

OUR LIVING HOPE

1 Peter

How do you feel about the future right now? A little nervous? Wondering where terrorists are going to strike next? Wondering if you will have enough money to provide for your retirement, or your children's college educations? For many the future holds a lot of question marks and uncertainties. What will happen with gas prices? Will the bird flu really become a pandemic and sicken or kill millions of people? Is the conflict in the Middle East really the beginning of World War III?

Many people in the early church also lived in uncertain times. Persecution of Christians was becoming an entertaining sport and many were unfriendly to the followers of Christ. Peter wrote a couple letters to these Christians and today we will start looking at the first of those letters. But first a little background about the man, Peter, himself.

Peter came from a family of fisherman who lived in Bethsaida and later in Capernaum. Andrew was Peter's brother and introduced him to Christ. Peter was married and his wife apparently accompanied him in his ministry.¹ Jesus clearly singled out Peter for special lessons throughout the gospels.² Peter often served as the spokesman for all 12 apostles. After the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), Peter was empowered to become the leading gospel preacher from the day of Pentecost on (Acts 2-12).

When it came time for Peter to be crucified, he claimed he was not worthy to be crucified in the same way that Jesus was crucified, and asked to be crucified upside down, which he was. Now let us look at what Peter was called to tell us by His Lord and ours, Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1: 1,2 NLT:

1 This letter is from Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to God's chosen people who are living as foreigners in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

2 God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. May God give you more and more grace and peace.

The author of this letter identified himself as, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." Some have questioned whether a common fisherman could have written this letter, especially since Peter and John were both called "unlearned and untrained men" (Acts 4:13). That simply means that they didn't have a doctor of theology degree from Harvard. We must

¹ Mark 1:29-31; 1 Corinthians 9:5.

² Matthew 10; 16:13-21; 17:1-9; 24:1-7; 26:31-33; John 6:6; 21:3-7, 15-17.

not underestimate, however, the training Peter had for three years during which he spent day and night with Jesus. We must also remember the powerful impact of the work of the Holy Spirit in Peter's life. The Holy Spirit empowered Peter to write this epistle, making Peter a very good example of what Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, NLT:

26 Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you.

27 Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful.

28 God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important.

29 As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

30 God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin.

31 Therefore, as the Scriptures say, "If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord."

His given name was Simon, but Jesus changed it to Peter, which means "a stone" (John 1:42). The Aramaic equivalent of "Peter" is "Cephas," so Peter was a man with three names. Nearly fifty times in the New Testament, he is called "Simon"; and often he is called "Simon Peter."

Peter and Paul were the two leading apostles in the early church. Paul was assigned especially to minister to the Gentiles, and Peter to the Jews (Galatians 2:1–10). The Lord had commanded Peter to strengthen his brethren (Luke 22:32) and to take care of the flock, and the writing of this letter was a part of that ministry. It was a letter of encouragement to the churches and to those Christians who were and would be suffering trials.

In chapter 5, verse 13, Peter indicated that he wrote this letter "in Babylon" where there was a community of believers. There is no evidence, either from church history or tradition, that Peter ministered in ancient Babylon, which is modern-day Iraq, which at that time did have a large community of Jews. There was another town called "Babylon" in Egypt, but we have no proof that Peter ever visited it. Peter is probably referring to Rome in a symbolic way when he speaks of "Babylon." We do have reason to believe that Peter ministered in Rome and was probably martyred there. It was not unusual for persecuted believers during those days to write or speak in "code" in order to protect themselves and their fellow believers. For instance, in Revelation 17:5 and 28:10 Rome is called "Babylon." When writing this letter, Peter probably referred to Rome as Babylon so that the Romans would not have any reason to be offended by his comments, nor would they be provided with any information that could be damaging to the churches.

There is, however, no evidence whatsoever that Peter founded the church in Rome, as many people think, or that he served as the first bishop of the Roman Catholic Church.

Peter directed this letter to: “*aliens*” in verse 1. They are called “*strangers and pilgrims*” in 1 Peter 2:11. These people were citizens of Heaven through faith in Christ (Philippians 3:20), and therefore were not permanent residents on earth. Like Abraham, they had their eyes of faith centered on the future city of God (Hebrews 11:8-16). Just like a very old gospel song said, “*This world is not my home, I’m just a-passin’ through . . .*” **these Christians were in the world, but not of the world** (John 17:16). We also, who have accepted Jesus Christ, are temporary citizens in a foreign land, ambassadors so to speak, but we long for our true home which is in Heaven.

Because Christians are “*strangers*” in the world, they are often considered to be “*strange*” in the eyes of the people around them (1 Peter 4:4). Christians have beliefs, standards and values different from those of the world. We’ll discover in this epistle that **some of the readers were already experiencing suffering** because of their different lifestyle.

These believers were also a “*scattered*” people. The word translated “*scattered*” (*diaspora*) was a technical term for the Jews who lived outside of Palestine at this time.³ They had been driven from their homeland of Israel. However, Peter’s use of this word does not imply that he was writing only to Jewish Christians, because some statements in his letter suggest that some of his readers were converted out of Gentile paganism.⁴ There was undoubtedly a mixture of both Jews and Gentiles in the churches that received this letter and we’ll notice a number of Old Testament references as we go through these chapters.

The important thing for us to know about these “*scattered strangers*” is that they were going through a time of suffering and persecution. At least fifteen times in this letter, Peter refers to suffering. Some of these Christians were suffering because they were living godly lives and doing what was good and right.⁵ Others were suffering rejection for the name of Christ (1 Peter 4:14) and being insulted by unsaved people who just loved to ridicule them (1 Peter 3:9–10). Peter wrote to encourage them to be good witnesses to those who were persecuting them, and to remember that their suffering would lead to glory.⁶

So 1 Peter is a letter of encouragement (1 Peter 5:12). We see also that a theme of *suffering* is contained throughout the letter. But in addition there is a **theme of glory**. One of the encouragements that Peter gives suffering saints is the assurance that their suffering will one day be transformed into glory. This is possible only because Jesus **suffered for us** and then entered into His glory.

As believers, we have a “***living hope***” because we trust a ***living Christ***. This hope

³ John 7:35 and James 1:1.

⁴ 1 Peter 1:14, 18; 2:9–10; 4:1–4.

⁵ 1 Peter 2:19–23; 3:14–18; 4:1–4, 15–19.

⁶ 1 Peter 1:6–7; 4:13–14; 5:10.

enables us to keep our minds under control and “*hope to the end*” (1 Peter 1:13) when Jesus will return. We must not be ashamed of our hope but be ready to explain and defend it. Since suffering brings glory, and because Jesus is coming again, we can indeed be hopeful.

However suffering does not automatically bring glory to God and blessing to God’s people. Some believers have weakened and fallen in times of trial and have brought shame to the name of Christ. It’s only when we exercise our faith in God’s promises and depend on the grace of God that we can glorify God in times of suffering. **Peter also emphasized God’s grace in this letter.** In chapter 5, verse 12, Peter writes: “*I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.*”

The word “*grace*” is used in every chapter of 1 Peter. **Grace** is God’s generous favor to undeserving sinners and needy saints. When we depend on God’s grace, we can endure suffering and turn trials into triumphs. It is grace alone that saves us (Ephesians 2:8–10). God’s grace can give us strength in times of trial (2 Corinthians 12:1–10). Whatever begins with God’s grace will always lead to glory.⁷

As we study 1 Peter, we’ll see how the three themes of **suffering, grace, and glory** unite to form an encouraging message for believers experiencing times of trial and persecution. These themes are summed up in 1 Peter 5:10 and 11, verses I would recommend we all memorize:

And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you.¹¹ To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

The cynical editor and writer, H. L. Mencken, once defined *hope* as “*a pathological belief in the occurrence of the impossible.*” But that definition does not agree with the New Testament meaning of the word. True Christian hope is more than an “*I hope so*” with fingers crossed. It is confident assurance of future glory and blessing.

An Old Testament believer called God “*the Hope of Israel*” (Jeremiah 14:8). A New Testament believer affirms that Jesus Christ is their hope.⁸ The unsaved sinner is “*without hope*” (Ephesians 2:12); and if one dies without Christ, he or she will be hopeless forever. The Italian poet, Dante, in his *Divine Comedy*, put this inscription over the world of the dead:

⁷ Ps. 84:11; 1 Peter 5:10.

⁸ 1 Timothy 1:1; Col. 1:27.

“Abandon all hope, you who enter here!”

This confident hope Peter speaks of gives us the encouragement and confidence we need for daily living. It does not mean that we should put on our pajamas and go up on the roof to complacently await the return of Jesus Christ. Instead, it puts us in the workplace, on the battlefield, where **we keep on going when the burdens are heavy and the battles are hard.** Hope is not a sedative; it’s a shot of adrenaline, or a blood transfusion. It infuses us with energy. Like an anchor, our hope in Christ stabilizes us in the storms of life (Hebrews 6:18-19); but unlike an anchor, **our hope moves us forward, it doesn’t hold us back.** Some translations of the Scripture use the word “*expectation*” instead of “*hope*.” Expectations keep you looking forward.

1 Peter 1:3-5 NLT:

3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation,
4 and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.
5 And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

Peter outlines a progression that is easy to follow: Everything begins with salvation, our personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. If we know Christ as Savior, then we have **hope**. If we have hope, then we can walk in holiness and in harmony. There should be no problem submitting to those around us in society, the home, and the church family. Salvation and submission prepare us for suffering, and if we focus on Christ, we can overcome and God will transform suffering into glory.⁹

Because of Christ’s resurrection, Christians have a **hope** of eternal salvation **that is** actually a **certainty**, for it is as verse 4 tells us: “*beyond the reach of change and decay.*” It is guaranteed and protected by God himself. Listen to what Jesus told His disciples in John 10:22–30 NLT:

22 It was now winter, and Jesus was in Jerusalem at the time of Hanukkah, the Festival of Dedication.
23 He was in the Temple, walking through the section known as Solomon’s Colonnade.
24 The people surrounded him and asked, “How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”
25 Jesus replied, “I have already told you, and you don’t believe me. The

⁹ Wiersbe, Warren W.: The Bible Exposition Commentary. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 1 Pe 5:12

proof is the work I do in my Father's name.

26 But you don't believe me because you are not my sheep.

27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me,

29 for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand.

30 The Father and I are one."

Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, believers have been born into a living hope, and that hope includes the glory of God. But, what do we mean by "*the glory of God*"?

The glory of God can be described as His complete splendor and perfection. The glory of God means the sum total of all that God is and does. "*Glory*" is not a separate attribute or characteristic of God, such as His holiness, wisdom, or mercy. Everything that God is and does is characterized by glory. He is glorious in wisdom and power, so that everything He thinks and does is marked by glory. He reveals His glory in creation (Psalm 19), in His dealings with the people of Israel, and especially in His plan of salvation for lost sinners.

When we were born the first time, we were not born for glory. "*For all flesh is like grass, and all the glory of man like the flower of grass*" (1 Peter 1:24, quoted from Isaiah 40:6).

Whatever feeble glory mankind has will eventually fade and disappear; **but the glory of the Lord is eternal**. The works of mankind done for the glory of God will last and be rewarded (1 John 2:17). But the selfish human achievements of sinners will one day vanish to be seen no more.

The miracle of salvation that Peter begins to describe in verse 2 of 1 Peter originated with God. We were chosen long ago by the Father, according to verse 2 as well as Ephesians 1:3-4, NAS:

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.

Another biblical word used to describe "*being chosen*" is the word "*election*." This election was not based on anything we had done, because we were not even on the scene at the time. Nor was it based on anything God saw that we would be or do. God's election was based totally on His grace and love. We cannot explain it (Romans 11:3-36), but we can rejoice in it.

Verse 2 speaks of “*foreknowledge*.” That does not suggest that God merely knew ahead of time that certain of us were going to believe, and therefore He chose us. This would take our salvation completely out of God’s hands and place it in ours. Remember, it is only because of the grace of God that we can be saved. God has made it possible because of His grace for a person to be saved **if** he or she is willing to confess that they are a sinner and to accept Christ’s death as payment for those sins. In the Bible, *to foreknow* means “*to set one’s love on a person or persons in a personal way*.” It is used this way in the Old Testament in Amos 3:2: “*You only have I known of all the families of the earth*.” God set His electing love on the nation of Israel. Other verses that use “*know*” in this special sense are Psalm 1:6; Matthew 7:23; John 10:14, 27; and 1 Corinthians 8:3.

But the plan of salvation includes more than God’s electing love; it also includes the work of the Holy Spirit in convicting the sinner and bringing him or her to faith in Christ. The best explanation of this is 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14 NLT:

13 As for us, we can’t help but thank God for you, dear brothers and sisters loved by the Lord. We are always thankful that God chose you to be among the first to experience salvation—a salvation that came through the Spirit who makes you holy and through your belief in the truth.
14 He called you to salvation when we told you the Good News; now you can share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember, the Son of God had to die on the cross for our sins, or there could be no salvation. Verse 2 clearly indicates the role of the Trinity in our salvation. While the word “trinity” never appears in the New Testament, we find a number of passages like this one, which clearly delineate the existence of each Person of the Trinity as co-existing. Notice the roles of each Person. We have been chosen by the Father, purchased by the Son, and set apart by the Spirit. It takes all three if there is to be a true experience of salvation.

As far as God the Father is concerned, I was saved when He chose me in Christ before the foundation of the world. As far as the Son is concerned, I was saved when He died for me on the cross. But as far as the Spirit is concerned, I was saved sometime around 1990, when I heard the Gospel and received Christ. Then it all came together, but it took all three Persons of the Godhead to bring me to salvation. If we separate these ministries, we will either deny divine sovereignty or human responsibility; and that would lead to heresy.

Peter emphasizes the balance and cooperation between God and His human servants in His plan to save sinners. In 1 Peter 1:23 we see that the Gospel was preached to these people by the ministers of God and that they heard it and believed (see also 1 Peter 1:12). Peter’s own example at Pentecost demonstrates the progression and balance we see in Romans 10:14:

But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?

The same God who ordains our salvation, also ordains the means to that salvation, the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God.

Our hope as believers is a living hope because it is grounded on the living Word of God (1 Peter 1:23), and was made possible by the living Son of God who arose from the dead. A **living hope** is one that **has life in it** and therefore **can give life to us**. Because it **has life**, it grows and becomes better and better as time goes on. Time destroys most hopes; they fade and then die. But the passing of time only makes a Christian's hope that much better.

Peter called this hope ***an inheritance*** (1 Peter 1:4). As the children of the King, we share Christ's inheritance in glory.¹⁰ We're included in Christ's last will and testament, and we share the glory with Him according to John 17:20–26 NLT:

20 "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message.

21 I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

22 "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one.

23 I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me ***and that you love them as much as you love me.***

24 Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!

25 "O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me.

*26 I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. ***Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them.***"*

Returning to 1 Peter chapter 1, note in verse 4 Peter's description of this inheritance for it is totally unlike any earthly inheritance. For one thing, it is incorruptible, which means that nothing can ruin it. Because it is undefiled, it cannot be stained or cheapened in any way. It will never grow old because it is eternal; it cannot wear out, nor can it disappoint us in any way.

¹⁰ Romans 8:17–18; Eph. 1:9–12.

In 1 Peter 1:5 and 9, **this inheritance is called “salvation.”** The believer is already saved through faith in Christ as Paul described in Ephesians 2:1–10 NLT:

*1 Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins.
2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.
3 All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.
4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much,
5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!)
6 For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.
7 So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.*

*8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God.
9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.*

10 For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

So when a person believes in Christ and His work on the cross and receives Him as their personal Savior, that believer is then saved through Christ, but the completion of that salvation awaits the Second Coming of Christ. At that time we will be given new bodies and enter into a new environment, the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. Paul called this “*the blessed hope*” in Titus 2:13.

What a thrilling thing it is to know that we were born for glory. When we were born again, we exchanged the temporary glory of mankind for the eternal glory of God,¹¹ and our future home and inheritance are guaranteed and reserved.

But there are some who think they might not make it, that they might lose that guaranteed salvation. Don’t ever think that way because if you have made a true confession of sin and an honest expression of faith that Jesus Christ died as a payment of your sin, you’re in. You can never lose that salvation because as verse 5 says, your salvation is being “*kept by the power of God.*” The word translated “*kept*” is a military word that means “*guarded, shielded.*” The tense of the verb reveals that we are constantly being guarded by God, assuring us that we shall safely arrive in Heaven.

¹¹ Wiersbe, Warren W.: The Bible Exposition Commentary. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 1 Pe 1:2

Believers are not kept by their own power, but by the power of God. Our faith in Christ has so united us to Him that His power now guards us and guides us. We are not kept by our own strength, but by His faithfulness. How long will He guard us? Until He returns and we share in the full revelation of His great salvation. This same truth is repeated in 1 Peter 1:9.

It's encouraging to know that we are "*guarded for glory.*" According to Romans 8:30, we have *already* been glorified. All that awaits is the public revelation of this glory (Romans 8:18–23). If any believer were lost it would rob God of His glory.

And therein lies our hope—that because of the salvation Christ offers us, we have Him and all that He provides to guide us, empower us, and encourage us. Because of our hope in Christ we have a future that is secure. Because of our hope in Christ we can live each day in the knowledge that He is always with us and that God keeps every promise He makes. What more could you want?

End of Message 1

1 Peter 1:6-9 NLT:

6 So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while.

7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

8 You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy.

9 The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

But Peter had another purpose in mind. He knew that a "*fiery trial*" was about to begin; official persecution from the Roman Empire (1 Peter 4:12). When the Church began in Jerusalem, it was looked on as a "*sect*" of the traditional Jewish faith. The first Christians were Jews, and they met in the temple precincts. The Roman government took no official

action against the Christians since **the Jewish religion was accepted** and approved. But when it became clear that Christianity was not a “*sect*” of Judaism, Rome had to take some official steps.

Several events occurred that helped to jump start this “*fiery trial*.” To begin with, Paul had defended the Christian faith before the official court in Rome (Philippians 1:12–24). He had been released but was then arrested again. His second defense failed also and Paul remained in prison (2 Timothy 4:16–18). Second, when the city of Rome burned, the Romans believed that their insane Emperor, Nero, had set the city on fire because he was possessed with the thought of building an entirely new city that would be more spectacular than any other city in the known world. In order to do that the existing city had to be destroyed. So by all accounts, sometime during July A.D. 64, Nero set fire to Rome.

The Romans were totally devastated by this fire. Their culture, in many ways, went down with the city. All the religious elements of their life were destroyed. This had tremendous religious implications because it made them believe that their gods had been unable to deal with this disaster and were also victims of it. Many people were homeless and many more had been killed. As you can imagine, the Romans were outraged, so Nero realized he had to find a scapegoat for what he had done.

The emperor chose the Christians as his scapegoat. The Christians were already hated because they were associated with Jews and because they were thought to be hostile toward the Roman culture. Nero spread the word that the Christians had set the fires. A vicious persecution of Christians followed throughout the entire Roman Empire including the cities we read about in verse 1 of 1 Peter.

Peter was most likely in Rome about this time and was probably subsequently executed by Nero, who was also responsible for killing the apostle Paul. But before his execution **it was Peter’s desire to prepare the churches for this coming persecution.**

We must not get the idea that all Christians in every part of the Empire were going through the same trials to the same degree at the same time. It varied from place to place, though suffering and opposition were pretty general (1 Peter 5:9). Nero introduced official persecution of the Church and other emperors followed his example in later years. Peter’s letter must have also been a tremendous help to Christians who were to suffer during the reigns of Trajan from AD 98–117, Hadrian from AD 117–138, and Diocletian from AD 284–305. Christians in the world today may yet learn the value of Peter’s letter when their own “*fiery trials*” of persecution begin. There is mounting evidence that we could be approaching the end times, the seven-year tribulation. We can’t be certain of this because nobody knows the time other than God, but I can tell you that all the prophecies regarding the Tribulation are in place, and I do believe that these latter days, whenever they come, will bring much suffering and persecution to the people of God. This is a most appropriate time for us to

take comfort in Peter's message.

Christians should rejoice in their assurance of salvation, even amid earthly trials. Our goal should be to demonstrate the kind of faith that will “bring us much praise and glory and honor” at Christ's return. Peter spoke of four things that are “precious” (1:7, 19; 2:4, 6–7; 3:4).

Christians Are Being Prepared for Glory (1 Peter 1:6–7)

We must keep in mind that all God plans and performs here is preparation for what He has in store for us in heaven. He is preparing us for the life and service yet to come. Nobody yet knows all that is in store for us in heaven; but this we do know: life today is a school in which God trains us for our future ministry in eternity. This explains the presence of trials in our lives: they are some of God's tools and textbooks in the school of Christian experience.

Peter used the word “trials” rather than “tribulations” or “persecutions,” because he was dealing with the *general* problems that Christians face as they are surrounded by unbelievers. He shared several facts about trials.

Trials meet needs. The phrase “if need be” indicates that there are special times when God knows that we need to go through trials. Sometimes trials discipline us when we have disobeyed God's will (Ps. 119:67). At other times, trials prepare us for spiritual growth, or even help to prevent us from sinning (2 Cor. 12:1–9). We do not always know the need being met, but we can trust God to know and to do what is best.

Trials are varied. Peter used the word “manifold,” which literally means “variegated, many-colored.” He used the same word to describe God's grace in 1 Peter 4:10. No matter what “color” our day may be—a “blue” Monday or a “gray” Tuesday—God has grace sufficient to meet the need. We must not think that because we have overcome one kind of trial that we will automatically “win them all.” Trials are varied, and God matches the trial to our strengths and needs.

Trials are not easy. Peter did not suggest that we take a careless attitude toward trials, because this would be deceitful. Trials produce what he called “heaviness.” The word means “to experience grief or pain.” It is used to describe our Lord in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37), and the sorrow of saints at the death of loved ones (1 Thes. 4:13). To deny that our trials are painful is to make them even worse. Christians must accept the fact that there are difficult experiences in life and not put on a brave front just to appear “more spiritual.”

Trials are controlled by God. They do not last forever; they are “for a season.” When God permits His children to go through the furnace, He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat. If we rebel, He may have to reset the clock; but if we submit, He will not permit us to suffer one minute too long. The important thing is that we learn the lesson He wants to teach us and that we bring glory to Him alone.

Peter illustrated this truth by referring to the goldsmith. No goldsmith would deliberately waste the precious ore. He would put it into the smelting furnace long enough to remove the cheap impurities; then he would pour it out and make from it a beautiful article of value. It has been said that the Eastern goldsmith kept the metal in the furnace until he could see his face reflected in it. So our Lord keeps us in the furnace of suffering until we reflect the glory and beauty of Jesus Christ.

The important point is that this glory is not fully revealed until Jesus returns for His church. Our trying experiences today are preparing us for glory tomorrow. When we see Jesus Christ, we will bring “praise and honor and glory” to Him if we have been faithful in the sufferings of this life (see [Rom. 8:17–18](#)). This explains why Peter associated *rejoicing with suffering*. While we may not be able to rejoice as we look *around* in our trials, we can rejoice as we look *ahead*. The word “this” in [1 Peter 1:6](#) (NASB) refers back to the “salvation” (the return of Christ) mentioned in [1 Peter 1:5](#).

Just as the assayer tests the gold to see if it is pure gold or counterfeit, so the trials of life test our faith to prove its sincerity. A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted! Too many professing Christians have a “false faith” and this will be revealed in the trials of life. The seed that fell on shallow soil produced rootless plants, and the plants died when the sun came up (see [Matt. 13:1–9, 18–23](#)). The sun in the parable represents “tribulation or persecution.” The person who abandons “his faith” when the going gets tough is only proving that he really had no faith at all.

The patriarch Job went through many painful trials, all of them with God’s approval; and yet he understood somewhat of this truth about the refiner’s fire. “But He knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” ([Job 23:10](#)). And he did!

It is encouraging to know that we are born for glory, kept for glory, and being prepared for glory. But the fourth discovery Peter shared with his readers is perhaps the most exciting of all.

Christians Can Enjoy the Glory Now ([1 Peter 1:8–12](#))

The Christian philosophy of life is not “pie in the sky by and by.” It carries with it a *present* dynamic that can turn suffering into glory *today*. Peter gave four directions for enjoying the glory now, even in the midst of trials.

Love Christ (v. 8). Our love for Christ is not based on physical sight, because we have not seen Him. It is based on our spiritual relationship with Him and what the Word has taught us about Him. The Holy Spirit has poured out God’s love into our hearts ([Rom. 5:5](#)), and we return that love to Him. When you find yourself in some trial, and you hurt, immediately lift your heart to Christ in true love and worship. Why? Because this will take the poison out of the experience and replace it with healing medicine.

Satan wants to use life’s trials to bring out the worst in us, but God wants to bring out the best in us. If we love ourselves more than we love Christ, then we will not experience any of the glory *now*. The fire will *burn* us, not *purify* us.

Trust Christ (v. 8). We must live by faith and not by sight. An elderly lady fell and broke her leg while attending a summer Bible conference. She said to the pastor who visited her, “I know the Lord led me to the conference. But I don’t see why this had to happen! And I don’t see any good coming from it.” Wisely, the pastor replied, “[Romans 8:28](#) doesn’t say that we *see* all things working together for good. It says that we *know* it.”

Faith means surrendering all to God and obeying His Word in spite of circumstances and consequences. Love and faith go together: when you love someone, you trust him. And faith and love together help to strengthen hope; for where you find faith and love, you will find confidence for the future.

How can we grow in faith during times of testing and suffering? The same way we

grow in faith when things seem to be going well: by feeding on the Word of God ([Rom. 10:17](#)). Our fellowship with Christ through His Word not only strengthens our faith, but it also deepens our love. It is a basic principle of Christian living that we spend much time in the Word when God is testing us and Satan is tempting us.

Rejoice in Christ (v. 8). You may not be able to rejoice *over* the circumstances, but you can rejoice *in* them by centering your heart and mind on Jesus Christ. Each experience of trial helps us learn something new and wonderful about our Saviour. Abraham discovered new truths about the Lord on the mount where he offered his son ([Gen. 22](#)). The three Hebrew children discovered His nearness when they went through the fiery furnace ([Dan. 3](#)). Paul learned the sufficiency of His grace when he suffered with a thorn in the flesh ([2 Cor. 12](#)).

Note that the joy He produces is “unspeakable and full of glory.” This joy is so deep and so wonderful that we cannot even express it. Words fail us! Peter had seen some of the glory on the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus discussed with Moses and Elijah His own impending suffering and death ([Luke 9:28–36](#)).¹²

1 Peter 1:10-12 NLT:

10 This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you.

11 They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ’s suffering and his great glory afterward.

12 They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.

The Old Testament prophets faithfully recorded God’s promises of eternal salvation, realizing all the while that they would never see the fulfillment in their own lifetime but that they were recording those words for future generations (see [Dan. 12:8–13](#); [Matt. 13:17](#)). In similar fashion, the angels, though they are not fallen and therefore do not need redemption, are intensely interested in it.

Receive from Christ (vv. 9–12). “Believing... receiving” is God’s way of meeting our needs. If we love Him, trust Him, and rejoice in Him, then we can receive from Him all that we need to turn trials into triumphs. [First Peter 1:9](#) can be translated, “For you are receiving the consummation of your faith, that is, the final salvation of your souls.” In

¹² Wiersbe, Warren W.: The Bible Exposition Commentary. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 1 Pe 1:6

other words, we can experience *today* some of that future glory. Charles Spurgeon used to say, “Little faith will take your soul to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your soul.” It is not enough that we long for heaven during times of suffering, for anybody can do that. What Peter urged his readers to do was exercise love, faith, and rejoicing, so that they might experience some of the glory of heaven in the midst of suffering *now*.

The amazing thing is that this “salvation” we are awaiting—the return of Christ—was a part of God’s great plan for us from eternity. The Old Testament prophets wrote about this salvation and studied closely what God revealed to them. They saw the sufferings of the Messiah, and also the glory that would follow; but they could not fully understand the connection between the two. In fact, in some of the prophecies, the Messiah’s sufferings and glory are blended in one verse or paragraph.

When Jesus came to earth, the Jewish teachers were awaiting a conquering Messiah who would defeat Israel’s enemies and establish the glorious kingdom promised to David. Even His own disciples were not clear about the need for His death on the cross ([Matt. 16:13–28](#)). They were still inquiring about the Jewish kingdom even after His resurrection ([Acts 1:1–8](#)). If the *disciples* were not clear about God’s program, certainly the Old Testament *prophets* could be excused!

God told the prophets that they were ministering for a *future* generation. Between the suffering of Messiah and His return in glory comes what we call “the age of the church.” The truth about the church was a hidden “mystery” in the Old Testament period ([Eph. 3:1–13](#)). The Old Testament believers looked ahead by faith and saw, as it were, two mountain peaks: Mount Calvary, where Messiah suffered and died ([Isa. 53](#)), and Mount Olivet, where He will return in glory ([Zech. 14:4](#)). They could not see the “valley” in between, the present age of the church.

Even the angels are interested in what God is doing in and through His church! Read [1 Corinthians 4:9](#) and [Ephesians 3:10](#) for further information on how God is “educating” the angels through the church.

If the Old Testament prophets searched so diligently into the truths of salvation, and yet had so little to go on, how much more ought we to search into this subject, now that we have a complete Word from God! The same Holy Spirit who taught the prophets and, through them, wrote the Word of God, can teach us the truths in it ([John 16:12–15](#)).

Furthermore, we can learn these truths from the Old Testament as well as from the New Testament. You can find Christ in every part of the Old Testament Scriptures ([Luke 24:25–27](#)). What a delight it is to meet Christ in the Old Testament Law, the types, the Psalms, and the writings of the prophets. In times of trial, you can turn to the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, and find all that you need for encouragement and enlightenment.

Yes, for Christians, it is glory all the way! When we trusted Christ, we were born for glory. We are being kept for glory. As we obey Him and experience trials, we are being prepared for glory. When we love Him, trust Him, and rejoice in Him, we experience the glory here and now.

Joy unspeakable and full of glory!¹³

1 Peter 1:13-21 NLT:

¹³ Wiersbe, Warren W.: The Bible Exposition Commentary. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 1 Pe 1:8

13 So think clearly and exercise self-control. Look forward to the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world.

14 So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then.

15 But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy.

16 For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."

17 And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time as "foreigners in the land."

18 For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver.

19 It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.

20 God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but he has now revealed him to you in these last days.

21 Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory.

We should put all our hopes on our sure salvation, seeking to imitate God's holiness as we await Christ's return (see [Lev. 11:44; 19:2](#); see exposition on [Heb. 10:1–18](#)).

We should always remember the great price paid for our salvation: the "lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb." God has been planning our salvation from before the dawn of time ([Eph. 1:1–6](#)).

The Glory of God (1 Peter 1:13)

"The revelation of Jesus Christ" is another expression for the "living hope" and "the appearing of Jesus Christ." Christians live in the future tense; their present actions and decisions are governed by this future hope. Just as an engaged couple makes all their plans in the light of that future wedding, so Christians today live with the expectation of seeing Jesus Christ.

"Gird up the loins of your mind" simply means, "Pull your thoughts together! Have a disciplined mind!" The image is that of a robed man, tucking his skirts under the belt, so he can be free to run. When you center your thoughts on the return of Christ, and live accordingly, you escape the many worldly things that would encumber your mind and hinder your spiritual progress. Peter may have borrowed the idea from the Passover supper, because later in this section he identifies Christ as the Lamb ([1 Peter 1:19](#)). The Jews at Passover were supposed to eat the meal in haste, ready to move ([Ex. 12:11](#)).

Outlook determines outcome; attitude determines action. A Christian who is looking for the glory of God has a greater motivation for present obedience than a Christian who ignores the Lord's return. The contrast is illustrated in the lives of Abraham and Lot ([Gen. 12–13](#); [Heb. 11:8–16](#)). Abraham had his eyes of faith on that heavenly city, so he

had no interest in the world's real estate. But Lot, who had tasted the pleasures of the world in Egypt, gradually moved toward Sodom. Abraham brought blessing to his home, but Lot brought judgment. Outlook determined outcome.

Not only should we have a disciplined mind, but we should also have a *sober* mind. The word means "to be calm, steady, controlled; to weigh matters." Unfortunately some people get "carried away" with prophetic studies and lose their spiritual balance. The fact that Christ is coming should encourage us to be calm and collected (1 Peter 4:7). The fact that Satan is on the prowl is another reason to be sober-minded (1 Peter 5:8). Anyone whose mind becomes undisciplined, and whose life "falls apart" because of prophetic studies, is giving evidence that he does not really understand Bible prophecy.

We should also have an *optimistic* mind. "Hope to the end" means "set your hope fully." Have a hopeful outlook! A friend of mine sent me a note one day that read: "When the *outlook* is gloomy, try the *uplook*!" Good advice, indeed! It has to be dark for the stars to appear.

The result of this spiritual mind-set is that a believer experiences the grace of God in his life. To be sure, we will experience grace when we see Jesus Christ; but we can also experience grace today as we look for Him to return. We have been saved by grace and we depend moment by moment on God's grace (1 Peter 1:10). Looking for Christ to return strengthens our faith and hope in difficult days, and this imparts to us more of the grace of God. Titus 2:10–13 is another passage that shows the relationship between grace and the coming of Jesus Christ.

The Holiness of God (1 Peter 1:14–15)

The argument here is logical and simple. Children inherit the nature of their parents. God is holy; therefore, as His children, we should live holy lives. We are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4) and ought to reveal that nature in godly living.

Peter reminded his readers of what they were before they trusted Christ. They had been *children of disobedience* (Eph. 2:1–3), but now they were to be obedient children. True salvation always results in obedience (Rom. 1:5; 1 Peter 1:2). They had also been *imitators of the world*, "fashioning themselves" after the standards and pleasures of the world. Romans 12:2 translates this same word as "conformed to this world." Unsaved people tell us that they want to be "free and different"; yet they all imitate one another!

The cause of all this is *ignorance* that leads to *indulgence*. Unsaved people lack spiritual intelligence, and this causes them to give themselves to all kinds of fleshly and worldly indulgences (see Acts 17:30; Eph. 4:17ff). Since we were born with a fallen nature, it was natural for us to live sinful lives. Nature determines appetites and actions. A dog and a cat behave differently because they have different natures.

We would still be in that sad sinful plight were it not for the grace of God. He called us! One day, Jesus called to Peter and his friends and said, "Come, follow Me... and I will make you fishers of men" (Mark 1:17, NIV). They responded by faith to His call, and this completely changed their lives.

Perhaps this explains why Peter used the word "called" so often in this letter. We are called to be holy (1 Peter 1:15). We are called "out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). We are called to suffer and follow Christ's example of meekness (1 Peter 2:21). In the midst of persecution, we are called "to inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:9). Best of all, we are called to "His eternal glory" (1 Peter 5:10). God called us before we called

on Him for salvation. It is all wholly of grace.

But God's gracious election of sinners to become saints always involves responsibility, and not just privilege. He has chosen us in Christ "that we should be holy and without blame before Him" (Eph. 1:4). God has called us to Himself, and He is holy; therefore, we should be holy. Peter quoted from the Old Testament Law to back up his admonition (Lev. 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:7, 26).

God's holiness is an essential part of His nature. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Any holiness that we have in character and conduct must be derived from Him. Basically, to be *sanctified* means to be "set apart for God's exclusive use and pleasure." It involves separation from that which is unclean and complete devotion to God (2 Cor. 6:14–7:1). We are to be holy "in all manner of conversation [behavior]," so that everything we do reflects the holiness of God.

To a dedicated believer, there is no such thing as "secular" and "sacred." All of life is holy as we live to glorify God. Even such ordinary activities as eating and drinking can be done to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). If something cannot be done to the glory of God, then we can be sure it must be out of the will of God.

The Word of God (1 Peter 1:16)

"It is written!" is a statement that carries great authority for the believer. Our Lord used the Word of God to defeat Satan, and so may we (Matt. 4:1–11; see Eph. 6:17). But the Word of God is not only a sword for battle; it is also a light to guide us in this dark world (Ps. 119:105; 2 Peter 1:19), food that strengthens us (Matt. 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2), and water that washes us (Eph. 5:25–27).

The Word of God has a sanctifying ministry in the lives of dedicated believers (John 17:17). Those who delight in God's Word, meditate on it, and seek to obey it will experience God's direction and blessing in their lives (Ps. 1:1–3). The Word reveals God's mind, so we should *learn* it; God's heart, so we should *love* it; God's will, so we should *live* it. Our whole being—mind, will, and heart—should be controlled by the Word of God.

Peter quoted from the Book of Leviticus, "Ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44). Does this mean that the Old Testament Law is authoritative today for New Testament Christians? Keep in mind that the early Christians did not even have the New Testament. The only Word of God they possessed was the Old Testament, and God used that Word to direct and nurture them. Believers today are not under the ceremonial laws given to Israel; however, even in these laws we see moral and spiritual principles revealed. Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the Epistles, so we must obey them. (The Sabbath commandment was given especially to Israel and does not apply to us today. See Rom. 14:1–9.) As we read and study the Old Testament, we will learn much about God's character and working, and we will see truths pictured in types and symbols.

The first step toward keeping clean in a filthy world is to ask, "What does the Bible say?" In the Scriptures, we will find precepts, principles, promises, and persons to guide us in today's decisions. If we are really willing to obey God, He will show us His truth (John 7:17). While God's methods of working may change from age to age, His character remains the same and His spiritual principles never vary. We do not study the Bible just to get to know the Bible. We study the Bible that we might get to know God better. Too

many earnest Bible students are content with outlines and explanations, and do not really get to know God. It is good to know the Word of God, but this should help us better know the God of the Word.

The Judgment of God (1 Peter 1:17)

As God's children, we need to be serious about sin and about holy living. Our Heavenly Father is a holy (John 17:11) and righteous Father (John 17:25). He will not compromise with sin. He is merciful and forgiving, but He is also a loving disciplinarian who cannot permit His children to enjoy sin. After all, it was sin that sent His Son to the cross. If we call God "Father," then we should reflect His nature.

What is this judgment that Peter wrote about? It is the judgment of a believer's works. It has nothing to do with salvation, except that salvation ought to produce good works (Titus 1:16; 2:7, 12). When we trusted Christ, God forgave our sins and declared us righteous in His Son (Rom. 5:1–10; 8:1–4; Col. 2:13). Our sins have already been judged on the cross (1 Peter 2:24), and therefore they cannot be held against us (Heb. 10:10–18).

But when the Lord returns, there will be a time of judgment called "the Judgment Seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10–12; 2 Cor. 5:9–10). Each of us will give an account of his works, and each will receive the appropriate reward. This is a "family judgment," the Father dealing with His beloved children. The Greek word translated *judgeth* carries the meaning "to judge in order to find something good." God will search into the motives for our ministry; He will examine our hearts. But He assures us that His purpose is to glorify Himself in our lives and ministries, "and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5). What an encouragement!

God will give us many gifts and privileges, as we grow in the Christian life; but He will never give us the privilege to disobey and sin. He never pampers His children or indulges them. He is no respecter of persons. He "shows no partiality and accepts no bribes" (Deut. 10:17, NIV). "For God does not show favoritism" (Rom. 2:11, NIV). Years of obedience cannot purchase an hour of disobedience. If one of His children disobeys, God must chasten (Heb. 12:1–13). But when His child obeys and serves Him in love, He notes that and prepares the proper reward.

Peter reminded his readers that they were only "sojourners" on earth. Life was too short to waste in disobedience and sin (see 1 Peter 4:1–6). It was when Lot stopped being a sojourner, and became a resident in Sodom, that he lost his consecration and his testimony. Everything he lived for went up in smoke! Keep reminding yourself that you are a "stranger and pilgrim" in this world (1 Peter 1:1; 2:11).

In view of the fact that the Father lovingly disciplines His children today, and will judge their works in the future, we ought to cultivate an attitude of godly fear. This is not the cringing fear of a slave before a master, but the loving reverence of a child before his father. It is not fear of judgment (1 John 4:18), but a fear of disappointing Him or sinning against His love. It is "godly fear" (2 Cor. 7:1), a sober reverence for the Father.

I sometimes feel that there is today an increase in carelessness, even flippancy, in the way we talk about God or talk to God. Nearly a century ago, Bishop B.F. Westcott said, "Every year makes me tremble at the daring with which people speak of spiritual things." The godly bishop should hear what is said today! A worldly actress calls God "the Man upstairs." A baseball player calls Him "the great Yankee in the sky." An Old Testament Jew so feared God that he would not even pronounce His holy name, yet we today speak

of God with carelessness and irreverence. In our public praying, we sometimes get so familiar that other people wonder whether we are trying to express our requests or impress the listeners with our nearness to God!

Possible ending to Lesson 2

The assurance of Heaven is a great help to us today. As Dr. James M. Gray expressed it in one of his songs, “*Who can mind the journey, when the road leads home?*” If suffering today means glory tomorrow, then suffering in a way becomes a blessing to us. The unsaved have their “*glory*” now, but it will be followed by eternal suffering *away from the glory of God* (2 Thessalonians 1:3–10). In the light of this, let’s read 2 Corinthians 4:7–18 NLT and rejoice:¹⁴

7 We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

8 We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair.

9 We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed.

10 Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

11 Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies.

12 So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you.

13 But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, “I believed in God, so I spoke.”

14 We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you.

15 All of this is for your benefit. And as God’s grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.

16 That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day.

17 For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

18 So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

The Love of God (1 Peter 1:18–21)

¹⁴ Wiersbe, Warren W.: The Bible Exposition Commentary. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 1 Pe 1:5

This is the highest motive for holy living. In this paragraph, Peter reminded his readers of their salvation experience, a reminder that all of us regularly need. This is one reason our Lord established the Lord's Supper, so that regularly His people would remember that He died for them. Note the reminders that Peter gave.

He reminded them of *what they were*. To begin with, they were slaves who needed to be set free. The word *redeemed* is, to us, a theological term; but it carried a special meaning to people in the first-century Roman Empire. There were probably 60 million slaves in the Empire! Many slaves became Christians and fellowshipped in the local assemblies. A slave could purchase his own freedom, if he could collect sufficient funds; or his master could sell him to someone who would pay the price and set him free. Redemption was a precious thing in that day.

We must never forget the slavery of sin (Titus 3:3). Moses urged Israel to remember that they had been slaves in Egypt (Deut. 5:15; 16:12; 24:18, 22). The generation that died in the wilderness forgot the bondage of Egypt and wanted to go back!

Not only did we have a life of slavery, but it was also a life of *emptiness*. Peter called it "the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers" (1 Peter 1:18, NIV), and he described it more specifically in 1 Peter 4:1–4. At the time, these people thought their lives were "full" and "happy," when they were really empty and miserable. Unsaved people today are blindly living on substitutes.

While ministering in Canada, I met a woman who told me she had been converted early in life but had drifted into a "society life" that was exciting and satisfied her ego. One day, she was driving to a card party and happened to tune in a Christian radio broadcast. At that very moment, the speaker said, "Some of you women know more about cards than you do your Bible!" Those words arrested her. God spoke to her heart, she went back home, and from that hour her life was dedicated fully to God. She saw the futility and vanity of a life spent out of the will of God.

Peter not only reminded them of what they were, but he also reminded them of *what Christ did*. He shed His precious blood to purchase us out of the slavery of sin and set us free forever. *To redeem* means "to set free by paying a price." A slave could be freed with the payment of money, but no amount of money can set a lost sinner free. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can redeem us.

Peter was a witness of Christ's sufferings (1 Peter 5:1) and mentioned His sacrificial death often in this letter (1 Peter 2:21ff; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1). In calling Christ "a Lamb," Peter was reminding his readers of an Old Testament teaching that was important in the early church, and that ought to be important to us today. It is the doctrine of substitution: an innocent victim giving his life for the guilty.

The doctrine of sacrifice begins in Genesis 3, when God killed animals that He might clothe Adam and Eve. A ram died for Isaac (Gen. 22:13) and the Passover lamb was slain for each Jewish household (Ex. 12). Messiah was presented as an innocent Lamb in Isaiah 53. Isaac asked the question, "Where is the lamb?" (Gen. 22:7) and John the Baptist answered it when he pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). In heaven, the redeemed and the angels sing, "Worthy is the Lamb!" (Rev. 5:11–14)

Peter made it clear that Christ's death was an appointment, not an accident; for it was ordained by God before the foundation of the world (Acts 2:23). From the human perspective, our Lord was cruelly murdered; but from the divine perspective, He laid

down His life for sinners ([John 10:17–18](#)). But He was raised from the dead! Now, anyone who trusts Him will be saved for eternity.

When you and I meditate on the sacrifice of Christ for us, certainly we should want to obey God and live holy lives for His glory. When only a young lady, Frances Ridley Havergal saw a picture of the crucified Christ with this caption under it: “I did this for thee. What hast thou done for Me?” Quickly, she wrote a poem, but was dissatisfied with it and threw it into the fireplace. The paper came out unharmed! Later, at her father’s suggestion, she published the poem, and today we sing it.

I gave My life for thee,
My precious blood I shed;
That thou might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.
I gave, I gave, My life for thee,

What hast thou given for Me?

A good question, indeed! I trust we can give a good answer to the Lord. ¹⁵

-----START The Bible exposition Commentary

Wilmington’s bible handbook

1 Peter 1:22-25 NLT:

22 You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart.

23 For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God.

24 As the Scriptures say, “People are like grass; their beauty is like a

¹⁵ Wiersbe, Warren W.: The Bible Exposition Commentary. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 1 Pe 1:13

*flower in the field. The grass withers and the flower fades.
25 But the word of the Lord remains forever.” And that word is the Good
News that was preached to you.*

Unredeemed human life will fade like a fallen flower, but God’s Word is everlasting, as are all who put their trust in it. As everlasting beings, we should love each other with “*sincere*” and holy love.¹⁶

1 So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech.

2 Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment,

3 now that you have had a taste of the Lord’s kindness.

4 You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God’s temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor.

5 And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What’s more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God.

6 As the Scriptures say, “I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.”

7 Yes, you who trust him recognize the honor God has given him. But for those who reject him, “The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.”

8 And, “He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they do not obey God’s word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them.

9 But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

10 “Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God’s people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God’s mercy.”

11 Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls.

12 Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.

13 For the Lord’s sake, respect all human authority—whether the king as head of state,
14 or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do

¹⁶ Willmington, H. L.: Willmington's Bible Handbook. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 1997, S. 769

wrong and to honor those who do right.

15 It is God's will that your honorable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you.

16 For you are free, yet you are God's slaves, so don't use your freedom as an excuse to do evil.

17 Respect everyone, and love your Christian brothers and sisters. Fear God, and respect the king.

18 You who are slaves must accept the authority of your masters with all respect. Do what they tell you—not only if they are kind and reasonable, but even if they are cruel.

19 For God is pleased with you when you do what you know is right and patiently endure unfair treatment.

20 Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you.

21 For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.

22 He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone.

23 He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

24 He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed.

25 Once you were like sheep who wandered away. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.

1 In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over

2 by observing your pure and reverent lives.

3 Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes.

4 You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.

5 This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They trusted God and accepted the authority of their husbands.

6 For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, and called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do.

7 In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.

8 Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.

9 Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will bless you for it.

10 For the Scriptures say, "If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies.

11 Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace, and work to maintain it.

12 The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil.”

13 Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good?

14 But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats.

15 Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.

16 But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.

17 Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong!

18 Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.

19 So he went and preached to the spirits in prison—

20 those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood.

21 And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

22 Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority.

1 So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin.

2 You won't spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God.

3 You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.

4 Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you.

5 But remember that they will have to face God, who will judge everyone, both the living and the dead.

6 That is why the Good News was preached to those who are now dead—so although they were destined to die like all people, they now live forever with God in the Spirit.

7 The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers.

8 Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.

9 Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.

10 God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

11 Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and

energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.

12 Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you.

13 Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.

14 So be happy when you are insulted for being a Christian, for then the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you.

15 If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people's affairs.

16 But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name!

17 For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin with God's household. And if judgment begins with us, what terrible fate awaits those who have never obeyed God's Good News?

18 And also, "If the righteous are barely saved, what will happen to godless sinners?"

19 So if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God, keep on doing what is right, and trust your lives to the God who created you, for he will never fail you.

1 And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you:

2 Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God.

3 Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example.

4 And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.

5 In the same way, you younger men must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you, serve each other in humility, for "God opposes the proud but favors the humble."

6 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.

7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

8 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

9 Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are.

10 In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.

11 All power to him forever! Amen.

12 I have written and sent this short letter to you with the help of Silas, whom I commend to you as a faithful brother. My purpose in writing is to encourage you and assure you that what you are experiencing is truly part of God's grace for you. Stand firm in this grace.

13 Your sister church here in Babylon sends you greetings, and so does my son Mark.
14 Greet each other with Christian love. Peace be with all of you who are in Christ.