

# THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

## BY

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## Introduction

The genuineness of this Epistle is confirmed by the most ancient sources. Polycarp, who was personally acquainted with the Apostle John, cites the Epistle of Peter. Papias of Hierapolis made use of the Epistle likewise. This was about the middle of the second century. Two quotations of Peter's Epistle are found in a very ancient source, "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," a kind of manual going back to 100 A.D. All the other documents of the first and second centuries show that the Epistle was unanimously known and accepted as Peter's.

The critics have not left it unattacked. We do not need to quote the different theories advanced by Cludius, Eichhorn (the man who coined the phrase "higher criticism"), De Wette, Bauer, Davidson, Pfleiderer, Hamack, and others. The main objection seems to be that the expressions used in this Epistle are too much like the thoughts and expressions of the Apostle Paul as used in his Epistles, so, as it is assumed, Peter could not have written it. This theory was expanded into the hypothesis that some one must have written it who had spent considerable time with Paul, so that he adopted Pauline ideas and phrases; John Mark has been suggested by some to be that person. Critics have pointed out many parallels with different Pauline Epistles. "In considering these parallels, allowance must be made for ideas and phraseology, hymns, prayers, confessions of faith, and other matter, which were the common property of the primitive Church; and would introduce a degree of similarity into the writings of different authors. But much of the thought and language of First Peter belongs to what was characteristic of the teaching of Paul and his followers as distinct from that of the Palestinian or Jewish churches. The parallels in any case, show a dependence upon Pauline teaching.

"But we may go further. There is a great variety of opinion as to the precise character and extent of the dependence of First Peter on the writings of Paul. It has been suggested that it is just possible that Paul himself was the author of First Peter, the passages in which Peter's name

occurs being later insertions; and again that this Epistle and Ephesians were the work of one author. But that dependence, especially on Romans, is very widely recognized" (New Century Bible).

All these objections, speculations, and theories denying the Petrine authorship are answered by the fact of inspiration. Peter no doubt knew and read the Epistles of Paul; in fact he speaks of them in his second letter (2 Peter 3:15-16). But that does not mean that he copied and reproduced the statements found in some of Paul's Epistles; nor does it mean that he depended on Paul when he wrote his Epistle. The Holy Spirit who guided Paul's pen guided also the hand of Peter; all is the direct work of the Holy Spirit.

If Peter uses some of the great truths found in the Epistles of Paul it was because the Spirit of God desired to have them restated. If we examine these parallels closely we discover that they cover the most essential truths of Christianity and are used for practical exhortations. Those whom Peter addressed needed these truths and the practical application. On the other hand there are many internal evidences which prove that none but Peter wrote this Epistle. It has been pointed out that there is a similarity between Peter's statements in the book of Acts and in this first Epistle. Compare Acts 4:11; 2:32, 3:15 with 1 Peter 2:7; 1:3, 4,8 and 5:1. He also uses a peculiar word for the cross. It is the word "tree" (the Greek word xulon). See Acts 5:30; 10:39; 1 Peter 2:24. Furthermore, the writer speaks of having been an eyewitness of the Lord's sufferings (5:1). He describes these sufferings, how He was reviled and reviled not, how He suffered and threatened not. And Peter was an eyewitness of all this. Nor is it without significance that in this Epistle alone the Lord Jesus Christ is called "the chief Shepherd." On the shores of Lake Tiberias the risen Lord restored Simon Peter to service and told him "shepherd My sheep," hence Peter speaks of the Lord as the chief Shepherd, and also exhorts the elders to be faithful in feeding the flock of God. As it is with all other critical objections to the traditional belief as to the inspired authorship of the different Bible books, the objections against the Petrine authorship of this Epistle are wholly worthless. Peter wrote this Epistle. The date cannot be definitely settled, but must be placed between 62 and 65 A.D.

## **SIMON PETER**

A brief review of the life and service of the Apostle Peter will be helpful in understanding his writings. He was born at Bethsaida in Galilee, from which Philip came also (John 1:44, 45). His name was Simon (or Simeon, Acts 15:14) and his father's name was Jonas. He had a brother by name of Andrew, and the three, the father, Simon and Andrew were fishermen at Capernaum. There Simon Peter had his home, as he was a married man (Matthew 8:14; 1 Cor. 9:5). His brother Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist and when he pointed out the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God, Andrew followed Him. Andrew brought Peter to the Lord (John 1:35-43).

When the Lord beheld him He revealed His omniscience, for He said: "Thou art Simon the son of Jona, thou shalt be called Cephas," which is the Aramaic word for stone. When later Peter, in answer to the question "Whom say ye that I am?" said: "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God," the Lord Jesus said to him, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:17-

18). The Greek word petros means a small rock, or piece of a rock; the Greek for rock is petra, the word our Lord used when He designated the foundation of the Church. It is not Peter, but Christ Himself, who is the rock. In his Epistle Peter contradicts by the Spirit of God the miserable invention that he is the rock upon which the Church is built, as claimed by Rome and even by Protestant expositors. (See 1 Peter 2:4-8). The Gospel records, as well as the Epistle to the Galatians, give us a good description of his peculiar character. He was impulsive, forward and self confident, yet he was true, loving and faithful. Before he denied the Lord, the Lord Jesus announced Peter's great failure and assured His disciple of His prayer, when Satan would sift him as wheat. In connection with this our Lord gave him a commission. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." His denial, his bitter repentance, his restoration at the lake of Tiberias, the still greater commission to shepherd the sheep and the lambs of the flock of God, are so well known, that we need not to enlarge on them.

The Lord also committed to him the "keys of the kingdom of the heavens," not to Heaven, nor to the Church, but to the kingdom of the heavens, that is to that which is now on earth. The book of Acts gives us the history of the use of the keys. He used the keys in connection with the Jews on the day of Pentecost, when he preached to them and, in preaching, opened the door to those who heard him; then he used the keys once more in the household of Cornelius (Acts 10) and then by preaching he opened the door to the Gentiles. This is what our Lord meant.

Here is another significant fact, in writing his Epistles Peter never mentioned this commission of the keys. According to Rome and other ritualistic churches he should have stated in the beginning of his Epistle that he is the supreme holder of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. But not Peter was to be the great apostle to the Gentiles; the Lord called Paul to this position. Peter is the prominent actor in the beginning of the book of Acts, when the gospel was preached "to the Jew first." After Jerusalem rejected that gospel and the apostle to the Gentiles had been called, Paul becomes the prominent figure in Acts. Peter is mentioned only once more in connection with the council held in Jerusalem (Acts 15). In Galatians chapter 2 his Jewish character in withdrawing from the Gentile believers after he fellowshipped with them is rebuked by Paul. In that chapter we also read that Peter with James and John were to minister to those of the circumcision, that is the Jews; while Paul and Barnabas were to go to the Gentiles.

After this incident we hear nothing more about Peter. The Spirit of God might have given us a complete account of what he did, where he went, but all is passed over in silence. The omniscient Spirit saw what would come in Christendom. He knew that ritualism would give to Peter a place of supremacy in the body of Christ which does not belong to him at all. Therefore Peter's life and service are passed over by the Holy Spirit and we hear nothing more about him in the inspired records. But we hear from him in the two Epistles which bear his name and which he wrote.

But while Scripture is silent, tradition is not. It is claimed by the historian Eusebius that he was Bishop of Antioch, the church which he founded. But the latter statement is contradicted by Acts 11:19-21 and the former is equally incorrect. Other ancient sources declare that he was very active in Asia Minor. That he must have ministered widely may be gained from 1 Corinthians 9:5: "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?"

But the entire ministry he rendered is not revealed.

Another tradition claims that he settled in Rome to oppose the Samaritan sorcerer Simon Magus (Acts 8). Justin Martyr in his writings states that Simon Magus was worshipped in Rome as a god on account of his magical powers. On account of it they erected a statue on an island in the River Tiber inscribed "Simoni Deo Sancto." Actually there was found in the year 1574 in the Tiber a stone with the inscription "Semoni Sanco Deo Fidio Sacrum" i.e. "to the god Semo Sancus," the Sabine Hercules, which is definite proof that Justin Martyr was mistaken. Upon this rests the legend that Peter went to Rome to oppose Simon Magus. It is claimed that Peter was Bishop in Rome for 25 years and founded what is called "the Holy See," which later developed into the abominable papacy with its lies. Peter never saw Rome. As we shall show later in this introduction, there is sufficient Scriptural authority to contradict this legend. Another legend states that he was martyred in Rome, where the Lord appeared to him, when Peter had left the city to escape death. That he should die the martyr's death had been announced by our Lord, as well as the manner of his death by crucifixion. Nobody knows where that death took place. When he wrote his second Epistle it was a brief time before his death (2 Peter 1:14); but that Epistle was not written from Rome.

### **Did Peter Write from Babylon or from Rome?**

At the close of the Epistle we read the following salutation: "The church that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you, and so does Marcus my son." "The church that is" does not appear in the original text; it has, therefore, been explained that Peter meant his wife, though it appears more probable that he meant the other elect ones who were with him in Babylon. The fact is established that when he wrote this Epistle Peter was in Babylon. But does this mean the literal Babylon on the banks of the Euphrates or the mystical Babylon, which is Rome? Roman Catholic writers claim that it means the city of Rome, and a large number of Protestant commentators side with this view. They claim that he was in Rome with Mark. They say that Babylon has the same meaning as the word has in the book of Revelation, that is, not the literal Babylon, but Rome.

There is no definite proof that Rome was universally called "Babylon" before John received it in his Patmos vision; it is claimed that the persecution under Nero led Christians to call Rome by the name of Babylon; but it is more likely that the name Babylon was widely used for Rome after John had written the Apocalypse. The Apocalypse was written some 25 or 30 years after Peter had written his Epistle, how, then could he have used this mystical name for Rome? Furthermore, a mystical name is out of keeping in an Epistle. It would be the only instance in the entire epistolar testimony where a place is camouflaged in this way. The use of a mystical name in an Epistle appears strained. It therefore must be the literal Babylon in Mesopotamia. And why should this not be? We read in the second chapter of Acts that among those who were in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit came to earth were "Parthians, Medes, Elamites and dwellers in Mesopotamia." They heard Peter's testimony and some of them must have been converted. Many Jews dwelt there, and while in 41 A.D. Caligula instituted a persecution against the Jews in Babylon and many left, there was still a large company of them in the fast decaying city.

But the most conclusive evidence against Babylon, meaning Rome, is the complete silence of the Apostle Paul about Peter being in Rome. Paul sent his Epistle to the Roman Church in the year 58 A.D. In that Epistle he greets many believers who were in Rome. If Peter had been there, why did he not mention him also? He went to Rome as a prisoner in the year 61, but there is not a word about meeting Peter in Rome. Finally, when Paul penned his very last Epistle from Rome he makes the significant statement: "Only Luke is with me" (2 Tim. 4:11). This silence about Peter in the Pauline Epistle can only be explained by the fact that Peter was not in Rome at all.

## **Addressed to Believers in the Dispersion**

The Epistle is addressed to the sojourners in the dispersion, that is, to Jewish believers who were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, provinces in the northeastern part of Asia Minor. Many assemblies had been founded there and there were many believing Jews. They probably had their own gatherings, keeping aloof from the assemblies formed by believing Gentiles. They were the remnant and yet in having believed they were members of the body of Christ.

## **THE PURPOSE AND MESSAGE OF THE EPISTLE**

When Peter wrote this Epistle he fulfilled the request of the Lord, when he told them "when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren." They needed strengthening and comfort for they were passing through all kinds of persecutions; their faith was being severely tested. As believers they were pilgrims and strangers on earth, their portion and calling was different from the unbelieving Jews about them, among whom they suffered. The Lord Jesus Christ who suffered in their behalf is repeatedly presented as a pattern for them in their persecutions, and blessed exhortations are linked with the Person and holy character of our Lord. The Epistle is not doctrinal, though the great doctrines of Christianity are in view throughout the Epistle. It is, like the Epistle of James, a practical Epistle, abounding in exhortations and references to Old Testament history suited to believing Jews in their trials. The keynote is "Suffering and Glory. The words suffering and suffer occur fifteen times and the word glory ten times.

The same error has been taught by some extremists in Biblical interpretation which we have pointed out already in the introduction to the Epistle of James, namely, that it has a Jewish character and does not belong to the Epistles in which the Church and the heavenly calling are revealed, and therefore the Church should not consider it. This is a most vital mistake. The first Epistle of Peter has an important message also for all believers at all times; to pass it over and not to heed its blessed message, its comfort and exhortations would mean a very serious loss. A one-sided Bible reading produces a one-sided Christian character and a one-sided Christian service. And there are only too many of such in the Church today.

## **The Division of First Peter**

As stated in the introduction the keynote of the Epistle is "Suffering and Glory." The end of their pilgrimage, when all suffering ends, will be salvation and the possession of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away. This salvation was the object of inquiry and searching by their own prophets. The Spirit of Christ who was in them testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. So they as being His and identified with Him would also have suffering which in due time will be followed by glory. The glory comes with His revelation, His appearing, when He comes again.

We divide the Epistle into five sections, but somewhat different from the five chapters into which the Epistle is divided in our Bibles.

- I. THE SUFFERING OF BELIEVERS AND EXHORTATION TO HOLY LIVING (1:1-21)
- II. THE BLESSINGS AND PRIVILEGES OF ALL BELIEVERS (1:22-2:10)
- III. CHRIST THE PATTERN FOR HIS SAINTS (2:11-3:9)
- IV. THE COMFORT IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS AND SUFFERING (3:10-4)
- V. EXHORTATIONS CONCERNING SERVICE AND CONFLICT (5)

Analysis and Annotations

### **I. CH. 1:1-21: THE SUFFERING OF BELIEVERS AND EXHORTATIONS TO HOLY LIVING**

- 1. The introduction and doxology (1:1-5)
- 2. Suffering and the coming glory (1:6-9)
- 3. As revealed in the prophets (1:10-12)
- 4. Exhortations to holy living (1:13-21)

Verses 1-5. As stated in the introduction, Peter writes to believing Jews in the dispersion throughout the provinces mentioned in the first verse. There is at once pointed out a contrast between them as true believers and their former condition. The nation to which they belonged was an elect nation, but they were "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." It is something infinitely higher than a national election. Here is an individual election; they were foreknown of God the Father. In the Old Testament the Lord called Israel nationally "my first-born son," but no individual Israelite knew God as his Father, nor did an Israelite know himself individually as a son of God and a member of the family of God. They had received something better.

The nation had been set aside while those who believed were brought individually into the family of God, knowing God as their Father, while they became His children. Israel as a nation was set apart externally and by ordinances; but their setting apart, or sanctification, was through the

Spirit. Their sanctification was unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Their setting apart was vastly different from that separation which God had accorded to the nation as such. The Holy Spirit had set them apart unto the obedience of Christ, called them to obey as He obeyed, not to an obedience of the law. Connected with this obedience is the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, that precious blood typified by their former sacrifices which were unable to cleanse from sin, but the blood of Christ assures perfect forgiveness and justification, and that gives confidence and boldness before God, and liberty and power to practice the obedience of Christ, for which the believer is set apart.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead." This is the doxology. It declares the new relationship into which they had been brought; for these Jewish believers it is no longer the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." They were begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead. It is a joyful song of the better hope. We may think of what it meant to Peter, as well as to the other disciples. They had believed on Jesus as their promised, national Messiah. Their hope was in Him. As the two said on the way to Emmaus, "we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." They hoped He would be King and take the throne of His father David. Then He who was their hope died on the shameful cross, and hope died. But the third day came and Christ arose from among the dead. Hope revived, yea, they were begotten again unto a living hope. His resurrection was a begetting again to a living hope, no longer the hope of the earthly kingdom but a living hope "unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that fadeth not away." And this living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead, the hope which centers in Him as the living, risen and glorified One, is the hope of all His people.

Israel as a nation possessed an earthly inheritance, the promised land and with it corresponding earthly blessings. But now as the elect, according to the foreknowledge of the Father, they have a better inheritance. Earthly things are corruptible; the heavenly inheritance is incorruptible. Earthly things are defiled, pollution clings to the fairest and choicest; the coming inheritance is undefiled, nor can it ever be polluted by sin and its curse, it is eternally pure. Here on earth everything is fading, every beautiful flower has its roots in a grave, all is passing and fading away; but that inheritance which we shall receive is never-fading, it is always fresh and beautiful. And this inheritance is "preserved in heaven for you"; it is more than reserved, as we have it in our Bibles. It is with Him in the glory and He preserves it for His saints, so that the cruel hand of Satan cannot touch it nor take it away from man. And while that inheritance is preserved by the never-failing Lord in glory, saints are kept for the inheritance by the power of God through faith. Here is the real perseverance of the saints; the power to persevere and to keep is not in us but in God. That inheritance is ready to be revealed in the last times, that is when the Lord comes for His saints.

Verses 6-9. The way to the promised land for the literal Israel led through the desert sands with trials and testings. The way of the elect in Christ also leads through the desert with its wilderness experiences; faith too must be honored and glorified by testings. Faith is not only a precious thing for us, it is precious to God as well. It is His gold, that in which

He rejoices. To bring out its value various trials are permitted by Him: "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." The goal of the hope, when the inheritance will be bestowed, is the appearing of Jesus Christ. This is His visible appearing. Peter writes as the apostle of circumcision and he does not write about the church as the body of Christ, the heavenly calling and destiny of the church, and therefore he does not say anything about the rapture preceding the revelation. Peter always speaks of His appearing or revelation; salvation as used in this chapter means the manifestation in glory, when He appears in visible glory and when we shall be manifested with Him in glory. Having mentioned His appearing, the Spirit of God directs the attention at once to the Person of Christ. He must ever be the object of faith and occupation for the true believer. This brings into view the true character of Christianity.

"Whom having not seen ye love." It is a strange sound and fact at first, but in the end it is precious. Who ever loved a person that he never saw? We know that in human relations it is not so. In divine things it is precisely what shows the power and special character of a Christian's faith. "Whom having not seen, ye love, in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls." This at once gives us a true and vivid picture of what Christianity is, of signal importance for the Jews to weigh, because they always looked forward for a visible Messiah as an object, the Son of David. But here it is altogether another order of ideas. It is a rejected Messiah who is the proper object of the Christian's love, though he never beheld Him; and who while unseen becomes so much the more simply and unmixedly the object of his faith, and the spring of "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (Wm. Kelly).

Verses 10-12. He directs their attention to the Prophets. The Spirit of Christ was in them and they testified before of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. This is the great message of these holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. When our Lord said to the Jews "Search the Scriptures ... they are they which testify of Me" He called attention to the same fact. They prophesied of the grace which was to come and though they did not understand their own prophecies, they sought diligently, they studied what they had written, searching and always searching, to find out what time, near or far, these things should come to pass. But they knew one thing, "To whom it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us did they minister the things which are reported to you by those who have preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, into which things the angels desire to look." They knew that it was not for themselves, nor for their own times, that which the Spirit had announced, but for another time. The passage is illustrated by comparing Isaiah 64:4 with 1 Corinthians 2:9-10. The Spirit having come down from heaven after Christ had died and was raised from among the dead, has made known the fullness of redemption. And the angels desire to look into these things; they seek to explore and to fathom the wonders of that redemption and the coming glories which are connected with it.

Verses 13-21. The first exhortation is to gird up the loins of the mind. The man who girds the loins of the body is getting ready for service; the girding of the loins of the mind means to set the mind on these things, the things spiritual and unseen. To be sober means to be watchful and temperate, thus walking soberly, and "set your hope perfectly on the grace

that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (the correct translation). As they were now "obedient children" in the family of God, their responsibility and calling is to live and act as such. A holy God demands a holy people; this was God's call to His people Israel in the Old Testament, it is His call to the elect in the New Testament (Leviticus 11:44). This necessitates a walk in the Spirit as it is so fully revealed in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians.

Next we find two great reasons for walking in holiness; the first reason is the relationship which believers have as children, God being their Father; the second, the redemption price which was paid.

"And if ye call on Him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourn in fear, knowing that ye were redeemed not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake, who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from among the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope might be in God."

He has called us by His grace and we call Him Father. As Father, the head of His family, to which we belong, He must govern His house. As Father He exercises judgment in government regarding His children; He must chasten His children if they do not walk as it becometh those who are in possession of the divine nature. And though that government is one of love and grace, the Father's dealing with a beloved child, we must pass the time of our sojourn with fear. But this is not a slavish fear, nor a fear which has in it the elements of uncertainty as to salvation, a fear which trembles before a holy God, fearing His wrath. It is a godly, a holy fear, a fear that we might not please Him. This holy fear should be a passion to measure up to our calling as children and not to displease Him who is our Father, so that He does not need to exercise a Father's judgment upon us.

While the first reason to walk in holiness has to do with our conscience, the second concerns the affections. That blessed redemption by the blood of Christ, the Lamb without spot and blemish, foreknown before the foundation of the world, is the other great incentive to please God. It is not by silver or gold that He has redeemed us from all the vain things, whether vain religious traditions, or vain manner of life and all that goes with it, but by that which is the dearest, the most blessed and the most precious thing in the eyes of God and to the heart of God--the blood of Christ. No finite mind can understand the price God paid for our redemption. By Him we believe in God, who raised Him from among the dead and gave Him glory. And that acquired glory He received He has given to His own (John 17:22).

## II. Ch. 1:22-2:10: THE BLESSINGS AND PRIVILEGES OF ALL BELIEVERS

1. The new birth (1:22-25)
2. Spiritual growth (2:1-3)
3. The privileges of believers as the holy and royal priesthood (2:4-10)

Verses 22-25. The relationship of those who are thus redeemed, whose faith and hope is in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, whose souls are purified by obedience to the truth, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, is stated first: "Love one another with a pure heart fervently." All the elect through the foreknowledge of God the Father are covered by the same love, are redeemed by the same Lamb, washed in the same precious blood, have the same Father. They are one; they are brethren and as such love must characterize them. But this love, loving one another out of a pure heart fervently, is the fruit of the new nature which all possess who have believed and are redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." The Word of God, living and abiding, under the operation of the Spirit (the Word is "the water" of which our Lord spoke to Nicodemus) is the agent of the new birth. It is not corruptible seed, but incorruptible, hence the nature is an incorruptible, a holy nature. There are three incorruptible things mentioned in this chapter. An incorruptible inheritance, an incorruptible redemption price, and an incorruptible seed giving an incorruptible nature. And that new nature must love that which is of God, therefore the exhortation of loving one another, which is more fully developed in the great "family Epistle," the first Epistle of John.

But the new birth carries with it another blessing. "For all flesh is as grass and all the glory of it as the flower of the grass. The grass hath withered and the flower fallen, but the Word of the Lord endureth forever, and this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

The old creation is left behind, the world with all its glory and boastings, is judged. All is as grass and the glory of man as the flower of the grass. Those born again do no longer belong to this world, as He prayed: "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world." The words concerning the grass and the flower of the grass are a quotation from Isaiah (Isa. 40:6, 8). But the quotation is changed a little. In Isaiah we read: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth," and here it is, "The grass hath withered and the flower fallen," that is how faith must look upon the world and all its glory, as withered and fallen, with no more attraction for the heart which knows God. But those who are born again are linked with that which abideth for ever, the Word of the Lord, preached in that ever blessed Gospel.

Verses 1-3. "Wherefore, laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envyings and all evil-speakings as new born babes desire

earnestly the pure milk of the Word that ye may grow by it unto salvation, if ye have tasted that the Lord is good."

Those who are born again of incorruptible seed, in possession of a new nature, are still in the world, though they are no longer of it. Evil is on all sides and there is still the old nature, the flesh, in every child of God though believers are reckoned as being no longer in the flesh (Rom. 8:9). The old things of the flesh must be put off, completely laid aside. This is the necessary thing for spiritual growth; if there is no putting off of these there can be no progress. Peter speaks of believers as "new-born babes."

The sense in which this expression is used here differs from the use of it in 1 Corinthians 3:1: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." The spiritual growth of the Corinthians had been arrested and dwarfed; they never developed, but remained babes, a spiritual monstrosity. But the meaning here is entirely different. Believers should be at all times like new-born babes hungering for that which the Lord has provided for spiritual growth, the milk in all its purity as found in His Word. The mother by which we are begotten again, that is the living and abiding Word of God, has also the nourishment for the life we have received. In this sense the child of God must always be like a healthy babe, always craving, hungering and thirsting for the pure milk as provided in His Word. All that we need, yea, every need is provided there, and as we go to that fountain which never runs dry, which never fails nor disappoints, we shall grow thereby.

One of the most subtle delusions is found among some Pentecostal sects, who imagine that they are so filled with the Spirit that they can dispense with the reading of and feeding on the Word. In the authorized version two words are missing which belong in the text; they are the words "unto salvation" ... "that ye may grow thereby unto salvation." They were omitted in some manuscripts, but belong here. Salvation here has the same meaning as in the first chapter, it looks forward to the end in glory.

And if we have felt that the Lord is gracious, have tasted of His loving kindness, we shall desire more and more of it, crave for still more. Peter surely had tasted that the Lord is gracious. We think of his denial, and when the Lord turned and looked upon him, Peter went out and wept bitterly. He had tasted that the Lord is gracious, and more so, when the Lord dealt so graciously with him at the meal His blessed hands had prepared for His disciples on the lakeshore (John 21), and His loving voice asked: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" The sentence, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," is a quotation from the Psalms (Psalm 34:8). David, like Peter, had shamefully failed and like Peter he had tasted that the Lord is gracious. All His saints have had the same experience of the graciousness of the Lord.

Verses 4-10. The testimony of Peter which follows is of great importance. The fisherman of Galilee knew nothing of what would happen centuries later. He did not know that ritualism would exalt him to a position of supremacy, claiming that he was and is the rock upon which the Church is built, that he was a bishop who communicated in Rome his apostolic authority to another, as it is claimed to one by name of Linus, and Linus handed over the same authority to Cletus and Cletus to Clemens, Clemens to Anacletus, Anacletus to Sixtus and so on from one generation to the other, each adding a little more till the harlot system of the mystical

Babylon, the papacy became what it is today. But while Peter did not know the future, the Holy Spirit knew and He inspired his pen to write that which is the complete refutation of popery and a man-made priesthood.

Not Peter is the living stone upon which everything rests, but the Lord Jesus Christ is the rock foundation, the Stone upon whom all is built. Not Peter was rejected by men, then chosen of God and precious, but it is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures had announced this fact beforehand. Isaiah 28:16 is quoted in Verse 6. This is followed by a quotation from Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14. The Lord Jesus while on earth had made use of these prophecies given by His Spirit (Matthew 21:42). The Holy Spirit after Pentecost reminded the rulers, elders and scribes of the people once more of this great prophecy concerning the rejection of the Messiah by the nation (Acts 4:9-12). And when the Lord Jesus quoted this prophecy from Psalm 118 He added, what is cited here in verse 8, whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken," that is what happened to the nation Israel.

The second half of this statement of our Lord in Matthew 21:44 is still unaccomplished-"but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." This will happen at the close of the times of the Gentiles, when the stone strikes the feet of the prophetic image (Dan. 2). Israel had rejected the Stone and therefore was unfit as a nation to build the spiritual house, as the Lord had likewise announced: "the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof." They had as a nation a house called "The House of the Lord," where He delighted to dwell, but it was not a spiritual house, but a house made with hands, a shadow of the better things to come.

When Israel rejected the Messiah and the kingdom He had offered, when they had delivered Him up and He died, after His resurrection from among the dead and His exaltation to the right hand of God, the third person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit, came to earth for the purpose of building amongst men the habitation of God, a spiritual house, and that house is the church. Thus Peter bears witness to Christ as the Living Stone, the rock upon which the Church "the spiritual house" is being built. He with all other believers, including ourselves, are the living stones. As mentioned in the introduction, Christ is the Petra, the Rock, Peter and every other child of God is a petros, a little rock, a living stone with Himself (Matt. 16:17-18). And His Son whom man dishonored and rejected is precious to God; He is His delight; He is precious to those who have believed; He is our delight. While God says that His delight is in Him, we too confess that all our delight is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, all believers constitute a holy priesthood. Peter does not claim an exclusive priesthood vested in him, but his inspired testimony is that all members of the body of Christ, the living stones, are a priesthood. In the Old Testament the priesthood of Christ was foreshadowed in Aaron and the priesthood of believers by the sons of Aaron. (See annotations in Leviticus.) No longer are needed sacrifices of animals, for He has brought the one sacrifice, by which he has made the new and living way by His blood into the Holiest, so that every believer can draw nigh with a true heart and full assurance of faith, with hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:19-22). This completely disposes of the ritualistic priesthood, vested in "ordained" men, that system which has been and still is and always will be, the corruption of Christianity. It also answers the blasphemous mass, which is an act of idolatry.

The function of the holy priesthood of believers consists in bringing spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name" (Hebrews 13:15). It is worship in the spirit and truth; it is praise and adoration as well as the ministry of intercession.

Once more Peter mentions the fact of the Christian priesthood. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the excellencies of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (Hosea 2:23). Israel was chosen, Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, they were called "to show forth His praises." They never attained it, because they were not a holy nation, though constituted a separated nation by God's calling. But these believing Jews through grace in Christ had become a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. As a remnant of the nation they possessed now what the nation never possessed. Of course that remnant was embodied in the church, and is a part of the body of Christ. Yet the application to them as a remnant must not be lost sight of.

Nor must we forget that there will be a future remnant of the nation, the nation which is now dispersed, which will become a holy nation, a royal priesthood in connection with the other nations. The promises, the gifts and callings of God, will all be accomplished, and those who had not obtained mercy will yet obtain mercy; that will be when He whom they pierced comes again and when they shall look upon Him in that day. Apart from this application to them as believing Jews, to whom the Epistle was addressed, all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, have a royal priesthood. Christ is a holy Priest and a royal Priest; both aspects of His priesthood believers share in Him. We are holy priests to go in to God to represent man before God; we are royal priests to represent God before man, to show forth His excellencies. The royal priesthood of Christ, is the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec. He was the King-Priest who came to Abraham and made known God and His glory to Abraham. Thus in Christ we behold the glory of God and as identified with Christ, indwelt by Him, our royal priesthood is to make Him and His excellencies known among men.

### **III. CH 2:11-3:9: CHRIST THE PATTERN FOR HIS SAINTS**

1. Abstinence and submission (2:11-17)
2. Christ the pattern for those who suffer (2:18-25)
3. Glorifying Christ in the marriage relation (3:1-7)
4. True Christian character (3:8-9)

Verses 11-17. The first exhortation is addressed to them as strangers and pilgrims. Such all true believers are. Because we belong to a heavenly

home we cannot be at home in a world which lieth in the wicked one, which has cast out the Lord of glory, and which continues to reject Him. And it is only as a stranger here that we can do what we are exhorted to do, "to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." If our heart is where He is, if our affections are set upon the things on high, if we lose sight of the "vain things" which charm the natural man, and we realize in faith the heavenly calling and the heavenly home, then we shall not fight the lusts of the flesh, but willingly and joyfully abstain from them, fleeing them, as Paul exhorted Timothy.

A general exhortation follows. Their conversation is to be honest among the Gentiles who often spoke of them as evil-doers, accusing Christians of their own shameful conduct, as unsaved Gentiles, so that it might bring reproach upon "that worthy Name." By their godly lives the Gentiles should see their good works and when the day of visitation came, they would then glorify God. Does this mean a visitation in judgment, or the visitation in grace? It means the latter, though a visitation by the chastening hand of God is not excluded. When sorrows come, when earthly hopes are blasted, when sickness makes the enjoyment of the material things impossible, then the unbelievers often turn to the people of God for help and comfort, the grace of God will then be manifested in the day of visitation; this glorifies God.

Exhortation to submission is linked with this. "Submit yourselves therefore to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether unto the king as supreme; or to governors as sent by Him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well." We must remember that the kings and rulers mentioned here, under whom these believing Jews lived, were heathen and idolators. Yet they were to obey and to manifest patient submission. The exhortation has a special meaning for them as Jews, for naturally they were a rebellious people. The exhortation given to them before their captivity in Babylon, "to seek the peace of the city" where they would dwell has generally been disobeyed. These believing Jews probably were tempted to resist the powers which ruled. (It is a significant fact that many of the radicals, anarchists, or as they used to be called in Russia, nihilists, are apostate Jews. Many of the persecutions of the Jews, in which the innocent have to suffer with the guilty, are produced by Jews meddling with the politics of the nations among whom they are strangers and trying to overthrow these governments.) Therefore the exhortation to submit for the Lord's sake, though there are limitations to such submission. Such submission is "the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Brief, but weighty, exhortations follow.

Verses 18-25. The exhortation after that is addressed to the servants, that is, to those Jewish believers who were slaves. To such the choicest words are addressed, God knowing that His own beloved Son had been on earth as a servant, that He was here not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give His life as a ransom for many. They were in the blessed position to "follow His steps." But the exhortation does not mean servants or slaves exclusively, it is written for all believers. "For this is acceptable, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it if, when ye sin, and are buffeted for it, ye take it patiently? but if, when ye do well and suffer, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." To suffer wrongfully and take it patiently, without murmuring and without strife, is whereunto believers are called. It is then that they can show forth His excellencies and follow after Him. "Because

Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that ye should follow His steps." And what an example has He left for us? He was the holy, spotless Son of God. Suffering for His own sins was an impossibility, for He was spotless. He knew no sin, neither could He sin. Yet He suffered. "Who did no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth; who when reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not; but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously."

Such is the pattern. But there is more than that. He knew no sin, did not sin and all His suffering, the shame and the suffering connected with the cross, was on account of our sins. "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." The rendering, or, rather, paraphrase, some have adopted that Christ bore our sins "up to the tree" is erroneous and misleading. Our Lord did not bear our sins in His holy life before the cross, but He bore them on the cross, in His own body. And He bore them that "we, being dead to sins, not as revealed in Romans to sin, but to sins, that is, the practical giving up of our own wills, should live unto righteousness.

The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is used by Peter in this paragraph. There it is written: "By His stripes we are healed," and the confession, "all we like sheep have gone astray." Of late the so-called "divine healers," men and women who claim gifts of healings, if not gifts to work miracles, speak of the sentence, "By His stripes we are healed," as meaning the healing of diseases. They claim that Christ died also for our bodily ills and that the stripes laid upon Him were specifically for the healing of our bodies, which Scripture so clearly states are "dead on account of sin." This is a most dangerous perversion of the truth. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, but nowhere is it written that He died for our bodily diseases.

These believing Jews were in possession of the truth as revealed in Isaiah 53. They foreshadow that other Jewish remnant of the future which will some day use the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah as their great confession of Him whom they despised and rejected, and by whose stripes they also will be healed. Then Peter speaks of our Lord as Shepherd, the Shepherd who died for the sheep, the great Shepherd brought again from among the dead. He loves His sheep and shepherds them. Bishop means overseer. He is the only Bishop, who watches over all and guards all His blood-bought sheep.

Verses 1-7. The practical exhortations are now extended to the marriage relation, how wives and husbands should be royal priests, showing forth His excellencies in their divinely sanctioned union, as man and wife. The wife is mentioned first, for her place is the highest, the place of submission, which in God's eyes is the place of honor. The case of a wife is stated who has an unbelieving husband. Is she to submit to him, who is an unbeliever? Must she be obedient to such a one? How often wives placed in this position have listened to the evil councils of others, and, instead of submitting to the demands of an unbelieving husband, have resisted him, and as a result misery came upon them. Let it be noticed that the Holy Spirit insists on obedience; the fact of the disobedient husband is given as a reason for submission. Then there is a promise. The unbelieving husband is to be won without the Word, that is, without preaching in a public service, by the godly life of meekness and submission of the

believing wife. This is the advice of the Holy Spirit, and many times the promise given to the believing wife has been made good.

Furthermore, there is a word concerning dress. The adorning is not to be outwardly in braiding of hair, wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel, but inwardly, "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price." The positive side is emphasized more than the negative. The greatest ornament a woman can wear is "a meek and quiet spirit," for it shows that in manifesting meekness and quietness, they learned and received from Him, who on earth was "meek and lowly of heart." This applies to every believer likewise. Wherever a meek and quiet spirit is manifested God is well pleased with it. What a contrast with the conditions in the world today. Women claim equality with men; in every walk of life they clamor to be heard; the female sex is breaking down the barriers set by the Creator and the Redeemer, demanding leadership in every sphere. The result will be disaster. But it must not be overlooked that here is also exhortation for the Christian woman to dress outwardly as becomes a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. There should be a difference between the daughters of the world and those who are Christ's. On the other hand, shabbiness of dress, an unclean appearance, is no more an honor to the Gospel, than a dress which is after the latest fashion of the world.

And the husband is exhorted next. He is not told to claim submission, or to insist upon it as his peculiar right. He is exhorted to give the wife honor as the weaker vessel, hence he must show to her, as the weaker one, kindness, tenderness, consideration and loving sympathy, as we read in Ephesians: "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church." The believing husband and the wife are "heirs together of the grace of life." Where this is practised there will be sweet companionship and fellowship in the Lord, nothing hindering them from bowing the knees together in His presence, expressing together their praise, their mutual needs and those of others.

Verses 8-9. General exhortations follow. What is found in these two verses constitutes a true Christian character.

## **IV. CH. 3:10-4: THE COMFORT IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS AND SUFFERING**

1. The comfort in suffering (3:10-17)
2. Few saved as illustrated by Noah's preaching (3:18-22)
3. The new life in its transforming power (4:1-11)
4. Suffering and glory (4:12-19)

Verses 10-17. The words which stand in the beginning of this section are quoted from Psalm 34:12-16. It is interesting to note that the Spirit

of God quotes from the three main divisions of the Hebrew Bible in the first three chapters of this Epistle. The Hebrew Bible is composed, according to Jewish division, of the law, the prophets and the writings. In the first chapter the law is quoted; in the second the prophets; and in the third we have a quotation from the Psalms. If we practice righteousness, the result of the new nature, produced by the new life, the promises of the Lord will not fail. To Israel in the Old Testament the Lord promised earthly blessings, and while to His heavenly people heavenly, spiritual blessings are vouchsafed, the earthly blessings are not excluded. It was true in olden times that "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers." It is so today, for He changes not. He looks for practical righteousness. Equally true is it that in His righteous government the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And there is the comfort if we do right that none can harm us, for the Lord is on our side.

Suffering for righteousness' sake must be, but there is a "blessedness" connected with it. The Lord pronounced this in one of the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:10). How fitting it is that in this Epistle, in addressing these Jewish believers as a remnant of the nation, this should be mentioned. It is the comfort in persecution, "be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled." The quotation in verse 15 is from Isaiah 8:12, 13. There it is a prophecy concerning the future remnant of Israel during their coming great tribulation, foreshadowed in Isaiah by the Assyrian invasion.

Verses 18-22. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in flesh but quickened by the Spirit: in which also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who before time were disobedient when the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing; in which few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water; which figure does also now save you, even baptism (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the request as before God of a good conscience), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being subjected unto Him."

This difficult and much misunderstood passage demands a closer attention. It is the passage upon which Rome has built her obnoxious and unscriptural doctrine of a purgatory. Protestant expositors have also misinterpreted this passage; in some quarters of Protestantism a kind of a "Protestant purgatory" is now being taught. Many errors, like a second probation, another chance for the lost, the restitution of the wicked, are linked with the wrong exposition of the above words.

Even sound believers have adopted that which Peter does not mean at all, and which is unknown in the rest of the Word of God. Their teaching founded upon these statements by Peter is as follows: The Lord descended into Hades, the place of the departed spirits and preached there. The visit took place after His death and before His physical resurrection, that is, He made the visit in His unclothed state, while His body still rested in the tomb. As to the preaching, the opinions of these exegetes are divided. Some believe that He went to Hades to announce the certain doom of the lost. Others, and they are not a few, state that He preached, offering to the lost salvation, while still others claim that the spirits in prison are the righteous dead to whom Christ announced that their redemption had been wrought out for them, and that He announced His victory.

As to the result of the preaching, the teaching is that it was successful; this is by inference, as they say, otherwise it could not be mentioned among the blessed results of Christ's suffering. They also claim that inasmuch as early Christian literature has much to say about that fictitious "descent into Hades" (or, as generally stated, hell), it must be the true meaning of the passage. In giving these views on the meaning of the passage before us we give a very few; there are many others, like the late Bullinger's view, that the spirits were the fallen angels, and that He went to herald His triumph to them. Pages could be filled with the fanciful and unscriptural interpretations of this passage.

The chief question is: Did our Lord go to Hades in a disembodied state? In fact, all depends on the question of what is the true meaning of the sentence, "quickened by the Spirit." Now, according to the interpretations of the men who teach that the Lord visited Hades, the spirits in prison, during the interval between His death and the morning of the third day, He descended into these regions while His dead body was still in the grave. Therefore, these teachers claim that His human spirit was quickened, which necessitates that the spirit which the dying Christ commended into the Father's hands had also died. This is not only incorrect doctrine, but it is an unsound and evil doctrine. Was the holy humanity of our Lord, body, soul and spirit dead? A thousands times No! Only His body died; that is the only part of Him which could die. The text makes this clear: "He was put to death in flesh," that is, His body. There could be no quickening of His spirit, for His spirit was alive. Furthermore, the word quickening, as we learn from Ephesians 1:20 and 2:5-6, by comparing the two passages, applies to His physical resurrection, it is the quickening of His body. To teach that the Lord Jesus was made alive before His resurrection is unscriptural. The "quickened by the Spirit" means the raising up of His body. His human spirit needed no quickening; it was His body and only His body. And the Spirit who did the quickening is not His own spirit, that is, His human spirit, but the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:11 speaks of the Spirit as raising Jesus from among the dead.

We have shown that it was an impossibility that Christ was in any way quickened while His body was not yet raised, hence a visit to Hades is positively excluded between His death and resurrection. There is only another alternative. If it is true that He descended into these regions, then it must have been after His resurrection. But that is equally untenable. The so-called "Apostle's Creed" puts the descent between His death and resurrection and all the other theorists follow this view. We have shown what the passage does not mean. It cannot mean a visit of the disembodied Christ to Hades, for it speaks of the quickening by the Spirit, and that means His physical resurrection.

What, then, does the passage mean? It is very simple after all. He preached by the Spirit, or in the Spirit, that is, the same Spirit who raised Him from among the dead, the Holy Spirit of life and power, to the spirits who are now in prison. But when the preaching occurred they were not in prison. And who were they? All the wicked dead for 4,000 years? The text makes it clear that they are a special class of people. They were living in the days of Noah. It is incomprehensible how some of these teachers, misinterpreting this passage, can teach that it includes all the lost, or angels which fell, or the righteous dead. The Spirit of God preached to them, that is, the Spirit who quickened the body of Christ, the same Spirit preached to the generation of unbelievers in the days of Noah.

The time of the preaching, then, did not occur between the death and resurrection of Christ, but it took place in Noah's day. Christ was not personally, or corporeally present, just as He is not present in person in this age when the gospel is preached; His Spirit is here.

So was He present by His Spirit in the days of Noah. It is written: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years" (Gen. 6:3). His Spirit was then on the earth. In long-suffering God was waiting for one hundred and twenty years while the ark was preparing. His Spirit preached then. But He needed an instrument. The instrument was Noah; in him was the Spirit of Christ and as the preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5) he delivered the warning message of an impending judgment to those about him, who did not heed the message, passed on in disobedience, were swept away by the deluge and are now the spirits in prison. As the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets (chapter 1:11) testifying beforehand of the suffering of Christ and the glory that should follow, so the Spirit of Christ preached through Noah. This is the meaning of this passage, and any other is faulty and unscriptural.

This interpretation is in full keeping with Peter's testimony. It is to "strengthen his brethren," to encourage and comfort those who were suffering persecution and passed through many fiery trials. They thought it strange that they had to suffer, that they were few in number who were saved, while they lived in the midst of the vast multitudes which rejected the gospel and live on in sin and disobedience. For this reason the Spirit of God reminds them that such was also the case in the days of Noah, as it will be again at the close of the age, as the Lord Himself had announced. The multitudes in the days of Noah despised the warning; only eight souls were saved out of the judgment.

It must also be remembered that Peter's Epistle is not a doctrinal Epistle. He does not teach, but exhort. It is true many of the exhortations have for a foundation doctrines stated elsewhere in the Pauline Epistles. If it were Christian doctrine that Christ went to the prison of the wicked dead, such a doctrine should then be more fully stated somewhere else in the New Testament. But such is not the case. The passage in Ephesians 4, concerning Christ leading captivity captive has nothing to do with Peter's statement. (See annotations on Ephesians 4).

The concluding words, linked with this statement, are a typical comparison of the deluge and the ark with baptism. It has also been misunderstood, and some teach on account of it that baptism is a saving ordinance, which is another error. We quote a paragraph from the Synopsis of the Bible which clears this up in a way which cannot be improved upon.

"To this the apostle adds, the comparison of baptism to the ark of Noah in the deluge. Noah was saved through the water; we also; for the water of baptism typifies death, as the deluge, so to speak, was the death of the world. Now Christ has passed through death and is risen. We enter into death in baptism; but it is like the ark, because Christ suffered in death for us, and has come out of it in resurrection, as Noah came out of the deluge, to begin, as it were, a new life in a resurrection world. Now Christ, having passed through death, has atoned for sins; and we, by passing through it in spirit, leave all our sins in it, as Christ did in reality for us; for He was raised up without the sins which He expiated on the cross. And they were our sins; and thus, through the resurrection, we

have a good conscience. We pass through death in spirit and in figure by baptism. The peace-giving force of the thing is the resurrection of Christ, after He had accomplished expiation; by which resurrection therefore we have a good conscience."

in other words our good conscience is not in having obeyed an ordinance, but it is by what Christ has done, who has gone into heaven and who is exalted at the right hand of God.

Verses 1-11. The opening sentence of the fourth chapter connects with chapter 3:18. The sufferings of Christ are thus brought to their attention once more. The reason is obvious. They were Jews and had been taught that earthly, temporal blessings, were the marks exclusively of divine favor; trials, sufferings and persecutions, on the other hand, according to Jewish conceptions, were evidences of disfavor. They were therefore disheartened and greatly perplexed when persecutions arose and they had to suffer. But these sufferings were the evidence that they followed Him who also suffered in the flesh. He suffered for us, that is, for our sins, and therefore believers must arm themselves with the same mind. They must expect suffering, not for sins, but from the side of an evil world. "For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." The death of Christ for sin (not sins) demands from the believer that he also cease from sin, from living after the old nature.

If the Christian gratifies the old nature and yields to it, it will not entail any suffering, but if the believer lives as "dead unto sin," walks in separation from this evil age, the result will be that he has to suffer in some way. The life he lives is no longer "in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." Such a walk brings with it the contradiction of sinners, the hatred of the world, such sufferings through which Christ also passed. Once they did as the heathen, the Gentiles, about them, walking in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banqueting, and abominable idolatries. But now their lives had been transformed; no longer did they run with them and do what the Gentiles did. Their former associates in sin and in the lusts of the flesh thought it strange that such should be the case, and they spoke evil of them. What evil they spoke about them is not stated. But for this they will have to give account to Him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead, even Christ.

The next verse has perplexed many, and has been misused by teachers of error and unsound doctrines, like the passage about the spirits in prison. "For to this end was the gospel preached also to the dead, that they might be judged as regards men after the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit." It is strange that expositors should detach a verse like this from the context and then, without considering its connection, build upon one verse a new and vital doctrine. So it is claimed that the dead mentioned are those who died before the gospel was preached, or who never had a chance to hear the Gospel, but who hear it now in the abode of death, to obtain eternal life. But this is only one of a number of other interpretations.

The Apostle had spoken in the preceding verse of the judgment of the living and of the dead. He now mentions the dead to whom the gospel had been preached. It is a thing of the past and means that those who are dead now while they lived had heard the preaching of the gospel. He means only the righteous dead and the other dead are not in view at all. Those who are

now dead passed through the same experience, as the living pass through it, judged according to men in the flesh, but living according to God in the Spirit. Thus the preaching to the dead as dead is not taught at all in this verse. If there were such a thing as preaching to the physical dead we should find it in the Epistle to the Romans, in that great document of the gospel, or somewhere else in the Pauline Epistles; but there is nothing mentioned about this anywhere.

The new life which is dead to sin and suffers with Christ must be manifested. Of this we read in the exhortations which follow (verses 7-11). The end of all things is at hand, the fact that this age will end must always be kept before the heart and mind. And if it was true then that the promised end is at hand how much more true is it now. As a result of waiting for His coming, expecting Him at any time, we are to be sober and watchful unto prayer, and manifest fervent love among and towards fellow-believers. There is to be hospitality without murmuring, ministering one to another, according as each has received. Public ministry in preaching or teaching is to be as the oracles of God, in dependence upon Him, as of the ability which God supplieth, that is, as enabled by His Spirit.

Verses 12-19. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which cometh upon you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." With what love and tenderness, dear Peter, by the Spirit of God, touches again on their sufferings and trials! How perplexed they must have been when they read their own Scriptures and remembered the promises made to Israel as to earthly blessings; and here they were suffering want and privation, were persecuted and slandered by those about them. He writes to them not to think it strange, as if a strange thing happened unto them, when passing through fiery trials. It is the path the Shepherd went and the sheep must follow Him. He suffered, it is the believer's privilege to suffer with Him. When sufferings and trials come, then is the time for rejoicing and not for being disheartened. Sufferings become sweet and precious when we remember they constitute us partakers of Christ's sufferings. And there is coming a revelation of His glory. In anticipation of that we can rejoice, for that revelation will bring the end of all suffering, and glory as well.

"if ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified." Instead of trying to escape sufferings with Christ, a little reproach, a little contempt for Christ's sake, we should welcome all most gladly. There is a blessing in it, even when people call us narrow or by any other name of contempt, because we exalt Christ and are true to Him. The Spirit of glory and of God rests upon us whenever we are reproached for the name of Christ. And if we were but more faithful, more separated, more loyal and devoted, we also would have more reproach, and as a result know more of the blessed experience that we are the resting and dwelling place of the Spirit of glory.

But there are sufferings which are inconsistent with Christ's sufferings and with the character of a Christian. "But if any suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." It means to count reproach and suffering for Christ an honor and a glory. Peter had made this experience when with his fellow-apostles he had been

beaten, "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41).

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God, and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" The sufferings of believers are permitted by the Lord for their own good likewise; they are His loving chastenings. Thus He deals as a loving Father with His house, whose house are we (Hebrews 3:6), permitting and using afflictions, sorrows, losses, that we may be partakers of His holiness. But if such is the case with His house, with those who belong to Him and whom He loves, what shall be the end of those that disobey the gospel of God? if the righteous, the sinner saved by grace, in his walk through the wilderness can scarcely be saved, if it needs the very power of God to keep him, what shall be the fate of the ungodly and the sinner? Therefore, when the believer suffers he commits his soul to Him who is able to sustain and carry him through.

## V. CHAPTER 5: EXHORTATIONS CONCERNING SERVICE AND CONFLICT

1. As to Christian service (5:1-7)
2. Conflict and victory (5:8-11)
3. The conclusion (5:12-14)

Verses 1-7. Peter now speaks in great tenderness exhorting to service. The exhortation is addressed to the elders and he speaks of himself as a "fellow-elder." Does he mean by this an official title or does he mean simply his age and experience? He is not writing in any official capacity, but the word elder has the meaning of old in years. He assumes no ecclesiastical authority to dictate, but speaks out of a ripe experience and a heart of love. How different from what ritualism has made him to be. He takes his place among the other elders and calls himself a fellow-elder, not claiming any authority or superiority whatever. He was a witness of the sufferings of Christ; he knew he would be a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed. The Lord had given him this assurance (Matt. 19:28, 29).

He gives some important exhortations. We give it in a better rendering. "Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but readily; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but being ensamples to the flock." Believers here are called "the flock of God." In John 10:16 the Lord had given the announcement that there should be one flock (not one fold, as the Authorized Version). The flock of God is the Church, the body of Christ. The language so frequently heard in Christendom when preachers and pastors speak of those to whom they preach as "my flock" or "my people," is unscriptural and should be avoided. God's children do

not belong to anybody but the Lord. As the Lord had commissioned Peter: "Feed My sheep," and "Feed My lambs," so Peter writes to the elders to tend the flock of God. It is the same Greek word used here which we find in John 21:16 and is really "shepherd"--shepherd the flock of God. It is not to be done for filthy lucre's sake, on account of gain, for money considerations.

All is prophetic, for exactly that which was not to be done is being done in Christendom today, hence many of those who claim to be shepherds of the flock are in reality nothing but hirelings; and often it happens that the hireling for the sake of better financial conditions will exchange "his flock" for another. Furthermore, there is to be no lording over the allotted charge (or over your allotments). The elder who has the oversight of the flock, called to shepherd the flock, minister to the flock as a servant, is not to take a place of superiority or spiritual dignity, claiming authority. This also is done in Christendom with its "Lord Bishops" and other titles of ecclesiastical authority. The word translated in the Authorized Version with "heritage" is in the Greek "kleros," and means an allotment. From this word comes our English "clergy." There is no such thing in the body of Christ as a "clergy" and a "laity."

Instead of lording over their allotted charge, the elders are to be ensamples to the flock, in a godly life. Then comes the promise, "when the chief shepherd is manifested, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." The sheep of Christ for which He laid down His life are very precious to Him, and those who serve His sheep, who minister to their need, will be honored by Him and rewarded with the crown of glory in the day of His manifestation. There is to be submission by the younger to the elder, that is, the younger in years are to be subject to those older in years. The same rule of loving submission extends to all the flock of God, "be subject one to another."

Humility is to be the right clothing for the saints of God. "They are to gird themselves with humility in this way, humility being that which will keep everything rightly adjusted, as the girdle the robe, and which would thus enable for such activity as all are called to; for humility is a grand help against discouragement by the difficulties of the way, and necessarily against all that would search out any remnant of pride in us" (F.W. Grant). Self-exaltation is the very essence of sin. God cannot tolerate it in His people. The example of Christ, who made of Himself no reputation, forbids it. God resisteth therefore always and in every way the proud, while He giveth grace to the humble. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." How little these great exhortations are considered in our times! Even among those who have the truth and believe in the revelation of God, while there is much increase in knowledge, there is little evidence of true humility. Humility will never leave us ashamed. We do not need to exalt ourselves; the Lord will do it for us.

Then there is the sweet comfort: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." All means all--all cares, whatever they are; all burdens, all anxieties we can roll upon Him, with the perfect assurance that He does care. Alas! our anxieties, our heavy feelings, our worry and our hurry, all speak the same language of unbelief. "Lord, dost Thou not care?" Well, it is if we look upon all burdens He permits to be laid upon us, as tokens of His love, by which we may learn His faithfulness afresh. Instead of murmuring then, we should sing and rejoice, being anxious for nothing, knowing He carries us and our burdens and cares as we can never

do.

Verses 8-11. Once more we hear His exhortation: "Be sober, be watchful!" Why? Because there is an adversary and a conflict. In those days of persecution he was the roaring lion; in our days he sneaks about as an angel of light. No longer is it the persecution of the church; it is the corruption of the truth which is the work of the adversary today. But in Peter's day the enemy was engaged in active persecution, seeking to devour God's people. Once more he will assume this character during the coming great tribulation, the time of Jacob's trouble. Then the faithful Jewish remnant, like this remnant to whom Peter wrote, will have to face the roaring lion, as we read so frequently in the book of Revelation.

Then follows Peter's benediction, quite a different thing from the fraudulent benedictions, which come from the counterfeit successors of Peter. "But the God of all grace, who hath called you unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, when ye have suffered a little while, Himself shall perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

Verses 12-14. The Epistle was sent to them by Silvanus. It is the same Silvanus whose back had been lacerated in the prison of Philippi, whose feet had been in stocks, and who sang the praises of the Lord with beloved Paul in that night of pain and suffering. He knew what suffering with Christ meant and could equally sympathize with his brethren.

There is greeting from the other elect ones in Babylon, as we have shown in our introduction, in literal Babylon on the banks of the Euphrates. Salutation from Marcus is also given. This is John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, whose failure in the book of Acts is recorded, and on account of whom the Apostle Paul had a falling out with Barnabas; it is the same Mark who wrote the Gospel which bears his name. The kiss of love is mentioned (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26). It was universally observed for centuries. "Peace be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."