verses 10-11 in the space below. Meditate on each phrase in these two verses. How do these verses bring encouragement to the saints?

DAY FOUR

15. In verse 12, Peter says that he has been writing about "the true grace of God". The believers to whom he was writing might have been wondering if they were really walking in the grace of God. After all, their lives included a great deal of suffering. Look back over the entire book of 1 Peter and complete the following:

In the present age, the true grace of God looks like ...

16. Now that Peter has reminded his readers of what the true grace of God is, he gives them one command that summarizes all the other commands he has given to this point. What is it? *1 Peter 5:12b*

DAY FIVE

17. Memorize the following two verses:

> ***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. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*** **1 Peter 5:10-11**

DAY SIX

18. Read the study notes printed below and then complete the following sentence.
This week, the Holy Spirit has taught me ...

1 PETER 5

Peter has, to this point in the letter, addressed servants, wives, husbands, and Christians in general. Here, he turns his attention toward the elders in the churches. The following, along with Acts 20:17-38, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and Hebrews 13:17, is one of the most significant passages outlining the duties of elders in the church.

> ***So 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: shepherd 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; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.***
> **1 Peter 5:1-4**

The church is not a leaderless institution. It is not an organism that simply, like a spinning top, is supposed to make its own way. Nor is it a democracy, always following the desires of the majority. Rather, the New Testament writers assume that there will be elders in the church. These elders are to provide oversight. They are, like a good shepherd would with his sheep, to protect the people from things that would bring them harm. The elders are to deal with enemies that threaten the spiritual well-being of the people.

It is natural, when talking about elders, to use shepherding language. Paul does the same thing when he speaks to the elders of the churches in Ephesus.

> ***"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure***

> ***fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears."*** **Acts 20:28-31**

I have never been a shepherd of real sheep. I am, however, a shepherd of "the flock of God". It's important for me to remember to whom the flock belongs. The people are not mine. They are God's. He expects me, and the other elders who serve with me, to lead. We are to do this with great eagerness. We are to lead by example. We are to be alert, watching out for the sheep. We are to deal with the "fierce wolves" that are circling the flock.

It is not easy being an elder. But it is good. And it comes with great reward. Those who fulfill their duties well will, "when the chief Shepherd appears" be given "the unfading crown of glory". Once again, Peter reminds the saints of the inheritance waiting for them. Here, the inheritance is waiting for the elders who serve well. Again, it is clear that Peter's eyes are set on a day that is to come. Like a child on Christmas Eve, he can't wait for the dawn to arrive.

Surely the promises of God are meant to give us courage. We cannot live with our eyes fixed on this day alone. Like Peter, our hearts must be set on the glorious events that will take place on that day.

Peter's words aren't just for the elders. He tells the "flock" under the care of the elders that they must "be subject" to the elders.

> ***Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*** **1 Peter 5:5**

This is a command. And it is not the only place this command appears in the New Testament. The writer to the Hebrews says the same thing in different words.

> ***Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are watching over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*** **Hebrews 13:17**

To "be subject to the elders", I would suggest, involves much more than just outward obedience to their words. It involves, at the very least, the same heart attitudes as are to be exhibited by the elders. If elders are to lead in humility, then the "flock of God" should be led in humility. If the elders are to be eager in their leading, then the "flock of God" should be eager in their following. If the elders are to feed the flock with care, then the "flock of God" should consume the spiritual food that is provided with the same care. If the elders are fighting against wolves that would damage the flock, then the "flock of God" should heed the warnings given by their shepherds.

Is there a way to summarize what life is to look like within the church? There is. Peter summarizes his instructions to elders and to non-elders by, once again, turning to the Old Testament:[61] "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble". I do not want God to oppose me. I want his grace. I want him to pour

61 Proverbs 3:34 LXX.

favor on me. For this to happen, I must, in whatever position he has placed me, walk in humility. To do otherwise is the height of foolishness. After all, who, in their right mind, would want God as an enemy? Sadly, however, many people, by their pride, set themselves against God. Don't be one of them. Walk in humility. As one of my friends likes to say, "Stay low." Do not exalt yourself. That is God's place. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled.

> ***Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 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. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*** **1 Peter 5:6-11**

The devil wants to devour you. He has 1,000 ways to do this:

He would have you think that God is a liar and that he speaks the truth (this is exactly what he achieved in his conversation with Eve).

He would have you disdain the eternal treasures of the kingdom and embrace the fleeting treasures of this world (this is what he achieved with Paul's helper Demas).

He would have you, because of the intensity of your suffering, grow increasingly silent about your faith (this is what was happening to the ones to whom Hebrews was written).

He would have you turn from the living God who can't be seen and exalt gods that the entire world recognizes (this is what he achieved with the vast majority of the people of Israel).

He would have you fill your days with so much busyness that you can't hear the glorious words of Christ (this almost happened to Martha).

He would have you love a Christ-less church (this is what was happening in the Laodicean church).

Satan is doing all of these things—and more—right now. But he is not all-powerful. He has suffered a mortal wound by Christ. He cannot devour you if you are "sober-minded" and "watchful". He cannot devour you if you "resist him" by being "firm in your faith". He cannot devour you if you remember that "the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world".

God is for you. In spite of the things you are suffering, and in spite of the whispers of the devil, you need to know that "he cares for you". As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:13, God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear. He will exalt you at the proper time. The proper time is not always our time. He will exalt us when he thinks it best. Satan wants us to be suffocated by our anxieties. God, on the other hand, want us to bring our anxieties to him. Because he is the "God of all grace" we can trust him to do what is best. He will, Peter writes, "himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you".

Do you believe all of this? Peter does. He doesn't see another path to God's grace. The road to grace, he insists, is paved with suffering.

Peter is not alone as he writes these words. He wants us to know that these words are echoed by many others:

> ***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. She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. Greet one another with the kiss of love.***
>
> ***Peace to all of you who are in Christ.*** **1 Peter 5:12-14**

Silas—the same Silas who suffered with Paul in Philippi—agrees with Peter. He, like Peter, recognizes that the true grace of God includes a healthy (this word is intentional!) dose of suffering. In fact, he helped Peter write these words. The church in "Babylon", like Silas, agrees with Peter. These saints, who were surely suffering greatly in this dark city, knew that the true grace of God could be found in the darkest of places. Mark, Peter's "son", agrees with Peter. He too knows that the true grace of God requires pain.

Do you know, like these and millions of others, know this to be the true grace of God? If you are in Christ, you will experience these things ... and he will bring you through them.

Stand firm.

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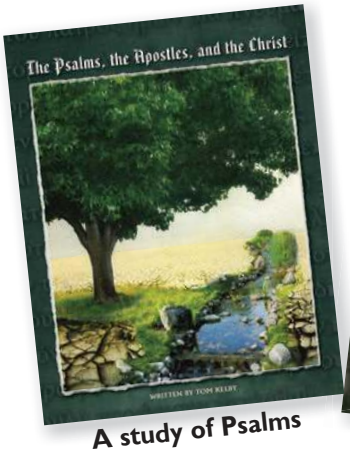
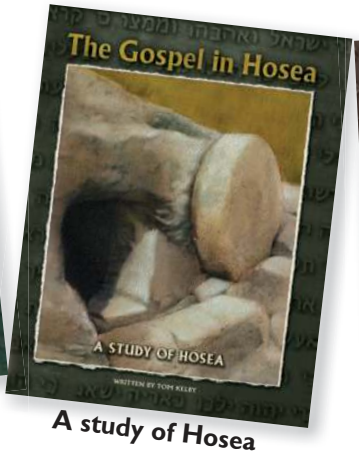
NOTES

Additional Bible Study Resources

FROM HANDS TO THE PLOW MINISTRIES



A study of Psalms



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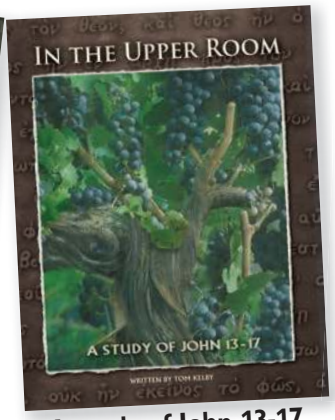

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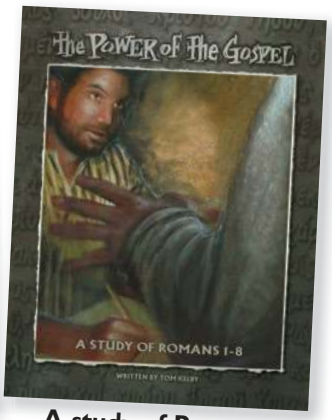
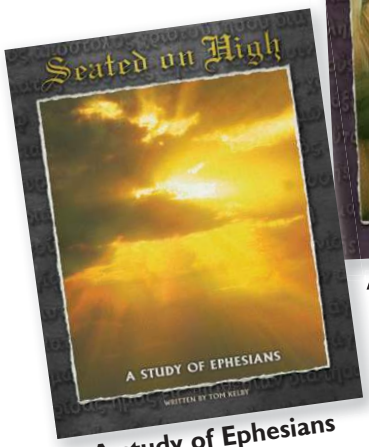


A study of Romans



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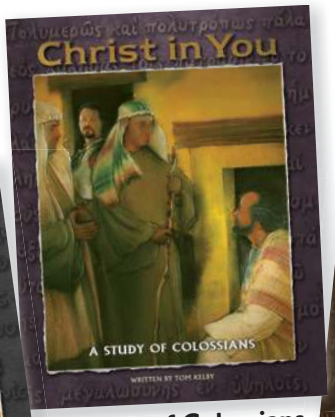

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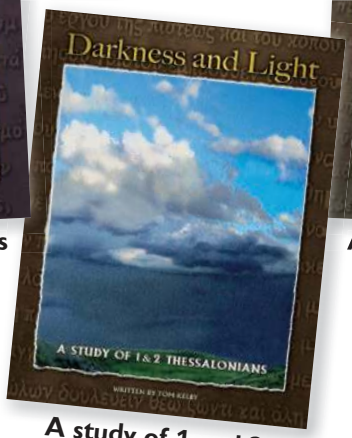
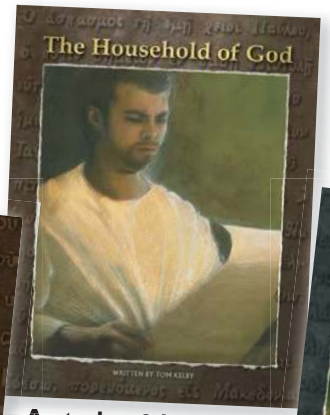
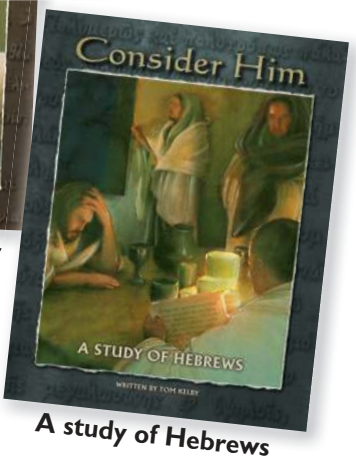


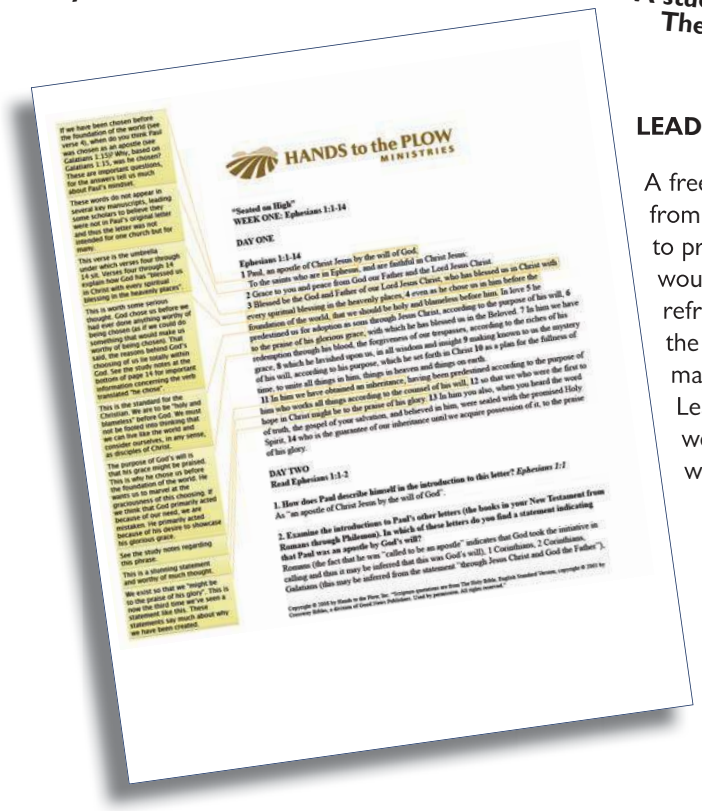
A study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians



A study of 1 Timothy



A study of Hebrews



HANDS to the PLOW MINISTRIES

"Seated on High"
WEEK ONE: Ephesians 1:1-14

DAY ONE

Ephesians 1:1-14
1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with
every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the
foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he
predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6
to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have
redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his
grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery
of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of
time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.
11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of
him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to
hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word
of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy
Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise
of his glory.

DAY TWO
Read Ephesians 1:1-2

1. How does Paul describe himself in the introduction to this letter? *Ephesians 1:1*
As "an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God".

2. Examine the introductions to Paul's other letters (the books in your New Testament from Romans through Philemon). In which of these letters do you find a statement indicating that Paul was an apostle by God's will?
Romans (the fact that he was "called to be an apostle" indicates that God took the initiative in calling and thus it may be inferred that this was God's will), 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians (this may be inferred from the statement "through Jesus Christ and God the Father").

If we have been chosen before the foundation of the world (see verse 4), when do you think Paul was chosen as an apostle (see Galatians 1:15)? Why, based on Galatians 1:15, was he chosen? These are important questions, for the answers tell us much about Paul's mindset.

These words do not appear in several key manuscripts, leading some scholars to believe they were not in Paul's original letter and thus the letter was not intended for one church but for many.

This verse is the umbrella under which verses four through 14 sit. Verses four through 14 explain how God has "blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places".

This is worth some serious thought. God chose us before we had ever done anything worthy of being chosen (as if we could do something that would make us worthy of being chosen). That raises the question behind God's choosing of us in totally within God. See the study notes at the bottoms of page 1 for important information concerning the verb translated "he chose".

This is the standard for the Christian. We are to be "holy and blameless" before God. We must not be fooled into thinking that we can live like the world and consider ourselves, in any sense, as disciples of Christ.

The purpose of God's will is that his grace might be praised. This is why he chose us before the foundation of the world. He wants us to a marvel at the graciousness of this choosing. If we think that God primarily acted because of our merit, we are mistaken. He primarily acted because of his desire to showcase his glorious grace.

See the study notes regarding this phrase.

This is a stunning statement and worthy of much thought.

We exist so that we "might be to the praise of his glory". This is now the third time we've seen a statement like this. These statements say much about why we have been created.

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LEADER'S GUIDE

A free leader's guide for this study may be downloaded from handstotheplow.org. This leader's guide is designed to provide additional help for those leading the study. We would encourage those who are not leading a study to refrain from using the leader's guide and to wrestle through the text and the questions on their own. Other studies may be ordered or downloaded from the website as well. Leader's guides are also available for these studies. The website also includes audio files of Tom Kelby's sermons which may prove helpful as you study this book.

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ησας ἡμᾶς εἰς ἐλπίδα ζῶσ
ῶν, εἰς κληρονομίαν ἄφθαρτ
ν ἐν οὐρανοῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς τοὺς
εως εἰς σωτηρίαν ἑτοίμην ἀ
γαλλιᾶσθε, ὀλίγον ἄρτι, ε
σμοῖς, ἵνα τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶ
ἀπολλυμένου διὰ πυρὸς δὲ
ν καὶ τιμὴν ἐν ἀποκαλύψει
ς ὃν ἄρτι μὴ ὁρῶντες πιστε
δεδοξασμένῃ, κομιζόμενοι τὸ
περὶ ἧς σωτηρίας ἐξεζή
τῆς εἰς ὑμᾶς χάριτος προφ