

# **EXPOSITORY NOTES**

## **1 PETER**

**Gordon Lyons**

# Expository Notes

*1 Peter*

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## 1 Peter

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## Introduction and Background

A former fisherman, now a fisher of men, Simon Peter (or *Cephas*) had been called to follow the Lord Jesus while working at his daily tasks. Peter's brother, Andrew, also had been summoned to follow Jesus. (Matt. 4:18-20) The name 'Peter' means 'a rock'; i.e., a rock fragment or a large stone. Peter would be instrumental in proclaiming the gospel and shepherding God's church after the Lord's resurrection and ascension. To this end, the Lord had prepared and equipped him.

The Lord Jesus would build his church on the foundation of the prophets and apostles; i.e., on the preaching and teaching of the apostles and prophets. (Eph. 2:20) The church is founded on the teaching of the Lord Jesus (the Rock, the Head and the Cornerstone) and on the teaching of the prophets and apostles as inspired by the Holy Spirit. (Ps. 118:22; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:6) The church is founded on Christ—not on any apostle as an individual person, or on any group of apostles. (1 Cor. 3:11)

Simon Peter was a married man (cf. Mark 1:30; Luke 4:38), and apparently Peter's wife accompanied him on occasions when serving the church. (1 Cor. 9:5)

Peter was a somewhat impetuous individual, and originally unstable in some of his ways and beliefs. In his early Christian experience, this disciple had lacked sufficient faith to walk to his Master on the water. (Matt. 14:30). Yet, this same disciple believed unreservedly and confessed openly that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. (Matt. 16:16; John 6:69)

In response to this confession of faith, Jesus assured Peter that he would build his church upon the rock. At the same time, the Lord imparted to Peter the 'keys of the kingdom'; i.e., the right and power to preach and teach authoritatively in the name of the Lord Jesus himself, as inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. (Matt. 16:18-19; cf. Isa. 22:22) This was a right, power and authority given not only to Peter, however, but also to all of the Lord's apostles, including Paul. (John 20:21-23; cf. Matt. 18:18, which is addressed more generally to church leaders<sup>1</sup>)

Peter acted as spokesman for the Twelve. However, the same man who vowed never to disown his Lord and Master denied any knowledge of him when Jesus was arrested. Three times, Peter denied that he knew Christ. (Mark 14:68-72) But the Lord knew Peter's weakness. He knew that he could not hope to stand in his faith without the strength of the Lord and of his Holy Spirit. Yet, the Lord had planned a specific task for Peter, and to prepare him for that task he forgave him willingly and restored him to fellowship with himself. 'Do you love me...?' Jesus asked Peter three times. 'Then Feed my lambs...Feed my sheep...Feed my sheep', repeated the Lord Jesus to Peter. (John 21:15-17)

Peter was to be appointed an under-shepherd of the Lord's flock—his church. Soon, at the coming of the Feast of Pentecost, Peter would be equipped for this task by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as he imparted gifts and abilities for specific forms of service to the church. By the same outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the other apostles too were to be equipped for their respective tasks.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Binding and loosing' refers to prohibiting or permitting certain courses of action, etc. according to the teaching of God's Word. The leaders of the congregation were required by God to explain from the teaching of the prophets and apostles and from the Holy Scriptures what was permitted and what was forbidden to believers. Formerly, this responsibility lay with the Rabbis; subsequently, with the apostles, and now with God-appointed leaders of the church such as pastors and elders.

Peter was to be equipped to shepherd (i.e., guide, guard and feed) the flock of God, especially in his capacity as the apostle to the Jews, but not excluding a more general ministry to Gentile churches. Peter served in this capacity in the church at Jerusalem, together with James, the Lord's brother, and John. Peter was reckoned as one of the principal leaders or 'pillars' of the Jerusalem church. (Gal. 2:9) However, at no time was Peter understood to have exercised a dominant role or superior office over the other church leaders or over the church in general. According to his own letters, he was a servant and apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:1) and a fellow-elder in God's church (1 Pet. 5:1). In fact, by his remarks in 1 Peter 5:1-4, Peter makes it abundantly plain that there can be no place in God's church for superior ranks or offices among God's people, but only for servants, ministers or under-shepherds of the flock. This is in keeping with the teaching of the Lord Jesus himself on this very subject. (Luke 22:24-27; see also Matt. 20:25-28; 23:8-12)

In his First Epistle, Peter, the apostle to the Jews, addresses the scattered Christian believers, probably from among both Jewish and Gentile people. These believers were located in such places as Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia; provinces within the former Asia Minor (now Turkey). The believers in these locations had endured much persecution for their faith, and the apostle is writing to encourage them, to strengthen them in their faith in the Lord Jesus, to counsel them in godly living, to exhort them to persevere, and to comfort them amidst their trials.

Peter finished with a specific exhortation to stand fast in the faith—a word with special relevance from one who knew what it was to fail the Lord Jesus, and then to find forgiveness from the Lord. (1 Pet. 5:12)

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# 1 Peter Chapter 1

## Salutation and Greetings

### 1 Peter 1:1-2

The apostle Peter opens his first letter with the following words:

#### 1 Peter 1:1

Peter—otherwise known as Simon Peter or Cephas—was the brother of Andrew. The family had come originally from Bethsaida of Galilee, but had moved to Capernaum. They had been fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. It was while involved in catching fish that the Lord had called them to catch men. The name Peter (Gk., *Petros*; Aram. *Cephas*) means a (large) stone or rock (fragment) (see Matt. 16:18; cf. also John 1:42).

In writing to the dispersed people of God, Peter—like Paul—asserts his apostolic authority. This authority, which was common to every one of the Lord's Spirit-filled twelve apostles, together with Paul, gave them the right to address the churches of Christ as the Lord's officially appointed representatives. Every word that the Lord imparted to his apostles by his Spirit was to be declared to the churches, and accepted by them, as the truth of God. The apostle's teaching was directly inspired by the Holy Spirit himself. (Matt. 10:13-15; Acts 2:42; 10:33; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Pet. 3:2)

Peter is writing to God's *eklektos*—i.e., his chosen ones (cf. v.2). From among all mankind, God had called out, or separated, a people for himself: a people to inherit the blessings of eternal salvation. Although they lived *in* the world, and were witnesses *to* the world, they no longer shared *with* the world in its opposition to God and to his Son. On the contrary, believers often found themselves despised and rejected by the world because of the stand they had taken for Christ. (John 15:19)

At the time of writing, these faithful believers had been scattered throughout the land—as Peter intimates in the next part of verse 1. Under persecution from the world, God's redeemed people had found themselves forced—in many instances—to leave home and family ties, and to seek refuge in various other areas or countries.

The several places mentioned above were—at that time—distinct provinces located approximately within the region now known as Turkey. Formerly, this area was designated *Asia Minor*. However, the 'Asia' mentioned by Peter in this letter was only one of a number of smaller provinces in what was later to become *Asia Minor*. Some of these other provinces are listed in verse 1.

#### 1 Peter 1:2

The word rendered *chosen* (Gk., *eklektos*) means to be picked out or chosen by God: i.e., to obtain salvation through Christ. This gift of salvation was based solely on Christ's perfect life and substitutionary and atoning death on behalf of every elect and believing child of God. To this end, the apostle Peter says (v.2a) that:

*[we]...have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...*  
(NIV)

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That is, we have been chosen not merely according to God's prior knowledge, but specifically according to God's prior arrangement or decree.

Concerning God's sovereign decrees, *to foreknow* means specifically *to foreordain*—not merely to be aware of beforehand. (Cf. Acts 2:23; Rom. 11:2; see also Rom. 8:29) Similar meaning attaches to the verb *to know*, which—when used in relation to God's sovereign decrees—means *to ordain*. (Cf. Jer. 1:5; see also Exodus 33:12) The word translated *chosen* reflects a sovereign choice—a choice to exercise mercy, solely according to the good pleasure of God's will. (Eph. 1:4-5)

The apostle then says that these believers have been chosen:

*(2b) ...through the sanctifying work of the Spirit... (NIV)*

That is, through the powerful work of his Holy Spirit in effectual calling and regeneration, God has brought sinners to repentance and faith in his Son. Moreover, from the time of their conversion, God's Spirit continues to sanctify them.

The fact that Peter seems to be including effectual calling and regeneration in his expression '*sanctifying work of the Spirit*' is implied in the phrase that follows. This would seem to point to the obedience of faith associated in the first instance with conversion (a faith granted by God's grace).

Likewise, the phrase, '*...and sprinkling by his blood,*' seems to be most closely associated with the wholehearted acceptance of Christ's atoning work on the sinner's behalf, and the regenerating power of God's Spirit effected through the eternal Word. However, it may also refer to the ongoing work of sanctification, and to the everyday cleansing from sin effected by the blood of the atonement. (1 John 1:7; 2:2; cf. Heb. 9:11-15)

Finally, in verse 2, the apostle adds his words of greetings to these widely dispersed believers. Thus, infers Peter, the grace or favour of God, and the peace of God, be yours richly to experience and enjoy—even and especially in the midst of your many and sore afflictions.

## Shielded by God's Power

### 1 Peter 1:3-9

#### 1 Peter 1:3

Realising afresh something of the magnificence of God's abundant grace and mercy toward sinners, the apostle rejoices in a burst of exuberant praise and thanksgiving to God. Though we were to offer our praises to God from now to all eternity, we could never begin to repay him or express to him all that is due for the salvation he has provided for us in and through his Son, Jesus Christ. Great indeed is the Lord—and most worthy of praise! (Cf. Ps. 145:3)

Out of his abundant and undeserved mercy toward us—even while yet in our sins—the Father has demonstrated his love toward us in granting us the new birth essential to salvation and fellowship with himself.

Therefore, we observe that the new birth is not something that we receive in and of our own volition. Rather, it is something, which—out of his grace and mercy—God the Father gives to us of his own sovereign will and pleasure. (Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:1,4-9) This is true whether we accept the translation, *...has given us new birth* (NIV) or, *...hath begotten us again* (KJV). Either way, God is the author or originator of our regeneration.



This initial work of grace is necessary in our lives in order that we may become able and willing to repent and believe on the Son of God. Until God's Spirit regenerates us, our heart (or mind and will) remains opposed to the things of God and to the message of the Gospel. (John 1:12-13; Acts 13:48)

Granted, in bringing us to the new birth, the Spirit of God creates within us not only a new life but also the earnest desire to receive Christ freely and willingly. However, this desire to believe is itself a work of God's grace. It is not attributable to the sinner apart from that work of grace.

This new birth is but the beginning of new and eternal life in Christ. This is our hope—our most certain assurance. Just as the Son was raised from the dead by the power of God's Holy Spirit, so all his people will be raised from the dead (or translated while still alive) to be with the Lord for ever. (1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-18)

Therefore, the hope of the Christian is a living hope. It is not tinged with doubt and uncertainty. It is as certain to be realised in full, as God is true. For God has made the promise of abundant and eternal life to us in his Word, and God's Word cannot be broken. (John 10:35) The guarantee of its fulfilment is the resurrection of Christ (the firstfruits of the final harvest of souls), and the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who regenerates, seals and sanctifies us in preparation for acceptance into the holy and blessed presence of God our heavenly Father. (1 Cor. 15:23; 2 Cor. 1:22)

In verse 4, Peter continues:

#### **1 Peter 1:4**

The inheritance that awaits God's redeemed people in glory is an eternal inheritance. God has prepared that eternal blessedness in heaven for all those who love and reverence him and his Son. (Ps. 31:19; Col. 1:5).

Unlike earthly inheritances that are subject to decay or loss, the inheritance laid up for us in the presence of God will last throughout the eternal ages. It cannot perish—i.e. it is not susceptible to corruption or decay. Nor is it subject to loss in any other sense. Nor can it be spoiled, i.e. it cannot be defiled or otherwise deformed. In heaven, there is nothing to cause such impairment. Again, our inheritance can never fade away. It is as unending as eternity itself. (Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5; contrast v.24)

Such, very briefly is something of the nature of the glorious inheritance awaiting us right now. On the great Day, God will grant the full benefits of this inheritance to every one of his redeemed people. Exactly what this inheritance consists of is difficult to describe or even imagine. Certain it is, it will surpass all human expectations. (Cf. 2 Cor. 2:7-11)

Of course, concerning the regeneration of our souls, part of our inheritance is the gift of eternal life. Later—at the Lord's coming or calling—we will experience the redemption of our bodies, i.e., the translation and glorification of our present mortal bodies. However, much more awaits the saints of the Lord that we can only begin to imagine on this side of glory.

This inheritance is being kept—i.e. it is being guarded by the power of almighty God—for us (personally), says Peter. We cannot fail to receive the promised inheritance in glory. That very inheritance has not only been prepared by God for us, it is also being kept (or guarded) by God—for us.

Then in verse 5, the apostle writes:

### 1 Peter 1:5

We—whom God has redeemed to himself through the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit—are being shielded or kept by the power of almighty God. Just as our inheritance is being kept secure for us by God's almighty power, so we are being kept secure for our inheritance—by the same almighty power of God. This is indeed a great encouragement to persevere in the faith by God's grace, and not to become unduly disheartened by sorrows, trials and afflictions.

The apostle says:

*(5a) who through faith are shielded by God's power... (NIV)*

It is true that we were brought to the point of repentance and faith solely by the work of God's grace in our lives. However, having effectually called us by his Spirit, God then gives us the faith to believe—a faith that we immediately and willingly exercise in embracing Christ as our Saviour and Lord. (Eph. 2:8) It is through this same God-given faith—continually exercised in and by us—that we persevere. And it is through this same faith that we wholeheartedly trust in God's ability, power and willingness to keep us secure in our salvation.

At our new birth, our salvation had only just begun. Granted, God has justified us once-for-all, through the work of Christ on our behalf. In addition, we are being sanctified daily and hourly by God's Holy Spirit. Even so, our salvation has yet to be brought to its completion in our subsequent glorification. This will take place when the translated and immortal body is united with the immortal soul. Then, the Son will present us faultless and blameless in his Father's presence. Until that time, we are being shielded by the almighty power of God—and therefore our salvation cannot be taken from us. Salvation in its final form—including the redemption of our bodies—will be revealed at the coming or calling of the Lord Jesus. (Jude 24)

In verse 6, the apostle says:

### 1 Peter 1:6

That is, we rejoice with exceeding great joy in the sure knowledge that an eternal inheritance is being kept for us in glory, and that we are being kept eternally secure for that inheritance. In this assured knowledge, we have every reason for confidence and exceeding great joy in the Lord. We know that the Lord our God is faithful. We remain confidently assured that he who began the work of grace in our hearts and lives, will most certainly bring it to completion—to the glory of his own holy name. Therefore, in Christ Jesus, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory (v.8)

In this life, the joy of God's redeemed people is always tempered with afflictions. While in this body, none of us will be exempt from sorrows, sufferings, pain or distress. These are all part of human life—even in the regenerate. This is because the body has not yet been delivered from the claims of this earthly creation nor has it yet been glorified. (2 Cor. 4:17-18)

Yet, these sorrows and trials are not without purpose, nor are they without hope—as is the case, very often, with those outside of Christ. For the believer, every trial, every difficulty, every sorrow, every experience of pain and distress, can be used of our loving heavenly Father to draw us closer to himself and to effect our sanctification more fully. (Rom. 5:1-5; Jas. 1:2-4)

All things *do* work together for the good of those who love God, and who are the called according to his purpose—not that this is always fully understood or appreciated. Nevertheless, the Lord knows the way that is best for us—and in his infinite love, mercy and wisdom, he leads us in the way that is right in his eyes.

Sometimes, however, God's way seems unnecessarily difficult. However, often this is because we are holding onto something that the Lord requires us to forsake, or to some attitude that is harmful to ourselves, to others and to our witness for Christ. In such cases, God may permit or ordain periods of trial—but only to refine us in the furnace of affliction, and to bring us forth as gold from the purifying flames. (1 Pet. 4:12-13)

### **1 Peter 1:7**

Peter continues by inferring: These trials—these sore afflictions of body and soul—have come into our lives so that the quality of our faith may be tested and proved.

There are very many who profess allegiance to Christ. However, when trials and tribulations arise, they abandon their profession. This is evidence that their profession was false. The very fact that they failed to persevere in trial or affliction is proof that their faith (so-called) could not withstand the heat of God's cleansing, sanctifying or 'purifying fire'.

Genuine faith is indeed of greater worth than perishable gold—and so is the person who possesses it. When trials and afflictions come into the lives of these people, they persevere in the faith in spite of—or because of—the difficulties. This is evidence that their faith is genuine. (Job 23:10; Jas. 1:12)

Peter continues:

*(7b) ...so that your faith ...may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. (NIV)*

When faith is proved genuine, then ultimately the glory must be given to God—the Giver of this kind of faith. This is why the apostle says that genuine faith results in praise, glory and honour [to God]. Ultimately, this celebration of praise and thanksgiving will be offered by the redeemed at the appearing [revelation] of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Holy angels, too, may be expected to join this mighty paean of praise—not, however, as redeemed beings, but as spirits who have never fallen from their position in glory (cf. Rev. 5:9-14).

### **1 Peter 1:8-9**

Although we have never personally seen the Lord Jesus, yet—in the knowledge of his immense love for us—we have come to love him with all our heart and soul. Blessed, indeed, are those who have believed, yet have not seen! (John 20:29)

Although we have never personally heard the teachings of the Lord Jesus, yet we have believed everything he said. We have full confidence in Jesus as the Son of God, and we accept every word he has spoken as being the very words of God. (John 8:28; 12:49-50)

This faith, however, is by no means irrational or blind faith. The Father himself granted us our faith in the first instance. The Spirit of God convinced us of the truth of everything the Lord Jesus had taught. Now, this same Holy Spirit continues to bear witness to the truth of God's Word. Our faith, therefore, is founded on the eternal God whose Word cannot fail or pass away. Again, the living witness of the Holy Spirit operating through God's Word confirms our faith to us. Moreover—by exercising or practicing our faith—we continue to believe on the Son of God. (John 16:13-15)

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Through our faith in the Son of God, our heart is filled to overflowing with a joy that no human words can adequately describe. It surpasses description. It is a gladness of heart and soul that comes from God himself, and that is engendered within us by the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:52; Rom. 14:17; 15:13; 1 Thess. 1:6)

Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. As with the other eight fruits, it is dependent on the first fruit of the Spirit being present in our lives, i.e., love. (Phil. 1:25-26) Thus, the apostle Paul says:

*(22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Gal. 5:22-23 NIV)*

Where the Holy Spirit is shedding abroad God's love in our hearts, then the other fruits of the Spirit will also become evident.

In verse 9, the apostle writes:

*(9b) ...for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (NIV)*

One of the reasons for the inexpressible joy experienced by the Lord's people is the fact that they anticipate a magnificent future in glory. Whatever happens in this life, nothing can deprive them of the glorious inheritance laid up for them in their Father's presence.

Included in our heavenly inheritance will be the completion of our salvation. Then, at the appearing of the Lord, our present mortal and perishable bodies will be translated and glorified. In body and soul, we will be presented faultless and blameless before the throne of God. This, of course, reflects merely the beginning of life in heaven—or life in God's new and unsullied creation. From that time, and for all eternity, we will share in the endless and unabated joys of God's new creation, in the presence of our loving heavenly Father and of the Lamb.

## Prophets Failed to Understand

### 1 Peter 1:10-12

In verses 10 and 11, the apostle says:

#### 1 Peter 1:10-11

God's plan of salvation is no recent innovation. On the contrary, the plan to redeem fallen men and women and to bring them to eternal life was prepared in the counsels of God from all eternity. Indeed, the first intimation in God's Word of the Good News of eternal salvation can be traced back to the book of Genesis. There, immediately after the fall of man, we are told that the offspring [Christ] of the woman would bruise the serpent's [Satan's] head. (Gen. 3:15)

Throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, the promise of the coming Messiah or Christ is repeated. It was this Messiah—Jesus the Christ—of whom the prophets spoke repeatedly. However, even although the prophets fully *believed* the message that they were declaring, they did not fully *understand* the significance of the message. (Cf. Matt. 13:17; Acts 3:22-24)

The Old Testament prophets searched the Holy Scriptures with the greatest care and diligence, trying to determine exactly what was meant by the coming grace of God. It was this message of God's grace—the day of the coming Messiah and of salvation through

repentance and faith in him—that the Spirit of God within the holy prophets was directing them to make known to the people.

*(11a) trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ... (NIV)*

From this verse, we observe that the prophets (and other believers) of the Old Testament had the same experience of the indwelling Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Christ—as believers today. They, too, knew the regenerating power of God’s Spirit. They, too, knew what it was to be commissioned by the Spirit (in their case, by anointing to the prophetic office).

Granted, these OT prophets and other believers lacked the fullness of grace and truth that came by Christ Jesus. This was the very thing that the prophets were so diligent in looking into. At the time, they failed to understand that God’s grace would not be revealed in all its fullness until his appointed time.

However, although a number of matters always remained a mystery to the Old Testament prophets, they knew that the coming Messiah would suffer intensely at the hands of sinful men. The prophets predicted the sufferings of God’s Servant hundreds of years before the event. However, they must have found it extremely difficult to understand why the coming Messiah needed to suffer. Seemingly, they had not connected the typical animal sacrifices for sin with the atoning sacrifice that—antotypically—would be offered for sin by the Lamb of God. (Heb. 9:11-12,15-28)

Peter continues:

*(11b) ...and the glories that would follow. (NIV)*

Yes, the Christ of God would indeed suffer at the hands of sinful men. So it was written in the Scriptures of truth, and so it was ordained by the Lord our God from the counsels of eternity. (Luke 24:45-46; Acts 2:23)

However, after his sufferings and resurrection, the Father would exalt his Son to the highest heights of glory. He who was and is the Son of God from all eternity would experience the kingly majesty, dignity and excellence of his Messianic office. The Father would give to him the name that is above every name—in heaven and on earth. In addition, he would be seated at his Father’s own right hand in heaven, there to exercise supreme authority. (Phil. 2:9-11; see also Isa. 9:7; Heb. 1:1-9)

In verse 12, the apostle writes:

### **1 Peter 1:12**

The Old Testament prophets searched the Holy Scriptures with exceeding diligence in their attempts to understand fully the message of God’s grace, and the sufferings of the coming Messiah. The Sovereign Lord God, however, did not enlighten them further. Even so, says Peter, the Lord did reveal to the prophets that these mysteries were never intended to be of benefit to themselves, but to us. The prophets were simply to be faithful ministers of God’s Word, declaring the messages that the Spirit of God inspired within them.

These mysteries of grace were never fully understood before the incarnation of God’s Son. However, with the coming of Grace and Truth personified in the Son of God, they have now been made known. That is, the way of salvation made available to both Jews and Gentiles through repentance and faith in Christ, and the necessity of the Lord’s sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension and glory, has now been fully declared.

Now, infers Peter, the mystery of God's grace—contained and revealed in the Gospel—has been fully made known. We have heard this Good News from those whom the Lord has appointed to preach it, and we have believed the message of truth. Much of what the prophets failed to understand, we have come to understand. This is because God's time for revealing these secrets of his grace has come with the advent of Christ. It is also because, in line with God's purposes, the Spirit of truth—sent from the exalted Lord Jesus as our Comforter and Guide—has enlightened us concerning these momentous truths.

The holy angels are the ministers or servants of God. Like the prophets, these mighty spirit beings earnestly desire to understand the significance of the glorious and sacred mysteries of God's grace. Unlike us, however, the holy angels have never fallen from their appointed position. They, therefore, have had no need of salvation, or of the grace of God relating to salvation.

The holy angels can and do minister faithfully to the heirs of salvation. Even so, they can never fully understand what it means to be redeemed. Nor can they fully appreciate the deep joy that fills the heart of a newly forgiven sinner. Although holy angels rejoice over one sinner who repents—and it cannot be doubted that their joy is real—yet it is not the joy of a personally shared experience. In many respects, therefore, the substitutionary and atoning work of Christ, and the reconciliation of redeemed sinners to God, must still pose a great mystery to the holy angels.

## **In Character and Conduct, be Holy**

### **1 Peter 1:13-16**

In verse 13, Peter writes:

#### **1 Peter 1:13**

In view of these great truths, we ought to prepare our minds for living the Christian life. In the KJV, it is '*...gird up the loins of your mind*': a reference to the gathering up of the flowing outer garments so that they did not impede movement or hinder active service. The redeemed believer should be actively involved in the Lord's service and actively ready for his coming (cf. Luke 12:35-36).

The writer to the Hebrews expresses a similar truth concerning Christian faith and living when he says, '*...Run the race with perseverance...*' (Heb. 12:1 NIV; cf. 1 Cor. 9:24)

Peter continues:

*(13b) ...be self-controlled... (NIV)*

Those of us who are Christ's must learn to apply self-discipline and moderation to everything we do. As believers who have experienced the peace of God and peace with God, we ought to be calm and collected in spirit, and circumspect in all that we do.

Next, the apostle says:

*(13c) ...set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. (NIV)*

Let us keep on hoping with that certain assurance of grace and salvation inspired in us by God. Let us hope in Christ and in God with the absolute trust and confidence engendered in our hearts by the Holy Spirit—a hope that is firmly founded on the unfailing Word and promises of God.

With such an assurance of grace, we should not flag in zeal for the things of God, or in our confident, quiet and joyful trust in God. Instead, we should hope (i.e., rest confidently assured in God) to the end; we should rejoice in the Lord to the end—for it is most certain that our hope in Christ, and in God's grace and salvation, will be fully realised in our ultimate glorification.

This grace will be given to us... [KJV, *brought unto you...*], i.e., it will borne across to us—thus bringing to completion our salvation in Christ. Then, we will be fitted to live forever in our heavenly Father's presence.

When will this take place?

*(13d) ...when Jesus Christ is revealed. (NIV)*

The believer's hope or confident assurance in Christ will be fully realised at the revealing of the Lord Jesus. At the personal, visible and glorious appearing of the Son of Man, our salvation will be made complete. The dead in Christ will be raised. Then they—together with believers still living—will be translated, glorified and presented in God's presence without spot or blame

For those whom God calls into his presence before the coming again of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God is revealed to them in all his glory, as they enter the portals of their Father's house above.

In verse 14, Peter writes:

#### **1 Peter 1:14**

Before our conversion, we lacked a true saving knowledge of God, of his Son Jesus Christ, and of everything spiritual. This ignorance or lack of true spiritual knowledge amounted to nothing less than moral blindness or insensibility, and spiritual death.

Except for the grace of God leading us to repentance and salvation in Christ, we would have remained in this spiritual darkness and death. Ultimately, our sins would have separated us eternally from God. In his justice, holiness and righteousness, God would have banished us forever to the 'outer darkness' of hell.

However, since we have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and redeemed by the atoning blood of Christ, the Holy Spirit has removed our spiritual darkness. Now, we are in the light. Now, we are God's children. As children of the light, we ought always to live in a way that reflects the character of our heavenly Father. No longer must we align our character and conduct to this present evil age—the world that is dominated by the attitudes and behaviour of fallen mankind. (Rom. 12:1-2; Gal. 1:4; 1 John 5:19)

We have crucified with Christ all the evil desires of our sinful nature. These were the desires or lusts that—at one time—we took pleasure in fulfilling. This was when we remained alienated from God, and were living as his enemies. Indeed, these '*wicked works*' or sinful deeds were the cause of our enmity against God. (Rom. 6:6; Col. 1:21)

Now, however, God has forgiven us and has reconciled us to himself through the merits of Christ's blood. Since this is true, we ought only to pursue righteous living and godly conduct—as befits the redeemed and holy children of God. Granted, we are called to engage upon a life-long conflict between the desires of the old nature and the desires of the new. However, we are to ensure that the *new* nature—not the old—predominates.

In verses 15 and 16, the apostle writes:

### **1 Peter 1:15-16**

By his sovereign grace, God called us to himself—through repentance and faith in his Son. By so doing, God demonstrated something of his infinite love, mercy and compassion toward us. However, the God of *love* is also the God of *light*; i.e., he is infinitely holy, just and righteous. (1 John 1:5)

The particular characteristic that Peter mentions in verses 15 and 16 is God's holiness. In Scripture, holiness is associated with *awfulness* or '*awesomeness*'. The one who is holy is perceived as being so pure and glorious that he is unapproachable. Hence the expression, *[God] who lives in unapproachable light*; i.e., indescribable holiness. This holiness is so magnificent and glorious that—to come anywhere near the Most Holy God—would result in a person's immediate and certain death. (Exodus 33:20; 1 Tim 6:16; see also John 1:18) Again, holiness is associated with that which is totally uncontaminated by, and separated from, sin and sinners—and from every form of impurity. Hence the reason God's holiness is associated with his awful majesty or with his awesome power and glory.

God lives and reigns in unapproachable light—or holiness. Nevertheless, because of Christ's merits, the believer can boldly approach the throne of grace. (Isa 6:1-3; Heb. 4:16)

Of course, the believer can never begin to attain to the infinite holiness of God—and this is not what God (through his servant, Peter) is commanding. Rather, the Lord is saying that just as he is characterised by holiness that involves total separation from everything morally, spiritually and emotionally unclean, so also must the Christian live a separated, pure and holy life.

We should note, however, that this is a separation from the *moral and spiritual contamination* or corruption of the world—not a separation from the *people* of the world. The holy and sinless Son of God associated with the people of the world, while remaining totally sinless and set apart from the world's contaminating and corrupting influences.

## **Live in Reverent Fear**

### **1 Peter 1:17-21**

In verse 17, Peter writes:

#### **1 Peter 1:17**

We should bear in mind that—when we pray to God—we invoke a Father in heaven who sees and judges a man's thoughts, words and deeds. In his judgments, God does not show favouritism. Nor does he—in any other way—show partiality between one person and another. God treats everyone alike. He judges them only in accordance with their works—not according to their person, personality, position or rank. (Rom. 2:11; Col. 3:25)

Since we know that God does not show partiality in his judgments, then we ought to show reverence for God—a reverent fear of God that should be reflected in the way we live.

We who belong to Christ are the children of the Most High God—the one whom we know is infinitely holy, and whom no man can approach except through the mediating and atoning blood of Christ our Redeemer. The awareness of God's awful and majestic holiness should prevent us from coming into his presence in prayer without due regard to his holy Person or attributes. (2 Cor. 7:1; Heb. 12:28-29)



Again, since the Father will judge us impartially according to our works, we ought not only to show a reverent fear of God but also to live in this world as though we were strangers or non-resident citizens. Let us remember that we no longer belong to this world. The Lord has chosen us out of the world and has made us citizens of his heavenly kingdom. From there, we await our glorious inheritance. Meanwhile, in this present world, we live like pilgrims. This world is not our home. We are merely passing through to that better land on high. (John 15:19; Heb. 11:13; 13:14)

In verses 18 and 19, the apostle writes:

### 1 Peter 1:18-19

However valuable and precious these material things might appear to be in themselves, they were of absolutely no avail to pay the purchase price of our redemption. Not all the gold, silver or other precious materials in the universe could have proved sufficient to ransom us to God. God required a payment greater by far than any of these—or all of these combined. None other than the Father himself, through his Son—the Lord Jesus Christ, could meet that payment. (Ps. 49:7-8; Gen. 22:8; John 1:29,36)

Now, of course, there was nothing intrinsically wrong with the way of life God had set for his people under the terms of the Old Covenant. Indeed, those who followed it inherited God's richest blessings. However, the pure way of life delivered by God to his people, had become distorted by man-made traditions and accretions to the original standards set forth by the LORD. (Rom. 7:12; Mark 7:8-9)

Because of centuries of such abuses, the rites, rules and regulations that the religious leaders required the people to observe, had become nothing less than an unbearable burden upon the people's shoulders. This was the yoke of bondage that had weighed down the Jewish people of earlier generations. This was the form of tradition that had been handed down to their descendants at the time Peter was writing. This is what the apostle Peter would be referring to when he referred to the empty way of life handed down to these people from their forefathers. (Matt. 23:4; Acts 15:10,28; cf. Matt. 11:29-30)

Certain it was that the practice of this empty way of life could never bring a person into right relationship with God. It was based almost entirely on ritual works, which, for many people, had lost their original significance. It was based too on daily and annual sacrifices, which—although ordained of God—were offered repeatedly with no efficacy to remove or cancel sin. Important as they were at the time, they merely typified the supreme Sacrifice yet to come, who would take away sin once-for-all by the sacrifice of himself.

It was not the blood of animal sacrifices that atoned for sin, but that redeeming blood which surpasses the price of all the silver and gold in the universe. Concerning the means of our forgiveness and reconciliation to God, Peter now refers to this redeeming blood in the next verse. (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22; Col. 1:20-22)

*(19) but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.  
(NIV)*

God has not redeemed you with such perishable materials as silver and gold, says Peter to these believers, but with the precious—or priceless—blood of Christ.

Precious stones or jewels may be said to be 'priceless.' However, the value of the shed blood of Christ immeasurably exceeds the sum of all the most precious stones in existence. The blood of Christ represents the sacrifice of the totally pure and unblemished *life* of God's incarnate Son—the only Perfect Man. The Son's unblemished life consists of his perfect holiness and righteousness—together with every other attribute of his perfect hu-

manity and divinity; however, it was as sinless and perfect Man that he laid down his life as the Lamb of God and Saviour of the world. (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22)

The blood necessary for atonement had to come from a victim without spot, blemish or any other defect. As can be seen, Christ—the Lamb of God—was that Victim *par excellence*. His perfect and infinitely holy life was yielded up voluntarily as an atonement for sin. (Exodus 12:5; John 10:18; Acts 8:32-33) By that unparalleled and ‘unrepeatable’ sacrifice, God redeems and reconciles repentant sinners to himself. The blood of the Lamb of God alone—shed vicariously—provides a more than sufficient ransom price for all who call upon his name for salvation. (Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 26-28; 10:10; 1 John 2:2)

In verse 20, Peter says of the Lamb of God:

**1 Peter 1:20**

*(20a) He was chosen before the creation of the world... (NIV)*

God’s Son—the holy, spotless Lamb of God—was chosen as an atoning sacrifice for sin before God created the world. This setting apart of God’s sacrificial Lamb was made before the creation and subsequent fall of man. Clearly, then, although—later—God was to create man righteous, the LORD had anticipated man’s subsequent rebellion and fall from his originally righteous state. Not only so, but also—from eternity—the LORD God had made provision for fallen man’s redemption.

In the next part of the verse, Peter says of the Lamb of God:

*(20b) ...but was revealed in these last times for your sake. (NIV)*

From eternity, God had chosen his one and only Son as the propitiatory sacrifice for sin. However, although his advent was long prophesied, the Son of God was not revealed to this world until his incarnation over 2,000 years ago. Then, in these last times, the Son of God fulfilled all the prophecies written of him in the Scriptures of truth. (John 1:1,14; Gal. 4:4-5; Heb. 1:1-2)

Although he was the promised Messiah or Christ, yet he was the suffering Servant of Jehovah (or YHWH). As the appointed Lamb of God, Jesus had come into the world to take away the world’s sin. In fulfilment of God’s plan, Jesus’ perfectly holy and righteous life was offered up voluntarily as an atoning sacrifice for sin. This was the only sufficient sacrifice that could—and did—turn aside the righteous wrath of God by paying the penalty due to sin, on the sinner’s behalf.

Therefore, Peter says (v.20b),

*[He] was revealed in these last times for your sake.*

(Cf. Isa. 52:13 - 53:12; 1 John 2:2; Rom. 3:25; 5:8-11)

Because of the effectiveness of this once-for-all sacrifice of atonement, all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. God no longer confines his salvation to one race or one nation alone. Through Christ, and by the preaching of the Gospel, the message of forgiveness and eternal life is proclaimed to people of every nation on earth.

All whom the Lord our God shall call, shall certainly respond to this Gospel message. By the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, they will be enabled—*freely and willingly*—to repent and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 10:12-13)

In verse 21, the apostle writes:

### 1 Peter 1:21

Through our wholehearted belief in, and acceptance of, the Lord Jesus Christ—and by means of him alone—we have come to know the Father. The Spirit of Christ within us has revealed to us the truth concerning the Father and the Son. This is what the Lord Jesus meant when he said to Philip,

*“...Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9 NIV)*

Formerly, we did not know God as our Father in heaven. Now, we not only know him as our heavenly Father, but he also knows—or acknowledges—each one of us as his children.

The apostle says:

*(21b) Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him... (NIV)*

The Son was raised from the dead by the power of the Father. By a word of command, God created the world out of nothing. By a like word of command, he called forth the Lord Jesus from the grave and gave him life again.

If God did not have the power to raise the dead, then clearly he would not be omnipotent. However, the Lord Jesus himself demonstrated such power, i.e., in raising Lazarus who had been dead for four days. Therefore, there could be no imaginable or real obstacle to the resurrection of Christ. It is a fact verified by God's Word and by very many independent witnesses who saw him after his resurrection.

However, not only did God raise his Son from the dead, he also glorified him. Following his ascension to his Father's right hand, the Son was highly exalted and given the name that is above every name. At the name of Jesus, every knee must bow and every tongue must confess that he—Jesus Christ—is Lord.

Now Christ reigns in heaven—resplendent in the glory bestowed upon him by his Father and majestic in the royalty and dignity of his offices. These are the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. Therefore, the Scripture declares the glorified Lord Jesus to be *King of kings and Lord of lords*.

In the next part of verse 21, Peter writes:

*(21c) ...and so your faith and hope are in God. (NIV)*

Because of what the Son of God has accomplished on our behalf; because of who he is; and because of the offices he holds in glory, our faith and hope in God are fully assured. We have every possible reason to maintain our confidence in God, because God is faithful. Because of Christ's everlasting merits, God will faithfully perform all that he has planned for us.

God will remain faithful to us throughout our life on earth. He will prove faithful in bringing his redeemed and holy people through every trial, tribulation, sorrow and distress until he delivers us safely into his eternal presence. Therefore, we ought never to lose heart. Even now, Jesus, the Son of God, is interceding for us in his Father's presence. He knows the pains that we bear. He knows the difficulties that we face and must needs endure. But he will not forsake us. He died to make us his own, and he lives to keep us ever for himself. Therefore, our faith and hope are in God.

## Love One Another Deeply

### 1 Peter 1:22-25

In verse 22, the apostle writes:

#### 1 Peter 1:22

Since the apostle speaks of purification in the past tense, it seems that he is referring to *justification* rather than—or in addition to—*sanctification*.

By our obedience to the truth as contained in the Gospel—*‘the obedience of faith’*—our souls have been cleansed or purified from all sin, i.e., we have been justified or declared righteous. The perfect righteousness of Christ, the Son of God, has been imputed to our account. Once-and-for-all, we have been pronounced righteous in God’s sight. Therefore, we can never subsequently be condemned. (Rom. 8:1)

However, although this is true, purification of the soul only *begins* with justification. The cleansing process is continued daily by the work of the Holy Spirit within the hearts and lives of every believer. In this case (it could be inferred), our souls are being cleansed or purified by the application of the truth, i.e., God’s Word.

As we read and meditate prayerfully on that living Word, the Spirit of God makes us aware of its essential truths—its moral and spiritual principles and precepts. In humble and willing obedience to the truth, we apply these principles and precepts to our daily lives. The more we apply God’s Word to our lives, the more effective the purification process becomes. Gradually, our character and conduct is being transformed into the likeness of Christ. This process is known as *sanctification*. Unlike justification, which is a once-for-all act, sanctification is an ongoing and lifelong process. This process culminates finally in our glorification, when all remaining vestiges of sin and decay will be removed.

The fact that we have accepted the truth, and are obeying the truth, is an indication of our love for God and for his Son, Jesus Christ. Since we are now God’s redeemed and adopted children, then it follows that we will love all other children of God—for we are all one family. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Formerly, all of us were sinners abiding under the wrath and righteous judgment of God. Now, by the grace of God, all of us share in an unmerited but common redemption, and all of us are joint-heirs with the Son of God to a heavenly inheritance. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1:7-9)

Since, therefore, we are all one in Christ, our love for one another ought to be sincere. It should be a love that is free from pride or ostentation; a love that is pure and humble; a love that is caring and compassionate; a love that is not easily offended and does not harbour grudges. Our love for our fellow-believers should be a reflection of the love of God for us, and of the love of the Son for all his people—his church.

In view of all that God has done for us, and in view of the fact that—apart from God’s grace—we would yet be in our sins, our love for one another should be humble, pure and sincere. In addition, our love for one another should be a love that is as deep and as boundless as the mighty ocean. It should be a love that is not restricted by how we feel about a person. Rather, it should be a love that loves the unlovable—even as God loves us.

Again, this love should come from deep within our hearts. It should not be a superficial love, that is nothing more than skin deep. Such love is not the love of God. On the other hand, heartfelt love is real love: for the Holy Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts, and this love is intensely pure.

Yet again, although this love is pre-eminently spiritual, it is also emotional. Let us remember the tender love of Jesus, when—in deep compassion—he reached out and touched the ‘unclean’ leper.

Therefore, concludes the apostle,

*(22b) ...love one another deeply, from the heart. (NIV)*

In verse 23, the apostle cites the reason for demonstrating heartfelt love to one another:

### **1 Peter 1:23**

The reason we ought to love one another deeply (or intensely) is simply that we have been born again of God’s Holy Spirit. We are God’s children, and every one of us is a brother or sister in the same family and household of God. The love of God that each one of us experiences ought to overflow from our lives into the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We ought to bear in mind the Lord’s own words:

*“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”  
(John 13:35 NIV)*

Peter says:

*(23b) For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable,  
through the living and enduring word of God. (NIV)*

That which brought about our new birth was the effective and powerful working of the Holy Spirit, acting through God’s living Word. Like seed sown in good soil, that Word found root in our hearts. Now, it is bringing forth fruit to the glory of God—fruit that will last: And, in the life of every redeemed child of God, the most important fruit of the Spirit is love.

This, then, is a measure of our growth in grace: if we are walking in the love of God, then we are living in close communion with the Lord—for the two are inseparable. Moreover, if we are living in close fellowship with God, then we will not only love God, but we will also love our fellow-believers.

In verses 24 and 25, the apostle cites the Old Testament Scriptures:

### **1 Peter 1:24**

All men are mortal. They are here today and gone tomorrow. The full bloom of youth all too soon passes into middle, and then old age. All our powers or faculties diminish or decay with advancing years. All that we achieved; all that we became; all that we learned and understood, all too soon passes away—just as surely as the grass withers and the flowers fall. Such is the nature of human mortality. It is perishable—and such it will remain until the redemption of the believer’s body when it will be rendered immortal and glorious.

### **1 Peter 1:25**

In contrast to the perishable nature of humankind, and the word of man, the Word of God is as enduring and imperishable as the eternal God himself. God’s Word abides throughout the ages—speaking to our souls the only words of light and life through faith in Christ Jesus. It was by this living and eternal Word that the Holy Spirit brought about our regeneration; and it is by this same living and enduring Word that we are being sanctified.

## Expository Notes

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The apostle reminds these believers that—in contrast to any other word or any other teaching —

*...this is the word that was preached to you. (NIV)*

This living and abiding Word is the same Word that you believers have heard from the beginning. This is the Word that resulted in your conversion, and by which you are now being fed and nourished in the Christian faith.

Therefore, like these believers, we too must hold fast to that Word, and to the one who spoke that Word. The Lord rendered that Word powerfully effective in our lives, as with the voice that wakes the (spiritually) dead. He is the LORD God Almighty—the Rock of Ages. By his Holy Spirit, his Word restores the dead to life.

# 1 Peter Chapter 2

## Crave Pure Spiritual Milk

### 1 Peter 2:1-3

#### 1 Peter 2:1

In view of the fact that we have been born again through the living and enduring Word of God, holiness and godliness ought to characterise our new lives in Christ. From hearing, reading and meditating on God's Word, we have come to realise that commitment to Christ involves putting off the old nature and putting on the new nature. Therefore, we must forsake everything that belongs to our former sinful manner of life, and replace them with the fruit and gifts of the Spirit. (Eph. 4:22-32; 1 Pet. 4:2-3)

Thus, in verse 1, Peter writes:

*(1a) Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice... (NIV)*

Those who belong to Christ must determine in their hearts to cast off—as a filthy or worn-out garment—all forms of malice. We must cast from us all maliciousness or wickedness; all malignity or ill will; all desire or intention to cause harm or injury to others. (Col. 3:8; Jas. 1:21)

*(1b) ...and all deceit ...*

We must also cast off all deceit. In the same way, we must abandon all forms of subtlety, craft or guile. Again, we must put from us all forms of lying, half-truths and falsifying of the truth. For those who know the truth cannot live a lie. (Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9)

*(1c) [all] ...hypocrisy...*

Hypocrisy is dissimulation or spreading lies abroad about our true character (e.g., by pretending to godliness when we are practising sin). It is acting a part (or play-acting). But there are no parts for actors in the kingdom of God.

Insincerity, flattery, lying lives, and double standards can have no place among the redeemed and holy people of God. Like deceit—its close relative—the believer must also shun hypocrisy. (Matt. 23:23; 24:51)

*(1d) [and] ...envy...*

Envy is an evil akin to covetousness, and is closely linked to lust and greed. It is a feeling of resentment that others have what we do not have; or that they receive greater blessings than we do. Envy often leads to covetousness—the sinful, powerful and often destructive desire to own or possess that which does not belong to us. However, far from exhibiting a spirit of envy, we—the Lord's people—should be content with what we have. Be it little or much, we should be ready and willing to share what we have with those in need. (Col. 3:5)

Peter concludes this catalogue of pernicious evils by saying:

*(1e) ...and slander of every kind.*

Slander is speaking evil of someone. Although originally the same, there is now a distinction between slander and blasphemy. When directed against God, we generally refer to evil speaking as *blasphemy*. When directed against man, we generally refer to it as *slander* (or *libel*, when in writing). (Eph. 4:29-32; Col. 3:8)

Included in slander (or libel) may be such sins as backbiting and defamation of character. These sins, in turn, include such evils as harmful gossip, talebearing, innuendo or other forms of character assassination or injury. (2 Cor. 12:20)

As believers, we must put off all these sins. They form no part of our new life in Christ and no part of the work of grace in our lives. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit within us makes us aware of the offensiveness to God of these sins. Through God's Word, we become aware of the requirement laid upon us as believers to abandon such ungodly and destructive attitudes and conduct.

In verse 2, the apostle says:

### **1 Peter 2:2**

Although many of us are no longer babes in Christ, nevertheless—concerning evil—we must act like newborn babes. Just as a newborn baby knows nothing of these sinful attitudes and practices (v.1), so we too should live as though new born. Again, just as a newborn baby desires nothing other than pure or uncontaminated milk, so we must seek nothing other than the pure, uncontaminated and unadulterated milk of God's Word. We must not only look for that milk, but—like a healthy hungry and thirsty baby—we must earnestly crave for it.

Without milk—the right kind of milk—a baby would starve to death. Similarly, without the pure milk and meat of God's Word, God's people would die spiritually. Unless we are constantly feeding on God's Word, we will fail to nourish ourselves on the truths of that Word. Provided, however, that we are drinking deeply from that Word, we will soon learn what is involved in our sanctification and growth in grace (Heb. 5:13-14).

When we are learning daily from the living Word, and applying the truths we find to our lives, then it follows that we will bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. If, however, we do not live by the Word, then—eventually—we will start practising the kinds of evils mentioned above. However, the more spiritual fruit we produce (by God's grace), the more we will desire to put off the remaining works of the sinful nature—including those mentioned above.

In verse 3, Peter continues:

### **1 Peter 2:3**

Now, we have experienced the quenching of our spiritual thirst through drinking deeply of the waters of eternal life. This 'water' is drawn without cost from the wells of salvation that never runs dry. (Isa. 12:3; John 4:14; 7:37-39)

We have indeed tasted that the Lord is good. We have drunk from the well that never runs dry (God, The Holy Spirit). We have also been feeding on the bread that came down from heaven to give life to the world (God, The Son).



No longer do we need to hunger and thirst for God's salvation. We have received this freely and in abundance. However, we must continue to hunger and thirst after the kingdom of God and his righteousness. (John 6:27,33-37; Matt. 6:33)

## The Stone the Builders Rejected

### 1 Peter 2:4-8

In verse 4, Peter says:

#### 1 Peter 2:4

As we approach—or draw near—to this living Stone... As—daily and hourly—we draw near to the Rock of our salvation...

Let us feed regularly on the one whom we have come to know as our Saviour and Lord. He is the bread of life. He has provided us with the water of eternal life. Again, he is the one who now provides nourishment for our souls through the living and abiding Word of God.

In this verse, Peter refers to Jesus as *'the living Stone'* [Gk., *lithos*]—a seeming contradiction, for stones do not live. However, the analogy may be taken from the Old Testament Scriptures. If so, it refers to the permanence, enduring nature, or steadfastness of stone. Therefore, the Lord God is sometimes referred to as the 'Rock' or the 'Eternal Rock'. Thus Jesus, the Son of God, is referred to as *the living Stone*—the one who, like his Father, steadfastly endures forever. (Ps. 18:2; Isa. 26:4; cf. Dan. 6:26; 9:15; see also 1 Cor. 10:1-3)

We should note that the one who refers to Jesus as *the living Stone* or Rock is Peter. The name Peter, of course, means 'a stone' or 'a rock'. Bearing in mind the remarks that passed between Peter and his Lord in Matthew chapter 16 (vv.13-20), it is evident from this passage that the apostle desires to emphasise the pre-eminence of Christ. In Matthew 16:16, Peter had confessed Jesus as 'the Son of the *living* God.' Now, the apostle refers to his Lord and Master as 'the *living* Stone.'

This living Stone—Jesus, the Son of God—was indeed rejected, or disallowed, by men. The Old Testament prophets had long foretold this rejection, and Jesus himself had told his followers repeatedly that the people would despise and reject him. He had come to his own, and his own had not received him. All this had been foreknown from eternity, as had his sufferings and death at the hands of sinful men. For, from eternity, God had determined exactly what should happen to his Son to secure the redemption of his people. However, this in no way lessens the guilt and wickedness of those responsible for the Lord's sufferings and death. (Matt. 21:42-43; John 1:10-11; Acts 3:23)

As the foundation or cornerstone of God's salvation, Jesus experienced rejection by mankind generally. (However, he was accepted by all those who—by God's grace—called upon his name.)

Jesus was the chosen Servant of God. He was the one whom God had ordained from the eternal ages to pay the purchase price of redemption. The cost of man's redemption involved the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus' own perfect and holy life. From eternity, the Son was dear to the Father's heart. He was his one and only Son—and therefore was precious in God's sight. Yet, although God loved his Son, he gave him up for us all: So great was God's love for the world. (Isa. 42:1; 52:13; John 3:16-18)

In verse 5, and continuing the thought of Jesus as *the living Stone*, Peter writes:

### 1 Peter 2:5

We, the believing children of God are also like living stones. We form part of a magnificent temple dedicated to God. Christ is the cornerstone (or foundation stone) of that holy temple. We are the individual stones of the building. God has shaped and formed us by his almighty hand, and he has laid our lives upon the only sure foundation—the Rock of Christ. (Eph. 2:19-22)

On that sure foundation, we are being built up—together with every other truly regenerated child of God—into a most holy place of worship. Indeed, we form not merely an inanimate structure of stone, but a *living* structure or living temple of God—both collectively as the Church world-wide, and individually as the particular and holy temple of God.

But even more than this, we are not to think of ourselves as forming only the framework of God's dwelling place in the Spirit, but also as the ones who minister within that holy spiritual sanctuary. (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16-18) Every redeemed child of God (not just a certain few) is anointed by the Holy Spirit to serve as a spiritual priest before God (*the priesthood of all believers*). This is evident from the fact that the apostle Peter is addressing his remarks to believers generally—not just to the leadership of the churches. (Rev. 1:6; 5:9-10)

As those whom God has redeemed and sanctified, we have been anointed to present to God *spiritual* sacrifices. The offerings we present to God must begin with the sacrifice of ourselves. Then, we may continue with the sacrifices of love, praise, worship and thanksgiving.

Blood sacrifices—in any shape or form—are not spiritual sacrifices. They, therefore, have no place in the offerings of believers. One blood sacrifice has already been offered—once-for-all: the sacrifice of the Son of God on the believer's behalf. The sacrifices now required by God, therefore, are those spiritual sacrifices already mentioned. Presented in and through the merits of Christ our Redeemer, these sacrifices alone are acceptable in God's sight—together with works pleasing to him. (Ps. 141:2; John 4:23-24; Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15-16)

There is, of course, only one mediating Priest recognised by God—Jesus, his Son, who ministers in the heavenly sanctuary or holy of holies. Jesus, the Great High Priest of our profession, is the only Priest who now has the authority or power to mediate before God on the sinner's behalf—based on his own sprinkled blood.

This is the reason why we can never approach God in any other way, or by any other person, than through his one and only Son. Jesus, and Jesus alone, shed his blood and sprinkled it on and before the heavenly atonement cover (or mercy seat) in order to open the way into God's presence. Thus, it is only and exclusively through faith in him, and in his perfect work on the sinner's behalf, that a sinner can find mercy from—and acceptance by—God. (Heb. 7:23-27; 9:12-28; 10:12,14)

In verse 6, Peter shows how Christ, the living Stone, is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. Thus, quoting from Isaiah 28:16, the apostle writes:

### 1 Peter 2:6

Peter shows his full acceptance of the Old Testament Scriptures as the inspired Word of God by quoting as Holy Scripture from the prophet Isaiah. Apparently, this was one of the passages the apostle had in mind when he spoke of Jesus as the living Stone who was

chosen by God and precious to him. In that passage, the LORD speaks through his servant Isaiah of a time when he would lay—or set in place—a sure and trusted stone in Zion.

(Zion was the ancient part of Jerusalem, otherwise known as the city of David. Later, however, the term 'Zion' was applied to the entire city of Jerusalem.) (Isa. 28:16; Rom. 9:33; Matt. 12:18)

In this prophetic Scripture, the LORD promises to send his Servant, the Messiah, as the Stone or Rock of his people—the Rock of salvation. This is a theme the apostle Peter must have immediately recognised when Jesus said in his presence,

*“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church...” (Matt. 16:18a NIV)*

During the apostolic period, Peter, James and John were recognised as 'pillars' of the church. However, as is evident from Peter's letters, the apostle did not subsequently understand the remarks of the Lord Jesus as implying anything other than a general oversight of the churches. It certainly did not imply—nor does Peter ever claim that it did—the investiture of any other kind of authority or office over and above that of an apostle of the Lord Jesus: an office that was common to the Twelve. Nor did it imply, nor did Peter ever allude to in his writings, any kind of apostolic succession. (Gal. 2:9; 1 Pet. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1)

Peter firmly believed Jesus to be the Son of the living God. In addition, the apostle Peter would automatically associate the terms '*eternal Rock*' and '*Rock of salvation*' with God—and with his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the reason why the apostle returns to this theme in this letter. Here, Peter refers—not to himself—but to Christ as the living Stone, and to every believer as living stones together forming a house of holy spiritual priests.

In the next part of this quotation from Isaiah 28:16, the apostle Peter writes of Christ, the living Stone:

*(6b) “...and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” (NIV)*

The one who commits himself wholeheartedly to the LORD's Messiah—Jesus, the Christ—will never be put to shame. The believer will never be disappointed, nor will he ever have cause to be ashamed, either in this life or on the Day of Judgment of ungodly men.

The living Stone that God has laid as the cornerstone of the gospel has come to grant forgiveness of sins and eternal life through repentance and faith in him. He will never fail to receive those who come to him, or to forgive their sins. Therefore, those who trust in him will never have cause to be disappointed or ashamed—either in this age, or throughout the ages of eternity. (Rom. 10:8-13; cf. Isa. 45:17; 54:4-10)

Developing this thought in verse 7a, the apostle says:

### **1 Peter 2:7**

To every one of us who, by God's grace, have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, we have discovered the inexpressible preciousness of this Stone—this eternal and enduring Rock. Not only have we experienced forgiveness of sins and new life in him, but daily we are experiencing his presence with us in all that we do and in all that we plan. By his Spirit, he is sanctifying, guiding, comforting and sustaining us. Precious indeed, then, is this living Stone—Christ, the Lord. (1 Pet. 1:8)

However, in the next part of the verse, Peter includes a quotation from Psalm 118:22 by writing:

*(7b) ...But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone." [Or, cornerstone] (NIV)*

In verse 4, Peter had said that this living Stone had been rejected [KJV, *disallowed*] by men—a thought probable based on prophecies such as Psalm 118:22. Those who do not believe on the stone that God laid in Zion will find that they have rejected the most important structure in their lives. Christ is that stone. He is mankind's only means of salvation. There is no other. That stone is the foundation stone (or perhaps, cornerstone) of a person's salvation. Unless a person's life is founded on this Rock or Stone, he has no hope of salvation. (Luke 20:17-19; Rom. 10:21)

This stone was indeed rejected by the 'builders'—the religious leaders of Jesus' day. These leaders were responsible for building up the congregation of God's people, but they rejected the most important Stone in God's building—the Lord Jesus Christ. The religious leaders considered this Stone not only as unsuitable (and therefore to be disallowed), but as totally worthless (and therefore to be rejected and broken up). (Matt. 21:42-43; Mark 14:1)

In verse 8, the apostle quotes from Isaiah 8:14:

### 1 Peter 2:8

*(8a) and, "A stone [Gk., lithos] that causes men to stumble and a rock [Gk., petra] that makes them fall." (NIV)*

The very Stone that the builders rejected for breaking up became ultimately the cornerstone of God's Church. This same cornerstone also became a Rock of offence, and a Stone of stumbling to those who wilfully refused to believe on him. It crushes those on whom it falls. (Matt. 21:42-44; Rom. 9:33; 1 Cor. 1:23; cf. Luke 2:34)

In the next part of verse 8, the apostle confirms this thought by saying:

*(8b) ...They stumble because they disobey the message... (NIV)*

They have heard the message of eternal salvation—the gospel of the free grace of God in Christ Jesus. However, they have refused utterly to repent and believe that message. They have been totally unwilling to abandon their sinful ways—preferring instead to live in spiritual darkness. Therefore, in disobeying the Gospel of eternal salvation, they have stumbled over that stumbling Stone. (Ps. 14:1-3; John 3:18-20; Acts 17:22-32)

The Stone that, for the believer, is the Rock of his or her salvation, is—for those who despise the grace of God—the Rock on which they perish. This is the punishment God imposes upon those who wilfully and persistently refuse to acknowledge his only Son.

The Scripture adds:

*(8c) ...which is also what they were destined for. (NIV)*

Grace is not given to those who are well aware of the truth but do not seek the Lord. Nor is it given to those who do not acknowledge their sin and show true repentance. This does not restrict God's grace in drawing men and women to Christ. It merely shows that God cannot be mocked. (John 3:18,36; Rom. 9:22; cf. Jude 4)

## The People of God

### 1 Peter 2:9-10

Moving on to discuss the inheritance and people of God, Peter writes:

#### 1 Peter 2:9

But *you*—you, in marked contrast to the disobedient just mentioned...

*(9b) But you are a chosen people... (NIV)*

The Scriptures tell us that God has destined (or 'set') the wilfully disobedient to stumble over Christ, the living Stone. This, however, seems to infer that God has chosen certain people *not* to stumble over that Stone; namely, those who respond to the invitation of the gospel. In other words, all those who—by God's sovereign grace—call upon the name of the Lord for salvation, and who experience that salvation through repentance and faith in Christ. (Isa. 55:6; Acts 2:39; Rom. 10:12; cf. 1 Pet. 2:7)

The apostle continues:

*(9c) ...a royal priesthood...*

Under the terms of the Old (Mosaic) Covenant, those only could serve as priests of God who belonged to the tribe and household of Levi. God excluded all other Israelites from ministering at the altar. The Levitical priests mediated on behalf of the people, offering to God all the sacrifices required by the LORD under that economy. (Num. 18:6-7; Heb. 7:5)

Now, however, there is no earthly priesthood, for there is no longer any blood or other typical sacrifices to be offered. All this has been fulfilled and abolished with the coming of Christ. By his perfect life and by his once-for-all perfect sacrifice of atonement on the sinner's behalf, Christ has fulfilled all righteousness. (Heb. 7:27; 9:11-28; 10:1-18)

Death prevented the priests of the old order from maintaining a perpetual ministry under one man. In contrast, and in virtue of his resurrection to glory, the Lord Jesus is the one and only Priest who can act *permanently* on behalf of God's people.

Again, the Lord Jesus descended from the tribe of Judah, and was not therefore of the priestly tribe of Levi. Jesus, however, is a Priest forever—after the order of the king-priest, Melchizedek. In Hebrews, it is written of Melchizedek that he is—

*...without beginning of days or end of life.*

That is, in respect of Melchizedek's origins, nothing is recorded. Again, in respect of his priestly ministry, no record exists of its beginning or end. (Heb. 5:5-6,10; 7:1-28; see also Gen. 14:18ff)

Although—under the New Covenant—no mediating priesthood exists on earth, there is nevertheless a priesthood of believers. This priesthood is common to *all* believers. (Exodus 19:6; 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:10)

The offerings to be presented by us as priests is:

- the sacrifice of ourselves to God; then,
- the sacrifices of love, thanksgiving, praise and worship—as indicated in v.5 above. In other words, spiritual offerings or spiritual sacrifices. (Ps. 50:14,23; Heb. 13:15)

This priesthood is referred to as *a royal priesthood* because it is associated with the royal kingdom of God and of his Christ, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords. Those who serve in this priesthood (all believers) are themselves members of God's royal household, and joint-heirs to God's kingdom with the Son himself. (Rom. 8:17)

The apostle continues:

(9d) ...*a holy nation*...

That is, a specially set apart 'nation'—or formally organised company of people existing in the world. Out of every nation on earth, God has called his own people. These redeemed people constitute a single nation that is holy to God. God has set apart the individual members of this holy nation<sup>2</sup> for himself and for his service.

Then Peter says:

(9e) ...*a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.* (NIV)

We are God's people by regeneration and by adoption. God has called us to belong to him with the express purpose that, in and through our lives, we might praise and glorify his great and majestic name. Again, our heavenly Father has called us to make known his name to others still in darkness—that they too might see the light of life in Christ Jesus. (John 1:12-13; 3:3,7; Eph. 1:5,11-12; Col. 1:12-14)

In verse 10, the apostle writes:

### 1 Peter 2:10

Once—when we lived in spiritual darkness—we were not a people in the sense of being recognised by, and set apart to, God. Then, our evil attitudes and deeds—including our evil and unbelieving hearts—made us God's enemies. Like the rest of mankind, we were abiding under God's righteous wrath and condemnation. (Rom. 8:7; Col. 1:21)

Now, however—now that we have come to know Christ as our Saviour and Lord—we are the people of God. By *regeneration*, we have been born anew from above into God's family. By *adoption*, God has placed us into his family as a son or daughter, and an heir. Therefore, we are not only the people of God, we are also the sons and daughters of God. (Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:4-7; 1 John 3:1-2)

Once, while we lived in the darkness of sin and the inward misery of alienation from God, we knew nothing of God's love and mercy. We were spiritually blind to these things. Although alive physically, we were dead spiritually. We were as 'the walking dead.' Without experiencing God's mercy, we would have perished eternally: for the penalty of our sin was death—spiritual, physical and eternal death. (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 1:1-10; cf. 2 Cor. 3:14-16)

In his great love, however, says Peter to these believers, God determined to extend his mercy toward us. By his Holy Spirit and by his eternal living Word, he brought us under conviction of sin, convinced us of our need of redemption, and converted us to Christ. In mercy, God offered us salvation through repentance and faith in his Son. In mercy, God granted us the ability to repent and believe. In mercy, God gave us the desire to receive Christ into our hearts and lives. Moreover, in mercy, he enabled each one of us to do so *freely and willingly*. (Acts 13:48; 16:14,34; Rom. 10:13)

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<sup>2</sup> *holy nation*: represented in, by and through the church; individually, and as a body. [GL]

## Let Our Lives Honour God

### 1 Peter 2:11-12

In view of their high and holy calling, the apostle Peter writes in verse 11:

#### 1 Peter 2:11

The apostle Peter now softens his tone in appealing to these dispersed children of God. Addressing them as *'Dear friends'*, Peter pleads to them with all his heart, exhorting them to remember that this world is not their home. They are pilgrims and strangers on this earth. Therefore, they ought not to be conformed any longer to this world's standards of behaviour. Rather, they should behave in a manner consistent with their calling as a holy people, a royal household and priests of the Lord. (Heb. 11:13-16; John 17:14-16; Rom. 12:1-2)

In view of this, says the apostle, we must abstain from sinful desires. We must shun those fleshly or carnal lusts that arise in our hearts and tempt us to sin. Such things belong to our old sinful nature. That old nature, however, has been crucified with Christ. Therefore, we must reckon it as dead with Christ. Concerning our new nature, we must reckon ourselves alive with the now risen and reigning Christ. If Christ continues to reign in our hearts by faith, then his almighty power will enable us to overcome. (Rom. 8:13-14; 13:13-14; Gal. 5:19-21; Col. 3:1-15)

We are not, however, to imagine that victory comes easily. Peter expresses this truth in the latter part of verse 11. Living the Christian life is like engaging in a war. It is—and will remain—life-long spiritual warfare.

Our enemy is not only the old nature (the 'flesh') and the world. It is also the spiritual forces of evil, i.e., the devil and his minions of evil spirits or demons. Satan tempts us to sin, and it is against him and his unclean spirits that we must defend ourselves. We certainly cannot defend ourselves against these mighty spiritual powers of evil in our own strength—but only in the strength of the Lord our God. Therefore, we must let his Holy Spirit fill or control our lives, for—before the Holy Spirit of God—Satan and the demons desist and flee.

Therefore, each child of God must arm himself or herself with the armoury that God provides. Only by putting on the full armour of God, and taking our stand against the devil with the *sword* of the Spirit, can we hope to stand in the *power* of the Spirit. (Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Pet. 5:8-10)

Peter continues this thought in verse 12, where he writes:

#### 1 Peter 2:12

Many, if not all, of those to whom Peter wrote this letter had been suffering hardship and persecution for the sake of Christ's name. Even so, they had to remember the importance of their witness for Christ, even, and perhaps especially, under persecution. Peter, therefore, exhorts these persecuted believers to conduct themselves wisely, circumspectly and without reproach toward the unbelievers among whom they lived. Thus, infers the apostle, live a life that is characterised by honesty, sincerity, purity and righteousness. (2 Cor. 1:12; Phil. 1:27; 2 Pet. 3:11)

The same principle applies to God's children today. Some people may accuse us before the governing authorities as evildoers. They may assert (falsely) that—as Christians—we refuse to submit to these authorities. Therefore, to refute such malicious accusation, we must conduct ourselves honourably among outsiders. Thereby, infers Peter, we will si-

hence the talk of these evil men. Their mischievous allegations will be proved groundless by the very nature of our good works and upright behaviour in the sight of all. These good works, however, must include willing obedience to the civil authorities.

Such good works result from the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. They are honouring to God and beneficial to mankind. Therefore, those who accuse us, do so without just cause. (Phil. 4:8; see also v.15 below)

The latter part of verse 12 refers to God 'visiting' his people. In this sense, a 'visitation' is a time when God makes himself known in power—either by his acts, or by a manifestation of his person. Often, in the Old Testament, the 'visitations' of God relate to the administration of divine providence or justice. (Job 10:12; Isa. 10:3; Hosea 9:7) At other times in the Old Testament, such visitations or revelations of God's power relate to salvation blessings (cf. Isa. 53:1; see also John 12:38).

In the New Testament, two principal times of visitation are:

- The revelation of God's salvation through the incarnation, birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and glorification of Christ Jesus; and,
- the revelation of the Lord Jesus at his second coming, followed by—and including—the last judgment.

(John 1:14,18; 14:9; 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 1:7)

When God visits his own people with salvation blessings, he vindicates them from false and scurrilous attacks. Often, the Lord turns back false accusations upon the heads of his people's accusers. In this way, the accusers are brought to shame and disgrace. (Isa. 54:15-17)

As a rule, the believer need not seek vindication for wrongs done to him. So long as he commits his soul to his faithful Creator, God will vindicate him. He will confound all those who falsely and maliciously accuse his redeemed children. Ultimately, God will compel them to acknowledge their sin and to glorify him for his justice and righteousness in dealing with them. (Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Pet. 4:19)

## Submission to Authorities

### 1 Peter 2:13-17

In verses 13 through 17, the apostle speaks specifically of the Christian's duty concerning the governing authorities:

#### 1 Peter 2:13

We are to submit ourselves, i.e., yield ourselves to—voluntarily and willingly to lawfully appointed authority. We are to recognise lawful government and legal authorities as the legitimately appointed ministers of God. These bodies are responsible for administering justice, equity and government in the civil realm. As believers on the Lord Jesus, we are to submit to them in everything—so long as that submission does not cause us to do anything contrary to the teachings of God's written Word, the Bible. (Matt. 22:21)

In the next part of the verse (and in the following verse), Peter specifies exactly which authorities he had in mind:

*(13b) ...whether to the king, as the supreme authority... (NIV)*



We are to submit ourselves (says the apostle) to the one whom God has appointed as the supreme earthly and civil authority over us. This means submitting to the authority represented by a king or queen, a president or prime minister, or any other head of state or head of government. (Prov. 24:21)

We should recognise that these rulers have been appointed by the Lord to maintain law and order; to govern the nation; and to minister to its people. They are God's servants for our sake. It is the Lord God who sets up rulers, and it is he who deposes them. (Dan. 2:21; 4:17,25-37; Rom. 13:1-7; see also Prov. 8:15-16)

These rulers are appointed to office (democratically or otherwise) only because the Lord has already decreed that they should be so appointed—and only for the time that God has ordained. Therefore, we ought always to pray for them, that they may conduct the affairs of the nation wisely, and with full regard for him who will one day require a reckoning of them for the way in which they have ruled. (Jer. 29:7; 1 Tim. 2:1-4)

In verse 14, Peter continues:

**1 Peter 2:14**

*(14) or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. (NIV)*

God requires us to submit ourselves to the head of state, or the head of government. He also requires us to submit ourselves to the ministers appointed by the government to carry out civil duties in their various departments.

The 'governors' mentioned by Peter in verse 14 are probably the legal representatives of the government—whether local or national. This would include the various law officers of the land (attorneys general, procurators fiscal or district attorneys). It would also include the judiciary: law lords, judges, sheriffs and magistrates, etc. (Titus 3:1-2)

The apostle makes the point that these legal officers (or governors) have been appointed to execute punishment on those who do wrong, and to commend those who do right. In executing justice, these officials would seek to acquit and vindicate those who had been unjustly accused.

In verse 15, the apostle writes:

**1 Peter 2:15**

Peter had already said that the believer would be accused falsely and maliciously (see notes on verse 12). Now he says that—by living a life that was above reproach, and by practising good works—the believer would effectively silence such wicked allegations.

If it were evident from their behaviour that they were intent on obeying not only God's law but also the civil law, then no legal representative would be able to sustain malicious charges made against God's people. Therefore, contends the apostle, silence—or muzzle—your accusers by your godly character and good deeds (v.12; Titus 2:7-8).

Then, in verse 16, Peter declares:

**1 Peter 2:16**

Through faith in Christ Jesus, the believer has been released from his or her bondage to sin, from its guilt and penalty, and from the constraints of the ceremonial and ritual Law. Now, we are free—no longer held captive to (or dominated by) the sinful nature. Freedom,

however, is not licence. We are free—but we are not free to practise sin. We are free only to practise righteousness. Therefore, as believers, we ought not to use our freedom—our forgiveness of past sins—as a pretext for repeating such sins in the future. (John 8:32-36; Rom. 6:18; 1 Cor. 7:22; Gal. 5:1,13)

Taken in context, this would seem to imply sins against—i.e., abuses of—the civil government or its offices. Such abuses might have related to former criminal offences (offences committed before being called to believe on Christ). However, they may also have related to other activities, such as tax evasion, fraudulent, dishonest or misleading statements on government forms, and the like. These, of course, must have no place in the lives of the redeemed children of God.

Therefore, says Peter,

*...do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil... (NIV)*

(1 Pet. 2:16; Rom. 13:6-7)

Peter immediately adds these words:

*(16b) ...live as servants of God.*

Now that the Lord has redeemed us, we can no longer practise those things that are associated with sin and darkness. On the contrary, we must live as the servants—i.e., the representatives or ministers—of the true and living God: the one who is infinitely holy and righteous.

Let it be observed from our upright character and conduct, infers Peter, that we are God's servants. Let it be seen that we are intent only in living to bring glory to God's great and majestic name.

In verse 17, Peter expands on the principle of showing due respect to others by saying:

The apostle writes:

### **1 Peter 2:17**

We must submit ourselves to rulers, and obey the laws of the land. We must show proper—or due—respect, also, to all those in authority. As private individuals, they and we stand on an equal footing in God's eyes. However, concerning the office that they hold, we must show these authorities due respect or honour. (1 Pet. 5:5)

This principle applies not only to those in positions of authority, but also to relationships among believers and among mankind in general. Where respect is due, respect ought to be given; where honour is due, honour ought to be given. Thus writes both the apostles Peter and Paul. More importantly, thus says the Son of God himself. (Exodus 20:12; Lev. 19:32; Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:7; Phil. 2:3-4)

In this verse (v.17), Peter exhorts these believers to show forth the love of God in their hearts toward those who are their brothers and sisters in Christ. They are to love their fellow believers dearly, remembering that they are all children of redemption and children of the same loving heavenly Father. Likewise, we are to bear with other believers, as we would want them to bear with us. We are to share with them, as we would hope they would share with us. (Rom. 12:10)

We should remember, however, that love involves sacrifice. It involves showing compassion; being tender-hearted; being sympathetic; showing understanding; not compromising

the truth, but, nevertheless, speaking the truth in love. Our love should be such that—if necessary—we would lay down our life to protect our fellow-believer.

In the next part of the verse, Peter says:

(17c) ...*fear God*...

Everyone ought to show reverent fear for God, and for the majesty of his presence. We must remember that he is the one who inhabits eternity. His name is Holy. He is the awesome one, before whom even the holy angels veil their face. Therefore, says Peter, fear God. Show due regard to the awful majesty and royal dignity of his Person—even although you are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace through his Son Jesus Christ. (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 24:21; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:21)

Then, the apostle adds:

(17d) ...*honour the king*.

This concept has been covered in the preceding verses.

## **Suffering for the Sake of Christ**

### **1 Peter 2:18-25**

In verse 18, the apostle speaks of the relationship that ought to exist between a servant and his or her master:

#### **1 Peter 2:18**

The word rendered 'slaves' here (Gk. *oiketēs*) refers to a domestic or household servant—not to a bondsman (Gk., *doulos*).

Peter exhorts these domestic servants to submit themselves to their masters with all respect. In other words, they were not to disobey their masters, or engage in arguments with them. They were to do as they were instructed. Such servants were to render the honour due to the master—or head—of the household. (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22; 1 Tim. 6:1-2)

What applies to the servant-master relationship is true also of the employee-employer relationship. Concerning our work, we are under obligation as Christians to submit to our employers in everything, and to render to our employers the respect due to them. Again, the same principle applies to anyone else in a subordinate position. He is to submit to his superiors—showing them respect or honour.

These instructions do not imply in any way inferiority or superiority of either party. As individuals, God has created everyone equal. They differ only in the *relationships* that they bear to one another. For example, in respect of the *relationship* that they bear to their parents, children are junior to and submissive to their parents. However, *as individuals* created in the image of God, they are equal with their parents. The same principle applies to wives in relation to their husbands, to children and adults in relation to their elders, and to everyone in relation to the elderly. (Lev. 19:32; Eph. 5:22-24; 6:1-4; Col. 3:18-21)

Again, although every individual *person* remains equal in God's sight, these same persons may differ in their *positions* or *offices* (e.g., employees in submitting to their employers, or wives to their husbands).

On a number of occasions, masters have been known to treat their domestic servants shamefully. Of course, there can be no justification for such evil behaviour. The Bible un-

compromisingly condemns such wicked abuses of human dignity and life. Even so, says the apostle to these believers, you must continue to submit to such masters, and to obey them.

Peter is not saying that these domestic servants should allow themselves to be abused cruelly or continually by such masters. This would be an intolerable restraint when it might be better for the servant to seek escape from such a situation. However, they were not to act prematurely in such matters—bearing in mind the sufferings of their Master in heaven, whose example they had to endeavour to emulate. (Cf. 1 Cor. 7:20-24)

Thus, in verse 19, the apostle says:

### **1 Peter 2:19**

It is praiseworthy—or worthy of thanks—if a man endures unjust afflictions with patience. However, he must not endure such afflictions merely for endurance' sake, but out of regard for the one whom he represents and to whom he belongs.

As a servant of men, he may be subjected to unfair, unjust or undeserved sufferings. But, as God's servant, he bears suffering patiently as one who has been called and appointed to represent the King of kings and Lord of lords. Those who abuse him now, and cause him suffering, effectively are abusing the one whom he represents. In the day of reckoning, they will give account for their every thought, word and action against God's Son and against his faithful servants. (Luke 6:22-23; John 15:18-21; 1 Pet. 3:13-17)

In verse 20, the apostle writes:

### **1 Peter 2:20**

There is no credit in being punishment for wrongdoing. Then, our punishment is deserved. Then—far from bringing honour to our Master in heaven, and gaining his approval—we bring shame and dishonour upon his holy name. Therefore, says Peter, let none of us suffer punishment because of some wrong we have committed. (1 Pet. 4:12-19)

The latter part of verse 20 more or less repeats what the apostle had said in verse 19. God watches over his own people for their good, and it is impossible that any harm should come to them of which he is not aware. However—being aware of such injustices—he will redress the wrongs done to them in his own way and in his own time. (1 Sam. 2:9; Matt. 5:10-12)

In verse 21, the apostle reminds these believers of the nature of their high and holy calling:

### **1 Peter 2:21**

To this, we were called when we were brought to belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, says Peter, that we were called not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake. We were called to endure the same kind of afflictions that our Lord and Master endured—patiently, and without seeking retaliation. Let us remember, too, the word of God:

*“...It is mine to avenge; I will repay.” (NIV)*

Instead of seeking redress for the wrongs done to us, we ought rather to pray for those who seek to harm us. (Phil. 1:27-29; Rom. 12:19-21; see also Deut. 32:35)

We ought to endure such sufferings for the sake of Christ, knowing that he will keep his hand upon us in all our sufferings. The Lord is faithful. He will never permit us to endure more than we are able to bear, or more than he gives us grace to bear. (Cf. 1 Cor. 10:13)

Following in the steps of the Master includes taking up the cross daily to follow him, and walking with him in the way of the cross. Thus shall we prove to be the Lord's true disciples. (Matt. 16:24)

In verse 22, Peter alludes to Isaiah 53:9:

### **1 Peter 2:22**

{Cf. Isaiah 53:9}

The apostle Peter had said that the Lord Jesus had left us an example to follow. What precisely, however, does this entail on the believer? As we know, the holy Son of God was totally sin-free. He was spotless, blameless and undefiled; he was completely without fault. This is the example that his redeemed people must aim to copy.

Of course, no believer can achieve sinless perfection in this life, nor could he or she ever live a life like the blessed Lord Jesus. Nevertheless, we are to strive after holiness, godliness and righteousness. By the grace of God, we are to do those things that the Lord himself would have done. We must have nothing to do with anything that would contaminate body or soul. (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Tim. 6:11; Heb. 12:14; see also Matt. 5:48; Phil. 3:12-15)

Never at any time did the Lord Jesus commit sin. As the Lord's servants, we must not continue to commit sin. Never at any time was deceit found in the Lord's mouth. As God's redeemed children, no lying, dishonesty or half-truths must ever come from our tongues.

Instead of using our tongues for evil, God's children ought to use them for good: we ought to use them to praise, bless and thank God, and to encourage and sustain our fellow men and women. We ought never to use any of God's gifts—including our tongue—to criticise someone unjustly, to gossip about him or her, or to slander them. (Eph. 4:23,29; Jas. 3:5-12)

Developing this thought further in verse 23, the apostle writes:

### **1 Peter 2:23**

When people flung scurrilous accusations at him—as those casting mud-covered stones—the Lord Jesus did not seek to counter their blasphemous attacks. The religious leaders and the people accused the Lord Jesus falsely and vehemently of all kinds of evil, yet the holy Son of God did not seek to exercise righteous anger against his false accusers. They asserted that the Lord Jesus was in league with the evil one, yet the holy Son of God did not seek to bring down upon them his righteous judgment. God's one and only Son suffered intensely, and most cruelly, at the hands of sinful men. Nevertheless—in all his sufferings—the Lord of Glory did not retaliate. (Matt. 12:24; Luke 18:32; Acts 2:23)

Not only did God's Son endure unjust sufferings and vile abuses against his character and person, but he also refused to utter any kind of threats against his tormentors. Instead, he committed himself completely to his Father in heaven—knowing that he must needs endure such scorn for the sake of others, and for their salvation. (Isa. 53:1-12)

Therefore, intimates the apostle, we too ought to commit our souls to God, knowing that he is faithful. We know, also, that—by enduring patiently for the sake of Christ—we may be instrumental in causing a perishing soul to seek God's mercy while yet there is time. It is certain that—should a sinner continue impenitent to the end—there will be no further opportunity of repentance. (1 Pet. 4:19)

In verse 24, the apostle writes:

### 1 Peter 2:24

*(24a) He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness... (NIV)*

We know, of course, that the Lord Jesus suffered for us: That is, he endured the afflictions of evil men in order to pay the purchase price of our redemption. It was God's will that his Son should suffer. In this way, Jesus secured our eternal redemption. He made full atonement for us, and reconciled us to God through the blood of his cross. (Col. 1:19-23)

God has redeemed and reconciled us to himself. Now, he requires us to live godly and righteous lives. As Christ died *for* our sins, so we are die *to* our sins. As Christ was raised never to die again, so we—as those raised with Christ—must live our new lives in him. By our character and conduct, we must show that we are the spiritually resurrected and renewed children of God. (Rom. 8:9-14; Eph. 2:6)

The apostle continues:

*(24b) ...by his wounds you have been healed. (NIV)*

Never let us forget the cost of our redemption, infers Peter. It was not the life of a good man merely, that redeemed us to God. Rather, it was the life of the only perfect Man—offered up in sacrifice—by which we were redeemed. When God gave his Son, he gave all that he had to give. So great was his love for us, and so great the cost of our salvation. (John 3:16)

By his wounds—by the terrible punishment inflicted upon him instead of us—we have been made whole. By his atoning blood, we have been healed of all our spiritual diseases. Therefore, we must never treat that blood lightly: For it is the blood of the holy Son of God. To despise it, or to tread it under foot by our attitudes or actions, is to treat both the Father and the Son with utter contempt. (Cf. Heb. 10:29-30)

In verse 25, Peter declares:

### 1 Peter 2:25

Just as wandering sheep eventually lose their way completely, so once we wandered far from God because we had completely lost our way. At that time, we were lost in sin, with no desire to seek forgiveness—until constrained to do so by the Holy Spirit.

In God's grace, the Good Shepherd sought over the hills and the mountains for the sheep that were lost—and there he found us. Now, we have returned to the Shepherd or Overseer of our souls. Now, we are safely his forever; for now he leads us by green pastures; and feeds us with his flock by the rivers of everlasting life. (Ps. 23ff; Luke 15:3-7; 19:10; John 10:11-16, 27-30)

Therefore, let us remember to whom we belong—and how much it cost the Lord, our Saviour and Shepherd, to search for us until he found us.

However, since we owe to him a debt that we can never repay, how ought we to conduct our lives? Should we not follow this loving, caring Shepherd all the way that he leads us? Moreover, does he not lead us—and feed us—from the living Word? Let us, therefore, feed on the eternal Word of Life. Let us hear and obey our Shepherd's voice—coming to

us through his Word, the Bible. Let us apply the truths of God's eternal Word to our hearts and lives. So shall we live our lives to the honour and glory of God.





# 1 Peter Chapter 3

## Husbands and Wives

### 1 Peter 3:1-6

Peter opens the third chapter of his first letter with these words:

#### 1 Peter 3:1

As believers, we are to show respect for one another; we are to honour one another, and to submit to one another in the Lord. Our submission to each other, however, must never be thought of as a submission based either on fear or on a supposed inferiority. Rather, submission must be based on love. We submit to one another because—in Christ—we are one, i.e., we are united to him as equals. As persons, nothing can alter this simple fact. God created us male and female, and—as persons—he created us equal. (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 5:21)

When, however, God's Word says that we are to submit to superiors, the superiority applies only to an individual's *office, rank or position*—not to their *person*. We are to respect and honour their rank, their position or their office.

Likewise, when God's Word says that a wife is to submit to her husband (whether or not the husband is a believer), this submission applies to the husband's *position* as head of the household. Submission does not imply the inferiority or superiority of either party. In God's eyes, both parties are equal. Nevertheless, from creation, God has ordained that a wife has to submit to her own husband, and to acknowledge his authority (or headship) over her. (Gen. 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:3,8-10; Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Tim. 2:11-14)

Great honour and responsibility is laid upon believing wives in relation to their unbelieving partners. The Lord's servant Peter, who was—or had been—a married man, reminds wives of one of their duties toward their husbands, as far as their spiritual welfare was concerned. Very often, a husband would refuse to listen to the Word of God or to the message of salvation. However, declares Peter, there is another way of bringing God's Word home to their souls: namely, by the consistent godly and loving conduct of their wives. (1 Cor. 7:16; 9:5) Such humble and godly conduct is mightier by far than the kind of conduct that arises from the rebellious spirit of the old sinful nature. By her sincere and consistent godly submission, a woman shows herself at her best. Her submission to her husband depicts her as a person of great worth, dignity and honour. (Prov. 31:10-31)

The apostle continues:

#### 1 Peter 3:2

Actions always speak louder than words. Even if a husband has refused steadfastly to listen to the word of the Gospel, he cannot refuse to take note of his wife's godly behaviour. This behaviour is without reproach or blameless. It is pure in the sight of God and men. It shows due reverence for God and for her husband. (Prov. 31:30) It is, however, a reverence that flows—not from a fearful heart—but from a quietly confident and loving heart. It issues from a heart filled with the abundant love of God; it flows from a heart in

which the graces or fruit of the Spirit abounds. This—more than any amount of debates or arguments—convinces a man of his sin, and shows to him the way of salvation.

Speaking, now, of a woman's true attractiveness, Peter writes:

### 1 Peter 3:3

In this world—or this present age—it is common practice for women to make themselves beautiful in a number of different ways. Peter is not necessarily criticising this practice, but he is emphasising where our priorities should lie.

Often, one or more of the outward adornments mentioned above enhances a woman's appearance, and increases her self-esteem. On other occasions, however, such outward adornments have the opposite effect. In one way or another, they detract from a woman's natural or God-given beauty.

In both of the above instances, the emphasis has been on the physical condition. This has its rightful and proper place. However, more important than the physical condition, is the spiritual condition. This is the inward condition of the heart, and the outward conduct produced by godliness, righteousness, humility and modesty. (1 Tim. 2:9-10; Titus 2:3-5)

The apostle continues:

### 1 Peter 3:4

Your beauty as a Christian should not be that of outward adornment. Instead, it should be the unsurpassable beauty of the heart.

One quality Peter mentions is *gentleness*. Gentleness (or meekness) does not imply weakness of character, but inner strength—an inner strength engendered by the Holy Spirit. The gentle or meek are those who commit themselves wholly to God, and who trust God completely in the everyday circumstances of their lives. They are those who—in sincerity and humility—seek to honour God and to help others. (Matt. 5:5)

In his Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, Dr. Strong says:

*“Gentleness or meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest. It stems from trust in God's goodness and control over the situation. The gentle person is not occupied with self at all. This is a work of the Holy Spirit, not of the human will.” (Gal. 5:23)*

Another quality mentioned by the apostle Peter in verse 4 of chapter 3, is a *quiet spirit*. This is another facet of real beauty—the peace or tranquillity of the one who is resting in God, and trusting in him. Instead of asserting herself or putting herself to the fore, this woman—by her reserve—makes herself more noticeable in the sight of men, and much more acceptable in the sight of God. Her modest and unassuming behaviour demonstrates to others something of her godly character and conduct.

These two characteristics—gentleness and quietness of spirit—are what constitute the kind of beauty that commends a person to God.

Peter now provides an example:

### 1 Peter 3:5

It was in this manner that the Old Testament believers who trusted in God manifested their beauty. Theirs was the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, the beauty of a holy and

confident trust in God. A woman revealed this inner beauty most clearly in the way in which she showed respect for her husband. This respect, however, did not arise from a servile fear of her husband—but from a due fear of God and a deep love for her husband. In respecting her husband, and in submitting herself to him, the wife recognised that God had appointed her husband to act as the head of the family.

Thus, the beauty of such a woman shone forth, winning her the respect and admiration of others. She won this respect and admiration, however—not from any outward display—but from the godliness, gentleness and quietness of her life. It was demonstrated by her willingness to submit herself to her husband in love, and out of a due fear of God.

God had brought them together. As individual people, the husband and the wife were equal in God's sight. However, concerning the order that God had ordained for each family unit, the wife was to submit to her husband. She was to recognise him as her head, and the head of the family. (Matt. 19:4-6; Eph. 5:22-24)

The apostle continues:

### **1 Peter 3:6**

Peter now gives an example of one of these holy women of the past—Abraham's wife, Sarah. By her godly conduct, Sarah showed herself to be a woman of outstanding beauty—a princess in regal dignity. Clearly, Sarah's conduct was not faultless. Nevertheless, the apostle Peter commends this woman for the way in which she usually conducted herself in relation to her husband. This godly woman recognised Abraham as her 'master'—i.e., her lord and head. As such, she willingly submitted herself to him, obeying him with a loving, humble and cheerful spirit (but see Gen. 18:10-15).

Because of their *faith*, Christians are termed the children of believing Abraham. Similarly, those whose *lives* are characterised by the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit are termed the daughters of Sarah. (Cf. v.6b with Gal. 3:7-9)

Now, infers Peter, if you submit to your husband, and if you acknowledge his place as head of the household, you will experience the Lord's blessing. However, in submitting to your husband, you must not give way to fear. Showing respect for your husband must never cause you to fear him—in the sense of being afraid of him. Nor must a husband ever do or say anything that induces in his wife an unhealthy or ungodly fear of him. Attitudes and behaviour that are characterised by arrogance, a domineering or intimidating spirit, or any other kindred evils, must never be used by a husband against his wife. In exercising his God-appointed headship, it must only be out of the deep love he has for his wife. She is the one to whom God has united him, and with whom he now forms one flesh. Since, however, they are one, how can a husband do or say anything that is harmful to his own self?

Although not expressly mentioned by Peter (as it is by Paul), God commands a husband to love and respect his wife. This love is not just emotional and physical love. Primarily, it is spiritual love—the highest kind of love imaginable. It is sacrificial love: the unreserved willingness to nourish and cherish his wife, and—if necessary—to protect her with his own life. (Eph. 5:33)

However, in the next verse, Peter does remind husbands of some of the duties and responsibilities that they owe toward their wives.

## Husbands to Respect Wives

Thus, to husbands, Peter writes:

### 1 Peter 3:7

Lest any husbands should vainly imagine that the apostle was giving them a charter to treat their wives as they pleased, Peter quickly dismisses this idea. In showing consideration for their wives, husbands were to care for them just as they would care for themselves. They were to consider such matters as their wife's needs. They were to respect their feelings and desires, and they were to share with their wives in meeting every legitimate need. (Gen. 2:22-25; Prov. 5:15-21; Cor. 7:3-5; 1Thess. 4:3-8; Heb. 13:4)

Being considerate also meant showing love, kindness and affection to their wives. It meant never saying or doing anything that would demean, dishearten or discourage them. On the contrary, husbands were to do only those things that would elevate their wives, encourage them, make them feel wanted above all others, and greatly desired. (Eph. 5:25-33; Col. 3:19; see also Gen. 24:67)

It is not only the wife who must respect her husband. This Scripture makes it abundantly clear that God requires a husband to respect his wife. This, of course, implies that he will never abuse or misuse her. Rather, he will always regard her as one to be greatly loved and cherished. He will look upon her as one who is precious both in the sight of the Lord, and to himself. (Cf. Mal. 2:14-16)

A wife is said to be the 'weaker partner' (KJV, *weaker vessel*) in the relationship. This is true only in respect to her physical characteristics, not in regard to her moral, spiritual or intellectual characteristics. (Cf. 1 Cor. 12:22)

In his grace and mercy, God granted you the gift of life: (not, in this verse, eternal life—but natural life). God imparted life to each of you. Subsequently, he united you as husband and wife. Therefore, live your lives as God intended. Live life to the full—especially since, as believers, you are also in possession of eternal life and are co-heirs of a heavenly inheritance.

While you remain here, however, see that nothing in your relationship becomes a hindrance or stumbling block to your joint prayers. For, if you do not remain in close communion with your heavenly Father, then you will begin to lose the sense of spiritual love that should govern your relationship with one another. Fellowship with God and mutual spiritual love is essential for controlling the way in which you live together as husband and wife.

## Love as Brothers

### 1 Peter 3:8-12

#### 1 Peter 3:8

The apostle Peter now extends his exhortations to the whole church. We are to live together harmoniously, as those who are the individual, but essential, members of one single Body—the Church. We are to bear in mind that Christ is the Head of that body of which we all form an integral and essential part. (1 Cor. 12:20-27) Therefore, we should ensure that no divisions arise in God's church—no disharmony, dissension or strife among the members of Christ's body. Rather, we are to ensure that his love continues to reign supremely in our hearts. With Christ's love in our hearts, we are to do our utmost to help one another; to support one another; to pray for one another, and to forgive one another. (Rom. 12:16; 1 Cor. 1:10)

In all things, we are to show tender or loving concern toward our fellow believers. We ought never to stand aloof from our own brothers or sisters in Christ. On the contrary, we ought to demonstrate our love for them in caring and practical ways. We ought to show compassion when compassion is required. Let us remember that there may come a day when we ourselves stand in need of understanding and compassion—rather than judgment or criticism. (Cf. Matt. 18:33)

Above all, in all our dealings with one another, we should show humility. We ought never to appear to others as better than they are—for this we most certainly are not. Rather, by submitting to them, we should make them appear better than we. We should make them feel a sense of godly worth—without patronising them. (Eph. 5:21)

To this end, let us remember the example of our blessed Lord Jesus. When his disciples ought to have ministered to their Lord and Master, it was he—their Lord and Master—who took the towel and washed his disciples' soiled feet. This is the kind and degree of love and humility we ought to show toward one another. (John 13:3-10)

As believers, we are to show humility and compassion. When offended against, we must not retaliate. Thus, Peter says:

### **1 Peter 3:9**

When we are being sorely persecuted and severely provoked, it is tempting to respond in like manner to our persecutors. However, this is contrary to the will of God for us, and contrary to the example set us by the Lord Jesus himself. (1 Pet. 2:21-23) If ever anyone had just cause to seek redress for the wrongs done to him, it was the holy Son of God. However, he sought no redress. He sought no vengeance on his enemies. On the contrary—and for our sakes—he endured the unjust scorn, reproach and cruelty of men.

The servant is not above his Master. If our Lord and Master endured such reproach for us, should not we be prepared to endure reproach for him? (Matt. 10:24-26; Heb. 12:2-3) Rather than seeking to pay back like with like—insult for insult—we ought to seek the welfare of those who try to harm us. We ought to pray for them and bless them—in sincerity, and from a pure heart. (Matt. 5:43-48)

Let us remember that—in insulting and reproaching us—they are in effect insulting and reproaching our Lord and Master. One day, they will give account for every unkind word and deed. Therefore, let us pray for them, and seek to bless them, that they may take note of our kind responses toward them. Perhaps, in his grace, God may bring them to acknowledge their sin and seek his mercy.

Persecution is part of our calling in the Lord Jesus Christ. At the time Peter wrote this letter, none of Christ's true followers escaped persecution from the world. Even today, the Lord does not guarantee us exemption from persecution. The Scriptures tell us quite plainly that God has called us not only to believe on Christ, but also to endure suffering and reproach for the sake of his glorious name. (2 Cor. 4:8-11; Phil. 1:29-30)

We must not think it strange, therefore, if we are insulted or considered as evil in the eyes of worldly men and women. Our new life in Christ is constantly reminding them of their sin and rebellion against God. This however, is something they would rather ignore or forget. Therefore—because our lives are the complete antithesis of theirs—some of them will seek to insult us and to accuse us of every kind of evil. However, we must not retaliate. Rather, we must pray for them. We must seek to bless them. (Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Thess. 5:15)

Let us remember, too, that God has promised us a very great reward in glory. In addition to the gift of eternal life and to the inheritance associated with that gift, God has prepared many other blessings for us. These glorious rewards are ours—provided we are prepared

to suffer for the sake of Christ's name. Therefore, we ought to endure suffering patiently—joyfully anticipating a future that is better by far. Our remaining time here is short, but our reward in heaven will endure throughout the eternal ages. (Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17-18)

The apostle continues:

### 1 Peter 3:10

However much we may be tempted to redress the wrongs done to us, or the insults heaped upon us, yet this is not the way of the Lord. The way of the Lord is the way of the cross—the way of suffering. It is not suffering for suffering's sake, however, but enduring reproach for the sake and name of Christ our Saviour and Lord.

Therefore, instead of seeking to avenge the wrongs done to us, let us guard our tongues from unkind remarks or harsh words—no matter how much someone may have provoked us. Let us keep our tongues from evil—remembering that we use our tongues to bless God and to sing his praises. Therefore, let us not contaminate that member of our body that honours the Lord. (Jas. 3:5-18)

Again, let us keep our lips from guile—or deceitful speech. There can be no place for crafty, cunning or deceptive remarks among the saints of the Lord. These are the characteristics of the devil and of our fallen sinful nature. (John 8:44; Eph. 4:24-27) Therefore, let us put to death such evils. Instead of returning evil for evil, let us speak peaceably to our neighbour. We should do this even when our neighbour rails against us. We should do it even when he seeks (falsely) to harm us, or to malign our character and reputation. (Prov. 15:1; Luke 6:22-23,27-29; Rom. 12:18)

Again, concerning the believer's conduct, Peter says:

### 1 Peter 3:11

In this verse, Peter is quoting from Psalm 34:14. Instead of returning evil for evil, we—as God's children—must turn (or 'about face') from the ways of evil, to practise the ways of righteousness. This behaviour alone is well pleasing to God. (Job 1:1; 2:3; 28:28; Ps. 37:27-28)

As the Lord's people, we must actively seek to establish peaceful and harmonious relationships. We must endeavour to bring about those circumstances that are conducive to peace, and that result in peace. We should understand peace as not only the *absence* of discord and strife, but also as the *presence* of harmony and unity among neighbours. (Prov. 16:6-7, 17-19) Even when peace proves to be very elusive, we are to pursue it. We are to follow after peace until we have secured it and restored harmonious relationships between brothers and sisters in Christ. (Matt. 5:9)

This is typical of the kind of attitude we ought to possess and exhibit in our everyday lives. It is from this humble and godly attitude that we ought to respond to those who insult us and treat us unjustly. We ought to seek their welfare by praying for them and by seeking God's blessing upon them. We ought to seek to establish peaceful relations with them. Even when this proves difficult to achieve, we ought to continue to pursue peace until we find it. (Rom. 14:17)

Peter reminds us that all of mankind's thoughts, motives, words and deeds lie open before God:

**1 Peter 3:12**

Still quoting from Psalm 34 (v.15: see entire Psalm) the apostle reminds us that God is watching—and taking note—of everything we think, say and do. Our Father in heaven observes and judges all our thoughts and actions. Therefore, we ought to live our lives in the knowledge that the Lord is the God who sees us; and that by him actions are weighed. (Gen. 13:13; 1 Sam. 2:3; Matt. 12:36-37)

Great, however, is the praise and honour we bring to the name of the Lord when our thoughts and actions toward our neighbour demonstrate a loving, humble and forgiving spirit.

God always hears those who seek to live their lives according to the teaching of his holy Word. Without doubt, the meek and the humble are the blessed of the Lord. They do not seek to avenge the wrongs and injustices committed against them. On the contrary, they seek only the blessing and salvation of those who malign them. (Matt. 5:3,5; Luke 6:27-36) Such believers receive a special blessing from the Lord. The love of God, the peace of God and the joy of the Lord fill their hearts in a very special sense. Great is the inward peace these dear saints enjoy in God's presence—even in the midst of their toils, trials and tribulations (cf. Ps. 37:11; 119:65; Isa. 54:13; 1 Thess. 1:6).

Above and before all others, it is the prayers of these dear saints—the meek and the humble—that the Lord hears and answers. (Ps. 66:16-20; 145:18-20) The Lord will not hear—let alone answer—the prayers of those who practise evil. No one can seek God's blessings until he has acknowledged and forsaken his sin, and has experienced the Lord's forgiveness. (Ps. 34:16)

Clearly, then, the unsaved cannot expect God to hear or answer their prayers. This is especially true since they do not present their prayers in and through the name of the Lord Jesus, except perhaps in a superstitious sense. However, in his abundant mercy, God *does* hear and answers the prayers of those who—in genuine repentance—call upon his name for salvation. (Luke 18:9-14; Acts 16:30-32; Rom. 10:12)

Far from hearing their prayers, the Lord turns himself away completely from those who practise wickedness or who remain in their sinful and unforgiven state. Indeed, the Scripture records that God is angry with the wicked every day. (Ps. 7:11-12; John 3:36)

We are God's redeemed and holy people. As such, we ought to ensure that nothing in our lives hinders our prayers to God—for example, any unforsaken, unconfessed or unforgiven sin.

**Suffering for Doing Good****1 Peter 3:13-22**

The apostle then asks:

**1 Peter 3:13**

Ultimately, no one can harm us—for we belong eternally to Christ. We are his treasured possession; we are his inheritance. People may despise us for the sake of his name, but they cannot harm our soul. God has promised that—in times of persecution—not a hair of our head will perish. (Luke 21:17-18; cf. with v.16; cf. also Ps. 121:1-8)

However, we must not understand this to mean that extreme persecution cannot result in our physical death. Rather, it means that nothing can happen to our bodies except God permits it. In addition, it means that—no matter what happens to these temporary bodies—our persecutors cannot endanger our souls in any way.

Let us, then, concentrate on doing what is right and honourable in the sight of God. Where, evidently, we are showing an eagerness to do what is right, those who falsely accuse us will be brought to shame and disgrace. Through the godliness of our lives, their false accusations will be shown up for the lies they are. (Isa. 54:17; Rom. 13:3-4)

Concerning unjust suffering, the apostle says:

### **1 Peter 3:14**

Even supposing that we are called upon to suffer unjustly for the sake of Christ's name, or for the principles of our faith, we should not become discouraged. On the contrary, we should rejoice in that we have been counted worthy to suffer for Christ. We should rejoice that—in representing his name—he has promised never to leave us nor forsake us. We are indeed, then, blessed—or supremely happy—if we share in suffering for Christ. (Acts 5:41; 2 Thess. 1:5; Heb. 13:5-6)

Quoting from Isaiah 8:12, the apostle Peter continues:

*(14b) "...Do not fear what they fear;<sup>3</sup> do not be frightened." (NIV)*

Let us never be unduly afraid of what might happen to us. Remember that God holds our lives and our circumstances in his hands. Nothing can happen to us unless a better way has been planned for us by the Lord. Let us, therefore, submit to his will, and he will direct us in the good and the right way. By his Word and by his Spirit, the Lord will guide our steps in the way that he wants us to follow. (Isa. 8:12-13; Job 12:9-10; Acts 17:25,28; Prov. 20:24)

Therefore, let us not fear what our would-be persecutors can do to us, or what they might *threaten* to do to us. God controls our destiny—not they. Moreover, God controls *their* destiny—not they. Therefore, let us continue to trust our faithful Creator. Let us continue to pursue a life of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 10:28-31)

The apostle continues:

### **1 Peter 3:15**

*(15a) But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord... (NIV)*

Our bodies are individual temples of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we ought to consider the members—or parts—of our bodies as the sacred vessels within God's holy temple.

In our *hearts* (or minds), we ought to set apart—or sanctify—Christ as Lord. We should let the realisation of his holy presence within us set a guard over everything we think, say and do. If the Spirit of Christ sanctifies his holy temple (our bodies), then we will find that everything we do is being done in line with God's will and purposes for us, and not in accordance with our own unspiritual desires. (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 6:18 - 7:1)

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<sup>3</sup> Or, "do not fear their threats."



The apostle Peter continues:

*(15b) ...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have... (NIV)*

Whenever we are called upon to testify to the grace of God in our lives, let us do so readily and willingly. Let us always be in a position to answer those who ask us why our lives are different from theirs. Let us answer them when they ask us why we believe as we do. Let us tell them why our lives are filled with a sense of peace, joy, contentment and fulfilment that is unknown to the world. Let us explain to them why we try to treat even our opponents with love and respect. (Col. 4:5-6; cf. Matt. 10:18-20) Again, let us be prepared to answer those who question us concerning our hope and assurance of sins forgiven. Let us tell them something of the indwelling Holy Spirit in our lives, and of eternal life and future glory.

Peter continues:

*(15c) ...But do this with gentleness and respect... (NIV)*

All these spiritual matters are unknown to the world. Therefore, with love, gentleness and great humility, let us provide an explanation to those who ask us about the way of salvation, or about eternal life in Christ.

When witnessing for Christ, it is essential that we show real love and true humility. We must remember that—at one time—we stood before God where these people now stand. In that lost condition we would have remained, had it not been for the grace of God. By his grace alone, the Lord has delivered us from eternal loss. (Cf. Acts 20:19; Phil. 2:3; Titus 3:2)

We ought, therefore, to explain to these enquirers what is essential to a right relationship with God. We should warn them of the consequences of remaining estranged from God. However, we should do all this in a spirit of gentleness. In addition, we should respect those whom we are addressing.

Thus, Peter says:

### **1 Peter 3:16**

Whatever we do, we ought to ensure that we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of our Lord and Master. In answering those who question us about our faith, we are acting as the Lord's ambassadors. We are his officially appointed representatives. We should remember, therefore, whom we are representing: Jesus, the Son of the living God. Therefore, we should speak well of him. At all times, we should endeavour to live worthily of him. (Phil. 1:27; Titus 2:8; Matt. 16:16)

By keeping a close watch on our character and conduct, no one will be able to speak ill of us—at least, not justifiably. Those who do speak maliciously against such good behaviour will indeed come to acknowledge their sin. Eventually, God will convict them. They will be ashamed of all the evil they have spoken against us falsely. (Acts 24:16; 2 Tim. 1:3; 1 Pet. 2:19) Perhaps in that day, if God spares them, they will endeavour to seek our forgiveness. We must be ready and willing to forgive—for, although, in the past, we have sorely offended God, *he* has forgiven *us*.

Speaking again of unjust suffering, Peter writes:

### 1 Peter 3:17

We are not to seek out suffering for suffering's sake. Rather, when God decrees that we should suffer for our faith, these circumstances will be presented to us. Under these circumstances—and under these circumstances alone—we should learn to accept suffering as the will of God. (1 Pet. 4:19)

As we seek to live a life that honours the Lord, we may find ourselves faced with many trials and tribulations, and with many temptations. However, we should rejoice in this kind of trial, knowing that God is faithful. We know that he will not permit us to endure more than we are able to bear, but will provide a way of escape. (1 Pet. 1:6; Jas. 1:2-3; 1 Cor. 10:13)

We should be prepared, therefore, to suffer for righteousness' sake—for this is according to God's will. We should be prepared—if need be—to endure misunderstanding, scorn and contempt. We should be prepared—for the sake of Christ's name—to have our character maligned and our conduct misrepresented. (1 Pet. 3:14)

However, none of us ought to suffer for a *justifiable* reason. None of us should be guilty of committing some offence or practising some sin that has led to our suffering. This kind of suffering does not accord with God's will. Therefore, we must endeavour to avoid the very semblance of evil in our lives. (1 Pet. 4:12-16; 1 Thess. 5:22)

The apostle cites the sufferings of the Lord Jesus as an example of unjust—but planned and purposeful—suffering:

### 1 Peter 3:18

*(18a) For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God... (NIV)*

When Christ died for our sins, he died for our sins once-for-all. When he, the Righteous One, shed his blood to make atonement for us—the unrighteous—he did so once-for-all. (Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 26)

By his once-for-all sacrifice of atonement, the Lord has redeemed us for himself. Therefore, let us reckon as dead—once-for-all—the desires of our old sinful nature. That old nature has been crucified with Christ. Our new life ought, therefore, to be lived as befits those who have been raised with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly realms. For it is through his atoning sacrifice and mediation on our behalf that we have been brought near to God. (Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:5; Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:15; Eph. 2:6)

Peter continues:

*(18b) He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit... (NIV)*

In order to fulfil God's purposes for the redemption of lost men and women, the Lord Jesus was put to death on a cross. After his burial, Jesus remained in the tomb until the third day. However, on the third day, he arose from death by the power of Almighty God. This power was applied through the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, by God's almighty power, the body of the once dead Jesus was raised never to die again. (Acts 2:23-24; 10:40; Rom. 1:4; 6:9; 8:11)

Still speaking of the Holy Spirit, Peter continues:

**1 Peter 3:19-20**

*(19) through whom also he went and preached to the spirits [or souls] in prison  
(20a) who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah  
while the ark was being built... (NIV)*

Through the same Holy Spirit who raised him from the dead, Jesus preached the message of his triumphant victory to imprisoned spirits (or souls) now imprisoned by the judgment and sentence of God. These were the spirits of the men and women living in Noah's day. (Cf. 1 Pet. 4:6; 2 Pet. 2:4-5)

The lives of these men and women had been filled with wickedness, violence and corruption. During the time he was building the ark, Noah had been proclaiming to these wicked individuals a message of salvation from God's coming judgment. However, although God waited patiently, everyone—except Noah and his immediate family—refused to believe that the LORD was about to destroy the world of sinful mankind. Consequently, all those who failed to seek refuge in the ark, subsequently perished in the waters of the deluge. (Gen. 6:3-18; 7:21-23)

To these wicked—but ever-living, imprisoned and tormented—spirits or souls, Christ proclaimed his triumphant victory.<sup>4</sup> This was a message of victory over Satan, sin, death, hell and the grave. This very victory, however, sealed eternally the final doom of these rebellious and unbelieving souls. It rendered certain their everlasting punishment in hell. (Cf. 2 Pet. 2:9)

In the latter part of verse 20, the apostle writes:

*(20b) In it only a few people [KJV, souls], eight in all, were saved through water... (NIV)*

In the ark built by Noah and others, only eight people experienced deliverance from God's judgment on the world of that time. Apart from those in the ark, all mankind and all other air-breathing creatures were destroyed.

Those who believed God, however, found salvation through heeding his Word and seeking deliverance through his appointed means—the ark. In the same way, those who be-

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<sup>4</sup> Some interpreters do not believe that this passage teaches a personal declaration of victory by the Lord Jesus to these imprisoned spirits. Rather, in their opinion, Christ was preached to them in and through the preaching of Noah. (Cf. 2 Pet. 2:5: See also Eph. 2:17, where it can be seen that Christ's 'coming to preach' is not necessarily by means of his coming in person. In this passage, it refers to the preaching of Christ by his servants. Christ is preached whenever his servants proclaim the Gospel message).

The three principal interpretations of this passage may be summarised as follows:

1. The preincarnate Christ preached to these individuals through Noah (2 Pet. 2:5). However, because they refused to heed Christ warning them through Noah of God's coming judgment, they perished in the Flood and subsequently were imprisoned by God; or,
2. Following his resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed his victory to these incarcerated spirits, during his "descent into hell" (cf. Eph. 4:9); or,
3. The risen Christ proclaimed his victory to the imprisoned fallen angels (identified as the "sons of God" in Gen. 6:2,4).

## Expository Notes

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lieve God today, find salvation through heeding his Word and seeking deliverance through his appointed means—his one and only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as the ark safely delivered the believer from God's wrath and *temporal* judgment, so faith in Christ safely delivers the believer from God's wrath and *final* judgment.

Using the analogy of the flood that destroyed and purified the old world, the apostle says:

### 1 Peter 3:21

*(21a) and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also... (NIV)*

This water—the overflowing waters of the flood—symbolises in our own personal experiences the waters of baptism. This water symbolises the regenerating and cleansing effects of the Holy Spirit. It symbolises our purification in the sight of God. It symbolises our death, burial and resurrection in union with Christ. (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3ff)

The floodwaters swept away the life of the old world, and brought in a new creation. Similarly, the waters of baptism typify the sweeping away of the old lifestyle, and the bringing in of a new creation.

The baptismal waters themselves have no power to transform or regenerate a person's soul. Baptism typifies death, burial and resurrection with Christ. In addition, however, the waters of baptism speak of the cleansing and regenerating effect of God's Holy Spirit. It is by this *spiritual* cleansing and regeneration that we are constituted the saved of the Lord. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17)

Thus Peter continues:

*(21b) ...not the removal [KJV, putting away] of dirt [KJV, filth] from the body [KJV, flesh] but the pledge of a good conscience toward God... (NIV)*

It is not the physical cleansing effected by the waters of baptism that saves us. This merely removes the outward contamination. Rather, it is the inward cleansing effected by the Holy Spirit that saves us. (Titus 3:5) This alone—the cleansing of the Spirit effected by the Word and by the atoning blood of Christ—is what saves us and reconciles us to God. It is on the grounds of Christ's finished work, and through faith in him, that we are saved. Moreover, it is because of this that we can stand before God with a good conscience. (Eph. 5:26-27)

The apostle continues:

*(21c) ...It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ... (NIV)*

This is the one and only reason why we have experienced the forgiveness of sins. Christ died for our sins, and he was raised for our justification. His resurrection proves beyond all doubt that his atoning sacrifice on our behalf was acceptable to, and accepted by, God. (Rom. 4:25) By that sacrifice, Jesus made a propitiation for our sins. Consequently, God has forgiven us, reconciled us to himself and accepted us into his family. He has also granted to us the gift of eternal life. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus, then, is what forms the sole basis and guarantee of our salvation. (Rom. 3:25; 5:10-11)

Speaking of the resurrected Lord Jesus, the apostle writes:

### 1 Peter 3:22

*(22a) who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand... (NIV)*

This same Jesus, through whom we have received the atonement, has now gone into heaven. There, he continues to intercede on our behalf, pleading the merits of his precious blood. This is why the sacrifice of Christ need never—and can never—be repeated. The Lord Jesus has already made a once-for-all sacrifice of atonement for us. That sacrifice remains effective forever. Hence, the reason Jesus can continually intercede with the Father on our behalf, i.e., he mediates for us on the basis of his blood once shed at Calvary. (Heb. 7:25; 9:12; 10:12,14; 13:11)

When he ascended into heaven, Jesus was highly exalted by his Father. The Father gave to his Son the name that is above every name. Once more, the Son assumed that position in glory, which—from eternity—he occupied in relation to his Father: namely, equality with God. (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 1:3,8-9; 10:12; 12:2; Phil. 2:9-10; see also Isa. 9:7; Heb. 2:9)

Peter continues:

*(22b) ...with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. (NIV)*

All power in heaven and on earth has been given to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, in heaven, he is able to exercise this power as the Supreme Ruler or Sovereign of all creation.

Not only are earthly rulers in subjection to the King of kings, but all heavenly beings are also under his control. All celestial spirits; all authorities above and below, and all powers of whatever nature must yield in submission to Christ the King. (Matt. 28:18; Col. 2:15; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 19:16)

Such is the nature and extent of the kingdom over which Christ rules. Such, too, is the power exercised by the one who is our beloved Saviour and Lord. With such immense power and glory at his command, however, who can ever come between us and the one who loves us with an everlasting love? (Rom. 8:35-39)



# 1 Peter Chapter 4

## Living According to God's Will

### 1 Peter 4:1-6

#### 1 Peter 4:1

Since our Lord and Redeemer willingly subjected his body and soul to intense suffering for us, we ought to be prepared to suffer for the sake of his name. The Lord Jesus endured suffering unjustly. So must we, infers Peter. He endured reproach on our account. We must endure reproach on his account, or on account of others. He is our living example, and we must follow in his steps. (Cf. Heb. 12:1-4; see also Gal. 2:20)

In Philippians, the apostle Paul writes:

*(5) Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

*(6) Who, being in very nature<sup>5</sup> God,  
did not consider equality with God  
something to be grasped,*

*(7) but made himself nothing,  
taking the very nature<sup>6</sup> of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.*

*(8) And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to  
death—even death on a cross! (Phil. 2:5-8 NIV)*

In the next part of verse 1, Peter writes:

*(1c) ...because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. (NIV)*

That we suffer at all for the sake of Christ's name is proof that we belong to Christ.

Again, because we have been born again and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we are more conscious or more aware of sin in our lives. Therefore, when it is a result of sin, we feel our suffering more acutely. However, we ought never to suffer as those who are guilty of practising sin in one form or another. In this respect, we have ceased from sin. Sin no longer has dominion over us. On the contrary, we are—or should be—controlled by the desires of God's Holy Spirit. Therefore, although we suffer as a result of our sinful failings, and for the sake of Christ's name, yet we suffer as those who are the Lord's. We suffer as those whom God has forgiven, justified and reconciled to himself. We are God's children; therefore, we cannot continue to practise sin. (Rom. 6:1-2, 11-12)

<sup>5</sup> Or, *in the form of* [NIV footnote to Phil. 2:6]

<sup>6</sup> Or, *the form* [NIV footnote to Phil. 2:7]

The apostle enlarges on this theme by saying:

### 1 Peter 4:2

We have finished with the deliberate practice of sin in our lives, and with the fulfilment of evil human desires. Now, we live our lives according to the will of God. We have forsaken our old sinful ways of life. Through the power of God's indwelling Holy Spirit, we live our new lives according to the teaching of God's Word. Through this Word, we find forgiveness and cleansing for every sin that we commit. (Eph. 2:22-24; 1 John 1:8-10)

In verse 3, the apostle reminds his readers of the nature of their past lives and conduct:

### 1 Peter 4:3

Prior to their conversion, some of these believers had been guilty of one or more of these sins. Not only had they indulged in this type of ungodly behaviour, but also they had regularly practised such sins. Before their salvation, debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and idolatry, had been to some of them an accepted way of life.

But for the grace of God, they would have remained in this condition. However, out of his abundant mercy, the Lord had redeemed them from the slavery of their sinful lifestyle, and from the punishment due to them for their sinful behaviour. Those who formerly had been alienated from God had been reconciled to God unconditionally. (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21)

Therefore, implies Peter, the Lord has delivered you from such sins. He has granted you new life in Christ. Out of love and gratitude to God, therefore, you must now live your lives as he desires—not as old the sinful nature desires.

Concerning his reader's former worldly friends, the apostle says in verse 4:

### 1 Peter 4:4

In many cases, infers Peter, our old friends cannot understand why our conduct has changed so dramatically. They cannot comprehend why we no longer associate with them in their sinful behaviour. Although we may have told them of our conversion to Christ, yet—in their unregenerate state—they cannot appreciate what this involves. It lies completely beyond their unspiritual understanding.

We ought not to be surprised, therefore, if our former associates tease us, mock us, or attempt to seduce us into joining with them again. Similarly, we ought not to be surprised if they heap abuse and contempt on us when we refuse to rejoin them.

Because they cannot understand spiritual truths and spiritual motives, they imagine (wrongly) that—when we refuse to join them—we are in fact rejecting them. Of course, it is not *they* whom we are rejecting. Rather, it is *their sinful behaviour and practises* that we are rejecting. Very often, however, they cannot comprehend this. Therefore, we ought not to think ill of them. We must remember that, at one time, we too were in a similar position.

Consider what the Scripture says (v.5):

### 1 Peter 4:5

Those who now despise us, or who fail to understand why we cannot and will not join them, will—one day—be called to account. The Lord will judge them for every word they have spoken against his people. He will judge them for everything they have thought—but have not expressed orally, and for everything that they have done. The same Lord who is *our Redeemer*, will—on that day—be *their Judge*.



Therefore, we ought to pray for their salvation; remembering that once we lived as they now live. Once, we did what they now do. Once, we thought as they now think. Pray, therefore, that God will convict them of their sin and bring them to repentance and faith in his Son—before his Son summons them to stand before his terrible judgment throne.

No matter how sinful or depraved a person may be, where there is life there is hope of God's mercy. On the day of final judgment, however, no hope of God's mercy remains for anyone.

In verse 6, the apostle Peter confirms the need for them (and others) to hear the gospel:

#### **1 Peter 4:6**

When the gospel is preached to unregenerate men and women, it is being preached to those who are now 'dead': That is, it is being preached to those who are presently and spiritually dead. They are dead in trespasses and sins. (Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 2:13) In this respect, all of fallen humanity is now dead. They will remain spiritually dead unless they hear and respond to the gospel. Therefore, if they are to have any hope of salvation in Christ, it is paramount that the gospel is preached to all nations.<sup>7</sup>

At one time, we too were spiritually dead. However, even although we walked as the 'living dead', the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ came to us. Through hearing and believing this gospel, we experienced regeneration. The Holy Spirit of God enlightened our spiritual darkness by creating within us new spiritual life. The Spirit did this by bringing us under conviction of sin, and by enabling us to repent and believe the truth of God's Word. Now, by God's grace, we are no longer under the sentence of condemnation. (Rom. 8:1)

One day, the Lord will judge us concerning what we have done while in this body. However, this judgment will determine our level of reward. It will not affect the gift of salvation and eternal life that God has given us. Meanwhile, we should desire to live our new life in a way that pleases and honours our heavenly Father.

### **Serving Others**

#### **1 Peter 4:7-11**

In verse 7, Peter continues:

#### **1 Peter 4:7**

The end is nearer now than when we first believed. Although this may seem like a statement of the obvious, Peter is exhorting his readers to live in consideration of the Lord's Second Coming. They were to conduct their everyday affairs as though the Lord might appear in the midst of what they were doing. Clearly, this could have unpleasant implications for many of God's people. Not only would they be unprepared for their Lord's coming, but his coming would expose their hidden sins. (Luke 12:35-40)

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<sup>7</sup> An alternative interpretation of verse 6 above supposes that *"the gospel [which] was preached even to those who are now dead,"* refers to those who lived and died before the coming of Christ. Even under the Old Testament, the gospel was preached—although not so fully as after the coming of Christ. Everyone, however, who heard the gospel during this period will—at the resurrection—be judged according to their works. (Cf. 1 Pet. 3:19-20)

Keep your mind clear; or, as the apostle Paul says,

*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Col. 3:2 NIV)*

Our bodies and our lives are not our own. God redeemed us at a price. Our bodies, therefore, belong to him—not to ourselves. They are the sacred temples of God's Holy Spirit. Therefore, infers Peter, we must exercise self-discipline or self-control over our bodies and lives.

When we are aware of the Spirit's living presence in our lives, and when we have surrendered to his controlling power, we try to avoid grieving God's Holy Spirit. Similarly, when we permit God's Holy Spirit to fill and control our lives, it is that much easier to maintain prayerful fellowship with our heavenly Father. In addition, we rejoice to see our prayers being answered according to the will and purposes of God.

Then, in verse 8, the apostle writes:

### **1 Peter 4:8**

The apostle reminds these believers to express their love to one another. They were not, however, to do so formally and insincerely, but out of a genuine and heartfelt love for their brothers and sisters in Christ. The tender, compassionate, caring love of Christ was to become the hallmark of all his people. This is spiritual love: the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is the love of the Father filling our lives, and overflowing into the lives of others. This is our living practical expression of the deep, deep love of Jesus. (John 13:34-35)

When God loved us, he did not overlook our sins. Yet, he did not judge us because of our sins. Rather, in his eternal love for us, God judged our sins in the person of our Substitute—his own Son. Therefore, implies, the apostle, we ought so to love our brothers and sisters in Christ that we will not sit in judgment upon them. We do not fail to acknowledge their sins—just as we do not fail to acknowledge our own sins. However, we are not their judges. God alone will be their judge, just as he will be our judge. (Matt. 7:1-5; Rom. 14:4-13)

If our brothers or sisters commit sins worthy of public condemnation and discipline, then it is for the oversight of the church to judge them. We, however, must love them, as Christ loves us. We must show the same compassion toward them that the Lord showed to us.

For this reason, Peter declares,

*...love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. (NIV; Cf. Prov. 10:12; Jas. 5:20)*

In verse 9, the apostle writes:

### **1 Peter 4:9**

Here is another way in which we can show practical love to our fellow-believers: by offering hospitality to them. We should invite them into our homes and share with them in fellowship, meals and prayer. We should show them that we accept them as one of the family—the family of God's children. (Rom. 12:13)

When we do this, we ought not to do it grudgingly. We ought not to do it while complaining secretly about the person or about the effort expended in entertaining him or her. We ought to do it as unto the Lord. We ought to do it as offering hospitality unto one of God's

own children. Concerning believing strangers, we ought to show hospitality to them as though we might be entertaining God's holy angels unawares. (Heb. 13:2)

**1 Peter 4:10**

The Lord has granted to each one of us different gifts, talents or abilities. We ought to use these gifts—not for ourselves—but for the glory of God and the good of others. Whatever gift God has entrusted to us, ought to be applied to the service of others. Whatever we are good at doing, we should do it to help those who are less able.

God has shown amazing grace to us. We ought to be faithful to him in administering the various forms of God's grace. This may be in service within the church, the community or the home. It may be in witnessing on an individual basis to others; or it may be in assisting others in their need. (Rom. 12:6-11)

In whatever manner we administer God's gifts of grace, we should do so faithfully and diligently. On the Day of Judgment, God will assess and reward those good deeds that were known publicly. However, he will also assess and reward those deeds of kindness that were performed privately, and were known to no one but the people we helped, and the Lord.

In verse 11, Peter specifies some gifts of God's grace:

**1 Peter 4:11**

*(11a) If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God... (NIV)*

Anyone who speaks of the things of Christ should do it in the realisation that he is speaking concerning the very words of God. Whenever he uses the Scriptures to demonstrate the truths of the gospel, he is reiterating what God himself has said.

All Scripture is inspired by God, or is 'God-breathed'. Therefore, when we use God's Word, we ought to remember that we are presenting not only the word, but also the voice, of the living God. The Holy Spirit uses this commanding and convincing voice to challenge and convict men and women of their sin. (Rom. 3:2; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 4:1-5; 2 Pet. 1:20-21)

In the next part of verse 11, Peter writes:

*(11b) ...If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides... (NIV)*

Do we serve the Lord? Do we serve others? In serving others for the sake of Christ, we are serving Christ.

At times, prolonged service can seem burdensome, discouraging or disheartening to even the most faithful of God's children. However, when we recognise our service as being performed unto the Lord, then the burdens become lighter. When we look to him to give us daily strength to meet the physical, mental and emotional demands, the Lord is more than willing to satisfy our every need.

Not that he will necessarily remove every difficulty. However, he will give us the strength necessary to cope with even the most unpleasant or arduous tasks. When we are serving him, his grace is sufficient for us. His strength is made perfect through our weakness. (2 Cor. 12:9)

The vessel that is most fragile and nearest to breaking, is the vessel that he most cherishes and remoulds by the skill of his hands.

In the latter part of verse 11, the apostle closes this section with a doxology:

*(11c) ...so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. (NIV)*

We serve our Lord and Master, to bring praise and glory to our heavenly Father's name through him. To him, therefore, be all the glory and all the power; now, and for all the ages of eternity.

## Suffering for Christ

### 1 Peter 4:12-19

#### 1 Peter 4:12

We should not be surprised that we suffer reproach for the sake of Christ. We ought not to be amazed that the world does not understand the believer, and persecutes us for our faith. Similarly, we ought not to be surprised at the intensity or severity of our trials.

We should remember that we are no longer under the controlling influence of the evil one—for now we belong to the Lord. The people of the world, however, are still the children of the evil one; and the evil one uses them to criticise and attack God's children (cf. 1 John 5:19). Therefore, at times, we may expect painful sufferings. However, these sufferings are evidence that we do not belong to the world—for the world does not persecute its own in this manner. We are the redeemed and special children of God.

#### 1 Peter 4:13

Instead of being surprised at our sufferings for the Lord, we ought rather to rejoice in our difficulties. However, we do not rejoice in our sufferings *as such*. Rather, we rejoice in the knowledge that we are enduring trial because of, or for the sake of, Christ's name.

Incidentally, these sometimes-painful trials will purify the dross from our lives, and make us more dependent upon the grace of God for daily living. Therefore, we learn that trials are beneficial in that they direct us from our limited self-sufficiency to God's all-sufficiency.

We ought, therefore, to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ's name. These sufferings are but for a time. Life at best is very brief. However, the joy that shall follow when our Lord appears in his glory, shall endure throughout the eternal ages. Then, all pain, sorrow and suffering will pass away. All tears will cease to flow; for never again will there arise anything in our lives or in the lives of others to cause us grief, sorrow or pain. (Isa. 25:8; Rev. 21:4)

In verse 14, the apostle writes:

#### 1 Peter 4:14

If, because of Christ's name, people reproach and insult us, then our blessings are considerable. When, because of our faith, we suffer insult, we ought to count ourselves happy indeed. (Matt. 5:10-12; Jas. 1:2-3) In abusing us in this way, people are acknowledging that we belong to Christ. Their reaction is typical of those who are yet at enmity with God by their sinful lives—lives under the control of Satan.

This is why we must bear with them patiently. By showing them something of Christ's love, they may be brought under the influence of God's saving grace. Perhaps by our pa-

tience and understanding, they too may be convicted of their sin, and be led to repentance and faith in Christ.

In any event, let us remember that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of glory and of God who rests upon us, and who abides within us forever. Our persecutors know nothing of God's Holy Spirit, or of the fruit of the Spirit. Since we have experienced God's everlasting love in our lives and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we ought to pray for, and bear with, those who seek to insult us and reproach us. (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:28)

In verse 15, Peter cautions:

**1 Peter 4:15**

If we endure suffering, it should never be for a criminal offence: for then we would be suffering justly for the crime we had committed.

Again, we should never suffer for interfering in other people's lives. We ought never to engage in any form of meddling, gossiping, or anything else of like nature. If we do, we invite suffering upon ourselves—but such is not the kind of suffering that honours God, or glorifies his name. (Cf. 1 Pet. 2:20)

In verse 16, the apostle continues:

**1 Peter 4:16**

If, however, we truly suffer as a Christian, then we have nothing of which to be ashamed, and no cause for fear or alarm. This is the kind of suffering that we may expect as believers; the kind that God permits, and that honours him. Instead of being ashamed of such suffering—or of our commitment to Christ—we ought to consider ourselves privileged to bear Christ's name. Therefore, let us praise God that we are his children, and that we are brothers and sisters of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 5:41; 2 Tim. 1:12; Phil. 1:29-30; 1 Pet. 3:17)

In verse 17, Peter continues:

**1 Peter 4:17**

It is time for judgment to begin with the family of God, i.e., the children of God.

God will deal with us according to our actions. He will take into account our responses to those who have insulted and persecuted us. He will consider whether we have been more concerned for their salvation, or for our own pride and reputation. He will judge us according as we have dealt with others. (Matt. 12:36-37)

God's judgment, of course, includes much more than this. Although it cannot affect our salvation, it can certainly affect our level of reward.

However, if the judgment of God begins with his children, what will it be like for those who are not his children? What will become of those who do not possess the gift of salvation, and who have not obeyed the gospel of God? (John 3:18,36; Rev. 20:12,15)

In verse 18, Peter expresses this question in the words of Proverbs 11:31:

**1 Peter 4:18**

{Cf. Prov. 11:31}

## Expository Notes

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People are saved only by God's grace—not by their own effort or self-will. However, when a person refuses to seek God's salvation, and when he chooses instead to live apart from God, what will become of him? (Rom. 9:16; Ps. 14:2-3; Rom. 3:10-18)

Of course, there can only be one answer. Unless the Holy Spirit leads him to repent of his sin and believe on Christ, he will perish forever in the lake of fire. Therefore, it is essential that God's children do not despise those who despise them, but rather attempt to reach them for Christ.

In verse 19, the apostle concludes this chapter by saying:

### **1 Peter 4:19**

In view of all this, let those who suffer according to the plan and purposes of God, endure such suffering patiently and with rejoicing. Let us commit ourselves to God. The Lord knows the circumstances of every trial that comes into our lives. He permits or ordains these trials.

He who loves us with an everlasting love will never permit his children to endure more than they are able to bear. Rather, in the time of trial, he will uphold us with his almighty and everlasting arms.

The Lord's love for us will never depart until the day that God ceases to be; for, like God himself, his love is eternal, and his mercies are forever sure.

# 1 Peter Chapter 5

## Shepherd God's Flock

### 1 Peter 5:1-4

#### 1 Peter 5:1

At the beginning of his letter, Peter had referred to himself as an apostle. Now, in this chapter, he refers to himself as an elder or overseer of the church, and a fellow-elder with other servants of God. Thus, it is clear, that Peter does not consider himself superior in person or office to other elders or overseers of God's church. Such authority as he possessed was that which pertained to his office as an apostle of the Lord Jesus; an office and an authority that Peter held in common with the Twelve and with Paul.

Possibly, as an *elder* (or 'bishop') Peter was responsible for the care of a number of churches. Certainly, as an *apostle*, he was responsible for all the churches commissioned to him. In Peter's case, it is possible that the majority of believers came from a Jewish background.

In this passage, Peter addresses other members of the oversight. He points out to them their responsibilities toward God and toward the flock under their care. Therefore, in verse 2, the apostle writes:

#### 1 Peter 5:2

Peter exhorts these elders to tend the flock of God. Tending the flock of God involves, but is not limited to, the following:

- Feeding God's sheep by leading them in the 'green pastures' where an abundant spiritual supply might be found for their souls: That is, by expounding to them regularly and consistently all the truths of God's Holy Word.
- Keeping God's flock safe from the evil one by nourishing them continually on the Word of truth, and encouraging them to study and meditate prayerfully on that Word for themselves.
- Praying for and with the flock that they might grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ—the Great Shepherd of the sheep. (Heb. 13:20)
- Preserving God's flock from error, deception, and false teaching, and also from anything that tends toward disharmony or disunity among church members.
- Teaching the flock (or church of God) those things that lead to truth, the expression of true Christian love, and purity of life.
- In love, disciplining those members of the flock that stray wilfully from the fold: That is, correcting in love those members of the church who sin publicly, in order to lead them to repentance and to restore them to fellowship with God.

(Isa. 40:11; John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 2:1-15)

However, insofar as Peter addresses these elders or overseers, in watching over God's flock, you must do so cheerfully and willingly, and not because it is your duty to do so. The Lord has entrusted his people to your care. You, therefore, must prove diligent in caring for God's people.

Not only must these elders (or pastors and other church leaders) meet their flock's *spiritual* needs, but they must also help them with their *emotional* (i.e., *psychological/mental*) needs—as far as this was possible and within the realms of their God-appointed spiritual office. Again, the leaders must ensure the provision of their flock's *physical* necessities. There ought to be no needy member among God's people.

In order that no single church leader might become overburdened with the weight of these responsibilities, the various duties ought to be apportioned among the elders, deacons and other officers of the church, as God has equipped them.

On no account, however, must the elders or other leaders perform these tasks with the thought of gain or reward. The Lord will reward them for the task they perform in his name and for the sake of his church; and, where appropriate, the church will pay them what is due for their service. However, no pastor, elder or other church leader must ever look after God's flock with the primary motive of being paid for their service. On the contrary, they must serve the Lord eagerly and cheerfully. (1 Cor. 9:7)

Those who prove faithful in the discharge of their office will find the Lord faithful in meeting their every need. Those, however, who put financial gain first, stand to find themselves last when their own needs need to be met.

The apostle continues:

### 1 Peter 5:3

Peter reminds these church leaders that they have been appointed to minister to the needs of God's people. On no account, however, must any of these leaders consider that their appointment to a particular office within God's church entitles them to some exalted rank. Those whom God appoints to serve others, are *servants* of others—not their superiors, lords or masters. In their turn, these God-appointed servants of the church bear upon their shoulders the responsibility of meeting the needs of others by ministering to them, i.e., *by serving them*. (Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:24-27)

Service, however, involves love, compassion and humility. Yes, there is a place for discipline; and it is true that discipline may involve judgment, rebuke, correction and punishment—but only in love. (Gal. 6:12-6) The Lord's servant must not be harsh with the flock of God. He must never domineer or lord it over God's people. Each one of us must remember that—except for God's grace—he who stands today, may not stand tomorrow.

Instead, then, of exercising an overbearing or tyrannical spirit over God's flock, an elder or other member of the oversight ought to be a living example of Christ. His life ought to reflect the love, compassion, kindness, patience and understanding of his Lord and Master. He ought to care for the flock of God as God's Son has cared for him. Similarly, he ought to deal with the lost and straying sheep in the same way that the Great Shepherd of the sheep treats them. The elder is, after all, the under-shepherd. (Contrast Ezek. 34:1-16)

Peter continues:

### 1 Peter 5:4

It is the responsibility of the members of the oversight to take care of God's flock, and to preserve that flock from harm and danger. One day, however, this responsibility will end. The Chief Shepherd will appear to bring his flock home to his heavenly fold. Then, he will



reward his under-shepherds according to their faithfulness in feeding and caring for his flock. Those proving faithful will receive that crown—that eternal reward—in glory.

This reward, of course, is quite distinct from salvation. Salvation is not a reward but a gift. The rewards given to God's people will be for faithfulness to and in the Lord's service, or for the sake of the Lord's name. This reward will never diminish or fade. It will be as a glorious and righteous garland crowning the heads of the faithful, including the faithful under-shepherds of the Lord Jesus Christ. They will receive a reward commensurate with their fidelity and service to the cause of Christ and his church. (1 Cor. 9:18,25)

## God Gives Grace to the Humble

### 1 Peter 5:5-7

#### 1 Peter 5:5

{Cf. Prov. 3:34}

Not only were the elders—and older men in general—to show humility in the Lord's service, but younger men (and women) were to demonstrate a like humility. They were to show respect for their elders (both as the members of the oversight, and as older men or women). (Lev. 19:32)

Younger men and women were to submit to the authority of the elders. They were to recognise that the exercise of such authority in the church was the exercise of the leaders' God-given duties and responsibilities regarding the care of God's flock. (1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17) However, the authority to which these younger members were to submit was not of a domineering or tyrannical type. The Lord forbade such abuse of authority to those who shepherded his flock. Rather, it was an authority marked by love, respect, dignity and caring compassion for God's people. It was an authority characterised by the badge of humility and service. (Luke 22:24-27)

Humility, however, was not to be reserved only to certain people within the church. In the next part of verse 5, Peter says that all of us are to clothe ourselves with humility—regardless of what position we might occupy in God's church. Instead of acting from self-important pride or self-interest, we are to show humility toward one another. We are to demonstrate genuine concern for other people's interests and wellbeing. (Phil. 2:4)

As can be seen from the latter part of this verse (quoting Prov. 3:34), God sets himself resolutely against those who are proud in spirit. On the other hand, he gives abundant grace to the humble: not, however, to those who profess humility but do not practise it, but to those whose actions demonstrate a truly humble spirit.

Peter writes:

#### 1 Peter 5:6

*(6) Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (NIV)*

In verse 6, the apostle continues this theme—but this time relating to God.

*"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand..." (NIV)*

Peter exhorts his readers—and here particularly, the younger members of the church—to assume a truly humble and sincere attitude before their Father in heaven. Again, in their relations with one another, they were to prefer others before themselves.

The apostle encourages all his readers to submit to the Lord's rightful authority over their lives. They were to yield to the Lord's sovereign sway in determining his plans for their lives. In everything, these believers were to obey God's will, and submit to his Holy Spirit speaking through his Word. (Matt. 23:11-12; Phil. 2:3)

What was true for these believers in Peter's day is true also for God's church today. If we likewise submit to God and to one another, then it is certain that—in due time—the Lord will exalt us. He will exalt us far above our expectations. He will deliver us from all those who try to take advantage of us because of our humble desire to live a godly life.

In the next verse, Peter continues:

### **1 Peter 5:7**

*(7) Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (NIV)*

In this world, we will experience many trials and tribulations. Because of our desire to live a humble and Christ-like life, we will be misunderstood and possibly even persecuted. (John 16:33; Rev. 2:10)

But, implies Peter, we ought not to be concerned about these things, or about any other causes of worry or stress in our lives. Though trials, difficulties, sorrow and grief comes into our lives, we ought not to dwell on them more than is necessary or appropriate. On the contrary, we should cast all our anxieties upon the Lord. We should throw them upon him who loves us with an everlasting love, and let him bear our heavy burdens.

The Lord invites us to take all our burdens to him. He cares for us, and is willing to bear us in all our distresses. (Ps. 34:17-22; Matt. 11:28-30) Therefore, whenever we feel unduly worried or anxious about something, we should bring this matter to the Lord in prayer. Then, we should leave it with him, for it is certain that he will deal with it. We need only continue to walk with him, and to trust him to resolve the sometimes seemingly insurmountable difficulties in our lives. He cares for us, and he will never disappoint us or leave us to our own wholly inadequate resources. (Matt. 6:25-34; John 14:27; Heb. 13:5-6)

## **Resist the Devil**

### **1 Peter 5:8-9**

#### **1 Peter 5:8**

Now, infers Peter, as believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, we ought not to anticipate a life free from trials, temptations and difficulties. These form part of our calling in Christ. Often, the Lord uses such sufferings to remove the dross from our lives, and to make us more useful for himself and for his service. (Rom. 5:3-5; Phil. 1:29)

In all things, it is our responsibility to prove self-controlled and alert in our daily lives. We must recognise that—since we are God's children—the evil one will do all in his power to harass us and to lead us into sin. His intention is to discredit our testimony and to bring reproach upon Christ's name. This is why he is called *'the devil'*, i.e., Diabolos, the slanderer or false accuser.

Satan is the prince of the demons, and the author of evil. He is the one who persecutes good men, estranges people from God and entices them to sin. On rare occasions, he can also afflict them with diseases by means of demons taking possession of their bodies.

Like a hungry roaring lion, the evil one prowls around among God's people, seeking for vulnerable spots in their lives. Once he detects a weak point, he does all in his power to exploit that weakness. Thus, like a lion mauling its hapless prey, Satan attempts to tear the Christian's life apart.

It is against these attacks that the believer must guard himself diligently. Although Satan is a mighty and powerful being, he cannot gain access to our lives beyond what God permits. However, he may severely tempt and try God's people. He may do everything possible to lead them astray from the paths of truth and righteousness. (Luke 22:31-32)

The believer, of course, need not yield to such temptations—but sometimes he feels completely overwhelmed. Sometimes, because of giving in to lesser temptations, he ultimately finds himself giving into greater temptations. (Eph. 4:27; 6:11-18)

Thus, in the next verse, Peter writes:

### **1 Peter 5:9**

We stand against the enemy, but we do not stand alone and we do not stand in our own strength. Therefore, we ought to heed the words of this verse and set ourselves *against* the enemy. We must not let the evil one deceive or intimidate us. Nor must we imagine that we cannot stand against such a powerful spiritual enemy. Let us remember that, although he is our enemy, Satan is a defeated enemy. Although he is powerful, Christ destroyed the full extent of his power at Calvary. (Col. 2:15)

We should remember, also, that Satan is a liar and the father of lies (i.e., the original source of all lies and deceit). He will attempt to convince us that he is much more powerful than he is. He will deceive us—in an attempt to cause us to surrender to him, instead of standing resolutely against him. (John 8:44)

However, by suggesting that we do not have the strength to resist him, the devil is in effect saying that he is more powerful than the Holy Spirit who indwells us. This is yet another lie, and an absurdity. Who can resist the Spirit of God? Yet, this is what Satan would have us believe. (1 John 4:4)

The apostle enjoins us to stand firm—i.e., immovable—in the faith. Convinced of our salvation, and sure of God's power to deliver us, we are to take our stand against the evil one. We are to refute his lies with the truth of God's Word—just as the Lord Jesus himself did. We are to remember that the One who is in us, is greater than the one who is in the world. (Matt. 4:1-11)

Again, we are to remember that the temptations we face, are not unique to us. We may imagine that no other believer could possibly be enduring the same struggles as ourselves. The truth is, however, that God's people world-wide are struggling against the same temptations to sin.

We may imagine that the Lord's people are exempt from certain categories of temptation and sin. Nowhere, however, does Scripture tell us that God will exempt us from certain types of temptation. We need only consider the example of God's people to see that no such exemptions apply. For example,

- Abraham was guilty of lying and deceit concerning his wife.
- Jacob was guilty of manipulation.

- David was guilty of adultery and murder.

All of these actions were detestable in God's sight, but the Lord's people committed them. God punished his people for their sins, in some cases very severely. However, the Lord never removed his love or his faithfulness from any of his wayward children. So it is today. We could become guilty of any type of sin—even sins that God particularly detests. Of course, the Lord will discipline us for committing these sins. Nevertheless, he will not remove his love or his faithfulness from us.

This principle applies also to those who have never yet accepted Christ. Regardless of the sins they may have committed, they can and will receive God's forgiveness upon true repentance and genuine faith in his Son. The blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient to atone for and cleanse the vilest offender—and there are no exceptions. (1 John 2:1-2)

## God Restores the Afflicted

### 1 Peter 5:10-11

#### 1 Peter 5:10

Our God is the God of all grace. In all circumstances of our lives, God provides grace sufficient for our every need. No matter what these needs may be, God is able to provide—and to provide abundantly. (2 Cor. 12:8-10)

Under all circumstances, God's grace will prove sufficient for us. However, this does not necessarily mean that the Lord will deliver us from every trial and difficulty. Often, God permits these trials to purge our lives of impurities, and to draw us closer to himself. Again, he may permit us to endure sorrows and difficulties to make us increasingly more dependent on his all-sufficient grace. In this way, we learn to depend less and less on our own inadequate and failing resources. (Isa. 43:2-4; cf. Dan. 3:25-26)

Whatever the reason, our heavenly Father promises to restore us after we have suffered. His Word assures us that—ultimately—he will make us strong; he will make us firm, and he will make us steadfast. Our resources, therefore, come from the Lord—not from within ourselves. (Ps. 138:7; Luke 22:32)

The apostle continues:

#### 1 Peter 5:11

Therefore, Peter sums up his doxology by ascribing all power to God, for time—and throughout the ages of eternity. He ends the doxology with an *Amen*: 'truly,' or 'so be it.'

## Stand Fast in God's Grace

#### 1 Peter 5:12

In his concluding remarks, Peter mentions the faithful brother, Silas (or Silvanus). This may have been the same Silas who was associated with the apostle Paul during his missionary journeys. Possibly, Peter dictated (or rough-drafted) his letter and Silas wrote it out in an appropriate form of Greek. (Cf. 2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1)

Peter encourages his readers to stand fast in the grace of God, i.e., in the message of salvation, and in the truths of God's Word. God's grace would flow into their lives through their reading of, and meditating upon, these eternal and infallible truths. (Cf. Rom. 5:2)

## Closing Greetings

### 1 Peter 5:13-14

#### 1 Peter 5:13

Sometimes, the inspired writers of Scripture use *'Babylon'* figuratively for the cities of Jerusalem or Rome, and perhaps it is the latter that Peter intends here. There was, however, a small town named Babylon situated on the banks of the Euphrates, but we have no record of Peter having any connection with this town or area. In any event, Peter passes on the greetings from the church 'in Babylon' to his readers.

The apostle also mentions Mark (or Marcus). This was a common name of Latin origin, so it is uncertain which Mark was intended here. It may have been John Mark, the evangelist and companion of Paul during some of his missionary enterprises. John Mark certainly became well known to Peter, and the apostle may have been the source of Mark's Gospel. Peter's reference to Mark as his son, may imply that Mark's conversion to Christ was through the instrumentality and ministry of Peter. (Cf. Acts 12:12,25)

#### 1 Peter 5:14

In the last verse, the apostle exhorts the believers to greet each other with the customary salutation, i.e., the kiss of love. In eastern countries, this kiss was the sign of fraternal affection. It was commonly used among Christians when welcoming or saying farewell to their brothers and sisters in Christ. (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20)

In the phrase, *'the kiss of love,'* (KJV, *charity*) the word love is the Greek word 'agape.' This is the word used of God's love for the world, and of Jesus' love for his disciples. This is the kind of love that we are to show to one another. It is a love that embraces brotherly affection, good will and benevolence. This is true spiritual and emotional love. It is that love which comes from God above, and which is pure in his sight. (John 13:34-35; 15:12-13)

Finally, the apostle bestows upon his readers God's eternal peace. This is the peace that transcends all human understanding. Only God's children can experience this peace. It is that same peace which brings an inexplicable calm and sense of well being to those who are the beloved children of God. (Phil. 4:7)

The believer rests secure in the peace of God. He knows that nothing can disturb that peace which Christ has obtained for him through the cross. Peace, therefore, comes to us through the blood of the cross. This blood guarantees that the peace of God in our hearts will never ultimately fail or pass away. It is the peace that Jesus left with his followers, and which he promised to them forever. (John 14:27; Col. 1:20)