

**EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**



**COMMENTARY.**

**FIRST PETER**

by

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**[BOOK 91-A]**

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## **WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?**

Professor Simon Greenleaf was one of the most eminent lawyers of all time. His "Laws of Evidence" for many years were accepted by all States in the United States as the standard methodology for evaluating cases. He was teaching law at a university in the United States when one of his students asked Professor Greenleaf if he would apply his "Laws of Evidence" to evaluate an historical figure. When Greenleaf agreed to the project he asked the student who was to be the subject of the review. The student replied that the person to be examined would be Jesus Christ. Professor Greenleaf agreed to undertake the examination of Jesus Christ and as a result, when he had finished the review, Simon Greenleaf personally accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

Professor Greenleaf then sent an open letter to all jurists in the United States jurists saying in part "I personally have investigated one called Jesus Christ. I have found the evidence concerning him to be historically accurate. I have also discovered that Jesus Christ is more than a human being, he is either God or nothing and having examined the evidence it is impossible to conclude other than he is God. Having concluded that he is God I have accepted him as my personal Saviour. I urge all members of the legal profession to use the "Laws of Evidence" to investigate the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and if you find that he is wrong expose him as a faker but if not consider him as your Saviour and Lord"

## **HOW CAN I BE SAVED?**

### **Salvation is available for all members of the human race.**

Salvation is the most important undertaking in all of God's universe. The salvation of sinners is never on the basis of God's merely passing over or closing His eyes to sin. God saves sinners on a completely righteous basis consistent with the divine holiness of His character. This is called grace. It relies on God so man cannot work for salvation neither can he deserve it. We need to realise that the creation of this vast unmeasured universe was far less an undertaking than the working out of God's plan to save sinners.

However the acceptance of God's salvation by the sinner is the most simple thing in all of life. One need not be rich, nor wise nor educated. Age is no barrier nor the colour of one's skin. The reception of the enormous benefits of God's redemption is based upon the simplest of terms so that there is no one in all this wide universe who need be turned away.

### **How do I become a Christian?**

There is but one simple step divided into three parts. First of all I have to recognise that I am a sinner (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4; John 5:24).

Secondly, realising that if I want a relationship with Almighty God who is perfect, and recognising that I am not perfect, I need to look to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour (1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:6; John 3:16).

Thirdly, by the exercise of my own free will I personally receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour, believing that He died personally for me and that He is what He claims to be in an individual, personal and living way (John 1:12; 3:36; Acts 16:31; 4:12).

### **The results of Salvation**

The results of this are unbelievably wonderful:

My sins are taken away (John 1:29),

I possess eternal life now (1 John 5:11,12),

I become a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17),

The Holy Spirit takes up His residence in my life (1 Corinthians 6:19),

And I will never perish (John 10:28-30).

This truthfully is life's greatest transaction. This is the goal of all people; this is the ultimate of our existence. We invite and exhort any reader who has not become a Christian by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to follow these simple instructions and be born again eternally into God's family (Matthew 11:28; John 1:12; Acts 4:12; 16:31).

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## INTRODUCTION

In the Old Testament period Esther was told regarding her time in history that she was alive, “for such a time as this”, a time of trouble where she must be sure to walk as the Lord’s Word directed and move into her new life only as the Lord opened the door. God had placed these two people into a time when Anti-Semitism was growing dangerously in the Persian Empire, and by following the Holy Spirit’s guidance they each found their sacrificial path in life that would lead to the deliverance of their people.

Both Esther and Mordecai had a sense of their place in history. For the believers of Peter’s day and many since, their time in history as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ has been a time of pressure and persecution, and at such times it is vital for the believer to be sure they are walking as they should, and where they should be. We are all born into the very place in space and time that is given to us by the Lord to fulfill our destiny before the Lord, in the Plan of God. As the days darken around us today in 2016 we need to hear Peter’s words and heed the faith application of Esther.

Peter’s little letters are written into such situations as we all face. They are addressed to believers who face pressures and give the encouragement and warning that is needed to ensure they do not miss their mission and waste their opportunity to serve the Lord as and how he has placed them within the unfolding drama of redemption within our time in history. We are challenged to see our place in terms of the end of time, rather than the pressures of our time.

Peter’s day was a time of tension and social change. It was a dangerous time to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and persecution was building. Peter’s first letter is written about ten years before the storm would break, but his last is written from prison as he awaits his and his wife’s execution by crucifixion under Nero. In an adjacent cell the Apostle Paul also awaits his death, and pens 2 Timothy at the same time as Peter writes 2 Peter. These are letters written into a time of danger, and for our day they have many practical challenges to live as our spiritual ancestors lived; with focus, Holy Spirit power and love for our brethren. We stand upon the faith, “once delivered to the apostles”, Jude 1-3, and we are to stand with them, not the fake preachers of prosperity that abound today.

## PETER’S DAY

“At that time (Peter’s day), treason was interpreted in a wide sense and was very severely punished. Anything that could be construed as disrespect to the Emperor was treason, and to speak of another Emperor or King was an unpardonable crime”. (Ramsey, 1959, p189.)

In our day, “we have passed now into a region of religious thought so different from that of polytheism that it is perhaps difficult for us to feel the sincerity of such words. Still undoubtedly they were sincere, and to refuse to listen to them was held to be, as Pliny said, criminal obstinacy”. (Westcott, 1883, p 249.) Roman Law stated clearly, “no-one shall have gods for himself alone at his own pleasure, and men shall not worship in private new of foreign gods unless they are adopted by the state.” (Quoted in Westcott, IBID, p 245.)

Very specific penalties were set out in Roman Law for any evangelistic activity associated with a new god. To refuse to give worship to the gods of the state was to refuse to support the state; it was treason to the paranoid Romans! They embody the spirit of the great Gentile Empires that Daniel saw in his visions. Daniel 2, 7, 8, 9, 11. They were the Beast of Iron, a vicious and ruthless empire that had as its open motto, “Let them hate us, as long as they fear us”. As Daniel had foreseen the great Gentile Empires would become more fierce through time, and the satanic religion of self-worship would find its ultimate expression in “Emperor Worship” in Rome and its descendant the Anti-Christ’s Empire.

The very fabric of ancient Roman society was tied up with idolatry. Every ceremony in house, work courts, and city was saturated with sacrifices and idol worship. For most it was just something you did; it was a casual thing of no real significance. Roman religion was the very image of satanic religion – one that made no real demands and required the form of obedience only. The pagans of Peter’s day were very much like the pagans of today, who are happy to say the “Lord’s Prayer” at funerals even though they do not believe in Jesus at all.

For the average citizen of all the great empires, religion has always been a thing you do at times, and don’t get too excited about, but to those who had received the message of Christ, they felt passionate about truth and about the “lost” state of their neighbours. To be “born again”, then as now, placed a person on a collision course with the rest of society, and in Peter’s day with Roman Law itself. Christianity is a universal and an absolute religion. Christianity was aggressively evangelical. The pagan gods were viewed as demons and the truth was to be proclaimed before all unto death! The Early Church from Daniel’s words saw correctly that the Empire was embodying the spirit of Anti-Christ and that there would be war between it and them until the Empire was saved, or the Lord came.

Power confrontations were the norm rather than the exception, and in such an environment, violence against the individual Christians and the church as a group was not to be long in coming. “Society was inhospitable and the world unjust. It was in such surroundings, full of menace both of their faith and to their fortunes that Christians had to play the man”. (Selwyn, 1952, Page 55.) This remains our challenge today as we see the stage props of the nations and events being arranged for the arrival of the Anti-Christ’s Empire in its final form.

The “good news” of Christianity was bad news for the old gods! The message of the evangelists was a message that, as far as the state was concerned, blew away everything that the old gods stood for. The early believers faced what modern

believers in Jesus face within Moslem countries today, but not just there now, in the Western nations also. It is now a criminal offence to speak against any other religion, even if what is said is true. This is a fraction of a degree from the full banning of the evangelical genuine form of Christianity, just as Hitler demonstrated that satanic policy in his evil empire.

The message of Christ as preached by the first century evangelists was absolute and uncompromising; God had stepped into history in the person of Christ and there is only one name given for mankind to have any fellowship with God. "One Way Only!", was the message, and it was then, and is still today, an isolating message. Acts 3:19-21, 4:12. Once people have truly heard the message of Christ they will either accept it or hate the message and the messenger! Our Lord spoke of this in John 15:18 - 25.

In Peter's day that hatred of the unsaved, with its origin in the satanic nature of the Roman Empire at the time, had grown significantly and was felt as threatening the very life of the people within the churches. "At such times violence might overwhelm a community like the eruption of a desolating volcano. They were hated of all men for the sake of the name." (Stibbs, 1959, p58.) All who do their evangelistic work within a pagan society will know the hatred of the pagans who have rejected the message! We have the Lord's word on this!

**John 15:18 – 25.** *"18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.  
19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.  
20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.  
21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.  
22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.  
23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.  
24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.  
25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause."*

The formal persecution of Nero was yet to be started at the time of 1 Peter and 1 Timothy. 2 Peter is written as Peter awaits execution, under Nero's persecution, which was centered round Rome and was short, but bloody. 1 Peter records advance prophetic warning of the coming trials, and 2 Peter gives instructions from within the flames.

There are four references in 1 Peter to the "fiery trial" that the believers are about to undergo. 1 Peter 1: 6, 7, 3:13 -17, 4:12-19, 5:9. They were facing the lot of all minority groups within a majority culture. "They were living in an environment charged with dislike, misrepresentation and positive hostility, probably with explosions of violence". (Kelly, 1969, p 10.)

They faced in the 50-60s AD a smouldering fire and occasional outburst of hostility rather than systematic persecution, that would not start Empire wide until the last decade of the century, in the days when John wrote his works, and for the churches that Peter wrote they would face their first real trial during the days of the rule of the Governor Pliny over them in the first years of the second century. (Refer: Bainton, 1964, Chapter 4ff, Cranfield, 1958, p10ff, Ramsay, 1904, pp146ff, Frend, 1965, chapter 1ff, for discussions of this).

## **EARLY PERSECUTIONS OF THE CHURCH**

The earliest persecutions against the church were from the Jewish Sanhedrin. Early in Acts we find the religious authority of Judaism persecuting the individual believers by beatings, floggings, imprisonment and threats. The believers were spoken of as, "evil doers", Acts 2 : 12. Their challenge, and our own, was and remains, to be "not guilty" of the charge, but daily recognizing that we will be "set up" by religious servants of the enemy and are to take our condemnation, "as unto the Lord".

They were all urged to be ready to give an answer to every man that asked them the reason for their confidence / hope, Acts 3:15. They were to be ready to suffer for righteousness sake, Acts 3:14, or for the name of the Lord, Acts 4:14. Once the church was established in the Greek speaking, Roman ruled world the religious persecution gives way to political attacks, each different in each place. The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to share the suffering of the Lord. Acts 5:29-32, 40-42.

In Acts 16:16 - 40, the Apostles are charged with "causing disorder", and by trying to introduce customs that were unlawful for Roman citizens to follow. This was the prelude to things to come, as under Roman Law it was the legal charge that would lead to execution, especially after Emperor Worship was decreed to be done by all citizens annually from the early 90s.

In Acts 17:1- 15, at Thessalonica, " a more formal procedure was now required, and they accused their fellow citizens of welcoming strangers, who were a danger to public order, and of having in concert with them conspired to set up another Emperor, (The Lord – Kurios – Jesus), and thus been guilty of treason against the rightful Emperor and Imperial Law." (Ramsay, 1959, p 189). Ramsay notes that as the gospel spread around the Roman world the legal machinery of Rome was slow to identify the specific laws to bring against the church, and so the early apostles had about sixty years before there is a concerted persecution with a unified legal approach Empire wide.

Once the precedence was set by Nero in 64AD, from that point, there was a standard way of dealing with the church and it was used whenever a governor or emperor wished. In God's great grace and mercy the early church had almost until the 90s to prepare for empire wide pressures to begin, by which time the churches had access to all the little letters like the ones before us in the Pastoral and the General Epistles. (For discussion of this refer, Mastermann, 1912, pp22ff).

By Acts 18:1- 18, we are in about 52AD, and the current Roman legal response to arguments against the church on religious grounds, is clearly spelt out by Gallio, the Proconsul of the Roman Province of Achaia incorporating most of southern Greece. He notes that under Roman Law the religious practices of people are irrelevant, unless there is a specific crime being committed, or the religion was not "approved" or "legal". Christianity is still seen as a variety of Judaism, which was a legal religion and accepted, at least until 67-70 AD and the great Jewish Revolt in Judea.

During the riot at Ephesus, Acts 19:23ff, the town officials are not threatened by Paul's teaching and defend his right to preach his form of Judaism. Pagans were happy to add another god to their pantheon, and they were so confident of the history of Diana in the area that they did not see the very real threat that the Christian message truly posed.

The motivation of Demetrius at Ephesus is clear, and sheer economics was involved. If you make your money out of pagan idols your livelihood is threatened by the preaching of a religion that has no idols to make! The satanic counter attack is building by this point, but the satanic weakness of self interest and pride acts against the enemy at this time. It will take Satan until the late 80s to secure a stable and self centered satanic Emperor in Domitian to institute full Emperor Worship.

By Acts 24 we are getting close to the Neronian persecution start date in the early 60s. Nero is Emperor but was not actively involved in the State at this point, leaving much of the governing to others. Nero's passion for chariot racing and worse things kept him distracted long enough for the Apostles to achieve all that the Lord's Plan called for. The charges laid against Paul by the Sanhedrin's lawyer Tertullus states three specific charges.

Firstly that the apostle has caused disorder and sedition amongst the Jews of the Diaspora, secondly that he is the leader of the illegal sect of the Nazarenes. Thirdly that he profaned the Holy Place in Jerusalem. He has headed in the wrong direction under the Lord's grace, and will lose his case against Paul, for Roman arrogance will not make any distinction at all at this time between sects of Jews – as long as they obey the Law and pay their taxes.

The case hinges of Christianity being an illegal religion in Roman Law. If that is proved then the door opens for Christians to be persecuted officially as a group causing dissent by disregarding the law of Rome and not seeking correct permission to worship. The early church by keeping close to it's Jewish roots had identified itself as a "form" of Judaism, and as Judaism was a recognized religion they were legally able to preach their "variant" of Judaism.

The Sanhedrin's case was carefully laid. By making the court decide that Christianity was not covered by the permission granted to the Jewish faith, the Sanhedrin separated themselves formally from the church and made the church illegal, and therefore open to attack. All this is being played out in the early years of the 60s. It appears that the decision in this first trial was in Paul's favour, and he was freed to spend three more years of missionary activity until his final arrest. During these days he writes the first letter to Timothy and Titus, and possibly Hebrews.

Two events speed the debate and drive the decision against the church and make certain Paul and Peter's later deaths. Firstly, James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem is murdered in the Temple precincts around 62AD. This death signals a major change in the attitudes of the Jewish unbelievers against the Jewish Christian Church in their midst. It occurs against an increasingly militant spirit within the nation against Roman rule that led to the Jewish revolt in 66AD.

Secondly, in July 64AD, the great fire of Rome occurs. Nero seeks a group to blame when the citizens turn on him and point the finger in his direction. The best scapegoat group is one that is hated by most, and with the increasing impact of the gospel message and the division in synagogues and families it caused, the church proved the best target for Nero to use to take the heat off himself.

Peter, Paul, and a number of other church leaders were formally killed by crucifixion or beheading, and many more were imprisoned and used for sport by Nero, killed in the arena for the entertainment of the crowds, or burned alive as torches to light up his evening parties in his palace gardens.

So many were killed in this manner that the Roman historian Tacitus records, "an immense multitude were convicted, not so much of the crime of arson, as of hatred of the human race. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames. These served to illuminate the night when daylight failed. Nero had opened his garden for the spectacle, . . . while he mingled with the crowds in the dress of a charioteer, or drove about in a chariot. Hence even for criminals who deserve extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty that they were being destroyed." (Annals XV. 44. 6-8.)

Tacitus has no time for the Christians. Note his comment, that they "hated the human race". What he means is that they considered themselves to have the truth and everyone else to need their Saviour. This remains our position and it will lead to all the hatred against believers down the centuries. Can you see how unbelievers may think that Christians "despise" them? Seutonius, the other Roman historian of the time, refers to our faith as, "a new and wicked superstition" (Life of Nero. XVI. 2).

Later in the second century the Christian lawyer Tertullian makes a statement about an “Institutum Neronium”, by which Nero declared all Christians to be outlaws but this is the only reference to such a decree. (Ad Nationes XII). Tertullian was certainly in a place to discover such a decree, but even without it the precedent was set, and from this point onwards Christians were “fair game” for anyone wanting a target.

By the days of the Flavian emperors in the late 80s and 90s Christianity was persecuted as a belief system that indicated a fundamental disloyalty to the Empire. By this date the state had identified that Christ’s claim as Lord and God was absolute, and so a Christian owed allegiance to one above Caesar. This was not to be tolerated by Rome!

To prove loyalty to the Empire and Caesar by burning incense to the genius (god like quality) of Caesar was the proof of loyalty demanded of all in the Empire by this time. This was not possible for a Christian, for to say that Caesar was Lord (kurios) was to deny Christ, and this was underlined by the requirement to swear their oath of loyalty to the Empire and Emperor in the name of the pagan gods of Rome. As far as the Roman state was concerned to say that Jesus was Lord, was to deny Caesar, and to refuse to “go along with” the Roman gods was to undermine the State further!

By this date to be a Christian is to be a threat to the stability of the State; Christians have become viewed in the same category as a bandit and revolutionary. No specific crime needs to be proved, if they are Christians and persist in this position, after being given time to repent, they were to be killed. It is this situation that Peter is preparing the church for.

In many places on earth today this is the case still and may become the norm again sooner than we think with globalization and the eventual (prophesied by Daniel, the Lord, and John the Apostle in Revelation) demand for a one world religion that tolerates all faiths except the absolute one! The Romans would have accepted Christianity if it had not been for it’s exclusive claims! Mankind still has this satanic position.

Remember, Satan loves religion, for it tranquilizes people into thinking that they have done all they need for their society to be blessed and for them to be admitted into heaven. Satan delights in religions of all forms; indeed he loves anything that keeps a person from a living and transforming relationship with Christ. This is his goal for mankind.

Acts 4:12 remains the death warrant for all believers, and we must be ready to die for this as our ancestors in faith were. This remains our challenge! Peter’s words strengthen us for the last days I believe we enter as I write these words.

**DATE OF THE LETTERS**

Of this letter it is written, “there is no book of the New Testament which has earlier, better or stronger attestation. . . it was regarded as canonical from the time when canonical first began to have a meaning.” (Bigg, 1956, p 7, 15.) Having noted this the date that the scholars select as the probable dates for the letters of Peter depend more on their theology than on the facts of history!

Liberal scholars set a late date, as it enables them to remove Peter from the equation, while conservative scholars chose an earlier date for both letters.

Most scholars of the period date the letters to the early years of the decade of the 60s; the first letter being written before the Neronian persecution begins, and the second written at the height of the persecution as Peter awaits his death. A Liberal like Sidebottom, 1982, p99, dates the first letter at 90AD, the second at 130AD. Reike, 1964, p145, dates the second letter to around 90AD. Mastermann believed the first letter may even have been written after the Jewish temple had been destroyed citing 1:4, 2:4, 4:7, 17. (Mastermann, 1912, p 23). Even Sir William Ramsay believed the first letter may not have been written by Peter and dates it to around 80AD, seeing in it many parallels to Revelation (1956 edition, p282).

Yet even he contradicts this later in the same book, noting, “Christians suffered by being condemned as criminals, and not as Christians, their defence lay in a life above suspicion, 1 Peter 4 : 25”. (IBID, p 348.) This would be true in the decade of the 60s, but by the late 80s and 90s it was a crime to be a Christian.

The majority of good believing commentators date the first letter to around 64AD, with the second written from jail a few years after, before 67AD. Refer, Mounce, 1982, p5, Ironside, 1984, p 64, Reike, 1964, p 71, Kelly, 1969, p 30, Selwyn, 1952, p 60, Stibbs, 1957, p57.

There are some things we do not, and cannot at this distance, know about these letters. We do not know exactly when they were written and so we must be humble as we speculate about these things! Peter may have out lived Paul, and written his last letter after Paul’s death, but the evidence of history points otherwise. Both probably died within days of each other, as Nero would have wanted. Their deaths were separated only for the shock and fear impact upon the Christians left alive.

Farrar noted that Peter writes to some churches founded by Paul and would not have done so had Paul been alive. (Farrar, 1882, p 146.) Stibbs points out that Mark and Silvanus, Paul’s constant companions, would only be with Peter if Paul was already dead. (Stibbs, 1959, p 65-67.) Both men were finally in adjacent cells and shared mission fields also.

Church history records that Peter was crucified under Nero and that would put the dates for the two letters, if they are Peter's (as I believe) at before 67AD. The content of the letters gives us another clue as there are many parallels between Paul's letters and Peter's. Compare 2 Peter 2:3 with 1 Timothy 6: 5, and Titus 1:11. Compare 2 Peter 2:19, with 1 Corinthians 10:29, and Galatians 5:13, and 2 Peter 2:1 with Galatians 2:4. The problems he faces in the church even in the second letter are early ones, much closer to 1 Corinthians 6:12, 13 than even to John's writing 25 years later.

### **THEMES**

The first letter is clearly facing the issues of faith under pressure, and its key word is hope. The believers are encouraged to focus on the eternal life perspective on their present troubles. The Christian's perspective must always be eternal, if we are to be strong and stable, for our journey to towards heaven not focused on earth.

We have a task here but no continuing city here! We are called to do the work of evangelism, at our time and place in history but our hope and destiny is in heaven not upon the earth. The believers are called to reclaim the resources of their faith and see that in suffering they have the opportunity to share the experience of their Lord. Under pressures of persecution we become partakers of Christ's suffering (1 Peter 4:13 cf - Colossians 1:24), and in this there is learning that would not otherwise come in time, and a joy that will last throughout eternity!

"Saint Peter is bidding his readers look at their troubles in the light of their glorious destiny, and so to chart their lives, that is to say, on a large map". ( Selwyn , 1952, p 79.) The church was not to seek out persecution and not to set out to cause offence, but when the inevitable attacks came they were to stand firm and focus on the eternal issues at stake rather than their temporal lives. This remains our challenge!

In the midst of talk of suffering Peter emphasizes the sovereignty of God. In 1 Peter 1:2 and 2:9, he reminds us that God has his hand on history and that all that comes to us comes under the principle of 1 Corinthians 10:13. "It is the epistle for afflicted believers, a wilderness Epistle. It pictures the believers as journeying on from the place of the blood sprinkling to the inheritance in heaven, or from the cross to the glory. It pictures a pilgrim people, strangers passing through an unfriendly world, moving on to the land of promise." (Ironsides, 1984, p 10.)

Peter's great theme is the base of the hope of believers; the cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. His letter is a challenge to imitate Christ, to have a dynamic personal and living faith that stands under pressure, like a light house in the storm. "It was under the stress of persecution that the church entered into the fullness of her corporate life. The body of Christ learnt its unity in the school of suffering". (Mastermann, 1912, p 28.)

It is a strong call to hold the apostolic faith. With Jude Peter calls us all to hold the faith once delivered to the apostles and demonstrated in the church in Acts. The many parallels to Acts indicate Peter may have had an early copy of the book before him. As it was finished at Rome the church there would have made a copy, and so it is logical that he had access to this vital book of apologetics.

Note:

Evidence of human sinfulness, Acts 2:23, 3:14, 4:10, 5:30, cf 1 Peter 3:16.

The fore-ordained purpose of God, Acts 2:23, 4:28, cf 1 Peter 2:21, 3:17.

Fulfillment of prophecy, Acts 3:18, 24, 10:43, 1 Peter 1:10 12.

Resurrection and exultation, Acts 2:24, 31-36, 3:13,15, 4:10, 5:31, 10:40, cf 1 Peter 4:13, 14, 5:6, 10.

The means of redemption, Acts 2:38, 3:19, 26, 4:12, 5:31, cf 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

The stone rejected by the builders, Acts 4:11, cf 1 Peter 2:7.

No man is common or unclean, Acts 10:28, cf 1 Peter 2:17.

The Cross = tree, Acts 5:31, 10:39, cf 1 Peter 2:24.

Soul of the Lord was not left in Hades, Acts 2:24-32, cf 1 Peter 3 : 19.

Christ raised by the Father, Acts 2:32, 3:15, 4:10, cf 1 Peter 1:21.

God is no respecter of persons, Acts 10:35, cf 1 Peter 1:17.

This first letter also provides the definitive advice to all believers of all time as to how we conduct ourselves when the state turns on us and starts to persecute us. 1 Peter 2:13-17, with Romans 13 : 1-6, have become the "locus classicus for Christian citizenship". (Van Elderen in ZPEB, 1980, p725.)

These passages remain our standard. We are to follow them not the views of political activists. This remains our challenge!

The second letter, “like all second letters is corrective. In the first letter we hear the voice of the teacher. As a rule in second letters it is rather the voice of the prophet or exhorter who speaks”. (Ironside, 1984, p64.)

“The purpose of second Peter is to warn, encourage and instruct the churches to meet the new challenges that a latter age would thrust upon them”. (White in ZPEB, 1980, p 728.)

### **PETER THE MAN**

Peter was even in the early days the spokesman of the twelve. Matthew 15:15, 16:16,18:21, 19:27, Mark 8:29, 10:28, Luke 9:20, 12:41, 18:28. Others considered him the leader, for example, it was to him that the enquiry about the temple tax was made. Matthew 17:24. Even though James would take the lead later it is Peter who establishes the church in Jerusalem and is it's key preacher throughout the early chapters of Acts.

He retains his strongly Jewish perspective and practices the faith of his fathers, observing the times of prayer in the Temple, Acts 2:46, 3:1, and uses the Stoa of Solomon for his preaching as did other Rabbis. While some see this as a “limited view” (Van Elderen, ZPEB, p734), it is better seen as his correct observance of his traditions and a necessary thing given he was called to preach to his fellow Jews.

Peter's early life as a believer is recorded in Acts and other New Testament letters. He is in Jerusalem first, but sees Cornelius and leads him into the church as an equal, and later is a delegate from the first church to Antioch (Galatians 2 :9-14). In Acts 16 Paul is forbidden by the Holy Spirit from entering the areas that Peter records as the recipient of his first letter.

Could it be that Paul was not allowed to go there because the Lord had Peter as the evangelist in mind to visit the area? We cannot know for sure but it certainly seems logical. In 1 Corinthians 1:12, there is a Petrine party in the city, indicating that the Apostle Peter may have visited Corinth or at least locals had visited him somewhere. It is a church tradition that Peter reached Rome around the mid 50s of the first century, and that he worked with the predominantly Jewish churches there.

Moffatt believes he was a survivor of the first persecution of Nero. He notes, “there seems no crucial objection, so far as internal evidence goes, to the acceptance of the homily as it stands, viz, as a pastoral letter sent by Peter from Rome during the seventh decade of the first century.” (Moffatt, 1963, p 87). I disagree, but we will only be 100% sure in heaven.

Ironside also believes Peter may have outlived Paul from the internal evidence of the second letter, which he notes, “has been accepted by the church since the second century at least, and by many reliable witnesses from the first.” (Ironside, 1984, p 64). “Paul was in all probability already with the Lord when Peter wrote, or else he was enduring his last imprisonment just prior to his martyrdom; for Peter mentions ‘all his epistles’ as being in circulation already.” (Ironside, 1984, p 63,).

Farrar follows the early church tradition and it tells a different story, although we must observe again that we do not know which one is true. Farrar tells the story (he refers to it as a “legend”) as the church records it of Peter's death. “On seeing his wife led to execution he rejoiced at her journey homewards and addressing her by name called to her in a voice full of cheerful encouragement, ‘Oh remember the Lord!’ He was executed on the same day as St Paul. They parted on the Ostian Way, and then Peter was led to the top of the Janiculum, where he was crucified, . . . .at his own request head downwards because he held himself unworthy to die in the same manner as his Lord.” (Farrar, 1884, p114. Also refer to Eusebius Ecclesiastical History, II, 25, 5 - 8 for the earliest surviving account of this tradition).

### **THE RECIPIENTS OF THE FIRST (AND POSSIBLY THE SECOND) LETTER**

This first letter was an epistle that was, “the child of many tears and much sorrow” (Meyer, 1953, p9). It was written most likely from Rome, as we have seen above, although some speculate that Egypt was it's place of origin! (Noted in Kelly, 1969, p 237). Rome was commonly referred to as Babylon by the early church. (Mastermann, 1912, p 32 who records comments by Clement, and Lightfoot).

Jewish converts, possibly from the day of Pentecost, carried the gospel into the regions mentioned by Peter well before any specific missions were launched. Peter's visit to the region may be dated by comparing Romans 15:19, 20, with Acts 16: 6, 7. “Because the Christian mission was already going forward in Bithynia and parts of Asia prosperously and peaceably, and it was undesirable that St Paul should build upon another man's foundations. No great boldness would be involved in the surmise that this work was under the direction of St Peter himself or of St Peter and St John.” (Selwyn, 1952, p 45).

“Pilgrims, chapmen, and traders of all kinds, soldiers, subordinate officials, all played a part in the dissemination of the gospel, and there was probably no corner of the empire where Christianity had not been heard within a very few years.” (Bigg, 1956, p 72,73.) When the order of the churches is looked at in terms of the Roman roads we may even have the route that the messenger took with the letter. “An excellent road ran from the Cilician Gates northwards through Cappadocia and Galatia to Amisus on the Euxine, probably the first city on that coast to receive the gospel”. (Selwyn , 1952, p 46.)

Mastermann notes, "the order in which they are enumerated probably represents the itinerary of the bearer of the epistle who may be supposed to have landed in Sinope, . . . missionaries from the churches of Syria and Cilicia probably found their way into the Province at an early date." (IBID, p 15, 16.)

The impact of the gospel on the provinces mentioned was significant for within fifty years when Pliny writes of the problems with the Christians in the area he reports to the Emperor Trajan that the temples are empty due to the spread of the gospel message. (Refer Ramsay, 1904, pp146ff)

"Some synagogues probably went over to Christianity in a body, in other cases a part would secede and this part would exhibit a vertical section of the parent group from top to bottom". (Bigg, 1956, p 71.) The recipients were a mixed group, as it must be remembered that every synagogue had it's Greek and local dialect speaking "god fearers", as well as proselytes. (Refer to Selwyn , 1952, p 44.)

"We have here distinct evidence of a bold and extensive mission larger in scale than any of the journeys of St Paul. . . . Silvanus is to visit them all, in person, or by deputy, and to send copies of the epistle everywhere. The object was to establish and confirm the churches, to bring them into touch , comfort them, and so pave the way for a further advance." (Bigg, 1956, p 69.)

**THE LANGUAGE AND AUTHORSHIP OF FIRST PETER**

Like all letters of the New Testament this book is attacked by the liberal critics (who always call themselves "the scholars") but the evidence is not for them it is against them. Tradition considered this first letter the letter of Peter from the beginning. As Guthrie notes, "the traditional view which accepts the claims of the epistle to be apostolic is more reasonable than any alternative hypothesis". (Guthrie, 1962, p 114).

Eusebius records the doubts of some about the book but both letters were accepted by the church fathers who were a lot closer to events than the nineteenth century German critics who reject these letters. "The actual arguments against the traditional authorship are not nearly as strong as has been made out." (Cranfield, 1958, p 7). "The onus probandi rests with those who assail or suspect these books, rather than with those who accept them". (Plummer, 1896, p 15.)

The major attack centers on the Greek of this letter compared against the Greek of the second. Even Guthrie asks, "the question must be posed, whether the author of first Peter could have written second Peter and the verdict given by the majority is in the negative." (Guthrie, 1962, p 148.) If this is so today, what is the solution?

The Greek certainly is different. "First Peter is beautiful Greek, second Peter is Greek as though the writer was looking up everything in a lexicon. First Peter is magnificent in the way it flows. Second Peter moves along awkwardly. How could they possibly be written by the same man? 1 Peter was almost certainly written through an amanuensis, 2 Peter was doubtless written by the apostle himself, who was unfamiliar with the language." (Criswell, 1975, p 11.)

Was Peter unfamiliar with the Greek language? A great deal is made of the statement in Acts 4:13, that Peter was and "unlettered fisherman". "Such a letter could not have been written by him, the illiterate fisherman, if he had lived to be a hundred". (Beare, 1947, p24.) Even Guthrie expresses doubts about Peter's Facility in the Greek language" (Guthrie, 1962, p 99.) Reike is more blunt, "the unlettered Galilean fisherman Peter would hardly have been the master of this Greek style". (Reike, 1964, p 70.)

Galilee was however a bilingual area and Peter would have had to have elementary Greek to trade in fish! It is now thirty years since he has been a fisherman and he has certainly be moving almost solely in a Greek speaking world where he would have had lots of opportunity to learn the language to a basic, even advanced level. The word "Unlettered" in Acts 4:13, does not mean stupid or simple, it means not a university graduate! The liberals in their desperation to down grade Scripture down play Peter's intelligence and they have no warrant to!

But where does the beautiful style come from? Perhaps it comes from his companion at the time, Silvanus, the scribe used by Paul also as an amanuensis (or writer who helps form the thoughts in the right words for the occasion). Beare refers to the amanuensis theory as, "a device of desperation". (Beare, 1947, p 183.) We must ask, is it simply a logical conclusion? It was the normal way for formal letters to be written at this time.

Jerome, the early church father felt there may have been two literary helpers that worked with Peter to write the first letter. This was a common practice in the ancient world, and would make sense for a man who was fluent in conversational Greek, and preaching, but getting the written form right would benefit from the assistance of a trained writer like the scribe Silvanus. Jerome is a lot closer to the time than the later speculators.

This man had worked with Paul on at least two of his letters and is likely the humble co-worker behind this first letter of Peter's. "It is reasonable to attribute to him the refinement of Greek grammar and style and the literary vocab while, at the same time recognizing in the letter the message, personality and apostolic authority of Peter." (Cranfield , 1958, p 8.)

The similarity of Peter's language in the letters to his preaching in Acts has been noted by several commentators. Farrar notes, "the style of St Peter in this epistle resembles in many particulars the style of his recorded speeches. It is characterized by the fire and energy which we should expect to find in his form of expression." (Farrar, 1882, p 123.)

Peter knows the works of Paul well and quotes or alludes to a number of Paul's letters. There are eleven references to Romans, ten to Ephesians, and 8 to James letter. Peter is not a simple quoter of others as Farrar notes, "the originality of St Peter is not only demonstrated by the sixty hapax legomena (only use of a word in the Greek New Testament) of his short letter, but also by his modification of many of St Paul's thoughts in accordance with his own immediate spiritual gift." (Farrar, 1882, p 132.)

The form the letter takes gives rise to speculation as to its original purpose. It has an immediacy and power that indicates its source was a powerful sermon that has been recorded for the benefit of all the churches. Most believe it was written out as a baptismal sermon and circulated for use at baptisms, as it is appropriate to mark the start of a believer's walk with the warnings about the trials that may await them.

Whatever the source of Peter's material, an immediacy and urgency is apparent as we read his words. Baptism is certainly in view and chapter 1:3 - chapter 4:11 may be the text of a message Peter gave for a baptismal service or at Easter time, but there are many commands and exhortations in this letter that indicate it has the wider church membership as its intended audience not just new believers at baptism.

Whatever formed the original message the letter takes this and strongly urges the young believer to take seriously the grace they have received and urges all to loving steadfastness in the midst of trial. Mastermann identifies a three point sermon here; holding the hope of the inheritance, following the example of Christ, and the certainty of God's eventual justice. (Mastermann, 1912, p26.)

One of the interesting features is Peter's humility throughout the letter. He "keeps himself well in the background and makes no parade of the apostolic status he assumes". (Stibbs, 1959, p 31.) Peter is always aware of his place to be obedient to every command he gives to us. Many who are leaders speak only of what others must do, they use the word "you" often, but for Peter it is the word "we/us" that is the important one. Look up the verses around the following. 1 Peter 1:3, 2:24, 3:18, 4:17. "Behind the 'us' of 1 Peter lies the authoritative witness of the original disciples". (Selwyn, 1952, p 28.) This remains our challenge! Will we be apostolic? Jude 3.

#### **THE LANGUAGE AND AUTHORSHIP OF SECOND PETER**

"No New Testament document had a longer or tougher struggle to win acceptance than second Peter". (Kelly, 1969, p 224.) "It is the most problematic of all the New Testament Epistles because of the doubts regarding its authenticity and because internal evidence is considered by many to substantiate these doubts". (Guthrie, 1962, p 137).

These two quotes are indicative of many comments about the second letter. How can we be sure about this letter? Is it genuine or is it a second century fake that should have never got into the Bible? For this latter question is raised by the liberal critics! We believe it is by Peter and that it is Holy Scripture, but do we have a good case?

The style of the letter is that of Peter. It is vivid and powerful, full of spiritual insights and practical throughout. Farrar notes, "it is so marked by unity and coherence, this remarkable little letter which the church could ill afford to lose, and which is full of impassioned warning and eloquent exhortation." (Farrar, 1882, p 183.)

There was a clear difference between the two letters that was recognized by the early fathers of the church. Jerome placed it in the Vulgate translation but noted the difference in style, character and content. Differences were noted but they were not considered to be "fatal differences" (Green, 1968, p 22.) Some early fathers found it hard to accept but "none felt it to be spurious, in spite of the hesitancy which existed over its reception." (Guthrie, 1962, p 142, also refer, Green, 1968, p 15.)

The style was certainly different. Note the following comments by Greek scholars. "The Greek of second Peter is grandiose, it is rather like baroque art, almost vulgar in its pretensionism and effusiveness. Pedantic words such as rhoizedon, and cumbersome phrases, such as hyperonka mataiotes phthengomenoi, abound." (Green, 1968, p 16.)

"It is highly coloured, effusive, and pompous. It slips readily into iambic rhythms, its choice of words is bookish and artificial and its constructions laboured." (Kelly, 1969, p 236).

"There is a rugged tautology in the Greek of the second epistle very different from the smoothness of the first." (Farrar, 1882, p 186.) Even though Farrar was unsure as to who its author was he noted that "no-one can read it without recognition of its power. (IBID, p 218, 219.) Like Farrar, Michael Green believes in the power of the letter and sees that the verbose style may be a form of Asiatic Greek that preferred that style. (Green, 1969, p 18.)

This may be correct but it makes more sense to see Peter reaching for his lexicon or asking advice about words; this is, I believe, this second is a letter that he wrote without the help of the professional scribe and linguist Silvanus!

It is still viciously attacked by the liberal critics, as one would expect, given the content! Remember this issue when you see a passage of Scripture attacked. What is it speaking of? Liberals do not like being nailed in their sins and they will attack the most powerful texts! This letter warns believers in terms that make Satan uneasy, for he doesn't want prepared believers, for he wants tranquilized ones. This letter is so different from the spurious letters of the second century that it is in this author's opinion clearly a work of the first century, and I believe from Peter after he is jailed!

Note the words of the attackers of Peter's authorship of this letter, for their words betray them.

"Here we find the words of a second century author who writes under the name of Peter, modestly employing the apostles name in order to discredit views which he felt certain were unapostolic, . . . . The discrepancies of language and thought are too well marked to allow of both homilies coming from the same author". (Moffatt, 1963, p 173-174.)

"Undeniably the Epistle presents the apostle Peter as it's author yet it is reasonable to suppose that a follower of Peter composed the writing in the name of this great man". (Reike, 1964, p 143.)

"The author certainly represents himself as the apostle, . . . . recalling his presence at the transfiguration and his receipt of a private communication from the Lord about his immanent death 1 : 14." (Kelly , 1969, p 235.)

Bigg, 1956, p 79, calls him a "forger". At least he is honest with his views!!! He goes on, Peter " was a married, uneducated labourer. Such a man always bears the stamp of his class. The gospels paint him as a man of slow understanding but strong convictions." (IBID, p 54.)

"Finally when the strongly Hellenistic language and imagery of second Peter are considered it becomes extremely difficult to ascribe this epistle to Peter, the Galilean fisherman". ( Reike, 1964, p 143, 144.)

What arrogance these men have! They have pigeon-holed Peter as a fisherman, and in their limited experience all fishermen are stupid, and unscholarly, therefore Peter is unable to be bilingual or learn good Greek over the thirty years that have passed since the Gospel days!

What was the Early Church's view of a work written by another man claiming it was by someone else? Even though there was some acceptance of a work written, as if it came from a great person, such works were always considered second class.

As Guthrie notes, "no advocate of a pseudonymous origin for 2 Peter has been able to give a wholly satisfactory account of the motive behind it." (Guthrie, 1962, p 169.)

Also Green, 1968, p 30. "The early church was not unconcerned whether the letters were genuine or not, as is proved by the controversy over admittance into the canon. Nevertheless, the fact remains that our conventions about copyright were not those of the first century." (Sidebottom, 1982, p 100.) Pseudapigraphy (pretending to write in another's name) was frowned upon, even though "different standards of literary proprietorship prevailed in those days." ( Green, 1968, p 32.)

The so called "Acts of Paul and Thekla" was dismissed as spurious by the church, and, "it was into a church exercising this sort of discrimination that we are asked to believe 2 Peter was surreptitiously inserted. I find it very hard to believe!" (Green, 1968, p 33.)

The Old Testament quotations in 2 Peter are all from Isaiah, Psalms, and Proverbs, all of which are quoted in 1 Peter. This is a letter that appears very different from the second century fakes, it has power and purpose, and any differences can be explained by the difference of purpose to the first letter, and the situation from which it came.

This is the last words of the apostle as he awaited death; it's power is the Holy Spirit's as he moved upon Peter. As a Jewish writer he draws upon Jude's work, who as his fellow Jewish apostle, and now martyr was both well known to him and who had thought the same way. There is nothing sinister about the use of Jude, indeed it is expected as he is the first martyr of the 60s and sets the standard for faithfulness unto death. (Refer to Sidebottom, 1982, pp67-69, and Guthrie, 1962, pp147ff).

Peter was bilingual, as all Galileans had to be to work. He had a Jewish name Cephas, but was known by his Greek one, as was his brother Andrew, a telling fact that indicates he could converse freely in Kione Greek. For a discussion of this refer to the following. Bulloch, 1981, p 7, p105, also, Stibbs, 1959, p 24, 25, 67, and, Kelly, 1969, p 31.

A fragment of a scroll from cave seven at Qumran appears to quote 2 Peter 1:15. If this is proved it indicates that the letter was known in Jewish circles well before 135AD. White sums up the case for the letter to be Peters. "The early church showed more care and suspicion in regard to the authorship of 2 Peter than almost any other epistle. Although most of the doubts had ceased by the end of the fourth century, . . . . the evidence supports the Petrine authorship." (ZPEB, Vol 4, p 727).

With this certainty let us open these two letters and let the Holy Spirit bring them to life for us and strengthen us are they have strengthened all previous generations.

**1 PETER CHAPTER 1****VERSES 1 - 2**

**“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. 2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace unto you and peace be multiplied.”**

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

This is the first letter of the “rock man”, for that is the meaning of “Peter” (Hebrew - Kefa, Greek - Cephas). Peter was called Simon by his parents, but it is the name the Lord gave him (Matt 4:18, John 1:42), that he uses now, as it reminds him and others that they have strength and purpose in life only if they are established on the rock. The “Rock” is Christ.

Peter is writing officially as the apostle of Christ. He is one of the twelve and it is with the authority of God's appointed man to establish the earthly church that he writes this. It was Peter who preaches the first sermon to establish the church on the day of Pentecost, and as the Lord honoured him by appointing him to this service, so we must take his words here, written in the Holy Spirit's power, with the authority over our lives that they truly have!

His words are to be the “sheet anchor in the trials of life”, (Kelly, 1969, p 39), not only for those addressed, but to all believers through history.

Peter is the apostle to the Jews, as Paul was to the Gentiles. Galatians 2:7-8. The verses that follow are addressed to the Jewish believers of the Roman Provinces listed but they stand for us all. They were “elect of God”, and so are we.

The Jewish believers who received this letter would have immediately seen Peter's reference here. It is to Exodus 19:5, 6, and in chapter two of this letter, verses 9, 10, Peter will identify that the church has a superior place in God's election to that occupied by Israel. The Jewish people were “elected” or chosen, called out from the nations around them to be a kingdom of priests to show in their national and individual lives the holiness of God and the plan of God (refer below to discussion of 1 Peter 2:9,10).

They were to be a beacon in a dark world; a people who separated themselves out to God's service. Matthew 5:14-16. This is what the biblical doctrine of election is all about. Election is God's choice, based on grace, of people to magnify his name. Election is always for service in the plan of God. It is based on and within God's holy character and is never spoken of as an act in violation of man's free will, for in scripture the two concepts are taught and placed alongside each other. In this doctrine eternity touches time; for God's Plan meets our Free Will, and we are rightly baffled at it.

When man, in his arrogance tries to work this out he develops theologies that go beyond revelation, and try to explain what cannot be understood fully by men this side of eternity. We are creatures of space and time and this is one of those doctrines that transcends that present reality. As Exodus 19 makes clear, so also the gospel record of the Lord's words on the subject make clear, man must exercise his free will, for which he is responsible; we must be obedient, and follow the Lord's instructions. Service is the result of a biblical understanding of election, not arrogant self satisfaction!

Mastermann (1912, p 60 - 63) makes several good points in the following observation on this topic. “It was election to a trusteeship of spiritual blessings. And the Christian, by being grafted into the body of the Christian church, is chosen as an agent through whom God may fulfil His purpose of blessing for the world. . . . Election is national rather than individual, for service rather than for happiness”.

“We are a people elect for the service of God. This is certainly a larger and nobler conception of election than the intensely individualistic conception of it which our protestant theology has made us familiar. . . . It is neither the arbitrary exercise of omnipotence to over-ride human free will nor mere foreknowledge of the direction that man's free will will take. It is the foreknowledge of a Father who both foresees the direction along which his child's character will develop and by wise training fosters what he foresees, . . . The purpose of election, obedience and union with Christ.”

When we look at words like election we must see them in the Jewish context in which the apostles used them, not in a reformation context that is often misleading. The reformers tried to tie up doctrines in a way that would produce secure arguments against the Roman Catholic Church, and they erred often by trying to tie up things that cannot be tied up by words that are time and space limited.

We simply cannot understand fully how free will and God's sovereignty can be reconciled, but that is only because we cannot think as God thinks! We cannot know what it is like for God, who is outside time and space and sees the past as he sees the future! We must be humble on these matters, but see what Peter here means for it is a doctrine he wants the believers to sing about. Do you sing about election believer? If you don't you do not know the biblical doctrine as the apostles understood it.

“Election is based squarely on the wisdom and knowledge of God. It is fruitless at this point to quibble about whether or not God elects on the basis of knowing ahead of time what man will choose to do. What we do know is that although God's decrees are absolutely sovereign they do not in any way over-ride the freedom of man to decide.” (Mounce, 1982,

p 9.)

Election opens the plan of God for us, and Peter is going to base the stability of all believers on this fact. We are chosen to be part of a plan that was formulated in eternity past, and it is sure to succeed, victory has already been foreseen, it is certain! We are part of this plan and we can be secure in pressure, and secure and stable even through death, for the Lord is in control and the plan will end with his victory.

Peter develops the rest of the chapter around three words here. The election/foreknowledge of God means we are secure, for he has foreseen everything and provision is there for all we will ever need. Verses 3 - 11 cover this. The second word is sanctification. The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life is the topic of verses 13 - 17. The third word is obedience (also a word from Exodus 19). We are called to obey and with obedience there is security and blessing.

The order of the Provinces mentioned probably reflects the route that the bearer of the letter took as he travelled around and expounded the contents.

We are members of the Royal Family of God (1 Peter 2:9-10), in a place of blessing and honour through faith in the work of the Lord for us on the cross, but Peter draws attention to God's work and provision rather than our response. He reminds us that we stand on God's character not the strength of our faith. He reminds us that we are believers because of God's work within us and for us, not any work or power we have.

As we have been saved by grace, so he reminds us that we are to grow in service and holiness (sanctification) by the power of the Holy Spirit and that we are to be obedient to the Word and let the Holy Spirit have his way with us. The Spirit's work will always lead to obedience to the revealed word and will of God.

This is an important principle to see in our days, where Pentecostal excess may cloud the issues of what is Christian maturity and what is not. Christian growth will always be seen in obedience to the revealed word of God. A disobedient Christian is not a spiritual Christian no matter what apparent spiritual gifts they manifest. A holy life is the proof of the Holy Spirit's work not singing loudly with a spiritual look on the face in the church. It is our obedience in the world that marks us out as obedient believers not our participation in worship services of the local church!

As people scattered throughout the world the Jewish believers may have felt isolated from their people and culture at times, yet God was working it out for blessing, for through them the pagans of all the provinces would come to know of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Often we think in terms of our earthly positions, cultures, and nationhood, yet Peter reminds us that we are all like these people, away from our true home, our true place where we have identity, for that for the believer is heaven. We are citizens of heaven first, ambassadors of Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:20. We have on earth no continuing city, Hebrews 13:14. Do we live like this or are we indistinguishable from our pagan neighbours? Prosperity on earth was never an apostolic doctrine, rather it was a pagan belief!

It is the blood of Christ that has saved us. We stand upon the blood brought ground of salvation, and it is his blood that is our security, so let us stand upon it, knowing that we have had our sins completely dealt with and are cleansed. We have been, as they were in ancient Israel, sprinkled with the blood and so are declared by God to be safe and secure in his love, rather than being under his condemnation. Romans 8:1. Also refer to Exodus 12, where the account of the first Passover is recounted by Moses. It is this that is in Peter's mind here, for we are as safe in the time of trial as the Israelites were on the night that the angel of death flew over Egypt. We are safe under the sprinkled blood.

If it is our time to die then we will glorify God in that death, but if we are to live then we are to stand tall, for we are to glorify the Lord in our confidence in all situations for we are part of his plan. Psalms 69:20, 116:15.

The result of this mental attitude is always the fruit of the Holy Spirit, of which Peter picks one here, Peace, to stand for them all. Peace is the Jewish greeting "shalom", and grace the Greek greeting "charis", but these words are more than a formal greeting by Peter to the two majority cultures.

They are words that remind us of God's provision and God's plan for us. "The rabbis connected the greeting 'shalom', with the peace of the Messiah (Numbers 6:26, Isaiah 9:6, 52:7). Jesus had given it deep significance. On his lips it is not a mere pious wish, but his gift which as Messiah he was able to bestow. Mark 5:34, Luke 10:5, John 14:27, 16:33, 20: 9, 21, 26. (Cranfield, 1958, p 18.)

The Lord himself makes a strong point about the fruit of people's lives. No fruit in the life = no position in the vine! If the Holy Spirit' fruit is missing in the life the person cannot be sure of their standing in Christ, for the Spirit will always produce Christ-likeness, and holiness. Refer to Matthew 7:15-23, and John 15: 1 -14.

## APPLICATION

### A. PERSONAL

Do we praise God for his Character, Person and Plan, and the stability this reality gives us? Peter begins his letter by reminding us that we stand upon the strength of God's character and plan not the power of our faith in Him. Let us daily praise him for his character, his grace and his plan.

Do we daily sing about our election and worship him in our service for him in the world, as well as our songs on a Sunday? If our worship does not overflow into our walk in daily life our faith is hypocrisy. Without application of the Word of God to life we are play actors with our faith! Let us be obedient to the Word we hear and read, and let us moment by moment let the Holy Spirit loose in our lives, that his power might strengthen our weakness and his wisdom might guide us through the revealed Word of God to serve the Lord where he has called us.

Let us be aware of the terrible arrogance of much theology, and be careful how we read the Holy Scriptures, letting them teach and correct us, not read in our theology, and in effect, tell the scriptures what they say! Let us be taught and corrected and be humble in matters we cannot answer until we see him face to face.

We, like Israel are in a diaspora - we are away from our home, and we are to be servants in ambassadorship. Let us not get too comfortable here! Let us always be ready to move house, city, or country for our only true country is heaven! If we are attached to our house, car, and city and country we need to re-examine our priorities, and discover again our role here on earth. 2 Corinthians 5:20.

The Lord leaves us here only to serve him, and if we are not doing that he may take us home early! The only safe place to be is doing what God wants you to do, where he wants you to be. Do not assess risks as men assess risks, assess danger purely in terms of being in God's will (safe) or out of it (unsafe), doing God's work or evangelism and teaching, (safe) or failing in your role as an ambassador (unsafe) and in danger of removal in accordance with John 15.

## **APPLICATION**

### **B. PASTORAL**

Let us be sure to preach the Holy Word of God in its Jewish context rather than in the theological context that we were taught at our training college. We stand on the faith once delivered to the apostles, Jude 3, not on the faith as interpreted by Popes or Protestants!

Do we remind our flocks enough that God has saved them for service! Is the reason we have so many lazy Christians in the church that we as pastors have not reminded our people of these things? We are all here on earth to serve him in giving the gospel to the lost, and we are all to have holy lives, so that our lives do not create a conflict with the message we are proclaiming.

We cannot preach salvation to the lost if our lives are full of mischief, arrogance, and other gross or subtle sin. We are to be holy, set apart for God, not distracted by the details of life, by money, power, social position, work, promotion, or family and national activities. This mental attitude and behavioural life style begins by the example of the pastor in the pulpit. Are we giving this message to our (the Lord's) people?

We are training ambassadors for heavens court when we teach the scriptures in the local church. Let us, as pastors judge ourselves by that standard! How well are our people operating as the Lord's ambassadors in their community?

What is the impact of the local church you pastor upon the community? Do people associate your church with evangelism? Do they associate church with holiness, and the fruit of the Holy Spirit, so that they are drawn to you? Or do they associate your church with pious hypocrisy?

The Lord holds us, as pastors responsible for the outcomes of our bible teaching. Let us examine the fruits of our labours in this matter! If the results are not there, let us examine our preaching program and all training we do in the church, for these are the results God demands of us!!!

## **CONCLUSION**

There is much, "unprofitable controversy around this word election. Some men have seen nothing else in the Bible, while others have hardly acknowledged it to be there at all. Then some have laboured to reconcile to their understanding the two truths of God's sovereignty and the freedom of the human will. Not content to believe that in God's economy there may be things beyond their measure. . . . Christians are called 'elect', chosen to be saints, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. The election is maintained when their lives are constantly hallowed by the influence of the Holy Spirit, while in Christ they have not only an example of perfect obedience after which they must strive, but a redeemer whose blood can cleanse them from all the sins from which their most earnest strivings will not set them free. . . . Limited human knowledge is what we have, . . . Men gaze upon this as they do upon the wrong side of a piece of tapestry as it is woven, . . . for full knowledge we have to wait to the end. . . . He who would rejoice over God's election, must feel and constantly foster within himself the sanctification of the Holy Spirit." (Lumby, 1893, pp 7 – 14.)

**DOCTRINES**

ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION

GOD: CHARACTER OF GOD

SANCTIFICATION

SPIRITUALITY

MATURITY – SPIRITUAL GROWTH

**MATURITY: CROSS TO THE CROWN**

**MATURITY - SIGNS OF MATURITY (Romans 15:1-15)**

GRACE

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

APOSTLE

PEACE

**PARAPHRASE**

“Peter, the man built on the rock, the one sent out to lead you by the Lord, to those of you who feel like stranger in a strange land, scattered through the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. You are God’s elect, in that place because of God’s character (foreknowledge), through the holiness that the Holy Spirit produces, to make you obedient to God’s revelation, for you are secure under the sprinkled blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. May the fruit of the Holy Spirit; all that God is free to do for you in Christ Jesus, and his peace of mind and stability of spirit; be multiplied within the lives of you all.”

**VERSES 3 - 5**

**“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled. and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.”**

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

Note the triumph filled and joyful start to these verses - “Blessed, or praised be God”. This is the start of the common prayer of the Jewish people through to this very day. Peter is drawing on his cultural heritage to find voice for his praise of God for the grace received by the believers in relationship with Messiah Y’Shua.

God’s character is again in view here. We praise him for who he is, and in this third verse it is for his mercy. This is an appropriate aspect of the character of God to meditate upon when you face pressure and possible persecution, even suffering and death. For in the midst of your suffering you are able to remind yourself of the unchanging character of God and claim the promises of God’s Word relating to this aspect of his nature. God is great (overwhelming in his magnitude) in his mercy; He feels our pain, sees our suffering and loves and cares for us in the midst of it. Worship transforms suffering into worship. Isaiah 61:1-3, Philipians 3:10.

The Bible does not say that believers will escape from suffering, but it does say we will be kept in the midst of them, and that we will never lose God’s loving caring presence. We do not speak to an abstract “god”; we speak to a loving father who has made himself known in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why we may have confidence in the midst of suffering, for we know him, and through him we know the love and plan of God. Hebrews 4:14-16.

Hope, in the biblical sense of confidence, is the theme here. How can we have hope in the face of what many would call disasters? By seeing all things in and through the character of the God who is revealed through the scriptures. “Hope is

the theme of this whole section, though the actual word does not occur again, the idea runs through it like a golden thread that holds it together.” (Cranfield, 1958, p 16.)

Just as it holds this chapter together, so hope should hold the church together under pressure, but it can only do that, if believers know the Lord’s character, his promises, his revealed plan, and encourage each other with these things.

We have a living hope, for we are in union with and daily fellowship with a living God. “A living hope is one that is never extinguished by untold circumstances, just as living waters flow fresh from a perennial spring”. (Selwyn, quoted in Reinecker, 1980, p 398.)

Remember also, that to call Jesus “Lord” (kurios) was to call him God. He is Lord of life, because he rose from the dead. The resurrection is the key doctrine of Christianity. Our faith rests upon the empty tomb, for he is lord and defeater of sin and of death itself. No resurrection = no Christianity!

Peter never forgot what he had done at the Lord’s trials, and he never forgot that the Lord had restored him to service. Too many believers are stuck in past failure, and they have not heard that we have a forgiving and restoring God. The Lord is not restricted with what he can do with us because of our past failures, for he has made perfect provision for forgiveness. Even 1000 years before Peter, David sang of that in Psalm 103:8-16.

Peter’s sins that terrible night nearly killed him with guilt later, but the Lord restored him, and the Lord can restore all those who come to him. The Lord receives us, he welcomes us, for he has fully provided for all our sins and they are no longer an issue between us and him, for he has removed them! Acts 10:43, Romans 15:7. “The Lord forgave his sinning and sorrowing servant, and through his (the Lord’s) forgiveness, he (Peter) lived again”. (Lumby, 1893, p 18.)

We were “born again”, or born with power from above. We have had a natural birth into a world that is dominated by sin, but through the work of the Lord, in accordance with the plan of God, we have been born again, through faith, into a new life that is eternal and has with it blessings that are neither tainted nor destroyed, nor are they limited by time or space.

Peter refers to our eternal inheritance as something that is undefiled, unfading, and imperishable. These words indicate an eternal reward for the obedient believer that is absolutely secure from all the things that decay peoples so called “wealth” down here on earth. We are urged to be people of eternity and infinity – the new creation, not hide bound to the old world of space and time that is fading by the day.

The word “unfading” is used of flowers and takes us back to the words of the Lord during the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 6:19 -21, 28-34. Read these verses and reflect back on Peter’s words here in his letter. “The three verbal adjectives indicate that the inheritance is ‘untouched by death’, ‘unstained by evil’, ‘unimpaired by time’; it is compounded of immortality, purity and beauty”. (Beare, quoted in Reinecker, 1980, p 398.) These are the things we should be searching after in daily life are they not? Paul urges us to do so in Philippians 4:6-9.

**Philippians 4:6-9.** “6. *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*  
 7. *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*  
 8. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*  
 9. *Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*”

The verb ‘tereo’, to keep, in verse 5 of Peter’s letter is the reminder to us that not only is our eternal reward kept for us, but that we are also kept (present passive participle of the verb phroureo) by the power of God. The reward is reserved for us, it has our name on it, and no-one can take it away from us, and we are securely “kept” by the power of God until the moment when we pass over from time to eternity and receive our reward.

This is the Christian conception of death that needs to be taught strongly and proclaimed for all to hear and see. The perfect tense of the verb indicates that the matter is settled, it has already been done by God for us and it will last forever. We are kept or better guarded by God’s power. The verb phroureo is a military one and indicates the security with which we are kept. The passive voice of the verb in the Greek language indicates that the subject receives the action of the verb, that is, we do nothing, we are guarded by God’s power, we receive this, it is his grace provision for us.

The present tense here means that the action of God in guarding us is on-going. We are at all times kept by the Lord’s armed guard right up until the moment that it is our time to leave this planet and return to our true home in heaven, and there collect our reward for service well done.

The word salvation here is used in the sense of “deliverance” for it refers to those who are already saved and secure in God’s kingdom, with eternal reward there for them! We will be in the times of persecution, delivered by the Lord and physically live to serve the Lord again on earth, or we will be delivered through death to our eternal reward.

Peter is spelling this out to us indicating that the believers only thought is to be on their active service in the battles they face at the moment, leaving the results with the Lord who loves and protects him or her. For similar uses of the word refer to Romans 13:11, and Hebrews 1:14, 9:28.

What all this means is that the believer can rejoice in the midst of suffering, as long as they know they are serving the Lord where and how he has made clear they are to serve. All of this will be fully revealed in the last days of the planet, to those standing against the Anti-Christ himself, when the full details of the Plan of God will be finally seen by all. Daniel 12:2-10.

The last chapter will put into context the whole book! Does evil still work its cancer? The answer is yes! Do believers still die under persecution? The answer is yes! Is this part of God's plan? The answer is YES! We are called to stand and serve now, and also wait now, and these orders are the toughest any soldier can receive, but we know our commander has all the facts and controls the final outcome. We are secure in Him, not in our physical strength or our limited mind's ability to understand things that are way beyond us.

When will we know all the facts and see the whole thing and be able fully to praise God for all that has happened? Only in the end, when all the facts of time are seen; only then when all will be finally revealed or unveiled can the full truth be known about each "tragic case" we see today. At this point we only know and see "in part". How do we deal with that all too human desire to have all the facts? Only by resting securely on the certainties inherent in the character of God and our knowledge of his revealed plan. What do we do now? We worship – we praise the One who has the answers.

**1 Corinthians 13: 9-12.** *"9. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.  
10. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.  
11. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.  
12. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."*

**APPLICATION**

**A. PERSONAL**

"But how can we talk with vivid conviction of that which occupies so small a space in our own inner life?" (Meyer, 1953, p15.)

This is the challenge to us all. Do the doctrines covered in this section of Peter's letter enliven our days as they clearly enlivened his? They ought to! We have an eternal destiny and each day should be lived in constant awareness of that.

We have new life that is eternal. Do we live as if that is true or would another person looking on see only a person living for today? Do we live as the pagans do? Or do we truly live as those who have an eternal destiny and eternal reward and a true home in heaven.

So many believers spend more time on doing up their house than they spend on things related to the furnishing of their mansion in heaven John 14:1-3, and then read on to verses 19-27. Note the similar themes of this section of the Olivet discourse of the Lord to Peter's words in this chapter. Peter never forgot that night of his betrayal, and the Lord's words were burned into him. His sadness at his actions never left him, but the joy of the Lord's forgiveness never left him either.

Let us ensure that the Lord's words are also burned into our daily walk. Let us not be distracted by things that rot and decay and that the bank can take away, but let us rather focus on the things that are eternal, for that is our destiny. No distractions!!!!

**B. PASTORAL**

How many times does Paul urge us to "encourage one another", and we do that with the words of Scripture? Do we do this enough from the pulpit, or do we engage in topical preaching that gives our views of events, but not the Lord's character, and the Lord's promises, and the Lord's plan! Let us ensure that the people leave every service fired up for service under pressure, even if none exists now in your neighbourhood. Let us ensure we give our people the Word of the Living God, not the opinions of men.

How long since you preached and mentioned the empty tomb, and our eternal life and rewards? How long since you expounded on the resurrection of the Lord, and the believers own resurrection? These are the doctrines that Peter starts with to encourage the saints under pressure, surely we ought to be mentioning them more often? These are the things that create stability, and this is what is needed today in the church.

How often are we asked questions that are not able to be answered this side of eternity or until we have all the facts. These verses remind us that the facts are not all in until the end. Only the Lord has the full picture now. Let us not be ashamed or embarrassed about saying, "I don't know", when the truth is, that we do not at this point know a lot of things!

All will be clear then, at the end, but until then we can be strong in faith through our knowledge of the character of the Lord. Let us ensure that every day we live we encourage each other by reminding each other of the wonderful dependability of the character of God.

## CONCLUSION

The ancient Jewish prayer, “Baruch atah Adonai Elohenu, melech ha olam”, is echoed in this section. “Blessed are you, our Lord God, King of the whole world”. We are, in these verses, reminded that our God is king of kings and Lord of Lords. His plan is going to work out and we are part of that plan and he has certainty in the plan and certainty in his provision for us in time with protection and in eternity with rewards.

## DOCTRINES

RESURRECTION

SALVATION

REGENERATION: BORN AGAIN

ETERNAL SECURITY

## PARAPHRASE

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to the standard of his great mercy has brought us into newness of eternal life through the resurrection power of the Lord from the dead., to bring us securely through to an inheritance unstained by evil, unimpaired by time, untouched by death, pure, beautiful and forever. We also are guarded by God’s power, and will be delivered from all evil, and in the last days will see all of this as the Lord reveals it to us.”

## VERSES 6 - 9

**“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness, through manifold temptations; 7 that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. 8 Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: 9 receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”**

## BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Given all that Peter has mentioned in the first verses there is only one appropriate response; it is to leap for joy within the certainty of the gracious and abundant provisions of the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, who is our Saviour. Even if we find ourselves in the midst of a time of “heaviness” we can praise the Lord who has a plan and purpose, and a direction that he wants us to take in the midst of it. With knowledge of his Holy Character and Eternal Plan we are meant to be unmoved by troubles.

They will touch us, and they will hurt us, but as long as they bring us to our knees, we will find the answer in the Lord’s love for us. 1 Peter 5:5-9. There is a hint of self pity in the verb used here. Like ourselves these people felt it was somehow unfair of the Lord to let this grief hit them. Peter is challenging them with a completely different mental attitude to take under these pressures.

Peter refers to the many types of pressure situations as “many coloured” as if they are simply sets of clothes that we put off and put on daily. His choice of words here is more than poetic, for it reminds us that all the events of time are like garments, that are often changed daily, or in a moment. All of us have experienced a great time of pressure that dissolved in a second with new facts, or a change of circumstance. That is Peter’s point.

Pressure situations come in all shapes, sizes and colours, but they are all like clothing; they can be changed in a moment by prayer and worship. Isaiah 61:3. His challenge is to adopt a mental attitude towards the pressures of time that will transform their effect on you even before the Lord’s gracious provisions remove them as testing.

The aorist participle in verse six tells us that the distress has already started for these believers. They are now worried, and Peter is challenging them to reconsider their worry in the light of the character and eternal provision of the Lord for each and every believer. They are to walk in the light of God’s unchanging character.

Already the storm clouds of the coming persecution are gathering. There is an oppressive sense of insecurity as satanic forces ready for the 250 years of murder to come. "The Christians of Asia Minor, to whom this letter is addressed, are also seriously alarmed, and we suspect somewhat liable to give way to self pity". (Cranfield, 1958, p 20.)

Is not worry always self pity? Peter's call is to passing over the problems to the Lord. Rather than sitting in the place of self pity, we are to stand upon the promises of God; walk in the light of who he is, not cringe in the shadow of our worries. He will sum this up in 1 Peter 5:7.

The first word of verse seven, 'hina', reminds us that there is a purpose to the trials, and that they are occurring in accordance with a plan. They are, "providentially ordered for driving and eternal ends". (Stibbs, 1959, p 77.)

Peter uses the Old Testament analogy of the refiners fire, from Malachi 3:3, to describe what the Lord is doing and going to do with them all. Within this concept there are six principles that are grounded in God's Holy Character, for them to rest their weary heads upon. (After Meyer, 1953, pp 30-32.)

1. He permits the fire to do it's work of refining to purify the person. Job 1.
2. He superintends the fire to ensure it is the right heat. 1 Corinthians 10:13
3. He watches over the progress of the trial and changes things to achieve his goal with the person
4. He limits the testing. It is for a season only; it comes to pass. Ecclesiastes 3:9-17, 1 Corinthians 10:13.
5. There is an eternal purpose that has value in time and reward in eternity associated with it. Romans 8:28.
6. These results will more than compensate us for the distress we may endure in time. 1 Corinthians 9:25.

"So God uses Trial and suffering to separate the believer from those things that hinder fellowship with God and growth in the spiritual life." (Ironsides, 1984, p 18.)

Peter is addressing people in his own day and our own, who believe that trial is an awful and ugly thing, and indeed from a human perspective some trials can be ugly and traumatic. Peter's challenge is to see them as "precious", as a thing of highest value. The human value system refers to suffering as an evil, to pain and violent death as terrible, to financial pressures as awful, but Peter tells us here that from God's viewpoint these things, when part of his fire are things of great value.

We value "things"; we value houses, cars, jobs, money, friendships, yet all these things may be "burned up" in the fire of persecution. Peter says that being able to transform our way of seeing things will lead us to the place where even the loss of all our goods under pressures, even the death of loved ones under persecution, is seen as, of "great value", for we see that we are on an eternal stage rather than an earthly one.

Winning for the worldly viewpoint is "dying with the most goods", but from God's viewpoint it is maturity in spiritual growth with him, and standing for the truth as his ambassador here on earth. As persecution draws near Peter challenges the believers to get their eyes firmly set on the eternal value system, not anything associated with, and thereby limited to space and time.

Houses, cars, money, jobs, family members, friends, may all be lost, but the losses can be of "supreme value" if they are part of the Lord's plan; for there is no tragedy in the will of God. His permitted trials may involve great earthly loss as far as men are concerned, but the heavenly reward will compensate us more fully than any mansions of earth can ever satisfy us.

"Faith is not the stoical endurance of evil, but a personal affection and devotion to the Lord, and love proves its sterling quality by standing the strain of life in his service. . . . Out of sight, but not out of reach; such is Peter's description of Christ." (Moffatt, 1963, p 98.)

The Christian life is about Jesus Christ. Success is always about occupation with Christ; being more focused on his "well done" than on all that the world has to offer!

"We cannot take his words and ignore him. Christianity is the personal relationship of the soul to Christ. Begin not with his words, but with himself, and when you possess him, you cannot fail of having all he said and did, and is, and will be without end." . . . . After all, love is measured, not by feelings, or sighs, or tears, but by acts. You love Christ by just as much as you are prepared to do, or suffer, or give up for him." (Meyer, 1953, pp 35, 37.)

Praise, honour and glory! These are to be our goals on earth, and they come only through our loving service of the Lord who gave his all for us. The Lord wants to "find" these things in us, that our lives might be reasons for hymns of praise. He comes for us, we remind ourselves of this each time we take communion, as we say, "until he comes", 1 Corinthians 11: 26.

All our life should be lived with this phrase burning in our ears. He is coming again, Acts 1:11, yet we like the apostles on that hill prefer to stand gazing into the sky. We are told directly to "wait actively" by serving him, until he comes!

Verse eight tells us the appropriate mental attitude, and it is glorying and joying! We keep on rejoicing in him with joy that is beyond human words. The present tense of the verbs in this verse speak of on going actions of the believer who is focused on their faith in Christ, rather than their problems in the world!

Verse nine tells us that the end point is the deliverance of our souls with glory in it. The souls here refer to the whole man, in a Jewish sense, rather than the Greek usage which split men up into parts. Jewish thinking always saw man as a unity, not three "parts", but three aspects of the one whole.

We are delivered, and not because we deserve to be, but because we have a wonderful Saviour who has provided all for us!

**APPLICATION**

**A. PERSONAL**

Do we feel sorry for ourselves when we face pressure situations, or do we praise the Lord in the midst, certain of his provision and deliverance? The standard when facing pressure is to "leap for joy in the Lord". All else is sin, for it reflects lack of faith in our Saviour God. This requires the filling of the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit will always deliver joy. **John 10:10. Romans 8:9** is a blunt reminder of the truth behind this, that no spiritual fruit = no Holy Spirit = no salvation.

**Romans 14:23** is another tough verse: "whatever is not of faith is sin"; but it is our given standard for life in this world. This is what we are called to! He did not save us to leave us in troubles without hope, yet how often we act as if that is true! Testing times are, "for a season" always, they end, yet do we keep our focus through the midst of them?

Eternal rewards last forever, and they are the things that we work for here in time, if our heart is set on the Lord rather than the earth! 2 Corinthians 4:17. Let us grasp the importance of the mental attitude that sees things God's way rather than through the panic that so often grabs us! Let us praise God for deliverance before it comes in time (for it is already certain from his eternal provision for us from before we were born!), and let us leap for joy at his answer to the testing time even before we see what form the answer will take, for in his economy it is certain!

We have not seen the Lord but we can still love him for who he is and what he has done and will do, as we meet him through his word and through his indwelling Holy Spirit. We must walk daily in this reality or we will conform to the world's standards and waste our time striving for things that don't last.

**B. PASTORAL**

Occupation with Christ; the Christocentric life is the heart of the apostolic message. Do we hear it today from our pulpits? Perhaps this is why we are so easily seduced from our task, for if we value the things of earth ahead of the things of Christ we cannot ever serve him in the place of troubles, and that is where the real work is to be done.

The task of the minister is through the systematic teaching of the Scriptures to assist the believers to get to know the Lord Jesus Christ. All preaching that does not advance that task is wasted time and effort on the part of the minister. "Sir, we would see Jesus". That was the question of the men who came to the apostles in the Temple Courts, it is still the task of all who would stand in the apostolic legacy.

We must not get in the way, and all we do must be based on helping people get to know him. The end of time is secure; we are with him! The only question for each believer is how loud their shout for joy now, and how great is their reward at the time of his coming! As pastors we are responsible to urge the believers on to greater service and therefore greater rewards.

**DOCTRINES**

- SUFFERING**
- FAITH**
- LOVE**
- SOUL AND HUMAN SPIRIT**

**CONCLUSION**

Joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit that Peter emphasises should be there under pressure. The mark of the mature believer is joy under pressure. Let us rejoice in it ourselves, and see it in others, as we set them an example worthy to follow. Peter is our example here, as the Lord was his.

**PARAPHRASE**

“In which circumstances you leap for joy anticipating victory in advance, even though for a brief time here on earth are saddened and weighed down by pressures, through many types of temptations. The plan of God allows these things, in order that, the testing for approval of your faith, a process much more valuable than gold or silver that does not last, though you must go through fire, might result in praise, honour and renown, at the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have not seen him in the flesh but you love him, you express your faith in him, and believing in him you are able to leap for joy, and rejoice with a depth of feeling that words cannot express, filled up to overflowing with glory, finally receiving the rewards of your faith through the deliverance of your selves into life eternal with him forever.”

**VERSES 10 - 12**

**“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. 12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.”**

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

This is a call to action. Note the verbal forms in this section. Present continuous tenses with the active voice reminding us that action is called for. We have information now that the Old Testament prophets longed to see, yet we are too often ignorant of the revealed counsel of God.

Daniel was told that he couldn't know, even some of the things he spoke of, but we can know more now for the Holy Spirit has revealed so much more of the Plan of God by our day. Remember, we still do not know all, and details relating to some things will remain secret until revealed at the time required. Let us rejoice as we hungrily study the revealed plan of God. The Bible is for time not eternity! It is for us to master and apply now. Study with hunger for results, and apply with vigour all that is read that applies to you.

Note Peter's points. The great doctrines of, Election in Christ, foreknowledge of the Father, and the Passion/sufferings of Christ are all related parts of the eternal plan, and we are in that plan! Glory is the result of seeing your part in the plan and playing that part to the full. There is security in the midst of it all due to the provision of God from eternity past for each of us in the plan. Peter challenges us to see the planned nature of history that is truly "his story".

The prophets were really keen to know what is now clearly revealed to us, and they searched with all their strength, but could not see it all, for it was not their time. We have the information, and the challenge is to use the same energy the old prophets used to learn and apply the details of the plan into our daily life.

They ministered to us, to people who they would not meet until the end of time, or in heaven, yet they kept their focus and did their job. We have so much more than they did but often "lose the plot" and go off after earthly things that don't matter. Let us keep the plot, and apply the plan!

“The men of the Old Testament lived in the strength of God's promise. With their faces turned towards the future, knowing that the divine intervention, which they expected could alone make sense of their life, . . . Over their lives there stood a great "not yet". They knew that they were waiting for something which had not yet come.” (Cranfield, 1958, p 29.)

“What reconciled Christians of the apostolic age to the initially shocking enigma of a crucified Messiah was their persuasion, confirmed by the resurrection, that it was an essential element in God's saving plan as attested by prophecy.” (Kelly, 1969, p 62.) If we truly understand the purpose of the cross and resurrection, then we can see that suffering, death and loss can all play their part in the eternal plan. Losses on earth are irrelevant; it is the "win" in the end and the gains of heaven that matter. The perspective is heavenly not earthly here.

The angels desired to know in advance what is revealed to us in Christ Jesus, yet even they were not permitted to know all that was to occur when the Lord came to earth. We have revealed to us the things that the angels were not allowed to know! Mark 13:32, Romans 16:25, 1 Corinthians 2:8. We have a superior position to them.

“So incredibly great is the gift which the Christian believers have received, that not even angels were permitted to observe the mystery connected with the coming of Christ and of his salvation”. (Reike, 1964, p 81.)

With such blessing comes greater responsibility. We are here on earth with a purpose, a role and a tasking for which we are held responsible. We are to preach, teach and stand as ambassadors for the King of Kings.

**APPLICATION**

**A. PERSONAL**

"The truly Christian reader, unlike the scoffers will look back to the privileges conferred on him, of partaking in the divine nature, and will seek to live worthy of it. He will also look forward to the day of assessment, and strive to live in the light of it." (Green, 1968, p 77.)

To those who receive much, much is expected! We are recipients of a great revelation and we must live in the light of it, not in the darkness of the values of this age!

## B. PASTORAL

The heavenly perspective is the only perspective that is to come from the pulpit. We must train our people to see things God's way so that they might serve him with focus and direction.

## DOCTRINES

### ANGELS

### ETERNITY PAST AND ETERNITY FUTURE

### REWARDS AND CROWNS

### SECOND ADVENT

### ANGELIC CONFLICT

## PARAPHRASE

"Concerning which deliverance, the prophets requested, searched and inquired with all their being, but they received no answer. They instead prophesied the gracious provision of God that should come to us! They tried to find out the details of when the Lord should come, but the spirit of God that worked through them testified through them, of the Lord's sufferings and the glory that would then follow. The spirit revealed to them that they would not see this, and that the words were not for them, but they wrote for us, and it is these things that the preachers today speak of in the power of the Holy Spirit who was sent from heaven for this purpose. These things the angels desired to search into and know, but it was hidden from them."

## VERSES 13 - 17

**"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts of your ignorance: 15 but as he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 because it is written, 'be ye holy, for I am holy!'. 17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every mans work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear!."**

## BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

"Get ready to do some hard work!", Peter urges. To gird up the loins was to hitch up the outer garment to either work or fight. "Get serious!", Peter tells us all. He is echoing Paul's words from Ephesians 5:14, and 6:14, and the commands of Exodus 12: 11, before the people left Egypt. Girding up the loins occurred when a prophet was to prophesy, Jeremiah 1:17, ready to run, 1 Kings 17:8, and also spoke of mental alertness, Job 38:3.

Peter is calling the church out of bondage to a spiritual Egypt, to move away from all dependence on earthly/carnal thinking, and to think and act as true ambassadors of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:10-20. The power of the mind must be harnessed, and self control (that is Holy Spirit control) must be the ruling power. We must be ruled by the Holy Spirit and rational logical reason, not any other substance or thought pattern.

"Conversion to Christ and regeneration by the Spirit are meant to be accompanied by mental awakening, by a new exercise of powers of understanding now divinely released and renewed. Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:17, 6:23". (Stibbs, 1959, p 85.)

The battle for the mind must be won daily for the believer to serve the Lord as they are called to. We are soldiers of the Lord, and each and every morning before dawn we have the responsibility of putting our spiritual armour on and reminding ourselves as to who we are in Christ Jesus. We are to be confident; to express hope/confidence through until the end of our race. Our confidence is to be in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, not in any other thing, or other person.

That word “obedient” crops up again here. “Trust and obey, for there is no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey”. The words of the old hymn are so true. Peter calls us to take the word as seriously as the prophets of old did and as the angels do. The “pilgrim attitude and temper” (Meyer, 1953, p 48), is in view here again also; we are citizens of heaven and to be living as strangers on the earth. “Like all the early Christians, Peter was conscious of the transitory nature of this life. The men of faith in Gods Israel had always been tent dwellers. Hebrews 9:11.” (Green, 1968, p 78-79.)

In his Jewish New Testament commentary David Stern notes, “Be mentally prepared for opposition, distractions, temptations and unexpected setbacks. This, having a clear hope for future reward and refusing to be shaped by the evil desires you used to have when you were still ignorant of Y’shua and Messiah, are necessary in order to heed Kefa /Peter’s main exhortation, namely to become holy yourselves in your entire way of life.” (Stern, 1992, p 745.)

The religions that dominated Asia Minor were immoral, as most Greek ones were, and these people had a habit from their days as unbelievers or moral laxity. It is vital that they do not slip back into their old slackness, even if now they are believers. Even if we do not become actively immoral again, the laziness and inaction associated with paganism is to be feared, for it stops our service.

Peter will move to the place where he will ask us all to be fearful of falling short of the standard God sets. We must always remember that it is man’s natural state to slip into immorality, and that lazy living becomes very quickly immoral living. Energy must be spent in staying in the Lord’s will, but if we commit ourselves to this path we have the Holy Spirit’s personal assistance.

God’s standard is holiness, but what does that word mean to Peter? In our day it is a tainted word, influenced by the hypocrisy of past ages where “holy” men were often easily ridiculed because they were so clearly false. The word as Peter uses it does not come anywhere near the pious, self righteous, self important person who wants everyone to know that they alone are perfect and pure.

Holiness meant a life that was separated for the service of God; it was a word that meant action, but action for God’s standards rather than mans. God is set apart from his creation, and we are to be also! Christians are meant to be different, to stand out as people who will not go along with the evil of their age. We are to be known as the people of God, those who stand for God and his plan rather than the ethos of the world. We are to be different without offensiveness. 1 Corinthians 10:32, 2 Corinthians 6:3.

The cross will be offensive to some but we are not to magnify this by our actions. The issue is Christ and the cross and resurrection not us! We are set apart to serve God not magnify ourselves. Our opinion is not important at all, and we must be careful to ensure people see Jesus, not us. This is what separation, and holiness mean; our emphasis is service of and for only him.

In the last verse in this section Peter reminds us that to call God Father is not an invitation to be slack and casual, but is a reminder in the very word used that respect and awesomeness is due to our heavenly Father. In Peter’s day a father was not the cuddly, cute and powerless item he has often become in Western society in the later 21<sup>st</sup> century.

A father of the first century was ruler of his household, protector of the members, had power of life and death, and was responsible for providing the necessities of life for all in the household. Great respect was due a father and that is the strong point here. Abba, was the word for “daddy” that a child used, but as a child grew it stopped using that term alone, joining it in times of great emotional power to the adult word for father, and was very respectful. Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15, Galatians 4: 6.

We have already seen in this chapter that emotions should not run away with us; they must always be under the guidance of the reasoning faculty, and always morally pure and respectful of God. Awesomeness is the dominant feeling from this verse. When we approach our Heavenly Father we are approaching the creator of the universe, and while, like our Lord, we may use the term “Abba”, we also use “father” in a respectful manner, as he also did.

God is not impressed by anything we have achieved, or any title we have won, or any post we hold on earth. God hears us because we are in Christ. We have no merit in and of ourselves. We are to have a healthy fear/awesomeness as we approach him.

## **APPLICATION**

### **A. PERSONAL**

We are here on earth for such a short time. We are sojourners, not permanent residents. No arrogance is justified, for we are temporary residents of a planet that is made by the creator of the whole amazing but still “temporary” universe. Bow in awe before your Lord and God. Baby believers have an excuse to be a bit “goofy” in their prayers, but as we mature we should be adult in our conversations with God, with respect and awe.

Are we children of obedience? Are we daily winning the battle for our minds? Are we keeping our hearts, minds and bodies pure? Are we alert to dangers to our mind or have we become lazy and let things distract us from what the Lord would have us do? Are we separated for service, or distracted by the details of daily life and events from the things the Lord wants us to do?

**B. PASTORAL**

The challenge for all of us as pastors is clear here. Our messages must portray correctly the standards of God and the respect and awe that the Lord is to be held in. Do we preach biblical “holiness” or have we let the false views of the last few hundred years cloud our teaching? We stand on the apostolic faith, not the faith of the men of 200 years ago!

Let us be sure our people are hearing what the Holy Spirit said to Peter here, not the word as distilled and edited by a commentator a hundred years ago! Away with “cloudy” teaching and let us be straight and clear in our exegesis of the words of scripture.

**CONCLUSION**

The mind is the battlefield for the believer and the mind must be under the Holy Spirit’s control rather than the old desires of the old sin nature we followed before we met the Lord. We are not ignorant now of the truth and so should live daily in the truth. Lazy believers, who fail to apply the word of God to daily life, fail to live up to the holy (separated for service) standard that God requires. We should be fearful of falling short of this standard, for this is the one we are judged by!

**DOCTRINES**

**HOLY SPIRIT**

**HOLY SPIRIT: COMFORTER**

**HOLY SPIRIT: TEACHER**

**HOLY SPIRIT: SINS AGAINST THE SPIRIT**

**OLD SIN NATURE**

**OLD SIN NATURE - THE FRUIT OF**

**PRAYER**

**PARAPHRASE**

“For these reasons tidy up your mind so that you are mentally ready to work or fight, being self controlled, keeping alert and expressing confidence right until the end when the eternal blessings you have will be revealed with the Lord at his coming. For these reasons also, be obedient to God, and do not allow your lives to become conformed into the pattern of your past lust filled lives lived in ignorance. Instead of this we are to be holy, separated for God’s service, for God who called us is holy and this is his standard. The scriptures say, ‘be holy, for I am holy saith the Lord’. You call his Father when you pray to God, and remember, he judges all by his standard, which is the same for all. He has no favourites, and cannot be fooled by anyone, so spend the days of your very short time here in fear that you will fall short of his standard and not hear his “well done” at the end”.

**VERSES 18 - 21**

**“Forasmuch as ye know, ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20 who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you 21 who by him do believe in God, that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory that your faith and hope might be in God.”**

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

Peter now tells the recipients of the letter of aspects of their redemption that they ought to know for they are things that will assist them in their present trials, as they meditate upon them. They are, firstly, the cost of redemption, the blood of Christ, secondly, the eternal origin of that sacrifice, thirdly, the importance of the resurrection in certifying that the redemption was successful, and fourthly, the desired and expected fruit of redemption, namely confidence in the church and individual regarding the future.

Peter uses two pictures to illustrate redemption; for Greeks the payment of money to a pagan temple, for the Jews the blood of the Exodus. As Peter has a mixed audience of Greeks and Jews, both converted, either from paganism or legalism, so here he refers to both forms of redemption payments to free a slave.

We must always remember to find out the use of the words Peter uses in his own day. The word, 'lutron', "was a technical term for the money paid over to buy a prisoner of war or slave his freedom. In the latter case it could be temporarily deposited in the shrine of a god, whose property he thus, by a legal fiction, became." (Kelly, 1969, p73.)

A slave who had been able to save up money to pay for his redemption could not legally buy his own freedom, for he was a slave and had no rights. He would deposit the money in a temple and so become the property of the god, the money (less a commission given to the temple) being paid back to his owner. Behind Peter's words is the observation, that money can only ever buy things that are as corruptible as it is! (Meyer, 1953, p 53.)

Both the groups that Peter addresses were caught in an empty, if at times beautiful, religious system. The Jewish believers were involved in a legalistic system that could never set them free from slavery to sin, and could never give them the dynamic hope/confidence that the risen Lord can give.

The Greek speakers were caught in an immoral paganism that with all its rituals and sacrifices could provide them only with an empty life that ended in death and an afterlife of the "semi-life" of the shades/ghosts ruled over by the cruel human hating god Hades. Satan in this god/demon really lets his guard down and shows his hatred of mankind.

Both were trapped in systems without hope, and the blood of Jesus alone set them free to truly live, both now and forever.

We are once more confronted by the primacy of the resurrection in the Christian message. Christianity alone, of all the faiths of mankind, gives real living hope for the future that isn't tinged by wishful thinking or base fantasy, but is rooted and grounded in the reality of the physical bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

Remember the principle expressed well by Mounce. "If the future is without meaning, the present is futile - (it is) motion without progress, vain, pointless, and empty". (Mounce, 1982, p 20.)

Peter calls the life that both groups received from their forefathers 'vain'; lacking in reality and producing nothing but emptiness in the centre of the men who follow those faiths, in the place where they need genuine meaning and purpose and direction. Man's soul hungers for meaning and significance, and that is only found in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, for that only is the beacon of hope for mankind, the empty tomb that points to the one who can be trusted to provide real hope rather than just wishful thinking.

The redemption price was the perfect sacrifice of the Lord upon the cross. As Isaiah foretold (Isaiah 52 - 53), and Moses prefigured in the Passover Ritual (Exodus 12), the shed blood of God's perfectly provided sacrifice would cleanse forever the sin problem for mankind.

As John the Baptist announced, this is indeed the final lamb that takes away the sins of the whole world. John 1:29. He is the last Passover lamb, Luke 22:7ff, 1 Corinthians 5:6 -8. He was the sacrifice without any blemish, any spot of sin; God's perfect provision for sin. Leviticus 22:18-25, Hebrews 9:11-15. The phrase, "blood of Christ", was the way the early disciples, with a Jewish frame of reference, referred to the total work of the Lord on the cross in terms of the fulfilment of the sacrificial lamb of the Old Testament.

The one paying the price owned the slave thereby ransomed. The Lord owns us, there is no polite way to say this! We are his as he has paid the price for our freedom. What does that mean to you believer? "The ransom owns those whom he has emancipated at the cost of his own life". (Moffatt, 1963, p 107.)

Peter's emphasis is on the plan of God through all these verses in this first chapter. This plan was laid down in eternity past, and it is within this plan that we have our confidence. "We must not think that Calvary was moulded on Leviticus (or Exodus), but that Leviticus was moulded on Calvary, as it stood out from all eternity before the mind of God." (Meyer, 1953, p 54.) Keep Meyer's perspective, for God's Plan comes from before this space-time universe was made.

The importance of considering the doctrine of redemption, when you are under great pressure, is given in the last verse of this section. Redemption is provided in order that the faith and hope of all believers might be rested securely in the, persons and work, character and provision, essence of and plan of God. One author has suggested it may read, "so that your faith may also be your hope in God". (Dalton, quoted in Reinecker, 1980, p 403.)

The context of redemption is eternity. The plan was laid in eternity past and its outcome has been secure from before the worlds were made. This is the certainty that Peter wants us to get hold of clearly. Even within Jewish Rabbinic circles there was an acceptance that God had provided for the Messianic deliverance before the creation of the world let alone the forming of Israel.

The security we have under pressures is the security that comes from the perfect character and plan of God not any other source. This pre-existence of the Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned in, John 1:1ff, Ephesians 1: 3-6, 3:11, Colossians 1:15-17, Hebrews 1:1-3, and Revelation 5:5-6. It is resting in the eternal realities of God's Holy Character and Plan that

really makes a believer triumphant. We are called to rest in the character of the Lord, not our own strengths. We are called to express faith in the ransom paid, not sit in dejection with our sins, for they are forgiven in Him. The reality of Christ's work is meant to transform us totally.

**APPLICATION**

**A. PERSONAL**

We are His, therefore how shall we live? To show real love for a master who set him free, rather than the slave paying the price, a slave could voluntarily enslave himself to that master for life. Exodus 21:2-6, Deuteronomy 15:12-18. Have we truly seen the necessity to be the Lord's slaves? Have we even started to be his ambassadors?

"Who then of us can live as we have been wont, following after vanity, treading in the footsteps of our forefathers, content to do as others before us? New claims have come in. Our redeemer is Lord!" (Meyer, 1953, p 56.)

Do we take our daily orders from our Lord? "We are on a pilgrimage throughout our lives in this dark world. God has graciously provided us with a lamp, the Scriptures. If we pay attention to them for reproof, warning, guidance, and encouragement we shall walk safely. If we neglect them, we shall be engulfed by darkness. The whole course of our lives ought to be governed by the Word of God." (Green, 1968, p 87.)

"Scripture is clear that the new birth is by means of the word which the spirit of God brings to bear upon the heart and conscience. Apart from this there is no divine life". (Ironsides, 1984, p 23.)

Is our faith our hope/confidence? This is the challenge Peter gives us. What we believe should be within us a "living hope"; every teaching (doctrine) of scripture being a source of confidence in the trials of life. Do a study of the concept of a living faith with your home group, and family. We have a living faith in a living way, Hebrews 10:20, that enables us to live fully in the midst of pressures as if they do not matter, John 10:10, for they do not!

**B. PASTORAL**

"When we grasp what it cost God to free us from sin, we will respond with reverential awe and renewed commitment to live a holy life". (Mounce, 1982, p 21.)

The text that springs to mind, is James 2:19, where James challenges the hypocrites to do more with their knowledge of God than the devils do! We are accountable as pastors for the productivity of the flock, for we are the Lord's under shepherds, and the owner of the flock returns to see how well our stewardship has been managed. We must be challenging always to application of the word to life. All things short of this are hypocrisy! Luke 16:1-13.

Do we preach the character and plan of God enough from our pulpits? Peter is clear that security of the mind rests on an understanding of the character of the God who planned our salvation from before we were made. If Christians have such a high view of God is it not to be expected that they will have a victorious view of the pressures of daily life. If they truly know God, will they not see things God's way, and rejoice, with Peter, in their troubles for they will see the Lord's provision in the midst rather than the problems.

We have been chosen in Him before the foundation of this world! Ephesians 1:4. What should this knowledge do within us? Do our people hear this enough from us as the Lord's heralds, his preachers. Will they not, if they hear this often, then live in divine viewpoint, rather than live in the panic of human viewpoint. Let us hit the mark, and achieve the standards the Lord sets for our stewardship as shepherds of His flock.

**CONCLUSION**

Application of the character of God to testing = confidence in service that goes on through pressures to the glory of God on earth and throughout eternity. Lack of application = hypocrisy!

**DOCTRINES**

**REDEMPTION**

**THE CROSS**

**CROSS: TYPES OF CROSSES**

**CRIES OF CHRIST FROM THE CROSS**

**THE CROSS AND SATAN**

**EPISTLE OF 1 PETER**

**PARAPHRASE**

“Fully knowing (and applying the knowledge of) the nature of your redemption from your traditional lives that had no eternal significance, for you were not redeemed with things that decay or lose their value, like silver or gold, but with the precious blood the Christ, like that of the lambs of the Old Testament, without any defect or sin. So great is this redemption, for it was arranged before the creation was made, but has been made clear for all to see in our day, to be fully seen by those who express their faith in God. The resurrection shows us the character of God, and gives us a glimpse of his glory. All this occurs so that your faith may also be your hope in God.”

**VERSES 22 - 25**

**“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, with unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: 23 being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. 24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away; 25 but the Word of The Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”**

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

Start the study of this section by looking back to John 13:34,35. The true result of a biblical faith is biblically appropriate fruit, and the key fruit of the Holy Spirit is love for the brethren. A believer without love is a contradiction. They are a hypocrite, a false child not a true one, 1 John 3:3,13 -24, 4:7 -19! If we do not love, and we are not convicted about it, then the scriptures are clear, we are not his at all, we are referred to as, “illegitimates or hypocrites”! Hebrews 12:8.

Note the use of the different Greek tenses of the verbs in this section, each underlining an application. The Greek perfect tense reminding us that in Christ there are many things that began at a specific point in time but their results go on forever. This applies to the first verb in the section, the verb for purification.

At the point of application of God’s Word to our lives through obedience to it’s holy demands, we are purified in our whole being. Remember the Hebrew mind does not split up a human being into body-soul-spirit, we are seen as a total entity. Purification of thought and deed occurs at that point in time but the results of that once for all cleansing go on forever.

The present tense, active voice, reminds us of the reality of on-going action of the words of God’s revelation to us; they keep on living and abiding forever, for they are of God, and reflect the true logos of God, the Lord himself. With reflection on this passage I believe that Peter is referring to the scriptures and the Lord in verse 23, as he uses the word “logos”, where-as in verse 25 he uses the word “rema”, a word that emphasises only the ‘words’. I suspect he uses logos in verse 23, with double reference; intending us to think of both the words of the scriptures, which give us the mind of Christ, but also to think of the Lord who is their source, and who guarantees their reality, truth and power. John 1, Corinthians 2:16.

The aorist tenses in verse 25 remind us of the action of the verbs (falleth, preached), which occur at a point in time. Like the leaf of the grass we fall in our time, and that awareness is to be the power that drives our focus in time. We are here for such a short time! At a point in time we die, and leave this place where it is too easy to feel at home.

Peter urges us to see in this quote from an unknown poet, that we must focus on eternity rather than time. We must not be “at home” here or we will lose our perspective on the events we are to play our part in, for only an “eternal life viewpoint” will give us the perspective that will enable us to serve the Lord without the cares and pressures of the world overwhelming us. Distraction remains the enemy’s main tool to disable effective Spirit filled believers.

Moral purity is always the result of feeding on, and application of, the Holy Word of God. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is essential for this process to occur. Without the spirit we are nothing! The result of the Holy Spirit’s work will always be the fruit of his presence, and the primary fruit is love. 1 Corinthians 13.

Like James, Peter urges the believers to “be hungry” for opportunities to show love for their fellow believers. James 1:22-27, 2:14 -26. There is to be no isolationism in Christianity; for it is meant to be worked out in community. A person who sits at home and studies their Bible and does not fellowship with and assist other believers, nor become active in any ministry, is a contradiction in terms. “To whatever preparation the Christian is exhorted, it is never with a view to himself”. (Lumby, 1893, p 55.)

It is said that the founder of the Salvation Army, when he died had one last word for his followers; that was, “OTHERS!” It is a good motto for the Christian life, but it begins, not with self effort but with the filling of the Holy Spirit, as he works upon the living Word Of God in our heart and mind. “In a day of constant change man needs some source of stability, something that endures. Only God and his Word provide such permanency.” (Mounce, 1982, p 23.)

Our spiritual birth was super-natural. We were brought to new life in Christ by the power of God working within us, not by any efforts of ourselves or others. The Lord uses believers to announce the good news but it is the Holy Spirit’s convicting ministry in the life of the unbeliever that transforms them into the children of God. The seed of our faith is the Holy Word which comes with the power of God and changes us into his likeness through daily application exercises.

It is a wise person who reflects daily on two things; the grandeur of the heavens, and the frailty of the grass. Peter quotes from some unknown poet, perhaps even from a love song of the day; we can only speculate, and such speculation is time wasting. The poet spoke truly, for all flesh is as the grass. We err in this life when we act as if it will go on forever, for earthly life has an allotted span and when that person’s life has reached it’s limit the person “falls” from the presence of the living.

All that is changed when we enter into Christ. We cross over from the realm of life and death into the eternal life of the born again believer. This is why we MUST BE BORN AGAIN! To have the Lord’s life we must receive his free gift of eternal life so that we can live with him.

Eternal life is the gospel message! This is the “good news”. This is the message that we should daily meditate upon; the Lord has delivered us from sin and death. Praise his holy name!

**APPLICATION**

**A. PERSONAL**

Have we reflected on the heavens and the grass today? Matthew 6:25-34. We should both look up, and look down each day, and then look ahead, and serve the Lord who called us to minister to him in this location where he has placed us.

Are we hungry enough today? Are we hungry to do some good thing for a fellow believer? Are we hungry to give the gospel to someone who does not know the good news yet? Matthew 28:18-20.

**B. PASTORAL**

The preachers are challenged by this section very thoroughly, are we not! God’s standard for behaviour is holiness and love. Our preaching must reflect this. We are to ensure we give the “good news” of eternal life. Ask yourself how long it is since you spoke about eternal life, and the shortness of this life. Remedy this, if it be a problem, for your flower will fall one day and the Lord will require of you an account of every word preached and said!

Let us encourage each other to live with eternity in our thoughts and heaven in our deeds. Each person seeing us through each day should receive a breath of heaven from us, for we are heaven’s ambassadors, and they will not see this glory anywhere else. That is why the Lord has left us here!

**DOCTRINES**

**HOLY SPIRIT (MINISTRIES)**

**FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT**

**THE BIBLE**

**BIBLE: INERRANCY**

**BIBLE: INSPIRATION**

**BIBLE AND THE BELIEVER**

**EVANGELISM**

**EPISTLE OF 1 PETER**

EVANGELISM - NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN

GOSPEL OF SALVATION

ETERNAL LIFE

SANCTIFICATION

**PARAPHRASE**

"You have morally purified yourselves by means of your obedience to the word of truth through the ministries of the Holy Spirit, in order to love your fellow believers, without hypocrisy. So, out of this pure heart, at every time there is practical opportunity to show it, demonstrate love for your brethren with real commitment to them and fervour! (For these things demonstrate the fact that you have been) born again, not from the source of things that decay away, natural seed, but from a seed (the very seed of David) that does not perish at all, through the living Logos of God, who is eternal (as you are also now, in him). For (to quote the poet) 'all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of the grass, the grass withers, and the flower of it falls', But, the word of the Lord abides forever, and it is this word through which the good tidings (of the gospel message) were announced to you."

**NOTES**

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **VERSES 1 - 5**

**“Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisy, and envies and all evil speakings, 2 as new born babies, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; 3 if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. 4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious. 5 Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ .”**

### **BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

“This world is but the nursery, the most advanced among us, only as babies.” (Meyer, 1953, p 63.)

Paul in Ephesians 4:22-24, used the analogy of clothing, encouraging the believers to put off the old life and it's habits like a tired old garment, and put on the new spiritual life, like a godly priestly garment of service to God. Peter does the same sort of thing here, using the new birth and the food of a new-born baby as the structure of the analogy.

As a baptismal message this passage makes total sense as the new believers put off old clothes and put on new ones once they left the water. The new life in Christ was to be totally different. We have in recent years fitted our faith into life, Peter, and the other apostles, exhort us to reconsider this approach, for all things are to be new in Christ, all attitudes are to be transformed, all habits brought into captivity to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5.

The reasons for this total change are found in the new role the believer has. Chapter one verses 13 -25, has introduced this and these verses simply flow from those earlier ones. We are to serve as the priests of the most high God, serving him as his ambassadors in this fallen world. 2 Corinthians 5:20. We are here to live and if required die as his witnesses of his work, policy for man, and plan for the ages. Let us look carefully at each of the commands Peter gives here.

Given the eternal life perspective of the last verses of the first chapter of the letter, the believers are exhorted to confront the behaviours that are incompatible with their spiritual status, and with the shortness and fragility of their lives. If our life is but grass, we are to put away all thoughts and deeds associated with five common sins.

1. All wickedness of thought and deed. Nothing associated with malice or evil must be given any time within our mind; it must be rejected, the very thoughts “stopped”, in our old sin nature.
2. All guile, deceit, is to be rejected as the way to achieve any goal. We are to “bait no traps” to achieve anything in the spiritual realm; we are to speak and act plainly and honestly.
3. No hypocrisy in our lives. We are not to be like play actors, pretending to be spiritual; what people see in us is what they are to get.
4. We are to win the battle against envy here and now, for what do we envy, but the things of this life that are also “like the grass” they decay and wither away. Why do we find ourselves envying those with bigger cars and houses and better jobs paying more money? Such things are of no consequence. All that matters is that we are where God wants us to be, and doing what he would have us do. We have a path to walk in this world, and the Lord has selected it for us from before the present universe was made. Let us walk with patience the particular path the Lord has for us and not envy the unbelievers (or other believers) who may be going to their eternal destiny with more things that decay in their bank!
5. All evil speaking is to be put away! Not just some but ALL! We are not to run down any other man or woman, at any time, in any way! Why is this? Because we are here as ambassadors of heaven, and the citizens of this world are not our responsibility; we are here to tell them of heaven and give the good news that through the Lord Jesus Christ, the door to heaven is open for them. Criticism gets in the way of the gospel.

The order is then clear. If we are indeed the children of God, we will show our family likeness by desiring the pure food of the baby in Christ, the Word of God. A lamb wanders in open fields and eats grass, but the wolf does not! We are known by our fruits (Matthew 7:13-23), but we are also known by our habits and preferred food.

A genuinely saved individual will desire with all their heart the pure food of the Word of God; they will seek out good Bible teaching and without it they will shrivel up and spiritually die. This is where the enemy attacks the church, by first, stopping the message of the gospel being heard, and then by stopping the systematic verse by verse Bible teaching that will enable the young believers to grow up in the grace and knowledge of their Lord, that they may serve him.

Newly baptised believers in the early church were given milk and honey to drink, as a potent symbol of this truth, and a reminder that they were to both seek the pure, sweet and nourishing, food of the Christian, and that that they would one day experience the blessings of heaven. (Reicke, 1964, p 90, Moffatt, 1963, p 113, Kelly, 1969, p 34.)

“This word ‘babes’, should also teach us out true attitude towards God. Throw yourself on him with the abandonment of a babe. Roll on him the responsibility of choosing for you, directing, protecting, delivering you. If you cannot understand his will, expect him to make it plain.” (Meyer, 1953, p 65.)

Total dependence on the Lord is the apostolic theme; Peter wants us to have the trust and mental attitude of the child that has eyes only for its parent. No problem is difficult if we see it through the eyes that see first the eternal plan of God and his provision for us in the midst of every testing situation.

Peter now discussed the Lord in the analogy of a “stone”, a word that for Peter had great significance, for that is how he was renamed by the Lord as the “rock man”. The word used is “lithos”, referring to a stone prepared for building, well shaped and fit for use in the foundation of a structure.

Two words stand out here. The word for stone, that takes us to the Messianic prophecies of the rock/stone. Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10,11, Luke 20:17, Acts 4:11, Romans 9:32, 33, 10:11,13.

The second word is “chosen”, bringing us back to the concept of the plan of God, the so called “Divine Decrees” of theology. 1 Peter 1:2, 2:9. The Lord has been chosen by the father for glory; we either share in his glory or are a part of his final judgement of all those who rejected his plan. As true children, we are part of the blessing, and should demonstrate that in time, by our feeding on his word daily, and by the fruit in our life of obedience to the word taken in.

Peter uses the word ‘stone’ in four ways through this chapter to draw attention to the nature of the Lord’s work for mankind and to demonstrate the finality of man’s rejection of his work.

1. The Lord is the “living stone” (verse 4); the one who gives life from death. Like the rock in the desert living waters come from him, but he is a hewn stone, not just a rock. The hewn stone (lithos) is a stone that has been under the mason’s hammer and chisel, and the Lord placed himself under disciple and obedience to win our salvation.
2. He becomes, through his obedience to the Father’s plan, the “precious cornerstone” (vs 6 - 8); the key foundation of the new building, the church. Only those who are part of this Holy Spirit constructed structure are saved and secure for all eternity.
3. By most men he becomes the “rejected stone” (vs 4-7). They have observed him and they reject him as “unfit”, but God makes him the cornerstone of the future direction of history.
4. He is to those who reject him the “stone of stumbling” (vs 8). They will stumble and fall into eternity without hope because of their arrogant rejection of God’s provided Saviour.

The unbelievers are judged because of their rejection of the Lord, and Peter makes it clear that they are culpable. They have rejected him after examining him, and they are responsible for their rejecting choice. The perfect passive participle of the verb “apodokimazo”, makes it clear that the results of their rejection go on forever! Revelation 20:10-15, 21:8, 27.

The Holy Spirit is taking us as living stones, and is building us into a spiritual house to the glory of God. The church here is referred to as a building, but it is not the bricks and mortar down the street, it is a spiritual structure held together by God’s power, and is the framework within which we function as the priests of God to the world.

The fact that we are carefully finished stones (lithos, not smaller rocks = petros), indicates that the Lord works on us to knock off the rough corners of the rock to fit us for his building project. We are here to be shaped and made fit for the building of the Lord’s church. Do we welcome the Lord’s shaping, the Lord’s testing situations that make us more fit for his purpose?

Peter is also encouraging us through this verse that we have a place, it is called the church; in the pagan world we do not feel we belong, but we have a place where we do belong, and that is where-ever the living church universal meets together. “In the world the Christian is a sojourner, but in the church of the living God he has an (eternal) place.” (Mastermann, 1912, p 95.)

What are our “acceptable sacrifices”? We are to be daily functioning as priests. We became the Lord’s priests at the point of salvation and we must learn the job through the Word and teaching of the Holy Spirit. In the ancient world, the priest stood for the god and did all service the god required of them. So it is with us. We are here to stand for the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in his absence. The ‘works’ of the new priesthood therefore involve, witnessing by life and lips, ambassadorship, prayer, giving, praise, worship, teaching and encouraging others.

## **APPLICATION**

### **A. PERSONAL**

“God’s training is empirical. Spiritual experience comes before spiritual knowledge.” (Lumby, 1893, p 66.)

We know him through the work of the Holy Spirit on our life as young believers and we are convicted of sin, and are urged to respond to that conviction by obedience to the words of Scripture, and to turn away from the past evil we grew up amongst. Evil practises are to be put away and good spiritual food is to be taken in. How well are you doing believer on a daily basis? Is evil being put away, or are you playing with it? Do you shrink away from even the appearance of evil, or are you losing your revulsion of evil things?

Conversely, is your hunger for the living Word Of God at such a level that you will not go a day without drinking deeply of the words that the Lord has for you? That is the Lord's will for you. Start right here!

Let us do the audit of verse one. Have we put away the five things Peter refers to here? If not let us take the actions required to put our lives right. The Holy Spirit wants to chip away all the rough edges of our life. Work with him and reject evil in all its forms.

Peter was a "rock man", as we are when saved, but the Lord wants to make us shaped and perfectly fitted stones in a building, "lithos", and he will go to work on us. Hebrews 12:1-13. Let us rejoice in his work upon us and pray that anything that slows down our service might be removed from our life.

Is the local church the place of belonging for you, or are to getting too comfortable in the company of the unbelievers with whom you work or live? For the believer the gathering together with other believers is a crucial thing, a thing that cannot be gone without.

There is no solitary Christian, for we are made to be built together! A person who claims to be a Christian and stays alone is not a true believer at all, for the Holy Spirit makes us fit to be joined together with others. A solitary Christian is at best a confused block of rock, rather than a hewn stone, at worst they are a pious fraud!

Let us serve the Lord as the holy (set apart from the world for service of God), priesthood, and bring the acceptable sacrifices of our time, goods, lips and total life, given for him, as he gave his all for us!

**B. PASTORAL**

"But it is not enough to renounce what is evil; there must be positive growth in what is good and that requires true nourishment." (Cranfield, 1958, p 44.) It is to the task of providing true nourishment and encouragement that we are called as the Lord's under shepherds: and it is the daily fulfilment of this task that ensures we are true pastors of the Lord's flock.

Are we working with the building stones the Lord has given us in the local church, are we seeking the structure that the Holy Spirit has given us in the shaped stones he is providing? Are we trying to do the shaping of believers, for it is not our job, it is the Holy Spirits! We are given a giant building puzzle when we get believers given to the local church. Our task is to help them find where the Lord wants them in the structure, not to force them into roles that they are not "shaped" for.

We have the Holy Spirit's help in this matter, and must use the help provided, for only a Holy Spirit empowered and led local church will even have a chance of getting believers to be doing the things they are supposed to!

"What was unthinkable in Judaism is fundamental to Christianity, proselytes became priests! . . . When religion was a matter of ceremonial sacrifice, it was a question of great moment whether the sacrifice offered would prove acceptable. . . Christians are assured that their sacrifices will be acceptable to God." (Stibbs, 1959, p 100.)

Our hope is in the Lord. We have a position in Christ that is unassailable, for it depends on his grace not our saintliness, and it depends on his plan and power, not on our human strength.

We may fail, but the sacrifice of our prayers is always received by our gracious Lord. Do our people really know this? Do they praise God as they should? If they do not it may be because we have not told them the truth fully enough; let us do the job and tell the people of God the whole truth of God's marvellous word.

**DOCTRINES**

**PLAN OF GOD**

**FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT**

**PRIESTS**

**HOPE**

**ETERNAL SECURITY**

**EPISTLE OF 1 PETER**

**PARAPHRASE**

Because of all this, let us reject and put away from us all behaviour that could be called 'wicked', all deceitful actions and thoughts, all hypocritical play acting, all envying of others for anything we do not have. Like new born babies, let us be pure in our desires, and let us desire first the uncontaminated food that is found in God's Word, so that we might grow by means of it's application into our life. For we have all tasted and we know that the Lord is gracious. We come to him, as the living foundation stone of our lives, which after examining, Many men rejected, but God the Father chose him to be the precious one of all eternity. You are all, also, living Holy Spirit hewn stones, part of the structure that the Holy Spirit is building together to form the church. Within this, you are set apart priests for God, and the spiritual sacrifices you offer to him are always accepted by him."

**VERSES 6 - 10**

**"Wherefore also it is contained in the scriptures, 'behold I lay in Zion, a chief cornerstone, , elect, precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded' (Isaiah 28 : 16). 7 Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, 'the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner'. (Psalm 118:22). 8 And, 'a stone stumbling and a rock of offence' (Isaiah 8 :14), even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed. 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people' (Exodus 19 : 5, 6), that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of the darkness into his marvellous light. 10 Which in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God, which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (Hosea 1:9,10, 2:23) "**

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

Peter is grounding the believers in the Old Testament in this section. He is building on the last section underlining the fact that the plan of God was announced centuries before and the outcome is as sure as the prophecies were of fulfilment. This is a principle that is not applied enough today. If the Lord has fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies relating to his first advent, then he will in like manner fulfil all the prophecies relating to his Second Advent.

Peter is also reminding the believers here that the Lord was indeed the Messiah, spoken of by the prophet Isaiah. There are a series of quotes here from Isaiah and other passages. Note the quotations for a moment in the AV text above. Notice that Peter quotes from Moses, David, Isaiah, and Hosea. Each and every phase of the history of Israel is covered here. Peter is underlining that the plan of God has unfolded over time, and that at each phase of history they were looking for the coming one.

The foundation stone is laid in Zion. While some commentators identify Zion here as referring to the heavenly Jerusalem, (Stibbs, 1959, p 102, Mounce, 1982, p 26), it must be remembered that the "city of Zion" was an actual place at this time in Peter's day. It is called the Ophel today and it is part of the site of the old city of David, and the Lord literally came to that place and it was there that he laid down his life for us all. It was in Jerusalem that the church was established on the day of Pentecost, so it is not necessary to spiritualise this passage, for the church was founded, established and led in the early days from the physical "Zion".

The emphasis in the first verse here is upon the result of the laying of the foundation stone, and that result is a salvation that works for mankind! To all who put their trust in him, he will never leave them in a place where they are confounded, or put to shame. We have security in our position in him, because he is able to keep and deliver us through unto eternity. Jude 24, 25.

Verse seven underlines this again. "We have certainty of acceptance in him". (Lumby, 1893, p 73.) This principle is stated also in Ephesians 3:12, Hebrews 10:22. He is precious, marked out for all eternity as "approved and first class", and it is upon his position and status that we are built up to form the church.

"Stones were examined and approved (for use) before they were used in a first century building. Rejected stones were described and perhaps in some way marked as 'disapproved'. 1 Corinthians 9:27." (Stibbs, 1959, p 102 -103.) Every stone was marked by the master mason that carved it, and marked for a reason, for he was paid by completed stones!

Our belief in him enables us to recognise the glory and preciousness of the Lord, but to those who examine the claims of Christ and then reject him they have cast a judgement, that Peter says here, will come back to haunt them, for the one they have rejected as "unfit for building" has been made by God to be the chief cornerstone of the building that God is constructing. Those who reject the Lord are outside this construction project, they are outside the plan of God, without hope and certain of judgement.

Rejection of God's plan and provided Saviour is a serious thing, and in verse eight Peter reminds us all that this has been set out from hundreds of years before the cross. The writer of Hebrews will seriously underline this a few years later. Hebrews 10:30ff, 11:6, 12:28-30.

Peter makes it clear by quoting Isaiah 8:14, that those who reject the Lord are responsible for their free action, but that these actions of individuals rejecting the Lord were foreknown by God, and are all provided for within his plan. Free will of man and the foreknowledge of God and provision for disobedience within his plan, is also stated in passages like, Romans 9:19-21, Philippians 2:13.

The Bible teaches both the free will decision making of man and the sovereignty of God. From our side of eternity, in a world where we cannot have a thought that isn't limited by space and time, this is hard for us to understand, but was not difficult for God to arrange within his perfect plan from before this world was even made. Remember in debating this subject that you are not God, and cannot see things the way He has and does!

"They stumble at the word because of their disobedience, and to this they were appointed. Do not misunderstand; they were not appointed, or predestined to be disobedient. God does not so deal with any man. The supralapsarian theology dishonours his name while imagining they are defending his righteousness when they teach." (Ironsides, 1984, p 29.)

"The disobedient must stumble, but the bible does not teach that they were appointed to disobedience. Such fatalistic lessons are alien to God's love. The two ways are set before men." (Lumby, 1893, p 76.) The Bible is clear on this matter, no matter how violently and arrogantly the Calvinists argue their case and ignore the difficult texts for them. Remember we face the limits of space-time logic when we discuss Election and Man's Free Will, for we confront the difference between actions of God "before" time, and our own in time. It is philosophically a "category mistake".

"Just as in Chapter 1 verse 2, he represents his readers as marked out by God for salvation, so here he envisages their adversaries as predestined to destruction; but in both cases his mention of obedience, or it's opposite, implies that the personal decision of the individual is involved." (Kelly, 1969, p 94.)

This passage, like all others in the scriptures, underlines that man is held responsible for his choices about the Lord. God's Word calls this rejection, 'disobedience to the Creator'. "Men stumble over the message because they disobey. Disobedience is not the some philosophical or intellectual difficulty with the message itself. It is the root cause of the unbelievers down fall." (Mounce, 1982, p 27.)

They think they have considered the claims of the Lord and are justified in rejecting him, but the Lord is who he claimed to be, and so their rejection of him with, "trip them up in time and cause them to stumble in eternity, right into the Lake of Fire. Revelation 20:11-5. They were not careful enough! Just as the traveller who isn't careful cannot curse the stone he trips over, just so the unbeliever cannot blame the Lord, for he should have seen him truly. They are without excuse.

Look at the position we have, as Peter sings about it in verse nine. We are blessed, privileged in four ways:

1. Chosen generation - We are chosen people in God's plan, and this selection occurred in eternity past; well before we were aware of our choices God was, and we are part of his plan. Remember, do not get into a foolish discussion about whether our choice occurs before God's election of us, for all this occurs in eternity past, where time and space have no relevance or significance. The question itself, in philosophy is called a category mistake, asking something in one dimension that only applies to another! We will not understand this until we ourselves leave the limits of space and time, but until then let us praise God and go on our way rejoicing!
2. Royal priesthood - We are royal because the priesthood we, "belong to and is in the service of the King of Kings". (Mounce, 1982, p 28.) The application of the Old Testament passage to Israel is gone beyond and applied to the church. Israel was a kingdom of priests, where-as we, within the church we are, royal priests! We have the same royalty through our second birth as the Lord has. We are princes and princesses of heaven.
3. A holy nation - Before salvation we were of all nations, but now we are the true people of God, of the eternal "nation" of heaven. We have not permanently replaced Israel in God's plan, but during the period of history when they are "set aside"(Romans 11:17-26), we have the role that they had, and more besides!
4. A set apart people - a people for the Lord's possession. We are his, we are owned by him, for he has paid the price for our redemption. All our problems are his problems, and all our joys are causes of praise and glory to Him.

Beware of so called, "Replacement Theology" here. The church has not permanently replaced Israel. Paul makes it very clear in the Romans 11 passage, as does James in Acts 15, that Israel has been set aside due to her unbelief, but that after the church's removal the Lord will fulfil literally all his promises to that nation, and they too will, as a people, look upon whom they pierced. (Psalm 22:16, John 19:34 -37, Zechariah 12:1 -14: 21.)

Remember that the Church emerges from Israel as a remnant of grace from the Jews and then Samaritans and Ethiopians were added (Acts 8), then Gentiles in Acts 10, through Peter. We are all, in Christ's body the Church, the recipients of God's grace and mercy, and the results go on forever, and blessings are renewed every morning with a new supply of mercy and grace for each and every day. Let us praise the one whose provision for us is so great.

## **APPLICATION**

**A. PERSONAL**

In verse seven, "Peter is not speaking of the intrinsic value of the cornerstone but of the honour that comes to believers because they have placed their trust in him. Ephesians 2:5-6." (Mounce, 1982, p 27.) We have a place of glory and honour, and so let us daily celebrate what the Lord has done.

"Just as true faith manifests itself in obedience, so heart unbelief inevitably finds expression in deliberate disobedience." (Stibbs, 1959, p 103.) The two paths are always before mankind; once we have received the Lord as our Saviour we still face the daily decision to be obedient in the things he wishes or to disobey. Let us obey him and serve him in accordance with our high fourfold calling in Christ Jesus. Let us behave as becomes a king, a priest, an ambassador, and a child of the living God, who is always and ever under his gracious provision. Let us live in the light, praising the virtues of the one who called us out of the darkness.

**B. PASTORAL**

"The presence of Christ in the world elicits faith and unbelief. The belief of Christ is thrown into relief against the background of repudiation on the part of others." (Moffatt, 1963, p 117.) Are we making the Lord's claims clear? Are we standing for him in our societies so that men are indeed rejecting the real Saviour? How many reject the Saviour having only ever heard a little or a wrong thing?

We are responsible for getting the truth about him out there, and then what each man does, they are responsible for! Are we preaching enough about the greatness, and glory of our position in Christ. Do our believers understand the, at least, thirty four things the Lord has already done for them at the point of salvation? Verse by verse teaching is demanded of us that all God's people know what they have and utilise fully the position they are held by God responsible for!

**CONCLUSION**

No distractions! "Encouraged by the assurance of the hope to come, they were to be holy in all their behaviours, not being conformed to their former lusts (1:14-16). They were to conduct themselves with reverent fear during their (short) stay on earth (vs 17 - 21). They were to long for the pure milk of the word, putting aside all malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy and slander (2:1-10)." (Slaughter, 1995, p 84.)

**DOCTRINES**

AMBASSADORSHIP

ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION

FREE WILL

SALVATION

GIFTS GIVEN AT SALVATION

**PARAPHRASE**

"Reinforcing these reasons, it is also laid out clearly in the Scriptures, 'behold I lay the foundation in Zion, the chief cornerstone, chosen, and honoured above all, and the ones believing on him will at no point ever be put to shame'. To you who are the believing ones, he is the honoured one forever, but to those who examine him and reject him, he is as the prophet said, 'the stone which the builders (foolishly) rejected, which has (under God) become the key to the whole building.' He is to them a stone of stumbling, and a rock that trips up the unwary.' for they stumble over the word, but all this was foreseen by the Father and is within his plan. But you are, not like them, you are a chosen out people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God's possession, in order that you might show forth the virtue of him who called you out of the darkness into his marvellous light. We were not a group in the past, but we are now the people of God, we were without mercy, but now we have God's mercy and love forever."

**Notes**

## VERSES 11 - 17

**“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul; 12 having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. 13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, 14 or as unto governors, as them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. 15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: 16 as free, and not using your freedom as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. 17 Honour all men! Love the brotherhood! Fear God, honour the King!”**

## BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Notice Peter’s address to the believers in verse 11. Dearly beloved”, and so we are! Do you praise God for this? You are most dearly beloved of God. We must remember our position, and this is Peter’s entreaty now. Peter now reminds us, by the use of the other two words he has previously used, of our position here on earth. We are strangers and pilgrims; we are here on a temporary basis, citizens of another country, with a job to do and then we are to move on back to where we belong. Heaven is our home, and Peter wants to keep that before the believers.

He now begins a series of commands to be obeyed by us all, if we would truly serve the Lord as his ambassadors. “Every command carries a promise at its heart. It is even possible to abstain from fleshly lusts, because God is able to keep.” (Meyer, 1953, p 77.)

Let us look at each command in order, for they are all to be taken seriously. We are a new creation, but we still have the Old Sin Nature, and its lusts must be fought daily. “Salvation is deliverance from the power of the lower nature, not from its presence. Not until we are taken into glory and changed to be like him (1 John 3:2) will we be set free in an absolute sense from the temptation of sin. In the meantime we are to turn a deaf ear to the demands and desires of our lower nature.” (Mounce, 1982, p 30.)

1. Abstain from fleshly lusts. These desires, ‘war against the soul’, and this is how temptations may be known. Whatever feels like a war within, is an indication of the battling Old Sin nature, and we must resist temptation, not explain it away. We will desire the best in Christ, but the old nature desires to satisfy it’s immediate lusts for pleasure without thought of what is right and correct for ambassadors of Christ. Lust is self focused; we are to be service focused, and anything that gets in the way of serving the Lord is sin! Each of us has a slightly different sin nature, with different temptations having different strengths for each of us. Whatever your weakness you are to identify it and resist it’s selfish desires.
2. Keep on having behaviour that is honourable and noble, with integrity towards all unbelievers. We cannot witness by word to those who despise us because of our bad life witness! No hypocrisy, Peter urges. Ensure we are worthy of a hearing before the lost.
3. Keep on doing good and noble works and so silence their criticism. Believers were called, “evildoers” by the pagan Romans amongst whom they lived. This was because they had forsaken the old gods. Peter says that such an accusation can only be resisted by works that speak of nobility, for this will confuse the critics and make it hard for them to condemn good people. Only by being worthy of a hearing can we contribute to the process of evangelisation of the lost.
4. At every point in life try to obey the laws of the land. A criminal cannot witness of Christ, for the unbeliever looks at them and sees a man who is evil!
5. Be respectful to all rulers and leaders within the community in which you find yourself. If the custom is to stand for the playing of the national anthem, we should stand. We must show respect and be the best citizens, for only then do we have a real witness. We are to do all this, for the Lord’s sake. Keep on doing good things, so that you might silence all criticism of the church.
6. Live as free men, under the spiritual laws of freedom, and so show to all the great blessing that there are for the believer, and the joy of the believers life style.
7. Give appropriate honour and respect to all people.
8. Keep on showing caring love to all your fellow believers.
9. Be in awesome respect of the power and majesty of the living God.
10. Give all respect to the chief ruler of your land.

These “ten commands” are in no way the only commands for believers (there are a further twenty plus in each of the following chapters, Ephesians 6, Philippians 4, Colossians 3:12 - 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5) but they are the ones Peter wants the believers of his day to be careful to follow as the storm clouds of persecution gather over the church.

In verse twelve Peter’s advice recalls the Old Testament saint Daniel, who kept such a blameless life that his enemies had to go to extreme lengths to find fault with him, Daniel 6:4, 5; just so is it to be with us. Reike refers to this verse as one which expresses a, “remarkable theory of missions”. He goes on, “The gospel will be promulgated to the extent that the believers everywhere show such extraordinary patience, loyalty, in spite of the ill will of the non-Christian, that every observer will be astonished and converted.” (Reike, 1964, p 94.)

How would world evangelism go if we all did that as believers? I venture to suggest that much of the world would be changed overnight! What holds back the progress of the churches’ evangelical effort? Only our individual and corporate disobedience to the words in this chapter of Peter! The “holy example of the primitive church” (Meyer, 1953, p 85), was the power that fuelled evangelism. The pagans were impressed by their lives and by the way they died, and that is the standard that Peter calls us to every day of our sojourn here. The Roman Empire was changed by Martyr’s obedience.

Verse thirteen reminds us that we are to have one motive for our obedience, that is, “for the Lord’s sake”. We are to be obedient for it is the Lord’s will and that settles the matter. Romans 13:1-7, is a parallel passage to this one, and both men were to pay the ultimate price for their faith under Roman law, but both did so with dignity, not abusing those who executed them. They, in this, followed the example of their Lord. There is no way around this principle, “loyal submission to civil rulers is plainly God’s will”. (Stibbs, 1959, p 109.)

While some find this a “difficult verse” (Kelly, 1969, p 108), that is only because they live in societies where interference in the affairs of the state by churches is common. We must, this writer believes, be careful to avoid all involvement in politics of any sort, and avoid any comment on politicians that might distract the unbeliever from the gospel message. We are here to share the gospel and nothing must come between that mission and the unbeliever.

Verse sixteen reminds us of the Christian laws (Law of Liberty, Law of Love, Law of Supreme Sacrifice), and the reason for them. We are free, but that freedom is freedom to serve the living God. “Christians are free men, enjoying a freedom their neighbours in the world around them cannot know, but what ensures this freedom is precisely the fact that they are servants of God.” (Kelly, 1969, p 111.)

Remember again, Nero ruled at this time, and Peter is calling for respect for such a man! It does not matter how anti-morality, anti-marriage, anti-family and anti-God a ruler is, they are to be given honour and respect as the ruler under God, who finally will terminate them all. “If from time to time we are unable to applaud the moral character, or approve the decisions of a national leader, we should still honour the office he holds.” (Mounce, 1982, p 34.)

“Respect or honour, are close synonyms. Deference does not necessarily connote acquiescence, agreement, or passivity, though it does rule out retaliation. Senior rightly observes, ‘1 Peter is encouraging neither suffering for sufferings sake nor an opium like religious passivity’. (Senior 1982, p 433) Deference refers to the proper attitude that results in behaviour characterised by respect.” (Slaughter, 1995, pp 77, 78.)

Only God is to be feared, with awesome respect. “God is to be feared, because he is the holy one, our creator and judge; the civil power is on a different plane, and while it calls for our loyal respect, this is defined by the more general non-religious term honour.” (Kelly, 1969, p 113.)

## **APPLICATION**

### **A. PERSONAL**

Believer, we are to celebrate our status as “beloved ones”. “Agapetoi, while primarily denoting the writers love for his correspondents, also evokes the thought of the love which God has for them and the mutual charity which should characterise the Christian community.” (Kelly, 1969, p 103.)

We are to praise God for this status of beloved ones, but then our worship is to overflow into practical action in deeds of care and love towards our brethren.

Then we are reminded of Peter’s two words to describe our position in relationship to the world itself, and our place within our own nation. “The first word paroikoi, describes those who have no rights or legal status in the place, where they are merely sojourners. The second word parepidemioi, emphasises that they are temporary residents only.” (Stibbs, 1959, p 107.) How are we doing on this front? Do we live as strangers, or have we become too comfortable in our temporary place of residence?

Do not tire of doing well! This is a constant request from the apostolic writers. “Doing well shall not fail of it’s reward. Men will testify as of Isaac of old, ‘we saw plainly that the Lord was with thee’, and we said, ‘let there now be an oath betwixt us.’ Genesis 26:28, (Lumby, 1893, p 87.)

Do an audit of the last week believer. Have you done well? Have you done things that would be called kind, loving, thoughtful, or considerate? If not, why not? It is these fruits of the Holy Spirit by which we are to be known in the world, and which open the door to the gospel.

We are to be obedient to power in the state, be it moral or immoral; this is important to note, for as noted above, Nero was Emperor when these verses were written! The morality of the politician is irrelevant, we are still under this command to obey for the Lord's sake. There is another passage to put alongside this and Romans 13, and that is Acts 5:27-42. With this passage alongside the other two we have a "double order".

1. Obey all existing authorities and respect all in power for the Lord's sake.
2. In spiritual matters respectfully obey God rather than men, and take whatever punishment is given to you for your obedience to the Lord. Consequences flowing from obedience to the Lord were to be taken without complaint or resentment, rather in the apostolic manner, to be taken with thanksgiving. Acts 5:40-42, 16:22-25.

**B. PASTORAL**

Beware of political entanglement pastors! Many a ministry has been ruined because it tied itself in to a politician who promised godly policies, and then in immorality dragged down his supporter's reputations. We are not here to change society, but to save individuals; to snatch out of the fire those we can. Jude 23.

"God does not deal with society as a whole, but with individuals one by one, not with the abuses, but with the spirit out of which they arise; not with politics, but with principles. You will best save the world by saving the individuals who go to make it up." (Meyer, 1953, p 82.)

No distractions from the task at hand! As a pastor we are responsible for the training of the saints that they might do the job the Lord has called them to. Our people must hear God's policy not ours, nor the policy of some local politician who has enrolled our support to clean up the town!

Every town and city needs cleaning up, but that is not the job, we are called to preach the word of the living God, and tell all who will hear the good news of salvation. We are here to fish for souls, not clean up the fish pond. Jude 22-23.

As pastors we are to be "blameless", Titus 1:7, 1 Timothy 3. As the pressure comes upon the church we are to be even more careful of our reputation before the world. We are to be known as Daniel was. If someone is wanting to charge us with evil, they must be forced to lie about us to do it.

**CONCLUSION**

Holiness before the world and unto the Lord!

**DOCTRINES**

**OLD SIN NATURE**

**LAWS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

**WORKS: DIVINE GOOD AND HUMAN GOOD**

**NATIONS**

**AUTHORITY: BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF AUTHORITY**

**STATE: BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF THE STATE**

**GOVERNMENT: NATIONAL**

**OBEDIENCE**

**PARAPHRASE**

“Dearly beloved ones, I keep on urging you, pleading with you, as citizens of heaven in a strange place, as only temporary resident here,( to live accordingly). Keep on holding yourself away, or back from any self centred pleasures( that would make the Lord ashamed of your actions). Behave in all ways, at all times, with honour and integrity in front of unbelievers. Some speak now against you as criminals, worthy of jail, but by your good works let them be silenced, so that(they might respond to the gospel and so then) they might praise God on the day of his return. At every point in daily life place yourself under the law, and in all you do respect the authority of the ruling powers, be they, empire wide, national, or local. This is the Lord’s will and you obey this command for his sake, for it is his will that rulers punish evil men, (and so establish law and order, within which we can give the gospel out). Put to silence those ignorant and foolish people who attack us by your good deeds. Live in Christian freedom, but do not use this doctrine as a cloak for any malice filled activity, but live as the servants of the King of Kings. Give honour and respect to all people. Practically show loving care for all the brethren. Live in awesome fear of God. Honour and respect the ruler of the state.”

**VERSES 18 - 25**

**“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle but also to the froward. 19 For this is thank worthy, for if a man for conscience towards God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well ye suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this acceptable with God. 21 For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps. 22 ‘who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth’ (Isaiah 53 : 9 LXX), 23 who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judges righteously: 24 who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, ‘by whose stripes ye were healed’. 25 For ye were, ‘as sheep going astray’ (Isaiah 53 : 4-6), but are now returned to the shepherd and bishop of your souls.”**

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

Peter begins a section that has parallels in Paul's writings in Ephesians 6:5-9, Philemon, and Colossians 4:1-6. These three passages together producing a glimpse into the early churches view of labour relations, and how both workers and managers should conduct themselves. The context, once again, is eternity, and the true role of the believer in time; namely, that we are ambassadors of the court of heaven, with responsibilities to perform. We have a role of witnessing to the Lord whatever our human job, which, whatever status it has or form it takes, must not get in the way of our witness.

Christianity was a religion of the people, with a significant following amongst the lower social classes, although we should not go too far on this point, for many wealthy people were saved and entered the church, and the local church became the only place in pagan society where all social groups mixed together. John 7:48, Mark 12:37, 1 Corinthians 1:26, cf, Acts 13:7,12, 16:14,15, 17 : 34, Philippians 4:22, James 1:9 -11, 2:5 -7. There is an ambivalence towards wealth in the early church for the wealthy as a whole were their oppressors, but there were some from the slave owning classes as members, Philemon being one notable example.

Unlike Paul, Peter does not address any words to Christian masters, a fact that several have commented on (Moffatt, 1963, p 125, and Cranfield, 1958, p 63). Why is this? We can only speculate, for by the date of this letter Paul’s letters were already well known. It is not that Peter felt it unlikely that the witness of the slaves would win their masters, for he is aware of all witness as playing a part in evangelism (the principles below make it clear he was thinking about witness), it is more that he is concentrating on the issues faced by his churches, for, as he saw it, there were principles of faith being ignored. It is most likely that in his churches no masters were believers.

Let us examine these principles that Peter identifies apply to the slaves of the Roman Empire.

1. Be in subjection - place yourselves under the authority of the boss/owner.
2. Be respectful with awesomeness towards them, so there is no hint of disrespect.
3. Have this attitude towards those who are good and those who are “two faced” and untrustworthy. Believers are to trust God in this matter.
4. This behaviour is worthy of honour, and enhances your reputation before the world.
5. Knowing what is unjust before God, and enduring it for the Lord’s sake, brings glory and the “well done” of God.
6. Enduring wrongful pain and sorrow, and taking it to the Lord, is the “school of maturity”, where we can learn more of the Lord and his suffering than in any other place in this life.
7. Do not suffer for your own wrongdoing! There is no glory in that.

8. Imitate the character of Christ; see any unjust suffering that comes your way as an opportunity to learn more of him, and become more like him as you place yourself totally in the Father's hands.

"These verses contain the fullest elaboration of the example of the Lord Jesus Christ for believers. The purpose of our call is to follow his steps." (Hiebert, 1982, pp 32, 33.) This is not an easy thing, nor a path that is without pain. To follow the Lord may involve losing all things that we previously held dear.

In days when some preachers are speaking of the so called, "prosperity gospel", these words are a clarion call back to biblical truth. Of all those who followed the Lord in the first century, there are not many who ended their lives as wealthy men or women. Indeed, their view was that to die wealthy was to have lived ungodly, for they reasoned that the wealth the Lord had given was given to be used for the necessities of life, then to help his people, and to do his work.

"Submissive acceptance of treatment that is patently unfair is a fine and Christian thing precisely because the Lord himself behaved in that way and the Christian vocation is to imitate him." (Kelly, 1969, p 118.)

Hiebert notes, regarding verse 21. "The Lord is our example, denoting a model to be copied by the novice. The example was not left merely to be admired, but to be followed line by line, feature by feature. . . The command to follow denotes a close and diligent following, the preposition (epi) takes it's force as marking direction. They must follow upon that line that his footsteps marked out." (Hiebert, 1982, p 34.) The standard for Christian behaviour is not any-one other than the Lord Jesus Christ. All falling short of his standard of behaviour is sin!

This section is vital for our understanding of the early church's attitude towards Messianic prophecy. Peter quotes freely from Isaiah 53 in this passage, verses 22 - 25, being an expanded and re-arranged version of Isaiah 53 in the order of verses 9, 7, 4, 5,11,12, then 6. Re-read Isaiah before you read this section and see how clearly Peter believes this has been fulfilled in the person and work of the Lord on the cross.

The Lord resisted sin and would not give way to trickery, or reviling (verse 22). What the people saw, was what they got from the Lord, and so it should be with us. The only way to follow the Lord, Peter underlines in this verse, is to live a life characterised by absence of sin, guile, and reviling! If you follow him in truth, the truth will be, that you live a life which characterises the fruit of the Lord Spirit rather than these fruits of the Old Sin Nature. Control of the tongue is a major indicator of spiritual maturity. James 3:2, Matthew 12:34, 35.

When others unjustly verbally attack us, it is then that our true character emerges; for only then do we see if we follow Jesus under pressure or drop too easily into, "getting even", types of behaviours. Such a mind set is slavery to sin, and the power of that slavery is what the Lord came to break to pieces.

Verse 24 directly reminds us of the efficacious sacrifice of the Lord on the cross for ours sins. The price for sin has been paid perfectly. Through his work we are free from sin and able, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to live lives that follow the Lord's example of righteousness. If we do not live this way, it is only because we have failed to take advantage of the riches we have in Christ Jesus. His death was "not that of a heroic martyr dying for a rejected cause, it was redemptive and substitutionary in nature." (Hiebert, 1982, p 40.)

To serve fallen men like Christ did we will be attacked by them, for they are "fallen" and until the Holy Spirit's quickening work begins in their lives they have nothing within them to even understand where we are coming from. Their hatred will be expressed in words and deeds, but that is not to be the thing that occupies our minds, any more than the insults of the crowd worried our Lord. He was here to save, and focused his mind on the work required to achieve that.

We are here to give the message of salvation, and must, through any undeserved suffering, or verbal attack that comes to us, not lose our way either. We are to follow the Lord's example of fortitude and focus, and not be side-tracked by attacks upon us. Nothing is to be taken personally by ambassadors for Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:9-20.

Read through Mark 13:13, Luke 21:17, John 15:18-25, Romans 1:26 -32, then go back and read verses 16, 17, for even knowing the nature of man, God provided for them all salvation, and we are to share the Gospel with them. In the hatred of men for us, we share in the sufferings of Christ, understanding a little more of the love of God for his world. Romans 8:16-18, 2 Corinthians 1:3 -7, Philippians 3:10, James 5:10, 1 Peter 4:13.

## **APPLICATION**

### **A. PERSONAL**

"It is the Christian's new awareness of God and of what is pleasing to Him, and his sense of his calling in Christ that should inspire and enable him to do this, even when it is difficult and painful to stick to it in practice because of harsh masters and unjust treatment." (Stibbs, 1959, p 113.)

"Peter encourages uncomplaining persistence in submissive loyalty even when it involves the painful endurance of unjust treatment. . . . It is the patient uncomplaining submission to suffering when one has done well that is acceptable with God." (Stibbs, 1959, p 114.)

The big question for us is, will we think in terms of human viewpoint or divine viewpoint? The “human rights” viewpoint that is the major one in our media, screams at us to, “stand up for our rights”. The Lord tells us to serve him and let nothing come between us and our job, which is to walk as he walked and by word and deed show a world that desperately needs him, that he has the power to enable even the taking of injustice with patience. We are to have our eyes fixed on heaven, which is where our ambassadorship stems from, and have our day guided by the “matter” of heaven (God’s plan of redemption) rather than our worries here.

Redemption, the Gospel of salvation, eternal life, the Holy Spirit empowered life; these are to be our themes and make up our message, not “human rights” and other worthy, but side-tracking subjects. This is the hard challenge for us. The tough choices are not good versus evil, but divine good versus human good; God’s viewpoint, timing and plan, rather than our plans and issues, good though they be!

The abolition of slavery would come in it’s time, but until that came and after it, the believers were to focus only on their job as the Lord’s ambassadors, and witness to the world of God’s saving and delivering power. This remains the imperative for us!

Verse 21 underlines this last principle; we are to imitate Christ! What is our response to the glory of his redemptive work? “Gratitude is the only appropriate response to the wonder of redemption.” (Mounce, 1982, p 36.) Is Mounce right here? Gratitude is all very well, but how is it to work out? Peter challenges us that it ought to work out in witnessing, and worship, and walking through daily life in a way that is both worshipful and enhances the witness to the world! Christ is our “model”, that means we are to take everything about the Lord’s life as our guide.

“The ultimate efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ depends on what it does in us.” (Mastermann, 1912, p 116.) “Redemption from sin is intended to have a practical effect in daily life; in order that we might live to righteousness. . . . As Theodoret said, ‘a new and strange method of healing; the doctor suffered the cost, and the sick received the healing’.” (Hiebert, 1982, p 41, 42.)

God always wants results! The parable of the talents is not taken seriously enough by most believers. Matthew 25:13-34, John 15:1-8. We are meant to be productive, or we will be disciplined in this life and lose reward in the next. Let us ensure that we do not get distracted by the attacks upon us by unjust men, but rather do the work of the gospel that is entrusted to us; that we may fix our eyes on the Lord alone, his ‘well done’, and his eternal rewards for our obedience! His opinion alone counts forever! “It is better far to have the approval of the Lord than the approbation of the world which crucified him.” (Ironside, 1984, p 37.)

Verse 25 reminds us that we were all sheep heading in the wrong direction before Christ found us. Even as believers we have wandered away from the truth, and that second meaning is probably the main meaning that Peter wants us to get firmly in mind here. Here he uses the verb “epistrepho”, meaning to “return to the right place again”, which would not be appropriate for our position as unbelievers. As his sheep the believers have wandered off into fields of their own choosing, but the fires of persecution are to bring them back to the true field of God’s chosen place of service for them.

There they are to stay and not get distracted by any temptation or attack, for the Lord is the overseer (bishop) of their soul, and he knows best where they are to serve and why it is important. Suffering and attacks upon us are often baffling, and always upsetting; we are to take this to our shepherd, for he cares for our soul, but we are to keep working for him through our pain and hurt. “Understanding will have to wait until another day. Meanwhile we accept it with thanksgiving”. (Mounce, 1982, p 38.)

**B. PASTORAL**

“Self vindication is ever to be avoided on the part of the follower of Christ. He is called to imitate his master, who endured uncomplainingly the false accusation of sinners and lived his pure and holy life, as under the eye of the Father, content to leave it with Him to justify Him in due time, Isaiah 50:5-8). . . . As he left everything in the Father’s hands so should we.” (Ironside, 1984, pp 34, 35.)

Is this the mental attitude that our people get from our Bible preaching? Are we too influenced by our self-centred age that finds the claims of the individual to “justice” so powerful that this earlier view is ignored?

Today we speak of “natural ethics” and demand the abolition of slavery, and other forms of injustice to our fellow man. This is all good and noble, but Peter tells us there is an even nobler way! We are right to observe these things, but Peter and Paul challenge us to consider in some situations a higher standard. Kelly, calls it, “the ethics of the redeemed community” (Kelly, 1969, p 115), and challenges us to see that, in the apostles eyes the evil of slavery was a side track issue at that time in the Roman Empire, and that the job the Lord had called them to had priority over issues of personal freedom.

The church would go on to be the prime mover within Rome, and centuries later in England, with the abolition of slavery, but Peter indicates by these verses that to enter this area at this point would have been to side track the church from it’s mission. The principle behind this is foundational.

First, and always, we are to focus on our ambassadorial and evangelical role upon the earth and serve the Lord wherever we find ourselves without complaint, as the Lord gives us example on the cross. Only when the witnessing role is

well established do we raise other issues, and then we must be sure that this is what the Lord is calling us to (a good example of this was William Wilberforce in England who was the Christian who was the prime mover in the abolition of slavery).

Once again we are challenged as pastors regarding our involvement in the politics, and political/moral issues of our nations. Is the witnessing role completed, and do we have a strong sense of personal call from God for this "issue"? Can a social evil be eliminated without there being a side tracking from the gospel message to the lost, for that is our primary role? Let us keep the apostolic faith and not allow anything to side-track us from the individual path the Lord has called each of us to walk in our nations!

## **CONCLUSION**

"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 the ordinary social distinctions, real enough in the daily round of life in the world, had lost all meaning. Galatians 3:28, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Colossians 3:11, Philemon 8 -18." (Kelly, 1969, p 115.)

The brotherhood of all believers leads to caring love for other saints, and reminds us that we live in a hostile world, and that we owe them the gospel (Romans 1:13 -17), even if they treat us as they treated our Lord.

## **DOCTRINES**

**SUFFERING**

**BROTHERHOOD OF BELIEVERS**

**FATHERHOOD OF GOD**

**AMBASSADORSHIP**

**CONSECRATION**

**SHEPHERD: CHRIST THE SHEPHERD**

## **PARAPHRASE**

"Workers, keep on placing yourselves daily under the authority of those you work for, respond to all orders respectfully. Obey this command, not only towards the fair and mild, but also towards those who are crooked and harsh, never straight in their dealings. This level of obedience is honourable, and will enhance the way Christians are seen by the world. When we suffer wrong unjustly we keep a good conscience towards God, and win honour before men. There is no glory or honour in being patient while suffering wrong when we deserve it due to some crime committed, but if we suffer wrong when we do not deserve it, it is admirable to God, and will be rewarded. This path of unjustified suffering, is the path we are called to walk, because Christ suffered for us, leaving us with the example to follow in his footsteps. He never sinned, neither was any trickery ever heard from his lips, when he was verbally abused, he never responded in kind, when he suffered unjustly he never responded by threats, but commuted his life to the one who judges fully, finally and justly. In his own body he took our sins upon the cross, in order that we, who were dead in our sins, should live no longer under sin's power, but live in his power, a life characterised by righteousness. By his sufferings we were healed. We all have been like sheep wandering every way except the one we should be on, but now we have returned to the one who is the overseer and carer for our souls (eternal destiny)."

**CHAPTER 3****VERSES 1 - 7**

“Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may be won by the conversation of their wives; 2 while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. 3 Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, 4 but let it be the hidden man of the heart. In that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quite spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price. 5 For after this manner in the old time, the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands: 6 even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters you are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. 7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

“The thought of wives submitting to husbands seems almost heretical to many people. Human rights occupy centre stage as a leading world issue. People are quick to defend their rights in every arena of life. . . . What did Peter mean when he wrote about a wife’s submission to her husband? . . . . The behaviour of believers when they encounter unfair circumstances should reflect a spirit of deference (honour) in all relationships as they follow Christ’s example and anticipate future glory. The apostles instructions to wives in 1 Peter 3:1-6, must be read and understood against the backdrop of this controlling literary message.” (Slaughter, 1996, p 63, 64.)

Peter’s words to the wives take up much more space than his words to husbands, and one commentator, Cranfield believes he knows why. Is he right? “The exhortation to wives is much longer than that to husbands, partly no doubt because women were more numerous than men in those early Christian communities, but chiefly because the position of a Christian wife was usually much more difficult than that of a Christian husband, and the wives were, therefore in greater need of pastoral counsel and encouragement.” (Cranfield, 1958, p 69.)

Stop and look at the context of these words. Re-read the last verses of chapter two(18-24), and read the whole section here (3:1-17). The issue before Peter is Holy Spirit produced mental attitude and behaviour, and from the very specific things he questions the women about, it is clear that they, as a group have slipped into dangerous practises, given the coming persecutions, and need the greatest correction. Why was the place of Christian women “much more difficult”?

For men their social position had not changed as believers, but for women there was great change. In Christ they suddenly were treated as real people, as worthy in and of themselves, through Christ. Freedom when gained after a history of slavery can go to the head, and this appears to be what has happened here, as in churches that Paul spoke to of similar themes.

The apostles are not grumpy old men trying to maintain a social order where women are suppressed, rather they are trying to get these women to see how to use their freedom to do their divinely appointed job and win lost souls; the first one they have responsibility for is their husband! Freedom isn’t to be relaxed into and selfishly enjoyed, it is to be used.

The first word is the Greek word, “homoios”, meaning “in the same way”. The question is, in the same way as what? What is the preceding command that Peter is referring to? Peter has been focused on mental attitude and the working out of that attitude in life; this word is his trumpet call to remind us that the theme here is the same!

The subject is the mental attitude and actions associated with the words of the previous chapter verses 18 - 24, good, gentle, thank worthy, glory, patience, acceptable; what I have called “honour”, and what others call “deference”. It is the mental attitude of a spirit controlled believer who sees the Lord as their example, who sees ambassadorship as their life, evangelism of the lost as their role, and heaven as their home.

Such a person is not ever “fighting for their rights”, for they are focused on the well done of their Lord, knowing that he has all things in his hands, and his plan is perfect, even in the midst of unfairness. Note carefully, the same word introduces verse seven. Peter makes clear that the same principles that apply to women here apply to the husbands as well!!! There is no double standard in the biblical position, for all are to submit in Christ like spirit to each other in service to the glory of their Lord.

**Ephesians 5:18-21.** “18. *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*  
19. *Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;*  
20. *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*  
21. *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*”

The word “hupotasso”, submission, “does not mean inferiority or superiority of person hood (including intelligence or spirituality) but the maintenance of divinely willed order.” (Gerhardt Delling, quoted in Slaughter, 1996, p 70.) There is

no master - slave relationship in marriage, and Peter (like Paul) uses “hupotasso” to underline the mental attitude of respect and deference, both for slaves and wives, not to emphasise the similarity of the two situations, but the universality of the Christian demand to honourable and respectful behaviour towards all!

“The voluntary subjection of Christian wives to their husbands constitutes a specific application of the apostles introductory words in 2:13 -17, to submit to every human institution and to honour everyone. By submitting to their husbands Christian wives exhibit behaviour that reflects the spirit of deference, which is essentially the spirit of Christ.” (Slaughter, 1996, 72.)

Wives are commanded to have this mental attitude towards their own (idios) husbands, not anyone else’s! The Greek word indicates a “strong possessive” (Slaughter, 1996, p 71), and, “seems to emphasise privateness and peculiarity to oneself in a relationship.” (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, 1973, p 370.) The submission of women to men is not taught here. Women have the same obligation men have, to be respectful to all they meet, but submission (response of love and respect) is towards their own husband alone. This is not licence for any men to dominate or control any women!

As Paul observed, (1 Corinthians 7, Ephesians 5, Colossians 3) there was a human temptation for the women to leave their pagan husbands and seek men who were spiritually more in tune with their new life in Christ, and this temptation remains strong in all places where Christianity makes new inroads into a culture, or community. Sadly in many evangelical churches this temptation proves too strong and many Christian women (and men) leave their husbands (or wives) for other men or (women), and their reasons are given as apparently “spiritual”.

“Their duty was not to leave their heathen husbands, nor to provoke hostility by constant speaking of spiritual things, but to win them by the silent witness of a life lived for Christ.” (Mastermann, 1912, p 119.) The service imperative of the blood bought believer, is to over-rule any of our self centred desires for a more pleasant life. We are here to serve the Lord not fulfil ourselves! It is a Christ centred life that Peter (and Paul and all the others) call us all to, it just so happens that the women needed the most “encouragement” here. We are to serve him where-ever we find ourselves, and the marriage we are in when we are saved, we are to stay in unless the unbeliever orders us out, or it becomes too dangerous to stay (1 Corinthians 7:10-24).

The word for winning to Christ is a significant one. Peter uses the future passive indicative of the verb, “kerdaino”. He is indicating by the future, that the believers focus should be out in front of them, and they should be living in a way to achieve a future purpose; namely the salvation of their spouse, (also of family and friends circle).

The passive voice reminds us that the subject receives the action of the verb, indicating the work of the Holy Spirit upon the unbeliever. We do not “win” them, God does by his work through the Spirit, but we have a witness to give, or we have an example we set that leads them away from the Spirit’s work. The great sadness of evangelism today is that so many unbelievers are actively turned away from Christ by the poor witness of the lives of Christians they know. We must have our lives right before our lips form words that are heard.

The indicative mood is the mood of reality, reminding us of the reality of the eternal hope, the reality of the rewards of salvation, that are worth doing anything for, in order that the unbeliever might be saved. The meaning of the word itself tells us that the saved person “wins, with great future gain”. The good news of the gospel message is eternal life; it is through our lives that they see this reality now!

In verse two Peter describes the life to be lived that will have maximum impact, and value, or use, for the Holy Spirit’s work. In a world filled with sexual lust, the unbeliever needs to see the Christian living without any hint of sexual sin (chaste), and with an awesomeness (fear and respect for God) that impresses them. How will that fear be manifested? By them seeing a believer who is living in the light of the reality of eternity, rather than being hungry and lusting after the things of time, as they, as unbelievers do!

Most commentators run off in major discussions about “subjection” but that is simply the mental attitude towards God and the husband, for the wife; the real subject here is the mental attitude that reflects an eternal life perspective rather than one that is totally focused on the things of time, that do not last!

Peter now turns to the thing that lasts least, but that these women are apparently spending/wasting good time on! Namely their ornate and expensive hair styles. Peter attacks a trend in these churches towards, “showy luxury” (Moffatt, 1963, p 130). The women were leading the way, and that is why these verses concentrate on them, but men also fall victim to this, ‘lust of the eyes’. Mark 7:20-23, 1 John 2:15-17. This passage from the first letter of John is particularly important, as it makes the same point Peter is here; the world does not last, and all that is associated with it does not last, only what is of God lasts, and only that is worthy of our time now!

Do not think that Peter is against washing the hair and combing it into an attractive style for the person; that is not attacked here. The styles that Peter attacks here, and Paul also, in 1 Timothy 2:9, is a style of dressing and hair doing that would have taken a woman and her slaves up to six hours to complete, and involve the use of thousands of dollars worth of gold and other precious items. This also tells us that while male slaves have been saved in large numbers, it may be the wealthy women who also form another sub group in the churches, and they have an arrogance problem that will lead them away from the Lord, and certainly lead their husbands away from even hearing the gospel message unless there is a shift in their heart’s desire.

This sort of addiction to pagan fashion was showy and flashy arrogance, and it exists today with those who dress to draw attention to themselves, and to show just how much money, power and sexuality they have! Such dressing indicates a heart that is set on the things of time rather than the things of eternity, and it must change if that person is to play their part in the Lord's work. All self centred behaviours are a danger, for they feed pride and arrogance and they are Satan's main tools to control and destroy mankind.

The two key words of verses three and four are, "outwards" compared to "hidden". Our treasure is to be hid in heaven, Matthew 6:21, Mark 10:21, Luke 12:15-34, James 5:1-6. If it is on earth then it decays, but if we have eternal reward through service for our Lord, that treasure lasts forever, as we also live forever. As loved ones of God with eternal life, our hearts ought to be set on the things of eternity.

The woman with the correct mental attitude is described in verse four. In contrast to the showy and wealthy women who are flaunting their wealth and sexuality, the godly woman is characterised by a meek (Greek – "prautes") and quiet spirit. Be careful here to get the Greek meaning of the words used; for this is not a description of a bland, badly dressed and 'quiet as a mouse' woman.

This is a truly lovely, and strongly spiritual woman to whom others would be attracted due to the strength of her transformed and spiritually focused nature. Meekness is not mousiness, it was to the Greeks the spirit that lacked arrogance, and self centeredness, but was focused on its "god given" role upon the earth. In this case the "meek" person was humbly focused upon their Holy Spirit filled service for the living God. The word for quietness does not mean she sits back and lets everyone else do the talking. It means people hang on her every word, for they know she speaks from the wisdom deep within her soul, and she only speaks when she has something significant to say.

Verses five and six, remind the women that if they imitate the mental attitude of verse four, then they will be standing in the "godly line" of great women of the past, the leading representative of which is Sarah. "The biblical principle of true pedigree is based on imitation of Christ, not of men. Matthew 5:45, John 8:39, and Romans 9:6-9." (Kelly, 1969, p 131.)

All through Scripture we have the choices of mankind spelt out; there are always two ways set before all generations, Abraham and Lot, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau. In Sarah's case we have her playing both parts. In the early years of her life she is Sarai (the contentious one), aggressive and barren, but she becomes Sarah through confronting the grace of God. She becomes Sarah (the princess), a truly respectful, responsive, loving and now fertile woman who has the son she longed for in her aggression/contentiousness.

The message is clear; contentiousness is barren (literally fruit-less), whereas respect and response is fruitful and blessed. Peter's point is related to aggression compared to respect and loving response. Don't get side tracked from the spiritual principles here into a discussion of childlessness! Peter's concern is not with increasing the number of physical children on the earth, but in increasing the impact of evangelism. His desire is that there might be more unbelievers led to Christ, having the door of faith explained to them by believers whose lives live up to the profession of their lips.

Women in Peter's day, by their involvement in the daily life of a society, often had more opportunities for this "life style evangelism", than did men, who often had most hours of their day taken up with paid work that did not give much time for sharing anything except work related issues. The daily struggle of men's work meant that they returned to their homes quite exhausted, and therefore very open to a change in attitude of their wives that would be most impressive to them.

Even today "burned out" people, male and female, respond well to love and respectful support from a spouse, and the door for the gospel is opened by such a response. Even with modern changes in work patterns and hours the principles that Peter lays out here have 100% relevance today, both within the home and in the community for effective evangelism of the lost.

The woman Peter describes is, like Sarah, quietly doing good, and is not living in fear of any man, worry, or thing, but respect for God, and loving respect for her husband. The AV of verse six has, "they are not afraid with any amazement". What does Peter mean here? He wants them to see that the faith and obedience of Sarah removed any of her fears for where her life was going; she relaxed and got on with being a godly woman, leaving her life in God's hands.

David Stern is strong here, "this is a call to give up neurotic anxiety. The anxious feelings may not go away, but one can gain a right perspective on them, not by suppressing them or denying their existence, but by acknowledging them while at the same time experiencing that God's peace(shalom), a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22), is stronger; as is God's power, love and self control, (1 Timothy 1:7). Seek God's rulership instead of dwelling on anxious thoughts and worries (Matthew 6:25,26,33). The basic fear is of death, but Y'Shua has abolished death (2 Timothy 1:10) and set believers free from this fear (Hebrews 2:15). (Stern, 1992, p 750.)

Verse seven is the husband's turn to receive Peter's attention, although, as we have seen, the principles of verses 2-6, apply to us all. The verse begins with the Greek word, "homoios", meaning, 'in the same manner'. Don't miss Peter's point in the use of this word, as most commentators do! All that applies to the women applies to the men also, plus a little more! The next principle of this verse is Christian equality. Both the man and woman are "heirs of the grace of life". We share an eternal reward and the status of royal family of God, as we have already seen earlier. Judaism, and the Greek Gnosticism of Peter's day had a "lopsided contempt for women". (Reicke, 1964, p 103.)

While women were respected as “child bearers” they were not looked upon as spiritual equals. The Lord and the church he founded changes all that. It would have been tempting for these people to carry over their views of women into their new life in the church, and this is why Peter has to specifically lay these principles out. The men are to live with their wives, both physically and sexually, in a manner characterised by “knowledge” (gnosis), which means with understanding of where their wives are coming from. Husbands are to listen to their wives, and first understand their concerns and the different way they see the world and their problems. Men and women think differently, and Peter urges the men to take time and put in effort to understand these differences. He is a married man and you can bet that he applied this, or else he would not have dared say these things, for the first reader of his letter would be his wife!

His congregation were watching him, and so we know this is a principle that was “dangerous” to state unless applied. All modern marital counselling starts with this principle, and as believers we must apply this or Peter says, we will not only have marriages in crisis but a prayer life in tatters. Prayer is hindered only by sin, and Peter tells us here that the sin of abuse in a marriage is a very serious one in God’s sight. God hates the behaviours of violent, bullying men, and God will not hear the prayers of a man who abuses his wife in any way!

The “weaker vessel” is Peter’s way of saying, ‘do not hurt the woman!’ A wife is to be protected not abused physically. Any man who physically hits or otherwise abuses his wife, in her body is in violation of God’s holy word and comes under a severe condemnation here. To hurt your wife, physically or sexually is to have your entire spiritual life “cut off”. Note the meaning of the word that Peter uses to describe the cutting off of the effectiveness of the man’s prayers. All his efforts in prayer will be to no avail if he is abusive to his wife in any way.

“This is a portentous warning. A man who does not respect his wife might try to retreat into prayer, but he will be unable to have a good spiritual life so long as he does not love, understand, and honour his wife.” (Stern, 1992, p 750.) The wife who fails to obey the principles of verses 2 - 6 faces a barren life without spiritual usefulness and with no results in either evangelism or the joy of the fruit of the Spirit, but the man who disobeys verse 7, loses his entire spiritual power, and has no relationship with his Lord until he loves his wife again!

## **APPLICATION**

### **A. PERSONAL**

“Silent evangelism is a biblical principle. Situations develop where nothing but godly and chaste behaviour can convince a spouse of the reality of the Christian faith. A man determined to disobey God cannot be won by harping on what he already knows but has decided to ignore.” (Mounce, 1982, p 41).

The husband knows what the wife believes, all the tears and nagging in his presence will not tell him anything more, but behaviour that shows what the Lord does with a life might just, under the Holy Spirit’s powerful convicting ministry open the door of salvation that nagging always closes.

Let all wives examine their hearts before God in regard to this principle, for if they are to have witness with their husband or family their lives must be filled with the fruits of the Holy Spirit or else their efforts will be in vain. But let us ALL apply this principle to life, for only people who look and act as Christ’s character is, can truly witness for him without bringing his name into disgrace.

Peter challenges us constantly in his letter to adopt the “Eternal life perspective”. To see things in terms of eternity rather than time; to look to heavenly rewards rather than the lusts for the things that are of time alone. Peter gets right down to basics here, and it is uncomfortable. He asks the women, how much time do you spend each day on your grooming and “beautifying”, in contrast to the time you spend with God in prayer and in the study of his Word?

Our actions and attitudes determine what we really value, and finally they will work out for all to see. What do people identify as our values when they look at our daily actions? Do they see people who think of time only, or do they see people whose hearts are set on eternal matters?

“Here the individual awareness that God’s eye is upon him, and his sense of what is valued in God’s sight, should determine how he acts.” (Stibbs, 1959, p 122, 123.) We are called to be Christ centred not self centred; service not life-style fulfilment is the call of the Christian. As we noted above, this does not mean we wear a hair shirt and look and smell bad! We are to be clean, appropriately dressed for all occasions, and ready to serve without giving offence by our bad dress and hair, or by our bad behaviours.

Life style evangelism has become a “dirty word” in many circles because it was reduced to, living the truth, with out speaking the truth; which is certainly not Peter’s point here. The Christian wife is to speak of Christ, but only after her life witness has earned her the right to share about what the Lord has done for her. This principle applies generally in society. Most unbelievers are more impressed by a transformed life, than by words.

They will read our tracts, but only after they have watched our tracks, and seen that our Saviour is worth following! What tracks are we making in life? Are we living a life that is worthy of following? If we are not, we should be careful about giving the gospel, for the smart unbeliever will judge our message by our life; if they don’t like that, they wont want our Saviour, who they see produces “that”!

Verse six encourages us to ask the question, have we banished anxiety and fear, or are we living as if “it all depends on us”? It doesn’t! Verse six reminds both the women and the men that God does not want us being anxious about anything. Philippians 4:6, Matthew 6:25 -34, Luke 10:40-42, 12:29-34, 1 Peter 5:7.

Our lives are to be filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and peace of mind is one of the primary fruits. This is Peter’s call to the women to “adorn themselves” with the fruit of the Spirit, and for all of us this call is applicable. Be filled with the Holy Spirit believer, or be useless to the Lord in time!

“God will not hear prayers from a home where the man bullies and overbears the woman”. (Moffatt, 1963, p 134.) “True prayer can only arise out of true home life”. (Mastermann, 1912, p 123.) “Selfishness in the relationship between husband and wife, any form of exploitation of the other person, is a certain way of spoiling the spiritual life.” (Cranfield, 1958, p 73.) Let this warning regarding the spiritual life of married men and women be taken seriously by them all, or they will not be able to be used by God in time.

**B. PASTORAL**

“It is much easier to stand amid a crowded assembly calling Christians to entire consecration than on the following morning, to bring those lofty principles to bear on the small details of the breakfast table, when the radiant light of the transfiguration has been exchanged for the grey of an autumn day break, and the excitement of the crowds for the spiritual presence of the wife and child.” (Meyer, 1953, p 106.)

Peter demands application into life of all these principles, as pastor-teachers we must also. These scriptural principles in the verses we have read must be applied in the churches daily life before the unbeliever or we will fall short of God’s standard, and fail in our ministry to the lost. Christian husbands and wives should be known within their communities as the ones who demonstrate the ability to listen to each other and behave with respect and love always towards each other.

These principles must be heard strongly from our pulpits every time we speak. The living presence of the Holy Spirit within us must be demonstrated by the fruit of the Spirit within our marriages and then into our community. If the marriage of believers is not right their witness to their world will not be either.

**DOCTRINES**

ATTITUDE

MARRIAGE

REWARDS AND CROWNS

**PARAPHRASE**

“In the same spirit of respect towards all authorities for Christ’s sake, Christian wives must also have a spirit of respectful responsiveness towards their own husbands. The reason for this, is in order that those who have rejected the gospel, might have the door of salvation opened by the behaviour of their believing wives. As they look closely at your behaviour they will then see your lives are characterised by chastity, respect and godliness. Let your true outward beauty (adorning) be that of your spiritual inner power, not your costly hair styles, clothes and jewellery. What is really valuable eternally is the Holy Spirit controlled life, characterised by a gentleness that puts eternal things first, cares for others, and is quiet and thoughtful rather than loud and full of empty talking. It was this sort of character that was praised in the past ages, and this is the sort of character that is demonstrated in the later life of Sarah, who was not ashamed to call her husband Abraham, her lord. You are in this godly line of women if you have the mental attitude they had, and do what they did. Like them keep on doing good things, and do not give way to anxiety, or worry about anything, (for you are in the Lord’s hands). In the same spirit of respectful response, husbands are to live with their wives in knowledge; this means that they are to listen to their lives, and truly understand them. They are to treat them with love and care as physically weaker vessels, (and not hurt them in any way). She is a fellow heir of all spiritual blessing for all eternity; (she is your equal in God’s sight). If she is abused in any way by you as her husband, your prayers will not be heard; (your spiritual life will be cut off).”

## VERSES 8 - 17

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, 9 not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrawise blessing. Knowing that ye are hereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. 10 ‘For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: 11 let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.’ (Psalm 34:12-16). 13 And who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good? 14 But, and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye, and, ‘be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 15 but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.’ (Matthew 5:10, Isaiah 8:12, 13.) and be always ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: 16 having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. 17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.”

## BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

“The Christian experience is one of incalculable indebtedness to the love of God, and those who are conscious of a debt they cannot ever repay cannot help but be humble.” (Cranfield, 1958, p 77.)

“We need to resist the temptation to pass over this truth too quickly. Verses that teach the absolute necessity of love are as true as those that teach that Christ died for our sins. . . . Humility is a balanced view of man’s relative significance over against God himself and the entire created order.” (Mounce, 1982, p 47, 48).

Peter has drawn our attention throughout this letter to the need for a different mental attitude towards the world by all believers. We were saved out of this world and still keep a lot of it’s attitudes to things, life itself, and others. Peter reminds us again and again that our whole thinking must change towards everything. Here he identifies the need to change attitude towards our fellow believers.

There are a number of direct orders here in verses 8 - 9.

1. **Be of one mind.** - To be of one mind means to avoid any behaviour that would create an argument leading to a church split, or violence of any kind. Mindless unity is not called for, rather it is to be a unity of the mind, based on well thought through positions, rooted and grounded in apostolic teaching.
2. **Show compassion.** - Compassion is rooted in the mental attitude that sees others as Christ sees them. The heart that shows compassion, shows it because they see the others needs and short-comings, and feels sorrow for the lack in the life of the other rather than arrogantly despising them.
3. **Love as brethren.** - This fruit of the Holy Spirit is demonstrated in life. The word used is “philadelphos”, the word for brotherly love; the caring practical love for those within the same family. It looks for a practical thing it can do for the much loved brother or sister. It is the reminder that we are in the same family as these fellow believers, and we are being watched by our heavenly father, who looks to us to behave as blood bought brethren.
4. **Be tender hearted to each other.** - The Greek word here is a great one; “eusplagnos”, which literally means, “good intestines”. It catches what the Greeks meant by the word. It refers to deep feelings in the stomach, the emotional feelings towards one we love that we can literally “feel deep within”. This is the level of the deep tenderness we should feel for our brethren.
5. **Be courteous.** - The word here, almost another synonym, brings further encouragement to love in practical ways our fellow believers. Act in such a way that others looking on would know you are friends.
6. **Do not render evil for evil.** This instruction reminds us that believers are not perfect, and at times a young or disobedient believer will verbally attack us, and practice, even ‘evil’ against us. What is to be our response? It is not to be in accordance with the Mosaic Law (Exodus 21:23,24, Leviticus 24:19-22), which gave the right to all Jews to demand justice and reparation for every blow or insult.

Peter is saying to all believers that we are NOT TO DEMAND our rights under the old law of lex taliones, but to place ourselves under the higher spiritual laws, the Law of Love, the Law of Supreme Sacrifice. We are now under the “Law of Christ”, Galatians 6:2, and the demands of that spiritual law are the ones Peter makes here.

7. **Do not give verbal abuse for verbal abuse** (railing). - When we are verbally abused, or lied about, we are not to respond in kind and lash back. We are to treat them as Christ has by showing a love and care that shames the sinning brother rather than copies them.
8. **Give rather blessing.** - The Lord’s words come back to us here. “Ye have heard that it has been said, (Leviticus 19:17,18, Deuteronomy 23:6), ‘thou shalt love thine neighbour and hate thine enemy’. But I say unto

you, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (in order that) ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, . . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,...." Matthew 5:43-48. Luke 6:27- 36. These commands are clearly our Lord God's standard of behaviour.

They are the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ to us all. If we would be his disciples we are to obey, and if we would be called his friends, then we are to be following these commands daily. John 15:9-17. 1 John 3: 11-24. If we do not have lives that are characterised by love then we do not have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are to be people whose lives are a constant blessing to those we mix with. If our lives are not characterised by blessing we are not fruitful in spiritual things, and if we are not fruitful, we are either not his at all, or we are his but standing in the place of judgement. John 15:1-8. The reason for Peter commanding these eight things above, is that we have received blessing and are obliged to the Saviour to give to others what we received from him. If we fail to show these things we fail our Saviour!

We are to beware of the evil of hatred towards those for whom Christ died. We are called to a ministry of reconciliation, not to execute justice or judgement upon those who do us wrong. We are called to transform lives by the love of Christ, not clean up our city by demands for changes to laws, or behaviours. The only change that matters is the change that the gospel's power brings into lives.

Nothing is to distract us from the gospel message. The Bible is clear about our responsibility when we are wronged; "vengeance is mine saith the Lord, I will repay". Romans 12:19, Psalm 94:1, Deuteronomy 32:35, Luke 6:35,36, Matthew 5:38 -48. We are not ever to seek vengeance or retribution, but rather salvation of the evil and the lost.

Verses ten and eleven (quoted from the Septuagint version of the Old Testament of Psalm 34:12-16) reminds these Jewish believers of the promises of the Old Testament that told them of the blessing that was upon those who showed love and mercy. Also refer to the following verses; Deuteronomy 32:45-47, Proverbs 3:1-7, Proverbs 4:20-23. If such a promise was attached to the Mosaic Law how much more blessing is there for those who go beyond it to follow the Law of Christ? Romans 10:5-11, 1 Timothy 4:7-11, 6:6, Revelation 22:14.

The next few verses contain further commands of Christian life.

9. **Desire with all your heart to live life as Christ commands** us. Peter uses a strong verb in verse ten; the Greek verb "thelo", referred to a strong desire that focused the mind totally on it's object. 'If you are really serious about seeking life, then seek it in Christ's standard of love', Peter says, and let him demonstrate that by turning away from all behaviours associated with evil. Jesus said, "I have come to give you life and to give it to you more abundantly", John 10:10. This is the promise that burns through Peter's words in this section of the letter. If we would know life in it's fullness we will know it only through a life transformed by the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

The translation Peter gives of the verses from Psalm 34, is a very free one, as you will see if you read the passage. This does not give us liberty to so quote from scripture, but Peter had this liberty under the apostolic commission he held. As we read these verses we read the Holy Spirit's words to us taking the Psalmists words and adding to them in a new and powerful way to make the bridge complete between the Mosaic system and the Lord's commandments to us.

10. We are to **stop (pausato) any evil behaviours**.

11. We are to **stop any verbal trickery**, or hypocrisy (guile) in our speech.

12. We are literally to "**turn away from**" (**ekklino**), **all evil** and,

13. We are, rather to do **good things to others**. Christianity is not about negatives, it is about replacement of evil and sin with good. Life change is being called for in the verb, "turn away from", and then all the other verbs. The aorist tense tells us that at every point in time that we have opportunity we are to (active voice) do these things (imperative mood, a command).

14. We are to **seek peace**. We are to actively pursue it like a hunter pursues his prey. This double command underlines the commitment to the ministry of reconciliation we must have. We are to be as focused as a hunter is. Anything short of this sort of focus is not good enough.

Another reason why we should do these things is now given in verse twelve, and in verse thirteen a principle is given that echoes back to Romans chapter eight. God is against the evil doers, and he is for those who do good. The Lord's standards do not change, and these principles are backed by his character! In this life we are either standing with the creator and saviour of the universe, or we are on the side of the enemy of truth. If we are with the Lord, we will be hated by the enemy, but we need have no fear of what they might do to us, for even if they kill us, all they achieve is our entry into eternity in glory. Acts 7:55-60.

The only ones who attack those who do good, are those who serve Satan. Their hatred of us is a badge of honour, for so they hated our Lord, and so we can leave their fate and our own life, in God's hands. Mark 13:13, Luke 21:17, John 15:18-25.

Verse fourteen advances the comforting encouragement that Peter gives in the presence of those who are attacking the church. The passage that this reminds us of is Matthew 5:10-12, and Peter may be quoting, or referring to the Lord's words here. It is the optative tense of the verb to suffer (also verse 17), which means, 'maybe they will but also maybe they won't suffer'; it is not a settled thing at this point.

When something is uncertain, what are we to do? The first thing is, we are not to be anxious. The second thing is to be prepared at all times for what the Lord warned us of, but prepare without worry. The beatitudes of Matthew Chapter Five are a continuation of the Old Testament promises of blessing for those who keep the Law of God.

The Lord's point, and Peter's here, is that our lives are to be characterised by obedience to the word of God irrespective of the future for us. If suffering comes then we are ready and through our obedience can be blessed in the midst of any situation. The two things we are not to receive along with the suffering, are a spirit of fear, and a spirit of trembling. The anticipation of troubles coming will often put people into a "tail spin" of fear and trembling. An old proverb says, 'a brave man dies once, but a coward dies every day'. Too often we live in anticipation of bad things happening to us.

The challenge of this verse is to live every day in confidence; maybe suffering will come, but if it does we are in our Lord's hands, and we are safe with him. Once again Peter challenges us with the daily battle for the mind. Will we today win the victory over anticipated fears and terrors?

Verse fifteen goes the next step to advance the believers preparation for any suffering that might come; Peter recalls them to the importance of having Christ seated on the throne of their hearts. The verse has a reference to Isaiah 8:13, and refers to JHWH in the text, indicating the New Testament truth, that Jesus is JHWH. Venerate, adore and worship the Lord in your hearts, set yourself apart for his service and leave the consequences of that choice with Him! Be ready also to give a good "apologia" for your faith. The word apologia means a logical reason for your belief, told in such a way that the philosopher would see why you believe; it is a reasoned explanation.

Notice how Peter refers to our faith; it is the source of our confidence (elpis). In a dangerous world the unbeliever needs the "good news"(gospel) message that shows them that they can have confidence in the midst of evil and uncertainty. This confidence is to be expressed through our evangelism (telling the truth of our confidence) with meekness and fear. Why does he use these words? Meekness is a favourite word for Peter, as it was for the Lord. It reminds us of several things; firstly there is to be no arrogance, no spirit where we put the hearer down and insult them. Secondly our evangelistic activity is to be a Christ centred thing, so that the unbeliever does not "see" us, but the one who gives us the confidence. We are also to do evangelism in "fear".

What does this mean? He has just told us that we do not have a spirit of fear. It is the secondary use of fear here, in the sense of awesomeness. The awesome responsibility of giving the news about the Lord must make us quiet and focused on our task. Be it a magistrate or neighbour we must be ready at all times to give a reasoned account of our faith and confidence; we ought to have a script ready he says, and one that will give the thoughtful man pause to think.

When we are continually under verbally abusive attack (the feeling here in verse 16), how do we keep going in the spirit of love? Peter calls for steadfastness in life and witness. Keep on having a good conscience, by doing right things! Don't falter and fall into bad actions or returning evil for evil. Shame the enemy by your goodness, then you earn the right to speak. Sustained godliness is called for before there will be sustainable and powerful impact on other's lives.

If we must suffer, then be sure that the unbeliever cannot accuse you truthfully of doing evil. If we fall even once and do a bad thing we spoil our witness and the unbeliever looks on and says, "I told you so, those Christians are no good". This is behind Peter's words. We must not let our Lord down and be charged before the courts, or our neighbours with any evil that robs us of the chance to give the gospel to them.

## **APPLICATION**

### **A. PERSONAL**

When the unbeliever looks in on the church and observes closely how Christians behave with each other, do they see, friends working together in mutual respect and practical love? Peter makes it clear that they should!

Are we as focused on our ministry as a hunter is on securing his prey? Are we this focused on living a life that opens the door with the unbelievers who are observing us? The fruits of the Holy Spirit are the "door openers" for the gospel message; if they are not present in our life, then the unbeliever will probably not believe us that we have something to offer. They will be right, at that point!

"When disasters strike the man of faith, they cannot touch the integrity of his personality or injure him in the ultimate sense." (Kelly, 1969, p 140.) Are we standing like Stephen or playing the coward as Peter did in the courtyard of Caiaphas? Peter recalled this time of cowardice and was now strengthened and determined, and he wants us to put away the cowardice of our own past and stand for truth in absolute eternal security.

The challenge of verse fourteen needs to be taken on board today. Do we live in the palace of the King in our soul, where the Lord is on the throne, or do we live in the 'panic palace' of sin, doubt and fear.

"The best way to be rid of craven fears, is to have ones heart filled with the right fears of Christ." (Cranfield, 1958, p 82.) Occupation of the mind with the Lord Jesus Christ will protect the soul from fear and prepare the soul for any suffering that will ever come; only the walking of the soul with the King of kings will give calmness when facing great pressures, for he is the one on the throne of the heavens.

How ready are you believer to give an "apologia", a reasoned response to those who ask of your faith? This is more than an emotional testimony it is a philosophically coherent explanation of why it is not reasonable and powerful to believe in the Lord. If you don't have such a script that expresses your "confidence" get one! Peter's second message is under this one; if you don't have confidence in God and His Word, get it first, and get it soon, before you are asked, or troubles come!

"So I advise all believers, live a Messianic life, know the truth, speak in love and humility, discern who is open, and trust the Lord to work in people's hearts, including yours." (Stern, 1992, p 754.) Are we ready to give the gospel, and do we know the basic points of the good news well enough to make sense of them to the unbeliever, and have the message not jar with our life witness? Consistency believer, consistency in spiritual walk and growth!

## **B. PASTORAL**

"Do not try to feel love, but will to love. Tell the dear master that you are willing to love, or willing to be made willing to love, but that he must create the grace of love within your breast." (Meyer, 1953, p 110.)

For the church to be one-minded depends upon the prior teaching of the pastor. Are we teaching the apostolic faith in such a way that our flock can gather around the word of God with one mind? Failure to teach systematically leads to many opinions, and dogmatic ignorance! This is the spirit that Peter wishes to avoid, and as pastors it is in our hands to avoid this by our systematic and regular teaching.

The church membership are meant to be trained to be able to endure suffering in such a way as to be a witness to the unbelievers in the midst of their greatest attacks upon the Christians. "Faith, as E J Carnell repeatedly insisted, is the resting of the mind in the sufficiency of the evidence." (Mounce, 1982, p 53.) "Inward holiness, outward readiness to indicate to everyone their grounds of hope with meekness and fear, together with a good conscience, would in the long run make the heathen blush at their insulting and threatening calumnies against the holiness which they accused of criminality." (Williams, 1965, p 166 – 167.)

Any misconduct or inconsistent behaviours could spoil their reply to the unbeliever who seeks a reason for their faith and confidence. We are to train our people so that they are ready to reply at all times. This is another of the standards by which we can judge the effectiveness of a ministry. Are the people who comprise that congregation always in readiness to give the gospel?

"It may seem strange to some that God could will suffering. It is perhaps more accurate to say that God wills to bring good out of suffering." (Mounce, 1982, p 54.) The believer's suffering is to be taken with the Lord firmly on the throne of their heart, so that within it they are blessed and through it they maintain and expand their witness. This can only happen if we as pastors have done our job and these things are known at a more than simply academic level.

## **DOCTRINES**

**LAWS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

**FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT**

**ETERNAL SECURITY**

**GOSPEL OF SALVATION**

**EVANGELISM**

**JUSTIFICATION**

**EPISTLE OF 1 PETER**

## PARAPHRASE

“Summing all this up, and making some final points here, be attentive to these things! Be of one mind, having an inner spirit of unity that makes factions unthinkable, having thoughtfulness and compassion for each other, loving the brethren as your brothers and sisters in the Lord. Be tender in your dealings with them, be filled up with courtesy towards all, not giving back insult for insult, or evil deed for evil deed done to you. On the contrary, give back blessing for any evil received. As you do this good thing, be firmly remembering that this is the life to which you are called, and that you are inheritors of (God’s great) blessings. As the scriptures have said before, ‘if a person really loves life, and wants to enjoy it, then let them hold back their tongue from speaking evil, and their lips from speaking trickery and deceit, and rather do good things. Let them turn away from any appearance of evil, and let them (if they are serious about life) seek with all their heart the path of the peace-maker, and blessing giver’. Let them pursue such a life like a hunter pursues his prey. ‘For the eyes of the Lord our God, are seeking out those who live this way( to bless them even more). His ears are always attentive to their prayers. However the face of God keeps on turning away from those who persist in doing evil’. Ask yourself, who is the person who will seek to harm me if I do good? (It can only be the enemy, Satan). And so, if we are to suffer (under his attacks) because of our godly lives and relationship with God (righteousness), then we can be happy in the midst of such suffering, for we have the promises of God’s holy Word to claim. Promises like, ‘do not be afraid of their terrors, nor let your heart receive any spirit of fear and trembling due to their attacks’, rather, be always ready to give the good news to every man who asks you why you are so confident in the midst of such troubles. Give your reasoned explanation of the gospel with a spirit of humility and with a sense of the awesomeness of the responsibility that the Lord has given you to tell the lost about their Saviour. Do this with a good conscience, (for if you have done wrong you ruin your witness). When they speak evil of you, as if you are evil doers, make them ashamed, because of your good behaviours in Christ, so that they see that you are falsely accused, (and so you open the door for the gospel to be preached to them). If we must suffer, then let it be for the good things we do, rather than for any bad thing we have fallen into.”

## VERSES 18 - 22

**“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: 19 by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; 20 which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: 22 who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him”**

## BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

The Lord’s victory was won on earth but announced in all the realms of the creation, to all living creatures, and Peter in this passage reminds us of the victory message, and where, and to whom it was announced. We have already seen that we are to be confident in the face of the attacks of men, and in these verses Peter makes it clear that we are also to be confident in the presence of the demonic forces that are a part of Satan’s group, for they have been dealt with by the Lord, in the same way as he has dealt with our other problems.

Verse eighteen gives us the gospel message, and all details of our life must be under our Lord’s control so that this message can be given to the unbeliever. Nothing must distract in our life, from the giving of this message. Note the key points of the gospel message that Peter draws our attention to by his use of words.

The word, ‘once’ is startling in it’s power. Peter is strong here; Christ died, “once for all”. This is the good news that the payment for sin has been made fully and finally. Note the points he makes:

1. He died once for sins, unlike the priests of the old covenant continually offering sacrifices.
2. He died for all, and the gospel is to go out to all. We owe it to all to tell them this good news.
3. He suffered, the just for the unjust, so that we might be declared justified.
4. He did all this to bring us to God as those covered by his sacrifice, and now acceptable in his sight
5. He died in his flesh, and we can “die” to the troubles associated with our bodies also thru him.
6. He was made alive through the Holy Spirit’s power, and so are we.
7. Because of all this we can have a new spiritual destiny in and through his work.

Peter has been reminding the believers of the need to maintain their witness and speak evangelistically in the midst of their suffering, and the example to follow is that of the Lord himself. After his victory on the cross he went to speak to the

fallen angels and announce that he had won. We are to also speak the truth to all powers we meet. We are to announce the same message that the Lord did, that he has won!

This is a difficult passage for some commentators, especially for those who reject the Genesis account. Kelly notes, “the key must be sought in the myth of the sin and condemnation of the rebellious angels of Genesis 6:1-4.” (Kelly, 1969, p 153.) He is wrong in his reference to “myth”, but he is right in his reference to the passage, for it is here that we find out to whom the Lord announced his victory.

The fallen angels who were locked up awaiting judgement were the first to be told that their doom was sure, for the Lord had completed the task that their master the devil had tried to stop happening. (Refer BTB – topic of the Angelic Conflict). This verse is meant to be an encouragement for afflicted believers, so ask yourself, ‘how can this be an encouragement?’ Look again at these verses and you will see his purpose in mentioning this otherwise quite obscure point.

The first thing to note is that the announcement was not the offer of salvation to these fallen angels (demons), but the victory proclamation that told them their doom was settled. “Christ’s proclamation to the imprisoned angels was not the offer of a second chance but the announcement of his complete and final victory over the power of sin and Satan. Colossians 2:15, Philipians 2:10,11.” (Mounce, 1982, p 57.)

What then is Peter’s point in this reference? His point is that victory is won. Victory has been proclaimed by the victor to the very forces whose whole being is opposed to his plan, but now are powerless to hinder it – for victory is won over sin and death. He could not announce victory to these demons unless it was certain, or else they could have objected and replied to him, but they could not for it was true! Peter’s message to those of his day and to us is, hold to the truth of the certainty of Christ’s victory under any present pressure!

Verse twenty reminds us that God may be “slow” to judge and end evil, as far as we are concerned, but he has a plan and it will work out. The so called, “problem of evil” is a big one for many, but viewed in terms of the Plan of God it is not the problem it first appears to be. God has not destroyed evil yet. The word “yet” is the key word when we discuss the evils of daily life. The plan’s end is assured; Christ will sit forever on the victor’s throne, and all those who opposed God’s plan will be judged. Revelation 20:11-15.

This verse also reminds us that few were saved in the days of Noah, and that numbers are not the issue with God. Free volition is the issue, as it relates to the angelic conflict, not the number of people who respond. The real issue for the fallen angels is that they are condemned because they rejected God, and their condemnation is made more sure because an inferior creature, human beings, can respond to the truth and be saved! They could have responded to God also, and we demonstrate to them that they are responsible, and culpable for their rejection. This is why they hate us so strongly! Our salvation reminds them of their damnation! We demonstrate that they were wrong in rejecting the love and plan of God.

Everything in time is about obedience or disobedience. As Peter has pointed out throughout this letter, we are to continue to be the children of obedience, and to recognise that the children of disobedience will continue to hate us as they hate the Lord himself. Their hatred, and malice must not worry or distract us from our task, which remains to spread the gospel to all who will hear.

Baptism may have been a theme here also, as the reference to water and being saved through the waters, may be an allusion to the ritual of believer’s baptism; certainly many commentators believe it to apply. Noah is referred to as the one who represents, “anti-typical baptism, or analogous baptism”. (Reicke, 1962, p 113.)

Many make a lot of this very brief mention of baptism, but miss the main point that Peter makes, which is, that the ritual without the inner reality is meaningless. Ritual does not save, and ritual does not provide security when pressures are faced; only the reality of a living faith, based on the reality of relationship with the risen Christ will give the Holy Spirit power to enable the believer to dynamically face troubles. The pressures of daily life are only able to be faced by those with a “good conscience”. This is well defined by Hiebert as, “a conscience purified by the blood of Christ and assured of personal acceptance with God.” (Hiebert, 1982, p 156.)

We live as believers in the resurrection power of the risen Lord of glory. It is the resurrection that is our guarantee of salvation and power to live facing pressures now. This section ends with a reminder of where the Lord is now, and the relationship of all the angels (fallen and elect) to him. He is seated in the place of power now, and so he does not need to wait until the end of time to take his royal throne, for he sits now in glory. He is superior to all the angelic powers now and, in him, so are we! Jesus is King of all human kings, and Lord of all angelic “lords”.

Note the words of verse twenty two carefully, for most believers today miss their power and glory. He is superior to all powers, and that means all demons are under his authority, even Satan has power only at his permission. What does this mean when we face pressures that are of a satanic origin? It means that the Lord has allowed it for his glory! Any pressure situation is allowed by the Lord to give us further opportunity to praise and glorify him in time! All testing is to be seen through the throne-room of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**APPLICATION**

**A. PERSONAL**

“Christ’s sovereignty over all spiritual forces is a precious assurance to afflicted believers.” (Hiebert, 1982, p 157.) Do we live daily in the reality of this victory that he has won so thoroughly, or do we live as if it is still an uncertain thing? Peter’s point is, it is certain, and it is sure, for he is the King! Live in the midst of pressures as victors over them, even while they still exist. See your troubles in the light of Christ’s full and final victory, and be confident and assured in your proclamation of the truth.

He is enthroned now, he is not waiting until the end, as victory is won now! Any pressure situation is allowed by him, is under his over-ruling will, and is part of his plan to bring glory to him; our role is to seek the way the Lord wants us to “play” the test so that we can enjoy the glory of the pressure, and praise him from the midst of the fire.

**B. PASTORAL**

The angelic conflict is a very important subject for believers to understand. We must seek to teach as much as is revealed in Scripture. It is a difficult subject, but the context of our very existence is tied up with the angelic conflict. The battle of the fallen angels with God before this creation was made is one of the reasons behind this present creation. In this area of study we have incomplete information, not because God does not want us to know, but because we have limited ability to understand the realities of what happened before space and time were made! But what is revealed we must teach so that the believers might have confidence in the midst of even the worst Satanic trials.

Read, Acts 2:27,31, Romans 10:6-8, Ephesians 4:8 -10. “ The best thing is to realise that we encounter here a mystery, which is still a secret from us, and reverently accept the hint - for a hint is all that is given to us - and thank God that the reach of God’s saving activity is not to be limited by our human desires to get things neat and tidy in pigeon holes of our own choosing.” ( Cranfield, 1958, p 86.)

“Few, as contrasted to the many who perished is an encouragement to Peter’s readers who were rejected minorities in their own communities.” ( Hiebert, 1982, p 154.) We often mistake the majority for the truth! In the Lord’s viewpoint the truth is where He is, and what His plan stands for, who-ever believes it. The Scriptures teach that there are always only a few who get truly with the truth and live it. We must get used to being in the minority, but never tire of standing for the truth and telling the majority the truth that Jesus is indeed Lord.

**DOCTRINES**

ANGELIC CONFLICT

JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

JUDGEMENT: GREAT WHITE THRONE

FAITH

HOPE

**PARAPHRASE**

“Because indeed, Christ has once suffered for full payment for our sins, the only truly just one for all those who are unjust, in order that he might bring us into fellowship with God. He was put to death in his earthly body, but made alive again by the power of the Holy Spirit, in whose power he went to the imprisoned demons and announced to them his victory (and their certain doom). These are the demons who were disobedient to the plan of God during the days of Noah. In those days we see God’s long suffering towards fallen mankind, (for the Lord waited to see if any would respond to the gospel Noah preached, but they didn’t). Noah preached while he built the Ark, but in the end only eight souls were saved and that through the waters. In a similar analogy today our baptism also speaks of our moment of salvation, (it does not mean we never have sin in our body again), but it stands for our new relationship with God in Christ, ( we are assured that we are purified by his blood, and stand, in Him, in a place of total acceptance with the Father). The Lord himself is seated on his throne in heaven, in the place of power as the God-man, all angelic beings now being subject to his rulership.”

**CHAPTER 4****VERSES 1 - 7**

“ Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; 2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. 3 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelling, banquetings and abominable idolatries: 4 wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: 5 who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. 6 For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. 7 But the end of all things is at hands: be ye therefore, sober, and watch unto prayer.”

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

**Romans 12:1-2.** “I beseech you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Of verse one Moffatt says, “there is therefore the noise of war in this verse. To arms!” (Moffatt, 1963, p 132.) Like Paul, in the passage above Peter is calling all believers to be prepared for any “active service” that may come our way. A helpful way of seeing these verses before us is to see them as the orders given by a commanding officer to troops in the last stage of their training, readying them for the noise of battle that is coming.

The reference to the fallen angels in the last verses of chapter three is now drawn upon. Peter is saying, because of the Lord’s victory announcement let us be clear headed and pay attention to the battle, for the enemy truly hates us and is out to get us side tracked any way they can! We could call this chapter, “keeping your head (thinking) safe in the midst of demonic attack”. Let us see these “Daily Orders”.

The same mind that Christ had as he confronted sin, is to be our mind towards sin. He rejected it and set himself to the cross to deal with it. It’s power is over, sin has been judged. Why do we still “play with” sin in our lives? The only reason can be that we have “lost our mind”. Peter says here, “get control of your mind again!” 1 Cor 9:24-27, 2 Tim 2:1-7.

The Christian Soldiers, “Daily Orders”. (Also read **Ephesians 6 :10 - 18**)

1. **Arm yourself.** - The reason for doing all these things is given first; “because of the sufferings of Christ, which were in his earthly body, we ought to have a different attitude towards our earthly life, and it’s temporal vehicle (the flesh of our body), than we had before we were saved. The Lord’s sacrifice for us must transform every part of our life, and every mental attitude to everything in time and space. This is illustrated by the command given here, “TO ARMS!” When a person becomes a soldier their old values and attitudes must change; they are no longer living as civilians but as soldiers, responsible to their commanding officer only, with no interest in the things of this world at all. Under his orders they must be ready to give up their lives at any second. 2 Timothy 2:1-7, 4:5-8.
2. **Have done with sin.** - If the Lord has died for us in his flesh, we are to die to our fleshly lusts; sin is to be resisted and rejected in both our mind and body. The result of being transformed by Christ, is that the sins of your old nature are “done with”, they are dead to you! The challenge is daily to “put to death” the old desires, to daily reject the claims of sin over our time. Time spent thinking of sin is time wasted and defiled, and we are responsible to our commanding officer for the use of our time, in HIS army.
3. **Stop wasting your very short life in fleshly things that don’t last.** - Time is flying by, get busy or lose your opportunity to serve the Lord. All we have is the “time remaining” of our lives, the past is already gone, be it for good or ill! Peter is really trying to frighten the foolish amongst his flock here! Look at how your life has flown! See how quickly it will all be gone, and use each day with hunger for the service of the living God. All that is of time decays, all that is of eternity lasts forever. In all we do, let us be mindful of this principle and use our brief time here for things of eternal value.
4. **Don’t follow the way of life of unbelievers;** it is dead and gone. - How tempting it is to look at the “successful lives” of unbelievers and long for their wealth and physical prosperity. Peter warns us to get our eyes off the lives of those who are not saved; he goes even further saying NOTHING about them is to be followed. All that the world calls “success” is empty; it does not last. Treat it as a “dead thing” and shun it as the orthodox Jew of Peter’s day would shun a corpse, lest they became unclean. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.
5. **Don’t walk with them; you are no longer in their race!** - Winning with them in their race has no significance at all. What point is there to train to run in a race where the prize has no relevance to you? To win with the world is to lose with God! Why play their game when you are called to a different one?

We would think an athlete stupid, if he or she went to the wrong event, in the wrong stadium, and competed in a sport that was not theirs; just so the Christian who “competes” in the world for rewards that are earthly rather than the heavenly rewards. Our commanding officer is the one who rewards us, the rewards of the rulers of this world are of no real consequence! Philippians 3:7, 8, Hebrews 10:35.

6. **Reject living in a way characterised by lack of control.** “No rules” is the motto of many in our day, as it was in Peter’s day. Peter reminds us that this is not our motto, and we must live lives that are as far away from such a motto as is possible. At all times we are to be under the control of our Lord’s commands, and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Believers are not to be under the command/control of anything other than the Word of God, nor under any power, other than the Holy Spirit. Holiness of life is the sign of that control, without holiness we cannot please God, and without a holy life there is no evidence of the Spirit’s control!

Reject strong desires that are wrong. - Strong desire to do wrong is no excuse to do wrong. We are to have character and resist strong temptations, not fall over into them!

Reject getting drunk at any time. - Drunkenness is a sin. It is a sin that some of us have a genetic propensity towards due to our inherited Old Sin Nature (if our human father was an alcoholic, this will probably be an issue for us). Such a propensity simply means it is an area of weakness for our Old Sin Nature, and we are RESPONSIBLE to set our guard against this area in our own life. No excuses! Take any action needed to be obedient here; just do it!

Reject invitations to all night noisy drinking parties. - Say “NO!” to all such invitations; there is no witnessing opportunity at such places, for those attending are seeking sin not salvation. Don’t waste your time, nor put yourself into a place of temptation, rather speak to your contacts who are feeling bad about going and witness to them!

Reject all social activity that centres on drinking. - Peter goes even further than the party scene. If any social activity centres around drinking or drugs have nothing to do with it at all!

Reject all sexual sins. - There is no compromise here. Some people are not tempted in this area, but many are, and there is, like with alcoholism, no excuses allowed for giving in to sexual sin. You cannot give the gospel in or through your adultery. ALL sexual sins are to be dealt with; pornography, mental attitude lusts as well as all forms of sexual relationship outside God’s plan, of right man, right woman.

7. **Be prepared for verbal attack** from those who will not understand the changes you make. - Don’t expect those who favour the enemy to like you! Don’t be stupid believer! Many believers are baffled at the hatred of the world for them, they should not be, it is “normal”. They hated the Lord and they will hate you if you stand with the Lord! Relax and get on with the job the commanding officer has for you to do. You are a soldier, and so arm yourself! The enemy hates you, so what! Be a soldier and stop expecting dumb things, like for the enemy to like you!

8. **Leave judgement / vindication with God** who will judge all of these people, alive or dead they will not escape his judgement. Verse six has been called, “the most difficult text in the Bible”. (Mastermann, 1912, p 143.) The confusion comes because of the later church practice of “prayers for the dead”, a pagan thing that has no place in Christianity. If this text is taken in its context, it will not become a pretext for such things! Peter’s point is that God will judge the pagans for their rejection of him, and we are to leave their fate to the justice of God. None will escape it, either living or dead.

As Stern observes, “Y’Shua the Messiah is the one who stands ready to judge the quick and the dead (KJV). This is why he was proclaimed to those who have since died (literally to the dead ones); namely it was so that, even though physically they would receive the judgement common to all men, death, nevertheless they might live by the Spirit in the way God has provided. That is, as a result of trusting in Y’Shua, they might, by the power of Ruach haKodesh, live holy lives of joy before death; and also, after death, they might have the joy of eternal life with God, also by the Ruach ha Kodesh. This passage, like 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, provides believers with comfort over friends who have died, as well as an answer to pagans mocking them for exchanging worldly enjoyment merely for the grave (vv 3-4).” (Stern, 1992, p 755.)

Remember, the gospel has been preached for over thirty years by the time this is written. Many have died, after hearing and rejecting the good news, as well as those who heard and believed at the time. All are held responsible by the Lord, and will be judged according to what they have done with the good news of the person and work of Christ. That is the criteria. John 3:16 - 36.

9. **Even the dead have heard the gospel message;** everyone is informed in this matter, some to rejoicing (believers who have died), others to weeping (unbelievers who have died). The good news is “out”, the only question is what will mankind on the earth now do with it? Their response is based on the information they receive by the words and life of believers; that is our responsibility, right now, every day!

10. **Live in the power of the Holy Spirit.** - Without the Holy Spirit we are “none of his”. Romans 8:9. Christianity is a supernatural faith, and without supernatural power within it is impossible to live the Christ like life to which we are called. The daily command is, “be filled with (empowered by) the Holy Spirit”. Ephesians 5:18, Acts 2:4, 4:8, 31, 9:17, 13:9.
11. **Keep a clear head at all times,** - be self controlled and in a state of readiness for action at all times. The mental attitude of the soldier and athlete is called for. We are on active service, in status “Alpha”, at “Red Alert”; and that means the enemy may attack at any time and we must be ready to follow our orders unto death at all times. This level of focus is the standard for us, for all falling short is sin in our commander’s eyes.
12. **Keep in touch with your commanding officer at all times through constant prayer.** - Prayer without ceasing, Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. We are to be in constant touch with Head Quarters, and that means constant prayer. When this fellowship is broken by sin, we are to quickly confess (1 John 1:9) and get back into living fellowship with the Lord, for our safety and security and efficiency in the battle depends upon our communications with him, and his with us.

Verse four reminds us that just being different in a society that values “community” is seen by many as a real problem. “Christians were held to be a queer group of kill joys. Their very presence was resented by their profligate neighbours. This dramatic difference in moral standards led with increasing frequency to active persecution.” (Mounce, 1982, p 64.) Do not think it a “strange thing” that men hate you, recognise your role as a soldier and take your place of service in the Lord’s ranks. Mark 13:13, Luke 19:14, 21:17, John 15 :18 - 25, 17:14. Our role is to be serving the Lord through the proclamation of the gospel, with a godly life to back it, and to do good to those who hate us, even unto death. Matthew 5:43-44, Luke 6:22-27, 1 John 3:13.

Peter is calling us to a realistic assessment of what our “active service” faith means, and what it involves by way of sacrifice and service. He stresses mental attitude because that is what wins long wars not gimmicks. We are engaged in a long war against sin and it’s prince. The victory has been won on the cross, but the enemy is still at large and can do damage, even though he can no longer “win” finally. This is the soldier’s mental attitude to which we are called. Satan is not bound, and all the prayers of well meaning folks will not bind him.

Satan roars like a lion still and like lions in the hunt, seeks out the weak and sickly to attack, 1 Peter 5:8. He is a defeated foe, but the Lord leaves him here until the end, to accomplish the Lord’s purposes in accordance with his plan, and timing. We are to know his destiny, our own, and what it is we are to do, and what is foolishness!

Verse seven challenges us to an, end times viewpoint of present time! We are to see every day as if it is our last, every day as possibly the last chance to share the truth with another, every day as the one where the Lord wraps this part of world history up and moves on to the next. “The Christian is ever to keep the end in view. He is to live not for the passing moment but as one who knows that the end of all things, that is, all things of this present order, is at hand.” (Ironside, 1984, p 49.)

To do this involves two things in Peter’s mind; things which sum up the “daily Orders” above. The first is to be alert to the eternal realities, with a mind that is clear of anything that will distract or befuddle it. The second is to be men and women of prayer, constantly in touch with the Lord our Saviour. “They were not to allow their minds to become befuddled or dazed by drink or drowsiness. They should keep themselves awake and alert, with all their faculties under control in order to be able to give themselves to prayer.” (Stibbs, 1959, p 154.)

## **APPLICATION**

### **A. PERSONAL**

“When Christians undergo suffering for conscience sake, there is a real virtue in it, a blessing from God (3:14). It enables them to participate more fully in the Spirit (4:14).” (Moffatt, 1963, p 146.) Suffering is not to be seen as a “strange thing”, be it from the natural world, or from people, or demonic forces who attack us. We are on active service after the Lord’s great victory of the cross and resurrection.

Our job is to proclaim that victory in the presence of the enemy, who the Lord has left upon the earth until the end of all things. We are called to know our place, our role, the demons place, their role, and the nature of the Lord’s victory, and where history is going. As soldiers with this knowledge we are secure and can serve with the confident mental attitude that Peter calls for here. Let us ensure we are that confident! We have no excuse, for the Lord has given us all the facts.

“Earthly life becomes divided for the Christian into the time past, before his conversion, and the rest of his time in the flesh, after his conversion.” (Stibbs, 1959, p 149.) We need to recall where we have been saved from, and where we are going, and then orient ourselves to the task to fulfil here and now, and do it! Have we received the “Daily Orders” of these verses? Are we obedient to them?

The eternal life perspective is the one we have seen in the first three chapters of the letter. Now Peter brings in another viewpoint we are to have; the “end times” viewpoint, where all things are seen as if each day is the last of this age!

Peter's point with each concept is to focus the mind each day and not let them drift by. We are soldiers, not drifters! Let us behave like trained and disciplined soldiers, not having anything in common with drifters.

**B. PASTORAL**

"To live now for the will of God is to forestall heaven. . . . . The lusts of men are many and varied, the will of God is one and eternal." (Mastermann, 1912, p 132.) Is this the message the people hear daily from our pulpit? If they do not we are in error and need to stand corrected.

"We live in a world and pay occasional visits into the unseen and eternal; those early Christians lived in the unseen and eternal, and paid periodic necessary visits into the world. We conform to this world, they were transformed by the daily renewing of their minds." (Meyer, 1953, p 138.) The "Daily Orders" of this section are a standard for us to assess our own work by and to check out our ministries within the church. How are we doing when we measure our success against these things?

**CONCLUSION**

The urgency that Peter gets into these verses is the urgency we need in our preaching, and the world needs to see it in our lives and hear from our lips. The days darken as we head towards the second decade of the twenty-first century and the fallen world needs to hear the truth from us, for they will hear it from no other quarter.

**DOCTRINES**

**OLD SIN NATURE**

**MARRIAGE**

**PLAN OF GOD**

**DRINKING ALCOHOL**

**PARAPHRASE**

"Therefore, on the basis of these things we have seen, let us see together their significance and application. As the Lord Jesus Christ suffered for us, (once for all absolutely) in his body, so we also need to put on our mental armour; that is, think in our mind in exactly the same way as he did, in relation to the things of this world (the body). The one who suffers in their flesh (in the way the Lord did), has finished with sin(they reject it as 'of the body', a temptation to a thing which does not last and therefore has no significance or meaning, and should have no power over us). The result of that mental attitude is that the person lives their remaining brief life according to the will of God, rather than the many lusts of the body. For our past life (as unbelievers) should be enough to satisfy us as to the results of sin! In those days we produced all the works that sin was capable of producing, we walked as pagans. Just like the other Gentiles, we practised unrestrained living, lives given over to strong passions, habitually getting drunk, going to noisy drinking parties, setting out to get ourselves to a place where we were under the influence of drink or drugs, ending up doing awful and immoral sexual acts, and calling it our religion! Think about this. Is it any wonder that those you used to party with hate you, and think it strange, and are insulted and offended by your change of life (that convicts and rebukes them). They speak evil about you for this reason, but relax in God's justice in these matters, for he will judge all those who oppose his plan, whether they have died already or are still alive, none will escape his judgement. For this reason,(so that all mankind who has ever lived), will know the truth, the good news of Christ's victory over sin and death, was preached even to those who had already died, (so they might know their fate is as sure as that of the fallen angels we have already seen above). The dead have not escaped judgement, they will receive the same judgement as those already alive in their flesh, that they, in their spirit might know the truth and stand before their God. The end of all things is at hand, (this phase of world history could end at any time), so you therefore ought to be people known by two things. Firstly you ought to be people who are always Holy Spirit controlled, and as such people constantly in prayer to your commanding officer, receiving his daily orders for your life at all times."

## VERSES 8 - 11

**“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover a multitude of sins (Proverbs 10:12). 9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging. 10 As every man has received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God: if any man minister let him do it as of the ability that God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever Amen.”**

## BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Love conquers all! So many say in our own day, but is it right and correct? Peter says it is correct in the area he is talking about, which remember, is the area of our witnessing role as members of the Lord's staff from heaven, standing for him upon the earth. For Paul love stands as the “key stone”, fruit of the Holy Spirit, holding all the others together. Corinthians 13:1-14:1.

The Lord made caring love the central virtue around which others “spin” also. Matthew 5:44-46, 18:22, 19:19, 22:37-39, Mark 12:29-34, Luke 6:27-38, 7:47. John 13:34, 35, 14:15-24, 15:9-17. There are over two hundred (200+) references to love being important for the believer in the epistles of the New Testament. We cannot ignore this verse, for it is the central teaching of Christianity. **BY** this shall all men **KNOW** you are my disciples, **IF** you **LOVE** one another!

How does love cover a multitude of sins? Remember the context as you read this. The context is our service, not our salvation. Peter is not teaching a form of works salvation here, he is teaching us something about the function of the church in its witness before the world. We will all sin, and do and say dumb things at times, but if we have love, these foolish acts and words will be, in effect, “veiled”; others won't see them, they will see our love and still hear our words.

Many unbelievers reject the gospel, saying, ‘those Christians, they are all hypocrites’. Sadly, this is true many times. The believers are living lives that negate their testimony. They hand out tracts about Jesus, but the tracks they make in the world are bad ones! People look at our lives, and if they see we live a lie, they spot that, but if they see love shining through, they will overlook, or not even see our sins, for this world is hungry for real love.

Unbelievers have had their full of promiscuous sex and all forms of false love, but they desire above all else genuine love, and will respond when they see it. Young believers also need to see and feel the genuine love of a fellow believer for them. Sadly many young believers leave churches because they are turned away by some hate or envy filled believer; love will cover many sins, and stop them poisoning the minds of others. Love will also heal the wounds that petty sins cause.

Nothing “veils” our sins from God, for our sins are both fully seen and fully taken away by the blood of Jesus; but before men, our sins can be “veiled”, and they still see Christ in our lives through our love, for He is LOVE, and this is the message the unbeliever needs to hear and see. For troubled and distressed believers, they too need to see and feel our love for them, for Christ loves them, and we are to love our brethren also, just as we are loved.

A few years after Peter wrote this verse John would write even more strongly about this in his letters. 1 John 3:11-23, 4:7 - 5:3. Love is the test for genuine faith. Love must always, “work out”, in life. If fruit does not work “out” of the vine, so it is visible, then it is not fruit! There is no such thing as “invisible love”; love by definition must be expressed, or it is simply neurotic infatuation. Peter is calling all believers to genuine love.

The most practical demonstration of love between Christians in the ancient world was in the area of hospitality, the place where you were to put yourself out to assist a travelling fellow believer. Hospitality meant opened your home to a person with whom you may have nothing in common other than his/her love for the Lord. It could be burdensome at times, but it was a practical indication of what WAS REALLY IN YOUR HEART. Peter's call is to a life of love without hypocrisy and without grumbling about it. To love and grumble at the same time is NOT to love at all! The Greek word for grumble here is the one used to translate the Hebrew word ‘meribah’.

Peter is likely referring to this time in Israel's history where they showed what was in their heart by their “grumbling”, and so were judged by the Lord. Peter calls us all to a life of genuine love, and blessing from God, but in using this word he reminds us that the alternative is the judgement and discipline of the Lord upon our lives. Hebrews 3:7 - 4:13. Exodus 15:23-26, 16:2-8, Exodus 17:1-7, Numbers 14:1-35. These passages are recorded for a warning to all generations of believers; we are not to moan! Instead of moaning we are to pray! Philippians 4:6-7, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

The principle of verse ten is well known and often quoted. ‘As you have received, so give’, is easy to say, but Peter demands application in practical service to others in the local church. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are to be used to benefit others not to enjoy for ourselves! If a believer sees their gifting as sources of personal pleasure first, they have lost the point of them! All gifts are given to be used. Matthew 25:13-40. What you don't use you lose! John 15:1-17.

We have received the ‘greatness of God's grace’; ‘grace by the truckload’, we might even say! To those who have received much, much is required! This is a specific command of our Lord, and Peter quotes the Lord here. We must obey

this or be “off side” with our Master! Matthew 10:8, Luke 12:41-48. Note it is Peter’s question that leads to this parable. John 1:16.

Verse eleven is a powerful word about our speech, as the earlier ones have been about our heart and our behaviour. Note again Peter’s order in his commands; first the mental attitude of love (open your hearts to each other), then the use of the homes God has provided for them, (open your homes to each other), then he moves into the area of general behaviour (open your wallets and diaries - use of your money and talents and time, to assist your brethren). Finally he says be clear, thoughtful, and wise in the use of your words.

Peter refers to the oracles of the ancient world. There were two sorts of oracles in the ancient world; there were the words of the pagan gods (demons - **Psalm 96:5**) spoken through the demon possessed priests of pagan shrines, and then the words spoken by the prophets of the true God.

Every time we speak in public before men we must remember we stand for the Lord and our words should be the words of the Lord we represent. If a believer cannot speak the words of God, they should not be speaking so much!

Next Peter mentions service for others. The word for service is diakoneo, the word for the deacon, and meaning to wait on tables as a waiter, and serve the food for others. Peter’s point is clear; if you are called to serve the Lord in the practical service, even of serving tables, then you are to do it “as unto the Lord”, and in such a way that those seeing you will give praise to God. All work is to be done to bring glory to the Lord. The focus of all our activities is to bring glory to the Lord who brought us. The service we do is to be “empowered” service, with the Holy Spirit being our power enabling us to serve the Lord under pressure.

The Lord provides all the power we need to do his work. The word Peter selects to describe the way the Lord provides is the word for the benefactor of the Greek theatre, the one who provided thousands of dollars to meet the costs associated with putting on a drama. The person doing this had to be very wealthy. Peter’s point is, that the Lord God is mighty to save and powerful in his provision for his saints, and there is no lack of anything required to do the job, to play our part in the great drama of time and eternity.

Peter’s final blessing in this verse is interesting. To the Lord is the, “glory and might for ever and ever, amen”. To the Lord is the glory forever, and he has the mighty power that will be acknowledged forever. He ends with the “amen”. It is not just, “so be it”, but a very strong statement in itself. “It is not a wish, but rather a strong affirmation, placing a seal of approval on what has just been said.” (Hiebert, 1982, p 252, 253.) “The word is not the expression of a wish (so be it), but the assertion of a fact (it is so).” (Mastermann, 1912, p 151.)

## APPLICATION

### A. PERSONAL

Note the order of the commands again:

1. **Set your heart right** with the fruit of the Spirit - LOVE one another in heart and deed. Open your hearts in love to one another.
2. **Open your homes**, in proportion to which you have opened your heart to fellow believers.
3. **Open your wallets** and provide for needs of others as you can. Be as generous with others as God has been with you.
4. **Open your diaries**, and make time to help your brethren, using the gifts God has provided.
5. **Open your mouth**, only when you can speak, as it were, the words of God in a godly way, with a view to having the impact on lives that an oracle would have.

“Love forgives, avoids giving occasion for sin, is quick to discern some generous construction to put upon the fault, or to quote some consideration to weigh in the opposite scale, and it rebukes with great tenderness.” (Meyer, 1953, p 145.) Does love guide our actions? Do we show it at every opportunity? If not, let us check our selves out, for without love we are empty of the work of the Holy Spirit!

In verse nine, “the addition (of the words), without grumbling has a sharp tang of realism about it. Then as now guests could overstay, or otherwise abuse their hosts welcome.” (Kelly, 1969, p 179.) How well do we measure up here? Do we look out for other believers, open our homes, and open our wallets to help those overseas with the necessities of life? This is the standard the Lord sets for us and so let us respond to need with open hearts not a fortress mentality protecting our “things”. What God has given is to be given away to support others. What we have is not “ours”, rather it belongs to the Lord, as we do!

Do an audit of your words today. How much of what you have said to others could be said to be “oracles of God”? How much serious material passed your lips today, and how much fluffy stuff or garbage? This is a matter for which we are accountable before the Lord our God.

Is every action in captivity to Christ? 2 Corinthians 10:5. All we do is to bring glory to the Lord. Can we praise the Lord as we serve in practical issues? This is the daily challenge, to look at all tasks and find a way to bring glory to the Lord through them, and to utilise the Lord's mighty power to ensure this happens. If it does not, we are at fault, for he has provided mighty power to us, through the Holy Spirit to ensure we are always well supplied.

**B. PASTORAL**

"Love refuses deliberately to drag out the sins it encounters so as to expose them to the gaze of all; it prefers to refrain from and discourage all needless talk about them." (Hiebert, 1982, p 247.) Audit your pastorate on this matter of love pastor! The theme of love is to saturate every message, or we are off the track. How well have you done recently on this?

"The Christian, by his conversation was cut off from the social life in which he had lived. For all such the apostle wished to secure a warm welcome into the hearts and homes of their fellow Christians. The strength of the early church lay in the koinonia into which each new member was welcomed. The loss of this sense of fellowship in the church today is the dire and humbling legacy of religious discord and social intolerance." (Mastermann, 1912, p 147.) While this is true, Peter would be more blunt; it is the result of sin and lack of spiritual life and growth; for all who are filled with the Holy Spirit will be filled with love and will show it to all.

No believer is ever to have to depend on unbelievers if a believer is present and can meet their needs. We have a responsibility to assist our brethren in foreign lands who may be short of money, food, clothes or study material. We may not be able to show hospitality in our homes, but we can provide for their needs from afar. Care for one another is the task we are always called to.

**CONCLUSION**

All aspects of life are to be under the control by the Holy Spirit empowered believer, in such a manner, as to bring glory and praise and honour to the Lord in all we think, do and say.

**DOCTRINES**

LOVE

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

STEWARDSHIP

GLORY

**PARAPHRASE**

"Before all other things in importance, keep on having the mental attitude of committed intense loving concern for others in the church family. This sort of loving concern for others will draw a veil over other sins you may have committed, (that otherwise might get in the way in giving the gospel). Practise habitually showing hospitality towards other visiting believers, and do it without being resentful and complaining about them, (even if they overstay their welcome at times). As each of you have received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so minister using your gifts to the benefit of all in the church family. Be good stewards/servants of this great variety of gifts you have received from the grace of God. If you are to speak in your service, then speak as the very spoken words of God. If any serve through the practical service at tables, then let them serve with the ability and power that God gives. The purpose of all service for the Lord is that through all things done and said, the Lord might receive glory and honour and praise. To him be the glory, the praise, and the ruling mighty power unto the end of the ages."

## VERSES 12 - 19

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; 13 but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you, for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as of a murderer or as a thief, or an evil doer or a busy body in other men’s matters. 16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. 17 For the time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? (Proverbs 11:31). 19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their soul to him in well doing, as unto a faithful creator”.

## BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

“The high standards of Christianity made society uneasy. By aspiring to the teaching of Christ believers had inadvertently become the conscience of society. Mankind has always been troubled by its conscience, and persecution has been the normal response. Matthew 5:11, 1 John 3:13.” ( Mounce, 1982, p 73.)

If we are to receive a “fiery trial” in our own lives we are to have the mental attitude expressed here in these verses. Don’t be baffled or surprised by persecution, as if it is unnatural. The persecution of the saved by those who are determined to be lost is the story of history. Did not Cain murder Abel, Ishmael persecute Isaac, Esau hate Jacob, the authorities hate the Lord himself? This has been Peter’s theme throughout this letter; the hatred of the unbeliever towards the believer is to be expected, and we are to relax in the midst of any pressures that their hatred brings, for we are in the Lord’s hands, and under his loving care. If we are to die under attacks from evil men we can die like Stephen seeing our Lord in the midst of the attack. Acts 7:55-60.

We are not to be baffled, questioning, worried, upset or moaning (verse 9), rather we are to be rejoicing when pressure situations come to us. Peter reminds them that they will be rejoicing with joy that overflows all boundaries when the Lord returns, so why not get started now! We are on the winning side. This is another great theme of the letter; if we are serving the one who wins in eternity, let us live like winners now! Rejoice now and rejoice even more later!

Paul has many parallel passages to this one, and it may be that Peter is echoing Paul’s sentiments; they are certainly shared by him. Philippians 1:18, 2:16 -18, 28, 3:1-3, 4:4, Colossians 1:24, 1 Thessalonians 5:16. This is the apostolic faith; it is a dynamic and powerful faith that smiles in the face of adversity, for it is always looking for the glory of God in the midst, and the path the Lord has provided through the troubles.

Suffering is viewed by the early church as a “gift” given by the Lord to his most mature and choicest saints, in order that they might grow spiritually even more. In suffering we have a chance to enter into something of the sufferings of our Lord. In a manner of speaking we share the sufferings of Christ, and we fellowship with Him in a way that we cannot short of suffering for the name of Jesus. Acts 5:40-42, Philippians 3:10. That is the thought at the start of verse thirteen.

As the doctrinal study of the subject in the Bible Topic Book makes clear, suffering is not a “bad” thing in this world, for it is the necessary result of the fall of man, but is used by the Lord to bring glory to himself as the saint walks through the suffering empowered by the Holy Spirit and looking to Jesus, the one who set the example of walking through the veil of tears in the spirit of peace and glory. Peter is giving all believers a promise here; reiterating the promise that the Lord is with them to the end of the age, Matthew 28:20, but even more is in view, for Peter takes us to the end of the age in his language.

If a believer is called to walk the path of suffering, then he or she is called to be like Christ in it, and by placing ourselves under such a spirit of obedience, even unto death, we will know, in the midst of it, the glory of the Lord in our spirit, as Stephen did, but also much more! Peter says that at his final return to the earth for his saints, we will receive even more glory. The doctrine of “Crowns” covers part of this also, but there is far more in these verses than even this. Suffering is not to be feared, flinched from or rejected, for there is glory in it, if it comes in God’s will for the saint.

“Do not only brace for afflictions, but rejoice in them, sharing the fellowship of the Messiah’s sufferings (Colossians 1:24, Ephesians 3:1-7). For just as the Sh’khinah (God’s manifest glory Hebrews 1:2-3) glory, once rested on the temple in Jerusalem, now the spirit of the Sh’khinah is resting upon you, since your body is a temple for the Ruach Ha Kodesh who lives inside you(1 Corinthians 6:19). The Sh’khinah was revealed as his, Y’Shua’s Sh’khinah at his first coming (John 1:14-15,); it is the same as ‘the glory to be revealed’ (John 5:1ff), at his Second Coming (Titus 2:12).” (Stern, 1992, p 756.)

The early Israelites could see the Sh’khinah glory from afar, but could not approach lest they died, but we, we are the ones who in suffering have the presence of the Sh’khinah of God with us in power, and later when the Lord appears we are there in the winners circle with our Lord sharing his glory, as we shared his sufferings. This victor’s crown is not won by any save those who share the sufferings of Christ. Can you see why Peter was not concerned if he, or others, had to suffer for their Lord, for it meant they had the opportunity to win great glory now and forever. Peter here is like the great military leader who does not shrink away from combat but urges his faithful troops on, knowing that it is only in the worst

of battles that the greatest of medals are given out for “courage under fire”. It is to this we may be called, and it is for this that the Sh’khinah of God rests upon us.

Verse fourteen reminds us that we are never alone in suffering, when it is for the Lord’s sake. Daniel 3:25. In the worst fiery trial, the three Israelites were joined by the Lord himself, and Peter’s promise here is, so will we be! Can anything separate us from the loving presence of the one who died for us that we might live? No! Never! We do not follow a Saviour who leaves us in the midst of trials to suffer alone. His firm promise is that he is with us, and will never leave us alone. Romans Chapter 8.

Evil doers attacked our Lord, calling him an evil doer, John 18:30, and so they will to us. Like our Lord we must make sure their lies are not true! They called him a blasphemer, but were themselves guilty of the very thing; so it will be until the end when he returns. Peter urges us to turn their blasphemy into glory by the way we take the suffering they dish out to us. By taking the suffering, “as unto the Lord”, we transform the attacks of the evil one into glory for the Lord, and glory for ourselves as we stand in Christ Jesus.

What never glorifies God is for believers to suffer in the courts and jails for genuine crimes against their neighbours. We are called to love our neighbours, and full love shares the gospel message, it does not lead to evil. Note what Peter specifically mentions as sins /crimes that believers have clearly been guilty of, or are in present danger of committing.

There are four categories of crime mentioned here, none of which are believers ever to be associated with. The first is murder. Sadly many believers through the centuries have responded to verbal and physical attacks upon them not by turning the other cheek, but by killing those who abused them! Peter, the one who drew his sword on the night of the Lord’s arrest has learnt the lesson God had for him that night. Have we heard the words of our Lord? Matthew 26:51-56, Luke 22:49-51.

The second thing is theft. All too many believers have stolen money, things that were not ours, and the reputations of others by the lies we may have told. We are not to be known as thieves by the world or they will not hear our message, for if it has not delivered us from such evil practises, what is the good news for the lost?

The third category of things is “evil doing”, and covers all things associated with evil. Remember that evil is defined as satanic attacks on the things that God hold’s sacred. Anything that attacks, or violates the four so called “divine institutions” is evil, as it undermines God’s Plan and so has satanic origin: -

1. All violation of the free will of human beings is evil doing.
2. All violation of marriage is evil doing. Adultery and all forms of promiscuity, pornography, or other perversions (child abuse, etc), is evil doing.
3. All attacks on the sacredness of the family is evil doing. Child abuse comes into all three categories as one of the great evils.
4. All attacks upon the integrity of the nation state are evil, for God has established the nations as his way to limit evil and enhance opportunities to spread the gospel, reversing the curse of the tower of Babel.

Believers are not to be known for attacking these four divine institutions; we are to be known as people who respect them and uphold them at all times.

Verse sixteen indicates that as the result of the attacks of the mob some believers will be led to judgement, and standing before the judges of ones own society can be a source of shame for a good citizen. Peter says, if you find yourself in this position, do not be ashamed if you are there for a good thing. Whatever the charges against us as believers, we are to make sure no crime is amongst them, except by the lies of our accusers.

Verse seventeen notes the logical fact about judgement. “If God’s judgement is ordained to start with his chosen people, it is certainly not going to stop with them.” (Kelly, 1969, p 193.) Note a very sober principle in this verse. When the Lord judges he begins with his own people, and purifies them first by the suffering he allows them to undergo. But if he allows this to occur, will he stop there? Peter brings our minds back to the plan of God again.

He reminds us that the suffering of the church is part of a plan and it is leading somewhere, and that is to the end of all things and the judgement of the whole world system. Keeping our heads safe from anxiety and despair as we undergo suffering, involves being focused on the plan of God that does not end with our pain or death, but ends with his glory and our glory with him.

Also note in verse seventeen, that the unbelievers are referred to as, disobeying not disbelieving. “The gospel makes its demands on the will of man. It does not call for his opinion. The truth of the gospel is not at issue. People either reject the truth or obey the truth. They do not decide on its truthfulness.” (Mounce, 1982, p 77.) Note this carefully. The unbeliever is condemned by their own actions, they disobeyed the clear instruction of the living God, and for such a crime they are truly lost.

Note also that as far as the church was concerned, it was always, "five minutes to midnight" (F F Bruce, quoted in Hiebert, 1982, p 245.) The return of the Lord was expected at any moment, and they lived with that reality, and had each day purified and focused by it. Matthew 24:36, Romans 13:12, 1 Corinthians 7:29, Philippians 4:5, Hebrews 10:25, James 5:8, 9, Revelation 1:3, 22:20, 2 Peter 3:8, 9.

In these verses we have the, "methodology for suffering saints" (Meyer, 1953, p 162). It may be summarised by the following three points.

1. Be sure you **keep in the current will of God** for your life.
2. **Be sure to not lose focus**, but keep on doing the good things you can in service for the Lord.
3. When facing each day, **commit your soul to the safe keeping of the Lord**.

Verse eighteen has had some stumble. It does not teach that it is "hard" for God to save us, and that some might not make it because it is too hard for God to help them! It simply underlines Peter's point from verse seventeen that those who disobey the Lord who died for them are in a very perilous place. Salvation was obtained, "with difficulty", it cost the Lord tremendous suffering, and the price paid was terrible, but it was total and complete. Given that price paid, Peter asks, where will the unbeliever stand?

Upon what ground will they try to establish their right to enter heaven on their own account? If the Lord on the cross is the standard, what can they do to win their own salvation? The answer is nothing! There is only one way that man may be saved and that is through the work of Christ; no-one else can do anything like this, and it is this that was required to win our salvation!

In verse nineteen we have Peter's expectation spelt out. He is not expecting them to die, but if they must his words will keep them mentally safe, if they apply them! "Martyrdom is not envisaged, for he expects them to go on living normal lives and to be energetic in practical charity. God is a reliable depository who can be trusted. His faithfulness is the basic motive for Christian hope in the New Testament." (Kelly, 1969, p 195.)

We are not to seek out a dramatic confrontation with the evil powers, we are to do the work that the Lord puts before us. If we are to suffer and/or die however, we are to accept it with rejoicing! He is our faithful creator, and the one who made us, has provided all things needed for us, in all things he leads us into!

If we must face and go through the 'fiery trials', then we are to go through them in the power of the Holy Spirit and grow spiritually, and witness in his power, right until our last breath is breathed. "There is no standing still in things spiritual. He who does not advance goes backwards." (Lumby, 1893, p 195.) God is faithful, he never 'forgets' us! We need to know and claim the promises of God. Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, 2 Timothy 2:13, Deuteronomy 7:9, Isaiah 49:7,15.

This is not resigning ourselves to our fate or any form of despair, rather it is the dynamic trust in the power of the Lord to keep us unto death. "Christian resignation differs from fatalism in that it recognises a beneficent will behind all the changes and chances of mortal life." (Mastermann, 1912, p 157.)

## **APPLICATION**

### **A. PERSONAL**

"To share Christ's shame is a glorious privilege, to have his fellowship, though it be in the midst of flames, is to have fullness of joy and to partake of his humiliation in this world is the pledge of participation in his glory in the world to come. Peter's motive is not to warn believers, but to encourage believers to endure steadfastly; so that believers are reminded, that terrible though their ordeal is, they are at least facing a less severe ordeal than the disobedient will have to face." (Cranfield, 1959, p 102, 105.)

"To suffer for Christ is to be blessed, because God's glorious spirit comes to rest upon all who endure reproach for him." (Mounce, 1982, p 75.) Medals are only won on the battlefield, never on the parade ground. The church teaching sessions and prayer meetings are the parade ground only; we are trained there to go out and do the work of evangelism and be prepared daily to suffer reproach for his sake. Luke 6:22-23, 1 Timothy 4:10, Colossians 1:24. The whole theme of this letter might be titled, the "fiery trial mental attitude", for that is what Peter wants from us, a dynamic mental attitude that faces troubles as opportunities for glory!

In verse seventeen and eighteen we are encouraged to keep our focus on the Lord who bought us, and to remember that we are kept by him. We are to, "trust yourselves to God, continue to do right and all will be well; however severe this ordeal may be, it is nothing compared to the fate of outsiders." (Moffatt, 1963, p 160.)

Do we remember who has called us, and do we praise him enough and often for who he is? Our response determines how he is able to act in blessing towards us, and that is why we are so often living beneath the level He desires for us. We are meant to be living in "Faith-Rest" – in praise and worship and trust in the one who died for us. He is our faithful

creator, and He is the one who made us, and he has provided all things needed for us, in all things he leads us into! Let us praise his holy name! He can be trusted and He will deliver us.

**B. PASTORAL**

“Yet we may know something of his other sufferings, when He was tempted, when he foresaw the doom of men and wept; when he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself when he surrendered himself to do and suffer the holy will of God. . . . Would it be right for him to sink fainting beneath his cross, whilst we are carried to heaven on beds of down. Shall he go through seas of anguish and we pass round them by a safer and easier path?” (Meyer, 1953, p 155 – 156.)

Are our people prepared for suffering should it come upon our people? If we are training believers we are training them for combat in the angelic conflict and that means there will be casualties. Are the people ready to suffer casualties for the Lord in his work? If our flock does not have the mental attitude expressed here then we do not have the mind of Christ, and we have failed in our job as pastors. Let us train for this spiritual combat; let us encourage our people to always have the mental attitude that takes suffering for the Lord’s sake in his way.

The battle for the believer is a daily battle for a dynamic and apostolic mental attitude. It is a mental attitude that sets itself the task of doing the work that the Lord has set us without dramatics. That means we seek no-thing that is not the Lord’s will for us. “Committing oneself to God is not passive submission. It involves active well doing, . . . . There is no place for a martyrdom mentality. Suffer in silence but get on with the job of living an active life of good deeds. Christians should be known for what they do.” (Mounce, 1982, p 78.)

**CONCLUSION**

We are called to a “Christ like life”, nothing short of that will do in the Lord’s service. Let us set our hearts and minds to the task of being obedient to him and to be trusting in him for all things, focused on the plan of God not the attacks of disobedient men.

**DOCTRINES**

SUFFERING

REWARDS AND CROWNS

NATIONS ( NATIONALISM

**PARAPHRASE**

“Loved ones in Christ, do not think it strange or unexpected that you may endure fiery refining and purifying trials of your faith. Do not think that some strange thing has happened to you, (this is “normal” in the devil’s world). (Instead of confusion and fear) keep on rejoicing, both now,(in the midst of it), and later at the Lord’s glorious appearing, for then you will exult and rejoice with real exuberance. If you are verbally abused because you are believers, blessed are you, because (in the midst of it all) the Holy Spirit is with you! On the part of the evil ones the Lord is blasphemed, but on your side the Lord is exulted (by your response to their attacks). But be sure, that none of you suffers judgement as a murderer, as a thief, as an evil doer, or an agitator and mischief maker. If you are judged as a Christian, then do not be ashamed, but rather let the Lord work his glory through this. Because the time for this judgement is begun and the church will suffer first. But if it starts with us and we suffer, what will happen to those who live in disobedience to the gospel message? If the righteous ones with great difficulty are saved, what will happen to the ungodly? Where will they stand? For all these reasons, those of us who are to suffer according to the will of God, let them commit their souls to the loving, faithful creator of all things, and demonstrate that commitment by doing good things (in love).”

**NOTES**

**CHAPTER 5****VERSES 1 - 4**

**“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”**

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

We are partakers of the glory of the Lord, and Peter wants us excited about the position we have and the opportunities it will provide for this life and the next. As an introduction to this passage read Psalm 73:16-28. The spirit of the Psalmist is caught and expressed by Peter in these verses. “Catch the glory”, he says to us, and then we will be stabilized in all that this life can throw at us.

Paul expresses the same things before Peter wrote his letter in, Romans 8:16-18. Also refer to, 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, Philippians 1:19-23, Colossians 3:1-4. Later he would reflect on this subject further in 2 Timothy 4:6-8, just as John would toward the end of the century in his first letter, 1 John 3:1-3, and Revelation 1:9.

Peter claims no superiority in verse one, he is not a “lordly elder”, nor any such thing as a “monarchical bishop”, as would later develop; indeed his very language, as we will see, opposes such a concept in it’s entirety. Peter calls on the pastor teachers of the local churches, as a fellow pastor - teacher (to use Paul’s term from Ephesians 4:11). Eldership was well established in the early church from the beginning because it was a Jewish concept for rulership of the local synagogues.

The specifically Christian criteria for appointment of elders was laid down by Paul in the Pastorals, 1 Timothy 3:1-15, Titus 1:5-9, but the characteristics here and in other places in the Prison, and other letters, simply highlight the importance of spiritual, Holy Spirit empowered and fruit filled characters to take the leadership. Elders of local synagogues had a similar list of character traits to qualify for appointment, and it was vital that the elders of the church were even more spiritually strong than their Jewish brethren who had not accepted the Messiahship of Jesus.

The key characteristic of eldership was care for the flock, as a steward of God’s assets, not your own. Peter talks a great deal about “ownership” here, and underlines that the one who “owns” the church, and every local congregation of it, is the one who won the glory by shedding his blood for it! The eldership is directly responsible to the Lord for their conduct in their governance of the local church.

The first point is, there are no “superior elders”, all are “fellow elders”, of equal status before the Lord, whose “under-shepherds” they are. There is only one celebrity, only one Lord in Christianity, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one who won the glory through his sufferings. This has been Peter’s other main point in the letter; we share in the Lord’s sufferings, and we also share in his glory through them, and we do this by living in his power and under his authority. Everything is to centre on HIM.

We are proclaimers of his message of salvation, and this message is a witness (Greek word = *martus*) to his suffering and to his glory. The “good news” is about his suffering in our place, perfect and complete to pay the price for our sin, and his glory, which we share through our faith in him.

We have a fellowship of glory with him, but before that we may have a fellowship of suffering for his message. Throughout this letter, Peter has mentioned that suffering is likely to occur in the Lord’s service, but that it is a necessary part of the glory, and we are to “catch the glory”, and praise him, in the midst of any suffering that comes our way. In light of his glory we can glory ourselves in all things! Philippians 4:4.

In light of the Lord’s suffering and his glory, Peter moves to the same order for the pastors of the local churches as he was given by the Lord after his resurrection. Feed the flock of God! John 21:15-17, Acts 20:28-32. It is an aorist imperative order. This underlines that there will be times when teaching the living Word of God, will not occur, but at every point in time (aorist) when it is possible, the pastors of the flock of God are to feed them with spiritual food; the wisdom that comes from the Word of God, and the care that flows from a heart transformed by the sufferings of Christ.

It is the word that Peter selects to use here that is interesting. It is the middle order from John 21 that Peter uses to stand for the total passage. It may be best translated, “shepherd my sheep”, but it involves the concept of feeding, but so much more also. Peter draws attention to the pastoral role of the local minister/elder; they are to lovingly care for the flock of God, and that involves protection, encouragement, feeding and setting the example of moral leadership. It is a call to, caring courage under fire!

It involves a number of things to work out practically, but first a mental attitude. Peter calls us to have in mind several things (verses 2 - 4):

1. As pastors we are all “fellow-elders”, equals before God, tried by suffering, focused and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and with a heart for service, and an expectation of glory within to drive us.
2. We are to “shepherd the flock; loving, self sacrificial service is in view here.
3. We are to feed the flock; they must not starve when they are with us.
4. They are God’s flock, not ours. We have the care and responsibility, but we answer to the Lord himself for our work with the flock he has given us.
5. We are to exercise oversight, so as to receive a good report from the Lord, and we are to be focused, as we serve Him, on His well done not anything else. Matthew 25:21-23.
6. We are to serve in a free way, under the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, not from any other “constraint”. No compulsion is to drive us except the desire coming from within from love for our Lord.
7. We are to be as keen as a volunteer, and with all the passion that this involves.
8. Lust for money, power, authority, position, or reputation, are not to be a part of our lives at all. Such lust for power is illustrated by Diotrephes. 3 John 9-10.
9. We are to be filled with passion, ready to serve, with total zeal for the task to which we are called.
10. Not lording it over the flock, as monarchs or dictators.
11. Being patterns, role models that others can follow in holy and joy filled living.
12. Being focused on winning the crown of glory, that is the eternal reward for the pastor who serve well. This involves being prepared to wear the crown of suffering in time with glory in our hearts, for they are fixed on eternal realities, where our true reward will be received.

Compare this list with those of the Timothy and Titus passages. Note how Peter’s concern is for a mental attitude which if present fulfils all of Paul’s concerns. Paul’s lists are primarily relevant for new Pastors being appointed in new churches, where-as Peter’s list complements this and may be added to Paul’s, especially where the church is facing pressures, and has been established for a while.

Lazy pastors, power or money hungry pastors, are strongly rebuked here, and are reminded that the Lord’s expectation of them is serious, and the consequences of failure or success (as the Lord determines it), are eternal. The Lord is the Chief Shepherd, he is the one to whom we must give account, and it is his well done that we are to focus on.

His return is sure, and he comes to give rewards to the saved and execute judgment upon the lost. Let us ensure, Peter says here, that we are on the receiving end of rewards not judgement.

**APPLICATION**

**A. PERSONAL**

“Sufferings are not only a qualification for shepherdship but for glory, . . . No cross, no crown!” (Meyer, 1953, p 164.) Beware the mental attitude in this life that concentrates on rewards, and the things that wealth can buy in this world, for that does not last, and will not protect the soul from the losses that may come under persecution. Only a heaven directed soul will survive the pressures of persecution, and only a heaven looking soul will win the crown of life!

The word ‘martyr’ 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.” (Kelly, 1969, p 198.) We are all left here to be witnesses of the transforming power of the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot witness to this truth unless it is true in our life! Do we seek the crowns that this world has to offer, or do we seek the eternal rewards that the Lord gives to those who set him first, and value only the work that he has for them.

“In periods of persecution there was a real danger in accepting office, for officials enjoyed an unpleasant prominence, which led to them often being singled out (for attention) by State authorities. Hence some were indisposed to take office at all.” (Moffatt, 1963, p 163.) Peter’s point is clear; we are to accept whatever it is that the Lord has, as our destiny in our brief life, and we are to serve him to the full extent of our Holy Spirit empowered abilities.

**B. PASTORAL**

Peter keeps on exhorting about the theme, “catch the glory”, he keeps on saying this in many ways through the letter to the flock, and chiefly to the shepherds of the flock. This is certainly our challenge as pastors today. The two fold impetus behind this call is, the suffering and the glory of the Lord. They are to be kept together in Peter’s view; for the sufferings intensify, or add to, the glory of the Lord. The Lord is the, “Lord of Glory”, who came in the glory of the Father, Luke 2:9-

14, and who will come again in his own glory; glory that will be even greater than that in which he came to earth first, Luke 9:26-32, 21:27, Matthew 16:27.

It was this daily expectation that enlivened the early church, and the power of it fired their service for the Lord of Glory, who they expected to see daily. In the very communion service, the wine was taken with the words, "until he comes" 1 Corinthians 11:26. Do we give this impression to our people today? Can they "catch the fire": can they see and "catch the glory", and be transformed by the reality of the Lord's coming? If not, we are off the track, and need to return to the true path.

"Whatever authority the elders have springs from lives of godliness and subjection to the Lord. They are to be examples to the flock, those whom the sheep of Christ may safely follow." (Ironsides, 1984, p 57.) Peter could be saying as we would today in an advertisement, 'No spiritually blind or stupid shepherds need apply! A truly stupid person is one who does not think of the end of his life. Many live as if they will not die and give account; what fools they are, and what useless lives we live if we forget how we will end. "Instead of driving and bullying the faithful, the presbyters are to prove a pattern to the flock, their best influence will be through personal example.'" (Moffatt, 1963, p 164.)

It is the end of the race that determines who wins, not any other part of it! Do not let any one rob you of your prize, Paul says, Colossians 2:18. How do others rob us of our rewards? They rob us by distracting us from the reality of the race, by getting us to slacken our pace, or go off the track. We are to be like the runners of the Olympics, and run to win! 1 Corinthians 9:24 -27. Peter's words echo Paul's in verse 27. "But I keep control of myself, bringing my body under subjection, lest in any way at all, that having preached to others I might find myself disqualified." How tragic for the pastor who preaches one thing and lives another, for he loses all reward! This is Peter's message to pastors; get focused again on the end of the race, and run to win, and train the flock to have the same mental attitude as this!

"This pastoral responsibility of the under shepherd can only be rightly understood in relation to Christ's pastoral responsibility as the chief shepherd. It is a sharing in this work and our shepherding is altogether dependent upon His." (Cranfield, 1958, p 110.) He has placed us in this position of great responsibility and it is responsibility unto HIM.

Let every pastor examine his heart and ensure that he lives this responsibility daily and examines himself daily that his work stands the test of time, and the test of eternity. Psalm 26:2, 1 Corinthians 11:27-33, 2 Corinthians 13:5-10. The words of St Bernard are powerful here. "Had I some of that blood that poured forth on the cross, how carefully would I carry it! Ask, ought I not to be as careful of those souls that it was shed for?" (Quoted in Mastermann, 1912, p 160.)

"But they are God's flock, . . . For the flock is precious to Christ and should be precious to his shepherds. To let them perish for want of tending is treachery to the master who has sent men to his work". (Lumby, 1893, p 204.) This strong emphasis is mine as well as Lumby's. There is work to be done, and in any church where this emphasis is not felt by the people, I believe that the pastor has failed in his duty to GOD! This is our role, and all falling short of this is sin on our behalf as the Lord's under-shepherds.

There must be, clearly from this passage, a strong Second Advent emphasis in our preaching. The Lord's coming again is the purifying hope (1 John 3:1-3, 1 Corinthians 13:12, James 1:22-25) for us all, flock and shepherds. He is coming again, therefore what manner of pastors should we be? Let this empower our thinking every day. Let us daily, catch the fire, catch the glory of it, and so serve him with a focus that will protect and encourage our flock in the midst of the worst that the enemy can throw at us. Colossians 3:3-4, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-12, 1 John 3:1-3, Revelation 1:7,8, 20:11-15.

As believers and as pastors we share the glory of our Lord, and as pastors we have the opportunity to add glory to glory, by winning the Crown of Glory. "It denotes victory. It is not so much a glorious wreath (Goodspeed), as it is a wreath that consists of glory. Our crowning reward will be to share in the disclosure of divine glory in the age to come." (Mounce, 1982, p 84.)

We are to strive to gain mastery, 1 Corinthians 9:25, and so win the crowns that are to be given at the great throne of the Risen Lord. We may then, like the twenty four elders, have the great opportunity to cast our crowns at the Lord's feet to celebrate his glory. Revelation 4:10-11. All rewards in heaven are opportunities for greater worship of HIM who gave his all for us; should we not be striving for this reward in order that we may praise him even more! Catch the fire pastor! Catch the glory!

**DOCTRINES**

**CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

**REWARDS AND CROWNS**

**HOLY SPIRIT – MINISTRIES**

**PARAPHRASE**

“To the pastors that are in all the local churches; remember I am also an under-shepherd, just like you are, and (like you all called to be) a witness daily, testifying of the sufferings of Christ, and also the glory (of his victory over sin), that will be revealed (at his second advent). I keep on urging and pleading with you to be the under-shepherds (that you are called to be), at every appropriate time, protecting, encouraging, and feeding the flock that belongs(not to you, but) to God,(but has been given to you to exercise loving care over). Take the responsibility of this charge(from God), not as if you are being forced to obey, but like an enthusiastic volunteer, eager to please (the one who called you to this). Do not serve by reason of any motivation related to the money, position, or power that you might receive, but with total zeal for the task before you. Do not be like dictators over what is really God’s possession(not yours to lord it over), but keep on being the sort of examples of lives that others could follow safely (and win reward themselves). (I say all this, so that) when (that certain day comes and) the Chief Shepherd returns for us, you will receive the (eternal life reward of the) crown of glory, that will shine to the glory of God forever and ever.”

**VERSES 5 - 9**

**“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble (Leviticus 19:32, Proverbs 3:34, also see Isaiah 57:15, Psalm 138:6). 6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exult you in due time: ( Psalm 75, Proverbs 15:33, Jeremiah 45:5). 7 casting all your cares upon him; for he careth for you ( Psalm 55:22 ). 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9 whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world .”**

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

This is what we could call, another “collage passage”, made up, as it is, of a number of specific Old Testament quotes with allusions to many more. Peter draws on his spiritual heritage here to underline some principles that have been the essence of spiritual life since the beginning of God’s dealings with Israel. The continuity of God’s plan is also emphasized by these references. God has always saved by grace through faith; the object of faith has always been the Lord Jesus Christ, either by type, in the sacrificial system, or in reality on the Cross.

Spiritual growth has always been the same way also; by God’s gracious provision of his Word, and by the faith of the believer in it. It has always been, TRUST AND OBEY! In the Old Testament the saved remnant of the nation were always spoken of as belonging to the Lord, and it is the Lord’s ownership of the believer that is in view here. He owns us, having paid the blood price for our redemption, and that means he “owns” our problems also. From the time we become believers in the Lord we cease to have personal problems, for they are now his! To hold onto anything as “ours” is a manifestation of pride, and that is the enemy of the spiritual life.

Before we start to look closely at Verse 5, refer to Ephesians 5: 8-21, James 4:6-10, for parallel passages in the New Testament, to see the other places where this theme is underlined for us. Submission to proper authority and then recognition that all problems we have are the Lord’s, are two essential behaviours we need to learn before we can relax and grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. This verse follows on from and sums up the earlier theme of proper subjection, or subordination, from chapter 2 verses 13, 18, and chapter 3, verses 1, 5.

“The duly appointed teachers are to be accepted as powers ordained of God, and their rule and guidance followed with submission.” (Lumby, 1897, p 213.) The Lord himself set the example of humility, the teacher of us all was submissive to the father’s will before he asks us to submit to his. John 13:4, Luke 12:37, also refer to Proverbs 3:34. The path of glory is the path of humility; it may be defined as having a proper attitude to God and to the tasks he has set for us to do. The Lord calls us to have a complete lack of arrogance; there is no room for those who have been set free by another to lord it over each other! Our salvation should lead to a spirit of thankfulness and obedient service in a spirit of teamwork. Anything short of this standard is sin!

First there is submission to the authority of the eldership in all spiritual things. Now note it is in all spiritual things, not in matters of finance or who we fellowship with, what we eat and drink, and who we marry! Elders have no authority over the control of our lives, that is the Holy Spirit’s role, but Elders are the guardians of our spiritual life as mentors and servant leaders. Secondly there is mutual submission to each other. Paul makes this point also in the Ephesians passage, Ephesians 5:18-21, both alluding to the Lord’s command, for believers to have caring, “other centered”, agape, love one for the other, John 15:12-14, 17. So we are without excuse in this area, and we are to test ourselves against the Lord’s standard, for it is he we must satisfy.

Peter’s order to, “clothe ourselves with humility”, echoes Paul’s words in, Colossians 3:8-16, and Ephesians 6:10-17. The very words used have a military flavour to them. There are many military words and concepts in this section, and Peter uses the soldier’s life to illustrate the mental attitude and behaviours required of the believer. We are to fasten firmly humility into our behaviour patterns. It is to be the starting point for the use of other “equipment” in the spiritual warfare we are to fight, in the same way as the Roman soldier’s belt was the item onto which all else was fastened.

In Isaiah 57:16, 17, the Lord is pictured as putting on his armour for the second advent, and it may be this picture that was in both Peter and Paul's mind when they wrote these passages. Like the Lord we are to be ready to fight the spiritual battles we are called to, and the first piece of armour is the one upon which everything else hangs. For Peter this is the mental attitude of humility; the readiness to do anything, considering nothing beneath oneself, every task a privilege for the service of the Lord who gave his all for you. Refer also to, Isaiah 6:10, and Psalm 132:9 for other illustrations in the Old Testament of this clothing metaphor.

The principle of God's resistance to those who are driven by pride is well attested by scripture. The Lord is against those who try to stand on their own merits, and who consider all things except "kingship" beneath their dignity. This pride centered life is devil-like rather than God-like. Refer also to, Proverbs 29:23, Isaiah 2:10, 11, 57:15, Jeremiah 13:18, 44:10, 11, Daniel 5:22 - 29, and Micah 6:8.

The last verse is important to quote at this point, as it directly comments on this principle. "He has showed you man, what is good. And what is it that the Lord requires of you? But to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." This is biblical faith in action, and this is what Peter tells us is required to please God and survive the times of persecution that are coming to the church!

Before reading verse 6 read James 4: 6-10. It is pride that holds back many people from doing useful service for the Lord. As Augustine said, "that which first overcame man is the last thing he overcomes." (Quoted in Meyer, 1953, p 169.) If we lift ourselves up we get what our power can achieve: if we depend on God, we get what his mighty power can perform! How foolish for believers to play politics for roles within the church, lie and cheat, and maneuver for positions that are the Lord's to give. We need the mental attitude that Peter is describing, whereby we seek the role the Lord has for us, and we seek it by prayer and acts of service waiting for the Lord to "lift us up".

The author of this study has learned this lesson in the very work of the Evangelical Bible College of Western Australia, which was established in and through believing prayer. Without money or physical assets a small group did this; they gathered and prayed humbly before the Lord asking HIM to open up opportunities, and within five short years the Lord had opened up opportunities for his service in five continents. We have never had any politics in our leadership groups, and each has focused upon the Lord's work that they were to do, and they have done it "as unto the Lord". The work of EBCWA has been a joy for twenty five years as a result. No conflict for twenty five years is due to the single fact of humility in our service; we seek the Lord's will alone. Don't rob yourself of this joy my brother or sister, for it surpasses all else.

This is what Peter is encouraging all believers to do in all the situations of service they face. Place yourself on the receiving end of his grace, Peter urges, and he will lift you up. God is in the business of lifting up the humble! He is also in the business of putting down the proud and arrogant. This is his character, and he cannot do any other thing, so position yourself in the place where the Lord can pick you up! That place is the place of humility and dependence upon him, with a readiness of mind to do anything he directs without complaint.

Note Peter's confidence here. The Lord will lift you up because he has the power to. You are recipients of his "mighty power", for he is ruler of all. A believer asked a pastor many years ago, "surely God is not interested in the little things of our life?" The pastor wisely answered, "Madam, in God's sight, what is big in your life?" Let us remember this, there is nothing "big" in God's sight amongst our problems or issues, all is small when compared to his "mighty power". Let us take the place of humility and depend upon this power.

The conditional clause (subjunctive mood of the verb to exult, meaning, maybe he will, maybe he wont, it depends on something, a choice made), introduces the choice we must make. If we decide to humble ourselves (it is an order, imperative mood), we will be lifted up, but we may be disobedient believers in this matter! By his use of the word for power, Peter underlined the point, that any problems here are related to the believer's positioning of them self, not the power of God. If we apply humble thinking to every issue we face in life, ready to follow the Lord as he directs, then he will act on our behalf. He will exult us, in due time. Position yourself in the place of humble obedience and receive his hand up into the service he wants you to accomplish.

Let us look at these two concepts. To be exulted in this context, with the word that Peter uses, indicates great honour. In today's armed forces they still have this concept. It refers to a "field promotion", which is given to a soldier for great bravery on the field of battle, for obedient service, placing his life at risk for others, under fire. In reward he is given a medal, but even more, a promotion to higher rank, to serve at a higher level in the forces. This is done publicly in a formal parade before the whole assembled army. This is the concept Peter wants us to grasp. The Lord honours those who serve him in humility, trusting his power, rather than their own, by providing both eternal rewards, and greater opportunities for service in time as well.

When does this honouring take place? When do we receive these things? In God's "right time". Our job is to focus on Holy Spirit empowered service for our Lord, he will then honour our service, in his way, and in his time, and we are to leave ourselves totally in his hands for this. True service for the Lord begins with the humble mental attitude, a total dependence on the Lord's mighty power through the Holy Spirit, and on our obedience to whatever the Lord leads us into. Our periods of active service, end with the Lord "lifting us up", honouring us, with greater opportunities for more service, and finally they end in eternity with eternal rewards, the crowns of glory and life.

Before reading verse 7, read the following passages. Psalm 27:13, 14, 37:3 - 7, 55:22, Psalm 56:3 -4, 9-11, Matthew 6:25, 34, Philippians 4:7. The verbs used here are, like the earlier verse, very strong verbs. The word for cast, is a powerful military, and wrestling term from the Olympic Games of the time. It is the word meaning to “body slam”, to violently pick up and throw an opponent in such a way as to knock the wind out of them and render them harmless, to pace them totally at your mercy. This word covers then both the mental attitude and the prayer action of the believer when they face their otherwise distracting cares, anxieties or worries.

Believers are to see their worries and anxieties like an enemy of the soul and spirit. We are to take them and violently/powerfully throw them at the foot of the cross for the Lord to deal with. We are to literally to, “knock the wind out”, of our worries! We are called to apply our faith in God, by trusting him with our worries, and leaving them with him. When he paid the price for us on the cross, he paid for everything, and that includes the worries we have in time; they are his, for we are his, give them to the one who owns them! To hold onto your own worries is pride, for they are not your to worry about. Be obedient and “body slam” them on the Lord! The promise is that he keeps on caring for us. He keeps on having loving care over all the details of our lives.

Having disposed of worries into the hands of another, the temptation is to sit down and put the feet up and relax. Peter has encouraged us to “relax over worries”, but he reminds us, we cast aside our worries in order to be more focused on the task the Lord has for us. Worries are a distraction, a waste of our energy that should be spent in focused service of the Lord.

So, having disposed of all distractions, focus on the soldier’s task, and the soldier’s enemy. We have an enemy, and he is still alive and well. Many today have grasped a false theology, and pray for the complete “binding” of the enemy. Peter tells us here, he is not bound yet, and won’t be until the Lord’s return. He has been left to be a test for us, a test we must pass to be effective in the Lord’s service. Our prayers may “bind” his activity in place and areas of service according to the Lord’s Plan for us, but he is not universally bound yet. Remember it was Peter who was told to “bind and loose” on earth by prayer, and so if Satan could be “bound” now then he would be telling us about it at this point in his letter. Matthew 16:19, 18:18. Peter gives us four orders relating to the activities of Satan and his demons; orders we are to obey for our own safety. Before we move to these, note an obvious, but often missed point!

Our worries are not “our” worries, and they are to be dealt with directly by us before the Lord’s Cross. Anxieties within are not satanic, they are simply our own Old Sin Nature area of weakness moving us into “panic palace” rather than holding the firm ground of faith upon the rock that is Christ. Satan prowls around “outside”, he has no power inside, for the Holy Spirit is there with us. Satanic attack is a limited thing on believers. If we walk in the power of the filling of the Holy Spirit he has very little opportunity to get any “hit” onto us.

All too many believers today are giving Satan too much credit for powers that in some cases he never had, and in other cases, certainly doesn’t have since the cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lions only attack the sick, weak, and isolated! Give your burdens to the Lord, for you are “HIS” and that means he owns your worries also!

The five “Daily Orders” for the battle against the adversary, are to be applied in the church age, in the power of the Holy Spirit. They will protect us against the cunning of the “lion”, who will destroy our ministry if we open our self to him.

1. **Be Sober!** - At all times be self controlled, not under the control of any emotion, or any other substance (drink or drugs), but only by the Holy Spirit. Romans 13:11-13, 1 Thessalonians 5:6 -8.
2. **Be Vigilant!** - At all times, stay awake to danger, don’t relax your guard, don’t get careless.
3. **Resist!** - Stand up to, resist, oppose everything he stands for. Zero tolerance of evil is to be the standard for our lives. Also refer, Luke 4:3-12, Ephesians 4:27, 6:11-13, James 4:7.
4. **Be steadfast in the faith once delivered** to the apostles! Be unbreakable, stand as a solid mass of soldiers resisting attack. Stand with the apostolic doctrines, and their practices. As a local church be united, stand together, tight and committed to each other.
5. **Keep on knowing you are not alone!** All believers suffer pressures when they stand for their Lord.

The word Peter uses to describe the reality of the “afflictions or sufferings” of the other believers, is an interesting one. He says that the sufferings will be accomplished, and the word indicates that it is a part of the job role; that it is a duty associated with the role.

To be a believer is to be associated with suffering. Once more he normalizes the suffering of the believers. It is not a strange thing, it is our duty, and we are to take it as a soldier takes the rigours of a long campaign; without complaint, and with dignity and strength.

**APPLICATION**

**A. PERSONAL**

Humility is a theme not mentioned as much as it should be in today's churches. We have joined the world and emphasized assertiveness, rather than biblical humility (the readiness to do any task for the Lord, not thinking anything beneath you) and biblical strength (the power of a Holy Spirit filled life). In this section we see Peter emphasizing the biblical concepts, and these are our standard for life. We are to be humble in our dealings with each other in the church, not seeking to lord it over anyone, but ready to do anything to serve and bless all in the Lord.

We are first to be humble in our attitudes to the tasks we may be asked to do, then to our future in life itself. We are to place ourselves totally in the Lord's hands regarding our future work and service for him. We are to be ready to serve in any area in any way, and wait for the Lord to give us the roles we may secretly desire. If we lift ourselves up we will get what politics can achieve, but if we do what Peter commands here, and humble ourselves before God, we will get what he can do!

The next subject addressed here is anxiety; how to deal with your worries. The first point Peter makes is, our worries are not ours but are really his, and are to be given to the Lord totally. We are to trust him with our worries as we trusted him for our salvation. The God who saves and delivers from sin, is also the God who can deliver from troubles. "Anxiety mirrors the fragile nature of our ability to trust. It decreases in exact proportion to our willingness to let go and trust God." (Mounce, 1982, p 87.)

"To recognise the fatherly hand of God is to be released from anxiety. . . . The one solid argument is the cross of Christ and his resurrection. Golgotha is both the demonstration and measure of God's caring." (Cranfield, 1958, p 118.) We are to see all things through the cross and empty tomb. We are to see all troubles through the delivering power of our Saviour Deliverer God. He is able, Peter says, and he will deliver; so body slam your problems on the Lord believer!

Of the devil Meyer observes, "it is a subtle manoeuvre of his to lead men to suppose that there is no devil at all. A gang of thieves is never so dangerous as when they have it widely rumoured that they have left the neighbourhood." (Meyer, 1953, p 181.)

Satan is not bound at present, for Peter tells us that he walks about! He has been defeated by the cross, and eternally doomed, but still is dangerous in our time, and right until the end of the Great Tribulation, when the Lord returns. We are to apply the spiritual daily orders for our security in our daily battle in the angelic conflict. We are always safe from the lion in the wild, if we are alert, and ready for it. Careless people get devoured! Vigilant people are alert, and stand firm with the rest, and so the lion flees from the solid mass of steadfast soldiers.

**B. PASTORAL**

The Lord cares for us. This is the central truth of our faith, and it puts the Christian faith ahead of all others in this alone. "Other religions with their many ceremonies are commonly occupied with the business of making god care, of 'awakening by sacrifice, or prayer, or act, the slumbering interest of the deity' (Mastermann). Christians begin with and are meant to build upon the confidence that God does care! Matthew 6:25-35, Romans 5:8, 8:32." (Stibbs, 1959, p 171.)

"In these few words is the central truth that Christ was manifested to reveal. It is the belief that God cares that marks off Christianity from all other religions, which under all varieties of form are occupied with the task of making God care." (Mastermann, 1912, p 167.) The most powerful thing about this doctrine is that God cares, even in the midst of pressure, suffering, death and troubles beyond words. His loving kindness and care for us never stop. Jeremiah 9:24, 31:3, 32:18, Psalms have 23 references to the loving kindness of God, Titus 3:3-7.

Peter's many military references in this section underline his emphasis on strength and steadfastness in our mental attitude, and the need for us as pastors to produce this sort of mental attitude in our people. If the church is not standing firm and steadfast like a solid wall of Roman soldiers then it is not living and operating as the Lord intended. Let us get our preaching and systems right pastors. Humility in service, Faith under pressures, Steadfast Strength when opposed by evil, Teamwork when faced with all attempts to split us off from our peers; these are the virtues that the world should see in the church.

**DOCTRINES**

**OLD SIN NATURE**

**SATAN - ADVERSARY**

**SATAN'S WORK**

**SATAN'S STRATEGY**

**SATAN'S DESTINY**

**EPISTLE OF 1 PETER**

**PARAPHRASE**

"In exactly the same way as the pastors, you younger believers be respectfully responsive to your elders; yes, all of you be respectful and serve one another, and be clothed with the spirit that seeks to serve in any way it can. Remember, God sets himself up as an enemy to those who are proud and arrogant, but he gives great gifts to those who have humility and serve others without being proud or arrogant. Humble yourself therefore under God's mighty hand of power, and in his good time he will lift you up to a higher position where you may serve him even more. Body slam your problems and worries upon the Lord, because his nature is that he always has loving care for every detail of your life. At all times be self controlled, (let nothing other than the Holy Spirit exercise any power over you). Stay awake and be alert for danger at all times. (Be ready for action at all times). The reason for this order? Our adversary the devil prowls about, roaring constantly, like a hungry lion, seeking those he can devour. Your role is to resist him, oppose everything he stands for. Stand firm with all other believers, like a solid wall of soldiers, the church is to stand against evil. (Unbroken and united, so the lion cannot snatch any away). Keep on remembering that suffering is endured by all believers everywhere on the earth; (suffering is the normal state of battle for us in the devil's world, but remember his time is short)."

**VERSES 10 - 14**

**"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. 11 To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever, AMEN. 12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand. 13 The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son. 14 Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus"**

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

Grace and suffering, stability in the midst, and glory to come; these are the themes of this letter, and as he draws to a close, Peter reinforces the lessons of suffering within the grace provisions of a loving God. "But all is ordered of Him. He will not permit one trial too many. When His purpose is fulfilled we shall be perfected and established in His Grace." (Ironsides, 1984, p 60.)

Suffering does not mean that God has "lost his grip" over events, but rather that the Lord has allowed us to enter an area of service where we will experience even more of his gracious provisions. Sufferings open the door to growth, as we place our trust in him.

There is certainty of blessing in the midst of suffering. This is underlined by the use of strong verbs in this section, all in the future tense. "The verbs here are future, not optative; it is the expression not of a wish but of a promise." (Mastermann, 1912, p 170.) "The permanent vindication and blessedness which God will ensure for them are hammered home in four powerful verbs in the future indicative, indicating vigorous confidence." (Kelly, 1969, p 213.)

The suffering comes within the plan of the one who saved us from sin for blessing, not for cursing. When suffering comes then, it comes from our loving and gracious God, not from a power that seeks our destruction. It also comes for, "a little while", only. We have an eternal call and destiny, and all that happens in time is just a "little while". Peter calls us here to keep the "eternal life perspective" on all that occurs in time.

Note each of the verbs of verse ten.

1. **He will "perfect" us.** - Through suffering he will, put us in order, bring us together, bind up any wounds we have and make us "whole people". Those who train in the Gym for fitness only build muscle by, in effect breaking it down, by training hard and stretching their muscles until they at times hurt. Real gym training is controlled suffering, but it makes the athlete strong. So it is with suffering and our own lives under God's care. Like the gym instructor the Lord in grace brings us through his training program in suffering and there is the certain outcome; we will be made whole people through it. We will be perfected, and we will grow as people.
2. **He will establish us.** - He will fix firmly our faith within our souls through the suffering, and we will become strong. This verb indicates that the muscles will be firmly fixed to the bone, so that then they can grow bigger and stronger.

3. **He will build upon the strength** and attachment of the muscles to the bone and build more strength upon what is already there.
4. **He will settle us.** - He will provide a firm foundation upon which we can be secure in pressures.

In verse eleven he takes us back to the doctrine of the Character of God. In verse ten he has referred to God, as the "God of all Grace", and here in verse eleven he uses the other words that remind us of God's plan, purpose, and destiny for us. He is the one who has the GLORY, and MIGHTY POWER, and it is, FOREVER AND EVER. We serve the mighty God, so when anything awful comes our way it is not because God could not stop it coming, it is because he wants us to face it, and grow through it.

When what we call tragedy strikes, we are too apt to look to the heavens and ask God why? We look up with accusation, as if the Lord let this trouble, "slip past him", as if he didn't see it coming and has been caught out by it. Peter states clearly here, all things are under my gracious God's care, and he is the one who saved you. Relax in his grace, and walk with him through your suffering. Fix your eyes upon him and see the glory that is to come; the Lord is still on the throne.

Even as they were to be killed this was to be the message they were to cling to. One of the first to die in the Roman province of Asia was the Christian leader bishop Polycarp. "Thus Polycarp is said to have been martyred in AD 155 at Smyrna, when Statius Quadratus was proconsul, but when Jesus Christ was reigning forever." (Moffatt, 1963, p 169.) "Bless the Lord oh my soul, and that is within me bless his holy name!" Psalm 103:1.

The way the ancients referred to eternity, was by the phrase, "to the ages of the ages", ("eis ton aionos ton aionon"). It was a reminder by the very words that there are various "ages" of man and the worlds themselves, and we are but in one of them at present. Every time they used these words they recalled that this world in this age was but one of many, and that in Christ Jesus they were inheritors of an eternal destiny that goes beyond this age. This is the eternal life perspective that we need as we face the "short" pressures of time.

Verse twelve introduces the scribe who wrote the letter itself at Peter's dictation. As mentioned already in the introductory section to this study, the scribe of the ancient world had a fair bit of leeway in the composition suggesting alternative ways of saying something, polishing the language of the writer, to make it even more powerful and specific. They were the "word smith" hammering out the form to convey the message the author intended.

Silvanus, or as we know him from Acts, Silas, is the man who was here helping Peter, as he had earlier helped Paul. Refer to Acts 15:22-40, 16:19-29, 17:4-15, 18:5, also refer to his work with Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:19, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:1. This is a man who was a living example of the virtue of "humility" that Peter has spoken of through this letter, a man who was prepared to always play the supporting role without ever feeling he wanted to be the leader. He was truly used of God for he put the masters work first and took all "jobs" he was given with cheerfulness, even though as a Jewish leader he had great standing in his own right.

Peter acknowledges his scribe Silvanus, paying credit to him for the good Greek in which this letter is written, but also noting that it is he who is behind the work's message and that the instruction carries his apostolic authority. Note the characteristic of Silvanus character that Peter identifies here as the key word describing him. He is a "faithful brother". In days when self interest is considered a "virtue", let us return to biblical virtues, and the first in order is fidelity; that we are women and men who are true to our word, what we say we will do. Fidelity to the task given is one of the great virtues of the Christian faith. Ephesians 6:25, Colossians 1:7, 4:7, 9.

What the Lord had called these men to complete they completed to death if necessary. To fail to do that was a great disgrace, and Demas is mentioned this way, with great sadness by Paul, 2 Timothy 4:10. Faithfulness was the key virtue on Paul's lips as he faces his own death, as he says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." 2 Timothy 4:7

Peter's purpose is also spelt out again here. He has written doing two things; exhorting and testifying. His purpose is also two fold; that they might know the "true grace" of God and stand firmly in it. Why does he say the "true grace" of God? From this letter we can see the answer; many have been preaching in his day, as in ours, a "cheap grace", and "easy believism", a "prosperity gospel", that ignored, disparaged, or mocked the concept of suffering as something essential in Christianity.

True Grace is the concept that Peter has been "exhorting". Peter has underlined that in suffering we grow more than in plenty, and that in suffering we learn more of the loving care of God than any other place; that suffering for Christ is not a "strange" thing, but is to be an expected thing. It is to be embraced, if it comes, without fear, but in confidence in God's provisions within God's plan for our life.

The eternal life perspective is to be followed rather than the desires of time for an easy life. Peter here sums up his points made earlier in a few words. Life is brief, eternity is forever and ever, and it's rewards alone matter. Any suffering we have to endure because of our Lord, is to be welcomed as an opportunity to glorify him, and is to be seen an opportunity to win glory and the crown of life and glory in eternity. This world is not our home, we are just passing through, and we are marching like an army, with a task to do!

Like Paul, Peter has used strong military terms to further underline the “mission” purpose of this life, and to correct the laxness of the church of his day, that was getting too much “at home” in their corner of the world. “Your view of things is too small”, he is saying to them and to us! He has called us to see the angelic conflict and our place in it, and blows the trumpet for us to “join our battle units” and get into the fight.

The fellowship of all the believers upon the earth with each other is mentioned again in verse thirteen. We are never alone upon the earth, for where-ever there are believers there are brothers and sisters, and we are to join with them, in praise, in worship, in loving concern, and in prayer. The church where Peter is greets the other churches with joy. Peter uses the word, Babylon, to describe the location of the church. Does he mean the ancient city by that name in modern Iraq? Many think so, as it was a significant city still in this day when he wrote. The two alternatives are that Peter was in Babylon as he wrote this, for there were also many Jews there still in the first century. Or that this was a code name for Rome. Refer to, Kelly, 1969, pp 218-220, for a good discussion of the two options.

The church is referred to as, “fellow elect” (suneklekte). It is Peter’s way of underlining that all believers are equally joined together in Christ, chosen and precious to him. From different countries, culture, races, languages, we are all brought together into a loving family, in Christ Jesus. This loving bond was demonstrated by early church members, by a loving kiss, with which they greeted each other. This was a hug and kiss on the cheek, and was a part of early Christian life through the centuries.

The same kiss that the traitor Judas used in the garden was transformed by the church into a sign of love and care in Christ Jesus. It was referred to as, “the kiss of peace”, and according to Justin Martyr (1 Apologetica 65:2) it was a regular feature of the communion service in Rome in his day. It was given with the words, “the peace of Christ be with you”. It was his peace and love that was being remembered as fellow believers were greeted. It was a reminder that even under suffering and persecution, there was loving care over each person, and that they had the peace of God that passed all understanding with them, in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7, Isaiah 12:2, 26:3.

Keep on greeting each other with the loving kiss, and then Peter pronounces his benediction, which is the Jewish one, Shalom to you all!; peace, joy, love, all good things in Christ, be to you all. In living union with Christ there is “shalom”, and this peace and security of the soul is only found, “in” Christ Jesus, for there is life and peace in no other, for there is no other name given whereby men can be delivered from sin, death and fear!

## **APPLICATION**

### **A. PERSONAL**

The Lord reigneth, and he is the “God of all grace”! Have we praised his name for who he is yet today? Read these brief Psalms and lift your voice to the one who loves you and upholds you with his grace. Psalm 93:1-5, 95:1-11, 96:11-13, 97:1, Psalms 98, 99, 100, 103:1, 10-14, 17.

Peter has summed up his teaching on the necessary nature of suffering; it’s short duration, the Lord’s provision in the midst of it, and the eternal rewards that are ours if we bear up like soldiers through it. It is not a “strange thing” when we face different forms of suffering, it is a normal thing for this temporal world. Let us check ourselves out on this matter; are we moaners like the Israelites at Marah and Meribah, or are we standing with Moses and Peter?

The Lord has power to keep us in the midst of anything that this world can present us with. He will complete his work within us, he will establish us by his Holy Spirit’s power, he will stabilize us on the sure foundation of our eternal destiny. Are we relaxed mentally about these things or are we still the slaves of anxiety? Peter calls us to take the remedy for fear, and serve the Lord with strength and focus on the task, rather than being distracted by the troubles that come along as part of the battle.

Silvanus (Silas) was a man of his word. He was there to begin the missionary journey with Paul after the falling out with Barnabas and John Mark, but he is faithful to the Lord’s calling for service, and here we find him with John Mark serving Peter. These were men who could disagree and separate, but it was without pride centered anger, and for service, and that service brought them together again, for their eyes were on their Lord, for whom the service was offered. Let us be like them!

All three of these men joined together to write this letter, a work that was meant to encourage and strengthen, and train up the churches to do their job before the Lord. How well do we work together with others on tasks that require co-operation, and will be achieved best by joint effort?

All too often we want to take total credit for work done, and we do not see the value of cooperative projects where the strengths of the Peter and the Silvanus can come together to produce even more than would have been dreamed of. With the power of the Holy Spirit, one plus one does not equal two, it may equal ten!

Believers are meant to be changed by reading the Word of God; changed within themselves and changed in their inter-relationships with others in Christ Jesus. “The Christian message must be transformed into changed lives. The purpose of doctrine is less to instruct than it is to provide the theological basis for a new way of living.” ( Mounce, 1982, p 91.) Peter’s challenge in this little letter is clear; are we living the transformed life that the Lord has called us to, and are we sharing it’s power with others?

**B. PASTORAL**

Do our people get the message about suffering from our teaching? Do they see the three points that Peter wants them to:

1. **Suffering is inevitable.** - It is part of being a Christian in a world where the devil is still active.
2. **Suffering is necessary for growth.** - Only under trial and test can faith grow.
3. **Suffering is limited.** - It is always within the grace provision of a loving God.

Are we examples, models, patterns to follow for the Lord's flock that he has given into our loving care? Do we set the pace, by such example as Peter has called us to through this little letter? We must remember the old word of wisdom, "monkey see, monkey do". "The weak take in teaching, rather from what they see than from what they hear. The teacher must be a living witness to the Word, a proof of it's truth and power. If he be not this, all his teaching is of little value." (Lumby, 1893, p 208.)

Are we "faithful brothers" in our working relationships with others in the Lord's service? Do we join together with our fellow pastors, who love the Lord and stand in the truth, even when we disagree about some minor points? Peter and Silvanus may have had some disagreements but they joined together in this endeavour to write this little letter for the glory of God and the strengthening of the Lord's church. Let us remember that it is the Lord's church, it is never "ours". He died for the church, he empowers the church, he is there for the church under suffering, and he is coming again for his church! Hallelujah! We have a mighty God! Peter wants our days to be filled with praise to the Lord Holy name, giving thanks for his great deliverance.

**CONCLUSION**

Peter has told of the nature of the God of all grace, and we stand in him and in his grace and glory and mighty power. Peter wants praises in pressure, for that is the normal response of one who knows the grace in which they stand. Suffering is "normal", and so is the praise of God from the midst of the fiery trial. The eternal life perspective is his theme; if we keep our eyes fixed on him we have the stability that is required of the true soldier of Christ.

**DOCTRINES**

**GOD: CHARACTER OF GOD**

**ETERNAL LIFE**

**GLORY**

**PARAPHRASE**

"For it is the God of all grace who has called us, and he has called us to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus! All suffering is just for a little while, (and in the midst of it, and through it), he will bind up your wounds, strengthen you and establish you on his firm eternal foundation. To him be the glory and mighty power, to the ages of the ages, Amen. Silvanus, our faithful brother, was my assistant as I wrote this letter, and it is brief, but in it I have exhorted and given lasting testimony to the truth, telling you what is the nature of the grace in which we stand. The church that is with me at Babylon, fellow elect with you, sends warm greetings to you, and so does John Mark my son. Greet one another with the kiss of love and peace. Shalom be to you all."

**NOTES**

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