

5-1-1980

Peace in Persecution: A Series of Sermons on the First Epistle of Peter

R. Scott Hulet

Recommended Citation

Hulet, R. Scott, "Peace in Persecution: A Series of Sermons on the First Epistle of Peter" (1980). *Western Evangelical Seminary Theses*. 354.
https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/wes_theses/354

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Western Evangelical Seminary at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Western Evangelical Seminary Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact arolf@georgefox.edu.

80

PEACE IN PERSECUTION
A SERIES OF SERMONS ON THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of Western Evangelical Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Divinity

by
R. Scott Hulet
May 1980

PORTLAND CENTER LIBRARY
GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY
PORTLAND, OR. 97223

Approved by: Wayne McCann

Major Professor

Cooperative Reader Joseph Carlson

Date: May 29, 1980

36551

Introduction to This Series

The First Epistle of Peter is a letter of encouragement and exhortation to a suffering people. The purpose of this study is to examine the Apostle's letter and other pertinent materials to discover what it meant in the life situation of those to whom it was sent. Then as a final product of that examination, the eternal truths that transcend all time have been presented in this series of sermons in a style that communicates to the modern Christian.

The Apostle tells us that we can have "Peace in Persecution."

The First Epistle of Peter

- I. The Salutation 1:1-2
 - A. Author Identified 1a
 - 1. Peter
 - 2. An Apostle of Jesus Christ
 - B. Audience Identified 1b-2
 - 1. Who they are
 - a. "God's elect"
 - b. "strangers in the world"
 - c. "scattered through out . . ."
 - 2. Why they are
 - a. chosen "for obedience"
 - b. chosen "for sprinkling by his blood"
 - 3. Who made them that way
 - a. "God the Father"
 - b. "sanctifying work of the Spirit"
 - c. "obedience to Jesus Christ"
 - C. Blessing Pronounced 2
 - 1. Grace
 - 2. Peace
- II. Our Living Hope: An Eschatological Salvation 1:3-12
 - A. The Source of Salvation 3
 - 1. God the Father
 - 2. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - B. The Character of Future Salvation 4-5
 - 1. A Secure Inheritance
 - a. imperishable
 - b. undefiled
 - c. unfading
 - d. kept in heaven
 - 2. A Secure Heir
 - a. by God's power
 - b. through faith shielded
 - C. The Character of Present Salvation 6-9
 - 1. A Reason for Rejoicing
 - 2. A Reason for Suffering
 - D. The Search for Salvation
 - 1. The Prophets Searched
 - a. When is the time?
 - b. What are the circumstances?
 - 2. It was Revealed
 - a. They were not serving themselves
 - b. They were serving you
- III. Prepare for Action 1:13-2:3
 - A. A Disposition of Hope 13
 - 1. "prepare your minds"
 - 2. "be self-controlled"
 - 3. "set your hope fully on the grace . . ."
 - B. A Lifestyle of Holiness 14-2:3
 - 1. Children of Obedience 14-16
 - a. "do not conform to the evil desires"
 - b. "be holy, because I am holy"

2. Fear of God 17-21
 - a. redeemed by the "precious blood of Jesus Christ"
 - b. "chosen before the creation of the world"
 - c. "revealed in these last times for your sake"
 - d. "raised him from the dead"
 3. Love of One Another 22-25
 - a. "purified . . . by obeying the truth"
 - b. "love . . . deeply from the heart"
 - c. a response of gratitude
 4. Craving of Spiritual Food 2:1-3
 - a. "like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk"
 - b. "you have tasted that the Lord is good"
- IV. The People of God: A Spiritual House 2:4-12
- A. Its Living Cornerstone 2:4,6-8
 1. rejected by men
 2. chosen by God
 3. precious to him
 4. precious to believers
 5. a cause of stumbling to the non-believers
 - B. Its Living Stones 2:5,9a,10
 1. you are "being built into a spiritual house"
 2. "to be a holy priesthood"
 - a. "offering spiritual sacrifices"
 - b. "through Jesus Christ"
 3. "a chosen people"
 4. "a royal priesthood"
 5. "a holy nation"
 6. "a people belonging to God"
 - a. "once you were not a people"
 - "once you had not received mercy"
 - b. "but now you are the people of God"
 - "now you have received mercy"
 - C. Its Holy Purpose 2:9b,10-12
 1. "that you may declare the praises of him"
 2. abstain from sinful desires
 3. live good lives
 4. that the pagan may see your good deeds
 5. and glorify God
- V. A Lifestyle of Submission 2:13-3:12
- A. An Example from Government 13-17
 1. The Instruction 13,14

"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men . . ."
 2. The Purpose 15

"By doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men"
 3. The Strategy 16,17
 - a. live as free men
 - b. live as servants of God

- c. show respect to everyone
 - 1. brotherhood of believers
 - 2. God
 - 3. the king
 - B. An Example of Slavery 18-25
 - 1. The Instruction 18
 - "Slaves submit yourselves to your master with all respect"
 - 2. The Purpose 19
 - "For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God"
 - 3. The Strategy 20-25
 - a. there is no glory in suffering for doing wrong
 - b. Christ's suffering is your example
 - 1. when insulted, he did not retaliate
 - 2. when he suffered, he made no threats
 - 3. he entrusted himself to God
 - C. An Example from Marriage 3:1-7
 - 1. For the Wives 3:1-6
 - a. The Instruction
 - "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands"
 - b. The Purpose
 - "So that . . . they may be won over without talk by the behavior of their wives"
 - c. The Strategy
 - 1. not outward adornment
 - 2. but inner self, a gentle and quiet spirit
 - 3. the holy women of the past are your example
 - 2. For the Husbands 7
 - a. The Instruction
 - "In the same way be considerate"
 - b. The Purpose
 - "so that nothing will hinder your prayers"
 - c. The Strategy
 - 1. treat them with respect
 - 2. as the weaker partner
 - 3. as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life
 - D. A Summary Exhortation 8-12
 - 1. "live in harmony with one another"
 - 2. "be sympathetic"
 - 3. "love as brothers"
 - 4. "be compassionate"
 - 5. "be humble"
 - 6. "do not repay evil with evil or insult with

- insult, but with blessing"
- VI. Suffering for Doing Good 3:13-4:19
- A. The Premise 3:13,14 & 4:12-19
1. "If you suffer for what is right, you are blessed." 3:14
 2. "Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering." 4:12
 3. "But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ." 4:13-16
 4. "For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God." 4:17,18
 5. "So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good." 4:19
- B. The Model 3:18-22
1. "Christ died for sins"
 - a. once for all
 - b. to bring men to God
 2. "put to death in the body"
 3. "made alive in the Spirit"
 - a. Through whom he went and preached to the spirits in prison from the days of Noah
 - b. The water of Noah's day symbolizes baptism that now saves you
 - c. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ
 1. who has gone into heaven
 2. who is at God's right hand
- C. The Implementation 3:14-16 & 4:1-3,6-11
1. "Set apart Christ as Lord" 3:14-16
 - a. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened"
 - b. "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have"
 1. do this with gentleness and respect
 2. keeping in clear conscience
 3. "so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander"
 2. "Arm yourselves also with the same attitude" 4:1
 - a. Not living for evil human desires 4:2a, 3,6a
 - b. But rather living for the will of God 4:2b,6b
 1. Be clear minded 4:7
 2. Self-controlled 4:7
 3. Faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms

- a. "Love each other deeply" 4:8
 - b. "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling" 4:9
 - c. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others" 4:10
 - d. "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God." 4:11
 - e. "If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides" 4:11
- D. The Response of the World 4:4
 - 1. "They think it strange"
 - 2. "They heap abuse"
- E. The Response of God 4:5
 - 1. Ready to judge the living
 - 2. Ready to judge the dead
- VII. An Appeal to the Elders and the Youth 5:1-11
 - A. Peter's Basis for Appeal 5:1
 - 1. "A fellow elder"
 - 2. "A witness of Christ's sufferings"
 - 3. "One who also will share in the glory to be revealed"
 - B. Peter's Appeal to the Elders 5:2
 - 1. "Be shepherds of God's flock"
 - a. serve as overseers
 - b. serve out of a willing desire, eager to serve
 - 1. "not because you must"
 - 2. "not greedy for money"
 - 3. "not lording it over"
 - 2. Be examples to the flock
 - C. Peter's Appeal to the Youth 5:5-9
 - 1. "Be submissive to those who are older"
 - 2. "Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another"
 - 3. "Cast all your anxiety on God because he cares for you"
 - 4. "Be self-controlled and alert"
 - 5. Resist the devil
 - 6. "Standing firm in the faith"
 - D. Peter's Promise 5:10
- VIII. Final Greetings 5:12-14
 - A. A Helper
 - B. A Message
 - C. A Greeting
 - D. A Blessing

"CHOSEN FOR OBEDIENCE"
1:1-2

Introduction

What do you say to a Christian who is suffering persecution? What would you say if you knew they were probably in for a whole lot more?

The Apostle Peter was faced with such questions as he wrote to a few Jewish and Gentile Christians who were scattered throughout the areas identified as Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. They were aliens in the lands where they lived. The persecution they had suffered had probably been the cause of leaving their own homes.

Peter calls these Christians "strangers." They were sojourners. Their residence was only temporary. One sees in this description not only the physical unsettledness of these people but also their spiritual condition of being related to the eternal God and possessing citizenship in heaven. A deeper attachment and a higher allegiance directed them in their lives. As Paul reminds us, Christians "look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

The only thing that could unite them was their mutual citizenship in the unseen kingdom. And that is what Peter immediately brings to focus. He addresses them as God's elect strangers. They are homeless and persecuted, but Peter brings a word of encouragement and exhortation to them: you are chosen by God.

Peter is thinking about the citizenship among the called of God. This is to be understood from the background of the elect nation of the Old Testament. The elements of the new life in Christ are the same as the requirements placed upon the chosen nation of the Hebrews. They are faith and obedience. To believe and to obey God results in entrance to his kingdom. The elect is distinguished by faith and obedience.

Peter does not attempt to build a theological case for election. He simply describes how it operates. In these two verses, Peter speaks about The Source of Election, The Means of Election and The Purpose of Election.

I. The Source of Election

Peter writes to those "who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." The source of election is the foreknowledge of God the Father.

As a youngster, I remember the awesome awareness that my mother seemed to know everything. Sometimes that was good because she knew when I needed help. Other times it wasn't quite as good for she knew that I had done something wrong.

God is omniscient. There is nothing that passes by without his knowledge of it. The Psalmist writes:

O Lord, you have searched me
 and you know me.
 You know when I sit and when I rise;
 you perceive my thoughts from afar.
 You discern my going out and my lying down;
 you are familiar with all my ways.
 Before a word is on my tongue
 you know it completely, O Lord. (Ps. 139:1-6)

The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah and said:

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart;
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.
(Jer. 1:5)

In this word that came from the Lord, it is the man himself that is the object of the divine foreknowledge, and his setting apart and ordination to the prophetic calling are immediate developments and consequences of it.

These same ideas characterize Paul's statement in Romans 8:29-30. Here Paul says that God's foreknowledge leads through predestination, calling and justification to ultimate glory. Another important statement of Paul's is in Romans 11:2. The Apostle writes "God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew."

Recognizing the Church as the true Israel, Peter now affirms that God's foreknowledge, with all that it conveys of providential care, appointment to service in the world, and glorious privilege, embraces also these feeble and scattered communities of Christians.

That is a good word to a suffering people. When everything seems to be falling around you, it is good to hear again that God is still in control and that He knows what is happening. He even knows before it happens.

The source of election is the advance knowledge of God.

II. The Means of Election

Peter identifies the means of election as "the sanctifying work of the Spirit." Foreknowledge is the condition,

God the Father is involved in that. But it is the Holy Spirit who in his sanctifying power brings the elect to conviction and conversion.

Peter had walked with Jesus. If there was something in Jesus' teaching that he did not understand, he would ask Jesus himself. It was the presence and call of the man Jesus which caused Peter to respond in obedience. Peter was also most likely present when Jesus taught about the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

John records in his Gospel these words in the sixteenth chapter, verses 7-11.

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment; about sin, because men do not believe in me, about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to bring us to God. Christ did that while on earth and he made provision for us when he returned to his father. The Holy Spirit brings us to God through his sanctifying power.

This holy power is founded in God himself. Just the other day I was teaching a group of junior children. We were talking about God. I asked one young lady to tell me what holy meant. By her answer I thought for sure that she must be a theologian. She said, "Holy means that God is different than we are. He is pure and has never sinned."

"God is different than we are." The idea of being different or set apart as unique is very significant. As recorded in Matthew 23, our Lord speaks of the Temple that sanctifies the gift. The gold and gift are dedicated, set apart, and reckoned as especially sacred and valuable by their relation to the already holy Temple and altar.

In his high priestly prayer of John 17, Christ says, "For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified." (John 17:19) Because Christ set himself apart, we now today can be set apart for his purpose. This is God's marvelous provision of salvation that baffles the mind.

Christ by His sacrifice sanctifies His brethren not only in the sense of setting apart but also in that of equipping them for the worship and service of God. This He does by making propitiation for their sins and cleansing their consciences from dead works.

This is to be understood in a national relationship. Israel was a people, a nation, sanctified, i.e., set apart to become the media for the coming of the Messiah and the fulfillment of God's redemptive purpose. By the act of setting apart, by hallowing for a designated purpose the Holy Spirit imparts God's divine attribute of holiness to the Christian society, consecrating it, calling it out of the world, devoting it to God and furnishing it with Divine gifts and powers. The Christian community is now God's nation and it is sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

To these people who were alien, suffering in a foreign

land, Peter says you have been set apart by the Holy Spirit.

III. The Purpose of Election

The foreknowledge of God and the sanctification of the Spirit lead to "obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood." This is the purpose of election.

Ours is an election not to privilege but to responsibility. God has not simply set us aside to receive special benefits. Whatever benefits we do receive are to be used to bring the world to God. In the second chapter of this epistle Peter identified the Christian community as "a holy nation," "a royal priesthood." Our responsibility to the world is as priests. As Israel was chosen to bring forth the Messiah, we are chosen to proclaim his gospel to a lost world.

Obedience is to listen to the law of God and faithfully serve according to it. In obedience we see the active human side of our relationship with God. The divine side of pardon and acceptance is seen in the "sprinkling by his blood."

The figure of sprinkling is taken from Exodus 24 and carries a sacramental understanding. The people pledged their obedience to the Law of God, the commandments which Moses had received on Mount Sinai and Moses sprinkled over them the blood of the oxen offered in sacrifice. These are the words in Exodus 24:7-8:

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said; we

will obey. Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.

From this happening we see the idea of sacrifice as a sacrament which binds the worshipper and his God together in vital communion, establishing between them a current of life in which both participate.

It is not unusual that we often call the Lord's Supper "Communion." Communion is a biblical word. It speaks about what we do as we participate in the sacrament of the bread and the cup together as a community. We demonstrate our oneness, our commonality with God and our fellow believers. But the communion is activated by our obedience. In the Christian community this fellowship of man with God has the most profound consequences in our behavior. It must be shown forth in man's obedience to the revelation of the divine will for him. The blood of sacrifice, which is the sign and seal of the covenant made between God and man is indissolubly linked with the obedience without which the communion cannot be maintained.

To disobey means a loss of communion. Disobedience is sin. Paul Rees has said:

The sign and proof of being among the 'elect' is not an empty prating of how secure we are once we have believed, but rather how sensitive we are to the principle and practice of obedience to the Saviour we have trusted.¹

¹Paul Rees, Triumphant in Trouble (West Wood, NJ: Fleming H. Revel Co., 1962), p. 25.

Peter's message is you have been chosen "for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood." You have been chosen to receive the benefits of his covenant as you are obedient.

Conclusion

Peter has reached these people at their one common ground. They are scattered. They are strangers. Their citizenship on earth is destroyed. But under God's power they are a nation.

Like these to whom Peter writes we are strangers in the world in which we live. Our citizenship on earth is at best temporary. But under God's power we are an eternal nation. We are an everlasting people. As Israel was chosen we "have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood."

God knew that we would be set aside to obey him. This is a message of grace and peace. And that is the blessing Peter gives: "Grace and peace be yours in abundance."

"SALVATION: NOW AND THEN"
1:3-12

Introduction

Not too many months ago I was talking with a group of young people. Our conversation was one of those in which you try to solve all the problems of the world in about thirty minutes. I had asked if anyone there believed in life after death. The answer was immediate: "No!" My second question was "What does that mean for you now in your present life?" This time the answers were not quite as immediate. After a period of time, one said, "I guess that means I have to do what I want to do and do it now." Another said, "I have to get all I can get because after it's over, there's nothing more." A third comment was, "I want to do things that make me happy now."

The nature of our salvation in Christ is in sharp contrast to these comments. These young people live only for now. Eternity has no meaning. Their security is simply based in themselves. And it is, in reality, only for a moment and then gone. The Apostle Peter identifies in the beginning verses of chapter one of his first epistle, some of the elements of what our salvation is and from whom it comes. He talks about the Source of Salvation, the Character of Future Salvation, the Character of Present Salvation and the Minister of Salvation.

I. The Source of Salvation

A. God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

Our text begins with an explosion of praise: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1:3)

The source of our salvation is God himself. We must be realistic about man. We can not save ourselves. Even in our greatest hour, we can not create that which is eternal. We must bow to God. God is far greater than we. He is perfect. He is worthy to be praised. It might more literally be said that he is "worthy of blessing." All creation praises him. If man were dumb, the stones would cry out.

It has been said "man is the measure of all things." But only a quick glance at history will show the frailty of man. A man who wanted desperately to bring salvation to his followers led them to mass suicide in a jungle of South America. There was no salvation, only destruction.

The people to whom Peter wrote were under persecution. The weakness and stupidity of man had been their daily experience. To be reminded of God's greatness and his mercy must have been profoundly refreshing.

The richness of this statement of praise is in the revelation of God as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" He is not only God, but he is God as revealed in relationship to his only Son. He is not only his Father but also is his God. And the Son is described in three ways, in his relationship to us "our Lord," in his person "Jesus," and in his divinely promised office "Christ."

B. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

The source of our salvation is God himself through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1:3).

From his mercy which we do not merit, he has given us new birth. The prophet Isaiah speaks of God's mercy:

He said, "Surely they are my people,
sons who will not be false to me;"
and so he became their Savior.
In all their distress he too was distressed,
and the angel of his presence saved them.
In his love and mercy he redeemed them;
he lifted them up and carried them
all the days of old (Isaiah 63:8,9).

This is a beautiful picture of God's mercy. "He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old." He has lifted us from the darkness of life to a new life. Our new life comes to us because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Death has no reign over us. Certainly we will all die and our physical bodies will rot away. But for the Christian, "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (I Cor. 15:54). There is a new level of existence. It is ours because of resurrection.

Peter had seen the sufferings of Christ. But it was also his privilege to be in the presence of the triumphant, resurrected Christ. He knew the power of resurrection. Man could provide no imitation. It was the work of God.

The source of salvation is God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

II. The Character of Future Salvation

Our salvation has both present benefit as well as future benefit. That which we enjoy under God's grace now is only a tantalizing tidbit of what is to come.

The character of our future salvation is seen in the words "living hope" and "inheritance." Both of these have immediate implications for life now but more strongly point us to the future.

A. A Secure Inheritance

A living hope is hope that is never extinguished. Outward circumstances can not destroy it. It is a secure inheritance.

The idea of the inheritance goes back to the Old Testament. The land which was promised to Abraham was "for an inheritance" (Gen. 17:3). In due time, it did indeed become the possession of his descendants. Although we, like Abraham's descendants, have an inheritance, it is not earthly land. It is the spiritual reality of which the promised land of Israel was but a symbol.

Peter says it is "an inheritance imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you." It can not be ravaged by foreign armies. It is imperishable. It can not be made unclean by evil. It is undefiled. It can not wilt like an old flower. It is unfading. These three adjectives speak of our inheritance untouched by death, unstained by evil and unimpaired by time. It is "kept in heaven for you" "where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Mt. 6:19,20).

Recently, in the National Gallery of Art, I saw some of Leonardo da Vinci's original work. Not only was I impressed with the beauty of the art but also with the careful security system throughout the museum. The hallways were lined with small rooms on either side and in every room where the art was displayed there was an uniformed guard keeping watch. Their only job was to stand and watch.

The inheritance which is ours in Christ Jesus, our only hope of glory is under the constant watch of God. It is "kept in heaven for you."

It is a secure inheritance for a secure heir.

B. A Secure Heir

This inheritance is for those "who through faith are shielded by God's power" To receive an inheritance would say something about our relationship to the one who is giving it. If we have indeed been given a new birth, we are born anew as children of God and as Paul writes, "Now if we are children, then we are heirs -- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17). By faith we have come to God and receive sonship and are shielded by his power. The word shielded belongs to military vocabulary. It is used in the present tense which seems to emphasize our need for continual protection. The Christian is not taken out of combat. We remain in the field of spiritual battle, where dangers surround us in every day. But, thank God, we are not left to our own resources. We are guarded by God's power and guaranteed final victory. Our part is to have faith. As we

exercise our faith, we lay hold of the divine power.

The character of our future salvation is hope, a living hope. Not a lifeless philosophical doctrine of immortality, it is the knowledge of an inheritance "kept in heaven for you."

III. The Character of Present Salvation

Our salvation has present implications as well. At the time of this writing there seemed to be little hope in the world for those to whom Peter ministered. The gift of living hope can be appreciated only when we know the bondage of fear which captivated the people of this day. Those who were economically and politically well situated were over-indulged with luxury. They knew nothing of real hope or joy or peace. While the world around abounded with beauty, courage and intellectual vigor, it was indeed a world without hope. Old age was faced with fear; life was continually threatened with misfortune and tragedy. The Christians had been driven out of their homes and it would seem right to be hopeless. But Peter gives them a message of hope and says, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials" (1:6).

A. A Reason for Rejoicing

The character of our present salvation gives us a reason for rejoicing. Even though all is bleak around, our salvation allows us to rejoice. There is an interesting paradox in verse 6. A Christian is said to rejoice while he

grieves. John Calvin has said,

the faithful are not logs of wood, nor have they so divested themselves of human feelings as to be unaffected by sorrow, unafraid of danger, unhurt by poverty, and untouched by hard and unbearable persecutions. Hence they experience sorrow because of evils, but it is so mitigated by faith that they never cease at the same time to rejoice. Thus sorrow does not prevent their joy, but rather gives place to it.¹

If with the eyes of faith we can continually see the marvelous blessings that God has given us by his grace, then it becomes easier to bear up under pain. It is possible to rise above the suffering and indeed turn them to an occasion of joy, if for no other reason that God has been faithful. Joy comes from the recognition that God is yours and he has provided for your salvation. By faith you are guarded by his power. This is not just an anticipated joy. In verse 8 Peter tells of its present realization as a partial fulfillment of the future glory.

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls (1:8,9)

The joy of the Christian is not wholly a joy of anticipations. But the touch of God penetrates time and reaches us right now. Faith lays hold of the unseen master and embraces him with love. The anticipated joy becomes an experience of the

¹John Calvin, Calvin's Commentaries: The First and Second Epistle of Peter, trans. W.B. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1963), p. 234.

present and we "are receiving the goal of our faith."

The joy that comes through faith is a response to the divine mystery of God's grace. It is impossible to express it in words.

B. A Reason for Suffering

In the character of our present salvation there is not only a reason for rejoicing but also a reason for suffering. The various trials had come to these scattered people:

so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed (1:7).

Gold is without a doubt a valuable item in this world. We have all watched its value carefully these days. In order to have the purest gold, it is subjected to severe fire. The fiery process produces something of great worth. But still it is a part of earthly possessions and they are only temporary. Your faith which is of eternal value is also subjected to a fiery process so that it might be proven "genuine and result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." The Christian is to seek no honor or glory or praise in this life. He is concerned only with how he may show himself approved in God's sight when Jesus is revealed in glory to judge the world.

James has said:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything (James 1:2-4).

The character of present salvation is faith. We have not seen him, but we love him; we do not see him now but we believe him. Because of our faith, there is a reason for rejoicing and a reason for suffering.

IV. The Minister of Salvation

Peter has identified the source of salvation, the character of future salvation and the character of present salvation. In these final verses of our text he identifies the minister of salvation as the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit directed the prophets of old to prophesy about the coming savior. They told of his sufferings "and the glories that would follow." The Holy Spirit revealed to them that this message was not for themselves but for men and women who would come after them. Those who did come after the preachers of the New Testament times, were given power by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel in its fulness.

Salvation is ministered to us by the Holy Spirit. His direction and guidance has been active from the beginning of creation and now he presents the truth, draws men and women to God, convicts them of their sin and gives "new birth into a living hope."

Conclusion

In these few words and throughout this epistle Peter has raised us above the world for a moment to show us our great salvation. He is equipping us for battle, preparing us for the trials of life. When we consider our salvation--with

God as its source, hope as its future character, faith as its present character and the Holy Spirit as its minister, we are invited to triumphant joy in the face of persecutions.

Our salvation is now and then.

"PREPARE FOR ACTION"
1:13-2:3

Introduction

Prepare for action is our topic today. Our text is I Peter 1:13-2:3. The first word of our text is "therefore" and whenever you have a therefore you must discover what it is there fore. It points us back to the content of the first part of this chapter. The Apostle Peter is writing about the great salvation that is ours because of the marvelous mercy of God.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given
us new birth into a living hope through the
resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Our salvation is a living hope, a hope that is present and that is coming. When Jesus Christ is revealed our hope will be fulfilled. That is what gives us motivation for life now. Peter says, "Therefore, prepare your minds for action." A more literal translation would be "gird up the loins of your minds." This metaphor relates to the long flowing gowns that were worn at the time of this writing. Around the house, they were worn loosely. However to prepare for vigorous work or travel one would pull up the gown and wrap a belt around to insure easy movement. This same image is used by the evangelist Luke in the twelfth chapter and the 35th verse of his gospel. In the context of preparation for the second coming Luke says, "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning." Also Paul uses the image in Ephesians 6:14, "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth

buckled around your waist . . ."

While living in Japan, one of my greatest delights was to walk around my community early in the morning. I remember one morning in particular. As I was walking, I saw an elderly woman come out of her house with a bucket and scrub brush. It was her job that day to clean the gutter in front of her house. She was dressed in the traditional kimono with the long sleeves. Before beginning her work, she pulled up her sleeves and tied them together. Free from any obstruction she quickly went to work. In such a manner, we are told to prepare our minds for the work of life.

The word for minds more specifically means "way of thinking" or "disposition." Peter says to prepare our minds for action is to have our way of thinking or disposition characterized by hope. "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, be self-controlled, set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed."

There is a profound relationship between hope and holiness. One is a disposition; the other is a lifestyle which is born out of the disposition.

I. A Disposition of Hope

There are people who spend their lives trying to figure what the future is going to be. Some write books and make lots of money but really no one knows what tomorrow will bring. But we Christians have a sneak preview on the future.

A. A Secure Future

Our hope is a secure future. Verse 4 of chapter 1

calls it "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade." The Apostle is writing to a group of people who are aliens in the lands where they are living. To many, their situation probably appears quite hopeless. And to these pilgrim people Peter gives a reminder that their heavenly Father has something more for them. They have benefited from the hope they have in present life but also they have a secure inheritance that can not be corrupted. It is spiritual and eternal. Incapable of pollution. It is "kept in heaven for you."

The word hope suffers from some secular misunderstandings. To some it is a weak word and indeed when some use hope, they really mean wish. Returning home after a long day, I often say I hope dinner is ready. Really I mean, I wish dinner will be ready. But when we say "Christian" hope it carries a sacred quality. It is not a weak word. It is a strong disposition based on faith.

Because it is based on faith, we can live like people in Egypt with their eyes on Jerusalem. The pressures and tensions of the world need not rob us from our hope. It is secure.

B. A Unifying Future

Our hope is a unifying future. The Apostle is addressing a community of believers. He is not just talking to an individual. Our history unites us but also for the Christian our future unites us. Israel became a nation when God extended His grace to them and brought them out of Egypt.

The event of the Exodus united the people into a nation.

Recently Kathy and I had the privilege of being in Washington D.C. and some of the surrounding areas. Walking on the grounds of Mt. Vernon where George Washington lived and roaming the cobblestone streets of Annapolis where the United States first located its capitol, we had a new awareness of what it means to be a part of a nation. History unites us. We all share in it. And for the Christian our future unites us as well. Together we are looking to the new Jerusalem. Together we long for the day when we will know perfectly that which we now only dimly know. This anticipation must be kept alive in our community. In our testimonies we need not always dwell on the past events of salvation and the filling of the Spirit; let us also speak of our future hope.

It does not only bring us together in the sense of a united anticipation but also our unity in the body of Christ will be more clearly seen when all the language barriers and cultural barriers will be destroyed. All the Christians from every nation will be one. What a beautiful day that will be!

Our hope is a secure future and a unifying future and it is our motivation for life now. Because we know the end of the final act we can stay through the drama even if it be painful. We have our eyes on the new Jerusalem.

II. A Lifestyle of Holiness

Hope is our disposition. It is our way of thinking and the result is a Lifestyle of Holiness. Our behavior is

the demonstration of our disposition. Our text identifies four characteristics of the lifestyle of holiness.

A. Children of Obedience

The beginning of verse 14 could more specifically be translated "Children of obedience." This would tell us that these are the ones who, in a sense, have as their mother obedience. The spirit of obedience dwells in them. This points us back to verse 2 where Peter makes mention that these believers were chosen that they may obey Jesus Christ. A part of obedience is not to "conform to the evil desires" that once entrapped you.

We must be careful not to define narrowly the meaning of "evil desires." Too often we think of something physical. Those evil desires are much more than that; they are the thoughts of the world.

The world's idea of success is far different than the Biblical idea. And yet we often allow ourselves to be caught by the worldly standards and frustrate the work of God. We go to the world for methodology instead of to the Bible. Peter's word to us is "do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance." Now we know better than that.

The world has a plan for your life. They have thought of everything. You are to be molded and shaped into a frustrated, angry person. But God also has a plan for you. His plan includes victory over the evil desires of your former life. By the power of God you can denounce them and

not be shaped by them.

In your behavior, you are called to be holy. A holy life is your response to God and the Hope that he gives you.

B. Fear of God

A second characteristic that is a demonstration of holiness is fear. Fear in the sense of a reverent respect.

In verse 17 we read:

And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth;

Again Peter is talking to these pilgrim people about the temporary time they are on earth. God is the judge who looks at your works; therefore conduct yourselves, behave yourselves as ones who deeply love God.

The Japanese people taught me something very profound at this point. The father of the house is listened to and obeyed no matter what. His position dictates authority. The position of the teacher holds a similar authority. A classroom full of students, either elementary or college, could be in complete chaos, but when the teacher is spotted and walks into the room, silence is immediate. The students are fearful to speak.

To conduct yourself in fear does not mean that you are constantly afraid. In Jesus Christ it is not the wrath of God that we are under, but in Jesus Christ we are moved to humble awareness that God is far greater than we. We can not presume upon God.

We can not save ourselves by buying our salvation with

"silver or gold." We have been redeemed from an "empty way of life" by the "precious blood of Christ." This is far more valuable than any perishable quantity. Christ is said to be "a lamb without blemish or defect."

A holy life is one that is lived with the constant awareness of the greatness of God, with the surprise, the delight and the shock that He would love me.

C. Love of One Another

The third characteristic that demonstrates holiness is love.

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart (1:22).

We are told to love one another as a response to our obedience to the truth. A holy and pure church is where love for one another is obvious. This is costly. It takes time to love.

Love is a commitment. It is a decision. I remember when I fell in love with Kathy. We were both students at Seattle Pacific and one of our first dates was to walk down to the canal and feed the ducks in the spring. From those moments our love grew and we pledged our lives to one another. The attraction that drew us together caused us to respond with a decision to love each other always. Now when there is a discussion that requires compromise, we recognize that there is no loss of love. Our love is, in fact, strengthened. Our relationship to God and to one another is similar. We make a decision, a commitment and the rest of

our life draws implications from it. We can not live by feelings or desires. Our love for God and the community of believers is not dependent on whether or not we like a certain church, a certain pastor or a certain program. Our love for God and for one another is a response of obedience.

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever. (1:23-25).

There must be a recognition that you can not save yourself. You benefit from the grace of God. What can you do but love each other?

D. Craving of Spiritual Food

The fourth characteristic that demonstrates holiness is a craving of spiritual food. The image that Peter uses is that of a newborn baby. When a baby is hungry, usually everyone in the house knows. There is no rest for anyone until the baby is satisfied and then in a few hours it starts over again. "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (2:2).

What are the nutrients of spiritual milk? The Word of God, prayer, the sacraments of the church, the fellowship of believers. Just like the baby can not do without milk, we can not do without these means of grace.

We have tasted of the Lord and he is good (2:3). We have been tantilized. The smell of a turkey roasting in the oven causes one to become hungrier and hungrier. Experience

tells us that it is good. The first bite quickly brings the second and the third and the fourth. So with spiritual food and growth in salvation. We begin, and stopping is not attractive.

A holy life is characterized by a craving of spiritual food.

Conclusion

Prepare for Action! The preparation is based in a Disposition of Hope. It becomes our way of thinking. The action is our response to that hope, in a Lifestyle of Holiness demonstrated as children of obedience in the fear of God, loving one another deeply and craving spiritual food.

Our hope prepares us for a Lifestyle of Holiness.

"A SPIRITUAL HOUSE"
2:4-12

Introduction

What would happen to your relationship to God and your relationship to your fellow Christian believers if this church building would be completely destroyed this afternoon? What would happen if all the church buildings in this city would be destroyed this afternoon? Would the work of the Kingdom stop? Would we lose our identity so that we could not function? This is not unlike what happened to the Christians in Japan during the Second War or in China when the Communists took over. There was no outward sign of the Christian faith. There were no public buildings to meet in. There was nothing to point to and say, "this is my church." But we know these perilous circumstances do not stop the activity of the church. Because, as Peter says, the church is "a spiritual house." It is not formed with brick and mortar, but with the Spirit of God. Peter teaches us about this spiritual house. First, Its Promised Cornerstone; secondly, Its Privileged Stones; thirdly, Its Priestly Function; and fourthly, Its Praiseworthy Purpose.

I. The Promised Cornerstone

The promised cornerstone of the church is Jesus Christ. He is the "Living stone . . . a choice and precious cornerstone."

In Matthew 21:42, Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22 (which Peter also quotes here) and applied it to himself. In doing

so Jesus gave the image of this stone a messianic character. In the context of the Psalm, the stone is the chosen people of Israel. But Jesus used the stone to tell about himself and his task. He was a chosen instrument.

He is the stone which is living. It is living because it is personal and able to enter into a vital relationship with man. We celebrate and worship our Lord who is victorious over death. He lives eternally. And he is our life-giving source. John says he is the "living water" which becomes in the believer "a fountain of water welling up to life eternal" (John 4:14). He is the "living bread which came down from heaven", and to eat of it is to have eternal life (John 6:51).

Peter also quotes Isaiah 28:16 and takes the great cornerstone of the temple in Jerusalem as an image of the unchangeable, abiding, firmness and adequacy of God. Christ as the stone is not just the foundation of the church. He is the solid, stable bedrock on which the foundation is laid.

Paul uses the image of the stone when he writes to the believers in Ephesus:

Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone, In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:20,21).

The cornerstone is easily the most important stone in a building. By it the whole structure is aligned and supported. Without it there is only a pile of useless stones.

The stone that was laid in Zion is the unchanging,

abiding, all sufficient Christ. He is chosen and precious.

Precious does not just mean something of high value but also something that is held in honor. Christ is chosen by God for honor. God designed a plan to bring man to himself. He chose his Son for the place of honor to be the one to proclaim his plan, suffer, die and rise from the dead to fulfill his plan and to be the promised cornerstone of his spiritual house to bring glory to his plan.

II. The Privileged Stones

As Christ was chosen for honor, so are those who come to him. He is the living stone "As you come to him, . . . you also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house." This is not just a dead house of brick and mortar, but it is a living house. The material with which it is built is your life and mine. As we come obediently in faith and worship, we are the Privileged Stones of the spiritual house of God.

The privilege that is ours is seen here by means of a sharp contrast between the response of man obedient to Christ and man disobedient to Christ.

In the verses just prior to those of our text, Peter has taught that by our response to Christ, by partaking of "spiritual milk," one is enabled to grow in spiritual maturity. Now he complements that thought by saying that personal spiritual development is accompanied by membership in the spiritual household of God. The verb "come" in this statement is a present tense participle. It speaks to us

about continuous action. As we are coming to Christ, as we are growing in Christ we are being progressively and continuously being built into the living structure of his church.

The word that is used for "coming" is used also in the New Testament to express an approach to God in worship.

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

As we come and bow before Christ and worship him, we are built into his spiritual house.

Our faith in Christ is the basis of our privilege. The text says the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. Peter says, to you who believe is honor. In these words of verse 7 he is explaining more fully the words of verse 6 taken from Isaiah 28:16. The honor that is given the believer is based in the honor of Christ with whom they are united.

This is not an honor we await at some future day, but it is given here and now. We have the honor of being built into a spiritual house resting on the precious cornerstone, Jesus Christ.

"But to those who do not believe," the stone does not bring honor but shame and disaster.

The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, and A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall (2:7,8).

God has often performed his most wonderful works

through those whom the world rejected. The stone that was thrown away became the capstone. The capstone is set at the upper corner of the building to bind the walls firmly together. A huge stone that was suitable for this purpose would be useless for any other task. If it were rejected, its size would make it a continual stumbling block to all attempting to work around it.

The unbelievers find that the stone which they have rejected is the essential factor in building life, and they are excluded from that life as long as they are disobedient.

Christ is too great to be neglected or avoided. For those who believe there is honor, he becomes the foundation on which all of life rests. For those who do not believe, there can only be chaos and anarchy.

III. The Priestly Function

Joined in Jesus as the cornerstone, we are privileged to be part of his house. With the privilege comes profound responsibility, as we must recognize the priestly function of the church.

Peter says, "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, once you were not a people but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (2:9,10).

These words point us back to the Old Testament. God

extended his grace for the people of Israel and brought them up out of the bondage of Egypt. At Mount Sinai Moses went up to God and the Lord said to him:

This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: You yourselves have seen what I did in Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:3-6).

The priesthood is holy. Holiness can be understood as separation for a sacred task. The priesthood of the Old Testament was separated to conduct the worship of God. They were set aside for a special task; consecrated to God for his use. As "a holy priesthood" we are called to be separated from those around us. We are to be different. In chapter 1 verse 14, Peter has said, "Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance." Those motivating forces of the old life are to be put away. In rebirth there is newness and differentness.

The worship that we offer to God is not the external sacrifices of the temple, but the "spiritual sacrifices" of his "spiritual house." Paul has urged us to offer our "bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God -- which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1) Our responsibility is awesome, as we recognize that we have turned away from the ways of the world so that in our differentness we might serve the world in worship to God.

The priesthood is representative. The priesthood was

taken from among men (Numbers 8:5). In Numbers we read that all the Levites were brought to the front of the Tent of Meeting and the Israelite community laid their hands on them (Numbers 8:9). This was done to designate them as their representatives before God.

This implies a relationship of the church to the world that is of deep significance. Who is going to pray for the world unless we pray for it? We are a part of the world, although not conformed by it, we still know the pain of being in it. As Christ knew humanity and therefore was a perfect high priest, we know humanity and must be priests on man's behalf.

At times it appears that our society is grotesquely evil. And it is true that the evil voices often seem louder than the good. But it is God's power working through his people, his kingdom of priests that preserves what is pure and right.

The priesthood is mediatorial. Who is going to bring the world to God if we do not? God's method of bringing man to himself is through his church. Our motivation in evangelism is not to build a church, but to bring women and men to worship Christ. The nation of Israel provided a means of salvation for the world, for from the nation came Jesus Christ. We are now the new Israel and we too have Jesus Christ who is the means of salvation for the world.

We are a chosen people, chosen to be different. We must preserve that differentness so that we might be repre-

sentatives of the world and mediators to God.

IV. The Praiseworthy Purpose

We are "a people belonging to God," joined together in Christ, privileged to be the building blocks of his spiritual house, responsible to be priest in the world "so that," Peter says in verse 9, "you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." The purpose of the spiritual house is not simply to provide an abode for God, but to declare, to advertise the praises of God. Our voices can not be silenced.

We are to bring all men to God and God to all men. God is the one who called us out of darkness. There is no greater motivation for praise than an experience of God's grace. "Once you were not a people but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

Our purpose is clear before us: to declare the praises of God. This is not done simply in external structures like buildings; but by a life dedicated to God, by abstaining from sinful desires, which war against our souls. Peter says in verse 11:

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us (I Peter w:12).

Our declaration of the praises of God is founded in our experience of his grace and is demonstrated in living holy lives which cause men and women to glorify God.

Conclusion

As you come to him, the living Stone--
rejected by men but chosen by God and
precious to him--you also, like living
stones, are being built into a spiritual
house to be a holy priesthood, offering
spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God
through Jesus Christ.

AMEN

"A LIFESTYLE OF SUBMISSION"

2:13-3:12

Introduction

What do you immediately think of when I saw "submission." Are your feelings related to that word pleasant or offensive. Approaching the subject of submission causes us to be quickly aware that we are indeed victims of our society. This is not to say that we Christians have not been a part of this society, because we have. In fact some of the distorted views of submission have come from the Christian community.

Because of the distortions, one of the dangers in this subject is that when submission is mentioned, thoughts immediately turn to husband and wife relationships. But in reality that is only a part of a lifestyle of submission in the Biblical understanding of the word.

In our text, we are given three examples of how submission is lived out. In each example there is the instruction, the purpose and the strategy used to follow through.

I. An Example from Government

A. The Instruction

The first example is from government. The instruction is found in verses 13 and 14:

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

Peter was addressing a people who were in the throes of persecution at the hands of a government hostile to their faith. Why would he tell these suffering people to submit? I'm sure some would rather have been told to pick up their weapons and fight. But Peter says submit.

Peter recognizes there are certain standards the world has set to determine right and wrong. Women and men have been appointed or elected to positions in order to see that these standards are adhered to. When an offense is committed the task of the officials is to punish the offender. When a good deed is done, the officials commend those who do right.

Government does not always carefully follow this pattern. Sometimes it seems that the offender is commended and those who do good deeds are punished. But over all, in the ideal, government is a tool to provide order and Peter instructs these Christians to submit to it "for the Lord's sake."

B. The Purpose

Peter identifies the purpose of submitting to government is verse 15: "For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men." So many hurting and ugly things are said in ignorance. The government officials did not really know the Christians. But to those who were the established rulers, these small bands of people represented something new and strange. They became an easy scapegoat on which to throw the sins of the heather. The Christians could not really expect the officials to

understand them fully. So Peter's instruction to them was to submit and do good. In so doing there could be no accusation against them.

In chapter 3 of this epistle, in the context of teaching about suffering for doing good, Peter uses the example of Christ. He had done nothing legally wrong. In fact Pontus Pilate tried to release him; but he was made to suffer. In his submission, the ignorant talk of foolish men was silenced as they were faced with the eternal implications of their actions.

The Christian's life is to be blameless before God and man. We are to follow the statutes of the government so that we might be blameless before man and therefore bring glory to God.

C. The Strategy

In verses 16 and 17, Peter gives us the strategy that we are to follow in submitting to government. His first word is "live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of Christ." Freedom allows one the privilege of deciding whether or not to obey authority. To submit to authority does not mean a loss of freedom, it is in fact the true expression of freedom. Obedience is given voluntarily, not compelled. Those who live under oppressive governments are told where to live, how to live and to some degree why to live. Obedience to such a government is not an expression of freedom. To live as a free man is to choose to align your will with the will of the authority which is

placed over you.

Above all persons, the Christian is indeed free. The liberating power of the gospel is a reality in the Christian's life. We are free from sin. We are free from the domination of Satan. But the Christian's freedom is not to be misused as a veil for evil. Our freedom, our privilege to choose, is not a license to hurt people. Peter says as free men live "as servants of Christ." In the midst of our freedom we are responsible to God. His laws and commandments govern our lives.

Peter's second statement is submitting to government is in verse 17: "Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king."

Respect is an essential element of submission. Everyone is due a certain degree of respect. The respect of fellow believers is demonstrated in love that forgets yourself and thinks only of the other. Respect of God is demonstrated in fear which recognizes that God's way is greater than one's own. Respect of the king is demonstrated in showing him honor as the possessor of a position of authority.

Submit to the government like men who have a choice, respecting all persons properly so that the ignorance of the foolish men will be silenced.

II. An Example from Slavery

A. The Instruction

The second example is from slavery. Peter gives his

instruction in verse 18: "Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh." Peter is not in any way condoning slavery. He simply recognizes its existence and teaches how a Christian who finds himself in such a situation should live.

I feel very inadequate to talk about slavery because I have never had the experience of being owned and managed by another human being. But I am aware that this word of instruction is not an easy statement. Peter was going against all natural inclinations. Man tends to react negatively to slavery, especially if he has enjoyed a degree of freedom.

Peter again remarks on the importance of respect not only to those who are good but also to those who are harsh. All people are worthy of some degree of respect from a Christian. The Christian does not show respect to one simply because of how that one has treated him. Respect to every person is a part of our Christian commitment.

B. The Purpose

The purpose of slaves submitting to their masters is given in verse 19: "For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God."

The slave is told that he will find favor with God and partake of his grace if because of his consciousness of God he bears up under unjust suffering. As a person is conscious

that God is present to provide strength, it is possible to bear up. One needs to have the continual awareness of God in control.

This consciousness is tested not in the easy times but in the hard times. There is no credit to you if you suffer because of your sins. If you slowly take out amounts of money from your master's books and deposit it in your own accounts, you deserve punishment. But if you suffer because your master steals from you, it is commendable if you bear up.

The purpose of slaves submitting to their masters is to find favor with God as they respond in obedience to him and know his work in their lives.

C. The Strategy

The strategy to do this is seen in the example of Christ. Peter quotes Isaiah 53:9 and applies it to Christ: "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When he was insulted, Jesus did not throw back insults. When he was made to suffer, he did not make threats. Peter tells us that Jesus "entrusted himself to him who judges justly."

To entrust means that you give something over to another so that they might care for it. It assumes that you trust that one to whom you have given your possession. When my wife and I took an extended trip back east, it was necessary to entrust our daughter to Grandpa and Grandma. Our trust in them is strong so we were confident that they would keep careful watch over her. In such a fashion, we are to

entrust our lives over to God and not attempt to take back the controls.

III. An Example from Marriage

The third example of a lifestyle of submission is from marriage. Peter includes a word to the wives and a word to the husbands.

A. For the Wives

1. The Instruction

The instruction to the wives is found in chapter 3 verse 1: "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands." As slaves submit to their masters by entrusting themselves to their care, like Christ entrusted himself to God, so is the wife to entrust herself to her husband. Let us emphasize that this is an instruction to the wives, not to the husbands. It is very unfair and wrong for a husband to use this verse against his wife.

God's plan for marriage is not that one would lord it over another. His plan calls for the husband to be a leader, not a lord. At the marriage altar a decision is made upon which a life of trust is built.

2. The Purpose

Wives, submit to your husbands "so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without talk by the behavior of their wives."

The purpose of wives submitting to husbands is to win them to Christ. The old adage "actions speak louder than words" seems appropriate here. If we really believe that the

gospel is written on the tablets of our hearts, then our life is going to be an outward demonstration of it and people will be brought to Christ. There is probably no one who knows you better than your spouse. They know where your actions come from. There is no pretending in marriage as God has designed it.

3. The Strategy

The strategy for the wives in submitting to their husbands is found in verses 2-6. Peter says your husbands will be won over "when they see the purity and reverence of your lives." Peter is describing a woman who is wholly dedicated to God and filled with his Spirit. She does not depend on the world's idea of beauty which expects extravagance in outward adornment. Her beauty is "the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight." Sadly, some have misinterpreted this to say that Christian women should boycott the fashion world and never have attractive clothes or accessories. In the past, some persons seemed to take a great deal of pride in how plain they could look. Peter does not say that you should force yourself to be unpleasing to the eye. He is talking about your dependence on outward adornment. It should be a complement to your inner self. It should demonstrate who you are in Christ.

Your examples are the "holy women of the past." Sarah made herself beautiful by submitting to Abraham. She trusted God and put her hope in him. Therefore she followed God's

plan for marriage.

Wives, trust your husbands and submit to them so that they might be brought to Christ by your beautiful behavior.

B. For the Husbands

1. The Instruction

Peter also has a word to the husbands. His instruction is "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives." "In the same way" points us back to chapter 2 verse 17 where Peter exhorted his readers to show proper respect to everyone and now he says that that includes wives. The words which are translated "be considerate" literally mean "according to knowledge." This phrase might better be translated "Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way." The husband is instructed to be knowledgeable of God's plan for marriage. Our relationship to God determines the nature of our marriage relationship. Through the knowledge of God and his plan the husband learns to set new value on his wife. She is not merely the mother of his children and the keeper of his house, but she is his partner in his eternal hope and in his prayers.

2. The Purpose

The husband is to live with his wife in an understanding way so that their prayers will not be hindered. This clarifies a very important responsibility for the husband. The effectiveness of his and his wife's prayers is determined according to his acknowledgment of God's plan for marriage. There is nothing that can hinder or enhance one's

prayer life more than his or her mate. Submission in this case is to each other so that neither's prayer will be hindered.

3. The Strategy

The strategy of living out this instruction is based on two facts. The first is that women are to be treated as a weaker vessel. The image of the weaker vessel is not meant to be derogatory in any sense. The husband is a vessel also. But Peter does seem to identify that women need more careful attention in physical and spiritual matters. At the time of this writing there was a rather low estimation of women. The Jew and the Greek alike considered women to be very inferior to men. We can not deny that this approach did effect Peter's statement. But even then, a careful look shows us that Peter is not making a statement about the nature of woman as much as how they are to be treated. God's plan is that husbands are to treat their wives with kindness like they might treat a fragile vase. This is a picture of submission in the Biblical understanding.

The second fact on which the strategy is based for husbands is that husband and wife are jointly and equally heirs of the gift of eternal life. Peter says treat your wives "with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life." Wives are to be treated with honor as spiritual equals. The inheritance that is kept in heaven which Peter speaks about in the first chapter of this epistle is not only for husbands but for wives as well.

Anticipating an inheritance tends to affect one's behavior negatively if he knows that someone else is going to receive more. But if one knows that all receive the same, one's behavior is affected positively by showing respect to everyone.

Peter is teaching about a mutual responsibility between husband and wife. Marriage is a covenant of repentance and forgiveness. It is a fellowship of mutual submission.

Conclusion

Here we have three examples of how Christian submission is lived out. It is a response to the divine plan of God in which we are called to trust and respect all persons properly. In the Christian experience there is no place for oppression.

In the final verses of our text (verses 8-12), Peter gives a summary exhortation: "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another." Think the same, be so inwardly united that division is unthinkable. "Be sympathetic," share in the feelings of one another. Be united in sorrow and in joy. "Love as brothers," practice the mutual love which is yours in Christ which is your bond together. "Be compassionate," be tender-hearted, "and humble," think of the other as more important than yourself. "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." When faced with hostility your attitude is not to be determined by the attitude which the hostile have toward you. But your attitude and response is determined by your relationship to God and he has called you to a lifestyle of submission.

"BLESSED SUFFERING"
3:13-4:19

Introduction

C. S. Lewis has considered what the reaction of the devil and his demons might be to war and the suffering of people. In a letter to his nephew Wormwood, the demon Screwtape writes:

Of course a war is entertaining. The immediate fear and suffering of the humans is a legitimate and pleasing refreshment for our myriads of toiling workers. But what permanent good does it do us unless we make use of it for bringing souls to Our Father Below: When I see the temporal suffering of humans who finally escape us, I feel as if I had been allowed to taste the first course of a rich banquet and then denied the rest. It is worse than not to have tasted it at all. The Enemy, (which of course for Screwtape is God) true to His barbarous methods of warfare, allows us to see the short misery of His favourites only to tantalise and torment us to mock the incessant hunger which, during this present phase of the great conflict, His blockage is admittedly imposing. Let us therefore think rather how to use, than now to enjoy, this European war. For it has certain tendencies inherent in it which are, in themselves, by no means in our favor. We may hope for a good deal of cruelty and unchastity. But, if we are not careful, we shall see thousands turning in this tribulation to the Enemy, while tens of thousands who do not go so far as that will nevertheless have their attention diverted from themselves to values and causes which they believe to be higher than the self. I know that the Enemy disapproves many of these causes. But that is where He is so unfair. He often makes prizes of humans who have given their lives for causes. He thinks bad on the monstrously sophistical ground that the humans thought them good and were following the best they knew.¹

¹C. S. Lewis, The Best of C. S. Lewis: The Screwtape Letters (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 28.

Screwtape was reacting to a profound truth of Christianity that continues to baffle the minds of many. It is related to suffering. When a Christian is made to suffer for doing right, then blessing is not far behind.

The Apostle Peter is addressing a people who had seen their fellow Christian believers taken from their homes, wild animal hides wrapped around them and then to the amusement of spectators, torn to pieces by dogs. Others of them had been fastened to crosses and set on fire to illuminate palace gardens. To these people of pain he says, "If you suffer for what is right, you are blessed." That is his premise in our text. He also has a model and a method of how this premise is lived out.

I. The Premise 3:13,14 & 4:12-18

Christians have suffered because of their faith from the beginning of the church. Not more than four years ago a headmaster of a mission school in what was then Rhodesia was taken out to the school yard and in front of all the children he was told to denounce Christ. He would not. Fierce dogs were released and he was torn to pieces before the entire student body.

Jesus has said:

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.
(Matthew 5:10,11)

Possibly with these words in mind, Peter says, "even

if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed." In chapter 4, verses 12-18, we are told that one should not be surprised at the suffering "as though something strange were happening to you." It is not unusual that Christians suffer. This is, in a sense, part of the deal. In fact you should rejoice that you are able to participate in the sufferings of Christ. He suffered for you and now you can suffer because of your relationship to him. He is one that the world will never love and as his children the world should never love you. "Rejoice when you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed." This is more than just the joy of making it through a hard time. In suffering there is a growth that occurs so that Christ is far more important to you than when everything was going well.

But our suffering "should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler." If we are made to suffer for these reasons, we deserve our punishment. There is no glory in that. But

If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, for praise God that you bear that name.

II. The Model 3:18-22

The model of this profound axiom of Christianity is Jesus Christ. In chapter 3, verse 18 we read, "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made

alive by the Spirit." There was a reason for Christ's suffering. It was "to bring you to God." He is righteous and he died for you, the unrighteous. He did not deserve to suffer. Yet look at the pains he bore. He suffered to the limit -- even unto death.

The contrast between "death in the body but made alive by the Spirit" is very significant. The sufferings of this life can only attack our flesh and death may even result; but it is in the Spirit of God that we are made alive. The flesh is doomed to death from the day of birth. The spirit is destined for eternal life from the day of rebirth.

Peter takes somewhat of a digression now in a collection of verses which have provided seeds for many hours of thought by scholars around the world. He talks about the activity of the Spirit in what is called the descent into Hell. By going back to the story of Noah, Peter attempts to relate the doctrine of Christian suffering to the saving experience of baptism. The salvation of Noah and his family through the water, is a symbol of Christian baptism. The image of the ark on the water with destruction outside but safety inside, is a beautiful picture of God's grace. Because of their salvation through the water, they were identified with God. So now, through the water of Christian baptism, we are identified with God and enjoy his grace because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ who is at the right hand of God "with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him." This is our strength and model in the face of suffering for righteousness'

sake.

III. The Method 3:14-16 & 4:1-3,6-11

If you suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Look at our Lord; through his pain we are healed of sin. It is a privilege to suffer for him as he did for us. Peter also brings to our attention the methods of implementation of this premise. How do we prepare ourselves and actually suffer well? Let us consider this in the form of three overarching imperatives which come from our text.

A. "Set apart Christ as Lord"

The first is found in chapter 3 verse 15: "set apart Christ as Lord." Peter wants his readers to distinguish Christ's lordship in their lives. They have confessed him as Savior but now they must face up to the implications of his total control. God is gracious to every person. But those who understand and experience his grace more profoundly than any other, are those who set him apart as Lord of their life.

That means, as Peter quotes from Isaiah 8:12, that one does not need to fear what the heathen fears, because God is in control. We are always ready with gentleness, respect and in a good conscience to give an answer to the reason for the hope that we have because he is the lord of our life.

The one who recognizes the lordship of Christ is directed by a higher purpose in life than the daily fears of humanity. He has the joy of freedom in Christ. The decisions of the day are made according to God's plan and not man's anxieties.

The behavior of the Christian who resists the control of the lordship of Christ is living under his own control, is not likely to be the same in the fierceness of trouble as the behavior of one who is in fact wholeheartedly committed to Christ's sovereign reign over his life. Fear is settled in Christ. All is done to his glory.

B. "Arm yourselves also with the same attitude."

The second imperative is found in chapter 4 verse 1: "arm yourselves also with the same attitude." "Since Christ suffered in his body," the Christian is to reckon himself as having "suffered in his body." The Christian has died to this present life. Paul writes to the Romans:

the death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.
(Romans 6:10,11)

As we identify ourselves with Christ in death, life has new value. The Christian "does not live," as Peter says, "the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God." We have spent enough time in pleasing the flesh in "debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry." All these things are but for a moment. We are dead to them and alive to the eternal. Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

In chapter 4, verse 7, Peter says, "be clear-minded

and self-controlled so that you can pray." All of the clutter has been cleared away so that one might have a "good conscience toward God."

Peter says to his suffering companions, "If you arm yourselves with the realization that you are identified with Christ in his death, you will be fit to fight the battles of the enemy." Apart from Christ you are unholy; with Christ you are clean. Apart from Christ you are frustrated and frazzled; with Christ you are secure and stable. Apart from Christ you are afraid; with Christ you are fearless.

When a Christian has learned so to regard himself with Christ, he is armed for the struggle. He is inwardly fortified against every assault of his spiritual enemies. His sentence to death has already been carried out and he will not be overcome by the troubles he may have to undergo.

C. "Faithfully administer God's grace in its various forms"

The third imperative is from chapter 4 verse 10: "faithfully administer God's grace in its various forms." Every believer has been given a grace gift that is to be used for service in the community of believers. In I Corinthians 12:7, Paul writes "Now to each man the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." He then speaks of a wide diversity of gifts: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues and interpretation of tongues and then in chapter 13, the supreme gift of love. In Romans chapter 12, Paul speaks about the gifts

of ministry, teaching, exhortation, sharing, leadership and mercy.

The body is not complete without the manifestation of all these gifts and more according to the design of God. These gifts are the demonstration of God's grace in the body. The instruction to us is to faithfully administer or employ them.

"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins." Love is the supreme gift. As we think of others before ourself, we are united so tightly that nothing can separate us. The love that is strong and constant forgives every offense, it "covers over a multitude of sins."

This is the mark of the Christian. As John writes "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). Love includes forgiveness.

Love is demonstrated in offering "hospitality to one another without grumbling." This word must have been especially helpful to these scattered people to whom Peter was writing. They were without homes and when they came upon a fellow believer's house they were probably eager to enjoy the benefits of his hospitality. The ministry of sharing is what is in focus here. Without grumbling we are to share from our supply of food and shelter. This is a beautiful example of love in the brotherhood of faith.

Peter emphasizes two other particular gifts in verse 11. They are speaking and serving. "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If

anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides." In the exercise of the spiritual gifts of preaching and all other acts of service the believer must recognize that all he does is done in the power of God. When this full and proper acknowledgment is given then God is praised through Jesus Christ. For as Peter says to him is due "the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."

These three imperatives lay out a disciplined order of spiritual muscle building so that one might be strong enough to fight off the enemy when made to suffer for the right. "Set apart Christ as Lord" and he will be in control. "Arm yourselves also with the same attitude" and you will be identified with him. "Faithfully administer God's grace in its various forms" and you will be a part of a strong community.

Conclusion

The world will "think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation: and they will "heap abuse on you" as Peter says in chapter 4, verse 4. But verses 5 and 6 say,

they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

We can frustrate the devil and his demons in how well we suffer. We do not live "in regard to the body." We "live according to God in regard to the spirit," looking to Christ

as our model.

So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

And that is why we can say, "If you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed."

"PETER'S PRINCIPLE FOR CHURCH LEADERS"

5:1-11

Introduction

The well known "Peter Principle" tells us one is promoted to the highest level of his incompetence. Our text gives us another principle for leadership from a different Peter. To follow the Apostle Peter's principle is not to be raised to incompetence but to be strengthened as a competent leader. Peter's principle is that the operation of the church requires mutual submission by all, leaders and followers alike.

This is communicated in the form of an appeal. Peter first gives his basis for appeal, then he addresses his appeal first to the elders, and then to the younger members, and finally he offers the promise of success.

I. Peter's Basis for Appeal

Peter's basis for appeal is found in verse 1: "I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed."

Peter could without question demand the obedience of these people. But he does not coldly exercise his authority. He first identifies with his readers. As a "fellow elder," Peter immediately causes them to be aware that he is one of them. He brings to focus their mutual involvement in the work of the church. Peter knew the pains and the joys of their work. He was not a pastor telling a doctor how to perform an operation. He was not a doctor telling a professor

how to give a lecture. He was an elder telling elders how to follow God's design for their ministry.

As "a witness of Christ's sufferings," Peter demands their reverence. He had been present when Jesus was fastened to the cross. He had seen the mockery of the crowd. He had heard the false accusations against Jesus. He had seen the tomb. He was a witness to the final sacrifice which made his and our salvation possible. His eye witness experience demanded their attention.

As "one who also will share in the glory to be revealed," he again lays claim to the strong unity that binds him and his readers together. Their future is the same. Together they look to the great hope of the revelation of Jesus Christ. This is a hope that is theirs because of their mutual commitment to Christ. They are fellow heirs of glory.

Peter's basis for appeal is that he is one of them, a fellow elder and a fellow heir who has been given a special task by virtue of his witness of Christ's sufferings. What he is about to say carries authority and demands obedience.

II. Peter's Appeal to the Elders

Having established his qualifications Peter makes an appeal to the elders of the churches: "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers."

The elders of the church carried a good measure of authority. Within the church they were responsible for preserving church doctrine and order. In the proper sense of the word, they were the officials. Age was a general qualifi-

cation for the office; the Greek word means elder men. But spiritual maturity was a more significant qualification.

Their model for ministry was that of a shepherd. It is from this word in the Greek that we get our word for pastor. The job of the shepherd is to submit himself for the service of his sheep.

Jesus asked Peter

'Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said 'Feed my lambs.' Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John do you truly love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord you know that I love you.' Jesus said 'Take care of my sheep.' The third time he said to him. 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said 'Feed my sheep.' (John 21:15-17)

The elders in the congregation are to provide the nutrients for life. A pastor friend of mine received a note from one of the children in his church. It was addressed to "Pasture Miller." God's plan is that every elder would be a pasture for the hungry youth.

Also in the gospel of John we read the saying of Jesus: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). The commitment of love for the sheep is so strong that the shepherd is willing to risk everything for the safety of the sheep. Self is put away so that the sheep of the congregation might be lifted up.

This commitment of love is seen further in the words of Jesus: "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (John 10:14). Those charged with the spiritual

care of a congregation must know the people. The sheep is so in tune with the shepherd's voice that he follows every command, confident that the shepherd knows best.

In appealing for the elders to be shepherds, Peter is telling them that they can not truly lead unless they have a commitment of love. They can not lead unless they feed. They can not lead unless they train. They can not lead unless they heal wounds, watch over the strayings of the flock and guard against wolfish enemies. They can not lead unless they submit themselves to service.

The flock to which they are charged is "God's flock." The shepherd does not own it. He is simply the overseer of the work. God has entrusted his children to these leaders. As they do their work, they are doing God's work.

Peter identifies three areas of potential danger in the motivation of the elders. First he says the shepherd should not serve because he must, but because he is willing "as God wants you to be." There are few things worse than a false sense of duty. In life we are to follow God's leading, not what we simply think that we should do or what we think someone else thinks that we should do. Service must come from a willing heart.

Secondly, Peter says that the shepherd should not serve out of greed for money, but because he is eager to serve. The greed for money has destroyed many servants of God. It is a sly enemy which slowly can creep up and devour a person. The shepherd of God's flock is to serve out of eagerness.

The third area of potential danger is the misuse of authority. The elder is warned against "lording it over those entrusted" to his care. Jesus said:

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all.

(Mark 10:42-43)

Authority is a dangerous possession. It must be used carefully and in a humble spirit. The structure of our churches is established so that the work of God will be done not so that some men will be more powerful than others. The elder who is elected or appointed to a position of authority must above all recognize the awesome responsibility before considering the possible privileges of the task.

Instead of "lording it over," the elder is to be an example to the flock. The shepherding is to be done by force of example not by the pressure of formal authority. Take note of this paraphrase of a well known poem.

If a Christian lives with criticism,
He learns to condemn.
If a Christian lives with hostility
He learns to fight.
If a Christian lives with ridicule,
He learns to be shy.
If a Christian lives with shame,
He learns to feel guilty.
If a Christian lives with tolerance,
He learns to be patient.
If a Christian lives with encouragement,
He learns confidence.
If a Christian lives with praise,
He learns to appreciate.
If a Christian lives with fairness,
He learns justice.
If a Christian lives with security,

He learns to have faith.
 If a Christian lives with approval,
 He learns to like himself.
 If a Christian lives with acceptance &
 friendship,
 He learns to find love in the church.

Satan would love to see you destroyed by causing you to do your work simply out of duty or out of greed or out of an evil desire to have power. These dangers are overcome as the leader recognizes the joy of submission to God for the service of his people.

"And when the Chief Shepherd appears," Peter says, "you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade." The crown was the prized recognition of the Greek cities. It was given to victorious athletes and to distinguished citizens. Here it appears that the thought is a reward for public service. It is a "crown of glory" not an earthly crown that eventually fades away. This is a heavenly crown "that will never fade away."

III. Peter's Appeal to the Youth

Peter now turns his attention to the younger members of the church. "Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older." The word that is translated "young men" literally means "younger." There is no distinction whether Peter is talking to men or women. What seems to be in focus is the age difference. The younger ones are "in the same way (to) be submissive to those who are older." This denotes that although details differ there is similarity in principle to instruction of the elder and to the younger. The same rule

of submissive unselfishness applies to the shepherd and to the sheep.

It is often easy for younger members of a church to grow dissatisfied with the existing leadership. The youthful person is confident and courageous. He is ready to take risks for success. But Peter knew that the key to success was a mutual submission. He wrote, "Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'"

The word for "clothe" describes the act of fastening on a garment with a knot and bow. It is also related to the word used to describe the slave's apron which was tied with a knot over his undergarment. Peter is saying that Christians should display toward one another the humility of the slave. One should wear humility as the slave's apron. It is not unlikely that Peter had in mind the event of the Last Supper when Jesus stood from the table, removed his outer garment and like a slave tied a towel around his waist, took a basin, filled it with water and washed the feet of his disciples. After this profound demonstration of humility, Jesus said, "you also should wash one another's feet" (John 13:14).

Peter quotes Proverbs 3:34 to emphasize the seriousness of the matter. To the proud man, God is an adversary; to the humble man, God is a provider of grace.

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time." The people to whom Peter wrote were persecuted and scattered. To these oppressed

people he says: "Recognize God's mighty control over your lives. Don't attempt to manage everything in your own power. He will lift you up if you humble yourselves. Throw everything that worries you upon God. He cares for you. He is in control."

"But don't let your confidence in God lead to slackness." "Be self-controlled and alert." The spiritual warfare that we are waging demands vigilance. Our submission is to God and to one another but not to the devil. He is the enemy that "prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." It is not pleasant to think that we are living in a jungle; but we are. We are sheep among wolves. Satan has stationed his allies all around us. They plan our destruction. The roaring lion comes most often as a purring pussycat camouflaged in sweetness. "Resist him," Peter says by "standing firm in the faith." Jesus sent Satan away by means of Scripture. So in the solid foundation of our faith we can squelch Satan's power.

Our confidence is built as we recognize that our brothers and sisters throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. The consolation in these words is not that others are suffering but that we are not alone and that God is faithful to others too.

IV. Peter's Promise

Peter concludes his appeal with a promise of success. It is not success in the world's definition. It is success as defined by God. Peter says if you bear up under the pain

of persecution, recognizing God's control, resisting Satan's luring "the God of all grace, who called you to this eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast." Like a damaged ship is restored and refitted after a storm, so God will restore you. Peter's promise is that God will himself be our strength. In moments of wavering, he will give firmness. In a passing weakness, he will give strength. In times of trembling, he is steadfast.

Conclusion

Peter appeals to us. He knows the joy and the pain of leadership in a church. His appeal is to experience the freedom of mutual submission. Don't let Satan be victorious by causing you to be power-hungry or arrogant. Submit to God and resist Satan. And God "will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aland, Kurt, and others (eds.). The Greek New Testament. 3rd ed. West Germany: United Bible Societies, 1975.
- Arndt, W. G. and F. W. Gingrich. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957.
- Beare, F. W. The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text With Introduction and Notes. 3rd ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970.
- The Bible, The New American Standard Bible.
- The Bible, The New International Version.
- The Bible, Revised Standard Version.
- Bigg, C. A. International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902.
- Douglas, J. D. (ed.). The New Bible Dictionary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1962.
- Harrison, Everett F. (editor-in-chief). Baker's Dictionary of Theology. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960.
- Johnstone, William B. (trans.). Calvin's Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter, by John Calvin. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1963.
- Kittel, Gerhard (ed.). Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Trans. and Ed. G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964-74.
- Latourette, Kenneth Scott. A History of Christianity. Vol. I. New York: Harper & Row, Pub., 1953.
- Lewis, C. S. The Best of C. S. Lewis. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977.
- Rees, Paul S. Triumphant in Trouble: Studies in I Peter. Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1962.
- Selwyn, E. G. The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text With Introduction, Notes and Essays. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan & CO., Ltd, 1952.