



1Peter - Lesson 1A

Chapter 1:1-5

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- As the Apostle John brought his remarkable gospel to a close, he chose to focus on a tender moment between the risen Lord and the most prominent apostle – Simon Peter
 - In Chapter 21, John records how the Lord appeared to Peter as he fished on the Sea of Galilee
 - Weeks earlier at the crucifixion of the Lord, Peter had been the most visible defector among Jesus’ disciples, though virtually all of them ran
 - And he denied Jesus three times publicly, despite having been the first among the disciples to confess Christ, the Rock upon which the church would be built
 - Now, at the end of John’s gospel, the humiliated Peter has retreated to his life of fishing
 - Wondering if all that he had followed after in the past three years had amounted to anything
 - Then the resurrected Jesus appears
 - And with a few simple words, Jesus restores Peter

John 21:15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus *said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He *said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He *said to him, “Tend My lambs.”

John 21:16 He *said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He *said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He *said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.”

John 21:17 He *said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus *said to him, “Tend My sheep.

John 21:18 “Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.”

John 21:19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He *said to him, “Follow Me!”

- In one powerful moment, Jesus picked up Peter from his despair and humiliation
 - He pierced his heart on the question of love and loyalty
 - Asking do you love me more than these fish?
 - Do you love me more than your work and way of life?
 - Peter responded emphatically, you know that I love you
 - To which Jesus commanded Peter, feed my sheep
 - Twice more Jesus asked the question did Peter love Him?
 - And twice more Peter declared insistently that he loved Jesus
 - And twice more Jesus gave the same command: feed, shepherd, tend my

sheep

- In that moment, Jesus erased the stigma of Peter's three denials with three opportunities for Peter to declare his faithful love for the Lord
 - And with that restoration fresh on his mind, Peter then hears the way he is to demonstrate that love: feed my sheep, shepherd my sheep, tend my sheep
- Of course, we know what Jesus meant
 - Jesus called Peter to act upon his love for the Lord by showing that love to the Lord's flock
 - And to do so in the way a shepherd shows love for his flock
 - By feeding them and tending to their needs
 - In Peter's case, the feeding was the teaching of God's word
 - And the shepherding was in directing their obedience to that word
 - And Peter was faithful to the end in his mission, never to deny or forsake the Lord again
 - And his first letter to the church stands proof of Peter's faithfulness to that commission
 - The letter we begin to study tonight
- We'll start our study by considering a little background
 - As with any epistle, we should begin examining the audience, the historical and social context of its day, and Peter's purpose in writing
 - Peter was the chief Apostle, both when Jesus walked the earth and afterward in the early church
 - He was appointed by Christ to be the Apostle to the Jews, and ministered for many years in Jerusalem
 - He was the one who preached at Pentecost and according to 1 Corinthians 15:5 he received a personal appearance from Christ
 - He was married and according to 1 Corinthians 9:5, he traveled with his wife when conducting ministry
 - Though we don't know when he died, well-founded tradition has Peter crucified upside down in Rome around AD 64.
- Peter's first letter doesn't dwell on lofty doctrinal issues for the most part
 - Like any NT letter, there is some doctrine teaching
 - But Peter's letter makes clear right from the start that his purpose in writing is not to teach principles the readers didn't already know
 - Peter wants to bring to mind things they already know to some degree
 - He 's going to talk of the challenges of living out the faith
 - Of practicing doing what's right, of living a holy life for Christ's sake
 - Of the necessity of relying on Christ's grace
 - And not merely the grace of our salvation
 - More grace in the practical sense

- Grace Christ provides to enable us to live out the holiness He requires
- And a grace to accept our circumstances as God ordained
- Really, Peter is preaching on recognizing and yielding to the sovereignty of God

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

To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen

1Pet. 1:2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

- Like all epistles, this one begins with a salutation, where the author identifies himself and his audience
 - But Peter's salutation begins the teaching right from the beginning
 - He starts with a simple identifying statement
 - An apostle of Jesus Christ
 - Twelve men selected from among all men of all time to become his representatives among men
 - Peter being the chief of those selected, the rock
 - His name in Aramaic, Cephas, means rock
 - Peter, his Greek name, means stone
 - The man who's unshakable faith looked so shaky in the hours before the crucifixion
 - Yet he was to be the first among the Apostles in authority and honor
 - Now he brings all that authority to bear in his letter
 - As the Apostle of the Jews, Peter ministered first in Jerusalem
 - By the end of his life, tradition says he was living in Rome where he was eventually crucified upside down
 - But some believe that Peter left Jerusalem earlier and traveled throughout the regions where exiled Jewish believers lived, including Babylon and the Diaspora
- This has led to some controversy regarding the audience for this letter
 - Some scholars consider the audience to be primarily Gentile Christians
 - The second view says that the audience Peter had in mind was specifically Jewish believers scattered outside Jerusalem
 - In general I don't find this issue to be significant to our interpretation of Peter's letter outside a few key passages
 - Because whether to Jew or Greek, the teaching instructs us equally well today
 - So let's move past the point for now and look more closely at Peter's opening statement to the believers

- Peter himself says he is writing to aliens in these cities and regions of Asia minor
 - The first question that raises is, why were they considered by Peter to be aliens?
 - Well, if Peter was talking to Jews, then he could mean the readers were aliens in the places they lived because they had left their homeland
 - And certainly some scholars see the letter this way
 - But regardless of whether the audience were Jew or Greek, the term alien has a spiritual meaning that is far more meaningful and it's one we need to consider
 - These believers were aliens spiritually
 - They were not residents of the cities or towns in which they lived
 - Some lived in Pontus or Bithynia, regions in northern Asia Minor on the Black Sea
 - Some lived in Galatia in central Asia Minor
 - Some lived in Cappadocia in eastern Asia Minor
 - This letter, by the way, was an encyclical letter, which traveled from city to city to be read in each one in turn
 - But no matter where they lived, they were aliens
 - They could remain in these towns
 - They could return to Jerusalem
 - They could move to Rome
 - They could move to San Antonio/Austin
 - But regardless, wherever they lived, they would be aliens
 - And Peter wants to remind them that they are aliens
- A believer's allegiance is no longer to this world or to what can be found in the world
 - Remember Jesus' words to His disciples in John 15

John 15:19 “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

- The moment we believe in the Gospel and become a child of God, we are granted a new citizenship
 - From God's perspective, we are no longer a citizen of the world
 - While we once belonged to this world, and even to the prince of this world, the devil (sons of disobedience)
 - At the point we believe, we immigrate into Heaven
 - We are now a citizen of the Holy City in Heaven which we will one day inhabit for eternity
 - And though we are still waiting the reality of that new place, you are no less a citizen of Heaven even now as we wait
 - If you were born to American parents living overseas, you would be born

into American citizenship

- And though you had never set foot in America, you would be no less an American
- And so it is for you and I as citizens of Heaven

Heb. 11:13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Heb. 11:14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

Heb. 11:15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.

Heb. 11:16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

- The saints of old lived with this thought ruling their lives
 - They lived in such a way that by their lives they proved what was in their hearts
 - Their hope was not found in a country on earth
 - They placed their hope and future in a heavenly city they knew awaited them in glory
 - So at the moment we are saved, we become citizens of heaven
 - The flip side of that conversion is also true
 - The moment we believe we become foreigners in this world
 - We instantly become tourists, strangers, or sojourners the Bible calls us
 - The fundamental question that Peter is going to raise over and over again in this letter and the issue we are each going to need to consider and wrestle with
 - Are we living as tourists and sojourners in this world
 - Or are we putting down roots?
 - Are we settling in?
 - Have we forgotten where our true hope lies?
 - Have we begun to buy into what the world tells us should matter?
 - Peter is going to bring this issue up time and time again in the letter, so I won't belabor the issue here
- So Peter begins the letter introducing his first theme: the reality of our separation from the world
 - But we'll put that aside only for a moment so we can consider the second major theme Peter introduces
- His readers as those who are were chosen by God
 - The believer is God's elect

- His readers were the ones God has appointed to believe and to become His children
 - And we are brought to faith by God's gracious choice
- Peter didn't just describe the believer as the elect in passing
 - He takes a moment to elaborate on what it means to be the elect
- We are brought to this life as a believer, as an alien by a God who determined to accomplish this work from the beginning
 - Verse 2 declares that it was according to the foreknowledge of God
 - Our election into the family of God has its beginning in the eternal purpose of God's will
 - Our inevitable adoption as sons and daughters of God was a decision formed in the will of God and executed before even the foundations of the world were laid, according to Ephesians 1
 - When Peter talks of God's foreknowledge, he is speaking of more than merely an awareness of what will happen (as some try to explain it away)
 - In Biblical terminology, God's foreknowledge is a way of saying that what God knew beforehand is what He purposed to happen

Acts 2:22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—

Acts 2:23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

- God's foreknowledge is always connected to God's sovereign power to bring about that which He knows or sets His mind upon
 - Paul puts it simply in Ephesians 1:5

Eph. 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

- To suggest that believers are called the elect simply because God knew in advance who would believe is not only unbiblical, it's nonsensical
 - Do we call someone the “president-elect” merely because one day the man woke up and decided he wanted to be president? And once he decides he wants the office, we start to call the person the president-elect?
 - If that's what the term meant, then we would be calling Hillary Clinton, Barak Obama, John McCain, Mike Huckabee, and the rest of the crowd president-elect, right?
 - They would all be the elect because they decided they wanted the job
 - Of course, that's utter nonsense
 - Any grade school student knows what we mean by the term president-elect

because they know what elect means

- The definition of the word elect means to make a decision to select someone for a new position
 - In the case of a president, it means that a group of voters made a decision to select someone to be president
- And in Biblical terms, it is a reference to God choosing men and women to receive His grace
- If fact, notice in verse 3 that Peter says God the Father has caused us to be born again to a living hope
 - And even before that, Peter describes the means by which God achieved that purpose
 - Verse 2 says that our salvation came about:
 - Because of the foreknowledge of the Father
 - By the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit
 - Made possible by the cleansing of Christ's atoning blood sprinkled on the heavenly altar
 - God the father chose us
 - God the Spirit changed our hearts so that we would receive the truth
 - God the Son cleansed us of our sin by His blood
 - All three persons of the Trinity were involved in the work of redemption, working a plan that God foreknew, anticipated, and intended before we ever took our first breath
 - There is simply no doubt in scripture that God appoints believers to faith and then brings that plan into reality
- Now I realize that this doctrine may raise more questions in your mind than answers today
 - And though I believe those questions deserve answers, I am not going to address them now
 - And the reason is because Peter himself isn't raising the issue of election for the purpose of a doctrinal discussion
 - Remember, the prospect of God electing believers to faith would not have been news at all to the early church
 - Especially to a Jewish church that knew very well the principle of God choosing people
 - God calls the nation of Israel His elect, and we know that He calls them this because He chose them, as He says in His word

Deut. 7:6 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

- So if Peter isn't intending to launch into a discourse on the doctrine of election

- Then what is his purpose in raising this issue especially at such an early point in his letter?
- Well, in a word: perspective
 - He wants to develop a little perspective in these believers
 - In fact, Peter was already at work building perspective when he began the letter in reminding them of their alien status
- And now Peter combines the idea of being a stranger in this world with the reality that they are in this situation because of God's sovereign choice to place them there
 - The readers were in their situation by His doing and by His will according to a plan that started long before they came along
- In the early church, life as a Christian could be hard
 - As a Jew, believing in Christ brought rejection from most if not all your family and your culture
 - You lost connection with your friends, your way of life perhaps
 - As a Jew you were already subject to persecution at times, but now even Jews persecuted you
 - And as a Gentile, you lost the ability to do business in a pagan culture
 - Where allegiance to pagan gods was a prerequisite for conducting commerce in many places, especially in the regions Peter mentions
 - Though these new Christians had been taught that they should be prepared for these hardships
 - They had learned first-hand that faith in Christ brought trials
 - They learned how hard it was at times to persevere in this new life
- And when the times get tough, faith can falter
 - And we begin to see our troubled circumstances as a kind of problem that must be solved
 - We interpret bad circumstances as a sign that something isn't right, and we need to fix it
 - Wives and Husbands in bad marriages seek escape
 - Slaves seek to rebel
 - Those under persecution seek relief
 - They put their obedience and their witness at risk
- Peter, who remembers the command of His Lord to shepherd the flock by feeding the sheep, wants to feed them the perspective they need to respond to their trials and their difficulties
 - And the perspective he's going to provide is perspective we need too
- His lesson on perspective begins with a three part description of the character of their salvation
 - The reward, the experience, and the privilege of our salvation

1Pet. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1Pet. 1:4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

1Pet. 1:5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

- It's only natural to remind the readers first of the reward that comes with their salvation
 - Peter starts in verse 3 reminding believers that our salvation is first and foremost a hope in resurrection
 - I'm often amazed at how few Christians can state what belief means
 - Belief in what
 - In Christ, yes, but what about Christ
 - That he was the Messiah, but how do we know that
 - Romans 10 gives us the answer

Rom. 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

- We are believing that He was raised from the dead
 - And in that belief, we have reason for hope, knowing that the same power of God that raised Jesus from death can certainly raise us as well
 - And since He has promised to raise us also

2Cor. 4:13 But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore we also speak, **2Cor. 4:14** knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.

- And there is a living hope in that belief
 - The world fears death and has no answer for the inevitability of death
 - And the fear of death drives men to a life of desperation

Shortly before his execution by firing squad, the notorious murderer James Rodgers was asked whether he had any final requests. "Why yes," he replied. "I'd like a bulletproof vest."

- But not the Christian
 - We have no fear of the grave, or should not

- The fear of death gives way to a living hope knowing that we will be raised just as Christ
 - How does it feel to consider that moment when you pass from this life to the next
 - Knowing that as you assume your new incorruptible form that it is the one and only time you will experience that transformation
 - That in that moment you will recognize that you are never going to face the prospect of an end again
 - That's true living hope
- That's what we have as a result of our Lord
- But if that weren't enough, Peter reminds the reader that this transformation is followed by an inheritance
 - In verse 4 we are reminded that our salvation brings with it an undefiled, imperishable inheritance reserved in heaven that cannot fade
 - It can't be withdrawn
 - It can't be lost
 - Consider how you come into an inheritance
 - You receive it after one who has died leaves you something in a will or as we often call it, the last will and testament
 - Well, my friends, let me tell you about the will your name was written in
 - It was the last will and testament of Jesus Christ
 - The New Testament
 - Upon Christ's death, the new testament was inaugurated in blood, Hebrews 9 says
 - And by that will, we receive an inheritance as children of Gods
 - Now if the death has already occurred, then the will has already gone into effect for those who are heirs
 - And as heirs, we must already be the recipients of that inheritance even now
 - And so we are
 - We can't get to it or see it now, because God has a better plan
 - He has stored it in a better place
 - He's placed it in an incorruptible place, stored for a day when we can receive it in full, unspoiled, imperishable
 - Yet because we are heirs and because it's already ours according to the will of God and because it is in heaven protected and waiting, it can't be lost
- Can things get any better?
 - Not only have we been saved from judgment
 - Not only are we given a living hope that the power of death has been removed for us

- We also have an eternal inheritance appointed for us by God
- But wait, you might ask Peter
 - What if we shrink back?
 - What if we can't make it to the end of this race without faltering?
 - What hope do we have to actually reach the end of our lives still trusting in Christ for this hope and inheritance?
 - Peter brings that answer in verse 5
 - Peter says we are those who are protected by the power of God
 - God doesn't save us in His power and then turn us loose in some sense and just hope it all works out OK
 - Were He to do something so absurd, who could be saved?
 - Honestly, who among us believes so much in our own abilities and strength of character that we could be sure of persevering on our own merits?
 - Not me
 - But praise God it doesn't work that way
 - And He protects us through the same faith He gave us in the beginning
 - The same way we were saved (by faith) we will be assured to persevere (by faith)
 - And that perseverance is for a salvation to be revealed to us in our last days
 - At our glorification
 - When we leave this body behind, we enter into the fullness of the salvation that is ours even now
- And then Peter moves into the second point, the experience of our salvation

1Pet. 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,
1Pet. 1:7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
1Pet. 1:8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,
1Pet. 1:9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

- In this salvation, Peter reminds the early church that they rejoice
 - They are excited and thankful and joyful because they know they have this inheritance and they have been saved from the penalty of their sins
 - And Peter says they have this joy even though – for a little while – they have been distressed by various trials
 - We need to get a clear understanding on what Peter means by trials

- The word is *peirasmos*
 - It can mean temptation or trial, but it's essential meaning is an external kind of attack
 - Something that comes upon a believer from outside themselves
- And the purpose of the trial is to challenge our fidelity to God and to Christ, and reveal the character of our faith
- Did you notice Peter's intentional contrast?
 - In verses 3-5, Peter went to great pains to bring to mind the permanency and lasting quality of the inheritance we have received
 - And of our faith itself
 - Being kept by the power of God
 - These are the things that should be on our minds because they are lasting and permanent and meaningful
 - And now in verse 6 Peter says you have trials in the meantime, but they are only for a little time (the Greek word literally means briefly)
 - Now is Peter saying that he somehow knows that his readers are about to experience some kind of relief from persecution and trials?
 - Does Peter have advanced word from God that the trials are about to end and that soon life will become blissful and uneventful?
 - No...his point is not that earthly trials are about to end
 - Peter's point, of course, is that in comparison to the unimaginable limitlessness of eternity
 - Our earthly life is brief, very brief

James 4:13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."

James 4:14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

- In contrast to the eternity of our glorified life with Christ, our life here is so brief that it is virtually immeasurable in the economy of God
 - And so whatever trials might come our way in this life, are by definition brief trials – they come for just a little while
 - Even if a trial should come upon us that would last our entire life
 - A disease or disability
 - Or perhaps a condition of poverty or persecution
 - Those trials and circumstances may fairly be called brief when we consider how long our joy will last in the eternal realm with God
 - And yet they are so very important to the character of our faith
 - We will return to this second point next week and continue on to the third



1Peter - Lesson 1B

Chapter 1:6-12

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One night in 1903, after delivering a sermon on the sympathy of Jesus at Chicago's Salvation Army Citadel, Frederick Booth-Tucker was approached by a man who was rather unimpressed. "If your wife had just died, like mine has," he declared, "and your babies were crying for their mother, who would never come back, you wouldn't be saying what you're saying."

Incredibly, a few days later, Tucker's own wife was killed in a train wreck. Her body was brought to Chicago and carried to the same Citadel for the funeral. After the service the bereaved preacher gazed into his wife's silent face before turning to the assembled guests.

"The other day a man told me I wouldn't speak of the sympathy of Jesus if my wife had just died," he declared. "If that man is here, I want to tell him that Christ is sufficient."

- Nothing tests the faith of a Christian quite so much as a trial of life
 - It's in those moments that we discover what we truly believe
 - And like the fire that tests precious metal, the trial proves the worth of our faith
- Peter understood trials, and Peter understood that Christ was sufficient in the face of those trials
 - And as we began to study last week, he knew that if his readers could share his perspective, they would also face their trials with the strength of Christ
- In his first letter, he's opened in Chapter 1 describing the reader's faith from three vantage points
 - Past, present and future
 - With each vantage point, Peter gives the reader something to cherish
 - Something to grab hold of to appreciate just how special their relationship in Christ was
 - To build some perspective, in other words

1Pet. 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

1Pet. 1:7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory

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- Last week Peter began in verse 3 looking at the future of our faith
 - It was a view of the permanent and imperishable reward, the inheritance that our Father has waiting for His children
 - These are the gifts of reward and substance that remind us of the love our

Father has for His children

- An inheritance that was prepared before the foundations of the earth for those who love Him
- In the passage we begin with this morning, Peter moves to the present nature of our salvation
 - If the future holds rewards, the present seems to hold trials
 - Well it certainly did for his readers
 - What a strange means of encouraging his readers
 - Perhaps Peter knows something about the spiritual benefit of trials
- The first thing we observe in verse 6 is the temporary nature of our present vantage point
 - Remember how he described the future of our salvation?
 - Verse 4: imperishable, unfading, reserved in heaven
 - Verse 5: the reality of our future in heaven protected by God
 - Friends, what's permanent is the unseen reality of the eternal realm
 - What's temporary is what we experience here today
 - The material world, the achievements, the relationships, the trials, disappointments
- The heart of Peter's point begins in verse 7
 - Peter draws a comparison between faith itself and gold
 - Gold was the most valuable material found on earth in Peter's day
 - Now gold is still very valuable today, but there are some things more valuable than gold
 - But in Peter's day, gold was in fact the "gold standard"
 - Nothing in earthly terms was more precious
 - But Peter says faith is far more valuable
 - On what basis is our faith more valuable than gold?
 - On the same basis as everything else
 - Because gold – as valuable as it is – perishes at the end of this age
 - But faith brings about the salvation of your souls, which is an eternal commodity
 - Here again, worth is measured in the economy of eternity
 - When you look around your life and take note of the things you place value on
 - Ask yourself are you assigning value according to the measuring stick that scripture uses?
 - Are you measuring against the standard of eternity?
 - It will be impossible for Peter's readers – and for us – to successfully weather the trials that may come so long as their eyes remain focused on the temporal rather than the eternal

- Because if we see our safety and security and peace and happiness and contentment originating in the world rather than in our relationship and future eternity with Christ
 - Then we will inevitably make bad choices, and decisions and judgments
 - And our obedience and witness to the Lord will suffer
- In fact, Peter’s next point rests entirely on his readers maintaining eyes for eternity
 - Peter says that our trials are the proof of our faith
 - Look in verses 6 Peter says his readers were distressed by various trials and in verse 7 he says these trials are the proof of their faith may be revealed
 - So trials in our faith mark our present experience in the faith, and they serve as proof of our faith
- First, Peter says that trials provide an opportunity for proof of faith
 - More specifically, our response to trials reveals the character of our faith
 - Before we understand what Peter is saying here, let’s be clear on what Peter is not saying
 - Peter isn’t saying that trials create faith, or bring us to faith, or increase our faith as if it were growing along some continuum toward salvation
 - Scripture is absolutely and consistently clear that saving faith is not measured on a continuum

Rom. 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

John 5:24 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

- Remember the poor jailer who was terrified when the jail was rocked by an earthquake

Acts 16:30 and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Acts 16:31 They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Acts 16:32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.

Acts 16:33 And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.

Acts 16:34 And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

- The testimony of scripture is unambiguous on this point:

- Our faith in Christ saves us immediately, completely, permanently
 - Then what is the effect of a trial on our faith?
 - By necessity, it is limited to one of two effects
 - A trial either reveals that we have not yet truly believed
 - And by the trial, the wheat and the tares are separated
 - Secondly, the trial strengthens the believer's hope and reliance in their faith
 - In the first case, the trial reveals the unbelief of a pretender
 - In the second case, the trial confirms the presence of faith to the doubter
 - Both purposes have eternal value to a God who wishes to separate the light from the darkness
- Remember how James begins his challenging letter:

James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

James 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

James 1:4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- He says we have reason to rejoice in trials
 - The reason for joy?
 - Because the trial has tested our faith
 - And testing is a good thing
 - Testing verifies the truth of our confession
 - Because there is only one thing worse than an unbeliever who knows they are an unbeliever
 - And that is an unbeliever, who doesn't know it
 - James says that our faith having been tested leads to confidence and hope...just as gold is purified through fire
 - We will develop confidence in our future and endurance in our walk with the Lord
 - And endurance, James says, will result that we lack nothing
 - Ultimately our glorification
- Later in James' letter, he uses Abraham as an example of what this process looks like
 - In Genesis 15:6, God declares Abraham to be righteous because he heard God's promise of a son and believed God's word
 - Abraham was righteous
 - James reminds us of that moment in Chapter 2 when he says this:

James 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

James 2:22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

James 2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and he was called the friend of God.

- In the decades after God declared Abraham to be righteous on the basis of faith, Abraham didn't have such a great testimony
 - He tries to make his own heir through Hagar
 - He goes to Egypt and lies about his wife
 - Then after Isaac does come along, Abraham allows his wife to mistreat Hagar
 - If you had been looking for proof of Abraham's belief in God's promises, I'm not sure if you could have found it
 - Which is why James uses that fascinating phrase
 - “Scripture was fulfilled”
 - Abraham was declared righteous by faith in Chapter 15, but the fulfillment, the opportunity to see the faith of Abraham lived out finally occurred in Chapter 22
 - God gave Abraham the trial, the test that was needed to demonstrate Abraham's faith
- Peter says much the same thing in the verse we read
 - In verse 9 we will obtain as the outcome of these trials the salvation of our souls
 - Not because we earn salvation through trials – such a misinterpretation not only misunderstands all that Peter is saying, but also the rest of the Bible
 - No, because in the trials we come to understand that we are saved, that we have a faith that can survive trial
 - And trials, like fire, purify and reveal the truth of our confessions
 - But if trials reveal the true believer, then we should also remember that sometimes the trial reveals that not all confessions of faith are genuine
 - Some are shown to be true, but some fall away and are shown to be false
- By the way, have you stopped to consider what it would mean if in your life you never experienced trials that tested your faith?
 - It might sound good at first, but remember what James said...
 - Count it joy that we have trials
 - So if it's joy to have trials, what would it be not to have trials?
 - We said last week that the Greek word for trial indicates an eternal event that comes upon us
 - Not an event we bring upon ourselves
 - We'll have plenty of those too, but we're talking here about something that comes upon you without any perceived blame
- Well, consider what the writer of Hebrews tells us in Chapter 12

Heb. 12:3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Heb. 12:4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

Heb. 12:5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,

**“MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD,
NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;**

Heb. 12:6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”

Heb. 12:7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

Heb. 12:8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Heb. 12:9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

Heb. 12:10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

Heb. 12:11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

- In quoting from Proverbs, the writer of Hebrews reminds his readers how discipline from the Lord is not only a good thing
 - It's an essential thing
 - And it is for discipline – for trials – that we endure
 - And we will desire discipline if we understand what discipline means
 - It means we are legitimate sons (and daughters)
 - Because a loving father will discipline his children
 - And if we didn't experience discipline, we would be illegitimate children
 - The literal word in Greek means bastard, or a son who has a mother but doesn't know who his father is
 - So according to scripture, if we have not experienced God's discipline in our lives (trials), then we are illegitimate
 - An illegitimate child is one who tries to claim a father who is not truly their father
 - We are not of our Father in heaven, but we remain of our father the devil
- Consider all the things a father can do in caring for his children
 - He can feed them, clothe them, protect them from injury or other harm
 - He can teach them, he can play with them and he can care for them when they are sick, etc.

- But all these things are things that this same father could do to any child
 - That father could feed, cloth, educate, nurse, or play with anyone's child if necessary
- But the one thing that distinguishes a true father from an illegitimate one is discipline
 - A true father can discipline a child, but he cannot discipline someone else's child
 - Firstly, he will probably risk a charge of assault or child abuse
 - Secondly, the child himself will not receive the correction of a man who is not his father
 - In blended families where a stepfather comes into a family with children, that man will know when he's truly received by those children
 - It will be when they receive his loving discipline
- The writer then adds in verse 10 that our earthly fathers disciplined us for a short time for reasons they felt best
 - But our father in heaven is disciplining us for eternal purposes
 - Here again, the perspective we need can only be found in an appreciation that God's timescale is the one that matters, not the world's
 - Just as the writer say, trials don't seem joyful
 - But if you consider that trials that discipline us and test our faith are proof that we are a child of God
 - Then we can take joy in them, but only if we see them through the eyes of eternity
- There's an important principle represented in this passage and in the passage of Hebrews
 - Instant gratification is the opposite of God's call on the life of a Christian
 - If we take the goal of instant gratification that reigns in our culture and try to make it a spiritual goal as well
 - Then we will completely distort the nature of the Christian experience
 - And we will be utterly frustrated and disappointed
 - And ultimately, we may fail to achieve anything of spiritual substance with the life God gives us here and now
 - Before we leave this passage, we should take a second to note how Peter again reminds the readers how much they have rejoiced in their faith
 - A faith that relies not on the physical manifestations of Christ
 - Not on physical proof, or personal experience
 - Rather, just on the hope that comes from supernaturally derived faith
 - Eyes for eternity
- Finally, Peter moves to the final vantage point
 - The past character of our salvation

- We might even be tempted to ask how could our salvation have a past?
 - We can understand how it has a present reality and a future reward
 - But what do we mean by a past?

1Pet. 1:10 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries,

1Pet. 1:11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

1Pet. 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

- Peter begins with the phrase, as to this salvation...
 - He's not speaking strictly in a personal sense now
 - Your salvation, my salvation
 - In other words, speaking about God's plan for redemption
- The prophets of the Bible spoke prophetically of the coming grace of a Messiah
 - And in that revelation they were also given the understanding to know that this message wasn't for them, or their generation
 - From our vantage point now, we can clearly see their prophecies spoke of Jesus as the Messiah
 - Rather, the ultimate purpose of their prophecies was in how it would draw men to Christ after His death and resurrection
- And secondly, Peter says these prophets searched the Spirit of Christ that lived within them to know who the Messiah would be and when He would arrive
 - They wanted the privilege of knowing about this Christ they spoke of prophetically
 - But even more importantly, they had a hard time fitting the two pieces of the Messiah's ministry together
 - How can a Messiah suffer and glory?
 - How does the king die and reign?
 - They longed to understand God's redemptive plan, but we have the privilege to see it played out
- Next week we'll answer the question in our hearts of, so what?
 - We've got future rewards
 - We've got trials
 - So what?
- What is our expectation in response?



1Peter - Lesson 1C

Chapter 1:13-25

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- We've reached mid-point in Chapter 1
 - And at this point, Peter is going to make a shift
 - If the first part of Chapter 1 could be described as encouragement to live in hope of our coming salvation
 - Then the second part would be described as exhortation to walk in holiness worthy of our salvation

1Pet. 1:13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1Pet. 1:14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,

1Pet. 1:15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;

1Pet. 1:16 because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

- Therefore...Peter says
 - Therefore...because we have been chosen for such an incredible salvation
 - Then we have an obligation to respond
 - And not just respond in any way, but in a specific way
 - Our response is holiness – holy living – righteous living in our thoughts and words and actions
- Peter begins by saying we must first prepare our minds for action
 - The phrase in Greek literally means gird your mind
 - The ordinary dress of Peter's day for a man was a long garment made of linen that reached to the ankles
 - So when decisive, forceful action was needed, a man would gird himself
 - He would pull up the hem of the garment and tie it off at the waist
 - So, girding the garment was always a preparatory step before active work or battle
 - So Peter says we should gird our minds
 - Get them ready for action, or make up your mind to act decisively
 - We know that holiness in any form depends on having the Holy Spirit in us by faith
 - Apart from the Spirit, we cannot hope to achieve any measure of holiness
 - But understanding that, our first step in seeking the holiness the Father requires is to obtain a mindset to seek holiness
 - It doesn't come by chance or luck or wishful thinking
 - We must mentally assent (agree) that holiness is in fact our goal
 - It's remarkable to me how often in our culture we teach people to set a

goal, organize themselves, prepare, plan, and take the steps necessary to realize your dreams

- We make a science out of self-help – to achieve great things
- But when Christians hear the Bible reminding them of the need to seek holiness because that's what pleases our Lord
 - So often the Christian will throw their hands up and say I just can't do it
 - It's beyond my ability – nonsense

Rom. 6:10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

Rom. 6:11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Rom. 6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,

Rom. 6:13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Rom. 6:14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

- Paul isn't saying that we're guaranteed holiness
 - But likewise he doesn't say there is no hope of holiness
 - Before we were a believer, we could not do anything holy or righteous or pleasing to God
 - Bringing meals to that sick neighbor
 - But even when we did the things we thought were good, it's still sin\
 - Previously, our only motivation was the flesh – sinful desires
- But from God's perspective they gave Him no credit and thus by definition they are sin
 - This is what Isaiah means when he said even our good works are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6)
- When we are called to set our minds on holiness, the Holy Spirit is the means by which to accomplish that command
 - The first step is to set our minds to it
- The second step Peter commands of the believer is to remain sober in verse 13
 - Being sober is really a reference to controlling lusts
 - The NASB adds the phrase sober "in spirit"
 - The NIV says be self-controlled, which may be closer to the meaning, though the word in Greek means to abstain from wine
 - Obviously Peter's command includes refraining from too much alcohol, but that's just one way we remain sober
 - I think Peter is saying literally remain sober in the sense of remaining in

control of the flesh generally

- I think this fits Peter's point better
- We are to prepare our minds for action while controlling our flesh's desire
 - It's a two-prong attack on sin
 - The war is now between Spirit and flesh
- Fasting can be a good tool to understanding these warring parties
 - But how can fasting help us spiritually?
 - Eating is one of the strongest urges of our bodies
 - Imagine setting your mind on choosing one day this week not to eat – no food, just water
 - I'm certain that by lunchtime, or for some stalwarts maybe around dinner time, you're gonna start to feel hungry
 - You'll have this overwhelming urge to eat – in fact it will dominate your thoughts
 - But we'd made up our mind, why are we struggling?
 - Our flesh has its own power within the body, that is distinct from our cognitive thoughts
 - The flesh has a will of its own that influences our mind and influences our spirit
- But it can be disciplined, and it takes practice
 - When we place our minds and our flesh in their proper perspective, God is inclined to bring about our success
- And then with the mind ready for action, the flesh under control, set your hope on the grace to be revealed with Christ
 - The writer of Hebrews echoes this thought

Heb. 6:18 ...we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

- We who have already taken refuge – in Christ, in the New Covenant – are already in faith, but still must take hold of the hope before us
 - Of achieving things we never thought possible with Christ living in us, for achieving holiness in our lives
 - These believers should take hold of the hope set before them
 - In other words, it is possible for believers to lose sight of the certainty of their salvation, to fear needlessly
 - The encouragement is to prepare your mind, take control of your flesh, and take hold of the hope
- Instead of remaining ignorant, Peter says in v15, be like the One who called you
 - We are moving into the why
 - We were the ones that God selected to be in His family

- Therefore, we have a responsibility, an obligation to live our lives in honor to Him
- And Peter quotes Leviticus 19:2 to prove his point
 - Be Holy because your Father is holy
 - Peter shows a remarkable reverence for the Old Testament, probably because of his Jewish audience
 - He quotes about as many Old Testament verse in his short letter as the writer of Hebrews quotes in his much longer letter
 - Only Revelation quotes more Old Testament scripture than 1 Peter
- In Leviticus 19, the context of the chapter is how Israel will enjoy fellowship with God
 - If the nation of Israel expected to enjoy the fellowship of God, then He required they be Holy
 - Holiness is the ticket to the dance
 - We can't enter into God's presence unless and until we are holy as He is holy
 - So, Peter is invoking the memory of Leviticus 19 to remind his readers that fellowship with God depends on holiness
- I think there is some misconception on what holiness means
 - In absolute terms we're talking about perfection
 - We must be perfect to enter into God's presence
 - The word means "set apart," as in set apart from sin, to be specific
 - So our position before God with respect to our righteousness must be perfect
 - We must have no defect when we stand before God
 - At the moment of our salvation, we have been granted positional holiness before God by Christ's atonement
 - And we will then experience fellowship with God in His presence made possible by Christ
 - This is why we can say with confidence that absent the body is to be present with Christ
 - Because there is nothing more any of us can do to improve on what Christ has already done
 - We are already perfect in God's eyes, because when He looks upon us, He sees His Son standing in our place
- That's one sense of being holy, but holiness is also a call to God's people today
 - We are supposed to yield to the Holy Spirit allowing Him to lead us into holy living now

Heb. 10:14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

- The same power that perfected us will sanctify us – bring us to holiness lived out
- Why?
 - Well first, for the same reason as Leviticus 19
 - If we desire a close abiding fellowship with our Lord even now, then we only need to seek holiness to find it
 - Our relationship in Christ is based on faith, not performance
 - But our enjoyment of that relationship has everything to do with obedience
 - If you want some proof of what I say, try living in complete disobedience and disregard for your spouse's wishes
 - Do this for even a little while and watch what effect it has on the marriage and your relationship
 - Now the marriage itself doesn't automatically dissolve just because we disobey
 - Similarly our covenant in Christ isn't dissolved when we disobey
 - But the fellowship suffers
 - And then we moan and whine about how we can't sense Christ's presence in our lives
 - He's still where He always was...we're the ones who have moved away
 - He won't leave us or forsake us, but when we place distance between ourselves and Him by virtue of our disobedience, we'll feel the effect
 - The second reason we are to seek holiness now is that we might bring Him glory for the work He has done in our hearts

Matt. 5:16 “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

- Our present experience should be marked by a life lived in holiness to the glory of Christ's name
 - This is a response based in decisive thought, purposeful action, hopeful expectation, fearful reverence
 - It is a response that understands the magnitude of what's at stake
 - Of how our eternal reward is on the line
 - Of how our choices and decision here and now bring with them eternal consequences
 - And most of all, it is a reflection of our faith in and love for our Lord
 - As the Apostle John writes:

1John 2:3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

1John 2:4 The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His

commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

1John 2:5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:

1John 2:6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

- Then Peter turns up the heat a little more on his readers

1Pet. 1:17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth;

1Pet. 1:18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,

1Pet. 1:19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

1Pet. 1:20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you

1Pet. 1:21 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.

- Verse 17 opens with the particle "if" in my translation
 - It's the word *ei* in the Greek, expressed in the first class condition which means something that is true and leads to a condition conclusion
 - In other words, it means since
 - Since they call God their Father
 - Because as believers they do call God Father
 - Peter says not only is He your father, true enough
 - But He is the impartial judge
 - The word for judge – *krino* – suggests judging with the intent to find some good
 - Not judge in the sense of condemn
 - Think of it like a judge at a science fair
 - Our Father is also our Judge
 - He will evaluate our works, Peter says, looking for what we did good
 - Peter is describing passing the Judgment Seat of Christ
 - Paul also mentions this coming moment of judgment for all believers

2Cor. 5:8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

2Cor. 5:9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

2Cor. 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- There is a test, and it comes upon our death
 - And it is a moment when we are judged for all we have done – both good and bad
 - Now how are we to take such a statement?
 - Or the statement in Peter's letter saying we will be judged for our works?
 - What about Paul's teaching in Romans 8 that:

Rom. 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

- Or the Psalmist:

Psa. 103:12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

- How can we be judged for our bad in such a moment?
 - Well, the answer is we all have bad "works"
 - Things that were done supposedly in the name of Christ or under the banner of faith
 - Yet we did them for ourselves
 - We did them with false motives, selfish desires, independent of what God Himself was directing us to do
 - Remember the example from the Gospels when Jesus admonished the Pharisees for how they practiced works of righteousness like prayer

Matt. 6:5 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

- We do things like this all the time
 - And when we stand before Christ, we will be reminded of those errors
 - And they will be burned up, so to speak
 - Only our truly holy works will remain
 - Those things we did under direction of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of Christ and the benefit of the saints
 - And there will be plenty of saints who made their mark in quiet humble ways who will receive great reward in the next age

- And I suspect there will be plenty of those who see far less than they expected
- So Peter says if you understand that this One you affectionately call Abba, Father, is also your judge in Christ
 - Then the only appropriate attitude we should have while we wait
 - Knowing that the moment of judgment is coming...
 - The only appropriate attitude is fear
 - Not merely reverence and awe as some define it, but also healthy measure of concern and even apprehension

Heb. 10:31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- We can't sugar coat this...there is a day of reckoning for everything
 - And though we don't fear condemnation
 - We should fear the eternal consequences for sinful choices and determined disobedience when we had a call on our lives to do otherwise
- And if fear weren't enough motivation, Peter reminds us of what it required for God to redeem us in the first place
 - In verse 18 Peter says that we weren't redeemed with gold or silver from the life we inherited from our forefathers
 - The life of sin that marks any descendent of Adam
 - We weren't redeemed with things that are perishable
 - Once again, Peter places the value of this world in its proper perspective
 - Instead we were redeemed with the blood of His Son
 - Here's what Peter is saying
 - If you won't be holy because you have been granted such a marvelous salvation
 - And if you won't live in holiness even though God has said be Holy as He is holy
 - And if you won't seek holiness even though your eternal reward is on the line
 - Then at least seek holiness on the basis that God was willing to put his perfectly holy Son to death in your place
 - Peter can't make a greater appeal than that
 - The next time you consider giving in to one of those lusts or temptations that dog you from time to time
 - To cut that person off in traffic in anger
 - To underestimate your taxes in greed
 - To take a lingering look at the attractive person in lust
 - To hide your true circumstances in deceit
 - Remember that Christ died because you did those things

- That those actions resulted in the death of the one you now call Lord and Savior
 - A Savior who was foreknown, meaning existent, before the foundations of the world
 - But who appeared and died for the sake of you and I
- And yet in that moment, there you are preparing to make the same mistake again
 - Gird your mind and decide to change your ways, Peter says

1Pet. 1:22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 1Pet. 1:23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

1Pet. 1:24 For,

**“ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,
AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS.
THE GRASS WITHERS,
AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,**

1Pet. 1:25 BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.”

And this is the word which was preached to you.

- To those who have been purified through obedience to the truth (meaning belief in the gospel)
 - Turn to one another in love
 - Peter’s giving an essential ingredient for success in the pursuit of holiness
 - If the church is going to succeed in pursuing holiness, then it needs one another
 - We aren’t supposed to do this alone – we can’t
 - The love of our brothers and sisters in Christ is absolutely critical to growth and maturing of the body
 - And we entered into this new Body of believers on the basis of the word of God
 - An imperishable word, a living word, a word that will never perish
 - And since we were born of that seed, we take our new character from the character of the one who gave birth to us
 - Like the Word who gave us a new birth
 - We are to be imperishable
 - We have a living eternal hope that will never perish
 - And like the seed that renewed us into this new life, we are to love
 - As Jesus loved us, we are to love one another
 - And by that love, the Body of Christ will have the strength to glorify God by our holiness

- In the weeks to come, this pattern repeats itself
 - Peter shows our obligation and desire to please our Lord
 - And then he reminds us of the specific ways that obligation and desire should manifest itself



1Peter - Lesson 2A

Chapter 2:1-10

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Johnny's mother looked out the window and noticed him "playing church" with their three kittens. He had the kittens sitting in a row, and he was preaching to them. She smiled and went about her work. A while later, she heard some loud meowing and hissing and ran back to the open window to see Johnny baptizing the kittens in a tub of water. She called out, "Johnny, stop that! Those kittens are afraid of water!" Johnny looked up at her and said, "They should have thought about that before they joined my church."

- That story reminds me a little of Peter's letter
 - Because sometimes I feel a little like those kittens
 - One minute I was playing church, and everything was easy and convenient
 - And then the next minute, the Lord got serious with me, and He began to show me the truth of His word in new ways
 - And the next thing I know, He began to get serious with me about my purpose in this faith He gave me
 - And His expectations for what I was to do in my walk as a Christian
 - And all of sudden, I felt like I had been dunked in cold water
 - Perhaps Peter's letter is having that effect on you
 - This is a splash of cold water in the face of Christians who may have been unprepared for what their faith required

1Pet. 2:1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

1Pet. 2:2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

1Pet. 2:3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

- Chapter 2 begins with the word "therefore"
 - Because you were brought into faith by the word of God
 - Therefore, do two things
 - Put aside the characteristics that marked your life prior to your new birth
 - And long for the word of God
 - Earlier Peter had commanded the believers in these churches not to be conformed to their lusts
 - Now he gives specific direction to cease five sins
 - The first two are attitudes of the heart
 - The next three are actions that arise from those attitudes
- As we look at this list, it's interesting that we don't see a broader spectrum of sin
 - There are many sins Peter could have listed, so why does he choose to focus on these five?

- We don't see sexual sins
 - We don't see sins of greed
 - We don't see sins of violence
- Peter is writing to the church, and the church is generally vigilant against certain sins
 - For example, it rarely tolerates believers who openly engage in sexual impurity, or financial impropriety
 - It usually contends with members who openly display hostility to one another in its various forms
- But these five sins are sins that often live quite comfortably in the church
 - And yet they are serious impediments to the growth and maturity of believers
- The first two attitudes are:
 - Malice, which is ill intent or evil thoughts and feelings
 - Deceit which is simply lying in all its forms
 - And these two sinful attitudes result in three general actions
 - Hypocrisy, which is a form of deception where we pass ourselves off to be something we're not so as to look better than we really are
 - Envy is a form of malice in which we despise another for what we want for ourselves
 - And slander is the perfect intersection of malice and deceit
 - It is deception in order to cause harm to another
 - False defamatory statements designed to cause injury to another
- We would all like to think that the church is a safe haven from these kinds of attitudes and behaviors
 - We've come to expect such behavior from the world
 - We all encounter deceit and malice almost everywhere we go
 - We see it on the freeway on the way to work
 - People who seem to take joy and delight in obstructing another car's path or denying them entry into traffic
 - We see it in the office among coworkers
 - People willing to spread false statements about us
 - People who envy our success and try to turn it against us
 - We see it in our neighbors and even in those we count as friends
 - And we see it in family relationships from time to time
 - But then we come into the confines of a church building, and magically those traits disappear
 - Or do they?
 - Peter's point here is that they don't magically disappear
 - And yet in the church, we tend to act as if they have

- We don't often acknowledge them, much less demand that we contend with these attitudes and behaviors
- In verse 1 Peter said put aside these things
 - The phrase in Greek literally means to lay aside a piece of clothing
 - The same word is used in Acts 7 when we hear the crowd laying aside their coats at the feet of Saul as they prepared to stone Stephen
 - Peter says Christians need to lay aside – take off – these traits
- The reason we set these traits aside is because unless we make a conscience effort to set them aside, they can easily coexist with our Christian experience
 - We must not allow ourselves to slip back into these old comfortable clothes, these comfortable habits that defined our past existence
- The second reason Peter says to set them aside, is because they stand in the way of Christian maturity
 - While there are no doubt many sins that lead a Christian to fail in their walk, I think malice and deceit are probably at the top of the list
 - Malice stands in the way of fellowship and an abiding relationship with other believers
 - And deceit stands in the way of transparency, and the conviction that transparency provokes
 - If we are willing to be honest with one another, we can't help one another
 - And if we can't help one another mature, we are sheep wandering by ourselves waiting for the enemy to pick us off
- How do we leave these kinds of sins?
 - Verse 2: long for the word of God
 - Specifically, Peter says be like a newborn child that longs for milk
 - The picture is a perfect representation of how we are to view the word of God in our lives
 - The relationship is one of trust and dependence and necessity
 - The newborn doesn't eat a variety of foods, but only milk
 - Milk is not only best, it is the only appropriate way to nurture a new born
 - And that newborn enthusiastically desires that milk
 - He/she longs for it
 - And the baby is completely trusting and dependent on that source
 - And by that milk, the child will grow strong
 - And by the milk of the Word of God, a believer will likewise grow strong
 - The Word of God isn't just one source of growth for the Christian
 - It is the only source appointed by God
 - Like a newborn who can't eat junk food and expect to prosper
 - A Christian can't expect to mature properly on a diet of humanistic

teaching, self-help, Christian psychobabble

"It is sad when Christians have no appetite for God's Word, but must be 'fed' religious entertainment instead. – Wiersbe

- We can't improve on the Word of God
 - We can't make it better – there's no substitute for mother's milk
- Take a moment and look at the transition Peter made from the end of Chapter 1 to this beginning of Chapter 2
 - Peter said that we could prosper in our pursuit of holiness because we had been born of a new seed
 - And the seed was the Word of God
 - And now he says that it is this same word of God that will be the instrument to draw us toward maturity

Eph. 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

Eph. 5:26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

Eph. 5:27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

- The very same instrument by which God brought us into faith – the word of God
 - It's the same means God has appointed to bring us to holiness
 - The solution hasn't changed
 - What worked in the beginning is what continues to work
 - If it ain't broke, don't fix it
 - But inevitably, we try to fix it
 - And Peter says that the church must put off those obstacles that stand in the way of us being useful to Him
 - We must long for God's word in our lives
 - Make it a priority
 - Learn to seek relief from our difficulties by what we find in the pages of Scripture – for that's why God gave it to us
 - Stop seeking solutions in the junk food of the world
 - Including "Christian" junk food, which is spiritualized pop psychology dressed up with a few scripture verses and intended to sound wise but lacking the substance of God's wisdom
 - Once we do these things, we may grow in respect to salvation

1Pet. 2:4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by

men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God,

1Pet. 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1Pet. 2:6 For this is contained in Scripture:

“BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”

1Pet. 2:7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve,

“THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,”

1Pet. 2:8 and,

“A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”;

for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

- Now how is God going to put our obedience and holiness to use?
 - If we the church do devote ourselves to holiness and self control
 - If we do put aside those persistent sins associated with our former selves and grow in maturity by the Word of God
 - Now what?
 - Well Peter says that just as Christ Himself was called the chief cornerstone, choice and precious in the sight of God
 - Then we likewise are living stones
- By the comparison Peter makes in these verses, he shows us how we are like Christ
 - Christian just means little Christ, and Peter begins to build a comparison here for how we are like Christ, the cornerstone
 - First, Jesus was a stone rejected by the builders
 - The picture is one of masons inspecting stones to select the one that would be the cornerstone for a building
 - The cornerstone was the most important stone in a building because it established the line for everything else
 - If the building was to run true and rise straight, the cornerstone must be perfect
 - Any defect would be magnified over the growth of the surrounding stones
 - When the leaders within the nation of Israel inspected Jesus, they rejected Him
 - They declared that He was unfit to be the one that could establish God's kingdom
 - And yet He was the stone God chose
 - He was considered precious
 - What men rejected, God chose

- Does this sound familiar?

1Cor. 1:26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;

1Cor. 1:27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

1Cor. 1:28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

1Cor. 1:29 so that no man may boast before God.

1Cor. 1:30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

1Cor. 1:31 so that, just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.”

- Like 1 Corinthians, Isaiah’s prophecy tells us that God intended it to be this way
 - He planned it this way
 - God had chosen Christ to be the cornerstone of a new kingdom
 - Yet He had also appointed Him to suffer at the hands of men who refused to accept Jesus as that cornerstone
 - Instead, they rejected Him
- And from that truth Peter makes the comparison to the church
 - The church is being built up today as living stones
 - And Christ is the cornerstone, the foundation of a new structure
 - We each represent additional stones used to construct the building
 - That building is the church, the Bride of Christ
 - Together with Old Testament Saints and the saints yet to come, we all form the kingdom of believers who will join Christ in His glory
 - And like the chief cornerstone, we are choice and precious
 - Chosen by God and precious to Him
 - Though like the cornerstone, we should expect to be despised and rejected by men at times

Matt. 5:10 “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 5:11 “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

Matt. 5:12 “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- One of the things that should worry us if we are not experiencing any persecution, is

that we are not showing any evidence to the outside world of who we are

- The more we are a Christian in the world, the more we will be rejected
- In verse 5, Peter says that the living stones are a holy priesthood
 - Priests under the Mosaic Law were the ones appointed to serve the Lord in the tabernacle
 - They performed the sacrificial ceremony before the altar on behalf of the people of Israel
 - Spiritual sacrifices were offered by priests on behalf of the nation of Israel, who relied on those sacrifices to be made acceptable before God
 - Peter says that we are now the royal priesthood serving God in His temple of the Church
 - The Church is not the building, but the people
 - We serve God in serving His people
 - We are also not advocating that the church is now Israel
 - There is a false doctrine that believes the church replaces Israel in God's plan – that the promises given to Abraham are forfeited by Israel and now belong exclusively to the Church
 - But scripture is clear that the promises God made to Israel He will fulfill one day
 - In any case, in the current age we're in, we as the Church now act as the priesthood performing sacrifice of service and interceded on behalf of the body of Christ

Rom. 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

- We now form the priesthood of believers, doing the general work of what the priests used to do for Israel
 - We provide spiritual service offering ourselves as a sacrifice with our time and money
 - We intercede through corporate prayer
 - We lead our members through worship

1Pet. 2:9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

1Pet. 2:10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

- Peter uses a series of brief references to the Old Testament, as touchstone verses to

prick the Jewish believer's memory

- ■ Chosen race (Isaiah 43:20)
 - Royal Priesthood
 - Exodus 19:6 made all Israel priests
 - But their disobedience at Mt. Horeb resulted in the Levites becoming priests
 - Holy nation – set apart from sin
 - Set apart as a beacon among the nations
 - Placed at the cross roads of civilization
 - God's possession
 - A people He could dwell with
 - But they played the harlot with the surrounding idols
- Israel failed God in their day, and they were judged for it
 - God has not forsaken them (Romans 9-11)
 - But for a time they are hardened, and the church has become the one through which God will accomplish this work
 - God will still get the work done
 - One day the window of opportunity for the gentiles closes again and God will return to complete His promises in Israel
 - But in these days of the church, Peter reminds us that these expectations now fall on us
 - We are God's chosen people for a time
 - We are the priesthood of believers
 - We are the holy nation set apart from the world to be a light
 - We are the people that God calls His own and He dwells with us through the Holy Spirit
- We were once not a people, but now we are the people of God
 - If God has selected us to be the ones through whom He shows Himself to the world and works His purposes in the world
 - But then we don't go out, we don't shine, we don't pursue holiness, or service to one another
 - We don't uphold His word and proclaim how God's word will be fulfilled...who will?



1Peter - Lesson 2B

Chapter 2:11-17

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- When you are in a new place meeting new people, we're always mindful of the importance of making a good first impression, aren't we?
 - This is never more true than when we are traveling to a foreign country

Barbara Bush once accompanied her husband, President George Bush, on a state visit to Japan. During a formal luncheon at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, she found herself seated beside Japan's Emperor Hirohito, the emperor who had presided over Japan during WWII.

Barbara noted the palace's youthful and modern appearance. She asked the emperor, "Was the former palace so old that it crumbled?"

"No," Hirohito tersely replied, "I'm afraid that you bombed it..."

- That's not the kind of first impression you want to make
 - Especially when you're representing your country
 - In fact, countries usually rely on professional diplomats to make good impressions on behalf of their nation
 - Like our ambassador to the United Nations
 - Well, except for the day...

...in 1948, when Warren Austin, America's Ambassador to the United Nations, urged the warring Arabs and Jews to sit down and settle their differences peacefully... "like good Christians."

- Again, probably not the best impression for an ambassador to make
 - It's important that we make a good impression, especially when we are representing our home country to a foreign people
- Do you remember at the very beginning of this letter, Peter called his readers two things:
 - First, he called us chosen people
 - And he called us resident aliens, foreigners
 - We've already studied what Peter meant by chosen
 - In Chapter 1 and then the first part of Chapter 2, Peter said it meant we are to be holy
 - Set apart
 - A priesthood serving God's temple, the Body of Christ
 - Peter's expectation was that we would live in a manner worthy of that call
 - Living our whole lives as chosen people should
- Well, today, we move into a new section of Peter's letter
 - In this new section, Peter describes what it means to be an alien, a foreigner living on earth
 - About how our Lord expects us to conduct ourselves while we remain here

awaiting the arrival of Christ's kingdom

1Pet. 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

1Pet. 2:12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1Pet. 2:13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,

1Pet. 2:14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

1Pet. 2:15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

1Pet. 2:16 Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.

1Pet. 2:17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

- Peter begins this section by saying again, we are aliens
 - As aliens, there are certain things we don't do and certain things we should do
 - If you are traveling overseas, and if you want to make a good impression
 - There are certain things you don't do and certain things you should do
 - Example: If you are in England, one thing you don't do is drive on the right side of the road
 - Another thing you don't do is eat English breakfast food, like blood sausage
 - On the other hand, you should bow to the queen and you should have tea at 4:00pm in the afternoon
 - Now here again, Peter calls us aliens
 - In other words, we are living in a strange land
 - We may have been born here physically
 - And for a time we thought of earth as our home
 - And we had no idea there was anything more
 - But now, as Christians, we have been born again by the Spirit into a living hope, into a heavenly citizenship
 - So now we belong elsewhere, even though for a time we still live here
 - While we may understand and even agree with this principle
 - It's another thing entirely to live according to it
- In verse 11 Peter begins by speaking from the negative point of view
 - In other words, Peter is going to begin by telling us what an alien living in a foreign land should NOT do
 - In verses 12 and onward, he will describe the positive perspective of what an

alien should do

- In fact, the positive runs all the way into Chapter 4
- So let's first look at what Peter says believers should not do if we are going to live properly as aliens
 - Peter says abstain from the lusts of the flesh for they wage war with the soul
 - Here again, another warning against sinning by allowing our flesh to rule over us
 - This is similar to his earlier warnings
 - But this time Peter is going to use the point to go a new direction
 - He uses the Greek word *apecho* for abstain
 - Which means "to hold back"
 - We need to hold back these lusts
 - Restrain ourselves
 - I picture a traveler who is about to say something rude, and then suddenly remembers his manners, and holds back
- Since this is at least the second time Peter has mentioned lusts, maybe we should define what lusts of the flesh look like
 - Paul gives us the list in Galatians 5

Gal. 5:19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,
Gal. 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,
Gal. 5:21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- I don't need to take time to define each one of these
 - Some of your translations will use slightly different words, which might be helpful in understanding them better
 - But I think it's sufficient to note that all of these are desires that arise out of our flesh nature
 - And they are the antithesis of love – agape
 - What do I mean by antithesis?
 - Well, these are actions that cannot coexist with love
 - They are like fire and water
 - One cancels out the other
 - We cannot indulge in these desires and simultaneously show agape love
 - For example, I cannot show my wife love if at the same time I harbor jealousy, anger, envy

- I cannot simultaneously show love for my Christian brothers and sisters and also stir up disputes, enmities, or dissensions
- I cannot simultaneously show love to the unbelievers I meet if I also promote sensuality (lewdness), sorcery, drunkenness, carousing
- These are desires that arise from our flesh, not from the Holy Spirit living in us
 - Remember Christ's commands?
 - Love your God
 - Love your neighbor
- If we indulge in these behaviors, then we have by necessity put aside love
 - We have become the world in our behavior
 - Paul says those who practice these things will be judged for them
 - To practice means to live according to them, to make them a way of life
 - That's what the unbeliever does
 - When we succumb to these lusts, we are living like the unbelieving world
 - This is why Peter says that these lusts wage a war for our souls
 - He's referring to the way our flesh is naturally opposed to holiness and to God in general
 - And for as long as you occupy your earthly body, you will experience this war
 - Your flesh fighting with your spirit for control
 - In that battle, your flesh is like a man being drowned slowly
 - It will continue fighting for air until the day God puts it to rest
 - In the meantime, God has called us to wage that war and to win so that we might represent Him to this lost and dying world
 - If you think about it, Peter is just asking the church to live in a manner that's consistent with the customs and traditions of our home country
 - And our home country is heaven now
- For example, imagine if you were an explorer who travels to some deep jungle or forest and comes upon an undiscovered tribe
 - And in this foreign culture you observe many unfamiliar customs
 - Perhaps they eat strange things
 - Perhaps they wear strange clothing
 - Perhaps they practice strange family rituals
 - Bizarre things, like the teenagers picked up their rooms
 - Family members fought over who got to do the dishes
 - Regardless of what you found, you would continue to follow your own culture
 - You would still prefer to eat meals like those you had at home
 - You would continue to wear dress that was familiar and appropriate to your culture

- You would continue to conduct your family life according to your customs and beliefs
 - In other words, you would live in their world, but you would not be of that world
 - We would remain distinct; you would remain who you are
- That's all Peter is asking for from his Christian readers
 - Peter says we are aliens and strangers, so we should live according to the customs of our home rather than of this strange place we find ourselves
 - Now there is a difference between our situation and the example I gave
 - We didn't leave our home and travel somewhere new
 - The new came to us
 - In fact, we have yet to visit our home
 - So the temptation to return is very strong
 - That's the war being waged for our souls
 - But because we are still residing temporarily in the old world, we have a job to do here
 - We are here to represent our kingdom to this world and do it properly
 - We are now the ambassadors for Christ

2Cor. 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

2Cor. 5:18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,

2Cor. 5:19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

2Cor. 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

- So how should an ambassador act?
 - In verse 12 Peter begins with a long discourse on how an ambassador should act
 - First, he says keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles
 - What does Peter mean by Gentiles?
 - Peter could have simply meant that Jewish believers who received this letter should carry themselves in an upright way among the Gentile nations in which they found themselves
 - But I think Peter is making a much broader point here
 - Peter is talking about how the church is viewed by the surrounding pagan culture of Rome
 - Peter says in verse 12 that his readers were being slandered by this group of Gentiles

- The Gentiles were calling the readers “evildoers”
 - The Greek word for evildoer is *kakopoios*, which is a common word for criminal
 - Christians were being slandered – unjustly called criminals
- And Peter suggests that this slander was the basis for the persecution
 - That the persecution came because the populace believed the reports that these Christians were criminals
 - We can assume that many of these reports were false or were exaggerations
 - But Peter is begging the church here in verse 12 to keep to excellent (or commendable) behavior so as to give no credibility to these accusations
 - For they were living in dangerous times
- At about the time of Peter’s letter, about AD 64, the Roman emperor Nero had begun to persecute Christians
- The persecution was brought about by a fire that broke out in the early morning of July 19, AD 64 in a small shop by the Circus Maximus
 - It spread rapidly to other regions of Rome, where it raged for nine days, destroying much of the city
 - The fire was the worst in a series of fires that ravaged the crowded city of more than a million people
 - Living in tightly packed apartment blocks of wooden construction, set along narrow streets and alleyways
 - Only two areas remained intact;
 - One of them was the "Transtiberum" region, the region across the Tiber River, called today "Trastevere"
 - It had a large Jewish population, including Jewish Christians
 - Nero was at his seaside villa in Anzio when the fire began and delayed returning to the city
 - Legend said that at the news of the fire, he began composing an ode comparing Rome to the burning city of Troy
 - His indifference to the suffering caused by the tragedy turned people against him;
 - Rumors began that the emperor himself set the fire in order to rebuild the city from his own plans
- It was well known that Nero disliked much of Rome
 - He thought the city was squalid and needed re-building
 - To stop the rumors of his complicity in the fire, Nero decided to blame someone else:
 - He chose a group of renegade Jews called Christians
 - They had caused trouble before and they already had a bad reputation in the city
 - About the year AD 49, the Emperor Claudius had banished some of them

from Rome for causing upheavals in the Jewish synagogues of the city with their disputes about Christ

- The ancient Roman historian, Tacitus describes the persecution of Christians this way:

Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace.

Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.

Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths.

Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.

- We'll probably never know what trouble these Jewish Christians may have caused in Rome
 - And almost certainly, many of the accusations were false
 - But it is also likely that there was some basis for truth
 - Especially with regard to the conflict that often arose between Jews and Christians
 - Rumors are always most effective when there is some credibility or basis for the accusation
- In the face of this persecution, what does Peter ask from the Christians?
 - Excellent behavior:
 - Live in such a way that we do not give support to their slanderous accusations
 - Be good neighbors
 - Don't do the very things they claim Christians do
 - And this will glorify God in the day of their visitation
 - It's interesting that Peter doesn't promise they will escape persecution by living in an excellent way
 - Doing the right thing is no guarantee of bliss, but it certainly helps
 - Instead, he points forward in time, saying they will glorify God in a day when God visits their enemies
- This can happen in one of two ways
 - Either these Gentiles will be converted by witnessing the faithfulness of Christians

and Christian martyrs

- And if so, they will give glory to God in the day of resurrection when the faithful will be gathered to Christ
- They will glory in how God used the Christians to bring conversion
- Or these Gentiles will not become believers and yet they will give God glory the day they stand before God in judgment
 - At the Great White Throne judgment
 - When every knee will bow

Phil. 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

Phil. 2:10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

Phil. 2:11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- There is no such thing as an unbeliever
 - There are believers and not-yet-believers
- Peter goes on in verse 13-17 to define excellent behavior in specific ways
 - It means submitting for the Lord's sake to every human institution
 - Whether king, or governors
 - Meaning you submit to the man in charge or to his representatives
 - To all forms of human government, in other words
 - This was a challenging expectation
 - Peter is essentially demanding that Christians who were experiencing persecution or who were about to experience it should submit to it
 - There is no qualification here
 - Peter doesn't say submit as long as the government is doing the right thing or is doing what we want it to do
 - I often think back to the Alabama judge who defied the law in keeping the monument to the 10 commandments in the court house
 - If I understand Peter's message here, we should submit to these authorities under virtually all circumstances
 - Even when the decisions of the government seem to go against God's heart
 - Consider Peter's own letter
 - He's saying, support the Roman government
 - The one killing Christians
 - The one worshipping pagan gods
- The only exception I can find in scripture for when a Christian can oppose a

government is when that government directs us to violate God's commands to us in His word

- Peter himself disobeyed authority when it conflicted with God's direction

Acts 4:18 And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

Acts 4:19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;

Acts 4:20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Acts 5:27 When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them,

Acts 5:28 saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

Acts 5:29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.

- Peter and John could defy this government order because it was an order attempting to silence their faith
 - But Peter's readers are in trouble because they are disturbing the peace and acting as criminals in the eyes of the public
 - This is a problem with their witness
- It's clear in reading these verses that the church in Peter's day had been abusing its freedom in Christ
 - Look at verses 16 & 17
 - He tells them not to use their liberty in Christ as a covering – an excuse – for their evil
 - They understood they had certain liberties in Christ
 - They no longer had to live under the law of the day
 - But they had taken that to mean nor did they have to submit to a pagan government
 - They misused this freedom as an excuse to disobey civil authorities
 - They appealed to a higher authority and claimed they didn't have to obey Caesar
 - Peter says this was wrong
 - This is why I say that the judge in Alabama was wrong
 - God's word doesn't demand that we post the 10 commandments in our court house
 - God's word only demands that we keep His commandments
 - His witness for Christ was not made better by his defying of the courts, it was made worse

- Rather than abuse our freedom in Christ, we must be on our best behavior and submit to governments
 - And Peter gives us three reasons why
- First, because in verse 15 it is the will of God that these men rule over us
 - We are submitting ourselves to these authorities for the Lord's sake, because it is the will of God
 - These institutions exist by the will of God
 - They rule because he placed them in power

Rom. 13:1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Rom. 13:2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

- When we rebel against government, we actually rebel against God in the sense that we rebel against his will
 - This isn't to say that we should never oppose governments in a legal manner
- The second reason we honor these authorities is that we silence the attacks of foolish men (verse 15)
 - If the church displays excellent behavior as a group, then it will give no credibility to the accusations of those intending to tear it down
 - Remember how Nero and his supporters used accusations of civil disobedience as a pretense to persecute Christians
 - And if a false accusation is going to be believed, it usually needs to be based in some kind of truth
 - Peter says don't give them a basis for making their accusations
 - Just remember, we won't necessarily prevent our own persecution
 - But if every individual in the church kept their behavior excellent and submitted to authority
 - The effect overall would be to undermine the accusations and silence these critics
- Finally, we obey governments and act in an excellent way because by our witness we may bring some men to know the truth
 - We already noted in verse 12 where Peter says that they might give God glory over our witness
 - But I also want to close today with an additional thought on how our obedience to authority is important to God's plan for salvation
- In 1 Timothy 2, Paul tells Timothy that God is not partial in bringing men to salvation:

1Tim. 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and

thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men,

1Tim. 2:2 for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

1Tim. 2:3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

1Tim. 2:4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- When Paul says pray for all men, he defines more specifically what he means by all men in verse 2
 - For kings and all who are in authority
 - And look at Paul's reasons for why we do such things
 - First, like Peter's advice, Paul says it will help us lead tranquil lives
 - Because we won't run afoul of the government and bring persecution upon ourselves
 - Secondly, and here's the main point, because God is not a respecter of persons
 - He includes in His plan of salvation the potential for all kinds of men to be saved, including kings and authorities
 - Since we do not know who God intends to call into faith, we can't rule out the possibility that God may use us to convert a king or governmental official
- We must not waste an opportunity to witness to these men just as we take care to witness to the lowest in society
 - And witnessing to a man in authority means showing obedience to authority
 - Try witnessing for Christ to your boss after you have failed to follow his direction
 - Try witnessing to a police officer as he writes you a speeding ticket
 - Try witnessing to a judge as he pronounces sentence for your crime
 - Try witnessing to the IRS agent when he finds you cheating on your taxes
 - So we are to be excellent in our behavior, obeying authorities over us so that we might be free from accusation, we might witness to Christ effectively, and so that we might obey the will of God
- Next week we will cover significant ground, looking at Peter's specific recommendations for how servants, wives and husbands should demonstrate excellence in their behavior
 - Bring your spouse and your servant
 - And if they are one and the same, then be prepared to stay late for some counseling



1Peter - Lesson 2C

Chapter 2:18 - 3:7

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- Peter continues on his theme of living in the world as a foreigner
 - We started with honoring authority, which is the proper thing to do when you are a stranger
 - We honor government first because it's God Who places men in authority, so we submit to government because we obey God Himself
 - Secondly, obedience to authority makes it more likely we will lead tranquil and peaceful lives
 - Finally, when we obey authority we possess a better witness for Christ
 - Well, these three ideas continue into today's lesson
 - Only now Peter is going to make application to three walks of life we can all relate to
 - Servants – workers
 - Wives
 - Husbands
 - But the principles we've been studying remain the same
 - We are foreigners, and we should act as one who represents heaven
 - We keep to the rules of our homeland, not the rules that drive this foreign world

1Pet. 2:18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

1Pet. 2:19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

1Pet. 2:20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

- When Peter says servants, he uses the word *oiketes*– house servant
 - This is a person who served in the household of a master
 - This person often faced considerable difficulty in their society
 - They had few rights and few protections and their master had almost unchecked authority over them
 - These people usually had significant restrictions placed on their personal liberty
 - Most of them placed themselves in this position of service, though once they were there they had few opportunities to leave the position
 - You could legitimately call them slaves, though the position of slave in Greek culture was more akin to indentured servant
 - Today, the closest parallel we might have is to our employer or boss
 - Or in the military, it would be our commanders and NCOs
- Peter says the right behavior for a Christian servant was to be submissive and

obedient

- Not only to the good and gentle Masters
 - But also to those who are unreasonable (*skolios* – crooked) or perverse or cruel
- This is an important Biblical principle that runs 180 degrees from the worldly perspective
 - What is the worldly rule for good behavior?
 - We are nice to those who are nice to us
 - We are opposed to those who oppose us
 - But what is the Biblical rule?

Matt. 5:43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’

Matt. 5:44 “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Matt. 5:45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matt. 5:46 “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

Matt. 5:47 “If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Matt. 5:48 “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- Look again at Peter’s comments in verse 20
 - Peter repeats the same lesson as Christ Himself taught
 - We submit to our bosses or to our employer not only when they are doing what we want or when they are treating us well
 - We submit to them even when they treat us harshly
 - We’re not talking about obeying to the point of carrying out sinful acts
 - If a master says go rob from that person or go murder someone, this is not an order we can obey because it violates God’s law
 - But when we are told to work long hours in difficult conditions or with inadequate compensation or under harsh treatment, we have no right to oppose that authority
 - As I search for a good example of this model, I think of Cinderella
 - The servant girl who did her best to serve her stepmother and showed her respect regardless of how she herself was treated

Col. 3:22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of

heart, fearing the Lord.

Col. 3:23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,

- But if we expect God to give us some kind of heavenly credit for our suffering
 - We must be sure that our suffering is unjust
 - Peter says in verse 19 that if for the sake of conscience towards God we suffer unjustly, this finds favor with God
 - God credits our account in heaven when we represent Him well in the face of injustice
 - But in verse 20, Peter gives the other side of the coin
 - If we suffer due to our own sin, then we get no credit
 - So the appropriate witness for an ambassador or foreigner who is working under harsh conditions is to be a model obedient servant
 - Think about it
 - If you want to stand out for Christ in the world as a foreigner or a stranger in your place of employment, how could you do it?
 - Here's how
 - When the world rebels against authority and shows no respect for their rule
 - You serve as if serving Christ Himself
 - That's a radical witness
- Because when the world is confronted with authority, it decides how to respond based on what's in it for them
 - But when a Christian faces authority, we decide how to respond by remembering what God expects of us
 - And because we are His representative in this world
 - We are His ambassador
 - We remember we are acting in His place and on His behalf
 - And how would Jesus act under harsh and unfair circumstances
 - Well, Peter describes how in the next verses...

1Pet. 2:21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

1Pet. 2:22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;

1Pet. 2:23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

1Pet. 2:24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

1Pet. 2:25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

- What a powerful example
 - The world's standard is to be respectful when we are respected
 - The Biblical standard is to respect authority especially when they mistreat us
 - Because we are acting in the place of Christ as His ambassador
 - He is our shepherd and Guardian of our souls
- And now Peter turns to the second example found within the common Christian experience – that of wives

1Pet. 3:1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,

1Pet. 3:2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

- Peter begins by saying likewise, in the same way
 - So before we even look at the specifics of how he instructs wives to respect authority
 - We already know that the principle remains the same
 - The basis for submission and the value of submission is exactly the same as it was for servants
 - And in fact, look ahead at verse 7 where we study husbands
 - The same Greek word *homoios* (likewise) is used again
 - So for husbands the principle is yet again the same
 - We submit to authority so that we can honor God, serving as his representative and drawing men to Him
- For the wife, the Biblical command is to be submissive to her husband
 - The term submission in Greek is a military term (*hupatasso*)
 - To be under authority
 - I think it's helpful to review briefly the Biblical basis for this command for submission and its real meaning
 - The basis for a man's headship within the family was established in the garden as God pronounced a curse on the earth and on the enemy
 - And He changed the relationship between man and woman
 - He gave the man responsibility for spiritual leadership in the family
 - The man was to lead the family in its battle with Satan
 - A battle that had begun in the garden but was now going to rage throughout millennia of human history
 - Since Adam had been AWOL in the garden when the Enemy was at work

deceiving woman

- Now he was to be on the front lines taking the role of defender and taking leadership over the family in all matters so that he had the authority to battle effectively
- In contrast, the woman was given a charge to desire her husband and support him from the protection of the rear ranks
 - Since she had been the one to try and defend the family in the first skirmish with Satan, and had fallen prey to deception
 - Now she was taken off the hot seat and the man was firmly placed in the line of fire on her behalf
 - And in this position, her duty is to be a loyal and obedient soldier
- Are we saying that a woman is in an inferior position in the Christian experience?
 - Well, I want you to consider what Paul said in Galatians 3

Gal. 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

- Spiritually, God does not see gender within the Body of Christ
 - He sees only His children
 - There are no second class citizens in the church
 - We all have equal access to the Father
 - A woman has no need to approach Christ or the Father through a man
 - She is no less a part of the Body of Christ
 - But physically, we still must exist in a specific form for a time
 - And within that existence certain obligations and expectations attach
 - For a wife, the expectation is that she submit to her husband's authority
- Consider Christ Himself
 - He said in John 10:30 that I and the Father are One
 - They are co-equal and co-eternal
 - The Son is no less God than the Father
 - Yet, we also know that He submitted to the Father in obedience
 - He did the Father's will
 - He was obedient even to death on a cross
 - So though we know that within the Trinity, Christ is equal to the Father
 - Yet in function, He took a place of submission to the Father for the sake of creation
- In the same way, the woman and the man are co-equal spiritually within the church
 - One is no more or less a part of the Body of Christ
 - But in the way God has designed the family and marriage, He asks the woman to

take a place of submission

1Cor. 11:3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

- And now look at the benefit that Peter says will be derived from a wife's obedience
 - As your husband is disobedient to God's word, then the wife may have opportunity to win him over by her godly behavior
 - Notice not won over by a word, but by a deed
 - Remember the servant example earlier
 - Did we submit only when our employer did the right thing?
 - No, but rather even when they did the wrong thing
 - And what was the result of suffering under unjust treatment?
 - That we might find favor, both with God and men
- Similarly, when does a wife submit to her husband?
 - When he does the right thing?
 - No, but at all times
 - And in fact, it's when he's doing the wrong thing that it's especially important that the wife submits so that she might influence him by *her* obedience

1Pet. 3:3 Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses;

1Pet. 3:4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

- Sometimes these verses are misused to emphasize the need for women to not adorn themselves
 - But consider the context
 - Peter isn't saying don't be externally beautiful
 - He's saying that external beauty can't be the mere extent of a woman's beauty
 - True wifely beauty is found in her behavior
 - And specifically, in godliness, gentleness, and a quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of the Lord
- The contrast here is between a woman who is outwardly the picture of wifely beauty, but inside she harbors resentment and rebellion and strife within her marriage
 - And by contrast, the truly beautiful woman may or may not adorn herself outwardly
 - But it won't matter what she does outwardly, because she will recognize that her true beauty before God and her husband is found inwardly
 - In a quiet, peaceful, submitted spirit supporting her husband as he struggles

daily to lead his family in the right way according to God's word

- And when he fails, she helps bring him back not by chastisement nor by condemnation
 - But rather by submission to his headship in the family
- If you want an example to follow, look at the one Peter uses:

1Pet. 3:5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands;
1Pet. 3:6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

- You may remember the story of Sarah and Abram from Genesis 12
 - A famine drove Abram to flee to Egypt, which was the wrong thing to do

Gen. 12:10 Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land.

Gen. 12:11 It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman;

Gen. 12:12 and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.

Gen. 12:13 "Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you."

Gen. 12:14 It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful.

Gen. 12:15 Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

Gen. 12:16 Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels.

Gen. 12:17 But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

Gen. 12:18 Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?

Gen. 12:19 "Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go."

Gen. 12:20 Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.

Gen. 13:1 So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him.

Gen. 13:2 Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold.

- Abraham did the wrong thing, repeatedly
 - Sarah didn't object, she did what she was told

- And she did so not because she trusted Abram
- But she obeyed because she trusted that if she did the right thing, then God would be faithful to protect her against her husband's mistakes
- And as a result, she and Abram received riches, which became her adornment in a way
 - In the end, she was adorned by her faithful submission to her husband trusting in God
- So like servants, the wife is called
 - To obey God in submitting to authority
 - To create harmony in the marriage
 - To honor God by being a witness to God's word within the marriage
 - If a woman wants to make a radical statement in the world for Christ, there is no more radical thing that a woman can do than declare that she views her proper role is to be submitted to her husband's authority
- Then finally to the husband

1Pet. 3:7 You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

- Now it may seem odd that men only receive a single line
 - In our culture, we are quick to interpret this as a sign that men have less reason to submit in comparison to slaves and women
 - But you aren't thinking with an eastern cultural point of view
 - If you were, then you would be stunned to find men coming at the end of the list and being given only one line of instruction
 - The truly remarkable thing about Peter's section on submission is that men come last on the list and only receive a bare mention
 - This diminishes men in comparison to the other groups
 - It reflects the Biblical teaching that husbands place their wives ahead of themselves
- The phrase in verse 7 is a bit awkward to translate properly
 - The most literal translation would be "Husbands likewise dwell with them according to knowledge"
 - My translation then interprets that to mean live with your wives with understanding
 - That's not the best fit, I think
 - I think Peter is assuming that the man has got the picture by this point
 - He's saying live with your wife according to the knowledge you now have
 - Your knowledge of God's expectations how a servant submits even

when the master is a dishonorable person

- How a wife submits to an husband even when he's an abusive man or careless absentee leader
- Knowing these groups will be obedient in submission
 - Now you live according to this knowledge
 - And without ignorance about what's expected of you as the master and husband
- Remember Peter's comments to the church in Chapter 1

1Pet. 1:14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,

- They were conforming to the lusts of the flesh in an earlier day when they were ignorant of Christ and His expectations
 - Now they were no longer ignorant
 - They must act according to the knowledge they had
 - And in the concluding words of verse 7, Peter says to live with her as with a weaker vessel
 - The term for weaker is a common Greek word *poieo* – the verb to do, or to establish or to keep
 - This is the only time it's translated weaker
 - Considering how the verse ends, I tend to think the better way to read Peter's statement is that men are to live in understanding with their wife
 - To keep her, establish her, to honor her due to her vulnerable position in the relationship
 - And Peter says that position of honor is due her since she is a fellow heir in Christ
 - Here's that equality again
 - For the husband who might decide to abuse his authority and take advantage of his wife's submissiveness
 - Remember, that one day we will all inhabit eternity in equality without distinction
 - And we will be rewarded according to our obedience
- And to the man who isn't honoring to his wife, his prayers will be hindered
 - Clearly disharmony in the marriage can impede a man's prayer life
 - But to really understand this verse, a man would have to be familiar with the practice of a husband and wife praying together
 - In a healthy marriage, prayer should be a corporate activity
 - Personal private prayer would take place as well
 - But the marriage couple would also have a commitment to praying together and for one another

- But when the couple is living in conflict due to an abusive or inconsiderate husband
 - Then these prayers are the first to be set aside
 - And a man's prayer life is most severely hindered
- Men, let's step up and rise to the Biblical expectation to lead our families in prayer, especially in our relationship with our wife



1Peter - Lesson 3A

Chapter 3:8-16

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- Peter continues on his theme of living in the world as a foreigner
 - We started with honoring authority, which is the proper thing to do when you are a stranger
 - We honor government first because it's God Who places men in authority, so we submit to government because we obey God Himself

1Pet. 3:8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

1Pet. 3:9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

- Verse 8 is a summation of Peter's argument going all the way back to Chapter 2:11
 - I know that because Peter says, to sum up...
 - This statement follows a section on servants, wives, husbands
 - And they are certainly essential attributes to a successful marriage
 - But they transcend the marriage relationship
 - They are attributes for Christian fellowship and they further establish us as different, as foreigners in this world
- It's interesting how Peter chose to write verse 8
 - There are five adjectives in the verse
 - *Homophron* – harmonious
 - *Sympathes* – sympathetic
 - *Philadelphos* – brotherly, loving
 - *Eusplagchnos* – kind or tender hearted
 - *Tapeinophron* – humble in spirit
 - Four of those five Greek words appear nowhere else in the New Testament except here
 - And the fifth one, tenderhearted, appears only one other place in Ephesians 5
- When we look at the unique language here, it seems like Peter is working hard to pick his words carefully, purposely
 - He wants to paint a very specific picture of how the church is to act
 - So, I think this is one of those sections where we take our time, we stop and consider why Peter chose these words
- Harmonious, or likeminded
 - Peter asks the church to think in a compatible or likeminded way
 - The idea is a unity of purpose and harmony in *action*
 - It doesn't necessarily mean unity of opinion
 - Or even unity of thought in general

- He isn't demanding that we all agree in every idea or plan or action, but that we unit under common purposes
 - To glorify God and deliver the Gospel
 - Which leaves room for some disagreement in doctrine or practice,
 - So long as the Gospel of grace isn't challenged
- But the Body of Christ is One unit
 - We have no distinction before the Lord
 - There is no us and them in the Body of Christ
 - There are no enemies among true believers
 - There is simply no basis for division within the true church, regardless of what the sign above the building says
- And if the church is to be an effective instrument in the world, and an effective witness for Christ, it must act in unity

Eccl. 4:9 Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.

Eccl. 4:10 For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.

Eccl. 4:11 Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone?

Eccl. 4:12 And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

- Peter instructs us to be harmonious, but his command begs the question how?
 - We could try to imitate one another or perhaps we imitate our leaders
 - Maybe we pick out a successful church down the street and imitate it
 - Or perhaps we follow some strategy, or movement with the church so we can align with that movement
 - You see the problem is we need something to align with if we are to be likeminded
 - But then how are millions of different congregations worldwide supposed to stay likeminded, harmonious?

Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each must individually bow. So one hundred worshippers meeting together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become "unity" conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship."

A.W. Tozer

- Do you want to be an effective ambassador for the Lord?
 - Do you want to find support and encouragement in your walk as a Christian?
 - Do you want to forge relationships that strengthen you and offer loving correction?
 - Do you want to stand against the power of the enemy in your life and in the world and find fruit in your service?
 - Then do all things through Christ who strengthens us
 - But we will do far more as a family in unity by the Spirit according to God's word than we could ever hope to accomplish living a singular, isolated Christian experience
 - And this principle is true both for individual Christians who remain unconnected, not listening to the leading of the Holy Spirit
 - And for churches that remain isolated
- Peter's second word is sympathetic
 - The real meaning of the Greek word is a little deeper than just feeling empathy for someone
 - It means to suffer together
 - To join in the trials and sorrow that were becoming increasingly common for Christians in Peter's day
 - What a powerful distinction for the Christian
 - We cannot overestimate how powerful our witness will be when we communicate the love of the Lord to hurting people
 - In Peter's day, of course, the need was for the church to be ready to show a sympathetic response to those who suffered:
 - Persecution
 - Abandonment by families who rejected their Christian faith
 - Disenfranchisement from their Jewish culture
 - And because they were living as strangers in the world, they needed each other more than ever
- But we too should understand the power of sympathy as part of our witness today
 - What does the world do for people suffering today?
 - Often they blame the victim
 - The world plays the blame game
 - They assume that unfortunate circumstances are a sign of guilt
 - When bad things happen to us, it's proof that we've done something wrong
 - That God or karma or some cosmic justice is bringing us our just deserts
 - The world's thinking is reflected in the title of a popular book from decades ago
 - "When bad things happen to good people"
 - There is the assumption that bad things should only happen to bad

people, not good people

- The confusion begins with the fact that the unbelieving world assumes that there are such things as good people
 - When the Bible says none are good
 - So there is no such thing as a good person, but that's a different sermon
- Actually, there is some truth to their assumption
 - When we do the wrong thing – sin – we should expect negative consequences to follow

Gal. 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

- So it's true that our sin will quite often result in bad things happening to us
 - But that fact doesn't mean that the opposite condition is also true
 - It doesn't mean that good things must come to those who do good
 - Think about it: if only good things happened to those who did good, how do you explain the Apostles?
 - How do you explain Paul, John the Baptist, the first martyr Stephen or the many other martyrs over the centuries?
 - How do you explain Jesus Himself?
 - The ultimate example of bad things happening to good people
 - Do you remember Jesus' words in John 15:

John 15:17 “This I command you, that you love one another.

John 15:18 “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.

John 15:19 “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

John 15:20 “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

John 15:21 “But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

John 15:22 “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

John 15:23 “He who hates Me hates My Father also.

- For the Christian, a life walked in the Spirit will necessarily bring the enemy's anger and hatred directed at us
 - Because we stand as Christ's ambassador, we stand in His place for a time

- So we should expect that the more we look like Christ, the more we are a target to the enemy
- A fair rule might be that if we are not suffering for our faith in any way at all, it may indicate our faith is invisible – the enemy doesn't need to spend time on an ambassador that never leaves its house

Toward the very end of his life, Voltaire, the French philosopher of the early 18th century was advised by a Christian that he should forswear and reject Satan. Voltaire declined. "This is no time to make new enemies!"

- So knowing that tragedy is simply a natural part of life amidst the consequences of sin
 - And it's a natural result of a life lived as an ambassador of Christ
 - Then what a shame it is if the body of Christ looks down upon a fellow brother or sister in the Lord in a moment of difficulty or pain or suffering
 - Judging them as if they are getting what they deserve
 - In fact, Peter says we should join them in their suffering, as an ambassador
- The next two adjectives are best viewed together – brotherly and kindhearted
 - The first word means to see one another like you would a true sibling in your family
 - For we are all now born again into a new family
 - And we will exist as one family for all eternity
 - This will always be our family, all believers in Christ
 - Just in case you need clarification on how to treat your brothers and sisters, Peter follows with kind or tenderhearted
 - Your relationship with fellow Christians should be one marked by a tenderhearted and loving kind of relationship
- What does a kindhearted sibling relationship look like?
 - We are to be affectionate with one another
 - We truly enjoy each other's company, longing for that company
 - We look out for one another
 - We defend one another
 - An argument, a disagreement doesn't end our relationship
 - Unfortunately for some of us, the brotherly love we find in our brothers and sisters in the Lord will be the only real sibling relationship we will ever know

Matt. 12:46 While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him.

Matt. 12:47 Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You."

Matt. 12:48 But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?"

Matt. 12:49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers!

Matt. 12:50 “For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

- Finally, Peter says we are to be humble in spirit
 - We are not to think too highly of ourselves
 - Often this phrase can be used to describe the salvation experience, but Peter is looking beyond that moment
 - He’s referring to our self-perception as believers
 - When we look around the members of our church body, we inevitably see differences
 - And some of these distinctions are given in scripture
 - Giftings
 - Roles
 - Age or maturity in the faith
 - But if you study these differences, none of them are given for the purpose of granting one group some kind of privilege or status over another group
 - But that IS the worldly way
 - The world is forever looking for ways to show off
 - To distinguish one from another and for the purpose of looking or feeling better than another by comparison
 - It’s all vanity
 - And the church isn’t to see itself in that
- As an example, look how Paul and Apollos describe themselves:

2Cor. 3:4 Such confidence we have through Christ toward God.

2Cor. 3:5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God,

2Cor. 3:6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

- Paul was the greatest theologian in the history of the church
 - Apollos was said to be the greatest orator of the early church
 - And yet Paul says consider them to be nothing apart from God
- The church has a powerful witness for Christ when it lives in a humble way
 - While the world around us boasts of all that it can do and all that it achieves and how much it is worth, we respond by saying we have nothing to offer
 - But God working in us can do anything
 - Talk about being different and standing out! In a boastful, reviling world, a

humble spirit will always stand out

- That's what we offer to a lost and dying world that they can't find anywhere else in a genuine way
 - What a shame it would be if when the world comes to us looking for that difference, we only reflect the world back to them
- We must stand out as ambassadors to do the very thing Peter directs in verse 9:

1Pet. 3:9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

- Peter instructs us not to treat others with contempt, even when they treat us that way
 - Then Peter says that we were called according to this very same purpose – that we might inherit a blessing
 - Peter is referring to the way God treated us

Rom. 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

- In other words, God turned to us in mercy while we were still busy hating Him and living as if we were our own God
 - And He saved us while we yet showed Him contempt
 - He didn't repay hatred with hatred, but rather hatred with kindness
 - He called us to inherit a blessing, so we should do the same to others – grant to others blessing and not evil
 - This is how the church stands as the ambassador for Christ
 - Acting to the world in the same way God acted toward us
- And this isn't new to the church
 - Peter quotes from Psalm 34 to remind the reader that this expectation has always been there

1Pet. 3:10 For, “THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT.

1Pet. 3:11 “HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT.

1Pet. 3:12 “FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL.”

- God's people have always been told to seek good, turn from evil, seek peace
 - Desire a satisfying and good life which can only be brought about by seeking the

righteousness of the Lord

- For the Lord only hears the prayers of his children, the righteous by faith in other words
- We alone have the privilege to be heard by God
- Finally, Peter provides this conditional challenge to the church

1Pet. 3:13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?

1Pet. 3:14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,

1Pet. 3:15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

1Pet. 3:16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

- He says who could harm you if you prove (or really become) zealous for what is good?
 - Which is very similar to something Paul teaches in Romans

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

- You see Peter isn't claiming that those who are zealous for what is good will always have a peaceful life
 - Peter is saying what Paul said...speaking in an eternal sense, what reason do we have to fear when you do good?
 - When the believer becomes zealous to do good, God notices and credits his heavenly account
 - And truly what kind of harm can come to God's children in light of what God is preparing for them in eternity
 - Doing good can't simply result in earthly good as your return
 - Because that's not a lasting kind of good
 - No matter how good you are, you will eventually experience calamity
 - Remember, even the most righteous man still dies
 - So no matter how good your life is, you can't escape the death process
 - Therefore, the test of Peter's words are not whether you avoid bad things in your life
 - The test of whether your good works brought you benefit will come at your eternal reward
 - And if we are zealous for good, we have nothing to fear because that reward cannot be taken

- Peter himself in his very next verse acknowledges that bad things will happen from time to time to the believer
 - He says you may suffer for the sake of righteousness
 - Nevertheless, don't be troubled
 - Peter quotes God's encouragement to Isaiah when Isaiah worried that Israel wouldn't accept his message, which they didn't
 - Yet Isaiah was faithful and God told him not to fear
- Then in wrapping up this section, Peter draws us back to the main point
 - When we are suffering for righteousness sake, for being zealous for good...
 - Peter says we sanctify Christ, which means we set Christ apart
 - He's saying we should live according to the holiness of Christ during these periods of persecution or suffering
 - In other words, be His representative, be His ambassador
 - Live as He would under your circumstances
 - And then look at the effect it will have in the world
- And when we react to persecution the way Christ reacted to persecution, that behavior will prompt a reaction from the unbelieving world
 - Look at the reaction in verse 15
 - They will ask us to explain why we have hope in the midst of our hopeless circumstances
 - They will ask us to give an account or defense (*apologia*)
 - Peter says we should be prepared with an answer, with our *apologia*, apologetics, which is the study of our beliefs
 - Many assume this to mean a preparation to give our testimony
 - Having a clear recollection of our path to belief can be useful at times
 - But that's not what Peter wants the reader to be prepared to give
 - He wants us prepared to give the Gospel to our attackers or to those who witness how we withstand persecution
 - Not the story of how I came to Christ
 - But the story of how Christ came to men
 - Not an explanation of how I was saved
 - But an explanation of how all men can be saved
 - Peter is asking us to be ready to explain and defend the gospel
 - Which means preparation beforehand
 - Study of the history, doctrines and heroes of our faith
 - Then practice, so we can be ready
- Some will receive that testimony, but some will not
 - But we must be ready to give it nonetheless

- Peter says there are two reasons to give your testimony even to those who might not accept it
 - First, it serves to contradict their slanderous claims against believers
 - The one doing good and testifying of Christ will inevitably refute any false charge of improper behavior levied against the Christian
 - Secondly, it stands as testimony against unbelief itself
 - For the unbeliever who rejected our message, our testimony becomes evidence against them at their judgment
- But we are called to testify regardless of whether it converts or convicts



1Peter - Lesson 3B

Chapter 3:17-22

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- Peter knows he's writing to a church under the threat of persecution
 - And he is writing to encourage perseverance, and faith in the face of that coming storm
 - And last week we ended with an exhortation
 - Even if you suffer for righteousness, you are blessed
- Another way to put it is you can't measure God's pleasure nor your blessedness on the basis of earthly bliss
 - ▪ True blessedness is measured on an eternal scale, and we are truly blessed no matter what kind of circumstances we find ourselves in during the here and now
 - And sometimes bad things happen to good people because it is God's will
 - Peter transitions out of that discussion today with verses 17-18

1Pet. 3:17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

1Pet. 3:18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

- The reality of living in a sinful, fallen world where the enemy rules for a time and where men follow after their depraved hearts is one we will experience
 - Trial and sadness and disappointment
 - And we will see bad things come our way
 - But it's much better that those bad things come because we are doing what's right than if it comes because we do what's wrong
 - When we bring bad things upon ourselves by our own sin, there is no praise to be found in that circumstance
 - We merely suffer at our own hand
 - But when we suffer for righteousness sake, God can do good things through us
 - And Peter once again uses Jesus as the ultimate example of how God can use our suffering for righteousness sake as a blessing
- In verse 18 Peter says "For Christ died once for all"
 - That little word at the beginning is no accident nor inconsequential
 - The word is *hoti*, and it has the effect of connecting the prior thought to the following thought
 - In other words, Peter is about to prove the prior statement with this example
 - This is important because it gives us a pattern to use to decode his example
 - Peter's principle was that suffering for doing good was better than suffering for doing bad

- And we can now examine Christ's suffering to see how His suffering could lead to benefit
- He died once for all
 - This phrase in Greek places the emphasis on the word once and not on the phrase for all
 - This means that Peter's point was not the extent of Christ's atonement but rather the finality of it
 - He died once and for all
 - He died to put the issue of sin to rest
 - He was the righteous and he died for the unrighteous
 - His death was useful to God in the very fact that it was a sinless death
 - We call this substitutionary atonement
- Christ was sinless in His life
 - He never violated any commandment or instruction of His Father
 - This is the definition of holy, sinless
 - Because He died without cause, Jesus' death became a payment for sin that He Himself never needed to make
 - He had no sin, so He never owed the price of sin, which is death (Romans 6:23)
 - Peter says that Jesus was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit
 - You can find a variety of interpretations for this phrase, but the meaning is really very straightforward considering the context of the verse
 - Basically, it describes how Jesus took our place
 - And as a man, Jesus necessarily suffered death in the same way that you or I were doomed to experience it were we to be judged for our sin
 - He died a human, fleshly death and suffered the penalty of sin which was spiritual separation from the Father
 - But because Jesus was sinless, the Father could be just in raising Him back to life in the spirit
 - You can understand the meaning of this statement by considering its contrast with the earlier statement of the flesh
 - Jesus died as a man would die, and then He was raised as the eternal are to be raised – in the spirit or in a new eternal form never to die again
 - The phrase is best translated “in the spirit” not “by the Spirit”
 - Based on Jesus' free payment, the Father could use that payment to cover the sins of you and I
- Consider that for just a moment
 - Jesus could have resisted the Romans and the Jewish leaders who desired to kill Him
 - Like the readers in Peter's day, Jesus saw the persecution coming and He feared it

- His experience in the Garden of Gethsemane demonstrated how much Jesus experienced and suffered fear and dread over the coming persecution
- Nevertheless, Jesus modeled for the Church exactly what Peter is telling His readers to do here
 - He did good, meaning doing the Father's will
 - And Jesus suffered for doing good
 - And the good He did saved you and I
- And as ambassadors, we are called to do the same as God requires
- Where Peter goes next includes some of the most controversial verses in the New Testament epistles, simply because they are difficult to translate
 - But like so much of the Bible, a correct translation is built on a firm understanding of what has come before in the pages of the Bible
 - What Peter is going to do in the remaining verses of Chapter 3 is something akin to free association
 - One thought leads to another then another
 - Or in this case Peter is going to find a way to bring the whole circle of thought back to a common point that ties the entire chain together in an amazing sequence of Biblical events
 - What I'm saying is that Peter is going to take several loose ends present in Old Testament scripture together with the death and resurrection of Christ and tie them all together to make his point
- Let's take the next section a verse at a time beginning with verse 19

1Pet. 3:19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison,

- In verse 19, Peter begins to expound a little on his previous statement of how Jesus took our place in death
 - He's describing what happened to Christ as He acted as our surrogate in death
 - Only His behavior was a little different given the fact that He is God and had no sin Himself
 - So He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison
 - First thing to notice is that Jesus went somewhere
 - This is an actual physical place that is not earth itself
 - And furthermore Peter says this is a place that continues to exist as it is a place where spirits dwell even now, he says
 - Secondly, in this place there are spirits dwelling
 - This is a place they live
 - It's not a place that spirits come and go but rather it is a place that a group of spirits are living

- And more than that, they are confined
- The place is called a prison (*phylake*)
- This is the same Greek word Paul uses numerous times to describe his own imprisonment
- So what kind of place is this?
 - Well from what we know so far, it fits the description of Hades which is a part of Sheol
 - Throughout the Old Testament, there are references to a holding place of the dead called Sheol
 - Based on many references from Genesis through the prophets, the place of Sheol is the holding place of the dead
 - It has two parts or sections, and those sections are most clearly seen in the story Jesus tells in Luke 16 of Lazarus and the rich man
 - On one side is Abraham's bosom, the place for the departed Old Testament saints
 - They were held there in comfort awaiting the atonement of the Messiah
 - The other side of Sheol is a place the Bible calls Hades
 - This is the place we commonly call Hell
 - It holds the souls of all unbelievers held in torment
- When Jesus died He descended into this holding place of the dead
 - Since Jesus was not due punishment for His sin and since He is God, He used His time in Sheol for a unique purpose
 - According to Peter He went and made proclamation to the spirits
 - Interestingly, the Greek word for spirit here is most commonly used to describe the angelic or demonic realm
 - It is uncommon to use it in reference to a human spirit
 - And the word for proclamation (*kerusso*) can also be translated preach, but Peter never uses *kerusso* when speaking about preaching the gospel
 - Instead, Peter always uses the word *euangelizo*
 - So he doesn't mean preach in the sense of evangelize
 - He means some other kind of proclamation made to angelic or demonic spirits in Sheol
 - To understand exactly what's going on here, we need to move on to our second clue in verse 20

1Pet. 3:20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.

- Peter continues the Greek sentence with a clause describing the spirits

- So now we get to learn a little more about Jesus' audience during His time in Sheol
 - They were disobedient spirits
 - Well, immediately this eliminates the angelic realm
 - Peter must be talking about the demonic realm of spirits
- Then Peter's next free association is that their disobedience occurred during a time of God's patience in the days of Noah
 - So immediately we're taken back to Chapter 6 of Genesis to understand who these disobedient spirits were

Gen. 6:1 Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,

Gen. 6:2 that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.

Gen. 6:3 Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

Gen. 6:4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

- Genesis 6 describes a time prior to the flood when men had begun to fill the earth
 - And at some point the sons of God began to mate with the daughters of men
 - The phrase "sons of God" is *ben elohim*, and it is used here and in Job
 - When it appears in Job, it refers to angels
 - And that's what it means here as well
 - Disobedient angels, which we call demons, began to mate physically with women
 - This is disturbing, of course, but it shouldn't seem impossible when you consider how angels appear as men and interact with mankind throughout the Bible
 - In verse 4 we're told that the product of these unholy unions were a race called Nephilim
 - The word in Hebrew means giants
 - And these were a race of mighty men who had renown for their might and size
 - They were a distortion of the human race and they were an unacceptable pollution of God's creation
- Now before we go further in Peter's chain of thought, we need to understand why it was that the demonic realm took this extreme step in the days of Noah
 - The reason goes all the way back to the beginning of Genesis

- In Chapter 3 God casts judgment on Satan for His deception in the garden

Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity

**Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”**

- In pronouncing a curse on the serpent in the garden, who was Satan in the form of a snake, God makes a promise
 - He refers to the seed of woman
 - Woman don't have seed in the Biblical sense, since this term is reserved for the man
 - So this would be a unique person, one who comes from the woman without the need for a man's seed
 - A virgin birth, in other words
 - This seed would bruise the serpent on the head
 - And the serpent will have opportunity to bruise the woman's seed on the heel
- This promise is called the *proto evangelium*: the first time the gospel is preached
 - What God says to the serpent in the garden is that He would send a seed from woman to destroy the serpent
 - And the serpent would have opportunity to strike the woman's seed on the heel
 - But this seed would be appointed to strike the serpent on the head
 - The meaning of these statements hinges on the difference between head and heel
 - A blow to the heel is rarely if ever a fatal blow
 - While a blow to the head is likely to be fatal
- After that promise, Satan began working to obstruct the possibility of the birth of this seed to prevent his own destruction
 - ■ He started by using Cain to murder Abel in the thought that Abel was the seed of the woman, Eve
 - Later Satan realized that the seed wouldn't come for some time, so he and his demons began to corrupt the population of men in the hope of ruining God's plan
 - Satan's final tactic was to use Herod to kill all the male children after the wise men described the birth of the Messiah
- So, based on the reference to Noah's day, we now can be clear that these were demons, disobedient angelic spirits, who tried to corrupt the human race in the days before the flood
 - These were the days when God was patient, waiting 120 years exactly as Noah built the ark
 - And the reference to the Ark leads Peter to his next free association

- He says that the ark was the means by which the Father brought a few righteous, safely through the waters of His judgment
 - Noah was obedient to God’s word, and yet he suffered persecution and humiliation during a hundred years as he built the ark
 - But because he was obedient, and though he suffered for it, nevertheless it was for his good and those of his family – and all mankind
- The ark he built in obedience became the instrument of his earthly salvation
 - And it preserved Noah and his family as God was pouring out judgment on the evil men and the demonic corruption that plagued the earth in his day
- This explains why they are now in prison
 - These demons became subject to the judgment of humanity once they took human form
 - Consequently, when the flood overtook them, they were brought down to Hades as are all unbelievers
 - And to this group Jesus made a proclamation
 - Given His audience were these demons who tried to corrupt the seed
 - It leads us to the conclusion that the proclamation that Jesus made to these spirits was the obvious point that their effort to defeat God’s anointed had failed
 - Since Christ’s very presence in Sheol was proof that the atonement had been made for sin
 - Satan’s defeat was assured
- The next free association clue comes in verse 21

1Pet. 3:21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

- Peter begins with the word “corresponding”, which is the Greek for antitype
 - He is calling Noah’s experience of escaping the flood in the ark a picture of baptism
 - The type Peter is describing is a deep one, and time won’t allow me to go into it in fullness
 - But the essence is fairly simple
 - The ark is a picture of Christ
 - Everything about it points to Christ
 - It is designed to allow those who place their trust in it to safely ride out God’s judgment
 - It has but one door we can enter and God closes the door behind us
 - It is covered in pitch, so that it will float, and the word for “pitch” in Hebrew is atonement

- There are numerous other connections as well, but you get the point
- Peter says that his readers were following a similar pattern when they were baptized
 - They had agreed to rest in Christ as their way to safely ride out God's judgment
 - And Peter clarifies that baptism is saving men by washing them clean, literally
 - He's referring to the washing away of sin from the flesh
 - The physical act of baptism doesn't wash away anything
 - No more than the physical ark granted Noah spiritual salvation either
 - But yet one follows from the other
 - Noah was willing to get into the ark because he believed God's promise that it would save him
 - Similarly, we are willing to be baptized because we believe that our faith in Christ will save us from judgment
- Yet that trust brings persecution in the days leading up to the flood
 - We are made to suffer in various ways at the hands of the enemy who is constantly looking for ways to war against the seed of woman
- But through that suffering, God was able to take the obedient seed of woman and turn His suffering to the good of all men who believe
 - And by His obedience, Jesus received His reward from the Father

1Pet. 3:22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

- What started as persecution and mocking and ultimately a death at the hands of the demonic realm
 - God purposed to turn into an act of good that He used to bring judgment to the demonic realm in prison
 - And then went further and used it as a means to bring men to glory
 - And finally, He was just to reward His obedient Son with the right to rule over all powers and authorities who once mocked Him and persecuted Him
- This is what God can do
 - And therefore, as Peter began in verse 17 of this great circle of thought...
 - It is better that if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right than for doing what is wrong
 - With Christ as our model and example, we should trust that even when persecution and trials come upon us
 - God has an eternal plan to reward us with good for the experience
 - And if we ever doubt the possibility that God could accomplish this in the midst of our circumstances

- We only need to remember what He was able to accomplish over millennia of time to fulfill His promise made in the Garden



1Peter - Lesson 4A

Chapter 4:1-11

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- Hopefully our minds have recovered from the free association exercise we explored last week
 - Peter took us through a series of points to prove one basic point
 - God may very well expect His church to suffer in the midst of doing what's right according to His will
 - And that our obedience in the face of suffering and persecution mirrors Jesus' own experience
 - As He did it opened up salvation on the cross
 - It mirrors the experience of Noah who did good only to be mocked and shunned,
 - Yet His obedience saved his family and the world with it
 - And Peter said this was far better than the alternative, to suffer for doing what's wrong
 - Like those demons that heard Jesus' proclamation when He descended
 - And like all those who have been disobedient and will be placed in subjection under Christ on the day of their judgment
 - And from this Peter's letter moves into Chapter 4 with a continuation of thought while at the same time a new direction building
 - A new emphasis on our growing anticipation of Christ's appearing

1Pet. 4:1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

1Pet. 4:2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

1Pet. 4:3 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

- Peter's fourth chapter begins with therefore (*oun*)
- Since Christ was willing and obedient to suffer in the flesh He took upon Himself
 - We are to arm ourselves in the same way for the same purpose
 - Peter uses the word *hoplizo* which means to equip a soldier
 - The sense here is of one preparing for a battle
 - And Peter then says we are armed with the principle he's been teaching from the end of Chapter 3
 - The principle that we do good in order to be obedient to God
 - And that obedience often leads to suffering
 - It's almost as if the present reality of suffering for the sake of Christ is proof that we are on the right track

- And I think that's Peter's point in the second half of verse 1
 - The one who is suffering in the flesh has ceased from sin
 - The suffering here is a reference to the one suffering for doing what's right
 - It's been Peter's theme since 3:17
 - It's the same reason Christ suffered on the cross as He obeyed the Father
 - It's not a reference to penitent suffering
 - The idea that I purge myself of sin through personal penance or self-induced suffering
 - This is a verse misused by Catholics and others to justify such mistreatment and to defend purgatory
- And when we are suffering for doing what's right, then we have ceased from sin
 - Not in the sense that we have forever overcome sin
 - The verb for ceased (*pauo*) is in the perfect tense, has ceased, and not in the aorist tense
 - The aorist tense is a completed action that continues indefinitely
 - The perfect tense is a state that remains true only for a point in time
 - In fact the word *pauo* literally means stopped, as in paused
 - Peter declares that whenever we find ourselves suffering for our obedience – for doing what's right – we can be sure that in that moment we have ceased from sin
 - One excludes the other
 - Do you see how this would be encouraging for the persecuted Christian?
- Even as the tidal wave of trial and tribulation came upon these readers, they could rest in the fact that they were living obediently and with an assurance that God found favor with them
- To live, as Peter said, for their remaining days in the flesh to the will of God and not for the pleasure of their flesh
 - This is radical stuff
 - Once we are saved, we now have an obligation to reset our life's course
 - We re-chart the path our life takes
 - Where before we made decisions and set goals based on what we liked, and what we wanted, and what felt good or seemed good or pleased the ego
 - Now that we belong to Christ, all that changes
 - Now we live for but one purpose – to do the will of God
- What a dramatic change
 - Not merely the refraining from a life lived to the pleasure of the flesh
 - But that all our priorities come from God's will
 - This means that not only must we take captive our thoughts and actions to align with God's will

- But we must seek God's will, and know His will
- We can't remain ignorant of it
- And that requires prayer, and Bible study and the counsel of godly brothers and sisters
 - It takes work and dedication and seriousness of purpose
 - It's a commitment greater in effort and scope even to the ones we make to our family or in the pursuit of our professions
 - And maybe most difficult of all in our culture, it requires that we displace many things on our schedules that we like and prefer
 - And allow God to replace them with other priorities
- In our day, we're talking about stepping back from the sensuality and allure of most television programs
 - Or perhaps the trap of a 60-hour a week job
 - Or the pursuit of fitness, or some hobby or any number of other activities that the enemy conveniently places in our path to keep us too busy to do God's will or too distracted to even ask
- In Peter's day, the distractions came in the form of the pagan culture that surrounded them in the cities and towns of the diaspora
 - You can see those concerns in Peter's next statements

1Pet. 4:3 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

1Pet. 4:4 In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you;

1Pet. 4:5 but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

1Pet. 4:6 For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

- In a somewhat sarcastic style, Peter tells his readers they've had time enough to indulge themselves in the pursuits of the unbelieving world
 - Peter uses the term Gentiles in its culturally traditional sense
 - From the Jewish point of view, Gentiles were unclean, ungodly and unlikely to ever change
 - And Peter's audience – whether Greek or Jew – had apparently been living according to these practices at some point in the past
 - Or perhaps still were to some degree
 - Their lives were driven by a collection of behaviors that typify an out of control, flesh-driven lifestyle
 - Sensuality – a lack of self-restraint in all matters of the flesh

- Lusts – depraved cravings and a preoccupation with satisfying those desires
- Drunkenness – the word literally means being soaked or dripping with wine
- Carousing – a party atmosphere that contributes to wickedness and a lack of self-control
- Drinking parties – here’s alcohol again
- Finally, idolatries of all kinds
- If Peter was concerned that his readers might still be prone to such behaviors
 - Then we must give some attention to the present reality of these errors in the church today
 - We have had our fair share of time devoted to such things
 - We’ve had time spent in that world, and we of all people should know better than to ever want to return
 - Precisely because we have been there and we know the lie
 - It’s time to live for God’s will and not for our own, especially now that we have tasted the kindness of the Lord
- And when we step back from that lifestyle, Peter says we will be noticed
 - In verse 4 Peter says the pagan world will pause from the carousing and drunkenness just long enough to notice that we aren’t joining in
 - Not that a Christian must abstain from alcohol or be so uptight that we stand out for looking pious and judgmental
 - We’re talking about standing out in how we find joy and fulfillment in serving the Lord
 - Take note of the end of verse 4
 - The world’s surprise at the Christian’s distinctions, their self-control and refrain from evil practices, often leads to them maligning us not joining us
 - We can’t be naive or unrealistic about the impact of our witness
 - We stand as a light in the darkness, but only when God opens eyes, unstops ears and makes a way available in the heart of a person
 - Only then will they receive the truth

John 1:5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John 1:9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

John 1:11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

John 1:13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will

of man, but of God.

- Only when God has done a work in the heart of a man or woman to produce faith
 - Only then can that person respond to what they see and receive the Gospel
 - Otherwise, they will merely hate what they see in us because it reveals their sin
 - And once again, in this we follow in Jesus footsteps

John 15:20 “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

John 15:21 “But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

John 15:22 “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

John 15:23 “He who hates Me hates My Father also.

John 15:24 “If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.

- Jesus’ testimony was to save those who the Father gave to Him
 - Those who believed in Him and called out to Him
 - But it was also to stand as a witness against the disobedient
 - And our witness in Christ’s place fulfills both purposes
 - And those who reject the message will be called before the judge upon their death

Heb. 9:27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

- Then Peter adds a word of encouragement
 - He says the gospel has been preached for this very reason
 - It has been brought to the dead that they may become alive in the spirit by the will of God rather than be judged in the flesh as they should
 - This is one of those cornerstone doctrinal statements of New Testament Christianity
 - In fact, if we understand verse 6 properly, we have most of what we need to understand all of Christian doctrine
- In all, there are three vitally important principles in Peter’s sixth verse of Chapter 4
 - First, he says that the gospel has been preached to the dead
 - Since this verse comes so closely on the heels of Peter’s mention of the spirits

in prison, we may be tempted to return to that earlier context to explain this comment

- But based on the text itself, we shouldn't do that
 - Peter has moved on, he's talking about something new here
 - He's talking about the spiritually dead
- He says the gospel is preached to those who are dead
 - It's in the same sense that Paul says:

Eph. 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

Eph. 2:2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

Rom. 4:16 For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

Rom. 4:17 (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.

- God gives life to the dead
 - Before faith, we existed in a state where our inner being, our spirit, was dead in the sense that it was separated from God and did not know or care for the things of God

Rom. 3:10 as it is written,

"THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

Rom. 3:11 **THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;**

Rom. 3:12 **ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."**

- So Peter's first principle is that the gospel is being preached to a dead people
- His second principle is even simpler
 - The dead unbelieving must be judged for the sin of the flesh
 - For the wages of sin are death
 - All who sin are due judgment, and God being perfect in judgment can't overlook sin and excuse it
 - He can only judge it rightly, for that is true righteous justice

- Finally, Peter says that God provided a solution to this problem
 - According to God's will, He is making us alive in the spirit
 - The preaching of the gospel to a dead and condemned people can, according to God's will, result in new life
 - A spiritual rebirth that brings new awareness and opportunity to obey and serve the living God
 - And this Peter offers as encouragement
 - For though we will be maligned for our willingness to do what's right, we are nevertheless hopeful that God will bring us the blessing of seeing others come to the understanding that God has granted us
 - That we might be useful to God for that purpose, even if it comes through our suffering, because that's how Christ Himself did His work for us
- Peter then continues to encourage...

1Pet. 4:7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

1Pet. 4:8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

1Pet. 4:9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

1Pet. 4:10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

1Pet. 4:11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- Peter follows his encouragement concerning the spread of the gospel with some of the most important pillars of Christian fellowship and service to one another within the Body
 - He addresses:
 - Prayer
 - Love
 - Hospitality
 - Contributing with our spiritual gifts
 - And doing everything to the glory of the Lord
- But with each of these directives, Peter offers a sensible reason behind its practice
 - For example, he says the church needs to be of sound judgment and sober so they can be ready and available for prayer
 - Because the end is near
 - What a powerful reminder to all of us
 - We should carry a hopeful expectation at all times that the end is near

- And I think Peter means not only the ultimate end of Christ's return for His church
- I think he also means the end for each one of us
 - Whether due to our own natural death or perhaps because the end comes upon us in persecution of the church
- But whatever the case, the end is always right around the corner
 - And therefore we are to be sober, not drunk, whether by excessive alcohol consumption or in some other lustful pursuit
 - Because when we give in to that lifestyle, we displace some other good pursuit
- And he says be fervent in love for one another to cover a multitude of sins
 - When times are short, and persecution comes, love among the brethren is at a premium
 - And it is something that must be cultivated
 - We must intellectually make a decision to show agape love
 - To serve others first and put their needs above our own
 - To be self-sacrificial
 - And this attitude among the believers will correct for a multitude of sins and offenses
- Likewise, be hospitable without complaint
 - Give shelter and comfort to those who need it
 - And don't begrudge their need, which defies true love
- Serve with your gift
 - There are two pieces of advice we could give to the church in any day, both in Peter's day and in our day, that would be revolutionary to the vitality and maturity of the church
 - The first is a life-long dedication to studying God's word
 - The second is an equally dedicated life of serving in our spiritual gift
 - Not just any kind of service or some random pattern of service
 - But daily serving the Body of Christ and doing so uniquely in the gift we've been given
 - Of course doing so requires we come to know and understand our gift, and then seeking to mature in practicing it
 - And then making time for using it rather than using time to our own desires
- So if you have the gift of prayer, you recognize it and practice it for the benefit of the Body to the glory of God
- If it is encouragement, then you counsel and comfort those in the Body who need it
- If it is service, then you seek ways to work for the needs of the church

- If it is teaching, then you teach
- If it is giving, then you put your industry and sacrifice into practice for the benefit of the church
- And so on...making service in your gift a priority in your life
- And then Peter sums up the advice by saying
 - No matter how you serve
 - Whether in gifts of utterance like teaching, preaching, or encouragement
 - Or in gifts of action like service, prayer, giving, etc.
 - In either case, give God the glory, because it was by His hand that you were even available and able to do such things



1Peter - Lesson 4B

Chapter 4:12-19

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- Generally, when considering what gets people through the door of a church on any given Sunday, trials, persecution and suffering would not be high on the list
- More than likely the message plays to our flesh and tickles our ears
 - Let's think back to how Peter began this chapter:

1Pet. 4:1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

- So how do we make our purpose to suffer for Christ?

1Pet. 4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

1Pet. 4:13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

1Pet. 4:14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

1Pet. 4:15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;

1Pet. 4:16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

- So why is this passage not popular in churches today?
 - Whilst Christians in Saudi Arabia or Iran would easily relate to a sermon topic on suffering or persecution
 - Not relevant in churches in the West
- Peter is writing to a group about to be killed for their faith
 - Burnt at the stake
 - Or taken to the coliseum to be eaten by lions
 - He's not talking about suffering a mild annoyance or rejection
- But it's a good thing that the church today (at least in the USA) is not suffering in that same way
- In this passage, Peter teaches a number of principles associated with suffering
 - First, in verse 12 Peter says the Christian should not be surprised when we encounter trials
 - Persecution or physical abuse or even martyrdom should not be a surprise to us
 - He even adds a hint of sarcasm here when he says that it is not as if some strange thing is happening when these trials come upon us
 - We know he is addressing this to Christians by the clear way he introduces the

section

- He calls his readers Beloved
- And he says they should not be surprised by the trials among them
 - And to be more specific, they are fiery trials
 - This is an interesting word in Greek
 - The word is *purosis*, which means burning to refine or purify
 - The word seems to describe not only the purpose of the trial – to purify and refine them
 - But also to describe the very nature of the trial
 - These were events that were ongoing
 - They were among these believers already
 - And since we know of Nero's persecution of Christians in Peter's day by burning them at the stake or on poles
 - Then it seems reasonable to conclude that his choice of words may have been intended to invoke a thought of those events
- How can Peter say this?
 - Don't act surprised if people want to burn you at the stake for your belief?
 - Don't act like something strange is happening
 - What does acting surprised mean?
 - How would you act if the government began to break down your front door and drag you off to prison or to the death row for your faith?
 - Would you be surprised?
 - Of course you would
 - In part, you would be surprised because it would be so unexpected in a culture with so many protections for individual rights
 - It would seem so surprising because we live in a country where the rule of law is so firmly established
 - Because we live in a culture that is largely pluralistic toward religion, where men have great freedom to practice their own religious faith
 - Do you realize I just described not only the United States, but also the Roman Empire
 - The Romans observed an extensive system of law that provided for many protections of individual liberty and for the rule of law
 - Roman citizens and even subjects of the realm were protected from abuses of power and false accusation
 - And although the Caesar's power was virtually unchecked, the local administrators were required to follow law and order in prosecuting criminals
 - Furthermore, the Roman culture took a pluralistic view of religion
 - To be more accurate, Roman religious culture practices syncretism which

is the blending of religions into a single worldview

- In that kind of culture, it would have been very surprising to see a sudden uprising against an otherwise peaceful and law abiding group of citizens in the way Nero orchestrated events against the Christians
 - No doubt they were surprised, and you and I need to appreciate that they were no less surprised than we would be if a soldier burst through our door right now
- So Peter is talking to us right now, and he's saying don't be surprised by a fiery ordeal, acting as if it's a strange thing
 - Persecution is not a strange thing but rather a common thing, at least when viewed from the perspective of history
 - And even today, many Christians around the world experience immense persecution
 - Persecution is not unusual
- The second principle Peter teaches in verse 13 is that suffering means we are identifying with Christ in His suffering
 - And that such an identification includes the opportunity to suffer with Him in His glory
 - Said another way, if we have been targeted by the enemy for such treatment, it is proof that he sees us as his enemy
 - And if the devil acknowledges us as his enemy, then it is further encouragement for us to know we are a child of God
 - And as such, we will have not only the privilege of suffering as Christ did
 - But we will also share in His glory, for our suffering is nothing more than a brief prelude to an eternal glory
 - It's much like childbirth, in the sense that if a woman must share in the pain of the experience
 - Then at least she can take comfort in the knowing that her pain is brief
 - And once it ends, she will experience the joy of a new child
 - And that joy will stay with her the rest of her life, or at least until the child is two
 - This is how it is for us as we suffer in trials
 - We have the blessing of an assurance of a coming glory with Christ and a chance to share in His joy
- Peter confirms the blessedness of persecution in verse 14 with his third point
 - He says that when we are reviled for Jesus' sake, we are blessed
 - The word for reviled literally means insulted verbally
 - So when people insult us because we believe in Christ, consider it a blessing
 - And Peter clarifies what he means by that paradoxical truth by explaining that the Spirit of Glory and of God rest upon us
 - What does it mean that we have the Holy Spirit rest on us and in us?

- Consider the following scripture verses

Rom. 8:14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

1John 3:1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

- When we have the Spirit, we are made the children of God
 - And that Spirit not only makes us a child of God, it testifies that we are a child of God
 - And when the Spirit rests upon us, it is the Spirit of Glory, the Shechinah glory of God shining to the world through our lives
 - And when the world sees that glory, and that we are children of God, the enemy is enraged and rejects us just as it rejected Christ
 - And as Peter just said, we can consider ourselves blessed when we are persecuted because it becomes additional confirmation that we are His children
- Now in case any of us or any of Peter's readers were tempted to take this rule and reverse it
 - Peter quickly adds verse 15
 - He says we should make sure we are suffering as a murderer, thief, evildoer, or a troublesome meddler
 - Well I was doing pretty good there until he mentioned that last one
 - And actually that last word just means a general troublemaker
 - *Allotriepiskopos* – one who meddles in things that are alien to his calling
 - You see, we can't take this principle and reverse it
 - Even though a believer can take encouragement in suffering for Christ as proof of their faith
 - Not all suffering is proof of our faith, and therefore not all suffering is a blessing
 - Suffering for doing the wrong thing is suffering we deserve and we can take no pleasure in it
 - And we certainly shouldn't seek after it
- But following this aside, Peter returns to conclude his point in verse 16
 - If anyone suffers as a Christian, he should not be ashamed but glorify God
 - The irony of this verse is found in the way Peter uses the term Christian
 - It's actually a rare term in New Testament writing

- It's only found here and twice in the New Testament
- In general it's not a complimentary term in Peter's day
 - It is a derogatory term used by unbelievers to describe Christians
 - It means a little Christ, and in that sense it is intended to identify believers with an executed criminal, but only less significant still
- That's why Peter says that we should not be ashamed at the title, because in his day believers were often ashamed to be identified with Christ in that way
 - Don't be ashamed to be identified closely with your Lord, even when your enemies use such terms to insult you
 - Rather count it as reason to glorify God
 - Imagine how this would have played out in their experience
 - Imagine men and women walking to synagogue to worship their Messiah
 - And as they pass through the city streets, their Jewish family and friends turn on them and mock them calling them Christian
 - Which literally means a Christ follower, a little Christ
 - And where before the sound of those words might have wounded their pride and hurt their feelings
 - Now they remember Peter's words and glorify God
 - Thanking God that they might be blessed to be counted among those who know the Lord

1Pet. 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

1Pet. 4:18 AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?

1Pet. 4:19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

- Verse 17 introduces Peter's next principle of suffering
 - The word "for" at the beginning of this section alerts us that there is a conclusion or application to be made
 - For judgment begins with the household of God
 - Who is this household?
 - Peter says it is us
 - It begins first with us
 - What does that mean?
 - Don't believers escape judgment?
- Peter has said already that we are to identify with Christ in our suffering for His name's sake

Phil 1:29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

- But our suffering is intended for our benefit, to refine us
 - And to appreciate what Christ went through for our sake so we may identify with Him
- But for the unbeliever, who may escape suffering there is a time appointed for their judgment which they cannot escape
 - At the same time that our suffering will end forever
- Peter is putting these two in context
 - Our suffering may be short, for a time, and for good purpose
 - And does not compare with the eternal suffering of the unbeliever
- Paul describes this same principle in his letter to the church in Thessalonica

2Th. 1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;

2Th. 1:4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

2Th. 1:5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

2Th. 1:6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,

2Th. 1:7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

2Th. 1:8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

2Th. 1:9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

2Th. 1:10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.

- Their faith was greatly enlarged and their love for one another grew
 - Why? Because of their perseverance and faith in the midst of persecutions
 - And then Paul says it is only just for God to repay those who persecute the church with afflictions
- Which is why in verse 19 Peter can make his profound conclusion
 - Those of us who have been ordained to suffer for doing what's right

- For believing in Christ
- For being a child of God
- For showing His light in this dark world
- If we are appointed to suffer for those good reasons, then we must also be prepared to trust God to know what's He's doing in the process
 - We entrust our souls to this God and we don't second guess His judgment
 - We don't demand answers to the difficult questions of life before we obey
- We don't question God's motives when we witness suffering nor do we waive in our trust that He is at work on His throne bringing all things to good for the sake of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose
- Rather, we trust and we obey and we rejoice
 - Are you prepared to do this? You may be called to do it sooner than you ever imagined



1Peter - Lesson 5

Chapter 5: 1-14

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- Last week we began the challenging discussion on trials and persecution
 - In a world attracted to a feel good kind of Christianity, Peter left us with a decidedly unpopular command concerning suffering for Christ
 - Thomas Constable (from Dallas Theological Seminary) offers a concise overview of Peter's teaching when he says:

The most striking feature of Peter's teaching on suffering for Christ is its bold emphasis on the sovereignty and initiative of God, even in the suffering of his own people:

- God allows us to suffer to demonstrate our character (v. 12).
- Those who identify themselves with Jesus Christ will share in the sufferings of our Savior (v. 13; cf. Phil. 3:10).
- Our sufferings will be an occasion of God blessing us (v. 14).
- In addition, our suffering will glorify God (v. 16).
- He then redirected our perspective on suffering by reminding us of the difference in the time and intensity of our sufferings as compared with those of unbelievers (vv. 17-18).
- Finally he concluded with an exhortation to trust God and do right (v. 19).

- Does this teaching fit into our present church culture?
 - Are we prepared to suffer much less inviting it and praying for it?
 - For the privilege of suffering for the name of Christ?
 - What a challenging way to enter into the week of Christ's passion, death and resurrection
- A time of suffering in any group, including the church, places special importance on strong, Biblical leadership
 - When times get tough, the tough get going, but the weak fall away unless good leadership prepares the group and helps hold it together
 - In fact, I find God's timing this morning to be so amazing
 - Here we are on Easter, and it was Christ's resurrection that had the immediate effect of plunging the Apostles and the rest of Jesus' disciples into confusion and disarray
 - The flock scattered and were in danger of disappearing altogether
 - Until the Good Shepherd stepped in to encourage the faithful
 - What happened to the eleven? They were supposed to step into the void and lead the church forward
 - But they faltered
- And so it's only natural that Peter would follow Chapter 4 with an exhortation to the leadership of the church to uphold their proper responsibilities in the face of persecution

1Pet. 5:1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,

1Pet. 5:2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

1Pet. 5:3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

- With his final “therefore “ application, Peter sets his gaze squarely on the church’s leadership, and so will we this morning
 - Peter gives the elders of the church an exhortation (I exhort you)
 - An exhortation is more than merely encouragement or request
 - It is an appeal made based on a compelling argument or circumstance
 - We exhort someone when the necessity and sensibility of our appeal are self-evident
 - We beseech them to respond as they know they must
 - Peter doesn’t begin his last section of his letter as he might have
 - He doesn’t say “I command you as an apostle of Jesus Christ...”
 - He could have said that certainly
 - Instead, Peter makes his appeal on the basis of a shared experience and obligation
 - He refers to himself as a fellow elder, a fellow under-shepherd
 - *Sumpresbuteros* – only occurs here
 - Not a chief elder, but *sum* – meaning together
 - Peter was with them as an equal in this issue of suffering
 - He witnessed the suffering of our Lord, so he understands the road he’s asking the church to walk
 - He is also a partaker in the promised reward of sharing in Christ’s glory, so he has the same obligation to honor the Lord through obedience
 - In other words, Peter must be prepared to follow his own advice
 - And follow it, he did, all the way to an upside down cross as church tradition teaches
- What Peter establishes in this opening verse is a Biblical standard we often see repeated in secular circles, but sadly it’s becoming less and less common in the church
 - The principle is, never ask someone to do something that you are not prepared to do yourself
 - Military commanders are taught this axiom of leadership
 - Successful parents adopt this viewpoint rather than “Do as I say rather than as I do”

- Coaches live by this standard, because who will receive instruction from a coach who doesn't model it in their own game?
- This is the essence of Peter's opening statement
 - He exhorts the church to follow his lead, to do as he does
 - He repeats this thought in verse 3
 - The leader is to prove to be an example to the flock
 - To actually live according to his own teaching
- Peter never made his teaching or commands on the basis of absolute apostolic authority, though he could have done so
 - He preferred to lead by example and to model appropriate behavior in his own walk
 - This is the one true model for Biblical leadership
 - It is the antithesis of hypocrisy
 - Leadership that leads in action rather than in words alone
- Our leaders should follow in Peter's footsteps
 - For example, if leaders want to stress the importance of Bible study, then they can best do that through their own participation in congregational Bible studies
 - If leaders want to encourage their congregation in the regular practice of prayer, they will find no more effective means than to pray with the congregation
 - If a leader wants the congregation to give generously to the work of the church, then the leaders should be a model of generosity
 - Likewise, the principle often works in reverse
 - If the flock is suffering from various ills
 - Whether it be inappropriate gossip, or poor attendance at church functions or lack of compassion for the needy or a general hesitation to share the gospel with others, etc.
 - So often we need look no further than leadership to find the seeds of that concern
- I think Peter makes his appeal here on the basis of a shared experience and obligation rather than on the basis of his apostolic authority *because* he believes he can make a stronger case based on his life example than he could merely by his title
 - There is a lesson in that for all of us, and especially for leaders
 - Our strength and usefulness as the Lord's under-shepherds is directly proportionate to the success of our personal walk of obedience and humility
 - Then in verse 2 Peter continues his instruction by telling the leaders they...
 - Should shepherd the flock of God
 - Not under compulsion, but voluntarily
 - According to the will of God
 - Not for sordid gain
 - With eagerness

- Not lording over those under their care
 - But living as example
- In verses 1-3, there are a series of important principles for church leadership we need to understand
 - First, verse 1 says a leader is to be an elder
 - Now we have come to use that term as an office, but Peter is using the term more as a qualification than as an office
 - The literal meaning of the word is old man
 - In other words, Peter calls himself a fellow old man
 - And while the term is also used to describe an office or position
 - It also described one of the inherent qualifications for becoming an elder in the church
 - You must be an older man
 - This confirms what Paul teaches in his pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus when he describes leaders as men who have obtained to certain level of spiritual maturity
 - The Bible views age as a necessary – but not sufficient – component of wisdom and spiritual maturity
 - You can't become spiritually mature overnight, so age is a necessity
 - You can't fake age

The Marx Brothers were originally a kid act, so they traveled at half-fare, even after the brothers had reached their twenties. Minnie [their mother] insisted they were still thirteen...

On one trip the conductor contested the mother's claim, saying 'that kid of yours is in the dining car smoking a cigar and another one is in the washroom shaving.' Minnie shook her head sadly. 'They grow so fast!'"

- But then not all those who are older will automatically have spiritual maturity either
 - The believer is expected to grow spiritually as they grow older physically
 - Also note that leaders are not called to a higher level of maturity than all believers in general
 - All believers should attain to the same degree of maturity
 - But only those who have actually done so should be called into leadership
 - And obtaining that maturity requires time in our walk and in our study
 - So leaders should generally come from the older and more mature members of a congregation
 - We should not elevate men into leadership positions too quickly or at too early an age
- In verse 2 Peter then says the leaders must act as shepherds of the flock
 - The word for shepherd (*poimaino*) means to tend

- To feed the sheep, to lead them and guide them to safe places
- To guard them from danger
- To keep them in order and moving together
- This is the role of a leader of the Lord's flock
 - It's not a CEO
 - It's not an administrator or dictator or commander
- First and foremost, the role of an elder is as a shepherd, a pastor who cares for the flock
 - Which means the church isn't ours
 - The leadership doesn't have a right to their position nor should they expect their flock to place them on a pedestal
 - They should not lord over their flock, as Peter says in verse 3
 - Not an oppressive kind of leadership, but rather one done by setting the right example
 - It's been said that a shepherd can't drive the flock ahead, but must lead it from the front
- Next, leaders must serve voluntarily
 - Now that may seem a bit odd, since we don't typically see this happening today
 - But in some parts of the world there is a strong desire to draft people into leadership
 - Third world churches where women vastly outnumber men, we may see women pressing men into service as elders
 - Biblically, leaders must volunteer
 - But notice how that desire arises in the first place
 - Point 4: they serve by the will of God
 - A man who discovers a sincere desire to be an under-shepherd and to serve God's people in a leadership role is showing evidence of God's prompting
 - That's why compulsion of any kind is strictly prohibited
 - We want to see a man earnestly desire to lead and serve God's people because that desire is a reflection of God's choice
 - God raises men up to lead in His church
 - And we should expect to see that desire evidenced in the voluntary desire of a godly man to serve in leadership
- Next, the leader is not to find his source of desire in sordid gain
 - Sordid gain means a greedy, dishonest kind of gain
 - Serving because of a desire to turn that service into a source of personal material benefit
 - We should notice that Peter's instructions were not that a man should not serve for gain
 - In other words, Peter didn't prohibit being paid for service

- To the contrary, a leader in the church has every reason to expect reasonable, fair payment for their devoted service to the church
 - This principle shows up time and again in the New Testament
 - It is to a congregation's shame if they are unwilling to support those who look out for their spiritual needs
- But the leader must never fall prey to love of money and seek to use God's people in this way
 - Fundamentally, we're talking about serving out of a love for the Lord and His people rather than to see what we can get out of it
 - Some rules of thumb we could use to guide us here are:
 - A leader who takes his income from the congregation should not enjoy a lifestyle substantially better than the congregation as a whole
 - His commitment to serve should not vary according to the level of compensation
 - His heart to serve and even his service itself should begin even before the compensation is available
- Finally, the leader should be eager to serve
 - This goes hand in hand with everything we've already said, but it puts everything in perspective
 - And it offers something of a warning to leaders
 - If a leader wakes up one day and finds himself dreading his opportunity to serve
 - If the joy is gone, and the desire to serve is replaced with a compulsory obligation
 - If the privilege has become burden
 - Then that person has ceased to be a shepherd and should step down
 - They are no less an elder
 - After all, they are still old and presumably are still spiritually mature
 - So their qualifications are still there
 - But they should no longer carry the responsibilities of the job
 - And give them over to someone who is eager for the opportunity to serve God's people
- These are the essential characteristics you want to seek in your leader
 - And particularly if the aim is to raise strong, healthy sheep
 - Sheep who are themselves being prepared to stand in the day of their testing
 - And likewise in our day, good leadership is essential to a healthy and strong church
 - And the reward to leaders themselves is found not only in the health of the congregation, but in true eternal reward

1Pet. 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading

crown of glory.

- Leaders who have been faithful in their calling can be assured that at the moment they stand before Christ, the Chief Shepherd, they will receive reward
 - Peter calls this reward the crown of glory, and it's unfading
 - Meaning it's eternal
 - It's a reward that comes at the moment we see Jesus and it lasts forevermore
 - The word for crown is *stephanos*, which is the word from which we get the name Stephen
 - It's one of two words for crown used in the New Testament, the other being *diadem*
 - *Diadem* refers to the kind of crown that only royalty may wear
 - A crown you inherit, a crown you cannot earn but must have bestowed upon you
 - This is not the kind of crown we're talking about here
 - This is a crown that is earned and awarded based on performance
 - This was the kind of crown awarded to Olympic athletes at the end of a race
 - Paul uses this word in describing a different kind of award he expects to receive

2Tim. 4:8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

- These aren't metaphors for salvation
 - The context and usage are completely different
 - We're talking about the rewards earned by believers for their works done in faith following salvation (laid up)
 - Awards that are not given until the appearing of Christ
 - Faithful leaders can look forward to the day when they may receive a crown for their service
- Now I know not everyone in here is a leader or even interested in becoming one
 - So in case you were tempted to tune out a little at this point, Peter catches the rest of us in the next few verses
 - Because good leadership can achieve virtually nothing without good followers

1Pet. 5:5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

1Pet. 5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He

may exalt you at the proper time,

1Pet. 5:7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

- Peter begins with younger men, those not old enough to be elders yet, your duty is to obey your elders
 - And actually, the word in Greek means younger ones, so it is speaking of everyone; men and women
 - We all obey our elders
 - The church is fundamentally not a democracy
 - The scriptures tells us we are slaves to Christ, not volunteers
 - And those appointed over us should receive our obedience as they seek to obey Christ
 - As the book of Hebrews says:

Heb. 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

- We owe our leaders a cooperative, loving, submitted spirit so that we can help them in the difficult tasks they carry on our behalf
 - And in fact, as Hebrews says, when we resist them, we only hurt ourselves
 - Peter connects our obedience to our elders as an issue of humility and submission to God Himself
 - Peter has come back once again to emphasize that our willingness to submit and to obey is really an issue of sovereignty
 - If we fully appreciate the unbound, unquestioned authority that God possesses in working out all things according to the counsel of His good and perfect will
 - Then when circumstances come upon us, whether good or bad
 - And when leaders direct us in ways we may not understand much less agree with
 - We won't fight back, or complain or retreat
 - We won't quietly slip out the back door and find a new congregation where they do things the way we like
 - We will prayerfully seek to know God's will and accept that His will is at work through our leadership
 - So long as that leadership conducts itself according to scripture and adheres to the doctrines and principles found therein
 - We can then confidently cast ourselves on God
 - All our cares, anxieties and worries
 - Like a sheep trusting its Shepherd to take it home safely
 - But then we do need to be prepared ourselves

- We aren't merely passengers on a cruise ship while our elders make the beds, and wash the dishes
- Rather, we are on a warship, and it's all hands on deck

1Pet. 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

1Pet. 5:9 But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

1Pet. 5:10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

1Pet. 5:11 To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- Our corporate responsibilities are:
 - First be sober, on alert
 - My translation adds sober in spirit, but I think Peter is making a general statement about our state of mind as well as our spiritual countenance
 - We all need to get serious about this war we are engaged in
 - Serving in the kingdom of Christ is serious business
 - And it begins even now as we serve Him in this world
 - We don't just pass time here waiting until we die and then eternity begins
 - It began the day you were saved, and now you're on the clock
 - Because our enemy hasn't stopped his work
 - The devil, Peter says, is prowling like a lion
 - When Peter says "your adversary", Peter emphasizes that the devil is our personal enemy
 - He knows us in that way
 - And he sees us as prey
 - To be devoured
- How does a shepherd protect the flock from a roaring lion?
 - First, you have everyone in a group, because there is safety in numbers
 - Secondly, the shepherd and the sheep are alert and ready for the attack
 - And when the attack comes, the flock resists the enemy
 - Our success in this battle comes from three steps
 - Be alert and ready for these attacks – not asleep at the wheel, blissfully ignorant
 - Secondly, be active in resisting the enemy – take steps in preparation: Bible study, prayer
 - Finally, place your trust in the One who is able to make you stand in the face of these attacks

- He will perfect you, confirm you, strengthen you, and establish you
- Even when the attacks mean the end of your life
 - Because, no matter how long they last or what the outcome may be, in the end you will see the glory promised to believers
 - To Him be dominion, forever
- Peter closes with a few personal notes which we will read to conclude the letter

1Pet. 5:12 Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!

1Pet. 5:13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.

1Pet. 5:14 Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

- You know, when we began this letter, I mentioned how ironic it was, in a sense, that Peter would be the one to write this letter
 - He was the man who betrayed Jesus in a time of testing
 - He was the one Jesus said that Satan had asked permission to sift along with the other disciples
 - And he was the one who cracked under the pressure of Christ's persecution
- Yet Jesus restored him
 - And then set him on a course to restore his brothers
 - And in this letter, Peter seeks to do the same for all the saints including for us today
 - That we would be prepared for that day of trial, for a day of suffering potentially, but a day we may stand rather than fail