

**THE BOOK OF
1 PETER
WITH STUDY NOTES**

A Preacher's Guide to the Book of 1 Peter



HANDS to the PLOW

MINISTRIES

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Introduction to A Preacher's Guide to 1 Peter

No one likes to suffer. We naturally try to avoid it if possible. Every Christian, however, will suffer. There is no way for the Christian to avoid it. Our Lord told us, repeatedly, that we would suffer (see John 15:18-25). It will not always be this way. After Christ's return, there will be no more suffering. However, that day has not yet arrived. We **already** are living as citizens of New Jerusalem (see Hebrews 12:22-24), but we have **not yet** received the full inheritance that is waiting for God's family members (see 1 Peter 1:3-5).

The Christian suffers for many reasons. Here are a few of them:

- 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 physically persecuted by those who hate our Lord,
- we (at least some of us) live under unjust governments,
- we (at least some of us) live in a place where Christianity is illegal,

- we (at least some of us) live in a place where another religion is predominant and followers of that religion actively persecute Christians,
- we (at least some of us) are married to unbelieving spouses who refuse to obey the gospel,
- we (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 can one who loves Christ live with joy (this is a command) when he or she will suffer a great deal? Beyond this, how can those who are suffering endure to the end with his or her faith intact? 1 Peter was written to provide answers for the Christian to questions about suffering. It is grace from God that is intended to help the believer live effectively even while suffering and to endure to the end.

But this letter does far more than just provide the believer with necessary help so that he or she might endure suffering. It also builds the believer's understanding of **biblical theology** (i.e., the story being told in the Bible). Peter uses many passages from the Old Testament in this letter. The believer has been granted the privilege of seeing how an Apostle of the Lord Jesus interacts with other books of the Bible. Thus, those who read Peter's words in this letter will grow in their understanding of the Old Testament!

This preacher's guide is divided into eight sections: (1) 1 Peter 1:1-2, (2) 1 Peter 1:3-12, (3) 1 Peter 1:13-25, (4) 1 Peter 2:1-10, (5) 1 Peter 2:11-3:7, (6) 1 Peter 3:8-22, (7) 1 Peter 4, (8) 1 Peter 5.

The eight sections all have a different emphasis. These eight sections may be a helpful way for the preacher or teacher to divide the material in a sermon series or in teaching. Study questions have been included which may prove useful in studying the passage.

There are, of course, other ways which the book of 1 Peter could be divided. May God grant you strong help as you meditate upon and teach from this letter.

Tom Kelby
December, 2016

How to use this guide

1.

This book contains the entire book of 1 Peter. We have divided the book into different sections. Before each section in this study, the reader will find a brief overview of that section.

2.

After the overview, the reader will find the text from 1 Peter itself. The text of 1 Peter appears in the **upper portion** of the page.

3.

This book also contains study notes that refer to certain words or verses or sections in the chapter of 1 Peter being studied. These study notes are located beneath the text of 1 Peter in the **lower portion** of the page. The study notes are not sermons. They are intended to help the preacher discover the meaning of 1 Peter.

1 Peter 1:3-12

After the introduction (1 Peter 1:1-2), Peter begins the main portion of his letter. It is important to note that **there are no commands in this section of 1 Peter** (1 Peter 1:3-12). Peter is not telling his readers greatness of God, the beauty of Christ, the great hope found in the gospel, and the sure testimony of the prophets. Only after Peter has based on the gospel (he does this beginning in 1 Peter 1:13). This is typical of New Testament *epistles* (i.e., letters). New Testament letters do not typically begin with commands. They begin with an explanation of the gospel, a celebration of the work of the Trinity, and a focus on the new nature of the people of God. **Commands appear after truths in the epistles. More specifically, commands are based on the truths of the gospel.** One example of this is the book of Ephesians. The first three chapters in Ephesians are an explanation of the truths of the gospel, a celebration of the work of the Trinity, and a focus on the new nature of the people of God. Paul begins using commands in the book of Ephesians in Ephesians 4. He shows his readers that the book of Ephesians in commands by using the word "Therefore" (see Ephesians 4:6-16). (see Ephesians 4:6-16)

4.

The study notes in the **lower portion** of the page are numbered. These numbers are red. The red numbers next to each study note are connected to a red number appearing within the text of 1 Peter in the **upper portion** of the page. The numbers go together.

5.

The study notes sometimes list other passages of Scripture. These passages are sometimes from the Old Testament and sometimes from the New Testament. These passages should be carefully examined because they are connected to the passage in 1 Peter that is being studied.

1 Peter 1:1-2

of God the Father,⁶ in the sanctification of the Spirit,⁷ for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.⁸ May grace and peace be multiplied to you.⁹

6

Believers can take hope during the difficult days of their exile because of God the Father's foreknowledge. This means that God the Father knows all things ahead of time. This is one of the things that distinguishes the true God from false gods. God alone knows the future (see Isaiah 44:7 and 46:10). Therefore, the believer can be confident that nothing he or she will encounter in this life is a surprise to him. All events are known by the Father and pass through his loving hands. The fact that God the Father knows all things ahead of time means that he will provide all the help needed by believers. They can rest in their Father's foreknowledge.

7

Believers can take hope during the difficult days of their exile because they are living "in the sanctification of the Spirit". This is a reference to the fact that the Spirit has cleansed believers from sin and he is constantly renewing them. This is the "environment" in which the believer lives! The elect are constantly expected to live by their own holiness or power. Rather, the Holy Spirit is constantly at work in their lives. Even while they are living in the Dispersion, these people are living by "the sanctification of the Spirit". The Holy Spirit is constantly cleansing and perfecting these people so that they can live rightly before God. (see 2 Thessalonians 2:13).

8

Believers can take hope during the difficult days of their exile because of the finished work of Jesus Christ. His death on the cross has been intended to accomplish, it "sprinkled" with his blood. Thus, whatever his death was intended to accomplish, it accomplished for them. Christ's blood perfectly satisfied the wrath of God and, because of this, believers are able to boldly come before God's throne of grace and receive mercy and help from God. Beyond this, the blood of Christ is a sign of the covenant between God and his people. The blood of Christ is constantly testifying on the behalf of the believer, saying that he or she is innocent and welcome in God's presence (see Hebrews 12:24). Because of Christ's work on the cross, believers are also referred to in significant to note that obedience and the sprinkling of blood are also referred to in Exodus 24:7-8. In that passage, the Israelites promised to obey God. They were then sprinkled with blood. However, even though the people were sprinkled with blood and made solemn promises to God, the Israelites during the time of the first Exodus were not able to keep their promises. Believers in the Lord Jesus are able to obey because we have a better hope in a better sacrifice that accomplished better things! Believers can and will obey Jesus because of Christ's finished work! Even in the difficult days of their exile, believers will be walking in obedience! In regard to believers in Christ obeying the words of Jesus, see John 14:15-16, 21, 24.

9

Peter concludes the introduction with this blessing. He asks God to pour out grace and peace upon his readers so that they might survive and thrive in the difficult days of their exile! This blessing is a real request from Peter and those reading this letter should receive this blessing by faith. Again, it is the joy and obligation of believers to imitate Peter and to ask God to pour out his blessings on the churches.

1 Peter 1:1-2

Quite a lot happens in the first two verses of this letter! **First**, Peter introduces himself (“Peter”). He is the writer of this book. It is significant to see how Peter’s theology (his understanding of God and of Christ and of the kingdom of God) has changed from the time of his calling by Christ (the time described in the Gospels) until the time of the writing of 1 Peter. Peter writes this letter as a mature follower of Christ. **Second**, Peter tells his readers why he is qualified to write the letter and why they must pay attention to it and obey what he has written (“an apostle of Jesus Christ”). **Third**, Peter names and describes his readers (“To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”).* **Fourth**, Peter describes the connection between his readers and the members of the Trinity (“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”). **Fifth**, Peter blesses his readers (“May grace and peace be multiplied to you”).

* Notes regarding the words “elect exiles of the Dispersion” (1 Peter 1:1).

It is important for the preacher or teacher to carefully consider why Peter refers to his readers as “**elect exiles of the Dispersion**”. These words say a great deal about Peter’s understanding of **biblical theology** (the story being told in God’s word beginning in Genesis). In this verse, Peter uses words that, at least at one point in history, applied to Israel. But Peter connects these words to the church! Peter will do this throughout this letter (see, for instance, 1 Peter 2:5, 9-10). This says a great deal about Peter’s understanding of the church.

The word **elect** is connected to the idea of people being chosen. Peter uses this word because he wants his readers to know that they have been chosen by God (see also Romans 8:31-34a). The fact that God purposely chose the believer should lead to joy and confidence.

The word **exiles** is connected to people living away from their homeland. Peter uses this word because the believers to whom he is writings are not living in their true home. Rather, they are living in a foreign land. Why are they away from their homeland? According to Peter, they are away from their homeland because they are part of “**the Dispersion**”.

The word **Dispersion** is connected to the idea of people being taken from one place and forced to live in another place. This has happened many times in history. But Peter is not using this term to refer to any dispersion of people. He has a very specific dispersion in mind—this is why the ESV adds the article “the” before the word “Dispersion”. The editors of the ESV also help the readers see this by capitalizing the word “Dispersion”. This same Dispersion is also referred to in John 7:35 and James 1:1.

The term **Dispersion** is taken from an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint. It refers to the scattering of Israel that was to take place if Israel disobeyed Yahweh and worshiped other gods. While the word **dispersion** doesn’t appear frequently in the Old Testament (at least in the Hebrew), the idea of **the Dispersion** is described in many passages. It is a major theme (see, for instance, Deuteronomy 4:25-28). Because of sin, God’s people would, like Adam and Eve, be driven from their land. They would be forced to live, like Adam and Eve, away from their true spiritual home.

But that’s not the end of the story! God also promised to bring his people back from the Dispersion. This, too, is a dominant theme. This return from the Dispersion is promised in many places. See, for instance, Deuteronomy 4:29-31 and Ezekiel 36:24-27.

The word Dispersion is not positive. It points to sin. If Israel had obeyed, there would have been no Dispersion. **However, Peter is not thinking about the sinfulness of his readers when he uses the word Dispersion in 1 Peter 1:1.** He is not thinking, when he uses the word, about a sinful people who are far from an angry God. **Rather, when Peter uses the word Dispersion he is thinking about a chosen 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 fulfilled. They are still part of the Dispersion spoken of in the Old Testament.

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 their true homeland. That is why Peter calls them “exiles”. They are living as strangers in a strange land. This has always been the mark of the saints (see Hebrews 11:13-16).

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 live? That is the subject of Peter’s letter to the churches.

1 Peter 1:1-2

1 Peter,¹ an apostle of Jesus Christ,²

¹ See Mark 1:16-18, 3:13-19, John 1:42-44, and Matthew 16:17-18. Peter is also the author of the book titled 2 Peter. While Peter didn't write the gospel of Mark, it appears Mark based his gospel on Peter's teaching. Peter writes as one who knows a great deal about suffering. In fact, he constantly lived with the knowledge that he would one day die because of his faith in Christ (see John 21).

² Peter wanted his original readers to know that he is an Apostle. Peter's readers today also need to know this fact. The Apostles carried (and still carry) unprecedented authority. This authority was given to the Apostles by the Lord Jesus himself. They were, and are, the most important humans on the earth because they are the authorized spokesmen for Jesus. They still have this role. Based on Jesus' words to his Apostles in John 14:26 and 16:12-15, it is clear that he wanted people to listen to the Apostles, to trust the Apostles, and to obey everything they said. Carefully consider Jesus' words to the Apostles. These words were spoken by Jesus so that believers throughout the ages would know (1) that they can trust the teachings of the Apostles and (2) that they must obey the teachings of the Apostles.

“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**

“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**

Based on Jesus' words in John 14 and 16, we can have confidence that Peter did not, in anything he wrote in 1 Peter, make a mistake. The Holy Spirit helped him write this letter. Peter 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. Regarding the importance of the Apostles, see also Ephesians 2:20 and Revelation 21:14. To depart from the teaching of the Apostles is to depart from Christ.

To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion³ in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,⁴ **2**⁵ according to the foreknowledge

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- ³ The words “elect exiles of the Dispersion” are very significant and say a great deal about Peter’s **biblical theology** (his understanding of the story being told in the Bible). Peter frequently takes words and ideas that were originally spoken to the people of Israel and applies them to the church. He does this on the day of Pentecost when he declares that the promise that God would pour out his Spirit on “your sons and daughters” during the “last days” has been fulfilled with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the church (see Joel 2:28-29 and Acts 2:14-21). This is also what Peter does in this letter when he calls the people to whom he is writing “**elect exiles of the Dispersion**”. Peter’s words here demand careful attention. (For a closer examination of the words “elect exiles of the Dispersion”, see the notes titled “**Notes regarding the words ‘elect exiles of the Dispersion’**” in the introduction to this section.) Peter does this in other places in his letter as well (see, for instance, 1 Peter 2:5, 9-10). How is Peter able to take words originally spoken to Israel and apply them to the church? Peter doesn’t think that the church has replaced Israel. Rather, Peter considers the church to be a part of the true Israel—Jesus Christ. In Christ, both Jews and Gentiles are united. Jesus is the obedient people of God in whom all of God’s promises are fulfilled. The Apostle Paul carefully explains this in Ephesians 2:11-22.
- ⁴ Peter is writing to believers scattered across an entire region (modern day Turkey) in the first century. These believers were suffering through many hardships. However, this letter is not just for that region during that specific time period of difficulty. God breathed out this letter so that it might bring help to all churches in all locations during all time periods (see 2 Timothy 3:14-17).
- ⁵ How can believers survive the difficult days when they are living as “elect exiles of the Dispersion”? Verse 2 provides the answer. Believers can survive because of (1) the work of the Trinity and (2) the faith and help of other Christians! Peter wants his readers to know that each member of the Trinity is actively involved in every aspect of the believer’s salvation and life. God the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ provide the believer with strong hope and real help! They are the reason believers are able to survive the difficult days of living as “elect exiles of the Dispersion”! (See also Paul’s description of the work of the Trinity in 2 Thessalonians 2:13. He, like Peter, is writing to believers who are suffering greatly. He, like Peter, calls his readers to trust in the Trinity.) In addition to the Trinity, the elect exiles also have fellow believers who are helping them survive the difficult days of living as “elect exiles of the Dispersion”. Notice Peter’s prayer of blessing for the churches. He is actively working on their behalf so that they might receive God’s blessings. It is the joy and obligation of believers (and certainly elders in the churches) to imitate Peter and to ask God to pour out his blessings on the churches.

of God the Father,⁶ in the sanctification of the Spirit,⁷ for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:⁸

May grace and peace be multiplied to you.⁹

⁶ Believers can take hope during the difficult days of their exile because of **God the Father's foreknowledge**. This means that God the Father knows all things ahead of time. This is one of the things that distinguishes the true God from false gods. God alone knows the future (see Isaiah 44:7 and 46:10). Therefore, the believer can be confident that nothing he or she will encounter in this life is a surprise to him. All events are known by the Father and pass through his loving hands. The fact that God the Father knows all things ahead of time means that he will provide all the help needed by believers. They can rest in their Father's foreknowledge.

⁷ Believers can take hope during the difficult days of their exile because they are living "in the sanctification of the Spirit". This is a reference to **the fact that the Spirit has cleansed believers from sin and he is constantly renewing them**. This is the "environment" in which the believer lives! The elect exiles aren't expected to live by their own holiness or power. Rather, the Holy Spirit is constantly at work in their lives. Even while they are living in the Dispersion, these people are living by "the sanctification of the Spirit". The Holy Spirit is constantly cleansing and perfecting these people so that they can live rightly before God. See 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

⁸ Believers can take hope during the difficult days of their exile because of the **finished work of Jesus Christ**. His death on the cross has been applied to them! They have been "sprinkled" with his blood. Thus, whatever his death was intended to accomplish, it accomplished for them! Christ's blood perfectly satisfied the wrath of God and, because of this, believers are able to boldly come before God's throne of grace and receive mercy and help from God. Beyond this, the blood of Christ is a sign of the covenant between God and his people. The blood of Christ is constantly testifying on the behalf of the believer, saying that he or she is innocent and welcome in God's presence (see Hebrews 12:24). Because of Christ's work on the cross, believers are able to obey Jesus. It is significant to note that obedience and the sprinkling of blood are also referred to in **Exodus 24:7-8**. In that passage, the ancient Israelites promised to obey God. They were then sprinkled with blood. However, even though the people were sprinkled with blood and made solemn promises to God, the Israelites during the time of the first Exodus were not able to keep their promises. Believers in the Lord Jesus are able to obey because we have a better hope in a better sacrifice that accomplished better things! Believers can and will obey Jesus because of Christ's finished work! Even in the difficult days of their exile, believers will be walking in obedience! In regard to believers in Christ obeying the words of Jesus, see John 14:15-16, 21, 24.

⁹ Peter concludes the introduction with this blessing. He asks God to pour out grace and peace upon his readers so that they might survive and thrive in the difficult days of their exile! This blessing is a real request from Peter and those reading this letter should receive this blessing by faith. Again, it is the joy and obligation of believers to imitate Peter and to ask God to pour out his blessings on the churches.

1 Peter 1:1-2

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 1:21-26 -

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 14:25-26* and *John 16:12-15*

8. Why, based on John 14:25-26 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?

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*¹⁰ -

*Deuteronomy 28:25*¹¹ -

Deuteronomy 30:1-10 -

Nehemiah 1:8-9 -

*Psalms 147:1-3*¹²

Isaiah 49:6 -

¹⁰ The noun translated “Dispersion” isn’t used in this passage. The verb, however, translated “to disperse” is used in verse 27.

¹¹ The Hebrew (sometimes abbreviated by the initials MT), which is the primary text 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”.

¹² The LXX reads, “he gathers the exiles of the dispersion”.

1 Peter 1:1-2

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?

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"?

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

1 Peter 1:3-12

After the introduction (1 Peter 1:1-2), Peter begins the main portion of his letter. It is important to note that **there are no commands in this section of 1 Peter** (1 Peter 1:3-12). Peter is not telling his readers to do anything in these verses. Rather, he is reminding them of the greatness of God, the beauty of Christ, the great hope found in the gospel, and the sure testimony of the prophets. Only after Peter has outlined the facts of the gospel will he outline commands that are based on the gospel (he does this beginning in 1 Peter 1:13).

This is typical of New Testament *epistles* (i.e., letters). New Testament letters do not typically begin with commands. They begin with an explanation of the gospel, a celebration of the work of the Trinity, and a focus on the new nature of the people of God. **Commands appear after truths in the epistles. More specifically, commands are based on the truths of the gospel.** One example of this is the book of Ephesians. The first three chapters in Ephesians are an explanation of the truths of the gospel, a celebration of the work of the Trinity, and a focus on the new nature of the people of God. Paul begins using commands in the book of Ephesians in Ephesians 4. He shows his readers that he is about to begin making commands by using the word “therefore” (see Ephesians 4:1). This means something like, “Based on all of the truths I’ve written about up to this point”. All of the commands in Ephesians 4-6 are based on the truths outlined in Ephesians 1-3.

It is also important to notice **Peter’s main subject** in verses 3-12. While he is talking to the elect exiles, his primary subject is not the believer. Rather, it is God. In these verses, Peter celebrates the blessed nature of God. He rejoices in what God has done by sending Christ. It is the joy and obligation of the preacher and teacher to imitate Peter in this way. We must draw attention to God’s greatness. He is worthy of worship, and one way we lead people to worship is by drawing attention to specific attributes that display God’s greatness.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!¹³

¹³ It is important for believers to understand that they are not the most important beings in the universe. God is the most important being. It should not be surprising, then, that Peter begins the main portion of this letter by focusing on God the Father. **He is the subject of these verses.** Peter declares that God is “blessed”. This is another way of saying that God is magnificent and worthy of all praise. The Apostle Paul uses the exact same words as he begins the main portions of both 2 Corinthians and Ephesians (see 2 Corinthians 1:3 and Ephesians 1:3). This is important to see! The gospel and the kingdom of God, we learn from these two Apostles, is, first and foremost, a testimony to the blessedness of God. Everything we learn from Peter in this book testifies to God’s greatness. He is the blessed God. People are to praise God because of his blessed nature. It is great sin not to praise God (see Romans 1:21).

The preacher or teacher should carefully consider other “Blessed be ...” statements in the Bible to see how different authors use this phrase. A great deal of theology can be learned from these “Blessed be” statements, for the statements change as the overall story being told in the Bible progresses. For instance, Genesis 9:26, 24:27, Psalm 41:13, 72:18-19, 106:48, Luke 1:68, 2 Corinthians 11:31, 2 Corinthians 1:3, Ephesians 1:3, and 1 Peter 1:3 all make statements that begin with the words “Blessed be”. However, the careful reader will note a change from a focus on Shem, Abraham, and Israel in the Old Testament time period (and in the time period before Jesus was born), to a focus on Jesus Christ in the time period after Jesus’ coming. It is clear that, in these last days, God is especially associated with Jesus. Thus, to have a relationship with God, one must have a relationship with the Lord Jesus.

According to his great mercy,¹⁴

¹⁴ Why does Peter say that “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” is “Blessed”? Peter focuses on one of the many ways that God is blessed (i.e., magnificent and worthy of all praise). Peter focuses on God’s **great mercy**: “According to his **great mercy**, he has caused us to be born again”. Mercy is connected to the kind of kindness that is shown to people who are in desperate need of help. According to Peter, God has a great abundance of mercy. The Apostle Paul says the same thing when he says that God is “rich in mercy” (see Ephesians 2:4).

Obviously, all people experience God’s mercy in many ways every day. However, Peter focuses on one specific way people experience God’s mercy: he has “caused us to be born again to a living hope”. Every person who has been born again is evidence of God’s great mercy!

In the Old Testament time period, writers sometimes called God to **remember** his great mercy (see Psalm 25:6 and Habakkuk 3:2). This was not because God was less merciful at that time or because he forgot to show mercy during that time period. **Rather, it was because he had not yet fully displayed his mercy by sending the Christ so that people could be “born again”**. **The Old Testament saints were looking forward to THE great display of God’s mercy—this was connected to the coming of Christ**. After Christ’s death and resurrection, however, the biblical authors no longer call God to remember his great mercy. They don’t call on God to remember his mercy because, in sending Christ, God has remembered and displayed his great mercy (see Luke 1:54, 1:72 and 1:78). Mercy has come! Christ is God’s mercy made known to us! New Testament verses connected to God’s mercy displayed in Christ include Romans 9:23, 15:9, Ephesians 2:4-5, and Titus 3:5-7.

Because of Christ’s coming, God’s mercy is always available to God’s people (see Hebrews 4:16 and 2 John 3). And it will be fully made known when Christ returns (see Jude 21). Since God is rich in mercy, he wants his people to be merciful as well (see Matthew 9:13, 12:7, and 23:23).

As was noted earlier, it is important to notice that **people are not the subjects of this verse**. The subject is the blessed God. Peter is focusing on one of God’s great attributes. People are part of this sentence, however. We are the objects of God’s great mercy. The God who is rich in mercy pours his kindness out on needy people! The preacher or teacher needs to learn to imitate the biblical writers by focusing on God’s greatness. This leads to worship of God.

he has caused us to be born again¹⁵ to a living hope¹⁶

¹⁵ The words “born again” are used in 1 Peter two times (1 Peter 1:3 and 1:23). Peter is talking about the new life that has already come to “us” from God. We were, like all people, once “dead in the trespasses and sins in which [we] once walked” (see Ephesians 2:1). But, like a new born baby, God has given the believer a brand new life. Why would God give us new life? He did this, Peter says, because of his great mercy. Again, we see that Peter’s focus is on God’s great attributes. The words “born again” are used by Jesus in his conversation with Nicodemus (see John 3:3 and 3:7). Jesus’ words to Nicodemus demand close study, because Jesus says that people **must** be born again if they are to enter the kingdom of God. While the **words** “born again” do not appear in the Old Testament, the **idea** of being born again is found in the Old Testament. Consider, for instance, Ezekiel 36:24-27. Again, this passage doesn’t use the words born again. But it is significant to note that Jesus seems to refer to key words from this particular passage during his conversation with Nicodemus about being “born again”. Thus, it appears that the words “born again” are Jesus’ way of summarizing the new life that God gives to people of faith.

Carefully read the verses from Ezekiel printed below. In this passage, God describes the things he, because of his great mercy, will do to his people. These things are all demonstrations of his great mercy! Notice the words “I will” in these verses and the promises connected to each appearance of “I will”. Each “I will” is an act of mercy! (In the following passage the words “I will” appearing within brackets have been added because they are implied by the text.)

“I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and [I will] bring you into your own land. 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 [I will] 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 36:24-27**

God’s people must learn to celebrate God’s blessed nature. It is the joy and obligation of the preacher to, like Peter, draw people’s attention to the blessed nature of God.

¹⁶ People are “born again” so that they might live their lives on earth with “living hope”. Like the “living water” Jesus describes in his conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well (see John 4:10 and 4:14), living hope is supernatural. It is hope that is constantly being refreshed so that fresh strength and courage are granted to the believer. Hope is a major theme in the New Testament. It is not a wish. Biblical hope is connected to God’s promises. Hope is the believer’s **confident expectation** that God will keep his promises. See also Acts 23:6, 24:15, 26:6, 27:20, 28:20, Romans 5:2, Colossians 1:5, 1:23, 1:27, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Hebrews 3:6, 6:11, 6:18, 10:23, 1 Peter 1:21, and 3:15.

The adjective “living” points to the fact that this hope is alive and constantly being renewed within the believer by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is like a fire that is never allowed to die down because fresh fuel is constantly being added. But there may be more to meaning of the adjective “living” in this passage. The words “**living** hope” may emphasize that the hope of the Christian rests upon a **living** person. Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead. He is, right now, alive. Every breath he takes is proof that our hope in his death and resurrection will not be in vain. **He is our living hope.** Regarding the living body of Christ being the hope of the Christian, see also Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 15:12-34.

through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,¹⁷ **4** to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,¹⁸ **5** who by God's power are being guarded¹⁹ through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.²⁰

¹⁷ People are able to be born again because of Christ's **resurrection**. He is the firstborn of a new kind of people—people who are, because of Christ's death and resurrection, members of "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that [they] may proclaim the excellencies of him who called [them] out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

¹⁸ Peter constantly reminds the saints that they have **not yet** received their full inheritance. Believers have **already** been born again, but they need to persevere so that they receive all that God has promised to them. These words from Peter about a future inheritance are grace from God. These words about the perfect and unchanging nature of the future inheritance help the saints persevere during difficult days of suffering. Regarding the future inheritance of the people of God, see Matthew 5:11-12, 6:19-21, Ephesians 1:11, 1:14, 1:18, Colossians 1:12, 3:24, Hebrews 9:15 and 11:8.

¹⁹ See 1 Corinthians 2:5.

²⁰ Believers have **not yet** received their full inheritance. It will be revealed "in the last time". When is the "last time"? According to verse 7, it is "at the revelation of Jesus Christ". This means that believers will receive their full inheritance at **Jesus' second coming** (see Matthew 25:31-46, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 1 Thessalonians 4:13- 5:11, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12, and Revelation 19:11-21). Until that time, believers need to endure "various trials" (see verse 6). How will believers endure until the end? They are able to endure because of "God's power"! He is guarding them! Peter's words are grace from God. They encourage the saints to keep their faith in God until the day when they receive their full reward. See Luke 7:41-42, John 14:15, 14:23-24, 1 Corinthians 2:9, 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, and James 2:5.

6 In this you rejoice,²¹ though now for a little while,²² if necessary,²³ you have been grieved²⁴ by various trials,²⁵ **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

21 According to Peter, a distinguishing mark of believers is that they find **joy in their future inheritance**. Jesus commands people to “Rejoice and be glad” when they suffer persecution because their “reward is great in heaven” (Matthew 5:12). He does not think persecution equals joylessness. Rather, Jesus expects his followers to be filled with joy because they recognize that they have a great inheritance waiting for them. In Matthew 13:44, Jesus tells a parable about a man who sees a “treasure hidden in a field”. This man sells everything so that he can gain this treasure. Even though this man sacrificed a great deal (by selling everything), he was filled with great joy because he knew that he was receiving something far more valuable (see Matthew 13:44).

22 Trials are not eternal. They will only last for a “little while” (see 2 Corinthians 4:17). This is difficult to remember in the midst of the trial. This is why it is important to meditate on God’s words constantly. God’s words reminds us of our “living hope” and give us grace to endure (see 2 Corinthians 12:9).

23 The “if” Peter uses in verse 6 (“if necessary”) is not stating that “various trials” may or may not happen. They are already happening! Peter is saying that various **trials are necessary and that they will happen**. Why would a good God allow this? Why are “various trials” deemed necessary? The answer is found in verse 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”. Peter’s words about trials being necessary should comfort the believer! If trials were not necessary, believers would not experience them. It should comfort the believer to know that all of our suffering passes through the hands of the **blessed God** who has **great mercy**. Because trials are necessary, it shouldn’t surprise the believer when trials come (see 1 Peter 4:12 and 1 John 3:13).

Peter appears to be borrowing his language about trials being **necessary** 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” (my translation of the LXX of Daniel 2:28). 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 and 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.

24 Trials are painful and they cause great grieving. Peter is not saying that they are easy to endure. Faith does not make it easy to endure trials. Faith makes it possible to endure trials.

25 Peter refers to “various trials”. The trials which will be faced by the believer are of many different types. The believer is able to persevere through every type of trial because of God’s power (see verse 5).

This verse speaks of believers rejoicing and of believers suffering. Both of these things are happening at the same time! Even though believers are currently suffering, they are able to rejoice because of the salvation they will experience in the last time.

and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.²⁶ **8** Though you have not seen him, you love him.²⁷ Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,²⁸ **9** obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.²⁹

²⁶ 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 our comfort. Trials prove that we love the reputation of Christ more than we love our own reputation. Trials prove that we love the laws of God more than we love sin. This is not all that trials accomplish. Trials are instruments God uses to make the believer stronger. For instance, according to James 1:4, “the testing of your faith produces steadfastness” (see also Romans 5:3-4).

²⁷ Biblical faith is far more than simply believing something to be true. For Peter, there is no faith in Christ that does not include love of Christ. Faith in Christ and love of Christ are inseparable. If a person does not love Christ and his work, he or she does not know him, and cannot claim to have true faith in him. Christ is returning for those who love him. See also Luke 7:41-42, John 14:15, 14:23-24, 1 Corinthians 2:9, 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, and James 2:5. As preachers of the gospel, we must be careful that we do not promote a “kind of faith” that lacks love and that will be proven false when Christ returns.

²⁸ This is the second reference to believers rejoicing. Once again, believers are rejoicing even as they suffer.

²⁹ Faith leads to “the salvation of your souls”. While believers have **already** received salvation because they have been “born again” to new life, and while believers are **currently** experiencing salvation as they are renewed day-by-day, in this verse, Peter is focussing on the full and final salvation that believers **will experience** at the second coming of Jesus Christ. Thus, believers **have been saved, are being saved, and will be saved.**

10 Concerning this salvation,³⁰ the prophets³¹ who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours³² searched and inquired

³⁰ Verses 10-12 are referring to the **Old Testament** Scriptures. According to Peter, the Old Testament Scriptures are “**Concerning this salvation**”. In other words, the Old Testament Scriptures are about the salvation which Peter has been writing about in verses 1-9! In other words, the Old Testament is about the glorious mercy of God that is made available to people by the death and resurrection of Christ! Peter’s words in verses 10-12 should impact how believers read and understand the books of the Old Testament. Based on these verses, it is clear that Christ is THE theme of the Old Testament. Everything, in some way, points to him. The prophecies point to him. The poetry points to him. The stories point to him. The laments (i.e., sad songs and poems) point to him. The praises point to him. Somehow and in some way, everything is about Christ. Of course, the way all of these different writings are about Christ differs from prophet to prophet and from book to book. However, all Scripture is somehow telling the story of the Christ. It is the joy and obligation of the preacher to learn how the Old Testament prophets were writing about the Christ and the gospel event.

³¹ This is a reference to the **Old Testament prophets**. According to these verses (and many other New Testament verses), the Old Testament prophets were writing about the Christ and the gospel event. This is confirmed in many New Testament passages. See Matthew 11:13, 13:17, Luke 10:24, 24:44-47, John 5:39, 46-47, 8:56, 12:41, Acts 3:18, 3:25, 7:52, Romans 1:1-5, and Hebrews 11:13. All 39 books in the Old Testament are meant to strengthen and confirm believers in their faith in Jesus Christ. All 39 books are meant to help believers endure during times of suffering. All 39 books are to be used by preachers and teachers in churches today.

³² Many times, people believe there is a **disconnection** between the message of the Old Testament and the message of the New Testament. They may say, for instance, that the Old Testament is all about **law**, and the New Testament is all about **grace**. According to Peter, however, the prophets were writing about the **grace** that belongs to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter and the other writers of the New Testament clearly saw a connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament. **The entire Bible is telling the story of the grace which comes to people through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.** What do we do with this information about the Old Testament? 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 books, 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 endure “various trials”!

carefully,³³ **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.³⁴ **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.³⁵

³³ The early Old Testament prophets (Moses, David, etc.) wrote about the Christ. The later Old Testament prophets (Zechariah, Ezekiel, Malachi, etc.) also wrote about the Christ. These later prophets were eager to know more about the Christ. How did they find out more information? They “searched and inquired carefully”. This means they **searched** the writings of the earlier Old Testament prophets. They **inquired carefully** about the meaning of the texts they were reading. This means, for instance, that Isaiah was carefully reading Genesis because he wanted to know more about the Christ! This was true of all of the prophets. They were hungry to know more about the Christ. They were not wondering if he would come. They were wondering when he would come and who he would be. Evidence of Old Testament prophets using earlier Scriptures in their own writings include Ezekiel’s quotation of Psalm 1:3 in Ezekiel 47:12 and Zechariah’s quotation of Psalm 72:8 in Zechariah 9:10.

³⁴ Peter summarizes the message of the Old Testament prophets by saying they were writing of “the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories” (see also Luke 24:26, 24:46, and Acts 3:18). Christ’s life reminds believers that they will, like their Lord, suffer before they are glorified. The servants are not above their Master (see Matthew 10:24-25). Glories follow suffering. That is a theme of 1 Peter.

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 in the next section of 1 Peter, “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!”

³⁵ The glories of our salvation are so great that heavenly beings eagerly desire to know about them. If this is true of angels, it should be true of men and women as well! Our desire to know about our great salvation should match that of the ancient prophets and the angels.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY 1 PETER 1:3-12

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?

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

5. The phrase “Blessed be the God and Father ...” appears in different forms in the Old Testament. Listed below 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 ...

Psalms 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 ...

1 Peter 1:3-12

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 phrase 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 ...

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. According to Jesus, why must a person be “born again”?

12. Jesus' words in John 3 about being "born again" are drawn, it appears, from Ezekiel 36:24-27. 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 might a reminder of the inheritance waiting for believers give hope to "elect exiles"?

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. In this view, it doesn't matter whether we love the truths or not. Peter's description of the faith in verse 8 goes far beyond mere “mental agreement”. Peter declares that the believers “love” Christ. Why do you think biblical faith must include love of Christ?

21. The following passages all describe the love that must be present in the one who believes. Summarize each passage below:

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? If you are a preacher or teacher, is this the kind of faith you are calling people to?

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 -

1 Peter 1:3-12

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?

1 Peter 1:13-25

Now that Peter has reminded the “elect exiles of the Dispersion” of the greatness of their God and of the great salvation he has brought to them through Jesus (1 Peter 1:1-12), he is ready to tell them how they ought to live.

To this point, none of the verbs that Peter has used have been **commands** (scholars call this type of verb an *imperative*). He has not told the believers to do anything. He has simply told them truths about their God and their salvation (scholars call this type of verb an *indicative*—it doesn’t make a command, instead, it makes a declaration about something). Now, however, the Apostle uses the truths he has proclaimed in verses 1-12 as the basis for commands he will give. This is also typically true in epistles written by Paul. He begins the letter by declaring spiritual truths (see, for instance, Ephesians 1-3). He does this by relying on *indicative* verbs (again, verbs that declare a truth). He then tells the believers what to do based on those truths (see, for instance, Ephesians 4-6). He does this by relying on *imperative* verbs (again, verbs that command somebody to do something). Like Peter and Paul, the preacher or teacher needs to connect the commands of the gospel (i.e., “flee from sexual immorality”) to the truths of the gospel (“God has changed you and given you his Holy Spirit so that you might obey”). Our lives are based on truth!

Peter’s emphasis in these verses is that the Christian must base his or her life on the truths of the gospel. This requires deliberate thought and deliberate action on the part of the Christian. It also requires careful and deliberate teaching by the preacher or teacher.

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.³⁶ **14** As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, **15** but as

³⁶ 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**". This is the second time that Peter has referred to the second coming of Christ (see 1:7). The grace that will be poured out on **that day** is to impact how the believer lives **every day**. We are commanded to set all of our hope on the grace that will come to us at the second coming of Christ! This means we must not set our hope on things that will pass away (see Matthew 6:19-21).

While verse 13 ends with this command, it is important to notice that it doesn't begin with the command. It begins with two *participial phrases*: (1) "**preparing your minds for action**" and (2) "**being sober-minded**". These are the means by which Peter expects this command to be kept. They are like **mini commands** that explain the way the **major command** will be kept. Here's how a participial phrase used in this way functions. I could give my daughter a command like, "Walk to school." Or, like Peter here, I could add a participle phrase to my command. This phrase would explain the means by which the command was to be kept: "**Looking both ways when you cross every street** (this is the participial phrase) **walk to school**" (this is the command). This is what Peter's two participial phrases are doing in the first half of verse 13. They explain the means by which we are to "set [our] hope fully on the grace that will be brought to [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ".

The **first participial phrase** ("preparing your minds for action") is, in the Greek, an extremely colorful expression. The Greek literally reads, "**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. These same words are used by Elisha in a command to his servant Gehazi in 2 Kings 4:29. Elisha commands Gehazi to "go" on an errand. But he tells him how he should go—**with his garments tied up**. 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 (see also the instructions to the Israelites in Exodus 12:11). Like Gehazi, we are to, metaphorically speaking, tie up anything that is loose and flapping around in our minds and keeping us from effectively living in this age. Jesus gave a similar command to his followers in Luke 12:35: "Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning". Jesus was not referring to how the believer was physically dressed, but to the spiritual readiness of the believer. Hebrews 12:1 presents a similar idea.

The **second participial phrase** ("being sober-minded") means that we are to be spiritually alert. It is the opposite of being a "spiritual drunkard". We are to be in full control of our minds and emotions and fully aware of spiritual realities. Peter wants his readers to be thinking about the truths he spoke of in 1 Peter 1:1-12. Only those who are constantly **preparing their minds for action** and **being sober-minded** are able to **set their hope fully on the grace that will come "at the revelation of Jesus Christ"**.

he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,³⁷ **16** since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”³⁸ **17** And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds,³⁹ conduct yourselves with fear⁴⁰ 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,⁴¹ **19** but with the precious blood of Christ,⁴² like that

³⁷ Peter’s first command relates to how we 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 begin with the command. He begins, once again, by describing the means by which the command is to be kept. We keep this command by (1) **not being conformed to our former passions** and (2) **by imitating God**. Formerly, our ignorant passions were our standard of behavior. We did what we wanted (see also Ephesians 2:1-3). 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.

³⁸ The command to be holy is found throughout scripture (see Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:1-2, 20:7-8, 20:26, and Hebrews 12:14). Notice the importance Peter places on the word of God. He says that believers must be holy because this has been written in the Scriptures. To disobey the Scriptures is to disobey God himself.

³⁹ The Father exercises his judgment through Christ. That’s why Paul is able to say, without contradicting Peter’s words 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).

⁴⁰ Peter’s **third command** relates to the attitude we are to have as we live. We are to “conduct [ourselves] with fear”. We are constantly to remember that God will judge us according to our deeds. In the same way that an electrician never forgets that he is working with something that can kill him, the Christian must never forget that he or she 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 does the Christian live in fear? Much the same way! We live in fear by remembering who God is, who we are, and the basic principles of our faith.

⁴¹ 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 ways of resisting God. But, in a shocking turn of events, a stunning price 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. See also Ephesians 2:1-10.

⁴² This is a reference to Christ’s death.

of a lamb without blemish or spot.⁴³ **20** He was foreknown before

⁴³ 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 clothing of leaves, 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 (see 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. The lamb is to be “without blemish”—the same description Peter uses when he describes Christ (see Exodus 12:3-6)! In that same passage, Yahweh tells 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 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 (see Exodus 12:12-13). After the tabernacle was built, lambs were used as sin offerings by the people. Once again, the lamb to be offered is to be “without blemish” (see 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 one 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.

the foundation of the world⁴⁴ but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you⁴⁵ **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

⁴⁴ 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 foreknown by God, Christ was foreknown by God. He was chosen before there was sin—or even a world! The glorified Christ has always been God’s plan! All of 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 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.

⁴⁵ Peter says that Christ was revealed “in the last times”. This is different from how he used these words in 1:5. In that verse, he was referring to the time after Christ’s second coming. In this verse, however, Peter is referring to the present age. Thus, Peter uses this phrase in two different ways. In this verse, the words “last times” refer to the days following the first 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 would flourish and in which Christ—the eternal Son of God—would 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.

heart,⁴⁶ **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,

⁴⁶ 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 with real people. 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.

25 but the word of the Lord remains forever.”⁴⁷

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

⁴⁷ Peter’s comment about the “living and abiding” gospel makes him think about several verses from **Isaiah 40**: “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). 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.

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 Christ), 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.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY 1 PETER 1:13-25

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 ...

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

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

5. This is now the second time Peter has referred to “the revelation of Jesus Christ”. He is talking about the second coming of Christ, when Christ will be “revealed” to all of the world in all of his glory. 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?

8. How are we to keep the command in verse 13? (*hint: look at the first half of verse 13—the “ing” words in the first half of verse 13 explain how this command is to be kept*)

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 -

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?

1 Peter 1:13-25

... 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?

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*

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** (in English, this is typically a word ending in “ing”, for instance, “writing” or “kicking”) 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, these ten verses 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 important truths about the faith.

Here are the two commands:

(1) So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, (2) 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

Both of these sections—the commands (verses 1-3) and the truths (verses 4-10)—demand a great deal of attention. Both of these sections will bring great help to the people of God. When we avoid commands and only speak truths, or when we avoid truths and only speak commands, we are not helping our people. The careful preacher or teacher will emphasize the ***indicatives*** of the gospel (the truths) and the ***imperatives*** of the gospel (the commands). They always go together.

1 Peter 2:1-10

1 So⁴⁸ put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.⁴⁹ **2** Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual

⁴⁸ 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. Everything following the particle “so” is based on the truths outlined in 1 Peter 1.

⁴⁹ It may appear that there are two equal commands in verses one and two: (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 (i.e., commands). Instead, Peter makes the choice to use, as may be seen in my translation that follows, a participle (*italics*) in this verse:

“Putting away, 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.

milk,⁵⁰ that by it you may grow up into salvation— **3** if indeed you

⁵⁰ 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. 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 a child’s 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 it is something that will happen.** In the same way that a baby longs for the very thing that will cause it to grow up (physical food), we are commanded to long for the thing that will cause us to grow up (spiritual food). 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 are not, as you’ll soon see, baby food. 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. These are the kind of verses that help us to grow up!

have tasted that the Lord is good.⁵¹

4⁵² 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

⁵¹ Verse three is a quotation from Psalm 34. It is evident, based on this quote and another quote in chapter 3 (verses 10-12) and several **allusions** (i.e., references that aren't direct quotes) scattered throughout 1 Peter, that Peter has been thinking deeply about this particular 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 other people to "taste and see that the LORD is good" (Psalm 34:8). This verse, Peter thinks, applies to his audience and to their situation. The careful reader will notice that Peter doesn't quote the verse verbatim. He doesn't command his readers to taste and see the goodness of the Lord. That's because 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! 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"), but Peter doesn't use a command 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.

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 taste more of Christ and to grow up into salvation.

As a final note regarding verse three, it is significant to see that Peter considers the Lord whom his readers have tasted to be Christ (he calls him "the Lord" in this verse). 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! Peter is not confused. He does this because (1) he is quoting from a Greek translation of the Old Testament (sometimes referred to as the LXX or Septuagint) and this is the word used in that translation, and (2) because Peter understands that God has, because of Christ's death and resurrection, given Christ this name! See also Philippians 2:8-11.

⁵² In verses four through ten, 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 has tasted the goodness of the Lord and is still tasting his goodness! 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.

stones⁵³ are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.⁵⁴ **6** For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious,

⁵³ 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. The word “living” means that Jesus 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: “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”.

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 (see Ephesians 2:19-22)! 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 (see Ephesians 2:1-3). 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.

⁵⁴ But, Peter says, we’re more than just part of the temple. We’re also **holy priests** who serve in the temple (see also Revelation 1:6). 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 wants us to 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 and to help others enjoy him! Are Peter’s astounding claims that believers are “living stones” and “holy priests” true? Peter insists that they are. To prove that this is the case, he quotes three different Old Testament passages that teach the same truths.

and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”⁵⁵

7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,⁵⁶

“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,”⁵⁷

8 and

“A stone of stumbling,
and a rock of offense.”⁵⁸

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁵⁵ See Isaiah 28:16. 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 in Christ will be accepted by God and will inherit eternal life (see John 3:3-6).

⁵⁶ 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, as with the destiny of believers, is also proclaimed in the Old Testament Scriptures. Peter uses two passages from the Old Testament to talk about the “heritage” of those who refuse to believe. 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 the Cornerstone of the true temple) the people rejected him.

In Matthew 21:42, Christ applies the prophecy from Psalm 118:22 to the Jewish leaders who rejected him. They were “the builders” who rejected the Cornerstone. They refused to accept him. This means that they saw Christ, considered him, and rejected him as the true Cornerstone of God's true temple.

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 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 to 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 is not because of 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.

⁵⁷ See Psalm 118:22.

⁵⁸ See Isaiah 8:14.

9⁵⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession,⁶⁰

⁵⁹ 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". Notice the poetic rhythm in verses nine and ten. 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 have received.

⁶⁰ 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, which is the translation 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".

that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.⁶¹

⁶¹ 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 (see Genesis 1:26-28). Adam didn't do this. Israel, a nation that was to be a "second" Adam, never did this (the land of Israel was a "type" of Eden). 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.)

10⁶² Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people;

62 After summarizing God's purpose, Peter describes the "elect exiles of the Dispersion" in four more ways. Peter draws all four of these descriptions from Hosea. These descriptions are understandable without reading 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.

In Hosea, 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 symbolic names (see 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 again 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".

once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.⁶³

⁶³ Based on the verses he quotes, Peter clearly believes that the promises made in the Old Testament to Israel have been received by the “elect exiles of the Dispersion”. But Peter’s readers are, for the most part, not Israelites. They are Gentiles! How can Peter take promises that were spoken to Israel (in Hosea) and apply them to the church? Beyond this, how can Peter quote a passage with conditional promises spoken, again, to Israel (in Exodus 19:5-6) and say that the church has received these conditional promises?

Carefully consider the conditional promise God made to Israel in Exodus 19:5-6. God said, “if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant” then “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 met this condition. Israel never obeyed God’s voice and kept his covenant! The prophets consistently charge Israel with disobedience. Peter himself says that Israel was never able to keep the law (see Acts 15:10)!

How, then, can Peter say that these verses are true of the “elect exiles” when (at least in regard to the promise in Exodus 19) the conditions were never met by Israel? Here is the key: the conditions were 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 killed the prophets. 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! The conditions of obedience and covenant keeping were met by the one who not only kept the outward law, but also the law in his heart. Jesus is obedient Israel!

The gospel writers clearly present Jesus as the “people” of Israel. He, like Israel, was called out of Egypt. He, like Israel, was tempted in the wilderness. He, like Israel, was called God’s son (see Exodus 4:22 and Matthew 3:17). Unlike Israel, however, from the beginning of his life, Jesus obeyed God’s voice and kept his covenant. He did what the nation as a whole never did. His actions were done so that he might “fulfill all righteousness” (see Matthew 3:15). God, in response to Jesus’ obedience and covenant keeping, declared, “this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (see Matthew 3:17). As the one who perfectly fulfills the law, Jesus is the inheritor of all of God’s promises to Israel. He is the inheritor of all that was promised to Abraham and all that was promised to David (see Matthew 1:1).

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”. Because Christ is the son of Abraham (see Matthew 1:1), those who are in Christ are also “Abraham’s offspring” (see Galatians 3:29). The path Jesus 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” (see Romans 6). This “in Christ” language is repeated 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.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY 1 PETER 2:1-10

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 ...

3. In verses 1-3 we find two commands. These commands are connected together. This means that 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 the second half of verse 2*)

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?

1 Peter 2:1-10

7. In 1 Peter 2:3, 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 is good”. The Psalm is referring to Yahweh. Peter applies this name to Jesus! 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*

11. Read 1 Peter 2:4-8. In these verses Peter, drawing from the Old Testament, refers to Christ as the Cornerstone. If your Bible has references in the margin, write down the Old Testament passages Peter is quoting here.

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. How does he describe these people in verse 8?

17. Review verses 9-10. In these verses Peter, drawing from the Old Testament, refers to the nature of those who are in Christ. Again, if your Bible has Scripture references in the margin, write down the Old Testament passages that Peter is quoting 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?
In what ways would the church change if the members saw themselves in this way?

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**

1 Peter 2:11-3:7

In this passage in 1 Peter, Peter gives specific instructions to Christians about how they are to live in particular situations. Some of the commands apply to all believers. Some of the commands apply to smaller groups of believers in specific situations. Verses 11-17 pertain to all believers. Every believer in every country must obey these instructions. After verse 17, however, Peter gives instruction to smaller groups of believers. These instructions are gracious gifts from God. They are intended to help believers thrive in very difficult situations. In verses 18-25, Peter speaks to “servants”. These words, however, also apply to all those who are employed by another person. In 3:1-6, Peter speaks to “wives”. In 3:7, Peter speaks to “husbands”. Peter’s instructions in these verses must be obeyed. All of Peter’s instructions in these verses are based upon the truths proclaimed in earlier parts of the book.

1 Peter 2:11-3:7

2:11 Beloved,⁶⁴ I urge you as sojourners and exiles⁶⁵ to abstain

⁶⁴ This is another major turning point in the letter. This turning point is introduced by the word “Beloved”. (Peter introduces another section with “Beloved” in 1 Peter 4:12.) The writers of the Epistles typically use this introduction when they’re introducing warnings or commands. In these two verses we find both.

This title “Beloved” appears frequently in the New Testament Epistles. In the epistles “Beloved” 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”!

⁶⁵ Peter reminds his readers, once again, that they are strangers living in a strange place (see 1:1 and the note connected to that verse). Based on his repeated references to the fact that believers are not yet home, it is clear that this thought is significant to Peter. 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 in this world. Like a scuba diver swimming deep in the ocean, you must constantly remember that you are living in an alien environment.

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 ...” (Ephesians 2:19). Paul is not contradicting Peter. Rather, he is referring to the fact that the Gentiles are no longer “outside the household of God”. They are now, because of Christ, “inside the household of God”.

from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Peter is not warning believers 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 people 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 people, but which lead to future misery. The passions of the flesh show up repeatedly in the biblical narrative. They are those things that cause people 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 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. 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” (see Ezekiel 36:24-27, Romans 8, and Galatians 5:16-26).

If you are a believer, 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, prying, 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.

12 Keep your conduct⁶⁷ among the Gentiles honorable,⁶⁸ so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good

⁶⁷ It is 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 (the ESV translates this word as “ways” in 1:18 and “behavior” in 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?

⁶⁸ Peter’s second command in this section 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 (see Romans 2:28-29 and Galatians 3:29). 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.

deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.⁶⁹

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

⁶⁹ 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” (a reference to Christ’s second coming). On that day, because the “Gentiles” have seen the “honorable” conduct of Christians, these former God-haters will glorify God. Why will these “Gentiles” glorify God? Peter doesn’t say it here, but it would appear that they are glorifying God 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 3:1-2: “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”. **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 refers to “watching” something. Since these two passages are connected in some way, and since one of the passages refers to the conversion of the ungodly, it is very possible that the other passage does the same.

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 be 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.

the emperor.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ How, beyond not sinning, is the Christian to do keep his or her conduct “honorable”? 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. However, his words apply to believers living under any form of government. 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 a prison setting, then you are to be subject to the administration and the prison guards.

It is 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 disobeying God’s will. If we do not honor, for instance, the president, we are not “doing good” (verse 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 (see Acts 4:18-20). However, even in his defiance of their evil orders, 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. (See also Paul’s words in 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!

18⁷¹ Servants,⁷² 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

⁷¹ 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.

⁷² Peter’s words concerning servants and masters applies to those 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 us to follow. We must walk as he walked.

you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.⁷³ **21** For to this you have been called,⁷⁴ because Christ also suffered for you,

⁷³ Peter says that it is a “**gracious thing**” when we endure suffering because of our good deeds. This is not because God enjoys “seeing” his people suffer. He does not enjoy the suffering of his people. Rather, according to verse 21, it is because the Christian has been called to walk in the footsteps of Christ. 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 imitation. Our suffering is a demonstration to the world that the manner in which the Son lived on this earth was good.

When we consider Christ’s life, we see that his suffering proved a great deal about (1) his love of God, (2) his love of God’s word, (3) the greatness of God’s power, and (4) his love of the world.

First, Christ’s suffering proved that he loved God more than he loved his own life (see John 14:31). When we, in imitation of Christ, also suffer because of doing good, we are demonstrating the same thing. If God always did what pleased us and put us in the most comfortable situations all of the time, the world might 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 that God’s will is more precious than anything else in all the universe—even our own lives!

Second, Christ’s suffering proved that he considered God’s word to be good and true. When we, in imitation of Christ, also suffer because of doing good, we are demonstrating that we also love and honor God’s word. We show that his commands are of more importance to us than our “comfort”, our “rights”, or our “dignity”. We demonstrate that his commands are trustworthy when we choose to obey them even when this obedience will (temporarily) cause us great pain. God demonstrates the greatness of his word by allowing its hold over his people to be tested in the severest of circumstances.

Third, Christ’s suffering demonstrated the greatness of God’s power. Christ did not rely on his own strength. Instead, he entrusted himself to God. When we, in imitation of Christ, also suffer because of doing good, we are, like Christ, showing the world that our trust is in God.

Finally, Christ’s suffering proved that he loved the world. When we, in imitation of Christ, also suffer because of doing good, we are, like Christ, showing that we consider the world to be precious and desire to see people delivered from their slavery to sin and death.

⁷⁴ See also 1 Peter 3:9.

leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.⁷⁵

22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.⁷⁶

23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return;⁷⁷ 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.⁷⁸ By his wounds you have been healed.⁷⁹ **25** For you were straying like sheep,⁸⁰ but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer⁸¹ of your souls.

3:1⁸² Likewise, wives,⁸³

75 **Peter's words about Christ should increase our love and admiration of him.** However, that is not Peter's only purpose. He wants to increase our imitation of him (see Matthew 16:24). We must "walk" as Christ walked (see 1 John 2:6). Like Christ, we are to entrust ourselves to God. We must believe that God will do with us what is best. If this means suffering, then we are to suffer as our Lord suffered. It should encourage the believer to meditate on the results of Christ's sufferings. His sufferings resulted in healing for the world. This is proof that suffering has a redemptive purpose! We could not have been saved apart from Christ's suffering! Peter's words here are intended to cause the people of Christ to embrace their suffering and to see God at work through their suffering.

76 In verses 22-25, Peter quotes from Isaiah 53. See Isaiah 53:9.

77 See Matthew 5:39.

78 See Romans 6:11, 18.

79 See Isaiah 53:5-6 and Ezekiel 34:5, 16.

80 See Matthew 9:36.

81 Significantly, **Peter uses the same words when he refers to elders in the church** (see 1 Peter 5:1-5). The fact that Peter uses the same words to describe elders as he uses to describe the Lord Jesus demonstrates the significance of elders. They are one of the key ways that the oversight and shepherding of Jesus is made known in the church. See also Acts 20:17-38, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and Titus 1:5-16.

82 Peter has completed his instructions to servants (which, again, applies to all those who are under supervision of some sort). Next, he addresses wives (verses 1-6). How should they relate to their husbands?

83 Peter starts these verses with the word "Likewise". This word means something like, "**In the same way**" or "**In a similar manner**". Peter wants wives to think about the words Peter has already spoken when they think about their relationship with their husbands. Thus, **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, wives are to be subject to their husbands.

be subject to your own husbands,⁸⁴ so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their

⁸⁴ Verses about wives being subject to husbands didn't just apply in the first century and in ancient cultures. These verses about how husbands and wives are to relate to one another are true in all times and in all cultures. They are gifts to men and women from the God of heaven: "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (see 2 Timothy 3:14-16).

The ordering of a marriage (i.e., "the husband is the head of the wife"—see Ephesians 5:23) is not a result of the curse. It took place before Adam and Eve sinned. Beyond this, the ordering of a marriage 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. God demonstrates Adam's place in the marriage by virtue of the fact that Adam was created first—see Paul's words in 1 Timothy 2:12-13. (The fact that Adam was considered by God to be the head of the first family may be seen in the fact that God spoke to Adam first after Adam and Eve ate the fruit. Adam, as the "head" of the marriage, was accountable for the marriage itself.)

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 (see Ephesians 5:22-24).

It is essential that pastors and elders speak about the marriage relationship in a biblical way. Parents must teach their children these things. 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. The marriage relationship was created by God (see Genesis 1-2). In his word he has outlined how it is to be ordered. In the same way that we cannot function in the church in a way that is inconsistent with God's desires, we must not attempt to pattern our marriages in ways that are inconsistent with God's desires.

It should be noted that people sometimes equate submission with weakness in character. We must not think that this is the case. Peter uses the term in an entirely positive manner. And Christ was not weak when he submitted to the authorities. In fact, his submission was one of the ways he demonstrated his strength.

It is counterproductive when Christians (particularly pastors and leaders) constantly make jokes about these topics. This subject 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 (see 2 Timothy 3:16), we will not make jokes about obeying any of his commands.

wives, **2** when they see your respectful and pure conduct.⁸⁵ **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.⁸⁶ And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.⁸⁷

7 Likewise,⁸⁸ husbands, live with your wives in an understanding

⁸⁵ The Apostle Paul states that the wife should submit to the husband because “the husband is the head of the wife” (see Ephesians 5:23). Peter, based on his words in verse one (“wives, be subject to your own husbands”), would clearly agree with Paul. However, Peter focuses on another reason why wives should be subject to their husbands. **He tells wives to be subject to their husbands because unbelieving husbands may be won to the faith “without a word by the conduct of their wives”.** This demands faith! When a Christian wife graciously submits to her unbelieving husband, she is preaching the gospel. Even if he won’t listen to the words of the gospel, he may be won “without a word” by watching the effects of the gospel in the Christian wife’s life. Peter’s words demonstrate why “respectful and pure conduct” from the wife toward her husband is so important. In this way, the gospel is constantly being preached in the home!

⁸⁶ Notice how Peter uses stories from the Old Testament in his instructions to Christians. Again, he does not see a disconnect between the message of the Old Testament and the message of the New Testament.

⁸⁷ Peter goes on to tell wives that they should pay more attention to what they wear. However, Peter is not thinking about outward clothing and jewelry. Wives are commanded to focus on clothing the “hidden person of the heart”. Peter’s words here are worth much thought. If you are a Christian wife, 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?

⁸⁸ As with Peter’s commands to servants and to wives, the command to husbands (“live with your wives in an understanding way”) doesn’t stand alone. It is grammatically linked to the command in 2:13. Thus, this command to husbands is a specific way that the command in 2:13 is fulfilled. Here, again, is that overarching command: “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution”. Thus, if the husband does not live with his wife in an understanding way, he is disobeying Peter’s words in 1 Peter 2:13. He is not properly being subject to the human institution of marriage.

way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel,⁸⁹ since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ The husband is commanded to show his wife special honor. He is to live with the understanding that she is the weaker member of the marriage and that she is an equal heir with him “of the grace of life”. When Peter says that the wife is the “weaker vessel”, he is not demeaning women. Peter is not saying that wives are inferior to their husbands. He is saying that they are different from their husbands. Husbands have certain strengths that wives do not have. Together, they make a perfect match. The husband must understand how he and his wife are the same (they are heirs together of God’s grace) and how they are different (he, in certain areas, has strengths that she does not have).

⁹⁰ As with wives, Peter gives husbands a reason why they must obey this command: their prayers will “not be hindered”. This verse is often explained in a negative way, however it is framed positively here. The result of a husband obeying this command is unhindered prayers. Why would any prayers be hindered? How does this benefit the kingdom of God? Peter does not answer this question. However, it seems likely that hindered prayers are a way that God gets the attention of men. If a man’s prayers are not being answered, it is possible that he needs to change the way he relates to his wife.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1 PETER 2:11-3:7

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 ...

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 the second half of verse 12, should you keep this command?

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

9. What do the words “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?

1.

2.

3.

4.

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

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 the “gracious thing” that Peter is referring to?

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

15. According to the second half of verse 23, 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 when you are slandered?

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 2:11-25, 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 in your work. How are you doing in regard to Peter's commands here?

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?

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**

1 Peter 3:8-22

In 2:18-3:7, Peter focused his attention on specific groups of Christians (servants, wives and husbands). In 3:8-22, Peter turns his attention, once again, to all Christians (“Finally, **all of you**”). Peter calls all believers to “have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind”. He tells all believers that they must “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”.

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 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 after Christ returns. Because of the Holy Spirit, we are to exhibit and enjoy the attributes of Christ now (see Galatians 5:22-23). In these verses, Peter describes what is to be normal in the church. We are **already** to be experiencing these things, even though we have **not yet** been perfected.

But Peter does more than just tell believers how they are to function within the local church. He also tells believers how they are to function outside of the local 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 are being mistreated, suddenly stop walking by the Spirit. We do not, because we are being mistreated, have permission to lash out in anger or bitterness. In every circumstance, whether within the church or outside of the church, we are to reflect Christ. This is the way that the church obeys the command given in Genesis 1:26-28. This is the way that God’s glory—all of his weighty splendor—fills the earth. Our actions are related to worship!

1 Peter 3:8-22

3:8 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,⁹¹ 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.”⁹²

13 Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?⁹³ **14** But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake,

⁹¹ Peter is, once again, quoting from Psalm 34 (see also 1 Peter 2:3). It is important to see the context of Peter’s word about keeping our tongues from evil. In context, Peter is talking about our responses when we have been wronged. According to Peter, it is evil to retaliate when we have been wronged.

⁹² Notice the poetry in this verse. The focus is on the **eyes, ears, and face** of the Lord. This is a poetic way of saying that God delights in answering the prayers of the righteous. Compare this to 1 Peter 3:7.

⁹³ 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 in those situations? How do we honor our Lord in those times? Verses 14-16 explain how believers are to respond when they are harmed for doing what is good.

you will be blessed.⁹⁴ 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,⁹⁵ so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ 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.

⁹⁵ 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. But our response does more than just prove what our attitude is toward Christ. Our responses actually work to change what others think about Christ! When we respond "with gentleness and respect", those who have slandered us are experiencing God's grace. If they receive this grace, they will be filled with shame and they will repent. Christ modeled this for us. Remember how he spoke as he hung on the cross (see Luke 23:34). It is significant to note that two criminals were crucified with Jesus. At one point, both of them were insulting Jesus (see Mark 15:32). Jesus, however, did not return evil for evil. Eventually, one of the two men repented of his sin (see Luke 23:39-43). Jesus' actions persuaded him to turn from his sin!

⁹⁶ Peter draws his words and thoughts from Isaiah 8. As with Psalm 34, Peter is quoting from a passage that he has been thinking about for some time. He also quoted from Isaiah 8 in 1 Peter 2:8 (he quoted verse 14). Peter **commands** believers to bless when we are cursed. We must do this!

17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.⁹⁷

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,⁹⁸ **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,⁹⁹ 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

⁹⁷ Suffering is sometimes God's will for us. See Joseph's words to his brothers in Genesis 50:20. He indicates that God meant his sufferings for good. All of Joseph's suffering had a purpose! The same is true of every believer. See Romans 8:28.

Peter quotation of Isaiah 8:12-13 demands close study. Isaiah reads as follows (carefully consider the words in bold): "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 from Isaiah, but he changes them in the following way: "Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but **in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy**" (1 Peter 3:14b-15a). Once again, Peter 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 (1) Peter is using a Greek translation of the Old Testament, and (2) he sees Christ as filling the role of Yahweh! Again, Christ has inherited this name that is above every name (see Philippians 2:9)!

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! 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.

This should give great confidence to the believer! Jesus is the all-powerful one. He is the one who is with us "to the end of the age" (see Matthew 28:20).

⁹⁸ This could also read, "but made alive **by** the Spirit".

⁹⁹ Peter's thoughts naturally turn to Noah when he thinks of the suffering and the deliverance of the godly (see also 2 Peter 2:4-10). These verses remind the reader that God is, even in the face of great evil, extremely patient (see also 2 Peter 3:9). His patience should never be taken to mean that he has forgotten about the righteous. God will never forget his people. The salvation of Noah and his family are proof of this.

of Jesus Christ,¹⁰⁰ **22** who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ 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 does not mean that the act of immersing a person in water actually causes them to be born again. 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 based on the “resurrection of Jesus Christ”. While we are saved by faith, we must not minimize the importance of baptism. To say that “Baptism ... now saves you” is true, for it is a normal 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?” (see Acts 19:3).

¹⁰¹ **Verses 18-22 are difficult. One difficulty** is in knowing exactly how Jesus “went and proclaimed to the spirits that are in prison”. Scholars disagree about the meaning of Peter’s words here. The preacher or teacher, however, does not need to know exactly how or when Jesus did this. Peter’s point is that Jesus actually did this. Even though Christ suffered to the point of death, Peter affirms that he overcame. He was “made alive in the spirit” (or “by the Spirit”). 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. **A second difficulty** is understanding Peter’s words that “**baptism now saves you**”. As was noted earlier, Peter does not mean that people are saved merely because they have been immersed in the water. He has already proclaimed that we must have faith in Christ (see 1 Peter 1:5, 7, 9). For Peter, baptism is not an “act”. It is part of the salvation process. It is a sign of faith. Peter’s words about Noah provide help here. Noah is an example of the deliverance the Christian can expect to receive because of his or her connection to Christ. In the same way that Noah safely passed through God’s waters of judgment, the believer also safely passes through God’s judgment. Baptism in water is a sign that the believer has passed through God’s judgment and is now living as a new creation, ready to please him and obey his commandments (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Regarding Christ’s victory over the powers and authorities, see also Colossians 2:15 and Psalm 112:8. The triumph of the righteous man over his adversaries is a common theme in the Psalms. 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.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY 1 PETER 3:8-22

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“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 ...

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?

1 Peter 3:8-22

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 verse 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?

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?

17. What happens when Christians do not respond in this way?

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 *Psalm 110:1, Ephesians 1:15-22, Philippians 2:5-11*

19. How does this compare to the position of the Christian? See also *Ephesians 2:6, Colossians 3:1, 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, Philipians 3:17-21*

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**

1 Peter 4

In 1 Peter 4, Peter speaks, again, to all believers. He tells all believers that they must **arm themselves** with Christ's way of thinking in regard to suffering so that they might resist sin and live for "the will of God". Here we see two surprising benefit of suffering. Suffering helps believers resist sin and it helps them obey God!

Peter is aware that his readers have, in the past, led sinful lives. However, he tells them that they must sin no longer. Peter tells the believers that they have spent enough time in the past sinning. Believers need to know that the "sinning season" of their life is over! Now is the time to be self-controlled and sober-minded. If believers are not sober-minded and self-controlled, they will not be able to pray effectively!

Peter's words aren't just about things we shouldn't do. He also speaks about things believer need to do. Believers need to love each other, they need to be hospitable, and they need to use their gifts. If believers do not obey these commands, the entire body of Christ will suffer!

Peter does not want believers to be passive or to be confused. Even though they are suffering, he wants believers to actively engage in life right now! If the believer thinks suffering is strange, however, he or she will struggle to move forward in faith.

1 Peter 4

1 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking,¹⁰² 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.¹⁰³ **3** For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles¹⁰⁴ 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.¹⁰⁵ **6** For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way

¹⁰² As believers in the Lord Jesus, we will suffer. We will suffer because our Lord also suffered (see 1 Peter 3:18 and John 15:18-20). Jesus faced his suffering in faith. He knew that God would deliver him. We should “arm [ourselves] with the same way of thinking”. This means that we should face suffering in the same manner as Christ faced suffering. We are to expect it. We are not to fear it. And we are to trust God to deliver us.

¹⁰³ Peter wants his readers to know that suffering brings great benefit to believers. According to verses 1-2, suffering has a cleansing effect on the people of God. It drives sin from them and increases their strength in their fight against “human passions”. From a human perspective, it would seem that suffering would produce weak Christians. This is not the case. It produces strong Christians who are able to resist “human passions” and who have a strong desire to live “for the will of God”. This is a reason Christians can praise God for suffering.

¹⁰⁴ Once again, Peter refers to non-Christians as “Gentiles”. Even though Peter’s readers are, for the most part, Gentiles, he considers them to be true children of Abraham (see Romans 2:28-29 and Galatians 3:27-29).

¹⁰⁵ In verses 3-5, Peter says that the “Gentiles” will persecute the people of God because they cannot bear the fact that Christians do not participate with them in their “flood of debauchery”. Christians will be maligned because of their refusal to endorse sin. But, Peter makes it clear, the Judge is watching: “they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead”. No one can avoid judgment. A day is coming when every sin will be accounted for (see also Psalm 1:5-6, Matthew 25:31-46, and Revelation 20:11-15).

people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.¹⁰⁶

7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.¹⁰⁷ **8** Above all, keep loving one another earnestly,¹⁰⁸ since love covers a multitude of

¹⁰⁶ 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! Your bodies are buried just like ours! God doesn't treat us any different from how he treats you!" 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 15:50: "I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable". However, even though the bodies of believers who have died have been "judged in the flesh the way people are", these same people are, because of their acceptance of the gospel, currently living in God's presence, 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 have **not 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 have **not yet** experienced it externally.

¹⁰⁷ 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, we must live carefully. The commands here are given so that we might be able to pray. Peter's words are grace from God intended to help Christians become "self-controlled and sober-minded". His words are intended to help us pray more frequently and more accurately!

These are commands! Peter's commands here indicate that the quality of our prayer life is connected to the condition of our thought-life. In other words, if you can't pray, the problem may be that you lack self-control in your thinking. This could be for many reasons. For instance, many believers today struggle to control their use of digital devices. If we lack self-control in how we use smartphones, tablets, and computers, we will not be able to pray effectively. 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 fact that we are living in the last hour, start thinking soberly, and pray.

¹⁰⁸ This is the substance of the "new commandment" Jesus gave to his Apostles on the night of the Last Supper (see 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.

sins.¹⁰⁹ **9** Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.¹¹⁰

10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:¹¹¹ **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.¹¹² 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,

¹⁰⁹ See also James 5:20 and Proverbs 10:12. Believers, at times, sin. We don't have to sin, but we will sin. We're not perfected yet. When other believers sin, we are love them with the love of Christ. When we do this, we are not causing the sin to be forgiven. Only God may do that. Nor are we excusing the sin. We are not pretending that the sin 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. See Exodus 34:6-7a.

¹¹⁰ Verses 9-11 relate to the love believers are to show to fellow believers. The instructions in these verses are commands. Believers 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 (see also Jesus' words in Matthew 25:31-46).

¹¹¹ Believers are “stewards of God's varied grace”. A steward is not an owner. A steward is someone who is managing someone else's property. Spiritual gifts are not owned by the believer. Rather, the believer is a steward of the gift. And no believer has every gift. Instead, we must believe that we are stewards of a small slice of “God's varied grace”. Since we are not owners, we cannot keep God's gifts to ourselves. As stewards of God's grace, we are to pour that grace out for the benefit of our fellow believers. To withhold God's grace would be to withhold grace from our fellow believers. To withhold God's grace is a grave sin.

¹¹² 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” (see Ephesians 3:8). We are able to love because God's love has been poured into our hearts. See Romans 5:5 and Galatians 5:22-23.

what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”¹¹³

19 Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

¹¹³ 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. Why would God judge his people? He is doing this because he is helping us. He is driving sin from our lives. He is causing us to rely on him more. He is causing us to love him more. He is bringing more glory to himself. And if God is judging his own family members, what will happen to those who hate him? Peter proves that God judges his family members by quoting Proverbs 11:31 (from the LXX): “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. It is that the righteous are saved in the midst of great difficulty. In other words, 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. See also Jeremiah 25:29.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY 1 PETER 4

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 ...

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 Christians?

1 Peter 4

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?

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. These verses refer to Christians as a “stewards” of “God’s varied grace”.

What is a steward?

Who is the owner of the spiritual gift?

Why is God’s grace referred to as “varied”?

17. What is the Christian to do with the gift he or she is stewarding?

18. Peter is assuming that a person would know the gift he or she is stewarding. How would a person learn the gift they have and learn how to use it?

19. What role might the elders in the church have in helping a person discover his or her gifts? How could they encourage people in this area?

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

1 Peter 4

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.

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**

1 Peter 5

The church is not a leaderless institution. Even though its members are filled by the Holy Spirit and gifted by the Holy Spirit, it cannot function without leaders. 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. These elders are representatives of the chief overseer—the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is natural, when talking about elders, to use shepherding language. Like Peter, the Apostle Paul uses shepherding language 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**

In the same way that a good shepherd protects the sheep, the elders are to protect the “flock of God” from things that would bring them harm. The elders are to deal with enemies that threaten the spiritual well-being of the people.

The elders need to remember that the flock belongs to God. The people do not belong to the elders. They are God’s. He expects the elders to lead. Elders are to do this with great eagerness. Elders are to lead by example. Elders are to be alert, watching out for the sheep. And elders are to deal with the “fierce wolves” that want to destroy 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” (this is another reference to the Second Coming of Christ) 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.

1 Peter 5

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 at the Second Coming of Christ.

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: “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 favor on me. For this to happen, I must, in whatever position he has placed me, walk in humility. To do otherwise is insanity. 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. Do not exalt yourself. That is God's place. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled.

1 Peter 5

1 So I exhort the elders among you,¹¹⁴ 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.¹¹⁵ 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.¹¹⁶ Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.¹¹⁷ **9** Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by

¹¹⁴ 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.

¹¹⁵ 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. 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 (see Hebrews 13:17).

To “be subject to the elders”, 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.

¹¹⁶ If a person lived and worked in an area where real lions prowled, that person would constantly be looking for their presence. In the same way, believers need to be wise in the way they live.

¹¹⁷ This is a quote from Psalm 22:13 (LXX). Psalm 22 is a psalm about the suffering of the Christ. However, because of Christ’s death and resurrection, those who have faith in him are counted as “in Christ”. We become partakers of his sufferings. Thus, because the believer is “in Christ”, this verse is true of the believer. The devil is a great enemy. Here, however, the Christian learns a great secret about how he can be defeated.

your brotherhood throughout the world.¹¹⁸ **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,¹¹⁹ a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of

118 The devil wants to devour you. He has thousands of ways of doing this:

- He would have you think that he speaks the truth and that God is a liar (this is exactly what he achieved in his conversation with Eve—see *Genesis 3:1-6* and *1 Timothy 2:13-14*).

- 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—see *2 Timothy 4:10*).

- 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—see *Luke 10:38-42*).

- He would have you love a Christ-less church (this is what was happening in the Laodicean church—see *Revelation 3:14-22*).

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 roaring 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”.

119 Peter wants his readers to know that Silas has played a role in the writing of this letter. The reader is not told exactly what role Silas played in the writing of this letter. It isn't important to know exactly how Silas helped Peter (he may have been the scribe writing Peter's words). It is important, however, to know that Silas agrees with Peter. Silas, like Peter, suffered a great deal because of his faith in the Lord Jesus (see, for instance, *Acts 16:16-40*). Peter wants his readers to know that Silas agrees with the things that Peter has said in this book. Silas, like Peter, recognizes that the true grace of God will include suffering.

God. Stand firm in it.¹²⁰ **13** She¹²¹ who is at Babylon,¹²² who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.¹²³ **14** Greet one another with the kiss of love.¹²⁴
Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

¹²⁰ This is a command.

¹²¹ “She” is probably a reference to the church in Rome. The Apostle John also refers to the church as a woman (see 2 John 1 and 13).

¹²² Peter writes from a place he calls “Babylon”. However, 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 rebellion against God. Peter wants his readers to know that the church in Rome is, even in the midst of intense suffering, surviving. The church is, even though it is located in “Babylon”, standing firm!

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 makes its entrance into the biblical story early in the book of Genesis. It was known as Babel at that time. Babel was the city that was founded in defiance of God’s plan for mankind to multiply and fill the earth with his image (see Genesis 1:26-28): “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. 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 (see Genesis 1:26-28). 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. (see Hebrews 12:18-24) 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 (see Revelation 17:5). It is not until the book of Revelation that we see Babylon completely destroyed (see Revelation 18:1-3). Peter, even though he is in Rome, feels like he is living in Babylon. 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.

¹²³ After a difficult beginning (see Acts 15:36-41), Mark became a great help to Paul and to Peter. The Gospel of Mark is probably Mark’s writing that is based on Peter’s teachings.

¹²⁴ **The focus here is not on the kiss.** Different churches in different cultures show their love to one another in different ways. **The focus is on love.** Peter wants the churches to show love to one another. This is not optional. See John 13:34-35, 15:17, all of John 17, and Revelation 2:4.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY 1 PETER 5

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 ...

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. Compare 1 Peter 2:25 and Peter's description of the elders in 5:1-4. What similarities do you find? What does this tell you about the role of the elders in the church? What does this tell you about how Christ shepherds his people?

1 Peter 5

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

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

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

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

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

11. What happens if we do do this?

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

13. What are we to do about his attacks?

14. 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?

15. 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?

16. 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 ...

1 Peter 5

17. 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*

18. Peter describes the church in an unusual way in verse 13. How does he describe the church? Why might he describe the church in this way? What encouragement would this bring to the churches that Peter was writing to? *See also John's description of the church in 2 John 1 and 13*

19. 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. **1 Peter 5:10-11**



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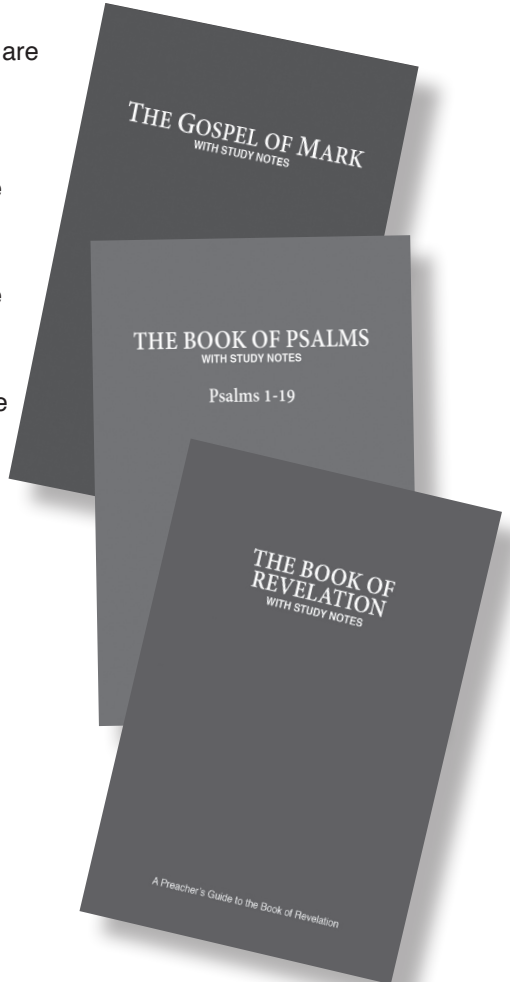
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