

Hednesford Pentecostal Church

1 Peter

Bible Version

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1. CHAPTER ONE

1.1. INTRODUCTION

1 Pet 1:1-2. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, {2} elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

In the early years of the church Peter was recognised as an apostle primarily to the Jews¹. He was involved in the early outreach to the Samaritans (Acts 8) and was responsible for the first incursion of the gospel into Gentiles (Acts 10). In later years he ministered in the Church throughout the Mediterranean area.

Some of the challenges Peter faced in adapting to the new environments were difficult and problematic. He obviously hadn't thought through some issues before getting in trying circumstances. His responses were therefore reactionary and often based on traditions or what he saw other people doing. This brought him into conflict with Paul on one occasion².

In his letter Peter addresses the believers as pilgrims. He uses this term again³. The only other New Testament writer to use that phrase is the writer of Hebrews. The term refers to people who are passing through an area because they are on a journey. It could also be translated as strangers or aliens. Like foreigners we find the world around us strange; and those of the world find our ways and customs different and perhaps unacceptable.

The names of the areas mention corresponds to what we would call Asia Minor.

Peter is believed to have written this letter in about AD 63-64; a time when Nero was responsible for the persecution of the church. One of the major themes of this letter is endurance in tribulation. Peter encourages believers with a reminder of our eternal perspective; that God's sovereignty had allowed this persecution for his purpose and glory; and that the church should follow Christ's example in tribulation.

In encouraging the saints, who may be bewildered and frightened, Peter reminds them that they are elect or chosen by God. The early church in Jerusalem responded bravely and positively to persecution from the Jewish authorities⁴. Peter now has to encourage the new Gentile believers to stand in the same spirit of faith.

¹ Gal 2:7. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter

² Gal 2:11-14. Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; {12} for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. {13} And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. {14} But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

³ 1 Peter 2:11

⁴ Acts 4:29-31. "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, {30} "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." {31} And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Acts 5:41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Peter names the whole of the trinity as being involved in the saints calling. It is the foreknowledge of the Father, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and the redemptive act of Christ that produces salvation in a man. These believers' salvation was neither a decision they made nor was it the work of a preacher; it is the sovereign work of God.

1.2. PRAISE GOD

1 Pet 1:3-5. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, {4} to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, {5} who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Like many of Paul's letters, Peter starts with praise of God. In writing this note of praise, rather than just praying it, he is seeking to raise the letter's recipients in praise and thanksgiving; to where they have their eyes on God.

In the midst of the persecution facing the church, believers would need to stand in the hope of the gospel. Here Peter speaks of it as a living hope. Paul writes of it as a blessed hope⁵. A Christian's hope is their confidence in God for the future. We are confident that all things work together for our good. We are confident that he is able to save us to the uttermost and that his grace is sufficient for us. We are confident of eternal life and our place in heaven. We are confident that the kingdom of Christ is coming and ultimately all spiritual foes are defeated.

Christ is resurrected and ascended into heaven and this is where the saint's inheritance is securely based. Our investments are spiritual in nature and eternal in their endurance. A gospel that focuses more on rewards in this life than in eternity is flawed. Prosperity, riches and success are not scriptural motivations for following Christ. Jesus told us to lay up treasures in heaven and he told some people to give everything they had away and follow him.

Despite Nero's threats believers should be reassured that they are kept by God's power, even if they were destined to die. God's ways are not our ways. We would choose divine deliverance from being killed, but the Lord who delivered Peter from Herod's sword allowed the same man to be murdered by Nero.

Rev 13:10. If anyone *is destined* for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.⁶

Our current physical Christian life is like a seed that when planted withers but produces a plant that is far greater. In similar manner the full glory of our salvation will only be seen in eternity.

When speaking of how we are kept by God's power the Greek text uses a military term. The power of God stands guard around the lives of those who are begotten of God.

⁵ Titus 2:13. looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ,

⁶ *New American Standard Bible*

1.3. GENUINE FAITH

1 Pet 1:6-9. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, {7} that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, {8} whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, {9} receiving the end of your faith; the salvation of your souls.

Although grievous troubles and persecutions were increasing, so was God's grace in the believers lives and this caused an exuberance of joy and rejoicing.

Peter explains the reason persecution was taking place was to demonstrate the precious and lasting nature of the believer's faith. Their endurance of this fiery trial would bring praise, honour and glory when Jesus comes to reign. Fire is used to purify gold and saints are purified through times of testing and difficulty when they have to rely upon God.

Not only did the saints believe in a Christ they had not seen, but they also loved him and they had received a spiritual deposit of glory.

Where is this inexpressible joy in western churches today? Are we too satisfied with the pleasures and comforts of the world that we know little of the lasting joy of the Lord.

1.4. PROPHETS & ANGELS

1 Pet 1:10-12. Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, {11} searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. {12} To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven; things which angels desire to look into.

The glory of the New Testament was partly revealed when it was foretold in the prophecies of the Old Testament. The New Testament was not only prophesied about when prophets spoke forth, but also through the law; its feasts, sacrifices, rituals etc. All of these gave an iconic representation of the truths of the New Testament.

Christ suffered to bring forth glory. The church may have to endure suffering but it does so in the hope of glory.

The Old Testament prophets and even the angels had wanted to inquire more into the hidden glory that was yet to be revealed. These prophets served future generations as much as their own generation. We too need to be generationally minded; laying up spiritual foundations and treasures for the next generation to build with. We need to break up spiritual fallow ground through prayer; we need to take ground of the enemy through spiritual warfare; we need to sow the seed of the gospel; we need to influence the morals of our society. Our generation may not see the full benefit of these efforts, but the next generation of church will be able to reap the effect.

- Psa 78:4-7. We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. {5} For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; {6} That the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, {7} that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments;
- Psa 145:3-4. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. {4} One generation shall praise your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.

1.5. A MIND FOR HOLINESS

- 1 Pet 1:13-16. Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; {14} as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; {15} but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, {16} because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

The good news of the gospel and the grace of God demand a proper response in the people of God. If we believe the gospel there is a "therefore"; a working out; an application. Before we were saved we allowed our lives to be shaped by the things we wanted, what Peter calls our former lusts. These may have been base lusts of the flesh; drunkenness, debauchery etc. Or may have been the lust for other things; possessions, security, happiness, position or power. But all these things are no longer appropriate for the believer. Our lives are not to conform to the old patterns of living; we have a new standard and a new model to copy: the holiness of God.

What is holiness? We consider holiness as moral, ethical and spiritual perfection; as separation or consecration unto God and his purposes. It is God's holiness that makes him unique and separates him from all his creatures.

- Isa 6:2-3. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. {3} And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!"

David said:

- 2 Sam 7:22. "Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

God is unique. He stands alone. He has no peers. There is none like him. The purity of his holiness cannot be seen by man. And yet we are called to share in his holiness. How can God call us to holiness when we cannot attain to such a level? Simply we are being instructed to begin a process that will not be finished in this life time but will continue in the next. This is not an excuse however for not starting.

Such holiness cannot come through merely an outward conformity to a legalistic pattern, but must begin with the thoughts and intents of the heart. To achieve this standard of holiness we need a new heart and a new mind.

- Psa 51:10. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Rom 12:2. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Eph 4:20-24. But you have not so learned Christ, {21} if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: {22} that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, {23} and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, {24} and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Peter says that this transformation, this new life style, starts in our minds. We are to gird up the loins of our mind. A girdle pulls into shape. Our thinking has to be with-strained and controlled. Our mind should not be allowed to run loose so that it can imagine all sorts of sin or follow old thought patterns. Our thinking pulled up and conformed to another image / shape - that of the mind of Christ. Holiness is to start in what we think about. Paul writes:

Phil 4:8-9. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy; meditate on these things. {9} The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

The New American Standard Bible (NASB) translates verse 13 as "prepare your mind for action". Christians are to have their mental powers alert; ready for action and in expectation of Christ's coming. The Greek word is *anazonnumi* and was used as a metaphor for being dressed for action. It is derived from the practice of people binding their long flowing garments closely around their bodies and fastened them with a leather belt. In this way they would be unimpeded running or working.⁷

If our minds are un-girded our lives will be misshapen. We once conformed to sinful lusts in ignorance. Now that we are enlightened we should not.⁸

The shape we are to conform to is the holiness of God. This isn't something mysterious, but was practically lived out in the life of Christ. Jesus lived in perfect agreement to the holiness of God. God only has one standard of holiness: His own holiness.⁹

We could paraphrase Peter's exhortation to say "cloth your mind in readiness". The High Priest had to wear a turban with a gold crown tied to it. On to this crown the words "Holiness to the Lord" were engraved¹⁰. Practical Christianity starts with the renewing and discipline of the mind. A simple hat like the priest's can be placed simply on the head, but the turban of the High Priest would take time as the linen was wrapped around his head again and again. In the same way the believer must continually apply godly disciplines to his mind, wrapping his mind in the word of God. This takes time and discipline.

⁷ Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.

⁸ 1 John 2:16-17. For all that is in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; is not of the Father but is of the world. {17} And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

⁹ Lev 11:44

¹⁰ Exo 28:36-37

Rom 12:3. For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Sober thinking is balanced and clear minded. It weighs up situations in the light of the word of God. These believers were suffering grievous trials. Pain, injustice and frustration can misalign our thinking if we allow it.

We can fully lean upon God's grace. The NASB says "hope completely on the grace of God." We don't hope in God's grace AND man's help. Grace doesn't need any additives. Grace is foundational, it supports and carries us. But it is only now partly revealed. We will fully realise the full extent of God's grace in eternity. Everything will be put right when Jesus appears.

1.6. COSTLY & PURPOSEFUL LIVES

1 Pet 1:17. And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;

Christianity is measured by action. The Father judges people's work; not their intentions or dreams. When Jesus came with a prophetic word to the seven churches in Asia Minor; the judge of all the earth looked at their actions - "I know your works". A believer's works are not the result of striving to please God or of sweaty self effort. A believer's work should flow from their relationship with God and be energised by faith. Such works are not tiresome or wearing. Instead we receive energy from doing them. Jesus said to the disciples:

John 4:31-34. In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." {32} But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." {33} Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?" {34} Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.

When we read of the Father judging our works, believers should not fear that the Father is searching for fault in order to proportion blame. The works of the saints are tested in order to bring blessing and reward. In the parable of the Talents¹¹ the first two servants lived bold daring lives and found their master pleased and generous.

The fear of the Lord (a sense of reverence and of being overwhelmed by God) is something all the apostle's taught. Familiarity leads to a lapse of standards, presumptions made on the grace of God and is dishonouring of God. God has no favourites¹². This fear is not an inner dread that paralyses; instead it is a sense of awe with regard to the majesty of God. The fear of the Lord brings a great confidence and boldness in the world.

1 Pet 1:18-19. knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, {19} but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

We have an incorruptible redemption; the word of God is incorruptible (v23) and our inheritance is incorruptible. In light of these things we should flee sinful ways which are corruption. The cost of buying us back from sin was the blood of Jesus. This indicates how precious we are to God. We should not therefore be flippant or careless in our Christian walk.

¹¹ Matt 25:14-30

¹² Acts 10:34. Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

The New Testament describes life without Christ as being futile or aimless. Paul calls the world's goals and achievements dross. Jesus said that it's a wide, easy way that leads to destruction.

1 Pet 1:20-25. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you {21} who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. {22} Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, {23} having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, {24} because "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, {25} but the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

Before Creation was begun, God had planned to redeem mankind through the Cross of Christ. Jesus' death isn't an attempt to patch up or repair creation after it went wrong, but is the central point of God's eternal purpose. Redemption isn't a reaction to unforeseen circumstances.

Our part in our sanctification is obedience to the truth, made possible through the indwelling of God's Spirit.

The word of God is incorruptible seed that imparts the nature of God in our lives. It is to be hungered after and devoured because it will cause us to grow. It is also sure and lasting, unlike man or his works.

2. CHAPTER 2

2.1. PURE MILK OF THE WORD

1 Pet 2:1-3. Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, {2} as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, {3} if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

The "therefore" refers to the previous quote of Isa 40:6-8¹³. In view of the temporary nature of life, and the permanence of God's word, we are to lay aside all these characteristics of the fallen nature. At one time we were bound by malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and evil speaking. We could not stop doing these things because they had control of our lives. But now Peter is able to say to believers "lay aside" these things. These characteristics are like weights we carry or obstacles that hinder our progress. Three times he uses the definite article "all"; we are not seeking to reduce these attitudes but to be totally free from them.

Instead of the fallen nature we are to demonstrate spiritual hunger; a hunger that is primarily met through the word of God. Here and elsewhere we see that the apostles understood and taught the importance and authority of the word in believers' lives. Newborn babes cry out for milk; it is of prime importance for their health and development. They will wake in the middle of the night for milk. How hungry are we for the word?

We cry to a gracious Lord who willingly satisfies the needs of his people. Verse 3 reminds us of the following verse

Psa 34:8. Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

¹³ Isa 40:6-8. The voice said, "Cry out!" And he said, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh is grass, And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. {7} The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. {8} The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."

2.2. LIVING STONES – HOLY TEMPLE

1 Pet 2:4-5. Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, {5} you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Peter now describes the church as a spiritual temple where each believer is a spiritual stone but Christ is the chief corner stone. It is only by being placed in this spiritual temple, connected with other believers, that we can fulfil our call to be a holy priesthood. Many of the privileges given to believers can only be truly realised when we are walking in obedience to the word and fellowshiping together.

The Old Testament temple had sacrifices offered for sin. We cannot make sacrifices for sin because Jesus has done that "once for all"¹⁴. But there are spiritual sacrifices to make in God's house. We think of prayer, praise, worship and the extolling of God's name. Believers can also be called to make sacrifices by giving up possessions or their rights or even their life.

1 Pet 2:6-8. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." {7} Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone," {8} and "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

Christ died to deliver believers from sin and shame. There will be many brazen, unrepentant people who will stand before the throne of Christ and then will realise their eternal shame. If we live a godly, Christ like lifestyle there is nothing in this life or the next we need to be ashamed of.

Peter is quoting Isa 28:16.

Isa 28:16. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.

Here it reads that the servant of the Lord will not act hastily or will not fret, instead of being out to shame.

In verse 7 Peter now quotes Psa 118:22.¹⁵ To God and those who believe this corner stone is the most precious of all. But to the religious leaders of his day, Jesus was the cause of offense. They actually believed that Jesus was demon possessed. Through their unbelief they were spiritually blind and stumbled over Christ.

Peter simply states that God had predestined the Jews to this unbelief; but he does not explain why or for how long. Thankfully Paul does tell us about these things.¹⁶

There is a persistent legend in connection with the building of Solomon's temple that perfectly illustrates this prophecy. The stones for the temple were prepared in advance in a nearby quarry. As they were needed, they were raised up to the building site. One day the workers in the quarry sent up a stone of unique shape and proportions. The

¹⁴ Heb 7:27

¹⁵ Psa 118:22-23. The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. {23} This was the Lord's doing; It is marvellous in our eyes.

¹⁶ See Rom 11:22-32

masons saw no place for it in the building so they carelessly pushed it over the hill where, in time, it became overgrown with moss and surrounded with weeds. As the temple neared completion, the masons called for a stone of certain dimensions. The men in the quarry replied, "We sent that stone up to you long ago." After careful search, the discarded stone was found and was set in its proper place in the temple.¹⁷

So one day Israel will realise that the stone they rejected is indeed the most important stone in God's house. Isaiah prophesied:

Isa 8:14. He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

He (the Messiah - Immanuel, or the Lord) is both a sanctuary to those who believe but a cause of stumbling to others¹⁸.

1 Pet 2:9-10. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; {10} who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

We are now the people of God. We were once no people - we did not belong, we had no rights, no abiding possession, and no lasting inheritance. We were without hope; like the grass of the field, one day here and then gone. We were without God, without Christ and destined for wrath. We had no rights before God; no right to call Him Father, no right to expect mercy, no right to expect favour.

But now we are the people of God: children of God rather than children of wrath; we have a hope, a future and a destiny. We have been translated from darkness in God's kingdom of light. We are a chosen people¹⁹, a privileged people, his special people.

¹⁷ Believer's Bible Commentary

¹⁸ See Luke 20:17, Rom 9:33

¹⁹ John 15:16

2.3. PILGRIMS WARFARE

1 Pet 2:11. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul

In view that we are just travelling through this life Peter implores the believers to walk appropriately, having the right conduct. We are foreigners in this world, not sharing in its norms and rights. We are journeying to a different land, and our destination should keep us focused on living a Christ honouring lifestyle.

Why does he urge or beg them rather than command the believers with apostolic authority? This is the voice of a concerned father who probably has seen too many believers injure themselves. He speaks to them as beloved. Peter knows that the saints need to acknowledge for themselves the things he is about to say. They need to apply it daily and inwardly. But external conformance to a moral code won't be sufficient; minds and hearts need to be trained.

The first instruction is that we abstain from fleshy or carnal lusts. When Paul writes on such issue he commands the saints to run from sin.

1 Cor 6:18. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

1 Cor 10:14. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

1 Tim 6:10-11. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. {11} But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

2 Tim 2:22. Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

There are some things we need to stand and fight against, there are some things we need to chase; but there are some things which we need to run away from. To put our selves in a place of temptation and then to fight against the same is dangerous and at very best a waste of effort.

We normally associate terms like “fleshy lusts” with the base cravings of the body and in particular sexual desire. We should realise that sinful lust is any strong desire that is contrary to the will of God or the seeking of gratification and comfort of self rather than the kingdom of God.

Lust is a desire or passion that has been tainted by and hijacked by sin. We were created as sexual beings; we were given a tongue to taste and appreciate various foods; we were designed with an eye to recognise what is beautiful or of great worth. But when sin hijacks these abilities it produces insatiable cravings, envy, jealousy and the desire to dominate and rule.

Not only should we never perform sinful actions but we are to refrain from the desire for these things. They are not to be remembered, rehearsed or imagined. Our mind is to be kept clear of such things. Fleshy lusts might be normal behaviour the world, but not for pilgrims destined for the real Holy Land.

There is a consequence to entertaining fleshy lusts because they wage war against our soul. They scar our soul and weaken us in mind and harden our heart. Then in the day of spiritual battle we are found compromised, unfit, weak and ineffective. We find that our spiritual armour is not in place. Lusts promise gratification, comfort and pleasure. In reality they lay siege to our life, our health and our spirituality. Lusts are never satisfied. The more people feed them the stronger the desire and the greater the bondage. Addiction and perversion are the result of gratified lusts.

Jesus said:

John 6:63. It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

Fallen man spends so much effort on the physical flesh life; worrying about what we shall eat and what we shall wear; fanatical about physical health and physical beauty. And yet all of these things will come down to the dust. It is our spiritual life and health that are of prime importance. All the works and words of this life will count for nothing in eternity if they are not wrought in the Spirit and in God's truth.

1 Pet 2:12. Having your conduct honourable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

A righteous lifestyle is not always appreciated by those around us; especially when we flee the pleasures they so greatly treasure. If sinful lusts seek to make war against our spiritual life, then righteous living makes war against the kingdom of darkness. It is being salt and light in the world. Such living undermines the defences of worldly attitudes and prepares people for conviction of sin and a time of visitation.

What does Peter mean by the day of visitation? Jesus second coming brings permanent residence which would not be described as visitation. Peter must be using the phrase to speak of a time of spiritual breakthrough, when the Spirit of the Lord visits a community and brings transforming and miraculous workings. In Acts 3 he uses a similar phrase: "season of refreshing"²⁰. Such a time Peter had experienced in those early church days in Jerusalem.

2.4. SUBMISSION AND HONOUR

1 Pet 2:13-17. Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, {14} or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. {15} For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; {16} as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

{17} Honour all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

Believers are to be model citizens; obeying all authority and paying all taxes. The provision of civil authority and leadership is God's idea, even if some people abuse their position. We should always respect the office, even if the man performs his responsibilities badly.

Peter is calling the church to submission and the giving of honour: two practices found little in the world around us. Jesus submitted himself to God in all trials and circumstance. To us this does not come very natural.

Doing good is not as dramatic as doing bad. But God plays the long game; slowly eroding opposition; slowly transforming attitudes. Ignorant opponents will eventually be silenced because of the good done by the church. Doing good in this context refers to doing what is right, but we would also include doing charitable deeds to others.

²⁰ Acts 3:19. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

A Christian is Christ's freed man²¹. For this reason we can have hope even when we are physically enslaved. But our freedom in Christ and the membership of God's royal family should not cause us to behave in an arrogant manner; which some have preached over the years²². Neither are we free from the law of Christ or the will of God. It is our submission to the will and purposes of God that define and enable our freedom.

Jesus gave the lowest seeker a sense of honour and value. He touched lepers, spoke respectfully to social outcasts and washed disciple's feet. His actions never lessened his own sense of worth and value. He could do this because he knew who he was and was secure in his relationship with his Father. We should remember that everyone we meet is someone that Christ died for and one of the "all creatures" who are to hear the gospel message²³.

1 Pet 2:18-20. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. {19} For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. {20} For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

The fear that servants are to have is the fear of the Lord; not fear of their earthly master.

Peter's teaching in this section is totally alien to our logical, western thought. People might ask "What credit is there in enduring injustice? There is no reward or payment in this life that can make it logical or worth while."

But for the believer this is an act of faith, an act of trust in God and a demonstration of patience. We don't expect it to make sense in this life; we just aim to be like our Saviour. God is pleased with the manifestation of patience when we suffer wrongfully or even pointlessly.

This passage should not be stretched, as some teachers have done, to suggest that a believer should always lie down under any and every difficulty, injustice or sickness. Consider how Paul defended himself at his various trials, or how he used his Roman citizenship to escape beatings. Instead Peter is saying that we have done everything that is in our power and when we have prayed with faith; then we should manifest trust in God through patience and endurance.

2.5. CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

1 Pet 2:21-25. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: {22} "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; {23} who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; {24} who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed. {25} For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

²¹ 1 Cor 7:22. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave.

²² Although we are sons of the king, we are not entitled to the best clothes, cars, homes etc. Our sonship should be defined by our willingness to serve others.

²³ Mark 16:15. And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

John wrote that in Jesus there is no sin.²⁴ Paul wrote of the sinless mind of Christ.²⁵ Here Peter writes of the sinless actions of Christ.

In encouraging the believers to endure with patience their suffering and persecution, Peter looks at Christ's example. Jesus was silent like a Lamb led to the slaughter. He laid no accusation against His accusers. He had committed Himself to His Father, and rested totally in that. He believed that everything that was happening to Him was ordained from above.

There was great purpose in the injustice that Jesus suffered. But he carried away our sins and empowered us to be dead to sin. Our response to this is living a righteous life.

The word translated as stripes is in fact singular and means wound or welt. The wounding of Jesus makes us whole. Peter is paraphrasing Isaiah 53 in these verses. Modern Pentecostals and charismatics see the reference healing by the strips of Jesus to mean physical healing of the body. The original language would appear to be speaking of more than just physical healing, although there is nothing to exclude physical healing and say that it is solely spiritual healing. But this cannot be considered as a proof text with regard to physical healing as part of the New Testament blessings. For that we would be better looking at Matthew 8.

Mat 8:16-17. When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, {17} that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses."

This is a key verse in the doctrine of healing. Matthew clearly identifies the atoning work of the Messiah (Isa 53:4) to include physical healing, making physical healing part of the redemption.

In the final call to submission Peter tells us submit to Jesus our shepherd and manager (bishop, guardian) of our soul. Without Christ we were in the process of drifting further and further away from God and righteousness.

3. CHAPTER THREE

3.1. WORD TO WIVES

1 Pet 3:1-2. Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, {2} when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.

In the New Testament age wives were treated as possessions of the husband within Roman and Greek households. The practise and teaching in Jewish culture of the day was not much better. They had very few rights.

The Greek culture was particularly anti-woman and it was taught that a woman was a deformed male. In Greek and Roman marriages the husbands were not expected to love their wives. That was not seen as a fundamental foundation or reason for marriage. Paul in his epistles commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the church - a radically new idea.

²⁴ 1 John 3:5. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.

²⁵ 2 Cor 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Those women who were coming to Christ were finding that were equally valuable and important to men in the eyes of God. They may also have witnessed women in ministry and leadership; women such as Priscilla.

Peter writes to these women guiding them to submit to their husband's authority in the house. The Greek word, *hypotasso*, means "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility and carrying a burden." Wives are to remain submissive to their husbands in their household. They are to emulate Sarah, a woman of faith²⁶ who was not inferior to Abraham but willingly submitted herself. This is to be an act of faith and of trust.

Interestingly where as Peter recalls Sarah submission to Abraham, Genesis reminds us that submission didn't mean voiceless or fearful subjection.

Gen 21:12. But God said to Abraham, "Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.

Peter writes that the lifestyle of the wives can win over unbelieving husbands without their being a barrage of words. He particularly commends purity and God fearing.

1 Pet 3:3-6. Do not let your adornment be merely outward; arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel; {4} rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. {5} For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, {6} as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

This is not prohibition on dressing smartly or attractively but is a warning against dressing ostentatiously. Neither should a believer dress provocatively, so as to tempt or inflame. Peter is saying that image is not a priority but the content of the heart is. Paul writes warning people to avoid shows of vanity²⁷. The New Testament dress code is decency and modestly. When femininity and virtue are no longer honoured as noble, women are tempted to turn to the lesser powers of seduction and sensuality.

Inward beauty of correct and godly attitudes is of prime importance, and is very attractive to God. Humility and submission are two aspects of such beauty that all believers should seek.

Rom 13:12-14. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. {13} Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. {14} But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts.

²⁶ Heb 11:11. By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.

Sarah also is accredited with faith concerning the birth of Isaac.

²⁷ 1 Tim 2:9-10. in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, {10} but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.

Eph 4:22-24. that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, {23} and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, {24} and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Col 3:12. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

Women of faith do not need to be fearful; before God or in their own homes. Sarah called Abraham lord in Gen 18:12.

3.2. WORD TO HUSBANDS

1 Pet 3:7. Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honour to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

The New Testament teaches that husbands should love their wives²⁸. This was revolutionary for the cultures of the day. The wives may be physically weaker (not mentally, emotionally or spiritually), but their husbands should honour and respect them since they are co-heirs in Christ²⁹.

A bad attitude between husband and wife will hinder their prayers and spiritual effectiveness. Paul teaches that a marriage should reflect the union of Christ and the church.

3.3. UNITY

1 Pet 3:8-12. Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tender-hearted, be courteous; {9} not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

{10} For "He who would love life and see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. {11} Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. {12} For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

The basic attitudes and actions of believers are stressed by Peter. Unity, compassion and love are the foundational goals. In fulfilling these we should be tender-hearted and courteous. We should not be motivated by revenge, but we should be seeking to turn evil to good and cursing to blessing. We sow blessings and as a result we reap an inherited blessing. Conversely if we sow the wrong things we may fail to receive our inheritance.

In verse 10 Peter's quoting Psa 34:12-16. Job discovered that keeping ourselves from evil speech and actions does not guarantee a problem free life. Jesus warns us all that in the world we will have

²⁸ Eph 5:25. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

Col 3:19. Husbands love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

²⁹ Rom 8:16-17. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, {17} and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Gal 3:28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

trouble. But this verse does encourage us that living a holy life will ensure that we are blessed by God in every circumstance. The wicked are warned they will have to face the Almighty.

3.4. FEAR NOT

1 Pet 3:13-14. And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? {14} But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."

Peter's rhetorical question invites the answer "no one". Common sense would tell us that those who do good to others should be valued, and that we will reap what we sow. However Scripture is full instances where the saints of God are persecuted and even martyred for doing good. So what does this verse mean? We should see it as a statement of Biblical wisdom, similar to many of the Proverbs. Wisdom statements in the Bible teach us practices which are godly and which normally produce the best outcome. However they are not guarantees for all times and in all occasions. There are times when wickedness seems to have the upper hand in society, and in such times godly living may invite persecution.

Psa 11:2-4. For look! The wicked bend their bow, They make ready their arrow on the string, That they may shoot secretly at the upright in heart. {3} If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do? {4} The LORD is in His holy temple, The Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.

Consider the following inspiring story from such a time in recent history:

During World War II a Christian boy of twelve refused to join a certain movement in Europe. "Don't you know that we have power to kill you?" they said. "Don't you know," he replied quietly, "that I have power to die for Christ!" He had the conviction that no one was able to harm him.³⁰

However despite all this, our confidence in the blessing of God and His sovereign purposes means that we do not need to fear men; only God³¹. Peter of course was writing to persecuted Christians.

1 Pet 3:15-16. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; {16} having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

God is to be put first in the very core of our lives; our thoughts and intents. Our heart is to be like the Holy of holies; a dwelling place for the Lord Most High from which we keep all unclean things.

We need always to be *willing* to proclaim our faith, but we must also be *prepared* to do so. We should have thought through the fundamentals. Do you know Scripture well enough to tell somewhat what you believe, why you believe it and what they must do to be saved?

In talking about giving a defence of our belief is Peter is he preparing the believers to stand on trial before Roman courts? To us the instruction means being unashamed of speaking for Christ before family and work colleagues who at worst may ridicule us. A good conscience before God is if greater worth than worldly acceptance or temporary safety.

³⁰ *Believer's Bible Commentary*

³¹ Isa 8:12-13. "Do not say, 'A conspiracy,' Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. {13} The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread."

In the day of Christ, when every deed is exposed before the Light of the World those who defamed Christians will be ashamed.

3.5. SUFFERING LIKE CHRIST

1 Pet 3:17-22. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. {18} For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

The persecution of the righteous might not be fair or just, but if God has allowed it for the purposes of his kingdom, then we should follow Christ's example, and be confident in the Lord and his purposes.

The cross is the ultimate example of how God can use evil events for good and bring about a reversal. The unjust treatment of Christ was turned into redemptive power for all humanity. His suffering and death were not pointless but were purposeful.

{19} by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, {20} who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

In these two verses Peter gives us an insight that is not repeated in Scripture. We only have this brief glimpse of what Jesus did whilst in Hades; he preached to the spirits of disobedient people who lived prior to the flood. These verses do not offer people the hope of accepting Christ as Saviour after their death.

{21} There is also an antitype which now saves us; baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, {22} who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

Both the death and resurrection of Jesus and Noah's flood remind us of Christian Baptism. But whereas Noah's flood washed the world clean from the filth and sin, believer's baptism is not about the removal of stain but it is the fulfilment of God's command.

The final verse of this chapter reminds believers of the sovereign authority that our resurrected Saviour has received. It is a comfort to know that Jesus is in total and ultimate control, but Peter is also showing us that this authority came about because Jesus first submitted himself to God and suffered the Cross.

4. CHAPTER 4

4.1. CALL TO ARMS

1 Pet 4:1-2. Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, {2} that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

We choose what attitudes and outlooks we have in our mind. The right mind set is like an array of weapons and armour we use in spiritual warfare. We have to prepare our minds for action. This means developing spiritual understanding through studying the word of God. This equips us so that when we are faced with difficult decisions or questions we can remain focused rather than being bewildered. Spiritual maturity cannot come without spiritual understanding:

Eph 4:13-14. Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; {14} that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

Maturity cannot come without UNITY, FAITH and KNOWLEDGE of Christ. Immature individuals or groups of believers are easily tossed to and fro. They are unstable, easily confused and side-tracked. There are those enemies of the truth who use trickery, craftiness and deceit in order to manipulate and take advantage of believers.

Preparing our minds for action also means taking control over what we think about. We need to be pure of mind, single of purpose. We should refuse lustful or resentful thoughts.

Phil 4:8. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy; meditate on these things.

Character and conduct begin in the mind. We are to some degree that which we consistently think about. Paul's admonition refers to the things we think about but also to what we think about other people (just and good report). We are to avoid the critical analysis of others.

Part of the mind set that Peter is calling us to have is the realisation that, like Christ, believers can expect to suffer in the flesh. A saint so dedicated to Christ will no longer be seeking selfish or sinful desires.

1 Pet 4:3-4. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles; when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. {4} In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.

The will of God is contrary to the lusts and passions of unregenerate men. The believer needs to choose which path he is to follow.

To the world believers who flee from sinful dissipation seem strange. But the world hasn't seen the pearl of great price.

1 Pet 4:5-6. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. {6} For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

"For this reason"; that is because of the coming judgement of all men, God wants the gospel to be preached to all. This means that all people would have opportunity to respond to the message. It also means that all people have the reference point of the gospel. They are without excuse. Jesus warned the Jews that his word would judge them on the last day:

John 12:48. "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

The phraseology Peter uses makes verse 6 easy to misinterpret. It might be thought to suggest that the gospel was preached to the souls of dead people, enabling them to live "to God in the spirit".

Those who hold to this idea suggest that this verse is linked to 1 Peter 3³². The idea of a second chance given to some or all is not supported by the rest of Scripture. We are told that after we die we all face judgement (Heb 9:27).

It is most likely that Peter is saying that some believers have been condemned by men and have been martyred, but they are now alive to God in the spiritual realm.

4.2. FERVANT LOVE

1 Pet 4:7-9. But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. {8} And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." {9} Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

The world is ever moving towards the end of this age and certain judgement. Believers are therefore to live focused, purposeful lives. The call to seriousness is not a call joyless, intense and severe religion; instead we are to take the claims of Christ serious and to live accordingly.

Fervency without love is empty religion. God is love and everything that we do and that we are should be founded on and motivated by the love of Christ. If we love one another we will be ready to forgive and we will not disclose the failings of others or bring them to shame.

Hospitality was part of the ancient eastern culture. It should also be part of the Christian culture³³. But not only should there be a performance of hospitality, the attitude in which it is done is important. Elsewhere we are told:

Heb 13:2. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.

A traveller once called in at a monastery for shelter. He was given extraordinary hospitality. A luxurious room, a feast of food and a new set of cloths instead of the rags he arrived in. As he left he remarked to the Abbott about this treatment. The Abbott replied "We always treat every visitor as though they were an angel from God – just to be on the safe side."

4.3. STEWARDS

1 Pet 4:10-11. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. {11} If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

We all have gifts; we are useful to the Lord Jesus; we all have potential for ministry; and God gives the grace and ability required. Not everyone gives themselves to serving the king by serving the king's people. Not everyone achieves the potential they have. We have received a gift that we may benefit others and we are accountable for the way we use that gift³⁴.

³² 1 Pet 3:19-20. by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, {20} who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

³³ Matt 25:40, Matt 10:41-42, Luke 14:12

³⁴ Matt 25:14-30 – The Parable of the Talents

The New Testament teaches about both spiritual supernatural gifts³⁵ and practical abilities that people possess. All should be seen as God's equipping and all should be used in service.

Rom 12:6-8. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; {7} or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; {8} he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Peter tells us that care is required in the way we handle our gifts and calling. Those who preach or teach God's word or use vocal spiritual gifts should realise the seriousness of speaking for God.

In addition we are to be good stewards of God's property. We are to use our time and talents to the glory of God, and not to squander them on our self.

4.4. FIERY TRIAL

1 Pet 4:12-16. Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; {13} but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. {14} If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. {15} But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. {16} Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

Peter calls the suffering of the saints "Christ's Sufferings". There is purpose in the suffering of God's people just as there was purpose in the suffering of Jesus. It is a fiery trial. Suffering for saints is not strange or unusual; it can be expected. In speaking about a fiery trial is Peter referring to the three men in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace or is he referring to the purifying of gold? The purpose of the trial is to allow us to partake in the glory of Christ.

It was when Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego were in the fiery furnace that one like the Son of God appeared and walked with them.

Jesus said:

John 15:20. "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

Paul wrote:

2 Tim 3:12. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

The New Testament consistently warns us that:

1). We will be at variance with the world around us³⁶

³⁵ 1 Cor 12:4-11

³⁶ John 15:18-19. "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. {19} If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

2). We need patience and endurance in our struggles.³⁷

A godly life exposes the sinfulness in those around, and these can respond with hatred and spite.

It may seem strange to read that the correct Christian response to persecution is rejoicing, but this too is part of our spiritual warfare. If when the enemy of our souls causes us pain, we praise God rather than complain, then we are standing fast against the kingdom of darkness. Also if we now rejoice whilst being tried, what joy we shall know when we see Christ return in power.

The Spirit of the Lord rests upon all believers, not only when we are persecuted. We are never alone in life, but the presence of the Lord is often most tangible when saints are hard-pressed. Persecution does bring blessing. Not all suffering brings blessing, but suffering as a believer is something to give thanks for.

Acts 5:40-42. ... and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. {41} So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. {42} And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

4.5. JUDGMENT

1 Pet 4:17-19. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? {18} Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" {19} Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

Is Peter suggesting that believers were suffering because God is judging them? No, he has said that they were suffering as Christ suffered. God may be allowing the persecution to purify his people but Christ has taken the punishment for us. If God so purifies his own people, what will be the fate of the wicked?

In verse 18 Peter uses a second rhetorical question to emphasise his point, quoting Prov 11:31. The NKJV uses "scarcely saved" whereas the NASV translates the phrase as "it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved". The Greek word used is *molis* which means with difficulty, hardly, not easily, scarcely. Salvation is not easily or cheaply achieved. This verse is not teaching us anything about the way or means of salvation, instead it is being used to encourage the saints in the presence of suffering, reminding us that the fate of the wicked and unbelieving is far worse.

The response to suffering is to commit ourselves to God and to rejoice that we share with Christ in his sufferings. Not all suffering is according to the will of God. We should not lie down and allow the world to trample on us when it is not the will of God. Neither should we cause our own suffering by being a religious zealot that stirs up opposition.

³⁷ 2 Cor 6:4-6. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, {5} in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in sleeplessness, in fastings; {6} by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,

Heb 10:36. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

James 1:2-4. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, {3} knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. {4} But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

5. CHAPTER 5

5.1. SHEPHERDS

1 Pet 5:1-4. The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: {2} Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; {3} nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; {4} and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

In addressing the church leaders Peter refers to himself as an elder, rather than an apostle. What is certain he never claimed, or was given, the authority of a Supreme Pontiff.

It is worthy of note that the New Testament always addresses a plurality of elders in each church. Paul addresses the qualifications of elders in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Tit 1:6-9.

When Peter says that he is an eyewitness of the sufferings of the Christ, is he saying he witnessed the crucifixion of Christ? The gospels only record John as being present at the cross. The Greek word here for witness does not mean necessarily mean eyewitness, but is someone who testifies truthfully to what has happened. Peter could be saying that his role is a herald of the cross.

Elders are responsible for the pastoral care of the people of God under their oversight. They are to take on this responsibility willingly and be eager examples but they should never be greedy or dictatorial.

The full reward for authentic leadership, as with all genuine Christian service, is received when Jesus returns.

5.2. SUBMISSION

1 Pet 5:5-7. Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."³⁸ {6} Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, {7} casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

There is to be a voluntary submission to those with spiritual authority over our lives.

We are to clothe ourselves with humility. Our clothing can make a statement, declare something about ourselves or portray something we want. The clothing of our spirit is our attitude, that which we portray to others. We are called to child-like humility³⁹. Humility is a keynote theme in Christ's demands on his disciples.

A missionary to India once said, "If I were to pick out two phrases necessary for spiritual growth, I would pick out these: "I don't know" and "I am sorry." And both phrases are the evidences of deep humility."⁴⁰

It is best to humble ourselves, rather than being obstinate and forcing God to humble us. Humbling ourselves is a process, not a one off decision or a single prayer. It is based upon a relationship with

³⁸ Prov 3:34

³⁹ Mat 18:4. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

⁴⁰ Believer's Bible Commentary

God and a recognition of His majesty. This process is described in Matt 5:3-12, the Beatitudes. Jesus humbled himself and was later exalted, and in like manner God has a day when the meek will inherit the earth.

James 4:6-7. But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." {7} Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

It is only the humble that can withstand spiritual attack:

Having humbled ourselves under God's mighty hand, we can then, through prayer, cast all our care upon Him. The cares we are to cast are our anxious worries and concerns. We are encouraged to do this knowing that God feels an affectionate sense of care towards us. Peter is quoting the Greek version of Psa 55:22.

Worry is unnecessary; there is no need for us to bear the burdens when He is willing and able to bear them for us. Worry is futile; it hasn't solved a problem yet. Worry is sin. A preacher once said: "Worry is sin because it denies the wisdom of God; it says that He doesn't know what He's doing. It denies the love of God; it says He does not care. And it denies the power of God; it says that He isn't able to deliver me from whatever is causing me to worry."⁴¹

5.3. SPIRITUAL WRESTLINGS

1 Pet 5:8-11. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. {9} Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. {10} But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. {11} To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

As believers we should not worry but neither should we be blasé. We should be clear, realistic and rational in our thinking and vigilant in our guard. Those who neglect such preparedness endanger themselves, since their spiritual adversary is diligent in his opposition. The devil is a defeated foe, but he still is dangerous. We can resist him and overcome, but we should not take risks.

Our resistance against the enemy is based upon our submission to God and our humility. It is also an issue of standing in faith, even when confronted by persecution. It wasn't Rome that was the cause of the believer's suffering but the kingdom of darkness.

Suffering is something we endure for a while which will bring us to maturity and strength. Satan would discourage us by saying that our sufferings are unique or that they are without purpose. Peter reminds us that neither things are true.

2 Cor 4:17-18. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, {18} while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

⁴¹ Believer's Bible Commentary

5.4. GREETINGS

1 Pet 5:12-14. By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand. {13} She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son. {14} Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Grace has been a major theme of Peter's letter. When everyone else could see dark clouds of opposition and suffering, Peter could still see the workmanship of the God of all grace.

"She who is in Babylon" could be a church in ancient Babylon or it may be a metaphor for the church in Rome. There was a large population of Jewish people in the ancient city on the Euphrates, so it is reasonable that the early church would seek to evangelise there. Rome is called Babylon in the Book of Revelation, but that was written many years after Peter's death.

Silvanus is also known as Silas and is the prophet / preacher who accompanied Paul on some of his missionary journeys⁴².

Mark may well be a reference to John Mark the author of the gospel. It was John Mark's mother's home where the prayer meeting that saw Peter delivered from prison had taken place.

Acts 12:12. So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

He had also been the cause of contention between Paul and Barnabas⁴³, but was later termed useful by Paul.⁴⁴

As he closes Peter reminds the saints not to forsake the common courtesies that help maintain the unity and bond of love. Finally Peter blesses the saints with peace in Christ Jesus: that is peace with God and the peace of God.

⁴² Acts 15:22. Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

Acts 15:40-41. but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. {41} And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

⁴³ Acts 15:37-39. Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. {38} But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. {39} Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus;

⁴⁴ 2 Tim 4:11. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.