

*Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour*

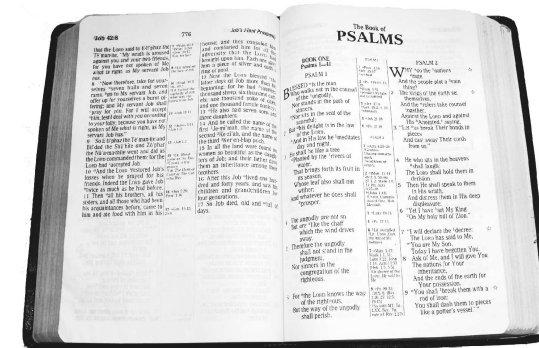
If we are looking for the return of Christ we will see to it that we will be diligent to be *without spot and blameless* in our lives; this is the only way to knowing the peace of God in our lives and to be found by Christ in peace at his coming (14). The coming again of the Lord Jesus is a great incentive to holy living (1 John 3:2–3).

Peter refers to the apostle Paul and recognises his writings as Scripture (15–16). He says that some things in Paul's epistles are hard to understand. If we want a better understanding of Scripture we must come to the word of God with a reverent and submissive attitude. The untaught and unstable twist Scripture *to their own destruction*. We must beware of some of those who have popular television programmes. They promise all kinds of blessings (healing and prosperity) to those who support them. They appear to be evangelical, but many hold to all kinds of heresies. We must remain steadfast in the truth of God's word so that we will not be led into error (17). Wrong doctrine will never produce a life that pleases God.

Peter has urged us to beware of being carried away by the error of false teachers which will cause us to lose our stability (17). He ends his letter by reminding us of the greatest antidote to ungodliness and false teaching. *'But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'* (18). Where there is true spiritual life there is also growth. As you look back on your Christian life, are you able to trace and to see the evidence of this growth? Are you showing an increase of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life (Galatians 5:22–23)? Are you enjoying a closer walk with God? Are you working out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12)? Do you know God's word better than you did a few months ago? *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

# PILGRIM BIBLE NOTES

God's holy Word simply explained and applied



## October 2014

Bible readings from 1 and 2 Peter

# 1 PETER

30 OCTOBER

2 Peter 3:10–14

## *What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct*

*The day of the Lord* is a term used for the return of Christ (10,12; cp. 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2). Scoffers may doubt that Christ will come again but he will come when they least expect as a thief in the night. They are in for a shock awakening. The second coming of Christ will be the time of final judgment; it will be a terrible day for those who do not expect or prepare for it. The earth and everything in it will be burned up in a massive conflagration (10,12).

The hope of Christ's return should not make us lethargic in our Christian lives, nor cause us to indulge in fruitless speculation about dates or minute details. We must:

- Be prepared. The coming judgment should have a sobering effect upon us. *What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness* (11,14). Worldliness is the great enemy of godliness (1 John 2:15–17). The world is not here for ever and we should be preparing ourselves for eternity. *Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure* (1 John 3:3). The Lord Jesus said, *Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect* (Matthew 24:44).
- Be expectant. *Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God* (12). If God the Father has determined the day of Christ's return (Acts 17:31), how can we hasten it? No one knows just when Christ will come and we cannot bring the day nearer (Matthew 24:36). We know that the gospel must be preached to all nations and all the elect saved before Christ returns (Matthew 24:14,31). We hasten the day by preparing ourselves for it (see above) and in preaching the gospel.

Christians can look for the day of God, not with despair, but with a sense of great anticipation and joy. The Lord will create *new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells* as he has promised (13; cp. Isaiah 65:17). **There is no future for this passing world but we have a wonderful future. How prepared are you for Christ's second coming?**

Peter wrote his first letter to persecuted Jewish Christians who lived in the land that is now called Turkey (1:1 – *the Dispersion* was the term used to describe those Jews living outside Palestine). He wrote from *Babylon* (5:13) which probably referred to Rome (often called *Babylon* by early Christians, cp. Revelation chapters 17 and 18). The letter was probably written late AD 63 or early AD 64 before the Roman emperor Nero unleashed his great persecution against Christians. Silas, who had been involved with Paul in writing to the church at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) wrote this letter under the direction of Peter (5:12; 'Silvanus' is the Latin form of 'Silas').

Peter wrote to encourage Christians who had been *grieved by various trials* (1:6) and to prepare them for the *fiery trial* (4:12) which was soon to come upon them. He showed them how they should live at such times, encouraging them by the example of the Lord Jesus (2:21; 4:1). His sufferings were followed by glory (1:11,21) and so will ours be (4:13–14; 5:1,10).

### Key Words

*Suffering* – 1:11; 2:19–23; 3:14, 17–18; 4:1,13,15,19; 5:1,10.

*Glory* – 1:11,21; 4:13–14; 5:1,4,10.

*Precious* – 1:7,19; 2:4,6,7; 3:4.

### Outline of 1 Peter

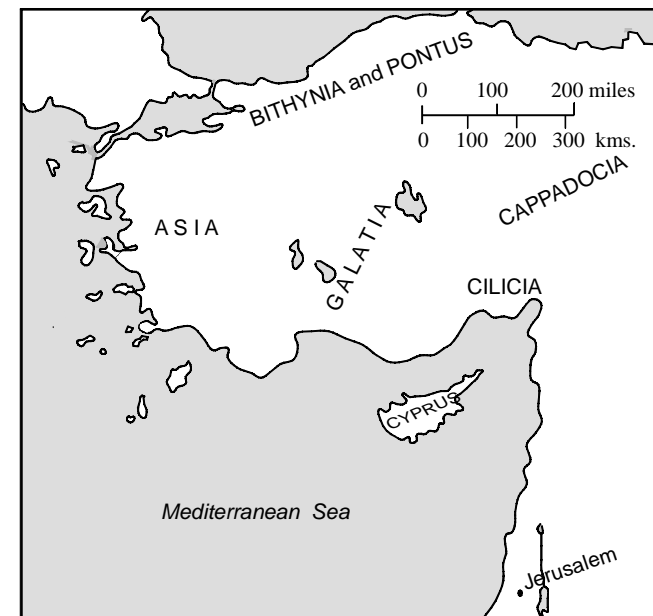
1. Opening greetings – 1:1–2
2. Thanksgiving for salvation – 1:3–12
3. Christians called to be holy in conduct – 1:13–2:10
4. Christians called to be honourable in conduct – 2:11–3:12
5. Suffering and glory – 3:13–4:19
6. Exhortation to elders – 5:1–4
7. Closing exhortation and greetings – 5:5–14

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise*

Peter again states his purpose for writing his letter. It is to stir up our pure (sincere) minds to make us mindful of the words of the prophets and the apostles (1–2). Many Christians in the early church were expecting the immediate return of Christ. They grew discouraged as persecution increased and Christ did not return as expected. Peter reminds us that the Lord Jesus and his apostles had warned of the scoffers who would taunt us with the question, *Where is the promise of his coming?* (4).

Have you noticed that many who scoff at the Bible *walk according to their own lusts* (3)? They hate the idea of judgment and assert that nothing changes – *all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation* (4). They wilfully forget that this is not true (5). Peter takes us back to the book of Genesis to remind us of the creation and the flood. Things did not continue as they were because God later destroyed the wicked world by the flood (5–6). Noah was a preacher of righteousness (and such preaching includes warnings of judgment upon sinners; 2:5). Those who heard Noah had 120 years to repent of their sin (cp. Genesis 6:3) but they did not take him seriously. God was indeed true to his word and his promise to Noah, and the world perished in the flood. God then used water as the instrument of destruction; next time it will be fire (7,10).

We may at times be tempted to feel that God is slow to keep his promises and his threats to punish the wicked. Let us always remember that God is not bound by time; he inhabits eternity (Isaiah 57:15). A thousand years is as one day with God (8). *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise ... but is long-suffering (patient) toward us* (9). The Lord is gracious and he delights in mercy (Micah 7:18). He is full of compassion and he delays judgment to give sinners ample opportunity to repent. **If your heart is not right with God please do not be careless about the need to repent now. Death or judgment may come suddenly and then it will be too late.**

**Map to show location of Peter's first readers (1:1)**

**Important** We often forget that the New Testament letters were originally read right through to a listening church or group of Christians. Some of the readings from Peter's letters will be repeated for several days in order to set into context the particular verses covered by the notes. Do read the repeat passage of Scripture each day so that it will be impressed on your mind.

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*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*

Peter wrote this letter to persecuted Christians whom he describes as ‘*pilgrims of the Dispersion*’ (1) How does he encourage these hard-pressed believers to persevere in the face of severe trials? He sets before them a feast of good things concerning God and our salvation. We read of election, sanctification and the precious blood of Christ with which we are redeemed (2,18–19); the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and the abundant mercy of God (3); our new birth (3,23); a glorious inheritance reserved for us in heaven (4) and the power of God to keep us until the return of Christ (5). The Old Testament prophets longed to know more of this great salvation of which they prophesied (10) and *which angels desire to look into* (12).

Each Person of the Trinity is involved in the work of our salvation (2). Every Christian is chosen by God the Father and sanctified (set apart to God) by the Holy Spirit and sprinkled by the blood of Christ for forgiveness and cleansing from sin. Many Christians are not at all clear about the doctrine of election. God did not choose us because he knew in eternity past that we would choose him. That is not the meaning of *elect according to the foreknowledge of God* (2). Scripture does not link ‘foreknowledge’ with God’s knowing how we would live or how we would respond to the gospel. God ‘knew’ us and loved us before we were born, choosing us to salvation before he created the world. The Bible teaches that election is entirely through the sovereign and gracious purpose of God and not according to any faith or good works foreseen by God in us (eg. Romans 8:28; 9:11–16; Ephesians 1:5,11; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Peter’s first readers were despised, hated and persecuted by the world, but they were precious to God. He loved them; he had chosen them. Do you feel rejected? Are you going through a time of trial and difficulty? **Christian, rejoice that though men of the world may reject you, God has chosen you. He will never forsake you and he will never stop loving you. Let us praise him with grateful and joyful hearts.**

*They promise ... liberty*

The ecumenical movement is increasing in its influence over churches. Most of those in this movement do not believe that the Bible is God’s holy and inspired word, and they tolerate many blasphemous errors. They are not very tolerant however of the Lord’s people, who will have nothing to do with their confusion. Peter knew that false teaching posed a great threat to the church and we must also understand this.

False doctrine is often associated with wrong living and Peter describes the wickedness of false teachers in his day. They have *eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children* (14). They are like empty wells, their teaching not satisfying the thirsty soul. They will be cast into the gloom and darkness of hell (17).

Balaam uttered sublime prophecies concerning God and his people (Numbers chapters 22–24), but he was a wicked man *who loved the wages of unrighteousness* (15). He was willing to denounce God’s people for money, such was his madness (16). *The wages of unrighteousness* may appear attractive for a time but will bring terrible judgment (12–13). False teachers are able to infiltrate the church because they often have *a form of godliness* (2 Timothy 3:5). They are very persuasive but their words are empty. *They promise ... liberty* though they themselves are *the slaves of corruption*. Those who are beguiled by them are brought into bondage (18–19).

Verses 20 to 22 do not teach that we can lose our salvation. Scripture is quite clear that this is not possible. **God does not choose us to lose us.** These verses warn that some who come under the influence of the gospel are in particular danger. They acquire a knowledge of the Lord and escape from the pollution of the world but they return to their sinful ways as a dog returns to his vomit, and a sow, after she is washed, to her wallowing in the mire. They have never been truly converted (cp. Parable of the Sower – Matthew 13:19–22).

*The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations*

Peter warns us against the *destructive heresies* and *destructive ways* of false teachers (1–3). He also tells us that God will surely bring judgment on them reminding us that he did not spare the angels who rebelled against him before the world was made. He did not spare the ancient world of Noah's day nor the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (4–6,9). The apostle goes on to write of two men who lived among people who were very wicked – Noah and Lot.

Noah lived in desperate times. He and his family were alone in their obedience to the Lord. The whole world was in the grip of the evil one and *the wickedness of man was great in the earth ... The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence* (Genesis 6:5,11). How did Noah manage to survive such dreadful spiritual darkness? He walked with God and was blameless (Genesis 6:9). Noah also had the courage to be *a preacher of righteousness* in a world that hated good and loved evil (5). He did not compromise his message to obtain a hearing among the ungodly. Can you imagine the mocking and the taunts that he suffered?

Lot found himself in Sodom because of his own folly and greed but he is described here as being righteous. Sodom was just like the western world today where sexual perversion and wickedness are flaunted. He heard the vile speech of the wicked around him and saw their filthy behaviour and he was oppressed and tormented by it (6–8).

Do you feel distraught at the spiritual ignorance and indifference to the gospel that prevails around you? The Bible warns that we are to expect these *perilous times* (2 Timothy 3:1). God has called you to be a light in the darkness (Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 5:8). We may be sorely tried by the wickedness of the ungodly and the blasphemies of false teachers, but *the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations* (or 'trials'; 9–10). **Remember that God is sovereign! What a privilege it is to know him and to walk with him in a wicked world.**

*A living hope*

Peter reminds us that God the Father *has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead* (3). Our hope is rooted in the fact that the Lord Jesus died and rose again just as he said that he would (eg. Luke 18:31–33). The founders of other religions are dead but Jesus is alive. Doesn't that bring a 'Hallelujah' from your heart? The Lord Jesus is preparing a place for us in heaven (John 14:2–3) where we have an inheritance which will never decay, tarnish or fade away (4). This inheritance is reserved for us in heaven, the most secure place of all – far safer than the vaults of the Bank of England or Fort Knox. A millionaire must leave his fortune behind when he dies but the believer knows that there is an inheritance in heaven waiting for him.

Not only does God keep our inheritance safe, but he also keeps us safe. *We are kept by the power of God* (5), we are eternally secure. We will receive our full inheritance in *the last time* (5; when Jesus comes again). This wonderful inheritance includes perfection, so that we will never sin again, and a glorified body that will never age, know pain, suffering, weariness or death. There will be rewards and surprises beyond our imagination. Satan and all that is evil will be banished to the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10; 21:8).

Peter's hope had been crushed when Jesus was crucified but despair gave way to glorious joy after Jesus rose from the dead. Must the *various trials* which grieve us crush our hopes? Never! We serve a risen Saviour and we have *a living hope* (3). *Our faith and hope are in God* (21). The very thought of all that God has done for us caused Peter to burst out in praise to God. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* (3). **We can hardly be silent, can we?**

*My name from the palms of his hands  
Eternity will not erase;  
Impressed on his heart it remains  
In marks of indelible grace.*

(Augustus M. Toplady)

*You greatly rejoice, though ... grieved by various trials*

Times of suffering or trial are very painful but the Christian is able to rejoice at such times. How can we *greatly rejoice* when we are *grieved by various trials* (6)?

- We can rejoice because we have a *living hope* (3; cp. *in this you greatly rejoice* – verse 6). This hope reminds us that our suffering is only for a little while and is nothing when *compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us* (Romans 8:18).
- We can rejoice because God tests our precious faith to refine it and strengthen it so that its genuineness *may be found to praise, honour and glory at the revelation* (return) *of Jesus Christ* (7).
- We can rejoice because we have a wonderful Saviour, though we do not see him (8). Though we have not seen the Lord Jesus we will see him when he comes again. To know that God loves us, and to love Jesus brings rejoicing *with joy inexpressible and full of glory* (8).
- We can rejoice because we are safe in Christ. Persecution may lead to losing our lives, but we cannot lose our souls. *Receiving the end* (purpose) *of your faith — the salvation of your souls* (9).

Why is it that we rejoice so little in Christ, even in times when we do not face trials? Could it be that our love for Christ has lost its fervour? Is it that we hardly take time for meaningful fellowship with the Lord? **If we do not rejoice in him when the sun is shining, we can hardly expect to rejoice in the storm.**

*When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;  
For I will be with thee thy troubles to bless;  
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.*

*When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,  
My grace all-sufficient shall be thy supply;  
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design  
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.*

(‘K’ in Rippon’s Selection, 1787)

*False teachers among you ... destructive heresies*

This is a very solemn and frightening chapter. Peter knows that he is soon to die (1:14) and he now warns us against the *destructive heresies* and *destructive ways* of false teachers. He writes of the severe judgment that God will bring upon these people (1–3). The apostle is vehement in his denunciation of heretics. Is it any wonder that almost every New Testament book has warnings against false teachers and false teaching? The Lord Jesus and the apostles warn us against them (Matthew 7:15; 1 Timothy 4:1–3; Titus 3:9–11). False teaching is a greater threat to the church than persecution.

The Christian world is plagued with false teachers. We may be aware of the heresies of the cults, but we must be on our guard against false teachers within professing evangelical churches. Some teachers, once respected, have turned away from the teaching of the Bible. Others are followed because their doctrines of prosperity and wealth appeal to the selfish desires of men and women. *By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words* (3). Many appear to be 90% sound in the things that they teach, and they speak about the cross of Christ, deceiving the unwary.

Heretics misuse Scripture to propagate their pernicious views. They are presumptuous and self-willed (10). Beware of their *deceptive words*. (3). They will exploit you and lead you astray if you tolerate them. False teachers attract ‘**many**’ to *follow their destructive ways* (2). We must never assume that a man is right because his teaching is popular. Do not be surprised that those who love truth are in the minority; this has always been the case.

We must not tolerate false teachers. Their destructive heresies are being introduced to weak, untaught believers. We must sound the alarm. **Do you love truth enough ‘to contend earnestly for the faith’ (Jude 3)?**

*Holy men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*

The Lord Jesus had told Peter by what death he would glorify God (John 21:18) and he knew that he was soon to die. He was soon to put off his *tent*; this means departing from the body through death (cp. 2 Corinthians 5:1–8). The apostle wrote that as long as he was alive he would remind them of the things commanded in verses 5 to 10. We have another *therefore* in verse 12. Peter wanted *these things* to be remembered and obeyed after his death. These things are still important. Notice the words *remind ...reminding ... reminder* (12–15).

Godliness comes from knowing the Lord Jesus Christ, from knowing his word and obeying it. The coming of Christ into the world is no cleverly devised story. Peter was an eye-witness of his majesty and dazzling splendour at the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus (16–18; Matthew 17:1–8). He was privileged to hear the voice of God from heaven, but we have the word of God in the Scriptures, which word we must heed. The Bible is no ordinary book. Scripture was given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. *Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit* (21; cp. 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Many professing Christians neglect God's word today preferring to listen to the ideas and heresies of self-proclaimed prophets. We have *the prophetic word made more sure* (19). The Scriptures are as a light shining in the darkness of this world exposing false teaching. The Bible is sufficient for all our guidance in matters of faith and practice. We do not need modern revelations or so-called prophecies. **If we know God's word we will be spared much trouble and confusion. The Bible will never lose its power to guide us, build us up in our holy faith, bless us and inspire us.** Let us praise God for the *comfort of the Scriptures* (Romans 15:4).

*Things which angels desire to look into*

*The Spirit of Christ* is the Holy Spirit (11; cp. 2 Peter 1:21) who inspired the Old Testament prophets to foretell the great salvation which is ours. They *prophesied of the grace* that would come to us through Christ (10). This grace is the undeserved favour of God to hell-deserving sinners and it is by that grace that we are saved (Ephesians 2:8). The Holy Spirit also revealed that Christ would suffer, die, rise again and be exalted (11). Glories followed the sufferings of Christ and will surely follow the suffering of the child of God.

The prophets were so excited by the wonderful news of the gospel that they sought to know more about their own prophecies and to have some indication of the time when they would be fulfilled. It was revealed to them that these things would not happen during their lifetime – they are for us (12).

The gospel given to the apostles by the Holy Spirit (12) is so wonderful that even *angels desire to look into* it. Those mighty, sinless beings cannot comprehend how the almighty God could give his only begotten Son to die for sinners; how the grace of God not only brings forgiveness to the sinner, but also adoption into God's family and blessing upon blessing, including eternal life, an inheritance in heaven, rewards and more. **Can we help but rejoice, even in the most adverse circumstances? Our great salvation was purchased at tremendous cost.** There are *things which angels desire to look into* in the message of the gospel. Charles Wesley probably had this in mind when he wrote:

*'Tis mystery all! The immortal dies!  
Who can explore his strange design?  
In vain the first-born seraph tries  
To sound the depths of love divine!  
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,  
Let angel minds inquire no more.*

*Therefore gird up the loins of your mind*

The word *therefore* is very important in the New Testament. It links a verse with what has gone before in order to apply doctrine. We should always ask ourselves when coming across the word, ‘What is the *therefore* there for?’ There are a number of *therefores* in 1 Peter, the first of which is in verse 13.

How are we to cope with trials and suffering? Should we attempt to get on some emotional high? Not at all! The apostle writes, *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ* (13). Let us think about this verse:

- *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind.* In Bible times men often wore long robes which hindered them in work or battle. When preparing for action, they would gather up their robes and tuck them into their belts to facilitate movement (cp. 1 Kings 18:46). In modern parlance Peter was saying, ‘Be sure that you are ready for action.’ Many spiritual battles are fought through the mind. Many Christians are too lazy to think, and the devil loves to have it that way. True Christianity never by-passes the mind but makes us think very hard. We must learn in trial and trouble to go to the Bible, and to look for encouragement from the Scriptures.
- *Be sober.* In other words, ‘Be serious-minded and level-headed’ (cp. 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:6,8; Titus 2:2,6,12). The sober person sees things as they really are. The Christian who is *sober* can be relied upon for his spiritual judgment and common sense.
- *Rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation* (return) *of Jesus Christ.* This is something that we must do. We have to place our hope fully or entirely on God’s grace for the future as well as the present. **We do this by reading, meditating and depending on God’s promises.** *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind.*

*Be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure*

God has chosen us and called us and we are kept by his power (1 Peter 1:4–5). We cannot lose our salvation but we can lose our assurance. We cannot fall from grace but we can fall into sin. We must be very diligent to make our *calling and election sure* (10). This exhortation is most important because:

- There are many who profess to follow Christ, but have little interest in the Bible or in obedience to God’s precious word. We can be religious without being Christian. The Lord Jesus gave a very solemn warning about false believers in the Sermon on the Mount. He warned that he would cast out *many* from his presence on the day of judgment who had worked miracles and prophesied in his name. They were not truly called or chosen by God; they failed to obey his will and were lawless (Matthew 7:21–23).
- There are Christians who are very sensitive to their own failings and they struggle with assurance of salvation and question themselves about the reality of their faith in Christ. Even the godliest person may experience times of doubts. A lack of Christian assurance hinders us in our work and witness for Christ and robs us of our Christian joy.

How do we make our *calling and election sure*? The phrase *be even more diligent* implies urgency and zeal. We are to examine ourselves as to whether we *are in the faith* (2 Corinthians 13:5). We must beware of excessive introspection which causes us to take our eyes away from Christ, however. We are to have a practical faith which shows the graces described in verses 5 to 8. Our faith must be seen in our good works (cp. James 2:18). If we do the things commanded in verses 5 to 7 we *will never stumble* and we will be sure of a wonderful welcome into the everlasting kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ when we meet him at death or when he returns (11). **Are you making your calling and election sure?**



*Neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus*

We are reminded in verses 2 to 4 of this chapter that the Lord has done great things for us, but this does not mean that we should just sit back to bask in our blessings. The Christian life is not static. We must for this very reason be very diligent (exert ourselves) to *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (3:18). We are told how to do this in these verses (5–7).

- *Add (supply) to your faith virtue* (i.e. moral excellence, cp. Philippians 4:8). Peter used the same word in verse 3 to describe the moral excellence of God. We have been called to *proclaim the praises* (same word as *virtues*) of God (1 Peter 2:9). We must by godly living show that we belong to God and proclaim his virtues by our lives as well as with our lips.
- *Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge* (discernment) so that we will be able to recognise the *destructive heresies* of false teachers (2:1) that would harm us.
- *Add to knowledge self-control*. We battle with sinful desires and temptation and we must exercise discipline in our lives.
- *Add to self-control perseverance*. We have to learn to persevere in the face of discouragement and difficulties.
- *Add to perseverance godliness*. We should always seek to please and honour God.
- *Add to godliness brotherly kindness* (cp. Ephesians 4:32).
- *Add to brotherly kindness love*. ‘In the Christian life you start with faith and you always end with love. Without faith you can do nothing, but given faith, and the practising of faith, you must inevitably end with love, for God himself is Love’ (D.M. Lloyd-Jones, EXPOSITORY SERMONS ON 2 PETER published by Banner of Truth).

If these graces are found in good measure in our lives (*abound*) we will be *neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*. To lack these things is to be short-sighted to the point of blindness (8–9). **Are you growing in your knowledge of the Lord and bearing precious spiritual fruit in your life?**

*As he who called you is holy, you also be holy*

Each Christian has been born again (or *begotten*) into God’s family (3,23), and the new family image should be seen in our lives. This is shown by:

- *Obedience to God’s will. As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance* (14). If we are in God’s family, we are expected to obey him, not allowing ourselves to be fashioned by the evil desires which were a feature of our old way of life (14). God’s will is revealed in his holy word. We need to read the Bible every day, hear good and faithful preaching, and live according to the teaching of Scripture. We must never assume that we are children of God if we are not serious about obedience to the Lord.
- *Holiness. As he who has called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct*’ (15). We must be holy like our heavenly Father (15–16). To be holy is to keep ourselves from sinning, being set apart to God so that we live to please him. Enoch *had this testimony, that he pleased God* (Hebrews 11:5). Biblical holiness does not make us miserable, but brings great joy to our lives. The Puritan William Gurnall rightly observed, ‘Say not that thou hast royal blood in thy veins; say not that thou art born of God if thou canst not prove thy pedigree by daring to be holy!’
- *The fear of God. Conduct yourselves throughout your sojourning here in fear* (17). We are accountable to our Father in heaven for the way we live. As his children, we should show by our conduct that we fear him. The fear of God is not a cringing, cowardly fear, but a sense of joyful awe and reverence. When we fear God, we will not fear men. *Noah was moved with godly fear* (Hebrews 11:7) and he was a *preacher of righteousness* (2 Peter 2:5). He was used by God because he feared God.

**Obedience to God, holiness of life, the fear of the Lord. – Are these things which distinguish a child of God from the ungodly seen in your life?**

*Redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ*

To be redeemed means to be delivered from captivity or slavery by payment of a price. Peter reminds us that we have been *redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot* (18–19). The apostle probably had in mind Israel's wonderful deliverance from Egypt when a lamb *without blemish* was slain for each household (Exodus 12:5–7). Its blood was sprinkled on the doorposts and lintels of each Hebrew house. The people were saved from the judgment visited upon Egypt, being sheltered by the blood. They were then delivered from bondage.

Christ is described as being *our Passover* (1 Corinthians 5:7) and we are redeemed to God by his blood (Revelation 5:9). Our redemption by the blood of the Lord Jesus brings us deliverance from the penalty and power of sin. We are justified by the blood of Christ and saved from God's holy wrath against sinners. To be justified means that we are declared righteous in the sight of God so that we are no longer under condemnation for our sin (Romans 5:9; 8:1). The Lord Jesus has delivered us from bondage to Satan and to sin (Ephesians 2:1–3; Colossians 1:13). We have been redeemed from an *aimless* way of life, and as a redeemed people we must always seek to please God by obedience and holy living (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Some modern theologians hate the doctrine of redemption through the blood of Christ. To the grateful Christian the blood of Christ is most *precious*. **Had Jesus not shed his blood, died and risen again, we would still be in our sins – lost, without God and without hope.**

*Ye souls, redeemed with blood,  
And called by grace divine,  
Walk worthy of your God,  
And let your conduct shine;  
Keep Christ, your living Head, in view,  
In all you say, in all you do.*

(William Gadsby)

*Exceedingly great and precious promises*

Peter emphasised that he was first a *servant* of Christ and then an *apostle* (1). God has given us a *precious faith* (1) and *exceedingly great and precious promises* (4). God has not given us these great and precious promises to lull us into complacency or smug self-satisfaction. He has given them to us that we may be *partakers of the divine nature* and to make us holy people (4). We rightly enjoy the comfort of God's promises but we must also take seriously the commands of God. To be partakers of the divine nature does not mean that we become 'little gods' as taught by heretical charismatic teachers such as Kenneth and Gloria Copeland. Christians are adopted into God's family but we are still human. To partake of the divine nature means to be *conformed to the image* of the Lord Jesus (Romans 8:29). We are no longer in bondage to the lusts of the flesh but are now Christ's free men and women (cp. John 8:34,36). Free to be holy, free to love God and to serve him.

The *exceedingly great and precious promises* from the word of God are absolutely true. God does not lie, he cannot lie (Titus 1:2)! These promises are not man-made fables (16). It is far better to encourage ourselves in the promises of God's word rather than to wallow in self-pity when our *precious faith* is tested and attacked!

*The knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord* (2,3,8) is one of the Christian's great privileges. To know God the Father and his Son is to have *grace and peace* multiplied to us (2); it is to have eternal life and to be godly (3; cp. John 17:3). **Is it not a sad fact that so often we behave as if the Lord is a stranger to us? We rarely talk about him and do not spend enough time with him in prayer nor listen to him through the words of Scripture.** We all need to grow in our knowledge of God. How keen is your spiritual appetite? Do you thirst after God (Psalm 42:1–2)?

## 2 PETER

8 OCTOBER

1 Peter 1:22–25

Peter wrote his second letter in AD 66 or 67 shortly before he was martyred (cp. 1:14–15). He wrote the letter to remind his first readers of the teaching of the prophets and the apostles (1:12–15; 3:1–2). He warns against the false teachers who were infiltrating the church. We are not to be surprised that in these last days there will be scoffers who scorn the promise of Christ's second coming. The apostle urges us to be holy and to be prepared for the return of Christ (3:10–14). His letter encourages us to *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (3:18).

### Outline of 2 Peter

- |                                           |   |        |
|-------------------------------------------|---|--------|
| 1. Opening greetings                      | – | 1:1–4  |
| 2. Be fruitful in the knowledge of Christ | – | 1:5–21 |
| 3. Beware of false teachers               | – | 2:1–22 |
| 4. Be prepared for the return of Christ   | – | 3:1–18 |

### *Love one another fervently with a pure heart*

Peter reminds us again of our new birth and of the purifying effect that obedience to God's word has upon our lives. Obedience to the gospel and cleansing from sin go together (22; cp. 1:2). We have been *begotten again to a living hope* (3) through the living and eternal word of God (23). Evil men hate God's word and the glorious message that it proclaims, but *the word of the LORD endures for ever* (25). The word of God plays an essential part in conversion and in the Christian life. When a person is born again, a radical change takes place in his life. He obeys the truth (the message of the gospel; 25; cp. 4:17) and repents of his sin. Those who reject the gospel are described as those who are *disobedient to the word* (2:8; cp. 2 Thessalonians 1:8).

If we are born again into God's family we must *love one another fervently with a pure heart* (22). Holiness and obedience to God are shown by love to our fellow-Christians. Some believers are most difficult and we do not find them easy to like. We are not told to like one another however, but to love one another, and that love must be fervent. There should be nothing half-hearted about the love between Christians. This means that we will care for one another, pray for one another and be practical in helping one another. We often fall short of God's demands. **We talk about love for one another, we also sing about it. Now let us put love into action.**

*How sweet, how heavenly is the sight,  
When those who love the Lord  
In one another's peace delight,  
And so fulfil his word!*

*Love is the golden chain that binds  
The happy souls above;  
And he's an heir of heaven that finds  
His bosom glow with love.*

(Joseph Swain)

*To you who believe, he is precious*

When we are born again, we need spiritual food in order to grow. That food is *the pure milk of the word* of God (2). Growth is a vital part of life and if we have no desire to feed upon God's word, we are spiritually sick, or we are still dead in our sins. There is no such thing as instant maturity in Christ. The growing process goes on throughout our Christian lives. We must grow in the knowledge of God and his word and we must become more Christlike in our lives, *laying aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking* (1). When we *love one another fervently with a pure heart* (1:22), there can be no place for these sins.

We should not only desire the pure milk of God's word, but also to have fellowship with him, coming to him as to a living stone (3–4). We have *tasted that the Lord is gracious* and Peter goes on to describe us as being part of a spiritual building in which we are also living stones (5). The Greek word used here for stone is not the rough piece of rock ('petros') which Jesus used to describe Peter (Matthew 16:18), but a smooth stone ('lithos') shaped and prepared for use in a building. When we are converted there are many rough edges in our lives which have to be removed. The smoothing process that God uses is chastisement and it is painful (Hebrews 12:11). This discipline is necessary so that we will be able to offer up spiritual sacrifices of praise and service which are acceptable to God (5).

The chief corner-stone of God's building is the Lord Jesus Christ. He was rejected by the Jews, but chosen by God the Father and precious (4; cp. Matthew 21:42–45). Those who reject the gospel message stumble over Christ, refusing to submit to him (7–8). Christian, you were once disobedient and in spiritual darkness. You may have despised Christ but now *to you who believe, he is precious* (7). **Show by your speech and conduct that Christ is indeed precious to you.**

*Your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion*

We rejoice that Satan is a defeated enemy but we must never underestimate his strength and his cunning. He is doomed and will be cast into the lake of fire after the return of Christ (Revelation 20:10), but at the present time he is prowling around *like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour* (8). One of his names, 'Apollyon' (Revelation 9:11), means 'destroyer' and he is doing his utmost to destroy gospel churches and to devour the unwary. We must never forget that we are engaged in spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10–18).

The devil was behind all the persecution suffered by those early Christians and he continues to attack God's people today. He is very subtle and he not only uses persecution to attack us but he also sows seeds of doubt in our minds about God's faithfulness. He attacks when we least expect and for this reason the word of God exhorts us, *Be sober* (level-headed), *be vigilant* (8). Let us take care in the things that we read or watch. Do not pay attention to gossip which gives Satan an opportunity to do his evil work in our minds.

The devil may be *like a roaring lion* but we are able to *resist him* in the strength of God (9; cp. James 4:7). We must stand firm in the faith and to do this we must know God's word. Many professing Christians are woefully ignorant of the teachings of Scripture and Satan has been able to bring confusion and heresy into churches. We are not above suffering; it is common to Christians throughout the world (9), but *the God of all grace* will supply grace for us to meet every situation (10). The Christian life is not easy. We will be insulted and we may suffer *fiery trial* (4:12) but there is no happier life in all this world and eternal glory awaits us (10). **To him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen** (11).

Peter dictated his letter to Silvanus (the Latin name for Silas). He closes with greetings from the church in Babylon (Rome; cp. Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 18:2) and from Mark, the Gospel-writer (12–14).

*Casting all your care upon him, for he cares for you*

The word *elders* in verse 5 is more likely to refer to older men rather than those who have the office of elder. Young people must submit themselves to their elders. Many young people despise the elderly and this is sinful. This is not only a word for the young, however. We must all *be submissive to one another* (5). This can be very difficult, especially when we feel convinced that we are right and the other person is wrong. How can we have the grace to *be submissive* in such circumstances? We must *be clothed with humility* and then the Lord will give us the necessary grace. *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (5 cp. Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6). Beware of pride! It brought the downfall of Satan (cp. Isaiah 14:12–15; 1 Timothy 3:6) and has been the ruin of many a person, including professing Christians.

How are we to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God (6)? We must repent of sinful attitudes such as selfishness and pride and learn to esteem others better than ourselves, seeking their well-being. We should think often about the Lord Jesus, who humbled himself to save sinners (Philippians 2:3–8). We show humility when we are *submissive to one another*, putting the interests of others before those of ourselves (Philippians 2:2–4).

Are you burdened with cares? God knows all about our trials and anxieties, and he cares. Christian, the almighty God, who is worshipped and served by multitudes of angels, cares for you. No problem is too big for him to handle or too small to concern him. Trouble at home, problems at work, financial worries, heartache over unsaved loved ones – God knows about all these things and wants you to prayerfully throw them on to his shoulders (and what immensely strong shoulders they are)! *Casting all your care upon him, for he cares for you* (7). **Memorise this verse and do what it tells you to do. It will make all the difference in your Christian life.**

**Jesus is Precious**

*Jesus is precious, says the Word;  
What comfort does this truth afford!  
And those who in his name believe,  
With joy this precious truth receive.*

*To them he is more precious far  
Than life and all its comforts are;  
Whatever things men precious call,  
Christ is more precious than them all.*

*He's precious in his precious blood,  
That pard'ning and soul-cleansing flood;  
He's precious in his righteousness,  
That pardoning, holy, heavenly dress.*

*In every office he sustains,  
In every victory he gains,  
In every counsel of his will,  
He's precious to his people still.*

*As they draw near their journey's end,  
How precious is their heavenly Friend!  
And, when in death they bow their head,  
He's precious on a dying bed.*

*With them may I in heaven be found,  
And with thy precious glory crowned,  
Join the sweet song, and there adore  
A precious Christ for evermore.*

(Samuel Medley)

*His own special people*

Many of the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament are applied to the Christian church. Verses 9 and 10 are two of these prophecies. Let us think about verse 9 (cp. Deuteronomy 7:6–9):

- We are a *chosen generation*. God has chosen us in Christ before he made the world (cp. Ephesians 1:4). We are *elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father* (1:2).
- We are a *royal priesthood*. We do not offer animal sacrifices like the Old Testament priests, but *the sacrifice of praise to God* (cp. Hebrews 13:15). Are you proclaiming *the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*?
- We are a *holy nation*. We must lead godly lives to enable us to *proclaim his praises (virtues)*. The remainder of the apostle's letter shows how this is worked out in practice.
- We are *his own special people*. Peter goes on in verse 10 to quote from Hosea 2:23 to show that the church, which consists of converted Jews and Gentiles, belongs to God. The Lord Jesus Christ is precious to us (7) and we are special to him.

Great responsibilities come with these great privileges. We have been called out of darkness into God's marvellous light. We are *pilgrims* bound for heaven and we must *abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul* (11). Spiritual warfare takes place in the flesh. We are not to yield to sinful desires but present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God in order to lead a holy life (Romans 12:1).

We are to be God-fearing citizens, beyond reproach in all our behaviour (12). We must obey the laws of our country (except when they contradict God's laws, Acts 5:29) even if rulers are evil (13–17). Remember, when Peter wrote his letter, the Roman emperor was the evil Nero. God has chosen us not because of any goodness in us. We have nothing to commend us to God. **We owe it to him to live as his own special people so that men will see our good works and glorify God in the day of visitation (12; cp. Matthew 5:16).**

*Serving as overseers ... being examples to the flock*

Elders serve as *overseers* who *shepherd* (or pastor) *the flock of God* (1–2). The word *overseer* is translated *bishop* in 1 Timothy 3:1–2. The words *elder* and *bishop* are used interchangeably in the New Testament (eg. Acts 20:17,28). The office of a bishop is not that of a man who oversees dozens of churches. There were several bishops (*overseers*) in each church (eg. Philippians 1:1).

The ability of a church to stand firm in times of trial and trouble depends much upon its elders. A well-taught and healthy flock (church) is better equipped to face difficulties and persecution than a church which receives little teaching. Elders must *shepherd* (pastor) the church with enthusiasm (2). They are not to be eager to gain money, but rather eager to serve God and his people. The office of elder has its own temptations and one that must always be resisted is the misuse of authority (lording it over church members, 3). Leadership must be by example, by serving. Elders are to lead God's people and must never drive them by harsh oversight. They are answerable to the Chief Shepherd (cp. Hebrews 13:17) who will richly reward faithful service.

If we are to be healthy in the Christian life, we must be prepared to submit to pastoral advice and to accept loving rebuke when we go wrong. This is why church membership is so important. In becoming a member of a church, we are undertaking to submit to the leadership of that church and to play our part in the building up of that particular fellowship. We will never be healthy in the Christian life if we insist on 'doing our own thing'.

Bad elders will quickly ruin any church. We need to pray that the Lord will raise up many godly elders in our churches (see 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9, for the high standards demanded of elders). **How often do you give thanks for your elders? How often do you pray for them?**

*If you are reproached for the name of Christ*

We must not be surprised when *the fiery trial* comes upon us (12). Peter was probably preparing his readers for the terrible suffering that Nero was about to inflict upon them. Suffering in one form or another is part and parcel of the Christian life. We should not ask, ‘Why is this happening to us?’ but rather rejoice that we are privileged to partake of Christ’s sufferings (13; cp. Acts 5:40–41). *If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you* (14). We should also rejoice, knowing that though we share in Christ’s sufferings, we will also share in his glory when he comes again, and we will *be glad with exceeding joy* (13; cp. 5:10; Romans 8:17–18). Suffering is not the end.

When we are glorified in heaven our tears will be wiped away. There will be no more sin, suffering, pain or death. **If you are being insulted by men because of your Christian faith, remember that the Lord loves you. Glorify God in suffering and commit your soul to his care in doing good (16,19).**

While there is no shame in suffering for the Lord Jesus, some Christians suffer because of their own sin or folly (15–16)! We must not complain if we suffer *as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody* (a meddler) *in other people’s matters* (cp. 2:20).

Peter warned that the time had come *for judgment to begin at the house of God*. The persecution that was already coming upon the church was the beginning of a testing and a sifting process. If judgment is harsh for the people of God, how much worse it will be for those who do not obey the gospel of God (17–18)!

*To this you were called*

We live in a world in which most people are being urged to stand on their rights. Obedience to God’s word means submission – we have to be prepared to deny ourselves. We saw yesterday that we must submit to the laws of our nation. Peter will go on in chapter 3 to urge wives to submit to their husbands, even if the husbands are not believers.

Servants are urged to be submissive to their masters whether those masters are good or harsh (18). It is a great trial to suffer for doing good. Peter tells us that to bear such suffering with patience is commendable before God (19–20). He points us to the example of the Lord Jesus who is sinless. When he was insulted, he did not trade insults; when he was tortured, he did not threaten (though he could have destroyed his wicked enemies in an instant). He committed himself to God the Father, the righteous Judge (21–23).

Those who believe that Jesus is a noble example to be followed but do not believe that he died to save sinners miss the great point of his coming into this world (cp. 1 Timothy 1:15). It is of course quite true that the Lord Jesus is the perfect example for us to follow, but Christ came to this earth as the sin-bearer for his people (24–25). He *bore our sins in his own body on the tree* so that we would die to our sinful way of life and live for righteousness.

We must follow his example when suffering for his sake. He is *the Shepherd and Overseer* of our souls and he lovingly cares for us (25). Are you suffering for doing good? Commit yourself to God (23) and rejoice that he has counted you *worthy to suffer shame for his name* (Acts 5:41). Peter reminds us, *To this you were called* (21). Called to suffer, called to be Christlike in suffering. **Someone once said, ‘The face of true godliness is never so beautiful as when it is spat upon.’**

*That your prayers may not be hindered*

Peter now turns from the relationship between servants and their masters, and between husbands and wives. *Likewise you wives ... Likewise you husbands* (1,7). *The husband is the head of the wife* (Ephesians 5:23) but this in no way implies that woman is inferior to man. They are equal, being made in the image of God; the difference lies in our God-given roles. Though wives are to submit to their husbands, husbands must also give honour (respect) to their wives (1,7). Men who do not honour their wives are sinning. Husbands must follow Christ's example and love their wives as *Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it* (Ephesians 5:25).

When a husband or wife becomes a Christian and their spouse remains unsaved there are many trials and difficulties. The unbelieving partner does not understand what has happened and is naturally concerned that their loved one does not become 'a religious maniac'. A wife will not win her non-Christian husband by preaching at him but by her God-honouring behaviour (1–2). If this is not apparent how can she expect God to answer her prayers for him? The strident demands of the feminist movement do little to enhance the cause of women. There is a beauty which is more than skin-deep which will never fade away. Every woman can have this beauty – *the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God* (4).

What about husbands? They must not excuse themselves with the old saying, 'You'll never understand a woman.' There is one woman that he must understand – his wife. God commands it (7). Husbands must work at understanding their wives' problems, fears, needs, longings, etc. You are to do this *that your prayers may not be hindered*. **Christian husband, are you having problems in your prayer life? Could it be that you are not giving your wife the understanding and respect that God commands and that this is hindering your prayers?**

*Be serious and watchful in your prayers*

What did Peter mean by *the end of all things is at hand*? Some commentators believe that it refers to the second coming of Christ, but others take it to refer to the destruction of the Jewish state (Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD). The times were difficult with unrest and turmoil in the Roman Empire and persecution coming from both Jews and Romans. How were those early Christians to conduct themselves in such times? How are we to live in an uncertain world?

- We must *be serious and watchful* in our prayers (7). In difficult times some become fanatics and speculate wildly about dates for Christ's second coming; others grow cold in their love for the Lord (cp. Matthew 24:11–12, 23–24). We must be level-headed and prayerful.
- We must *above all things have fervent love for one another*, being ready to forgive and to forget wrongs committed against us *for love will cover a multitude of sins* (8). Many in our churches have great problems and trials. We need to understand them and feel for them in their suffering. We must encourage and support them. We do not need to talk about fervent love. It must be seen and felt.
- We must cheerfully open our homes to give hospitality (9; cp. Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:1–2).
- God has given all of us gifts, not to use for selfish ends, but to use in the service of others. We must be good stewards of these gifts (10).

Preachers of God's word have an awesome responsibility to preach as those who are delivering the words of God. To despise biblical preaching is to despise a most important God-given gift to his church. To be frivolous, shallow, light or complacent in preaching is out of order (11). In any form of service we must be whole-hearted in doing it *with the ability which God supplies*.

We may be enjoying a period of calm, peace and blessing in our Christian lives but we cannot afford to relax. Let us be serious and watchful so that we can pray more effectively. **We may not be called upon to glorify God in suffering at this present time, but we are called to glorify him in all that we do (10–11).**



*Therefore ... arm yourselves with the same mind*

How are we to face suffering and at the same time live holy lives? If our attitude is wrong, we will run into trouble. Peter again urges us to use our minds. Biblical principles must be thought through and then worked out in our lives. *Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind* (1; cp. 1:13). The Lord Jesus suffered *that he might bring us to God* (3:18). He suffered *in the flesh* to save us from *the lusts of men* to do the will of God (2). We must arm ourselves with this attitude, that we are no longer our own, that we belong to God (cp. 1 Corinthians 6:19–20). The old life must go! Immorality, unwholesome desires, drunkenness, wild parties, drunken orgies and idolatry have no place in the Christian life (3). Our former associates may misunderstand us and even speak evil of us (4), but they will have to give an account of their own lives to God (5).

Verse 6 is difficult to understand and opinions are varied as to what it means. I believe that in the light of the previous verse, Peter is saying that the gospel was preached to those who are now in heaven, when they were alive on earth. Their lives were transformed for the better by the Holy Spirit, but those opposed to the gospel spoke evil of them (4). The day of judgment (5) will see the vindication of God's people and the punishment of the wicked. Christian and non-Christian will have to give an account of their lives on that awesome day (cp. Romans 14:10–12). **Can you honestly say that you are seeking to live your life according to God's will (2) so that you will please him?**

*Lord and Saviour, true and kind,  
Be the master of my mind;  
Bless and guide and strengthen still  
All my powers of thought and will.*

*Thou hast made me mind and soul;  
I for thee would use the whole;  
Thou hast died that I might live,  
All my powers to thee I give.*

(Handley C.G. Moule)

*You were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing*

Peter reminds us again of the Christian calling. We have already seen that God has called us *out of darkness into his marvellous light* (2:9), and that he has also called us to suffer for Christ (2:21). We were also called to bless those who ill-treat us. *You were called to this that you may inherit a blessing* (9). Many Christians go from place to place chasing after blessings (often just emotional bubbles which soon burst). We inherit a blessing by being a blessing. How can we be a blessing? Peter tells us in the verses that we have just read:

- *Be of one mind* (8) living and working together in harmony, always endeavouring *to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Ephesians 4:3). Division in the church drives away blessing and hinders God's work.
- Have *compassion for one another*, learning to 'feel' for one another, understanding and being concerned for each other. See the hymn, 'How sweet! how heavenly is the sight ...'

*When each can feel his brother's sigh  
And with him bear a part;  
When sorrow flows from eye to eye  
And joy from heart to heart.* (Joseph Swain)

- *Love as brothers* (see notes for 8 October on 1 Peter 1:22).
- *Be tender-hearted* (cp. Ephesians 4:32). We must not be hard-hearted or ride rough-shod over the feelings of others.
- *Be courteous* (some Greek manuscripts have 'humble-minded').
- We must not try to get even with those who have wronged us, but rather bless them (9; cp. Matthew 5:44).

Look at the blessing we will inherit if we put these principles into practice (verses 10–12, quoting Psalm 34:12–16). We will see good days and enjoy the smile of God as he lovingly watches over us and hears our prayers. **What more can we want?**

*Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts*

When we show the virtues and shun the vices described in verses 8 and 9, we will usually avoid trouble (13). There are exceptions, however. Some are softened by the godly living of Christians but others are hardened by it. The latter feel shamed when their sin is exposed by the righteousness of the Christian and they may respond with verbal or even physical abuse. They may slander us for our good conduct and brand us as evildoers (16). Peter tells us that we can be happy in such circumstances. *Even if you suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed* (14; cp. Matthew 5:10–12).

We must not be afraid of the threats of the ungodly, but *sanctify* (set apart) *the Lord God* in our hearts (14–15). Matthew Henry writes in his commentary, ‘We sanctify the Lord in our hearts, when we with sincerity and fervency adore him; when our thoughts of him are awful (filled with awe) and reverend; when we rely upon his power, trust to his faithfulness, submit to his wisdom, imitate his holiness.’

Let us remember that God is sovereign over all our trials. We must overcome the temptation to react angrily and to treat our opponents with contempt when they slander us and the gospel we love. We are to be ready to answer those who oppose us, giving them a reason for the hope that is within us with meekness and in the fear of God. To be able to do this, we must know the Lord and know our Bibles. We must also have a good conscience before God which comes from God-honouring conduct (16). The Lord has often used the testimony of persecuted Christians to bring their tormentors to repentance.

We can be happy in suffering if we glorify God by our lives and by our lips. Remember also that if we suffer for doing good, it is the will of God (17) and his will is best. We may be misunderstood by unbelievers, who may even find fault with our good conduct, but we will have a good conscience before God. **When he is set apart as Lord in our hearts, we will know his presence with us and we will enjoy his blessing.**

*Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust*

Christ our sinless Saviour *suffered once for sins. the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God* (18). We have been brought to God and reconciled to him (cp. Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:13,16)! Verse 18 contains three essential truths concerning Christ’s death:

- He *also suffered once for sins*. His atoning work is complete (cp. Hebrews 7:27; 9:28). The Roman Catholic church teaches that at every Mass, the priest offers up Christ again as a sacrifice, with the wafer and the wine actually turning into the body and blood of Christ. This doctrine (known as ‘transubstantiation’) denies the plain teaching of Scripture and the completeness and sufficiency of Christ’s death for the salvation of sinners. We do not have to do penance for sin or suffer in so-called purgatory. We have a complete salvation.
- Christ died as a substitute for sinners. Any other explanation of his death fails to understand or accept the obvious teaching in Scripture of his substitutionary sacrifice (cp. Isaiah 53:5–6).
- Christ was raised bodily from the dead by the Holy Spirit. We serve a risen Saviour.

The *spirits in prison* are those who refused to heed the words of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of Noah (19–20). They are now bound and awaiting judgment. This will take place at Christ’s second coming when their bodies will be raised. How does baptism save us (21)? The verse in no way suggests that this is water baptism; it has to do with a good conscience towards God which comes with the baptism of the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ at conversion (cp. 1 Corinthians 12:12–13). Every Christian knows this baptism without which there can be no salvation.

Christ has ascended into heaven and is now at the right hand of God, reigning supreme over all the universe (22). The exalted Lord Jesus prays for us at God’s right hand. How wonderful and encouraging. **Let us rejoice and give thanks to our great God and Saviour.**