

## 1 Peter Bible Study #1: First Introduction – Who and Whom

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 1:1

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

### **Who & Whom**

Before discussing the contents of 1 Peter, it is necessary to ask *who* and *whom*. Who wrote the book, and to whom is it written?

#### *Who?*

The author identifies himself as St. Peter, one of the twelve Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. By this declaration, he claims Divine inspiration for the Epistle that follows, making it an authoritative text for all Christians to read and obey. While it is no sin to merely accept that 1 Peter is written by its titular author, we must be aware that the claim in authorship is an impactful one. An Apostle, or ἀπόστολος,<sup>12</sup> is *one who is sent*.<sup>34</sup> Here, the writer is saying that he is a delegate of Jesus Christ, someone with the authority and mission to pass along the message of our Savior to all believers. His words are to be taken as divinely inspired, as Christ promised in John 14:25-26,

“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

This means that by our Lord's promise, the Apostles are the only ones guaranteed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to pass Christian dogma to the Church. They also demonstrate that they can approve the writings of others as authoritative, as we see in the cases of St. Luke, St. Paul<sup>5</sup> and others. In other words, to summarize: Apostles *wrote Bible*, and if God used anyone else to write, the Apostles were the ones to verify it – at least through fellowship, as we see with St. James's Epistle. When the author of 1 Peter says he is an Apostle, the intended response of Christians reading his letter is to carefully read and obey.

#### *Doubts on St. Peter's Authorship*

Of course, the Church has always accepted St. Peter's authorship as a fact, with various attestations from the Church Fathers confirming Apostolic authorship. However, in recent centuries scholars in the so-called discipline of “higher criticism” have cast doubt on the authorship of almost every book of the Bible. They do not want to submit to Apostolic authority, so they cast doubt on whether St. Peter ever wrote anything at all.<sup>6</sup>

The case presented against Petrine authorship (and our response) is as follows:

-Language. The claim is made by critics that, since St. Peter was originally an uneducated

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1 Transliterated “Apostolos,” Strong's #652

2 <https://bibleapps.com/greek/652.htm>

3 It is derived from the verb ἀποστέλλω, transliterated “Apostello,” Strong's #649

4 <https://bibleapps.com/greek/649.htm>

5 2 Peter 3:15-16

6 Higher critics are even more aggressive regarding 2 Peter, which we will defend when we begin studying that particular Epistle.

fisherman, there is no way that he would employ rhetoric and advanced use of Koine Greek in the way that he does in the Epistle. This criticism is absurd because it relies on two assumptions:

- a) That St. Peter was stupid, potentially even illiterate.
- b) That the author wrote this Epistle with no assistance.

The first assumption is false based not only on the typical education of children in Judea, but also on St. Peter's use of the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament – written in Greek – in Acts 2. This demonstrates an ability to read Koine *at least*, as well as his prior knowledge of Scripture showing a more educated background. And since 1 Peter includes the Septuagint rendition of other verses,<sup>7</sup> it is likely that the same Peter that spoke at Pentecost is the same man who wrote the Epistle. Furthermore, if he *had* been educated, it is evident that he wrote the Epistle some twenty to forty *years* after Pentecost. That is plenty of time to get educated!

Even if St. Peter *was* a blithering idiot or uneducated rube, the linguistic argument against Petrine authorship fails on account its second assumption due to the presence of Silvanus, St. Peter's scribe. 1 Peter 5:12 says “By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.” It is possible that if the Apostle's language was a bit rough around the edges, Silvanus may have editorialized with St. Peter's approval.

-Dating. A second contention against St. Peter having written the Epistle is a supposed dating issue. The author discusses the Church at large undergoing trials and discrimination; the “scholars” believe that earnest persecution of Christians by Rome did not start until emperor Domitian's reign circa 81 A.D., by which point the real St. Peter would long have been dead. They also believe that the use of the term “Babylon” is a late reference or code-word for Rome, necessitating a later date. The dating argument fails on account of:

- a) willful ignorance of history
- b) ignorance of linguistic usage

Some of these critics hold that persecution did not arrive until late in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. Apparently, the record of persecution found in the Book of Acts was a lie, as was Suetonius's testimony that emperor Nero harmed Christians.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, nowhere does the writer state that *only* the Romans were going after the Church; to the contrary, believers underwent harm by Jews, Romans, Ethiopians – almost *everyone* encountered by Christian missionaries was at some point hostile to them. And what is Babylon to the New Testament writers? The home of idolatry and the powers which persecute.<sup>10</sup>

### The positive case for Petrine authorship

Self-Identification. Simply put, the author of 1 Peter identifies himself as Peter and gives us no reason to doubt him. He writes to a specific group of Christians in a specific group of places (1Pet.1:1), so presumably these dispersed believers were already familiar with him and would not expect him to make a detailed defense of his identity. The author writes under the assumption that the Christian diaspora knows who he is. The early Church would have rejected this work if St. Peter was long dead.

7 Example: 1 Pet.2:22, “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.,” from the LXX Isaiah 53:9

8 Nero's persecutions were around 64 B.C. and prior.

9 <https://bible-history.com/nero/suetonius-on-the-christians>

10 Revelation 17

Orthodoxy. The author does not write anything particularly *new* to the believers. The doctrine he touches on (in the midst of his exhortations and comfort) is not an innovation or something “newly inspired,” There are no odd titles given to Christ like “Illuminator,” as there are in the “Letter of Peter to Philip,”<sup>11</sup> and nor are there any heretical teachings like the Docetist<sup>12</sup> “Gospel of Peter.” First Peter cannot be traced to any later theological inventions, but is doctrinally right at home with the other Epistles in the New Testament and the Gospels.

Audience. St. Peter writes to “the Dispersion,” a term which we discuss below as referring to the Church. If there is a Dispersion, there was a Dispensing. The beginning of this is mentioned in Acts 8:1, which says:

And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Since this is in living memory for the St. Peter, as is the great amount of upheaval which occurred whenever non-Christians began to hear the Word, it is reasonable to assume he is speaking to those who experienced this during their flight from Jerusalem and other areas in Judea. Though not a Biblical source, it is also attested by Epiphanius of Salamis in the *Panarion* that Christians further dispersed during the “Jewish War” of A.D. 66-70.<sup>13,14</sup> In a way, one might even say that 1 Peter is written in a preparatory fashion for further potential persecution.

If we might summarize, there is no reasonable argument to be made against Petrine authorship. The cases made by skeptical academics are just-so stories, designed solely to undermine observance of what the Apostle says. That their arguments amount to “Peter was just too stupid to write this and he was probably long dead when it was written” make no sense even under the surface-level scrutiny we have applied to them here. To the contrary, 1 Peter is not only written to an audience that is *familiar* with the Apostle, but it also serves as a snapshot of New Testament theology as presented in the other Epistles. Saint Peter wrote the first Epistle of Peter.

### *Whom?*

Just as the author is extremely important to understanding the text, so is the audience. 1 Peter is written *to* someone, and the identity of those people matter. His exhortations apply to the people the letter is addressed to; anyone outside of it might find healthful counsel or vicarious comfort. If this Epistle is not binding upon everyone in the Church, then those outside of the original readership may say “I hope that, just as God did these wonderful things and offered these great comforts to Peter's audience, He shall do so to me. Yet I shall not obey all of his commands, as they are not aimed at me.” We must admit our bias – not only from theological priors and elsewhere in Scripture, but also in the knowledge that this would be a tragic thing to see. It would result in moral chaos. For example, women would not have any requirement to submit to their husbands, and their husbands would have no command to bear with their wives; 1 Peter 3:1-7 would be demoted to mere advice.

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11 <https://ccd.claremont.edu/digital/collection/cce/id/1210>

12 Docetism is the belief that Christ's Body was an illusion – and thus His Crucifixion did not actually accomplish salvation.

13 *Panarion*, book 29, 7:8. Found here:

[https://web.archive.org/web/20150906041916/http://www.masseiana.org/panarion\\_bk1.htm#29](https://web.archive.org/web/20150906041916/http://www.masseiana.org/panarion_bk1.htm#29).

14 Also attested by Eusebius in *History of the Church*, 3.5.3, found here:

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iii.viii.v.html?highlight=pella#highlight>

This is especially important as it touches soteriology. All of the cities to which St. Peter refers in the first verse are in Asia Minor, or what is now called Anatolia, or modern day Turkey; during the first century, these are indisputably Gentile lands. However, he is also writing to what he calls the Diaspora, something he also calls *elect*, and this was typically a term for exiled Israelites and jews. So either St. Peter is writing to all Christians, and treating them in a way consistent with the Church's identification as the true Israel; or he is addressing jews only, perhaps slightly specified to jewish Christians.

Why is this so important? In 1 Peter 2:9, the Apostle writes that his audience is “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.” If the Epistle only applies to a jewish audience, then there is no universal priesthood of all believers (or at best there is a severely weakened one). St. Peter would be contradicting St. Paul<sup>15</sup> and his own words in Acts, where he proclaims that God does not show partiality between jew and Gentile,<sup>16</sup> in addition to contradicting St. Paul's teaching concerning Israel being a spiritual entity rather than a racial one.<sup>17</sup> Even worse, soteriological statements like Galatians 3:28, in which access to salvation is shown to *not* be on the basis of race, is thrown out the window according to 1 Peter 1:1 calling the Diaspora *elect*, and the spread of Christians based on persecution *not* counting for anything! In other words, to claim that this Epistle is addressed solely to jewish believers – or jews in general – is to introduce so many contradictions into the text of Scripture that it would make 1 Peter look non-canonical.<sup>18</sup>

Thankfully, this is not the case.

#### *Written to the Church*

St. Peter says things about his audience which can only apply to the entirety of the Church. For instance, in 1 Peter 2:10, he writes “Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” Those of Hebrew extraction have almost always maintained an identity before God, while Gentiles have not always done so. With no Covenant between them and God, with no history of being a chosen people, but suddenly being chosen by God to enter into His *New Covenant*, this verse means that indeed the Diaspora is identified as Christians of any ethnicity whatsoever.

St. Peter even exhorts his audience to not act or think *like they once did*. 1Pet.1:14 says “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance” - which cannot apply to those observant jews who had the Law, which specifically disciplined against sinful passions and made sure that the children of Israel were not ignorant of a coming Messiah. Certainly St. Peter would not have his coethnics in mind when he says in 1Pet.1:18, “knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers,” as if he were throwing the whole of the Old Testament in the trash! Yet the Gentile Christians indeed *did* come out of a futile and pagan tradition which does not save.

Thus there is no legitimate reading of 1 Peter without taking into account that it is a Catholic, or universal, Epistle. When referring to a Diaspora or the “Gentiles,” the Apostle is doing nothing more consistently identifying the Church as the true Israel. It belongs to, applies to, and is *for* the entirety of the Church, and we rejoice to have it as part of the treasury of the Canon.

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15 Galatians 2:6

16 Acts 10:34-35

17 Romans 2:11, 9-11

18 If someone should be inclined to claim we are being over-dramatic in our assessment of that interpretation, let us remind our readers that none other than John Calvin advocated for a jewish reading of 1 Peter:

<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom45.iv.ii.i.html>

## 1 Peter Bible Study #2: Second Introduction – Purpose

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 1:1-9

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:

May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

### **Introduction**

We have established St. Peter the Apostle as the true author of the Epistle which bears his name. In addition we also established that 1 Peter is a truly Catholic Epistle, with the Body of Christ in general being the original audience, thus making it binding on the Church today. What the Apostle writes is directly applicable to us today, and we are duty bound as Christians to believe what it says and to obey the exhortations contained therein.

Nonetheless, while it is binding upon us all we cannot hope to fully embrace it unless we do two crucial things. First, we must understand 1 Peter's *purpose*, or why the author wrote what he wrote. What is the occasion? What is the tone? What does the Apostle hope to gain by writing as he has? The intended purpose of the writing will determine how the Christian receives the Epistle, that he may rightly produce the intended results. To read the book in a devotional manner, we must understand its purpose. Thankfully 1 Peter 1:1-9 teaches the reader about the occasion for the Apostle's writing. The second crucial thing to do is find the structure of the Epistle, so that we may emphasize what the writer emphasizes, and rightly apply it – but that is the topic of the next lesson.

### **Commentary**

#### **Vs.1**

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

As mentioned previously, this is merely a greeting to Christians who are in Asia Minor. The specific names of cities in this region do not detract from the Epistle's catholicity, as the author addresses “elect exiles of the Dispersion.” It is addressed to *all* of the elect, but the letter was to be

copied and sent where Christians had settled after being dispersed. It is likely, given this address and Christ's messages to churches in Asia Minor,<sup>1</sup> that the majority of first century believers were residing in this area to avoid Roman and Jewish persecution.

### **Vs.2**

according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:

May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

The second verse is a Trinitarian formula. God the Father is shown to be, by title alone, Creator and Father of all; it is by His foreknowledge (knowing who shall be brought to belief and thus be saved) that the exiles are called Elect. The Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier, setting us apart and making us more holy over time. Christ, our King, has shed His blood which is sprinkled in a sacrificial manner for our redemption. In saying for sprinkling with His blood,” the author draws a direct connection between the Crucifixion and the sin offerings in the Mosaic Law.<sup>2</sup> This suggests that St. Peter was familiar with the messaging in the book of Hebrews, which asserts that the Mosaic sacrificial system was a typological picture of the ultimate sacrifice which Christ made at Calvary.<sup>34</sup> Thus St. Peter, in harmony with the rest of the New Testament, presents the Trinity which functions as follows: the Father as Provider, the Son as Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier.

### **Vs.3-5**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Though St. Peter has cited foreknowledge as a fundamental part of election, this does not mean that he is supporting the Arminian position regarding predestination. In fact, he says that all credit in our salvation belongs to God alone: the Apostle is clearly a monergist, and states plainly that God actively preserves us through faith. Yet this monergism is not a Calvinistic one, as the vehicle of salvation is not a prior decree of *election*, but the *Resurrection* – or, in a word, the entirety of the Atonement.

Note also that he speaks of a future-tense salvation, for which the Christian is preserved. The author is future-oriented, but in the already-but-not-yet sense. He speaks of being born again, indicating a familiarity with Christ's words in John 3:3, only using ἀναγεννήσας,<sup>56</sup> which specifies the “born from above” in John's Gospel to an explicit “born *again*.” The believer, being reborn, already belongs to God and is thus saved; yet the believer has not *yet* received the eternal blessed life which marks the Resurrection of the dead. To be saved in this life is to be preserved for the salvation to come – a final deliverance from our last enemy, death.<sup>7</sup>

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1 Revelation 1:11

2 Leviticus 5:9 and elsewhere.

3 Hebrews 9:27-10:14

4 Interestingly enough, this places 1 Peter chronologically at the same time as or after the writing of Hebrews. At the very least, typological theology was in development in the Church during this time.

5 Transliterated “anagennesas,” Strong's #313

6 [https://biblehub.com/greek/anagenne\\_sas\\_313.htm](https://biblehub.com/greek/anagenne_sas_313.htm)

7 1 Corinthians 15:26

### **Vs.6-7**

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

It is evident that the congregations to whom he writes, indeed the Church at large at the time, were undergoing great pain. There was persecution abroad, many had been exiled from their original homelands, and the dating given around the time of the Jewish war (A.D. 66-70) means that their relatives were fighting and dying, if not simply being victimized by rebels and Romans alike. The question may very well be in their minds, “why is this happening?” St. Peter answers that, like refining gold and other precious metals, it is a matter of God using these bad occasions for good, namely the sanctification of believers. It is thus no accident that 1 Peter comes right after Hebrews and James, which both teach the same thing; suffering can be a means of making us more righteous; only Hebrews highlights the disciplinary aspect, while James emphasizes the fruit of steadfastness.<sup>8</sup> 1 Peter on the other hand looks directly at the general perfection being worked in the believer through their suffering, that they may be *better* believers, more faithful to our Lord. As Christians have always been persecuted and will be until Christ's Return, it is something for us to internalize as well.

### **Vs.8-9**

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

These two verses contain both encouragement and exhortation. St. Peter is commenting on how the believers hold faith *now*, and the fruit of that in the *future*. He highlights the joy that comes within from knowing that one is slated for salvation by faith in Christ. One cannot help but mention that the verbs concerning their faith are not imperative but *indicative*, and this means that the people to whom he writes are doing the right thing. To love Christ with Agape love is to love Him sacrificially, to seek His will in all matters; the churches in Asia Minor are doing just this, so the Apostle's writing is commending them for it. This stands in contrast to the author of Hebrews employing a purpose of “educate and exhort the people to stay in the faith,” and St. James's didactic speech to purify Christians and lead them to greater steadfastness. St. Peter is willing to give the “Attaboy” or “good job” to faithful believers.

### **Purpose**

There certainly are exhortations in the book of 1 Peter, but his letter is intended first and foremost to be an encouragement. He centers his writing on the work of Christ in us, and how our suffering is a means of identifying with Christ and getting closer to Him. This *will* mean giving directions for our conduct, especially as the believer will behave consistently with being saved, but that comes after the reassurance that our Lord sees us, commends us, and has given us a dignity and status which did not belong to us when we were nonbelievers.

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<sup>8</sup> Hebrews 12:3-17, James 1:12

## 1 Peter Bible Study #3: Third Introduction – Structure

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### Introduction

We have established St. Peter the Apostle as the true author of the Epistle which bears his name. In addition we also established that 1 Peter is a truly Catholic Epistle, with the Body of Christ in general being the original audience, thus making it binding on the Church today. Then, touching on the purpose of the Epistle, we discovered that St. Peter's intention for his audience (including us today) was to bring us to awareness of God's care, our status, and the identification of the believer with Christ in the experience of trials.

### Structure

By constructing an outline, or finding the *structure* of the Epistle, we can find the emphases that the author places on various subjects. If a Bible study must start with the who-what-when-where-why, then outlines and syntactical analysis help us to answer the *what* question. It is a means of reading the book without proof texting, to prevent the blunders that might come from reading single verses in isolation.

In defining an outline, we also notice patterns in the author's literary style, helping us to summarize the *what*, finding something of a thesis statement that accomplishes the *why*, or the purpose the author had for writing. In the case of 1 Peter, we notice a repeated motif of Christian conduct being directly connected to salvation. How is this motif expressed?

### 1 Peter Outline

Pericope	Section	Length
1:1-2	Initial Greeting	2 verses
1:3-9	Purpose Statement	7 verses
1:10-12	The Prophets (prelude)	3 verses
1:13-21	Self-Conduct from Salvation	9 verses
1:22-2:3	Church Conduct from Salvation	8 verses
2:4-10	What Christians Are	7 verses
2:11-25	Exilic Conduct from Salvation	15 verses
3:1-7	Marital Conduct	7 verses
3:8-12	Incentives for Virtue from Salvation	5 verses
3:13-22	Exilic Conduct from Salvation	10 verses
4:1-6	Self Discipline from Salvation	6 verses
4:7-11	Authentic Use of the Universal Priesthood	5 verses
4:12-19	Identification with Christ in Suffering	8 verses
5:1-5	Instructions for both Pastorate and Laity	5 verses
5:6-11	Current Struggle and Future Glory	6 verses
5:12-14	Ending Greeting	3 verses

## St. Peter and Hebrew Poetry

The Apostle was a Hebrew man. He demonstrates a great familiarity with the Old Testament, to the point of producing it from memory in his sermon at Pentecost.<sup>1</sup> This means he potentially went to a Hebrew school for learning Scripture before settling on continuing the family fishing business. This means that he knew about and could draw inspiration from the way Old Testament authors wrote. Yet he is writing a *letter*, not a poem, so 1 Peter is written in a more familiar style. He does not need to introduce meter, stanza, or exact spacing. He is also comfortable inserting small messages, or asides, which pertain to the overall subject but would break poetic convention. Thus, as we will show, St. Peter establishes his central message by borrowing concepts from Hebrew poetry without limiting himself to poetic syntax: namely he employs the rough imitation of parallelism and chiasmic structure.

### Synthetic Parallelism and Repetition

Something to note is the repetition of a “because/therefore” logic in St. Peter's writing. “Because we are saved, here is the conduct we must employ in our personal lives, our personal discipline, our relations with outsiders and our relations with each other.” Sometimes it is worded in a different order: “We must conduct ourselves righteously because God has saved us.” This is essentially a long-form expression of Hebrew synthetic parallelism, in which an idea is expressed and then expanded upon in the next line. Often in Scripture a parallelism is repeated for mnemonic (memorization) purposes, as well as discussing other aspects of the truth being taught.

Example from Proverbs 16:

14 A king's wrath is a messenger of death,  
and a wise man will appease it.

15 In the light of a king's face there is life,  
and his favor is like the clouds that bring the spring rain.

In the fourteenth verse, King Solomon employs a synthetic parallelism. The first line teaches that an angry king is a sign of impending death (presumably for those who made him angry), and the second line provides a “so-what:” the wise man appeases the king's wrath. The fifteenth verse continues speaking on the topic of a king's attitude and emotional state by providing a contrasting formulation: the monarch being *happy* means life!

St. Peter essentially does the same, but in the epistolary genre, or letter format. Because of his familiar tone with his audience, it is not proper to have a strict syntax and meter to his language, or to stuff the entire message into two lines per instance. Instead, St. Peter keeps the *spirit* and *concept* of parallelism in his writings, while maintaining the freedom of prose; he does not write exact parallel lines, but sometimes has parallel sentence structures. This way his ideas are expounded on more precisely, but the memorization effect of repetition is still in full force: his repetition of the same ideas helps the audience truly *learn* the lesson.

### Chiastic Center

A “Chiasm” is a poetic structure which utilizes the placement of stanzas, lines, and words to highlight a central message. Named after the Greek letter *Chi*, or X, a typical chiasm shows the first line or stanza matching the last one, the second matching the second to last, and so forth. In the center of the poem is the main interpretive key, from which we are to understand the rest of the text. We do well to think of a chiasm almost like an essay where the thesis is in the *middle* of the message rather than the beginning.

Example from Genesis 11, first written as normal prose:

1 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2 And as people migrated from the east, they found a

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1 Acts 2:14-36

plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. **3** And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. **4** Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.” **5** And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. **6** And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. **7** Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech.” **8** So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. **9** Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

Here is Genesis 11, demonstrating its chiasmic structure:

**A1 1** Now the whole earth had one language and the same words.

**B1 2** And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

**C1 3** And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar.

**D1 4** Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”

**E 5** And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built.

**D2 6** And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.

**C2 7** Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech.”

**B2 8** So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.

**A2 9** Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth.

And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

The central verse in the passage is Genesis 11:5, in which “the Lord came down” shows the single difference between a united, rebellious mankind and a divided mankind. This tells us, the readers, to focus on God's actions in response to man's attempts at building the tower, which are *in reverse sequence* an undoing of what humanity was attempting to do.

Scripture is absolutely *brimming* with chiasms, and for 1 Peter, there is something similar. 1 Peter 2:4-10 is the beating heart of the Epistle, the thematic center. All concepts flow from his explanation of who the Christian truly *is* after having been regenerated. The expectation of good conduct comes from this transformed life, and the the understanding that God deems believers to be precious members of His chosen people.

**4** As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, **5** you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **6** For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious,  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

**7** So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone,”

**8** and

“A stone of stumbling,  
and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

It bears repeating that 1 Peter is written in the “epistolary,” or letter-format genre, not a poetic one. But as there are twenty-nine verses preceding 1Pet.2:4-10, and thirty-six after (not counting the aside on marital relations) in the main body of exhortations and encouragements. It is in the center of the main body of text, while 1Pet4:7 and after are more explanatory in nature.<sup>2</sup>

As this is the rough center of the text, the main driver of the Epistle, 1Pet.2:4-10 gives us the prevailing attitude the Christian has toward himself, the *Saint* part of “simultaneous Saint and Sinner.” It is how God sees the believers who are justified by faith in Christ, and the motivating factor in our service. There is much more to say on this passage, but it will receive special attention in its own installment (and likely be referenced every week!).

### St. Peter's “Elevated Conduct” Motif, Shown in Rough Parallel Text

Key:

- Christian salvation
- Christian conduct in light of salvation
- Consequential Connection (“On account of this,”)

1:13-21

13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” 17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile,

18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 21 who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

1:22-2:3

22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,

23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

24 for “All flesh is like grass  
and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,  
and the flower falls,

25 but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

2:1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—

3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

2:11-25

11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable,

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2 These successive passages do maintain *some* of the rough parallels that St. Peter employed, but less so than the main body.

so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

**13** Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, **14** or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. **15** For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. **16** Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. **17** Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

**18** Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. **19** For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. **20** For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

**21** For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. **22** He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. **23** When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. **24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. **25** For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

3:8-12

**8** Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. **9** Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless,

for to this you were called,  
that you may obtain a blessing.

**10** For

“Whoever desires to love life

and see good days,

let him keep his tongue from evil

and his lips from speaking deceit;

**11** let him turn away from evil and do good;

let him seek peace and pursue it.

**12** For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,

and his ears are open to their prayer.

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

3:13-22

**13** Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? **14** But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, **15** but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, **16** having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

**17** For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

**18** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, **19** in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, **20** because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. **21** Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **22** who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

## 1 Peter Bible Study #4: Prelude from the Prophets

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 1:10-12

**10** Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, **11** inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. **12** It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

### **Introduction**

We have discussed how 1 Peter was written, including a large section loosely patterned off of Hebrew poetic structure. Several times throughout the Epistle, the Apostle presents two related ideas: what Christ has done for us, and how we must live according to the new identity we have in Christ. These two foundational theses surround the central proposition that Christ *saving* us means that we have a new identity which we did not have before being saved.

To introduce this theme after his initial praise in 1Pet.1:1-9, he speaks of an advantage that the Christian has over even the prophets of the Old Testament. The contrast being set up is not one of ontological superiority of one group over the other; the Apostle is not filling the Christian's head with the idea that he is somehow a better *person* than the prophets on account of when he was born. Nor is he lecturing the believer on how they must have a better attitude since previous saints did not have what we have. Instead, he is highlighting and celebrating the privilege granted to the Christian.

### **Vs.10-11**

**10** Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, **11** inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

*Salvation* – By salvation, the Apostle means the free offer of forgiveness and eternal life by the blood of Christ shed upon the Cross and on account of His Resurrection.

*The grace that was to be yours* – is this to say that the prophets were not saved? Heaven forbid! The prophets, like all saints, were saved by God's Grace through faith in Christ.<sup>1</sup> But the grace which was to belong to *us*, not the prophets, is the gift of the full revelation of the Gospel. Today's Christian has a great advantage and encouragement regarding the special nature of the salvation given unto us, that we should not be “in the dark” concerning God's plan to redeem humanity.

*Searched and inquired carefully* – The prophets deeply yearned, according to the promise given to them, to find out who would suffer and be brought to glory. We should not be surprised to hear that the prophets knew about both of these aspects of the Gospel, as the promise of one who would undergo suffering followed by victory was present even at the Fall. Genesis 3:15, the “Protoevangelium” or “Proto-Gospel” states “He shall crush your head and you shall bruise his heel.” While Adam and Eve were not given the full details concerning who among their descendants would defeat the serpent, they knew these two key factors – suffering and victory.

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<sup>1</sup> The “Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11 makes this *very* clear.

*Spirit of Christ* – Though this passage is not *about* the Holy Spirit per se, it is worth noting that the term “Spirit of Christ” denotes procession of the Holy Spirit. The Nicene Creed speaks of this when confessing the following: “and I believe in the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*.” This is a mysterious doctrine which coincides with the eternal generation of the Son; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. Since the Holy Spirit here is called the “Spirit of Christ” rather than the “Spirit of the Father,” the *Filioque*, or “and the Son” clause in the Creed. Though 1Pet.1:11 is not *about* eternal procession of the Spirit, it does contribute to the formulation of the dogma.

**More** importantly, St. Peter is giving us a Christocentric view of the Old Testament – and all Scripture, for that matter. The Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit, attested by St. Paul in addition to St. Peter.<sup>2</sup> To be a spokesman for God is to be in the office of prophecy, meaning that the Holy Spirit will speak accordingly: the Holy Spirit, being the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of prophecy, will point people to the Gospel.<sup>3</sup> By teaching that the prophets pointed to Jesus, according to the Spirit of Christ, and that this is the *central* aspect of their ministries as they penned the inspired Old Testament, St. Peter is directing us to a Christocentric view. This has consequences for Biblical interpretation, as we are directed here to read Scripture with Christ in mind; the New Testament becomes our starting point for the development of theology and for all hermeneutics.<sup>4</sup>

## **Vs.12**

**12** It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

Here the Apostle shows that he is not lecturing nor berating the reader, but speaking with the voice of Gospel. All Scripture can be categorized according to one of two voices, Law and Gospel, the first of which is subdivided by three.

### **Law:**

-1<sup>st</sup> Use – the Law's function as a curb on sin and evil by warning of earthly consequences, with attendant promises of reward for good behavior. This is typically a ministry of civic power.<sup>5</sup>

-2<sup>nd</sup> Use – The Law's function as a mirror which evaluates us based on the presence of sin in our lives. This means being told by the Law that we are sinners in need of a Savior.

-3<sup>rd</sup> Use – The Law is a guide, which helps the forgiven Christian to live a life which pleases our Lord.

### **Gospel:**

-The Gospel is that promise of Divine Mercy and Grace, attained by faith in the Atoning death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus. With it includes *all* promises of good from our Lord.<sup>6</sup>

St. Peter, establishes that the Apostle is writing with the voice of Gospel. He speaks of the prophets being used by God for the believer, with a Gospel delivered by evangelists and Apostles for the believer, through the empowering of the Holy Spirit for the believer. It is a unilateral promise and action of Grace for those whom our Lord calls to salvation.

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2 2 Timothy 3:16-17

3 Revelation 19:10

4 As opposed to those denominational traditions like the Reformed, who typically place more emphasis on the Old Testament as a starting point.

5 Romans 13:1-7

6 2 Corinthians 1:20

## 1 Peter Bible Study #5: Christian Living in Light of Being Saved

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 1:13-21

**13** Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **14** As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, **15** but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, **16** since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” **17** And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, **18** knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, **19** but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. **20** He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you **21** who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

### Introduction

In 1 Peter 1:10-12, the Apostle describes a great privilege that the Christian has over everyone who came before the Atonement and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, even over the prophets and the angels. This privilege consists of having the full revelation of the Gospel clearly preached, so that one's joy may be fuller and they shall never undergo the difficulties of waiting for the Messiah's first arrival. While the Holy Spirit dictated prophecies concerning the Messiah to the prophets, they searched out the time He would arrive and what He would do, but to no avail: they were tasked with writing and *trusting* what God was saying rather than fully understanding it, because their task was to serve believers.

This privilege implies that there is a certain attitude that the believer must have, especially in reading and understanding the Scriptures – hence Lutherans placing interpretive primacy on the New Testament over the Old. But there are further implications and outworkings of this Grace given to us, namely in the life we live as Christians. 1 Peter 1:13-21 begins the “therefore” passages of the believer's life in light of being saved.

### Commentary

#### Vs.13

**13** Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

*Therefore* – the following verses are predicated on the wonderful position the Christian is in, having received the Gospel in its fullness.

The Apostle gives three directives in this verse. First, the believer must be prepared for action, or ready to do as God wishes for him to do in any given circumstance; the specific Greek phrase suggests preparation to do battle, as “ἀναζωσάμενοι τὰς ὀσφύας τῆς διανοίας” is literally translated “having girded up the loins of the mind.”<sup>12</sup> The connotation is that one must be ready –

1 [https://biblehub.com/interlinear/1\\_peter/1-13.htm](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/1_peter/1-13.htm)

2 Illustrated example and explanation of girding one's loins: <https://www.artofmanliness.com/skills/manly-know->

not just for action, but for *battle*. This paints a picture of the Christian as a soldier in Christ's army, engaged in struggle against the forces of the world, the flesh and the devil; his armor is faithfulness and his weapon is the Word.<sup>3</sup>

Second, he must be “sober-minded,” not falling under the influence of intoxication. This is not just a condemnation of drunkenness, but of any substance or sinful habit which harms a believer's readiness for action. A soldier can gird his loins for battle all he wants, but he is not ready for battle if he is drunk! Here St. Peter denies any sort of moral anarchy on the part of Christians: he who has the privilege of receiving the fully revealed Gospel is also called to take God's side and serve with discipline.

This calls for faith, and particularly that faith which sets one's hope (that is, anticipation) on the promises of Christ. The believer is to be sober and ready to serve, being motivated to do so by the promise that when Christ is “revealed” (that is, when He returns) He shall bring about the Resurrection, eternal life, and the beatific state. Thus, from the beginning of the Epistle, St. Peter argues that our motivation to serve God comes directly from faith in what the Gospel teaches.

### Vs.14-16

**14** As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, **15** but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, **16** since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

If one is declared a child of God, then one must conduct himself accordingly. The fourteenth verse *assumes* that one is declared a child of God by Grace, rather than deeds; there was a way a man acted according to pagan passions, then he became a child of God and is now expected to shun his previous behavior.

With this, however, comes an odd combination in the grammar. The fifteenth verse includes an imperative: “you also **be holy** in all your conduct.” The sixteenth verse includes a *future tense indicative*: “you **shall be holy**, for I am holy.” Now, to be *holy*, or ἅγιος,<sup>45</sup> is to be different or separate. So first St. Peter tells us that we must be separate, or holy, in our conduct on account of God's holiness, but then he cites Leviticus 19:2, in which God's promise to His people is that they *will* be holy on account of His holiness. So on the one hand, we are commanded to be holy; on the other, we are told that this shall happen anyway.

This means that St. Peter intends for the Christian to participate in what is promised. If God says that we shall be holy, then holy we shall be; the process of this happening to us is called sanctification. The believer, by the activities of the Holy Spirit, becomes more righteous, less prone to sin, and more devout. But the expectation is that we should *participate* in that process of sanctification, walking and working in cooperation with what the Holy Spirit is doing. The believer with a girded and sober mind is intended to desire to act in accordance with what he shall be.

### Vs.17-19

**17** And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds,

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<http://how/how-to-gird-up-your-loins-an-illustrated-guide/>

3 Ephesians 6:10-18

4 Transliterated “hagios,” Strong's #40

5 <https://biblehub.com/greek/40.htm>

conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, **18** knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, **19** but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

The Lord judges us impartially. When we sin, He may very well discipline us in order to return us back to the track of sanctification from which we strayed.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, He can and does reward faithfulness.<sup>7</sup> Being omniscient, He knows exactly what we have done and judges accordingly, with no partiality. Verse seventeen does *not* touch on soteriology, as the next two verses state that believers have already been ransomed by the Blood of Christ. If we are ransomed by His Blood, then we *do not purchase being ransomed*. A victim of ransom is not responsible for freeing themselves in any capacity!

Yet our conduct must still be with “fear,” the same kind of fear that a child has for his father. Fathers discipline their children, and so a motivating factor for a child's obedience is avoiding punitive discipline. Note also that St. Peter says that this motivation is during a time of “exile.” We are children having been taken captive by the forces of sin, death and the devil. Though our ransom has been paid, namely the price of death, we are not *fully* delivered yet from the sufferings and temptations that Christians are subject to here in the world. We are not home yet: before we return, we are to work with the understanding that our heavenly Father expects us to be exemplary, holy exiles.

#### **Vs.20-21**

**20** He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you **21** who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

That Christ was foreknown is to say that the works He would accomplish as the “lamb without blemish or spot” have been planned ahead from eternity past. His atoning death and Resurrection have been known since before our Lord spoke the words “Let there be light.” While some might ponder how that works, given that the Gospel's first promise appears to be a reaction to the fall in Eden,<sup>8</sup> we have very little to wrestle with. God knew that free creatures would inevitably fall from a position of untested righteousness, but on the other hand forcing persons to make decisions according to righteousness destroys their personhood – and God wants to be worshiped by *persons*, not objects.<sup>9</sup> So before He created the world, all three members of the Trinity understood that there must be a plan of salvation. It is, in a sense, God's chosen means of accomplishing the best of all possible worlds.

Perhaps more confusing is St. Peter's soteriological statement in the twenty-first verse. It is through Christ that we are believers in God. St. Paul has said previously that we are brought to faith through hearing the Word *concerning* Christ,<sup>10</sup> but does this mean that it is *through* Christ that we are converted? Or isn't that a role of the Holy Spirit, who speaks concerning Christ and

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6 Hebrews 12:3-17

7 James 1:12

8 Genesis 3:15

9 The Formula of Concord (Solid Declaration II ¶19-24) speaks of mankind's will as bound, such that we are free to make real choices *Coram Mundo*, but not to make choices *Coram Deo*. The Reformers prefer the term “block” for a proposed human with no will whatsoever. If God created mankind like that, then there would be no mankind to save – just “blocks,” or objects as referred in this study.

10 Romans 10:17

convicts the world?<sup>11</sup> And for that matter, since this is in the plan of the Father, shouldn't we say that the Father is the One decreeing conversion, with Christ and the Holy Spirit playing subordinate roles to accomplish His dictates?

The answer is honestly simple, if unsatisfying to the most curious minds. God the Father sent our Lord Jesus, that we might through the forgiveness of sins and the regeneration of Baptism come to our Father in faith and trust. In a word, we would not be *believers* in the true God if God had not sent His Son to die for our sins; and we would not receive this forgiveness without the proclamation of the Word inspired by the Holy Spirit and the washing of regeneration, which restores in the Image of God in us. Rather than, say, the reformed vision of a regimented group of selected elect, *all three* members of the Trinity are involved in conversion and salvation. But here the Apostle, building a theme of the interaction between the Gospel and the third use of the Law, will consistently point to Jesus Christ, approaching the conversion aspect of soteriology from that specific angle.

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<sup>11</sup> John 15:26-27, 16:8-13

## 1 Peter Bible Study #6: Virtue Ethics and Church Conduct

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 1:22-2:3

**1:22** Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, **23** since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; **24** for

“All flesh is like grass

and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,

and the flower falls,

**25** but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

**2:1** So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. **2** Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— **3** if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

### Introduction

St. Peter has instructed Christians everywhere to gird the loins of their minds on account of salvation. In a word, 1 Peter 1:13-21 is about conduct arising from the *mindset* of a believer; because he is saved, he no longer lives the slovenly and ignorant life of a pagan, opting instead to properly fear God and be ready for all good works because of the eternal life he has in Christ. Thus the previous passage studied introduced the central motif of 1 Peter, that of the interaction between the Gospel and the Third Use of the Law. The Gospel says that the believer is saved by God's Grace through faith in Christ and the Atonement which He worked for all. The Third Use of the Law says to the believer, now that one *has* been saved, it no longer accuses him but rather guides him to do what pleases God from a grateful heart. St. Peter highlights how the Gospel itself serves as the motivation for using the Law as guide, spurring us on to perform good works.

The question may arise, however, as to what sort of good works the Apostle would have us prepare ourselves to do? He answers the question before it is raised, but not with specifics at first. One will not find “tithe your money on Tuesdays” or “give enough bread to the poor every week to supply them with five meals.” Instead, he highlights the positive character traits and dispositions (that is, *virtues*) from which a kind of instinct for good works may flow.

In both of his epistles, the Apostle is careful to present virtue ethics as central to Christian morality. This is likely one account of opposition coming from the judaizer heretics, who demanded that all believers strictly follow the Old Covenant in order to be saved. Their argument may well have been along the lines of specificity: for example, they might have said that since the command to gather together as believers is found in the Third Commandment, without the regulations found in the Mosaic code Christians may very well neglect the Sabbath! But in the virtue ethics of St. Peter, the reply would be that a Christian who is committed to loving God and loving his fellow believers would *desire* to go to Church without being hounded by the hundreds of commands from Moses.

This is not to say that the Christian never needs specifics. After all, the Ten Commandments explain the Two Greatest Commandments, which by their nature are extremely

broad. A man is to love God above all else and love to love his neighbor as himself, but if that is all he is told to do then he shall not understand what that looks like in practice. On the other side, however, there is a risk of “dead orthodoxy,” or the obedience of commands without the heart being invested – something that our Lord condemns *constantly* in the Prophets. The judaizers sought to bind men to rote obedience and habit instead of bringing them to actually loving the Lord, all while threatening Christians with damnation for not following their traditions. St. Peter, whether he had these heretics in mind or not, steers the believer away from such thinking by balancing out specific commands with the orientation of the heart and development of the believers' characters.

## Commentary

### 1:22-23

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

St. Peter passes along the command of our Lord Christ that Christians must love one another,<sup>1</sup> and expands on the reasoning behind it. We love one another with Agape love on account of being born again through the Word. Being born again entails faith, or an “obedience to the truth,” which brings Christians together in fellowship. Note that both *Philia* and *Agape* are mentioned as virtues. In the congregational context for these verses, *Philia* (the natural “brotherly” love which encompasses friendship and cooperation), precedes *Agape* (the sacrificial love which seeks the benefit of the other for its own sake). This is not to say that one is required to *like* someone who is a believer just because they are a believer: note that the command is to exercise *Agape*, not *Philia*. However, one's obedience to the truth, one's faith, ought to lead to that brotherly love occurring naturally as the soul is purified.

Having mentioned St. Peter's virtue ethics in contrast to the specificity of Mosaic Law, we must clarify that even the command to love one another with *Agape* love is broadly for the exercise of a virtue. It is a command *toward* a virtue, not a command to be exercised like a speed limit. St. Peter does not tell us a specific action, like “help your elderly neighbor replace the shingles on his roof;” someone who holds to *Agape* love for his elderly neighbor shall likely do so without a specific command given.

### 1:24-25

for

“All flesh is like grass

and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,

and the flower falls,

but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

Here the Apostle cites Isaiah 40:6-8 and applies it to our regeneration. The Word remains and endures forever, by nature of Who spoke it. Thus the Gospel is planted in the new believer, acting like a seed per the Parable of the Sower.<sup>2</sup> It grows into renewal of the person and eternal life. For the author, this means the Christian is to love other Christians *because* he is a new

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1 John 13:34-35

2 Matthew 13:1-23

creation<sup>3</sup> who will live forever.

The text would have remained the same had St. Peter only brought up the last clause of Isaiah 40:8, “the word of the Lord remains forever.” However, bringing up the nature of flesh being temporary, how it fades away in comparatively little time, is something he wishes to highlight. This death is an already-but-not-yet for the Christian. Our sinful flesh died when we were Baptized,<sup>4</sup> and the Word produced the new creation that we are today, but we still wrestle with the “old Adam” as concupiscence and temptations rage on within us.<sup>5</sup> St. Peter ties in Isaiah's words as a means of emphasizing the eternal nature of our relationships with other believers.

## **2:1**

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

Part of practicing Agape and Philia is rejecting the practice of wicked behaviors. Embracing virtue means doing away with vice, after all. Note that St. Peter only chooses one action, slander, out of the five things to be put away. “Malice” here is used as a general catch-all term for depravity, doing things from bad motivations. Deceit is ultimately a mercenary withholding of or distortion of the truth, whether that manifests in lying or omitting facts or failing to inform someone of something they ought to know. Hypocrisy, initially a term for the mask-wearing actors of Greek theater, is the disingenuous trait of someone who wears a false persona. Envy is an entitled disposition of jealousy and coveting which neglects gratitude for what one has. All four of these are motivating traits for specific sins in the same fashion that virtues are motivating traits for good works. They are aspects of sinful flesh, which is to die as pointed out in 1Pet1:24-25, and thus should be properly shunned. The Christian is a new creation, made immortal by the implanted Word, so his entire being rejects that which comes from death.

## **2:2-3**

Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

St. Peter recognizes that the life we have in Christ is *new* to us, so we are like infants in it. We do not have full knowledge, we cannot make all decisions on our own, and we rely on God for all of our needs. There are two ways of seeing the “milk” however, that which sustains us. The first being God's Presence and His blessings as the “milk.” Citing Psalm 34:8 – “Taste and see that the Lord is good” – the Apostle exhorts us all to long for the Lord, thus growing into salvation by faith. An infant cannot grow into salvation by himself after all, necessitating that he be fed from another source. God's presence, His care, His blessings, and indeed Christ's Body and Blood granted to us in the Sacrament, these are the source of our growth as Christians. As we grow in the faith, we begin to crawl, walk, and speak, embracing the life of a mature believer, but even then we stay close to He who saves us.

The second understanding is that the “pure spiritual milk” as basic doctrine in the same vein as St. Paul's use of the phrase as well as the author of Hebrews.<sup>6</sup> This is a second valid interpretation of the verse, closely related to the first. Just as a Christian cannot live without

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3 2 Corinthians 5:17

4 Romans 6:1-6

5 Romans 7

6 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, Hebrews 5:11-12

God's presence and providence, nor can he continue on without the Word rightly divided and preached to him. It does not suffice for the believer to only hear Law and Gospel *once*, be converted, and stay that way until the Resurrection. To the contrary, we must consistently be evangelized and re-evangelized throughout our walk with God, even when we are already believers. With the analogy of the infant, it is unheard of for an infant to go without the milk which continues its life; in the same way, the Christian ought not continue going without longing for the Word fitly spoken, driven right into his soul and reifying his faith.

## 1 Peter Bible Study #7: What Christians Are (Part 1)

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 2:4-10

**4** As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, **5** you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **6** For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious,  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

**7** So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone,”

**8** and

“A stone of stumbling,  
and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

**9** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. **10** Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

### **Introduction**

This passage is the central message of First Peter. It provides the basis for the Apostle's virtue ethics and the motivation behind his instructions to believers, doing so by defining the Christian in relation to Christ and in opposition to nonbelievers. The Christian is held to a higher standard of conduct because he is *different* from nonbelievers; he is different from nonbelievers because Christ Himself is different from the rest of religious figures (as indeed He is distinct from all people altogether). On account of believing the Gospel, the Christian is elevated in status before God from a sinful human of no consequence to being members of a holy priesthood and subjects in the Kingdom of Heaven. This means living with greater confidence, conducting oneself in a wholly elevated manner, and *remembering* being saved, even daily, as a part of our lives. In short, this passage opens up our understanding of the whole Epistle. On account of this, we do a disservice to the Apostle and his writing if we do not give it adequate time and care, so we will be covering this passage over multiple smaller studies.

### **Commentary**

#### **Vs.4-5**

**4** As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, **5** you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

#### *A Living Stone*

Christ is the “living stone,” the foundation upon which the entirety of the faith rests.

There is no Church and no Christianity without Christ. He was rejected by mankind, but elevated by our Heavenly Father, to the point of being the basis and substance of our belief and trust. We look to Jesus for our salvation and subsequent way of living. As He is elevated, we come to Him in faith with the same understanding as the Israelites who looked to the bronze serpent to be healed from snake venom.<sup>1</sup> The Christian is to come to Christ, not to the Law of Moses, not to the logic trees of philosophical denominations, nor even to belief in “God” generally. We look to Jesus for salvation and find all of our assurance from Him.

Here we also see a rare statement concerning the relationship between two members of the Trinity. The Father chose the Son for His ministry of Atonement and loves Him. One ought not be surprised by the fact that the Persons of the Trinity actually speak to and relate to one another, as the Gospels have demonstrations of the prayers of Christ Himself, the voice of the Father speaking to the Son, and the Holy Spirit resting upon Jesus's shoulder at the Jordan.<sup>2</sup> This is reflected here in St. Peter stating that Christ is precious to the Father and chosen by Him, whereas sinful humanity rejected Him.

How is Christ *chosen*? Did God choose Himself? In what way does this make sense? While Christ is most certainly *chosen*, we must be careful not to explain it in such a way that ignores Scripture, as the adoptionists and subordinationists attempted to do.

-Adoptionism is the heresy that states Jesus was originally a mere human who, through righteousness, went through apotheosis and became deity; it directly denies the Gospels' teaching regarding the eternal pre-existent Divinity of Christ in order to assert some capability on the part of humans to become gods. This is typically found in mormon thought as well as some liberal theologies, both of which have a man-centered worldview. They miss the wonder of God the Son *deciding* to follow a call to infinite humility, being born of a manger and dying on a Cross for undeserving people.

-Subordinationism advances the notion that, while Jesus might be Divine, He is somehow *less* so than the Father; it denies the flat statement of St. Paul that our Savior is equal to the Father.<sup>3</sup> Subordinationism, in trying to answer the question of how Christ was chosen, posits that He is somehow less God than God – effectively dividing an infinite into three unequal parts. To do so is to deny the full divinity of Christ altogether, which would make our faith worthless. Only an infinite Being of infinite mercy could take the weight of mankind's infinite separation from the Divine on account of sin and ameliorate that offense. If it were not the case, then those who are damned could not be damned *forever* as they are. One does not have an Atonement if one does not have a fully Divine and fully human Son of God going to the Cross.

Neither adoptionism nor subordinationism are necessary for understanding this “choosing” of Christ. The Father is always the Father and the Son is always the Son; by virtue of these titles which our Lord has given us, we see a view of eternal generation which explains that the Son *voluntarily* submitted to the Father out of love. He was chosen and sent to redeem humanity without declaring Him *merely* human nor denigrating His equality with the Father. While “chosen” implies a position in which the chosen individual obeys (and indeed it appears that there is hierarchy in the Trinity), it does not follow that the chosen one is ontologically lesser or lesser in status. Christ is *fully* God, yet voluntarily submits Himself to the Father who chooses Him for the task of saving us.

### *Like Living Stones*

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1 John 3:13-15

2 Mark 1:9-11

3 Philippians 2:6

By “living stones,” St. Peter suggests that the true Temple of Christianity is built using *people*, not literal architectural supplies. Since the veil in the Jerusalem Temple was torn asunder on Good Friday,<sup>4</sup> meaning that Christ's atoning death resulted in God's earthly presence being among *all* His people, not just in the Holiest of Holies. Following the line of thinking, God builds up His church by taking the rough stones of sinners and refining them into the bricks with which He makes a living edifice. A nonbeliever is good for nothing in the sight of God, as faith in Him is a prerequisite for pleasing Him at all;<sup>5</sup> a believer is made more and more suitable for use in something greater than himself.

By “living stones” in the “spiritual house,” St. Peter also means that we are a *priesthood*. The universal priesthood of all believers means that we have, without breaking the distinctions which God has provided,<sup>6</sup> universal status and privileges – as well as a universal duty to render “spiritual sacrifices” through Christ. So a Christian may absolve, pray, assist, and call upon others to help their neighbor. While the normative practice for a congregation is to reserve administration of the Sacraments to professional clergy, this does not in all cases *restrict* the administration of such to them. For instance, the Christian head of household must also take up the ministry of the Word in teaching it to his household, and Christian laity is permitted to Baptize in special circumstances. Christians handle the Word of God together, study it and proclaim it, they evangelize, they do everything *as a priesthood*. The elevation of status provided here is altogether foreign to Old Testament believers, who lived under a strict, hereditary separation between themselves and the Levitical priesthood, while proclamations of the Word were relegated to prophets specially called to do their work.

Attempts to undo this truth or bar Christians from enjoying these privileges are done from the sacerdotalist perspective, which is to say slavery of the laity under the priesthood. But in doing so, they deny what St. Peter is saying. He says that Christ is a living stone: he also says that we Christians are *like* living stones. We are being made to be like Christ Himself in sanctification, such that what Christ has we have as well. We are the inheritors of righteousness, eternal life, and authority on account of faith in Jesus, let no man say otherwise in some attempt to rebuild or maintain the papacy. Recall that the very name Peter means “a stone,” or “carved out from the stone.” In calling us living stones, believers are afforded similar, if not equal, dignity to the Apostle himself! While this will never result in us being *equal* to Christ, it certainly elevates us higher than nonbelievers and gives all Christians a station to rejoice in.

What is meant by spiritual sacrifices for this spiritual priesthood to conduct? In a word, our lives being lived for Christ Himself: we are living sacrifices,<sup>7</sup> with all of our conduct and thought being oriented to our Savior's glory and our neighbor's well-being. Since a proper priest performs his labors and prayers on behalf of the faithful, we take the same mindset, serving our neighbor in thought and deed – for God does not need our works, but our neighbor does.<sup>8</sup> There is also the sacrifice of thanksgiving,<sup>9</sup> which like our service to God and our neighbors we cannot do without Jesus. When St. Peter says that these are sacrifices done through Christ, it is on account of Him freeing our will and sustaining our faith: “Apart from Me you can do nothing.”<sup>10</sup>

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4 Matthew 27:51

5 Hebrews 11:6, Romans 14:23

6 This is to say, Apostolic commands barring wicked men and women from the pastoral office are still binding per 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 3:1-13

7 Romans 12:1

8 I paraphrase Luther here, admittedly.

9 Psalm 116:17

10 John 15:5

## 1 Peter Bible Study #8: What Christians Are (Part 2)

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 2:4-10

4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious,  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,  
“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone,”

8 and

“A stone of stumbling,  
and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

### **Introduction**

This passage is the central message of First Peter. It provides the basis for the Apostle's virtue ethics and the motivation behind his instructions to believers, doing so by defining the Christian in relation to Christ and in opposition to nonbelievers. The Christian is held to a higher standard of conduct because he is *different* from nonbelievers; he is different from nonbelievers because Christ Himself is different from the rest of religious figures (as indeed He is distinct from all people altogether). On account of believing the Gospel, the Christian is elevated in status before God from a sinful human of no consequence to being members of a holy priesthood and subjects in the Kingdom of Heaven. This means living with greater confidence, conducting oneself in a wholly elevated manner, and *remembering* being saved, even daily, as a part of our lives. In short, this passage opens up our understanding of the whole Epistle. On account of this, we do a disservice to the Apostle and his writing if we do not give it adequate time and care, so we will be covering this passage over multiple smaller studies.

### **Commentary**

#### **Vs.6-8**

6 For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious,  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone,”

8 and

“A stone of stumbling,  
and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

St. Peter cites three verses to support his assertion that the Christian comes to Christ the chief “living stone” and then becomes like Him over time. Without understanding the context of the passages he refers to, one will not be able to understand the contrast the Apostle sets up between believers and nonbelievers. Let us explore the references he makes.

*“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious,  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”  
-Isaiah 28:16*

The full passage referred to in Isaiah's twenty-eighth chapter is part of a full-throated condemnation of the populations of Israel and Judah. Against Ephraim's drunken arrogance, the prophet promises that the Northern Kingdom shall be trodden underfoot and devoured.<sup>1</sup> Afterwards, a message is given to the Kingdom of Judah, marked by “scoffers:”

Therefore hear ye the word of the Lord, ye afflicted men, and ye princes of this people that is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with Hades, and agreements with death; if the rushing storm should pass, it shall not come upon us: we have made falsehood our hope, and by falsehood shall we be protected:

Therefore thus saith the Lord, *even* the Lord, Behold, I lay for the foundations of Sion a costly stone, a choice, a corner-stone, a precious *stone*, for its foundations; and he that believes *on him* shall by no means be ashamed.

And I will cause judgement *to be* for hope, and my compassion shall be for *just* measures, and ye that trust vainly in falsehood *shall fall*: for the storm shall by no means pass by you, except it also take away your covenant of death, and your trust in Hades shall by no means stand: if the rushing storm should come upon you, ye shall be beaten down by it.

Whenever it shall pass by, it shall take you; morning by morning it shall pass by in the day, and in the night there shall be an evil hope. Learn to hear, ye that are distressed; we cannot fight, but we are ourselves too weak for you to be gathered.

The Lord shall rise up as a mountain of ungodly *men*, and shall be in the valley of Gabaon; he shall perform his works with wrath, *even* a work of bitterness, and his wrath shall deal strangely, and his destruction shall be strange. Therefore do not ye rejoice, neither let your bands be made strong; for I have heard of works finished and cut short by the Lord of hosts, which he will execute upon all the earth.<sup>2</sup>

The children of Judah had made a covenant with death and Hades, for which the Lord promises to cast them down and humiliate them. There is a promise of shame for those who do not believe in the Cornerstone, Christ, whom our Heavenly Father sent. St. Peter explains, when he says “So the honor is for you who believe” that the *opposite* is true: if whoever trusts in Christ our Cornerstone shall not be put to shame, then they are honored instead. And if God Himself is the One casting nonbelievers to humiliation and shame, then He is also the one honoring the Christian!

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1 Isaiah 28:3-4

2 Isaiah 28:14-22 (Brenton's Septuagint, which most closely matches the translation St. Peter utilizes for Isaiah 28:16)

*7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,  
“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone,”*

Here St. Peter refers to a prophetic passage in Psalm 118:17-24, which reads as follows:

- 17** I shall not die, but I shall live,  
and recount the deeds of the LORD.  
**18** The LORD has disciplined me severely,  
but he has not given me over to death.  
**19** Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
that I may enter through them  
and give thanks to the LORD.  
**20** This is the gate of the LORD;  
the righteous shall enter through it.  
**21** I thank you that you have answered me  
and have become my salvation.  
**22 The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone.**  
**23** This is the LORD's doing;  
it is marvelous in our eyes.  
**24** This is the day that the LORD has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

In first person, the prophecy recounts that Christ undergoes severe discipline (that is, going to the Cross and dying), but is not given over to the power of death: He rises again. Those that are the “builders” rejected Him by handing Him over to the authorities to be killed, but on account of Christ's Resurrection and ascension to the Throne, He is now the “cornerstone,” that which sets the standard and upon which everything else is built.

As he did with calling Christ the living stone, in applying Psalm 118:22 to Christ St. Peter (whose name translates to “stone” or “carved from the stone”) utterly denies being the rock on which the Church is built – that title properly belongs to Jesus and the confession that He is the Christ.<sup>3</sup> A cornerstone is the basis for an entire edifice. Out of the rejection of Christ by the Jews came the edifice of the Church with our Savior being the One from whom all is modeled and set straight. This continues the message of vs.5, in which we are “like living stones” because we are being conformed to the image of Jesus.

*“A stone of stumbling,  
and a rock of offense.”*

*They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*

St. Peter cites Isaiah 8:14 here, part of a broader passage which reads:

**11** For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: **12** “Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. **13** But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. **14** And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. **15** And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.”

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 16:18

By referring to Jesus as the “stone of stumbling,” St. Peter directly identifies Jesus Christ as God. Isaiah 8:14 refers in the original passage to our Lord, and applying it to Jesus means He is that very same Lord. Thus there is no “same God, different religion” dynamic between Christianity, judaism and islam as some commonly assert: those who reject Jesus reject God Himself. If someone should reject Jesus, then they stumble, fall and perish.

Yet here one finds a curious addition by St. Peter when he says “they stumble because they disobey the Word, as they were destined to do.” The basis for this destiny is not found in the doctrines of election or the reformed concept of “double-predestination.” St. Peter's closest referent is *prophecy*, not decrees made in eternity past. God prophesied the future regarding the Stone of Stumbling, the Cornerstone rejected by the builders, He who does not leave us ashamed when we trust Him.

## 1 Peter Bible Study #9: What Christians Are (Part 3)

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 2:4-10

4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture:

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7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,  
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“A stone of stumbling,  
and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

### **Introduction**

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### **Commentary**

#### **Vs.9**

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Here St. Peter adds yet more elevation to the believers, going beyond their status as becoming living stones in the “spiritual house” to a race, priesthood, and nation of heirs.

-*Chosen Race*: Using γένος<sup>12</sup> for “race,” St. Peter highlights the new birth which takes place in Baptism.<sup>3</sup> The term is the origin of English words like “genealogy,” where one traces their family lineage and ethnic history. Thus a convert to Christianity is born anew into an elect family, a genealogy which endures unto Judgment Day as the people belonging to God. This verse refers to the many Old Testament instances in which God emphasizes His election of Israel: for instance, in Deuteronomy 10:15, Moses writes “the Lord set His heart in love on your fathers, and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day.” St. Peter says that this status belongs to Christians as the new Israel.

-*Royal Priesthood*: From Exodus 19:6, in which God says that Israel is a “kingdom of priests.” Only the Christian may belong to the universal priesthood of believers, and only the Christian may intercede in a priestly fashion for all men. Our prayers are efficacious, and only the Christian Sacraments are effective before our Lord. God does not listen to the please of nonbelievers nor does He regard their pagan rites. The priesthood of Christians demonstrates our exclusive *relationship* with God in addition to belonging to the new chosen Israel.

-*Holy Nation*: ἔθνος,<sup>45</sup> the second term for “race” or “nation.” This is not to suggest that the Church is a country, but rather a distinct people group marked by shared blood, mannerisms, culture and polity. Christians together share the same blood (the Blood of Christ administered in the Eucharist), the same mannerisms and culture (Agape culture, mutual honor), and the same polity (Christ is our king). Also a reference to Exodus 19:6, where God calls Israel a “holy nation.”

Before God, the Christian is counted as belonging to the new Israel, the Church. This is a real Kingdom, a real priesthood, and a real race to which we are elevated when we are brought to the faith, that we may “proclaim the excellencies of Him who called.” We evangelize by proclaiming the wonderful things God has done to us and for us and the promise of eternal life He has given us. Defined again in opposition to the nonbeliever, we are reminded that we were once in darkness with the other heathen but are now brought to “marvelous light.” That light is the higher status of the Christian before God, *Coram Deo*, by faith.

One's earthly race, like their sex, persists. God does not obliterate the distinctions between individuals simply because they believe – or else St. Peter would not later speak of the differing responsibilities of husbands and wives in 1Pet.3:1-7. Yet these distinctions, and the Godly responsibilities which come with them (caring for one's wife, advocating for one's ethnic kin, etc.), do not confer status *Coram Deo*. Belonging to an *additional* race, a heavenly one, is what counts before God as holiness and righteousness, and this is only affected by faith in Christ.

Consider the example of two Irishmen, one being a Christian and the other being an atheist. Both men care about their wives and their children, fulfilling the proper duties of men; both of them care about their Irish kin, seeking the benefit of their people. *Coram Mundo*, facing the world, according to the commands of God each is doing the right thing. But only one of them, the Christian Irishman, has any standing before our Lord, because strictly speaking he belongs to *two* races, the latter of which is a spiritual one which belongs to God. Though both men might live similar lives, even nearly identical, our Lord will only have regard for the man who belongs to Him by faith in Christ.

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1 Transliterated “Genos,” Strong's #1085

2 <https://biblehub.com/greek/1085.htm>

3 John 3:5

4 Transliterated “Ethnos,” Strong's #1484

5 <https://biblehub.com/greek/1484.htm>

**Vs.10**

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Once more St. Peter stresses that, *Coram Deo*, facing God, there is no people nor status for one who is not a Christian. But for the believer, one *does* belong to a people which He established. In the world, there are many groups and races, each with their own interests; as far as salvation is concerned there are only two – the Church and the heathen. Those who go from heathenry to Christianity are transferred from one group to the other in our Lord's eyes, thus receiving the mercy freely given to His children.

This verse (and the preceding verse) also demonstrates that the Epistle is a truly Catholic one, applying to every Christian who reads it – not just Jewish Christians. Old Testament saints were not in darkness, and they belonged to a people which was reserved by God for good things. Also, with the Proto-Gospel of Genesis 3:15, as well as the absolution provided in the Mosaic sacrificial system, they did in a way receive mercy. This would also prove true in the first century as the Gospel rang out first to the Jews, many of whom converted, and for some there was no break in belonging to God's people – Mary, Joseph, and the Apostles come to mind. Thus we have an understanding that St. Peter is writing primarily to Gentile Christians, whose races and histories mean nothing toward salvation and whose false religions gave them no mercy whatsoever. And thus do we rejoice to inherit the promises which belong to all of God's people.

## 1 Peter Bible Study #10: What Christians Are (Part 4)

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 2:4-10

4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
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They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

### **Introduction**

Having gone over this passage for three separate sessions, it is now time to put the passage together, synthesize the message, and apply it both to doctrinal formulation and Christian life. While it might seem tiresome, this is part of what is called the “Biblical theology” method, which often looks to individual books of the Bible for theological discussion. In order to understand what St. Peter is teaching us, we must find his central message and read 1 Peter in light of it.

And what is the central message of 1 Peter, in light of this passage? It is simply this: Christ elevates the Christian as He Himself was elevated: nonbelievers remain in humiliation. This message permeates the entirety of 1 Peter, especially in the teleological aspect. We were elevated, so we must act as an elevated people. We have been brought to a new nation, and we must treat ourselves as such.

### **Elevation and Humiliation**

#### *Elevation*

Verses four and five say the following:

4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house

Christ was counted as having no value by men, yet God counts His Son as having value, and thus He is made the chosen and precious cornerstone (“chosen and precious” being repeated in verse 6 for emphasis). Since the believer is raised up to be living stones *like* the Living Stone

that is Christ, that means we too are chosen and precious in the eyes of God. If Christ is the cornerstone, from which the standard is set, then we being made to be *like* living stones in the spiritual house means we are being conformed to the image of Christ.

But if someone is going to be conformed to the image of Christ, he must be brought out from being raw material and made better than he once was. This requires taking someone out of their previous debased state, and bringing them *up* in status before God. Thus the Christian is brought to the New Israel, declared to be one among God's people before they begin to conform to God's standards. Upon entrance, he is now part of a chosen lineage, a universal priesthood, and a new nation – all of which belonging to our Lord (vs.9). As we discussed earlier, this does *not negate* one's material status, but rather *adds* to it. The universal priesthood confers dignity to all believers and certain rights but does not do away with natural hierarchies nor spiritual hierarchies: husbands are still heads over their wives, the Apostle is still a spiritual leader over the laity he instructs, and Christ is still head over all. Yet even the newest believer, even a freshly Baptized infant, has value before God which no nonbeliever has.

### *Humiliation*

The nonbeliever does not and cannot have the status before God which a believer has. It is true that later St. Peter will refer to the Church's state as one of Exile, suggesting that the heathen have a kind of status in their own spheres, but it is evident that such individuals have no hope of the restoration which God promises to the Church. Verse 6 reminds us “whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame,” and the inverse is true – the unregenerate *will* be shamed if they do not turn to Christ and join His people. Not only are they shamed and humiliated in the future, their rejection of Christ is something foretold by prophecy as leading to stumbling, as verse 8 says. The non-Christian who persists in unbelief shall stumble and break when in contact with Jesus Christ.

The status difference borders on the ontological. A Christian is almost a different class of being altogether than a non-Christian. Believers are part of the true Israel, while God does not even consider nonbelievers to be part of *any* people. Believers have their sins forgiven, receiving mercy from our Lord: nonbelievers do not, and thus without conversion are destined for eternal punishment. One who is not a Christian is in a kind of spiritual darkness (vs.9), and thus cannot even perceive reality correctly. In other words, on account of sin the heathen are properly understood as *defective humanity*. Christians are *restored* humanity.

### *Response*

Throughout 1 Peter, a message rings out that one who is elevated by God will live accordingly. If we are being made closer in our character to Christ, the intention is to live the way Christ did during His earthly sojourn before the Ascension. We thus seek to further build up God's house by doing good works, loving our neighbor as ourselves, continuing in prayers and supplications, and altogether cooperating with what the Holy Spirit is doing with us during the process of sanctification. If the Christian is a restored human being, brought to what we were supposed to be since before the Fall in Eden, then we ought to *act* like it.

Yet not only ought we to show the good works and character development which are associated with our union to Christ, we are also called, each one of us, to a kind of evangelism. We must, by word and deed and life, “proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” We are not to be arrogant nor condescending towards the heathen, but rather to call their attention to the amazing God that has done so much for us – because He can and wishes to do the same for them.

## 1 Peter Bible Study #11: Exilic Conduct

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 2:11-25

**11** Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. **12** Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

**13** Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, **14** or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. **15** For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. **16** Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. **17** Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

**18** Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. **19** For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. **20** For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. **21** For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. **22** He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. **23** When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. **24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. **25** For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

### **Introduction**

St. Peter introduced his central thesis in 1Pet.2:4-10, the magnificent truth that Christ elevates the Christian as He Himself was elevated, and nonbelievers remain in humiliation. In passages preceding the Thesis, he alludes to the reality of the transformed life believers have on account of Christ's work; now it is time to be more explicit. Now that the reader understands they are part of the true Israel, in 1 Peter 2:11-25 the Apostle details various ways in which they must *act* like it.

### **Vs.11-17**

**11** Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. **12** Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

**13** Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, **14** or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. **15** For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. **16** Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. **17** Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

### On Exile

The Christian is part of the true Israel, and the true Israel happens to be in a position of Exile. Unlike the Assyrian and Babylonian Exiles, this is not a punitive measure on the Church,

as he will later speak of God taking this period to save others who will be brought into the Body.<sup>1</sup> We are called to endure this state that others may be saved, yet it is still an Exile, and so we are exhorted to conduct ourselves as such.

Perhaps St. Peter's initial readers were confused. Sure, the Christian faith has more stringent moral standards than the paganism they once held to, but one has *more* freedom in Christ than they ever had as a slave to the devil! Yet when one is elevated by our Savior, they are elevated to a race which is not at home, a nation without a homeland, and a priesthood which is not accorded the honor due to it by the world.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, since the Gospel does not destroy earthly distinctions one may take comfort in brotherhood with their kin, enjoy their homeland, serve their government, and even seek the best interests of all of these; but there is now a *second* set of all of these things to which the Christian also belongs, and that leads to a disjointed state of existence. Once we were nonbelievers with a “God-shaped hole” in our hearts; now we are believers beset with longing for God's Kingdom to be fully inaugurated. That Kingdom of Heaven is “already but not yet” because Christians, being a nation unto themselves, are in Exile for the sake of bringing more Christians into being.

There is a connection to the Old Testament exiles regarding the advice which is given to the Christian Church. Daniel and his friends did not satisfy their appetites with King Nebuchadnezzar's delicacies, opting to eat vegetables instead of food which would have defiled them;<sup>3</sup> so too do Christians abstain from defiling passions, though certainly with greater freedom than Daniel had (we can eat all manner of foods now). And since Daniel and the other prophets are models and advocates for good conduct in the midst of Exile, the Apostle gives the same advice. To do so honors God despite the slander of the “Gentiles,”<sup>4</sup> who receive correction in one way or another – when our Lord visits them either for conversion or for Judgment Day.

### On Government

The prophet Jeremiah spoke to the Exiles of Judah, saying that they must seek the welfare of the Babylonians and pray for them despite the conditions the Exiles were under. They were assured that God Himself would restore Judah after seventy years, and thus were forbidden to listen to any voice that told them to rebel or try to restore themselves.<sup>5</sup> St. Paul later speaks to Christians and tells them to obey the governing authorities on account of the nature of a ruler's vocation – punishing wickedness and rewarding righteousness.<sup>6</sup> St. Peter incorporates both messages broadly here, while clarifying the matter of Christian freedom.

We are to submit to the governing authorities, whether emperor or magistrate. The Apostle uses both titles here on account of historic circumstance, as he wrote to congregations under Roman rule, but it clearly extends out to all forms of government in all places. All civic authority is to be obeyed (with the exception of any decree or law that commands us to apostatize or sin in any other way),<sup>7</sup> lest we by our rebellious activities slander Christianity as a whole. There is however one accepted rebellion: honorable conduct, which truly rebels against our antagonists by not permitting false witness to continue. Hence St. Peter's turn of phrase “that

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1 2 Peter 3:8-9

2 1 Peter 2:9

3 Daniel 1:5-16

4 Literally “nations,” i.e., all the races of men. The dualistic dynamic between Israelite and Gentile was shifted at the Atonement and Pentecost to a dynamic between Church and World. Of course, every Christian also belongs to an earthly race, but is nonetheless subject to this new dynamic on account of being Baptized into Christ.

5 Jeremiah 29:4-14

6 Romans 13:1-7

7 Acts 5:29

by doing good you should *put to silence* the ignorance of foolish people.” They are fools and they must be silence: how shall we silence them except to prove their slander wrong?

There must have been some murmuring in the churches of Asia Minor regarding freedom, perhaps with some confusion between a civic conception of freedom and Christian freedom. Civically speaking, there are two freedoms: freedom to do what one wishes and freedom from bad circumstances or consequences. Christian freedom has elements of both kinds, being especially rooted in our new ability to make real choices before God and to truly please Him. However, this freedom is *not* to be used as a license for sin, or as St. Peter calls it a “cover-up for evil.” We are certainly to live freely and enjoy the privileges God has afforded us, but God did not free us in order that we may sin.

Note here that the word “evil” is *κακίας*,<sup>89</sup> which broadly includes malice. Someone rebelling against the State with “I’m a free man” as their justification is ultimately a malicious actor; St. Peter calls that man wicked. Now, this is *not* to say that Christians cannot discuss politics or disagree about them! Yet the matter of rebellion, especially predicated on Christian freedom, is only going to be used to justify wickedness – and often inspire more of it. We must be on our guard against *abusing* our freedom in such manner.<sup>10</sup>

### **Vs.18-25**

**18** Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. **19** For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. **20** For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

**21** For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. **22** He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. **23** When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. **24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. **25** For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

#### *Submission to Personal Leaders*

Highlighting the persistence of earthly distinction past our conversion, verse 18 states in no uncertain terms that a Christian must respect hierarchies. The word “servant” here applies to slaves, household servants, employees, and more, denoting someone who is under another's authority. Servants are to submit to their masters regardless of whether their masters are good or bad people, preferring to be “mindful of God” instead of disgruntled. A shift may be too long, a promotion may be denied, or in the context of slaves beatings are doled out; whether mild or extreme, the response to such injustices is to endure them and repay the bad master with the quiet dignity of respect.

Our first instinct here is to balk. Surely Christians must not be doormats! Indeed, and we must not be silent in every case of injustice, for we must be mindful of the God who sent prophets to cry out against all the sins of men. But when a decision is made by a leader or employer, a master of any stripe, we are not to seek retribution because, with Christ as our example in verse 23, we trust in God to vindicate us. To encourage us, St. Peter reminds us in the same verse that God *judges justly*; in this life we may very well find ourselves distressed by all manner of unfair treatment and prejudice, but God

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8 Transliterated “Kakias,” Strong's #2549

9 <https://biblehub.com/greek/2549.htm>

10 Luther's *On the Freedom of a Christian* is a fantastic resource for digging deeper into the topic. Found here: <https://editions.mml.ox.ac.uk/editions/freiheit-1520/>

sees it all and makes all things right. For some (I would even wager most) this occurs in our own lives, if we are but willing to notice it and patiently wait. For others, justice is accomplished in eternity after the final judgment: we should expect to see many reversals of social status between those of high estate and those of low estate in the world to come.

### *The Nature of Salvation*

More important to us is the matter of soteriology in the final two verses. Christ died for our sins, knowing that we are incapable of repaying the debt owed to God for our transgressions. The reason He rescued us was for the sake of life – but what kind of life? The kind that lives to righteousness, not sin. The Apostle does not mean that we live to righteousness in terms of earning or laboring to *be* righteous, any more than dying to sin would mean laboring to cease our transgressions. The language of dying and rising refers to the book of Romans, particularly the sixth chapter, in which St. Paul clearly states that one dies *once* to sin and becomes alive to righteousness at the moment of Baptism.<sup>11</sup> In line with St. Paul, the Apostle presumes that we are already healed, already dead to sin and living to righteousness; we obey our rulers and masters *because* this is the case, not in order to achieve it.

In other words, St. Peter instructs us to live like we are saved, not like we are damned. The nonbeliever, who remains in his humiliation, remains alive to sin and dead to righteousness, so we should *expect* him to quarrel with his masters, rebel against authorities, and do all things out of selfishness. The nonbeliever does not seek to reveal the witness of Christ and cast aside slander through good actions; to the contrary, since he is unsaved, he reveals the witness of himself and engages in slander with the rest of the world. But the believer, having been brought to life, healed, and returned to our Lord's flock where we properly belong, is expected to conduct himself in this Exile with a greater sensitivity to the Will of our Lord.

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<sup>11</sup> Yes, I am asserting here that St. Peter read the book of Romans and hearkens back to it. Either that is the case, or St. Peter first catechized St. Paul with the concept and St. Paul elaborated on it in Romans. Either way, the two were clearly aware of each other's work.

## 1 Peter Bible Study #12: Marital Conduct

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 3:1-7

**1** Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, **2** when they see your respectful and pure conduct. **3** Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— **4** but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. **5** For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, **6** as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

**7** Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

### Introduction

St. Peter has begun to urge Christians to take the Church era seriously for what it actually is – an Exile. Thus he discussed the standards of conduct that believers must have in the face of a hostile world. Now it is time to address the relationships *between* believers, for if Church does not have harmony between her members then she cannot survive the Exile she undergoes. The matter of Christian marriage is addressed first. This is fitting: though both are instituted by our Lord, marriage as an institution precedes the Church. Adam and Eve were wed before any sacrifices were made, before the Gospel was first preached, and before any government was established. As the first human relationship to be established, it is the first to be addressed for the sake of harmony between Christians.

The Apostle begins by addressing wives and he devotes most of this passage to instructing them. In a way, this is a mirror image of St. Paul's admonition to married couples, where he spends more time exhorting husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the Church.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps St. Peter is aware of what Ephesians has to say towards husbands,<sup>2</sup> and recognizing it to be sufficient he does not dwell on them. If this is not the case, it may be said that he is focusing on them to conform to the hierarchical motif of the previous chapter. Though there is a universal priesthood, earthly distinctions persist and so do *hierarchies*. On account of this, the one with lower standing must submit to the one with higher standing, yet without abandoning the dignity and freedom they have.

### Vs.1-2

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

*Likewise* – The previous passage instructed Christians to obey the governing authorities and their earthly masters (if they were slaves), even if they were unjust and/or pagan. Because a husband is head over his wife, the same logic applies. This ought to be sobering to the Christian

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1 Ephesians 5:22-33

2 Ephesus is in Asia Minor, after all.

who desires to rebel against his government, for the same logic he uses against the magistrate – “I am free! He is unjust!” – may be used against him in his own household.

*Be subject to your own husbands* – wives are to recognize their husbands' authority and obey them. The sword translated “be subject” is ὑποτασσόμεναι,<sup>34</sup> is translated as “submission” in Ephesians 5:21 and 5:24. In using the middle voice, St. Peter is saying that Christians wives have a duty to subject themselves to their husbands – the onus is on them to choose to do so, as opposed to requiring it to be enforced on them. The recognition of authority does not consist solely in doing what the husband asks her to do, but in *enthusiastically* and *respectfully* doing so. The word used for “respectful” is φόβω,<sup>56</sup> from the root word for fear. This is not to say that a wife should be terrified of her husband, but that her proper conduct comes from a place of reverence. The same way she previously honored and feared her father when dwelling in his house, she must honor and fear her husband.

*Even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives* – The intent of subjection to one's husband is not to manipulate the man into doing favors or “fixing” his personality to the wife's liking. Instead, a wife's reverence for her husband is a loving act that helps him to develop as a man. If he is not a believer, then he will be encouraged to listen to evangelism with the understanding that his spouse cares for him. If he is a believer but in *sin*, his wife's obedience and care will inspire him to order his conduct aright. Even if a husband is simply a tyrant, a Godly Christian wife will by her actions leave him feeling ashamed, or he will be shown for the bastard he truly is.

Conversely, this means that a wife must not do the opposite. If she decides to treat her husband with disrespectful and self-willed attitudes, then he will not be brought to the faith or away from sin. To the contrary, he will feel quite justified in his actions, digging his heels in rather than feeling shame or inspiration. A rebellious and cantankerous wife will, at best, browbeat her husband into obeying her every whim, modifying his behavior but losing his heart: assuming that he does not simply divorce her, she will be stuck living with a man who does not love her.

### **Vs.3-6**

Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

There is a further motivation to be a respectful and submissive wife, namely that of true inner beauty. While a woman's strength is typically found in her attractiveness, this does not make her *truly* beautiful in our Lord's eyes. St. Peter says here that a woman fostering the “gentle and quiet spirit” is what really matters to God. What does it mean to be gentle and quiet? Let us explore the terms.

*Gentle* – πραέως<sup>78</sup> – alternatively translated “meek” in Matthew 5:5, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Meekness in the Biblical context is strength under control.

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3 Transliterated “hypotasomenai,” Strong's #5293

4 <https://biblehub.com/greek/5293.htm>

5 From “phobos,” Strong's #5401

6 <https://biblehub.com/greek/5401.htm>

7 Transliterated “Praeus,” Strong's # 4239

8 <https://biblehub.com/greek/4239.htm>

Though she has God-given strength, the gentle wife does not use her power for crass manipulation or browbeating. In context her appearance would be something which meekness applies to, preferring modest dress; this would also entail not denying sex to her husband (that is, using sex as a weapon). Of course this does not deny that women have other capabilities than just their looks, but nonetheless it certainly applies in the context of marriage.

*Quiet* – ἡσυχίου<sup>9</sup> – having a calmness or stillness. Also seen in 1 Timothy 2:2, in which St. Paul urges that we pray for rulers “that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” The connotation is one of stability and peace, not silence. There is no condemnation for Deborah's singing in Judges 5, and nor is Sarah condemned for speaking to her husband. But a quiet spirit is one that is not perturbed or restless, nor is it fearful and dissatisfied.

*And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.* – Sarah and the other holy women in the Old Testament are marked by St. Peter as being submissive, respectful, meek, at peace, and brave. Sarah is especially cited here as the prime example, since not only did she enthusiastically submit to her husband, she also had a journey with God in a similar way to Abraham's. Both of them left Ur when God called Abraham to faith, and both received the promise of a son in their old age.<sup>11</sup> Though Abraham experienced a more direct relationship with our Lord, Sarah is seen following him with bravery and faith – even when he made mistakes.

The aspect of fear or dismay is also taken into account. The Apostle instructs women to be courageous here, knowing that it takes a measure of courage to submit to a higher authority. A Godly wife puts her well-being in the hands of another, relying on her husband the same way a faithful Christian relies on God for his or her daily bread. She does not insist on being an “independent” woman, for such independence is actually motivated by endless doubts and fear.

With this passage St. Peter preemptively answers the objections that may arise in the Church, almost all of which being with “what if.” What if the husband mistreats her? Her conduct will lead to a reformation of his character. What if submission means a broken spirit or broken will? This is not the case, as respecting one's husband truly requires having a *strong* and *established* personality. The Apostle does not want Christian women to be lifeless doormats, but willing helpers; they are not at the bottom of a caste system, but willing participants in the role that our Lord gave them.

#### **Vs.7**

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

*Likewise* – The husband is now addressed in connection to the commands given to the wife. He is called to be strong, knowing that his headship over the family is a larger responsibility. If a wife is told that her willing submission and respectful conduct is a mark of bravery and strength, the same is said of the man who willingly leads and cares for her!

*Understanding way* – Literally “according to knowledge.” The husband cannot forget that his woman is the weaker vessel, primarily in the realm of the physical. If he does not take her limitations into

9 Transliterated “Hesychou,” Strong's #2272

10 <https://biblehub.com/greek/2272.htm>

11 Genesis 18:1-13

account, perhaps imposing unrealistic expectations or growing too impatient at her shortcomings, then he is demonstrating a lack of understanding.

*Showing honor* – The hierarchy of marriage, with the husband at the head, does not take away the inherent dignity of the wife. She is an heir of salvation, meaning that like her husband she has had the image of God restored to her in Baptism and she is slated for eternal life with Christ our Lord. To mistreat her is to blaspheme, calling God a liar by denying who our Lord says she is.

Since a husband is the head, he is called to lead his family in godliness. Naturally this means enforcing Biblical rules, including headship itself. Yet this enforcement must not be done in such a way as to mistreat, deride, neglect or show contempt for the wife, for husbands are warned here that God will treat them the same way they treat their wives.

## 1 Peter Bible Study #13: The Ideal Church

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 3:8-12

**8** Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. **9** Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. **10** For

“Whoever desires to love life  
and see good days,

let him keep his tongue from evil  
and his lips from speaking deceit;

**11** let him turn away from evil and do good;  
let him seek peace and pursue it.

**12** For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,  
and his ears are open to their prayer.

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

### **Introduction**

St. Peter has begun to urge Christians to take the Church era seriously for what it actually is – an Exile. This extends to our conduct as Exiles in the world, requiring us to be good citizens and good servants. It also intensifies the need for harmony between believers, and this starts in the home. A wife must enthusiastically submit to and respect her husband, and a husband must treat his wife with understanding and honor.

Now, surprisingly, St. Peter seemingly *jumps* to an ideal state of relations between Christians. While he goes into detail describing the motivations and more precise actions for wives in submitting to their husbands, for a congregation there is a brief list of virtues and a stern admonition to refuse taking vengeance. It is the first part of a longer admonition to imitate the mindset of our Lord Christ, but starting with more human motivations (receiving blessing from God).

### **Vs.8**

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

*Finally* – The word “finally” here is not intended to suggest that the Apostle is ending his Epistle with this passage. It suggests an aim, a state of being to which we should strive in relation with one another, namely the virtues he lists. The word-for-word translation of the phrase would be “Now to the end all unity, sympathetic, brotherly love, tenderhearted, humble.” The *telos* of the congregation should be to have a brotherhood of believers that holds all of these virtues toward one another.

Of course, this is an *ideal* to which St. Peter exhorts us to strive. Christians *ought* to be united in doctrine and compassionate to one another. Christians *ought* to be friendly and willing to listen. A congregation benefits the most when the members are all humble as well! These are self-evident virtues which combined form an ethos of Agape love in imitation of our Lord Jesus.

### **Vs.9**

Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

The Apostle knows, however, that this will not always be the case. Congregations everywhere, on account of sin, will find themselves plagued by cliques, arguments, hard hearts, wayward clergy pulling rank, and all other manner of dysfunction. Since this is the case, while Christians *strive* to the virtues which make for harmonious living in the face of Exile, at the very least one must avoid taking revenge. Verse nine is written in the immediate context of Christian-to-Christian relations, meaning it applies mostly to our relationship with one another. Yet he will extend it to our enemies in the next passage. But for now, let it suffice to say that if an earnest Christian does something bad to us or insults us, we obtain real blessing from God by refusing to repay them in kind.

### **Vs.10-12**

For

“Whoever desires to love life  
and see good days,  
let him keep his tongue from evil  
and his lips from speaking deceit;  
let him turn away from evil and do good;  
let him seek peace and pursue it.  
For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,  
and his ears are open to their prayer.  
But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

The Apostle cites Psalm 34:11-16, written when King David was fleeing from Saul. The blessings he brings up as a reward for refraining from vengeance, reviling, and wicked behavior in general are curiously retained for *this life*. One sees good days in this life when conducting himself graciously. God watches over the believer in *this life* when they order their speech and deeds to humility, and He listens to their prayers. On the topic of prayer, the inverse is true: just as a man mistreating his wife leads to hindered prayers,<sup>1</sup> so too will our prayers be hindered if we are bent on vengeance and bitterness. If a Christian wants to live the *good life*, then he does well to be a man of peace!

Of course St. Peter does not stop there in terms of our motivations. He will continue on to a crucial aspect of nonvengeance as part our sanctification in Christ. But as the first thing we perceive is in this life, he brings up the incentives for peaceful living first in terms of material benefit – good days, answered prayers, productive relationships. Lest one take this into the realm of cost-benefit analysis however, he will move on to a more spiritual motivation in the next passage.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 3:7

## 1 Peter Bible Study #14: St. Peter's Cross Theology (Pt.1)

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 3:13-17

**13** Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? **14** But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, **15** but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, **16** having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. **17** For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

### **Introduction**

St. Peter has begun to urge Christians to take the Church era seriously for what it actually is – an Exile. This extends to our conduct as Exiles in the world (requiring us to be good citizens and servants), as well as to our conduct within the Body of Christ (requiring us to be good husbands, wives, and parishioners). Harmonious living in the Church, however, requires Christians to foster virtues conducive to it: “unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.”<sup>1</sup> This is a difficult task, since our sinful nature lends itself to division, hostility, anger and pride. So St. Peter spends much more time on a simple requirement to follow while we seek Christian virtues: *do not get revenge*, “but on the contrary, bless.”<sup>2</sup> By refusing to get revenge, and by doing good instead, one shall be blessed by our Lord.

Yet this command from the Apostle is not just tied to preserving harmony in the congregations. More importantly, 1 Peter 3:13-22 teaches a value system of God which is alien to the world. In fact, to human sensibilities it appears to invert our understanding of what is “good” and what is “bad” - at least to moderns. The motivation for disdaining vengeance and for enduring the difficulties of being a Christian is ultimately wedded to identification with Christ and service to Him above all others.

### **Vs.13-14a**

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed.

Though the world is corrupt, it retains some semblance of the first use of the Law. Civic and cultural authorities are given a function of punishing wickedness and rewarding good behavior as a means of curbing the effects of sin.<sup>3</sup> Thus a Christian who is zealous for good works *ought* not be punished, as it would be an absurdity for authorities to do so. Why would a non-believer persecute someone for volunteering at the soup kitchen? Why would authorities punish a Christian for telling the wayward to abandon violence or crime?

Yet this *does* happen, especially when Christian doctrine is preached. The world has no problem supporting Christians for doing good deeds in the *Coram Mundo* orientation – that is, things which materially benefit society. The world absolutely hates it, however, when it is told that we must trust in Christ for our salvation or be damned for all eternity. Nonbelievers rage at being told their favorite sins are abominable to God, whether it be a sexual, financial, or

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1 1 Peter 3:8

2 1 Peter 3:9

3 Romans 13:1-7

dispositional sin.<sup>4</sup> The preaching of Law and Gospel spurs the rebellious part of sinful humanity which desires to have eternity played out on their terms; few will ever appreciate being told that they are not in control of their destiny, or that they are poor, miserable sinners. The devil also plays a role, as the preaching of the truth causes his dark kingdom to recede, and the political structures of the world despise having their power limited or threatened. So despite the benevolent motivations of devout Christians, they are persecuted “for righteousness' sake,” and God blesses those that suffer this way.

### **Vs.14b-15a**

Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you;

To know that one will be persecuted may inspire fear. We are programmed to hate suffering in all of its forms and consider all pain to be avoided. Humanity is naturally epicurean in this sense; we avoid pain and seek pleasure. However, St. Peter exhorts the faithful to be neither fearful nor perplexed. This is what non-Christians do, this is how they behave, and inflicting tribulation is part and parcel of their nature as puppets of satan.

Instead of fearing the persecutor who punishes righteousness, the Christian must honor Christ and see *Him* as the reason one must endure rather than cowering away or avenging oneself. This is identification with Christ, part of the Theology of the Cross, that just as He suffered for our sakes we may very well suffer for Him. As He has given us the certain hope of eternal life, we “make a defense” by witnessing to that truth. It is true that there is an apologetic sense to the fifteenth verse, in that Christians must have answers to questions regarding their faith and be able to respond to accusations; but *in context* the sense of the verse primarily pertains to martyriology. Proclaiming the Gospel and living it out is a witness to the truth before nonbelievers; so too is enduring suffering on account of it.

### **Vs.15b-17**

yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

The more literal translation of “gentleness and respect” is “meekness and fear.” The Christian's answer to both inquiring and hostile nonbelievers is *not* supposed to have a limp-wristed tenor, like that of a fearful mouse or battered child. To the contrary, this “gentleness” suggests composure and self-control, not using one's strength to inflict harm but employing it for good. The aspect of fear is not toward the nonbeliever (in verse 14 the Apostle tells us not to fear them), but toward God. When confronted with hostility from the world, we must not shrink back or lose control, but being mindful of God as the One who is watching our interactions we stay the course even if it means pain for ourselves.

Yet the Christian must have a “good conscience,” still doing what is right. Per the injunction against revenge, we do not mistreat nor sin against those who are persecuting us. Thus they are put to shame, as the only offending party is them – not the believer. They are the only ones lying, they are the only ones acting wickedly, not the one bringing the Gospel to them; this means that either they shall convert, or answer to God on Judgment Day for their actions.

Finally, St. Peter says “it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.” As mentioned earlier, the Christian identifies with Christ. In this life we may

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<sup>4</sup> That is, coveting or fleshly anger or mercilessness, etc.

be called to suffer on His behalf in similar fashion to how He suffered for us. His sacrifice was entirely voluntary as an act of Divine love toward us, and we are called to voluntarily go through these circumstances and endure them out of love toward Him. Thus it is indeed better to suffer for doing good, as such is holy before God. The world finds this perplexing, as again the basic instinct is to avoid pain and pursue pleasure. If someone suffers punishment for doing something bad and overstepping their rights in this matter, the world is capable of understanding it. They shall not condemn a man fornicating for the sake of pleasure, while they will typically punish a rapist. They can tolerate a greedy man amassing wealth, they shall despise a thief. A Christian must abhor the thought of committing sins which society tolerates or applauds; the thought of committing punishable offenses must never even enter his mind! For we hold to a *higher* morality than they, where even our suffering can be a good thing.

## 1 Peter Bible Study #15 : St. Peter's Cross Theology (Pt.2)

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 3:18-22

**18** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, **19** in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, **20** because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. **21** Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **22** who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

### **Introduction**

St. Peter has started discussing the matter of living under persecution while one has the exhortation to refuse taking vengeance. While a Christian living in the way God intends ought to have no fear of the civic authorities, tribulation can and will happen on account of the witness of the faith clashing against the unbelieving world's idolatry. The believer must take heart by being mindful of Christ, that one becomes closer to Him by suffering for Him, and maintaining good conduct during his tribulation. Though we prefer not to have trouble in this world, we recognize that our morality is higher than the basic epicurean instinct that the rest of humanity has.

The section on applied Cross theology is completed by the Apostle turning the reader's attention to Jesus in an unexpected way by promising a future glory. We typically hear and teach that one suffers on account of "living in a broken world," without recognizing that pain can actually accomplish great things. In particular, St. Peter highlights the institution of the Sacrament of Baptism as an example of our benefit from the Crucifixion.

### **Vs.18**

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

Though we may suffer for Christ, Christ suffered first for us, and that at a much greater degree. The Apostle states explicitly that our Savior went to the Cross to "bring us to God;" without the Righteous suffering for the unrighteous, the unrighteous would remain as they are. Remember, the central thesis of 1 Peter is this: Christ elevates the Christian as He Himself was elevated: nonbelievers remain in humiliation. By bringing us to God through the Atonement, Jesus Christ elevates us from our prior state of humiliation. We are raised up because Christ was cut down.

Yet this is not the end of the story; Christians do not believe that Jesus was crucified and then nothing else happened. To the contrary, He rose from the dead *bodily*,<sup>1</sup> not just "spiritually," and from there ascended to the Throne Room of God. But first, before the bodily Resurrection, He was "made alive in the spirit." The Christian goes through the same thing; we are first killed in our Baptism,<sup>2</sup> then at the same moment made spiritually alive, and we await a bodily

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1 Luke 24:36-43

2 Romans 6:3-4

Resurrection like unto the Resurrection of Christ.

### **Vs.19-20**

in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

When Christ was “made alive in the spirit,” one must recognize that He is both God and man, having two natures (Divine and human) to the one Person. According to His Divine essence and nature, He has always been alive in the greatest possible sense; according to His human nature, the moment of His death on the Cross resulted in a change in essence. At the Incarnation, He took on mortality: He was able to be killed, able to age, became hungry and thirsty, etc.<sup>3</sup> When He is Resurrected, we see He is able to walk through walls, appear wherever He wishes, and is immune to anything that might harm, such as putting one's hand in His wounds.<sup>4</sup> In other words, an exalted human nature is greater than that which we are born with – even when corrupted nature due to sin is not a factor.

Since Christ has a human nature, He also has a human *soul* and a human *spirit*. The raising up (in vs.18 “being made alive”) of His spiritual parts permitted Him to go into hostile otherworldly environments while retaining the ability to leave as He wished. It is for this reason, according to His spirit, He traveled to the “spirits in prison” and preached to them.

The prison which Christ preached in before His bodily Resurrection is commonly referred to as “hell,” hence the traditional term “harrowing of hell” in Church history. It is from this verse that we have the line in the Apostles' Creed, “He was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell.” We do not know what message He preached, except that it seems to have been a message spoken to the antediluvian generations of mankind. Those who existed before the Great Flood<sup>5</sup> were, in some sense, rebellious souls to whom God found it necessary to reach with a message. Does that mean that they were given a second chance at salvation? No. Does that mean that Christ came down to bring Old Testament saints to Heaven? No. Again, we do not know, yet we retain the confession of the Harrowing of Hell on account of the way it expresses Christ's two natures and the hope of believers for Resurrection.

### **Vs.21-22**

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Christ suffered to “bring us to God” as the Apostle says in verse 18. He reminds the reader that the means by which we are brought to God is through the Sacrament of Baptism. Verse 20 states that “eight souls were saved through water.”<sup>6</sup> Baptism corresponds to this: the way that God poured out water to kill wicked humanity in the Flood, He pours water with the Word upon us to kill our Old Adam, or sinful nature, that we may be saved. It is not the water itself which saves in this fashion, but the Word with the water, by which power one receives an appeal for “a good conscience,” the forgiveness of sins.<sup>7</sup>

3 Romans 8:3 says He came in the “likeness of sinful flesh” - though unfallen and sinless, He was still mortal.

4 John 20:24-29

5 Genesis 7

6 The literal translation. The Greek text employs ψυχαί, for souls, and διεσώθησαν for “were saved” or brought safely. Strong's #5590 and 1295 respectively.

7 Acts 2:38

It is on account of Christ's Atonement worked for you that your Baptism does such wonderful things for you. Our Baptist friends may object to what Scripture says plainly about Baptism because they believe it is a work of man. Yet here the text makes it clear that Baptism is not a work of man, but of God; it saves because Christ saves us. God does the Baptizing, not man. Without understanding this, these verses have no business *being* in the text of 1 Peter 3, as mentioning Baptism without Baptism doing anything betrays the immediate context of Christ suffering for something *good* to happen.

Consider the final verse, verse 22, which states that our Savior has gone into heaven and received power over all angels and authorities – and anything else, with the expansive terms “authorities and powers” included in His absolute rule. First came death, then a spiritual rising, then a Resurrection, then all authority being given unto Him.<sup>8</sup> Being united to Christ in our Baptism, we go through a parallel process which ensures that our suffering as believers is for a greater glory: death, spiritual renewal, and one day a Resurrection and exaltation. The identification of the believer with Christ does not stop at undergoing pain and suffering: it also extends out into the *good*, the elevation, the greater authority and status given. While we experience a mixed bag in this life of good and bad experiences, in the long run we are promised ultimate good for all eternity.

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8 Matthew 28:18

## 1 Peter Bible Study #16: Being Different

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 4:1-6

**1** Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, **2** so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. **3** For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. **4** With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; **5** but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. **6** For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

### **Introduction**

The Atonement was won by the suffering of Christ for sinners, and He went to the Cross willingly for the sake of future glory – receiving a Kingdom. Thus the believer, who benefits from the salvation won for him, ought to take the same mindset. He must be in harmony with others and never seek revenge, preferring to be patient when suffering persecution from the world. Thus is the message of St. Peter's applied Cross Theology in 1 Peter 3; we identify with Christ through our lives as living icons, so to speak.

The Apostle does not *end* his discussion there, but decides in this passage to expand the “living icon” motif further into the realm of normal daily life. It is doubtful that every waking moment of a believer's life will be spent fleeing violent persecution, after all. Yet even time spent without having to flee or go into hiding is still time one must spend being *distinct*. We must carry ourselves as different from the world, seeking abstention from the passions of the flesh and the activities of the spiritually dead.

### **Vs.1-2**

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.

Christ suffered “in the flesh,” that is He suffered according to His human nature. St. Peter is not denying the Divinity of Jesus, but affirming His humanity. Christians *arm* themselves with this mentality, a stoic patience under persecution, as though it were a weapon. The spiritual war being waged on the world stage is not going to be won with swords or bombs, but with believers taking the right attitude going into battle against the devil and his servants. To be a good soldier for Christ, one must be willing to go through what He went through and to see it as beneficial *training*.

It is for this reason that we reject the martyrial obsessions of sects like the Donatists despite the verse saying “whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” The popular conception of martyrdom in the Donatist heresy being an “automatic” guarantee of salvation – even if by suicide.<sup>1</sup> To the contrary, St. Peter is simply agreeing with the authors of Hebrews and James that one's experience of tribulation has a sanctifying effect.<sup>2</sup> If one has suffered for the

1 <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/donatism>

2 Hebrews 12:7-11, James 1:12-15

Gospel, then he will be not be tempted to *live* for sin, as St. Peter qualifies in the second verse. Here the Apostle is encouraging the churches in Asia Minor that their tribulations shall make them *better people*, should they endure them rightly.

### **Vs.3**

For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.

Christians are already not permitted to engage in these things. Before our conversion, we were characterized by such ugly pleasure-seeking. Now, being Christians, we can safely say “I have no need of what I did previously.” Pleasure-seeking belongs properly to (written here as “suffices”) the *past*, not our lives now. How much more improper would it be, pathetic even, for someone to return to these things after having suffered at the hands of nonbelievers for his faith? The mental image of a man being beaten for the sake of Christ, but then shortly thereafter fornicating with a woman and getting drunk, is one which invokes enormous sorrow, suggesting a defeated attitude on the part of the sinning Christian. We are called to be *different*, and even much more so as living martyrs.

### **Vs.4-5**

With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

The Christian is called to live a life consistent with being elevated in status before God. A member of the true Israel, the Kingdom of God, must live as he is, not as he was. Yet this means abstaining from the ways “Gentiles” live, namely for the flesh and its endless debaucheries. Naturally, they will notice that we live differently than we do, and it will shock them, inspiring all sorts of judgments against us.

This dynamic is seen today. A man is called a wet blanket if he does not join a party with alcohol and erotic dancers. A teenage girl is bullied for not smoking cigarettes with her friends in the school bathroom. A man's boss says “we're going out drinking,” and he risks being passed up for promotion by staying home. As a more passive form of persecution via social ostracizing, it is grating. Yet St. Peter encourages believers that Judgment Day shall happen, and those who rejected us and spoke ill of us will give an account for their foolishness.

### **Vs.6**

For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

It is tempting to connect this verse to 1 Peter 3:19-20, given the account of the Harrowing of Hell. However, this would miss the parallel language to 1 Peter 3:18, which says Christ was “put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.” Identifying with Christ, the believer is “judged in the flesh the way people are,” so that “they might live in the spirit” - meaning that the believer is, like Christ, made alive *through* their death but not because of it. The Gospel was preached for this very reason, that spiritually dead people may be made alive.

This verse strongly suggests a chiasmic structure between 1Pet.3:18 and 1 Pet.4:6, which will be explored in the next installment.

## 1 Peter Bible Study #17: Authentic Universal Priesthood

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 4:7-11

**7** The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. **8** Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. **9** Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. **10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: **11** whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

### **Introduction**

The Church is the true Israel, and the Epistle of 1 Peter meditates on what that means for Christians living in our time of tribulation. So far as this touches on the universal priesthood, similarities between the Church and the Old Testament priesthood are noted. There is a distinction in the Old Testament between the Levites and the Aaronic priesthood. While all priests were from the tribe of Levi, not all Levites were priests. This did not mean that other Levites did not have any responsibilities; instead, they played a crucial role in *assisting* the priesthood with matters of Tabernacle attendance;<sup>1</sup> later, under the Davidic reforms, they were tasked with conducting, music, security, bookkeeping, and more.<sup>2</sup> Though a Levite could never *be* a priest if he was not descended from Aaron, there would be no Aaronic priesthood without him and his brothers making sure things ran smoothly.

The Church runs on a similar basis. All Christians are part of a universal priesthood, as St. Peter has stated earlier in this Epistle, but not all believers may inhabit the pastoral office.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the Aaronic priests, today's pastors are not selected by blood; they are to be men qualified on the basis of merit and call.<sup>4</sup> By necessity this means that many are excluded from the pastorate, including all women, children, new converts, and the morally compromised. The exclusion of these from the pastoral office does *not* prevent them from serving though! To the contrary, as St. Peter writes here, they are essential in their works of service for the operations of the Church.

### **Vs.7**

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

By “the end of all things,” the Apostle does not necessarily mean the Eschaton or Judgment Day, though it is tempting to assume this is the case. Truly, Christ may return at any point in time, so His return is always near, and the Christian ought to be found disciplined and sober when the Second Advent occurs. Yet this passage is not *about* eschatology, which St. Peter spends more time discussing in his second Epistle. To the contrary, in context the word *telos*, translated “end,” also denotes *purpose*, and a Christian's purpose which approaches is their eternal state in Christ Jesus. We live in the final era before the End.

Note that the Apostle says “for the sake of your prayers.” He does *not* say “for the sake of your eternal state.” Our eternal blessedness is already assumed by the Apostle, who speaks to *believers*, not apostates or nonbelievers. Rather, the self-control and sobriety he exhorts us to is based on the effectiveness of our appeals to God. God is far less likely to grant our requests if we

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1 Numbers 18:1-7,

2 1 Chronicles 23:24-32, 1 Chronicles 25-26

3 1 Peter 2:9

4 1 Timothy 2:12-15, 3:1-7, 4:11-16

are found “unclean” by slovenly living. During this last era, in which God's priesthood is comprised of all Christians, we must be disciplined followers if we wish to please Him with the good works which come from faith.

### **Vs.8-9**

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

St. Peter is effectively repeating the command of Christ in John 15:12, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” Here the Apostle makes it explicit that this command is carried over from him and his fellow Apostles to *all* Christians. This *Agape* love, seeking the good of the other for their own sake, is the root motivation for all believers in their attitude toward one another. It covers over sins – that is, it is the reason for which we forgive one another and overlook each other's failures. Without *Agape*, every Christian would be incessantly bitter toward the rest of the Body of Christ for their various offenses. Once more, this ties into our priesthood, as love becomes a means of intercession; although true absolution is brought about by the power of the keys, *Agape* mitigates the effects of sin.

As an example of *Agape* love, St. Peter brings up hospitality. The particular word is φιλόξενοι,<sup>56</sup> which quite literally means “loving strangers,” with a root in *philadelphia*, or brotherly love. In other words, though we may be “strangers” to one another in a church setting, we are to still be friendly with one another and (as the next verses speak on) serve one another. This is not to say that a Christian is under obligation to show hospitality to *all* strangers, but a Christian is to love other Christians even if they do not know one another personally.

### **Vs.10-11**

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Here the “Priest/Levite” relationship is demonstrated. God's Grace is “varied” in that He gives different gifts to different people for the sake of serving others. The one who “speaks” with the oracles of God is the man inhabiting the pastoral office, preaching the Word as a rightly called teacher. Those who serve, by the strength God gives them, effectively fit into the “Levite” category – taking care of everything else according to their station. Though all Christians serve a sort of intercessory and forgiving role as a priesthood, the distinction is still made between those chosen to serve as public ministers and those who serve otherwise.

This is to be done so that God is “glorified through Jesus Christ.” If we please Christ by obeying His command and operating with the callings He has given us, then we please God and give Him glory. This is not to suggest that He is deprived of some glory in the first place, as though there were some lack to be addressed. St. Peter expresses something similar to the exposition of the second petition of the Lord's Prayer found in the *Small Catechism*:

*The kingdom of God comes indeed without our prayer, of itself; but we pray in this petition that it may come unto us also.*

To God belongs all glory no matter what. Yet this esteem and praise of our Lord should be something occurring *among us*.

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5 Transliterated “philoxenoi,” Strong's #5382

6 <https://biblehub.com/greek/5382.htm>

## 1 Peter Bible Study #18: Cross Theology Redux

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 4:12-19

**12** Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. **13** But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. **14** If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. **15** But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. **16** Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. **17** For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? **18** And

“If the righteous is scarcely saved,

what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

**19** Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

### **Introduction**

In 1 Peter 3, the Apostle begins to speak on applied Cross Theology. The Christian shall be made to suffer here on this earth, and must endure it while continuing to honor God by good conduct, even to his enemies. That the theology of the Cross teaches us about Christianity by the self-revelation of God, and this involves both an intellectual and experiential teaching. It is one thing for the Christian to learn about Jesus dying on the Cross for him; if this never leaves his head, neither shall his faith expand nor his sanctification increase. St. James and the author of Hebrews make this fact plain, that tribulation is not only expected in this life but it is a *good thing* for the sake of being made more like Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Yet while Hebrews and James will speak on the theology behind the phenomenon of Christian suffering, St. Peter is interested giving in practical examples, guiding believers to the right mindset when experiencing suffering, and reminding them of the correct (and incorrect) responses to it. With this passage, he is more explicit with some of the shocking implications.

### **Vs.12-13**

**12** Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. **13** But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

We should first note that the imperative does not involve an “if,” but a “when.” The “fiery trial” which *shall* occur to the churches in Asia Minor to whom St. Peter writes is a certainty. What is the nature of the trial? In its historical context, St. Peter wrote during the time of Nero's acts of persecution, which included setting Christians on fire. Later on, during the end of the first century, the state persecution of believers reached Pontus (in western Asia Minor) under emperor Trajan; this generally included executing Christians who were not citizens of Rome.

Is this limited to the first century though? Not at all, for *all* Christians are to expect tribulation.<sup>2</sup> When a Christian undergoes an experience like this, they are to rejoice. We do not believe that this life is all there is, and instead trust that God has ordained us to future glory in His Kingdom. Early martyriological accounts, like that of Polycarp or Perpetua, demonstrate a near-excitement on the part of the martyrs to suffer for Christ, knowing that they were that much

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<sup>1</sup> James 1:12, Hebrews 12

<sup>2</sup> 2 Timothy 3:12

nearer to eternal joy with Christ our Lord. We must have the same mindset should we be placed in such situations as they were. This may not be as drastic or life-threatening as the martyrs experienced in Rome; in fact, it may be simply being told by a human resources agent to confess a false morality – in effect being told “sin against your God or you are fired.” We are told here that standing strong even under this kind of test is honoring to our Lord, and we should rejoice.

#### **Vs.14-16**

**14** If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. **15** But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. **16** Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

St. Peter includes the most benign form of persecution, the *insult*, as something which demonstrates our blessedness. It is no exaggeration to say that a Christian being insulted on account of his faith is *still* a moment of martyrdom, for the believer in this case is still called to be a witness to the truth of the Gospel – and he shall stand strong, provided the Holy Spirit rests upon him. Yet while even the slightest insult is a moment which brings glory and honor to God, the slightest *merited* insult on account of a Christian sinning brings *dishonor* and anger to God. We are to stand firm in good conduct in the Name of Jesus Christ. We do poorly if we find ourselves giving Christianity a bad name because of our misbehavior.

#### **Vs.17-18**

**17** For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? **18** And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

Citing Proverbs 11:31 (Septuagint version), the Apostle tells us in no uncertain terms that the nonbelieving world will suffer far worse than we do today. In this life the Church is always small, persecuted, and in great distress despite her joy at receiving the Gospel. In the *next* life, that is after Judgment Day, all of those who never repented for attacking, harming, and insulting Christians shall find themselves undergoing unimaginable torment. It is greater to suffer now as a Christian for one's faithfulness and receive eternal life on the other side than to suffer for all eternity as a nonbeliever. Yet it must start with us.

#### **Vs.19**

**19** Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

And why must it start with us? Because, as St. Peter makes clear in the third chapter, and as St. James and the author of Hebrews make clear, suffering is part of our sanctification. God chastises those whom He loves, and He rewards those who endure the trials which await. So to entrust ourselves to Him and continue in good conduct is to honor Him greatly by treating Him as the Father He truly is.

## 1 Peter Bible Study #19: Rules for Elders and Laity

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 5:1-5

**1** So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: **2** shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; **3** not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. **4** And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. **5** Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

### **Introduction**

As his parting instructions begin, St. Peter turns to the conduct of church authorities. As an Apostle, he has the responsibility to convey the teachings of our Lord Jesus to others, yet doing so by exhortation rather than compulsion. He does not lord himself over the congregations of Asia Minor, but instead simply informs them of who they are and what they are to do according to the position God has given them. In this sense, St. Peter teaches by example *as* he teaches by text.

### **Vs.1-3**

**1** So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: **2** shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; **3** not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

By “elders,” it is best understood that the Apostle means those with a position of authority within the Church. It would be erroneous to assume that he is *establishing* an office of elder, for he refers to himself in this way – while he is an Apostle, one who has witnessed Christ's suffering and Resurrection! We must take this expansive view of it, since he specifies that he writes as a “fellow elder,” meaning that the same responsibilities and powers are broadly attributed in this fashion. Thus we may safely assume that what he writes here he writes to bishops, pastors, and deacons, all of whom bear authority in the Church which manifests in different ways. Pastors are ordained to Word and Sacrament, deacons are ordained to the Sacrament and church administration,<sup>1</sup> and bishops oversee all the activities under their purview (that is, having synodical authority). If a congregation should *have* elders or presbyters out of a desire to fulfill unique responsibilities however, this would apply to them as well.

Much is made and said by the churches today about the hierarchical structure of the Church as presented in the New Testament. Not much is said about the limitations inherent in the offices. God wants willing ministers with good attitudes; a minister who lacks proper motivation and drive has harmed his own qualification to the office. Ministers must also not “fleece the flock” by greedily demanding more money than is necessary. When the Apostle says that ministers are to be “not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock,” he condemns every single member of the clergy who would say “I'm the pastor, you're not, do as I say!” Hierarchy in the Church does not translate into churches becoming fiefdoms of the personal whims of men. No pastor is the “Vicar of Christ” as the pope supposes he is; though the pastor speaks on behalf of God by the ministry of the Word, he does not do so *as though he were*

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<sup>1</sup> That is, they may run the liturgy, oversee congregational activities, and pass along messages given to them, as St. Stephen does in Acts 7.

*God*. He cannot force people to do anything nor harshly punish them for disobeying him (that is a matter for the congregation to handle). Instead of taking crowns for themselves,<sup>2</sup> pastors are to lead by example, not by diktat. Note that instructions for Church discipline in 1 Corinthians are *not* laid at the feet of the pastor, but of the congregation as a whole. Let us never confuse the public administration of the Office of the Keys being carried out by ministers with “Left Hand” power to push people around by force.

#### **Vs.4**

4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

It is plain to see that our Lord rewards those who seek Him by faith and desire earnestly to please Him.<sup>3</sup> This is doubly true for ministers (of all stripes, from the pastor to the deacon), who are *greatly* rewarded should they faithfully carry out the duties of their office. It is a calling that is high risk,<sup>4</sup> high reward. St. Peter himself is included among those Apostles who are rewarded with *thrones* in Heaven, great power and authority, for their service per the latter chapters of Revelation. So it is with faithful ministers today, who shall receive crowns of glory should they be faithful.

#### **Vs.5**

5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

The term “younger” does not denote physical age but lesser authority in the Church on account of less catechesis, lack of ordination, etc. Effectively the “younger” are laity, and the laity are to be subject to the ministers. Where previously the pharisees had inhabited the seat of Moses,<sup>5</sup> now it is the elders who do. While the elders are *not* permitted to boss people around, their instructions are by example and by teaching: the laity are to see the good example and listen to the good teaching and follow both. However, they are not to follow a pastor's *bad* example or *bad* teaching, just as Christ instructed people to listen to the pharisees but did not mean that they should believe in pharisaism or sin in the way these teachers did.<sup>6</sup>

If it is a sin for clergy to “pull rank” against their laity, it is an even worse sin for laity to try to push their pastors around. They are to be humble facing upward in the hierarchy as the ministers are to be humble facing downward. To fail to do so, attacking ministers on account of some charismatic pretension of superiority, is to fail to know one's place in the Church. This does not mean that laity cannot hold their ministers accountable; yet if they do so it must be according to God's Word and Will, just the same as a minister can tell people what to do but only according to Scripture, not his whim.

St. Peter ends the pericope by quoting Proverbs 3:34<sup>7</sup> in the exact same way that James 4:6 does. “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” A congregation is not functioning as a Christian congregation if the ministers and laity do not have proper humility, expressing Agape love toward one another by proper understanding of their office. In fact, should pride infect either station in the Church, God shall oppose it and frustrate it's operations at every step. It is a stark warning that we must heed for the good of our congregations, lest they be destroyed by pride.

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2 The Greek word translated as “domineering” is understood as enforcing mastery: <https://biblehub.com/greek/2634.htm>

3 Hebrews 11:6

4 James 3:1

5 Matthew 23:2

6 Matthew 23:3-12

7 Septuagint translation



## 1 Peter Bible Study #20: The Almost Conclusion

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 5:6-11

**6** Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, **7** casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. **8** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **9** Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. **10** And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. **11** To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

### Introduction

As his parting instructions continue, St. Peter simultaneously expands and retracts the area of focus in his address to the churches in Asia Minor:

-On the one hand, the focus on relatively minor potential conflicts between believer and believer, laity and clergy, etc., is shifted to the conflict between all Christians and our bloodthirsty enemy the devil. This is accomplished on both the individual and collective level.

-On the other hand, the focus is shifted somewhat from congregation to individual believer. Though the commands are still spoken in the plural, they can only be obeyed on the individual level, and comfort can only be received in this way. Christians would have a hard time collectively casting all of their anxieties on the Lord, for instance, but a single Christian may do so with relative ease.

It is important to recognize that these are the *final* instructions in 1 Peter. They highlight and summarize the Exilic life of the believer here on earth and present the situation as it is. As has been the case throughout the entire Epistle, St. Peter employs expansive language which lets us know that this is not restricted *merely* to Asia Minor, but instead applies to every single Christian in all history.

### Vs.6-7

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

In context, there is an aspect of laity/clergy relations in the sixth verse, but in a transitional fashion. What St. Peter says here applies to the Christian anxious over what his elder<sup>1</sup> says just as much as it does to general anxiety. The same is true of his exhortation to humility. If we are patient and humble as new Christians, over time God lifts us up in maturity; if someone is a minister, his humility before men results in a raising of his stature among them, as God rewards his faithful and earnest service.

We must highlight the precious truth of these two verses, especially since “anxiety” is a commonplace affliction in modern times. Μέριμναν<sup>23</sup> denotes a *fracturing* in the individual, a turmoil of the heart which is not easily put back together on one's own initiative. By telling us to cast<sup>4</sup> these cares and anxieties upon the Lord, we are told that emotional well-being is not solely the prerogative of the individual Christian. Instead, the Apostle encourages us by saying that God

1 As we said last week, “elder” here only makes sense as applying to those called to offices within the Church – Deacons, pastors, Bishops, etc. A theoretical “Presbyter” office is something a church may have, but the commands for them apply just as easily to *all* ministers.

2 Transliterated “Merimnan,” Strong's #3308

3 <https://biblehub.com/greek/3308.htm>

4 Literally “throwing.”

*cares* about His people, each and every one of them. God has a vested interest in healing the turmoil of the anxious, but requires here that we go to Him with them, placing these problems in His hand – effectively letting go of any pretension that we can do it by ourselves. This ties in with St. Peter's admonition to humility, as only a humble man could admit to his own weakness here; yet with this admission there is great gain.

### **Vs.8**

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

A sober-minded individual is temperate, but not just with alcohol. Of course Christians must not be *drunkards*, but the truly intoxicating thing is sin, by which the devil loves to ensnare people. Like a lion does, he lies in wait for the unaware or stalks the weak, typically acting as an opportunistic predator. Unless a lion is starving, it will not go after the strongest gazelle in the field or assault a hippopotamus. So if a Christian is not letting himself be weakened by enticing sin, if he is temperate (not a teetotaler necessarily but at any rate not getting witheringly drunk), he is in a better position to survive the attacks of the evil one.

### **Vs.9**

Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

The devil is a persistent force in this world, raging because his time is limited. One might ask how a single fallen angel has the ability to assail so many believers; the answer is found in his control over *other* fallen angels, as well as his general sway over the nonbelieving world. He is *ultimately* the one conducting these attacks on God's Church. While the devil is not omnipresent, and he can only be in one place at one time, he has access to infernal agents which report to him for nefarious purposes. By resisting the agents of the devil, the Christian resists the devil ultimately.

And how shall we resist the devil? We cannot attack him physically, and even if someone were to kill a man he was possessing, only the man would die and go to hell, not the devil. The tools the believer has at his disposal are the full armor of God: truth, righteousness, the Gospel, faith, assurance of salvation, and the Word, all with persistent prayer.<sup>5</sup> To this list, St. Peter adds here patient endurance and recognition that one is united by faith with all other believers.

### **Vs.10-11**

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

The suffering of a believer is guaranteed, but temporary; the glory of salvation is eternal, to the point where no amount of pain here on earth can compare with it. After the Resurrection, when a faithful believer is given eternal blessedness by our Lord, there shall *never* come a time when he will regret being a Christian. He shall never say “This isn't as good as St. Peter said it would be.” He shall never say “This wasn't worth it.”

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5 Ephesians 6:10-18

## 1 Peter Bible Study #21: Conclusion

For lay leaders and deacons to conduct after the Sunday service, or during a midweek Bible study session.

### 1 Peter 5:12-14

**12** By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. **13** She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. **14** Greet one another with the kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

### **The Conclusion of 1 Peter**

#### *Silvanus*

There are few notes to make regarding the specifics of this chapter. St. Peter gives honorable mention to his *amanuensis*, or scribe, named Silvanus. This is historically held to be Silas, the traveling companion of St. Paul during his second missionary journey. In Acts he is referred to as Silas, in the Epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter he is called Silvanus. This *could* be a different man altogether, but it is doubtful that the Apostle would mention any other scribe by name.

That an amanuenses wrote this letter under St. Peter's dictation means he likely assisted with the formulation of various phrases, as the introduction to this Bible study series has argued. More importantly, this suggests that St. Paul was with Silvanus and St. Peter while this Epistle was being written. As St. Peter writes to the churches in Asia Minor, presumably from Rome; this would substantiate St. Paul delivering 1 Peter to the churches in Asia Minor by way of his visit to Ephesus in 52 A.D.<sup>1</sup> St. Mark, who collaborated with St. Peter in writing the second Gospel, is also there, suggesting that the writing of this Epistle was during a time in which a meeting among early Church figures was taking place. If this is the case, it brings a greater depth of understanding for what St. Paul did on his missionary journeys, acting as a courier in addition to an evangelist.

Acknowledgments of scribes demonstrate a way in which the early Church operated, even during the Apostolic era. The churches, which did not have the conveniences of modern technology or publishing houses, needed instruction sent by epistles. Ignatius shows this to be the case in the eleventh chapter of his letter to the Smyrnaeans.<sup>2</sup> When St. Peter says “this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it,” he says this as a command to the churches in Asia Minor in their *current circumstances*. Not that modern Christians may depart from God's Grace – we mean no such thing! – but the immediacy of the Epistle must be taken into account when considering the general tone.

#### *She who is at Babylon*

“Babylon,” at the time of this Epistle's writing, is properly identified as one of three locations.

-It could be the actual city of Babylon, which at the time was under Parthian control: this is unlikely, since there is no historical record of any churches being established in Babylon during the first century, nor any individuals going on missionary journeys there.

-Another potential location could be Jerusalem, since it is referred to as “Sodom and Egypt” in Revelation 11:8. Sodom was home to immorality, Egypt was home to idolatry and sorcery: Babylon was commonly understood to represent *both*. This is possible, especially as persecutions against Christians were common in Jerusalem, but it is

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1 Acts 19

2 <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0109.htm>

doubtful that St. Peter would have this location in mind given that other saints were there. The Epistle contains no greetings from St. James the Just, nothing regarding the goings-on of Judea, etc.

-The best candidate is the third: Rome, which persecuted Christians during Nero's tenure and dispersed many churches. It had the same hallmarks as Babylon (idolatry, sorcery, immorality), and was more actively involved in attacking Christians than Jerusalem at the time. Babylon was an *empire* as well as a city, and so was Rome. Babylon took the children of Judah into Exile, and St. Peter characterizes the Christian life under Roman power as just that – *exilic* life which fits with his motif of *exilic conduct*.

We must also consider, however briefly, who “she” is. This could be an individual operating under a veil of secrecy, like a servant girl in the Roman courts who would be executed if her name was revealed. Another possibility is that St. Peter's wife is mentioned in this fashion, to be modest. It could also be a figure of speech for the congregation in the city of Rome itself, as an outpost of the Body and Bride of Christ in the first century. In the immediate context of sending greetings from various individuals, we might prefer to see “she” as a single person; the contrast of using a single feminine definite article instead of a proper name, however, could support arguments toward a congregational entity.

### *The kiss of love*

Typically people see this sort of exhortation in the New Testament and wonder why this practice is not observed in Western churches today. The primary reason is that this is not an actual command. No, St. Peter is not commanding that every Christian greet every other Christian with this particular physical expression of friendship<sup>34</sup> – reading it that way devolves into absurdities. Imagine a congregation with 100 people, and before the Divine Service may begin, each congregant is required to kiss the other 99 people, amounting to twenty minutes or so of kissing before the service can begin. With this same requirement, if a one hundred and first person shows up late, the service has to be stopped so he can kiss everybody! One shudders to think how ridiculous such a practice would become in those parishes with 1500 or more Christians attending.

It is better to understand this as connecting *Philia* love with *Agape*. The “kiss of love,” or “kiss of *Agape*,” expresses the *friendship* and affection which results from a right practice of *Agape*. If Christians are always looking out for one another and helping each other with all their needs, it is highly unlikely that any of them should remain enemies! Instead, by their good works and unselfishness their brotherly love grows. *Agape* rightly understood *is* the kiss by which we greet our brothers and sisters in Christ.

It is no accident that St. Peter should end his Epistle with this phrase. After all, he was present when Christ says in John 13:34, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” He passes along the same great Commandment which was given to him by our Lord. *Agape*, or seeking the good of the other for their own sake, encapsulates all of the Ten Commandments; after all, both the Greatest Commandment and Second Greatest Commandment bind us to love. All of St. Peter's exhortations to all Christians amount to this *Agape* rightly observed within the congregational relationships, in light of the salvation won for us by Christ Jesus.

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3 “Kiss” in Koine Greek is φίλημα, transliterated “philema,” Strong's #5370. It shares a root with *phileo*, which is understood as brotherly/friendly love.

4 <https://biblehub.com/greek/5370.htm>