

NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 40

1 Peter

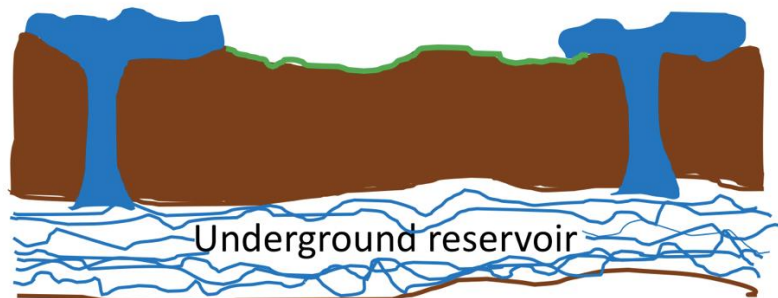
I am not a particular fan of growing old. I enjoyed my childhood. Mom found out that the school cafeteria made the best peanut butter cookies I'd ever tasted. She called, spoke with the woman who made them, and found out she used a special ground-up peanut butter. I was sick at home a few days later, and mom put me in the car, and drove 30 minutes to find the peanut butter so she could make the same cookies. Of course, I enjoyed my childhood!

Life in my teenage years was great. I had terrific friends, a great youth group at church, a nice niche in school (debate!), and, like many teenagers, I believed life could be anything I wanted it to be. One of my debate friends was Dan Danielson. Dan and I spent hours and hours discussing the relative merits of Calvinism, specifically predestination and free will. I loved the fellowship, the mental challenges, and the way it sharpened my focus on God, his Word, and theology.

College was super. A great time of growing in knowledge, experiences, and faith. I better learned the gospel, and found a group of people who were as captivated by God and his work in Jesus as I was. We explored new books, new ideas, and new worship. Law school was a blur, but a good one. I enjoyed trying to find how my faith integrated with my soon-to-be vocation.

Once I started practicing law, I went for some time before I realized I was growing old(er). Maybe it started to set in once I figured out "Spring Break" was in my past. Our law firm did not take off for a week each Spring. Still, as I was aging, I was teaching constantly in church. My early lessons were centered in Jesus, but I am confident they took a much different form than my lessons do today.

If one were to contrast my thoughts and teaching over the years to that of today, you would find different ideas percolating at different times. The underlying faith and experiences are the same, but it expresses itself differently at different times in different places.



This reminiscing comes to mind as we consider 1 Peter.

Remember Peter? A chronological New Testament study like ours leaves Peter out of the limelight for a good while when considering the ministry and writings of Paul.

Peter was the impetuous fisherman from Galilee that Christ called as an apostle early in His ministry, and Peter answered by leaving the fishing boats and becoming a fisher of men (Mt. 4:18). Simon Peter was the “rock” who started out 100% for Christ, except when he was denying Jesus to save his own skin! Peter left the boat and walked on water toward Jesus (until his faith wavered as he realized what he was actually doing). It was Peter who often spoke out for the twelve, asking the Lord to explain his parables (Mt. 15:15). It was Peter who first declared Jesus the Son of God (Mt. 16:16). It was Peter who proudly told Jesus he would never betray the Lord (Mt. 26:33-35). Yet, it was Peter who panicked when accused of being associated with the Lord. Three times, Peter denied Jesus before the cock crowed (Mt. 26:73-75). Even though Jesus told Peter beforehand that such would happen, Peter was broken over his sin.

After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to Peter. Jesus took time to heal Peter’s heart from the pain and guilt of the denials. Before his ascension, Jesus challenged Peter three times to “Take care of my sheep” if Peter truly “loved” Jesus. Jesus also explained to Peter that Peter would ultimately not deny Jesus, but instead would die a martyr’s death with his hands stretched out when Peter was older (Jn. 21:12-19).

Before that death, which history teaches us was by crucifixion, Peter spent his time feeding Jesus’ sheep.¹ Peter was infused with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and delivered the powerful sermon explaining the deity of Jesus and saving work on Calvary before a stunned crowd of Jews, thousands of whom joined the church on that first day (Acts 2).

During early Acts, we read of Peter preaching from Jerusalem day and night (Acts 4:8-13). Peter was imprisoned and released miraculously (Acts 12:1-16). Peter was feeding the church and providing the leadership for which Jesus had asked. We also saw references to Peter’s work in the church in the writings of Paul. In Galatians, we read of Peter’s interaction with Paul at the church in Antioch (Gal. 2:11ff).

¹ Clement, the Pastor/Bishop of the church in Rome from 88-97 A.D. wrote of Peter’s martyrdom at Rome apparently during the same period of Nero’s persecutions as Paul. Other church histories reference the same point. Eusebius’s church history (written around 325) writes, “It is, therefore, recorded that Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and that Peter was likewise crucified under Nero. This account of Peter and Paul is substantiated by the fact that their names are preserved in the cemeteries of that place even to the present day” (Ecclesiastical History 2:25.5). An early apocryphal work called “The Acts of Peter” (written around 150-200 A.D.) relates that Peter requested crucifixion upside down because he did not deserve to die in the manner of Jesus.

Similarly, we read in the Corinthian correspondence that Peter worked within that church as well (Paul uses Peter's Hebrew name "Cephas" in 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5).

1 Peter

This brings us to the letter of 1 Peter. It is one of two letters in the New Testament ascribed to Peter (the other, appropriately called 2 Peter!). Peter was not the prolific letter writer that Paul was. In fact, no one in the New Testament wrote as Paul did. It was Paul who really brought the "letter form" as a force to be used in the church. Peter wrote his letters later in his ministry, after Peter had multiple interactions with Paul. Was Peter inspired to use this tool for the church after seeing the way God had mightily used it with Paul? We do not know. But, we have Peter's two letters, and in the second letter, Peter acknowledges reading some of Paul's letters (2 Peter 3:15-16).

Authorship

Some scholars question whether Peter actually wrote the letter. Before considering the arguments in favor of Peter's authorship, let's look a bit closer at those offered against Petrine authorship.

The reasons given vary, but basically fall into several areas: the Greek is too good to come from the pen of a Jewish, Galilean fisherman; the Greek version of the Old Testament (the "Septuagint") is used instead of the Hebrew; the letter is too dependent on Paul's teachings and theology; there is no specific reference to unique knowledge of events in Jesus' life; and, the persecutions referenced in the letter would not happen until after Peter's death.

Is the Greek too good for a Galilean fisherman? This argument doesn't overly impress me. There is not much doubt in my mind that Peter's fluency with Greek would have been at least functional. As a fisherman, he was likely a merchant with the fish. The Galilean area had Greek cities as well as those of a Hebrew/Semitic nature.² Furthermore, Peter is 30 years after his fisherman days. He has traveled and preached in a Greek speaking world using Greek, as he polished and delivered his messages in countless forums. We know of his active involvement in Corinth

² There were ten Roman/Greek cities in the area of Palestine that as a group were called "the Decapolis" (from two Greek words: "ten" and "cities.") We read of Jesus' ministry in these areas in Mt. 4:25, Mk. 5:20; 7:31. The principal languages in these areas was Greek and Latin, as well as the local languages of Hebrew and Aramaic. These cities included Hippus on the shore of Galilee as well as Gadara, the name associated with the man from the "Gadarenes," six miles from Galilee (Mt. 8:28).

and Rome. We should expect him to communicate effectively in Greek. Finally, we rightly assume that Peter employed a secretary to take down the letter, so the quality of the Greek is far from determinative.

What concerns me more on the Greek is not the nice Greek of 1 Peter, but the vivid difference between the Greek of 1 Peter and 2 Peter. As polished as the Greek is in 1 Peter, the Greek of 2 Peter is rather raw. It seems fairly clear that the same person did not write 2 Peter as the writer of 1 Peter.

Does this mean Peter is not the author? No. It is important to understand how letters were written in his day. We get insight into what happened by reading the text itself. A key passage is 1 Peter 5:12,

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.

The 1 Peter 5:12 passage could well be telling us that Silvanus was the one responsible for penning Peter's message. Peter, of course, would be able to tell Silvanus what to put into the message, but the letter itself, might be the immediate wording of Silvanus.

This also helps explain the strong associations of the letter to phrasing and concepts associated with Paul. Silvanus is also known by his shortened name "Silas." We read of him in snippets of the New Testament as a traveler and missionary partner of Paul and Timothy. (See, 2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:1 as well as the narrative account of Paul's missionary journey in Acts 15-18.)

Silas was an integral part of Paul's ministry. As a traveler with Paul, it could be expected Silas would have copies of Paul's correspondence. Of course, Silas would also be very familiar and conversant with Paul's teachings and thought forms of the gospel and faith.

I think of it this way. Often I will ask one of my trusted lawyers to comprise a memo or pleading for court. I tell them what I want in it, how I want it structured, and occasionally I even tell them specific words to use in places. My lawyers will then prepare the pleading as I have instructed and present it to me for my editing, and ultimately signature. These are my pleadings, but they are prepared with assistance from others and will reflect their writing style, their language and thought forms.

I think that we might be seeing a first century equivalent in 1 Peter with Peter using Silas.³ This is the import of 1 Peter 5:12, as well as the strong emphatic introduction that boldly begins,

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:1).

If Peter is *not* the author of the letter, this is a very bold (and false) way to begin!

As for using the Septuagint, we saw in Paul an ability to use the Septuagint or the Hebrew Old Testament depending upon the audience or the passage. We should not be surprised as Peter through Silas is writing to those outside Jerusalem that he would use the “version” of the Bible with which they are most familiar. The New Testament book of Hebrews is written in marvelous Greek, but the many quotations in it are from a Greek Old Testament, not the Hebrew Old Testament text. As an aside, though I typically use the ESV myself, there are times where I teach in forums where another version of the Bible is used, and I will use the version of my audience rather than my usual choice. Occasionally I will even use my own translation of a particular passage, if I am looking to emphasize an aspect of the original lost in the available translations.

Is the letter too dependent upon Paul’s doctrines and theology? It seems more tied into Paulinisms than 2 Peter. In addition to the Silas role, we should not forget that Peter and Paul had considerable interaction. Peter and Paul were martyred in the same city (Rome) around the same time. Peter read and knew Paul’s writings. Peter and Paul discussed theology and doctrine (Gal. 2). Ultimately, the same God and Holy Spirit produced the theology of Paul, Peter, and the church.

Is the lack of specific references to Jesus’ life events conclusive proof Peter didn’t write the book? I would certainly not be able to write as Peter without referencing at least once, “As the Lord told us...” Still, I think this argument cuts both ways. It challenges Petrine authorship, but it also supports Petrine authorship. If you were writing a fake book claiming that Peter wrote it, wouldn’t you feel compelled to put in some life events so people would continue in the false belief Peter actually wrote it? Only Peter would not feel compelled to put in such events. Furthermore, while

³ Clement, the bishop of the Roman church toward the end of the first century, is quoted using the same Greek construction for the letter he comprised on behalf of the church of Rome to the Corinthians. That letter from Rome was written “by” or “through” Clement (Greek: *dia klēmentos* – διὰ κλήμεντος), Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.23.11.

there is no special recounting of events from the life of Christ, the language and expressions often echo the gospels and the words of Christ.⁴

As to the suffering and persecutions, reading Acts and Paul's letters shows that the persecutions of the churches came in waves that could make a book as 1 Peter relevant at any time period, not just after Peter's death. In fact, the sufferings Nero levied against the church after the burning of Rome could precipitate such writings by Peter. Even though the book was not written to Roman Christians, that does not mean that enemies of the church did not use Nero's condemnation of Christians as a pretext for persecutions in other parts of the Empire.

The letter itself claims Peter as author, church history is clear in its attribution of this letter to Peter, and the letter itself is consistent with Peter's teachings we have in Acts. In Acts 4:10-11, Peter references Jesus as the stone the builders rejected quoting Psalm 118:22. Peter does the same thing in 1 Peter 2:7-8. Similarly, in Acts 5:30, Peter speaks of Christ's death on a "tree" (literally "wood" in the Greek). Peter uses the same word in 1 Peter 2:24, while most other writers speak of Jesus' death as on a cross rather than a "tree" or "wood."

It seems more than fair to me to conclude the letter is one of Peter's, written through the hand of Silas.

The Text

As we look at the letter, we will see that Peter likely wrote it from Rome. If so, we may safely surmise that it was written in the 60's, the decade of Peter's death. The major theme in the letter is suffering (mentioned 16 times). The letter has the uniqueness of a continuous chain of imperatives. Over and over in the letter, the command form of Greek is used to deliver the message ("Be self-controlled" 1:13; "be holy" 1:15; etc.). Some scholars consider this an informal writing style much more akin to a sermon (another indication to me of Peter's authorship). I will use this outline in looking at the letter:⁵

1. Introduction (1:1-2).
2. The character of salvation: Preservation (1:3-12).
3. The claims of salvation: Holiness (1:13-2:10).

⁴ These are set forward by a number of scholars in a number of articles and books. See, e.g., Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, p. 28; Gundry, "Verba Christi' in 1 Peter" NTS 13:336-350. I will note several of them within this lesson.

⁵ Borrowed loosely from Merrill Tenney's *Introduction to the New Testament*.

4. The conduct of the saved (2:11-3:12).
5. The confidence of the saved (3:13-4:11).
6. The counsel for the saved (applied to suffering) (4:12-5:11).
7. Concluding salutations (5:12-14).

Introduction (1:1-2)

Peter starts his letter in typical form for the first century. Peter identifies himself as “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” and addresses the letter to “God’s elect.” But, Peter does not stop there. Peter explains that the recipients are not only God’s elect, but also “strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.”

Peter echoes a number of key Biblical doctrines. We see the doctrine that God has chosen his elect through foreknowledge for a purpose of obedience. The church was never elected by God to continue in the unsaved world’s destructive death spiral of sin and depravity. God has elected the church for purity. The blood of Jesus cleanses us eternally, and the Holy Spirit works in our lives daily bringing us into greater holiness and sanctification.

Another doctrine set out in these introductory verses centers on the trinity, although that word will not be formed for over another century. Peter recognizes the work of God the Father (electing the church on his foreknowledge), God the Spirit (working sanctification in the church), and God the Son (whom we obey and through whose blood we are cleansed).

The character of salvation: Preservation (1:3-12)

Peter moves past the introduction and starts his letter with a bang. Peter begins praising God, the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is the recognition Peter first vocalized during the days of Jesus’ ministry. In Matthew 16, we read where Jesus asks his apostles, “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered then, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:15-16). This is the rock hard fact that God built his church upon (Mt. 16:17-18).

Peter says that in God’s great mercy we have a “new birth” (echoing Jesus’ teaching to Nicodemus in John 3) “into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.” Peter witnessed firsthand the resurrected Jesus. Peter preached the

resurrected Jesus from Pentecost through the day of Peter's death. This same Peter earlier pulled Jesus aside (again in Matthew 16 we read the account) and rebuked Jesus for teaching this very thing. Jesus told Peter and the apostles "he [Jesus] must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." And, "Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!'" (Mt 16:21-22). Peter must have replayed this scene in his mind countless times as he fathomed the depths and riches of God's love and plan.

Peter saw the inheritance we have in Christ as one that would not perish, spoil, or fade. It had not done so for Peter. From the 30 or so years since the ascension of Christ, the inheritance grew stronger day by day. It was not fading. Peter's faith in this fact was a shield that protected him and protects the church during times of suffering and turmoil. Knowing what we have in Jesus sustains us in times of difficulty and grief. We grow through the problems. More than gold is purified by fire, we are purified by the struggles we go through as we see Christ sustaining us.

Peter speaks of us as loving and believing in Jesus even though we have not had the honor or blessing of actually seeing Jesus in person in the flesh. No doubt Jesus' words to his disciples when Thomas was given proof of the resurrection echoed in Peter's mind: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (Jn. 20:29). Peter knows that in our believing, we have the joy that comes from our salvation in Jesus.

Peter takes a moment as he references this salvation to remind his readers that the salvation in Christ was prophesied throughout the Old Testament. The prophets "searched intently and with the greatest care" as they tried to understand exactly when and how the Messiah would come in redemption. The prophets served not themselves in these endeavors, but us. The grace and answer that came incarnate in Jesus and the salvation that came by his death were prophesied for our benefit to teach us and point us to Jesus as Messiah.

Greek for Geeks

1 Peter 1:7 has a nice play on words that contrasts and parallels faith and gold. The Greek word for "test" or "the act of testing" comes from the root *dekomai* (δέκομαι). Peter uses this root to reference our "genuine" faith as well as the "testing" of fire that gold undergoes. While the pun is lost in many translations, the ESV has tried to retain it by speaking of the "tested genuineness of your faith."

Peter's play illustrates that gold gets tested for purity by fire, and through the play on words we can infer that fire, or persecution, also demonstrates our faith, resulting in praise to God. Yet there is also a contrast because Peter says that the analogous testing of our faith is testing of something far more valuable than gold, which was the most valuable metal of its day.

The claims of salvation: Holiness (1:13-2:10)

Because of this salvation in Jesus prophesied long ago, Peter calls us to action. He calls us to holiness. We are to prepare our “minds for action.” How? With self-control and by setting our confidence on what we have when Jesus returns taking us into eternity. We are enlightened about what is to come, so we should not live as though we were ignorant. Knowing our eternity in Christ, calls us into the same holiness as Jesus. Living according to evil desires is contrary to what we know to be true.

We have not gotten our inheritance because God took some gold and bought us back from the curse of sin. God took the very life and blood of Christ, “a lamb without blemish or defect” as the debt of sin (1 Pet. 1:18-19). This was never an afterthought by God. God chose Christ as our payment for sin before the very beginning of the world. Through Jesus alone we have our redemption. When we hear the message of this deliverance and respond to it, we find in our lives an obedience that purifies us. We grow in our love for each other, sincerely and from the heart. It is a different life we lead. We are reborn into a life of love that will last for eternity itself. This is confirmed by the very word of God that also lasts for eternity (1:22- 25).

Knowing this, Peter challenges the church to rid itself of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. Being born again, we should be craving spiritual milk. We have tasted the goodness of God, and we should grow up strong nourished by this tremendous salvation (2:1-3).

We find this as we are built into a holy and spiritual house upon the foundation of Christ. Jesus is a stone rejected by the builders that has formed the entire basis and foundation for our existence. We are not the ones stumbling over Jesus the Rock; we are those who are built upon him. We are chosen for God’s purposes. As God’s priests, as a holy nation, we sing out the praises of our God in the midst of a dark world where we used to live. We live in darkness no more but in the praise of his wonderful light.

Our enlightenment, our rebirth, our foundation, and our life in Christ – these things make us different. We are set out for a life that endures suffering with the calm confidence of our deliverer and our future. In love and care, we minister to each other and the world, confident in our Savior.

The Conduct of the Saved (2:11-3:12)

Peter begins this section of his letter urging Christians to live and conduct themselves as those who are saved from this world. In a sense, that places the Christians as aliens, strangers in a world system dominated by sin and its slavery-

type hold over humanity. The sinful desires of mankind wage war against the Christian, both internally and externally. Internally, we all face the struggle against sin. Externally, we suffer persecution at the hands of unbelievers. In this regard particularly, Peter tells his readers to handle the persecutions by living pure lives. That way, the pagans may “accuse you of doing wrong” but still may “see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits” (2:11-12).

What does this mean pragmatically in the world to which Peter writes? For starters, the readers are to submit themselves to the authorities as required in the worldly system. This is only to the extent the authority does not require sin on the believer’s part. This applies to each authoritative institution, King, Governor, or other who is set up to keep peace in the kingdom and punish wrongdoers.

Submission is not *de rigor* because these authorities are somehow more deserving of respect. The submission is proper for “the Lord’s sake.” Peter calls for the submission because it “is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.” History is replete with first and second century examples of Christians being wrongly accused as lawbreakers who live ignorant and outrageous lifestyles. Peter wants the rumors of such stopped dead in their tracks as Christians live exemplary lives (2:13-15).

The Christian is still to live as a free man, for his/her allegiance is really only to God, but this freedom is never to be a cover up to do wrong. True life respecting God and in service to God is showing proper respect to everyone, loving the fellow believer, and honoring the king (2:16-17).

In the world’s economy, this also applied in a special way to slaves. Their masters were an authority instituted by man. Slaves were to submit themselves to all the masters with respect. This maxim applied to those whose masters were good and considerate as well as to those whose masters were harsh. There is commendation in treating all with respect. If a slave abuses his position and is punished, then there is nothing too commendable about the slave. If a slave is punished without doing anything wrong, then that slave has been treated unfairly and has responded in a way that is worthy of accolades among the church and God. This is a slave who has truly suffered for the cause of Christ. This is a slave who has shared in the unjust suffering of the very Son of God. This is a slave who walks the path of a Messiah, who committed no sin, who deceived no one yet was insulted – a Messiah, who never retaliated or threatened, but lived and died trusting the Father.

What is the net result of the life and death of Christ? Our righteousness! His wounds heal us; we are saved. Those who were lost and wondering sheep have returned to the care of the shepherd. We are where we ought to be. We are who we ought to be (2:18- 25).

After writing about governmental obedience and economic authorities, Peter speaks of marriage. Peter writes for wives to be submissive in the same way to their husbands. Peter highlighted this teaching as a way that unbelieving husbands might come to faith. Even without preaching verbally to their husbands, women could have a profound effect by the way they lived. If women would emphasize purity and reverence, inward qualities of a gentle and quiet spirit, then they would paint a prettier picture of God and his effect on lives than if they spent all day in a beauty chair getting the best hair do and clothing makeover money can buy! This is in fact the beauty that holy women in the past have walked in, and it should be the priority beauty of the woman of God (3:1-6).

Husbands are next admonished to live with the same consideration to the wives. Husbands are to treat their wives with respect. Husbands should treat their wives recognizing that even though in Peter's world the wives were the weaker partner in the marriage, in God's kingdom, they were full heirs – just as much as men – of the gift of life that is a full gift to everyone, man or woman (3:7).

Peter closes this section addressing the readers' behaviors with each other in their daily lives. Peter wants them to live in harmony together. They should sympathize with each other's problems, as family does. They were to care with compassion and humility. If someone treats them wrongly, then they are to respond with blessing. This is the Christian response. We know sin. We know its power and hold. We also know the freedom from sin in Christ. We know the future of the Christian. This gives us the balance and perspective to live above sin. When others sin, we understand. But we do not answer with sin. We are in a different place. We answer from the grace in which we live. Our tongue stays away from evil; our actions seek peace. We know God's eyes are on us, and he hears our prayers (3:8-12).

The Confidence of the Saved (3:13-4:11)

Why can the Christian live with confidence the life that Peter has set out? Because of Jesus! We live knowing our blessings. If we are not harmed by this world, then praise God. But if the world harms us, then even though we may deserve it, we still praise God because we know his blessings on our lives. We are not afraid of this world and what it can do. With our hearts in Jesus, we know our eternity.

We have an answer that we can give to anyone who asks us why we hope in the face of despair, why we confidently proceed in the face of persecution and pain. We can answer those who question with gentleness and respect. We can explain our lives knowing that in deed we have done nothing of which we should be ashamed. Our suffering is for doing good, not evil.

So, we give an answer. Our answer is simple: Jesus is our Lord. He has died for our sins – one time for all sins – and brought us before God himself. Jesus died physically but was brought to life again by the Spirit. His death accomplished that for us, and it accomplished even more. In ways we do not have explained, Christ went through the Spirit and preached “to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built” (3:20). Peter does not go into detail, but he seems to be referencing Genesis 6:1-3 where God’s wrath is declared coming because the “sons of God” (traditionally considered angels) were wrongly intermingling with the “daughters of men.”

While going back to Noah, Peter explained that as the water saved Noah (not in the sense of bringing forgiveness of sin, but in the sense of separating him from the sinful world being destroyed) so baptism saves us. Not that baptism magically removes dirt from our souls, but that it separates us and sets us apart from those in the world destined for destruction (3:13-22).

So, Christians are not confident of life because of our self-sufficiency. We are confident because we are armed with Christ and his attitude. Christ suffered in his body. So when we suffer, we understand that we are no longer bound up under sin’s power and curse.

We are suffering because of our faith in Christ, the very faith that declares and shows us free from sin. So, when people mock us or think it strange that we live with different convictions and a different life, we can know with confidence that we are on the right path. Those on the alternate path are those destined for destruction.

Regardless of when we live, this destruction is near. So we need to keep clear minds, remember and understand the ramifications of our faith, and live controlled by that belief. This means we love each other deeply, regardless of each other’s sin. We are hospitable to each other – without grumbling about it! We take the gifts God has given each of us and we use them for the common good. In other words, we use them for God’s purposes. This is in praise to God, and to the glory of Jesus Christ (4:1-11).

Final Counsel for the Saved (applied to suffering) (4:12-5:11)

Before closing his letter, Peter gives some final counsel for the saved in reference to their suffering. He wants them not to think it strange or surprising. They are to rejoice to the extent they are participating in the sufferings of Christ. Whenever they are insulted because of Christ, they should know God blesses them. There is no shame in suffering because you are a Christian. We should know that we in the house of God are judged first, then the world. We suffer because we are saved. We

are past judgment, but in a world of the unjudged. We should not be surprised we hurt. We should continue to commit ourselves to God and his will.

Peter sets out special encouragement and instruction for the elders in the church. Peter, who had been told by Jesus to feed Jesus' sheep, passes that role on. Peter tells the elders they are to be shepherds in God's flock. This is not out of greed for personal gain (monetary or egotistical). It is to be from eagerness to serve.

Before closing, Peter leaves the eldership and adds a special note for the young men. He urges them to be submissive to the older men. They are to wear humility, knowing God opposes the proud, but "gives grace to the humble" (5:5). With that in mind, they are to humble themselves in God's sight and let God lift them up.

Peter urges his readers to be self-controlled and alert. There is an enemy afoot, Satan. Satan prowls around like a roaring lion seeking those he might devour. Peter says to resist him, standing firm in the faith. As they do so, they can be confident that God is in control and God will make them strong and steadfast (5:1-11).

Concluding Salutations (5:12-14)

Peter ends noting that Silas helped him with the letter. He adds that "she who is in Babylon" (which most scholars understand to be the church in Rome) sends greetings as does Mark. Peter closes with affection and a prayer for peace to those in Christ.

POINTS FOR HOME

1. *"According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope"* (1 Pet. 1:3).

Look carefully at this verse. God – according to his GREAT mercy – has *caused* us to be born again to a *living* hope. This gives me great encouragement. My life with the Lord started with God's great mercy. Our God is in the saving business. He does not want anyone to perish. He goes to great lengths to save me! What an amazing God!

2. *"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct"* (1 Pet. 1:14-15).

This is a logical follow-up to the first point for home. I live in a world where the Almighty God over all has brought me into a relationship with him. Do I really want to live as if none of that happened? Heavens no! I want to be like

this amazing God. I want to walk in his holiness rather than the passions of ignorance!

3. *“Love one another earnestly from a pure heart”* (1 Pet. 1:22).

Here is a very practical way I can grow into what God calls me to be. I can affirmatively seek to love one another. Jesus asked Peter repeatedly in a final conversation, “Peter, do you love me?” As Peter affirmed each of three times, Jesus instructed Peter to “feed my sheep.” This is what the love is that Peter encourages us to follow. It is a love of service. Let us commit to showing a servant’s love to the flock of God, seeking the good of others, at our own expense.