

Sermons on 1 Peter-Lowell Johnson

1 Peter Sermon by Lowell Johnson

December 2014

1. Introduction to 1 Peter
2. Strangers in the World 1 Peter 1:1-2
3. Thank You Lord, For Saving My Soul 1 Peter 1:3-5
4. Smiling Through The Trials of Life 1 Peter 1:6-9
5. What Angels Wish They Knew 1 Peter 1:10-12
6. Hungry for Holiness 1 Peter 1:13-17
7. Redeemed With the Precious Blood of Jesus 1 Peter 1:18-21
8. Got Milk? 1 Peter 1:22-2:3
9. The Rock and Our Role 1 Peter 2:4-10
10. Making God Look Good 1 Peter 2:11-12
11. The Footprints of Jesus 1 Peter 2:19-25
12. Marriage: Made in Heaven But Maintained on Earth 1 Peter 3:1-7
13. How To Love Life and See Good Days 1 Peter 3:8-12
14. When Life "Just Ain't Fair" 1 Peter 3:13-17
15. The Triumphant Christ 1 Peter 3:18-22
16. Clash-Mates with the World 1 Peter 4:1-6
17. The End Is Near! 1 Peter 4:7-11
18. Suffering Is Part of God's Plan 1 Peter 4:12-19
19. Portrait of a Pastor 1 Peter 5:1-4
20. Jesus: Our Caretaker 1 Peter 5:6-7
21. Our Adversary the Devil 1 Peter 5:8-11

AN INTRODUCTION TO FIRST PETER

Of the original twelve disciples, three were chosen to write inspired New Testament books. These three are Matthew, John, and Peter.

As a disciple of Christ, Peter is clearly the most popular of the twelve; yet, as a writer of Scripture, he is the least known among the three. That's too bad!

The Gospels have more to say about Peter than any other disciple, and Peter has more to say than any other person who came in contact with Jesus. Most of us could tell of one experience after another of Peter in the Gospels; yet, few of us know the main themes of First and Second Peter. Again, that's too bad!

Peter's name appears 210 times in the New Testament; Paul's name is found 162 times. The names of the remaining eleven disciples combined appear only 142 times.

Peter, Paul, and John were the three most prominent figures in the early Church.

- Peter is the "apostle of hope." More than anyone else, Peter stresses hope as the answer to persecution and difficulty.
- Paul is the "apostle of faith." He articulates more clearly than any other writer the doctrine of justification by faith.
- John is known both through his person and writing as the "apostle of love."

There are the three great New Testament teachings: Faith, Hope, and Love.

Peter is writing his first Epistle against the backdrop of pain and suffering. He wrote to the scattered believers to encourage them to

live for Christ in a hostile world. It is both a message of encouragement (“Stand fast.”) and a warning (“Hard times are upon us.”).

First Peter was probably written at the end of Peter's life, around A.D. 64. It is thought that after writing his first epistle, he was arrested and tried. Between his trial and execution, he wrote 2 Peter (2 Peter 1:13-21).

In 1 Peter 5:13 he identifies the place of writing as “Babylon” or Rome. Notice that Peter mentions “Marcus my son.” This is John Mark who wrote the Gospel of Mark. Mark received much of his information for his Gospel from Peter.

Peter's two epistles continue to fulfill our Lord's command to him to feed His sheep and lambs (John 21:15-17).

Peter develops the doctrine of Christ in a remarkable way in his first short epistle. He discusses:

1. The incarnation of Christ (1 Peter 1:20)
2. The names for Christ:
 - a. The Spotless Lamb (1 Peter 1:19). Peter and John are the only two New Testament authors to refer to Christ as a Lamb (John 1:29, 36; Revelation 5:6; 1 Peter 1:19).
 - b. The Chief Cornerstone – His relationship to the Scriptures (1 Peter 2:6).
 - c. The Precious Stone – His relationship to believers (1 Peter 2:7).
 - d. The Stumbling Stone – His relationship to believers (1 Peter 2:8).
 - e. The Bishop of our souls (1 Peter 2:25).
 - f. The Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4).
3. His sinless life (1 Peter 1:19; 2:22)
4. His suffering and death (1 Peter 1:11; 2:23, 24; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1).
5. His resurrection (1 Peter 3:21-22).
6. His ascension (1 Peter 3:22).
7. His presence at God's right hand (1 Peter 3:22).
8. His second coming (1 Peter 1:13; 4:13; 5:1-4).

Peter also offers a number of titles which describe believers:

- obedient children (1 Peter 1:14) - newborn babes (1 Peter 2:2)
- living stones (1 Peter 2:5) - a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5)
- a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:5) - a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9)
- a peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9) - strangers and pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11)
- Christian (1 Peter 4:16) - the righteous (1 Peter 4:18)
- the elect of God (1 Peter 1:2) - the people of God (1 Peter 2:10)
- the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11) - the flock of God (1 Peter 5:2)

The theme of 1 Peter is suffering. In each chapter Peter gives hope for the hurting:

- 1 Peter 1:6-7
- 1 Peter 2:18-19
- 1 Peter 3:15-17
- 1 Peter 4:12-14
- 1 Peter 5:8-10

The first thing we notice in 1 Peter 1:1 is his name, Peter. In 2 Peter 1:1 he calls himself, Simon Peter. The name his father and mother gave him was Simon. Jesus gave him the name Peter (a little rock) in Matthew 16:17-18 when Jesus asked who the people said He was and then Jesus asked who THEY said He was. Peter spoke up and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” It was then that Jesus gave him the nickname, Peter.

But Simon Peter had a third name in Scripture: Cephas. Cephas is the Aramaic word for Peter. Peter is a Greek word and Cephas is the Aramaic equivalent. Why do we find his Aramaic name in the New Testament? Because Aramaic was the language of the day. Jesus spoke Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.

Unlike other letters that were written to local churches, Peter's letters were written to folks who had been scattered because of persecution; to a mission field.

Peter calls those he is writing to pilgrims, strangers, sojourners, visitors. The idea is that of a person visiting a place for a while, but who is not a permanent resident there. Believers are citizens of heaven;

their home is in heaven with God. No matter where believers live on earth, it is not their permanent home. Our home is heaven and

soon we shall be called to go home and be there for ever and ever. Philippians 3:20-21 (The word “conversation” means “Citizenship”).

The believers Peter is writing to are scattered from him and each other throughout modern day Turkey because of the persecution of Nero.

Peter was:

A. A Fisherman

Peter was in the fishing business along with Andrews, James, and John. Peter was known as the “Big Fisherman.” When I think of Simon Peter, I think of someone like Hoss Cartwright.

In John 21:8-11 six of the disciples were dragging a net filled with 153 fish and Jesus was cooking breakfast for them on the shore. The coals were hot and the Lord told them to bring some of their fish to Him. Peter got hold of the net of fish that took six men to pull and he brought them to Jesus by himself.

B. Fearless

He was the spokesman for the group of disciples and he asked most of the questions.

In Matthew 15:15 it was Peter who asked the Lord to explain the parables to the disciples because they didn't understand them.

When Jesus was talking about forgiving one another, it was Peter who asked how many times we should forgive our brothers.

When Jesus spoke of rewards for serving Him, it was Peter who said, “Lord, we have forsaken all to follow you. What are we going to get?”

C. Fickled (Vacillating)

One minute Jesus was blessing Peter for his insight when he said that Jesus was the Christ, and the next minute He was rebuking him and saying, “Get behind Me, Satan.”

On the Mount of Transfiguration, one moment Peter was basking in the glory of the Lord and in the next moment he was disappointing the Lord wanting to build booths on the Mount.

One minute Peter is defending the Lord in the Garden and the next he was denying he knew Jesus.

D. Forgiven

The risen Lord told Mary to go tell His disciples AND Peter that He was risen and then the Lord allowed him to preach on the Day of Pentecost and 3,000 were saved.

Sometimes we are too hard on Simon Peter. A prayer by Ken Gire tells us how we ought to look at Simon Peter and how we ought to evaluate him:

Dear Lord Jesus,

Thank you for Peter. He was a great man. He loved you so much. He left everything to follow you. In your Name he healed the sick, cast out demons, and preached the kingdom. For three and a half faithful years he stood beside you. And when the soldiers came to take you away, he stood up for you. When the others deserted you, he followed all the way to the temple courtyard.

I confess I would have never made it that far. Help me not to pass judgment on him, Lord. Rather, may his great fervent love for you pass judgment on me.

Help me to see that I deny you in so many areas of my life, in so many ways and at so many different times.

When I am too busy to pray, I deny that you are the center of my life. When I neglect Your Word, I deny that You are competent to guide me. When I worry, I deny that You are Lord of my circumstances. When I turn my head from the hungry and the homeless, I deny that You are a God of mercy who has put me here to be Your hands and your feet. When I steal something from another person to enrich or enhance my life – whether that be something material or some credit that is rightly due another, which I have claimed for myself – I deny You are the source of all blessings.

Forgive me, Jesus, for all those quiet ways, known only to You, in which I have denied You. . . .

Thank You for all the times You have prayed for me that my faith might not fail. There is no telling how many times I have been rescued from Satan's hand because you stood beside me. And thank You, most Faithful of friends, that no matter how terrible I have failed You, I can always look into Your eyes, and there find forgiveness. . . .

STRANGERS IN THE WORLD

1 Peter 1:1-2

Of the original twelve disciples, three were chosen to write inspired New Testament books. These three are Matthew, John, and Peter.

As a disciple of Christ, Peter is clearly the most popular of the twelve; yet, as a writer of Scripture, he is the least known among the three. That's too bad!

The Gospels have more to say about Peter than any other disciple, and Peter has more to say than any other person who came in contact with Jesus. Most of us could tell of one experience after another of Peter in the Gospels; yet, few of us know the main themes of First and Second Peter. Again, that's too bad!

Peter's name appears 210 times in the New Testament; Paul's name is found 162 times. The names of the remaining eleven disciples combined appear only 142 times.

Peter, Paul, and John were the three most prominent figures in the early Church.

- Peter is the "apostle of hope." More than anyone else, Peter stresses hope as the answer to persecution and difficulty.
- Paul is the "apostle of faith." He articulates more clearly than any other writer the doctrine of justification by faith.
- John is known both through his person and writing as the "apostle of love."

There are the three great New Testament teachings: Faith, Hope, and Love.

Peter is writing his first Epistle against the backdrop of pain and suffering. He wrote to the scattered believers to encourage them to live for Christ in a hostile world. It is both a message of encouragement ("Stand fast.") and a warning ("Hard times are upon us.").

Peter could see clearly that "hard times were upon them." Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment about the year A.D. 62. Peter comes to Rome about the year A.D. 63. Nero is in power over Rome. It is about this time that Peter wrote his first letter.

On July 19, A.D. 64, Nero set fire to the Imperial City of Rome. You see, Nero was determined to stamp his image on a new Rome. Nero hired arsonists to destroy the old city. Maybe you remember stories of Caesar Nero fiddling while Rome burned. While that may not have happened literally, Nero was fiddling around very definitely. The ensuing devastation gave him justification to rebuild structures like the Circus Maximus, which seated over 100,000 spectators. It was built to witness sporting events and gladiatorial bouts, and eventually, Christians being thrown to lions.

Suspicion began to rise that Nero had a part in starting the fires. Nero knew he had to quickly find a scapegoat, and he found one in the Christian community. He said, "It is not I who burned the City, but those who speak of the unquenchable flames of hell." He also said the Christians practiced cannibalism in their observance of communion when they partook of the body and blood of Jesus. He said the Christians stressed love and purity and they were a threat to the perversity of the day. The Christians also caused their families to crumble because believers and non-believers would not live together.

Only months after Peter's first letter was penned, Nero brought persecution that resulted in the annihilation of six million Christians. Some were thrown in prison, some were covered with animal skins and attacked by dogs, some were fed to lions, some were sawed in two, some were made into human torches, some were crucified. Many scholars believe that Peter wrote his second letter while waiting to be crucified upside down for his Lord.

Here is a principle we need to keep in mind: What you don't understand, you fear. What you fear, you oppose. What you oppose, you attack. That's where the early Christians found themselves.

That's why Peter writes to those who are now scattered throughout Asia Minor, modern day Turkey. Peter was not writing for the people back then. In many ways he could have written the same letter to Christians in 2014.

While I personally believe that the Church will not go through THE Tribulation, I do believe that these latter days will bring much suffering and persecution to the people of God. Never before in America and the rest of the world have Christians been under such attack as they are today, and it is going to get worse.

But Peter's tone is more positive than negative. He writes to encourage the scattered believers (and us) to stand fast in the grace of God in the midst of great trials.

Three things I want to share with you:

I. Our Condition 1 Peter 1:1

Charles Dickens began his epic novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, with these unforgettable words: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." That, in essence, is Peter's message. Because you are a Christian, you live in two different worlds at the same time; the City of God and the city of man. That's why he writes to "God's elect, strangers in the world" (1 Peter 1:1). Those two phrases must always be kept together because they explain our simultaneous relationship to the world and to God.

The key word here is "strangers," which is sometimes translated as "aliens" or "pilgrims" or "sojourners" or even "foreigners." It describes those who come from another country but now live in this country. They are "resident aliens" or you might even call them missionaries." Peter means that Christians are strangers residing on the earth whose home is in heaven.

Imagine visiting a foreign country and there you see people who don't look like you do, talk like you, think like you, or live like you. They have a set of values you don't share, speak a language you can't understand, and eat food that seems strange to you. You pick up the paper and you can't read it. You turn on the radio and it doesn't make sense. You're in a store and you can't communicate with anyone.

But Peter is writing to people who were living in their hometowns. They had been raised there. They spoke the same language, wore the same clothes, ate the same food and shared the same culture. But now these hometown folks had embraced the Gospel of Jesus and everything has changed for them. Now you are a stranger in your own hometown.

Peter says the same thing happens today whenever the Gospel penetrates a city, an office, a classroom, a business, a factory, or a family. Nothing is the same as it used to be. Everything has changed because you aren't the same person you used to be. Now you are a stranger to people you have known for a lifetime. That's hard for some Christians to face.

Peter is saying, "There has been a change in your life. You've transferred your allegiance from the world to Jesus. Salvation has made you a stranger in the world.

A Christian businessman explained what it means this way: "A lot of people cheat and I won't do it. They want something extra that I can't give them. Sure, I lose business, but that's the way it is." Let me clarify. It's not true that in the world everyone cheats, but in the world people cheat. And it's not true that in the world everyone lies, but in the world people lie. I'm not saying that in the world everybody worships money, but in the world people worship money. I'm not saying that in the world everyone lives for sexual gratification, but in the world many people do.

That's the world we live in as resident aliens and strangers. That's 2014. So what does this mean in practical terms?

- If you are a businessman and have decided as a Christian not to cheat, lie, or double-cross, if you've decided to deliver what you promise to deliver, you are a stranger in the world.

- If you are a husband and you have decided to be faithful to your wife because you are a Christian, you are a stranger in the world.

- If you are a Christian teenager and you have decided to do your work as unto the Lord, not as pleasing men but in order to please God, then you are a stranger in the world.

- If you are depressed and discouraged and you have said, "No, I won't turn to drugs or alcohol to handle my problems." you are swimming against the tide, and you are a stranger in the world.

- If you are working in an office where coarse language, profanity, and loose talk are the accepted norm and you have decided not to join in, God bless you, my friend, you are a stranger in the world.

It's not a question of isolation from the world; it's a question of being in the world and not of the world. That's our condition. We are strangers in the world.

II. Our Characteristics 1 Peter 1:2

Peter uses three phrases to describe our relationship with God. These three phrases constitute the spiritual biography of every believer. This verse tells us about our relationship with God and how God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit work together to complete our salvation,

A. We are Chosen by God the Father.

The word translated “chosen” or “Elect” simply means “to choose for oneself.” We are God's chosen people. God has His people everywhere. And God says, “You are where you are for a purpose. 1 Put you there to glorify Me. Now bloom where you are planted.

Some Christians are confused when we talk about election because they suppose THEY chose God. They did, but because God's foreknowledge is flawless, He chose you first. God chose you first and then you chose Him!

The word “foreknowledge” means “to know before hand.” The Greek word is “prognosis,” which to us means a prediction regarding future outcomes. When a doctor gives a prognosis, it's an educated guess, but God's foreknowledge isn't like that. God doesn't make educated guesses. He knows what is going to happen because He has determined to make it happen. It means that God makes an effective choice. We are chosen because God decided to choose us.

God chose you first and then you chose Him. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love Him, because He first loved us.”

We sing: “Oh, how I love Jesus. Oh, how I love Jesus. Oh, how I love Jesus, Because He first loved me.”

The “because He first loved me” part is the great truth of foreknowledge. While I was still a sinner, He loved me and chose me and sent His Son that I might be saved.

One man was so struck by the fact that he was “chosen” by God that he said that it encouraged him and humbled him at the same time. He said, “That means I have a responsibility.” He's exactly right. Those who are chosen are called to serve the Lord. We must remind ourselves that we were not chosen according to our merit, but solely by God's mercy. He knew what He was doing when He chose us, and He's not finished with us yet.

God's foreknowledge means that God has already seen the future and He knows exactly what will happen – every single event and consequence. He even knows what could happen (but will not), and every single possibility and its consequence. God has a supreme overall view of all things – all things past, present, and future.

Although God knows what He will choose to do, His knowledge has nothing to do with our decision; nor will it influence our decision.

God didn't choose anyone to be eternally lost. Some believe that God chooses some to be saved and some to be lost. Second Peter 3:9 says that it is not God's will for any to perish. Some will perish, but it is not His will that they perish. They will perish because they reject His Son as the provision for their salvation.

Salvation is not some heavenly lottery based on the luck of the draw. God doesn't say: “You're number five, you stay alive. You're number six, you're in a fix. You're number seven; you go to heaven. You're number eight, so you incinerate. You're number nine; you'll be fine. You're number ten; I'll take you in.” No, God is not willing that any should perish. The elect are the whosoever will's and the non-elect are the whosoever will not's.

B. We are Changed by God the Holy Spirit 1 Peter 1:2

To sanctify means to “set apart” for a holy purpose. Let me say it very simply: The Holy Spirit is the One who makes us holy. He gives us the desire to know more, He grants us understanding, He convicts of sin, and He brings us to Jesus. He is the source of all spiritual growth.

His work begins in us before we believe and continues until we go to heaven. He completes it when we are finally glorified in God's presence. No one is ever saved apart from the Spirit and no one grows as a Christian without the Spirit.

This means that my salvation doesn't start with me; it starts with God's work in me. I didn't choose Him; He chose me. God always makes the first move, and if He didn't make the first move, I wouldn't make any move at all. Salvation is of the Lord – first, last, and always.

C. We are Cleansed by God the Son 1 Peter 1:2

This is the purpose for which we were chosen: “for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling with His blood.” Peter is using obedience the same way Paul does in Romans – as a synonym for saving faith because believing God is always the first step in our obedience to Him.

And when you believe, you are sprinkled with the blood of Christ. The concept of being sprinkled with blood goes back to the

sacrifice of the Old Testament. Although blood plays a prominent role in the Old Testament, Exodus 24 records the only instance where blood was actually sprinkled on people. It happened at Mount Sinai just after God through Moses gave the Ten Commandments. The Jews had come to a decisive moment of commitment. When the people promised to obey all that God had said, Moses took the blood of several young bulls and sprinkled it on the assembled multitude. The sprinkling of the blood meant they were personally entering into the covenant. They had heard it, they agreed to obey it, and now by blood they were entering into it.

To be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus means to believe the Gospel and be saved. It means that the blood of Jesus is personally applied to your life. The blood of Jesus Christ covers all our transgressions and makes us guiltless before God – perfect and acceptable to Him.

III. Our Compensation 1 Peter 1:2b

“Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.” Peter’s prayer is “may you have more and more of God’s grace and God’s peace.” This is our compensation for being strangers in the world. There are no limits on God’s grace or God’s peace. We can never come to the end of either one.

We will be “strangers” in this world until we are in the presence of Jesus. An old southern melody was written from our text today.

I am a poor wayfaring stranger, while traveling thro' this world below;
There is no sickness, toil, nor danger in that bright world to which I go.
I'm going there to meet my Father, I'm going there no more to roam;
I am just going over Jordan, I am just going over home.

I know dark clouds will gather o're me, I know my pathway's rough and steep,
But golden fields lie out before me, where weary eyes no more shall seep.
I'm going there to see my mother, She said she'd meet me when I come;
I am just going over Jordan, I am just going over home.

I want to sing salvation's story in concert with the blood-washed band;
I want to wear a crown of glory, When I get home to that good land.
I'm going there to see my classmates, Who passed before me one by one;
I am just going over Jordan, I am just going over home.

I'll soon be free from every trial, This form will rest beneath the sod;
I'll drop the cross of self-denial, And enter in my home with God.
I'm going there to see my Savior, Who shed for me His precious blood;
I am just going over Jordan, I am just going over home.

Is heaven your home? Will I see you over there?

THANK YOU, LORD, FOR SAVING MY SOUL

1 Peter 1:3-5

After reading, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The word translated “blessed” appears many times in the Bible, but it is not always from the same Greek or Hebrew word.

For example, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek; Blessed are the peacemakers; Blessed are the pure in heart.” The word there means “joy” or “Happy.” “Happy are the pure in heart.”

But here the word translated, “Blessed,” is a different word entirely. This word literally means “to speak well of.” It is the word that we get our word “eulogy” from.

Sometimes you go to a funeral and someone will stand and give an eulogy or speak well of the person who has died. But I want to tell you, God is not dead! He’s not even sick! He’s doing well! He’s a living God!

We do not eulogize God in the sense that we speak well of the dead, but we do speak well of Him because He is a Living God.

So the idea would be best expressed by our word “praise.” “Praise be unto God, for He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ and without Him, we would be hopelessly doomed forever.

This is really a doxology! "Praise be unto God the Father for the salvation we received through the Lord Jesus Christ." In 1 Peter 1:3 Peter explicitly praises God "Who has caused us to be born again." Two statements are expressed:

God has done something – "caused us to be born again."

We should do something – declare "Blessed be God" or "Praise the Lord."

(Now read the rest of the passage.)

I can't read these verses without thinking of the little chorus:

Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul,
Thank you, Lord, for making me whole,
Thank you, Lord, for giving to me
Thy great salvation, so rich and free.

Thank Him and Praise Him for what? For:

I. A Living Hope 1 Peter 1:3

We know that 1 Peter was written to persecuted believers scattered far and wide across Asia Minor. They faced numerous "fiery trials" that were about to grow worse. I find it highly significant that Peter doesn't begin by talking about their problems. He begins by talking about who God is and what He has done for them. God comes first! And when God comes first, His people instinctively praise His name. When we start with God, we see our problems in proper perspective, but when we start with our problems, it's often hard to find God at all.

When God is in His proper place, we see the problems of life in their proper perspective. That's why Peter begins with a burst of praise – not a statement of their problems.

Praise God Who caused us to be born again! Everything else in verses 3-5 relates to that main idea. We can break it down into five major statements:

1. We have experienced God's mercy – verse 3a
2. We have been born again – verse 3b
3. We have a living hope – verse 3c
4. We have a guaranteed inheritance in heaven – verse 4
5. We are kept by God's power – verse 5.

"A lively hope" means "a living hope." I don't have to HOPE I'm saved; I KNOW that I'm saved. It is assurance with calmness. It is steadfast and sure, and I have complete confidence that I have salvation in the Lord Jesus.

Notice it is a living hope; not a dead or lifeless hope. It is not the kind of hope that may or may not come to pass. This living hope is active and functioning. It is the glorious hope and assurance of living with God personally.

You see, if you are saved, you have two birthdays. You have a physical birthday and a spiritual birthday. Like the song says, "I have a birthday I can't remember and I have a birthday I can't forget."

In our first birthday we are born with a birth defect: SIN! When we trust Jesus in repentance and faith, He forgives our sin and allows us to start over, but without the birth defect of sin. God gave birth to us. He "fathered" us by an act of His own will (John 1:13). He acted on our behalf to rescue us while we were yet sinners, estranged from Him, and rebelling against His holy decrees. He didn't save us because He had to, but because He wanted to. Therefore, He alone gets the glory for our salvation.

Let me ask a question that may help us grasp this truth. How do you know you were born? It's not as easy to answer as you might think. You're here so you must have been born, right? How else could you be here if you had not been born? But I dare say, not a one of us remembers being born physically. So how else can we know we have been born physically?

- "I have a birth certificate; that proves I was born." Those can be faked.
- "I have a picture of me as a baby." How do we know that picture is really of you?
- "I have a paper with my baby footprint on it." Very cute, but your foot is a lot bigger now. How can we be sure it's your footprint?

How do you prove you were really born? There's really only one answer: "I'm alive, and my life proves I must have been born."

Second question: "How do you know you have been born again?"

- "I have a baptismal certificate." You can be baptized so many times that you're waterlogged, but that still doesn't prove you are born again.
- "I walked down the aisle and joined the church." That doesn't make you saved.

How can I know I have been born again spiritually? "I know I am born again because I have the life of God in my soul. I am different than I use to be. I am a new creature in Christ. I have a new heart in Jesus. Therefore:

- "I have a living hope" – verse 3.
- "I have a guaranteed inheritance" – verse 4.
- "I am kept by the power of God" – verse 5.
- "I will praise the Lord; thank the Lord." "I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips" (Psalm 34:1).

II. A Lasting Heritage 1 Peter 1:4

An inheritance is a gift. You can't earn an inheritance.

Sometimes when parents die and leave an inheritance, the children fight over it as if they did something to earn it.

An inheritance is a benefit or blessing given, usually because you are born into a family. You didn't merit it or work for it. It is theirs because of birth. So it is for the child of God.

Our inheritance is an eternal home with God.

A. It is a Guaranteed Place.

Romans 8:17. If we are God's children, we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ and we will be glorified together with Him.

See John 17:22-24.

B. It is a Glorious Place.

1. It cannot be Destroyed – Incorruptible

It is beyond the reach of death. In heaven there are no funerals, no graves dug, no cemeteries, no funeral flowers or songs.

Heaven cannot perish or age or deteriorate or decay. It is perfect. It never changes and it shall never cease to be the most perfect inheritance imaginable.

2. It cannot be Defiled – Undefiled

Heaven cannot be soiled, stained, polluted, flawed, or tainted by sin. Traces of sin are seen everywhere on this earth, in every divorce, every little child that is abused, every drunk, every person on drugs.

In heaven there will be no sickness, disease, infections, accidents, pollution or tears.

3. It cannot Decay: It cannot face away or wear away.

It will last forever and never lose any of its freshness, luster, splendor, or brightness.

It is "reserved in Heaven for us." Our inheritance is guarded for us by Almighty God. He protects our inheritance.

But I must warn you, there can be no occupation or accommodation without an advanced reservation. You cannot go to heaven without an advanced reservation!

III. A Limitless Security 1 Peter 1:5

How can our inheritance be so secure? Because we are not liable for keeping our own salvation? We are "kept by the power of God."

If it were left up to you and me to keep it, we would lose the fight. But it is kept by the dynamic power of Almighty God. He can save to the uttermost! (Hebrews 7:25).

What God begins He always finishes – Philippians 1:6.

God will present our inheritance to us "in the last times." Someone described the scene like this:

Think of stepping on shore and finding it heaven,
of taking a hand and finding it Christ's hand,
of breathing new air and finding it celestial air,
of feeling invigorated and finding it immortality,
of passing from storm and tempest to perfect calm,
of waking up and finding it home!

Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul!

SMILING THROUGH THE TRIALS OF LIFE

1 Peter 1:6-9

Let me remind you that Peter is writing to a group of Christians in Asia Minor who are living under great trials; AND, it is going to get worse! Nero will end up putting some four million Christians to death many of them slow, agonizing, sadistic deaths.

Redemption does not guarantee us immunity from trials. The Christian who thinks that just because he or she is saved that they are going to be shielded from trouble is in for a terribly rude awakening! Being saved is no hedge from trouble! Christians get sick! Christian marriages fall apart. Christians walk through some pretty deep, dark valleys.

There will be trials that will come our way. We may not understand them all, nor appreciate them when they come, but we need to be prepared for them just the same. That is Peter's purpose in these verses. He wants to encourage his readers, but he also wants to prepare them for what is surely to come.

Remember that just because a trial comes and takes you by surprise and jerks the rug out from under your feet, it never took God by surprise! He knew about it before it happened and had already made a way to bring you out of that trial.

God's Promise

God hath not promised
skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways.
all our lives through;

God hath not promised
sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow
Peace without pain.

But God hath promised
strength for the day,
Rest for the labor,
Light for the way,
Grace for the trials,
help from above,
Unfailing sympathy,
undying love.

I have discovered that many Christians hesitate to ever mention that they are hurting.

Someone greets them and asks, "How's everything going?"; and with a smile on their face they say, "Oh, everything is going great!" Yet, down deep on the inside, they know that everything is not great.

Having a positive attitude toward life is important. We need to be positive, but I think there is something deeper here. I think what's at stake here is that we as Christians have somehow become convinced that, if we really have faith, and if we really believe, then we are not supposed to have any problems. Everything is suppose to be great; and so we act and talk like everything is fine, even when we know it is not.

A farmer was in a courtroom one day and he was criticized for changing his testimony in a suit that he had brought against a motorist who had run him and his horse-drawn wagon off the side of the road. The defense attorney asked the farmer as he was on the stand, "Why did you change your testimony? You told my client at the time of the accident that you were not hurt and now you are in court telling us that you are hurt. Why didn't you tell him that in the first place?"

The farmer said, "Well, it was kind of like this: I was riding along, minding my own business. This fellow came by in a big car and ran me off the road. The wagon turned over. Here was the horse over here on his back with his legs in the air and here I was over here on my back. Your client walked over to the horse and said, 'I think this horse is hurt.' Your client walked over to the horse, pulled out a gun, and shot him! Then he walked over to me with his gun in his hand and said, 'What about you? Are you hurt too?' I wasn't about to tell him that I was."

It may be that we don't tell folks we are hurting because we're afraid we'll get shot! Yet, the Bible says that we are to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).

Peter tells us how we can smile through the trials of life:

I. The Reality of Trials 1 Peter 1:6-7

Peter addresses the reality of suffering 15 times in these five chapters. Let me mention four things about trials:

A. Trials are Sure to come.

You and I are not going to escape trials. They are going to come! Our faith is going to be tested by trials. Jesus said, "In this world you will have tribulation (or trials)."

Notice in 1 Peter 4:12-13 that it is our faith that is to be tried to see if our faith is real or genuine.

B. Trials are Temporary (Brief).

You say, "They don't seem brief to me when I'm in them," but compared to eternity, they are.

An old black man was asked what his favorite verse in the Bible was. He said, "My favorite verse is, 'And it came to pass;' it didn't come to stay."

C. Trials are Necessary.

Note the phrase, "if need be." The phrase indicates that there are special times when God knows that we need to go through trials. Sometimes trials discipline us when we have disobeyed God's will. Psalm 119:67 says: "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your Word." At other times, trials prepare us for spiritual growth, or even to prevent us from sinning. We do not always know the need being met, but we can trust God to know and do what's best.

D. Trials are of Many Kinds.

The word "manifold" (various) means many colored. Peter is talking, not about the Number of trials, but the Nature of the trials. He is talking about the many sizes, shapes, and angles in which the trials come.

Peter uses the word "manifold" only one other time. In 1 Peter 4:10, he talks about the "manifold grace of God." For every color of trial, God has a grace to match the trial. He has promised never to leave us when we are in the trial. His grace will always minister to us while we are in the trial.

II. The Reason for Trials 1 Peter 1:7

Why do trials and tribulations come to us? Why can't life be just a bed of roses? Why can't we, as Christians, just go through life without any trials and without any troubles?

Peter answers that question in our text. This is not the only biblical answer to that question, but it is one of the biblical answers to the question. These trials come to test our faith. The word "test" can mean two different things. It can mean to Prove or it can mean to Improve.

A. It means to Prove.

To test something means to determine the value of the thing; to show its genuineness and its worth.

Peter illustrated this with the idea of gold. Suppose you found what you thought was gold in an old mine. You dig out some of the ore

you think is gold. How could you prove it was really gold? You would take it to an assayer and he would test it. He would evaluate it and then he would tell you if it was real or genuine.

Peter says that sometimes that happens to our faith. God puts our faith to the test to see if it is genuine. If we had nothing in our life but favorable circumstances, our faith might be faith in favorable circumstances and not in God. But if you take away the favorable circumstances and

the faith is still there, then Peter said that faith has been proven to be genuine and real. Sometimes trials come to test the value of our faith.

Job is a wonderful example. It was not until God took away his wealth, health, family, and success that he really saw God clearly. (Job 42:5; 23:10. Faith isn't tested in the good times.)

I don't know all the reasons for Janice's death, but God used it in my life to show my maturity level. While I wouldn't wish what happened to my wife of 36 years on anyone, it confirmed to me that my faith was real as I committed it all to the Lord and it made my faith stronger as well.

B. It means to Improve.

The first word in 1 Peter 1:7 is "that" or, better, "so that." There is a purpose in the testing and that is to improve us.

Remember that when God puts us in the fire or fiery trail, He does so to improve us or to purify us. God always controls the thermostat! He puts us in the furnace to burn off impurities like greed, impatience, unkindness, anger, bitterness, lust, or selfishness.

Think again about that gold ore. When you get it out of the ground, that gold ore is mixed with all kinds of impurities. How can you get the utmost value out of it? You have to refine away the impurities. You have to take away the excess and get down to the main ore itself. How do you do that? You put it through the fire and through the testing of the fire, the impurities are burned away and the true value is revealed. As the impurities rise to the top of the pot where the gold is placed, the impurities are dipped away until one can see his reflection in the melted gold.

Sometimes fiery trials come, not just to prove our faith, but to improve our faith; to make it deeper, stronger, and better.

Peter says that our faith is "much more precious than gold that perisheth." Gold, along with the world, will pass away, but the immortal soul will live forever. Through trials we are cleansed, purified, and strengthened.

Hard times make strong saints. There is no other way for us to mature and improve.

III. The Rewards of Trials 1 Peter 1:7

When our faith remains firm to the finish, it produces three things:

1. Praise: Praise is what we will give to our Lord when we see Him in His revelation of Himself. We will thank Him and praise Him.
2. Glory: Glory is something others give to God because of us. Others feel better about God because they see He has made good on His promises in our life.
3. Honor: Honor is something that God gives to us. He will say to some of us; "Well done, good and faithful servant."

God is looking for faithful disciples. Who, having passed through the fiery trials, are stamped for all the world to see, "Approved by God."

IV. The Results of Trials 1 Peter 1:8-9

A. We Love Him. 1 Peter 1:8a

Notice the word "you." Peter had seen the Lord in the flesh, but his readers had not. But seeing is not believing. Most of the people who saw Him in the flesh did not believe Him. The religious leaders by-and-large rejected Him. Today, we don't know what He looks like. He is unseen, but He is not unloved.

I want to go on record and say that I love Him more than any person or any thing I have ever seen.

B. We Trust Him. 1 Peter 1:8b

Thomas said he would not believe Jesus was alive unless he could touch His wounds. John 20:28-29.

Someone said, "No apostle ever remembered Jesus." That's an amazing thought. Here is what he meant: You know the living and

you remember the dead. The apostles never remember Jesus because He was still with them. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus lived in them.

C. We are Filled with Joy. 1 Peter 1:8c

“Joy unspeakable” means “Joy above words.” It is joy that is so great that words cannot express it; even in the midst of trials.

D. We are Filled with Hope. 1 Peter 1:9

The word “received” is an athletic term that speaks of receiving an award at the end of a long struggle.

Peter is saying, “Keep your eyes on the prize.” That will give you hope even in the midst of trials.

The greatest contradiction in this world is a joyless Christian. Once when Martin Luther was going through a period of depression, his wife, Katie came into his study wearing all black, with her face covered with a black veil. Martin Luther asked her, “Who died?” She said, “God died.” Luther responded, “Silly woman, God hasn’t died.” She said, “Oh, I thought by the way you were acting that God had died.” She wanted to remind him that Jesus is alive and God is in control. It worked, and Martin Luther left his bad mood and began to rejoice again.

Let me ask you, “Has God died?” “Is Jesus alive?”

Then let's show the world we can rejoice, even when we are suffering.

WHAT ANGELS WISH THEY KNEW

1 Peter 1:10-12

Peter begins in Chapter One verse 10 by saying, “of which salvation.” That seems like a strange way to begin a sentence until you realize that verse 9 ends in the middle of a thought. The great theme of these verses is salvation.

The first nine verses covers all three tenses of salvation:

1. We have been saved in the Past.

If you are saved, there was a time in your past when you were convicted of your lost condition and were made aware of your need of Jesus as your Savior. So, you repented of your sin and invited Jesus into your heart and life. God forgave your sins and cleansed you of every sin. At that point you received salvation.

2. We are also now Being saved.

This is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit as we grow in the Lord and become more and more like the Lord Jesus.

3. Then we Shall Be Saved.

We Were saved sometime in our Past; we are Being saved in our Present; and we Shall Be saved in the Future. We are going to be taken out of this place and taken into glory.

In these verses that we are about to study, Peter says that there are three groups that are interested in our salvation. The flow of the passage is something like this: History really is His story. Jesus Christ is history's greatest news story. The Prophets Anticipated Jesus' coming, the Apostles Announced Jesus; the Angels Admired Jesus. In the scheme or design of our salvation, the prophets, the apostles, and the angels were all interested in the way Jesus would provide our salvation.

I. The Prophets Anticipated Jesus

For centuries the Old Testament prophets wrote about, looked for, and waited for God's “Anointed One.” They expected God to fulfill His Word about salvation and deliverance through God's Messiah.

How did the Prophets get their information? Through Revelation, Inspiration, and Dedication.

Notice four words. Notice the word “inquired” (verse 10), the words “searched diligently or carefully” (verse 10), the word “searching” (verse 11), and the words “it was revealed” (verse 12).

Their diligent inquiry gave the prophets enlightenment about the coming Messiah. They studied, dug, worked, sought out and searched out the facts about the Messiah. The word means that they examined and “sniffed out” every critical bit of available

information – written and oral.

The Prophets had two primary jobs: They Proclaimed God's word and they Predicted future events. They were Foretellers and Forth-tellers.

Then, Divine Inspiration gave the Prophets information concerning the coming Messiah as well. Notice verse 11: "the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." Now look at 2 Peter 1:21: God's Spirit carried them along. The Spirit of God enlightened and sharpened their thinking powers.

But you must understand: The Prophets wrote and spoke what God instructed them to write and speak, but they didn't understand much of it themselves. So they studied their own prophecies.

No one Prophet had all the truth revealed to him. God's revelation was Progressive Revelation. One Prophet would receive one bit of truth and another Prophet would receive another bit of truth.

I like to think of the Prophets as archers who shot arrows of truth up into the air. They shot them so high and so far that they disappeared over the horizon, and the Prophets themselves had no idea when those arrows of truth would hit the ground, but all the arrows proved that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

I would point out four things about the Prophets and their prophecies:

A. They predicted the coming of Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

There are over 300 separate prophecies in the Old Testament relating to the coming of Christ. The problem was this: The Prophets saw the coming of Christ as one huge mountain top. They did not realize that there were actually two mountain tops with a valley between them – a valley of at least 2,000 years. They could not distinguish between His first coming and His second coming. They could not see that between the two comings was the Church Age.

These 300 arrows of truth were shot up into the air by about 40 men in different places, over a 1,500-year period. And all of the arrows fell on Jesus – not to kill Him, but to prove that He was indeed the Promised Messiah. Every single prophecy came true and there was not one contradiction.

Here are just a few of those predictions made about Jesus:

1. He would be born of a virgin – Isaiah 7:10.
2. He would be born in Bethlehem – Micah 5:2.
3. He would be born into the tribe of Judah – Genesis 49:10.
4. His ministry would begin in Galilee – Isaiah 9:1.
5. He would work miracles – Isaiah 35:5-6.
6. He would teach in parables – Psalm 78:2.
7. He would enter Jerusalem on a donkey – Zechariah 9:9.
8. He would be betrayed by a friend – Psalm 41:9.
9. He would be sold for 30 pieces of silver – Zechariah 11:12.
10. He would be accused by false witnesses – Psalm 35:11.
11. He would be wounded and bruised – Isaiah 53:5.
12. His hands and feet would be pierced – Psalm 22:16.
13. He would be crucified with thieves – Isaiah 53:12.
14. His garments would be torn apart and lots cast for them – Psalm 22:18.
15. His bones would not be broken – Psalm 34:20.
16. His side would be pierced – Zechariah 12:10.
17. He would be buried in a rich man's tomb – Isaiah 53:9.
18. He would rise from the dead – Psalm 16:70.

B. They didn't understand much of what they predicted.

How could Isaiah understand how "a virgin would conceive and give birth to a Son" (Isaiah 7:14)? Imagine 25 men trying to put together a 300 piece jigsaw puzzle, but no one had all the pieces and no one had the picture on the front of the box. Add to that that the men didn't work together; in fact, they were hundreds of years apart from each other.

C. They couldn't understand the time and under what circumstances the prophecies would be fulfilled.

They couldn't figure out who the Messiah would be or when He would come or how He would present Himself.

D. They couldn't understand why one prophet would see a suffering Messiah and how another prophet could see a Messiah full of glory.

- In Psalm 2 they saw Him in His glory; in Isaiah 53 they saw Him suffering.
- They saw tragedy on Mount Calvary and they saw triumph on the Mount of Olives.
- He would be a Prophet greater than Moses; a Priest greater than Aaron; a King greater than David; and He would be despised, rejected, smitten, and put to death.

II. The Apostles Announced Jesus 1 Peter 1:12a

The Apostles affirmed and proclaimed what the Prophets before them had anticipated.

The Apostles proclaimed the supernatural birth of Jesus. The Son of God became flesh, not in the ordinary way, but by the direct intervention of God. The incarnation of Jesus stands as one of the greatest miracles of the ages.

The sinless life of Christ continues as an integral part of Apostolic preaching. First Peter 2:22 says, "Jesus did no sin, neither was deception found in His mouth."

The suffering and death of Christ on the cross is a central fact in the Apostle's preaching. First Peter 2:24 says, "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

The resurrection of Jesus remained in the forefront of the preaching of all the Apostles. On the Day of Pentecost Peter made the message clear: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses" (Acts 2:32).

The ascension of Jesus and His continuing intercession at the right hand of the Father, praying for His people was preached by the early followers of Jesus.

The Gospel of grace includes the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

The return of Christ for His saints and the setting up of His Glorious Kingdom is the hope of every believer!

III. The Angels Admire Jesus 1 Peter 1:12b

"Which the angels desire to look into." The Gospel of the Son of God is so thrilling that the angels of heaven "stretch themselves" to learn more about it.

The word means "to peek into," "to peer into," "to pry into the full meaning of."

The word also means "to stand on tiptoe": and "to stoop low." It is the same word used when Peter and John peered into the empty tomb.

Angels are interested in our salvation. They "pry into" the full meaning of man's redemption in Christ. It is as though they are saying to the redeemed, "I want to know more! Please, tell me more! Tell me what it's like to be convicted of sin. Tell me more about what happens when a sinner admits he is a sinner and asks Christ to forgive him. Tell me what it's like to have your sins forgiven by Christ."

Angels are either good or evil; obedient or disobedient. There are no saved angels. Only humans can be redeemed. Angels don't experience the misery of being lost; nor the joy of being saved!

They see the changed life of a saint – And marvel.

For the angels, one word describes every born again child of God: Privileged! Privileged!

You have experienced something no angel in heaven has ever or will ever experience: Redemption! And you are Privileged!

How about you? Are you privileged? If you are saved, Christ has wrapped you in His robe of righteousness. No angel has that.

If you are saved, you are Privileged to be a Child of God!!

HUNGRY FOR HOLINESS

1 Peter 1:13-17

One of the great themes of First Peter is that as Christians are only TEMPORARY residence on this earth. Our ETERNAL residence is in heaven.

- In 1 Peter 2:11 Christians are called strangers and pilgrims.
- In 1 Peter 1:17 Peter says we are sojourning through this earth.

“This world is not my home; I’m just a passing through.”

This passage encourages us to prepare for our Eternal home while we are in our Temporary home.

Peter has been laying a foundation about the meaning of salvation. Beginning in 1 Peter 1:13, he continues this theme and adds the concept of holiness.

God has called us to be holy, but how many of us really want that word on our resume? What if I were describing you to someone else and I said, “He/She is kind, friendly, funny, loving, compassionate – and holy.” All the other descriptive words have a favorable impact, but not everyone feels good about the word “holy.” If someone says you are “holier than thou,” or a “Holy Joe,” or, heaven forbid, a “holy-roller,” they aren’t being complimentary.

When you hear the word “holy,” you may conjure up different images. You may visualize that group of Christians who are a part of the Pentecostal Holiness movement where their women don’t wear makeup, cut their hair, or wear pants. I believe most of them are sincere in their conduct, but that’s not all the word “holiness” means.

I want us to examine the wonderful concept of holiness from two perspectives. We’ll briefly examine God’s holiness and then discuss what it means for us to be holy.

Holiness is the primary attribute of God. There are many Bible words that describe the character and nature of God. We read that God is Spirit; God is Light; God is Love; God is Merciful; God is our Shepherd; God is Almighty – I could go on for the rest of this message simply recounting the words and titles used to describe the richness and beauty of God’s character and still not scratch the surface!

But of all these descriptive terms, there is one word that appears more than any other: God is Holy. In Isaiah 6, the prophet had a vision of the Lord high and lifted up. In this vision, the seraphim were hovering above God shouting to each other, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory!” (Isaiah 6:3). The word “holy” is repeated three times. In Jewish thought the number three is a Divine number: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “Holy, holy, holy” – God is perfect holiness.

What does “holy” mean? The Hebrew word used in the Old Testament is “Kadah,” which literally means “to cut apart” or “separate.” The New Testament word is “hagios” and comes from the same root word for “sanctified” or “consecrated.” It basically means “separate, distinct, different.” Holy means set apart or different.

Our holiness is the reflection of God’s nature since the saved man has God’s nature in him (1 John 3:9). Here Peter gives us some practical advice on how to reflect God’s holiness in our lives. He doesn’t just say, “Be holy” and leave it up to us to figure out how to be holy. Starting in verse 13 he gives us five specific areas of our lives where holiness operates. If you want to be holy, you must understand what holiness involves. He gives us some imperatives:

I. Be Smart 1 Peter 1:13a

Holiness involves your Mind: Decide to be holy.

The KJV puts it this way: “Gird up the loins of your mind.” That sounds strange to us. If I told you, “When you go home, I want you to gird up the loins of your mind,” would you know what I wanted you to do?

In the Middle East in that day and time, the men didn’t dress like we dress today. They wore long, flowing robes that went to the ground. It made it very difficult for them to engage in hard work or to fight or to run when they needed to run. Whenever there was a call to action and an energetic response, they would grab the bottom of their robe and tuck it under their belt, or, as it was called, the girdle that they wore around their waists. They would “gird up their loins” so that they could fight or so that they could run and not be entangled or hindered or tripped up.

But this was not a call to physical activity; it is a call to mental activity! “Tighten up the belt of your mind!” An equivalent expression today would be, “Take off your coat, roll up your sleeves, and get to work.” The New English Bible translates it, “Be like men stripped for action.” “Get ready to be holy.”

Why would Peter tell us to tighten up our mind; to get our thoughts under control? Why would he say that?

Because a loose, undisciplined, lazy mind is dangerous. All our problems start between our ears. Many a person has let their thoughts get loose and have been tangled and tripped up in their Christian walk.

Our thought life is under constant attack. Satan always wants to control and corrupt our thought life.

Question: Do you ever have problems with your thought life? Our thought life can be disciplined and brought under control. Paul says in Colossians 3:2 that we are to set our affections; our thought life, on things above.

II. Be Sober 1 Peter 1:13b

Holiness involves your will. Practice self-control. Your will is the part of your soul that determines what you do, where you go, and what you say. You make a decision with your mind, but it's your will that makes it happen.

Peter is saying, "Be self-controlled. Stay free from anything that would cloud your moral and spiritual judgment, causing you to lower your standards and compromise your values."

We usually think of "being sober" in relationship with alcohol and other stimulant drugs. Actually, the word has a much broader sense. It includes alcohol and drugs, but it involves so much more.

- Does alcohol and drugs cloud your moral and spiritual judgment and cause you to lower your standards and compromise your values? Absolutely! Leave it alone!
- Does Anger cloud our judgment to the point where we totally lose control? Yes! Then get your anger under control.
- Do wrong friendships cause us to lower our standards and compromise our standards? Drop those friends.
- Is there a harmful TV show or habit or a certain kind of music that clouds your spiritual or moral judgment? Deal with it!
- Whatever drags you down, deal with it if you want to be holy.

The word "sober" also means "to be serious;" to be serious about the Christian life. Take things like the Bible and prayer and self-control seriously as you walk with the Lord.

III. Be Sure 1 Peter 1:13c

"Hope for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Holiness involves our future and is based on God's grace.

What is hope? HOPE is Having Only Positive Expectations.

The source of our hope is the return of Jesus Christ. When Paul wrote about the Second Coming he said, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (1 Titus 2:13).

Don't let anything distract you from looking for our Lord's return. Let nothing side-track you from looking and longing for Jesus to come back. His coming again is the saint's great prize!

When Peter says that we are to "hope to the end," he means that we are to put our complete confidence and assurance in the promises of God – especially concerning the Second Coming of Jesus.

Live futuristically. Present actions and decisions are governed by future hope. We are to Live Looking! Just as an engaged couple makes all their plans in the light of their future wedding, so Christians today live with the expectation of seeing Jesus.

IV. Be Spiritual 1 Peter 1:14-16

Holiness involves our conduct: Dare to be different. Holiness involves acting differently than people who aren't followers of Jesus Christ.

Being holy makes us different, but it doesn't make us weird. To be holy, you don't have to shave your head and carry a huge cross around in the streets. You don't have to take a vow of chastity, poverty, silence, or move to a monastery. Being holy means living such a God-filled life of kindness and gentleness that your life becomes winsome to others.

What is it that God really wants from us? Our text puts it very simply: "Be holy because I am holy." Do you want another interpretation? God says, "Be like Me!" That's right. God wants us to be like Him!

Talk about raising the bar. That's a high standard. It goes far beyond the usual list of dos and don'ts that we associate with being

holy.

Holiness is the most exciting thing in the world. Holiness means being so much like God that you change the world and the world begins to change around you.

Being holy doesn't mean sinless perfection, but it does mean living a godly, separated life-style. That, within itself, can be intimidating to a lost world.

Several years ago, Billy Graham was invited to a celebrity golf tournament and he was matched with the President of the United States and a couple of golf professionals. One of the golf professionals was a Christian and the other was not. They played the traditional 18 holes of golf and when they got through, the golf pros went into the clubhouse.

One pro said to the other, "I will never do that again!" "Do what?" "I will never play golf with Billy Graham again! I don't want anybody pushing Christianity down my throat." The other pro looked at him and said, "I don't remember Billy Graham saying anything to you about being a Christian."

The golf pro later told Dr. Graham that story. Then he said, "You know, I went home and tried to think about what you might have done to offend that lost man. But you were a perfect gentleman in every way. You never said anything out-of-the-way. Everything you did seemed just right. Just living your Christian life brought that man to a conviction of the sin in his life."

God wants us to live holy in an unholy world. One Church father said, "Tell someone about Jesus every day. If necessary, use words."

V. Be Saintly 1 Peter 1:14-16

Two things will happen when we start to live like Jesus:

A. Family Resemblance 1 Peter 1:14a

"As obedient children." Just as children begin to resemble their parents, the child of God will begin to take on the characteristics of the Lord Jesus because we are partakers of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

B. Firm Refusal 1 Peter 1:14b

"Not fashioning yourself according to the former lust in your ignorance." That is, don't go back to your former life-style. Let your inward holiness manifest itself in outward holiness.

How do we maintain a holy lifestyle? It's not easy!

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord,
Abide in Him always, And feed on His Word.
Make friends of God's children, Help those who are weak,
Forgetting in nothing, His blessings to seek.

Take time to be holy, the world rushes on,
Spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone.
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be,
Thy friends in they conduct, His likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy, let Him be thy Guide,
And run not before Him, whatever betides.
In joy or in sorrow, still follow thy Lord,
And looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.

Take time to be holy, Be calm in thy soul,
Each tho't and each motive, Beneath His control.
Thus led by His Spirit, To fountains of love,
Thou soon shall be fitted, for service above.

REDEEMED WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST
1 Peter 1:18-21

The Apostle Peter is still speaking of our salvation here in 1 Peter 1:18-21.

- God has caused us to be born again.
- God has given us an inheritance in heaven that we can never lose.
- In the future we will see Jesus face to face.
- Saved folks enjoy a salvation that the angels stand on tiptoe to understand, but cannot.

In the light of our wonderful salvation, Peter gives us three commands: Be holy (verses 13-16); Fear God (verses 17-21); and Love one another deeply (verses 22-25).

There are some things that ought to motivate us to be holy, fear God, and love one another deeply. One of those things is our Redemption.

What is Redemption? What does it mean to be Redeemed? Let me give you an old illustration:

A boy made himself a special boat that he loved with all his heart. But one day as he was sailing the boat on the lake, the wind blew it away and he lost it. Sometime later, the boy was walking along the shore of the lake when he saw his boat for sale in the window of a store. The boy went into the store and said to the owner, "Sir, that is my boat in your window. I carved it myself and painted it myself, and it took me a long time to make it. While I was sailing it on the lake the wind blew it away from me and I guess someone found it, but it's mine."

The store owner said, "I'm sorry son. A man came in and asked me if I wanted to buy it and I did. I had to pay for that boat and I can only let you have it if you buy it." So the boy went home and worked hard, earning enough money to buy back his boat. When he paid the store owner for the boat, he hugged it tightly and said, "Little boat, now you belong to me twice. I made you and now I have bought you back."

You and I belong to Jesus twice if we are saved. He is the One who created us; made us. But because of Adam's sin, we are born into this world as sinners. When we are born into this world we are sinners and, although God made us, we are in Satan's kingdom: he owns us. But Jesus was willing to pay the price of redemption for us and when we trust Him as Lord and Savior, we belong to Him forever – body, soul, and spirit.

When Peter says, "You were redeemed" in verse 18, he uses a word that means to set free by the payment of a price. The term comes from the slave markets of the first century. When Jesus died on the cross, His blood paid the price to set us free from the slave market of sin. Of all the names that believers give to Jesus Christ, none are more precious than the name "Redeemer." We use other names more often, such as Lord and Savior, but no word touches the heart like the name Redeemer. It reminds us of what it cost Him to save us from our sin. Redeemer is the name of Christ on the cross. We remember not only that He gave us salvation, but also that He paid a great price for it.

The Concept of Redemption

I remind you that redemption involves paying a purchase price and it was often used in the context of the slave market.

The people of Jesus' day readily understood references to slavery because at that time the nation of Israel itself was under the heel of its Roman conquerors, and an estimated sixty million people were living as slaves throughout the Roman Empire.

Most people wouldn't appreciate being called slaves. Slavery suggest being in bondage to a person or a system, with no control over your own life and with no way out.

Jesus used this term on one occasion to startle His hearers with the reality of sin's bondage and their need for redemption. And not surprisingly, the people reacted with shock and disbelief.

Jesus said in John 8:34, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." The truth is, all of us are born in slavery to sin as surely as the children of slaves on Southern plantations were born in the condition of human bondage. And as surely as the chains and shackles of slavery held their victims in an iron grip, the chains and shackles of sin hold every person in an iron grip until Jesus comes to the slave market with His precious blood and redeems us from sin's auction block.

The bondage to sin reveals itself in a person's attitudes and actions (See Titus 3:3).

The process of buying one from a slave market is important to keep in mind as we talk about Christ's redemption and the price He paid to redeem us from slavery to sin.

The purchaser had three options with regard to the slave he had bought. The buyer could either make that slave his own, or resell him – which for the slave simply meant trading one form of bondage for another, – or set the newly purchased slave free.

The word usually translated redemption can also be translated “ransom,” as in Matthew 20:28, where Jesus said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

We are familiar with the idea of paying a ransom for someone who has been kidnapped or taken prisoner and is being held in bondage until the payment that's demanded is met. The price Jesus paid was made to God Who was the offended party.

Understand that when Jesus redeemed us, He did so for the purpose of setting us free, not re-enslaving us. We have been redeemed in such a way that nobody can ever enslave us again and we are redeemed completely and permanently.

II. The Cost of Redemption 1 Peter 1:18-20

Notice that what Jesus did to pay our sin debt “was foreordained before the foundation of the world.” In other words, God knew what Jesus would do on the cross and approved of Him doing it.

The primary meaning of that word is not that of advanced knowledge, but that of advanced planning. Not only did God know what Jesus was going to do, but He planned that Jesus would come to this world and die on the cross for the sins of man. This plan was in the heart of God before sin was ever in the heart of man! Before Adam ever sinned in the Garden, God had already started a plan into action that would culminate in the death of Jesus on the cross, and the reconciliation of lost sinners to God. In fact, as far as God is concerned, Jesus died before the world was ever formed. Jesus is “the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). My friend, that is a picture of grace!

The cross didn't catch the Lord by surprise! He didn't have to switch to “Plan B” when everything else had failed. He not only planned for the cross, it was the only plan He had!

Jesus paid a debt He did not owe for those who owed a debt they could not pay. Man had sinned against the Lord and was sold under sin! The only way man could be delivered was for a ransom price to be paid for them. When Jesus died on the cross, His blood canceled your sin debt, if you will only believe in Him.

Notice: He did not redeem us “with corruptible things as silver and gold.” Money can only purchase things which are as corruptible as it is. If silver and gold could have redeemed man from sin, the Father would have given it so His Son would not have to die.

We can't buy our way out of the sin mess. No amount of money would redeem one sinful soul.

Only the blood of Jesus could pay our sin debt. Why? Leviticus 17:11: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood ...it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

The blood is the life of the flesh. Life is man's supreme possession, and God's supreme gift. When a man has given that, he has given all he can.

What kind of blood did Jesus shed?

A. Jesus' Blood is Precious Blood.

Few things are called “precious” in the Word of God:

- Peter says “a quiet and gentle spirit” of a woman is precious in the sight of God.
- The Bible says that the promises of God are precious.
- God calls the death of His saints precious.

The word precious means to be of great value because it is one of a kind. Only His blood can produce the desired effect. It is the most precious thing to be found in heaven or earth. Only His blood can redeem.

But notice, it was not called precious blood until it was shed on the cross.

B. Jesus' Blood is Pure Blood.

His blood is without blemish and without spot. His blood is much different for our blood, for His blood does not have the taint of sin upon it. You and I were born with a sin nature. He was born of a virgin of the Holy Spirit and had no sin nature.

C. Jesus' Blood is Powerful Blood.

“He is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.”

What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus,
What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

For my pardon this I see, Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
For my cleansing, this my plea, Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Nothing can for sin atone, Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
Naught of good that I have done, Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my hope and peace, Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
This is all my righteousness, Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Oh! Precious is the flow that makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know, Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

III. The Completion of Redemption

What did His redemption accomplish for us? We are no longer under the curse of sin. Redemption gives peace and removes fear.

What is to be our response to His redemption for us?

He bought us off the slave market of sin. We belong to Him. I Corinthians 6:19-20.

Jesus paid it all; All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.

I gave My life for thee, My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st ransomed be, And quicken from the dead;
I gave, I gave My life for thee, What hast thou given for Me?
I gave, I gave My life for thee, What hast thou given for Me?

GOT MILK? 1 Peter 1:22 – 2:3

The emphasize of 1 Peter one is the importance of being born again, or of being born into the family of God. In 1 Peter two Peter stresses the necessity of growth resulting from the new birth.

When we are first saved, when we are newly born into the kingdom of God, Peter calls us “newborn babes.” That's where every saint begins. All of us who are saved start off as “babes in Christ,” but we are not to stay “babes in Christ.” We are to “grow” in the Lord.

D. L. Moody use to describe Christians of his day as “wasp Christians.” When a wasp makes its way out of its nest, it emerges full grown. It changes very little from the time it first comes forth from its nest until the time it dies. Many Christians are like that.

Babies are cute, but every parent wants their baby to grow. What a sad thing it would be for a baby to be born and then never grow. If a child was born and twenty years later it was still the size of an infant and could not speak or do things for itself, we would say, “It's not normal.”

As parents expect their children to grow physically, so God expects His children to grow spiritually. All who truly have been born of the Holy Spirit are to develop into spiritual maturity.

If you have any interest in growing spiritually, pay attention to what Peter says because he is speaking to you. And if you haven't been growing as you would like, pay closer attention because Peter connects two things that we must keep separate. If we want to grow spiritually, there are some things that we must get rid of and there are some things that we must start doing. We must lay aside some things and we must earnestly crave some things.

Peter mentions five marks of immaturity that will definitely stunt our spiritual growth. We are to “lay aside” or “cast off” these things entirely. We are no longer to practice them. We are to cast off these things like you would cast off dirty clothes so you can put on fresh, clean clothes. If these five things are in your life, Peter says that they are a sign of spiritual immaturity. What are they?

1. Malice

Malice is a spirit of ill will with a desire to get even with someone in a spirit of revenge. “I'll pay them back. I'll get even.”

If you and I nurse or pamper a hurt and let the wrong done to us linger in our minds, the thing will flourish and we will hold a grudge.

How many of God's people live in spiritual defeat because of this sin of malice. Mature Christians forget the unkindness by returning good for evil.

The story is told that Leonardo da Vinci, while painting his great work, "The Last Supper," vowed he would get even with a bitter enemy by painting him as Judas. He knew the painting would be on display for all to see and that it would greatly hurt the man. There was a sense of gratification in his heart as he yielded to this selfish temptation. But later, as he tried to paint the face of Jesus, he was forced to give up in despair.

Realizing that such a task demanded a pure heart, he put away his animosity, admitted his sin of vindictiveness, and quickly painted out the face of his enemy. Only then, he said, could he paint the face of Jesus.

So long as there is a vengeful spirit, no believer can effectively serve God. All of his labors will be hopelessly fruitless until his heart overflows with God's love for others.

Notice that Peter says, "All malice." If there is one that you have malice against, remove that cancer of evil from your heart.

2. Guile or Deceit

Cut out all kinds of deceit. Deceitfulness is a miserable sin. You are deceitful when you tell a lie or omit the truth in order to gain a personal advantage. Deceit is a clever form of deliberate dishonesty. God's people are to be true blue, honest and trustworthy at all times. Cut deceit out of your life.

3. Hypocrisies

The word is plural and includes all sorts of hypocrisies. The word means pretense of any kind. It means wearing a false face of pretending to be something that we are not.

When we pretend to be something we are not, we cover up what we really are; and give the appearance of something we are not.

Judas was a pretender; he wore a mask, and look at his later end.

4. Envy

Envy contains the thought of jealousy. Envy is jealousy at the success of others or happiness at another's failure or misfortune. It is a poison of the soul that turns you into a resentful, angry, grouchy, miserable, critical person.

The Pharisees and Sadducees envied Jesus. That's why they put Him to death. Envy will pollute your life. Lay it aside.

5. Evil Speaking

The word includes all kinds of slander. It means "to speak down to" or "to speak against another person." It includes gossip, talebearing, spreading rumors, passing along a bad report, taking cheap shots, using humor to cut someone to pieces, and unkind words. And it's usually done behind the back of another person.

These rotten attitudes have no place in the Christian life.

All of these are relational sins or horizontal sins because they touch on how we relate to others. They deal with how we respond to the difficult people we rub shoulders with every day.

Ephesians 4:29. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

A little girl once said to her mother, "I was a peacemaker today." The mother asked her if she had settled a quarrel for others. "No," she replied, "I knew something and didn't tell it."

If we do not relate rightly horizontally to our brothers and sisters in Christ, we cannot relate vertically to God. We can't be right with God if we are wrong with our brother.

That's the negative part. Now Peter gives us the positive side of how we can mature in the Lord.

Look at 1 Peter 1:23, 25; 2:2-3.

A. The Bible is Permanent

The Bible is incorruptible. It lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:23).

The Bible endures forever (1 Peter 1:25).

There are two things that the Bible declares will last forever. They can never be destroyed or pass away: God's Church and God's Word.

The Bible is accurate because it is inspired of God (God-breathed).

- Matthew 24:35: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.”
- Matthew 5:18: For verily I say to you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.”
- Psalm 119:89: “Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven.”

B. The Bible Purifies the one who reads it, believes it, and heeds it.

- Psalm 119:9: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word.”
- John 15:3: “Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken to you.”
- John 17:17: “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth.”

D. L. Moody said, “Sin will keep you from the Bible, or the Bible will keep you from sin.”

C. The Bible Produces Spiritual Life and Growth – 1 Peter 1:23

- James 1:18: “Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth.”
- Romans 10:17 “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

In Matthew 13:18-23 Jesus gives the parable of the sower who sows the good seed – the Word of God. Some of the seed falls into good soil and brings forth fruit. That seed sown in the mind or human heart is the Word of God which germinates and produces new life because of the reception of that seed and the work of God's Spirit through it's message.

Spiritual growth comes by means of God's Word. The one who wants to grow spiritually must invest time in God's Word.

We are told that milk is the perfect food. So God's Word is the perfect food for the soul. It is imperative that we drink daily of the “sincere milk of the Word.”

The growing Christian “delights in the Law of the Lord; and in His Law doth he meditate day and night” (Psalm 1:2).

We need to be saturated with the Word when we are confronted by temptation and sin. “Thy Word have I hid in mine heart; that I might not sin against Thee” (Psalm 119:11).

Look back at 1 Peter 2:2. Notice that he doesn't say, “If we are newborn babes or when we were newborn babes,” rather, we are to continue all the days of our lives AS newborn babes, craving the sincere milk of the Word.

Stay away from spiritual “junk food” and desire the milk of the Word. It's the only way we can grow.

New or old Christians should long for, crave, and desire the milk of the Word so they can grow. Growth in Christ is not accidental. Time spent in God's Word is the secret to spiritual vitality and progress.

Christians should frequently review their “spiritual growth charts.” Where are you spiritually as far as your growth is concerned. Are you a “wasp Christian?” No bigger now than the day you were saved?

Peter is going to say in his Second Epistle, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:18).

THE ROCK AND OUR ROLE

1 Peter 2:4-10

(Read 1 Peter 2:11 also and remind the folks that this is the key verse in 1 Peter.)

Peter has been writing about salvation and spiritual growth. He begins this section (verse 4) by writing, “As you come to Him (Jesus), the Living Stone.” Peter employs a participle when he communicates the idea that you don't simply come to Jesus one time. The word is literally saying, “As you continually keep coming to Jesus over and over again.”

In these verses Peter tells us who Jesus is and who we are because of Who He is.

I. Who Is Jesus?

Peter uses one key word to describe who Jesus is. He is the Stone upon which the whole Church is built. You can see that in four different places in our text:

- In verse 4, He is “the Living Stone.”
- In verse 6, He is “the Cornerstone.”
- In verse 7, He is “the Capstone.”
- In verse 8, He is the “Stone that causes men to stumble.”

But there is even more in our text about Christ, the Stone:

- He is the Stone the builders rejected Verse 7.
- He is the Stone chosen by God Verse 4.
- He is the Stone that is precious to every believer Verse 7.

We can say it another way:

- To the world, He is the Stumbling Stone.
- To God, He is the Chosen Stone.
- To believers, He is the Corner-Stone.

A. Jesus is the Living Stone 1 Peter 2:4

Peter identifies Jesus as a Living Stone. Isn't that an oxymoron? An oxymoron is a combination of two seemingly contradictory words, such as: jumbo shrimp; freezer burn; pretty ugly; athletic scholarship; living stone.

A stone isn't alive! We say something is “dead as a rock.” But there is a width and depth to our Lord's character that is impossible to fully comprehend. For example, Jesus is a wounded healer; a meek Master Who gives us a light yoke.

Remember that Peter wants us to practice holiness and grow in holiness. “Be ye holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16).

Notice 1 Peter 2:4: “To whom coming” could better be translated, “As you habitually come back to Jesus time and time again.” This coming to Jesus does not refer to the initial response of a sinner who comes to Christ for salvation. The tense and voice of the participle indicates that this coming is a personal, habitual approach. It is an intimate association of communion and fellowship between believers and their Lord. Coming to Jesus means a continual coming unto Him. The Church grows as saved people return to Jesus with a new, fresh commitment of their lives to Him. We should never become weary of returning to Jesus for guidance and renewal.

The first step in practicing holiness is fellowship with Jesus Christ, the Living Stone.

Here Peter uses a unique figure of speech. In 1 Peter 1:3 he referred to a “living hope” and in 1 Peter 1:23 to the “living ...Word”; then in 1 Peter 2:4 he referred to Christ as the “Living Stone.” Peter says this Stone is living. It has life in itself and gives life to others as they enter in to a personal relationship with this living Stone.

In verse 4 Peter says that Jesus is the “Living Stone,” but in verse 5 he says that we who believe in Him “Are Like Living Stone.” That means that He is the Rock and we are like chips off the Living Block. When we come in contact with Jesus Christ, we are made alive with Him.

Brick or stone find their maximum use when they are brought together and fitted together with the mortar of God's grace. As long as stones are scattered upon the ground, they are not of much real use. It's only as they are united that they help form a building that they become useful. As we relate to Christ and relate to one another, we are “built up a spiritual house.” Every “living stone” in God's house is to be supportive of others.

B. Jesus is the Foundation Stone 1 Peter 2:6

Peter used two words to describe the cornerstone. (We will look at the second word in a moment.) A cornerstone provided the foundation for a building. It was the first stone to be placed and all the other stones related to it. If the cornerstone was not perfectly square and perfectly laid, the entire building would be flawed.

In Matthew 16, Jesus was talking to Peter about the foundation of the Church. Peter had just confessed Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. After which Jesus said, “I tell you that you are Peter (petros – pebble) and upon this rock (petra – bolder or stratum) I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:12).

Some assume Jesus was talking about Peter being the foundation of the Church. But it's clear when you study the words, Jesus wasn't calling Peter the foundation. He was actually making a contrast. Jesus had given Simon the nickname of Peter, which means "rock" but the word

means a small rock; the kind of rock you would pick up and throw at a dog. But you wouldn't use a pebble for a foundation. Jesus used a word that meant a stratum rock. Have you ever stood beside a mountain and seen the different strata of rock pressed into the mountain side? That's what Jesus was describing.

If we had been there that day, I think you would have seen Jesus point at Himself and said, "and upon this rock, I will build My Church."

Peter knew who Jesus was talking about being the foundation. Paul identifies Jesus as the foundation of life when he wrote "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:11).

In life, like in construction, it's important to have a good foundation. Jesus is the only true Foundation upon which you can build your life.

C. Jesus is the Capstone 1 Peter 2:7

This is the second word that is translated cornerstone, but it is another rock picture that could better be translated as capstone. A capstone was different from a cornerstone. A cornerstone was used for a foundation guide, and was the first stone laid. In contrast, a capstone was the last stone laid.

By law, the tallest structure that will ever be built in our nations' capitol is the Washington Monument, which is 555 feet tall. On December 6, 1884, the capstone for the Washington Monument was set in place. A scaffold had to be built so the dignitaries could participate. The winds were gusting to almost 60 mph that day which made the ceremony a dangerous endeavor.

The capstone is a 9-inch pyramid containing 100 ounces of pure aluminum. In the 1880's aluminum was a rare metal, and it was installed as part of the Monument's lightening protection system. At the time, this capstone was the largest piece of aluminum produced and it was displayed in Tiffany's Jewelry Store in New York City before it was installed.

On the eastern face of this capstone are two words in Latin, "Laus Deo," which means "Praise Be to God." In other words, overlooking the 69 square miles of the most powerful city on earth is a capstone that offers praise to God!

When Solomon's temple was built, all the stones were quarried at a remote location so there was no sound of chiseling heard on the holy ground. A powerful Jewish legend tells the story of a strange-shaped stone being brought to the construction site early in the process. The head builder looked at the stone and couldn't figure out where it fit, so he figured it was a mistake, so the stone was rolled away to the side and forgotten.

It took several years to build the temple, and when the building was almost finished, the builder sent word to the quarry that he was ready for the capstone. The quarry master sent word back that he sent the capstone years earlier. The capstone was the stone that had been rolled aside and by now was covered with dirt and vines. That's what the Bible means when it speaks of "the stone which the builders rejected has become the capstone."

You may wonder how Jesus can be both the Cornerstone and the Capstone. He is both the foundation of your life and the crowning achievement of life. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. He is the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega.

D. Jesus is the Stumbling Stone 1 Peter 2:8

In verse 7 Peter says that for those who know and accept Jesus as Savior and Lord, He is precious, but to those who reject Him, He is a stumbling stone and "a rock of offense."

There is a warning here that we must not miss. The same stone that saves some causes others to stumble. Three times in this passage Peter uses the word "precious" to describe Jesus. But to the world Jesus is not precious at all.

The word "offense" means "to create a scandal." To this world Jesus is either precious or He causes a scandal. Oppose abortion, homosexuality, or same-sex marriage in the Name of Jesus or pray in the Name of Jesus in public and it will create a scandal.

You can love Jesus and accept Him or you can reject Jesus, but you can't ignore Jesus!

II. Who We Are in Jesus Because of Who He Is 1 Peter 2:5, 9-10

A. We are a Holy Priesthood (verse 5) and a Royal Priesthood (verse 9)

Here is the key to understanding this concept. In the Old Testament, God called a certain group of men (the Levites) to serve Him as priests. They had special privileges and special responsibilities and duties, but you could sum them up by saying they offered sacrifices for the people before the Lord. The sins of the people had to be atoned for and covered by the blood of the sacrifice, but only the priests could offer the sacrifice.

The whole Old Testament system sent a message that it was not easy to approach God. The ordinary Israelite could not offer his own sacrifice; he had to go through the priest who offered his sacrifice for him. The priests served as a go-between the gap between God and man.

Peter says, "That's all changed now that Christ has come and died for our sins." In the Old Testament, they HAD a priesthood. In the New Testament, we ARE a priesthood. Every believer is now a priest; being a priest means we have access to God at any time. We don't have to have anyone to go to God for us.

A priest builds bridges. He builds bridges to God. Since we as believers are priest, we can approach God at any time.

What did priests do? They offered sacrifices to God. In the Old Testament they offered animal sacrifices. Now, we offer a different kind of sacrifice before God.

Understand that you and I can be a priest wherever we are, 24/7. We don't have to wait to come to church. We are all portable temples and mobile priests.

What kind of sacrifices are we as New Testament priests to offer to the Lord?

1. We are to offer our bodies as a Living sacrifice unto God – Romans 12:1.
2. We are to offer the sacrifice of Praise continually – Hebrews 13:15.
3. We are to offer the sacrifice of Good Works – Hebrews 13:16.
4. We are to offer up our Witness to the lost – Romans 15:16.
5. We are to offer up to the Lord our Prayers – Revelation 8:2-4.

To say it another way, Jesus left us on earth to be a bridge-builder for Him.

- We do that when we worship Him.
- We do that when we Praise Him.
- We do that when we confess our sins to Him.
- We do that when we give to Him.
- We do that when we witness for Him.
- We do that when we perform acts of mercy in His Name.

Prayer is one of the most powerful ways we can exercise our royal priesthood.

As we do those things, Jesus will become more precious to us – 1 Peter 2:7.

I have yet to meet a true born-again believer who would not readily agree that Jesus Christ is precious to them. I'll tell you, Jesus is on my mind and heart all the time.

So precious is Jesus, my Savior, my King.
His praise all the day long with rapture I sing;
To Him in my weakness for strength I cling,
For He is so Precious to me.

He stood at my heart's door in sunshine and rain,
And patiently waited an entrance to gain;
What shame that so long He entreated in vain,
For He is so Precious to me.

I Praise Him because He appointed a place,
Where, someday, thro' faith in His wonderful grace,
I know I shall see Him, shall look on His face,
For He is so Precious to me.

For He is so Precious to me;

For He is so Precious to me.
Tis heaven below My Redeemer to know,
For He is so precious to me.

MAKING GOD LOOK GOOD

1 Peter 2:11-12

When I Played softball for one of the church teams (a 1,000 years ago), when I would get up to bat, one of our guys would shout out, "Make us look good, Preacher. Get a hit!"

That's what Peter is saying in these verses: "Believer, always make God look good!"

In 2 Corinthians 5:20 Paul says, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ stead, be ye reconciled to God."

- "We are ambassadors for Christ." What does that mean? What is an ambassador? An ambassador is a representative from one country who represents that country and their leader to another country.
- Here is a man that the President of the United States has chosen to go, say to Israel, to represent him and the United States while he is in Israel. The President wants that ambassador to make the United States look good.

Paul said in Philippians 3:20 that believers' citizenship is in heaven. God leaves believers on this earth for a while as His ambassador. God wants believers to make Him look good before other believers, but He wants us to make Him look good to those who are lost sinners so they will want to become one of His children as well.

That's why God wants His children to be pure. That's why He wants His children to live right and be merciful and forgiving toward others. That's why God wants His children to be faithful to Him and be His example of godly living before the world. Like one man said, "Share Christ every day, and if necessary, use words." We are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and by our very lives, the lost can see something different about us that they want in their lives. They will see that God has changed us and they want that change in their life.

Sadly, there are times that Christians don't make God look good. Sometimes we as God's children don't look anything like God. Sometimes Christians make God look bad through everything from lying and gossiping to unfaithfulness to God and immorality with others.

Remember this: Someone is watching you! Someone is listening to you! Christians are always on display. We are walking advertisements for God or against God. The world watches our actions and our reactions. The world takes note of how we handle temptations and trials and troubles and even triumphs.

Notice the last part of verse 12 – that "they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God."

- In His sermon on the Mount Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."
- The word "glorify" means "to make larger or to make more beautiful." To glorify God means "to make God look more desirable to those around us;" to make Him larger and more wonderful.

How do we do that? Peter mentions three things in these two verses:

I. Our Status 1 Peter 2:11

When we were born the first time, we were born into this world. This is the world you can see, smell, taste, hear, and feel. When you experience a spiritual birth, you are born again into a new world. From that moment on, we belong to a different world and we no longer feel at home in this world. We live here, but we realize there is another world to live for.

We are now citizens of heaven! We are waiting the arrival of our Savior, Jesus Christ who will transform our earthly bodies into glorious bodies like His own.

We live here, but this isn't our home. That's why we never feel totally at home in this world. Heaven is our true home. We reside in this world, but we don't belong here.

This world is not my home I'm just a-passing through,
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.

The angels beckon me from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

Just over in Gloryland we'll live eternally
The saints on every hand are shouting victory.

Their songs of sweetest praise drift back from heaven's shore
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

II. Our Struggle 1 Peter 2:11

Notice the phrase, “abstain from fleshly lust, which WAR against the soul.” We are at war and the real battle is not the outside; it's on the inside. Every believer is at war with the desires of the flesh that drag us down.

All sin starts in the mind. If we can win the battle on the inside, we can win the battle on the outside. As believers we cannot and must not accept the world's standards. As citizens of heaven, we will always be square pegs in round holes. The danger is that we will try to “pound to fit and paint to match” so that we look and act like everyone else.

If you are saved, you will never feel at home here because we're not suppose to be at home here. The battle inside the heart is one more proof that our true citizenship is in heaven.

I want you to see something else: If you are saved you will never feel at home in this world AND you will never escape the war between your old fleshly nature and your new spiritual nature.

Galatians 5:16-17: “This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.
For the flesh wars against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would.”

Not only does our sinful flesh constantly place wicked desires in our mind, the world without God is CONSTANTLY trying to influence us to give in to their way of thinking as well.

Peter says we must “abstain from fleshly lust.” The word “abstain” means “to keep away from something; not to get involved with something, to use spiritual restraints.”

What are some of those fleshly desires we are to abstain from and not get involved with? Read Galatians 5:19-21 in the Living Bible.

Let me ask some pointed questions to see if you have ever had a civil war in your heart between the flesh and the spirit.

- Are you ever tempted to cheat or cut corners at work or in school?
- Do you hold grudges against those who mistreat you?
- Do you spend time dreaming about illicit sexual encounters?
- Are you ever tempted to gossip about someone you dislike?
- Do you ever think, “I wish I weren't a Christian just for a few minutes so I could do what ever I wanted to do?”

Don't do it! Don't surrender to sinful desires. These desires are at war against your soul. They are out to destroy you. There is no place for evil in the Christian life, so don't make room for it. If you think about evil long enough, you will be tempted to do it. So don't think about it.

III. Our Strategy 1 Peter 2:11-12

Did you notice Peter's humble approach as he opens his heart to these people? “ 'Dearly beloved' – I write this to you because I love you and want the best for you.”

“I beseech you” means “Please. I beg you.” “I Plead with you.” “I entreat you.”

Verse 12 “having your lifestyle and conduct honorable among the Gentiles.” “Honorable” implies the purest, highest, noblest kind of goodness. It means lovely, winsome, gracious, and excellent. It means to be attractive or praiseworthy.

Christians ought to be the most honest people on earth. We ought to be the kindest people on earth. We ought to be the most gracious people on earth. We ought to be the most trustworthy.

We are to make Jesus beautiful by the way we live. Remember: Every day we are either drawing people to Jesus or pushing them

further away.

Peter adds an important phrase: Don't be surprised when you are unfairly attacked. Live so that no one can make an honest attack on you. Do good works anyway and leave it in God's hands.

Let me close with two passages of Scripture: Romans 13:13-14; Titus 2:11-12.

Live for Jesus! The world is watching. Some will believe because of our example.

Make God look good!

THE FOOTPRINTS OF JESUS

1 Peter 2:19-25

Peter writes his first book to warn his readers that they are going to soon face a great deal of suffering. And, he tells them why they are going to suffer. It is because they are strangers in this world. This world is actually not their home. Their citizenship is in Heaven. They are strangers or sojourners and pilgrims in this world. They are just passing through this world on their way to Heaven.

With that being said, Peter tells them how they are to live here as they represent our Heavenly Lord and King. We are to live Holy lives. We are to be holy because our Lord is holy (1 Peter 14-16).

Then we are to live Humbly. We are to live honorable lives so that when the people of this world speaks of us, they may not speak of us as evildoers (1 Peter 2:12).

Not only are we to live Holy lives and Humble lives, but we are to live in Harmony with those we come in contact with. In 1 Peter 2:13-17 Peter tells his readers to submit themselves to every government official; then in 1 Peter 2:18-21 Peter says that we are to submit to our bosses and those who are over us because this will make God look good and those of the world will detect there is something different about the folks who follow Jesus.

Now, in the verses we are about to look at, Peter says we don't have to figure out on our own how to live Holy, Humbly, and in Harmony with the folks of this world, because Christ is our example and we are to walk in His steps.

Most of us are familiar with the letters "WWJD," which stand for "What Would Jesus Do?" You might think "WWJD" originated in the 1990's when everyone was wearing T-shirts and bracelets with the letters on them or the words, "What Would Jesus Do?" But the question, "What Would Jesus Do?" was first popularized a hundred years earlier by a pastor from Topeka, Kansas, named Charles Sheldon. In 1896 he wrote the book *In His Steps*.

The chapters in the book were actually story-sermons he shared with the members of Central Congregational Church. The fictional story was about a young, unemployed man who moved to a community to find a job. Most of the members of the local church considered him a tramp, and none of them chose to help him.

One Sunday, the young man asked to speak to the congregation. As he stood before them sick and hungry, he quietly asked why the members claimed to be Christians but their actions denied their faith. He posed the question: "What would Jesus do? Is that what you mean by following in His steps?" Then he laid his hand on the communion table and collapsed – dead.

The church members were so shaken, they began to ask themselves the question, "What would Jesus do?" The pastor challenged everyone in the church – doctors, lawyers, merchants, salespeople, teachers, students, and everyone in the city – that for one year, all the people would make that question the basis of all their decisions. That simple question changed their lives, their church, and their community. It's a classic story every Christian should read.

What DOES it mean to walk in the steps of Jesus? In all of the Bible, the phrase "In His Steps" only appears once and it is used in the context of suffering.

Let's look at "The Footprints of Jesus."

I. His Footprints are Filled with Pain 1 Peter 2:21-22

The question, "What Would Jesus Do?" doesn't work in every situation.

1. First of all, we may not know what Jesus would do in any given situation. He was always doing the opposite of what people expected. Isaiah 55:8; John 8:1-11.

2. Second of all, if we knew what Jesus would do, that doesn't mean we could do what Jesus would do. For instance, when Jesus saw His disciples out on the stormy sea of Galilee and they were so afraid, He simply walked out on the water to meet them and calmed their fears.

If you were on Pickwick Lake and a storm came up and you became greatly afraid and I wanted to come join you, I know the answer to "What Would Jesus Do?", but that certainly doesn't mean I could do what He did! The only time we can do 100 per cent sure we can ask and answer that question "WWJD?" is when we are suffering.

In this passage of Scripture, Peter identifies two different kinds of suffering.

1. Some suffering may come as the result of my bad choices – 1 Peter 2:20

Peter asked, "Is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it?" We have a saying, "If you do the crime, you gotta do the time." All bad choices have bad consequences. The Bible says in Galatians 6:7: "Don't be deceived, God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

2. The second kind of suffering is undeserved – 1 Peter 2:19

This is unjust suffering. Sometimes, people are going to treat you in ways you do not deserve. Sometimes life isn't fair.

In the cartoon strip Earnest and Frank, both Earnest and Frank were standing in front of an exhibition hall with many different flags displayed. The sign in front of the building said, "The World's Fair."

Upon reading the sign Frank said, "Oh, no it's not!" He's right, the world isn't fair. Life isn't fair – but God is good.

Sometimes you suffer and it's okay to recognize you are not to blame. That's when you should walk in His steps because that's exactly the way Jesus suffered. He didn't deserve to be beaten and crucified, yet He endured it. The footprints of Jesus are filled with blood. He has already suffered and showed us how to react. Now, we must walk in His steps.

Following Jesus means that sometimes we will suffer even when we have done nothing wrong. The greatest honor for any Christian is to be like Jesus. When we suffer unjustly, we share in a tiny portion of what happened to Him. Though He did no wrong, He was betrayed, tried, denied, and crucified. Though He never sinned, He was hated by those who plotted to kill Him. The same may happen to us. People close to us may disappoint us and some may turn against us.

Jesus suffered innocently. Look at 1 Peter 2:24-25. There is an enormous amount of gospel truth in these verses:

1. His suffering was personal – He Himself.
2. His suffering was substitutionary – He bore our sins.
3. His suffering was severe – in His body on the tree.
4. His suffering was redemptive – that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.
5. His suffering was curative – by His wounds you have been healed.
6. His suffering was reconciling – you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your soul.

There is enough gospel truth in those two verses to save the whole world:

- He takes our punishment.
- He pays the price for our sin.
- He gives us new life.
- He heals our hearts.
- He brings us back to God.

All that we want and all that we need are found in the cross of Christ.

II. His Footprints are Filled with Patience 1 Peter 2:23

I submit to you that this is not a natural way to live. When we are insulted, our natural inclination is to return an insult for an insult. But Jesus chose another way. As the old spiritual puts it, "He never said a mumblin' word."

Isaiah 53:7: "As a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth." When He stood before Pilate and Herod, and when He faced the jeering mob, He uttered no insult, He made no threats.

When they scourged Him, He didn't retaliate.

When the soldiers pushed the crown of thorns on His head, He didn't curse at them.

When they drove the nails in His hands and feet, He didn't threaten them.

When the by-standers spat on Him, He didn't spit back.

When they swore at Him, He didn't swear back.

Sometimes the real test of your faith is what you don't do. Sometimes you'll be a better Christian by saying nothing at all.

Let me pose a hypothetical question for a moment: What if Jesus had answered back when He was attacked? What if He had retaliated? What if He had insulted Herod, mocked Pilate, and used His divine power to escape the Roman soldiers? What if He had said to those who abused Him, "You just wait until I come into My Kingdom. You'll have to stand before Me in judgment one day and I'll make you pay for what you're doing to Me!" What if He had worked a miracle and freed Himself? What if He had?

We would not be saved. We would still be in our sins. We would still be lost and on our way to hell.

Often the tongue is the last outpost in the battle between flesh and spirit. Peter emphasizes that Jesus was silent when He was mistreated. How hard it is for us to follow His example.

It's amusing to think that this advice comes from Peter who never seemed to follow his own advice. He was the man with the foot-shaped mouth. Perhaps that's why he emphasized it here. He learned the truth the hard way.

Sometimes we just need to keep our mouth shut. Sometime we talk too much. What would happen if we did for others what Jesus did for us? Perhaps our powerful silence would convict them. Perhaps our kindness would disarm them. Do you know what happens when we resist the urge to get even, and when we stop claiming our rights, and when we give up always wanting to be understood, and when we give up our anger and bitterness? I'll tell you what happens – we become like Jesus! And that's when our life begins to change the world around us.

II. His Footprints are Filled with Promise 1 Peter 2:23

"He committed (entrusted) Himself to the Perfect Judge." The word "entrusted" carries the idea of handing something valuable to someone. It is the same word used in Luke 23 when it says Jesus breathed out His last breath on the cross and cried, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." When we entrust our pain and our problems to God, we are taking our hands off our pain and problems and allowing God to settle the score in His way and in His time. And God will richly reward us when we follow the steps of Jesus when we react to pain and problems, especially those caused unjustly by other folks.

Here is some good advice from an oyster:

There once was an oyster whose story I tell,
Who found that sand had gotten under his shell,
Just one little grain, but it gave him such pain,
For oysters have feelings although they're so plain.
How did he berate the harsh workings of fate
That brought him to such a deplorable state?
"No," he said to himself, "since I cannot remove it,
I'll lie in my shell and think how to improve it."
So the years rolled by as the years always do,
And he came to his ultimate destiny – stew.
And the small grain of sand which had bothered him so,
Was a beautiful pearl, all richly aglow.
Now this tale has a moral – for isn't it grand,
What an oyster can do with a morsel of sand?
Think ...what could we do if we'd only begin,
With some of the things that get under our skin?

Jesus is not just our Savior from sin. He is also our example when we suffer unjustly.

In the Christian life there are two ways to glow – through people and through pain. And the hardest growth often comes from pain inflicted by other people. It happened to Jesus. It will happen to us as well.

MARRIAGE: MADE IN HEAVEN BUT MAINTAINED ON EARTH

1 Peter 3:1-7

Peter has already considered the Christian's responsibilities to the state or the government and also to his employer. Peter's command toward both: submit. Remember: Our real citizenship is in heaven.

Next, Peter speaks to the believer's obligation in the home. His first concern is for married women who had been recently converted to Christ, but whose husbands were still unconverted. Many of the unbelieving husbands had become extremely bitter and cruel as a result of their mates' newly-found faith. These married women were greatly disturbed as to what they should do about their unbelieving husband's treatment of them.

Should these Christian wives leave their unsaved husbands? Would it be better for her if she sought better surroundings where the atmosphere might be more conducive to growth in grace?

The scriptural answer is an emphatic "NO!" Let the believing wife stay where she is and live such a godly life before him that her unbelieving mate will ultimately cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" First Corinthians 7:13 says, "The woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him." Paul's admonition is to submit to her husband.

If the believing wife is to be effective for the Lord Jesus, it is of prime importance that she "be in subjection" to her "own husband." This means she should adapt herself, as far as conscience permits, to her husband's desires and demands.

Have you ever heard the expression, "a marriage made in heaven?" Every marriage that follows God's plan for marriage is a marriage made in heaven. When Jesus spoke about a husband and wife He said, "What God has joined together ..." I have performed weddings for over 40 years, but I've always been aware it was God who really joined the man and woman together, not me.

The key to having a health marriage is to continue to learn how to be a better wife or husband. Someone said that there ought to be a statement on every marriage license that says: "A marriage license is just a learner's permit."

You may have noticed that six of the seven verses dealing with marriage were addressed to women. I think there is a reason for that.

If you went to a pet store to buy a pet turkey, you would pick up a cage, food, water bowl and a booklet with instructions on how to care for your pet. The turkey, on the other hand, wouldn't need a book telling him how to live with you because the smarter one gets the instructions.

I think you can see the analogy! Women are given a greater amount of instruction because their challenged to live with men can be much more difficult! Peter makes it as simple as he can for husbands when he gives them only one verse.

I. The Explanation of Submission 1 Peter 3: 1

"Wives, likewise, be in submission to your own husbands." We should not be surprised that in the middle of his epistle in which the word "suffering" appears sixteen times, Peter addresses the subject of marriage. In days of difficulty, marriages will either grow stronger or collapse under strain. Thus, it is fitting that Peter would address the issue of marriage within the overarching theme of the believer and suffering. The key word for hard times and suffering in connection of the government, with employers, and marriage is submission. How should saved women deal with their unsaved husbands if they want to win them to Christ. One word, submission.

As a pastor, I have found that, when a man gets saved first, his wife and kids follow him in faith. Such was the case in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10), as well as in the family of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16). When a woman is saved first, however, I have found she tends to come alone. That is partly due to a phony sense of male superiority that says, "If she found it first, how right can it be?" or, "This church stuff doesn't fit in with the macho image I've cultivated so carefully."

Again, he says, "Wives, likewise (or in the same way), be submissive to your own husbands." The words "in the same way" are there because he has already written about submission to government and bosses.

Many of you who are Christians wives know the Bible directs you to submit to your husbands, but unless you understand what the concept of submission really is, you'll be frustrated, angry or fearful.

There are two negative extremes wives often take. First, some are so repulsed by the idea of submission they rebel and become the opposite – a loud, boisterous, criticizing woman. They refuse to recognize the headship of their husbands and they are constantly complaining and nagging. Solomon was an expert on wives; he had 1,000 of them. In Proverbs 21:9 he wrote: "Better to

live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a contentious wife.”

The other extreme mistake is to think submission means you are a slave, a doormat, and that you must always do exactly what your husband says without question. As a result some women become a mousy, timid wife who bows and walks 15 steps behind her husband.

The word “submit” is one of the most misunderstood words in the Bible. It sounds like such a scary word. It sounds like something that strangles and smothers you! It's no wonder the word “submit” makes some wives angry and others afraid. That's why verse 6 says, “don't give in to fear.”

The Greek word for submit is “hup-o-tasso” and it involves the purpose of improving something. It means to be under or beside to strengthen or support or to lift them up.

Ladies, that's what it means to submit; not that you are inferior or less of a person. Remember that Jesus always submits to the Father, but that doesn't mean He is less important or inferior to the Father. In fact, the Father magnifies the Son!

Submission is NOT a position, its a disposition. Whenever you encourage or pray for your husband, you are lifting him up to God. Don't be afraid of godly submission.

II. The Examination of Submission 1 Peter 3:1b-4

Ladies, what will your submission to your husband do for your husband? In a word, your submission to him will make you more beautiful to him.

I remind you again, Peter is talking to saved woman who are married to unsaved husbands. And Peter said to submit to your OWN husbands. The command does not require women to be in submission to men in general.

Peter says the best way for a believing wife to win her unbelieving husband is to do so without a word. Christian wives, you'll never win your lost husband to the Lord by preaching to him. Don't preach to him. Don't put tracts in his lunchbox when you send him off to work. Don't turn the Christian radio on when he is watching football. You are to win your husbands by simply submitting to him.

Don't nag him. It would be hard to find more sensible advice than this. Someone said, “A wife who has good horse sense never becomes a nag.” How many women are driving their husbands from the Lord because of their unscriptural handling of the problem.

We all hate for others to nag us, especially when we know they are right. Human nature being what it is, nagging usually drives people farther away.

This sort of thing happens all the time. Because some wives greatly desire for their husbands to be saved, they lay Christian books on the table next to their favorite chair or put tracks on the table or preaching tapes or place-mats with Scripture verses on them or constant begging or pleading for him to come with her to church. Women can be so creative when they are wanting you to do something (can I get a witness!). It gets old after a while because the husband begins to feel that his wife is pressuring him into becoming a Christian.

Peter's advice: cool it! You can't nag a man into the kingdom of God. You'll end up making him angry. Back off. Take it easy. It's not your job to convert him. Only God can do that.

So what do you do? Win him by the quality of your life. Your holiness of life will convince and convert him. Usually unbelieving husbands are won to Christ, not by telling but by showing; not by Preaching Lips but by a Practicing Life.

Ladies, let me tell you what your strongest evangelistic tool for winning your husband is: It is purity of life with reverence for God. It is loving, gracious submission to her husband. Added to submission is modesty, meekness, and respect for her husband.

Ladies, Peter says to dazzle your husband with your inner beauty! See 1 Peter 3:3-4.

Peter mentions two different kinds of beauty: outward beauty and inward, unfading beauty. The word “adoring” is from the Greek word that we get our word cosmetics from. The word means an orderly arrangement.

Because these verses can be easily misunderstood, let's look at them in two other contemporary versions:

- From the Contemporary English Version: “Don't depend on things like fancy hairdos or gold jewelry or expensive clothes to make you look beautiful. Be beautiful in your heart by being gentle and quiet. This kind of beauty will last, and God considers it very special.”
- From the New Living Translation: “Don't be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on fancy

hairstyle, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should be known for the beauty that come from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.”

Is God against women having beautiful hair or wearing jewelry or wearing beautiful clothes or wearing make-up? No! Not if it is done in moderation. In fact, I think it is a sin if some woman don't wear make-up! Any barn looks better with a little paint on it!

But Peter is talking about beauty that not only last, but increases. There is a kind of beauty that doesn't depend on youth or cosmetics or plastic surgery because it is not external. Do you know why we have so many beauty parlors? Because you have to keep going back to them. One visit never finishes the job. The women of the world emphasize the outward because they are empty inside. Their dress is a testimony to their bankrupt values.

What is unfading beauty? It's beauty that doesn't depend solely on mascara or eye shadow or lip gloss or silk skirts or the latest fashions. This unfading beauty never goes out of style and never has to be replaced. This is how women get more beautiful as they grow older.

What brings inward beauty? A meek and quiet spirit (1 Pe 3:3-4).

1. A Meek (gentle) Spirit

To me, and to most men, there is nothing as unattractive in a woman as a loud-mouth, out-spoken, sassy, bossy, domineering women. There is nothing lady-like about a woman like that. As Barney would say, “Ladies, that's where you cheapen yourselves.”

Meekness is my power under God's control. It is one who has a godly perspective on life. My lips are under God's control. My eyes are under God's control. My ears are under God's control. My thoughts are under God's control. My actions are under God's control. My attitudes are under God's control.

A meek spirit is one where the Christian lives under the moment-by-moment leading of the Holy Spirit.

2. A Quiet Spirit

The word “quiet” means tranquil or undisturbed. It is a heart that is not easily ruffled by the cares and concerns of life. Here is a woman who sets the emotional tone for the entire family by her own spirit.

Inward beauty is permanent and unfading. If you are 15 and ugly, you can't help that. But if you are 50 and ugly, it's your fault. Real beauty is inward beauty.

III. The Example of Submission 1 Peter 3:5-6

Sarah is a wonderful example of godly submission, even when her husband was wrong.

IV. The Encouragement to be Submissive 1 Peter 3:7

“Likewise ye husbands” you are also to be submissive. You are under God.

The word “husband” comes from two old English words: House Band – He is to keep the home intact. The husband is to be the real “homemaker.”

Three words of advice are given to the husbands:

A. Be Considerate Verse 7a

“Dwell with her according to knowledge” means to know your wife deeply, profoundly, in ways she deserves to be known. Study her, get to know what makes her tick, figure out how her mind works, and learn what her gifts are, her desires, her talents, and her dreams.

Be sensitive to her needs. Learn to listen to her with your heart. Never neglect her. Spend time with her. Encourage her.

B. Be Courteous Verse 7b

“Giving honor to her as to the weaker vessel.” Treat her with respect and dignity. Assign value to her.

That word “weaker vessel” actually means priceless, fragile china. Men, we are old black cast iron skillet. She is a fine piece of crystal. Treat her like a princess. Little things mean a lot to a woman.

Men, we often begin our marriage being considerate, respectful, and treating her with dignity but then we become neglectful and selfish.

A Mexican was riding a donkey and his wife was walking beside him. Someone asked, "Why isn't your wife riding?" He answered, "Cause she ain't got no donkey."

C. Be Compatible Verse 7c

We are fellow-heirs of the grace of life. We are one in Christ.

Then he adds something to motivate us: "that your prayers be not hindered." This means your prayers that you pray together.

My favorite verse on the home is Psalm 127:1. Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain.

HOW TO LOVE LIFE AND SEE GOOD DAYS

1 Peter 3:8-12

Notice the first word in 1 Peter 3:8: "Finally." Peter is a typical preacher. You know when a preacher says "finally," he doesn't mean immediately. Peter says "finally," but he's only about half way through with his book.

Actually, the word "finally" here means "to sum up." He goes back to Chapter 2 and says in 1 Peter 2:2, "If you feed on the milk of the Word, you will grow in certain relationships:

- You will grow in your earthly citizenship,
- You will grow in your employer/employee relationship,
- You will grow in your husband/wife relationship."

Now Peter says that you will grow in your relationship with all believers.

One evidence of spiritual growth is how you and I relate to others. Most folks think "growing in the Lord" means just inward growth. They think spiritual growth is a kind of mystical growth that takes place on the inside, but no one can see it.

Most folks believe that spiritual growth is determined by how much Bible study you do or how often you pray or how much meditation you're involved in. All of that is a part of spiritual growth, but only a part. Peter says that where there is real spiritual growth, it will be seen as we relate to one another.

Look at the growth of the Lord Jesus in Luke 2:52: "And Jesus increased in wisdom (intellect) and in stature (physically), and in favor with God (spiritually) and man (socially in His relationships).

Now in summing up, Peter gives us some marks of maturity that should be in every believer's life:

I. All Christians Are to be Agreeable 1 Peter 3:8

Notice that these qualities of character are to be found in ALL believers.

Your translation may use several words: "All of you are to be of one mind; you are to be like-minded; you are to be agreeable; you are to live in harmony; there is to be unity."

For most of us, being like-minded is what happens when you agree with me. But that's not what Peter had in mind. He is not calling on us to agree on everything. That's not possible, nor is it desirable.

Inside the Church we may disagree on many things: politics, which is the best Bible translation, worship style, music style, the best way to discipline children.

We don't agree on everything and that's okay. In the early Church they disagreed on eating meat offered to idols, keeping the Sabbath, which days to observe, and whether drinking wine was acceptable.

Disagreements in the Church are nothing new. But we do have to be like-minded. That can only happen if we have the same focus – the Lord Jesus Christ. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

We will never have 100 per cent agreement, but we can disagree without being disagreeable. God does not call for uniformity, where we all look alike or think alike or all like the same things, but He does call for unity and harmony. There is to be unity in variety!

The idea is that there is strength in unity and beauty in variety. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1).

The idea is that of an orchestra: There are dozens of different kinds of instruments and if you heard them warming up, you would think, "with all these different sounds and strange looking instruments, all I'm going to hear is noise." Then the leader taps on the stand. He signals for them all to play in one accord, and the many sounds become one beautiful piece of music. So it is when the people of God are of one mind and purpose and goal.

II. All Christians Are to Have Compassion for One Another 1 Peter 3:8

Compassion is sympathy which one has for one another. Sympathy is your hurt in my heart. Compassion is understanding and identification that one has for another, especially in difficulty. We "rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).

We must not be insensitive, callous, indifferent or cynical about the suffering around us.

III. All Christians Are to Love Each Other as Brothers 1 Peter 3:8

Peter is speaking of brothers born from the same womb. Since all believers are adopted into the family of God, we ARE BROTHERS and we ought to act like brothers.

Love is that special ingredient that cuts down on any friction that might come between Christians.

One tells of his attempt to drive an iron bar through a piece of timber. Though he made the hole the right size, the bar was rusty and did not fit. He hammered harder and harder until the wood began to split. Suddenly he thought of using oil. He oiled the bar and squirted some oil into the hole. Then it took only a few blows of the hammer to ease the iron into place. The oil had neither diminished the size of the bar nor enlarged the hole. It had merely relieved the friction. A few drips of oil were far more effective than many blows of the hammer. How slow we are to learn this.

IV. All Christians are to be Tenderhearted 1 Peter 3:8

The word "pitiful" means "to be full of pity, with a desire to help." We need to ask the Lord to soften our hearts and make us more aware of the needs around us.

V. All Christians are to be Courteous and Humble 1 Peter 3:8

Peter is talking about showing respect for others by showing Christian politeness and being mannerly toward one another. It means to learn to be a Christian gentleman and a Christian lady.

The opposite is being demanding, pushy, and always wanting your way. Be humble in spirit.

VI. All Christians are to be Forgiving 1 Peter 3:9

Refuse to get back at someone or to get even with someone. Refrain from saying anything ugly back to anyone, but return good for evil.

Someone has said: To render good for evil is Godlike,
To render good for good is manlike,
To render evil for evil is beast-like,
To render evil for good is devil-like.

In Matthew 5:38-41 Jesus abolished the eye for an eye and the tooth for a tooth law.

VI. All Christians are to Control Their Tongue 1 Peter 3:10

If you have learned to control your tongue, you have made good progress toward becoming spiritually mature. The manner in which we speak reveals to a large degree either the fullness or the shallowness of our spiritual life.

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridlenth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is in vain" (James 1:26). One may pretend to be spiritual, but his speech will uncover his hypocrisy.

The old doctors could tell a great deal about a person's health by looking at their tongue. That's why they would say, "Stick out your tongue." You can also tell a great deal about a person's spiritual health by the way they use their tongue. "Refrain your tongue from evil."

Proverbs 21:23: "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from trouble."

Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt."

VIII. All Christians Should Turn From Evil, Do Good, and Seek Peace 1 Peter 3:11

Peter said in Acts 10:38 that Jesus "went about doing good." We live in a world of pain, tragedy, death, and conflict. It is impossible for a Christian to go through one day without meeting many opportunities to do good, be a peacemaker and thereby put faith into action.

Peter now gives us a threefold incentive for living godly lives. Verse 12 tells us something about God's eyes, God's ears, and God's face.

1. God's Eyes are on the Righteous 1 Peter 3:12a

Anyone who is in Christ has been declared by God to be righteous. So if you are in Christ and Christ is in you; God had His eyes on you, and nothing escapes His gaze.

In fact, Proverbs 15:3 says that "The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good."

There's a funny story about a burglar who broke into a house one night. He froze when he heard a voice saying, "Jesus sees you." Finally, he took a few more steps and heard the same voice, "Jesus sees you." The voice was coming from the kitchen, so he crept up to the door. Once again, the voice said, "Jesus sees you." He shone his flashlight toward the voice and was relieved to see it was a talking parrot in the cage speaking those words. He said, "You stupid parrot, you scared me to death." Turning on the kitchen light, he was shocked to see a large Doberman standing beneath the parrot's cage. He looked at the parrot just in time to hear him say, "Sic him, Jesus."

God really is watching you, but the truth is, He's not going to sic you. Some people picture God as a heavenly policeman who is watching from heaven just to catch people doing something enjoyable or fun. And when He does, He shakes His Divine finger and says, "Now, cut that out right now!"

God isn't watching you to hurt you. He's watching to help you! The Bible says in 2 Chronicles 16:9: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him."

2. God's Ears are open to our Prayers 1 Peter 3:12b

God hears what I say to others. As followers of Jesus we are to speak a different language from the world. We are to speak the language of kindness.

If you have trouble with your words, you should memorize Psalm 141:3: "Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips."

What if I followed you around for the past seven days, secretly recording every word you spoke? And now, I'm getting ready to play back some of the the choice selections for this congregation to hear. Would that bother you? Let's turn it around. What if you KNEW I was following you around over the next week recording all your words to play back next Sunday; what would be different about your speech? I'm not interested in recording your words, but God really is listening and we should all talk in a way that won't burn His ears.

God hears what you say to others, and He hears what you are saying to Him. Even though they may be millions of voices crying out to Him at the same moment, His ear is open to you, as if you were the only one speaking.

In his book, *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer wrote: "An infinite God can give all of Himself to each of His children. He does not distribute Himself that each may have a part, but to each one He gives all of Himself as fully as if there were no others."

3. God's Face is Against those who do Evil 1 Peter 3:12c

God is Spirit and Light so He doesn't have a face with a nose or mouth. His face is a reference to His shining glory.

When I sin, I lose sight of God's face.

"When we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with God and with each other (1 John 1:1). But when we get off track, it's like we turn away from the light of God's face. God is holy and cannot look on sin. Isaiah 59:2 says, "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you." When we sin, we must confess our sins and walk back into

the light.

In Psalm 4:6 David signs, "Let the light of your face shine on us." The best translation of that phrase "light of your face" is "smile." David is saying,, "Let your smile shine on us.

God loves you and cares for you so much. He can't take His eyes off of you. He is attentive to all you say. He wants to reassure you with His smile.

WHEN LIFE "JUST AIN'T FAIR"

1 Peter 3:13-17

The major theme in 1 Peter is suffering. Some 16 times in this book Peter warned his readers that within a short time as Christians, they would be suffering because they were Christians.

But that doesn't seem fair! As a general rule, Christian people try to live right. They try to follow their Example, the Lord Jesus, who went about doing good and never did anything wrong. Why would folks who try to live right; who try to live without murdering someone, or stealing from anyone, or committing adultery, or lying, or hurting anyone in any way, why would they be the ones who suffer. These are the folks who try to be helpful and kind and seek to do the right thing. So why are THEY the ones who suffer and those who live ungodly aren't targeted for suffering. That just doesn't seem fair!

We expect life to be fair, but often it is not. We can't understand why good people suffer, and bad people seem to be getting all the breaks. It doesn't seem fair! And it's not.

Each one of us has been touched by this subject in one way or another. Each of us can point to that person or that event that, perhaps, is still haunting us and has preoccupied our thoughts and our time far too long.

Maybe a mate has been unfaithful or walked away for no apparent reason. Maybe there has been a sudden, unexpected death or an unexpected diagnosis of a loved one. Maybe it was an unfair situation at work or at school. Maybe a friend turned against you or you have been unjustly accused of something.

There's something in each of us that longs for circumstances to be fair, isn't there? There's something within us that wants bad people to be punished and good people to be rewarded. Unfortunately, real life doesn't always turn out that way.

As Christians we know that ultimately good will triumph over evil and that our God is just and good and fair, but what can we do about the injustices and unfairness in the meantime? How can we keep pressing on during those times when life "just isn't fair?"

THINK ABOUT THIS: There is not a person here who does not have a reason to be bitter about something, because we ALL have been treated unfairly to some degree. (Repeat.)

The great issue in life is not the presence of problems or unfair circumstances, for they are going to come, but the great issue of life is how we are going to respond and react to them when they do come.

Peter begins by presenting us with the two possibilities for Christians living in a hostile world. First, there is the possibility that we won't suffer at all. "Who is going to harm you if you do what is good?"(verse 13). The answer normally is, "No one." If you are eager to do good in the sight of God and man, you should have nothing to fear. And most of the time for most of us, that's how life works out. When we play by the rules, we should live in safety and security.

But that doesn't always happen. That leads Peter to the second possibility: "But even if you should suffer for what is right" (Verse 14a). In Greek this is what is called a fourth-class condition, which means it describes a situation that is possible. Doing right does not guarantee a trouble-free life. Verse 14 tells us that Christ may call us to suffer for doing right.

What do we do then? How do we respond then? Peter instructs Christians who suffer for their faith with five commands:

I. Consider Yourself Uniquely Blessed By God 1 Peter 3:14a

The word "blessed" here carries the idea of "Privileged" or "honored." Peter uses the same Greek word for blessed that Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount, when He said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10).

In Acts 5 Peter and the other disciples were preaching about the resurrected Christ and the religious leaders had them thrown in prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the doors and brought them out of the prison. They went back to the temple and

began preaching again. The High Priest had them brought before them again and said, "Didn't we strictly command you not to teach any more in His Name? But you have filled Jerusalem with His teachings, intending to bring this Man's blood on us."

Peter and the others said, "We must obey God rather than man." They beat the disciples, probably with 39 lashes and commanded them again not to preach in the Name of Jesus. Acts 5:40-41 says, "So they departed from the council, REJOICING that they were counted worthy to suffer for His Name."

James 1:2 says, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience."

We can endure unfair treatment as a blessing when we remember that someday we will be rewarded for our endurance of undeserved trials.

II. Don't Panic or Fear Their Threats 1 Peter 3:14b

Don't be frightened or afraid of the one who is mistreating you, because we know that God is on our side. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Our faith never promises to exempt us from troubles or death. Each of us should recognize that God watches over us and is able to provide the help and security which His people need. Peter says it is much better to suffer from doing good than to suffer from being evil (verse 17).

III. Reaffirm Jesus as Your Lord 1 Peter 3:15

The key step to take when you are treated unfairly is to "sanctify" or "set apart" Jesus as your Lord. The word "Lord" literally means "Boss" or "Master." Some people want Jesus as Savior but they don't want Him as Lord. They want someone to save them from going to hell, but they don't want someone to control their lives. But the truth is you cannot accept Jesus as your Savior and willingly reject Him as Lord.

The word "sanctify" means to cherish something so much, you set it aside because it is special. In the same way, we must realize how precious and valuable Jesus is. In our heart, there is only room for one Number One – and that must be Jesus.

When you are suffering, you must realize Jesus is Lord over your tough circumstances. Acknowledge Christ's control over your unfair circumstances and do your best to see that He is glorified.

Acts 7 records the stoning of Stephen. It was a savage and undeserved attack. But when those men who were stoning him looked into Stephen's face, they did not find their own hate reflected back at them. They saw the reflection of the Savior's grace and love. Stephen died without bitterness and cursing on his lips. Instead he uttered a prayer of forgiveness for those who had so mercilessly mistreated him. What an example for us!

IV. React in a Way That Will Cause Others to Ask About Your Hope 1 Peter 3:15b

"Always be ready to give an answer, a defense, to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you." Always be ready; be ready at a moment's notice to explain what you believe. We should know WHAT we believe, WHY we believe it, and we should be READY, WILLING, and ABLE to explain what we believe to someone else.

Peter emphasizes not only What we say but also How we say it. We must be gentle, with meekness. We must be winsome, kind, and gracious in our dealings with the lost. You cannot argue people into the kingdom. We must treat people with respect.

Seldom will there be a more opportune time to share the Lord Jesus than when you are suffering and glorifying Him through it. Someone is watching. They will observe your behavior. They will be touched by your witness.

Notice the word "hope." The Bible word "hope" doesn't mean to wish for something. The Bible word for "hope" is more related to the word truth. It means having a positive anticipation of receiving something that has been promised. It carries the idea of assurance. Our hope is in Jesus Christ. How do I know I'm going to heaven? Because Jesus promised me that if I trusted in Him, I would not perish but have everlasting life.

My hope is built on nothing less;
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame;
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ the solid rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

V. Keep a Good Conscience 1 Peter 3:16-17

Nothing silences our slanderers, especially when we are suffering, like Integrity.

Sometimes we cannot always explain why it is God's will for suffering when we do what is right.

There was a Hebrew who suffered unjustly and, yet, he is admired by all for his Integrity. He won the hearts of all because of the way he suffered and the way he responded to his suffering. His name is Job.

In the midst of all his suffering, Job knew God was in control. Even when his wife told him to curse God and die, he worshiped God. During times when you are suffering unfairly, it may be the hardest time to worship, but worship he did. And, remember, folks were watching him ...But so was God.

God is a very present help in the time of trouble.

THE TRIUMPHANT CHRIST

1 Peter 3:18-22

Many Bible scholars have called this passage of Scripture “one of the most difficult passages in the entire New Testament. Not only is it a difficult passage, it is also a troublesome passage. Let me just mention a few of the topics mentioned in these five verses:

- Christ died for sins once for all to bring us to God.
- Between His death and His resurrection, He preached to spirits in prison.
- Those spirits disobeyed during the days of Noah when the ark was being built.
- Only eight people were saved in the ark and they were saved by water.
- Baptism saves us by the resurrection of Christ.
- Christ now sits at God's right hand.

When Martin Luther commented on this text, he said something along the lines of, “I'm not sure what Peter means in this passage.” Many other commentators have said the same thing.

Several commentators have mentioned that these verses speak of the most important round-trip of the ages made by Jesus Christ. When Jesus left heaven to come to earth, He was seated at the right side of the Father's throne. He left there and came to earth as a baby. When He was crucified and buried His spirit went to the heart of the earth. He was resurrected and ascended in His glorified body, back to the right side of His Father's throne again. Because of what He accomplished on the cross, His resurrection, and His ascension, the believer now has eternal life because his sins have been forgiven.

I want us to look at our Triumphant Christ as we see Him in this passage.

I. Christ Conquered on the Cross 1 Peter 3:18

The word “death” (verse 18) speaks not just of physical death, but of awesome suffering.

Then, it was a sacrificial death. He died “for sins,” but not for His own sins, for He never sinned. His was a substitutionary death – “the just for the unjust;” “the righteous for the unrighteous.” He took our place, He bore our shame, He paid the price for all our sin. He took the penalty for our sins and He placed it on Himself.

Our Lord's death was an atoning death that forever eliminated the need for any further sacrifice for sin. The price was fully paid once and for all by His shed blood. Hebrews 2:9 says that He, “by the grace of God” tasted “death for every man,” “that He might bring us to God.”

One of the key words in this verse is the word “once.” He suffered Once for sins. He died Once! Everything He intended to do in His death, He did! His death can never be repeated.

On the cross He cried, “It is finished!” He was saying: It is done! It cannot be undone! It cannot be redone! Jesus paid it ALL! He conquered sin! The entire provision for salvation has been made. There is nothing left to be done, but believe and accept it by faith!

II. Christ Conquered the Coffin 1 Peter 3:18b

Jesus was “quicken by the Spirit.” His Spirit became unrestricted. His body was dead and in the tomb. His body was dead, but His Spirit was very much alive and active while His body was in the tomb.

What was His Spirit actively doing? (verse 19). The word “went” (verse 19) means “to go on a journey;” “to transfer from one place to another.”

Verse 19 tells us the Spirit of Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison. Well, who are those spirits and how did Jesus preach to them.

Who are these spirits in prison? They are referred to again in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. These are fallen angels; demonic spirits who “disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.” Some of the fallen angels are loosed on earth, and some of the more evil ones are confined in prison and will be loosed on earth during the Tribulation.

These demonic, fallen spirits are confined in a place of incarceration called in the original language, “Tartarus,” or as Peter calls it here, “prison.” It is not the place called Hell, but a kind of death-row holding cell. There they await the final day of judgment when they will be cast with Satan into the Lake of Fire, the place originally created for him and his demons.

We have seen the “spirits” and the “prison;” now, what about this “preaching”? What kind of a proclamation would Christ make to fallen angels? If you look at the word “preached” in Greek, you would find the word “kerusso,” a term for declaring an edict or making an announcement. It is not the word for declaring the gospel. Christ was not witnessing to the wicked spirits to give them a second chance at salvation. It’s too late for them! They have made their choice.

Rather, Jesus was proclaiming His victory over sin, over Satan, and over death. His victory at the cross sealed their fate.

There are five ways the devil was defeated, disarmed, and disgraced by the cross of Christ:

1. His head was crushed Genesis 3:15
2. His works were destroyed I John 3:8
3. His power was broken Hebrews 2:15
4. His demons were disarmed Colossians 2:15
5. His doom was guaranteed John 16:11

Now look at 1 Peter 3:20-21: “few, that is, eight souls were saved by water: the like FIGURE (antitype) whereunto even baptism doth also now save us.”

Peter is going to explain how the story of Noah illustrates salvation. First, water represents God's judgment. It was the water of judgment that wiped out the old world. Second, the ark represents God's salvation. They were saved “by” or “through water,” but if they had been “in” the water and not “in” the ark, the water that saved them would have destroyed them. It was not the water that saved. In fact, it was the water that brought death. It was the ark in the water that saved Noah and his family. Third, the water symbolizes baptism. What does Peter mean?

Let me answer a question with another question. How much water actually touched Noah and his family? None at all. The water that “saved” them never touched them. The water only “saved” them because they were already in the ark. Baptism by itself cannot literally save anyone. It is Christ who saves. Baptism cannot literally wash our sins away. We must come to Christ by faith to be saved. But baptism is critically important because it is the pledge of a good conscience to the Lord. Baptism is like pledging allegiance to Jesus Christ. It’s the moment in which we “cross the line” and take our public stand for the Lord. In many Muslim countries, Christian converts are not persecuted until they are baptized. Baptism can be a life or death decision. It means you’ve decided to leave the old world behind and get in the Ark of salvation – the Lord Jesus Christ.

The issue is not “Have you been baptized?”, but rather, “Have you become a follower of Jesus?” We are not saved by water literally any more than Noah was saved by water literally. But the same water that destroyed others saved him and his family because they were in the ark.

Then Peter adds one final phrase when he says we are saved “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (verse 21). Aren't you glad Jesus rose from the dead? We do not worship a dead Jesus. If we did, our hopes and dreams would have died with Him. We worship a risen Christ. And now we see how perfect the picture really is. The waters of the great flood picture the waters of baptism, and the waters of baptism point to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Baptism is a sermon without words. When a baptismal candidate stands before me, that person represents Jesus dying on the cross. Lowering them into the water represents Jesus buried in the tomb. Raising them out of the water represents Jesus rising from the dead. The whole gospel is found in every baptism, and every baptism preaches the gospel message.

III. Christ Conquered Through the Cloud 1 Peter 3:22

The round-trip is completed. Jesus came from heaven to earth and has returned to heaven.

What a glorious day it must have been when Jesus returned to glory. The angels must have said, “Lord Jesus, it’s so good to see you where you belong, at the right hand of the Father. Lord, heaven has not been the same without you.”

Then they must have bowed and sang, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God, Almighty." "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" "Crown Him with many Crowns; Crown Him Lord of all!" Jesus: Crucified! Buried! Risen! Ascended! Exalted! Crowned!

Psalm 24:7-10 tells us how heaven responded when Jesus returned to glory!

CLASH-MATES WITH THE WORLD

1 Peter 4:1-6

Jesus told His followers they would always clash with their culture. For Christians, it's not a military clash, it's a clash of values and truth.

In America, everyone wants to "fit in" with the crowd. There is a powerful force called "peer pressure" that works to mold and shape us to be like everyone else. That's why students want to wear clothes with certain labels and why adults want to drive certain automobiles.

In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and MANY enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a FEW find it."

The danger of trying to run with the crowd is that they are running in the wrong direction.

Peter offers some powerful encouragement about the kind of attitude we should have when we clash with the world. In verse four Peter says those of the world are going to heap abuse on those who follow Jesus. When Peter wrote this letter 2,000 years ago, Christians were violently abused. Some of them were thrown to wild animals in the coliseum. They would even tie some young Christian men to the horns of a bull, and then the bull was forced to fight a lion. The blood-thirsty Roman spectator cheered as they were entertained by this brutality. In the midst of all of the persecution and pain, Peter reminds them Jesus suffered too.

Although we aren't being thrown to the lions, our contemporary world still heaps abuse on everyone who is fully devoted to following Christ. They just use different weapons. Instead of spears, fires, and wild animals, the world today employs ridicule and scorn to make fun of Christians.

These verses in 1 Peter presents two great truths: Suffering must be faced and sin must be forsaken (1 Peter 4:1). There is a purifying effect of physical suffering. Affliction humbly borne tends to disengage the heart from sin.

Anyone who thinks the Christian life is a bed of roses doesn't know much about the Christian life. The Christian life is a HAPPY one, but at times it is a HARD one. The Christian life will be one of hardships and obstacles and is at times an extremely costly life.

What are we to do when surrounded by the trials of life? What is the response of the Christian to be in evil times? "Arm yourselves!" Arm yourself with God's promises. Arm yourself the determination that through His grace and strength you will never know defeat. Never be ashamed of the fact that you belong to Christ.

Out-and-out believers in Christ will always be criticized by the ungodly. The Lord has told us, "If the world hate you, you know it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18-19).

How few of God's people are willing to take a stand in the face of ridicule and persecution. It's so easy to drift with the world and to fit into one's environment. Those who love Christ will pay the price of hardship.

"Arm yourself with the same mind Christ has." The Greek word translated "arm yourself" was used of a Greek soldier putting on his armor and taking his weapons. It pictures a heavy-armed foot-soldier.

This word picture offers a blunt reminder that we Christians are not living in this world as tourists. We are not vacationing our way to Heaven. We are Christian soldiers. Everywhere around us the battle rages. The danger is real and the enemy is strong. Christ died, not only to gain victory over sin's dominion, but to equip us for the fight, to give us the inner equipment we need to stand strong.

There are three fundamental ways in which our attitudes are different from the world's. We clash with the world because:

I. We Have a Different Attitude About Life 1 Peter 4:2

Christians have a different outlook on life than do non-Christians. As a result we do not live the rest of our life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. We have two choices on how to live our life. We can live our life according to human desires, or we can live our life for the will of God.

Here is the main difference between our lives and the lives of those who don't follow Jesus: We live for eternity; not for the moment!

The attitude of the world says, "I want it, and I want it right now!" That's why Americans are so deep in debt. Instead of using discipline to save their money and pay cash for something, they want it now. So they borrow the money. They have to have credit cards to pay off the balance of their other credit cards. That's living for the moment.

That's why thousands of teenagers are having sex before they're married. They don't want to wait until marriage, they want to experience it now. They talk about safe sex, but the only safe sex is exclusively between a husband and a wife.

As followers of Jesus we look at life differently. This life isn't all there is. There is an eternity ahead. You will spend far more time on the other side of death in eternity than you will here. This life is preparation for the next.

The Christian's life is different because when we are faced with a temptation or a task, we ask ourselves, "How will this effect eternity? How will it affect MY eternity and the eternity of others?"

Because of that, our lives don't belong to us, we belong to God. A follower of Christ is someone who has devoted their life to obeying God.

II. Because We Have a Different Attitude About Sin 1 Peter 4:2-4

Notice the two phrases: "the will of God" and "the will of the Gentiles." He is talking about two different life-styles that we may live. Though words describe the way of the Gentiles:

1. A Wasted Life 1 Peter 4:3a

Peter says, "You have spent enough time in the past living the way pagans live. You have wasted enough time as it is in the sin of the old life. Now live on a higher plane."

The old song said it well: "Wasted years, wasted years – O how foolish."

2. A Wicked Life 1 Peter 4:3b

He names some of the sins of the old life:

a. "Lasciviousness" or "lewdness"

Lewdness means wickedness in general. It describes unbridled, unrestrained, and outrageous sins. Sins that shock. Sadly, not much shocks us any more – nudity, immorality, profanity. When folks "come out" and admit or brag about their lewdness, and we are not shocked or embarrassed, it is to our shame.

b. "Lust"

Lust means longing for and seeking after sexual sin. The word describes one who sinks to the level of animals to satisfy their desires.

c. "Excess of wine" means being under the influence of some drug until you lose control of yourself.

d. "Revelings" means wild parties that lead to orgies. If you have ever been to Bourbon Street, you have seen what Peter is talking about. **e. "Banqueting"** is eating and drunkenness to excess. Acting wildly in public.

f. "Abominable Idolatries" is worshiping anything other than God.

Notice 1 Peter 4:4. When you get saved, your old friends will not understand when you refuse to run with them and reject the sinful lifestyle. In fact, they may make fun of you or put you down or ridicule you for your stand. It will take courage for you to remain true in your stand for Christ.

When Augustine was converted to Christ from an immoral life, he immediately began to avoid his old places of sin. But one day he was crossing the street and one of his former mistresses saw him and began to run after him. She called out his name several times but he would not answer. Finally she said, "Augustine, it is I, it is I." Augustine answered, "Yes, but it is no longer I."

Have you ever stopped to think what other cultures on this planet think about America? We believe we live in the best nation on earth, but sometimes we are blind to our national faults.

After 9/11, many Americans were stunned to learn there are millions of people who hate America and are willing to go to their deaths to destroy our culture. We say they are lunatics, but wait. They honestly believe our American culture is wicked, and as American culture spreads to other nations, they think our wickedness will infect other nations, as well.

Now why do they think our culture is wicked? Because it is. A few months ago, a Christian organization asked some Muslim students in the Middle East what they really thought of America. The clarity and honesty of their answers may surprise you. Here is what they said:

1. "Americans have two things on their minds: money and sex."
2. "In America mothers prefer to work than to take care of their children."
3. "In our culture the parents take care of the children, and later the children take care of the parents. In America children abandon their parents."
4. "America used to be a Christian country. Now atheism is the official religion of the West."
5. "Your television shows are disgusting. You are corrupting the morals of our young people."
6. "American culture is a kind of syphilis or disease that is destroying the Islamic community. We won't let you do to us what you did to the American Indian people."

As followers of Jesus Christ, we have a different attitude about sin. Here's the difference: We used to run toward sin; now we run from it!

2 Timothy 2:22. Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

III. We Have a Different Attitude About Death 1 Peter 4:5-6

Peter makes a statement about what will happen to everyone after they die: They will have to give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

The words "give an account" means "to pay back." People who have walked in lewdness and participated in drunkenness and maligned believers are amassing or accumulating a debt to God which they will spend all eternity paying back.

All unsaved will be brought together before the Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ, at the Great White Throne Judgment.

The saved will escape this final judgment, so they will live forever in God's presence.

With that assurance, we can live life here on a higher plane!

THE END IS NEAR! 1 Peter 4:7-11

I want to ask each of you a personal question: "How much more time do you think you have to live on this earth?" Do you think you have reached the half-way point in your life? If you are a teenager, you may think most of your life is still ahead of you – and it could be. But we all know teenagers die.

If you're 50 or older you may think you've passed the half-way point, but we know people are living longer than ever before. For me, I know I have a lot more years behind me than I do before me. The truth is, none of us really know how much time we have left to live; that's why we need to be prepared for death now!

Someone once asked Saint Augustine, "What would you do differently if you knew that Jesus would return in the next fifteen minutes, or that you would die in the next fifteen minutes?" The fourth century Church father continued to water his garden as he answered, "I would keep on doing what I'm doing right now." He was so sure that he was doing God's will that he would not have to change his course of action.

How about you? Would you mind standing before the Lord as you are now or would you want to change some things? Maybe there is a wrong that you need to make right. Or, maybe there's someone you need to speak to. Or, maybe there is someone you need to apologize to. Or, maybe there are some things you need to talk to the Lord about. Simon Peter says, "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7). The Greek word for "end" is never used in the New Testament as a chronological end, as if something simply stops. Instead, the word means a consummation, a good achieved, or a result attained.

God is getting ready to "wrap it all up." His purpose for time on this earth is about complete and we will move to the next stage of His plan.

Every generation ought to live as though theirs is the last generation before Jesus returns.

We are closer now than we've ever been to that time. We don't know when it will be, but it could be at any moment.

What should be the conduct and life-style of the Christian in the light of the return of Christ? Peter gives us some practical suggestions for life as "the end of all things" approaches. He tells us to: use good judgment – stay alert ...stay calm ...be in a spirit of prayer ...practice God's love ...show hospitality ...and use our God-given talents wisely.

Let me use three phrases to sum up what Peter is saying:

I. Wake Up 1 Peter 4:7

It is certain: Human history on this earth as we know it is going to close. So keep a sound, alert mind. Have a balanced mind so you can use sound judgment. Keep a controlled mind. If your mind is knocked out of balance or your mind is not controlled, you won't know how to pray when the end of all things is at hand.

When you read the letters written by Paul and Peter in the first century, it is clear they believed the return of Jesus would be in their life-time and it would be followed with the end of time as we know it. It's been 2,000 years and Jesus still hasn't returned. Were they wrong? Not really. That's the way Jesus told us to live.

In Mark 13 Jesus was speaking about the time of His return and He said, "The exact day and hour? No one knows that, not even heaven's angels, not even the Son. Only the Father. So keep a sharp outlook, for you don't know the timetable. It's like a man who takes a trip, leaving home and putting his servants in charge, each assigned a task, and commanding the gatekeeper to stand watch. So stay at your post, watching. You have no idea when the homeowner is returning. You don't want Him showing up unannounced, with you asleep on the job" (Mark 13:33-36).

Our job is to work, preach, pray and witness with a sense of urgency. Jesus Himself said, "Behold, I come quickly!" (Revelation 21:7).

II. Warm Up 1 Peter 4:8-9

Since the end is at hand, show love one to another. After all, love is the mark of a true Christian. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Love is the most important command we can follow. Jesus said all of the commandments in the Old Testament could be summarized in only two: (1) Love God with all your being, and (2) Love your neighbors as yourself."

A. Love Costs 1 Peter 4:8a

That is, love is demanding! The word "fervent" means to "stretch or to reach out." Love extends itself. Like an athlete who stretches himself out to reach a goal and expends his energies until he has no more to give, so the Christian is to stretch himself out on behalf of others.

B. Love Covers 1 Peter 4:8b

Peter quotes part of Proverbs 10:12, but note the contrast: "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sin." Hate uncovers and exposes, but love covers.

It is Satan's nature to expose and uncover the faults of others. It is God's nature to cover; not to condone or approve faults, but to cover faults. So check your disposition. Do you get pleasure in exposing the faults of others?

The story of Noah is a familiar one. The wickedness of all mankind came up before then Lord and He was going to destroy mankind. But God didn't destroy all of mankind by the flood, because "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8). After the deluge, man and animal got off the boat. Soon afterward Noah planted a vineyard. Noah became a victim to wine that came from the vineyard. He lay drunk and was uncovered within his tent. His son, Ham, saw his father's nakedness and made sport of him and was cursed. Shem and Japheth, the other two sons, took a garment, went backwards into their father's tent so as not to see their father's nakedness, and covered the nakedness of their father.

Love doesn't make a mockery or joke of sin and expose it to others, love conceals and covers sin. Love doesn't broadcast the faults of others; it is blind to the faults of others in the sense that it lets hurts and faults done toward you pass.

By the way, that's a good trait to have in all of life, but especially in marriage. "Love keeps no record of wrongs."

C. Love Cares 1 Peter 4:9

Peter says that one of the most visible expressions of love is hospitality. Entertaining guest in your home is not the same thing as hospitality – don't confuse the two. Entertaining involves having your good friends in your home – people you know you'll enjoy.

Hospitality is inviting strangers into your house – without knowing much about them. Entertaining is a social grace that will get your name in the paper. Hospitality is an expression of love that never seeks any recognition. In entertaining the focus is on the host, their beautiful home, or cooking skills; in hospitality the focus is on the needs of the guest.

In Genesis 18 Abraham demonstrated hospitality. Three strangers approached his tent. They were angels, but they looked like ordinary men. Abraham didn't realize who they were until later. He welcomed them, washed their feet, and fed them. What a lesson! If you never open your home to strangers, you may miss one of the greatest opportunities on earth – meeting angels. Hebrews 13:2 says, "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it."

Someone has well said, "Folks don't care how much we know until they know how much we care."

Peter adds a word in verse 9: "Be hospitable to one another without grumbling." Show kindness and be friendly to strangers in a non-resentful way. Don't complain about the time and trouble it may take to be gracious.

Have you ever done someone a favor and later complained about it? The hospitality loses its flavor if one grumbles about having done it. Gestures of friendship are in good taste in Christian service. Strangers should not feel like strangers.

III. Wind Up 1 Peter 4:10-11

You've seen those little toy monkeys that you wind up and it beats its cymbals together. Kids don't like it when the monkey winds down. They want you to keep winding the monkey up so the cymbals will keep beating.

God had entrusted to each of us as believers spiritual gifts – not to be buried or to be put under a bushel, but to use on behalf of others and for the benefit of the body of Christ. Christians are to be good stewards of our gifts and use them well.

We are not saved to sit, we are saved to serve.

The end of all things is at hand! Time is short! Stay alert! Pray! Practice God's love! Use your God-given gifts wisely! "That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:11b).

SUFFERING IS PART OF GOD'S PLAN

1 Peter 4:12-19

As you study the Book of 1 Peter, three themes keep recurring: salvation, submission, and suffering. Peter has already addressed the topic of suffering three times, but he has more to say in these verses.

There is a strange doctrine being taught by some pastors today. They teach that if you have enough faith, you won't have to suffer in any form. It is the "Health and Wealth Gospel" and it has become popular in our day.

There is something you need to know about their teaching – It's Not True! Job said that "man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble." Jesus said, "If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you." The Apostle Paul suffered. He was put in prison, beaten, stoned and left for dead, shipwrecked, was given a thorn in the flesh; all because he preached Jesus. Peter also suffered and even died being crucified upside down.

And what about Jesus? The religious leaders never let up on Him! They accused Him of being illegitimate, they lied about Him, they nailed Him to the cross, and even when they put His dead body in the tomb, they gave Him no peace. They put a seal on the tomb and a guard at the tomb to guard Him.

Believers in other parts of the world know this far better than we do, but suffering is part of God's plan for His followers. Peter would say, "Living for Christ is the best life you can have, and it always includes suffering. You can't escape it." Someone said, "Adversity is the diamond dust heaven polishes its jewels with."

But Peter's message is not just about the Presence of suffering, but the Purpose of suffering and our Reaction to suffering.

Peter shares four insights in these verses about the Christian's suffering. He tells us to: Expect Pain; Connect with Jesus' Pain; Interject Pain; and Reject Bitterness that sometimes comes with pain.

I. Expect Pain 1 Peter 4:12

Notice the first word of verse 12: "Beloved." The word actually means "those who are deeply loved by God." That's huge. That's not

just a throw-away word. It's the key to everything Peter wants us to know. This is what he means: "God loves you deeply and profoundly. Therefore, don't be surprised when you suffer as a Christian."

Question: Could God keep His children from suffering if He wanted to? Of course He could. Then why doesn't He? Because suffering makes us stronger.

In 1 Peter 4, Peter gives us seven things we need to learn about suffering:

1. Suffering loosens sin's grip on us – 1 Peter 4:1-2
2. Suffering causes others to look at us differently – 1 Peter 4:4
3. Suffering places us in good company – 1 Peter 4:6
4. Suffering keeps us focused on eternity – 1 Peter 4:7
5. Suffering frees us to participate in ministry – 1 Peter 4:8-11
6. Suffering allows us to experience glory – 1 Peter 4:13-14
7. Suffering reminds us to faithfully commit our soul unto the Creator – 1 Peter 4:19

Christian, expect suffering. Sometimes when Christians suffer, they act very surprised. They ask, "Why me?" or "I just can't believe this is happening to me."

One of the first questions we ask is, "Why?" Would it really console us if all our "why's" were answered? I don't think so. A child is not comforted by being told why his toy is broken or why he pinched his finger in the door. He is consoled by the fact of his mother's presence and her expression of love and sympathy.

A wise man once said: "Life is ten percent of what happens to you and ninety percent of how you respond to it." When something painful happens to you, how do you respond? Do you act surprised? Or do you frown and start crying? Or have you learned to put it in the hands of Jesus?

On September 11, 2001, we weren't expecting a terrorist to rob us of our sense of security – that's why it was so painful. It was like a sucker punch in the gut we weren't ready to take. Today most Americans believe there will be another terrorist attack on American soil. God forbid it will happen, but if it does, Americans will handle it in a different way – it will be expected this time. If we know someone is about to hit us in the stomach, we can tighten our muscles – it still hurts, but not nearly as much as if we're slugged unexpectedly.

The same is true of our personal suffering. Prepare to be hurt. Expect pain to come into your life. Peter says, "Don't be surprised – it's normal."

II. Connect Your Pain 1 Peter 4:13a

Peter says we should rejoice that we participate in the sufferings of Christ, we share something in common with Jesus.

The word "participate" is the Greek word "Koinonia" and is usually translated "fellowship" and means "to share something in common." Whenever we suffer, we should remember that we have something in common with Jesus. He suffered, too. Peter even said to rejoice when you suffer, because it should remind you of all the suffering that Jesus endured on the cross when He died for our sins.

There is something about suffering that identifies us with Jesus. There is something about suffering that draws us to Jesus and makes us more like Jesus.

When we suffer there is a bond and a connection is established with Jesus because He also suffered.

Remember that Jesus not only suffered physical pain, He experienced the emotional pain of betrayal, rejection, ridicule, and injustice.

After a Bible professor suffered a broken body in an auto accident, he said, "While I was recovering from my accident and suffering from my broken body, I learned things I didn't know I needed to learn." That's what suffering does in our lives. It teaches us things we didn't know we needed to be taught.

Peter says that we are to make sure our suffering is not deserved suffering or something that we brought on ourselves – 1 Peter 4:14-16.

III. Interject Praise 1 Peter 4:13b

Peter says whenever we suffer as a Christian, we should utter an interjection of praise.

When my son was small in the 1970's, there was an educational cartoon on Saturday mornings called "Schoolhouse Rock." Even though I attended high school, college, and graduate school, pretty much everything I know about interjections I learned from "Schoolhouse Rock." The song about interjections went like this: "When Reginald was home with flue, uh huh, the doctor knew just what to do. He cured the infection with one small injection. While Reginald uttered some interjections: 'Hey!', 'That smarts!', 'Ouch!', 'That hurts!', 'Yow!', 'That's not fair!' Interjections show excitement or emotion! Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah. Yeah!"

That's exactly what we need to do when we suffer. We need to interject some emotional statements like, "Hallelujah!" and "Praise God" whenever we're going through a tough time.

"Now wait a minute, Preacher: How can I Praise God for all the bad things that are happening to me?" The Bible doesn't say we are to praise God because bad things are happening to us. Look again. We are to praise God because we bear that name, Christian. Praise God that you are a Christian, and that there is healing, forgiveness, power, and grace in the Name of Jesus.

Rejoice! "Yeah, I know I ought to rejoice, but I just don't feel like it." Rejoicing isn't a feeling, it's a choice. Don't wait until you feel like it. If you do, you'll never praise Him for suffering. You can't feel your way into praise, but you can praise your way into a feeling.

Why should we rejoice in suffering? Because "when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad" with the overflowing joy you will have in the future. The awareness of future joy enables you to rejoice at the present time.

Jesus gave a beautiful illustration of suffering being transformed into glory in John 16:21.

When someone tells you she's pregnant, you don't say, "Oh no! That's going to be awful! You're going to start gaining weight and stretching in unbelievable ways. You'll have to go to the hospital, where you'll sweat and strain. Oh, I'm so sorry you're pregnant." Of course not! We look at childbearing as a great privilege and a real joy because we know that some baby who brings pain for a short time brings joy for a lifetime.

Jesus knows what He's talking about when it comes to joy. Jesus endured the cross because He knew it was the cross that would bring joy. See Hebrews 12:2.

IV. Reject Bitterness 1 Peter 4:19

Notice the word "continue." It means that even when we're suffering, we should keep on keeping on. Don't quit. Sometimes when a Christian is suffering, they experience bitterness. They think, "Why me?" Instead of choosing to praise God, they get discouraged and become bitter.

I love the verse we find in 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 as it is found in The Message: "So we're not giving up! How could we? Even though on the outside it appears as if things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making a new life, not a day goes by without His unfolding grace. These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us."

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our lives to make us strong. Listen to James 1:2-4 from The Message:

"Consider it a gift when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely so that you may become mature and well developed."

PORTRAIT OF A PASTOR 1 Peter 5:1-4

When a church finds itself without a pastor, they usually form a Pastor Search Committee. Sometimes that Committee will ask the congregation what they want in a pastor. I read sometime ago of a church without a Pastor that took a poll of the members to determine the kind of pastor that they needed. The Chairman of the Search Committee received the results, studied them, and wrote the following report to the congregation:

"Dear Church: After compiling the opinions of the congregation, we bring the following conclusion as to the kind of person that you desire to be pastor. He is to be a tall short man, with curly straight hair. He must be seriously jolly, youthfully old, with one eye blue and the other brown. He must preach the Bible to others. He must visit the hospitals at least 80 hours per week, newcomers 80 hours per week, members 80 hours per week, and devote at least 80 hours to committee meetings, and spend plenty of time with his family. He is expected to be available at all times for everyone for any reason and yet spend much time with God.

"Final conclusion of the Search Committee: We have decided we cannot find YOUR man, but will honestly seek for GOD'S man."

If you were going to write a job description for a pastor, what would you write? What would be on your list?

Peter knew the saints to whom he wrote were being severely persecuted and afflicted, but he also knew that the leaders in the Church could be a strong stabilizing force in keeping believers steadfast during this trying period. This explains why Peter wrote this special message to the leaders of the Church, to encourage them to do their work faithfully.

Hard times is not the time for leaders to run away. When a Church was going through a difficult time, a lady gave her pastor a plaque which read: "No one would have ever crossed the ocean if they could have gotten off the ship in the storm."

When the fiery trials came, the believers in the assemblies would look to their spiritual leaders for encouragement and direction. Peter writes about the responsibilities that a pastor has to his people and also the responsibilities that the people has to him.

I. The Relationship of the Pastor 1 Peter 5:1

Let me start by identifying some terms:

The words "elder" and "bishop" refer to the same office. In the Bible the word "elder" may not mean "an old man." Rather, the word "elder" or "bishop" speaks of a godly, mature, faithful man who has the wisdom to provide guidance for the people of God.

Peter identifies himself as an elder: "Who also am an elder." There is no hierarchy among Christians. We are all equal in Christ. But throughout history, God has always called out leaders from among His people.

- When He needed someone to lead His children out of bondage in Egypt, He chose Moses.
- When He needed someone to defeat the Philistines, He called out a shepherd boy named David.
- When He needed someone to build the temple, He called Solomon.

To this day, God is still calling out individuals to provide leadership to His people. This "calling out" is not something to be coveted or sought. God gives it to those He calls.

The foremost prerequisite for an elder or overseer or pastor concerns his relationship to Christ. There must be a living, thriving relationship to Christ through the new birth, and then there should be a continued fellowship with Christ as Lord. No pastor can be of any value, either to God or to those he leads, unless he lives and walks in fellowship with his Master. That invokes a daily heart-searching and self-examination before the Lord. It also includes a constant and unbroken yieldedness to the will of the Lord. Jesus is to be real to the pastor; not a second-hand experience. There must be complete surrender and separation to Christ with an earnest desire to put Christ first in all things.

In his classic book, *Lectures to my Students*, Charles Hadden Spurgeon writes: "Every workman knows the necessity of keeping his tools in good state of repair. If the workman loses the edge, he knows that there will be a great waste of his energies and his work will be badly done. The instruments of my holy calling are my own spirit, soul, and body. My spiritual faculties and my inner life must remain keen if God is to use me."

II. The Responsibility of the Pastor 1 Peter 5:2-3

Three things Peter would deal with in relation to the Pastor:

A. The Weight of the Pastor

I don't mean is the Pastor fat or slim; I'm referring to the LOAD of his responsibility. Peter uses three words to describe the weight or load of the Pastor. It is important to understand that all three of these things are to be in one man – the Pastor. Sometimes we hear a Pastor described like this: "Well, he's a good pastor, but he's not much of a preacher," or "Well, he's a good preacher, but he's not much of a pastor."

The truth is, every man that God calls into His ministry has different spiritual gifts.

Each man is stronger in one area than in another. But we as Pastors should recognize both our strong points and our weak points and we may need to spend more time developing our weak points to bring those areas up to where they need to be. Look at the three areas of the Pastor's load:

1. Elder: I've already said that the word "elder" does not refer to age but to the dignity and maturity one needs for the office. This takes time, experience, and preparation. God doesn't just flip a switch in the heart of a man when He calls him to the office of Elder or Pastor. Every Pastor makes mistakes and he needs to back up and try again. That means the Church needs to be patient with

him and have a spirit of understanding, especially with a man young in the ministry. The elder carries the idea of giving wise spiritual guidance and counsel.

2. Overseer: The word means “to look upon or inspect.” It has to do with matters of administration and leadership. This means the Pastor needs to learn to work with people, and all kinds of people, because the Church is made up of a lot of different personalities and temperaments. The Pastor is the one that God speaks to concerning the direction in which the Church should go.

3. Pastor: When Peter says to “feed the flock of God,” the word “feed” means “to shepherd” or to Pastor. Before Jesus commissioned Peter to feed His sheep in John 21, He asked him an important question: “Lovest thou Me?” That is a more important question than, “Do you love My sheep?” Now the Pastor should love the sheep, but if he loves the sheep and doesn't love the Chief Shepherd and the Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus, he'll never be the Pastor he ought to be. Love for Christ is the only successful and productive motive for service. Love for Christ must be first. There are no substitutes! Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:14, “The love of Christ constraineth us.”

To “feed the flock” entails more than mere provision of spiritual food. It could be better rendered “tend the flock” – encouraging, protecting, guiding, and leading the saints in the will of the Lord as well as building them up in the Lord.

B. The Work of the Pastor

1. Teach: The shepherd always went before the flock and searched out the pastures before the sheep ever got there. It's important for the Pastor to lead their people into green pastures of the Word of God so they might feed themselves and grow. We have nothing to feed them except the Word of God. It is both milk and meat for the child of God.

2. Tend: The Pastor is to care for the needs of the people. Sometimes the sheep need special attention. Sometimes sheep get sick or hurt and need special attention. Sometimes sheep need protection or correction.

Remember the Pastor is a bishop or overseer, which means the shepherd is both “among” and “over” the sheep and this can create problems if the sheep do not understand this. The Pastor is one of the sheep and is “among” the members of the flock.

What makes it even more challenging is the fact that the flock is not the shepherd's; it is God's. I sometimes hear Pastors say, “Well, at my church,” and I know what they mean; but strictly speaking, it is God's flock, purchased by the precious blood of His Son (Acts 20:28). We Pastors must be careful how we minister to God's sheep, because one day we will have to give an account of our ministry. But the sheep will also one day give an account of how they have obeyed their spiritual leaders (Hebrews 13:17), so both shepherds and sheep have a great responsibility to each other.

3. Train: Sheep need to be encouraged, enlightened, and edified.

4. Turn: Sometimes sheep stray and need to be turned back to the right path. This may involve rebuke or discipline in love.

5. Treasure: God's children need to be loved. The Pastor ought to love those that God has entrusted to his care.

C. The Ways of the Pastor 1 Peter 5:2-3

1. “Not by constraint, but willingly” 1 Peter 5:2

The Pastor should have both a shepherd's heart and a servant's heart. The Pastor's attitude toward his work is crucial. It's not enough to be the right kind of man, he must take the right view of the work God has called him to do.

If a man does it right, being a Pastor can be exhausting. Someone put it like this: “Being a Pastor demands the wisdom of Solomon, the patience of Job, the strength of Samson, the courage of Daniel, the kingly character of David, the administrative ability of Nehemiah, to say nothing of the compassion of Hosea or the battlefield brilliance of Joshua.”

2. “Not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind” 1 Peter 5:2

The Bible has a particular word for the person who is in the ministry for money. It calls that person a hireling. I have known ministers of the gospel who have refused repeatedly to accept speaking engagements unless satisfactory honorariums were guaranteed. God forbid that anyone should put a price tag on his ministry. Our Savior did not consider for a moment the cost to Himself when He shed His own precious blood to provide eternal salvation free to all who believe.

Peter said we are to minister with a “ready mind;” or “an eager mind.” Always be ready and willing. Paul said, “Whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Colossians 3:23-24).

3. “Don't be lords (arrogant, dictatorial, overbearing, or domineering) but be examples or models of Christian living.” 1 Peter 5:3

Some Pastors abuse the power, the authority, and the respect that comes with being a Pastor. In their heart they love to boss people around. Their power has corrupted them.

III. The Reward of the Pastor 1 Peter 5:4

Jesus is called the Good Shepherd who died for His sheep (John 10:11), the Great Shepherd who lives for His sheep (Hebrews 13:20-21), and the Chief Shepherd who comes for His sheep (1 Peter 5:4).

As the Chief Shepherd, He alone can assess a man's ministry and give him the proper reward.

The crown of glory is literally the crown which is eternal glory. This is the reward that will be given to the loyal and obedient servants of Christ when He returns.

My sister did a cross-stitch for me that reads: "Working for the Lord doesn't pay much, but the retirement is out of this world."

Whatever reward God's servants will receive will be fair and future, but even now the faithful Pastor is rewarded. I'm not talking about cash pay. I'm talking about the joy of seeing lives transformed, of seeing the faithfulness of saints, of loving friendships, of being a part of the blood-bought family of God.

For the Church to be what God wants it to be, Pastor and People must work together.

Hebrews 13:17NLT " Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they know they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this joyfully and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit."

JESUS: OUR CARETAKER

1 Peter 5:6-7

What a wonderful encouragement these verses are to the believer. "Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." Every word of this statement is an assurance for daily living. It is a promise from God to His children.

If you are burdened or bothered or bound, God has a word for you. Peter says that Jesus can and wants to do something in our lives about cares and anxiety. I want us to look at Jesus: Our Caregiver.

I. The Meaning of Care

What does Peter mean when He says to cast all your care on Jesus? What "cares" is Peter talking about? The word "care" may be translated worry, anxiety, or burden.

The word "care" comes from two Greek words: one means "to divide" and the other means "the mind." Care is that which divides or distresses or depresses the mind.

Someone said that worry is like rocking in a rocking chair. It gives you something to do, but it doesn't get you anywhere. Few die from honest toil and labor, but millions perish under the slave-master's lash of worry.

II. The Misery of Care

A. Care Divides the Mind

Anxiety or worry is a gnawing dread in your gut that something bad may happen. Some of the visible symptoms of anxiety are restlessness, irritability, fatigue, difficulty in concentrating and difficulty sleeping.

The word care means "to choke or to strangle or to pull apart." Have you ever been mowing your yard and you come to some tall, heavy grass and the motor chokes down until it kills the engine. That's what care and worry will do to you.

That's what care and worry will do for you. It will choke you down and strangle the life out of you.

B. Care Distracts the Mind

Colossians 3:2 says to "set your mind on things above; not on things of the earth."

Let me share some of the things that distract our minds:

1. Failures

Failures or sins of the past. Sin is what distracted Adam and Eve. They were so distracted by their sin, they saw only their nakedness and shame. They couldn't see God's mercy and grace.

The song writer put it like this:

Are you weary, are you heavy hearted? Tell it to Jesus, Tell it to Jesus;
Are you grieving over joys departed? Tell it to Jesus alone.

Do the tears flow down your cheeks unbidden? Tell it to Jesus, Tell it to Jesus;
Have you sins that to men's eyes are hidden? Tell it to Jesus alone.

Tell it to Jesus, tell it to Jesus, He is a friend that's well-known;
You've no other such a friend or brother, Tell it to Jesus alone.

2. Finances

Your cares may be your job or your lack of a job and you are worrying about how you are going to make ends meet. Look at Matthew 6:25-34. Jesus says, "Don't be worried, consider the birds of the air and the flowers in the field." God takes care of them and God can take care of you!

3. Family

A wayward child or a wayward spouse can distract our minds.

4. Future

Some folks worry about their health in old age or their retirement. The song writer was right when he said:

Just when I need Him, Jesus is true, never forsaking all the way through;
Giving for burdens pleasures anew, Just when I need Him most.

Just when I need Him, Jesus is strong, Bearing my burdens all the day long;
For all my sorrow giving a song, Just when I need Him most.

Just when I need Him most; Just when I need Him most.
Jesus is near to comfort and cheer, Just when I need Him most.

C. Cares Disrupts our Peace

Have you ever had a neighbor's dog keep you up barking at night? In much the same way, cares nag you and control your thoughts and disrupt your peace.

D. Cares Dishonor God

We sometimes judge a parent by the conduct of their children. If they act badly, it reflects on the parents. And it reflects badly on our God when His children act as if He can't handle their burdens and they live their life in a state of worry and anxiety.

III. The Master of Cares

He who bore the load of the world's sin on the cross can bear anything, even "ALL your cares."

The only other time this particular Greek word is used in the New Testament is in Luke 19:35 when they laid their coats on the back of the little donkey that Jesus was to ride into Jerusalem.

Two words catch our attention: Casting and Careth. Casting is what we do; caring is what He does. He is interested in and concerned about you.

The word for "cast" means "to toss or to throw or to roll the burden from your back on the back of another." We are to roll the burden of our heart on the back of Jesus. Casting our anxiety on the Lord is like putting a saddle on a horse before we ride it. It would be preposterous for us to ride a horse while carrying the saddle on our shoulders. But that's what many of us do with our problems. We're trying to carry them ourself instead of rolling them on the Lord.

How do I know God cares for me? Let me share four pictures of God's caring for us:

1. God cares for us like a daddy counting his child's first steps.

Parents, do you remember how excited you were when your little child took its first step? "Johnny took four steps today!"... and then you stopped counting steps and started trying to chase them down! God is like that. He counts your steps, and He never stops counting. The Bible says: "For what is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high? Does He not see my ways and count my every step?" "Surely then, you count my steps but do not keep track of my sin." (Job 31:2-4; 14:16).

Isn't that wonderful! God cares for us so much that He is watching and counting our every step, but He doesn't keep track of how many times we fall.

2. God cares for you like a mother calming her hurting child.

Every mother has an instinctive desire to protect her children from danger and to comfort them when they're hurting. You might not remember it, but there was probably a time when your mother bounced you on her knee and chanted, "Ride a little horsy, down to town; watch out baby, or you'll fall down!" There is an amazing connection between a mother and a baby. God says, "I care for you like that." God speaks about Jerusalem in Isaiah 66:12-13: "I will extend peace to her like a river; you will nurse and be carried on her hip and be trotted on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you."

3. God cares for you like a hen covering her frightened chicks.

Of all of God's creatures, the hen is one of the most protective of her young. When a hawk flies over the farmyard, a hen clucks to call her chicks and shelters them under her wing. The Bible affirms that God will "Cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge" (Psalm 91:4).

4. God cares for you like an eagle coaxing its young to fly.

Look at Deuteronomy 32:11. The eaglet learns to fly when the mother eagle tears up the nest and forces them to leave their comfort zone.

Sometimes we think God is harsh toward us when He stirs up our nest and causes us to leave our comfort zone, but He is trying to teach us to be what we have never been before and to do what we have never done before because He cares for us.

How do we cast all of our care upon the Lord? If you want to learn how to do something well, you should seek out someone who is already doing it well and let them teach you. The Apostle Paul was an expert at casting his anxiety on the Lord. Two things are involved.

A. We must Bow (Pray)

Philippians 4:6-7, The Message: Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life."

In other words, bow in prayer, tell your burdens to the Lord, and allow Him to carry your burdens. The song writer said it like this:

I must tell Jesus all of my trials; I cannot bear these burdens alone;
In my distress He kindly will help me make of my troubles quickly an end.

I must tell Jesus all of my troubles; He is a kind compassionate friend;
If I but ask Him, He will deliver, make of my troubles quickly an end.

Jesus can help me, Jesus alone!

B. We must Believe

"He cares for you." You are His personal concern, so, take your burdens to the Lord and leave them there. Our problem is that we want to take our problems to the Lord, then pick them up and carry them with us.

Dr. John Haggai used to tell about his Aunt Edith. She went home one day and saw her children in a huddle. When she got closer, she realized that they were looking at baby skunks. She cried out to them, "Children, run into the house." They each grabbed a baby skunk and ran into the house.

How do you handle your cares? You take them to the Lord and leave them there.

How much more enjoyable life would be if we, from this moment, resolved to cast all our care upon the Lord!

OUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL

1 Peter 5:8-11

Before God created man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, He created the Angelic Beings. These Angelic Beings were spiritual beings created to worship and honor God. God created them to do His bidding and to serve Him.

This world was a wonderful, beautiful place, free from all sin, and God Himself said that all He had created was very good.

The angels were created and given different ranks. One of those angels, Lucifer, was perhaps the most beautiful and the most influential of all the angels. Isaiah 14 tells us that Lucifer's beauty and influence made him proud. That is not the last time an attractive and talented person was filled with pride and was corrupted because God created them with great beauty and talent.

Revelation 11:3-4 tells us that Lucifer and a third of the created angels formed a rebellion against God. Lucifer wanted to overthrow God and take His throne in Heaven, and he wanted to be worshiped as God. It was then that God kicked Lucifer and those who rebelled against God with him out of Heaven. From that moment God created Hell for Lucifer, who became the Devil and Satan, and for all of his angels. Satan became the prince of darkness and he has sworn perpetual hostility against God and against God's crowning creation, man.

Satan had the audacity to openly attack the Creator, stain His creation with sin, and pulled man down with him into the mire of depravity. All men will find himself in battle with Satan. And the battle with Satan doesn't stop when a man is saved. If anything, the battle gets more fierce. If Satan had the audacity to attack the Son of God, he will surely attack us as God's children!

I want us to look for a moment at our adversary the devil:

I. The Characteristics of Satan

If you saw the devil, would you even recognize him? It's not easy because he's the master of disguise. What does the devil really look like? Most people imagine he is some kind of evil looking red creature with a mouth full of sharp teeth and two ugly horns protruding from his head. Satan wants you to think that, because since you've never actually seen a creature like that, it's easy to believe the devil doesn't really exist. As long as the devil can make us think he's a joke, we won't recognize him.

Did you know that Satan doesn't want people to believe in him? And he has been successful in his plan because most Americans don't believe in the devil. In 2002 the George Barna research team found that almost 95 percent of Americans believed in God, but only 41 percent of Americans believed in a living being called the devil. That's the way Satan planned it. He knows if you don't believe in him, you won't be on guard for his attacks.

If you think Satan is some ugly being, think again. In 2 Corinthians 11:15 Paul says that "Satan masquerades as an angel of light." He doesn't want to spook you, he wants to entice you!

Is the devil real? Or is he just a made-up character preachers use to scare you into joining the Church?

I'll tell you this: Jesus believed in a personal devil. Jesus referred to the devil at least 15 times in the Gospels. Either Jesus didn't know what He was talking about or the devil is real.

The New Testament writers believed in a literal devil, because 23 of the 27 New Testament books refer to the devil. Billy Sunday used to say, "I know the devil is real, because I've done business with him." (So have I!)

Maybe the best way to understand what Satan is like is to look at the names that are given to him in the Bible.

1. As a Serpent, he Deceives – 2 Corinthians 11:3

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the Serpent beguiled (misled by tricking or charming or delighting; deceived) Eve through his subtlety (his hard to detect skillful and clever suggestive words), so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

How does Satan deceive? He tricks us by using misleading or even charming tactics. He can make wrong look pleasurable, exciting, and delightful.

2. As a Lion, he Devours – 1 Peter 5:8

- Satan is sneaky.

The preferred hunting method of lions is to hide themselves near a waterhole or trail and wait for an unsuspecting animal to pass by.

Then, with a roar, they spring out of hiding and it's lunch time. Lions are naturally equipped with a camouflaged color, and they are patient enough to wait for hours.

Lions are powerful animals. A grown lion can grow to over eight feet in length (not counting the tail) and weigh over 400 pounds. He can snap a zebra's neck with a single bite or crush the skull of most animals with one swipe of its mighty paw. Like a lion, the devil is sneaky. He always hides his true intent. He never tries to get you to hate God; he just wants you to doubt the truth about God and to doubt what God says is true.

- Satan will stalk you.

Lions are not the fastest animal in the jungle, but they are experts at silently slipping up on their prey. Satan prowls around looking for an easy target. Jesus said that Satan's plan for your life is to "steal, kill, and destroy." He wants to steal your blessings, kill your joy, and destroy your happiness.

- Satan tries to scare you.

On a still night, a lion's roar can be heard almost five miles away. It is the loudest noise made by a living creature. In the same way, one of Satan's most effective methods is to keep you in fear.

3. As the Devil, he Defames.

The word "devil" means accuser, slanderer. Satan will attack our reputations or honor by false slander. Satan slanders us before God, and he slanders God before us, and he slanders brother against brother.

4. As our Adversary, he Defies.

The word "Adversary" means "One who is an Opponent." He actively opposes and objects all that we do for God.

5. As an Angel of Light, he Disguises.

Satan is the great pretender and counterfeiter. Jesus called him a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44).

II. The Conduct of Satan

Satan is always active. Notice that Peter says that Satan "walks about, seeking someone he can devour." Only God is omnipresent; so Satan can only be in one place at one time. Remember also that he has many demonic spirits under his command.

But have you ever thought how active Satan is? Consider how much mischief he has done. He is here and there and everywhere tempting us. Think of the places he or his fallen spirits are: on the job site, in the schools, in the government, in the jails, on the battlefields, on the mission fields, in the nursing homes. He is in the social circles, in the churches, even in our beds, when you toss and turn all night, you'll find him there.

Satan never misses an opportunity to do his evil work. He likes to hit when we are depressed, discouraged, or ill.

But I must tell you, Satan is not in all sin. Satan gets blamed for a lot of things that are not his fault. Since the Garden of Eden, man has pointed to Satan to try to escape responsibility for his sin. We all have a sin nature. The Bible never declares that the devil is responsible for our sin. We are responsible for our own lives and the way we live.

I heard about a lady who brought home a very expensive dress from the store. The husband was upset about the dress because he had just told her that their finances didn't look good. So he asked her, "Why did you buy that dress?" She responded, "The devil made me do it." The husband said, "Well, why didn't you just say, get behind me Satan?" She said, "I did, and he said it looks nice from back here too!"

III. The Caution Toward Satan 1 Peter 5:8

A. Be Sober

Respect Satan; he's dangerous. We should never joke about him nor underestimate his power or ability. Satan is a powerful and dangerous enemy and he can and will strike – when we least expect it.

B. Be Vigilant

Always be on guard against him. Be alert. Don't give place to the devil.

How can we deal with the devil?

1. Resist him 1 Peter 5:9

James 4:7 says to “resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Well, how do you resist him? Jesus left us the example when He was tempted of the devil: He used Scripture! Time and again Jesus said, “It is written.” Satan cannot stand up to the Word of God.

2. Be steadfast in the Faith

“The Faith” refers to the fundamentals of the faith. You must know the Word of God. The Bible says, “Your Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against God.”

1 John 4:4 says, “Greater is He that is within you than he that is within the world.”

IV. The Conquest of Satan 1 Peter 5:10-11

Let me give you an insight into the hunting skills of a lion. The lion doesn't try to attack a whole herd of animals. He knows there are always some weak animals. Lions target stragglers or the weak. Sometimes a lion will just run at a herd, knowing he can't catch them. But as the frightened herd starts to flee, he'll be looking for an animal that is limping or weak – and that's where he heads for his next meal. Satan does the same thing spiritually. He attacks Christians who are wounded or weak in the faith. And he attacks strong Christians at their weak points.

The Bible teaches the value of the herd mentality. The Bible says, “Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as you see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

Just as lions attack stragglers, Satan will try to isolate you from the herd. Satan doesn't want you to come to church. He wants you to get mad and stay away. He'll tell you about the hypocrites or tell you that you can get just as much worshiping in front of a television. But the Bible says there is strength and safety in the herd. And the herd is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the promises of God is that Satan will be defeated and we will gain the victory – see 1 John 3:8; Revelation 20:1-3, 7-10.

Our conquest is more than the fact that Satan loses. It is the fact of what God has planned for us.

- We will share the glory of God – 1 Peter 5:10.
- He will perfect us and welcome us home to be his Him – 1 Peter 5:10.