

1 Peter

Introduction 1:1-2

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

Peter began this epistle in the customary manner of his day. He introduced himself and his original readers, and he wished God's blessing on them to prepare them for what he had to say. He prepared them for dealing with trials by reminding them of who they were, what they had, and where they were going (vv. 1-5).

The letter begins with Peter identifying himself as the author. Although many today want to deny that Peter wrote the letter, the internal and external evidence is still largely in favor of authentic Petrine authorship. The name "**Peter**" was given to Simon by Jesus Christ early in his ministry (John 1:42; Matt 10:2). Peter designates himself as an apostle. The term "**apostle**" may simply mean "messenger," but here the idea is that Peter is one of the original twelve apostles, specifically chosen by Jesus Himself for that office (Mark 3:13–19).

Therefore, what Peter writes is not merely his personal opinion, but as an apostle he is commissioned by Christ and writes God's words to the churches (1 Cor 2:13; 14:37; Gal 1:8–9; 1 Thess 2:13). The letter is addressed to the "**elect**", which modifies the term "**exiles**". In this letter he emphasized that Christians are actually citizens of heaven and our sojourn here on earth is only temporary (2:11; Gen. 32:4). To speak of his readers as elect means that they have been chosen by God. Most scholars argue that the readers are primarily Gentiles. Often in the Old Testament, Israel is designated as God's chosen and elect people (Deut 4:37; Isa 14:1; 41:8–8; 43:20; 45:4; 51:2). Hence, Peter indicates at the outset that the church of Jesus Christ is the true Israel of God, His chosen people. However, there are some scholars, especially amongst the Preterists, who argue that Peter is writing to Jewish believers in Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

The church is God's suffering people, having no place of rest in this world. In the Old Testament, exile was Israel's punishment for their sin, when they were evicted from their land by Assyria (722 BC) and Babylon (586 BC). However, there is no notion here that Peter's readers are being punished as exiles. Believers are exiles, not because they are displaced from their homeland. Believers are exiles because they suffer for their faith in a world that finds their faith strange.

The location of the readers is communicated in the words **of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia**. The particular group of Christians to whom this letter went lived in the northern Roman provinces of Asia Minor (modern western Turkey). This was originally a circular letter written for circulation among the addressees. The sequence of provinces corresponds to the route that the bearer of the original letter would have normally followed.

The term "**dispersion**" was often used of Jews who lived outside Palestine, who were scattered from their homeland because of their sin (Deut 28:25; Isa 49:6; Jer 15:7; 41:17). In the New Testament the word is used in only two other places, in both cases probably referring to Jews who were outside the land (John 7:35; Jas 1:1). In this instance, however, the word probably is used metaphorically. Peter was probably not writing

specifically to Jews but primarily to Believing Jews and Gentiles. They were the people of God, who joined with believing Jews in the promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Dispersion belongs with the word “**exiles**” in that it communicates again that believers are distinct from the world.

The phrase “**according to the foreknowledge of God the Father**” actually modifies “**elect exiles**” in v. 1. The important question here is whether the word “**foreknowledge**” could simply mean that God foresaw who would be His elect or chosen. The word “know” in the Old Testament often refers to God’s covenantal love bestowed on His people (Gen 18:19; Jer 1:5; Amos 3:2). The rich associations of that term continue in the New Testament. Probably the most important verse for Peter is 1 Pet 1:20, where it says that Christ “**was foreknown before the creation of the world.**” Peter was not merely saying that God foresaw when Christ would come, but that God *foreordained* when Christ would come. Therefore, when Peter said that believers are **elect “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,”** he emphasized God’s sovereignty and initiative in salvation. Believers are elect *because* God the Father has set his covenantal affection on them.

The next phrase, **in the sanctification of the Spirit**, also modifies the word **elect**. Not only does God the Father foreknow who the elect will be, but the Spirit is the *source* of their sanctification. Although “**sanctification**” often refers to the progressive growth of holiness in the lives of Christians (1 Thess 4:3), in this context, the focus is on conversion. Peter explained how believers came to be part of God’s elect people. When believers are converted, they become God’s holy and set-apart people (1 Cor 1:2).

This brings us to the next phrase, **for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood**, which is also rather difficult to understand. One interpretation is “to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood” (RSV). In this case Jesus Christ functions both as the object of the noun “obedient” and as the subject of “sprinkled with his blood.” This interpretation should be rejected as awkward and as a grammatical nightmare. A much better interpretation is that the foreknowing work of God and the sanctifying action of the Spirit *result in* human obedience and the sprinkling of Christ’s blood. Conversion is not merely an intellectual acceptance of the gospel, nor is it “blind faith.” Conversion involves obedience and submission to the gospel, what Paul called the “**obedience of faith**” (Rom 1:5).

The next question this passage raises is, to what does the sprinkling of blood refer? In the Old Testament the sprinkling of the blood is used for the cleansing of a leper (Lev 14:6–7), for the sprinkling of priests in ordination (Ex 29:21), and the sprinkling of the blood when the covenant with Moses was inaugurated (Ex 24:3–8). Sanctification, obedience, and the sprinkling of blood are three different ways of describing the conversion of believers. Exodus 24:3–8 is the most probable background to the passage. The covenant is inaugurated with sacrifices in which blood is shed and sprinkled on the altar (Ex 24:5–6). The people pledge obedience to the God of the covenant (Ex 24:3, 7). Moses then sprinkled the people with the blood, stating, “**This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you**” (Ex 24:8). The blood of the covenant signifies the forgiveness and cleansing the people needed to stand in right relation with God.

We see, then, that entrance into the covenant has two dimensions -- the obedient response to the gospel and the sprinkling of blood. Similarly, God’s work of foreknowing and the Spirit’s work of sanctifying introduce the readers into God’s new covenant. Believers enter the covenant by obeying the gospel and through the sprinkled blood of Christ, which is His sacrifice. The Holy Spirit accomplished election when He separated the elect and set them aside to a special calling. God’s purpose in election was that we might obey Christ and that He might sprinkle us with His blood (Eph 2:10). Jesus’ blood was the ratification of the New Covenant (Matt 26:27-28) since it was the basis for the forgiveness of sins promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Peter prayed for God's fullest outpouring of His grace on the readers. They needed this in view of their sufferings. His readers also needed God's gift of peace since they were suffering.

Called to Salvation as Exiles (1:3-2:10)

Praise for Salvation (1:3–12)

Peter began the body of this epistle by reminding his readers of their identity as Christians. He did this to enable them to rejoice in the midst of present suffering. They could do this since they would ultimately experience glorification.

The hope of our salvation 1:3-5

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.

Peter begins with the theme of the entire paragraph. God is to be **blessed** and praised for the salvation he has given to believers. Blessing God is rooted in the Old Testament and is a pervasive feature of Old Testament piety. The blessing is directed to God, “even” the “**Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**”

The reason for this praise is that God **has caused us to be born again**. This phrase directs our attention to the Father's role in producing children, with the means used being the word of God (1 Pet 1:23). The focus here is on God's initiative in producing new life. That believers are **born again** is based on **his great mercy**. Believers deserve judgment and wrath, but God is a God of mercy and grace, bestowing life upon those who are opposed to Him (Eph 2:4–5).

The goal or result of God's election is now explained. In v. 3 Peter mentions the living hope of believers, in v. 4 their inheritance, and in v. 5 their salvation. A “**living hope**” is one that is genuine and vital, in contrast to a hope that is empty and vain. Those who are suffering persecution can look to the future with the sure confidence that immeasurable blessing awaits them. Their confidence is grounded in and secured by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Their **hope** is the hope of resurrection and triumph over death. Therefore, whatever happens to them in this world is trivial compared to the blessing of the future resurrection.

Many scholars have called Paul the apostle of faith, John the apostle of love, and Peter the apostle of hope. They have done so because of the dominant emphasis each of these writers made in the New Testament. Peter had much to say about hope in this letter.

In the Old Testament the inheritance is the land God promised to His people (Num 32:19; Deut 2:12; Josh 11:23). The word is especially common in Joshua for the apportionment of the land for each tribe or family. Peter understood the inheritance, however, no longer in terms of a land promised to Israel but in terms of the end-time hope that lies before believers. Peter's point in v. 4 was that they are sojourners and exiles in this world, they face suffering now, and their hope is directed to the future inheritance. Our future inheritance is not subject to destruction from any source, defilement from without, or decay from within.

What exactly is our inheritance? Our inheritance is Jesus Christ Himself and the blessings that He has promised us (Col. 3:4; Eph. 1:14).

In v. 5 we should note that Peter describes the inheritance in terms of “**salvation**” (*soteria*). The term **salvation** has 3 time references. **Salvation** is usually conceived of as a past possession, justification, and this notion is found in the New Testament (Eph 2:8–9). **Salvation**, sanctification, can also refer to a present possession (1 Cor 1:18). Also, **salvation**, glorification, can be defined as being rescued from God’s future judgment or wrath on the last day (1 Pet 4:17; Rom 5:9; 1 Thess 5:9). Peter conceived of salvation in future terms here.

Peter assured his readers that they will certainly receive this inheritance, that future salvation will be theirs. The reason for this confidence is that they are those “**who by God’s power are being guarded.**” The word “**guarded**” or “**protected,**” is used of putting garrisons in a city to protect it from foes (Phil 4:7). How does God protect believers? God does not exempt them from persecution or suffering. Believers may suffer agonizing pain because of their faith. God preserves believers so that they will receive their final inheritance and experience the joy of eschatological (end time) salvation. Peter added that believers are protected “**through faith**”. Therefore, obtaining the final inheritance does not bypass human beings. Believers must exercise faith to receive final salvation. Faith here is “**continuing trust or faithfulness.**”

There is no final **salvation** apart from continued **faith**, so faith is a condition for obtaining the eschatological inheritance. I do not believe Peter meant that the elect will inevitably continue in faith, namely, continue to believe the truths of the gospel and always walk in obedience. Paul warned that Christians can stop believing the truth (1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 2:17- 18). Rather Peter meant that God’s power keeps believers saved in spite of their sins because we have placed saving faith in Christ in the past. In this sense we never lose our faith. There is much misunderstanding about the Bible’s teaching concerning the perseverance of the saints. It does not teach that Christians will inevitably continue to persevere in the faith, that is, continue believing the truth, walking with the Lord, or doing good works. It does teach that God will persevere in His commitment to bring all who have trusted in Him to heaven. 1 Pet 1:5 contains a glorious promise. God’s power protects us because His power is the means by which our faith is sustained.

We should not use this verse to deny that believers must maintain their faith until the end. Its function is to encourage believers with the truth that God will preserve their faith through sufferings and the trials of life. Faith and hope are ultimately gifts of God, and he fortifies believers so that they persist in faith and hope until the day that they obtain the eschatological inheritance.

Joy in Suffering (1:6–9)

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.

The main theme in vv. 3–5 is that believers should praise God because of the certainty of their hope. The thought shifts slightly in vv. 6–9. Now Peter focuses on the joy (vv. 6, 8) and love (v. 8) that fills the lives of

believers, even though they are suffering. They are joyful because suffering is the pathway to a godliness that passes the test on the last day (v. 7), and because suffering results in eschatological salvation (v. 9).

The words “**in this**” should be understood as a general antecedent and can be translated “for this reason.” The phrase reaches back to the entire content of vv. 3–5, focusing on the eschatological hope of believers. They rejoice now because of the inheritance that most certainly awaits them.

Believers rejoice despite suffering because they know that it will not persist forever. It strikes “**now**” and “**for a little while**”. In comparison with the eternal glory ahead, our present distresses are only brief and temporary (Matt. 5:4-5; 2 Cor. 4:17-18). The idea is that the sufferings believers experience are the will of God for believers (1 Pet 4:19). The New Testament regularly sees sufferings as the road believers must travel to enter into God’s kingdom (Rom 5:3–5; Jas 1:2–4). Peter assured his readers that God is working out His plan even in their anguish.

Why is it God’s plan for Christians to suffer? Verse 7 provides the reason. Sufferings function as the testing grounds for faith. They test the genuineness of faith, revealing whether or not faith is authentic. If faith proves to be real, the believer will receive “**praise and glory and honor**” when Jesus Christ returns. Those who truly believe will persist in their faith, continuing to trust in God when difficulties occur. True faith is contrasted and compared with gold. Approved faith is more valuable than gold because gold is only temporary and perishes. But faith is also compared to gold, for like gold it is refined and proved through fire. Peter reminds believers again that the test may be intense and stringent. Life as sojourners is anything but easy, and yet by God’s grace the lives of believers are filled with joy.

The focus here is on the value of genuine faith in God’s sight on the day of judgment. The words “**may be found**” refer to the final judgment when God examines the life of each person (Phil 3:9; 2 Pet 3:10, 14). “**Praise and glory and honor**” are given on that day to the person whose faith has been tested and approved by fire (Rom 2:7, 10, 29). The eschatological reward will be given to them because of the genuineness of their faith, which is proved by the sufferings they endure. God brings sufferings into the lives of believers to purify their faith and to demonstrate its genuineness. The eschatological reward reveals that believers have been transformed by God’s grace. Inasmuch as believers rejoice in God so they are willing to undergo pain.

Verse 7 concludes with the hope that animates believers, the revelation of Jesus Christ, His appearance at His second coming. Christ will be seen by all, and yet those to whom Peter wrote have never seen Him. The first phrase of v. 8 (“**though you have not seen him**”) relates to the past, indicating that Peter’s readers never saw the historical Jesus. Nevertheless, they “**love him.**”

The believers have never seen the Lord Jesus, nor do they now see Him. Nevertheless, they believe in Him. Believing is not based on seeing (John 20:29). Seeing will be their portion at the revelation of Jesus Christ. In the meantime the Christian life is marked by believing. Peter’s point is that believers who suffer are not destroyed by their troubles. They love Jesus Christ and rejoice in Him, even though they have never seen Him and do not see Him now. Their lives are characterized by a hope that fills the present with love and joy.

In verse 9 Peter was explaining why believers are filled with love and joy for Jesus Christ. They have love and joy because of the prospect of future salvation. Believers now enjoy salvation and yet will experience it fully at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Believers are full of love and joy even now because of the hope of salvation.

Salvation of “souls” could easily be misunderstood, as if Peter referred to the salvation of our immaterial substance, not including the physical body. The word “souls,” however, refers to the whole person and does not suggest in any way that the body is left out. We should also notice that such salvation is “**the outcome of your faith.**” The word “**outcome**” (*telos*) has the idea of result here. The love and joy of believers is rooted in the hope of eschatological salvation. They know, therefore, that despite present sufferings they will see Jesus Christ when He is revealed and they will enjoy Him forever.

To summarize this passage so far (vv. 3-9), Peter called on his readers to rejoice in their present sufferings because of their hope, faith, and love. They had certain hope in the future appearing of Jesus Christ and in their final glorification. They had faith in God's dealings with them presently, allowing them to undergo trials and sufferings, and they had love for Jesus Christ for what He had already done for them in the past.

The Witnesses of Our Salvation 1:10-12

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

Peter reminded his readers that the prophets had predicted that Jesus Christ's life, as their own lives, would include suffering followed by glory. He mentioned this to encourage them to realize that their experience was not abnormal.

The link between vv. 9–10 is the term “**salvation**”. The **salvation** believers experience now, which will be consummated in the future, was also prophesied in the past. Believers in Christ represent the fulfillment of prophecy. They enjoy the great privilege of living in the days when the history of salvation is being fulfilled. The Old Testament prophets “**prophesied about the grace that was to be yours.**” What was predicted in the past was intended for Peter’s readers. Their salvation is described as “**grace**” here, and the point is that such grace “**was to be yours.**” The prophets “**searched and inquired carefully**” into this salvation.

Some scholars have argued that the prophets mentioned here are New Testament prophets. They believe it makes more sense to conceive of New Testament prophets searching the Scriptures rather than the Old Testament prophets who actually wrote them. Most commentators agree, however, that this is referring to the Old Testament prophets. The latter view is most likely correct.

Some interpreters have seen the phrase “**the grace that was to be yours**” (v. 10) as a reference to the salvation of Gentiles. The Old Testament prophets predicted this, too (Isa 52:15). Peter's original audience was probably predominantly Gentile groups of Christians. It seems more likely, however, that Peter was not referring exclusively to prophecy about Gentile salvation, but seems to have been referring to the grace God promised to all believers, including Gentile salvation, about which he had been speaking in verses 3-9.

The Old Testament prophets had predicted that the Messiah would experience both **suffering** and **glory** (Isa 61:1-3). However, they did not understand how His suffering and glory would fit together. It is possible to understand that mystery only after Jesus' earthly ministry.

The title "**Spirit of Christ**" occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in Romans 8:9. In both places it probably signifies not only that the Spirit came from Christ but also that He witnesses to Christ as His representative (John 15:16-17). Peter was stressing the Spirit's witness to Christ in the Old Testament rather than the preexistence of Christ. The prophecies were not the invention of the prophets or their "best guess." The Spirit of Christ was **indicating ... the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories**.

What the prophets desired to know and what they **searched and inquired carefully** was **what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating**. The prophets prophesied about what was not fulfilled in their day. They "**predicted**" Christ's suffering and glory (v. 11). His "**glories**" (*doxas*) refer here to His resurrection and triumph over evil powers (1:3; 3:19–22).

Old Testament prophets longed to see and experience the fulfillment of what they prophesied. But God "**revealed**" (*apekalyphthē*, a divine passive) to them that their ministry of prophecy and foretelling would not be realized in their day. Their ministry was not ultimately directed to themselves or their own generation but to Peter's readers and all those who live after the death and resurrection of Christ. In other words, the Old Testament prophecies do not only *apply* to Peter's readers but were *intended* for them. What the prophets foretold has "now" been announced to believers through those who proclaimed the gospel. A distinction is drawn between the prophets who *anticipated* and *predicted* the coming of the gospel and those who have now actually proclaimed the *fulfillment* of the gospel to the believers.

To say that the Spirit is "**sent from heaven**" is likely a reminder of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out on the church to bear witness to Jesus Christ. We noted in v. 11 that the prophets prophesied by the Spirit of Christ and we are told that those who proclaim the gospel do so by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Peter's main point throughout this section is that believers in Jesus Christ are extremely blessed to live in the time when the predictions of the prophets have come to pass. A similar lesson was communicated to the apostles by Jesus himself: "**Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it**" (Matt 13:16–17). Believers also stand in contrast to the angels, for they also **long to look** at and reflect upon these truths. The point is that angels reflect with delight on God's saving actions. Remember that angels do not experience the gospel in the same way as human beings since they are not the recipients of redemption.

Peter's point in verses 10-12 seems to be that his readers could rejoice in their sufferings even though they could not see exactly how or when their present trials would end. The readers should find encouragement by looking at the prophets' limited understanding of their own prophecies dealing with the suffering and glorification of the Messiah. God would bring their own experiences to a glorious completion just as He would the Messiah's, though in both cases the details of fulfillment were not yet clear.

The Future Inheritance as an Incentive to Holiness (1:13–21)

Peter wanted his readers to live joyfully in the midst of sufferings. Consequently He outlined his readers' major responsibilities to enable them to see their duty clearly so they could fulfill it. These responsibilities were their duties to God, to other believers, and to the world.

The first section of this letter (vv. 3-12) stressed walking in hope. The second section (vv. 13-25) emphasizes walking in holiness, reverence, and love. Peter held out several incentives to encourage his readers to walk appropriately -- God's glory (v. 13), God's holiness (vv. 14-15), God's Word (v. 16), God's judgment (v. 17), and God's love (vv. 18-21). Peter presented the believer's duty to God as consisting of three things: 1) a correct perspective, 2) correct behavior, and 3) correct attitude.

A life of holiness 1:13-16

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."

The word "**therefore**" reaches back to all of vv. 1–12. In the following verses the believers are exhorted to live a godly life. But all these exhortations are grounded in God's saving work as explained in vv. 1–12. Believers are to obey because they are God's chosen people, because they have been born again by the Father, because they have a safe inheritance, and because of the greatness of their salvation. God's commands are always rooted in His grace.

It has often been observed that hope in 1 Peter is virtually equivalent to faith in Paul, and the term "**hope**" reminds believers that one trusts God for the future. Verse 13 should read, "**Set your hope fully on the grace ... by preparing your minds for action and by being sober.**" Peter emphasized in vv. 3–9 that the salvation of believers is eschatological, that it is an end-time hope. Now he urges them to set their hope completely on the grace that will be theirs "**at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**"

The two phrases explain how believers are to set their hope completely upon Jesus Christ. First, they are to "**prepare your minds for action.**" More literally, they are to "**gird up the loins of your minds.**" The image of "girding up the loins" means that one tucks in one's long flowing garments to run or do serious work (Exod 12:11; Jer 1:17). We may even have a reference to the exodus traditions here, where Israel prepares itself to leave Egypt. Hence, Peter pictures a mind prepared for active work.

Second, believers set their hope completely on the end by **being sober-minded**. Peter was not merely saying that believers should refrain from drunkenness. There is a way of living that becomes dull to the reality of God that is anesthetized by the attractions of this world. When people are lulled into such drowsiness, they lose sight of Christ's future revelation of Himself and concentrate only on fulfilling their own earthly desires. **Being sober-minded** describes a Christian who is in full control of his or her speech and conduct in contrast to one who allows his or her flesh (sinful human nature) to rule. The main duty is to become conscious of the culmination of our hope when Christ returns. We should remember that what God will give us soon as a reward for our faithful commitment to Him is worth any sacrifice now.

Peter calls all believers to be holy. Setting one's hope completely on Jesus Christ's coming (v. 13) means that one lives a holy life now (v. 15). Believers are to do God's will, just as "**obedient children**" obey their parents. The phrase reminds us that believers are born again by the will of God. Obedience is necessary for conversion and cannot ultimately be separated from faith, although it flows from faith. Peter had no conception of the Christian life in which believers give mere mental assent to doctrines. In other words, *orthodoxy* (proper beliefs and doctrines) should always lead a believer to *orthopraxy* (the practice of proper conduct).

Here we have both negative and positive implications. First, in v. 14, there must be a complete break with the past, **do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance**. The verb used here, **conformed**, is found elsewhere in the Bible only in Rom 12:2 (**‘Do not be conformed to this world’**). Believers are to be holy by not being conformed to their former desires. The word **passions** here denotes the baser appetites which, unless strictly controlled, keep a man from God (Gal 5:16; 1 John 2:16) and drive him to sin. Peter attributes their earlier absorption in these to their **ignorance**, which conveyed much more than unawareness of the moral law. In the Old Testament (Jer. 10:25) and the New Testament (Gal 4:8; Eph 4:18; 1 Thess 4:5) it is a routine characterization of the Gentiles **‘who know not God.’** Ungodly desires still entice believers and tempt them to depart from God. They must refuse such desires and choose what is good.

The positive aspect comes out in v. 15 in the invitation, **but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct**. God Himself, and not any system of abstract ideals, is to be their standard, for as a result of His calling He has made them His own. “Calling” does not merely mean “invite” but conveys the idea of God’s power in bringing people from darkness to light. All holiness stems from the God who called believers into the sphere of the holy. They are to separate themselves from the evil desires of the world and live in a way that pleases God. Some scholars rightly point to Lev 18:2–4, where Israel is to differentiate itself from the evil practices of Egypt and Canaan. To be holy is to separate oneself from what is evil. The injunction to holiness embraces all of life (**“in all your conduct”**).

In verse 16, God’s people are to live holy and pleasing lives because God is holy and good. God’s people are to model their lives after God Himself. Many verses in Leviticus are similar (Lev 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:7, 26). Because of its pre-occupation with holiness the legal section Lev. 17–26 has been designated the Holiness Code. The Old Testament takes it for granted that God imparts holiness to whatever objects or people He appropriates to Himself. Therefore, Jerusalem is holy (Isa 48:2); as is mount Zion and the Temple (Isa 64:10). Israel is holy because God has chosen them as His people and dwells in their midst (Lev. 17–26). For the New Testament writers the church is God’s holy people, and its members are ‘saints’, holy in virtue of being called by God. Just like their Old Testament predecessors, they are conscious of the moral challenge this holiness presents.

A Call to Fear (1:17–21)

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.

Peter continued the exposition of Leviticus 19 that he began in verse 16.

The main theme of the passage appears in the injunction to live their lives **“with fear.”** Because of the inheritance and salvation believers look forward to (vv. 1–12), they should set their hope completely on Christ’s coming (v. 13), devote themselves to holiness (v. 15), and live in fear (v. 17). The remaining verses (vv. 18–21) explain why believers should be fearful. A genuine fear of judgment hinders believers from giving in to

antinomianism, where we can live any way we want based on an abusive view of God's grace. The background to such fear can be traced to Deuteronomy (Deut 4:10; 8:6) and the wisdom tradition (Prov 1:29; 3:7; Job 28:28), where the fear of the Lord informs all of life.

In one regard, the "if" means "since" here in v. 17 (a first class condition in Greek). We do call on God as our Father because He is our Father (Matt. 6:4, 6, 9). Nevertheless He is also the Judge of all, and He judges impartially, not on the basis of externals but on the basis of reality. Since we must all stand before God for an evaluation of our works, we should live now accordingly (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10). In one sense this interpretation is correct, for Peter did not wish to introduce any doubt into his readers' minds about whether God is their Father. On the other hand, Peter intentionally wrote the sentence as a hypothesis to provoke the readers to consider whether they call upon God as their Father, truly desiring that they would answer in the affirmative. The word "Father" is used of God in the Old Testament (2 Sam 7:14; Jer 3:19; Mal 1:6; 2:10). It is likely, however, that Peter derived the term "Father" from the teaching of Jesus, where God's fatherhood is emphasized (Matt 6:1, 4, 8-9; 7:11; John 5:19-20). God's tenderness and love as Father is mingled with His judgment and the fear that should mark Christians in this world.

The motivation for living in fear is explained in the next phrase, **who judges impartially according to each one's deeds**. The one believers call Father in prayer is also the one who will judge them impartially on the last day. Judgment according to works is a persistent theme in Jewish literature (Jer 17:10; 25:14; Ezek 33:20). This theme is also common in the New Testament and regularly refers to God's assessment of people, both believers and unbelievers, at the final judgment (Matt 16:27; Rom 2:6, 11, 28-29; Rev 2:23; 20:12-13; 22:14). No conflict exists between judgment according to works and God's grace. Good works are evidence that God has truly granted re-birth (1 Pet 1:3) to a person. Each of us will give an account of his or her works, and each will receive the appropriate reward. This is a 'family judgment,' with God the Father dealing with His beloved children. The Greek word translated **judges** carries the meaning 'to judge in order to find something good.'

Verses 18-19 together form a negative/positive comparison. Peter contrasted what did not redeem believers with the means by which they were redeemed. Verses 18-21 are written to increase the believers' appreciation of their new relationship to God and their new status as Christians. Peter emphasized that believers were not **ransomed** or "redeemed" with silver and gold. The term **ransomed**, or "redeem," (*lutroō*) recalls Israel's liberation from Egypt (Deut 7:8; 9:26). The term also is applied to the liberation of individuals (Pss 25:22; 26:11), and in Isaiah the return from exile is portrayed as a second exodus (Isa 41:14; 44:22-24; 51:11; 52:3; 62:12; 63:9). In the Greco-Roman world those captured in war could be redeemed, and slaves were often "manumitted", meaning that their freedom was purchased. In this context, in which many associations with the Old Testament are evident, Peter most likely derived his imagery from the Old Testament.

The word redemption signifies liberation, and here Peter spoke of redemption "**from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers.**" The "**futile**" ways of life in the Old Testament it is often associated with the idolatry of pagans. Similarly, in the New Testament it depicts pre-Christian existence (Rom 1:21; Eph 4:17). The life of unbelievers before their conversion was futile, empty, and devoted to false gods. Such a way of life had been handed down from generation to generation. Here we have firm evidence that the readers were primarily Gentiles (4:1-4), since the Jews were at least taught they should worship the one and only God. The reference to **silver and gold** may be mentioned because of their association with idolatry (Deut 29:17; Dan 5:23). They are "**perishable**" and do not persist (1:4). They are greatly valued by human beings but end up being vain and useless (Eccl 2:1-11).

In v. 19 Peter now explains positively the means by which believers were redeemed. We learned from v. 18 that **futile ways** were not the means. Instead, believers were purchased and ransomed **with the precious blood of Christ**. Peter contrasted here the perishability of possessions with the preciousness of Christ's blood. Here we most likely see a combination of allusions both to the Passover lamb as well as to the Suffering Servant. As the death of the Passover lamb liberated the Israelites from physical bondage in Egypt, so the death of Jesus Christ frees us from the spiritual bondage of sin (Ex 12:5). It is quite possible that the Israelites viewed the blood on the door as that which ransomed them. Also, although nothing is said about the blood, Isaiah 53 teaches that the Servant will die and that His death will be a guilt offering (Isa 53:12).

In speaking of redemption Peter always emphasized our freedom from a previously sinful lifestyle to live a changed life here and now. The shedding of blood signifies death, the giving up of one's life. Blood is precious because without it no one can live (Lev 17:11). The shedding of blood indicates that Christ poured out His life to death for sinners. What Peter teaches is that the blood of Christ is the means by which believers are redeemed.

The term "**blood**" refers to the sacrificial system in the Old Testament, where blood was necessary for atonement. The Old Testament imagery continues when Christ is compared **a lamb without blemish or spot**. The requirement that sacrifices are to be "**without blemish**" (*amōmos*) is often stated in the Old Testament (LXX Ex 29:1, 38; Lev 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6, 9; Ezek 43:22). The word "without spot" (*aspilos*) is not found in the Old Testament, but it reinforces the thought that Christ was a perfect sacrifice. Peter's point was that Jesus was sinless (2:22). He was a perfect sacrifice because of His perfect life.

In v. 20 we read that the Christ "**foreknown before the foundation of the world.**" To say that the "**Christ**" is **foreknown** probably implies His preexistence. Remember that the main theme of this passage is that believers should conduct their lives in fear. They should do so because they have been ransomed with the precious blood of Christ (vv. 18–19). Now the believers are informed that this is no afterthought. God determined before history ever began ("**before the foundation of the world**"; Eph 1:4) that the Christ would appear at this particular time in history as redeemer.

Christ "**was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you.**" The "revelation" or "manifestation" of Christ refers to His incarnation. Peter emphasized that believers enjoy the blessing of living at the time when God is fulfilling His saving promises. The "**last times**" signals the last days of salvation history, which began with the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The phrase **in the last times** indicates that the last times have commenced with the coming of Christ.

Verse 21 continues by noting that believers who live in the days of the fulfillment of God's promises are "**believers in God**" ... "**through**" Christ. They have put their faith in God because of the work of Jesus Christ, whose work is featured in vv. 18–19. The God in whom they believed raised Christ "**from the dead and gave him glory.**" Christ's resurrection of the dead is the foundation of the "living hope" of believers in 1:3, just as here the hope of believers is rooted in the resurrection of Christ.

The glorification of Christ after His sufferings was noted in 1:12. The vindication and glorification of Christ after His sufferings is the paradigm for believers as well. As God's exiled people they suffer now, but their future hope is resurrection and glorification. They anticipate the day when sufferings will be no more, and they will experience eschatological salvation. Three imperatives, commands, have dominated this section of the letter:

hope (v. 13), be holy (v. 15), and live in fear (v. 17). Verse 21 reminds the believers again that the holy life to which they are called is a life in which they are trusting in God's promises.

Living as the New People of God (1:22–2:10)

The focus now shifts from the individual to the community, from the call to live a holy life to proper relationships among church members. The three subsections may be divided as follows: 1:22–25; 2:1–3; and 2:4–10. The first two paragraphs are marked by imperatives (commands) and the last one by an indicative (an affirmation). First, Peter exhorted believers to love one another (1:22), grounding this call to love on their conversion (1:22a). The Word is invincible, and this Word is identified as the gospel proclaimed to the believers (1:24–25). The second section is also introduced with an imperative. Believers, as newborn babes, should long for the undiluted milk of God's Word (2:2). The command to long for God's Word is also grounded on v. 23, on God's bringing them to new life by means of his Word. According to 2:1–3 the Word is not only the means by which new life began (1:23) but also the means by which it leads to salvation on the last day. Spiritual growth also involves putting aside attitudes and actions that would destroy love within the community (2:1). Peter expected that they would long for the message of the gospel if they had tasted the Lord's kindness (2:3), for the initial taste would give them a desire to experience more of the Lord's goodness. It seems likely that in 2:4–10 Peter returned to what God has done for believers in Christ, as in 1:3–12. This section emphasizes particularly that the churches in Asia Minor are God's chosen people, His new community in the world. Just as Jesus Christ was God's chosen one, so too those who trust in Christ are God's new temple and His chosen priests.

A Call to Love (1:22–25)

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.

The main theme of the paragraph is found here in v. 22 in the exhortation to love. The first phrase says, "**Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth.**" The phrase "**by your obedience to the truth**" probably refers to "the truth of the gospel." Often in the New Testament the gospel is designated as "the truth." The goal or purpose of their conversion is a genuine love for fellow believers. Since love is the goal of conversion, the injunction to **love one another earnestly from a pure heart** follows naturally. The characteristic of a Christian community is fervent or constant love for one another.

In v. 23 the command to love is now explained as being rooted in God's prior saving work. Christians **have been born again ... through the living and abiding word of God.** Peter's argument is that they should love one another *because* they have been born again by God. The means by which God begat his people is "**imperishable**" rather than "**perishable seed.**" The heavenly inheritance of believers is "**imperishable**" (1:4). On the other hand, believers are redeemed with Christ's precious blood, not with "**perishable**" things like silver or gold (1:18). The Word of God is the instrument, the seed, God uses to produce new birth (Matt 13:20; Luke 8:11). God's word is always **living** in the sense of life-giving or creative (Gen 1:3; Phil 2:16; Heb 4:12) and it is **abiding** since it 'abides forever' (Isa 40:6–8). Peter's theology here matches Paul's, for Paul teaches that

“**faith comes from hearing the message**” (Rom 10:17). Similarly, in Galatians 3 the reception of the Spirit is mediated through believing the preached message (Gal 3:2, 5).

In v. 24 the word “**for**” introduces the Old Testament citation (Isa 40:6–8). Here Peter uses the Isaiah passage as an explanation or restatement of v. 23, showing from the Old Testament that the Word of God endures forever. The quotation comes from Isaiah 40, where comfort is proclaimed to Israel because God will work once again and restore His people from their exile in Babylon. The “good news” for Israel (Isa 40:9) is that God fulfills His promises and that the nations of the world, which seem so strong, cannot resist His promised Word to deliver them from exile (Isa 40:6–8). Such nations are **like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass, withers, and the flower falls** when the Lord’s wind blows upon them.

The main point from the Old Testament quotation now emerges in v. 25, **the word of the Lord remains forever**. Hence, Isaiah supports Peter’s argument in v. 23 that the word of God is “**living and abiding**.” It is an **imperishable seed** according to v. 23. Isaiah 40 emphasizes that no nation, regardless of its strength, can frustrate His promises. In Isaiah the text shifts between “**Lord**” (*kyrios*) and “**God**” (*theos*), and Yahweh is clearly the subject in each case. Peter applied this text to Jesus Christ. The Word of the Lord that stands forever was preached to them. The historical Jesus did not proclaim the gospel to believers in Asia Minor, and so the Word of the Lord is here to be interpreted as the Word *about* the Lord Jesus.

Verse 25 concludes with Peter’s commentary on the Old Testament citation. The word of the Lord in Isaiah, which represents the promise that God will restore His people from exile and fulfill His promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3), is ultimately fulfilled in the gospel proclaimed (*euangelizō*) to the churches in Asia Minor. Peter’s use of the word **preached** (*euangelizō*) almost certainly comes from Isaiah since in Isa 40:9 “**the good news**” for Zion and Jerusalem is that God will come and fulfill His promises to Israel. Now with Peter the New Exodus, the return from exile, and the fulfillment of all God’s promises to Israel have become a reality through the Word of God, the good news, the gospel.

Longing for the Pure Milk (2:1–3)

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

The “**so**” in 2:1 probably relates to what has just preceded, namely, the new life that believers enjoy by God’s grace. They have been begotten, born again, by God (v. 23) by means of His Word, and therefore are exhorted to lay aside all in their lives that smother love for one another. The central command in this paragraph is the injunction to long for the “**pure spiritual milk**” (v. 2), so the phrase **put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander** should probably be seen as attendant circumstances and *not* as a command. In this way it should probably be best understood as, “while you are **putting away**”.

The word “**putting away**” is often used in the New Testament for putting off sin or that which hinders Christian growth (Rom 13:12; Eph 4:22, 25; Col 3:8; Heb 12:1; Jas 1:21). Believers need to put aside **all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander** on a daily basis. The sins listed here tear at the social structure of the church, ripping away the love that keeps them together. Peter emphasizes that no sin is to be tolerated in the community and that sin is to be rejected completely.

The central imperative in the paragraph is communicated here in v. 2. Believers are **long for the pure spiritual milk** so that they **may grow up**, resulting in their **salvation**. This longing for milk is compared to the craving for milk of **"newborn infants."** Peter's point is not that all the believers in Asia Minor were new converts, but that all believers should be like infants in the sense that they should **"long for"** the **"pure spiritual milk."** The "milk" here is not elementary Christian teaching (contra 1 Cor 3:2; Heb 5:12-13), in contrast to "meat," but the spiritual food of all believers. The word **long for** or "crave" is a strong one, used of the fervent desire believers should have for God in the Old Testament (LXX Pss 41:2; 83:3). Babies long for milk that will sustain bodily growth, and similarly believers should desire milk for growth in salvation.

The word **milk** is qualified by two adjectives: **pure** and **spiritual**. The first one, **pure** or "without deceit" obviously echoes **"deceit"** in 2:1. Therefore, having renounced **deceit**, it is fitting that their drink should be **pure**, free from deceit. The Greek word *logikos* is usually translated and understood by many to mean **"spiritual."** However, the word does not actually mean **"spiritual"**. Peter probably opted for the term to clarify that the milk he had in view was the Word of God. The **"word"** (*logos*) was the means by which God begot believers. God's **"word"** (*rhēma*) abides forever, and that very Word is identified as the gospel (1:25). Hence, Peter most likely used *logikos* to define milk here, so that the readers would understand that the milk by which they grow is nothing other than the Word of God. The means by which God sanctifies believers is through the mind, through the continued proclamation of the Word. Spiritual growth is not primarily mystical or emotional, but rational in the sense that it is informed and sustained by God's Word.

The purpose **"so that"** (*hina*) for desiring the milk of the word is now conveyed. By means of the Word believers grow. Such growth **"results in" salvation**. Peter's point is that spiritual growth is necessary for eschatological salvation. The evidence that one has been born again by the Father through the Word is that believers *continue to long* for that Word and become increasingly mature.

Believers are to long for the milk of God's Word since it is essential to obtain salvation on the last day. This longing in v. 3 is fitting **"if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good."** Peter did not write **"if"** to sow doubts in the minds of the readers, but neither should the word **"if"** be confused with **"since."** Peter wanted the readers to contemplate whether they have in fact experienced the kindness of the Lord, and he was confident that the answer would be affirmative.

Here Peter alluded to Ps 34:9 in the Septuagint. The selection of this psalm is intentional, and a number of echoes of this psalm echo throughout 1 Peter. We should note the theme of the psalm. When the righteous are afflicted and suffering, they can be confident that God will deliver them from all their troubles. Peter's suffering readers could take great encouragement from the message of this psalm. Further, the psalm calls on the readers to hope in God in the midst of their troubles (33:9, 23, LXX), one of the central themes in our letter. The superscription of the psalm was also known to Peter's readers, and it informs us that David wrote the psalm when he fled from Abimelech after he feigned insanity. David praised God for delivering him from all "his sojournings". Also, both Peter and the psalmist said that those who trust and hope in the Lord, in contrast to unbelievers, will not be put to shame (1 Pet 2:6; 3:16; 4:16; Ps 33:6).

We now come to the main idea of the verse. Believers should long for the Lord if indeed they have tasted or experienced His kindness. Longing to grow spiritually comes from a taste of the goodness of the Lord, an experience of His kindness. Those who pursue God fervently have tasted His sweetness. Christian growth for Peter is not a mere call to duty or simple moralism. The desire to grow comes from an experience with the Lord's kindness, an experience that leaves believers desiring more and more.

The Living Stone and Living Stones (2:4–10)

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 honored, 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.

According to v. 4 the “**Lord**” of v. 3, who is clearly Yahweh in the Old Testament context of Psalm 34, is now Jesus Christ. The use of the Old Testament is significant Christologically since it demonstrates that what is true of Yahweh is also true of Jesus the Christ. The first Old Testament allusion emerges when Jesus is identified as the “**living Stone**.” That Jesus is the stone is confirmed by the Old Testament references that follow in vv. 6–8. Jesus is doubtless called the “**living**” Stone because of His resurrection. Peter probably drew this theme from Ps 118:22, where the stone stands in the original for Israel, harassed by the world-powers and thrown away as useless, but given honor by God by becoming the cornerstone. In Acts 4:11 Peter appealed to this same verse to refer to Christ’s death and resurrection/exaltation. The religious leaders despised Jesus by crucifying Him. But God made Him the chief **cornerstone** by raising Him. Such a reading of Ps 118:22 comes from Jesus Himself in the parable of the tenants (Matt 21:33–46). The tenants kill the son to possess the inheritance, which is a clear reference to the crucifixion of Christ, fulfilling the prophecy that the builders would reject the cornerstone (Matt 21:42). Matthew implied, however, that the killing of Jesus is not the last word, for He becomes the **cornerstone**, which almost certainly points to His resurrection.

Peter continues to allude to Psalm 118, for as the cornerstone of the building was rejected by the builders, so also Jesus was rejected by mankind. In Acts 4:10–11, where Peter also cited Psalm 118, it appears that the rejection of Jesus as the cornerstone was fulfilled in His death, whereas His vindication and exaltation by God occurred at the resurrection. The same emphasis on Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection of Christ is likely present here in our passage as well.

That God has set His seal of approval on Jesus, alludes to an excerpt from Isa 28:16, which Peter will cite in full in 6 and which runs in the LXX: ‘**See, I shall lay for the foundations of Zion a precious, chosen stone, an honored corner-stone for her foundations; and he who has faith in it [him] shall not be put to shame**’. The prophet is addressing the rulers of Jerusalem who, threatened with invasion by Assyria, have ignored his advice and have made an alliance with Egypt. Using metaphors drawn from the Temple, Isaiah insists that Israel’s true refuge lies, not in political pacts or military power, but in confidence in God, who is their sure foundation. Christians read the passage as a prediction of Christ, and found especial encouragement in the promise made explicit in the LXX that faith in Him would not be disappointed.

While **chosen** and **honored** stress God’s vindication of Christ, both words leave an impression that, humiliated and distressed though the believers are, they will enjoy a similar victory. In the meantime, Peter now in v. 5 draws the comparison between Christ as the “**living Stone**” and believers as “**living stones**.” Believers are

“**living stones**” because of their faith in the resurrected Christ. Jesus’ resurrection life becomes theirs, even while they live in this hostile world. They await their resurrection at the end of the age, but even now because they have come to Christ (v. 4) they have new life. Nowhere else in the New Testament are believers called living stones, though elsewhere they are described as God’s temple or house (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Eph 2:19–22; Heb 3:6). The **house** is “**spiritual**” (*pneumatikos*) because it is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Peter clearly here identified the church as God’s new temple. The church is a **spiritual house**, because the Spirit both brings it into existence and permeates its life, and also points the contrast with the material, man-made temple.

The phrase “**spiritual house**” probably is appositional, and so most likely the point of the text is not that believers “**are being built up as a spiritual house**” but that they as **living stones**, as a **spiritual house**, are **being built up**. The purpose of such building is that they function as a “**holy priesthood**.” The divine passive of the verb **being built up** signifies that God is the one building the church (Matt 16:18) in order for it to be a “**holy priesthood**.”

The purpose of the **holy priesthood** is “**to offer spiritual sacrifices**”. The word “**offer**” is regularly used to denote the offering of sacrifices in the Old Testament. “**Spiritual sacrifices**” (*pneumatikas thysias*) are required, meaning that they are sacrifices offered by virtue of the work of the Holy Spirit. By this Peter may also have been implying that animal sacrifices are no longer **acceptable to God**.

Many Old Testament writers had already hinted at the truth that what pleases God is not external sacrifice in itself, but rather such things as prayer and praise, thankfulness, a broken and contrite heart, and a life of justice and compassion (Pss 51:16–19; 69:30; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6–8). With Christ’s supreme sacrifice all material sacrifices, even the divinely ordained ones of the Law, had been finally abrogated. The true worship of Christians, according to Paul (Rom 12:1; Eph 5:2; Phil 4:18), is the surrender of themselves, individually and corporately, **to God through Jesus Christ** in loving service to one another and faith. According to Heb 13:15, the sacrifice they continually offer consists of praise and thanksgiving, charity and mutual sharing. Christ is the mediator through whom our approach to God is made possible.

In v. 6, the Old Testament citations appear to provide an explanation or restatement of the previous verses. The text cited is from Isa 28:16. As we have already seen, in context Isaiah 28 is a message of judgment on Ephraim for their disobedience and unbelief. What Isaiah emphasized throughout the book comes to a climax here. Those who trust in the Lord will escape judgment. Isaiah encouraged the people not to put their trust in foreign alliances or military strength (Isaiah 30–31), but only the Lord. Those who do not trust in Him will perish, but those who put their faith in Him will triumph.

Peter argues that what is true of Christ is also true of the community. Just as Christ is the “**living Stone**,” so also the church is comprised of “**living stones**.” The text was understood Messianically by the Isaiah Targum, “**Behold, I will appoint in Zion a king, a strong king, powerful and terrible**.” Isa 28:16 was viewed by a number of sources as having an eschatological fulfillment and Peter and Paul both see it as fulfilled in Christ. Here in Peter, God has “**chosen**” Christ as a stone in Zion. Jesus is God’s **chosen and honored** cornerstone. That is, the entire building, the church, takes its shape from Him. God made Him the **cornerstone** of the building when He raised Him from the dead. So the appointment in view here focuses on Christ’s resurrection, which revealed that He was **chosen** and honored by God.

Peter finishes this sentence by stating that the one who believes in Christ “**will never be put to shame**.” Just as Christ is the chosen and honored one of God and was so honored at His resurrection, so too believers will be

vindicated on the last day. What is true of the Christ is also true of His people. Believers will not experience the embarrassment of judgment but the glory of approval.

Peter now draws an inference from v. 6 for believers, **so the honor is for you who believe**. By “**honor**” Peter meant final vindication on the day of judgment. Just as Christ was “**honored**” by the Father (vv. 4, 6) at the resurrection, so those who trust in Him will be honored on the last day, even though presently they are suffering.

Those who disbelieve will face “**shame**” (v. 6) and dishonor (v. 7a) on the last day. The reason for this is that the stone that was disregarded by the builders has become the chief cornerstone of the building. The establishment of the cornerstone likely refers to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:11). He has been vindicated by God and is the stone from which the building made of God’s people takes shape. Peter cited Ps 118:22 at this point, and this psalm is cited often in the New Testament (Matt 21:42; Acts 4:11).

The psalm in its original context describes the return of the king to the temple to give thanks after His victory over His enemies. The stone rejected in the historical context of the psalm was the Davidic king, and the builders were the foreign nations that rejected the rule of the anointed king of Israel. The enemies of Israel assured their own destruction, for the Davidic king was the stone by which Yahweh would carry out His plan in the world. Hence, the king cuts off God’s enemies with confidence (Ps 118:10–14).

Both Jesus and Peter (Matt 21:42; Acts 4:11) applied the psalm in an interesting way. The builders who reject the anointed king are not foreigners but the religious leaders of Israel. The religious leaders believe they are building God’s building, but they have rejected the cornerstone for the structure. By doing so they are behaving like the pagan nations of David’s day and have assured their own judgment, for God has established Jesus as the cornerstone by virtue of His resurrection and hence vindicated Him. God has vindicated and honored Jesus (vv. 4, 6), even though people have rejected Him (vv. 4, 7). Those who disbelieve in Him will face judgment.

Verse 8 continues the thought from v. 7. Those who disbelieve stumble over the stone, who is Christ. They stumble over Christ because they refuse to believe in Him and obey Him. People who stumble and disobey are responsible for their refusal to trust in Christ, and yet God has appointed, without Himself being morally responsible for the sin of unbelievers, that they will both disobey and stumble.

The stone that sits at the head of the corner is one over which the disbelieving stumble and fall. Peter alluded to Isa 8:14 here. In the context of Isaiah 8, Israel and Judah are called upon to fear and trust the Lord rather than fear other nations. Peter likely found it to be relevant to his readers since the churches in Asia Minor were tempted to fear those who mistreated and persecuted them.

Peter then explained why some stumble and fall over the cornerstone. They fall “**because they disobey the word**.” The “**word**” here is the gospel. The word “**disobeying**” is causal, explaining why they stumble. Here “**disobeying**” is complementary to their “**disbelieving**” in v. 7. The two cannot be separated, since all disobedience flows from a failure to trust God. Their stumbling over the cornerstone is not accidental. In this instance humans stumble because of rebellion, because they do not want to submit to God’s lordship.

Peter added an interesting comment to conclude his comments about the disobedient, “**as they were destined to do**.” The verb **destined** often refers to what God has appointed to occur (Acts 1:7; 1 Cor 12:18, 28;

1 Thess 5:9). Some scholars argue that Peter merely meant that God has appointed that those who disobey the message of the gospel would stumble. However, God has not only appointed that those who disobey the word would stumble and fall. He has also determined that they would disbelieve and stumble. Although many New Testament believers have difficulty with this, the idea that catastrophe also comes from God is often taught in the Old Testament. **“When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?”** (Amos 3:6). **“I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things”** (Isa 45:7). The worldview of the Scriptures is that God is sovereignly in control of all things. Even the cruelest and most vicious act in history, the execution of Jesus Christ, was predestined by God (Acts 2:23; 4:27–28).

The Scriptures never exempt human beings from responsibility, even though God ordains all things (Rom 9:14–23). Peter indicted those who crucified Christ, even though the execution was predestined by God himself (Acts 2:23). Peter indicted them because in killing Jesus they carried out their own evil desires. They were not forced into crucifying Jesus against their wills. No, in putting Him to death they did exactly what they wanted to do. Similarly, Peter criticized those who stumble over Christ the cornerstone for their unbelief and disobedience. He did not argue that their unbelief is free from any guilt because it was predestined. He had already emphasized that they chose not to obey Him and that they refused to believe in Him. Human beings are responsible for their sin, and yet God controls all events in history. The Scriptures do not resolve how these two themes fit together, so we are forced to leave them in tension and accept them by faith.

The **“but”** beginning v. 9 is most naturally understood as a contrast to what immediately precedes. God has appointed the disobedient to destruction, but on the contrary believers are a **“chosen race”**. They belong to God’s people because they have been elected, that is believers have been chosen by Him. The privilege of belonging to God’s people is conveyed by Peter with a number of Old Testament allusions.

First, Peter drew on Exod 19:6, using the exact words found there in identifying the church as a **“royal priesthood”**. In Exodus the title applies to Israel, with whom God enacts His covenant at Sinai. Israel’s priesthood was such that they were to reflect to the nations the glory of Yahweh, so that all nations would see that no god rivals the Lord (Isa 61:6). Unfortunately, Israel mainly failed in this endeavor as the Assyrian (722 BC) and Babylonian (586 BC) conquests and deportations demonstrate. The reason for the exile is that Israel failed to keep God’s law. Now God’s kingdom of priests consists of the church of Jesus Christ (Rev 1:6). It too is to mediate God’s blessings to the nations, as it proclaims the gospel.

Second, Peter reproduced the exact words of Exod 19:6 in identifying the church as a **“holy nation”** (Exod 23:22, LXX). The church of Jesus is a people now set apart for the Lord, enjoying His special presence and favor. Again the privileges belonging to Israel now belong to the church of Jesus Christ. Peter does not present the church as a new Israel replacing ethnic Israel in God’s program. Instead, Old Testament Israel was a pattern of the church’s relationship with God as His chosen people. In this way, the church does not replace Israel, but it does fulfill the promises made to Israel. Hence, all those Jews and Gentiles who belong to the true Israel are now part of the new people of God.

The purpose of the people of God is now explained. God has chosen them to be His people, established them as a royal priesthood, and appointed them as a holy nation to be His special possession, so that they **“may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”** Peter again probably alluded to Isa 43:21, for there we are told that God formed Israel for Himself so that **“they would recount my praises.”** As God formed Israel to praise him, now the church has been established to praise his

wonders. God's ultimate purpose in everything He does is to bring Him praise (Isa 43:7) and glory. The declaration of God's praises includes both worship and evangelism, spreading the good news of God's saving wonders to all peoples.

Believers proclaim God's praises for calling them "**out of darkness into his marvelous light.**" This is a description of their conversion and uses the language found in Genesis 1, where God speaks the word and light becomes a reality (Gen 1:3–5), pushing back the darkness. Conversion is often depicted in the New Testament as a transfer from darkness to light (Eph 5:8; 1 Thess 5:4, 5, 8).

Verse 10 returns to the status of the believers as God's people, by Peter alluding to the words of Hos 2:23. In Hosea, Israel is rejected as God's people because of their sin, but God pledges to have mercy on them and form them again as His people. Such has been the experience of the church of Jesus Christ. They did not deserve inclusion into God's people, but they have now received his mercy and rejoice at their inclusion.

Bringing Glory to God in a Hostile World (2:11-4:11)

The focus now shifts from the relationship believers have with one another (1:13–2:10) to their relationship with the unbelieving world that is suspicious of and hostile to believers. An inclusio (or book-end structure) functions as the boundary for 2:11–4:11 since the text begins (2:12) and ends with the theme of God's glory (4:11).

The theme for 2:11–4:11 is expounded in 2:11–12. Believers should live as exiles and sojourners in this world so that unbelievers will observe their godly lives and glorify God by coming to faith in Christ. According to the first major subsection believers please God by living in a way that reveals the gospel in the social order (2:13–3:12). Christians demonstrate a godly lifestyle by submitting to those in authority (2:13, 17; 3:1). Believers should submit to governing authorities (2:13–17), slaves should submit to masters (2:18–25), and wives should submit to husbands (3:1–6). The goal is to live in such a way that unbelievers will glorify God and repent and believe. Christ's suffering is the supreme example to imitate (2:21–25), for His own suffering was the means by which human beings returned to God. Another theme is that a godly life is necessary to receive an eternal reward. In the summary (3:8–12) Peter called on believers to live in a way that pleases God so that they will obtain life on the last day.

The next major subsection is found in 3:13–4:11. Those who endure suffering will receive an eschatological (end-time) blessing from God. First Peter 3:8–12 functions as a transition from the previous subsection. In this new section Peter emphasized that believers are blessed by God if they suffer for doing what is right (3:13–17). The suffering of believers leads to the topic of Christ's suffering. The suffering of Christ was the pathway to glory and the means by which He triumphed over evil powers (3:18–22). Peter implied that the same pattern is true in the life of believers in that their suffering is the preface to eschatological (end-time) glory. But in the interval believers must prepare to suffer and to make a clean break with sin (4:1–6). Believers will be rewarded in the last day if they do so. Finally, they are to live daily in light of the eschaton (4:7–11), by pursuing a life devoted to prayer, alertness, and ministering to others.

The Christian Life as a Battle and Witness (2:11–12)

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.

Peter explained what Christian conduct should be negatively (v. 11) and positively (v. 12). Then he expounded more specifically what it should be positively in 2:13—4:11.

The emphasis now shifts to the relationship believers have with the world. Hence, they are identified as “**sojourners and exiles**” (*paroikous kai parepidēmous*). These terms recall Abraham’s status as a sojourner, for he describes himself as an “**alien and stranger**” (*paroikos kai parepidēmos*) in Gen 23:4 (LXX). Abraham had no property on which to bury his wife. Similarly, Peter’s readers had no permanent home in this world. The two words also appear in Ps 38:13 (LXX). There the psalmist emphasized the shortness of life, a theme that fits well with Peter’s themes.

Peter now exhorts believers (*parakalō*) to live a certain way as **sojourners and exiles**. Exhortations to godly living are often found in the New Testament with the verb “**I urge**” (Rom 12:1; Eph 4:1; Phil 4:2). These exhortations are always grounded in the redemptive work of Christ already accomplished for believers. They are exhorted “**to abstain from the passions of the flesh.**” The meaning here appears to be close to the Pauline understanding of the term “**flesh,**” in which these are the natural desires that human beings have apart from the work of the Spirit. In 1 Peter the “**flesh**” (*sarx*) represents the weakness of human beings in this age. This verse informs us that those who have the Spirit are not exempt from fleshly desires. The depth of the struggle in which believers are engaged is explained by the words “**which war against your soul.**” The “**soul**” here does not refer to the immaterial part of human beings, but rather to the whole person, showing that sinful desires, if they are allowed to triumph, ultimately destroy human beings.

Verse 12 is connected to v. 11 by a phrase that is translated as an imperative (command), “**Keep your conduct.**” This phrase may be better understood as instrumental (“**by keeping your conduct good among the Gentiles.**” Even though unbelievers are inclined to revile Christians as those who do evil, they will be constrained by the godly lifestyle of believers. Since believers did not honor the typical gods of the community, they were naturally viewed as subversive and evil in that social context.

Peter’s hope is that unbelievers will glorify God because they see “**your good deeds.**” Peter most likely alluded to the words of Jesus recorded in Matt 5:16, “**Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.**” Both Peter and Matthew drew a connection between “seeing” good deeds and the corresponding praise that is given to God as a result. But what did Peter mean by “**glorify God on the day of visitation**”? The “**day of visitation**” could refer to God’s judgment or His salvation. Most likely here, the “**day of visitation**” is a reference to the day God will visit unbelievers and judge them (the great white throne judgment). This seems more likely than that it is the day when God will visit His people. For the original readers this would probably have applied to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Submit to the Government (2:13–17)

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.

The central theme of this section is found in the first word, “**subject**”. The idea that believers should be subject to governing authorities is a standard part of New Testament teaching (Rom 13:1, 5). Peter gave a command that represents a general truth in that he specified what Christians should do in *most* situations when confronting governing authorities. Believers should be inclined to obey and submit to rulers. However, the authority of rulers is not absolute. They do not infringe upon God’s lordship, and hence they should be disobeyed if they command Christians to violate God’s will.

The injunction to **be subject** is not to “**to every human institution**”, but “**to every human creature**”. The word “creature” refers to human beings or creation. Peter immediately defined “**every human institution**” with the phrases “**whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors**” (vv. 13–14). When Peter gave the exhortation, he reflected only upon governing authorities, not every single person. But why call them “human creatures”? We must remember that the emperor cult was popular in Asia Minor, and Christians doubtless felt social pressure to participate in emperor worship. Peter reminded his readers that these rulers are merely creatures, created by God and existing under His lordship.

Peter reminded his readers in v. 14 that government has a valid and necessary God-appointed purpose, **to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good**. Doing right here means that Christians behave as good citizens, and that they do what is honorable in the world’s eyes. Peter most likely did not intend to say that rulers always fulfill such a purpose. He was quite aware from the Old Testament that rulers may resist God and His will (Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar). The persecution of believers indicates that rulers may be involved unjustly in oppressing believers. Also, Peter could hardly forget that Christ was unjustly condemned under Pontius Pilate or that James was put to death by Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:2). Even the most oppressive governments, however, do hold evil in check to some extent, preventing society from collapsing into complete anarchy.

Peter now explains in v. 15 why believers should submit, arguing that they should do so “**for this is the will of God**.” By submitting to government believers **should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people**. Unbelievers are ignorant because they do not fear the Lord and walk in His ways (Prov 1:7). Such people will be silenced by the good deeds of Christians.

In v. 16 Peter was not merely concerned about the outward actions of believers but also the motivations that inform their submission. Three phrases explain the standpoint from which Christians should operate in submitting themselves to governing authorities. In each case the implied verb is “**be subject**” from v. 13, and not “live” as in the ESV. First, believers are to submit “**as people who are free**”. Believers have been ransomed by Christ’s blood (1:18–19) and are no longer subject to the futility of this world. Second, as free people they are not to use their **freedom as a cover-up for evil**. Genuine freedom liberates believers to do what is good. Third, believers should submit “**as servants [doulos] of God**.” The word “servants” should usually, if not always, be translated “**slaves**.” Believers do not enjoy unrestricted freedom. Their freedom is exercised under God’s authority. Christians are free in the sense of being under no obligations to God to gain His acceptance. He has accepted us because of what Jesus Christ did for us. Also we are free from the dominion of sin and Satan. We are no longer his slaves. We should not use this freedom to sin but to refrain from sinning.

Peter then in v. 17 gathers the Christian's social obligations together in a single, four-fold injunction. **Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.** We should **honor everyone**, but we should **love** fellow believers. God deserves **fear** whereas the emperor is worthy of **honor**. Respect is not the same as honor. We may not respect someone, but we can and should still honor him or her. Similarly we may not be able to respect certain government officials because of their personal behavior or beliefs, but we can still honor them because they occupy an office that places them in a position of authority over us. We are to honor them because they occupy the office, and not just the office.

Slaves, Submit to Masters (2:18–25)

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

Peter probably assigns priority, and so much space, to slaves because a large proportion of his readers belonged to this class. It was the burning conviction of these early Christians that, through their fellowship with Christ, they had entered into a relationship of brotherhood with one another in which ordinary social distinctions had lost all meaning (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; Phm. 8–18). Slavery might be inherently wrong, but the New Testament writers were not so much concerned with social ethics as with the ethics and worldview of the redeemed community.

Peter began by exhorting believers to submit to the government (2:13–17). Now he turns to the responsibility of slaves. People became slaves by being captured in wars, kidnapped, or born into a slave household. Those facing economic hardships might choose to sell themselves into slavery in order to survive. Slaves in the Greco-Roman world were under the control of their masters, and had no independent existence. They could suffer brutal abuse at the hands of their owners, and children born in slavery belonged to masters rather than the parents. Slaves had no legal rights, and masters could beat them, brand them, and abuse them physically and sexually. Slaves could purchase their freedom in the Greco-Roman world with the help of their masters, a procedure called manumission. However, most slaves had no hope of being manumitted.

Just as citizens are to submit to the government, so slaves are commanded to submit to their masters. New Testament writers were not social revolutionaries. They did not believe that overthrowing social structures would transform society. Their concern was the relationship of individuals to God, and they focused on the sin and rebellion of individuals. New Testament writers therefore concentrated instead on the godly response of believers to mistreatment. However, it must be noted that the New Testament nowhere commends slavery as a social structure. It nowhere roots it in the created order, as if slavery is an institution ordained by God.

Here in v. 18 slaves are exhorted **be subject** themselves to their masters. The submission is to be carried out **“with all respect.”** The original Greek literally says “with all fear.” In every instance in 1 Peter fear is directed

toward God, not human beings (1:17; 3:2, 6, 14, 16). The reason slaves are to submit to masters is because of their relationship with God. Hence, masters are not to exert absolute authority over slaves. If they commanded slaves to violate God's will, then slaves are obligated to disobey, even if they suffer because of their disobedience. Peter applied the injunction to submit to both **the good and gentle** masters and masters who are "**unjust**" (*skoliois*).

In v. 18 slaves are called on to submit, and now in v. 19 Peter explains why ("**for**") such submission should be practiced. The reason believers should submit is that such obedience is "**a gracious thing**." It is "grace" (*charis*) if they endure pain while suffering unfairly. That such suffering comes because of their Christian faith is clear from the phrase "**mindful of God**." Slaves are commended, then, if they suffer pain because of their relationship with God, a relationship that causes them occasionally to deviate from what masters desire. When Peter said it is "**a gracious thing**" for someone to endure suffering because of their relationship with God, his point was that those who suffer in such a way will receive a reward from God and that the reward is their future salvation (*glorification*).

Verse 20 elaborates on v. 19, explaining in what circumstances believers will be rewarded and in which circumstances they will not. Peter began with the instance in which believers endure pain, but they do so "**when you sin**." In such cases they will receive no reward from God since they are simply receiving what they deserve. On the other hand, if they endure suffering as a consequence of "**doing good**" then one will receive a reward ("**grace**") from God.

What Peter said here was that believers were called to experience their final reward (vv. 19–20) through enduring suffering. Why are believers called to suffer in order to receive their final reward? The answer given in v. 21 is that this was also the way appointed for Jesus, the Messiah, **because Christ also suffered for you**. Believers are to follow His pattern and endure suffering in this present age. Christ's suffering functions as an example for this purpose (*hina*), so that believers would "**follow in his steps**." As Christ's disciples, believers are to suffer as He did, enduring every pain and insult received because of their allegiance to the Master.

Peter now in v. 22 begins to elaborate on Jesus' suffering, depending primarily on Isaiah 53. His selection of Isaiah 53 is no accident since the focus in Isa 52:13–53:12 is the suffering of the Servant of the Lord. Peter's main purpose was to commend Jesus as an example. If Jesus as the servant of the Lord did not sin or use guile, despite suffering intensely as the Righteous One, then believers should follow His example and refrain from sinning or using deceit when they are mistreated as Christ's disciples.

Verse 23 emphasizes that the sinlessness of Jesus was not easily attained. **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**. While in no sense a quotation, the first two clauses seem inspired by the description of the Servant in Isa 53:7 ('**In spite of being afflicted, he does not open his mouth ... like a lamb dumb before his shearer, he does not open his mouth**'), the detail being modified by recollection of the treatment of Jesus. Confident though Jesus was of His righteousness, He preferred to leave its vindication to God rather than take action Himself against His enemies. Slaves driven to despair by misunderstanding and cruelty should do likewise in the knowledge that God **judges justly**.

Verse 24 now continues, **who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree** reproduces, with appropriate modifications, Isa 53:12, which states that the Servant '**bore the sins of many**'. The word translated tree is an archaic reference of the cross, and is used in speeches in Acts (5:30; 10:39; 13:29) and in Gal. 3:13 (quoting

Deut 21:23). Jesus' death is the means by which sins are forgiven. Often the word "**bore**" is used of "offering" sacrifices (Heb 7:27; 13:15; James 2:21). However, the cross is not an altar to which Jesus carried up our sins. It is also unclear whether the image of the scapegoat who was released in the wilderness is in mind (Lev 16). In this instance the verb must mean "**bore**" rather than "offered". The text does not say that "God offered Jesus" but that "**Jesus bore our sins.**" The idea that Jesus was cursed for the salvation of his people is probably implicit. Since Christ died for the sins of the people, it is fair to deduce that His death was substitutionary. His sufferings and death were vicarious. As our representative He endured the penalties which our sins deserved.

The purpose of Christ's death (*hina*) was not merely to provide forgiveness but to empower His people to **die to sin and live to righteousness**. Living to righteousness becomes a reality by dying "**to sins.**" Here righteousness refers to the high standard of moral behavior expected of Christians.

The verse concludes with another allusion to Isaiah 53, here to v. 5, **By his wounds you have been healed**. Was Peter referring to forgiveness of sins here or physical healing? Even though Isa 53:5 is used in Matt 8:17 in reference to Jesus' healing ministry, we can be quite certain that forgiveness of sins is the subject here. Nothing else in the context points to physical healing. The first part of v. 24, which refers to Jesus' bearing our sins, clearly points to forgiveness, and the content of v. 25 also implies forgiveness when it speaks of those who have returned to their shepherd and overseer.

The "**for**" (*gar*) connecting vv. 24–25 indicates that the healing in v. 24 is from the punishment deserved for wandering in v. 25, demonstrating that the healing involves forgiveness of sins. The reference to **straying like sheep** goes back to Isa 53:6. The combination of "**return**" and "**heal**" is another piece of evidence that the healing in view involves the forgiveness received at conversion. Believers are no longer lost sheep, but "**have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**" All those who are now believers were once condemned before God. Only Christ lived a sinless life, and He atoned for sins by His substitutionary death. With the words "**Shepherd and Overseer,**" Peter reminded his readers that their ruler is not the emperor or slave owners but Christ. Only Christ is called a shepherd in the New Testament.

Wives, Submit to Husbands (3:1–6)

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.

Having explained before how Christians should conduct themselves in the world, Peter next gave directions about how Christian wives and husbands should behave. He did this to help his readers understand appropriate conduct in family life during times of suffering as well as at other times.

The address is not to women in general but to wives as the words "**your own husbands**" demonstrate. Wives are exhorted to **be subject** to their husbands, just as citizens should submit to ruling authorities (2:13) and slaves to their masters (2:18). Voluntary submission is in view here, and husbands do not have the responsibility or authority to ensure that wives submit to them.

Peter's words are addressed in particular to wives with unbelieving husbands, "**even if some do not obey the word**". Still, all wives are addressed, not only those with disobedient husbands. The emphasis here is on the rebellion of husbands who refuse to adhere to the gospel. Just as slaves are to submit to morally bankrupt masters (2:18), so Christian wives are called on to submit to unbelieving husbands, and their primary objective is to win their husbands to the Christian faith.

Peter emphasized that wives are coheirs with their husbands of eternal life (3:7), implying the fundamental equality of men and women. The equality of men and women is also proclaimed in Paul's affirmation in Gal 3:28. The New Testament was countercultural in promoting the equality of women. Indeed, Jesus' treatment of women was revolutionary in that He treated them with dignity and respect, and hence His stance toward women was paradigmatic for the early church.

Some argue that such submission of wives to their husbands represents an accommodation to ancient culture for the purpose of evangelism. Such a reading of the text is certainly possible, and it might even be preferable if the only text we had on this matter were in 1 Peter. However, when we read the Scriptures as a whole, it is doubtful whether the accommodation view is correct. It is clear from Eph 5:22–33 that submission of wives to husbands is grounded in theology, namely, in Christ's relationship with the church. It is not an accommodation to culture. The submission of wives to husbands mirrors the church's submission to Christ, and therefore it should be accepted as a norm that transcends the culture of the first century, making it still applicable today. A different function does not suggest that wives are lesser beings. Those who argue that a different function implies inequality betray a secular worldview that identifies worth with status and the exercise of power and authority.

Verse 2 elaborates on what is involved in bringing unbelieving husbands to faith. Wives should not focus on speaking the gospel to their husbands in attempting to persuade them to believe. Husbands are more likely to be impressed with the Christian faith "**when they see your respectful and pure conduct**". Peter commended "seeing" rather than "talking" as the means by which wives should influence their husbands. Peter was not forbidding speaking to unsaved husbands about the Lord or sharing Scripture verses if the husband would be receptive to those. His point was simply that a godly wife's conduct is going to be more influential than anything she may say.

It was common in the Greco-Roman world to admonish women to dress modestly instead of ostentatiously or seductively. Peter in v. 3 did not prohibit women from wearing their hair nicely or from wearing any jewelry at all. However, he did prohibit them from spending an excessive amount of money on their outward adornment or from wearing clothing that is seductive.

Peter continues in v. 4, the adornment God desires is not external but internal. Wives should not focus on hairstyle, jewelry, and clothing but on who they are in relationship to God, so he says, "**let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart**". What matters to God is not what people look like on the outside but their godly character. An echo of 1 Sam 16:7 may be found here, "**The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.**" Women should strive for "**a gentle and quiet spirit**" since these qualities are "**incorruptible**", whereas clothing, jewelry, and braided hair are transitory and will fade away. Gentleness and a quiet spirit evidence the kind of godly behavior that will attract husbands to the faith, and they contrast with a verbal witness, which unbelieving husbands tend to view as irritating.

Verses 5–6 provide an example from holy women of the past to encourage the women of Peter’s churches to submit to their husbands with a gentle and quiet spirit. These women are called “**holy**” because they lived in a way that was pleasing to God. The reference to Sarah suggests that the women in view were Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, just as the patriarchs were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The most important comment in the verse is that these women “**hoped in God.**” These women submitted to their husbands because they were confident that God would reward all those who put their trust in Him.

In v. 6 Sarah, the wife of Abraham, is introduced as an example for the women of Peter’s day. These holy women “**submitted**” to their husbands “**as**” Sarah “**obeyed**” Abraham. The comparison demonstrates that the word “submit” includes the idea of obedience. The example of Sarah’s obedience cited is when she called Abraham “master” or **lord** (*kyrios*). What is interesting is that the text alluded to is Gen 18:12, and it reflects an off-hand comment by Sarah to the idea that she would become pregnant by Abraham. She still referred to him with respect and dignity instead of merely calling him an old man. We see from this that even in casual situations Sarah respected Abraham’s leadership. The wives in Peter’s community have become Sarah’s daughters if they imitate her godly behavior and **do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.**

Husbands, Live Knowledgeably with Your Wives (3:7)

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

Only one verse is addressed to husbands, presumably because Peter focused on those who were liable to experience oppression from authorities rather than those who actually exercised authority. The word “**likewise**” does not suggest that husbands are to submit to wives, as people submit to rulers (2:13), slaves to masters (2:18), and wives to husbands (3:1). The New Testament nowhere counsels husbands to submit to wives, and such an idea is not implied here. Instead husbands are to “**live with your wives in an understanding way.**”

Husbands, then, should live together with wives informed by the knowledge of God’s will, of what he demands them to do. The wife is described here as the “**weaker vessel**”, meaning only that women are weaker than men in terms of sheer strength. This is not saying that women are inferior to or less intelligent, or less spiritual. A husband who lives according to God’s requirement shows “**honor**” for his wife (and by extension to all women). The reason he does so is that women are “**heirs with you of the grace of life,**” showing that women are fundamentally equal with men.

Husbands who ignore such a command will find that their prayers are hindered, which means that God will refuse to answer their prayers. God does not bless with His favor those who are in positions of authority and abuse those who are under them by mistreating them. The husband who does not treat his wife with honor will not get answers to his prayers the way he could if he did treat her with honor. Therefore, disobedience to the will of God regarding how a man treats his wife hinders the husband's fellowship with God.

Live a Godly Life (3:8–12)

8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you

may obtain a blessing. 10 For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; 11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

The conclusion to all of 2:11–3:7 is now drawn in these verses. Peter concluded this section of instructions concerning respect for others with a discussion of the importance of loving our enemies.

The conclusion to all of 2:11–3:7 here in v. 8 is introduced with the word “**finally**” (*telos*). Now the whole community is addressed as “**all of you**”. It seems that Peter addressed relationships within the church in v. 8 and relationships with unbelievers in v. 9, though certainty on this matter is impossible.

The proper attitudes of Christians towards one another are revealed five adjectives which demonstrate the different ethical traditions. First, they are to all **have unity of mind**. Paul uses almost identical language when exhorting the believers to ‘**be like-minded**’ (Rom 15:5; Phil 2:2). Harmony was for obvious reasons prized in the primitive Church (Acts 4:32; 1 Cor 1:10), especially when the environment was hostile. Then they are to be full of **sympathy**. This probably denotes not active compassion for the distressed, but a readiness to enter into and share the feelings of others.

The next three attitudes represent attitudes which in their richness stem from the gospel revelation. The writer is not thinking of **brotherly love** in general, but of the special love which should knit believers in Christ together. Believers are also to have a **tender heart** towards those who are experiencing pain. In Eph 4:32 such compassion is rooted in the mercy experienced in the forgiveness of sins. Finally, having a **humble mind** expresses a characteristic of Christ (Matt 11:29) which soon became an important part of the Christian ideal of human relationships (Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:3).

The next words in v. 9 most likely define the reaction the writer wishes his readers to make to unfriendly treatment, **Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless**. The Old Testament freely recognizes (Deut 32:35) that vengeance belongs to God, and discourages one (Lev 19:18) from exacting it oneself. Here we get persecuted Christians being invited actually to **bless** their tormentors.

The ground for the Christian's good will to others, even our enemies, is **for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing**. God blessed us when we were His enemies (Rom. 5:10). Peter's reference to inheriting a blessing reminds us of the inheritance he spoke of earlier and urged us to keep in view (1:4). However, God will give us this part of our inheritance only if we faithfully do His will (Heb. 12:17).

The blessing for insult response is one in which we react kindly when we suffer. It springs from an attitude of forgiveness. It has its focus on God and the promises of His Word. Instead of reacting in anger, we respond with forgiveness. The consequences of taking this approach are getting a blessing, having a full life, and walking with God (vv. 9-12). How does one give a blessing instead of an insult? We refrain from speaking evil, walk away from it, do positive good, and seek to make peace rather than trouble (vv. 10-12).

Peter's logic may seem strange at first. Christians are called to bless so that (*hina*) they will inherit the blessing of eternal life. Is there the danger of works righteousness here, of suggesting that the blessing will be obtained by the merit of believers? Peter had already explicitly taught that God has begotten believers to new life (1:3, 23) and that He will preserve them to the end (1:5). Now he stressed the behavior that is necessary for those

who identify themselves as Christians. Good works are often introduced as evidence that one is truly redeemed.

In vv. 10–12 Peter cited Ps 34:12–16 (LXX 33:13–17). Psalm 34 focuses on suffering and the Lord’s deliverance of those who are afflicted. Peter already had alluded to it in 2:3 and now returned to it again. The psalmist reminded his readers that the Lord rescues His own when they suffer and that He will judge the wicked. Meanwhile the righteous display their trust and hope in the Lord by renouncing evil and pursuing what is good. The language of the psalm is understood typologically in that the promise of life and good days in the land points toward and anticipates life in the world to come.

Peter was not promising good days in this world since persecution and troubles are to be expected (1:6–7; 3:13–17; 4:12–19). He was providing a motivation for believers to bless those who persecute them and to live in a way that pursues peace. They are to refrain from speaking evil and from guile so that they will obtain the eschatological reward, eternal life itself. We must insist again that such a theology is not works righteousness, nor is it contrary to the fact that salvation is by grace. Peter believed that those who have received new life from God will live transformed lives and that such lives provide evidence that they have been converted.

Believers must make a conscious effort to **“turn away from evil”**. They must devote themselves to what is **“good.”** Peace can easily be disrupted, especially when others mistreat and even abuse us. Therefore, believers must **“seek”** and **“pursue”** peace. Such peace will only be preserved if believers do not insult and revile others, and if they extend forgiveness to those who injure them.

The point of v. 12 is that the Lord’s favor is on those who live in such a **righteous** way. In other words, He will bless them with the inheritance promised in vv. 7, 9 and with the future life of the age to come noted in v. 10. The hearing of their prayers (v. 7) reveals that they are truly members of God’s people. Conversely, **the face of the Lord is against those who do evil**, which means they will not obtain an eternal inheritance but God’s punishment.

Peter previously explained how a Christian can rejoice in suffering, having set forth his or her responsibilities and conduct in times of suffering. He next emphasized the inner confidence a Christian can have when experiencing persecution for his or her faith to equip his readers to overcome their sufferings effectively.

Suffering for doing good 3:13-17

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.

Peter had just affirmed in v. 12 that the Lord will look with favor on the righteous, but He sets His face against those who practice evil. He speaks here of the final judgment, where those who live righteously will be rewarded and the wicked will be judged. **Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?** The point of the rhetorical question, then, is that no one will harm believers ultimately on the day of judgment, for God will reward them for their faithfulness.

In v. 14 Peter tells us that those who suffer for the sake of righteousness, those who endure opposition because of their zeal for what is good, are **“blessed”**. Suffering, though not a constant experience in the Christian life is always a threat and could erupt at any time. Peter was not teaching that suffering is rare, only that it is not constant. The suffering envisioned is **“for righteousness’ sake”** and hence excludes trouble that comes because of ignorance or sin (2:20; 4:15).

Since believers are blessed by God when they suffer, they should not fear what unbelievers can do to them. Fear of human beings, even of those who persecute, is forbidden. The reason fear is prohibited relates back to vv. 13–14a. Since no one can ultimately harm believers and since even their suffering is a sign of God’s blessing, then it follows that they should not fear what others can do to them.

Peter alluded in this verse and the next to Isa 8:12–13. We need to unpack this text a bit. The context of Isaiah 7–8 is important. The Southern Kingdom of Judah was threatened by the Northern Kingdoms of Israel and Aram (Syria). These two countries were threatening to remove Ahaz as king of Judah and to install a certain Tabeel as king in his place. The threat filled Ahaz and Judah with terror (Isa 7:2), but Isaiah promised that the Lord would preserve Judah, that Israel and Aram would be conquered by Assyria, and that the Lord would provide a sign to demonstrate the faithfulness of His word. Judah and Ahaz were to respond by trusting in the Lord’s promise. In Isa 8:11–15 the Lord commands his people not to fear the plot of Israel and Aram. They should only fear Yahweh, the God of Israel, and put their trust in Him alone. Those who trust in Him will find Him to be a sanctuary, but those who fail to trust Him will stumble, fall, and be broken.

Just as Judah had enemies in the days of Ahaz, so Peter’s readers faced enemies in their day. Just as Judah was tempted to fear their foes, so Peter’s readers were liable to fear what their persecutors might do to them. Hence, the words of Isaiah still spoke to Peter’s day. Believers are not to fear the suffering unbelievers might administer to them. They are to trust in the Lord, believing that He will vindicate His own!

Peter here in v. 15 stated the second implication from vv. 13–14a, continuing to allude to Isaiah 8. Negatively, believers are to refrain from fear. Positively, they are to **“in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.”** The move from Yahweh to Christ here is common in the New Testament, reflecting the conviction that Jesus the Messiah deserves the same honor as Yahweh. In addition, Peter’s change reflects the situation his readers faced, for they were persecuted because of their allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord. Peter exhorted his readers to continue to treat Christ as the holy one, fearing Him instead of those who are harming them. Christ is already Lord in any case, but believers demonstrate and acknowledge His lordship in their lives by honoring His Name (Matt 6:9).

Believers should **always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you**. What Peter emphasized is that they were to be prepared to provide a **“defense”** to those who ask about the Christian faith. The truth of the gospel is a public truth that can be defended in the public arena. Unbelievers will recognize by the way believers respond to difficulties that their **hope** is in God rather than in pleasant earthly circumstances. Here the hope that animates believers will become so evident that unbelievers will ask for an explanation. Those who fear God and live in humility will treat their opponents **with gentleness and respect**. Peter probably had in view **gentleness** toward other people and reverence before God.

Verse 15 blends right into v. 16. Peter specified what is involved when believers defend their faith. When Peter spoke of a “**good conscience**” he referred to the relationship of believers to God. They live in God’s presence in all they do, and hence they must not resort to revenge, anger, or sin when they are called upon to defend their hope. The reason believers live in fear and humility before God and maintain a good conscience is **so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame**. Some unbelievers refuse to acknowledge the goodness of the lives of believers. On the last day, however, they will be put to shame by God himself and will be compelled to acknowledge that believers lived righteously.

Even Christians may be apt to explain all suffering as an indication of their righteousness, when some of it may be deserved and come to them because of their sins. Verse 17 explains that the opposition Christians receive must be for good behavior, not their shortcomings. The suffering each believer endures represents God’s will for them. Peter did not deny the reality of Satan and his part in the persecution of the church (5:8), nor did he exempt from responsibility human beings who persecute the church (2:12; 3:16). Nevertheless, ultimately no one can touch God’s children apart from His permission. God’s intentions and motives in allowing suffering are remarkably different from Satan’s, and hence God remains unalterably good in the process, while Satan is irremediably evil.

Christ’s Suffering as the Pathway to Exaltation (3:18–22)

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.

In vv. 13–17 believers are to be full of confidence and refrain from fear because of the promise of their eschatological inheritance. Now in vv. 18–22 Peter argued that Christ also traveled the pathway from suffering to glory. Suffering, then, is not a sign of divine displeasure. Precisely the opposite. Those who suffer for the Christ will be glorified as He was. First, Christ suffered for the unrighteous to bring believers to God (v. 18). Second, by the power of the Spirit He was raised from the dead and proclaimed victory over demonic spirits (vv. 18–19). Finally, He is now exalted on high as the resurrected and ascended Lord and has subjected all demonic powers to himself (v. 22). The main point, then, is that believers have no need to fear that suffering is the last word, for they share the same destiny as their Lord, whose suffering has secured victory over all hostile powers.

The main idea of the previous passage is that believers should not fear, even though unbelievers may inflict pain on them (3:14). Instead they should set apart Christ as Lord in their hearts and be prepared to respond to questions posed by unbelievers (3:15). The reason believers should not fear is that they will be rewarded and blessed by God for suffering (3:13–14). Hence, suffering is the pathway to glory.

Believers should not become intimidated in suffering but continue to sanctify Christ as Lord because the suffering of Christ was also the means by which He was exalted. Just as suffering was the pathway to exaltation for Christ, so also suffering is the prelude to glory for believers. The emphasis on Christ’s victory reminds believers that the troubles of the present time are temporary, that victory is sure because Christ has

triumphed over evil powers. Peter did not summon his readers to follow Christ in these particular verses. He encouraged them by reminding them of Christ's victory over evil powers.

The subject in v. 18 turns toward the suffering of Christ. Peter was thinking of the death of Christ here, but the term **"suffer"** establishes a connection with the experience of his readers. Just as believers in Asia Minor were suffering, so also Christ suffered. Nevertheless, the uniqueness of Christ's suffering is also communicated, just as it was in 2:21. Christ's death was **"for sins"** (*peri hamartiōn*) "once for all". The suffering of Christ was unique and definitive in that He offered Himself as a sin offering once for all. The distinctiveness of Christ's sacrifice is featured here, for even though believers suffer, they do not suffer for the sins of others, nor does their suffering constitute a sacrifice for the sins of others. Nor was Peter suggesting here that the suffering of believers is the means by which unbelievers are brought near to God.

The uniqueness of Christ's death continues to be emphasized, for He suffered on the cross as **"the righteous for the unrighteous."** The righteousness of Christ is referring to His sinlessness (2:22). His suffering therefore was undeserved. We saw earlier in 2:21–23 that the response of Jesus to unjust suffering functioned as an example for believers. Christ's role as an example is also implied in this text since in the previous paragraph believers are also exhorted to do what is right even if they suffer. Nevertheless, the uniqueness of Christ's suffering comes to the forefront here. That Christ was **"righteous"** (*dikaios*) is stressed elsewhere in the New Testament (Matt 27:19; Acts 3:14; 7:52; 1 John 2:1, 29; 3:7; Isa 53:11). Since Christ suffered as the sinless one (1 John 2:1), His suffering is unique. Indeed, only Christ suffered **"for the unrighteous"** (*hyper adikōn*). His death was vicarious and substitutionary and the basis for people becoming right with God.

The reason Christ's death is sufficient is precisely because He was sinless. He could not have died on behalf of His people if He Himself were stained by sin. His perfect obedience, therefore, is the basis for the sufficiency of His death. Paul described it as Christ dying for sinners (Rom 5:8), adding elsewhere that He died for our sins (1 Cor 15:3). John said God's Son was the "propitiation" or satisfaction for sins (1 John 4:10). And we have seen already in 2:24 that Peter drew upon Isaiah 53 in teaching that Christ **"bore our sins."** The uniqueness of His death is also communicated in the purpose of His sacrifice, in that He died **"to bring you to God."** Only Christ through His suffering died for the unrighteous, and the suffering of believers could not bring others to God. Indeed, Christ's suffering is the means by which all believers are brought to God, showing that they were formerly unrighteous and sinners.

Christ was put to death with reference to or in the sphere of His body, but on the other hand He was made alive by the Spirit. Even though Jesus suffered death in terms of His body, the Spirit raised (Rom 8:11) Him from the dead. Similarly, those who belong to Christ, even though they will face suffering, will ultimately share in Christ's resurrection.

Peter begins in v. 19, **in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison.** Although there are numerous interpretations of v. 19, the majority of scholars today argue that the text describes Christ's proclamation of victory and judgment over the evil angels. These evil angels, according to Gen 6:1–4, had sexual relations with women and were imprisoned because of their sin. The point of the passage, then, is not that Christ descended into hell but, as in 3:22, His victory over evil angelic powers. The evidence supporting this view is rather impressive. First, the word "spirits" almost certainly refers to angels (evil angels in this context). Second, the notion that the spirits are imprisoned fits with Satan's imprisonment in Rev 20:7. Third, Gen 6:1–4 may possibly provide the reason for the spirits' punishment -- their sexual relations with women. Such an interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 is debated of course. But fourth, this interpretation was standard in Jewish

literature in Peter's day. Also, Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:19 are very similar. According to this likely view this view, Christ by means of the Holy Spirit went and proclaimed victory over the imprisoned spirits.

The interpretation of v. 20 depends, of course, on how v. 19 is understood. I have argued that the imprisoned spirits in v. 19 refer to the angels who sinned by having sexual relations with women in accordance with Gen 6:1–4. Such angels “**formerly did not obey.**” The disobedience, as Jude 6 and 2 Pet 2:4 also explain, is their transgression of boundaries God established, with the result that these fallen angels engaged in sexual relations with women. Another confirmation of the proposed interpretation is the reference to Noah, since the incident between the “**sons of God**” and the “**daughters of men**” (Gen 6:1–4) immediately precedes the flood narrative. Indeed, it is quite plausible to understand the sin in Gen 6:1–4 as the climax of sin justifying the extermination of all humanity.

God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared. The Lord could have wiped out the human race instantly. Instead God demonstrated His patience while Noah built the ark, presumably giving human beings an opportunity to repent during this interval (Rom 2:4; 3:25; Acts 14:16; 17:30). The judgment of the flood that destroyed all is prominent in the text, but so also is the salvation of the few. Peter emphasized that only a “**few**” were saved (Matt 7:14) from the flood. Actually, the number of those who were rescued was only “**eight.**” The appeal to Noah and God's patience reminds Peter's readers to persevere. If God preserved Noah when he stood in opposition to the whole world, He will also save His people, even though they are now being persecuted.

Noah's 'salvation' was brought about by the same act of judgment that destroyed the wicked. The way God rescues the righteous is by destroying their enemies. The water also separated Noah and his family from their wicked contemporaries, who perished in the flood, and hence they were spared from the corruption of the society in which they lived. When the waters subsided, they entered a new world, one that was cleansed from sin and prepared again for life. The parallel to baptism is drawn in the next verse.

The water that deluged the world in Noah's day and through which Noah was saved functions as a model or pattern in v. 21 for Christian believers. **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.** But to what is the water related in the new covenant? The answer is baptism. The waters of the flood destroyed the ancient world and were the agent of death. Similarly, baptism, which was by immersion, occurs when one is plunged under the water. Anyone who is submerged under water dies. Submersion under the water represents death, as Paul suggested in Rom 6:3–5. Jesus described His upcoming death in terms of baptism (Mark 10:38–39; Luke 12:50), indicating that submersion under the water aptly portrays death. Just as the chaotic waters of the flood were the agent of destruction, so too the waters of baptism are waters of destruction. New Testament believers are rescued from death through His resurrection (Rom 6:3–5; Col 2:12). Hence, we are not surprised to read in this verse that baptism saves “**through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**” The waters of baptism, like the waters of the flood, demonstrate that destruction is at hand, but believers are rescued from these waters in that they are baptized with Christ, who has also emerged from the waters of death through His resurrection. Just as Noah was delivered through the stormy waters of the flood, believers have been saved through the stormy waters of baptism by virtue of Christ's triumph over death. Believers at baptism can be confident on the basis of the work of the crucified and risen Lord that their appeal to have a **good conscience** will be answered.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ brings us back to the center of this passage, the victory of Christ over his enemies. Peter picked up again the word “**has gone**”, emphasizing Jesus’ ascension after His resurrection. The same term in v. 19 also refers to Jesus’ triumph over demonic powers after His death and resurrection. The emphasis here is on Jesus’ entrance into heaven and rule at God’s right hand. The reference to the right hand recalls Ps 110:1, where David’s Lord sits at Yahweh’s right hand and rules. Jesus applied the psalm to Himself in His teaching (Matt 22:44; 26:64), and the influence of the psalm is pervasive in the rest of the New Testament (Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13). In the suffering of New Testament believers, Jesus still reigns and rules. He has not surrendered believers into the power of the evil forces even if they suffer until death. Jesus by His death and resurrection has triumphed over all demonic forces, and hence by implication believers will reign together with Him.

Preparing to Suffer as Christ Did (4:1–6)

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.

The word “**therefore**” draws a conclusion from the previous verses (3:18–22), where Christ’s victory over hostile powers by virtue of His death and resurrection is featured. The connection between the two sections is that since Christ’s suffering is the pathway to glory, believers should also prepare themselves to suffer, knowing that suffering is the prelude to an eschatological reward. The main point of the verse is that believers are to **arm** themselves with the intention to suffer. The term “**arm yourselves**” has military connotations, and in other texts the Christian life is compared to the life of a warrior (Rom 6:13; 13:12; Eph 6:11–17). Discipline is needed to live the Christian life, particularly in view of the suffering believers encounter. Indeed, believers must arm themselves with the “**the same way of thinking**” that suffering is inevitable. Like soldiers preparing for battle, believers should prepare themselves for suffering.

The phrase, “**whoever has suffered in the flesh**” refers to believers and relates back to the command to prepare themselves for suffering. Peter explained why they should prepare themselves to suffer, seeing the commitment to suffer as evidence that they have **ceased from sin**. The point is not that believers who suffer have attained sinless perfection, as if they do not sin at all after suffering. What Peter emphasized was that those who commit themselves to suffer show that they have triumphed over sin. They have broken with sin because they have ceased to participate in the lawless activities of unbelievers and endured the criticisms that have come from such a decision. The commitment to suffer reveals a passion for a new way of life, a life that is not yet perfect but remarkably different from the lives of unbelievers in the Greco-Roman world.

Christians should arm themselves with the intention to suffer, **so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God**. In other words, instead of fulfilling the human lusts that dominated their lives before conversion, but will live to fulfill the will of God. Believers are summoned to suffer in the sense that they are called to do God’s will and to turn away from a life of sin. Peter realized that

some Christians would likely die before Christ returned while still anticipating the imminent return of Christ. Whatever the span of life God grants, believers are to live zealously for God as long as life endures.

The “**for**” (*gar*) introducing v. 3 explains why believers should live the rest of their lives for God’s will. They have already spent sufficient time in the past carrying out “**the Gentiles want to do.**” Peter understood believers in Jesus Christ as part of Israel, members of the new people of God (2:9–10). In saying that the time past is “**enough**” to have lived as unbelievers, Peter’s point was that it is more than enough, that there is no room now for any dalliance with the lifestyle of unbelievers.

The catalogue of misconduct which follows, **living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry**, closely resembles those in Rom 13:13 and Gal 5:19–21, as well as having points of contact with late Jewish texts.

Pagans are surprised that believers do not participate in what they consider to be normal cultural activities. In response they criticize, defame, and revile believers and thereby also the God they worship. **With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you**

Currently unbelievers may have been enjoying the favor and privileges of Greco-Roman society. They may have been experiencing social advancement and the praise of their peers. Present circumstances, however, are not the last word. Those who live now “**for human passions**” (v. 2), who live in debauchery and the “**flood of debauchery**” (vv. 3–4) and revile believers (v. 4), **will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.** They will need to “**give account**” to God. Believers should not succumb to the temptation to renounce their faith so they can enjoy the approbation of society. Such approval is short-lived, and those who mistreat believers now will be judged in the future.

Verse 6 begins **this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead.** Peter considered the case of believers who had died physically. These people heard and believed the gospel when they were alive but had subsequently died. Unbelievers viewed the death of believers as proof that there is no advantage in becoming a believer, for all without exception die. Peter indicated, however, that unbelievers do not understand the whole picture. Even though from a human perspective believers seem to gain no benefits from their faith since they die, from God’s perspective, **live in the Spirit the way God does.**

Death is not the last word for believers. They will be raised from the dead. The contrast between the “**flesh**” and “**spirit**” here is parallel to 1 Pet 3:18, for Christ also died in terms of His flesh, but He was raised to life by the Holy Spirit. A similar destiny awaits believers. They die physically but will be raised to life by the Holy Spirit. Peter used the present tense because the future will certainly come to pass.

Living in Light of the End (4:7–11)

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

Verses 5–6 conclude with a reference to the final judgment, and Peter continued that theme in v. 7a with a reminder that the end is near. Hence, he returned to the main theme of the previous paragraph. Since the end is near, believers should live according to God’s will. What this means in practice is that believers should be alert and sober for prayer, that they should live in sacrificial love, and that they should use their gifts, whether speaking or serving, to help others. Their aim and motivation in all they do is to see God glorified through Jesus Christ.

The reason the end is near is that the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ have inaugurated the last days (1 Cor 10:11; 1 John 2:18). All the following exhortations in this paragraph draw from the coming of the end. Because **the end of all things is at hand**, believers should live in the following way.

In the New Testament the approach of the End is regularly interpreted as a challenge to watchfulness and blameless behavior. So here in v. 7 Peter appeals to his readers to **be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers**. Believers should not get excited by the proximity of the End or allow it to upset the routine of their lives. The last days are to be days of surprise, catastrophe and testing, and Peter’s picture here is of the quiet confidence, mutual support and reliance on God which Christians should exhibit. The realization that God is bringing history to a close should provoke believers to depend on Him, and this dependence is manifested in prayer, for in prayer believers recognize that any good that occurs in the world is due to God’s grace.

Peter requests in v. 8 that in these critical, expectant days they should **keep loving one another earnestly**. This is to come **above all**. Peter’s teaching about the primacy of love reflects primitive Christian thinking (Gal. 5:13; Jas 2:8), which itself was founded on Jesus’ own sayings (Mark 12:30–33; John 13:34 f). He reinforces his advice by loosely quoting Prov. 10:12, **for love covers a multitude of sins**. In the Hebrew the meaning is that love, unlike hatred, conceals and passes over faults in silence (1 Cor. 13:7). Here Peter’s point is that at the coming judgment his readers will receive mercy for their own sins provided in the meantime their mutual love does not falter. Forgiveness is God’s free gift, and there is no suggestion of its being merited. However, the gospel teaches (Luke 7:47) that he who loves much has many sins forgiven him and that on the final day (Matt 25:31–46) what will be decisive will be the love, or lack of love, we have displayed in our actions.

In v. 9 Peter exhorts the believers to **show hospitality to one another without grumbling**. There was a great deal of coming and going in the early Church due to the journeys of apostles, evangelists, teachers, and carriers of letters, and in such a close-knit community it was natural that visitors should be put up by fellow-Christians. So the Lord’s praise for entertaining guests was important (Matt 25:35). Peter gives a reminder that hospitality can be frustrating, to be shouldered cheerfully, **without grumbling**, if it is to be worthwhile.

More generally, the readers are exhorted in v. 10, as the end approaches; **as each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace**. Since each has some gift, Peter cannot be thinking exclusively either of the specifically ‘Spiritual’ gifts which attracted much attention or of distinctive tasks of ministers, but of any capacity which can be employed for the benefit of the community. Peter takes the view that everything a man possesses, whether it is an extraordinary spiritual faculty or merely some simple talent, is on loan to him from God and so ought to be expended for the good of his fellow Christians. Hence individuals are **stewards**, referring to the slave who was responsible for managing a man’s property or household and for distributing their wages, and food to its members. In this case the treasure to be handed out is nothing less than **God’s varied grace**.

Peter then gives two examples of specialized activities in the community in v. 11, suggesting that those who exercise them should consider themselves as in fact agents of God's grace. Hence, **whoever speaks** let it be **as one who speaks oracles of God**. The reference is to routine functions like teaching and preaching. What the Christian spokesman enunciates, if he is faithful, is God's word. He does not simply repeat the divine message, but God speaks through him. As Paul said (2 Cor. 5:20), '**God makes his appeal through us**', contending that what he preaches should be received '**not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God**'. (1 Thess. 2:13) In the same way, **whoever serves** let it be **as one who serves by the strength that God supplies**. The parallelism with *If a man speaks* suggests that here too Peter has the activities of ministers primarily in mind. His argument is that, if the minister's or the Christian person's contribution to the common life is to be effective, he or she ought to rely, when making it, not on his or her own human resources, but on God's help. Any worthwhile strength comes from God, who is at work in the person.

Persevering in Suffering (4:12-5:11)

Suffer Joyfully in Accord with God's Will (4:12-19)

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

Peter reminded his readers of how sufferings fit into God's purposes to encourage them to persevere with the proper attitude.

Peter begins his renewed exhortation in v. 12 by addressing his readers as **Beloved**. In all their anxieties and troubles the believers belong to a fellowship whose members are knit together by love. He pleads; **do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you**. Peter is giving the same advice as in 1 John 3:13: '**Do not be surprised if the world hates you**'. Christians have always been misunderstood, disliked, and subjected to insults and abuse, when they knew themselves to be striving to carry out God's will. The gospels provide evidence of the comfort and support they found in our Lord's explicit warnings (Matt 5:11; John 15:18-20). The word **fiery trial** by which the writer describes their painful experiences properly means burning, exposure to the action of fire, the testing or purifying of metals by fire, or destruction by fire. In the LXX it refers to the refining of metals by fire (Ps. 66:10; Rev. 3:18) or, metaphorically, the testing of people. In the New Testament the word is only used, apart from here, in Rev 18:9, where it refers to the burning of Babylon. In selecting it the picture in Peter's mind is most likely the one predominant in the Old Testament of the purifying of metal by fire. The sufferings his readers have to undergo should be viewed as a divinely ordained trial of their faith and discipleship.

In v. 13, Peter argues that believers should rejoice in so far as they are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that they may rejoice with exultation also at the revelation of His glory. Earlier he has taught them that imitation of

Christ in His suffering is their Christian vocation (2:21), and that through their baptism they participate in His death (4:1). Their seemingly distressing experiences, he now declares, are of a piece with this, and in fact amount to sharing Christ's sufferings. These trials should not cause them surprise or discouragement, but rather **that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed**. Peter exhorted readers to rejoice in their present sufferings so that they will be able to rejoice and exult forever when Christ returns. By implication, those who do not rejoice in their sufferings do not truly belong to Jesus Christ. If they groan about sufferings now, they will presumably be disappointed on the future day.

In v. 14, the glorification which suffering brings does not belong to the distant future, **If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed**, here and now. The reason why they are already blessed is **because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon** them. In other words, they already, through the grace of the Spirit and as the crown of their sufferings, participate in the divine glory (1:7) which, according to the New Testament (2 Cor 4:17; Col 3:4), the faithful will enjoy at the final consummation. Already that glory, spoken of in the Old Testament (Ex 33:9; 40:34; Isa 60:1–7) as manifesting itself in the pillar of cloud or in other ways, is breaking in on the Church, and is being imparted by a special anointing of the Spirit to believers who suffer for their Lord and bear His reproach.

Now, to guard against possible misunderstanding, in v. 15 Peter adds a qualification, **But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler**. As a Christian, a man should feel no disgrace, but should glorify God in **the name of Christ**. The blessing mentioned in v. 14 of course does not extend to those whose rough treatment is punishment for obviously guilty conduct.

But the position is totally different if he is called upon to suffer **as a Christian**, not on the ground of any specific act of wickedness, but simply of being a Christian. Verse 16 continues, **Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name**. The most plausible suggestions for understanding the last phrase, **let him glorify God in that name**, are that the believer gives glory to God either by his manner of living up to the name or boldly witnessing to it, or simply by virtue of bearing the name. Hence, the Greek behind in this name should be rendered either 'in this capacity', that is in his capacity as a Christian, or 'on this account', that is because he is called upon to suffer as a Christian.

It is unnecessary to interpret **suffer as a Christian** as necessarily implying that Christianity as such has become a capital offence. Following the precedent set by Nero from 65 onwards this was the case, but in the context of 'being insulted for Christ's sake' the phrase probably means no more than having to endure the shame, exclusion and occasional violence which the despised name brought on its bearers.

In v. 17, Peter spells out the reason why the believers should give glory to God in their tribulations. **For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God**. In other words, these trials are the preordained opening phase in the unfolding of God's plan for the End. A preparatory judgment and purification are necessary, and the prophets (Jer 25:29; Ezek 9:6; Mal 3:1–6) had foretold that a start would be made with the chosen people, indeed with the sanctuary and the priesthood.

If God's judgment is ordained to start with His chosen people, it is certainly not going to stop with them. Peter continues, **and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?** He is referring to the readers' hostile neighbors and persecutors. Their lack of faith is characterized, as in 2:8; 3:1, as disobedience, just as faith is identified as obedience in 1:2; 14; 22. The doom in store for them will definitely be frightful -- no glorious conclusion, as for Christians who suffer faithfully, but only absolute

destruction. Peter's message is similar to Paul's, who assures his distressed correspondents (2 Thess. 1:5–10) that **'God deems it just to repay with afflictions those who afflict you'**, and that when Christ is revealed from heaven they will be granted rest from their pains, while the punishment meted out to **'those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ'** will consist in **'eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord'**.

To drive the contrast home, in v. 18 Peter cites LXX Prov. 11:31, **And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"** In the original context the subject under discussion is the temporal welfare of the two types of men, but Peter changes the teaching to deal with the end time. Even the righteous man, he points out, meaning the faithful Christian, will only be saved on the day of judgment with difficulty. The foretaste of judgment which his readers are already experiencing is proof of that. Peter shares the harsh outlook of the apocalyptic discourses attributed to our Lord Himself (Mark 13:19). But if God's elect have to pass through such difficulties and trials, the reflection that should solidify their resolution and their courage is that words cannot describe the irreparable fate awaiting the wicked and sinful who reject the gospel and are the enemies of the believers.

Having outlined the blessedness of righteous suffering and the awful fate of those who inflict it, Peter draws his conclusion to this section in v. 19. **Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.** The thought intended is probably that while people exempt from suffering will naturally commit themselves to God, those who suffer should do so also, for their suffering is providentially ordered. That the believer's afflictions are all part of God's plan is one of the writer's constant themes (1:6; 2:15; 3:17; 5:6).

Martyrdom is not pictured here, for Peter expects them to go on living normal lives and to be energetic in practical works of charity. The verb **entrust** is the one used, according to Luke 23:46, by the dying Jesus of committing His spirit to God. This is a deliberate echoing of Ps. 31:5. It is a graphic term connoting entrusting something valuable to someone for safe-keeping. God's faithfulness is the basic motive for Christian hope in the New Testament (Heb 10:23). The description of God as **Creator** is of interest. Though frequent in the LXX, this is its only appearance in the New Testament. The title may have been chosen here to show that it involves God's power and love to guard His creatures.

Exhortations for Elders and the Faithful (5:1–5)

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."

The elders are now addressed because as leaders they may face the brunt of persecution first. There may also be an echo of Ezek 9:6, for the judgment that commences in God's temple begins with the elders. Or it may be that the elders are addressed first simply because they are leaders of God's flock. Three exhortations are given to the elders. 1) They are to shepherd and oversee God's flock, doing so because it is God's will, not because they feel compelled to serve. 2) They are to be eager in fulfilling their task and should not serve for financial

gain. 3) They are to live as examples of the flock instead of using their authority to oppress the church. The motivation for the leadership of elders is explained in v. 4. When Jesus as the Chief Shepherd of the church returns, they will receive a glorious crown that never fades. If elders are to shepherd the church in a godly manner, the younger members of the congregation are to submit to the leadership of the elders.

Peter begins in v. 1, **So I exhort the elders among you**. Elders (*presbuteroi*) are the officials who acted as pastoral leaders of the congregations. So Paul speaks of **‘those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you’** (1 Thess 5:12), and of **‘persons who lend assistance and exercise rule’** (1 Cor 12:28). In Phil 1:1 he calls them **‘overseers (episkopoi) and deacons’**. The title is applied in Acts to the leaders of the Jerusalem church, and of the Ephesian church (20:17–38). The elders’ functions include leadership, pastoral supervision, and disciplinary and financial responsibilities.

In order to add weight to his charge Peter first describes himself as a **fellow-elder**, intending the elders to understand by this that Peter shoulders the same responsibilities as they and can sympathize with their difficulties. Next, he reminds them that he is a **witness (martus) of the sufferings of Christ**. Peter was an eye-witness of the Lord’s passion, and as such is qualified to hold up Jesus’ endurance of suffering as an example (2:21–23). However, properly speaking, *martus* denotes one who testifies rather than an eye-witness, and it is frequently applied in the New Testament (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8; 22:15) to people who proclaim, and so bear witness to, Jesus. It is highly probable that, as at 4:13, the thought in Peter’s mind is the association between sharing Christ’s sufferings and sharing His glory. In other words, Peter is claiming to be a witness to Christ’s sufferings in the deeper sense of himself suffering for His testimony. Also, it is implied that in his sufferings as a missionary and teacher of the faith Peter is at one with the elders in their present tribulations. Hence, he can claim that, as a witness to Christ’s sufferings, he is also **a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed**. Most likely Peter is thinking of the divine glory which has been given to Christ (1:11; 21; 3:22) in His resurrection, ascension and being seated at God’s right hand, and which will be revealed (4:13) at His Second Coming.

In v. 2, Peter exhorts the elders, **shepherd the flock of God that is among you**. The thought of God’s chosen people as His flock is deeply rooted in the Old Testament (Isa 40:11; Jer 23:1–4; Ezek 34:1–10). In the New Testament the imagery of shepherding is occasionally applied, as here, to the community leaders (John 21:15–17; Acts 20:28), but only in one place (Eph 4:11) are they actually designated **‘shepherds’**.

It is desirable in these times of trials that the elders should exercise their oversight in the right spirit, and this is defined in three ways. First, **exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you**. The phrase **as God would have you** is to be taken closely with **willingly**. The elders are to serve, not for their own satisfaction in the job, but as glad volunteers in God’s service. Secondly, Christian leaders should watch over their flock **not for shameful gain but eagerly**. We recall that Paul upheld (1 Cor 9:7–11) the right of apostles and others to be supported by the churches, though declined (2 Cor 12:13–17) to take advantage of it himself. Also, the finances and poor relief of the communities were in the hands of the elders or overseers, and the temptation to abuse one’s trust was very real.

The third way, seen in v. 3, is rather obscure, **not domineering over those in your charge**. There is no doubt that Peter is warning elders against abusing their authority. Following Jesus’ own words, they are to serve their subordinates rather than **‘lord it over them’** (Mark 10:42) in the manner of pagan rulers. Elders are not to enter the ministry so they can boss others around but so they can be **examples to the flock** of the character of Christ.

Peter reminded them that their labor for others will have a great reward and will bring remarkable joy. Jesus here is called “**the Chief Shepherd**”, a rare term that occurs nowhere else in the New Testament or in the LXX. The designation of Jesus as the Chief Shepherd reminds the leaders that they are fundamentally servants. Their positions of leadership are a responsibility, not a privilege by which they advance their own status. As shepherds they serve under the authority of the Chief Shepherd, doing his will rather than theirs. The appearance of Christ reminds the leaders that their positions of leadership are temporary. When the Lord comes, those elders who have served in accordance with the instructions in vv. 2–3 will receive a reward, “**will receive the unfading crown of glory.**” Peter contrasted the crown elders will receive with the leafy crowns presented in the Greco-Roman world. Such crowns were given after athletic victories or military conquests. Such crowns faded as time elapsed, but the crown given by God will never fade. It is difficult to know if the crown is equivalent to eternal life itself or if it is a special reward for elders. In the other “**crown**” (*stephanos*) texts the reward is entrance into heaven itself (Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10; 3:11). The usage in the rest of the New Testament slightly favors this second idea. Elders can be confident that they will receive the greatest reward conceivable when the eschaton (end times) arrives.

The text shifts from “**elders**” to those who are “**younger**”, possibly echoing Ezek 9:6. Perhaps the young are those who are young in faith, who have been recently converted, or perhaps as in Titus 2:6–8 those who are young are given a particular exhortation, especially since young people may tend to be more independent and less inclined to submit to those in authority. The first idea is quite unlikely, since it is difficult to prove that the term “**younger**” refers to those who are recent converts. We probably should understand Peter to refer to those who are literally younger, perhaps because younger people would be more apt to act rebelliously.

The **younger** in particular, then, should **be subject to the elders**. We have seen elsewhere that Peter understood submission as the responsibility of believers to those in positions of authority (2:13, 18; 3:1, 5). We have already noted that elders are admonished not to use their authority as dictatorial rulers but are to serve those under their charge. Conversely, those who are under leadership should follow and submit to their leaders.

Peter grounded this admonition with a citation from Prov 3:34, which is also quoted in Jas 4:6, **Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”** Believers should be humble because God sets His face against the proud, but He lavishes His grace upon the humble. Those who submit to God’s sovereignty in humility will find that He will exalt and reward them.

Closing Exhortations and Assurance (5:6–11)

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.

Since God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (v. 5), believers should humble themselves under God's mighty and sovereign hand in their suffering. They are to humble themselves so that God will exalt them and give them the reward of eternal life on the last day (v. 6). Humility also manifests itself in handing over our worries to God (v. 7a), so worry is a form of pride. Worry constitutes pride since it denies the care of a sovereign God. The remedy for worry is to believe in and rest in God's care for believers (v. 7b). Suffering does not only call for humility but also believers are to be sober and alert (v. 8). Alertness is necessary because the devil is prowling about and is using suffering, hoping to frighten believers into apostasy so to destroy their faith. Because the devil is lurking around, believers must resist him, and such resistance is maintained by continuing strong in faith (v. 9). Believers should be encouraged when they realize that fellow believers throughout the world are experiencing the same suffering. Peter prayed in v. 10 that the God who gives all grace and strength to endure the sufferings of this age and that the sovereignty will belong to Him forever.

The **"therefore"** in v. 6 demonstrates that the call to humility reaches back to v. 5. Since God resists the proud and pours His grace upon the humble, **"therefore"** believers should humble themselves. By humbling themselves believers will experience God's grace, for God bestows His favor on those who acknowledge their need of Him. They are to accept the suffering God has ordained as His will instead of resisting His will while suffering. They should realize that the purification of God's house has begun (4:17). When Peter said they are to humble themselves **under the mighty hand of God**, he used an expression that is associated particularly with God's delivering Israel out of Egypt (Ex 3:19; 32:11; Deut 4:34; Dan 9:15). Just as the Lord delivered His people from Egypt, so He will vindicate His people who suffered. Believers are to humble themselves before the Lord **so that at the proper time he may exalt you**. The theme that the humble will be exalted can be traced back to the teaching of Jesus (Matt 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14). The verse promises exaltation **"at the proper time"**. Peter was not promising vindication and exaltation in this life. The time in view is the day of judgment and salvation. The day of humiliation is limited to this world, but believers will be vindicated by God's grace forever.

The phrase in v. 7, **casting all your anxieties on him**, should be understood as explaining how believers can humble themselves under God's strong hand. Therefore, giving in to worry is an example of pride. Believers humble themselves by casting their worries on God. Conversely, if believers continue to worry, then they are caving in to pride. Worry is a form of pride because when believers are filled with anxiety, they are convinced that they must solve all the problems in their lives in their own strength. When believers throw their worries upon God, they express their trust in his mighty hand, acknowledging that he is Lord and Sovereign over all of life.

Casting one's worries on God would not bring comfort if He were unable to help in times of distress. Giving our anxiety to God makes sense **"because he cares for you."** God has compassion on His children and will sustain them in every distress. Peter's words here remind us of Jesus' exhortation to avoid anxiety (Matt 6:25–34). There may be an allusion to Ps 55:22. The psalmist prayed to God to help him because the wicked were attempting to destroy him, and even his close friend had turned against him. Verses 4–8 express the anguish and torment he felt in the midst of such opposition. We find the allusion in v. 22 (Ps 54:23, LXX), **"Cast your anxiety upon the Lord, and he will sustain you"**.

As Peter drew the letter to a close, he continued to give final exhortations to his readers. He called them to be **“sober-minded; be watchful.** The call for vigilance goes back to the beginning of the letter (1:13) and functions as an inclusio. Vigilance is needed because **Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion.** Believers must remain vigilant and alert until the very end because the devil seeks to destroy their faith. The devil inflicts persecution on believers so that they will deny Christ and lose their eschatological reward. Peter identified the devil as an **“adversary”**. The same idea is found in the word “Satan,” which means “adversary.” The word “devil” means “slanderer” or “accuser,” and we are reminded of his accusations against Job (Job 1:9–11; 2:4–5) and Joshua, the high priest, in the Old Testament (Zech 3:1–2; Rev 12:10).

Peter portrayed the devil here **like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.** The devil roars like a lion to induce fear in the people of God. In other words, persecution is the way he tries to intimidate believers in the hope that they will give up at the prospect of suffering. If believers deny their faith, then the devil has devoured them, bringing them back into his fold. The contrast between God and the devil is quite striking. God tenderly cares for his children (5:6–7), inviting them to bring their worries to Him so that He can sustain them. God promises to protect His flock (v. 2) in all their suffering. Conversely, the devil’s aim is not to comfort but to terrify believers. He does not want to deliver them from fear but to devour their faith. Peter warned believers to be vigilant. The devil is a defeated enemy, and if believers do not fear his roar, we will never be devoured by his bite!

Verse 9 continues the exhortation to stand against the devil. In v. 8 Peter called for vigilance and alertness, so that believers will not sleep and be caught off guard by their enemy. In this verse he summoned them to actively **resist** the devil. The word for “resist” is used of Paul’s opposition to Peter in Antioch (Gal 2:11), and of Jannes’ and Jambres’ stance against Moses (2 Tim 3:8). Resistance represents active engagement against an enemy. Believers will not triumph over the devil if they remain passive.

The next line **“firm in your faith”** should be understood as saying that resisting the devil means that believers remain firm in their faith, that is, in their trust in God. Believers triumph over the devil as they continue to trust God, believing that He truly cares for them and will sustain them until the end. Perseverance until the last day is accomplished from beginning to end by faith.

In the last clause of the verse motivation for standing firm in the faith and resisting the devil is given. Peter was explaining that believers should know **that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.** What encouragement did Peter provide to the readers here? He remarked that believers elsewhere experience suffering in the same way as his readers. The **“world”** (*kosmos*) here does not refer to the entire world in enmity against God, but that such sufferings are inflicted on believers throughout the Greco-Roman world. Not everyone in the world faces such opposition. Opposition is directed against those who believe in Jesus Christ. It is noted that the sufferings are experienced **“by your brotherhood”**. In other words, everyone in the Christian family faces the same rejection and discrimination.

Verses 10–11 together make up the conclusion to the body of the letter and contain the message of the letter as a whole. It is likely that Peter now focused on God’s strength as the means by which believers obtain their eternal reward. **The God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ**, is the one who will also enable them to persevere until the end. He begins by designating God as “**the God of all grace.**” God is both the possessor and giver of all grace. The sufferings of believers are intense, but God’s grace is stronger still. This grace is expressed particularly in God’s calling of believers to **eternal glory**. “**Calling**” here refers to God’s effective work by which He brings believers into a saving relationship with Himself. That the calling is to salvation is clear since believers are called to God’s “**eternal glory.**” Peter emphasized that God’s saving calling is effectual **in** and through **Christ**. God will certainly complete what he has inaugurated. Their calling to glory is sure.

Before glory arrives, however, believers must suffer for **a little while**. Saying that the suffering will last a short time does not mean that it will only last for a brief interval during the earthly life of believers. The sufferings of this life will *seem* as if they lasted a little while when compared to the eternal glory that endures forever.

Four different verbs are used to describe God’s promise for believers, and together they emphatically make the same point. The God who has called believers to eternal glory **will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish** them, so that they are able to endure until the end. He will fulfill His promise to save and deliver them. The God who has given such promises also uses exhortations to provoke His people to be faithful until the last day. These exhortations are the very means by which God’s promises are secured, and indeed God in His grace grants believers the strength to carry out the exhortations. Still, such grace can never be used to cancel out the need for responding in obedience to the exhortations.

5:11 After emphasizing the power of God’s sustaining grace, even in the midst of suffering, it is not surprising that Peter concluded with a doxology, **To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.** Peter emphasized here the sovereignty and power of God. The God who permits suffering in the lives of His children, and even allows the devil’s fury at them (Job 1–2), is the sovereign God and the God who cares (5:7). The **dominion** belongs to Him—**forever**. The doxology concludes with “**amen,**” signifying that Peter longed for the day when God’s rule will be evident to all, that he anticipated the day when suffering is past and glory and peace and joy reign forevermore!

Conclusion (5:12-14)

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

Peter concluded this epistle with a final exhortation and greetings from those with him and himself to encourage his readers further.

Peter begins his concluding remarks by saying, **By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you.** The name is most likely intended to refer to the prophetically gifted Silas whom the Jerusalem

church sent to Antioch (Acts 15:22–34), and whom Paul later selected as his companion on his ‘second missionary tour’ (Acts 15:40–18:5). If so, he is also to be identified with the Silvanus whom the Apostle speaks of as a fellow-preacher of the gospel (2 Cor 1:19) and as joint-author of certain letters (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). Silvanus was most likely the amanuensis or secretary of 1 Peter.

Peter describes his letter as brief (Heb 13:22). He then identified the purpose of the letter, **exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.** The grace of God has been manifested in Jesus the Christ, who suffered on the cross and then was exalted to glory. Similarly, Peter called on his readers to suffer faithfully as Christians as an entrance into glory. In the interval before the consummation of all things, believers are exhorted to “**stand firm**” in such grace. Failure to stand constitutes apostasy, and those who apostatize will face destruction on the last day.

In v. 13, the letter closes with greetings and a benediction, which is characteristic of letter closings. **She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.** The **chosen** one represents the church in **Babylon**, which sends her greeting to those who are elect pilgrims from Asia Minor. Such an interpretation is confirmed by 2 John, where the church is described as “**the chosen lady and her children**” (v. 1), and John closes by saying, “**The children of your chosen sister send their greetings**” (v. 13). A reference to the church is also suggested by the teaching that the church is Christ’s bride (Eph 5:22–33; Rev 19:7–9).

The historical Babylon of the Old Testament was a city in ruins, and so Peter could not have been referring to that city. Peter drew on Old Testament tradition, where Babylon represents those opposed to God (Isa 13–14; 46–47; Jer 50–51). In this instance Babylon designates Rome itself, the enemy of God. The mention of Babylon constitutes another reminder that believers are exiles in their present situation, and the allusion to exile under the dominion of Babylon constitutes a bookend, an *inclusio*, between the beginning and end of the letter.

The greeting from Mark comes from John Mark, who accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey. He subsequently left Paul and Barnabas, and Barnabas recruited him for further missionary work after Paul rejected him (Acts 12:25; 13:4, 13; 15:35–39). Paul later spoke highly of Mark (Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24). The early tradition that Mark wrote his gospel under Peter’s influence is also historically credible. Calling Mark his “son” is not literal but designates the fatherly love Peter had for the younger Mark.

The injunction to “**greet one another with a kiss of love**” is similar to the Pauline letters, where the holy kiss is enjoined (Rom 16:16; 1 Thess 5:26). Peter’s language differs since he spoke of “a kiss of love” instead of a “holy kiss.” The love between believers should be comparable to the love that exists in a healthy family.

The letter ends, **Peace to all of you who are in Christ.** The reference to peace recalls 1:2 and in that sense functions as yet another *inclusio*. The phrase “**in Christ**” simply means that Peter prayed that peace would be the portion for all those who are believers. Believers were battered by trials and persecutions. The stress of life was significant. What believers need in such a situation is God’s peace and strength, a peace that will enable them to stand (5:12) amidst the pressures of the present evil age. Such peace will fortify believers so they can endure opposition and persevere to the end, so that they will receive their eschatological reward.

Soli Deo Gloria!