



**THE FIRST
EPISTLE OF
PETER**



**LUTHER E.
SCHWARTZKOPF**

**LIVING WAY
BIBLE STUDY**

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- 2. SMALL GROUPS* The class meets for an opening and divides into small groups of 8–10 people. The small group leader guides the group through the P.A. questions, encouraging each to share their answers and discuss further as time allows.
- 3. THE MESSAGE* The lecture or message is given by a pastor or layperson who has researched the material and presents the study, giving personal insight and augmenting, but not duplicating, the author's comments.
- 4. THE NARRATIVE* The author's comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the end of the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the small groups may choose to review the author's comments of the last lesson, and share what each has highlighted as meaningful or important.

Each lesson should be stapled together according to the number of the lesson in the right-hand corner of the page. The P.A. questions for the next week should be attached after the author's narrative for the current week, as they will be the home study for the next class session.

The first meeting of the class is an introduction to the study. Since the members of the small groups have no P.A. questions to discuss at the first meeting, they may use the time to get acquainted or to tell what they hope to receive by studying this course. At the first meeting, the lecturer presents background information about the course, using the Introduction lesson as a guide.

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Studies listed include the number of lessons (xx) and the *author*

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| Philippians (12) | <i>Rev. Martin Mayer</i> |
| Colossians (8) | <i>Rev. Luther Schwartzkopf</i> |
| 1 & 2 Thessalonians (9) | <i>Rev. Weldon Leimer</i> |
| Timothy, Titus & Philemon (16) | <i>Dr. O.A. Waech</i> |
| Hebrews (28) | <i>Rev. Martin Mayer</i> |
| James (8) | <i>Rev. Luther Schwartzkopf</i> |
| 1 Peter (8) | <i>Rev. Luther Schwartzkopf</i> |
| 2 Peter & Jude (9) | <i>Rev. Luther Schwartzkopf</i> |
| 1 John, 2 John & 3 John (8) | <i>Dr. Robert Holst</i> |
| Revelation (28) | <i>Rev. John Scharlemann</i> |
| Great Miracles of the N.T. (13) | <i>Rev. John Scharlemann</i> |

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Born in China of missionary parents (1922)

Graduated from Concordia College (Milwaukee) in 1940 and Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) in 1945

Received degree in Sociology and graduate studies in Counseling Psychology from California State University (San Bernardino, CA)

Spent entire ministry in the Southern CA District (1945-1988)

Missionary-at-large, E. Sierra area (1945-48)

Immanuel, Oceanside and Fallbrook (1948-50)

Trinity, San Bernardino (1950-72)

First full-time Director of Arrowhead Lutheran Camp (1972-88)

Served on District Bible Institute staff in the 1950's; developed and taught courses: How to Study the Bible and God's Purpose for Lutheran Women

Graduate Bethel Bible Series Bible Study Institute

Served twenty (20) years on Synodical District, Mission Services Department, six years as chairman

Retired from full-time ministry in 1988, with wife (Ruth) moved back to Bishop, CA to be with grandchildren and enjoy the outdoor activities as well as the beauty and majesty of the High Sierras

Called to Glory — May 13, 2006

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“If we can pick up on this theme of being exiles in a godless and hostile world, we will be able to appreciate the main thrust of Peter’s letter.”

OUR PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

“What on earth are you doing, for heaven’s sake!” This is one way to put it. Another way to put it might be to ask the question, “Do you have a personal mission statement?” Have you ever formulated a clear and precise statement regarding your purpose in life as a Christian? Have you ever taken the time to spell out in specific terms the various things which you will need to do, as well as the things you will never do, if you hope to fulfill your personal mission in life?

The First Epistle of Peter offers clear guidelines for the believer who is serious about formulating such a “Personal Mission Statement.”

Dr. Martin Luther included this short letter (only 105 verses) on his “short list” of the most important books in the New Testament. His contemporary Dutch authority on the New Testament, Erasmus, called it “an epistle sparse in words, crammed with content.” Lutheran scholar Martin Franzmann, in his *The Word of the Lord Grows*, writes, “Anyone looking for a key book which will unlock the meaning of the whole New Testament would do well to give his days and nights to this book!”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The opening verse of this letter identifies the author as “Peter: an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Originally Peter’s name was “Simeon,” a Hebrew word which means “hearing”— something which Peter wasn’t too good at during his discipleship days. “Simon,” the Greek version of this, was applied to Peter forty-nine times in the New Testament. Shortly after He called Simon to

follow Him, Jesus gave him the name “Cephas,” which is the Aramaic word for “rock” (John 1:42) hence, the Greek name “Peter” which also means “rock.” The frequency of the combination “Simon Peter” and the phrase “Simon who was known as Peter” indicates that from early on the new name which Jesus gave him became the popular way of referring to him.

Peter was the son of Jonas (or John). He had grown up in his father’s home in the fishing village of Bethsaida, which is on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Like his father and other disciples of Jesus, Peter was a fisherman. He also had a home in Capernaum, just a few miles south and west of his “home town” (Mark 1:29-30). Paul mentions (1 Corinthians 9:5) that Peter was married and that his wife often accompanied him on missionary trips.

Peter was one of the first to become a disciple of Jesus. It was at the invitation of his brother Andrew, a follower of John the Baptist, that Peter met Jesus (John 1:40-42). With James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Peter was part of the “inner circle.” This trio of disciples often accompanied Jesus for special experiences (e.g. The Transfiguration, Mark 9:2-8; and in Gethsemane, Mark 14:33).

In the Gospels, Peter comes across as a quick-tempered, highly emotional, undependable, “foot in his mouth kind of guy.” However, following his reinstatement to discipleship at Jesus’ post resurrection appearance (John 21) and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2), Peter began to live up to the nickname “Rocky” (taken from the Greek). His forceful preaching on Pentecost (Acts 2:14-40), blessed by the Holy Spirit, led to the conversion of 3,000 people who were “added to the Church” on that one day! (Acts 2:41).

PETER’S MINISTRY AND MISSION

In the beginning, Peter’s ministry seems to have been primarily among his fellow Jews in and around Jerusalem. Yet, by God’s direction Peter ministered to non-Jews as well. In fact, he has the distinction of being the first to receive Gentiles into church fellowship, as the account of the conversion of the Roman Centurion Cornelius and his family reports in Acts 10.

Acts (12:17-18) tells us that Peter made a quick decision to leave Jerusalem in A.D. 44 at the outbreak of persecutions against the followers of Jesus, instigated by the wicked King Herod Agrippa. We aren’t told, however, where he went. Peter does reappear briefly in Jerusalem in connection with the special council (Acts 15). Here, chairman James calls Peter by his Hebrew name Simeon.

The question of whether or not Peter ever made it to Rome has been a subject of debate for many years. Lutheran scholar Dr. Paul Maier writes in the historical notes of his novel *Flames of Rome* that the “current consensus” is in favor of the idea that Peter did make it to Rome. He points to a letter, which Clement of Rome sent to the people in Corinth in A.D. 96. In this letter he ties the martyrdom of Peter and Paul with those of the Christian martyrs who gave their lives during Nero’s persecution in A.D. 64. Maier’s notes also mention, “there are numerous references by Christian authors to the martyrdom of Peter and Paul in Rome.” The date of Peter’s arrival in Rome is likewise shrouded in mystery, but it probably was shortly before his martyrdom.

The actual site of Peter’s execution and burial plot is said to have been in the garden adjacent to Nero’s palace, which was situated across the Tiber River from the main part of Rome. The first Christian Emperor Constantine (ca 280-337) had a chapel erected here in honor of Saint Peter. Today, on this site stands the magnificent renaissance Basilica of St. Peter and adjoining it, St. Peter’s Square.

The legend that Peter was crucified upside down has been pretty well accepted since the time of Origen, the renowned Church Father (A.D. 185-253). Many scholars today question the reliability of this legend because there was no early tradition stemming from Rome itself suggesting that he was, indeed, crucified in this way, and they feel that the claim has “an apocryphal ring” to it.

THE AUTHENTICITY OF PETER’S AUTHORSHIP

That Simon Peter was, in fact, the author of this letter had early and strong support. The letter was explicitly ascribed to Peter by that group of “church fathers” whose opinions carried tremendous weight in their day and beyond — men such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria,

.....

*Peter was one of the first to become a disciple of Jesus.
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.....

and Origen, all of whom lived and worked during the latter portion of the second and the beginning of the third century (A.D.). The fourth century historian Eusebius, of Alexandria, in his *Ecclesiastical History* noted that Peter's authorship of this letter was "universally accepted" by the Church without any doubt.

Nevertheless, there are many modern scholars who are bold enough to challenge this strong witness. At the head of their list of objections is their observation that the quality of the Greek in this letter is much too polished for Peter. It is true that in Acts 4:13 the disciples are referred to as "uneducated, common men." However, the Greek word for "uneducated" (*agrammotos*) does not mean illiterate. In this context, it very likely means simply that the disciples were without formal training in the Holy Scriptures. They didn't have diplomas from any of the rabbinical schools.

Without question, the Greek of 1 Peter is a cut or two above that of 2 Peter. Most conservative Bible scholars point to verse twelve of Chapter 5 to explain this difference. Here the apostle Peter states that "By Silvanus...I have written to you." The Greek word for "by" literally means "through" or "by means of." Silvanus is regarded as another name for Silas who was the apostle Paul's faithful co-worker (see Acts 15:22-29; 2 Corinthians 1:19). With Paul, he co-authored the letters which Paul sent to the Thessalonians.

It may very well have been that when Paul was executed in Rome, his colleague Silvanus (Silas) made himself available to assist Peter. Peter was very likely happy to have the assistance of such a competent servant of the Lord, especially since Silas had been with Paul on his missionary trips among the people of Asia Minor for whom this letter was intended. Peter was glad to use him as his "amanuensis," the person who actually put his hand to the stylus and wrote the words. In this case, Peter would tell Silas what he wanted to say — maybe in Aramaic, his mother tongue. Silas would then put Peter's thoughts and ideas into words, and grammatically form them into Greek. Even though Silas did the actual composing and writing, it would in essence be Peter's epistle.

Without going into detail, other objections from modern scholars can be just as easily explained away. We are on pretty solid ground if we follow the testimony of the early church and accept Peter as the author of this letter.

WHEN WAS 1 PETER WRITTEN?

Putting a date on this first letter of Peter may not be quite as simple. However, everything points to sometime during the period of Nero's reign, which was from A.D. 54 to A.D. 68. It cannot be dated earlier than A.D. 60 since it shows familiarity with Paul's "prison letters" — Colossians and Ephesians dated A.D. 60. Some scholars feel that since Peter still calls for unequivocal loyalty to the state (2:13-17), it probably was written prior to Nero's official persecution which began in A.D. 64.

Very likely, it was written shortly after the martyrdom of Paul in A.D. 62, but just before the horrible persecution of Christians ordered by Nero — A.D. 63 or early 64.

WHERE WAS 1 PETER WRITTEN?

In 5:13, Peter designates the place from which the letter was being sent as "Babylon." There seems to be agreement among Bible scholars that Peter was using this name in a symbolic way (Cp. Revelation 17:9-10) and as a "code word" for Rome. This fits with what we have written above about the date of writing and earlier about Peter's being in Rome around this time period.

THE INTENDED FIRST READERS

According to verse one, this letter was addressed, first of all, to the Christians in the five provinces of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). You may recall that the apostle Paul focused his missionary efforts in the two provinces of Galatia and Asia — the southern and southwestern portions of Asia Minor. The seven churches of Revelation are all in Asia.

Peter's missionary trips apparently took him to the southeast and the north. You may recall that on his second missionary journey, the apostle Paul "attempted to go into Bithynia, but the spirit of Jesus did not allow them" (Acts 16:7). It may very well have been, that unknown to Paul, his colleague Peter was already ministering to the people in that province.

Some believe that shortly before his beheading, the apostle Paul had encouraged Peter to write a letter of

encouragement to all of the Asia Minor congregations — those he himself and Silvanus had served and those Peter had worked with. The purpose of such a "circular letter" would be to warn them all about the anti-Christian movement already underway in Rome, and which would probably soon make its way to Asia Minor. Peter is preparing his readers for a blow that is about to fall, rather than one that has already hit them.

The readers are called "exiles of the Dispersion." Many of the Jewish converts could relate to this term because they were part of the great Diaspora, which found their people fleeing to all parts of the world. However, since most of the Christians in Asia Minor churches were Gentiles, we can assume that Peter was using this phrase in a figurative sense. He wanted to remind them that like their Jewish Christian friends, all of them should think of themselves as exiles — as aliens and pilgrims who have been dispersed in a godless and hostile world.

A GENERAL EPISTLE

First Peter is classified as a "general" epistle. It is "generic" in nature. It has a message not just for its originally intended readers. It has a message for all believers in all ages.

If we can pick up on this theme of being exiles in a godless and hostile world, we will be able to appreciate the main thrust of Peter's letter. Even though we may not face the horrendous physical and emotional persecutions which Peter's friends faced, in reality the times have not really changed all that much. We would do well to think of ourselves as pilgrims in a hostile world.

The hostility may be masked, but this makes it even more dangerous. Like the people in Asia Minor, we need to be astute enough to recognize the diabolical forces at work to rob us of our precious faith and hope. We need to be prepared. Let this serve as a powerful motivation for each of us to work up a Personal Mission Statement and have a clear idea of what it will take to carry it out.

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 1 PETER 1:1-12

Thank You, Father in heaven, for Your great love and mercy, which moved You to do everything that needed to be done for my eternal salvation. Help me to grow daily in my appreciation of this wonderful truth, and fill my heart with joy as I look forward to the blessedness of eternity. Amen.

.....
1 Peter 1:1-9

- 1. Suppose you have a neighbor who is a Jehovah’s witness. One day she says to you “You believe in the Trinity, don’t you? Do you know that the word “Trinity” is not even in the Bible?” What do you say to her?

Verse 2 clearly speaks of the “threeness” of the Godhead.
What does the Father do?

What does the Son do?

What does the Spirit do?

- 2. What led God to bring us into His family of “chosen ones” (v. 3)?

____ our goodness ____ His mercy ____ our potential
How does the concept of a “new birth” re-enforce this?

- 3. What three negative “compounds” does Peter use (v.4) to emphasize the durability of the inheritance we will one day receive as members of God’s family?

What is Peter trying to get us to understand?

- 4. Consider Fred who has been a devout Christian all of his life, very active in his church, and always ready to speak to others about his faith. In his later years he has become a victim of Alzheimer’s. His diseased mind seems to have, at best, a very blurred understanding of what the Christian religion is all about. He even refuses to take Holy Communion. Can you find something in verse 5 which might help you to console and reassure his wife, who is concerned about his eternal life.

- 5. According to verse 6, what should you expect might happen to you if you really try to live out your life as a member of the family of God?

What two things should we keep in mind as we deal with these trials? (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17; James 1:2-4)

6. In verse 7, what process in metallurgy does Peter use as an analogy to show believers how to react to trials, which come their way because of their faith?

What invaluable benefits can accrue to the believer who is tested like this?

Have you experienced such testing and blessing?

Please share with the class.

7. What does Peter say should always and in all circumstances be the dominant characteristic in our lives as God's "special people" (v. 8)?
8. According to verse 9, what blessing will be ours if we continue in the faith? How can this give us incentive and courage as well as the capability of maintaining a spirit of joy even when we're feeling the hostility of the world at its worst?

1 Peter 1:10-12

9. In the first nine verses of this letter, Peter has been singing the praises of God for all the wonderful things He has made possible for His "Chosen Ones." He wants them to appreciate how privileged and "special" they really are. What does he point to now, to get them to see that they even have "an edge" over some of God's great people in the Old Testament?

Who else had not been in on the specifics of when and where God would bring fulfillment to His great plan of salvation for the whole world?

What was true of the Asia Minor Christians is true for us, too. How should this make us feel?

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“The same Holy Spirit, who spoke to these men, saw to it that the “Good News” of Jesus was announced to you, and the same Holy Spirit opened your ears to accept — the promised Messiah — as your Lord and Savior.”



In the summer of 1997, after twelve years in space, the Russian space station MIR began to experience all kinds of problems. The crew of the space station, as well as scientists in the Moscow control center, knew they had to get the damaged equipment in working order as quickly as possible. After all, these men from planet earth could not survive in space without the artificial environment provided by the space station. They were only temporary residents in space. You can be sure that they never forgot that — not even for a split-second.

It's kind of like that for Christians living on planet earth. We should never — not even for a moment — lose sight of the reality that as God's chosen people we are truly aliens in a hostile world.

This is where the apostle Peter begins in his formulation of A Personal Mission Statement for the people to whom he wrote this epistle, as well as for us today. He reminds us all that we are people who are “out of our element” during our short sojourn on earth (See John 15:19).

HOW WE GOT TO BE PEOPLE OF GOD'S WORLD

1 PETER 1:1-3

In verse 2, Peter reminds us of the important truth of how we got to be “other-worldly” people. We “were chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.”

In this short statement, Peter summarizes how it all happened. It began with the Father's “choosing” us. But there is a lot more to it than that. In the

beginning, God's created people sinned and disobeyed Him. Then, early in the history of His chosen people of the Old Testament, God introduced ceremonies which clearly demonstrated that it would take shedding of someone's blood before people could again enjoy a good relationship with Him. Before the High Priest could enter God's presence in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle and later the temple, animals were killed on the altar of sacrifice. Only after the High Priest had sprinkled some of the blood over the people and upon himself did he move toward the place of God's Presence. All of this pointed to the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on Calvary's Cross.

When Peter says here (v.2) that the Christians were "sprinkled" with the blood of Jesus Christ, he obviously doesn't mean this in a literal sense. They were sprinkled with His blood figuratively when they heard the Good News that God's Son had shed His sacred blood on the Cross on their behalf. The Holy Spirit then broke through the spiritual darkness in their hearts and led them to see that God had done all of this for them. They responded by opening their hearts to Him. The "bottom line" is that they had the Triune God to thank for their blessed relationship with Him. God had taken care of everything that needed to be done to make this possible. Basically, it was all His doing!

In this letter, Peter followed the customary format for formal correspondence. In the first verse, he identified himself and gave his credentials. Next, he identified the persons to whom the letter was addressed, including a brief complimentary statement about them. He evidently felt that referring to them as "God's Chosen People" was the highest honor he could mention.

Next would come the greeting. In those days, among the Greeks the greeting was "Xaire!" or "Joy!" Instead of using the customary word, Peter used a similar sounding word "Xaris" or "Grace!" To make the greeting even more meaningful, he added the Greek translation of "Shalom!" — the greeting, which was commonly used by members of God's Old Testament people. "Shalom" (Peace) points to the idea of perfect spiritual soundness.

Peter's wish for them then was that this grace and peace would "be multiplied" — would be theirs in abundant

supply. It was his wish for them that they would experience more and more of the exciting power of God in their lives! Nice touch! Can you think of a more fitting way for one Christian pilgrim to greet other pilgrims than to wish them increased spiritual power and blessing?

As Peter reflected for a moment upon what he had just told Silvanus to write, and before he gets into the body of his message for them, he just has to say how excited he is about all this. He invites his readers to join him. He says "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v.3). If he were writing this today, he may have chosen to say "Let's hear it for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ — three cheers to God for what He has done!"

First on his list of things for which to give God "three cheers" is the new life that they all have. "We have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Peter is here referring to the new life which God in His great mercy gives to all who respond to the Gospel. Just as the life we receive from our parents comes to us without any action on our part, so this "new birth" is a result of what God has done — a gift from Him.

The birth puts us into a loving relationship with our heavenly Father, which is characterized by hope. In our time, people will often use the word hope interchangeably with the concept of "wishful thinking." This is not what Peter means here by the word "hope." He meant looking to the future with a well-founded expectation of great blessing.

This hope, Peter writes, gets its durability and dependability from the established fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It was the resurrection of Jesus that was responsible for Peter's return from the hopelessness which overwhelmed him, after the crucifixion of Jesus. Here Peter seems to echo what his colleague Paul said in the great resurrection chapter of his correspondence to the Corinthians "If Christ has not been raised your faith is futile and you are still in your sins... But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead!" (1 Corinthians 15:17ff). In Jesus Christ and His resurrection from the dead, believers are given the forward look to something we can count on.

WE ARE GUARANTEED A FANTASTIC RETIREMENT

1 PETER 1:4-5

As members of God's family we can look forward to a fantastic "retirement" when our short stay on this earth is over. Peter's language here seems to allude to Israel's hope as they were being led through the wilderness by Moses. It was their hope of an inheritance in the Promised Land that kept them going.

However, Peter points up a great contrast between such an inheritance and the inheritance he is talking about. He piles up three negative compounds. First, he says this inheritance is "imperishable." In contrast to Canaan, it cannot be ravaged or polluted. Secondly, it is "undefiled." The Greek word for this (*amiantus*) refers to a certain mineral found among the rocks which can be made into a fire-resisting fabric (maybe like asbestos). The fabric turned into pure white when placed into a fire. The Romans paid dearly for it. They wanted it for wrapping the remains of their dead so that in cremation the precious ashes would be preserved in a fabric that remained unaffected by the consuming fire. Thirdly, Peter says that it was "unfading." The Greek term for this seems to be a reference to something with which Peter's readers would be familiar. In his *Lexicon of the Greek Language*, Dr. Thayer tells us that the word is the same as the *amaranth*, a flower that never fades. When plucked off, if it is moistened with water it revives. Back in those days, says Dr. Thayer, "the *amaranth* plant was a symbol of perpetuity and immortality."

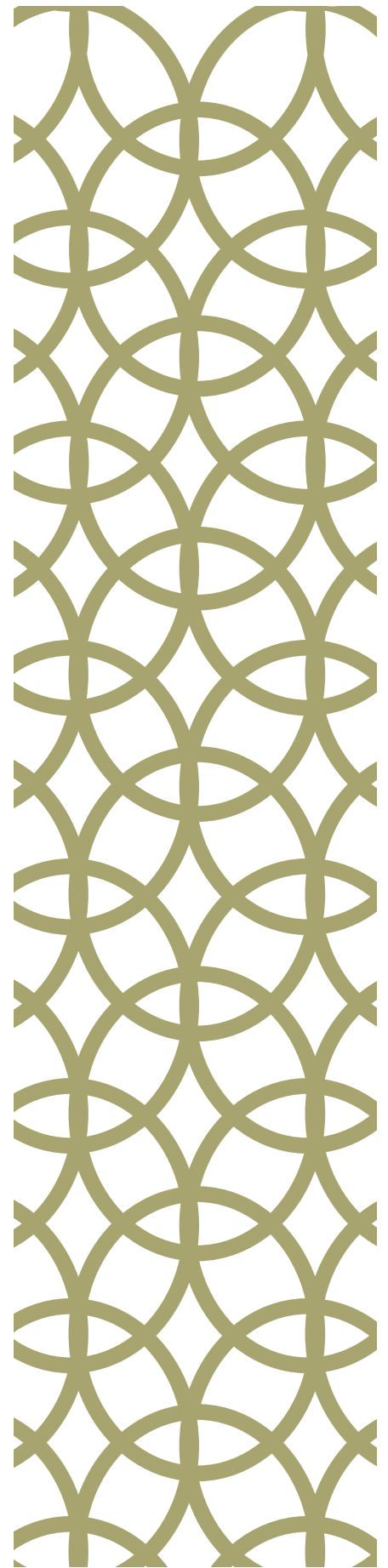
Furthermore, Peter reminds them, this inheritance "is kept in heaven for you." The verb form for the word "kept" happens to be the perfect participle, which implies completed action. It strongly suggests the idea that this is a "done deal." It's like a treasure which God has placed into a "heavenly safety deposit box," the key for which God will put in your hands one day. This inheritance is a sure thing!

Not only is it secure, Peter says, there is also this neat feature: You can count on getting to heaven to claim it. As you and I remain in a faith relationship with God, we can enjoy it throughout eternity. You can count on Him.

WE CAN LIVE JOYFULLY, NO MATTER WHAT

1 PETER 1:6-9

Since we have so much "going for us," Peter tells us, the overriding characteristic of our life is bound to be one of steady joy. He adds that this will be true, "though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials." The language used here does not seem to point to any organized persecution. Peter is simply laying before them the difficulties they can expect to experience on a day-to-day basis, simply because they are Christians. Their unique outlook for the future as well as their set of values is going to put them "at odds" with the people around them. There will be open and sometimes subtle antagonism toward them and their way of life simply because they are different. It is inevitable. It comes with the territory. Nevertheless, Peter



assures them, this is only for a “little while.”

Peter then goes on to instruct them how to put a “positive spin” on the difficulties they might encounter. He alludes to the way in which impurities are removed from gold by the heat of a fire. What remains after this process is a more beautiful genuine nugget of gold. Here, Peter encourages the believer to consider hardships they may experience as the occasions which will help to bring out the true wonder and beauty of their faith. It will not only survive the testing, but become even stronger and more beautiful. That purified faith will call forth the words of admiration and commendation from the Lord at His Second Coming.

Peter interrupts his train of thought to focus briefly on another facet of truth about the faith, which they already had. “Think of it,” he says, “You have never seen Him and yet you love Him; you don’t see Him now and yet you believe in Him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy.” He wanted them to recognize how much more valuable than gold is their faith. Gold can bring some blessings. But it’s nothing compared to blessings that faith can bring them. Their faith in the Lord Jesus brings present joy that you cannot find words adequate to describe. Peter also says that it is “exalted” joy, very likely intending for them to think of their joy as a hint of the glories to come.

Peter is on a roll. Not only does faith bring hope, love, and joy, ultimately it brings the best gift of all “the salvation of your souls.” The word “soul” is used here in the Semitic sense of “person” or “self.”

With all of the exuberance he can muster, Peter reminds them that they are special and privileged people. As people of faith, they have hope, they have joy, and they can begin to experience the blessedness of their future salvation already during their earthly sojourn.

BELIEVERS ARE MOST PRIVILEGED

1 PETER 1:10-12

In his effort to show them how special and unique they really were, Peter suggests that they take a look at the past. Think about the great prophets of the Old Testament, he says. They had the privilege of foretelling the details of God’s plan of salvation and describing in detail various

aspects of the Messiah’s work of redemption. Yet it was all in the future for them. They hunted in vain for hints as to when and where all of this would take place. Somehow, they came to accept the fact that they were just the advance guard. What they had the privilege of knowing about and announcing would not happen in their time.

You are much more privileged, he told them. What these great servants of God could only dream about and write about, you are experiencing personally! The same Holy Spirit, who spoke to these men, saw to it that the “Good News” of Jesus was announced to you, and the same Holy Spirit opened your ears to accept — the promised Messiah — as your Lord and Savior.

If that were not enough to convince them how special they were, Peter takes it a step higher reminding them that in their faith they had something that not even the angels in heaven can experience. These are “things into which angels long to look.” The present tense suggests that they are continuing to try to see what the Christians are experiencing. Peter may have had in mind the reality that the angels of heaven are perfect beings. They know nothing of the agony and anguish of sin. So, they can’t experience the wonderful Gospel of forgiveness and the hope of eternal life. They are limited to rejoicing over a lost sinner returning to God.

This wonderful section lays the foundation for everything else that Peter says later in this epistle.

As we go about our task of formulating our own “Personal Mission Statement,” this is the place to begin. We start by affirming who we are and how we got this way. We are a most privileged people. We are members of God’s Holy People — not because we are so good, but because He is so gracious. This is the basis for a radically different view of life, which might not always be understood or appreciated by unbelieving people with whom we share a comparatively short ride on planet earth.

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 1 PETER 1:13 - 2:3

As I study Your Word today, Lord, help me to see clearly that You have not only called me by the Gospel and led me by the Holy Spirit to accept the salvation which Jesus has won for me with His sacrificial death, but You have also called me to a life of holiness and obedience. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

.....
1 Peter 1:13-16

1. Take a few minutes to formulate for yourself a clearly stated "Personal Mission Statement" with two or three specific goals:

1.

2.

3.

2. What is the significance of the word "Therefore" with which Peter begins this section (v.13)?

Summarize in a personal way the main truths which Peter stated as the basis of his "Therefore." In v.1-13, Peter reminded me that...

3. In the light of what Peter's "Therefore" referred to, what is the first thing he challenged his readers to do?

Why this emphasis on using their minds?

4. What does Peter say can give us inspiration as we struggle to live a life of obedience to God?

Is Peter suggesting that our motive for obedience is our hope of getting to heaven when we die?

What would be wrong with that?

How can the sure hope of salvation help us?

5. Suppose you heard a Televangelist proclaim "Believe in Jesus and you will go to heaven. That's all there is to it!" In the light of verse 14, is that all there is to being a Christian?

What else does God expect?

Tell how membership in a Christian congregation helps you grow in personal "holiness."

Who is the model that we should seek to emulate in our "quest for holiness?"

1 Peter 1:17-21

6. What "attitude" does Peter say should dominate our lives as we seek to live for God, according to verse 17?

How can we reconcile this advice with what the Apostle John writes in 1 John 4:18?

If you are familiar with Luther's Small Catechism, how does Martin Luther begin the explanation of each of the Ten Commandments?

7. With whose religious experience does Peter try to get his readers (and us) to identify in verses 18 & 19?

What event in the history of God's Chosen People of the Old Testament does he want them to think about?

8. How does Peter (v.20) further seek to show his readers, of that time and now, the absolutely unbelievable magnitude of God's love?

What does he say (v.21) that this thought should do for us?

1 Peter 1:22-25

9. In what area of our lives (v.22) will God be looking for us to come through with God-like behavior?

How does God's example help us to clarify our understanding of what He means by love? (Romans 5:8)

In singling out the importance of love for brothers and sisters in Christ, was Peter implying that we are not expected to show love to non-Christians? How might you explain the absence of an all inclusive directive to love all people?

1 Peter 2:1-3

10. What does Peter recommend as an antidote or vaccine against attitudes and behaviors (2:1) that stifle and thwart our growth in holiness (v.2)?

What does Peter (v.3) point to as a way for us to nurture within our hearts a healthy and strong appetite for the Word?

LESSON 3

1 PETER 1:13 - 2:3

1 PETER

| | |
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| THE PRICE HE PAID IS OUR MOTIVE FOR REVERENT FEAR 1 PETER 1:17-21 | 15 |
| ALL THIS SHOULD MOVE US TO A LIFE OF LOVE 1 PETER 1:22-25 | 16 |
| THE WORD WILL HELP US TO GROW IN LOVE 1 PETER 2:1-3 | 17 |
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“We will use the brains God has given us to evaluate our lifestyle and get rid of anything and everything which is not “godly.” And we will seek with God’s help to pattern our lives after Him — especially His love!”

• • •

OUR PRIMARY MISSION IN LIFE

In the “preamble” (Lesson 2), Peter’s letter helped us to establish a solid base on which to develop our Personal Mission Statement. It helped us to clarify who we are and how we got to be who we are. Lesson 3 takes it a step forward to consider what should take place in our daily lives, in the light of what God has done for us.

OUR LIFESTYLE SHOWS WE REALLY ARE GOD’S PEOPLE

1 PETER 1:13-16

The word “therefore,” at the beginning of this section, hooks up the coming exhortation for holiness of living to everything that Peter has stated so far. “Therefore” is a “call to arms” for the sincere follower of Jesus. The great salvation, which God in His grace has provided for us, is designed not only to free us from eternal condemnation; it is also designed to free us up to be God’s people during our temporary stay on earth.

Without any hesitation, Peter calls his readers to “gird up your minds and be sober” (v.13). This figure of speech has its origin in the style of clothing for that day (Cp. Luke 12:35-37; Ephesians 6:14). Men and women wore loose-flowing robes. When they had manual work to do, they would take up the folds of their garments and tuck them under their belts so that movement of arms and legs would not be impaired. Today’s equivalent would be “Take off your coat, roll up your sleeves, and get to work!”

Peter's exhortation for us today is "Getting your minds in gear!" Living the Christian life is not a "no-brainer." It is not something we will simply drift into. It will require serious mental effort on our part. He informs us right "up front" that if we hope to live as God intends us to live we should expect a good mental workout.

And that will, quite naturally, require that you "be sober," Peter adds. This doesn't refer specifically to alcoholic excesses. It is used metaphorically to describe moral and spiritual alertness and sensitivity. Like a football coach giving his players a pep talk, Peter gives his "team" something to remember as they go out on the playing field of life to meet some tough challenges: "Set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." For those who take seriously the challenges of living the holy life, it will be very demanding. They can take heart. They know that when the game of life is over, they will experience the glory of Christ's victory when He comes again.

First of all, "as obedient children" (v.14) we will need to "roll up the sleeves" of our minds to carefully analyze and evaluate attitudes and behaviors that have become a part of ourselves over the years. In this process of evaluation we will be aware that many things, which were part and parcel of our personality, will have to be eliminated. Incidentally, the order of the words in Greek for "as obedient children" seems to suggest that we get closer to the meaning of this Hebraism by reading "as children of obedience." It would highlight the important concept that Peter wants to put across — that we are not just children of God who feel a strong obligation to be obedient; rather we are children who have inherited obedience. Thus it is our very nature to want to please our Heavenly Father. It's like we have received a whole new set of spiritual genes!

As "children of obedience," we have the right attitude to accept Peter's call to holiness (v.15). "As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct." This echoes God's call to Israel in Leviticus, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

Some commentators point out that the Greek word for "holy" (*hagios*), as it refers to God here, may be a "virtual noun" to identify God Himself as "The Holy One."

Translated this way it would read "Since it is The Holy One who has called you, you should be holy..." This makes God Himself the One we are to imitate. He is the model for our holiness (Matthew 5:48; Colossians 3:10; & Ephesians 5:1).

As with Judaism, Christianity is also a summons to holy living. Therefore, this makes it our #1 goal in life as God's people. It is the heart of our Personal Mission Statement.

THE PRICE HE PAID IS OUR MOTIVE FOR REVERENT FEAR

1 PETER 1:17-21

As an additional incentive to strive for holiness, Peter holds up the concept of the new and very personal relationship they have with God (v.17). It is a great privilege for them now to be able to think of the God of the universe as their loving "Father." This was very special for the early church. History tells us, it was the custom in those days to ask the catechumens not to join in praying the Lord's Prayer until they completed their instruction and had been baptized. In fact, catechumens were usually dismissed from the worship service before the Lord's Supper and the praying of the Lord's Prayer. So it may very well have been only recently that the recipients of this letter had begun to use the term "Father" in their worship.

The concept of "Father" implied not only that special relationship, it also played into the role of the Father as one who "judges each one impartially according to his deeds." God is the loving, caring, comforting Father. But a father also has a big responsibility to show approval or disapproval of the behavior of his children and to do this in a fair and impartial manner. Peter urges them to remember this side of God's "fatherhood," recognizing the truth that God, their Heavenly Father — not just looks the other way when He notices unholy behavior on the part of His sons and daughters. His love for them wouldn't allow it. In the light of this truth, Peter says to them, "conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile."

At first glance, it might seem that Peter is introducing a motive that really doesn't fit with the basic idea of the Gospel. Doesn't John tell us "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). What Peter means here by "fear" is a healthy respect and reverential awe, which grows out of mature love for God. It is not a

servile fear, but a sensitivity to the reality that disobedience to His divine will is going to grieve our Heavenly Father. There is no real contradiction here.

As Peter strives to motivate his readers to take seriously the challenge to live holy lives, he lifts up the truth of what it took on the part of God to bring them into a saving relationship with Himself. They should never forget that God had paid a great price to ransom them (v.18). The Greek word for ransom usually had to do with the transaction, which freed someone from slavery. Incidentally, this involved a formal ritual, which was regularly accompanied by a sacrifice of one kind or another. Peter had heard Jesus use the same idea when He proclaimed that He had come to give His life as “a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

If you “read between the lines,” you sense Peter’s “hidden agenda” coming to the surface. He really wants these new Christians to think of themselves not only as children of their Heavenly Father; but also, and especially, as “the New Israel!” The Israelites became the “People of God” when God called them out of Egypt. On the night of their deliverance, each family had been directed to pick out a lamb for sacrifice — not just any lamb. It had to be a lamb without spot or blemish. The blood of the lamb smeared on the doorposts of their homes would spare them from death. The meat of the roasted lamb would give them energy to start their journey to a new land and a new life. Peter wanted to get them to identify mentally with what happened for the Jews in Egypt. He wanted them to recognize that the bondage in which they were when God found them was really much worse than being slaves to an earthly tyrant. At that time they were literally slaves to “the futile ways inherited from their fathers” (v.18). Their lives then were just as pointless and meaningless as it was for the Israelites making bricks for the Pharaohs.

Peter didn’t want them ever to forget what it had cost God. The ransom price was not silver or gold. Rather, it was at great personal cost to Him. His “only begotten Son” fulfilled the symbolism of the lambs that were butchered by the Israelites on the night of the original Passover, as well as the hundreds of thousands that shed their blood in the annual Passovers.

Peter goes on to describe the amazing greatness of that love. He tells us in verse 20 that it wasn’t just an impromptu or impulsive burst of love on God’s part. It had deep roots which went way back before time began. Already in eternity, God could see ahead to what would happen to His creation. Because He is love, God determined already then that He would do whatever it took to reclaim the world of people for Himself. What had been determined “before the foundation of the world...was made manifest at the end of time for your sake!” Peter wants them (and us) to be on the receiving end of such deep and abiding love.

ALL THIS SHOULD MOVE US TO A LIFE OF LOVE

1 PETER 1:22-25

Having issued the challenge to holiness, and having put forth several truths to

motivate them, Peter brings this section to a conclusion by reminding them of what God considers His highest expectations for them. Above all, God expects them to “love one another earnestly from the heart” (v.22). The word for “love” is “agape.” It describes a kind of love which is an act of the will, (not a feeling), which expresses itself in a strong determination never to think about nor do anything which will result in harm of any kind to a fellow human being — especially our brothers and sisters in the faith. The word “earnestly” suggests that it’s to be aggressive and “pro-active,” as opposed to “reactive.” The emphasis upon loving people who are fellow believers is not meant to exclude the importance of loving all people. The topic here just happens to be love toward brothers and sisters in the household of faith. Sincere love for fellow believers is at the top of the list in our call to holiness.

In verses 23-25, Peter once again alludes to the idea that they will live lives of love for one another, not because it is expected of them, but rather because it is their very nature to do so. Christians ought to love one another not “as if” they were brothers and sisters, but because they truly are brothers and sisters in Christ. They have the capacity to do this, Peter says, because they have “been born anew.” Like Jesus, he pulls an analogy from nature. They all knew that everything a plant is going to be is predetermined by the seed, which is planted. Applied to them, it meant that they had their new life because of the miraculous power of the Word of God, specifically the “Good News” which was preached to them and had found a place in their hearts (v.25). The “seed” for the new life comes from God and the life that develops from it has the stamp of eternity on it.

THE WORD WILL HELP US TO GROW IN LOVE

1 PETER 2:1-3

Peter had been writing in figurative terms. In verse one of chapter 2, he speaks in very down-to-earth language. He writes “So put away all malice and all guile and insincerity and envy and all slander.” Again, Peter seems to be referring to their Baptism experience for an illustration. As in the ceremony of Baptism they took off their ordinary “street clothes” and put on the “pure white baptismal garment,” so now, they will “put off” all ungodly behavior and “put on” appropriate behavior.

Incidentally, in the Greek, the phrase “So put away” (RSV) is the aorist participle, indicating a “point action.” It is not an imperative. Peter assumes that they had already made a clean break with these sins, and in effect cleared the way for their growth in holiness. At the same time, Peter recognizes their “newness” in the faith. He knew how daunting it would be for them to follow through on their baptismal vow to “renounce the devil and all his wicked works.” His advice to them is “Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation.” The word translated “spiritual” (logikon) would be better translated “of the word,” as the King James version has it. That would make it “the milk of the word.”

Peter’s reference to “newborn babes” may have hinted at their newness in the faith. But the point he wants to make is not this so much as it is to encourage their devotion to the Word. The word that is used here for “long for” (epipotheesate) is the same word that is used in the Greek Septuagint translation of Psalm 42:1, “as the hart panteth after the waterbrook.” As an infant has an intense yearning for its mother’s milk, so should they (and we) have an intense interest and longing for the Word of God, so we may be nourished and strengthened in our faith to a life of holiness.

Probably without stopping to take a breath, Peter adds (v.3): “For you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.” Without saying it in so many words, Peter gives us a special incentive to be “people of the Word.” It is in the “milk of the Word” that we have our contact with God Himself. They had already had a “taste of God” in the Gospel. In essence, it is the Word that enables us to “feed” upon God Himself and thus to receive for ourselves the spiritual strength we need to be empowered for holiness of living.

In summary, this section of 1 Peter teaches us that our reason for living is to be holy as God is holy, and gives us “the basics” for being able to grow in that direction. We will use the brains God has given us to evaluate our life-style and get rid of anything and everything which is not “godly.” And we will seek with God’s help to pattern our lives after Him — especially His love!

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 1 PETER 2:4-10

Heavenly Father, my heart is filled with joy, wonder, and gratitude as I come into Your presence. There is joy in my heart as daily I seek to follow Your "Call to Holiness." There is wonder when I think of what my salvation cost You. There is gratitude that I am among the people whom You call Your "Chosen Ones." In the precious Name of Jesus. Amen.

.....
1 Peter 2:4-5

1. How do these verses tie in with the thought expressed in 2:2? What is the topic in verse 2?

.....
What does Peter say we should do in order to "be built up?"

2. Who is the "him" to whom we are to come?

.....
From whom did Peter get the notion to refer to Jesus as a "stone?" See Isaiah 28:16 and Matthew 21:42.

.....
What is the significance of Peter's referring to Jesus as "the living stone?"

.....
In what way are we also "living stones?"

.....
What kind of "house" are we a part of?

3. In the minds of the Jewish people, what was the fundamental purpose of the Temple at Jerusalem? See I Kings 8:6 & 10-12; Isaiah 6:1; Ezekiel 43:4-7.

.....
What does Nehemiah 10:39 call it?

.....
What does Jesus call it (John 2:16)?

.....
In what special room of the Temple would the "Divine Presence" dwell? (Hebrews 9:2-3)

.....
How was this special room shielded from the rest of the Temple area (Exodus 26:31-33)?

What happened to the “shield” at the moment Jesus died on the Cross (Matthew 27:51)?

What did this signify?

- 4. What do you suppose Peter means when he declares that we who are believers are “God’s house” in our world today?

What does the Apostles’ Creed call it?

- 5. Whose sons had been chosen by God to do service in the Tabernacle? (Numbers 3:4)

Which tribe was designated to be responsible for everything which went on in the Temple (Numbers 1:53)?

How did a priest become a high priest (Hebrews 5:4)?

What was the special privilege of the high priest? See Hebrews 5:1

In the light of what you know about the job description of the priesthood, what does it mean for you, personally, to think of yourself as a member of the priesthood (2:5)?

- 6. Peter writes that as priests before God we are privileged to “offer spiritual sacrifices” (2:5). What specific role of the Old Testament priesthood do you think he might be referring to?

List below the sacrifices other than animals and fruits of the field, which Scriptures encourage:
Psalm 107:22

Psalm 50:14

Philippians 4:18

Romans 12:1

Psalm 51:17

Hosea 6:6

Hebrews 13:15

7. When Peter uses the term “acceptable” (v.5) with regard to “sacrifices” what was he referring to? See Leviticus 22:17-25; 1 Peter 1:19.
-

What does Peter say will make our “spiritual” sacrifices acceptable to God (v. 5c)? See Hebrews 9:13-14.

1 Peter 2:6-8

8. In what way can Jesus “the Rock” also be a stone that will “make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall” (2:8)? See 1 Corinthians 1:23.
-

According to verse 8, what is the real reason that some people reject Jesus and the Gospel?

Does the phrase “as they were destined to do” (v.8) mean that they had no choice? What else could it mean?

1 Peter 2:9-10

9. Peter (v. 9) ascribes all of the cherished titles of God’s chosen of the Old Testament to believers in Christ. What do you think was his purpose in doing this?
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10. How does verse 10 keep us from taking a wrong kind of pride in the titles God gives to us?
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| WITH FELLOW BELIEVERS, WE ARE GOD'S TEMPLE 1 PETER 2:5A | 22 |
| WE ARE A HOLY PRIESTHOOD – 1 PETER 2:5B | 22 |
| WE WILL SHARE IN CHRIST'S GLORY – 1 PETER 2:6-8 | 23 |
| WE ARE SPECIAL PEOPLE WITH A SPECIAL MISSION 1 PETER 2:9-10 | 23 |
| PERSONAL APPLICATION – 1 PETER 2:11-3:7 | 25 |



“God wants us to think of ourselves as He wanted the Old Testament Jews to think of themselves — very special people, set apart by God for His unique purposes. It should make us feel honored, of course; but more importantly, it should move us to sense the responsibility we have to fulfill the purposes for which He has set us apart.”

In our introduction to First Peter we heard that Dr. Martin Luther put this brief letter on his “short list” of most important books in the entire Bible. In Luther’s Works there are over seventy references to just these six verses (2:4-10), which are the basis for Lesson 4. This must have been one of his favorite passages.

WE ARE IN GOOD COMPANY

In these verses, Peter continues his “Call to Holiness.” He highlights the great privileges that we enjoy as followers of Christ. All of this can be a tremendous source of inspiration for us as we strive to be “God’s People.”

WE HAVE A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

1 PETER 2:4

Peter uses imagery from the Old Testament. Worship life revolved around the Temple in Jerusalem, and it focused upon the “Holy of Holies,” which was separated from the rest of the temple areas by a huge veil sixty feet long, thirty feet wide, and at least four inches thick.

Without a doubt, Peter had witnessed the emotionally and spiritually charged rituals, which related to this special place. He had watched as the high priest sacrificed an ox; and then, having sprinkled himself and his priestly garments with blood, solemnly made his way behind the veil into the very presence of the almighty God.

It is to this dramatic moment in the religious experience of Old Testament worshippers that Peter is alluding when he says, “Come to Him” (2:4). The Greek word for “come to” (*proxserxomenoi*) is regarded as a specialized word for “drawing near” to God in worship. Grammatically, it is a present tense participle, which has the sense of continuing action. “Be people who are always drawing near.”

Peter goes on to identify the “him” into whose presence we are to draw near, as “that living stone.” Someone has called this a “daring metaphor,” because stones do not live. However, Peter was in pretty good company. None other than Jesus Himself had “personalized” the idea of a stone. Jesus quoted the Messianic prophecy in Psalm 118:22, “The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner” (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17). Clearly, Jesus implied that He was the stone referred to. See also Acts 4:11. There also seems to be strong evidence that “Stone” or “Rock” was a Messianic title among the Jews, as well as among the Christians of that day.

The important point which Peter makes here is that when we “keep drawing near” to Jesus, it is virtually the same experience that was the primary focus of the Old Testament worship in the temple — coming into the very presence of God Himself.

Peter acknowledges that not everybody is ready to accept the idea that Jesus is the fulfillment of this Messianic prophecy and the “Rock” on which God would build His New Testament Church. He is the stone “rejected by men.” Maybe this was a veiled warning to his readers. He wants them to realize that when they take their stand with God and accept Jesus as the Stone “chosen and precious,” they are bound to have the opposition of unbelieving people. He wants them (and us) to be prepared to face this reality.

WITH FELLOW BELIEVERS, WE ARE GOD’S TEMPLE

1 PETER 2:5A

After this little “aside,” Peter returns to the imagery of temple construction. If Christ is the “living” stone that will be the foundation or chief cornerstone, Peter says, then those who “keep coming to Him” will also “like living stones be... built into a spiritual house.” The Greek text emphasizes the uniqueness of this concept. The placement of the words has the intent of having it say: “Even you yourselves are living stones.” (Where Dr. Livingstone got his name!) Peter wanted his readers to get a sense of what he was telling them. In effect, he was saying that the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem, which was to serve as the place of God’s Presence on earth, was being replaced. It was only a symbol of the even more magnificent Church of the New Testament — the Holy Christian Church of which they were an integral part. Through their spiritual union with Christ, they and fellow-believers of all ages are the very Dwelling Place of God on earth.

WE ARE A HOLY PRIESTHOOD

1 PETER 2:5B

Peter shifts the imagery from the idea of believers being the “house of God” to

the activities, which take place within the Temple. Only the descendants of Levi were allowed to serve as priests. Acting on behalf of the people, the priests would take the sacrifices and present them to God. Here Peter assures his readers that in the new scheme of things, they not only did not need the temple, they also no longer needed priests to represent them before God. They have the privilege of coming into the presence of God on their own (cp. Hebrews 4:16).

Like the priests of old, there were sacrifices for them to bring to God. They were privileged to bring “spiritual sacrifices.” The concept of sacrifices, even in the Old Testament, was not limited to animals or produce. Contrition, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving are all described as “acts of sacrifice” (cp. Psalm 50:14, 51:17, 107:22). In Romans 12:1, Paul points to the most important sacrifice that we can offer. We should offer to God our very selves.

The term “acceptable” refers to the temple regulation, which required that worshippers have their sacrifices examined and approved by priests before they could be taken to the altar of sacrifice. Peter writes that we can be sure that what we offer will be “acceptable to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

WE WILL SHARE IN CHRIST’S GLORY

1 PETER 2:6-8

To give credibility to the “spin” that he puts on the Old Testament symbolism of the Rock, Peter declares “For it stands in Scripture.” Peter shows no hesitation in declaring that Jesus was the fulfillment of a Messianic prophecy from Isaiah with which everyone was familiar. He is the One to believe in and he adds that whoever does, will not “be put to shame.”

Having said that, Peter continues (v.7), the imagery of the Rock and describes Jesus as a “stone of Destiny.” On the one hand, “To you therefore who believe, he is precious.” In Greek, this sentence has no verb, and rather literally says, “Therefore the honor to you, the believer.” This fits with the ending of the previous verse. Those who believe in Jesus will never experience shame; rather they will share in His glory and honor.

Not for those who reject Him. For them He will be “a stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall” (v.8). (See also Isaiah 8:14). Like many biblical metaphors, the idea of a “stone that will make men stumble” may have its origin in history. In the days of Jesus and His Apostles, we are told, the Jews told the story of a massive stone that had somehow been brought to the construction site for the Temple. The workers kept bumping into it, bruising their shoulders and shins or stubbing their toes, losing their balance and their tempers, as well. It was this way until a prophet came along and pointed out that this stone would make a great cornerstone. It was put in place. It fit beautifully, and the construction continued.

Whether or not this story is authentic, the application Peter makes is valid. Christ was a stumbling block to most of the religious leaders of His day. He was a constant source of irritation and anger to them. They rejected Him and in the end were put to shame.

At the close of verse 8, Peter gives his diagnosis of the problem. The problem wasn’t with Jesus. The problem was their stubborn refusal to obey the Word of God. Disobedience means more than just a failure to comply. It has the added meaning of actively rebelling against God and His Church. This led to the crucifixion and later to the hostility, which the early church experienced and continues to the present time.

The phrase “as they were destined to do,” at the close of verse 8, seems to raise the question of predestination. The word for “destined” in Greek is in the aorist indicative to indicate a completed event. Does it mean that God selected certain people in advance to be people who would stumble against the Gospel and reject Christ? Some Bible students say that the destiny of those who are lost, is tied to their disobedience of the Word. Those who persist in rejecting the Word will perish. It is simply “cause and effect.”

WE ARE SPECIAL PEOPLE WITH A SPECIAL MISSION

1 PETER 2:9-10

In contrast to the lot of those who disobeyed, Peter goes on to say those who accepted the Gospel can lay claim to all of the great titles, which God had given to Israel of old. Like

.....

When you lift Jesus up, He will “draw” people to Himself.
(John 12:32)

.....

Israel, believers are a “chosen race.” In modern terms, with this new set of spiritual genes, which they have in common, they are a different breed from the rest of humanity.

They are to think of themselves also as “a royal priesthood.” This term has its roots in Exodus 19:3-6, where God instructed Moses to tell the children of Israel “...and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests.” This seems to emphasize the inclusiveness of this priesthood. Every member of the kingdom is a priest, or official representative of God on earth. No matter how young or how old we might be, we represent God in the world today. We not only have the right, but the duty to tell the world of God’s love.

If we think of “royal” as an adjective, it suggests that we occupy a place of honor in God’s kingdom. Revelation 20:6 declares, “...they shall be priests of God and of His Christ, and they shall reign with Him.” The term “a holy nation” looks at the high standing of New Testament believers from a different angle. The Hebrew word for “holy” means literally “cut off at both ends.” It is a “picture word” which includes the notion that it is something, which is cut off at both ends so that it will be removed and set apart for special purpose. In this case, the term “set apart” would convey the thought Peter wanted to express. God wants us to think of ourselves as He wanted the Old Testament Jews to think of themselves — very special people, set apart by God for His unique purposes. It should make us feel honored, of course; but more importantly, it should move us to sense the responsibility we have to fulfill the purposes for which He has set us apart.

Another concept that Israel of old cherished was the title “God’s own people.” The modern translation of Exodus 19:5 quotes God as saying to Israel that if they will keep the covenant they will be “my own possession among all the people.” The significance of this title lies in the thought

that we who are Christians have the assurance that we have a claim upon God’s fatherly goodness and mercy, because we truly belong to Him.

Peter says, these are wonderful titles, which you and I can claim for ourselves. But it doesn’t stop there. As people of God who have experienced first-hand His goodness, we are called to “declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (v.9). Peter’s word for “declare” is not used elsewhere in the New Testament, but it is used several times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX) to speak of the praises of God (e.g. Psalm 9:14, 71:15, 73:28). This is “Course 101” in witnessing. Witnessing of the best kind, which we all can do, doesn’t involve great knowledge of theology, it doesn’t mean “one-up-manship” in dialogue and argumentation. It simply means being ready to tell others what God has done for us, personally. No one can argue with you when you make such declarations. But when you do this you hold up the light of truth about God and His love in Christ. When you lift Jesus up, He will “draw” people to Himself (John 12:32).

Peter’s closing thought for this section refers to the Old Testament prophet Hosea. All of the honor and privilege they can claim becomes even more marvelous when they consider once again how it all happened. Like Israel in the days of Hosea, they were people who had been far from God. They were a “No People.” Before they came to Christ, they were people who had never received mercy. But, now they had experienced in Christ the amazing mercy of God and had been brought into this special relationship with Him and into the fellowship of believers. As they thought of how far they had come, it should increase their sense of appreciation and wonder. And it should inspire them even more to want to “declare the wonderful deeds of God.” It should move them to really be God’s own people in thought, word and deed.

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 1 PETER 2:11-3:7

Heavenly Father, I cherish the honor of being part of Your family. Please fill me with Your Holy Spirit so that I may always live in such a way that people around me will be led to appreciate the presence of Your people on earth and ultimately give glory to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

.....
1 Peter 2:11-12

1. By using descriptive terms at the beginning of verse 11, what does Peter want us to remember about ourselves?

2. What does Peter (v.11) tell us we really need to watch out for while we live here on earth?

Write what comes to mind when you hear the phrase "passions of the flesh" (v.11).

Look at Paul's list of "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19). Do you find any "sins of the flesh" to which you think "church people" might be particularly susceptible?

3. What does Peter say should be our attitude towards these "passions?"

When these "passions" are given free reign in our lives, what is at stake?

4. In verse 12 what does Peter say we should be passionate about?

Since most of the people Peter is writing to were non-Jews, who did he mean by the term "Gentiles?"

What does Peter say is the primary reason we should be concerned about our behavior in the presence of non-Christians?

1 Peter 2:13-17

5. Even though we are really "citizens of another kingdom," what should be our attitude toward human institutions? What does Paul say (Romans 13:1) about the origin of human institutions?

6. Slander against Christians included many things, even cannibalism (Lord's Supper). How does God advise silencing such slander?

Even though we are God's "free people," how are we always to think of ourselves during our time on earth (v.16)?

1 Peter 2:18-25

7. What incentive does Peter offer for "domestic servants" to be dutiful even if their masters are abusive?

Whose example should inspire them?

Can you think of any reason he preferred Isaiah's words (Isaiah 53:9) rather than referring to his own experience?

To whom did Jesus entrust His destiny (v.23)?

What application can you make to employer/employee relations in the 21st Century?

How does this effect membership in labor unions?

1 Peter 3:1-7

8. How does Peter's appeal for women to be "submissive" sound to you?

Do you think this requires Christian women to "submit" to abuse? (Explain)

What incentive do Christian wives have, especially if they happen to have unbelieving husbands?

9. In verses 3-5, Peter gives some "beauty secrets." How does this pertain to using cosmetics, jewelry, special hairdos, etc.?

What do Peter's words say to you personally?

10. What are Christian husbands to bestow on their wives (v.7)?

Do you think the term "weaker vessel" is a "put down," and how might the women be "weaker"?

What happens for the husband who fails to honor his wife?

Which phrase shows there is no inequality in the sight of God?

LESSON 5

1 PETER 2:11-3:7

1 PETER

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|--|----|
| DURING OUR SOJOURN, WE STRIVE TO BE GOOD CITIZENS 1 PETER 2:13-17 | 29 |
| WE ARE RESPECTFUL OF THE EXISTING SOCIAL ORDER 1 PETER 2:18-25 | 29 |
| WIVES AND HUSBANDS AS SERVANTS OF GOD 1 PETER 3:1-7 | 30 |
| PERSONAL APPLICATION – 1 PETER 3:8-4:6 | 32 |

• • •

“The motif of these verses is that like Jesus, no matter how savagely others may treat you and provoke you — you never use the sinfulness of others as an excuse to sin against God.”

• • •

The theme of Lesson Four is that God in His divine wisdom and love has made us His very special people and has given to us high honor and privilege (2:4-10). Along with the honor and privilege, there comes great responsibility. First Peter 2:11 marks the beginning of the second part of the epistle. He tells us that, even though we are only temporary residents on this planet, God expects us to be responsible and obedient citizens of the world in which we live.

OUR FIRST LOYALTY IS TO OUR HOMELAND

1 PETER 2:11-12

Peter’s special term of endearment “Beloved” and his impassioned “I beseech you,” give special urgency to the exhortation which follows. Peter reminds them that as they lived out their lives in a world that was in essence alien to them, they needed to be constantly on their guard against the “passions of the flesh.” This term includes any desires which are contrary to the will of God in heaven. (See Galatians 5:19-21 and I John 2:16). They would need to recognize these “passions” as part of a carefully orchestrated insidious campaign to destroy them spiritually — “they wage war against your soul.” See them for what they are and have nothing to do with them is Peter’s counsel.

On the positive side, Peter says how important it is for them to “maintain good conduct among the Gentiles” (2:12). Here Peter uses the term “Gentile” from the viewpoint of the Christians as the “True Israel.” He means any non-Christian, Jew or Gentile. Christians are

always to be on their best behavior, but even more so in the presence of non-believers.

The reason Peter gives for being especially careful about public behavior is that it could have eternal consequences. Take the case of non-believers who had accepted the “politically correct” stereotype of Christianity which characterized it as a weird and subversive movement which encourages lawlessness. On a “day of visitation” — a time in life when God would draw near to them (cp. Luke 19:44) — these same people might be more favorably inclined to open their hearts to God because they had observed the good conduct of their Christian neighbors.

DURING OUR SOJOURN, WE STRIVE TO BE GOOD CITIZENS

1 PETER 2:13-17

Here Peter zeroes in on specific areas in which they are to set examples of good behavior. Even though their primary loyalty was to a kingdom which was not of this world, Peter instructs them to submit voluntarily to the rules of the established social order where they lived.

In biblical Greek the word for “institution” (*ktisis*) is used exclusively of things and activities brought into being by God. Translating it this way, it would be “...every divine institution among men,” thus attributing the origins of human institutions directly to divine initiative. It also echoes Paul’s declaration in Romans 13:1. It is God’s will that there be order in society. “For the Lord’s sake” provides the motive for us to submit to them, and thus bring honor to God.

Peter singles out the institution of government for first consideration. The Christians of Asia Minor lived under the government of Rome, which pretty much ruled the world at that time. The emperor was at the top of the governmental structure. He was assisted by governors who carried out the day-to-day routines in the provinces of the empire (2:14). The fact that the emperor at the time was the notorious Nero only serves to strengthen Peter’s exhortation, implying strongly that our “submission” does not hinge upon our personal opinion of the political system nor on the person in charge. We obey the “powers that be” because we are loyal to our Heavenly King.

Our submission to governmental authority not only gives glory to God, but it may accomplish something which fits in with God’s plan for the world. Peter says that when we are obedient citizens, we “put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” — the slanderers of verse 12. God wants this kind of behavior to stop. God’s way for silencing those people who foolishly condemn Christians is for Christians to go on the offensive and live consistently as model citizens.

This section closes (v.17) with what some Bible students see as a motto for God’s people of all times. There are two pairs: (1.) “Honor all men — Love the brotherhood” and (2.) “Fear God — Honor the Emperor.” In the first pair, we are reminded to show respect for all human beings regardless of race, skin color, culture, etc. All of them are creatures of God and objects of His divine love. But, there is that special group of people who make up the brotherhood of believers. This fellowship calls for unique God-like concern and love (*agape*).

The second part of this motto tells us first to “Fear God!” We give God the highest respect. Our honor to the emperor takes its place second to our fear of God.

WE ARE RESPECTFUL OF THE EXISTING SOCIAL ORDER

1 PETER 2:18-25

Peter next gives attention to the family. The family or household was (and is) perhaps the most common and most important social institution. The Greek word translated servants refers to domestic workers. It included freemen as well as slaves. The term indicates that in many cases masters gave privileges to their slaves which made them almost like members of the family. In fact, we are told that by the first century most slaves had been born into slave households.

Peter directs Christian domestics: “Be submissive to your masters with all respect” (v.18). They were not only to do what their masters told them to do, they were also to show due respect to masters for the position they held in the household. And this was to be the case not only for “kind and gentle” bosses, but also and especially for the masters with an “overbearing attitude.” The Greek word

for “overbearing” is *skoliois*, which has the basic meaning of “crooked.” This probably refers to their dishonesty with regard to pay, working conditions, and a failure to live up to Roman regulations for slave owners and employers of “domestics.” Such masters could make life pretty miserable for them. In this connection, Peter (v.19-20) adds an encouraging word. The Christian domestic who maintains his respect and obedience in a spirit of submission, even when the master of the household is down-right nasty, can be assured that God is taking note of it and is pleased. The secret for maintaining respect and doing their duty is to be “mindful of God.” This means they consider God as their real master (2:16).

In addition, Peter reminds them that if they find themselves suffering unjustly, they should not be surprised: “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps” (v.21). The Greek word for “example” is *hypogrammon* which literally means something written under. It referred originally to a document which included all the letters of the alphabet, given to children as an aid in learning to draw them. Christ and His innocent suffering are the pattern which we are to trace. In the following verses, Peter delineates clearly the example of Jesus. Even though Peter had been an eyewitness to much of Christ’s suffering, he chose to use the grand words of Isaiah, chapter 53. It was a chance to show his reader the authenticity of the Old Testament prophecies. This is pure Gospel, set forth to motivate and empower not only the domestics, but the followers of Jesus — then and now!

The motif of these verses is that like Jesus, no matter how savagely others may treat you and provoke you — you never use the sinfulness of others as an excuse to sin against God. You remember that it was sin (yours included) that put Jesus on the cross of Calvary. Because he “Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.” If they received wounds, remember Jesus did too — and His wounds brought healing to them. The slaves could identify with the crucifixion because “death on a tree” was the legal punishment for runaway slaves.

The example of Jesus not only gives us the pattern to follow in resisting temptations to sin, it shows us a very

important mental step He took to help himself remain firm in His resistance to evil. He entrusted Himself “to Him who judges justly” (v.23), which is a very important point for us to remember when the going gets tough. In the same vein of thought, Peter quotes Isaiah again to remind us that we are in good hands “You were straying like sheep, but have now been returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”

WIVES AND HUSBANDS AS SERVANTS OF GOD

1 PETER 3:1-7

The term “likewise” in both verses 1 and 7 ties Peter’s exhortation for wives and husbands to everything he has been saying to the domestics. Since the word was used as a lead-in to Peter’s instruction to husbands as well as wives, evidently Peter was not linking it with the idea of submission (2:18 and 3:1). Rather, Peter had in mind the bigger picture of how Christians can and should carry out their role “as servants of God” in all of their relationships — in this case the intimate relationship of marriage. His word to wives was that they “be submissive” to their husbands. The very words tend to make many women of today bristle with resentment. Keep in mind, Peter is not addressing this to men, so that they might think they have a biblical mandate to make sure that their wives are duly submissive. Rather, it is an evangelical appeal to wives to voluntarily take their place in the social order, supporting their husbands as they carry out their responsibilities to provide for and protect wife and family. The word “submissive” in no way suggests that women are in any way inferior.

They too, are to remember at all times that their highest purpose in life is to be “servants of God” (2:16), doing what they can to further the rule of God in the hearts and lives of people and to win them for Christ. Just as servants were encouraged to be especially faithful to the masters who were “crooked,” so Peter here says his appeal to wives applies especially in the event that they are married to someone who does not “obey the word.” Without them saying a word, their “reverent and chaste behavior” could speak powerfully and might lead to the conversion of their mates.

This viewpoint will give direction to their lives as women. Many women make it their top priority in life to make themselves as physically attractive as possible. Fitness

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Peter had in mind the bigger picture of how Christians can and should carry out their role “as servants of God” in all of their relationships — in this case the intimate relationship of marriage.

.....

programs, the fashion industry, and cosmetic companies are making “big bucks” in our day as they respond to this. Ladies, don’t misunderstand Peter’s words here (v.3-5). He is not “putting you down” for wanting to be attractive, nor is he saying it is wrong for Christian women to want to keep fit, wear jewelry, or use cosmetics. He is saying that women of God will make it a top priority to do the things that will make themselves spiritually fit and beautiful. They will be more concerned about having a healthy “hidden person of the heart” which expresses itself in “a gentle and quiet spirit.” This is adornment of the best kind. Peter refers to it as “the imperishable jewel...which in God’s sight is precious” (3:4). The Christian woman has an awareness that God is looking at her, too, and she is anxious to be beautiful in His sight.

Finally, Peter has a few well-chosen words for the Christian husband. The word “likewise” which begins verse 7 ties in with the thought that husbands can find in marriage some special ways to live as “servants of God.” His instructions are really quite simple and straightforward. “Live considerately with your wives,” he tells them. The original Greek says “...according to knowledge.” The knowledge referred to could mean the true spiritual enlightenment, which will be sensitive to the needs and claims of his wife, which he regards as a sacred obligation. Such a stance would be the opposite of a common attitude, which focuses upon “what my wife can do for me.” It could also refer to the knowledge of the Gospel, which calls for a love that is likened to the love that God has shown for us all.

Peter adds two very compelling reasons for the husband to be considerate to his wife. He should bestow honor upon her as the “weaker vessel.” The wife may be physically weaker. She may be weaker also in the sense that in that society she really did not have any rights. Because of this, he had the privilege of giving her honor in the home. Nevertheless, the greater incentive for such treatment was the fact that before God there is no inequality. They are “joint heirs.” There are dire consequences for the husband who fails to give honor and consideration to his wife. Their very relationship with God is in jeopardy. Their prayers would be “hindered.”

Have you been able to find things in this section of 1 Peter that can be of practical value for you as you seek to “flesh out” your Personal Mission Statement? Maybe you would like to compare notes with a fellow member of your study group. God bless your efforts to come up with some meaningful insights.

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 1 PETER 3:8-4:6

Thank You, Lord, for making me Your very own. Guide me every day of my sojourn on earth so that I, who have been so blessed, may be a blessing to all around me and even to those who sometimes make my life very difficult. Through Jesus Christ who made this all possible. Amen.

.....
1 Peter 3:8-12

1. What is the number one virtue that Peter encourages his readers to cultivate? (v.8)

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Which verse(s) in Jesus' High Priestly Prayer (John 17) express the same thought?

.....
How would you describe "unity of spirit"?

2. Peter also lists four other qualities which Christians need. How does each of them contribute toward promoting a corporate "unity of spirit" among people with differing backgrounds and opinions?

Sympathy

.....
Love of the brethren

.....
Tender heart

.....
Humble mind

3. In verses 10-11, Peter quotes Psalm 34 to remind us of three specific things that we need to keep in mind. Finish this sentence: "If I want to live a fulfilled life, I will need to

.....
Put into your own words what you think verse 12 is telling you as an incentive to live the good life.

.....
1 Peter 3:13-17

4. In verse 13, Peter says that people who strive to live decent lives don't get into too much trouble. Recall the Bible story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:7-23). What happened to Joseph?

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Why can we still say that no harm came to him? (Luke 12:4-7)

Share a personal experience when you “suffered” because you tried to do the right thing.

What is Peter’s advice (v.14-15a) when that happens?

- 5. Peter (v.15b) states another very important mental preparation we should make. What should we do and how should we do it?

What is the one thing you should never allow the hostility of others to cause you to do? (v.16)

1 Peter 3:18-22

- 6. Verse 18a gives three statements about Jesus’ death for sins. What are they and what do they mean to you?

1.

2.

3.

- 7. According to verse 18b and 19, what else did Jesus have the opportunity to do after His sacrificial death on Good Friday and prior to His glorious resurrection on Easter?

Where were “the spirits in prison?” (The Creed)

What was the purpose of Christ’s “preaching”? (Catechism)

In the context of this discussion about the importance of being willing to suffer for the faith, what value does Jesus’ descent into hell have for you?

- 8. What significance might there be in Peter’s report that only “eight persons” out of the thousands on earth were saved?

What was the physical “mechanism” that lifted the ark and its residents to safety?

Of what does Peter see this a “type?”

What does Holy Baptism do for a sincere believer? (v.21)

What other event (v.22) does Peter mention to give us consolation and courage in the face of life's difficulties?

1 Peter 4:1-6

9. What can we do to prepare ourselves mentally for suffering, according to 4:1?

What will govern our behavior? (v.2)

When we live this way, from whom (vv.3-4) will we likely feel resentment and abuse?

What thought (v.5) should bolster our resolve not to let anything pressure us to return to our former godless way of life?

What comforting thought does Peter offer (v.6) about the state of believers who have already experienced physical death?

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“They have been called to “be a blessing” to others. They should be “proactive” in overcoming evil with good. They should never let the evil behavior of others determine their own behavior. Their proper response to evil will be to bless those who abuse them, as Jesus did, with words of forgiveness.”

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THE GOAL OF OUR “MISSION”

In this section, Peter gives us some more information about our personal mission in a hostile world. He reminds us that God is expecting us to follow through, no matter what! He assures us that in the end we will be glad we did!

BE A BLESSING TO FELLOW BELIEVERS

1 PETER 3:8-12

The word “finally,” at the beginning of this section indicates that what follows will apply to all of his readers. He goes on to list five special qualities, which they would need to cultivate.

The first of these is “unity of spirit.” The Greek term for this (omophrones) appears nowhere else in the New Testament. A literal translation would be: “of the same mind.” This does not mean that everyone has to think alike on every issue. It refers to our “mind set.” To serve and glorify the same Lord and Master is the “agenda” we can all bring to the fellowship. The second characteristic is “sympathy.” Literally this means “to feel with” another. The context suggests that this concept may be reflected in our modern term “sensitivity.” We will carefully regulate what we say and what we do, not so much in terms of how it makes us feel, but of the effect it will have on others. The third quality: “Love of the brethren.” Peter gave this high priority already in chapter 1:22. God wants us to live together as one big happy, loving family.

The fourth quality is the word translated “tenderhearted” (eusplagchnoi) is

an Hebraism which literally means “having strong bowels.” The Hebrews thought of the bowels as the seat of human emotions. As brothers and sisters in the Lord, we should be quick to feel and to show affectionate concern especially for the needs and problems of fellow pilgrims. Incidentally, the verb form for this word is used only of Christ in the New Testament, suggesting that it is only as we have His Spirit that we can be truly tenderhearted. Last, but not least, the fifth characteristic is a “humble mind.” The Greek word for this (*tapeinophrones*) is quite descriptive. (*Tapeinos* – “low”; *phrones* – “mind”). Martin Luther’s translation “*freundlich*” captures the thought nicely. A humble person wants to be a friend to all, regardless of their station in life.

To encourage them to really work at this, even when it isn’t easy to do so, Peter reminds them that this actually isn’t easy to do, so, Peter reminds them that this actually is their “calling” (v.9). They have been called to “be a blessing” to others. They should be “proactive” in overcoming evil with good. They should never let the evil behavior of others determine their own behavior. Their proper response to evil will be to bless those who abuse them, as Jesus did, with words of forgiveness.

When they do this, their own lives would be blessed. They have God’s own Word for it, Peter reminds them, quoting Psalm 34:12-16. If they respond to evil by doing evil, they are included in the pronouncement at the end of verse 12. On the other hand, if they continue to do the right thing, “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayer.” Surely this is an important consideration.

BE A BLESSING EVEN WHEN YOU SUFFER FOR IT

1 PETER 3:13-17

Here Peter, led by the Spirit, finds himself writing words to prepare his readers for the terrible persecution which would soon be unleashed against them simply because they were trying to live as God directed them.

At the moment of writing, Peter considered this a very remote possibility. The “but” which begins verse 14 introduces this subject. It is followed by the Greek word for “suffer,” which is in the optative form to suggest that the suffering was a very unlikely prospect for them. Nevertheless, Peter tells them how to meet it in the event that the unlikely does occur. Firstly, they should keep in mind that they “will be blessed.” That’s for sure. Secondly, they should “have no fear of them, nor be troubled.” When you read about the atrocities which befell the Christians in the first century, you wonder how they could possibly keep from being terrified out of their wits. Peter’s words in verse 15 are part of the answer. Instead of focusing upon the threats of imminent harm, Peter says they should focus upon Christ: “...in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord.” This is an adaptation of Isaiah 8:12-13, where the prophet says: “The Lord of hosts, let Him be your fear.” Reverencing means to honor and respect Him as the Lord of the Universe who can and will keep His Word to turn the worst of evils into everlasting good.

The other part of the answer is: “Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you.” Here Peter may be remembering how totally unprepared he was for the confrontation he experienced that night in the courtyard

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For the faithful believers, it was a reminder that they weren't going to be losers, but would share in Christ's victory over sin, death and hell.

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of The High Priest's palace. He focused on his fear of reprisal, instead of reverencing Christ as Lord. He was not prepared "to give an answer" to the maiden and the others who questioned him. Peter adds, "yet do it with gentleness and reverence." When Peter was challenged, his response was anything but "gentle and reverent." History shows that many of the early Christians followed his advice. They were completely fearless even as their own flesh burned to illuminate Caesar's games or as they felt the crunch of their bones as lions tore them limb from limb. They sang praises to God and gave powerful witness to Christ. Unbelievers couldn't help but be impressed. Many of them became believers.

Whatever you do, Peter tells them, don't allow the persecution to be the occasion for committing sin yourself. "Keep your conscience clear, so that when you are abused, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame!" (v.16).

CHRIST'S SUFFERING & DEATH OVERCAME EVIL *1 PETER 3:18-22*

If they needed encouragement to accept the improbable idea that good can come out of suffering, Peter tells them (v.18) to consider the example of Jesus. Jesus' suffering and death is the heart of the Gospel which they had come to believe. His death was the atoning sacrifice "for sins once for all." It was vicarious — He was the Righteous One who suffered and died in place of the unrighteous. His purpose in going through all of this agony was "to bring us to God." The outcome of His terrible suffering and death was the salvation they cherished. Incomparable good came from awful suffering.

As for Jesus, although He died physically, He was "made alive in the spirit." This implies that what happened to

Jesus is something they could count on to happen to them if ever they were called upon to lay down their life rather than deny their faith. Great encouragement!

When Jesus was made alive in the realm of the "spirit," Peter tells us (v.19-20) that He "went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark." Interpreters have differed about the interpretation of just about every word in this statement.

The word for "spirits" (pneumata), alone and without qualifications, is not used anywhere else in the Bible to describe human spirits. Nevertheless, the reference to the time of Noah and God's patience during the 120 years that Noah was building the ark seems to indicate that it refers to people. Peter may have used their blatant disregard for God as symbolic of all people who turn their backs on God in any age. When unbelievers die, their disembodied spirits (souls) are taken to a "prison," awaiting Judgment. Jesus, "made alive" in the realm of the spirit appeared before them and "preached" to them, Peter says. The word for "preach" is "ekeeruxen," which means to "proclaim" — always with a suggestion of formality and authority. Jesus did not descend into hell to give sinners "a second chance" but to let them know in person that they had been terribly wrong to reject Him. Isn't this possibly part of the torment they were to experience? For the faithful believers, it was a reminder that they weren't going to be losers, but would share in Christ's victory over sin, death and hell.

The story of how Noah and his family survived God's Judgment by obeying God was likewise to be encouragement and comfort for them. The same water that flooded the earth and destroyed the wicked people served to lift the ark and provide a safe refuge for them. And if

they found themselves wondering about the fact that as believers they were such a tiny minority, remember that out of all the people who lived at the time of the Flood only eight of them were saved.

The thought of how the water of the Flood actually provided salvation for the family of Noah led Peter (v.21) to use it as a type of the salvation which was theirs by means of the water of Holy Baptism. J.B. Phillips' translation sums up nicely what Peter is saying "And I cannot help pointing out what a perfect illustration this is of the way you have been admitted to the safety of the Christian "ark" by Baptism... It means the ability to face God with a clear conscience. For there is in every true Baptism the virtue of Christ's rising from the dead."

In verse 22, Peter pictures for his readers more of the victorious side of Christ's suffering. He told them to consider where Jesus is now. Following His resurrection, he "has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers subject to Him." It can't get any better than this! When Handel was putting together his musical masterpiece on the life of the Messiah he saved the most triumphant chorus for what he regarded the climax of the life of Jesus. The majestic "Hallelujah Chorus" was originally a celebration of Our Lord's Ascension!

LIKE JESUS, OVERCOME SIN IN YOUR LIFE

1 PETER 4:1-6

In this passage, Peter once again becomes very practical. Jesus endured physical suffering because He knew that it would ultimately result in victory over sin, death and hell. His advice to his readers is "arm yourselves with the same thought." This is clear enough. However, the last part of verse 1 is a bit obscure. At first reading, it seems to say that bodily suffering somehow helps a Christian to get rid of sin. This interpretation flies in the face of the teaching that our salvation is complete and full because of what Jesus did. Peter had just stated (3:18) that Christ suffered and "died for sins once for all." It may be that Peter wants us to take this statement in the same sense that his colleague Paul wrote Romans 6:5-7. By union with Christ, the Christian is to understand that his conversion is a death to sin.

This means that as long as God allows them to live on this earth ("in the flesh" 4:2), they should always seek to obey the will of God and not be ruled by "human passions," as they once were. Some see a bit of irony in verse 3, as though Peter, "with tongue in cheek" reminds them that they have had more than enough opportunity "in time past" (before their conversion) to do the evil things which the non-believers are doing.

I'm sure they knew what Peter was referring to, but for some reason, Peter is led by the Holy Spirit to list (v.3) the most prominent evil activities of their unregenerate neighbors. Perhaps Peter did this for our benefit. When we study his catalogue of evil ways we can readily see that this is pretty much the way worldly people live today.

The fact that they no longer participated in these sinful activities with their former friends would very likely be a problem for some of them, says Peter. The unbelievers are going to be surprised. That surprise, Peter implies, will likely lead them to open hostility. When they refuse to join their former cronies in "passions of the flesh," as they once did, their former friends will take it as a personal insult. Subconsciously, they will feel a sense of judgment upon them and their way of life. They will strike out against the Christians in whatever evil way the devil prompts them: Boycotting their businesses, telling lies and doing whatever they can to make life miserable for them.

If this happens, don't let it discourage you, Peter reminds them. The Day of Judgment will come and they will have to explain their behavior. They will be judged not only for their disobedience to the Gospel, but also for whatever abuse and misery they heaped upon the Christians.

Finally, Peter has a word of assurance regarding loved ones who had already died. They had responded to the Gospel which had been preached to them. Even though they experienced the common judgment of death to their bodies, they "might live in the spirit like God."

Have you found some more ideas to add to your Personal Mission Statement? Share these with fellow students.

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 1 PETER 4:7-19

Lord God in heaven, keep me ever aware of the fact that it won't always be easy to follow the path You have set for me. Help me to do the things that will keep me strong in my faith and in my dedication to the purposes for which You have called me into the fellowship of Your people. In Jesus' precious Name. Amen.

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1 Peter 4:7

- 1. What special reason does Peter give his readers for keeping close to God in prayer?

.....
Look at 2 Peter 3:10. According to Jesus (Luke 21:28), what should be the response of believers to this event?

.....
1 Peter 4:8-11

- 2. Besides "sane and sober" prayer (v.7), what else should they make a priority in their daily lives?

.....
What could you say to a person who says he can be a good Christian without being part of a church fellowship?

.....
What incentive does Peter give that will enable us to be loving, especially to fellow-believers?

.....
In the light of what Peter wrote earlier (3:18), what do you think he meant?

- 3. To what specific opportunity to show love to fellow Christians does Peter point (v.9)?

.....
Why do you think this was important at that time?

.....
How might this apply today?

- 4. What does Peter say (v.10) is the real purpose for which God gives a variety of personal "gifts" to the people of faith?

.....
How are we to think of ourselves with regard to the gifts God has given us?

What “gift(s)” has God given you (don’t be bashful)? Pick three people in your study group and tell what gifts each have and uses for the good of the fellowship of believers.

5. Can you think of occasions where you can use the “gift” of speaking (v.11) in a spiritually productive way? What does “as oracles of God” teach us about the manner in which we might use words for the benefit of others?

In addition to helping others, what is the ultimate goal of good stewardship?

1 Peter 4:12-14

6. Peter has “good news” and “bad news” for the recent converts to Christianity in Asia Minor. What is the “bad news”? (v.12)

Why do you think Peter felt constrained to bring up this bleak picture of what might be in store for them?

What is the “good news” which is implied in the term “fiery ordeal”? (see 1 Peter 1:7)

7. What does Peter say (v.13) which makes it clear that he isn’t recommending that they face their trials with a stoical acceptance of the inevitable?

What could help them to be sincerely happy even in the midst of suffering?

What additional incentive is given in verse 14?

1 Peter 4:15

8. How does Peter point out (v.15) that suffering “per se” does not automatically produce blessing?

What are the sins mentioned in Peter’s list?

What point is Peter making?

1 Peter 4:16-19

9. Which kind of suffering carries with it the promise of blessing?

What great good does it accomplish?

In verse 17, how does Peter refer to the sufferings that loyal Christians are called upon to endure?

10. In verse 18, using the word of Proverbs 11:31, Peter poses a question. What is your answer?

In the light of all this, what does verse 19 tell us to do?

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“Christians do not suffer accidentally or because of irresistible forces of blind fate; rather they suffer in accordance with God’s good and perfect will. They do what is right and trust God to see them through it.”

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The theme of this section in 1 Peter sounds a note of urgency. It urges us to remain staunch in our commitment to the mission God has given to us, no matter what! Peter tells us that if we expect to accomplish this, we have to keep close to God and to one another.

KEEP CLOSE TO GOD THROUGH FERVENT PRAYER

1 PETER 4:7

Peter’s exhortation to prayer (verse 7) is preceded by a statement which gives special urgency to it. He reminds his readers that “the end of all things is at hand.” Peter wasn’t thinking here primarily of the cataclysmic end of the physical world. Rather, he had in mind the idea of the goal to which all of God’s drama of salvation was leading. All of the major events in God’s plan had taken place. All things are ready for Christ’s Second Coming and the ushering in of the final phase of God’s eternal rule. It could happen any time.

The imminent “end of all things” should be an encouragement for Christians to keep especially close to their Lord through prayer. Peter says that they should all “keep sane and sober” so that their prayers might be more meaningful and relevant to the circumstances of their lives. Peter might have had in mind his own failure in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:37-40, 66-72). Instead of praying, Peter slept. As a result, he was completely unprepared for the temptations which he soon faced. The reality of the Second Coming should be strong motivation for us to be “people of prayer.”

KEEP CLOSE TO ONE ANOTHER

1 PETER 4:8-11

Peter's advice to them, in view of the coming "end of all things," is very clear. In addition to strengthening their bond with God, they should make a special effort to strengthen the bonds of fellowship with one another "above all, hold unfailing your love for one another." The translation "hold unfailing" falls far short of conveying the intensity of the Greek word "ektenee." Martin Luther translates it with the earthy word "brunstige" which is used of animals in heat. It suggests the idea that showing love to fellow-believers should be a "driving passion" for every disciple of Jesus.

Peter points them to something that can fuel their determination to practice this "agape" love, no matter what. He says that "...love covers a multitude of sins." This phrase echoes Proverbs 10:12. Some Bible students regard the Greek word used here (kaluptei) as a technical term which means "to atone for." They find support in the words of Jesus regarding the woman who anointed His feet in the home of Simon, "I tell you her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much" (Luke 7:47; James 5:20). In light of the fact that all of our sins are already forgiven "once for all" (1 Peter 3:18), we need to look elsewhere for the meaning of Peter's statement. It is in the remembrance that Christ has "covered" the multitude of our sins that we find good reason for covering the sins that others commit against us, no matter how great they may be.

This earnest love, Peter says, will show itself in hospitality towards brothers and sisters in the faith. The Greek word (philoxenoi) literally means "love to strangers." Peter is telling them to open their homes to fellow Christians who might need a meal or a place to stay for the night. In those days they didn't have hotels and motels as we do today. Keep in mind also that when they became Christians, many of them had cut their ties with former friends and were no longer welcome in their homes.

Peter recognizes that following through on hospitality may not always be convenient for them. It might even be a hardship for some. So he encourages them to do this work "ungrudgingly" (literally "without murmuring"). Stated

in a positive way, they should embrace this as a privilege and actually a form of service to Christ Himself (Matthew 25:40). In verse 10, Peter undergirds this injunction to demonstrate their love to fellow Christians, especially strangers. He reminds them that whatever they have is a gift of grace entrusted to them by God and to be used "for one another." This applies to us, too. Whatever resources we have, we are to think of them as gifts of God's grace which He put into our hands to manage for Him. We are His stewards.

In verse 11, Peter mentions several examples of "God's varied grace" which are apropos of their situation. He mentions two main types of ministry, which they might be called to participate in. The first one, "whoever speaks, as one who utters the oracles of God." This is advice for all of the Christians, not just pastors. It includes all forms of speech activity, such as singing, personal testimony, and informal theological discussions (such as might take place in Bible classes). While this interpretation assumes that the ideas spoken truly "square" with God's Word, the comparative "as" emphasizes the seriousness of purpose with which a person should speak — like they would if they were proclaiming the "very words of God."

As in the ministry of sharing the Word, so in the ministry of service, having the right attitude is of great personal importance. The spirit of service should grow out of the personal understanding and belief that our capacity to help is truly a gift to us from God's treasury of "varied grace." We become people who "render service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies." Properly understood, this means that we are constantly aware that if we are able to share what we have for the common good, it is because God has given us the resources and the energy! With this understanding, we will not use our time, talent or treasure to bring honor and glory to ourselves. Rather, we will see to it that "in everything God may be glorified." J.S. Bach made it a practice to write the initials "I.N.J." (In the Name of Jesus) at the beginning of each composition. At the end, he put "Soli Deo Gloria!" (To God Alone Be the Glory!) What a nice way for us to dedicate ourselves — to live each day in Jesus' Name and at the end of the day give God the glory for whatever good we have done!

“HANG IN THERE” EVEN WHEN THINGS GET ROUGH

1 PETER 4:12-14

Peter begins this section with the very personal and intimate “beloved” (*agapeetoi*). He wanted his readers to know that he could identify with them. Peter knew from personal experience what they were going to go through.

What Peter has to say to them was a scenario that most of them probably would never have dreamed of. He mentioned this in the beginning of his letter (1:6-7 and again 3:13-17). Now as he winds up his letter, he again talks about suffering for the faith. This might strike them as something which contradicted the promised blessing of the Gospel. They needed to get this straight in their minds now, so that when suffering hit them, it wouldn’t catch them off guard and cause them to deny the faith. Peter felt obligated to tell them that they shouldn’t “be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you, as though something strange were happening to you” (v.12). For Christians the very real possibility of suffering for the faith “comes with the territory.”

Peter refers to the “fiery trial” as something that has the capacity to bring about something profitable for them. It is not a wasteful thing. It “comes upon you to prove you.” This is the language of the goldsmith, who uses fire to purify and make even more precious the gold ore. (See Lesson 2). Peter suggests that if we will look at suffering from this viewpoint we will see how God can take something that is essentially a horrible experience and give it value.

But that isn’t all! Peter tells us that if we will take this view of suffering, which comes our way because of our relationship to Christ, we will be able to stand fast. In verse 13 he tells us that we will even find reason to be happy about it “...rejoice in so far as you share Christ’s suffering.” When you suffer because of your faith in Christ, you can think of it as a personal experience shared with Christ who suffered so much to make you His. And you can also anticipate the overwhelming joy that you will share with Him one day. So, instead of being thrown off balance by the trials that come your way, actually welcome them.

Peter (v.14) looks at it from still another angle. “If you

are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” It is Peter’s version of the beatitude: “Blessed are you when men shall revile you...for my sake” (Matthew 5:11). In verse 13, the reward for remaining steadfast was future bliss in heaven. Here, it is for the present. Very likely Peter was thinking about the word “glory” as it was used in the Old Testament. God’s glory was manifest as the “Skekinah” — the pillar of light which dwelt in the “Holy of Holies.” It was the visible sign of God’s presence. It was initially fulfilled in the person of Jesus — Immanuel — “God with us.” So His people who bear His reproach and suffer for His Name are owned as His by a special anointing or manifestation of the Spirit of God. What an honor! What an incentive!

BE SURE OF THE SOURCE OF SUFFERING

1 PETER 4:15

We’re not sure what led Peter to insert this word of cautioned clarification found in verse 15, where he tells them that they should be sure that their suffering is definitely caused by their relationship to Christ. Not all suffering carries with it the promise of spiritual blessing. He mentions several examples which may or may not have been true for them. It is pretty obvious to them that the person who suffered because he was a “murderer or a thief or a wrong-doer” brought this upon himself. This kind of suffering has no particular merit or blessing.

Then Peter mentions something else. In the Greek text the word “as” (*oos*) occurs before “murderer,” but not in front of “thief” or “wrong-doer.” Yet it is placed again before the word for “mischief-maker” [*meddler*]. This seems to put this term in a class by itself. The first three crimes are such that any of the non-Christians might be guilty. The last one would have been an activity that was peculiar to Christians and something that brought suffering to them. The Greek word for “mischief-maker” (*allotriepiskopos*) is not used anywhere else in the New Testament. Some scholars think that it may have been “coined” by Peter himself. Literally, it means to be involved in the business of others. The NIV translates it “meddlers.” Dr. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon has this note: “The writer seems to refer to those, who with holy but intemperate zeal, meddle with the affairs of the Gentiles — whether public or private — in order to make them conform to the

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The title “Christian” was just coming into use when Peter wrote. They didn’t pick the name for themselves, but when it was hurled at them in derision, they willingly accepted it, indicating that they were honored to be associated with Christ.

.....

Christians’ standards.” You could see how such activity would be obnoxious to many and bring social disfavor upon them. People like this would consider themselves as martyrs and seek to claim the blessings Peter refers to. Peter says, “No way!”

HOLD FIRM AND TRUST IN GOD

1 PETER 4:16-19

The suffering because they are Christians, on the other hand, is a suffering that qualifies for God’s blessing. The title “Christian” was just coming into use when Peter wrote. They didn’t pick the name for themselves, but when it was hurled at them in derision, they willingly accepted it, indicating that they were honored to be associated with Christ.

Verse 17 gives another perspective on the suffering they may be called upon to endure. The suffering was to be looked upon as a judgment of God. It was to be a judgment of refining, to test their faith, and to make them strong. It is quite likely that the judgment scene of Ezekiel 9 was in Peter’s mind when he wrote this, indicating that God’s judgment will begin with God’s house, which is now the New Testament Church, and then spread outward to destroy all unbelievers. A similar thought is spoken of in Malachi 3, which predicts that the Lord Himself “will suddenly come to His temple” as the messenger of the covenant who is “like a refiner’s fire.”

The “reading” his readers should take on the trials they endured is that this is a sign that the Lord Himself was in their midst and they should rejoice in His presence. The “flip” side of this truth is that His judgment upon those “who do not obey the Gospel of God (v.17)” will be their utter ruin. Verse 18 is an echo of verse 17, taken from Proverbs 11:31. In plain English it says that if the people of God make it through the judgment of God “by the skin of their teeth,” what chance do the unbelievers have? The word “therefore” (Grk.ooste) which begins verse 18 introduces what follows as a summary statement of all that Peter was attempting to teach them with this section; yes, with the entire epistle. Christians do not suffer accidentally or because of irresistible forces of blind fate; rather they suffer in accordance with God’s good and perfect will. They do what is right and trust God to see them through it.

Remembering this will help us to put the question of temporary suffering in proper perspective and not allow it to keep us from doing what is right in the eyes of God. Now, can you put this thought into your own words and make it a part of your “Personal Mission Statement?”

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 1 PETER 5:1-14

Help me Lord, to accept the reality of evil forces around me and to recognize that Satan is behind them hoping to rob me of the blessing of salvation as well as the blessings You want to give me during my sojourn on earth. Give me wisdom and strength of faith to resist him and stay true to You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

.....
Review Question

1. In Lesson 7 (and again in Lesson 8) Peter tells us that Christians should expect to experience hostility in one form or another from the unbelieving world around them. Please relate any personal hostility you have experienced.

Why does God allow it (4:12)?

1 Peter 5:1-5

2. What three things (v.1) does Peter refer to as credentials which should get the elders (pastors) to "listen up?"

Why do you suppose he did not refer to his authority as an apostle? (Verse 3 might give you a hint)

What do you think he had in mind with the phrase "partaker in the glory that is to be revealed"?

3. To what occupation does Peter compare (v. 2) the role of pastors?

To emphasize the tremendous responsibility they have, how does he refer to the "sheep" in their care?

From Psalm 23, put together a shepherd's "Mission Statement."

In relationship to his ministry, what should be the faithful pastor's:

Attitude

Style

Motive

What incentive (v.4) does Peter give?

4. Why do you think that Peter (v. 5) singles out “younger” people for special counsel?
-

Put into your own words what you think he was recommending to them:

Why is humility or submissiveness so important if a fellowship of believers is going to be all that God intends it to be? (Think in terms of your own congregation)

1 Peter 5:6-11

5. Before whom also is it important to be submissive (v.6)?
-

What is Peter probably referring to with the term “the mighty hand of God”? (See 4:19)

How were they to regard their trials and tribulations?

What should they (and we) confidently do with any and all anxieties (v. 7)?

Why?

6. Even though we do not need to be anxious, what does Peter tell us (v.8) we still need to do?
-

Why?

Do you think that Satan is still “roaring” in our civilized society today? If you don't hear him, does that mean he's not around? Explain.

7. Did Peter tell the Christians of Asia Minor to run and try to hide from Satan? What (v.9) was his advice?
-

What did James (4:7) add to this?

How did Jesus (Matthew 4) drive Satan away?

Did this work for the early Christians? (Revelation 12:10-12)

Of what else does Peter remind them? (v.9)

How might this help them in their struggles?

8. What other assurances does Peter give them in verse 10?

9. How can they be sure about all of this? (v.11)

What is the significance of the Amen?

1 Peter 5:12-14

10. How does Peter (v.12) summarize in just a few words the two goals he had in mind when he wrote this letter?

How does his instruction in verse 14 fit in with what Peter wrote in 3:8 and 4:8?

To what does Peter link his farewell: "Peace" (Shalom)?

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In Chapter 5, Peter reminds us of the importance of networking with fellow Christians as we strive to live out our Christian life in a hostile world. He has words of encouragement and exhortation, which can make our “networking” beneficial. He reminds us that we are all in this together!

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITHFUL PASTORS

PETER 5:1-4

Peter begins this chapter with a Greek word “oun,” which the RSV translates “so.” This connects his exhortation for the church leaders to what he had just written about the trials and tribulations that Christians might have to endure. What he had to say to the “elders” takes on special urgency.

The Greek word translated elders is “presbyterous.” The basic meaning of the word is simply “older men.” From early on in the history of Israel, older and spiritually wiser men were chosen to provide leadership. The Jerusalem church followed a similar plan (Acts 11:30; 21:18). The term “elder” is equivalent to our word pastor.

Peter calls himself a “fellow-elder.” He wants the elders to realize that the advice he gives them comes from someone who understands the great responsibilities they have. As additional incentive for them to “listen up,” Peter reminds them that he was a “witness to the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed.” (See Matthew 17:1-8).

His directive begins with the Greek word “poimanete,” an imperative. Literally, it means “be a shepherd!” This is the same imperative that

Jesus used in John 21, when he reinstated him to the apostleship. Three times Jesus said “Feed my sheep!” Shepherding embraces everything that sheep would require: protecting, leading, guiding, and feeding (see Psalm 23). Peter also reminds them that it is “God’s flock” they are to tend. They are only under-shepherds. God Himself is the Great Shepherd (Psalm 100:3; Ezekiel 34:7ff). One day they will be called before Him to give an account of how they took care of God’s sheep in their charge. They have an awesome responsibility! (1 Corinthians 4:1-2; Hebrews 13:17).

Peter’s first caution for the pastors has to do with attitude “not by constraint but willingly.” Phillips translates this “... not because you have to, but because you want to.” Peter strongly implies that unless you really want to do the job of shepherding, you don’t stand a chance of being helpful to your parishioners.

The second guideline is “not for shameful gain, but eagerly.” The Living Bible paraphrase “...not for what you will get out of it” opens up all kinds of possibilities. Pastors will be ineffective as shepherds if their motivation is wrong. Some may do it for the prestige it might bring; others because they like to be “in charge.” For some it’s just “a job.” Today’s English Version (ABS) probably comes even closer to Peter’s meaning “Do your work not for mere pay, but from a real desire to serve.”

Directives one and two speak to the topics of attitude and motive, the third addresses the topic of style of “pastoring.” Peter says that pastors should not carry out their oversight of people in a domineering style. The word for “domineering” is the same word Jesus used when He spoke to His disciples in Mark 10:42. Jesus applied it to the rule of the “great ones among the Gentiles.” Such a style has no place within the Christian fellowship. They should, rather, lead by their good example. The authority of God’s household is one of truth and love that gently leads to persuasion.

Typical of Peter, we have in verse 4, the added incentive, which seeks to have his readers look beyond the moment. If they will live up to these guidelines, they will one day in the future receive a great reward. “And when the chief Shepherd is manifested, you will obtain the unfading

crown of glory.” What Peter has said to the pastors applies equally as well to all who are in positions of leadership within the fellowship of the church, at whatever level.

HUMBLY SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER

1 PETER 5:5

The Greek word “omoioos” (“likewise” — RSV) with which begins verse 5, tells us that Peter continues the discussion along the same line only now he directs attention to the attitudes of those who are being led. He singles out one segment of the congregation, “you that are younger.” More than older mature people, it is youth who have a problem with accepting the authority. Back in the turbulent 60’s, youth of our nation had this slogan “Don’t trust anyone over 30!” Granted that while this was a bit extreme, it is quite characteristic of young people. As they struggle to “find themselves,” they often place a low value on the wisdom and guidance of older people.

His word to the youth of the Christian fellowship is simple, “Be subject to the elders.” Don’t just “go” with your natural, and sometimes rebellious, youthful feelings. Recognize that the elders and older people, in general, are God’s gift to you to help you through difficult times and keep you from making some big and costly mistakes. Your loving Father in heaven asks you to listen to them and to follow their leadership, especially in matters spiritual.

In fact, Peter goes on to say, this applies to everyone, regardless of age. If the pastors are going to be effective in their ministry and if the fellowship of the believers is going to be all that God intended it to be, the spirit of “submissiveness” must prevail. Peter puts it this way: “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another” (v.5). The Greek imperative that Peter uses for “clothe yourselves” is “egnkombosasthe.” The root meaning of the word is “to knot, or to tie.” The noun form referred to the white apron of slaves (egkoombooma) which was fastened around the waist. We need to let those around us know that we are ready to serve them by displaying an attitude of humility. Peter remembered how Jesus did that in the upper room. He girded Himself with a towel and stooped to do the work of a slave (John 13:4). Afterward, He told them that this was an example for them to follow.

Peter supports this exhortation with a quote from the Old Testament (Proverbs 3:34): “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” The spirit of humility ranks high on God’s list of personal qualities for His followers. It is the lubricant which enables a body of believers to live and work together without the friction that pride causes.

HUMBLY SUBMIT ALSO TO GOD

1 PETER 5:6-7

In verses 6-7, Peter mentions another area in their lives where it is important to be submissive. It has to do with circumstances of suffering and persecution, which this short letter had been addressing. This is what Peter meant by the “mighty hand of God” in verse 6. They were to regard their difficulties as something that, in the final analysis, God was permitting. They were to remember that God is still in charge. The human tendency is to resent and rebel, to murmur and grumble. Peter’s admonition is “let yourselves be submissive.” This involves not just a passive resignation, but an active cooperation. It’s like a man who has a medical problem. He seeks out a qualified doctor and then submits himself to his or her advice and treatment. It is only when we willingly “submit” ourselves to our God that He can help us to spiritual health.

Any concerns that come with this whole process are to be turned over to God: “Cast all your cares upon Him!” The tense of the Greek word (v.7) indicated that this is to be done in a conscious, deliberate action! The incentive which Peter gives is a deceptively simple statement, “for He cares for you.” Yet, it expresses a belief, which is unique to the biblical faith. Other religions operate with the notion that somehow through rituals, prayers, and ceremonies their constituents need to awaken God’s interest and concern. Christians begin with the confidence that God already cares and they build on that. This was especially important for them as they faced the hostility of the world.

BE READY FOR THE CONFLICT

1 PETER 5:8-11

After telling them that God will take care of all of their concerns, Peter reminds them that this does not mean there isn’t anything for them to do. It should not lull them into a false sense of security. They would need to be “sober and watchful” (v.8). If they haven’t figured it out for themselves by this time, Peter explains to them that behind the antagonism that was growing with each day they should see the person of God’s arch-enemy, Satan. He is on the prowl, like a roaring lion looking for a meal. The roar of the king of the jungle has a terrifying effect upon lesser animals who hear it. The hostility and the threats of worldly people and governments are like the lion’s roar. Satan will try to use it to intimidate the Christians, hoping to reduce them to a state of helpless terror in which they will be unable to resist his attacks and become his prey.

Don’t let that happen to you, Peter tells them. Don’t let the ominous roar of

persecution intimidate you. Then Peter gives advice that may surprise us. He doesn't tell them to "go for cover." In verse 9 he says, rather, that they should take a firm stand against him: "Resist him!" The word resist implies active, determined opposition. And, it suggests the encouraging thought that such a confrontational stance against Satan will be successful. James (4:7) says, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." You can count on this. It will be victory for God's kingdom. No matter what the outcome from the point of their life on earth, they can be sure that God's kingdom will be advanced. To give them further incentive, Peter reminds them they are not alone in experiencing difficulties. Brothers and sisters in the faith all around the world are paying the same price as they are. Keep remembering that!

As he wraps up this letter of encouragement, Peter directs them to look at their troubles from a new perspective. They should see beyond the troubles at hand. He reminds them (v.10) that the "God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ" is still in charge, no matter how it might seem. Because He is, there is a time limit on the sufferings. Peter says it will be "a little while." For some, it will be a "little while" because they will die. For others, no matter how long it lasts, it will still be just "a little" when compared to the glory of heaven. Both groups have the assurance that God will be on hand personally to pick them up and "restore, establish, and strengthen you." Having said this, Peter (v.11) winds up this letter with a short doxology "To Him be the dominion forever and ever!" "Three cheers for God!" The Greek word for dominion is "kratos." It is interesting to note that in the New Testament it is used exclusively for God. It describes the ability to keep under control, to acquire and to retain mastery over all things. God is in charge always!

THE CONCERN OF OTHERS — A SOURCE OF STRENGTH

1 PETER 5:12-14

Bible scholars pretty well agree that it was at this point (vv 12-14) that Peter may have taken the pen in his own hand and added this as a post-script. "By Silvanus," (v.12) may very well mean that Silvanus was going to deliver this

letter personally (see Lesson 1). It may also mean that he was well-known to the readers, and that he had actually once even worked among them. All of this shows the concern that Peter had for them.

"I have written briefly," suggests that there were many other things that Peter might have included. What he did write about was his biggest concern. He hoped that all of them would accept his exhortations, and above all that, they would stand fast in the true grace of God. "She who is at Babylon (v.13), who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings." Peter wanted to assure them that the brothers and sisters in Rome felt a strong bond with them and would hold them in their thoughts and prayers. The same goes for Peter's reference to "my son Mark."

His final directive in verse 14: "Greet one another with the kiss of love." Here Peter follows the example of his co-worker Paul (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:26). A kiss was a sacred sign of agape love and unity. In the Western Church, it was customary at the communion service until the 13th century, and in some of the Eastern and Western churches to this day, it is retained in a modified form. The Living Bible paraphrases it to say, "Give each other the handshake of Christian Love."

His final word: "Peace to all of you that are in Christ." "Peace" was in his greeting at the beginning of his letter and it is in his closing, as well. It reflects the very common Hebrew blessing "Shalom," but when he adds the words "to all that are in Christ Jesus," he "New Testamentizes" the ancient greeting. He makes a strong statement that true peace can belong only to those who are firmly linked to Christ by faith and to one another in that loving fellowship which is His Church on earth (Philippians 4:7).

Did you find anything in Chapter 5 of Peter's First Epistle that you can add to your "Personal Mission Statement?" May God help you to live your "Mission Statement."

Soli Deo Gloria!