

INTRODUCTION AND 1 PETER

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Introduction

I. Authorship

A. The internal evidence is clear. The Apostle Peter is expressly identified as the author of the letter in 1:1, and he says in 5:1 that he was "a witness of Christ's sufferings" (note Lk. 22:54b, 61). There also are some similarities of ideas and expressions between 1 Peter and Peter's speeches reported in Acts (compare Acts 4:11 with 1 Pet. 2:4; Acts 1:22, 5:32, and 10:39 with 1 Pet 5:1; Acts 10:34 with 1 Pet 1:17; Acts 10:42 with 1 Pet 4:5; Acts 15:9 with 1 Pet 1:22). 2 Peter 3:1 refers to a prior letter, which almost certainly is 1 Peter, so even if one thinks 2 Peter was pseudonymous (which I do not), it reflects the author's view that Peter was the author of 1 Peter.

B. The external evidence confirms that Peter is the author. As early as Polycarp's letter to the Philippians (A.D. 108-114), 1 Peter was used as a source, indicating its early acceptance as an authentic letter of Peter. By the end of the second century and beginning of the third the letter is explicitly identified as Peter's (by Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian). According to Eusebius in the early fourth century, that identification was not disputed in any quarters of the early church.

C. Many modern scholars, perhaps even a majority, deny that Peter was the author mainly on the assumption that the Greek is too sophisticated for a Palestinian fisherman for whom Greek would be a second language. It is by no means clear, however, that Peter could not have gained the required proficiency in his decades of interaction and travel in service of Christ. Indeed, Karen Jobes argues in detail in *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005) "that the extent of Semitic interference in the Greek of 1 Peter indicates an author whose first language was not Greek" (p. 337). In any event, the use of an amanuensis (secretary) could account for Greek proficiency beyond that of Peter.

D. D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo thus conclude in *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 645-646:

The case against Petrine authorship is therefore not at all a strong one. We agree with I. Howard Marshall that "if there ever was a weak case for pseudonymity, surely it is in respect to this letter." Only the issue of language stands in the way of authenticity; and this problem is far outweighed by the problem of thinking that a pseudonymous letter would have been written and accepted in the early church.

II. Place of Writing

A. In 5:13 Peter sends greetings from "She who is in Babylon, chosen with you." This suggests that Peter is in "Babylon" when writing the letter.

B. The historical Babylon of the O.T. was basically in ruins and was all but deserted. There is no evidence of Peter ever being there and no evidence of a church being there at this time. There was a very small Roman military colony in Egypt called Babylon, but there is no evidence of any Christian mission there until much later.

C. Most scholars agree that "Babylon" is a metaphorical reference to the center of Gentile (God-opposing) power, a reference drawn from Babylon's role in relation to Israel in the O.T. Karen Jobes states (p. 322), "There is virtually unanimous agreement among modern interpreters that the referent of 'Babylon' is actually Rome." Note that Mark was in Rome in Col. 4:10 and is mentioned in 1 Pet. 5:13. Eusebius states expressly that Papias (A.D. 60-130) said Peter wrote his first letter from Rome.

D. In light of this, "She who is in Babylon, chosen with you" probably refers to the church in Rome.

III. Date

A. There is a strong church tradition that both Peter and Paul were executed in Rome by Nero between A.D. 64 and 66. See, e.g., Eusebius's early-fourth-century work *The History of the Church* (Book 3, sections 1-2).

B. Peter apparently was not in Rome when Paul wrote Romans around A.D. 57. Paul's first Roman imprisonment was around A.D. 60-62. The fact the letters he wrote during that imprisonment (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon) make no mention of Peter and the fact Luke says nothing about Peter's presence during his report of Paul's imprisonment in Acts makes it unlikely that Peter was in Rome at that time. Given that Christians in the provinces to which Peter was writing would be familiar with Paul, even if they did not know him personally, the fact 1 Peter does not mention Paul makes it unlikely Paul was in Rome at the time it was written.

C. The most popular scenario is that Peter arrived in Rome some time after Paul's release from prison around A.D. 62 (during Paul's ministry in the East) and wrote 1 Peter before Paul was arrested again. Given that we need to leave time for Peter to write 2 Peter, that puts the writing of 1 Peter in A.D. 62-63. (It is possible that Peter was in Rome after Romans was written and before Paul's first imprisonment – between A.D. 57-60 – and wrote 1 Peter at that time. The former scenario is favored by the fact Eusebius implies that Peter came to Rome only near the end of his life.)

D. Hebrews most likely was written to the church in Rome in the mid-60s, perhaps a bit closer to the beginning of Nero's persecution than 1 Peter, a time when more "persecution straws" were in the wind. If that is correct and if 1 Peter was written from Rome in A.D. 62-63, one can speculate that Peter left Rome for some unknown reason

soon after writing 1 Peter. As the situation in that city grew more ominous, the Hebrew writer learned of it and dispatched his letter. Peter returned to Rome at some point during that time, perhaps in relation to the intensifying situation with Nero, where he wrote 2 Peter and was executed (as was Paul).

IV. Audience and Destination

A. Peter's intended audience is mainly Gentile Christians, even though Jewish Christians were no doubt part of the congregations.

1. This is suggested most strongly by the statement in 1:18 that they "were redeemed from [their] empty way of life inherited from [their] ancestors," the statement in 2:10 that they "once [were] not a people but now [are] a people of God," and the statement in 4:3 that they had spent enough time participating in the desires of the Gentiles, "having traveled in licentiousness, lusts, instances of drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and detestable acts of idolatry."

2. The agreement in Jerusalem that Paul would evangelize Gentiles and Peter would concentrate on Jews (Gal. 2:1-10) apparently was not intended to be exclusive or permanent. As Carson and Moo point out (p. 643), "Paul continued to evangelize Jews in every city he visited; and 1 Corinthians 1 implies that Peter had spent enough time in Corinth to attract a following among the mainly Gentile Christians there."

B. The Gentile Christians to whom Peter is writing are located in five regions of Asia Minor (which today is occupied by the nation of Turkey): Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

1. These probably refer to Roman political provinces, but some believe they designate smaller ethnic areas. Though Bithynia and Pontus were in Peter's day joined as a single province, Peter may have referred to the areas separately because the emissary carrying the letter would have begun his journey in the eastern part of Bithynia and Pontus (Pontus) and ended in the western part (Bithynia). The provinces are listed in the order they would be encountered on such a journey.

2. Peter need not be addressing Christians in the same localities as Paul's missionary activity. It is possible that the emissary's loop through these provinces did not dip that far south. Carson and Moo state (p. 648), "probably [Peter] has in mind only the northern part of Galatia and Cappadocia and the northeastern part of Asia."

3. "Peter's reference to 'those who have preached the gospel to you' (1:12) suggests that he did not personally evangelize these Christians" (Carson and Moo, 648).

V. Occasion

A. The Christians to whom Peter writes are suffering some kind of persecution. He refers to their suffering in a number of places:

1. In 1:6 he says that now they "have been grieved a little while in various trials."

2. In 3:13-17 he refers to the prospect of their suffering for righteousness and being reviled.

3. In 4:12-19 he refers to the fiery ordeal among them (v. 12), speaks of their sharing in the sufferings of Christ (v. 13), and suggests that they are suffering because they bear the name "Christian" (vv. 14 and 16).

4. In 5:9 he says the same sufferings are being endured by the brotherhood in the world, and in 5:10 he refers again to their suffering.

B. Most recent scholars are convinced that the persecution they were experiencing was a local unofficial persecution, the product of a general resentment of and hostility to Christians by the Roman public. As Carson and Moo state (p. 639):

By refusing to engage in the quasi-religious customs surrounding the official Roman governmental structures, by resolutely setting themselves against some of the immoral practices prevalent at the time, and by meeting so often on their own to celebrate the Lord's Supper, Christians were regarded with suspicion and hostility. The readers of 1 Peter were probably being criticized, mocked, discriminated against, and perhaps even brought into court on trumped-up charges. This situation fully explains the references to suffering in 1 Peter – including 5:10, since Christians throughout the empire were indeed suffering this same kind of treatment, and 4:14, 16, since the readers were indeed suffering because they followed Christ and bore his name.

C. Peter is writing to encourage them to endure in the face of their difficulties. "In a phrase, Peter calls on his readers to exhibit 'piety under pressure' as a means of glorifying God and of witnessing to a hostile but watchful world" (Carson and Moo, 636).

Text

1. Greeting (1:1-2)

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to [the] elect, sojourners of [the] Dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²[elect] according to [the] foreknowledge of God [the] Father, in [the]

sanctification of [the] Spirit, with reference to obedience and sprinkling of [the] blood of Jesus Christ: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

A. The name Peter

1. Peter's given name at birth was the Aramaic name *Shim'on*, which is transliterated into Greek both as *Simo*,n (Σίμων) and *Sumeo*,n (Συμεών), which are transliterated into English as Simon and Simeon, respectively.

2. He was given the nickname "Rock" by the Lord Jesus to symbolize his new role as an apostle (Jn. 1:42; see also Mat. 16:18). That nickname probably was given in Aramaic. The Aramaic word for rock is *ke,pa,*' , which is transliterated into Greek as *Ke*,phas (Κηφᾶς), which in turn is transliterated into English as Cephas.

3. The Greek word for rock is *petra*. Since *petra* is grammatically feminine in form, when applied to a man it becomes *petros*, which is transliterated into English as Peter. So Peter is the English *transliteration* of the Greek *translation* (*Petros*) of the Aramaic nickname (*ke,pa,*') and Cephas is the English *transliteration* of the Greek *transliteration* (*Ke*,phas) of the Aramaic nickname.

4. Peter is most often referred to in the N.T. simply as Peter, but sometimes in the Gospels and in 2 Pet. 1:1 his given name and his nickname are combined, yielding Simon (or Simeon) Peter.

B. Peter identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He is writing to them with the authority inherent in that position. The word he is bringing to them is the word of the Lord.

C. He is writing to the elect, those chosen for the blessings of God, whom he further describes as sojourners of [the] Dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

1. The term "Dispersion" (Diaspora) referred to Jews living outside their homeland of Palestine, and as such, serves as a metaphor for the people of God living in a state of dislocation. Christians are sojourners, meaning we live in this world as resident aliens, because this fallen world is not our home. We are citizens of heaven.

2. They are physically located in various Roman provinces of Asia Minor.

D. Their election is said to be (a) according to [the] foreknowledge of God [the] Father, (b) in [the] sanctification of [the] Spirit, and (c) with reference to obedience and sprinkling of [the] blood of Jesus Christ.

1. Though Calvinists would disagree, I am persuaded that God's election is based on his knowing in advance who will freely choose to put their faith in him rather

than being an unconditional choice following which God *determines* who will (and will not) put their faith in him.

2. Election is in the sanctification of the Spirit in that those who come to faith are sanctified by the Spirit; they receive the Spirit and thereby are set apart for God's purposes.

3. Election is with reference to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ in that it is tied to one's obedience to (acceptance of) the gospel message through which one is cleansed by the blood of Christ.

E. Peter desires on their behalf that grace and peace may be multiplied to them.

II. Privileges and responsibilities of being God's people (1:3 – 2:10)

A. The blessing of salvation (1:3-9)

³Praised [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who, according to his great mercy, has given us a new birth into a living hope through [the] resurrection of Jesus Christ from [the] dead; ⁴into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you ⁵who through faith are protected by [the] power of God; into [the] salvation ready to be revealed in [the] last time, ⁶in which [time] you [will] greatly rejoice, though now, if it is necessary, you have been grieved a little while in various trials ⁷in order that the genuineness of your faith – being more precious [than] gold which, though perishable, is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at [the] revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁸whom not having seen you love, in whom not now seeing but believing you [will] greatly rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy ⁹on receiving the end result of your faith, [the] salvation of [your] souls.

1. Peter says God is to be praised for his great mercy in bringing Christians into a living hope, a vibrant and meaningful hope, through the resurrection of Christ. He means, of course, that our hope has been provided by what Christ endured for us, which is represented by his resurrection (see 1 Pet. 2:24, 3:18a). He died for our sins, and his resurrection demonstrates God's approval of that sacrifice and/or is part of the completion of the sacrifice in that the Lord entered heaven itself "once for all by his own blood" (Heb. 9:12, 24 -- NIV).

2. Peter spells out the substance of our living hope in two ways:

a. It is an "inheritance," a term that presupposes a familial relationship with the Father (e.g., Rom. 8:15-17; Rev. 21:7).

(1) He describes this inheritance as imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. In other words, it is eternal, precious, and constant (without diminishment).

(2) It is kept in heaven, which means it is completely secure. The faithful will not find the cupboard empty on that day. On the contrary, the faithful are protected by God's power. No contrary power can deny them their inheritance; no contrary power can defeat God's purpose to bless the faithful.

b. It is the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, meaning the time of final judgment at Christ's return.

(1) As Wayne Grudem states in *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 59:

Salvation is used here not of past justification or of present sanctification (speaking in theological categories) but of the future full possession of all the blessings of our redemption – of the final, complete fulfillment of our salvation (*cf.* Rom. 13:11; 1 Pet. 2:2). Though already 'prepared' or *ready*, it will not be *revealed* by God to mankind generally until the *last time*, the time of final judgment.

(2) Christ is coming again to consummate the kingdom he inaugurated at his first coming. At that time, Christians will be resurrected, like Christ the firstfruits, and will spend eternity in a redeemed creation, the new heaven and earth, a perfect reality of love, joy, and fellowship with God and one another. See, e.g., 1 Cor. 15: 20-23, 42-44, 49, 50-57; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; Rom. 8:8-13; Phil. 3:20-21; Rev. 21:1-5.

3. The reaction of the saved on that day will be one of tremendous rejoicing.

a. Verse 6 begins with the prepositional phrase "in which," which many commentators take as referring to all that one has been given in the new birth as described in vv. 3-5. But I side with many ancient commentators and with modern commentators like J. Ramsey Michaels, Leonhard Goppelt, Hans Windisch, James Moffatt, and Charles Bigg who understand "in which" to refer to the immediately preceding phrase, "the last time."

b. That understanding requires a future meaning to the present tense verb "greatly rejoice," but the present tense can have a future meaning in this kind of circumstance. J. Ramsey Michaels writes in *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 28:

The best option remains the present indicative with a future meaning. In "confident assertions regarding the future," especially prophecies (BDF § 323), a present tense can stand for the future. If "the

time element is established by the context" (in this instance, ἐν ᾧ linked to the preceding ἐν καιρῷ ἐσχάτῳ), the present "becomes semantically a 'zero' tense, taking a future meaning from the context" (Reynolds, 69). Such an understanding accounts for ἀγαλλιᾶσθε in v 6, and will be found applicable in v 8 as well. It is this interpretive insight, not a primitive textual tradition, that most plausibly explains the persistence of the future verb forms *exultabitis* and *gaudebitis* in Latin translations of vv. 6 and 8 . . .

c. This fits best, in my opinion, with the temporal contrast indicated by "though now." They are suffering *now* but on that *future* day will greatly rejoice. The future orientation is further supported by the reference in v. 7 to their faith being found to result in praise, glory, and honor *at the revelation of Jesus Christ* and the reference in v. 9 to receiving the *end result of their faith*, the salvation of their souls.

d. This does not mean that Christians do not rejoice in some deep sense through the sorrow of present trials; it means that there is a sense of unparalleled rejoicing that will characterize our entrance into the eternal glory of the consummated kingdom.

4. Peter explains that the various trials they were suffering were a testing of their faith, just like gold is tested, so that its genuineness may result in *their* praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Christ (see, Rom. 2:29; 1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Pet. 5:4). Michaels states (p. 31), "Peter has in mind *explicitly* the praise, glory, and honor that God bestows on his servants, and only *implicitly* the praise, glory, and honor that is his in the act of giving." That is what is in store for the Christian; it is an inheritance like no other.

5. In speaking of the salvation of their "souls" Peter is not referring to the salvation of the immaterial aspect of their being. Rather, as Peter Davids notes in *The First Epistle of Peter*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 60, he is using the word in its typical Hebrew sense of the total person, the self. You can see this quite clearly in his statement in 3:20 that "eight souls" were saved through water, referring to Noah and his family.

a. Schreiner rightly cautions (p. 71): "Salvation of 'souls' could easily be misunderstood by moderns, as if Peter referred to the salvation of our immaterial substance. The word 'souls,' however, refers to the whole person and does not suggest in any way that the body is left out. The reference is to 'a person's whole life or self-identity.'"

b. Paul Achtemeier states in *I Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 104:

[The] eschatological context, at home in the Hebrew rather than the Greek tradition, gives to [souls] the sense of the salvation of the entire person rather than simply the rescue of a higher or spiritual part of a person in

contrast to the body. Because such Hebrew tradition in which the human being is understood to be a psychosomatic unity is dominant in the NT, redemption (here [salvation]) is understood in terms of a new creation rather than of the release of the soul from imprisonment in the body. A translation that implies salvation of only part of the person (e.g., "soul") is therefore misleading, since in 1 Peter elsewhere [soul] is used to mean the whole person.

B. Digression accentuating the greatness of this salvation (1:10-12)

¹⁰Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace [to come] to you diligently searched and carefully inquired, ¹¹inquiring into what [time] or what sort of time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating when predicting the sufferings [coming] to Christ and the glories after these things. ¹²It was revealed to them that they were presenting these things not for themselves but for you, which things have now been announced to you by those who preached the gospel [to] you by [the] Holy Spirit sent from heaven, into which things angels long to look.

1. Peter highlights the greatness of this salvation by noting that the O.T. prophets who through the Spirit foretold its coming were so taken by its glory that they expended themselves in trying to discern the time or general period when the means and grounds of that salvation, that is, the sufferings of Christ and subsequent exaltation which they were predicting, would occur.

a. There are numerous references in the N.T. to the O.T.'s predictions about Christ. For example:

(1) Jesus says in Mat. 11:13 that "all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John," meaning that the entire O.T. -- even its commands -- had a prospective or forward-looking aspect, and as Mat. 5:17 shows, Jesus is the fulfillment of that aspect.

(2) Lk. 24:25-27 states (ESV) – ²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

(3) Lk. 24:44-47 states (ESV) – ⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that

repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

(4) Paul says in Acts 26:22-23 (ESV) – ²² "To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³ that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

(5) Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:3-5 (ESV) – ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

b. Wayne Grudem writes *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 70:

In this sense [of the entire Old Testament being writings of 'the prophets'], the predictions of the sufferings of the Messiah begin with the prediction of the 'seed' of the woman who would be bruised in the heel by the serpent (Gn. 3:15), and continue through much of the Old Testament writings (for, example, Pss. 22:1, 7-8, 18; 34:19-20; 69:21; Is. 50:6; 52:14-15; 53:1-12; Zc. 12:10; 13:7, *etc.*).

The Messiah's subsequent glory is predicted in Pss. 2:16; 10; 22:22; 45:7; 110:1, 4; Is. 9:6; 40:3-5, 9-11; 42:1-4; 61:1-3; Je. 33:14-15; Ezk. 34:23; Dn. 7:13-14; Mal. 3:1-3, *etc.*

c. The Holy Spirit who inspired the O.T. prophets is here called the Spirit of Christ (see Rom. 8:9 and also Acts 16:7; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19) because he is the same Spirit who was sent from Jesus (see v. 12; Acts 1:4-5, 2:33) and he bears witness to Christ and glorifies him (Jn. 15:26, 16:13-14). As Jim McGuiggan writes in *Where the Spirit of the Lord Is* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing, 1999), 39-40:

The Spirit brings glory to Christ by refusing to put himself on center stage. Whatever the Spirit does and however he does it, it is to be understood in light of Jesus' own proclamation: "He will bring glory to me."

We've all known people who were the dynamic behind whatever was going on, and while we knew they were at work, they didn't parade or proclaim their presence. They were hiding in plain sight. They did their job so well that people looked at what was being accomplished more than at the prime mover in the venture. The Spirit of God models this behavior for us.

He doesn't want first place!

Because there is no life without him, because we have no Christ without him, because he does so much -- we're tempted to forget *why* he does what he does. The Spirit does what he does to glorify the Christ, to bring the Christ, to represent the Christ.

He never parades his own presence, even though he insists that we know he is present. And when the Spirit leads people to speak -- and they cannot speak without him -- they speak of the Master and not of him. The Spirit suffers from no identity crisis, yet you never hear him say, "Behold me!" Rather, over and over and over again he says, "Behold him!"

To say we shouldn't glorify the Spirit would be nonsense! To say we shouldn't delve into his nature and work would be sheer ignorance. But one of the reasons that less has been said about the Spirit down the centuries than about the Father and Son is because the Holy Spirit has unceasingly pointed to the Father and the Son. That he himself should be praised and glorified is only proper, but it honors the Spirit when we pay attention to the focus of his work in the world. He is not the focus of his own labors. In pointing away from himself, the Spirit is not putting himself down; he is exalting the Christ.

2. These prophets sought to discern when their predictions would be fulfilled, presumably by investigating the times and circumstances of their own lifetimes, by reflecting on earlier prophetic writings, and/or by seeking wisdom or further revelation from the Lord (e.g., Dan. 12:8).

3. They no doubt were hoping that this great work of God about which they prophesied would be fulfilled in their days, but it was revealed to them that their prophecies were, at least primarily, for those like Peter's audience, those who lived on the other side of the Christ event and who had had the glorious news of his crucifixion and exaltation announced to them through the Spirit-inspired and Spirit-empowered preaching of the gospel.

4. God's redemption of sinful humanity through the atoning work of Christ, an event now having occurred in history, is a subject so sublime that angels long to look into it, long to explore its depths. Thomas Schreiner writes in *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 76: "[T]he privilege of enjoying and anticipating salvation comes to the forefront. Old Testament prophets saw it from afar, and angels also marvel when gazing upon what God has done in Christ, while the Petrine readers actually experience it."

C. Living holy lives in light of salvation (1:13-16)

¹³Therefore, having bound up the loins of your mind, being sober, set your hope fully on the grace to be brought to you at [the] revelation of

Jesus Christ. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not conform to the former passions [when] in your ignorance, ¹⁵but like the Holy One who called you, you also be holy in all your conduct. ¹⁶For it is written, "Be holy, because I am holy."

1. Given the greatness of the salvation in which they participate ("Therefore"), they need affirmatively to set their hope fully on the gracious blessings to be given to them at the Second Coming of Christ. This involves preparing their minds to do so by having a sober grasp of their salvation, a clear understanding of what that salvation entails; it involves appreciating the certainty and greatness of that salvation. When one grasps the blessings that are in store for the faithful in Christ, one is strengthened to live in light of that expectation, prepared to have one's present life shaped by that hope. Setting one's hope fully on the blessings of the eschaton goes beyond simply *expecting* those blessings; it includes choosing to live in light of those blessings, choosing to live a life that is pleasing to the provider of those blessings.

2. Thus they are called in v. 14-16 to live holy lives. Because the God who called them to salvation is holy, Christians are to be holy in all their conduct. No area of life is exempt from this directive.

a. Although holiness as applied to God involves his total distinctiveness, the stress is on his moral and ethical distinctiveness. He is set apart in that he is perfectly and infinitely good, righteous, just, faithful, kind, loving, forgiving, etc. God is not just bigger than we are; he is better! This stress is seen in the contrasting of his holiness to sin. In Hab. 1:13, after referring to God in 1:12 as the Holy One, the prophet says: "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong." Isaiah 5:16 states: "But the Lord Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness."

b. Christians *are* holy in the sense God has set us apart, made us special, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We are uniquely related to him in that we have received the holy cleansing of Christ's blood (see Heb. 10:5-10). In fact, the word translated "saints" is literally "holy ones." But we are called here *to be* holy because God is holy (not *as* God is holy, which would be impossible). This means we are to be morally and ethically distinct from the world because God is that way. This aspect of holiness is seen, for example, in Rom. 6:19 and 1 Thess. 4:4, 7. 1 Cor. 1:2 appears to combine both aspects of Christian holiness.

D. Living in light of God's judgment and redemption (1:17-21)

¹⁷And since you call upon a Father who judges impartially according to each person's work, live in fear [during] the time of your sojourn, ¹⁸knowing that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from [your] ancestors not with perishable things [such as] silver and gold ¹⁹but with precious blood, as of an unblemished and

spotless lamb, [the blood] of Christ. ²⁰He was foreknown before [the] foundation of [the] world but was revealed at [the] last of the times for your sake, ²¹who through him are believers in God who raised him from [the] dead and gave glory to him, so that your faith and hope might be in God.

1. Given the fact the heavenly Father they call upon is one who judges impartially according to each person's work, and thus one who will not wink at rebellion or defiance from anyone, they need to live in fear of the consequences of defying God. In other words, they cannot presume upon their relationship with God and imagine that it frees them to disrespect or to mock God by the way they live.

a. Jobes remarks (p. 116), "The pagan life that God abhors will be no less abhorred if it is lived by one who professes to be a Christian."

b. Schreiner states (p. 81):

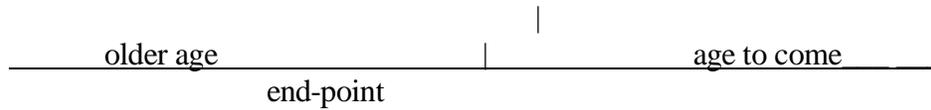
There is a kind of fear that does not contradict confidence. A confident driver also possesses a healthy fear of an accident that prevents him from doing anything foolish. A genuine fear of judgment hinders believers from giving in to libertinism. The background to such fear can be traced to Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 4:10; 8:6) and the wisdom tradition (Prov 1:29; 3:7; 9:10; Job 28:28; Eccl 12:13), where the fear of the Lord informs all of life.

c. We are not to fear men as they seek to bully us from faithfulness to God (e.g., Mat. 10:28; Acts 5:29; Heb. 13:6; 1 Pet. 3:6), but we must fear God. That is all over the Bible. Psalm 111:10 says that fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. When Paul says of people in Rom. 3:18 that there is no fear of God before their eyes, it is not a compliment! Indeed, Peter commands them in 2:17 to "fear God."

2. The motivation toward holy living that is provided by a sober awareness of the dreadful consequences of defying God is reinforced or multiplied by an awareness of the breathtaking price that was paid for their redemption. They are to live knowing that their deliverance from the empty way of life they had inherited as Gentiles, a way of life that degraded them and held no hope for eternal life with God, was "purchased" with something more precious than all the wealth in this decaying cosmos; it was "purchased" by the supremely precious blood – the life – of the Lord Jesus Christ. His blood was analogous to that of an unblemished and spotless lamb offered for sacrifice under the old covenant in that it was poured out for the benefit of others.

3. The incarnation of God the Son as the God-man Jesus Christ and his accomplishment of redemption for mankind through his atoning death and resurrection was known by God from eternity, but he was revealed in the last times, the last days, in the sense that he inaugurated the kingdom of God, ushered in the new age that marks the end of the old age in principle and the beginning of its end in fact.

a. Here is James D. G. Dunn's representation of Jewish thinking about the coming and nature of the kingdom of God in *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 464:



b. The N.T. teaches that the kingdom of God, the age to come, was ushered in or inaugurated in the Christ event but that its consummation awaits his return. As Preben Vang and Terry Carter put it in *Telling God's Story: The Biblical Narrative from Beginning to End* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 199:

According to Jesus, the kingdom of God is already here. Jesus inaugurated it! The "age to come" has broken into the "present age." God is making his presence felt already now. Yet the kingdom of God is not here in full. Evil still exists. God does not yet fill "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). This will only happen at the time of consummation when Christ comes back. We now live between the times. The promised "age to come" has already begun but is not here in full. The "old age" is still here as well.

c. Michael Bird puts it this way in *Introducing Paul* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 114, 116:

Fundamental to Paul's theology is that the future age (the eschaton) has already broken in and has been *inaugurated* through the life, death and resurrection of the Son of God. . . .

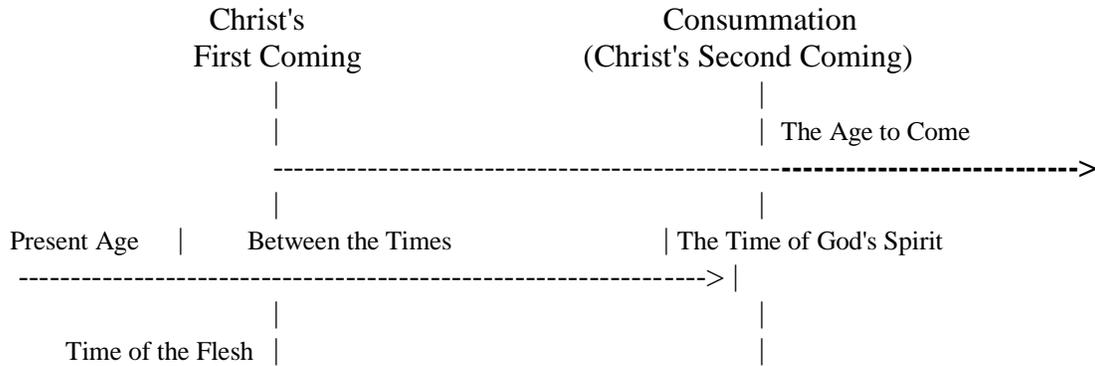
The coming of Jesus has inaugurated a new era of redemptive history and God's new age has been launched upon the world, something like a covert operation seizing key nodes along the rear echelons of an opposing force. Those people who confess faith in the Messiah and experience the transforming power of the Spirit of God are living billboards in our global metropolis advertising God's activity in the world and pointing to things soon to come. At the same time, the old age continues, death and evil are realities that need to be confronted and endured, but their power has been broken in principle and even in practice. What is more, the day is coming when God will finally do away with them and the old age will be no more. On that day God will be 'all in all' (1 Cor. 15:28).

c. Dunn diagrams the N.T. perspective this way (p. 464):



mid-point end-point
 cross/resurrection parousia

d. Vang and Carter diagram it like this (p. 200):



e. Schreiner says regarding 1 Pet. 1:20 (p. 88):

The "end of the ages" . . . signals the last days of salvation history, which commenced with the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Michaels rightly notes that the phrase here is to be distinguished from "in the last time" . . . in v. 5. The latter refers to the eschatological inheritance that awaits believers, but the phrase here indicates that the last times have commenced with the coming of Christ. [He adds in a footnote: "What we have here is inaugurated by not yet consummated eschatology."] The stunning privilege of believers is communicated once again because all these things occurred "for your sake" (cf. vv. 10-12). What a tragedy it would be to throw all these privileges away by ceasing to live in the fear of God.

4. It is through Christ that these Gentiles have become believers in God the Father. The gospel of Christ is God's saving work on their behalf, so in embracing that gospel they put their trust in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him to the greatest heights, intending that people would put their faith and hope in him as a result of the redemption he provided in Christ.

E. Love as those reborn through the word of God (1:22-25)

²²Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth resulting in genuine brotherly love, love one another fervently from a [pure] heart, ²³having been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through [the] living and enduring word of God. ²⁴For, "All flesh [is] like grass, and all of its glory like [the] flower of grass; the grass withers and the flower falls, ²⁵but the word of [the] Lord

endures forever." And this is the word that was preached as good news to you.

1. They had purified themselves by obedience to the truth, meaning they had accepted the gospel, which included their submission to baptism (see 3:21). Peter Davids states (p. 76), "The image of purification is that of OT washings that made one ready to participate in the cult (Exod. 19:10; Josh. 3:5; John 11:55; Acts 21:24, 26; 24:18). This figure was taken over in the NT and stood for both inward purification through repentance from sin (Jas. 4:8; 1 John 3:3) and Christian initiation, which included repentance, commitment to Christ, and baptism, as here (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11)."

2. Their conversion resulted in their having a genuine love for fellow Christians. Their passage from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God brought them into a special relationship, into fellowship, with all others who had made that same journey. Conversion includes entrance into the brotherhood of the redeemed, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ; it includes loving other Christians simply because they are fellow-Christians.

3. But Peter commands them to deepen and intensify this love. They are to love one another fervently from a pure heart, meaning a heart that is untainted by ulterior motives. We are to be intensely committed to the welfare of our brothers and sisters in Christ, not because we are working some angle but because they are fellow heirs of God's gracious gift of life.

4. The instrument of their new birth was not an earthly, perishable seed, like the sperm of a human father, but the heavenly, imperishable seed of the word of God, which seed gives birth to imperishable life (1:4).

5. Everything in this fallen world will perish (in its fallen state), but the word of the Lord has no expiration date; it will remain valid and true throughout eternity. And that is the word that was preached to them in the gospel of Christ, the word that gave them new life.

F. Remove divisive sins and grow up through ingesting the word (2:1-3)

Therefore, put away all malice and all deceit and [forms of] hypocrisy and envy and all [acts of] slander. ²As newborn babies, crave the pure rational milk in order that by it you may grow up into salvation, ³since you have tasted that the Lord [is] good.

1. Given the need for Christians to love one another fervently in light of their common birth into new life through the word of God (Therefore), Peter commands them to put away all malice and all deceit and [forms of] hypocrisy and envy and all [acts of] slander. There is no place for any of this in relationships within the body of Christ. As

Schreiner remarks (p. 98), "The sins listed tear at the social fabric of the church, ripping away the threads of love that keep them together."

a. Malice or ill-will is the opposite of love in that it desires harm rather than blessing.

b. Deceit (or guile) and hypocrisy, being a phony, undermine trust and thus make it very difficult for love to flourish. When one suspects that someone is "running a game" on them, it not only stifles compassion and reduces the desire to help the person but also clouds the question of how true love should express itself in his case.

c. Envy is a resentment over and a desire to have something that belongs to another.

d. Slander is verbally running someone down, saying things intended to lower them in another's eyes.

2. As newborn babies crave milk from their mothers, they are to crave the pure, the uncontaminated, rational milk that is the word of God so that by it they may mature as Christians. Schreiner states (p. 100):

The word *logikos* is translated by the NIV and understood by many to mean "spiritual." Usually, however, in Greek literature the term refers to that which is rational or reasonable. It is not equated with the term "spiritual," even though it overlaps with it. . . . Peter probably opted for the term to clarify that the milk he had in view was the word of God. The "word" (*logos*), after all, was the means by which God begot believers. God's "word" (*rhēma*) abides forever, and that very word is identified as the gospel preached to the Petrine believers (1:25). Hence, Peter used *logikos* to define milk here, so that the readers will understand that the milk by which they grow is nothing other than the word of God. The means by which God sanctifies believers is through the mind, through the continued proclamation of the word. Spiritual growth is not primarily mystical but rational in the sense that it is informed and sustained by God's word.

3. This growing up or maturing as Christians is "into salvation" in that the growth process begun with the new birth culminates in eschatological salvation. You see this same concept in 2 Pet. 1:5-11. Growing in the ethical manifestations of faith assures that we will never stumble from the path we are on, a path that leads to glory. There is danger in stagnating in our faith. If we are not growing, we become more vulnerable to the enemy.

4. This drive for longing to grow spiritually flows from their having experienced through their new birth in Christ the Lord's amazing goodness and kindness.

G. You have become God's holy people in Christ (2:4-10)

⁴As you come to him, a living stone, rejected by men but chosen [and] precious in God's sight, ⁵you also as living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands in Scripture, "Behold I am laying a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame." ⁷The honor therefore is for you who believe, but to unbelievers: "[the] stone which the builders rejected, this one has become the head of [the] corner" ⁸and "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble by being disobedient to the word, to which they were also appointed. ⁹But you [are] a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for [God's] possession in order that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰You once [were] not a people but now [are] a people of God; you had not received mercy but now have received mercy.

1. Jesus is here called a "living stone." He is a living person, having been raised from the dead, who in the spiritual, new temple that is the church (see 1 Cor. 3:16) functions analogously to a cornerstone (v. 6) in a physical building (see Eph. 2:19-22). In ancient times, the cornerstone was not something put into place at the time the completed building was dedicated. It was the first stone laid, and it set the line or standard by which the walls were constructed (see Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002], 406-407).

2. As they convert to Christ, they are incorporated into the new temple being built by God. Davids comments (p. 86, n. 21): "That temple imagery is intended is clear from the usual use of the building image in the NT (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6, 10:21-22), from the 'house' language in 1 Pet. 4:17 that uses the Septuagint's language for the temple, and from the easy shift to priesthood and sacrifice in context."

3. Their incorporation into the new temple through faith in Christ is with the purpose of their being a holy priesthood that offers to God spiritual sacrifices rather than the physical sacrifices of the Jewish priesthood under the old covenant.

a. These spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. No offering is acceptable to God if it is made by one who has not been set apart as God's own through participation in Christ's atoning work. It is in conversion to Christ, coming to him, that one becomes holy and thus acceptable to present sacrifices to the Almighty.

b. The nature of the spiritual sacrifices Peter has in mind is indicated in v. 9 where he says that the purpose of their being a royal priesthood is to pro-

claim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. As Michaels states (p. 110), quoting D. L. Balch in part (English versification in brackets):

"in contexts where ἐξαγγέλλω refers to 'proclaiming' the praises, deeds, righteousness, or works of God, the proclaiming always is to God in worship" (cf. Pss 9:15 [14]; 55:9 [56:8]; 70 [71]:15; 72 [73]:28; 78 [79]:13; 106 [107]:22; 118 [119]:13, 26; Sir 18:4; also Philo, *De Plant.* 128).

. . . Whatever else they may imply, the "spiritual sacrifices" are first of all the praise of God by his people.

c. This is similar to Heb. 13:15, which states, "Through him, then, let us always offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips praising his name." William Lane remarks in *Hebrews 9-13*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1999), 524 (see also p. 551) that here "[t]he writer [of Hebrews] draws upon a tradition of a song of praise which the community offers to God."

d. Edmund Clowney comments in *The Message of 1 Peter*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 95-96:

Peter says that we have been brought from *darkness to light* and made a *priesthood* so that we may show forth God's *praises*. This spiritual worship has no earthly altar or ark; it has transcended the elaborate ceremonials of Old Testament worship. It is vain to imitate in pageantry the ceremonies that ended when the veil of the temple was torn in two. Yet worship remains the central calling, not only of the Christian, but of the Christian church. . . . It finds its burning focus in lifting the name of God in adoration. This function of the priesthood cannot be delegated. God's praises must rise from the lips of all his people, assembled before his face and joining with the festival assembly of the saints and angels. . . .

Nothing can be put above worship. We adore God not to gain his favor, but because adoration is our response to his grace. We are, to be sure, uniquely blessed through worship, and as God's worshippers we seek his blessing. But the core of our worship is not receiving but giving. Peter reminds us that the inestimable privilege of entering the presence of the Lord contains a yet greater privilege: to lift his name in praise. If the singing and speaking forth of the praises of God are viewed as 'preliminaries' to the sermon, the meaning of worship has been lost.

e. We have worried so much about reducing Christianity to nothing more than our gatherings for worship that I fear we have unintentionally diminished the significance of those gatherings.

(1) Intimate communion with God is available for saints at all times and in all places, but it seems that an even more intense experience of God's presence is available when we gather as a group to worship.

(a) Recall that in Mat. 18:20 Jesus said, "where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

(b) Recall that in 1 Cor. 5:4 Paul refers to the power of the Lord being present when they were assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus.

(c) Recall that in 1 Cor. 11:10 Paul makes a passing reference to angels as present in (or at least watching over) their worship assembly.

(2) I think we will be blessed richly if we can get a sense of God's distinct presence in our corporate worship. Larry Hurtado writes in *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 50-51:

The author of Hebrews speaks of participation in the community of Christian believers in awesome terms:

You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Heb. 12:23-24).

Given that Christians were taught to think of themselves collectively in such terms, it is understandable that their cultic gatherings were seen as filled with meaning and significance as well. They did not have temple structures or the elaborate rituals familiar in the larger religious environment, but (perhaps, indeed, therefore) the gathered group was itself a living shrine and their praise and worship spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God. They did not have a priestly order; instead, they saw themselves collectively as a priesthood, all of them thus specially sacred and their gathering a holy occasion.

They experienced their assemblies as not merely human events but as having a transcendent dimension. They sensed God as directly and really present in their meetings through his Spirit. Indeed, even a gathering of two or three believers is graced with the presence of Christ (Matt. 18:20), giving it efficacy in prayer and other actions. In 1 Corinthians 11:10, the curious passing reference to the angels present in the worship assembly shows how familiar the idea was. Paul's Corinthian readers apparently needed no further explanation (though we could wish for one!). As the 'holy ones' (saints) of God, believers saw their worship gatherings as attended by heavenly 'holy ones', angels, whose presence signified the

heavenly significance of their humble house-church assemblies. It is this sense that Christian collective worship participates in the heavenly cultus that finds later expression in the traditional words of the liturgy:

'Wherefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we do laud and magnify your glorious name.' Scholars have suggested similarities with the Qumran sect, who seem to have thought of their worship as likewise a participation in heavenly angelic cultus, and thus as blessed with the presence of angels. The point is that in their sense of their worship gatherings as an extension of and participation in the idealized worship of the heavenly hosts, and in their view of their gatherings as graced with God's holy angels, they express a vivid transcendent significance pertaining to these occasions.

(3) We need to shed the notion that by giving the worship assembly any kind of special significance we detract from the importance of daily faithful living and thus encourage a kind of ritualistic devotion. That is a false dichotomy; it is not an either-or situation. We can catch the grandeur of our gatherings without falling prey to the idea that God cares *only* about our gatherings. Indeed, holy living is a predicate to acceptable worship in our assemblies.

4. Peter says in v. 6, by reference to Isa. 28:16, that the one who believes in Jesus, the chosen and precious cornerstone, will never be put to shame. The point is that the decision to trust in the Lord will be vindicated, will be shown to have been wise rather than foolish, however things may appear at any given moment.

5. He then says, by reference to Ps. 118:22 and Isa. 8:14, that believers will be honored, but unbelievers, those who reject and consequently stumble over God's chosen and precious cornerstone, will by implication be put to shame. They stumble into disaster by being disobedient to the word, by refusing to accept the gospel (see 3:1), which consequence of disobedience to the word was set or appointed beforehand. As John Elliott states in *1 Peter*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 434:

That which is "set" or established by God is the stumbling (*to proskomma*) resulting from not heeding the word, rather than the disobedience itself (Bigg 1902, 126; Beare 1970, 123; cf. the same sense of *keitai* in Luke 2:34, "this child is set [*keitai*] for the fall and rising of many in Israel"). Or to express it differently, it is the *result* of disobedience that is foreordained, not the decision itself (cf. also Spörri 1925, 163-65). That the author presumes free will in accepting or rejecting Jesus as the Christ is evident from 2:12, where he envisions that the honorable behavior of the believers might turn their accusers from slander to the glorifying of God. Similarly, in 3:1, it is anticipated that the holy behavior of wives might win their unbelieving husbands for the Christian faith.

6. These Gentiles previously were not part of the people of God. In Paul's words from Eph. 2:12, they formerly were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel,

were strangers to the covenants of promise, had no hope, and were without God in the world. But now in Christ they have received mercy and have been grafted into the Israel of faith (Rom. 11:13-20).

III. Live as strangers and sojourners in the world (2:11 – 4:11)

A. Live differently from, yet attractively to, the hostile world (2:11-12)

¹¹Beloved, I urge [you] as strangers and sojourners to abstain from fleshly desires which war against the soul. ¹²Keep your conduct among the Gentiles good in order that, in which case they malign you as evildoers, by observing [your] good works they may glorify God on [the] day of visitation.

1. Peter addresses them as "Beloved," probably referring to God's love for them as well as his own.

2. He urges them as "strangers and sojourners" to abstain from fleshly desires that war against the soul.

a. They are like foreigners in their own land because of their allegiance to Christ. As resident aliens generally were looked down on and discriminated against by native populations, so Christians had the same experience in their homelands.

b. Christians, those who have the Spirit, are not exempt from base desires, from desires for things that are contrary to the Spirit (see Gal. 5:16-25). Indeed, those desires are so strong that they are described as "warring" against the soul. They are portrayed as an enemy that is attempting to conquer believers. As Schreiner remarks (p. 121), "Such desires must be resisted and conquered, and the image used implies that this is no easy matter. The Christian life is certainly not depicted as passive in which believers simply 'let go and let God.'"

c. With J. N. D. Kelly, J. Ramsey Michaels, Peter Davids, Paul Achtemeier, Thomas Schreiner, and Karen Jobes, and against Wayne Grudem, I understand "the soul" against which the fleshly desires war as the whole person rather than the immaterial part of one's being. In Schreiner's words (p. 121), "The whole person is in view, showing that sinful desires, if they are allowed to triumph, ultimately destroy human beings." If you believe "the soul" is here limited to the immaterial part of a human being, then fleshly desires war against that part of a person, presumably by weakening its resolve.

d. I Howard Marshall comments in *I Peter*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 80-81:

Normally, the alien is someone who is visiting a country to which he does not in any sense belong. The readers, however, used to belong to the "country" in which they are now aliens. If we want to stretch the metaphor to make it fit, we could think in terms of a person who visits a country and there falls in love with and marries one of the local people. The spouse now adopts the nationality and way of life of the alien and ceases to "belong" to the country where he or she still resides. Clearly a break of this kind, involving a "conversion" that makes people no longer citizens of their own country but resident aliens within it, is all the more difficult to carry through. The temptation to go back to the old way of life must be immensely strong.

3. Peter tells them in v. 12 to live such good lives among the Gentiles, meaning the pagans, the unbelievers, that though they falsely accuse them of doing evil they will, by observing their good works, glorify God on the day of visitation.

a. The thought seems to be that by living good lives in the presence of unbelievers they may lead to the conversion of former accusers so that as converts they will be part of the chorus glorifying God when he visits in the return of Christ to finalize history.

b. Jobes states (p. 172): "The day of visitation should probably be understood as a reference to the future final judgment, by which time Peter hopes that unbelievers who have observed the good works of the Christians they have slandered will have come to faith in Christ." She elsewhere puts the point like this (p. 173): "A primary purpose of the self-controlled life is its evangelistic value for attesting to the truth of the Christian gospel. The winsome way of life of Peter's readers even in the midst of a difficult social situation is hoped to be the witness that would bring unbelievers into the Christian community so that they too might glorify God on the coming day of judgment."

c. The function of godly living here parallels the call on wives in 3:1-2 to live in such a way that their unbelieving husbands may be won over by seeing their pure and reverent conduct.

d. When we start looking for reasons why the church is not growing, why people seem less attracted to Christianity, we should start here. As Ronald Sider points out in his book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience* (excerpted in *Books & Culture*, January/February 2005), polls show that Protestants who claim to take the Bible and their faith seriously ("evangelicals") divorce their spouses just as often as their secular neighbors, beat their wives as often as their neighbors, and are almost as materialistic and even more racist than their pagan friends. Sider writes: "Scandalous behavior is rapidly destroying American Christianity. By their daily activity, most 'Christians' regularly commit treason. With their mouths they claim that Jesus is Lord, but with their actions they demonstrate allegiance to money, sex, and self-fulfillment."

B. This includes submitting to authorities (2:13 – 3:7)

1. All submit to governing authority (2:13-17)

¹³Submit to every human creature on account of the Lord, whether to a king as being supreme ¹⁴or to governors as those sent by him for punishment of those who do evil and praise of those who do good, ¹⁵for this is the will of God: by doing good [you are] to silence the ignorance of foolish men. ¹⁶[Do so] as free people, yet not as those viewing freedom as a cloak for evil but as God's slaves. ¹⁷Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

a. The good conduct they are to exhibit among the pagans includes submitting to the emperor and the various governmental authorities he appoints. The Christian's participation in the inaugurated kingdom of God does not free him from obligations to secular authorities.

b. As Paul spells out more fully in Rom. 13:1-5, Christians must submit to the governmental authorities because they have been established by God. Governmental authority was established by God within human society to be a blessing through preventing anarchy and social chaos. As with the institution of marriage, government has a positive role to play *even after* the inauguration of the new age.

c. Governmental authority punishes those who do evil in the sense of rebel against it and commends those who do good in the sense of contribute to the order it seeks to maintain.

d. These authorities are referred to as "human creatures" probably to remind his readers that however exalted and powerful the authorities may be in the eyes of the society, they are merely creatures, beings who were made by God and who exist under his lordship.

e. The Christian's submission to the governmental authorities does not depend on their goodness. It depends only on the fact they occupy the position of authority within that society. Nero was the Emperor (A.D. 54-68) when Paul wrote Romans and Peter wrote 1 Peter, and he certainly was an evil man, though the full extent of his wickedness was only later to be displayed.

f. God sometimes brings or allows evil people to come to power for various reasons. As Paul mentions in Rom. 9:17, God raised up the wicked Pharaoh that he might be glorified through displaying his power against him. And Jesus told Pilate in Jn. 19:11 that he would have no authority over him if it were not given to him from above. See also, Dan. 4:17, 25, 32.

g. But God holds these evil rulers accountable for their wickedness. Daniel 4 tells us that God caused the great king Nebuchadnezzar to lose his mind so that he wound up living like a wild animal. It was not until he repented that his rule was restored to him. And though God used the Assyrians to punish Israel and the Babylonians to punish Judah, he poured out his wrath on the wickedness of those nations (e.g., Isaiah 10; Habakkuk). Their ultimate punishment, of course, will be in the judgment.

h. Peter says their obedience to governmental authority is to be done on account of the Lord, meaning they are to obey those authorities ultimately because of their reverence for and submission to Jesus. Christians cannot obey governmental authorities when to do so would mean disobeying God. As Peter and the other apostles put it to the Sanhedrin in Acts 5:29, "We must obey God rather than men!" Otherwise, we would be placing government over God, which is idolatry. There are notable examples in Scripture of this kind of civil disobedience.

(1) When Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill the newborn boys, they refused to obey (Ex. 1:17).

(2) When Nebuchadnezzar ordered all his subjects to fall down and worship his golden image, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to obey (Daniel 3).

(3) When King Darius decreed that for thirty days no one should pray to any god or man, except himself, Daniel refused to obey (Daniel 6).

(4) When the Sanhedrin banned preaching in the name of Jesus, the apostles refused to obey (Acts 4:18 ff.).

i. It is God's will that in doing good, in being good and virtuous citizens, they will silence the ignorant talk of foolish men who falsely accuse them of being a threat to the social welfare.

j. They are to submit to the authorities as free people, as people who ultimately are not answerable to the state but people who do not view that freedom as a cover for rebellion but who realize that God who is their master calls them to submit.

k. The four commands of v. 17¹ set forth obligations to the people and ruler in the worldly sphere and to the people and ruler in the heavenly sphere that they would be tempted to ignore in the context of their persecution.

(1) Peter says Christians are to treat all human beings as special or important, treat them with dignity and respect. I suspect this was to counteract the temptation spawned by local persecution to treat those outside the church with contempt.

¹ Though the first imperative is aorist and the other three are present, I treat them the same. See, e.g., Davids (p. 103, n. 14).

(2) He reminds them that they are to love the brotherhood, something that is tempting to forget when identification with the church is drawing ire from the larger society.

(3) He says they are to fear God, which is a reminder not to yield to pressure to deny or be unfaithful to him, including being unfaithful to him in refusing to submit to the governing authorities.

(4) He tells them that they must honor the emperor, which reinforces the point of vv. 13-14. The more alienated one feels from the society by virtue of local persecutions, the less one is inclined to honor the political ruler of that society.

2. Slaves submit to earthly masters (2:18-25)

¹⁸Slaves, submit in all fear [of God] to [your] masters, not only to the good and gentle ones but also to the harsh ones. ¹⁹For this [is] commendable: if someone bears the pains of suffering unjustly because of an awareness of God. ²⁰But what credit [is there] if, when sinning and being beaten, you endure? But if when doing good and suffering you endure, this is commendable before God. ²¹For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered on your behalf, leaving you an example in order that you should follow in his steps. ²²"He did not commit a sin nor was deceit found in his mouth"; ²³when being insulted, he did not return insults; when suffering, he did not threaten but kept entrusting himself to the one who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, in order that, having died to the sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wound you were healed. ²⁵For you were going astray like sheep, but you have now turned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Excursus on First-Century Slavery

Slavery was a basic social institution in the ancient world. S. Scott Bartchy writes in "Slave, Slavery" in Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 1098: "As many as one-third of the population of the empire were enslaved, and an additional large percentage had been slaves earlier in their lives."

The Bible does not endorse or assume the goodness of slavery; it simply tolerates it. It takes slavery as a fact of life and regulates people's involvement in it. Unlike marriage and parent-child relationships, Scripture nowhere suggests that slavery was ordained or instituted by God; it was a product of sinful humanity. This is evident from the fact that in 1 Cor. 7:21 Paul urges, "Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you --

although if you can gain your freedom, do so." He would never give such advice to spouses or to parents and children. In this regard, it is probably more than coincidental that, from all indications, neither Jesus nor the Apostles owned slaves.

The seeds for slavery's dissolution were sown in texts like Phlmn. 16 ("no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother"), Eph. 6:9 ("Masters . . . do not threaten [your slaves]"), Col. 4:1 ("Masters, provide your slaves what is right and fair"), and 1 Tim. 6:1-2 (masters are "brothers"). (Note also that Jesus' teaching about mercy and forgiving debts [e.g., Mat. 6:12, 18:23-34] implies the inappropriateness of debt-slavery.) As has been said, where these seeds of equality came to full flower, the very institution of slavery would no longer be slavery. That this took so long to happen is a result of Christian dullness to the implications of the gospel.

The fact God did not forbid Christians in the first century from owning slaves but rather tolerated a regulated form of first-century slavery does not mean that was his ideal for mankind. His ideal is brotherhood and equality, but it is possible that the world had gotten so twisted that he was willing to tolerate less than his ideal as a concession to the hardness of men's hearts, similar to what he did, through Moses, in permitting divorce (see Mat. 19:3-9).

Or maybe he tolerated it because mandating the release of slaves in that social context would have caused anarchy and consequent suffering as the gospel exploded across the Roman world. In other words, perhaps the thorn of slavery needed to be removed slowly; perhaps society first needed to be altered under Christianity's influence to be able to handle such a change without overwhelming adverse side effects. James D. G. Dunn states (*The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 699):

[S]lavery was an established fact of life in the ancient world. As many as one-third of the inhabitants of most large urban centres were slaves. The economies of the ancient world could not have functioned without slavery. Consequently, a responsible challenge to the practice of slavery would have required a complete reworking of the economic system and a complete rethinking of social structures, which was scarcely thinkable at the time, except in idealistic or anarchic terms.

In the context of this regulated form of first-century slavery that God tolerated, if release was desired it needed to be worked out on an individual basis consistent with the principle of brotherhood. But as long as the relationship remained, the slave could not take advantage of having a brother for a master, and the master could not mistreat the slave.

That God tolerated a regulated form of first-century slavery does not mean he would tolerate that same form of slavery under different social conditions or tolerate other forms of slavery, such as the slavery that existed in early America. Slavery in the first century was a very different institution from early American slavery. S. Scott Bartchy states in "Slavery (Greco-Roman)" in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:66-70 (paragraphs are not continuous in original):

Central features that distinguish 1st century slavery from that later practiced in the New World are the following: racial factors played no role; education was greatly encouraged (some slaves were better educated than their owners) and enhanced a slave's value; many slaves carried out sensitive and highly responsible social functions; slaves could own property (including other slaves!); their religious and cultural traditions were the same as those of the freeborn; no laws prohibited public assembly of slaves; and (perhaps above all) the majority of urban and domestic slaves could legitimately anticipate being emancipated by the age of 30.

It must also be stressed that, despite the neat legal separation between owners and slaves, in none of the relevant cultures did persons in slavery constitute a social or economic class. Slaves' individual honor, social status, and economic opportunities were entirely dependent on the status of their respective owners, and they developed no recognizable consciousness of being a group or of suffering a common plight. For this reason, any such call as "slaves of the world unite!" would have fallen on completely deaf ears. (From p. 69: "The great slave rebellions, all of which were led primarily by prisoners of war between 140-70 B.C.E., never sought to abrogate slavery. Rather, these rebels sought either escape or to turn the tables by enslaving the owners.")

Furthermore, by no means were those in slavery regularly to be found at the bottom of the social-economic pyramid. Rather, in that place were those free and impoverished persons who had to look for work each day without any certainty of finding it (day laborers), some of whom eventually sold themselves into slavery to gain some job security.

Large numbers of people sold themselves into slavery for various reasons, e.g., to pay debts, to climb socially (Roman citizenship was conventionally bestowed on a slave released by a Roman owner), to obtain special jobs, and above all to enter a life that was more secure and less strenuous than existence as a poor, freeborn person.

Slaves were used for "an enormous variety of functions in enormously different circumstances," some of which when compared to New World slavery seem astonishingly responsible: "doctors, teachers, writers, accountants, agents, bailiffs, overseers, secretaries, and sea-captains."

Since slaves represented a substantial investment by their owners . . . , they could at least expect to receive enough food to keep them alive and working. Manumission could mean the end of that security. Epictetus [a first-century philosopher], himself an ex-slave, took pleasure in pointing out that the slave who thinks only of gaining his freedom may be reduced, when he is manumitted, to "slavery much more severe than before."

For many, self-sale into slavery with anticipation of manumission was regarded as the most direct means to be integrated into Greek and Roman society. For many this was the quickest way to climb socially and financially. As such, in stark contrast to New World slavery, Greco-Roman slavery functioned as a process rather than a permanent condition, as a temporary phase of life by means of which an outsider obtained "a place within a society that has no natural obligations of kinship or guest-friendship towards him."

Andrew Lincoln writes in *Ephesians*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 418:

Many slaves in the Greco-Roman world enjoyed more favorable living conditions than many free laborers. Contrary to the supposition that everyone was trying to avoid slavery at all costs, it is clear that some people actually sold themselves into slavery in order to climb socially, to obtain particular employment open only to slaves, and to enjoy a better standard of living than they had experienced as free persons. Being a slave had the benefit of providing a certain personal and social security.

a. Peter commands the slaves² to submit out of fear of God to their earthly masters, even those that mistreat them. The motivating fear seems clearly to be a fear of God (in the sense previously described) rather than a fear of the master because fear of God was commanded in the preceding verse, elsewhere in the letter fear is to be directed toward God and not toward humans (1:17, 2:17, 3:6, 3:14), and the following verse specifies the motivation as an awareness or consciousness of God.

b. It is commendable before God if one is willing to endure *unjust* treatment at the hands of human authorities such as slave masters, to refrain from rebelling against them, because one is mindful that God has called one to honor their authority. Enduring *justified* punishment for wrongdoing is not commendable because one is only getting what one deserved; there is no injustice to "swallow" out of allegiance to God.

c. They were called to endure injustice at the hands of human authorities without being sullen or rebellious because Christ suffered this way and left them an example in doing so. He was sinless, perfect (drawing on Isa. 53:9), and yet was horrifically abused by human authorities. Rather than lashing out at his tormentors with insults or threats, he submitted to them and kept trusting in God the Father, the one who judges justly and who thus can be counted on to right all wrongs.

² "Although οἰκέται can specify slaves attached to a household rather than, for example, those who worked the field, it can also be used generically for slaves and is probably to be understood in that sense here." Achtemeier, 194.

d. Having cited the Lord as an example of submission to unjust treatment, Peter, alluding to other verses in Isaiah 53, speaks of the Lord's crucifixion that brought us healing from sin so that we might live for righteousness. This radical change in orientation is summarized in v. 25: they were wandering like lost sheep but have now, in their conversion, turned to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls, the one who will bless and protect them and lead them to eternal glory.

e. Remember that this call to submit is in the larger context of helping to draw pagans into the kingdom of God. Norman Hillyer states in *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 83:

Masters fall into two main types. Some are good and considerate in their dealings with servants, who therefore do not find it difficult to submit. For servants having to deal day after day with masters who are harsh and mean, and who mistreat those who serve them, however, it is another story. Yet in both situations Peter tells his readers that it is their Christian duty to submit cheerfully. Their constancy in bearing whatever they have to suffer in the course of duty is a powerful sign to those over them that they possess inner resources beyond the natural. This positive attitude may indeed cause annoyance to an uncomprehending pagan master who expects a very different response. That in itself witnesses to the special grace believers are given and could be the means of prompting a desire in the master to share the believers' secret.

3. Wives submit to husbands (3:1-6)

Likewise, [the] wives be subject to your own husbands, in order that even if some disobey the word they will be won over without a word through the conduct of the wives ²by seeing your pure and reverent conduct. ³Do not let your adorning be outward – of hair-braiding and wearing gold or of putting on garments – ⁴but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable [quality] of a gentle and tranquil spirit, which is of great value in the sight of God. ⁵For this way [is] also [how] the holy women who in the past hoped in God adorned themselves, by being subject to their own husbands, ⁶as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You became her children, so do good and do not fear any intimidation.

General Remarks on the Submission of Wives to Husbands

Men and women are created equally in the image of God and together comprise mankind (Gen. 1:26-27, 5:1-2). In 1 Cor. 11:11-12 Paul points out that men and women are dependent on each other. In 1 Cor. 12:12-27, he makes clear that all who are in Christ are part of Christ's body and are equally precious; there are no second-class citizens in the

kingdom. Peter describes husbands and wives as "co-heirs of the gracious gift of life" (1 Pet. 3:7). In terms of one's standing before God, Paul says in Gal. 3:28 that there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus.

In the marriage partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, a man and a woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction. He is head of the wife as Christ also [is] head of the church (Eph. 5:23). God in his sovereignty has bestowed on the husband the responsibility of headship or leadership.

In doing so, and in calling the wife to accept her husband's leadership, God is not saying that the wife is inferior to, less worthy, or less capable than her husband. Husbands and wives simply have different roles or functions.

We ask, "*Why* did God place the leadership responsibility exclusively on the husband (and the men in the spiritual family) rather than letting the wife lead where she is the more (or equally) capable partner?" In other words, why isn't it merit based rather than sex based? Ultimately the answer is that God is sovereign (Ps. 103:19; 1 Tim. 6:15) and that he chose to do it that way.

One could just as well ask why God gave the tribe of Levi the exclusive responsibility to care for the Tabernacle, or why he gave the family of Aaron the exclusive responsibility of serving as priests. Why limit these roles to people who happen to be born in a certain lineage rather than allowing everyone equal access to the roles? Why isn't it merit based rather than tribe based?

And that is precisely what led to Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16. Korah, a Levite, and 250 community leaders opposed Moses and Aaron on the basis that they should have equal access to God. All Israel was holy, so no one family line should be exalted to the priestly function. It was a challenge to God's right to choose select groups for specific roles. And, as you know, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed by the earth, and the 250 community leaders were incinerated by God. The spirit of Korah is alive and well in those who deny the leadership role of men in the family and the church. As is usually the case, they have masked their rebellion with claims of insight and enlightenment, but it is still rebellion.

Understand that a submissive or nonleading role does not mean an inferior status. Jesus is God; he is one in nature, being, and essence with God the Father. So the Son is not inferior to or less worthy than the Father, yet he is functionally subordinate to the Father; he willingly submits to the Father's authority. This is made explicit in 1 Cor. 11:3, 15:27-28 and is demonstrated by a number of facts:

1. He was sent by the Father (Mat. 10:40, 15:24, 21:3 7; Mk. 9: 37, 12:6; Lk. 4: 43, 9:48, 10:16, 20:13; Jn. 3:34, 4:34, 5:23, 5:30, 5:36-38, 6:29, 6:38-39, 6:44, 6:57, 7:16, 7:28-29, 7:33, 8:16, 8:18, 8:26, 8:29, 8:42, 9:41, 10:36, 11:42, 12:44-45, 12:49, 13:20,

14:24, 15:21, 16:5, 17:3, 17:8, 17:18, 17:21, 17:23, 17:25, 20:21; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 3:2; 1 Jn. 4:9-10, 4:14).

2. He spoke the words of the Father (Jn. 7:16, 8:26-28, 8:38-40, 12:49-50, 14:24, 15:15).
3. He came to do the Father's will (Jn. 4:34, 5:19, 6:38, 14:30; Heb. 10:5-9).
4. He revealed the Father (Jn. 1:18, 12:45, 14:7-9, 17:6, 17: 26; Heb. 1:1-4).
5. He seeks to please, glorify, and honor the Father (Jn. 5:30, 8:29, 14:13, 17:1-5).
6. He judges only as he hears from the Father (Jn. 5:30).

If Jesus, being in very nature God, can submit to the Father's authority, then certainly a wife can submit to her husband's leadership without denying her equal dignity or value. She is acting like Christ! That parallel is specifically drawn in 1 Cor. 11:3.

Submission to Christ is expressed in unquestioning obedience because he is God. He is the holy and infallible Creator and Savior. There can be no justification for questioning his will or attempting to enlighten him. Husbands, on the other hand, are limited, sinful human beings. Unlike the Lord, they can make very foolish and even sinful choices.

Submission to husbands is expressed in supporting their nonsinful decisions, not because of husbands' inherent qualities (who they are) but because God has given the responsibility of leadership in the family to the husband. When the husband has finally chosen a course of action, the wife willingly supports and follows that choice. She does not resent it and does not seek to sabotage or undermine it.

Of course, if a husband chooses a sinful course of action, the wife cannot support it. The husband's authority is from the Lord, and he has no authority to push one of Christ's disciples into sin. To follow one's husband into sin is not a submission that is "fitting in the Lord," to use the words of Col. 3:18.

Unlike the situation in submitting to Christ, the wife must help her husband in the discharge of his leadership responsibility. This often requires her to inform, question, advise, and correct her husband. A wife's submission to her husband does not mean she cowers silently and occasionally utters "Yes, oh great one." She is a nonleading partner and is called to use her abilities and gifts to bless her husband and the family.

In a healthy marriage, husbands and wives can almost always come to a consensus on what course of action should be taken, but occasionally they cannot. In those situations where a mutual decision cannot be reached, the wife is called by God to yield to her husband's decision. I think James Hurley captures very well the spirit in

which such decisions should be made (*Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981], 151):

The manner in which such decisions are handled is crucial. The husband may not be high-handed and stubborn, knowing that she will finally have to give way. That is not the model of Christ's headship. Neither may the wife be grudging and resentful. That is not the manner of our response to Christ. In the last analysis, when the two can devote no more time to individual and joint seeking of the grace of God to permit them to come to one mind or to be willing to yield to the other, an exchange along the following lines is in order:

Husband: "Not because I am inherently wiser or more righteous, nor because I am right (although I do believe I am or I would not stand firm), but because it is finally my responsibility before God, we will take the course which I believe is right. If I am being sinfully stubborn, may God forgive me and give me the grace to yield to you."

Wife: "Not because I believe you are wiser in this matter (I don't) or more righteous, nor because I accept that you are right (because I don't or I would not oppose you), but because I am a servant of God who has called me to honour your headship, I willingly yield to your decision. If I am wrong, may God show me. If you are wrong, may he give you grace to acknowledge it and to change."

a. As slaves submit to earthly masters knowing that God calls them to do so (in fear of God), the wives are to be subject to their own husbands knowing that God calls them to do so (Likewise).

b. The purpose of that submission that Peter highlights in this context is its potential for winning to the faith unbelieving husbands. They can be won to the Lord, meaning they can be persuaded to accept the truth of gospel they already have heard (implicit in their having disobeyed it), without (further) verbal persuasion from their wives by seeing the truth of Christ reflected in their pure and reverent conduct, which includes their submission.

c. Peter warns them not to let their adorning be outward, through things like hairstyles, gold, and clothes, but to let their adorning be through the kind of person they are on the inside, specifically through having a gentle and tranquil spirit, a submissive spirit, which is of great value in God's sight.

(1) I do not think this is a flat ban on items of outward adornment; I think it is a ban on allowing such externals to substitute for inner beauty. A godly woman can "dress up," within limits of modesty, meaning not being so flashy or revealing as to reflect an inappropriate desire for attention, and still have her adorning be

the beauty of her inner person. Though she is dressed up, her spirit is her true attractiveness.

(2) In Ezek. 16:10-13 God is speaking metaphorically of his role as Jerusalem's husband. He says that he clothed her in embroidered cloth, fine linen, and silk; that he adorned her with ornaments and put bracelets on her wrist and a chain on her neck; and that he put a ring in her nose, earrings in her ears, and a crown on her head. Though it is a metaphor, it suggests to me that outward adornment is not inherently sinful. The problem comes when that external beauty is all there is such that his wife (Jerusalem) trusts in it and goes after other men (representing foreign gods and illicit political relationships).

(3) In Song of Songs/Solomon 1:8-11 the woman's external ornamentation is spoken of positively, which again seems inconsistent with any notion of such things being inherently sinful.

(4) Marshall states (p. 101):

It is true that Peter's statement might well be translated: "Your beauty should *not so much* come from outward adornment . . . *but rather* it should be that of your inner self." Though desire to be beautiful and attractive is manifestly a commendable one, outward beauty, however much desirable, is secondary to beauty of character. The desire for outward beauty can easily lead to the sins of pride and vanity as well as of a wrong use of money.

d. Peter says that it is by possessing a gentle and tranquil spirit expressed in submission to their husbands that godly women in biblical history adorned themselves, "exhibit A" being Abraham's wife Sarah.

(1) Her submission to Abraham's leadership is represented in Gen. 18:12 where she refers to him as her "lord."

(2) Dan McCartney states in his doctoral dissertation titled "The Use of the Old Testament in the First Epistle of Peter" (quoted in Schreiner, 156, n. 157): "Although Gen. 18:12 does not give in itself a direct example of Sarah's obedience, the fact that even in this negative instance in Sarah's life she referred to Abraham as 'my lord' would have indicated to Peter, and it did so to his contemporaries, that submission was her *customary attitude* toward Abraham."

e. He tells the wives he is addressing that they became Sarah's children, meaning that in their conversion to Christ they became her descendants in that they shared her faith in God. Through faith they were grafted into *true* Israel, the ethnic Israel of faith, the offspring of Abraham and Sarah who believed God's revelation in Christ, which fusion resulted in *new* Israel (Rom. 4:16, 9:6-8, 11:13-20; Gal. 3:7-9, 3:29, 6:16; Eph. 2:11-22), though Peter does not go into all of that.

f. As those in Sarah's lineage of faith, they are to do good, do right, which includes submitting to their husbands, and they are not to fear any intimidation they may receive as a result of their faith. They are to fear God, not man.

4. Comment on husbands' duty to wives (3:7)

⁷The husbands, in turn, live with [your wives] according to knowledge, paying honor to the female as to a weaker vessel, as also to co-heirs of [the] grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

a. Having addressed the fact wives are to submit to their husbands, Peter mentions the corresponding duty of husbands to their wives. Whereas wives are to submit to their husbands, husbands are called to live with their wives in accordance with their knowledge of God's will, which is that they pay honor to their wives.

b. A husband pays honor to his wife, says she is important and significant, in how he talks to her and about her and in the kind of priority he gives to her needs and to their relationship. Treating her with disrespect and running her down in talking with others is the opposite of showing her honor.

c. Peter says the husband pays honor to his wife as to a weaker vessel. The female is a "weaker vessel" physically and positionally, but not mentally, morally, or spiritually. She is in a "weaker" position than her husband in the sense God has assigned her a nonleading role in the marriage and because, at that time especially, the husband had greater social power. This physical and positional weakness makes the wife more vulnerable to mistreatment and therefore, in God's eyes, especially worthy of protection. God is the champion of the vulnerable, and he will not tolerate those who exploit them. See, e.g., Jas. 2:1-4.

d. The wife is also to be honored as a co-heir of salvation. In terms of her relationship with God, the Christian wife is in no way "weaker." That was Paul's point in Gal. 3: 26-29:

²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷ for as many of you as were baptized into Christ, clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.

e. And notice that this honoring of wives is so important, that failing to do so will disturb the husband's relationship with God and thus hinder his prayers. The Christian who insists on mistreating his wife cannot expect to come to God

as though all was well. Rather, he can expect to be disciplined through God's refusal to answer his prayers.

C. This includes living with one another in love and harmony and not repaying mistreatment by the world (3:8-12)

⁸Finally, all [of you be] like-minded, sympathetic, loving as brothers, compassionate, and humble, ⁹not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but on the contrary blessing, for to this you were called in order that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰For, "Whoever wants to love life and to see good days let him stop the tongue from evil, and [his] lips are not to speak deceit. ¹¹And let him turn from evil and let him do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹²For [the] eyes of [the] Lord [are] on [the] righteous, and his ears [are open] to their prayer, but [the] face of [the] Lord [is] against those who do evil."

1. Living differently from, yet attractively to, the hostile world (2:11-12) involves not only submitting to proper authorities (2:13-3:7) but also living with one another in love and harmony and not repaying mistreatment by the world.

2. In their relationships with one another, they are to be like-minded in that, as disciples, they all are to share the perspective of Christ. They also are to be sympathetic toward one another, to love one another, to be compassionate toward one another, and to be humble toward one another.

3. In their relationships with the world (and with one another if need be), they are not to respond to mistreatment in kind. Instead of returning evil for evil or insult for insult, they are to respond by blessing the perpetrators, by asking God to show his favor and grace upon them.

a. It seems the focus shifts here to unbelievers, as similar teaching elsewhere refers to the relations of Christians to those who attack them (Marshall, 108). Moreover, how Christians respond to unbelievers who mistreat them is an important theme of 1 Peter (Schreiner, 164). As Peter noted in 2:23, when the Lord was insulted by opponents he did not return insults.

b. Paul commands the same thing in Rom. 12:17 ("Do not repay anyone evil for evil"), 1 Thess. 5:15 ("Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong"), and 1 Cor. 4:12 ("When we are cursed, we bless"). This teaching is, of course, rooted in Jesus' teaching. For example, Jesus says in Lk. 6:27-28: "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." Jobes says (p. 217-218) regarding this command of the Lord:

It is imperative here to understand what "loving" one's enemies means in contrast to modern ideas of "love." Such modern ideas led one student to ask in exasperation, "How can Jesus expect me to love my enemies when I don't even like them?" "Loving" in modern culture refers primarily to an emotional attachment of a greater intensity than merely "liking." But Peter clearly interprets Jesus' command to love to refer not to emotions but to acting rightly toward one's adversaries, regardless of whatever emotions may or may not be involved (cf. Jesus' teaching on loving one's neighbor as presented in the parable of the good Samaritan in Lk. 10:25-37). Acting rightly toward one's adversaries is defined in 1 Pet. 3:9 as not responding in kind to their insults, slander, and evil intents. It means having the inner fortitude to break the cycle of evil that spirals ever downward.

4. Peter says, in essence, in v. 9b that they were called by God to a faith that is inextricably tied to a way of life, a way of life that includes loving their enemies and not retaliating against them, and they were called to that faith/life in order that they may inherit the blessing of eschatological salvation. The verb "inherit" recalls the eternal "inheritance" in 1:4, which is the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, meaning the time of final judgment at Christ's return. Michaels rightly states (p. 179):

The context of 1:4 reinterpreted the "inheritance," understood in the OT as the promised land, to refer to an eternal and heavenly salvation to be revealed at the coming of Christ. The same reinterpretation is assumed both here and in v. 7. The "grace of life" is an eternal future life, and εὐλογία, or "blessing," is God's final pronouncement (i.e., bestowal) of eternal well-being on his people at the last day . . .

5. Peter supports his linking of their way of life to their salvation (note "For") by reference to Ps. 34:12-16 (LXX 33:13-17).

a. Schreiner remarks (p. 166):

In the historical context of the psalm, "life" (zo,,e,,n) and "good days" (he,,meras agathas) refer to life and blessing in this world. But for Peter this language almost certainly referred to the *eschaton*, to end-time salvation. We have already seen in 1:4 that the "inheritance" refers to eschatological salvation. The language of the psalm, therefore, is understood typologically in that the promise of life and good days in the land points toward and anticipates life in the world to come. Similarly, the language in 3:7 also demonstrates that Peter thought of the coming reward since "joint heirs of the grace of life" (RSV) signifies life in the future age.

b. The psalm indicates that the blessings of God are for those who live godly lives, the unstated reason being that genuine faith in God necessarily and inevitably expresses itself in godly living. As I have said *ad nauseam*, biblical faith is not

mere intellectual assent to certain truths; it is the "yes" of the entire person. As Schreiner notes (p. 168), "Peter was hardly suggesting that believers will live perfectly and that such perfection is necessary to obtain an inheritance. But he was insisting that a transformed life is necessary to obtain the inheritance."

D. Encouragement to righteous living in the face of opposition (3:13 – 4:6)

1. Live devoted lives and fear not (3:13-16)

¹³Now who [is] the one that will harm you if you are zealots of the good? ¹⁴Indeed, even if you should suffer because of righteousness, [you are] blessed. So do not fear the fear of them nor be troubled ¹⁵but in your hearts sanctify the Christ [as] Lord, [being] always ready to [give] a defense to anyone who demands an accounting for the hope in you, ¹⁶but [do so] with gentleness and fear, having a clear conscience, in order that when you are spoken against those reviling your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame.

a. Given the blessing in store for those who live faithfully, the blessing Peter spoke of in 3:8-12 (*kai* at the beginning of v. 13 translated "Now," being almost equivalent to "Therefore"), he asks rhetorically who will harm one who is devoted to God's will, devoted to doing what is good in God's eyes. The assumed answer is "No one."

(1) By that Peter does not mean that faithful Christians will not suffer harm in persecution or that they will do so only rarely. He means that the eternal blessing in store for them from God makes any harm they suffer in persecution in this life so relatively insignificant as to not count as harm in any meaningful sense. In Schreiner's words (p. 170), "Peter assured believers that nothing can ultimately harm them if they continue to walk in God's paths, that the pain inflicted on them now is only temporary, and that they will be vindicated by God on the last day."

(2) His thought is similar to that in Rom. 8:31, where Paul asks rhetorically (ESV), "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" The understood answer to that question is "No one," but it is "no one" in a qualified rather than an absolute sense. It means that, given God's determination that the faithful will be with him forever in glory, no one can be opposed to the faithful in any way that *ultimately* matters.

(3) Achtemeier comments (p. 230), "The thrust of the verse is therefore not to deny the presence of social persecution in the lives of Christians, something the author knows as both possibility (e.g., 1:6; 3:14) and reality (4:12-19), but rather to point out that such persecution is not capable of removing them from the divine favor shown to them in Jesus Christ."

b. Peter in v. 14 reinforces his assurance that the faithful cannot be harmed by men in a truly meaningful sense by stating that even if they should suffer in persecution, suffer because of righteousness, what really matters is that they are blessed by God for the faithfulness that generates the persecution!³ As Jesus said in Mat. 5:10 (ESV): "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

c. Given that men cannot really harm faithful Christians and given that suffering because of righteousness, being persecuted for their faith, is a sign of God's blessing, Peter commands them in v. 14b not to fear the fear their opponents bring, meaning not to fear their threats or intimidating behavior, and not to be troubled by them. This understanding of "do not fear their fear" is reflected in RSV ("Have no fear of them"), NAU ("Do not fear their intimidation"), NKJV ("Do not be afraid of their threats"), TNIV ("Do not fear their threats"), ESV ("Have no fear of them"), and NET ("do not be terrified of them").

d. Christians are not to be bullied from faithfulness to God. Rather, as he commands in v. 15, they are in their hearts to sanctify the Christ as Lord, meaning they are to reaffirm in their hearts their commitment to Jesus as Lord.

e. Related to that, he tells them they are always to be ready to [give] a defense to anyone who demands an accounting for the hope in (or among) them. We are to be ready to explain why we live as we do, explain what is motivating our conduct, when the larger society is getting "worked up" because we are out of step with the culture.

(1) Note that this presumes we have solid intellectual grounds for believing the gospel is true, rational grounds that can be shared with others in the public arena (Schreiner, 174-175). We are not left saying simply that we know it is true because of some private, subjective experience in our hearts.

(2) As Schreiner cautions (p. 175), "That does not mean, of course, that every Christian is to be a highly skilled apologist for the faith. It does mean that every believer should grasp the essentials of the faith and should have the ability to explain to others why they think the Christian faith is true."

f. Peter says in v. 16 that in making our defense of the faith we are to do so with gentleness and fear, having a clear conscience. We are to exercise gentleness toward our challengers and respond with fear of the God who commands that gentleness, keeping our consciences clear through our faithfulness to him in this and in all aspects of our lives. Hillyer remarks (p. 109), "Christian lips must be corroborated by Christian lives."

³ Schreiner states (p. 170), "The conjunction 'but' (*alla*) introducing v. 14 does not provide a contrast but a clarification of v. 13. Hence, it could be translated as 'indeed.'" See also, Michaels (p. 185).

g. One purpose for our being ready to give a godly defense of why we live as we do is so that those who demand that defense through their attacking us for living as Christians may be put to shame by having their hostility exposed for the ignorance it is, perhaps turning others and maybe even them to the faith as a result.

2. Reinforcement of the call and elaboration on Christ's work (3:17-22)

¹⁷For [it is] better to suffer [for] doing good, if the will of God wills, than [for] doing evil, ¹⁸because Christ also suffered once for sins, [the] righteous for [the] unrighteous, that he might bring you to God, having been put to death in [the] flesh but made alive by [the] Spirit, ¹⁹by whom also he went [and] preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰when they formerly disobeyed, when the patience of God waited in [the] days of Noah while [the] ark was being built, in which a few (that is, eight souls) were saved through water. ²¹This [water] also, [as] an antitype, [that is] baptism, now saves you – not a removal of dirt from [the] flesh but a pledge of a good conscience toward God – through [the] resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who, having gone into heaven, is at [the] right [hand] of God, with angels and authorities and powers being subject to him.

a. In v. 17 Peter reinforces the call to keep their conduct good, to live with a clear conscience before God. They are to do so because ("For") it is better to suffer for doing good, to suffer persecution for behavior in accord with the Christian faith, which suffering God sometimes permits, than to suffer as punishment for wrongdoing. By living right they ensure that whatever suffering they receive from opponents is persecution, suffering for Christ, rather than justified punishment.

Note on difficulty of vv. 18-22 – Paul Achtemeier says (p. 240) of vv. 18-22, "There is little question that these verses constitute the most difficult passage in the entire letter." John Elliot says (p. 648) the passage "poses a staggering number of difficult questions." Karen Jobes states (p. 236), "This passage in 1 Peter is the one most debated and written about; from the earliest days of the church it has been understood in different ways." Indeed, Martin Luther wrote (quoted in Jobes, 236), "This is a strange text and certainly a more obscure passage than any other passage in the New Testament. I still do not know for sure what the apostle meant." The literature on the text is enormous, all of which is a clue that one must tread here with an extra dose of humility and circumspection.

b. As I understand v. 18a, Peter is saying that it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil because in the former case one is following the path of Christ. Though being absolutely righteous, he also suffered, once for all time, in

accordance with God's purpose that he atone for sins so as to bring the unrighteous (including them) to God. Davids remarks (p. 136), "Jesus died in order that, so to speak, he might reach across the gulf between God and humanity and, taking our hand, lead us across the territory of the enemy into the presence of the Father who called us."

c. The passive participles in v. 18b "having been put to death" and "made alive" seem clearly to refer to Jesus' death and resurrection, but that raises the question of how to understand (and thus how to translate) the dative nouns σαρκὶ (flesh) and πνεύματι (S/spirit) that modify those verbs.

(1) Rather than discuss the various options, let me just say that I agree with Achtemeier (p. 250) that the most natural way to understand the dative noun "Spirit" following the participle "made alive" is in an instrumental sense, which yields "made alive *by* the Spirit." It is so translated in KJV, NKJV, and NIV. As Achtemeier notes, it is "a central affirmation of the NT" that Christ was raised by God (citing Acts 3:15, 4:10; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; Gal. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:10), and there are clues that the Holy Spirit is the means or agent by which God accomplished that great work. That is implied in Rom. 8:11, 1 Cor. 6:14, and 1 Tim. 3:16.⁴

(2) The resistance to this understanding is "because the parallelism of the two phrases implies that both datives are to be construed in the same way" (Achtemeier, 250), and most find it unsatisfying to construe the first as "having been put to death *by* flesh" or "*by* [the] flesh."

(a) Though it would be unusual not to do so, the parallelism of the phrases does not absolutely require that they be construed in the same way (see KJV, NKJV, NIV, and Schreiner, 184). The parallel prepositional phrases in 1 Cor. 6:11 and 1 Tim. 3:16 commonly are translated differently. So Peter could be saying that Jesus was killed *in* the flesh, meaning either in his body (as NIV) or in his state of mortality and raised from the dead *by* the Spirit. This is even more likely if this section was part of a preexisting Christian hymn (see NET note), as poetry is replete with examples of grammatical and lexical license.

(b) The result can be similar if both datives are construed as datives of sphere. In that case, Peter would be saying that Jesus was killed *in* the realm of the flesh, in his state of mortality, and raised from the dead in the realm of Spirit-mediated blessings, referring to his being raised by the Spirit to resurrection life. Grudem states (p. 156), "But made alive in the spirit . . . must mean 'made alive in the spiritual realm, in the realm of the Spirit's activity'. Here it refers specifically to Christ's resurrection, because 'made alive' must be the opposite of 'put to death' in the previous phrase. 'In the spiritual realm, the realm of the Holy Spirit's activity, Christ was raised from the dead.'"

⁴ See the discussion in Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991), 184-198.

(c) It is also just possible that both datives could be construed as instrumentals, as Achtemeier argues. In that case, Peter says Jesus had been put to death "by flesh," meaning he was killed by unbelieving humanity but was raised to life by the Spirit of God. In 1:24 "flesh" refers to physical creatures in their mortality.

d. The Spirit by whom Jesus was raised Jesus to life is the same Spirit by whom Christ went and preached (or the realm of the Holy Spirit's activity is the same realm in which Christ went and preached) in the person of Noah (that being understood, see below) to the people who were disobedient in the days when Noah was building the ark, people who thereafter died in the flood and whose spirits have since been confined to the terrible portion of Hades, the realm of the dead, awaiting the final judgment.⁵

(1) This understanding is at least as old as Augustine and was the dominant understanding for over a thousand years, but today it is held, with some variation, by only a minority of scholars (including Gordon Clark, Paige Patterson, John Feinberg, Wayne Grudem, Edmund Clowney, Millard Erickson, and John Skilton [see Jobes, 239; Schreiner, 184, n. 280; and Grudem, 204, n.1]; see also NET notes).

(2) The notion of Christ preaching through Noah by means of the Spirit is not as strange as it may sound given Peter's statement in 1:10-11 that the Spirit of Christ spoke through the O.T. prophets and his statement in 2 Pet. 2:5 that Noah was a preacher of righteousness.

(3) The word πνεῦμα ("spirit") can refer to an angel or demon, but it also is used in a number of places in reference to the human spirit (e.g., Num. 16:22; Eccles. 12:7; Mat. 27:50; Acts 7:59; 1 Cor. 5:5; Heb. 12:23).

(4) When Peter says that Christ "preached to the spirits in prison," he need not mean that they were spirits in prison *when* Christ preached to them. He could mean that they *now* are spirits in prison, at the time of his letter, but that when Christ preached to them they were human beings, beings of both body and spirit, living on the earth. The NAU inserts "now" in its translation to reflect that understanding. This is similar to how most commentators understand 1 Pet. 4:6: the gospel was preached to those who are *now* dead, at the time of the letter, though they were alive on earth when the gospel was preached to them. NIV, TNIV, and NET insert "now" in 4:6 to reflect that understanding.

(5) That the spirits in prison are the spirits of humans who were living on the earth in the days of Noah is indicated by the specification that the preaching took place at an earlier time, when they formerly disobeyed, that is, when the patience of God waited in [the] days of Noah while [the] ark was being built.

⁵ In the following comments I am heavily indebted to Grudem, 203-239.

(a) Though most translations understand the aorist participle ἀπειθήσασίν as an adjectival participle modifying "spirits," yielding the translation "*who* formerly disobeyed," it is better to understand it adverbially, which when taken in a temporal sense yields "*when* they formerly disobeyed." See Grudem, 233-236 and ESV footnote; NET note states, "the grammatical construction strongly favors an adverbial interpretation describing the time of the preaching."

(b) There were many texts in extra-biblical Jewish literature that interpreted "sons of God" in Gen. 6:2, 4 as referring to sinful angels who married human women, but there were only a few extra-biblical Jewish texts that put this assumed angelic sin at the time of the flood or described it as a cause of the flood. More often this angelic sin is placed two to four generations *before* the flood. And none of the texts that make a connection between angelic sin and the flood mention what Peter mentions: God patiently waiting and disobedience occurring during the building of the ark.

(c) On the other hand, the biblical evidence is clear that there were human beings who disobeyed God, when he waited patiently in the days of Noah during the building of the ark. Genesis 6:5-13 is all about human sin as the reason for the flood. 2 Peter 2:5 identifies Noah as a preacher of righteousness and then describes the world of his day as "a world of the ungodly." In 2 Pet. 3:6-7 the flood is analogized to the coming judgment of the ungodly, referring to humans (see 2 Pet. 3:11).

(d) Outside of Scripture, the *Sibylline Oracles*, dated to the late 1st century B.C. or early 1st century A.D., describes Noah as exhorting the people to repentance and their mocking of him. Some later rabbinic teaching, which may go back to the first century, describes Noah as warning the people while building the ark and being mocked and despised. Clement of Rome, a first-century Christian, wrote that Noah preached repentance. In addition, Jewish literature frequently mentions human sin as the reason for God bringing the flood.

(e) So even if Peter's readers believed Gen. 6:2, 4 referred to fallen angels who took human wives, which was a popular but not uniform understanding of that text in first-century Judaism, it still seems likely that Peter is here speaking of human beings who disobeyed during the building of the ark.

(f) This conclusion is further supported by the fact these spirits are said to have disobeyed "when the patience of God waited," which almost certainly refers to his waiting for their repentance, a possibility never mentioned with regard to fallen angels. Indeed, a number of extra-biblical Jewish writings, including Philo, specifically connect God's patience in the years leading up to the flood with his waiting for sinful humans to repent.

(6) As for why Peter did not simply say that Christ "preached *through Noah* to the spirits in prison when they disobeyed," Grudem states (p. 238-239):

[T]he abundance of extra-biblical testimony to Noah's preaching to rebellious unbelievers during the building of the ark would have made the sense proposed here much more readily understood. In fact, if we could have asked any first-century Jew or Christian the question, 'Who preached to those who disobeyed in the days of Noah, while the patience of God was waiting during the building of the ark?', there would certainly be only one answer: it was Noah who did this preaching.

To a group of Christians who had such an understanding of the biblical narrative, Peter then wrote that Christ preached to the disobedient people in Noah's time. It might not have been asking too much of his readers to expect them to realize that he meant that it was through Noah that Christ did this preaching. In short, the sentence may not have been as obscure to the original readers as it has long seemed to subsequent interpreters.

e. I think these remarks serve to remind Peter's readers that Christ is through the Spirit (or in the realm of the Spirit's activity) working in them and with them toward the goal of appealing as a small minority to an ungodly and hostile world, the very thing he has been urging them to do. God is waiting patiently for repentance of the ungodly in their day, as he is in ours, but whenever he chooses to bring the flood of judgment, the faithful will pass safely through that frightening event.

f. In Noah's day, the eight faithful souls were saved from judgment "through water" in the sense that water, which served as the means of the world's judgment, also served as the means of their deliverance. It was water that lifted the ark and thus protected its occupants from the water's deadly effect. Michaels states (p. 213):

The likely meaning is that Noah and his family were brought safely through the flood by means of the flood waters themselves (cf. *διὰ πυρὸς*, "by fire," in 1:7). If it is objected that they escaped only because Noah built an ark that would float, the appropriate (and only possible) answer is that Peter is interested in "water" in the story, not "wood" (as in *Wisd Sol* 14:6, and Justin, *Dial.* 138.2), because there is something he wants to say about Christian baptism.

g. Peter says the saving water of the flood is a type, the antitype of which (the thing it symbolizes), Christian baptism, now saves them.

(1) He adds that the saving effect of baptism is related not to some physical effect of the water, a removal of dirt from the flesh, but to the fact baptism, being immersed in penitent faith in Jesus' name, is either an *appeal* (RSV, NAU, NRSV, ESV) to God *for* a good conscience or a *pledge* (NIV, NJB, TNIV, NET) to God *to maintain* a good conscience.⁶ It is an expression of the human heart directed to God.

⁶ Deciding between these two possible meanings of *ἐπερώτημα* is very difficult.

(2) He then declares the objective basis on which Christian baptism saves – the resurrection of Jesus Christ! In other words, the expression of faith in baptism is related to salvation only because Christ's atoning work, represented by his resurrection (as in 1:3), has made salvation possible. Baptism merely is the God-ordained way in which faith is to express itself for one to appropriate personally Christ's saving work. It is the culminating expression of saving faith. Thus Paul speaks of it as baptism into Christ's death (Rom. 6:3).

h. He reminds them in v. 22 of the supreme position and authority of the one to whom they are loyal, the one for whom they are suffering. Jesus Christ is in heaven at the right hand of God the Father, and all hostile spiritual powers are subject to him. The implication is that there is nothing ultimately to fear from the attacks of those powers, expressed through human persecutors, because these spiritual beings can do only what the Lord allows them to do. They are not comparable, rival powers; they are subjects.

3. Arm themselves with the resolve of Christ (4:1-6)

4 Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, you also must arm yourselves with the same resolve – for he who suffered in the flesh has finished with sin – ²so as to live the remaining time in [the] flesh no longer for [the] lusts of men but for the will of God. ³For enough time has passed to have participated [in] the desire of the Gentiles, having traveled in licentiousness, lusts, instances of drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and detestable acts of idolatry, ⁴regarding which they are surprised by your not running with them into the same flood of debauchery, vilifying [you]. ⁵They will give an account to him who is ready to judge [the] living and [the] dead. ⁶For to this [end] the gospel also was preached to [the] dead, that they may be judged in [the] flesh according to men but live by [the] Spirit according to God.

a. Since Christ, their master, suffered for faithfulness to God they must arm themselves with the same resolve to suffer for faithfulness. That it requires resolve to endure such suffering is evident from the declaration that one who suffered [for faithfulness] has broken with sin. In other words, no one suffers for faithfulness who has not broken with sin, who has not *resolved* to endure suffering rather than disobey God to be free of it. The nature or consequence of this resolve (v. 2) is that one who has it lives one's remaining life no longer for the lusts of men but for the will of God.

b. They should arm themselves with this commitment to the will of God for the additional reason that before their conversion they had already spent enough time in the Gentile (unbelieving) wasteland of sinful living, which was replete with rampant sexual sin, intoxication, and detestable idolatry (to which some of the sexual sin and intoxication was no doubt related).

c. Regarding their repentance from this sinful lifestyle, their acquaintances are surprised that they no longer join them in their sinning and heap scorn on them as a result. But Peter reminds them that those heaping the scorn will face divine judgment, will account for their rebellion to the one who is ready to "judge the living and the dead," a "phrase that normally refers to Christ's judgment (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1; cf. Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:9; and later references in 2 Clem. 1:1; Barn. 7:2; Polycarp, *Phil.* 2:1)" (Davids, 153). "[E]ven the dead cannot escape the final judgment (as also in 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Rev. 20:11-15)" (Davids, 153).

d. Verse 6 is another notoriously difficult verse. Given that the final judgment encompasses the dead (v. 5), I think Peter reminds them of why the gospel had been preached to those of their number who were *now* dead, those who had believed in Christ and already passed on. It had *also* been preached to them, preached to them as well as to those still living, because it protects against God's judgment even beyond the grave, his judgment of the dead. It was preached to these now deceased saints so that, though they were judged negatively, persecuted for the faith, during their earthly lives (in the flesh) in accordance with the will or standards of men, death did not mean they were fools for having endured that suffering. It was not the final word. The gospel was preached to them so that however they suffered at the hands of men they will, despite having died, be given life by the Spirit according to the will or standards of God.

(1) Achtemeier summarizes the meaning of the verse this way (p. 291):

The point of v. 6 is thus not to provide justification for God's right to judge both living and dead, nor is it to give further light on the obscure event described in 3:19. The point rather is the encouragement of embattled Christians, to assure them that their faith, despite their rejection by human beings and the death that has overtaken some of their fellow believers, has not been in vain. Rather, the same judgment that will require an account from those who have blasphemously opposed the Christians (v. 5a) will also see the vindication of those Christians who had undergone what appeared to their nonbelieving contemporaries to be the judgment of death, and hence the demise of all their hopes.

(2) Schreiner comments on the verse (p. 208-209):

Peter considered the case of believers who had died physically. These people heard and believed the gospel when they were alive but had subsequently died. Unbelievers viewed the death of believers as proof that there is no advantage in becoming a believer, for all without exception die. Peter indicated, however, the unbelievers do not understand the whole picture. Even though from a human perspective believers seem to gain no benefit from their faith since they die, from God's perspective (which is normative), they live according to the Spirit. . . . [D]eath is not the last

word for believers. They will be raised from the dead. The contrast between "flesh" and "spirit" here is parallel to 1 Pet. 3:18, for Christ died in terms of his flesh, but he was raised to life by the Holy Spirit. A similar destiny awaits believers. They die physically but will be raised to life by the Holy Spirit. I am suggesting, therefore, that Peter did not consider the intermediate state here but the resurrection of the dead. He used the present tense because the future will certainly come to pass. This interpretation makes the best sense contextually, for it gives the readers encouragement to continue to endure the social ostracism they are facing from their contemporaries. Peter reminded his readers that even if they die physically, death is not the last word. The resurrection awaits them.

(3) Most modern commentators understand 4:6 to mean the gospel was preached to those who are *now* dead, dead at the time of the letter, though they were alive on earth when the gospel was preached to them. This includes Kelly, Davids, Grudem, Michaels (with a twist), Marshall, Hillyer, Achtemeier, Elliott, Schreiner, and Jobes. The NIV, TNIV, and NET go so far as to insert "now" in the translation to reflect that understanding.

(4) Regarding the dative nouns *σαρκὶ* (flesh) and *πνεύματι* (S/spirit) that modify the verbs "may be judged" and "live," I again, as in 3:18, follow Schreiner in construing the datives differently despite the parallelism of the two phrases. As I said there, the parallelism of the phrases does not absolutely require that they be construed in the same way, and they are not so construed in 3:18 in the KJV, NKJV, and NIV. The parallel prepositional phrases in 1 Cor. 6:11 and 1 Tim. 3:16 commonly are translated differently, and in 3:18 the possibility one is dealing with a fragment of a preexisting Christian hymn (see NET note) increases the plausibility of doing so. If that is the correct way to construe the datives in 3:18, then that verse supports construing them similarly here.

(5) The result can be similar if both datives are construed as datives of sphere. In that case, they would be judged in the realm of the flesh, meaning in their earthly lives, and would live in the realm of the Spirit, meaning in the realm of Spirit-mediated blessings, the focus being on the blessing of eternal resurrection life at the final judgment.

E. Living in light of Christ having brought the end near (4:7-11)

⁷The end of all things has drawn near. Therefore, be clear thinking and self-controlled for prayers. ⁸Above all, have earnest love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹[Be] hospitable to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰As each has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of [the] diverse grace of God. ¹¹If anyone speaks, [do it] as [speaking] words of God. If anyone ministers, [do it] as from [the] strength God supplies, so that in all

things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the power, forever and ever, amen.

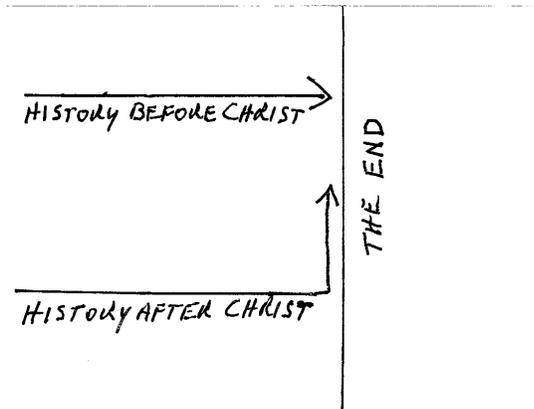
1. With the Christ event, the end has drawn near in that the *necessary grounds or basis* for the final eternal state has occurred. The victory has been won by Christ; his atoning death purchased not only our reconciliation but that of all creation. As Paul says in Eph. 1:7-10, God's will for the handling of the end of history is to unify heaven and earth in Christ. In other words, his will is to "heavenize" creation, to create that state called the new heavens and new earth. From the time of Christ's redemptive work, the final state has been, as we might say, "a done deal." All that remains is for the consequence of Christ's achievement to play out.

a. Christ's work was essential for the victory, for the redemption of creation, because it is the only means by which God forgives sin consistently with his holiness and righteousness. When the victory that has already been won by Christ will be "cashed out" or fully expressed, when God will send the Christ to consummate the kingdom, to bring history to a close with the eternal state, is a matter of God's unknown timing.

(1) As Jesus says in Mk. 13:32 (also Mat. 24:36) (ESV), "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

(2) Peter specifically cautions his readers in 2 Pet. 3:8-10 not to allow the apparent slowness of Christ's return to become a cause for doubting the certainty of it. He tells them that God operates in his own dimension of time – with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day – so that he cannot be judged by human perceptions of slowness.

b. Since Christ's achievement, creation has been on the verge of the end. This (poorly drawn) diagram may help you in conceptualize the idea. It's from J. H. Newman, a 19th-century pastor, and was cited in the commentaries on 1 John by F. F. Bruce, I. Howard Marshall, and Gary Burge. As long as this reality, history as we know it, continues, it does so on the brink of Christ's return and the consummation of all things. However long God in his purposes extends the time since Christ, Christ's coming is ever at our door.



c. Further illustrating the concept

(1) To use a mundane analogy, it is as if all the defenders in a football play had been blocked so hard as to be unconscious. When the last defender is knocked out, the touchdown is already secured at that point; the only question is how long the runner will choose to take before crossing the goal line.

(2) Or think of a will that calls for the executor to bestow on the heirs an inheritance at whatever time the executor chooses. Once the testator dies, the inheritance draws near in the sense it now may come at any time. With the testator's death, what is necessary for the exercise of the executor's discretion has occurred. From the testator's death on, the heirs live on the brink of their inheritance but without knowing when it would arrive.

(3) Now imagine that the will calls for the executor to bestow the inheritance at such time as the executor allows weeds to sprout by removing his protection against them. The inheritance will not be bestowed until the weeds sprout, but that *set of events*, the bestowal of the inheritance and the sprouting weeds with which it is associated, has drawn near with the testator's death because they both can occur in a short period of time at the executor's discretion.

(4) Similarly, the Christian inheritance in the eternal state will not be bestowed until God allows Antichrist, the man of lawlessness, to appear by removing his protection against him, but that set of events has drawn near with Christ's redemptive work because they both can occur swiftly, in a short *period* of time, at God's discretion.

(a) As Douglas Moo explains in Gleason Archer and others, *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 209-210:

Within the New Testament there are indications that suggest that New Testament authors could not have intended to portray the Parousia as an event that could happen "at any moment." . . .

Therefore, it does not appear that the imminence of the return of Christ can be understood in an "any-moment" sense. . . . It is better to define *imminency* as the possibility of Jesus' coming for His people *at any time* – 'time' being understood broadly as a short *period* of time. It is in light of that 'any-time' coming that the church is called upon to live out its calling.

(b) After pointing out that the N.T. specifies certain precursors to the second coming, Millard Erickson likewise states in *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 1194, "This is not to say it is inappropriate to speak of imminence. It is, however, the complex of events surrounding the second coming, rather than the single event itself, that is imminent. Perhaps we should speak of this complex as imminent and the second coming itself as 'impending.'"

d. Here's how Douglas Moo puts the general point in *The Letter of James*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 224:

With the death and resurrection of Jesus and pouring out of the Spirit, the "last days" have been inaugurated. This final age of salvation will find its climax in the return of Christ in glory. But – and here is the crucial point – the length of the age is unknown. Not even Jesus knew how long the "last days" would last (cf. Mark 13:32). What this means is that the return of Christ, as the next event in the salvation-historical timetable, is, from the time of the early church to our own day, "near," or "imminent." Every generation of Christians lives (or should live!) with the consciousness that the *parousia* could occur at any time and that one needs to make decisions and choose values based on that realization. So it was as true in James's day as it is in ours: we need to *be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near*.

e. Some claim that the N.T. writers erred in saying that the end had drawn near or that Jesus was returning "soon" because history revealed that he did *not* come soon. But in the sense explained above, Christ's coming was "soon" in every generation. Robert Shank writes in *Until: The Coming of Messiah and His Kingdom* (Springfield, MO: Westcott Publishers, 1982), 395-396:

Said a professor of theology whom I know

The apostolic Church believed Christ would return in their day. He did not, and they were wrong. Other generations of the Church believed that Christ would come in their day, but time proved them all wrong. If we expect Christ to return in our day, time will no doubt prove us wrong.

Not at all. In every generation of the Church, all who expected Christ to return in their time were right, and all who did not were wrong, terribly *wrong*. Christ, the apostles, and the entire NT enjoin upon us no other

attitude than to expect Jesus to return in our time. Whether he returns in our day is God's responsibility; whether we expect his return is our responsibility, for which we must give account. Whether he returns in our generation or not, we are wrong if we fail to expect him. In every generation of the Church, "the Lord is at hand." This is the time frame of the NT, including the Revelation.

2. Given that life is always lived on the verge of Christ's return, Peter commands them to be clear thinking and self-controlled for prayers. We need to see life in accordance with God's revelation and have the self-control to bring to God prayers that are informed by that perception. We are to pray as spiritually enlightened people.

3. Above all, we are to love one another sincerely – let that "above all" sink in – and we are to do so because love covers a multitude of sins in the sense it makes us more forgiving of and more patient with the sins of our brothers and sisters. Love inclines toward healing, reconciliation, peace, and fellowship, whereas hatred inclines toward conflict and retribution. As Solomon wrote in Prov. 10:12 (ESV), Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses. Jobes remarks (p. 278), "love that covers sins is probably best understood as a forbearance that does not let wrongs done within the Christian community come to their fullest and most virulent expression."

4. He commands them to be hospitable to one another without grumbling. Schreiner comments (p. 213):

Hospitality was one of the marks of the Christian community (cf. Rom 12:13; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8; Heb 13:2). Hospitality was particularly crucial for the Christian mission in a day when lodging could not be afforded, and hence the advance of the mission depended on the willingness of believers to provide bed and board for those visiting (Matt 10:11, 40; Acts 16:15; 3 John 7-11). The early church was aware that such hospitality could be abused (cf. Did. 11:3-6). Furthermore, hospitality was necessary in order for the church to meet in various homes (cf. Rom 16:3-5, 23; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15 Phlm 2). The words "without grumbling" acknowledge that those who open their homes may grow tired of the service. Hence, they are exhorted to be hospitable gladly, not caving in to the temptation to begrudge their charity to others.

5. Peter says in v. 10 that each Christian has received a gift from the diverse grace of God, meaning the nature of the gifts varies, and that each Christian is to be a good steward of that gift by using it in service of others.

a. God blesses Christians with differing abilities so that they may use those abilities to convey his blessings to others. In other words, spiritual gifts are given to enable us to be vehicles of God's blessings to our brothers and sisters. "Paul emphasized the same theme, reminding believers that gifts are given to build up and edify

others, not to edify oneself (1 Cor 12:7, 26-26; 14:1-19, 26; Eph 4:11-12)" (Schreiner, 214).

b. Implicit in the fact we are "stewards" of these gifts is the truth that they are not self-executing. God has entrusted us with them, and it is our duty to use them or manage them in accordance with his will.

6. Those who have been given a speaking gift, which in the first-century would include not only teaching, evangelism, and exhortation but also prophesying, tongue-speaking, and interpreting, are to exercise that gift with an understanding that they are speaking on God's behalf. Even those speakers not delivering inspired revelations from God are representing him to the community. Jobes states (p. 282):

Therefore, those who speak must understand that they are engaged in serious business that restrains them from positing merely their own human speculation. Instead, they must speak in accordance with the revelation that God has given in the OT and through the apostles of Christ. As Goppelt (1993: 304) explains, "Whoever passes on the gospel should be intentional about speaking not from narrow individuality, but from a posture of having listened to God. . . ."

7. Those who exercise one of the multitude of non-speaking gifts that God bestows are to do so without reservation, with the kind of energy and effort that is worthy of the fact God supplies the strength (as well as the ability) to serve in that capacity. Refusing to exert great strength in exercising these gifts is to refuse to serve as from God's strength.

8. The purpose of using God's gifts in the way we should use them is that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. As God's blessings flow to people through our proper stewardship of his spiritual gifts, he is glorified as the giver of those gifts, as the one who has enabled and empowered his saints for ministry, and is glorified through the maturation of the saints that results from the proper exercise of the gifts. He is glorified through Jesus Christ because Christ's redeeming work is the overarching context of the entire discussion and the entire letter.

9. The doxology in the last clause of v. 11 could refer either to God the Father or Jesus Christ. As Jobes notes (p. 283), "the apparent ambiguity of the antecedent of the relative pronoun does not seem to trouble the author as much as it does modern interpreters, perhaps because he understands Christ and the Father share such praiseworthy attributes." She adds, "Even though Peter's readers may feel powerless within the hostile situations they face, the doxology reminds them that all power belongs to the God they serve in the name of Christ."

IV. Comfort and instruction for their suffering (4:12 – 5:11)

A. The right attitude in persecution (4:12-19)

¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery [ordeal] among you, occurring to you as a test, as though a strange thing were happening to you, ¹³but in so far as you share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, so that you also may rejoice at the revelation of his glory, being overjoyed. ¹⁴If you are insulted for [the] name of Christ, [you are] blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God is resting on you. ¹⁵For let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler, ¹⁶but if [anyone suffers] as a Christian let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in this name. ¹⁷For [it is] time for judgment to begin from the house of God; and if it is first from us, what [will be] the end of those who disobey the gospel of God? ¹⁸And, "If the righteous person is saved with difficulty, where will the godless and sinner appear?" ¹⁹So then, let those who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

1. Peter tells them not to be surprised at the persecution they are suffering, which he refers to as a fiery ordeal that serves to test or purify them. Christians suffering is not a strange thing. Our Lord suffered, and he told the disciples in Jn. 15:18-19 (ESV), ¹⁸ "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." Paul said in 2 Tim. 3:12 that "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

2. Rather than be surprised at their suffering, they should, to the extent that suffering is persecution for the faith and thus a sharing in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice in it. They should rejoice in that persecution so that they also may rejoice, indeed be overjoyed, when Christ returns in glory on the day of judgment. The two are linked in that rejoicing in suffering for Jesus is a reflection of one's faith in his greatness, one's faith in him as Lord and Christ, and those who have such faith will be blessed on, and thus also will rejoice on, the day of his return. Acts 5:41 tells us that when the apostles were beaten by the Sanhedrin they left rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.

3. In being insulted for the name of Christ they actually are blessed because the Spirit of glory and of God is resting on them.

a. Insults motivated by their Christian living are in fact tributes that the transformative Spirit is at work in their lives, the Spirit who is divine and who is from glory and who marks those bound for glory.

b. I suspect Peter says the Spirit "rests on" them rather than "dwells in" them because he is alluding to the LXX of Isa. 11:1-2, which is a messianic prophecy that says the Spirit of God "shall rest on" the root of Jesse. He is encouraging them by saying that the same Spirit predicted to rest on the Messiah is resting on them, implying

that they therefore can be confident that their endurance of suffering will be a prelude to glory as Christ's endurance of suffering was a prelude to his glory.

4. None of them should suffer in being punished for wrongdoing, but if they suffer because of being a Christian, a follower of Christ, they are not to be ashamed but rather are to glorify God in the name Christian. Instead of denying Christ or abandoning faith in him in the face of pressure, they are to hold fast to the faith, confessing and praising his name.

5. In the persecution of Christians, God is beginning his judgment of humanity starting from his temple, the church. The purpose of that judgment in terms of the church is to test it (v. 12, 1:6-7), to allow the genuineness and purity of its faith to come forth, whereas the purpose of that judgment when it later falls on unbelievers will be to condemn and punish them.

a. If it is difficult for the righteous, for Christians, to be saved in the sense there is suffering for them to endure en route to that salvation, their eternal inheritance, one can only imagine the suffering that awaits the godless and sinner in the judgment. If the saints suffer in this judgment, albeit for the positive purpose of testing, how much more will the unbeliever suffer in punishment for his sin?

b. Achtemeier states (p. 316), "the thrust of the verse [v. 17] is to warn Christians facing situations where denial of their faith could appear to alleviate their suffering that such denial will in fact only guarantee that their eventual end will involve suffering far worse than any they must now endure."

c. Jobes likewise states (p. 295):

In 4:16, the motivation to faithfulness was positive, pointing out the opportunity Christians have to glorify God by remaining faithful to Christ in the midst of suffering and thereby demonstrating that God is worthy of their suffering. Here in 4:17b-18, Peter makes the negative point that those who reject the gospel of God will suffer much more than anything the Christian will endure during the hardships and persecution of this life. Therefore, it is better to suffer a little now as a Christian than to become one of those who reject Christ and will suffer much more later.

6. Given the dreadful consequence of abandoning Christ as implied in vv. 17-18, Peter concludes in v. 19 with an exhortation to those suffering persecution to keep trusting in the faithful Creator and to keep doing good.

B. Exhortation to the elders and the community (5:1-11)

1. Exhortations for elders and younger ones (5:1-5)

Therefore, I urge [the] elders among you, [I] who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also a sharer in the glory that is going to be revealed: ²shepherd the flock of God that is with you, [exercising oversight], not under compulsion but willingly, according to God, not with greed for material gain but eagerly, ³not as being lords over the allotted ones but being examples for the flock; ⁴and when the Chief Shepherd is revealed, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

⁵Likewise, younger ones, be subject to [the] elders. And everyone clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for "God opposes [the] proud, but gives grace to [the] humble."

a. Because of the persecution these Christians are facing and the dreadful consequences of succumbing to the pressure of that persecution (Therefore), Peter exhorts the elders to fulfill their leadership role.

(1) They must help the saints to maintain their trust in God and to continue living faithful lives in the face of persecution by modeling trust and faithfulness in their own lives. The flock must see its leaders standing up to the pressure of the society, being willing to suffer themselves in Jesus' name. If the elders simply order the saints to stand strong from their position as elders, it will have little or no effect on the saints' strength and courage to do so. To embolden the brothers and sisters, to encourage them, the elders must be willing to be out front "taking arrows."

(2) Peter, himself an elder, refers to the sufferings of Christ and the glory in which Christians will participate at the time of Christ's return. He thus encourages them through Christ's example and the eternal blessings that await the faithful. (Verses 1:7 and 4:13 make clear that revelation and glory refer to the future coming of Christ.)

(3) He commands them to shepherd the flock that is with them, exercising oversight. They are to care for the wellbeing of the Christians in their congregations, which requires them to be alert to situations and circumstances in their lives.

(4) They are to serve in this capacity not under compulsion but willingly, even eagerly as he says at the end of the verse. It is not always easy to identify the line between compulsion and encouragement, but to serve rightly a man needs to have some inner desire and motivation to assume that role. As Schreiner states (p. 234), "Those who serve only because they feel they must will lose their joy, and the church will suffer as a consequence."

(5) An elder is not to serve from a motivation of greed for material gain, seeing the position as a means to financial gain. Rather, he is to serve eagerly, meaning he is to serve because he wants to give of himself in that role.

(6) When Christ, the Chief Shepherd, returns those who served faithfully as under-shepherds, as elders, will receive their share in the eternal glory of the consummated kingdom of God.

b. In v. 5a Peter urges the younger members of the congregations to be subject to the elders, presumably because they were in special need of such instruction. Schreiner remarks (p. 238), "They should not be resisting the initiatives of leaders and complaining about the direction of the church." Grudem states (p. 192-193):

[T]he question remains why Peter spoke only to *you that are younger*, and not to the whole church, in commanding submission to the elders. It is probably because the younger people were generally those who would most need a reminder to be submissive to authority within the church . . . This would not imply that the others were free to rebel against the elders, but quite the opposite: if those who are likely to be most independent-minded and even at times rebellious against church leaders are commanded to *be subject to the elders*, then it follows that certainly everyone else must be subject to the elders as well.

c. In v. 5b Peter urges all the saints to be humble toward one another. Schreiner comments (p. 238), "Humility is the oil that allows relationships within the church to run smoothly and lovingly. Pride gets upset when another does not follow our own suggestions." Peter supports his admonition with a reference to Prov. 3:34: God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

2. Closing exhortations and assurance (5:6-11)

⁶Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in [due] time, ⁷casting all your anxieties on him, because it matters to him about you. ⁸Be sober; be alert. Your enemy [the] devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing the same sufferings are being endured by your brotherhood in the world. ¹⁰And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ [Jesus], after you have suffered a little, will himself prepare, establish, strengthen, [and] secure [you]. ¹¹To him be the power forever, amen.

a. Given that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (therefore), Peter calls them to humble themselves under God's mighty hand, meaning they are bow before his right to bring his testing judgment on them in the form of

suffering. They are to accept his sovereignty in the matter without resenting or rebelling against him because of it.

b. They are to maintain this submissive spirit before the Almighty that he may exalt them on the day of Christ's return. Schreiner states (p. 239-240):

Peter was not promising vindication and exaltation in this life. The point is not . . . that such vindication occurs occasionally in this life. The time in view is the day of judgment and salvation, what Peter called "the last time" (*en kairō eschatō*) in [1:5], or "the day of visitation" (RSV, *en hemera episkopēs*) in 2:12. That the exaltation would occur on the last day fits with the eschatological focus in 1 Peter and draws us back into the orbit of the first verses of the letter (1:3-12), where the salvation envisioned is an end-time salvation.

c. Their humbling of themselves before God is to include their casting their anxieties on him. This is a humbling because it is an acknowledgement that one cannot solve the problems in one's life in one's own strength. Schreiner states (p. 241), "When believers throw their worries upon God, they express their trust in his mighty hand, acknowledging that he is Lord and Sovereign over all of life."

d. They are to cast their anxieties on God because he cares about them. "He has compassion on his children and will sustain them in every distress" (Schreiner, 241). Peter may be alluding to Ps. 55:22 (54:23, LXX). In the context of anguish caused by opposition from the wicked, the psalmist states in v. 22 (ESV), "Cast your burden (anxiety in LXX) on the LORD, and he will sustain you."

e. Peter commands them in v. 8 to be sober and alert, to be vigilant, because the devil is seeking to destroy their faith. He is seeking to push them to apostasy through persecution, to strike fear in their hearts as does the roar of a lion, but they are to resist his effort by standing firm in the faith. And as encouragement to do so, they are to know that Christians throughout the Greco-Roman world were enduring the same kind of discrimination and abuse. They were experiencing it and standing firm through it.

f. After they have resisted and held fast to the faith through their *relatively* light or brief suffering (see Rom. 8:18 and 2 Cor. 4:17), the God of all grace, who called them to his eternal glory in their identification with Christ through repentance and baptism, will exalt them.

(1) The word "little" in the clause "after you have suffered a little" can mean either that their suffering will be small in amount or small in duration, but either way Peter is speaking relatively, speaking in comparison to the eternal glory God has promised.

(a) Achtemeier states (p. 345), "The ὀλίγον [little] may refer to quality as well as quantity, that is, compared to the glory to come, any

suffering, of whatever length, is minor when seen from the perspective of that glory." Schreiner states (p. 245), "The sufferings of this life will seem as if they lasted a little while when compared to the eternal glory that endures forever (cf. 2 Cor 4:16-18)." Jobes states (p. 316), "Peter is more likely saying here that in light of the eternal (αἰώνιον, *aiōnion*) glory, which believers have in Christ, a lifetime in this body is but a little while (*oligon*)."

(b) This is Paul's perspective in Rom. 8:18 and 2 Cor. 4:17. He says in the former (ESV), "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." He says in the latter (ESV), "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison."

(2) Regarding God's preparing, establishing, strengthening, and securing them, I think Achtemeier is correct in stating (p. 346), "The point of the future verbs here is that subsequent to the suffering, God will give the Christians an unshakable grounding by including them in his eschatological glory." Similarly, Jobes states (p. 316), "Peter uses four nearly synonymous verbs to describe what God himself will do for the benefit of faithful Christians after that little while [of suffering] has passed . . . Peter probably uses these four as a rhetorical crescendo to refer to the complete act of God at the consummation of all things."

(3) Peter describes their eschatological exaltation in terms of God preparing, establishing, strengthening, and securing them. (The words he uses have a broad range of meanings that overlap. I take them in the way stated.)

(a) They will be equipped or made ready for life in eternal glory at the resurrection, will be set firmly in that reality, will be strengthened in their conviction of the gospel as their faith becomes sight, and will be set on the secure foundation of an unshakeable reality, an existence that is eternal.

(b) Peter may describe their eschatological exaltation in these terms because such imagery would have great appeal to those buffeted by persecution. To those whose doubts, weaknesses, fears, and insecurities have been magnified in the turmoil of suffering, God promises he will bring them home to an eternal dwelling for which they have been completely equipped, in which there will be no threats, and from which they cannot be moved.

(c) Knowledge of this promise not only comforts the saints but also "provides strength for them to endure whatever hardships a hostile culture may visit on" them (Achtemeier, 346).

g. Having spoken of God's plans for the faithful, Peter in v. 11 praises God as the one with the power to fulfill such a grand promise.

V. Concluding words (5:12-14)

¹²Through Silvanus, the faithful brother, as I think, I have written briefly to you, encouraging [you] and testifying that this is the true grace of God, in which you must stand. ¹³She who is in Babylon, chosen with you, greets you, also [does] Mark, my son. ¹⁴Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

A. In saying that he wrote "through Silvanus," Peter most likely is saying that Silvanus was the one designated to carry the letter to them. That is how the phrase was used in the first century (see e.g., Schreiner, 248; Jobes 320).

1. He offers a typical commendation of a person bearing a letter by saying he regards Silvanus as a faithful brother.

2. Silvanus is most likely an alternate (Latinized) form of the name Silas, which was probably the Greek form of an Aramaic name. Luke refers repeatedly in Acts to Silas who was Paul's partner in ministry (Acts 15:22, 27, 32, 40; 16:19, 25, 29; 17:4, 10, 14-15; 18:5), and Paul refers to Silvanus as one who accompanied him and Timothy in their travels in Asia Minor and Greece (2 Cor. 1:19). Silvanus also is named with Paul and Timothy in the opening of both letters to the Thessalonians.

B. Peter identified the purpose of his letter as encouraging them and as testifying about the true grace of God in which they must stand. They must not abandon Christ in the face of their suffering because to do so is to abandon the grace of God.

C. "She who is in Babylon, chosen with you" refers to the church in the locale from which Peter is writing, which I understand, with the vast majority of scholars, to be Rome. Peter probably refers to the city this way because it conjures up the image of exile under Babylonian dominion and thus bookends the reference to them in the opening verse as "sojourners of the Dispersion."

D. Mark is John Mark, who accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 12:25). He was the author of the Gospel of Mark, which historically credible early tradition says was based on information provided to Mark by Peter.

E. Paul in four places (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26) tells the saints to greet one another with a *holy kiss*, and Peter here tells them to greet one another with a *kiss of love*. Notice that neither Paul nor Peter says simply "Greet one another with a *kiss*." Rather, they both specify the attitude behind the kiss, and that is the focus of the command.

1. Given that kissing was the standard way of greeting family and friends in first-century Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures,⁷ what is being commanded is not that they greet by kissing – that was assumed – but that *when* they greet by kissing it not be duplicitous, that the kiss not mask unholy or unloving attitudes toward the recipient as was done in the kiss that betrayed Christ.

2. If, for example, Miss Manners charged Americans to "toast brides and grooms with sincerity," it would be missing the point to think that she was insisting on wedding toasts. The practice of toasting newlyweds would be the unaddressed cultural backdrop not the subject of the command. The command should be understood along the lines, "Given the practice of toasting, do not use it as an occasion for duplicity."

F. Peter closes with a prayer for peace for all Christians. Schreiner states (p. 252):

Believers in the Petrine churches were buffeted by trials and persecutions. The stress of life was significant. What believers need in such a situation is God's peace and strength, a peace that will enable them to stand (5:12) amidst the pressures of the present evil age. Such peace will fortify believers so they can endure opposition and persevere to the end, so that they will receive an eschatological reward.

⁷ See, e.g., Craig Keener, "Kissing" in Craig Evans and Stanley Porter, eds., *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 628-629.