

HOW ARE WE SAVED?

1 Peter 3:18-22

Intro: This morning we get back to our study of 1 Peter after the two weeks that you have had with Gary in the book of Jonah.

Our Scripture reading for the morning included some of the verses we have already covered, but I wanted all of us to be reminded of the general tone of this Epistle, and especially the fact that one of the main themes of the Epistle is, as Peter stated it in chapter 3, verse 14, SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE.

In fact, Peter not only emphasized that we as believers should expect to be persecuted because of what we believe, but he also clearly teaches that it is best that it be that way. It is best (1) because it is the will of God, (2) because of the beneficial effect that it has upon our lives, (3) because it enables us to display the grace of God in our lives, and so will cause others to ask about our faith, and thus (4) it opens hearts to the Gospel of God's grace.

The particular part that I want to cover this morning is in chapter 3, verses 19-22.

I do not think that there is any question but that this is, in some ways, the most difficult part of the Epistle. However, I hope that the meaning of these verses will be clear to you as we consider it this morning. The passage has been interpreted in various ways, and I do not claim to have the last word on it. But I will give you my understanding of it, and I sincerely hope that I have the mind of the Lord concerning it.

First of all, let me survey the passage to explain what it means, and then I will come back and make some practical applications from it.

I. THE MEANING OF THE TEXT (1 Peter 3:19-22).

I need to begin with v. 18, the verse we considered together three weeks ago today before Lucille and I left for our vacation.

Peter in this passage was showing that good, great good, eternal good, can come out of suffering for righteousness' sake. And the pre-eminent example of that is the suffering of Christ. Verse 18 speaks of that suffering, and the purpose of God for it. Peter mentioned not only the death of Christ "for sins," but His glorious resurrection--that He was "quicken'd by the Spirit," i.e., the Holy Spirit.

Verse 19 speaks of our Lord's preaching by that same Holy Spirit, and you can see that, by linking verses 18 and 19 together (as we ought to do), this had to be preaching that the Lord did after His resurrection. So it could not be, as some have interpreted this verse, preaching that the Lord did in Hades, or Sheol, between His death and His resurrection.

But how did He do this, and who are "the spirits in prison"?

Notice very carefully that Peter said that the Lord did the preaching by the Holy Spirit.

This probably means the preaching which Peter Himself did, as well as the preaching of the other Apostles, and even of deacons like Philip and Stephen.

We need to remind ourselves of what Paul wrote about his own preaching, and the preaching of his fellow-servants, when he said in 2 Cor. 5:20,

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ,
as though God did beseech you by us:
we pray you in Christ's stead,
be ye reconciled to God.

The preaching that is effective preaching is preaching in which God is at work, preaching where Christ is ministering through His servants. That, it seems to me, is what Peter was speaking about.

But who are "the spirits in prison"?

This is a Biblical term which describes the bondage of sinners. Isaiah spoke of it, and our Lord read it as being descriptive of His ministry. We have it in Luke 4:18 where the Lord read in the Temple that He had been anointed by the Spirit "to preach deliverance to the captives."

So verse 19 has to do with the post-resurrection ministry of Christ through the Apostles.

But how can we link this with v. 20 and Peter's reference to Noah? It seems that those who were disobedient in Noah's day were those to whom the Lord was preaching after His resurrection.

I believe that the problem is solved when we realize two things:

- 1) That people in Noah's day were just like the people in our Lord's day, and even in our own day. "The spirits in prison" is descriptive of unregenerate people in every generation. Sinners are always in bondage to

their sin in every generation. That is why they go on sinning even when they hate the consequences.

- 2) That Peter wanted to use the flood in Noah's day to illustrate the truth of water baptism. See how verse 21 begins.

So he was saying that the world of "spirits in prison" ("spirits" referring to their hearts, not just their bodies) in Noah's day were disobedient to Noah's preaching while God patiently waited all of those years that Noah was building the ark. And only "eight souls" were saved.

Then Peter makes the application regarding water baptism in v. 21.

The flood in Noah's day was a type of baptism; baptism is the antitype--that is, it is that to which the type pointed. And so, as Noah and his family were saved by water, so we are saved by baptism.

Now you can see why we have a problem in this text. Does this mean that people who teach baptismal regeneration, that no one is saved until he is baptized, have a text here that supports their doctrine? It seems that they do. But let us look a little more closely at it.

If we were to speak about Noah's deliverance, we could say, and should say, first of all, that God saved him and his family.

But we could also say that the ark saved them.

And then we could say that they were "saved by water," as Peter did.

Let us compare this with salvation.

We are Biblically correct to say that God saves us. We are equally correct in saying that Christ saves us. We can also say that we are saved by the Holy Spirit. We can also say that we are saved by faith. Or that we are saved by grace. Or that we are saved by the Word of God. We can also say that we were saved by the person who brought the Gospel to us. Paul spoke in this way in 1 Cor. 9:22.

SO WE CAN ALSO SAY THAT WE WERE "SAVED BY WATER." How can we? What actually is water baptism?

Baptism, like the flood, is a type--a type of the resurrection of Christ. (Read the first part and the last part of v. 22.) We are saved by the resurrection of Christ, of which water baptism is the type. And, by the way, this is a strong argument for immersion. But does this mean that no

person is saved until he is actually baptized in water?
Is water baptism a condition of salvation?

It cannot, as such, be a condition of salvation. This would contradict other passages of Scripture, such as, Eph. 2:8, 9; Tit. 3:5. We are saved by grace alone.

Well, what does it mean, then? What is the true significance of baptism? What did it mean in NT times? Why did Peter himself say on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:38,
Repent, and be baptized every one of you
in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,
and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

If you compare what happened to the Jews in Acts 2 with what happened to the Gentiles in Acts 10, you will find that the order is different:

- 1) With the Jews--repentance, baptism, the Holy Spirit.
- 2) With the Gentiles--repentance, the Holy Spirit, baptism.

To whom was Peter writing in this Epistle? To Jews. Why was baptism so important to the Jews? BECAUSE IT INDICATED THE SINCERITY OF THEIR FAITH. Baptism was the first way in which a Jewish man or woman or child could say to his family and to the Jewish community in which he lived, "I want you to know that I have become a Christian, that I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour, that my hope for salvation, for the forgiveness of my sins, is in His death and in His resurrection.

Thus baptism should always be the first way in which a Jew or a Gentile says, "I am a Christian." In this sense he is "saved by water." We are baptized, not in order that we might be saved, but to show that we are!

Isn't the same true about our faith? We believe in Christ because we have been born of God.

And so our salvation rests upon the resurrection of Christ which is portrayed by our baptism in water.

But that is not all: Look at v. 22. Here we have the exaltation of Christ at the Father's right hand--the climactic evidence that the Father is pleased with the work of the Son concerning our salvation. THIS IS A GREAT PASSAGE ON ASSURANCE.

Was it worthwhile for Christ to suffer for righteousness' sake? Can God bring something good out of that which in itself is very, very bad? He does it all of the time, but He did it pre-eminently in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let us go on to . . .

II. THE APPLICATION (1 Pet. 3:19-22).

Notice, first of all,

- A. The nature of a true ministry: Christ working and preaching through His servants.

All that we do is in vain unless the Lord is working through us. Cf. Isa. 55:10, 11.

- B. The hopeless bondage of sinners.

We cannot set ourselves free. Only God through Christ can do that. Cf. John 8:34,
Jesus answered them,
Verily, verily, I say unto you,
Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

- C. The longsuffering of God.

Who is there who is saved who does not marvel at this? We marvel at God's patience with a sinning world, but even more so at His patience with us before and after our salvation.

- D. The amazing work of Christ.

1. His suffering and death.
2. His resurrection.
3. His present glory in heaven at the right hand of God.

- E. Our assurance: "the answer of a good conscience toward God."

The Greek word that is translated "answer" here is used nowhere else in the NT, nor does it occur at all in the LXX. It probably can be best translated with the words, an expression, a confession, a declaration. Baptism does nothing to cleanse us from sin, but it is an expression that we have a conscience before God and toward God that we have really been forgiven and saved. To have a good conscience is to be at peace that through Christ all that has been wrong between God and our own souls has been made right, and will continue to be right.

Concl: So, how are we saved? Peter told us at the beginning of this Epistle. It is through Christ, and through Him alone. Are you saved? Have you confessed your faith in Him by being baptized? And do you continue to confess Him in your life? Baptism alone can easily become a meaningless ritual.

ARMED FOR THE CONFLICT

1 Peter 4:1-6

Intro: Peter began this Epistle by giving us one of those classic statements concerning salvation which are found many places throughout the NT, especially in the Epistles. He spoke of the ultimate goal of our salvation: our "hope." We have a heavenly inheritance where we will not only be "with Christ," but "like him, for we shall see him as he is" (to borrow a couple of expressions, one from Paul, and the other from John).

And it was in that opening statement of this Epistle that Peter mentioned the fact that from the time we are saved until we finally get to heaven, either through death or the coming of the Lord, we are being "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1:5)--and in this context "salvation" means the culmination of our salvation when we will be like our Lord, delivered forever from the possibility that we could ever sin again.

But the question arises as we look at that statement in 1:5, "From what are we being kept?" We know we are being kept for heaven and all that heaven will mean to us, but we are "kept" now from what? The answer becomes apparent as we come to 1:13-16. We are to be "kept" from sin, from the influence of the world, and from all that the Devil is continually seeking to do to draw us back into the things from which the Lord has saved us.

Along this line see also 2:1, 11, 12, 21, 22. And it is all through ch. 3. Godly living was to be the object of the people of God toward the Roman government, in their homes, on the job, and in their relationships with others in the Church. WE NEED TO KEEP IN MIND THAT CHRIST DIED TO SAVE US FROM OUR SINS--SINS PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE! This is the emphasis that we have in 2:24, and again in 3:18. And now we come back to it again in 4:1 where Peter is actually applying what he had been writing about since 3:18.

All of this points to a distinguishing characteristic of all true believers in Christ: They are no longer able to sin as they used to sin. They can sin, but they cannot live in sin. Sin bothers them. If a person claims to be a Christian, and yet continues to live as he always has, you must conclude that his claim is a false claim. No person can be truly saved, and yet continue on in sin. Cf. 1 John 3:9, 10.

Now another point about this that Peter dealt with extensively is that the Christian's refusal to sin is the source of great trouble for him with the people of the world. This is why the child of God is persecuted. This is the cause of his suffering in the world.

And this brings us to our text in chapter 4, the first six verses. And Peter here brings us back to the Cross.

From a human standpoint, the reason that ungodly men hated our Lord was because of His Deity. He was holy, sinless, undefiled and undefilable. He suffered, suffered terribly for it. From God's point of view, He was suffering for us, paying the penalty for our sins. And we died with Him. Consequently, we should not expect to be treated any differently from the way our Lord was treated, AND THIS IS THE TRUTH THAT WE NEED TO ARM OURSELVES WITH.

I. OUR ARMOR AND ITS USEFULNESS (1 Pet. 4:1-3).

The Lord expected to suffer and to die because of His opposition to sin. He expected to be hated by the world because He would condemn their way of life, not condone it. And we are to expect the same reaction, the same response from the world.

The world is still what it always has been since Adam sinned against God. The world is an enemy of God, and an enemy of all godliness. We are not to expect that we will have an easy time in this world. We are to expect conflict, to expect trouble--IF we are really saved, and really living as the Lord wants us to live.

And this very attitude, this understanding, will provide us with protection. We will expect trouble. We will get prepared for it. AND WE WILL SEE THAT GOD HAS A GOOD PURPOSE FOR LEAVING IT THIS WAY, THE WAY OUR LORD FOUND IT WHEN HE WAS HERE ON EARTH!

What is the purpose? How can it be useful to the child of God?

Peter stated its usefulness at the end of verse 1, and then gave it negatively and positively in v. 2. And then he gave an additional reason in v. 3.

A. We need to have our thinking, our expectation, from the world, straight.

If we expect great acceptance from the world, or great approval from the world, we are going to be disappointed and easily defeated.

But, if we expect opposition, then we will more likely be prepared.

B. God's purpose is to change our way of life--from sinning to holiness.

- C. And then in v. 3, whatever time we have given to the world and its sin is enough, and more than enough.

Did you ever hear a Christian say, "Oh, I wish I had committed some other sins before the Lord saved me"? A real Christian would never speak like that. Instead, he would say, "Oh, I wish I had never sinned against the Lord. I regret every sin I ever committed, and I will be so thankful when I will never be able to sin again!"

We all may not have sinned to the extent described in v. 3, but the potential was there for all of us.

The first, "lasciviousness," speaks of unrestrained and uninterrupted immorality. A life that is wanton and licentious.

The second, third, and fourth words all have to do with drinking and drunkenness, and the sins that go with them--wild parties, sexual perversions and orgies. With the problems that we have over drugs, we have almost forgotten that basic to the corruption of our society is drinking beer and other intoxicating drinks. One of the beer companies advertises that "the night belongs to Michelob." I would like to send them those words of our Lord Jesus Christ, recorded in John 3, where He said, "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (v. 19b).

God says, "You have sinned enough. You have given far too much time to "the lusts of men," to "the will of the Gentiles." And the child of God says, "Yes, I have; far too much time."

Is that the way you feel about sin--not only regretting it, but despising it.

You see, the Lord lets us experience that suffering for righteousness' sake to wean us away from sin, and to make us stronger in holiness.

But notice what Peter wrote in v. 4.

II. THE ATTITUDE OF THE WORLD (1 Pet. 4:4).

- A. They are astonished.

They cannot figure you out. You used to sin like they still do, but now you won't do those things any more.

- B. They are critical of you, and speak evil of you.

III. THE GRACE OF GOD TOWARD THE WORLD (1 Pet. 4:5, 6).

In the very way in which God deals with His people, purifying them through persecution from the world, He is exercising His grace toward the world--in two ways:

- A. Seeking to awaken them to something that they may not know. See v. 5.

They are going to talk to God some day about their sins, and about the lives they have lived here on earth. And this is to be one of the truths we set before the world as the Gospel is preached to them.

And this leads to the second point in v. 6.

- B. The Gospel is preached.

You see, it is not our similarity to the world that gives us an opportunity to witness; it is the way in which we are different from the world.

Think of how this is illustrated time and time again in the book of Acts. And how it may have been the very thing that God used to bring you to Himself.

"The dead" here are the spiritually dead. It cannot mean to those who are physically dead because there is no possibility of being saved once a person dies without Christ.

"That they might be judged according to men in the flesh" has been interpreted a couple of ways:

- 1) Men are judged by the Gospel.
- 2) Or Peter could have been saying (and I believe he was), that those who believe the Gospel will experience the same opposition from the world as others who had previously received Christ.

We do new converts a great disservice when we falsely tell them that everything is going to be greater and better when they receive Christ. In their hearts it will be, but "in the flesh" it will get worse than it ever has been.

But, oh, the joy of living according to God in the spirit! This means that your heart is right with God. Your sins are forgiven. You are at peace. You are more conscious than ever of your sins, but you know that Christ paid the penalty for them in full!

Concl: So there is truth here for those of us who know the Lord, and truth for those who still need to know Him.

LIFE AND MINISTRY IN THE END TIMES
1 Peter 4:7-11

Intro: Peter has made it very clear that the child of God who is really living for the Lord is not going to have an easy time in this world.

But he has also made it clear that the Lord has good purposes to accomplish through our testings and trials. One is that God will be glorified. Another is that our lives will be purified. This means that we will be made to turn from our sins, and, on the other hand, we will become more holy, more like God wants us to be, more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, we are not just to be passive in our lives, taking things as they come; there are certain important things for us to do. And this is what Peter was dealing with in the passage that we will consider today: 1 Pet. 4:7-11.

There are actually five things that Peter did in these five verses.

First, he stated a basic truth that every child of God needs to keep in mind every day that he lives: "But the end of all things is at hand." We will come back to that in just a moment.

Secondly, Peter gave a series of exhortations which fall into three groups. I will refer to them as being PERSONAL (that which we need to be concerned about for ourselves); CORPORATE (that which involves other members of the church); GENERAL (that which has to do with all other people, even those who are outside of the church).

Finally, Peter stated the purpose that God has, and which we should seek, in all of these things: "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Let us now consider these in order. First . . .

I. THE FOUNDATION FOR THE EXHORTATIONS (1 Pet. 4:7a): "But the end of all things is at hand."

Peter has kept many truths before his readers throughout this Epistle, and one of the most important is that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again. E.g., see 1:3, 4, 5, 7b, 9, 13, etc.

For every generation of the Lord's people it is spoken of in this way, as being "at hand," because (1) it is absolutely certain that the Lord is coming back, but (2) we do not know when that will be. But we need to be thinking about it all

of the time. This will have a profound effect upon the way we live, a very good effect. Throughout the NT it is held forth as one of the greatest incentives for holy living. We should look upon death in the same way (although that is not what Peter was speaking about here; nor was he speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem, as some have said). The Lord is coming, when, we do not know. But His coming is certain, and it could be today! We need to be ready!

In order to be ready, there are things for us to do, and, as I have already pointed out, these practical matters (in this instance) fall into three categories.

II. THREE EXHORTATIONS (1 Pet. 4:7b-11a).

The first is . . .

A. Personal (1 Pet. 4:7b).

There are two of these, and they indicate that, first of all we need to be concerned about our own spiritual health and growth.

1. "Be ye therefore sober."

It is true that a Christian should not be a drinker of intoxicating beverages, but that is not primarily what Peter had in mind here. Sobriety, which was mentioned as far back as 1:13, has to do with wise as compared with foolish behavior. It means to live as a person would who has full possession of his thinking ability. He looks at things in their true light--both the things of this world, and the things of God. He uses the world, but he does not conform to the world. He puts the things of God, the things of eternity, first. He is not frivolous and pleasure-seeking, but concerned about how he can best be pleasing to God.

2. "And watch unto prayer."

One writer has said that Peter was not telling them to pray (he assumed that they were praying), but it was that they were to "watch unto prayer"--that is, carefully watch over their lives so that they would not be hindered in praying.

They were not to let other things crowd out their prayers. They were not to engage in conversation or activities that would make it difficult for them to pray. It means that we should be alert as we pray. We should seek to pray so that our prayers would be

answered, and if not, we should seek to determine the reason why they are not being answered.

The person who really loves the Lord, who wants to live for the Lord, and who is expecting the Lord to come, will be giving himself continually to prayer.

B. Corporate (1 Pet. 4:8-10).

It is possible for us to be selfish in the cultivation of our own lives, and so Peter moved on to things that we need to be concerned about in our relationship with each other.

Each one of these three verses has something for us to do.

1. Love (v. 8).

This is the most important thing in our relationship with each other--LOVE (not "charity"). There can be no true fellowship without love. We are not going to help each other spiritually if there is not love. This is the distinguishing mark of a child of God: he loves the other members of his family.

And if we love each other, we are not going to be intent on exposing the sins of others, but in seeing that they are covered. This does not mean that we hide things that are wrong, but it means that we overlook and forgive things that are done against us in our desire to help others spiritually.

2. Hospitality (v. 9).

Believers were often in need of food, and of a place to stay. The inns were more often than not places where a Christian could not go. So those who could were to open their homes, and to do this "without grudging."

The Lord is not glorified, nor are others blessed, if we do things just because we have to, and wish that we were doing something else. And this applies to more than hospitality. We should be grateful that we have the strength and means to serve the Lord, and do what we do with grateful hearts.

3. Ministry (v. 10).

Each believer has a special way, or ways, in which he can minister to others. Peter seems to have in

mind here the exercise of our spiritual gifts. God has made it possible for us to do what we are able to do, and we are "stewards of the manifold grace of God." And so we need to be "good" ones.

The providence of God is evident when we think of this--God bringing people together so that one can do the very thing that another needs to have done for him.

But now we come to the third group of exhortations:

C. General (1 Pet. 4:11a).

There are two here:

1. Speaking.

This has to do with teaching. Not only must the one who is able to teach be sure that he is teaching the Word of God, but his teaching must express the conviction that he knows and is assured that his message is from God, and he speaks as one through whom God is speaking.

Do you remember that Paul mentioned in his second letter to Timothy that the time would come when men would not endure sound doctrine? They would turn away from the truth, and be turned to fables. Are we not seeing that very thing happening today? The one who is expecting the Lord to return knows that the darker the hour, the greater is the need for people everywhere to hear the clear and faithful teaching of the Word of God.

2. Other forms of ministry.

Not all are gifted to be teachers. And yet there are other things to be done. Perhaps the difference between elders and deacons is the thought here.

This does not mean that deacons are not involved in a spiritual ministry.

Nor does it mean that it is only elders and deacons who are to do the work of the church. We all have a part. The elders and deacons are examples, pointing the way.

Before I leave this, let me point out the emphasis which Peter made here, an emphasis that continues right on to my last point: it is an emphasis on GOD! "God" is mentioned

four times in vv. 10, 11.

Is it not a shame that we hear so little about God, and about Jesus Christ, even in the church today? We hear a lot about man, man's potential, man's importance, what man is doing. BUT WE HEAR VERY LITTLE ABOUT GOD.

Now Peter was writing here about what the believers needed to be doing, but he does it all with reference to God. The work of the Lord is centered in God, not man. We are not indispensable, but God is! The work of the Lord can get along without me, or without you, but not without the Lord, not without God! If He is using us, and we are trusting Him to use us, then we can be instruments of blessing. But if we are on our own, we are worse than useless; we will only complicate things because of our pride and our ignorance of the ways of the Lord.

If we are God-centered in our lives, then we will be God-centered in our work. And that is the way things need to be.

But let us go on to see . . .

III. THE PURPOSE OF GOD (1 Pet. 4:11b).

The providence of God is very obvious in this passage.

In v. 7 Peter spoke of "the end." This word has to do with the final realization of a purpose that God has had.

We come to the same thought in v. 11. God has designed His work so that the glory would all be His, not ours. And His glory is only realized "through Jesus Christ." And this glory of God is to be continued throughout eternity, lit., unto the ages of the ages. "Dominion" is one of the Greek words for power, but it means power being exercised--God being seen now as the Sovereign One, just as He will be seen throughout all eternity.

Concl: Let me ask you in closing, do these verses describe the way you live and work? If not, they should. What are you going to do about it? Peter was not wasting words. He was speaking to the hearts of the people who were to receive this letter. But it was also for us.

Let us be praying that the Lord will work in us, and work through us, that we may be instruments in His hand to bring blessings into this world, spiritual blessings, as we rush on toward that glorious time when our Lord shall come. If we live for His glory now, we will be thankful for all eternity.

THE FIERY TRIAL
1 Peter 4:12, 13

Intro: As we have seen in going through this Epistle, the Apostle Peter has had a great deal to say about the suffering of the saints, and the reason he did was because he was writing to saints who were suffering. They had suffered much in the past, they were suffering at the time when Peter wrote to them, and it seemed that there was no end in sight!

This is the second time in the Epistle that he had likened their sufferings to the refiner's fire. Cf. 1:6, 7.

The refiner's fire was more than just a fire. It was an intense fire. It took special conditions to be able to create such a fire. We have a good illustration of it in the case of Daniel's three friends: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When they told Nebuchadnezzar that they would not worship his image under any conditions, he became so angry that he told his men to heat the furnace seven times hotter than they normally did. Cf. Dan. 3: 19.

The suffering of the Lord's people has always been intense. It is often intense because of its duration. Often by its variety. Often because of its repetition. Note what Paul wrote about his sufferings in 2 Cor. 11:23-28.

We have another record in Heb. 11:35b-38. Others mentioned before these in vv. 32-35a also faced great trials, but were granted special deliverances.

In a sense, the Bible is a book dealing with the sufferings of the people of God.

But let us look more closely at verses 12 and 13.

There are two commandments here: the first is negative; the second is positive. The first tells what we are naturally inclined to do; the second shows what we are not inclined to do. (Read them.)

I. "BELOVED, THINK IT NOT STRANGE . . ." (1 Pet. 4:12).

This is the verb that Peter used in v. 4 of this same chapter. It speaks of something that is new, unheard of, something that surprises people, and causes them to wonder that such a thing should take place.

Now implied in this statement is the idea that they were inclined to feel that this was strange, very strange.

A. Why would they feel that it was strange?

I can think of three reasons.

1. Because of who they were.

Were they not the children of God? And was not God more powerful than all of their enemies? And had He not given them many promises in His Word that He would keep them from their enemies, and deliver them from those who rose up against them?

Surely one difference between a child of God and a person in the world ought to be that the child of God would not have to go through the troubles that a godless person should expect.

This is the way we are inclined to think, isn't it? We think of what a great testimony answered prayer would be.

2. Because of what they were seeking to do.

And there are two sides to this.

a. They had been seeking to please the Lord. They were not being judged (as far as we can see in this Epistle) for any sin or sins that had or were committing. If they had been sinning, they would have expected judgment, but not when they were seeking to please the Lord. Does the Lord reward obedience with fiery trials?

b. They had been seeking to live as good citizens in the world.

They honored the king. They were not criminals. They paid their taxes. Society was improved because of them. They lived moral lives.

If they had been evildoers, you would expect trials, but should you expect it when you are seeking to live honorably in the world.

Now let us look at the other side:

B. Why should they NOT think it strange?

1. Because the people of God have suffered from fiery trials from the very beginning of time.

Cain killed Abel because God accepted Abel's sacrifice, but rejected his.

Think of Moses who chose to suffer affliction with

the people of God. Cf. Heb. 11:25.

The experience of the Israelites was one of almost constant persecution.

And then we think of David and the prophets (Jeremiah in particular), of Daniel and his three friends, and on and on.

2. It was in the teaching of the prophets.

Take, e.g., Isa. 43:2b, ". . . when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." But they would walk through the fire!

The Psalms give us many words of comfort for afflicted saints.

3. It was the experience as well as in the teaching of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

His enemies were not satisfied until they had nailed Him to the Cross.

And did He not say, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you"? Cf. John 15:18. He also said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33b).

4. The Apostles suffered, and they also taught that there would be suffering.

After speaking of what Cain did to Abel, the Apostle John wrote, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you" (1 John 3:13).

Paul wrote to the Philippians,

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake (Phil. 1:29).

He later wrote to Timothy,

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

So it should not surprise us that the people of God suffer, but it should surprise us that we do not suffer more than do!

But now let us go on to look at v. 13.

II. "BUT REJOICE . . ." (1 Pet. 4:13).

Peter did not tell those believers to rejoice, and leave it there, but he gave them some reasons as to why they could and should rejoice. We are not to be as though we do not feel the pain. But there are reasons why we can rejoice that far outweigh the pain.

Let me point out several from our text, but we will need to go back to v. 12 to get the first one--and it even it has two parts.

- A. We can rejoice because we know that God has purposes, good purposes, for our trials.

It is a "trial which is to try you." This suggests two things for our comfort and rejoicing.

1. It is to show the genuineness of our faith.

This was what the refiner's fire did (and does) to the metals which are put into it--it shows that they are genuine.

Not everybody who professes to be a Christian is in fact a true Christian.

The Lord spoke on one occasion about those who receive the Word, but their hearts are stony. And when persecution or tribulation arise because of the Word, they are offended, and wither away--showing that their faith was not real! Thus, the Lord uses trials to purify His people by separating those who are not His people from those who are.

2. But this refiner's fire shows another part of the divine purpose.

It is not to destroy the faith of those who believe, but to purify and strengthen it.

People become spiritually stronger when they are tested, and they become more holy, too. Cf. 1 Pet. 5:10.

If this were all that we could say, it would make our trials very worthwhile, but let us go on to v. 13 where we find several more reasons as to why we can rejoice.

- B. We are partakers of Christ's sufferings.

This does not mean that we add to what He did on the Cross. What He did was sufficient and complete for our

our salvation. But what it does mean is that we fellowship with Him in His sufferings, i.e., we suffer because of our relationship with Him, and for the same reasons that He suffered.

Would any of us give up Christ to avoid our sufferings? Now that our eyes have been opened to the evils of sin, would we exchange a life of holiness for a life of sin? Certainly not! If you would, it is probably because you are not really saved.

- C. There is a time when our sufferings will be over forever! It is when Christ's glory shall be revealed, and that will be when He comes to take us to be with Himself.

That is why Paul called it "our light affliction, which is but for a moment" (2 Cor. 3:17). He also called it "the sufferings of this present time" (Rom. 8:18). They will not last forever; they are just for now.

When we get to heaven there will be no more suffering of any kind. That is not the case with those who do not know the Lord. They will suffer then as they never have here--AND SUFFER FOR ALL ETERNITY!

- D. There is a time coming when Christ's glory will be revealed.

We can rejoice now, but then our joy will be "exceeding joy." Peter used this word exceeding in 1:6, 8. In those verses it is translated "greatly" and "unspeakable." This will be the greatest time of rejoicing that believers have ever experienced. And that will never end. We will be glad then, as never before, that we have endured our sufferings here with rejoicing that we might be happier than ever then.

- E. The final reason given here as to why we can rejoice now even though we are persecute is that when Christ's glory is revealed, we will not only see His glory, but we will wear that glory! Cf. 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God . . ."

Concl: So trials are to be expected by us, the Lord's people. They can arise from within the ranks of the Church, or be thrust upon us from the outside. But instead of depressing us, they are to encourage us, knowing (1) that the Lord is accomplishing a most necessary work in our hearts, and (2) that these days are limited. Glory and even greater joy are ahead.

BEARING THE REPROACH OF CHRIST

1 Peter 4:14-19

Intro: These verses go with verses 12 and 13. But they also repeat the emphasis which Peter had made at least three times previously:

- 1) 1 Pet. 2:11, 12, 13-15.
- 2) 1 Pet. 2:18-20.
- 3) 1 Pet. 3:15-17.

All of these passages have a twofold purpose:

- 1) Peter was instructing them concerning the inevitability of trials, and what they were to do in them.
- 2) He meant to encourage them concerning the trials they were experiencing, and concerning those they would experience in the future.

Peter did not want them to expect an easy time in this world. They would have trials. And those trials would often be severe and prolonged. They could come from the government, from masters, from unsaved husbands, or from the people of the world generally. But Peter made it very clear that they were not to cause trouble for each other! How wonderful it would be if the Church today would remember that because much of our trouble comes from within the professing Church.

But let us look at our text.

Peter gave them A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT in v. 14. This is followed by THREE EXHORTATIONS in vv. 15, 16. Then he asked TWO QUESTIONS in vv. 17, 18. And finally A CONCLUDING EXHORTATION in v. 19.

I. A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT (1 Pet. 4:14).

To reproach a person is to insult him. It is to try to discredit a person's character, his reputation, his way of life, his work, his family. Nothing strikes closer home to our hearts than this.

But the Christian is to expect reproach because of his relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is ridiculed because he is a child of God, because he wants to please the Lord, because he believes the Bible is the Word of God, because he believes that he is going to heaven and that only those who are trusting in Christ will be in heaven.

How different this is from what many professing Christians seem to be trying to do today. They want to make the Christian faith acceptable and pleasing to the world, so that the people of the world will want to become Christ-

ians. And so we need to remember, as John Brown said in his commentary on 1 Peter,

But it is not every thing that is called Christianity the world hates; it is the Christianity of the New Testament (Vol. II, p. 399).

If we never have any trouble because of the profession of our faith, we need to examine our hearts to make sure that we really are saved.

But notice what follows! "Happy are ye"! How strange this is! How can we be happy if we are being reproached, even if it be "for the name of Christ"? It is because of what that reproach means. It means that "the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." Spirit should be capitalized. It refers to the Holy Spirit, and can be translated the glorious Spirit of God.

But the good part of the statement is really in that verb: "resteth upon you." It means more than that you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (although that is true, and this would be evidence that you are indwelt by Him). It also means that His blessing is upon you! And for His blessing to be upon you means that your life is pleasing to God. The very fact that you are being reproached is because your life is a condemnation to the world. They see the evidence of salvation in you, and they do not like it.

And so, with this evidence of the Spirit of God upon you, those who reproach you are actually reproaching the glorious Spirit of God. But He is being glorified through you.

Peter was not speaking of someone who professes to be a Christian, but who does not live like a Christian should be living. He was talking about a Christian who was really living for the Lord!

(Illustrate this with the first part of Psalm 1.)

But let us go on to the second point:

II. THREE EXHORTATIONS (1 Pet. 4:15, 16).

Notice the three times we have the word "let" in these two verses. The first two are negative (what they were not to do); the third is positive (what they were to do).

A. The first is a warning (v. 15).

Imagine talking to the Lord's people like this. Can a believer commit murder? Can he be a thief? Can he do

the many other things that the Bible identifies as evil? And what about being a busybody?

We might feel that he could be the last, but what about the first three?

Listen to what one commentator wrote many years ago:
Exhortations to Christian in the apostolic epistles not only proceed on the principle, that there were false professors in the primitive churches, but on the principle, that in the truly converted man, that is, "in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing"; and that, but for the restraining influence of the Spirit and Providence of God, there is scarcely any violation of the Divine law, into which remaining depravity, stimulated into active operation by powerful temptation, may not hurry him (Brown, Vol. II, p. 403).

And so, how careful, and prayerful, and dependent upon the Lord, we need to be, trusting the Holy Spirit to deliver us from the sin that is in our members. How quickly and how tragically we can dishonor our blessed Lord. Peter was perfectly correct in writing as he did. We can bring reproach upon the whole cause of Christ by acting in a way that is unbecoming to one who is a child of God.

B. "Let him not be ashamed" (v. 16a).

When? "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian."

You probably know that this title for the people of God occurs only three times in the NT: here, and twice in the book of Acts--11:26; 26:28.

Since this name originated in Antioch, a Gentile city, it is very likely that it was used as a term of reproach--which would be the reason that Peter would use it here. It actually means a follower of Christ. If you are suffering because you are following the Lord, because you are seeking to obey Him, to please Him, to glorify Him, then do not be ashamed, regardless of the way you may be reproached for it! There is much to be ashamed about if you suffer as an evildoer (in any sense of the word), but nothing to be ashamed of if you are suffering "as a Christian"!

Cf. Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 1:8, 12.

Remember those wonderful words written by Joseph Grigg back in 1765?

Jesus, and shall it ever be,
 A mortal man ashamed of thee?
 Ashamed of thee whom angels praise,
 Whose glories shine through endless days?

Ashamed of Jesus, that dear Friend
 On whom my hopes of heaven depend!
 No; when I blush, be this my shame,
 That I no more revere His Name.

Ashamed of Jesus! yes, I may
 When I've no guilt to wash away,
 No tears to wipe, no good to crave,
 No fears to quell, no soul to save.

Till then--nor is my boasting vain--
 Till then I boast a Saviour slain;
 And O may this my glory be,
 That Christ is not ashamed of me.

C. "Let him glorify God on this behalf" (v. 16b).

Since Christ suffered as He did for us, should we not consider it an honor to be able to suffer reproach for His Name?

As I mentioned, I believe, last Sunday, at the close of the service, Peter had practiced what he was preaching here. Cf. Acts 5:41, 42.

Instead of trying to avoid the reproach of Christ, let us thank Him for making it possible to suffer with Him and for Him.

III. TWO QUESTIONS (1 Pet. 4:17, 18).

There are two kinds of people in the world, as far as God is concerned: (1) there are those who make up "the house of God; (2) there are those who "obey not the gospel of God." Or, to state it another way, (1) there are "the righteous; (2) there are the ungodly and the sinners.

Hebrews 3:6 helps us in understanding the term, "the house of God":

But Christ as a son over his own house;
whose house are we,
 if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing
 of the hope firm unto the end.

In other words, "the house of God" is the family of God, the people of God. It is made up of those who are truly righteous in God's sight because they have been born again, and their faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ--as

opposed to the people of the world, and as opposed to those who merely profess to be Christians, but are not. These latter ones are those who "obey not the gospel of God," the ^ungodly and the sinners.

(Relate this to Psalm 1 again.)

Now the fact presented to us here in Scripture is that God is dealing, and will continue to deal with both of these groups: those who obey not the Gospel, i.e., who do not believe the Gospel, who do not want to have anything to do with God, but they will have to stand before Him anyway; those who know the Lord will, according to 2 Cor. 5:10, "appear before the judgment seat of Christ." As we learn from Gen. 18:25, God is "the Judge of all the earth."

Having seen this, we need to know that the time of God's judgment has been set. We do not know when that will be, but it has already been determined by God. However, as we learn in our text (v. 17), "the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." God is already dealing with His people in judgment--disciplining them, correcting them, purifying them. This is His purpose for the fiery trials (and all other kinds of trials) that we go through.

If He deals with us as severely as He does in some instances, then "what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" And "where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?"

This is intended to help the believer, and to warn the unbeliever.

As far as believers are concerned, their judgments may be severe, but they are nothing compared with what the unbelievers will experience--the torments of hell throughout eternity! Cf. 2 Thess. 1:7-10.

Cf. Psa. 1:5, 6, "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment . . ." May the Lord touch the heart of anyone here this morning who is without Christ as his Saviour, that you might turn to Him in faith and be saved.

But we have one more verse where we find . . .

IV. A CONCLUDING EXHORTATION (1 Pet. 4:19).

Suffering in the Church purifies the Church from those who claim to be Christians, but are not. And it also purifies each Christian. But not even a true Christian can endure the fires of testing apart from the keeping power of God.

Therefore, we have this exhortation.

Let me refer again to 2 Tim. 1:12. Also to Jude 24, 25.
And see John 10:27-30.

But Peter's concern here in v. 19 is not just that we might be kept in salvation, but that we might be kept "in well doing." What did he mean by this?

He meant that we might persevere in living for the Lord just as we would do if things were quiet, and there were no trouble at all.

And how can we do this? Because our God, our heavenly Father, is also "a faithful Creator." It took more power to make us than it does to keep us. And He is going to be "faithful" to us through all of our trials. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:13. Oh, how wonderful, how amazing, is the faithfulness of God!

Concl: So we may be reproached for the Name of Christ.

But we have "the Spirit of glory and of God" upon us, to help us. And we have "a faithful Creator," and a faithful Saviour. They will keep us. But our peace through all of our trials is dependent upon how we learn to commit the keeping of our souls unto God, our "faithful Creator."

Let me close with Phil. 4:6, 7. Take your burden to the Lord, and leave it there. Then you will be happy, and will even be able to "glorify God" and to "rejoice" that you are counted worthy to suffer for His sake. Cf. Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail, singing at midnight. That is not mere human courage; that is the grace of God.

SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK

1 Peter 5:1-4

Intro: We have seen as we have been considering this Epistle of Peter, written to the people of God mentioned in 1:1, that they were going through a time of intense and prolonged suffering for the sake of Christ, and for the sake of the Gospel. The Epistle, from beginning to end, refers to suffering.

Throughout the Epistle Peter has explained the purpose of their sufferings, has addressed himself to various groups within the churches, and has given them certain practical helps.

By the time we get to the end of chapter 4, verse 19, we have something of a climax, although the message of the Epistle does not end until chapter 5, verse 10. (Read 4:19.)

Each believer has to deal with his own troubles, and he has to learn to trust the Lord in those troubles. Actually, the standards are the same whether times are comparatively quiet, or whether there is a lot of trouble.

BUT THE CHURCH ITSELF ALSO HAS A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE LIVES OF BELIEVERS DURING TROUBLED TIMES. THIS ROLE IS TO BE OF HELP TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD, AND IT COMES MAINLY THROUGH ITS LEADERS (although individual believers certainly can and will minister to each other). However, this special help is to come from the leaders of the church, namely, the elders!

When you place the last verse of ch. 4 along side of the first verse of ch. 5 (as indeed it was in the original--no chapter divisions), you can see that there is no conflict between trusting the Lord, on the one hand, and being helped by the elders, on the other hand. In fact, the two go together. The Lord is in both. And believers need both. They need the Lord, and they need the leaders whom the Lord has appointed in His churches.

But in our text for today, Peter was not telling the people what they were to expect from the elders (except as they would read and hear what he had written to the elders). No, he was addressing himself to the elders themselves.

It is Paul in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1 who gave the qualifications for elders, but here Peter not only told the elders what they were to do, but also the attitude and spirit in which their work for the saints was to be done. This is a very heart-searching passage for any elder. But it is important also that the people of God may know what to expect from their leaders. Their leaders are not just primarily, but exclusively, shepherds and overseers of the Lord's people. They have a pastoral work to do in caring for the people of God.

We have three things in these four verses:

- 1) Peter's address to the elders (v. 1).
- 2) Peter's charge to the elders (vv. 2, 3).
- 3) Peter's promise for faithful elders (v. 4).

I. PETER'S ADDRESS TO THE ELDERS (1 Pet. 5:1).

Peter shows a tenderness here toward his fellow-elders which also indicates that the Lord had made some great changes in his life. He spoke to them as one of them. He stood over them as an apostle, but he chose to approach this subject as one having the same responsibility that they did in their relationship with the Lord's people.

And notice how he identified himself in addition to those words, "who am also an elder":

A. "A witness of the sufferings of Christ."

This means at least two things:

1. Peter was there when the Lord suffered and died on the Cross. He had been there (though the remembrance of his conduct at that time must have been painful to him). He knew the reality of it all. He knew how determined the Lord had been to do the will of the Father. He had seen the hatred of the people toward the Lord. He had been an eye-witness of it all.

He did not mention the resurrection here because it was in the sufferings of Christ that the elders (and the churches) would find their encouragement and strength.

2. This was Peter's message.

In this respect, Peter was like Paul. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:2. This was the heart of the apostolic message. If you took the Cross out of their preaching, there would be nothing left!

But notice what Peter said along with this:

- B. "A partaker of the glory of the glory that shall be revealed."

Here the NIV gives an interpretation, not an translation, and I believe the translators failed to give the true meaning of the text. They rendered this phrase, "and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed." Peter was not just speaking of what he would

experience in the future, BUT OF WHAT HE HAD ALREADY EXPERIENCED IN A LIMITED WAY. Cf. 2 Cor. 3:18. Also Rom. 8:30.

Elders, take notice!

We cannot say what Peter said and mean exactly the same thing, but we need to be able to say this in another sense. The two statements are related, and they stand with us in this same order: the sufferings first; the glory afterwards.

We have the Word of God to show us Christ's sufferings. We need to dwell upon that truth in the many Scriptures where it is presented until the truth of the Cross is written upon our hearts.

The effect will be noticeable, very noticeable, for our people. There will then be seen in an increasing way, the glory that shall be manifested fully in all of the people of God when the Lord comes.

What is that glory? That glory is God Himself! To partake of His glory is to be made like Him.

And often, even in ministering the Word, that glory will be very apparent in the life and ministry of an elder who is really walking with the Lord and dwelling upon the truth of the Cross.

But let me go on:

II. PETER'S CHARGE TO THE ELDERS (1 Pet. 5:3, 4).

There is one charge, and it is expressed in these words:

Feed the flock of God which is among you,
taking the oversight thereof . . .

To "feed" is to shepherd. To shepherd "the flock of God" (not our flock) is to do all for the people of God that a shepherd would do for a flock of sheep:

- 1) Feed them.
- 2) Lead them.
- 3) Guard and protect them.
- 4) Gather them.

He is actually to live with them and for them, laying down his life for them.

In 2:25 Peter called our Lord, "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." In 5:4 he spoke of the Lord as "the chief Shepherd." The Lord Jesus is our main Pastor. All of the rest of us serve under Him--and what a privilege that is!

"Taking the oversight" comes from the word which is usually translated, bishop. A bishop is an overseer. To oversee is look after and to care for the people of God. It is to

- 1) to see that things are as they should be,
- 2) to see that things are being done as they ought to be.

The overseer is a guardian, a teacher, an inspector, a supervisor, an examiner, one who superintends. He visits the people of God to know what is going on in their hearts and in their lives spiritually.

These words describe the God-given responsibilities of an elder.

But, in the exercise of his duties, he must be care to do them in the right way. How the elder does what he does is just as important as what he does!

So in doing what he does, there are three negatives followed by what is the right way in each case. Notice what they are.

A. "Not by constraint, but willingly."

That is, not just because it is a duty. Not because you have to do it. Not because it is expect of you. "But willingly" -- because you want to. The elder is to be one who chooses to do this above everything else because this is what he loves doing more than anything else that he has to do.

Often people in other walks of life put us to shame by their untiring devotion to their work.

B. "Not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind."

These are days in which we need to be reminded that an elder, a pastor, any servant of the Lord is to beware of covetousness. The Lord's servant is not to be in the Lord's work because of what he can get, but because of what he can give.

And he must be eager, earnest, ready (cf. Rom. 1:15). In the words of Dr. Criswell of First Baptist in Dallas, the servant of the Lord should want to serve the Lord even if he did not receive anything for it, rather than do anything else!

As we have all be able to see recently, the love of money is "the root of all evil" in the ministry, too!

C. "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (v. 4).

The NASB has a better rendering of this:

Nor yet as lording it over those allotted
to your charge,
but proving to be (mg., becoming) examples
to the flock.

As servants of the Lord, our heritage is that part of the Body of Christ which has been assigned to us. We are to be where we are, not because we have selected our own place of service, but because we are where the Lord has put us.

And we are not there as lords, but as examples.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

Not for that we have dominion over your faith,
but are helpers of your joy,
for by faith ye stand (2 Cor. 1:24).

Our teaching will not be as effective as it should be if we are not the personification of what we teach. The apostle Peter indicated here that an elder should be a growing Christian! When we stop growing, our usefulness is greatly limited. If we want our people to grow, we need to be growing.

We are not bosses; we are servants. We are to be leaders, examples--pointing the way not only by our teaching, but by our living.

All of this leads to . . .

III. PETER'S PROMISE FOR FAITHFUL ELDERS (1 Pet. 5:4).

Actually this is God's promise, but it was delivered to the people of God by Peter. (Read it.)

There are two words for a crown in the NT. One, a diadem, is a crown for royalty, a king's crown. The other (the one that is used here, the one from which we get our name, Stephen) means the garland given to an athletic victor, or to a victor in war, or even to express the joy of a couple in marriage. It is the word used by Paul in 2 Tim. 4:8 for "a crown of righteousness." Also in 1 Cor. 9:25. Cf. 2 Tim. 2:5.

Our salary here on earth. Or our position in the church. These are not to be the main things that we are concerned about. It is "when the chief Shepherd shall appear," and what we will receive from Him then. "A crown of glory" is glory at its best!

Concl: So, if there are risks and dangers to be expected in this world because one is a Christian, there are even greater risks and dangers (humanly speaking) when one is an elder.

But this is where we need the attitude of Peter as he expressed it in Acts 4:19, 20. See also Paul's words in Acts 20:24,

But none of these things move me,
neither count I my life dear unto myself,
so that I might finish my course with joy,
and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus,
to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.

We often associate verses with people. This verse will always remind me of a graduating class back in the early 50's at the Multnomah School of the Bible. This was their class verse. As I have read it since, I have often wondered how many of them have remained true to what they want to do when they left the school.

Oh, that the church would come back today to the guidance given to us in the Word of God, and that those of us who are leaders would scorn the ways of the world in our desire to do the Lord's work in His way that we might have His blessing.

THE APRON OF HUMILITY
1 Peter 5:5-7

Intro: (Read also John 13:1-17.) *Our glorious salvation.*

This first epistle of Peter was written to saints who were suffering, who were afflicted. And therefore it is an important source of help for any child of God who is going through trials because of his faith in Christ. Our trials may be different from time to time, but the answer is always the same.

The first part of the answer is for us to realize that God has purposes to accomplish in our trials. 1 Pet. 1:7 touches upon this. It is easier for us to face our tribulations if we know that we are going to benefit from them.

Secondly, beginning with 2:13 and going on to our text for today where we have the word two times, Peter spoke of the need for being submissive in our trials. The word submit is used seven times--six of them apply directly to the people of God; one of them to "angels and authorities and powers" (3:22)--but even there we have an illustration that is important for our submission.

The complete list of references where the word submit is used is:

- 1) 2:13--for the Christian as a citizen.
- 2) 2:18--for Christian servants.
- 3) 3:1--for Christian wives.
- 4) 3:5--a reference to the holy women of the past, and so related to 3:1.
- 5) 3:22--"angels and authorities and powers."
- 6) 5:5--the "younger" Christians.
- 7) 5:5--a word to "all" Christians.

We are going to learn today that submission requires humility, We cannot be submissive without being humble, nor can we be humble without being submissive. And a humble submissiveness is always manifested by obedience to God. And obedience to God always means obedience to His Word.

So submission, or humility (call it by either word) is a very practical characteristic of a child of God. Just as we can say that you cannot be submissive without being humble, so we can also say that you cannot be humble without being obedient to the Lord and to His Word.

I hope you will keep these things in mind as you seek to get the message of this Epistle permanently in your mind, and hopefully, in seeing the effect of the message of this Epistle upon your daily life.

But note what our first point is in v. 5:

I. A MESSAGE FOR CHRISTIAN YOUNG PEOPLE (1 Pet. 5:5a).

We have been led to believe in our day that it takes special people and special methods to work with young people. We often hear it said that a certain person is good with young people, or he is not good. Churches are on a constant search for youth directors, or youth pastors. There is even an organization here in Portland of youth pastors.

Where did such ideas come from? They certainly did not come from the Word of God. Paul never said anything about specialized workers with young people, or even with children. There is no part of Scripture devoted in a special way to young people and children except for passages like this where you can see that they are exhorted to do as the adults are exhorted to do. There is not one kind of a ministry for children and another kind for young people and another kind for adults. All three groups are to get the same teaching, and the same men who are responsible for the adults are responsible for the young people and for the children. We may use a more simple language when we speak to children, but the message is the same.

So look what we have here!

What Peter has been saying to various groups within the church throughout this Epistle, he now says specifically the same thing to the young people (and here we can include the children because they are included in the term, "younger").

Young people, children, listen to me. This is for you. You need to learn in these early years of your life the importance of submitting yourself to those whom the Lord has put over you in the church: Your elders! You will be called upon to exercise this same kind of submission throughout your lives.

And let me say this to you parents this morning: You need to be teaching your children to be submissive to you in your homes. Then it will be a normal thing for them to do the same thing toward church leaders.

And elders, let me say this as far as we are concerned. Paul said to the Corinthian church, to all of them, the adults, young people, and children, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). We need to be setting a godly example before our people so that, as they follow us, they will be following the Lord! That is the point that Peter was making as he went from speaking to the elders to speaking to the young people and children.

But let me come back to the young people and children.

Submission is the most important lesson that you will ever learn: submission to your parents, submission to the leadership of your church, and it is all related to submission to the Lord. And yet it is the hardest lesson we have to learn. It is hard because we want to be our own boss. Americans do not like for anyone else to tell them what to do. But always remember: We do not take our directions from the people of the world. We take our directions from the Word of God. The Word will never guide us in the wrong way, but we can certainly make a lot of mistakes if we fail to learn to be submissive to those whom the Lord has placed over us. Take this fifth verse into your heart. It is God's message especially for you.

But let me go on to my second point:

II. A MESSAGE FOR THE WHOLE CHURCH (1 Pet. 5b-7).

This message actually goes down through v. 11, but we will consider only verses 5, 6, and 7 today. In these three verses Peter was in reality saying the same thing in three different ways.

When the writers of Scripture do this, that is, say the same thing more than once, there are at least two reasons for it:

- 1) For emphasis--to show its importance. And we could add, urgency.
- 2) To make perfectly clear what they were saying. This is especially true if the same thing is stated differently.

A. The message:

1. "Be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility."
2. "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God."
3. "Casting all your care upon him."

Subjection to one another as the people of God means all of these things, and you cannot be or do any of the three without being truly humble in heart before the Lord. Remember that humility is not just a matter of outward behavior; it is a matter of the heart--and God knows our hearts.

1. "Be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility."

To "be subject" we must be humble, not just before God, but before each other.

To "be clothed with humility" illustrates what it means to "be subject." And here you can see why we have read John 13:1-17, and you can also see where I have gotten my subject for my message today.

The idea in the expression, "be clothed with humility," is that of putting on humility as one would put on an apron. This is what our Lord did when, as we read in John 13, vv. 4 and 5, He took a towel and girded Himself, and began to wash the disciples feet, and to dry them with His towel. The greatest and most amazing example of humility that we have in all of the Scripture is to be seen in our Lord Jesus Christ. He humbled Himself by becoming a man. He humbled Himself by the way He lived on earth. And He certainly humbled Himself by dying, and in the way that He died.

Can any true child of God refuse to act and live as the Lord Jesus Christ did?

The people of any church ought to be able to learn humility from their elders as well.

Cf. what our Lord said in Mark 10:42-45.

In Luke's passage which is parallel with this one from Mark, the Lord said this (Luke 22:27):

For whether is greater,
he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth?
is not he that sitteth at meat?
but I am among you as he that serveth.

The Greek word for humility means to see yourself as you really are. It is to have a low opinion of of one's self. It comes from a word which mean, "not rising from the ground." It is just the opposite of the kind of junk that we hear so much about these days--self-esteem, self-love, self-worth. Our counsellors (many of them, and even those who claim to be Christians) are teaching us that we need to find out who we are. A little child who knows anything about the Word of God can tell you and me in an instant who we are. We are sinners in need of the grace of God. And the reason people get depressed about themselves is because they are trying to make something out of nothing; they refuse to recognize their nothingness, and to seek the mercy of God.

The most difficult thing for any person to be is
HUMBLE!

Listen to what Mr. Spurgeon told his people at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London 1883. (Read Vol. 29, pp. 421, 422, and p. 426m.)

Our troubles can always be magnified by our pride.

2. "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God."

We are dealing not just with ourselves, nor just with other people, but with God, and one of the first lessons to learn in every trial is that of humbling ourselves under God's mighty hand.

3. "Casting all your care upon him."

To do this, you need to pray. Proud men do not pray. They would rather take care of their own problems. They do not need the Lord.

The verb here translated casting is the same word that is used in Luke 19:35 where the people cast their garments on the donkey so the Lord could sit upon them as He rode into Jerusalem. Lit., it means to cast away. We need to humble ourselves by casting our burdens, our anxieties, on the Lord, and quit trying to handle them for ourselves.

Note that "care" is singular. Take them all, and cast them all upon the Lord.

But what encouragements did Peter give to the Lord's people so that they would be submissive to each other, so that they would humble themselves--not seeking things for themselves, but delighting to be of service to others?

B. The encouragements.

The first is in v. 5. There are really two, but they go together.

1. "For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

Do you want to have God on your side, or standing against you? Humility opens the door of grace.

2. V. 6 -- "under the might hand of God, that he may exalt you in due season, or lit., in time--at the right time, in His time, when it will bring the greatest glory to Him, and the greatest blessing to you and to me.

And He is mighty enough to do all that needs to be done.

3. V. 7 -- "for he careth for you."

Lit., it matters to Him about you--cumbersome English, but you get the point.

Heb. 12:6 makes it clear that the reason the Lord chastens us is because He loves us. And He chastens us to purify our lives, and to make us more conscious of our great and continuing need of Him. How wonderful to know that He cares about us, and for us!

Concl: The story is told of a certain prince during the Middle Ages who visited the Spanish galleys where prisoners, serving life sentences for crimes they had committed, were chained to their oars below deck. The Spanish King declared that the prince, in honor of his visit, could set one of the prisoners free. He went below deck and began to talk to the men, asking them what they had done to deserve such punishment. They all declared their innocence. They said that either they had been the victim of false witnesses, or that their crimes did not deserve such a punishment. But finally he came to one prisoner who said that he deserved what he was getting. He was guilty. He was thankful to be alive, and said that, if he died at his oar, it would be no more than he deserved. The prince said immediately that it was a shame for such a bad man to be among the others who were so good, so he determined to set the bad man free.

If we are truly humble, we will know that regardless of how trying our circumstances might be, we never have gotten, and never will get, what our sins really deserve. If we feel otherwise, there is much that we need to learn about what it means to humble ourselves before the Lord.

Remember: the Lord has purposes for what He does. He does not intend to destroy us, or our faith, but to strengthen us, and to purify us. And in His time, at the best time, He will lift us up and out. In the meantime, let us humble ourselves before Him, learning to cast our anxieties upon Him instead of trying to take care of them ourselves.

YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL
1 Peter 5:8-11

Intro: We come today to the conclusion of Peter's message in this Epistle. The last three verses are important verses as we shall see next Sunday, the Lord willing, but the message as such concludes with v. 11.

These verses are similar to Paul's conclusion to the book of Ephesians, only Peter's version is much shorter. I am referring to Paul's warning about our conflict with "the devil," our Enemy and Accuser. But the message from Peter and from Paul is identical. They have the same thing to say regarding the way in which we are to oppose our Enemy.

These four verses can easily be divided into three parts:

- 1) What Peter had to say to the people of God, i.e., what they were to do.
- 2) What he had to say about the Devil, i.e., what the Devil was intent on doing.
- 3) The work of God, Peter's prayer for the people of God--the work that the believers could expect God to do for them in the light of the very great danger they were facing.

The part that has to do with the people of God, i.e., their responsibility, is given in two parts. So this will be our outline of these verses:

- I. The exhortation to believers: "Be sober, be vigilant."
- II. The warning concerning the devil (v. 8b).
- III. An additional exhortation to believers: "Whom resist steadfast in the faith . . ." (v. 9).
- IV. Peter's prayer to God for the believers (vv. 10, 11).

I. THE EXHORTATION TO BELIEVERS (1 Pet. 5:8a).

Anyone who knows anything about the life of Peter in the Gospels should realize that Peter's heart was filled with memories of regret as he penned the words that we come to here at the conclusion of his Epistle.

I pointed out last week how the words of v. 5 in this chapter must have reminded Peter of that time in the Upper Room when the Lord washed the disciples feet.

Here he must have been thinking about the time that the Lord said to him,

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren (Luke 22:31, 32).

And later, when the Lord took Peter, James, and John with

Him into the Garden of Gethsemane, our Lord said to them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and WATCH with me (Matt. 26:38). Then He went into the garden to pray. When He returned, He found all three disciples asleep. He awakened them, and said, What, could ye not WATCH with me one hour? WATCH and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matt. 26:40, 41).

The words translated here in 1 Pet. 5:8, "be vigilant," are from that same word that the Lord used, translated, "watch." It means to be on guard, to stay awake, to exercise the greatest caution. "Be sober" is a word that Peter had used two times before in this Epistle: 1:13; 4:7. It, too, has to do with staying awake so that you and I are not caught off guard, or taken by surprise.

When we combine these two words we see that one of the greatest problems that we have to be concerned about is the problem of being drowsy and careless spiritually, and of even going to sleep spiritually..

How would you feel if you were told on the news that a vicious lion had escaped from Washington Park Zoo, and that he had been seen in your neighborhood? And how would you feel if you had actually heard him roar outside of your home? THIS IS SOMETHING MUCH WORSE THAN THAT.

Notice the next part of the verse which is . . .

II. THE WARNING CONCERNING THE DEVIL (1 Pet. 5:8b).

"Adversary" here actually means an opponent at law, an accuser. Obviously his purpose is to get us to sin against the Lord so he can have something to charge us with before the throne of God.

Our sins often arise from our trials. We will see more about that in a moment. But notice that here the character and work of the Devil are described in the words, "as a roaring lion." What are we to learn from this picture of the Devil?

For one thing, the Devil has awesome power. For another, he is vicious and deadly, seeking prey. And all of this is very intimidating. No one in his right mind would go out to face an angry lion unless he had the right weapon so he would be able to defend himself! He "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

This is a constant threat which every child of God faces. And the Devil usually takes a time of trial where we are

distracted and distraught to attack us. He cannot "devour" us in the sense that he can get our salvation away from us, but he can rob us of our trust and of our peace and of our joy in the Lord--and this condition for a child of God is worse than death itself!

What can be done in the face of such danger? Notice the second exhortation that Peter gave to the people of God in his day, and to us today.

III. AN ADDITIONAL EXHORTATION FOR BELIEVERS (1 Pet. 5:9).

Our tendency is to run, or to hide. but that is wrong. What are we to do?

Listen to these words: "Whom resist stedfast in the faith."

"Resist" is the same word that Paul used in Eph. 6:13 where it is translated "withstand." It is the same word that James used in Jas. 4:7 where he wrote, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"! How do you like that?

But how do we resist him?

We resist him "stedfast in the faith"--firm, rock-like, unmovable in our confidence in the truth of the Word of God. You see, the Devil is still up to his old tricks, like he said to Eve in the Garden of Eden, "Yea, hath God said...?"

"The faith" is a NT expression, as I have mentioned many times, which has to do with the teaching of the Bible, the doctrines of Scripture. The Devil is out to destroy our confidence in God and in His Word, and to get us to stop being obedient to the Lord, and to stop serving the Lord, or living for Him. God allows the Devil to attack us, not that our faith would be destroyed, but that it would be made stronger than ever, and that we would be weaned from the world and from ourselves as the source of our strength or joy.

Therefore, if we are going to be able to "resist" the Devil, we need to know the truth, and be unshaken and unshakeable in our confidence in the truth of the Word of God. We must believe not only that it is the Word of God, but that it is our sufficiency for all that we are to believe and all that we are to be doing.

IV. PETER'S PRAYER FOR THE BELIEVERS (1 Pet. 5:10, 11).

This is an excellent pattern for the way in which we are to be praying for each other. We cannot "be sober, be vigilant," without praying for ourselves. But we need to be

praying for each other as Peter prayed in those days for the people of God. WE NEED TO REMEMBER ALWAYS THAT OUR RESPONSIBILITY IN SCRIPTURE DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE ARE TO DO ANYTHING IN OUR OWN STRENGTH, OR THAT WE EVER ARE TO ACT ACCORDING TO OUR OWN WISDOM. IT IS ONLY BY GOD'S POWER AND BLESSING THAT WE CAN BE OBEDIENT TO THE WORD OF GOD.

How fitting it is that Peter's concluding words to his message should be about God, and that they should be a prayer! He had learned the lesson that the Lord sought to teach him many years before.

These are two verses, like a number of others in the Word of God, which tell the whole story.

How important it is for us to know in times of trial that God is not only a God of grace, but that He is "the God of ALL grace"! Spurgeon said once (the daily reading for the evening of Aug. 22) that God is ready to forgive than we are to sin.

Why are we His? Not because we chose Him, but because He called us. Unto what did He call us? His eternal glory. Our sufferings are only "for a season" (1:6); our glory will be eternal.

But suffering, trials, testings are a part of His plan for us. Why? Because through them He is perfecting us, stabilizing us, strengthening us, settling us. What do they mean?

"Make you perfect" is the expression used in Matt. 4:21 and Mark 1:19 for mending nets, putting them in full order, making them ready, equipping and preparing fully.

"Stablish" is to make steadfast--that which was commanded in v. 8.

"Strengthen" -- cf. Paul's experience and statements in 2 Cor. 12:7-10.

"Settle" -- to establish on a foundation, to be grounded.

AND FOR ALL OF THIS, GOD GETS THE GLORY "FOR EVER AND EVER" --lit., unto the ages of the ages.

Concl: We have a real, a powerful Enemy. BUT WE HAVE A GREATER GOD! In all of our trials let us pray that we will not turn from Him, but to Him. That we will not quit trusting Him, but that our faith will become stronger than it ever has been. But our trust must be in the Lord. Faith comes from Him, not from us.

THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD
1 Peter 5:12-14

Intro: In Matthew Henry's commentary we read that the Apostle Peter had three reasons for writing this Epistle:

- 1) To explain more fully the doctrines of Christianity to these newly-converted Jews.
- 2) To direct and persuade them to a holy conversation (life), in the faithful discharge of all personal and relative duties, whereby they would secure their own peace and effectually confuse the slanders and reproaches of their enemies.
- 3) To prepare them for suffering.

As we think back over the five chapters of this Epistle, I doubt if any of us could improve upon that summary.

Christians need to be grounded in the truth. They need to show by holy lives that they have been truly born again. And they must be prepared to suffer for their faith. We live in a world that is at enmity with the true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so we are not to expect that it will be easy to live for the Lord, nor will it be easy to spend our lives seeking to spread the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we come to the conclusion of the Epistle--three short, but very important verses.

In them Peter stated his purpose in writing this particular Epistle.

I. THE PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE.

It was to testify to them very strongly (which is what the verb means) to "the true grace of God." There is nothing false in it. It is the real Gospel.

Peter could say that he had "written briefly" because there was so much more that could have been written. He limited himself to that which he knew his readers needed.

When he spoke of their election (as he did at the beginning of the Epistle, and again at the end), he was giving them the true Gospel. When he spoke of their being called to salvation, he was giving them the true Gospel. When he spoke of salvation as being a work of God through the Word of God, he was giving them the true Gospel. When he repeatedly spoke of the substitutionary, vicarious death of Christ on the Cross, he was giving them the true Gospel. When he assured them that they would one day enter into "eternal glory," he was giving them the true Gospel. When he explained that salvation means being born again, and that the life

of a genuine Christian will be a holy life, a life pleasing to God, he was giving them the true Gospel. HE WROTE IT ALL OUT BECAUSE HE WANTED THEM TO BE ASSURED AND REASSURED THAT THE MESSAGE THAT THEY HAD HEARD FROM HIM AND FROM OTHERS WAS INDEED "THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD," which is another way of saying, THE TRUE GOSPEL OF GOD! When he called it "the true grace of God" he was indicating that it was totally undeserved, and that is the true Gospel. As Alexander Maclaren once said, grace "is properly love in exercise towards inferior and sinful creatures who deserve something else" (Vol. 11, p. 148)--and we can add that that "something else" is eternal judgment in hell!

So, if you want to know what the Gospel is, read the Bible, read 1 Peter. You will not go wrong if you do.

But, as I have already indicated, 1 Peter is not just a doctrinal treatise. Peter said that he also did some "exhorting" in this Epistle--and we know that that also is true. He had briefly, very briefly, explained to them as a group of believers, and to certain ones specifically, how a true child of God should live in this world if he is to have the blessing of God, and if he is to shut the mouths of his enemies--because a true Christian will have enemies even though he does not want them, or look for them.

And beyond that, Peter had explained how they were to live when afflictions came their way.

He actually said a lot in a relatively short letter.

But this is still not all that he wanted them to do.

The KJV says, "wherein ye stand." There is some reason for saying that this should be expressed as a command. Then it would read, as the ASV gives it, "stand ye fast therein." This meant that Peter did not want them to forsake a single truth that he had included in this Epistle. No other Gospels were to be accepted. No part of the Gospel was to be left out, or modified, or ignored. It was all important, and they were to be prepared to lay down their lives, if need be, for "the true grace of God," the Gospel of their salvation!

Now let me direct this statement at the close of Peter's Epistle to each of you--because, although this letter was not originally written to us, it was written for us, as was all of the Word of God.

We have spent 27 Sundays on this Epistle. Most of you have been here for all of them, or for almost all of them. Do you understand that the Gospel is "the true grace of God"? Do you know both doctrinally and personally that grace of God

that brings salvation? Is your life a holy life, a life that gives evidence that your heart has been changed by the grace of God through the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross? Do you shy away from certain doctrines like the doctrine of election just because there are people who do not like it? How concerned are you about the spread of the Gospel of "the true grace of God"?

What a tragedy it is if we have spent all of this time in this Epistle, and you are still not saved, or you still have reservations concerning any part of the truth that we have covered! Remember that Peter has indicated that we show our faith, not just by the fact that we are meeting with the people of God, but by our behavior all through the week, and in all of the relationships that we have--in our homes, at work, in relation to our government, as well as at church.

May the Lord search each of our hearts with these heart-searching words of verse 12.

But look also in these verses at . . .

II. THREE ENCOURAGING REFERENCES.

They are:

- 1) A reference to Silvanus, or Silas.
- 2) A reference to the church in Babylon.
- 3) A reference to Marcus, or John Mark.

Let us learn what we can from what Peter said about each one, and be encouraged ourselves. We need encouragement, don't we?

A. Silvanus.

This was Silas who is first mentioned in the NT as being sent with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch with the letter (or letters) giving the decision regarding the Gentiles which was made at the Jerusalem Council.

Shortly after when a rift developed between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark, Silas accompanied Paul, and was active with him in the ministry of Paul at Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth.

He was called a "prophet" in Acts 15:32, and is said to have been one who preached in Corinth when the church was established there. See 2 Cor. 1:19.

From his final mention in Acts (18:5) to the one in our text for today, we know nothing of Silas. BUT HERE, SOME 10 OR 12 YEARS LATER WE FIND HIM INVOLVED WITH PETER IN

HIS MINISTRY, PROBABLY AT BABYLON. AND PETER WAS GETTING READY TO SEND THIS EPISTLE TO THE JEWS OF THE DISPERSION BY THE HAND OF SILAS. AND PETER CALLED SILAS, "A FAITHFUL BROTHER UNTO YOU, AS I SUPPOSE," i.e., in my judgment or estimation.

(Silas is mentioned by name 17 times in the NT:

Acts 15:22, 27, 32, 34, 40;

Acts 16:19, 25, 29;

Acts 17:4, 10, 14, 15;

Acts 18:7;

2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:12.)

"Not a syllable that Silas ever said is recorded in Scripture" (Maclaren, Vol. 11, p. 140). He always was in a subordinate place, working either with Paul or with Peter.

Silas fits into the category of those whom the Apostle Paul was referring to when he wrote,

. . . those members of the body,
which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:
And those members of the body,
which we think to be less honourable,
upon these we bestow more abundant honor
(1 Cor. 12:22b, 23a).

And what greater honor could Peter have bestowed upon Silas than to call him, "a faithful brother"? If that can be said about you and me when our earthly course is run, that will be enough. That is all that is required. Cf. 1 Cor. 4:1, 2. We are not all called to places like those held by Paul and Peter, but we, along with them, are called to be "faithful."

There is no evidence that Silas ever was jealous of Paul or of Peter, that he was ambitious to be more prominent. He did faithfully what he was appointed to do. And Peter was here saying, in effect, "Though Silas has spent his life ministering to Gentiles, yet you Jews can trust him because he is not only your brother in the Lord, but he is "a faithful brother," one you can trust."

But let me go on to the second word of encouragement.

B. The church at Babylon (v. 13a).

There is no need to make this Rome. The Greek actually says, she at Babylon. But this IS a proper way to speak of a church. Peter and Silas and John Mark were all there. And Peter was sending greetings from a Gentile church to Jewish believers who had been scattered out of the land of Israel--and yet they had all been saved by

the same Saviour, and all were a part of that great fellowship made up of Jews and Gentiles, the body of Christ.

The work of the Gospel continued to go on with the blessing of the Lord.

But there is a third word of encouragement. It had to do with . . .

C. Marcus; or John Mark.

The story of John Mark is quite different from that of Silas.

(He is mentioned only 8 times by name in the NT:
 Acts 12:12, 25;
 Acts 15:37, 39;
 Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; Ph. 24; 1 Pet. 5:13.)

Col. 4:10 tells us that he was Barnabas' nephew.

It was to his mother's home that Peter went after he was miraculously delivered from prison by the angel of the Lord, where "many were gathered together praying." And so it is thought that John Mark may have been raised in a well-to-do family.

He was chosen to go with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but he left them in Pamphylia so that Paul refused to take him when he and Barnabas were pre-paring to leave on their second journey. This is what led to the breach between Paul and Barnabas.

But the Lord continued to work in the heart of John Mark and we know that he was with Paul during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, and that when Paul wrote his last letter to Timothy from Rome at the time of his second imprisonment, he said this:

Take Mark, and bring him with thee:
 for he is profitable to me for the ministry
 (2 Tim. 4:11).

Here in our text Peter called John Mark, his "son," which may mean that Peter was the one who had led John Mark to the Lord.

And the crowning work of John Mark is that he is the one whom the Spirit of God used to give us the oldest of the Gospel records, the Gospel according to Mark. And it is thought that the information given in that Gospel was obtained by Mark from the Apostle Peter--so that it could

really be called, the Gospel according to Peter.

But how encouraging this is! What an illustration of Phil. 1:6! We may fail the Lord, but the Lord does not give up on us. And this is a case where an unprofitable servant became a profitable servant. And he went on to have a most useful part in the ministries of both Paul and Peter.

So we must not give up on ourselves, nor on anyone else who really knows the Lord. Peter himself had failed the Lord in a most serious way. But God lifted him up, and made him stronger and more useful than he had ever been before.

And the Lord continues to do the same with those of us who are His people today.

There are two more things in our text which we can put under one heading:

III. A GREETING AND A PRAYER (1 Pet. 5:14).

A. The greeting: "Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity."

The fellowship of the people of God is a fellowship that is characterized by love, the love of God. And it was important for the recipients of this Epistle, in the midst of their suffering to remember this. And so Peter sent his love to them, and was asking them to express that love to one another.

This practice of kissing one another was first limited to men kissing men (in eastern style), and women kissing women, but ultimately was abandoned. It may be practised in some places today, but the principle is what we need to remember. As believers, we are to love each other.

B. The prayer: "Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen."

What is peace? It cannot be the absence of trouble and trials, or there would be no possibility that we could ever have peace. The Lord Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation . . ." (John 16:33).

Perhaps these other words spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ give us the true meaning of peace:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you:
not as the world giveth, give I unto you. (Over)

Let not your heart be trouble,
neither let it be afraid (John 14:27).
Peace is an untroubled heart, and a heart at rest from
fear. Such a life is only possible to those who are
"in Christ Jesus."

And Peter concluded: "Amen"--so let it be!

Concl: And so Peter ended this Epistle as he began. See 1:2b,
Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

God gives His grace that we might enjoy His peace--not peace
that is just barely enough, but peace that overflows, that
abounds! But this comes through the knowledge of the truth as
it is in Christ, and through lives lived in accordance with that
truth.

Have we learned anything in spending these 27 weeks in this
Epistle? I trust we have. And I also hope that it will be
evident in the days to come as we, through the grace of God, see
increased blessing upon our fellowship together and greater
fruitfulness in our field of labor.