

# OpenTheo

## 1 Peter: Chapter-by-Chapter Commentary

February 18, 2022



**Alastair Roberts**

\*CONTENTS\*

00:00:00 - 1 Peter 1.1-21: Born Again to a Living Hope

00:11:13 - 1 Peter 1.22—2.10: Built Up as a Spiritual House

00:24:17 - 1 Peter 2.11—3.7: Submission

00:43:46 - 1 Peter 3.8—4.6: Suffering in the Way of Righteousness

00:58:26 - 1 Peter 4.7-19: Suffering for the Name of Christ

01:09:44 - 1 Peter 5: Elders Called to the Task of Shepherding

If you have enjoyed my videos and podcasts, please tell your friends. If you are interested in supporting my videos and podcasts and my research more generally, please consider supporting my work on Patreon (<https://www.patreon.com/zugzwanged>), using my PayPal account (<https://bit.ly/2RLaUcB>), or by buying books for my research on Amazon ([https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/lr/36WVSWCK4X330?ref\\_=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/lr/36WVSWCK4X330?ref_=wl_share)).

The audio of all of my videos is available on my Soundcloud account: <https://soundcloud.com/alastairadversaria>. You can also listen to the audio of these episodes on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/alastairs-adversaria/id1416351035?mt=2>.

## Transcript

1 Peter is the first letter of the leading apostle in the New Testament. Some have doubted that such a letter could have been written by a man of Peter's education and background on account of such things as its strong Greek style. Others have observed many similarities to Paul.

Perhaps it's written with the help of Silvanus, who was associated with Paul he's

mentioned in chapter 5 verse 12. The notions that we have of authorship may be rather narrower than those that should apply to a letter such as this. While there is no compelling reason to doubt that it was sent by Peter, in his name and with his authority, and in accordance with his teaching, this need not mean that he composed every single word himself.

Nor needs such a position question that this book was inspired by the Spirit in its entirety. Some have suggested that the book is primarily a catechetical or liturgical document that has been formed into a letter, with a lot of fundamental teaching covering the basics for those who have just been baptised for instance. While no conclusive case has been proved on this front, it is a tantalising possibility.

One of the things that it does, for instance, is suggest that things such as household codes were standard elements of early Christian catechesis. Peter introduces himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He's once sent as an emissary of the Messiah, one who represents his master.

It's sent to elect exiles of the dispersion. These people are objects of God's choice, they're elect, even though they may be in exile. In a condition of exile it may seem that God has cut them off, but in fact they have been chosen by him, and while scattered abroad in the world, are gathered to him by his Spirit.

The language of the dispersion was often used by the Jews. Peter Davids has observed that 2-4 million Jews lived outside of Palestine, and only about a million within it. Much of the Jewish nation then was living in various parts of the Roman Empire.

In this letter Peter does not seem to be writing wholly to Jews, or even primarily to Jews. There are a number of statements about their former lives that suggest that the recipients were Gentiles. This of course is noteworthy, because the Church is taking on aspects of Israel's identity.

These Christians live in a large area of Asia Minor, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. This region was highly Hellenized, it was cultured and wealthy in its cities, and was a context with various mystery cults and traditional Greek religion in addition to the imperial cult. The early Christians, to whom Peter is writing, were living in that sort of world.

They have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of the Father. This is God's eternal purpose, choice and providence. The Church's existence, and its existence in its scattered form, is according to God's intent and providence.

It is not an accident, it is not something that we have stumbled into or grasped for ourselves. Behind all of this lies God's settled and effective purpose. We are elect in the sanctification of the Spirit, in addition to the foreknowledge of God the Father.

We have been set apart as holy, marked out by the Spirit of Christ. We are marked out for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood. We are elect for the sake of obedience, chosen to be conformed to his image and to act faithfully in his name.

We are elect in order that we might live a new form of life and live to God's glory. We are sprinkled with Christ's blood. This is the blood of a new covenant, a blood that leads to cleansing and forgiveness of sins and access to God.

If we had been paying attention we would have noticed that this is a Trinitarian opening. The foreknowledge of God the Father, the sanctification of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ. As in the rest of the New Testament, there is an implicit Trinitarian structure to the Gospel.

Peter opens up with a blessing. It is a blessing addressed to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is framed and known in the light of Jesus Christ.

If we want to get access to God it is through Christ. If we want to know who God is, we see who God is in the light of Christ. Through God's mercy we have been begotten again.

We have a radical new beginning, a new beginning that has occurred through the resurrection. This was the decisive event of new birth. Jesus became the firstborn of the dead and we enter into the new birth when we are united to Christ.

The new birth is not primarily a fact about individuals. It is a fact about a new humanity that is being formed in Christ. The new birth is an event that primarily happened to Christ and we are being joined into it.

And all of this has set us apart for a heavenly inheritance that has been preserved for us. It is protected from all sorts of corruption or destruction, from any sort of defilement. And we are preserved for it.

God guards us through faith for the full measure of the salvation that he has in store for us. A salvation that will be revealed finally on the last day. And recognising the contours of the situation that Peter has described, we can rejoice even in the midst of trials.

These trials are not without purpose. They are there to purify and strengthen our faith, preparing our faith like gold for Christ's glory. Our faith will be a cause of glory and praise to him.

Much as the testing and the proving of Job's faith brought glory to God and matured Job as a son, so the trials that we experience are preparing us for Christ's glory and for fellowship with him. We already love and rejoice in Christ with great joy, even though we have neither seen him in the past nor presently see him. In all of this we are experiencing a foretaste of a gift of God without measure that we are awaiting in the future.

We are having a reality filled promise of what is yet to come. A down payment of what we expect in the future. This salvation brought by Christ was foretold beforehand.

The Old Testament speaks of it and anticipates Christ in many different ways, sometimes through direct prophecy, sometimes through typological prefiguration, sometimes through such things as the words of the Psalms and the two different levels of reference that they can have. All of these scriptures were revealed by the Spirit of God and Peter speaks about the Spirit of Christ speaking in, through and to the prophets and the way that the prophets were trying to discover what was being foretold, seeing shadows and silhouettes thrown back by a great light that awaited in the future. They were trying to understand what was going on, what this was all about.

They maybe saw the initial fulfilments of the prophecies that they foretold but they could not see that greater fulfilment that was awaiting in the future. What they predicted was not just the glory of Christ but also his sufferings in places such as Isaiah 53 for instance or in Psalm 22. And in some way they realised that these prophecies were not ultimately for themselves.

They were awaiting some later time when their true meaning would be disclosed. And Peter says that that time has come and that the early church is experiencing that. In the message of the gospel announced to them, these secrets that the prophets had been trying to figure out have now been disclosed.

Indeed angels themselves try to figure out these things and understand what is going on. The prophets have tried to figure out these things in the past. In the revelation of the gospel, the angels are trying to figure it out, its great mysteries.

And then Peter challenges us to figure things out. We must prepare our minds for action. He speaks of girding up loins or perhaps we might think of rolling up sleeves, preparing for action and being sober minded, developing a seriousness and determination in the way that we approach these things.

The same energy that the prophets devoted to figuring out these things and the angels devote to these issues, we should devote. We should think through these things, try to understand them, try to figure out what it means for us and as a result to set our hope fully on the grace that we are awaiting at the future revelation of Jesus Christ. Charles Cranfield describes verses 14 to 23 as describing the warp and the woof of Christian life.

The warp, the threads that run lengthwise and the woof, the threads that run across. The warp is the nature of the Christian life and the woof is its motives. The warp is obedience to God, holiness, the fear of God and the love of the brethren.

And the woof is God's holiness and our belonging to him and the fact that we relate to the judge of all as Father. We have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and

we have been begotten again by the word of God. He begins by calling us to be obedient children.

We're not to be conformed to the passions of our former ignorance. Obedience involves struggling against our lusts and our passions, the things that once characterized our state. A state that is itself described in terms of ignorance and lack of knowledge.

The same ignorance that we should be fighting against as we gird up the loins of our mind and struggle to learn and understand more about God's truth. Peter takes up an expression that is almost a refrain in the book of Leviticus. Be holy as I am holy.

We are children of God and we must seek to conform ourselves to the character of our Father. If we call upon God as Father, he is the impartial judge of all. And we must have an appropriate sense of fear in calling such a one our Father.

We should not be presumptuous. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Peter wants us to have a sense of the weightiness of what it is to approach God and the grace, the sheer measure of the grace that we have received.

When we approach God, we are approaching the impartial judge. We are approaching the one who is a consuming fire. And we must have an appropriate sense of how we stand before such a God.

We must also consider the cost of our redemption. We were delivered at incalculable cost. Christ is our Passover lamb.

He was the one who was sacrificed for us. God did not redeem us at the cost of silver and gold, even vast quantities of silver and gold, but with the precious blood of his own Son. No price could be greater than that.

This advent and gift of Christ was foreknown before the foundation of the world. This was always God's purpose and intention. And in his providence it came to pass.

Our redemption finds its origin in God's purpose before the dawn of time. And now, in the last times, he has made this manifest for our sake. It is out of this purpose that we are believers in God.

A question to consider. What could the Old Testament prophets have known about Christ ahead of time? What do you think they would have expected? There is a strong theme of Christian initiation throughout the passage that begins at the end of 1 Peter chapter 1. A few commentators have gone so far as to claim that this is a baptismal liturgy and that the baptism occurs between verses 21 and 22 of chapter 1. This is highly speculative and I think unlikely, but Peter does exhibit a peculiar attention to the beginnings of Christian life. He starts off by speaking about coming to Christ in an obedient response to the summons of the gospel.

This leads to purification of the soul. It leads into the life of a new family where brotherly love should be the manner of our behaviour. Our hearts have been purified so that we might love each other.

There is likely here an allusion to the process of Christian initiation. We receive the gospel, we confess the faith, we are baptised into Christ's body where we are united with our brothers and sisters in Christ. And Peter is calling his hearers to live out this new life that they have been brought into to the full.

And the focus on loving our brothers and sisters is really pronounced. This love must be sincere, it must be unfeigned, it must be true, and it must be earnest, a deep and a fervent love for other people in Christ. The process being described is our being born again, we're rising to a new life, and the word of God is the means by which this happens.

This word is an incorruptible or imperishable seed. It endures, it won't perish or die. It is this word by which we were called, it is this word that gave us new spiritual life, it is this word with which we were sealed in baptism, it is this word that we grow in and from.

And to underline the point, Peter quotes from Isaiah chapter 40 verses 6 and 8. This is a powerful passage about the good news of God's reign. In verses 1 to 9 we read, A voice cries, In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low.

The uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. A voice says, Cry. And I said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows on it. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion. Herald of good news, lift up your voice with strength. O Jerusalem, herald of good news, lift it up, fear not.

Say to the cities of Judah, Behold your God. As with the rest of the New Testament authors, when Peter quotes from the Old Testament, he typically wants us to think about the surrounding context of the quote, and here that context is the context of the Gospel message itself, God's salvation coming, God being established as King, His righteousness being worked out in history, and the powerful word by which this prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled is the means by which they have been brought into the body of Christ. This is the word that is at work in them.

Coming to Christ and the truth entails putting away all these other things that are against the truth, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. There must be a purging, a putting off, a clearing out of all those things that are contrary to Christ. As we take Christ on, as we clothe ourselves with Christ, all other things that are contrary to Him must be removed, and in the place of this deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander, we must cultivate a hunger for the purity of the truth of Christ.

Peter compares it to newborn infants desiring milk from their mothers, and it seems here that he is addressing this to infants in the faith. These are people who have just been born again, just been baptized, they've tasted something of the great goodness of God, they've been brought into the body of Christ, and now they are being encouraged to grow up into salvation through constantly feeding on the truth. Growing up into salvation means that this is an ongoing matter of life.

The moment of being born again is not the finish line, it's the starting line, it's the place where our new life in Christ begins, and we grow and we develop and we persevere in this life to enter into the full possession of the salvation that God has prepared for us. He appeals to the fact that they already have some taste of the goodness of God, and that taste should give them an appetite for more. If you know that God is good, then seek more and more goodness from him.

He won't disappoint you. Becoming a Christian involves coming to Christ, the living stone rejected by men but chosen by God. But this is necessarily something that makes us part of a body too.

We are being built up into a spiritual house and a holy priesthood. In Ephesians chapter 2 verses 19 to 22, Paul speaks about this. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Peter himself would have known something about this, this coming to Christ as a living stone, as living stones ourselves. His own name Peter was given to him by Christ, speaking about the fact that he was a stone or a rock. And in that context of Matthew chapter 16 verse 18, Christ spoke about building his church, an image that mixes together a community, an assembly of people and a building.

It seems very appropriate that Peter brings together those two images here. Christ described himself in John chapter 2 as the temple and we are described in him as temples of the living God, each one of us individually and also all of us corporately. The purpose of the church is to be this spiritual body, this living temple.

We might think about the events of the day of Pentecost, where like the lampstand of

the temple or the tabernacle, the disciples are lit with the living flame of the Spirit. The Spirit descends into their midst as the Spirit descended upon the tabernacle in Exodus chapter 40 or upon Solomon's temple in 1st Kings chapter 8. We are a new temple, we are a new building of God that is being established, formed by people and the chief purpose of the church is to offer spiritual sacrifices. The temple was there as a means of sacrifice, as was the tabernacle, but now the sacrifices are performed by persons.

The true purpose of sacrifice was always spiritual sacrifice, the offering up of the human spirit in prayer and in worship and in self-dedication. The New Testament speaks about this in a number of different places. We offer the fruit of our lips in worship, we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to God, we are washed as sacrifices in baptism, our bodies presented to him for his service, our limbs and our organs like those limbs and organs of the sacrifices of the animals that were separated and placed upon the altar, our limbs and organs are presented to God for his worship and his service.

Our resources are another form of sacrifice, our praise and our prayers are also forms of sacrifice. The primary purpose of the church, as we see in these verses, is a Godward one. Some people have said that the church primarily exists for the sake of outsiders, as if its primary purpose was mission and evangelism.

That is not the case. The primary purpose of the church is the purpose of a temple. We are to offer spiritual sacrifices to God, our purpose primarily is a Godward one, and these sacrifices are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

He is the one who has provided a living way through his sacrifice. All of our sacrifices are a participation and on the basis of his sacrifice. Without the way and the acceptance that he has won for us with God, we could never approach.

Peter goes on to develop his position from Old Testament quotes, developing and exploring the meaning of the term stone. Jesus did something similar to this in Matthew chapter 21 verses 42 to 44. Jesus said to them, Have you not read in the scriptures, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone? This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits, and the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him. Here Peter quotes from Isaiah chapter 28 verse 16, Psalm 118 verse 22, and Isaiah chapter 8 verse 14, all of which helped to develop his point about Christ as the cornerstone. God is building a new temple in Zion, the mount of his habitation.

He has placed this special dress stone, this particular stone of great beauty and value, and it is the cornerstone of this grand new edifice. Everything else is going to be built around and according to this stone, and for those who believe, they will not be put to



shame. They will not be condemned, but will be vindicated on the day of testing.

However, for those who reject, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Their whole building project has been rejected. The stone, or in the parable of the wicked vinedressers, the sun that they have rejected will become the one that everything else is built around.

What's more, that stone will become a cause of stumbling, a rock of offense. The stone is a cause of division. For some it leads to their glorification and building up, and for many others it leads to their destruction.

The dividing factor once again is the word. Their disobedience of the word is something that they were destined to do, and God's placing of this stone in Zion is on the one hand a means of judgment upon those who reject, and on the other hand a means of blessing to those who accept. People's destinies will be determined according to how they respond to this stone.

There is a contrast drawn now between those who disbelieve and those who accept Christ. Here Peter draws once again upon Old Testament scripture, Exodus chapter 19 verses 5 to 6, in the context of Sinai where God calls his people to the mountain and tells them what he will do with them. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

And then in Isaiah chapter 43 verses 20 to 21, These sorts of statements were used of Israel in the Old Testament, and here the language that was applied to Israel in the Old Testament is applied to the people in the church, Jews and Gentiles alike. Not only is the church a new temple, the church is a royal priesthood, it's a holy nation, it's a people of God's special possession, God's name is placed upon us, and we have a priestly purpose but also a heralding purpose. We proclaim the excellencies of God to the wider world, while our primary purpose is to offer spiritual sacrifices, we are also to be a light on the hill, to be those who bring light to the surrounding world.

We have been called out of darkness into God's marvellous light for this purpose. Once we were not a people, but now we are God's people. Once we had not received mercy, but now we have received mercy.

And here he is referring to Hosea chapter 1 to 2. There the prophet spoke about disowned people that God was receiving back, and here Peter speaks not only about Jews who are forgiven, but about Gentiles who were never a people at all, who were brought into the body of Christ and in him become a new people. The language here might also make us think about creation, called from darkness into light. Once not a people, but now a people, God has created something out of nothing, God has brought light into the darkness.

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. A question to consider, how in our presentations of the gospel could we speak about the church in a way that gives it the same centrality and importance to the message of the faith as Peter gives it here? From the second half of 1 Peter chapter 2, Peter presents his hearers, seemingly new or young converts, with a pattern of behaviour that should mark them out from those around them. He begins with a more general statement.

In the very early Christian letter, the Epistle to Diognetus, you also see something of this understanding. In a passage that is very heavily informed by 1 Peter chapter 2. They are charged to abstain from passions of the flesh, because these things wage war against the soul. They are living in hostile territory, and the flesh that is being referred to here is more like Adamic humanity in its fallen and weak condition.

Our souls, by contrast, are our own selves, which are compromised and threatened and challenged by the passions of the flesh. We are in constant warfare, and Christians will face constant accusations, false accusations. Christians should live lives of exemplary godliness, lives beyond slander.

The hope is that such conduct will lead Gentiles to glorify God on the day of visitation. Gentiles is an interesting word to use here. It is applied to those outside of the church.

The church is contrasted with the nations in the way that Israel formerly was. Israel set against the Gentiles is now the church set against the Gentiles. In the verses that follow, Peter will particularise this message to people in particular relationships and callings.

The beginning of verse 13, be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, could be read as a heading for what follows. As in Ephesians chapter 5 verse 21, being subject or submitting ourselves to others is fundamental to Christian behaviour in the world, in every single context. Peter's approach is very similar to Paul's.

We must place others before ourselves and behave with meekness towards all. Ultimately this is for the Lord's sake and in obedience to him. This is applied first of all to the emperor, which is presumably Nero at this time, and to governors and other rulers.

These have been given the task of punishing evil and praising those who do good. This is similar to what Paul says in Romans chapter 13 verses 1 to 4. Rulers in both Paul's teaching and in Peter's are spoken of as servants of Christ and they must be treated in such a manner. They may be unfaithful servants of Christ but they are servants nonetheless.

This both underwrites their authority and also demystifies their authority. The ruler or the king or the emperor is not ultimately over all. He is not divine.

He is a servant of God. That's all he is. He is not someone who can place himself over God.

The ruler has been given the task of punishing those who do evil and praising those who do good. This is fundamentally a task of judgment, a task of establishing a moral order within the land. Christians must live meekly as exemplary citizens, silencing any slanderers.

As people in a democratic society our relationship with government is of course different in some respects from that which would have existed in Peter's day, but the fundamental note of subjection must be retained. In part this approach to subjection is informed by the fact that we are citizens of another country. The lands that we currently inhabit are not our final home and as a result we should not be overly preoccupied with our political rights or the honour of our nations but should be far more concerned with the place where our citizenship is from and where our treasure is, in heaven with Christ.

Part of what Christian freedom entails is the fact that the governors and rulers and other people over us in this age are not the final horizon. We can look beyond them to God to whom our submission ultimately is given. Freedom then must be rightly understood.

It must not be a cover-up for evil or rebellion. We have a general duty of honour to others. Christian faith is a faith that accords dignity to all.

The radical nature of this in societies where people are often denied all dignity or others are granted dignity at the expense of their neighbours should really not be missed. While we can often focus upon the unequal distribution of wealth, the deeper inequity can often be the distribution of dignity. Many people in our societies feel despised by their neighbours.

Many feel ignored, unseen or denigrated. Much life is lived as a vaunting of ourselves over others, an attempt to gain the upper hand, to gain dignity at other people's expense. The two words honour everyone could not be more radical in such a context.

In addition to this more general duty of honour, there is a particular duty of love to our brothers and sisters in Christ. This love is one that must engage both the actions and the affections. It should also be the distinguishing mark of the people of God.

See how they love one another. The supreme duty of fear of God comes above everything and before everything else. And this is the third charge that he gives in this verse.

The emperor is the final one. He must be honoured. The way that we speak of him, the way that we live under his rule, all of these things must be characterised by respect of the office and of the one who is within it.

Yet the honouring of the emperor is not the same thing as the fear of God. The fear of God comes first. The emperor is not God and cannot take his place.

Peter does not address masters but speaks to servants and particularly servants in households. The servant must submit to his master. Peter doesn't deal with the injustice of the institution of slavery but rather speaks of the way that someone in the position of a servant must act.

The institution isn't simply invalidated. However, it is noteworthy that Peter chiefly deals with it within a frame of injustice. He focuses not upon masters in general but upon cruel and unjust masters in particular.

The submission of the servant is not contingent upon the goodness of their masters. This is biblical teaching more generally. When we think about submission, many people want to have escape clauses, whether it's to government or wives to husbands or servants to masters.

Many people are most concerned that there should be exception clauses and these will be foregrounded over the duty of submission that really should take first place. It is important to recognise that such statements are not justification of the institution of slavery more generally, nor are they supposed to be turned around as if they granted the master a divine claim over the servant. The servant's subjection is on account of Christ, not on account of his master.

The servant is called to identify with the way of Christ himself who suffered injustice righteously and not on account of any sin on his part. There is no honour in suffering for sinful behaviour. Indeed, suffering for righteousness sake is suffering to which all Christians have been called.

It is a matter of walking in the footsteps of Christ and being joined with him in his suffering. He has given us the example and we must follow after him. Peter speaks of the sufferings of Christ in a way that presents them as the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah, weaving allusions to Isaiah chapter 53 in with descriptions of Christ's behaviour in his trials and on the cross.

Verses 3-5 and 7 of Isaiah chapter 53 read, He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities.

Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth, like a lamb that has led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. Peter concludes the chapter by returning to verse 6 of Isaiah chapter 53, All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned, every one to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

And he connects this to the redemption that they have received. You have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. Moving into chapter 3, he calls wives to be subject to their own husbands.

Likewise, not just like the slave should be subject to his master, but also like men have to be subject to rulers and governments. Submission isn't something exclusive to wives, rather it is the general pattern of Christian behaviour that must be refracted into the particularities of their specific vocation. There is reason for concern when this is forgotten.

When the submission of wives becomes something just by itself, rather than the manner of Christian behaviour in which we all put others before ourselves and we submit to those over us, the biblical teaching can be twisted into one of male dominance, rather than one of the way of Christ who took on the form of the servant. Once again, the subjection here is ultimately for the Lord's sake. The woman's true master is Christ, not her husband.

Just as we must submit to the ruling authorities, less as the great lords over us, but more as the servants of Christ, so the wife must submit to her husband as a fellow servant of Christ with a particular calling relative to her. As the true master is Christ, not the husband, the husband is not given a right of mastery over his wife. The more general command of meek faithfulness and exemplary behaviour is now applied to the wife.

Early churches were predominantly female in their membership, and slaves were very highly represented too. Many women would have had pagan husbands, and this would be a situation that the early church would often have to address. We should also be clear that marriage for many would have been very cruel.

The point of Peter's teaching here is not that mistreated slaves and abused wives should have no recourse, rather he is presenting them with a pattern for Christian conduct in a society where there often was no such recourse. Their conduct must be respectful and pure, it must be driven by the fear of God. And the danger for women would be to overvalue outward adornment, broadcasting wealth and status and physical appearance.

The true adornment, however, is that of Christian graces, graces that are unassuming, meek and modest. This is not going to win human attention so much, but God sees it. It is not a pursuit of human praise and honour and advancement over others.

Dress, adornment and cosmetics can so often be driven by a preoccupation with advancement or preference over others, and must, like everything else, be subject to the Christian disciplines of modesty, meekness and concern for others over ourselves. Paul makes similar points in 1 Timothy 2 verses 9-10. Women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness, with

good works.

Neither of these passages are condemning attractive dress or appearance, but they do challenge attitudes that typically drive people's pursuit of these things, something that Peter, like Paul, presents as a temptation for women especially. For those women who might be worried that they will not be seen if they follow Peter's instruction, Peter wants them to be aware of their immense value in the sight of God. God sees and truly values what others might not have the eyes to see or to value.

This is the pattern of behaviour of the holy women of old, the great heroines of the faith. They didn't trumpet their presence, but God saw the remarkable character of their quiet and unassuming graces, and he wants his people to do the same. These heroines of the faith, their submission to their husbands is especially singled out as the context where their graces are most seen and where they flourished.

Their submission to their husbands was driven by hope in God. It takes a lot not to seek to push oneself forward or to assume charge, but the people of God, men and women, are those who are prepared to live in situations of dependence, of lack of power and control, and to put the interests of others before themselves. This is what it meant for Abraham to dwell as a stranger in the promised land, for Moses to lead the Israelites out into the wilderness, or for David not to strike out at Saul.

Such a way of living demands a fierce and determined dependence upon and hope in God. Sarah, the mother of the faithful, is the great example here. Sarah spoke of Abraham with great respect and honoured him, and she courageously entered situations that were dangerous on his account, following his lead as God had called him.

Sarah wasn't a weak and spinelessly compliant woman. It took immense courage for her to follow Abraham and his calling, especially as she generally didn't enjoy the same agency within it as he did. She is defined by a determination to do good and by fearlessness, and her daughters must be also.

Their situations might be complicated by unfaithful husbands. They might need to be submissive to pagan husbands, even while courageously resisting their intimidation and their attempts to prevent them from following Christ. Submission, as Peter presents it, is not a fearful capitulation to intimidation or passive compliance with lordship.

Quite the opposite. It is courageous and active. In verse 7 he moves on to husbands.

Once again we see the word likewise introducing the command to husbands. In verses 13 and 17 we see a connection between being subject and honouring. These things look different from relationship to relationship.

Husbands and wives are not in a symmetrical relationship at all, but the duty of honouring others and placing them before ourselves is refracted within each of these

contexts and relationships. Husbands are called to live with their wives in an understanding way. They're called to live with them, to share the realities of life together.

They are called to live with understanding. This might be read as a reference to the knowledge of Christ and his truth, but I think it's more likely a reference to sympathetic understanding and attention to their wives. They are to be loving and considerate.

This requires developing the arts of listening and noticing, of observing those things that will enable their wives to flourish. And they must show honour to the woman as the weaker vessel. Women are weaker than men in various ways, most immediately in physical strength, but also in certain other respects such as power in wider society and vulnerability to various forms of mistreatment.

The husband's response to this ought not to be a cruel dominance over her, but a greater regard for and honouring of her. That the response to relative weakness should be greater honour was exceedingly counter-cultural in Peter's day and remains so in many ways in our own. The husband must show respect for his wife and ensure that others do too.

He must protect her from harm and put her interests ahead of his own in the exercise of his strength. The wife is a joint heir with her husband of the grace of eternal life. They are both equal in dignity.

They are servants of Christ together, and they must treat each other accordingly. Husbands must show great concern for the health of their marriages and their relationship with their wives. If they do not, their spiritual life might be greatly harmed.

Our relationship with God is not hermetically sealed from our relationship with our neighbour, and our closest neighbour is our spouse. If we are not at peace and in right relationship with our neighbour, and most particularly with our spouse, we may find that our prayers are not being answered. A question to consider.

What are some broader ethical patterns that can be seen in Peter's teaching concerning Christian conduct in wider society and in the context of the household? 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 8 to 12 concludes the section of instructions that began in chapter 2 verse 11. It presents six characteristics of faithful Christians. Unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, tender hearts, humble minds, and blessing rather than reviling.

Unity of mind is a common theme within the New Testament. If we have the mind of Christ, we will be united, and we won't be constantly at odds with each other. We are called to have sympathy or compassion, entering into other people's joys and sorrows, weeping with those who weep, and rejoicing with those who rejoice.

We must have love for brothers and sisters in Christ. Throughout the New Testament,

this is one of the defining characteristics of the people of Christ. We must have hearts that are tender, kind, open to being moved.

Our hearts must not be closed to people, they must not be calloused. Christians must have humble minds, meekness, concern for others before ourselves, not thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought, a sense of the greatness of God and the needs of our neighbours, and a sense of how small we are in the light of God's greatness. This should inform all of our thinking.

In the activity of our minds, we can often be puffed up and proud, but yet true wisdom is found in the fear of the Lord. It begins with this posture of humility, and it never ceases to be characterised by this. We must have a posture of blessing towards others.

We've been called to obtain a blessing, and as Christians we participate in the giving of what we receive in the Gospel. We are forgiven, so we forgive. We have been blessed, so we bless.

We have been given the Spirit as the people of God, so we minister the Spirit to others. And to solidify this point, he quotes at length from Psalm 34. As Charles Cranfield notes, Peter has rephrased the quotation to accent its reference to the age to come.

The life that the psalmist, as quoted by Peter, desires to love is not so much the life of the present day, but the life to come. And blessedness, which we await from the Lord, comes to those who follow the instructions of the psalmist. And verse 13 continues the thought of the quotation from Psalm 34.

It could be translated, And who is he who will be doing you evil? This follows on from verse 12, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. If we are zealous for what is good, and wholehearted in our pursuit of it, no evil can ultimately harm us, no matter how fiercely it might assail us. This is similar to Paul's point that he makes in Romans chapter 8, verses 31 to 39.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all? How will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies, who is to condemn. Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are being killed all the day long, we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to



separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Indeed, in addition to the fact that no suffering will ultimately harm us, we are promised that if we suffer for righteousness sake, we will be blessed.

Here he takes up the point of Jesus in Matthew 5, verses 10-12 at the end of the Beatitudes. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you, and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. He charges his hearers, Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy.

This is taken from Isaiah chapter 8, verses 11-13. For the Lord spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying, Do not call conspiracy all that this people call conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, him you shall honour as holy.

Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. These are the verses that immediately precede those concerning the stumbling stone, which he has already alluded to in the preceding chapter. We should also note that Christ the Lord fills the place where the Lord of hosts was in the original quotation.

Such uses of Old Testament texts in the New Testament is an important line of evidence for the deity of Christ. The New Testament authors were prepared to take Old Testament scriptures that were clearly about God himself, and use them to refer to Christ. Christians are charged to give an answer for their hope.

Maybe this is an actual trial in the case of persecutions, or just when we are questioned by our neighbours and others around us. We must think diligently so as to be able to answer such questions well when we are put on the spot. And we must do so with gentleness and respect.

These themes have been central throughout. These are characteristic of the way that Christians relate to their neighbours. We also act with a good conscience.

We maintain blameless and exemplary lives. We are transparent in our godliness. We aren't driven by fear, resentment, or anger, as Cranfield argues, but by integrity.

Over time this can put false accusers to shame. Once again, as he did when he spoke to slaves about their suffering, he speaks of the goodness of suffering for doing good. As he says in chapter 2 verses 19-20, For this is a gracious thing, when mindful of God one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

For what credit is it, if when you sin and are beaten for it you endure? But if when you do

good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. And from here, as he did previously, he moves into the example of Christ's sufferings of the righteous one suffering unjustly. Christ's suffering should be our model.

The suffering of Christ, however, is redemptive. It brings us to God. It opens up a new and living way and removes the obstacle of sin.

Christ was put to death in the flesh. He took the Adamic weak flesh that was under judgment and bore the judgment that lay upon it. But he was made alive in the spirit in the resurrection.

Peter's distinction between flesh and spirit is much the same as Paul's is. The verses that follow are some of the most debated in the whole of Peter's writings. Who are the spirits in prison? What does it mean that Christ proclaims to them? Various theories have been put forth.

Some talk about people being in spiritual bondage. Others have seen here the doctrine of Christ's descent into hell. Others still have seen a reference back to Genesis chapter 6 and the angelic sons of God who took human women and had relations with them.

This story was narrated in more detail in the apocalyptic intertestamental text, the book of Enoch. It seems to me that this event is also referred to in 2 Peter 2 verses 4-5. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment, if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserve Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.

And then also in Jude verse 6, and the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day. Considering that the spirits are associated with the time of the building of the ark, considering the use of the term spirits, and considering references to this narrative elsewhere in the New Testament and particularly within the writing of Peter, it seems most likely to me that this is a reference back to Genesis chapter 6 and the stories surrounding it. What then does it mean that Christ preached the spirits in prison, and when does that take place? Their disobedience took place in the days of Noah, but it seems to me that Christ preaching to them occurred in the spirit during the period between his death and his resurrection, or perhaps some might argue after his resurrection and ascension.

The preaching in question is Christ's declaration of his victory over them. It is not a preaching that can lead to salvation. It is rather a preaching that seals their defeat.

Reading passages like this in Revelation chapter 12 verses 7 to 12, we should remember the cosmic dimensions of the work of Christ. Christ is defeating the rebellious angels and

he's reordering the heavenly realms. During the time of the rebellion of these angels, prior to the flood, God's patience waited and the ark was prepared, but only a few, a remnant of eight people, were brought safely through the waters.

Peter makes a remarkable comparison of this with baptism. Just as Noah and his family were delivered through the waters of the flood, so Christians are delivered through the waters of baptism. The waters of the flood drowned the old world and the enemies of the people of God, and the waters of baptism symbolically drowned the old world and all the devils that pursue us.

It is an exceedingly strong claim to say that baptism saves us. What might Peter mean? Some have tried to empty this statement of its force, but while Peter is concerned to say how baptism saves us, he does not make the statement only to empty it. For Peter, it seems, the rite of baptism is truly saving.

He makes clear what he does not mean by this. It does not save as a removal of dirt from the body. It's not just a physical rite that works in a magical way, as if you could wash your flesh in the waters of baptism and instantly be saved.

That is not how baptism works. Baptism's efficacy does not reside in mere water. Rather, baptism saves as the answer of a good conscience towards God, and its efficacy comes through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The efficacy of baptism is like the efficacy of a wedding ceremony for a loving union between a man and his wife, while the baptism of a wedding ceremony can create a formal relationship. The true efficacy of such ceremonies depends upon a wholehearted self-rendering over time, as we faithfully live out the meaning of what we have been committed to in the ceremony itself. In the case of baptism, we are baptised into Christ, we are baptised into his death, buried with him, in order that we might be raised with him on the last day.

That event of burial with Christ in baptism is a marking out of our bodies for that future event of resurrection. Baptism suspends us between the event in the past, the death of Christ, and the event in the future, the resurrection of our bodies that we anticipate. And the efficacy of baptism is the efficacy of resurrection itself.

That's where baptism gets its power, from the future in which it will be confirmed by God raising us from the dead. This Jesus Christ who was raised from the dead has gone into heaven. He has triumphed and been exalted over all angels, authorities, and powers which are now subject to him.

He will reign until all things have been put under his feet, as Psalm 110 verse 1 declares. Recognising the pattern of Christ and his sufferings, we must take the same course. Peter describes in generic terms the way that the person who follows Christ's example

will behave.

There is a watershed point in their lives between before and afterwards. In the before time, they had all the time that they wanted for living as the Gentiles do, for sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. All of these practices that brought no profit, and the people who continue to practice these things, are surprised when Christians don't join them in them.

Yet these behaviours are a sort of flood of debauchery that they are being drowned under. And though they speak ill of Christians, their judgment is near at hand. They will have to give an account to the one who will judge the living and the dead.

Verse 6 is another difficult verse to understand, for this is why the Gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does. Is this a reference back to the spirits in prison that were mentioned previously? I don't believe that it is. Rather I think it relates to the preceding verse.

Christ is going to judge the living and the dead, and the Gospel has been preached even to those who have died, even though they have suffered the consequences of death in the flesh the way that people more generally do, they might live in the spirit the way that God does, and they will be raised on the last day. Concerns about the death of Christians seem to have been common within the early church, as it wasn't entirely clear to some how those who died prior to the second coming of Christ would participate in his resurrection. Here, as Paul does in chapter 4 of 1 Thessalonians, Peter wants to assure his hearers that those who have died in Christ, who have heard the Gospel and responded to it, will also live in the spirit with them.

They will also be raised up. A question to consider, Peter here uses the story of the flood as an example of the salvation that Christians have received. The story of Noah and the ark and the flood more generally is referred to on a number of occasions in the New Testament as a paradigmatic example of judgment.

What are some of the other occasions when it is used as an example, and what lessons can we learn from it for understanding the judgment of God? In the second half of 1 Peter chapter 4 we see the way that life must be lived in the shadow of the day of the Lord to come. The end of all things is at hand. The last times are introduced by the death and the resurrection of Christ, and Peter is here writing just a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem, which would radically transform the world.

The nearness of the day of the Lord is a common theme throughout the New Testament writings. James chapter 5 verse 8, Romans chapter 13 verses 11 to 12, 1 John chapter 2 verse 18, Revelation chapter 22 verse 12, Philippians chapter 4 verse 5, Almost two thousand years later, what are we to make of this sense of the imminence of the day of

the Lord? It may be of some help to draw a distinction between a theology of eschatological imminence and a chronology of eschatological imminence. The New Testament has some sense of chronological imminence.

The day of the Lord is near at hand because the destruction of Jerusalem is near at hand, and the destruction of Jerusalem is the initiation of many of the last day processes. However, a theology of eschatological imminence is something more. It's a recognition of the penultimacy of the present age.

The fact that the reality of the last things is already being worked out in our midst, and the present age is transitory and passing away. The judgment that we await in the future is already in the process of arriving, and the destruction of Jerusalem would be a key inauguration event of the last day judgment. The future that we await at the end is already incipiently operative in the present.

We're already seeing its effects. Christian theologians have talked about the already not yet pattern of the New Testament. We already have a reality-filled promise and down payment of what awaits us at the end.

In Christ, the future has already arrived, it just has not yet been widely or evenly distributed. In the life of the body of Christ, we are participating in the powers of the age to come. As we experience the work of the Spirit in our midst, we are having an anticipatory foretaste of the future and the present.

And recognizing all of this, we must be sober, alert, we must stay awake and be vigilant. This is a common message in the New Testament, perhaps most notably in Jesus' Olivet Discourse. In 1 Thessalonians 5 we read, But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.

For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. We must keep our wits about us, be alert, we must recognize the transitory character of our current activities, and not be overly invested in this present age.

It is passing away, and this sobriety is in part for the purpose of prayer. We must watch and pray as Jesus encouraged his disciples, bracing ourselves for the coming of the time of testing. We must keep ourselves prepared for prayer.

This involves keeping short accounts with God and being at peace with our neighbors, knowing how essential they can be. We do not want anything to hinder our prayers. We are marked out as children of God by our love, and a commitment to each other will be

immensely important when the times of testing come.

Love covers a multitude of sins. A similar statement is found in James chapter 5, verses 19 to 20. My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Love is needed for solidarity and mutual support, especially in persecution. Love forgives. It is that that enables us to cover those sins that have been committed against us, and to enable relationships to be healed and restored.

Peter charges his hearers to show hospitality. Hospitality would have been very important for the early church as people were traveling from place to place. The importance of hospitality is also seen in Jesus' teaching concerning the sheep and the goats.

The sheep are recognized in part by the hospitality that they show to the unknown strangers, who are the brothers of Christ. Likewise, when Jesus sends his disciples through the towns and the cities of Israel, the places where they go are faced with a test of hospitality. How will they receive the messengers that have been sent to them? And Peter wants the people to whom he is writing to show that pattern of hospitality to each other without grumbling.

He talks about the exercise of spiritual gifts, and his teaching here is similar to that which we find in Paul in Romans chapter 12 and 1 Corinthians chapter 12. The very grace of God that he talks about here is similar to the one gift of the Spirit that is manifested in numerous different gifts of the God's grace has a beautiful diversity and variety to it. It accentuates difference, but in a beautiful unity.

The distinctiveness of each is discovered in the mutuality of all. In Romans chapter 12 verses 4 to 6, In 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 7, He gives two examples, speaking and serving. The speaker must speak as one bearing the oracles of God, as one who's handling the word of God.

This is not just human speech, it is speech that has weight and must be delivered as such. The other example he gives is that of service, practical service that must be ministered in the strength that the Lord supplies. And all of this is for the purpose of God's glory in Christ.

And he ends this section with a doxology. They will be able to see the purpose of this, testing and proving them so that they might share in Christ's glory, going through the sort of suffering that he underwent in order to enter into the glory that he has entered. And this leads to a different approach to sufferings.

Sufferings are no longer the worst thing that can befall us. In fact, we can find much

cause for rejoicing in them. We are blessed if we are insulted for the name of Christ.

This is a sign that the spirit of glory and of God rests upon us. We've been marked out by his name and in the eyes of those around us, we are identified with him. This is teaching that is found on various occasions within the New Testament.

Philippians chapter 1 verse 29, for it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake. Matthew chapter 5 verses 11 to 12, blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven.

For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Acts chapter 5 verse 41, then they left the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. For the third time in the letter, he distinguishes suffering for that which is good and for the name of Christ from suffering for wrongdoing.

And he gives a the different ways in which people could suffer for wrongdoing, as a murderer, as a thief, as an evildoer, presumably comprehending the various ways, for instance, someone might be seen as a lawbreaker or as a meddler. Various other translations have been suggested for the word translated meddler, but meddler does seem to be the right interpretation here. Why might it be mentioned? One of the important themes of Peter's letter to this point is the way that Christians should live among the Gentiles as aliens and strangers, and as those who live respectable and quiet lives.

As such, Christians should mostly be those who keep themselves to themselves. While they witness to others, they will not meddle in others affairs or make a nuisance of themselves. They live peaceably with those around them and quietly with relationship to wider society.

If they suffer as a Christian, they should not be ashamed. They should glorify God in that name. Suffering as a Christian, it suggests that that term had a particular sting to it.

It was a term that was used by outsiders of believers. The earliest Christian movement did not call itself Christianity. It called itself the way and other such things.

The term Christian was first used of believers in the city of Antioch in Acts chapter 11 verse 26. The term is also used by King Gripper in chapter 26 verse 28 of Acts. It seems to be a term that's meant to shame, but there is no shame in being associated with Christ and his name.

Rather, that name ought to be born with pride. When judgment comes, it begins at the household of God. It's a dangerous place to be near to God.

If you are near to God, you more immediately face judgment. However, within the household of God, you are prepared for judgment. Every single time we come before God, for instance, we're having a sort of rehearsal of the final judgment that we await.

However, those who have rejected the gospel, who are outside, do not have such preparation and will face far more severe consequences. He quotes Proverbs chapter 11 verse 31. If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner? In light of all of this, we should entrust our lives to our faithful creator while we seek to do good.

We will suffer, but we will be suffering according to his will, the will of our loving father who created and saved us. A question to consider. Throughout the New Testament, the one thing that Christians are taught to expect in this life is suffering.

Yet suffering is almost always framed by the purpose and loving will of God and by the fact of Christ's return in judgment. We see the reality of what our sufferings here and now are in the light of the transitory and passing character of this present age. What practices could we develop in our personal lives to make us more prepared for suffering when it comes? First Peter chapter 5 concludes the epistle with some parting instructions and greetings.

He turns to address the elders at the beginning and his reason for doing so seems to follow from what he has just been talking about. They are facing a fiery trial so they will need oversight. Faithful elders will be especially important at this time.

Elders here are probably referring to people with a more formal role, but it should not be detached from its more informal sense. When we talk about elders we can often think about a formal office or function in some degree of detachment from its more generational sense. Yet the fact that elders are older is not unimportant.

Certain things can only be known through experience and as we live through the patterns of life we experience those times of sowing and reaping the harvest of our past actions and commitments and we experience the various seasons of life. Those who are older have gone through these seasons of life and can put their wisdom at the disposal of those who are younger. Peter speaks of himself as a fellow elder.

He doesn't appeal to his apostolic authority but presents himself alongside them as one who has the same sort of commitment of oversight. He is also a witness of the sufferings of Christ from a unique vantage point. As Peter looked back upon the sufferings of Christ no doubt he also recalled his denial, those memories being inseparably bound up together.

He is also a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed. He has a foretaste of Christ's glory in the transfiguration and he also has this experience that all Christians



have of the spirit that gives us a down payment and guarantee of what we will receive on the last day. Elders are called to shepherd the flock of God among them.

The notion of the people of God as a flock and their leaders as shepherds is one that we find throughout the scriptures. The patriarchs were keepers of sheep. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph introduces his brothers in Egypt as shepherds.

Moses who once shepherded sheep in the wilderness shepherds Israel out of Egypt leading them with a shepherd's rod. The young David is called from the flock to shepherd God's people Israel. Later in places like Micah chapter 5 the Messiah is described as a shepherd.

Christ in John chapter 10 speaks of himself as the good shepherd, the one who lays down his life for the sheep. When we think about shepherds we can often have this image of bucolic mountainsides, perhaps the countryside of the English Lake District and this very peaceful and serene scene. Yet shepherding as it is described in scripture is a far tougher profession.

Shepherds had to lead their flock through the wilderness. They had to protect them from bandits and thieves. They had to protect them from wild beasts.

David killed the bear and the lion. Jesus talks about laying down his life for the sheep. The shepherd in Israel had to tend for sheep in hostile and unforgiving terrain to locate good pasture in an often dry land.

The faithful minister is an under shepherd of the chief shepherd responsible to him for his flock. In John chapter 21 verses 15 to 17 Jesus had given this charge to Peter himself. When they had finished breakfast Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon son of John do you love me more than these? He said to him, yes Lord you know that I love you.

He said to him, feed my lambs. He said to him a second time, Simon son of John do you love me? He said to him, yes Lord you know that I love you. He said to him, tend my sheep.

He said to him the third time, Simon son of John do you love me? Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, do you love me? And he said to him, Lord you know everything, you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, feed my sheep. Under shepherds are dependent upon and responsible to the chief shepherd.

The flock is the flock of God, not their personal flock. And in places like Ezekiel chapter 34 we have an extensive indictment against the false shepherds who treat the flock of God as if it were their own. And then a description of how God as the true chief shepherd will seek out and tend for his flock.

In verses 1 to 6 and 11 to 16 of that chapter. The word of the Lord came to me, son of

man prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, even to the shepherds, thus says the Lord God, our shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves, should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them.

So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and they had become food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered, they wandered all over the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.

For thus says the Lord God, behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out, as a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep. And I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land.

And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel.

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

The description of the true shepherd in 1 Peter chapter 5 should be looked at more closely. When we think about elders and pastors, we tend to think about leaders. But the description of the work of the shepherd here does not focus upon the theme of leading.

The sorts of things that are foregrounded are tending, overseeing, presenting an example. Domineering, leading for mercenary purposes, or being an elder only under compulsion are all opposed. True oversight must be a willing and eager activity, a loving activity exercised from the heart, not for mere financial gain.

It should not be a matter of taking advantage and privilege over others, but of giving yourself as an example. The overseer has authority, but his authority is used in the way of service. What he looks for is not earthly treasure or human power, but the reward of glory that comes from the chief shepherd.

When Christ, the good shepherd, appears, the good elder must be able to give a faithful account of his charge. Those who are younger must be subject to their elders. They must respect their service, they must learn from their example, and they must allow themselves to be tended to by others, to be overseen and guided by humble leaders for their own good.

There are virtues of good leaders, but there are virtues of good followers too. The more general deference towards the older generation that Peter encourages here is a bit counter-cultural in our own time. Our society idealizes youth.

Many of our churches have ceased to be intergenerational, and even when they are, they can continue to idealize youth. The older people can be aspiring to be young. A posture of humility should characterize Christians more generally.

In our relations to one another, whether we are in positions of authority or under other people's authority, we must be characterized by humility and honoring each other. Part of the radical message of the New Testament is that humility and honoring other people is not exclusive to those in lower positions in society. God himself is humble in his condescension to us.

Peter drives the point home by quoting Proverbs 3, verse 34. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. No one should boast in God's presence.

He then moves into a series of short instructions. We must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. We should recognize and submit ourselves to God's providences.

They are about to enter into this fiery trial, and they must recognize that God is the one who is in control of all things, even the trial that they are undergoing. Like Job had to submit to the hand of the Lord, so they have to submit. God will raise them up at the right time.

Quoting Psalm 55, verse 22, he calls for them to cast their anxiety upon God. He cares for us. Just as our Lord charged Peter to watch and pray lest he enter into temptation, Peter presents his hearers with a similar challenge.

Once again he tells them to be sober-minded and to be watchful. They must be alert, recognizing that they are acting in hostile territory. The devil himself is seeking to destroy and to consume.

He is like a savage beast, a roaring lion. And what is needed to resist him is a strong, a firm, and a steadfast faith. In the struggle that they face, it will help them to recognize that these struggles come from God ultimately, and God will preserve them through them.

Furthermore, the sufferings that they are experiencing are not exclusive to them. Other

Christians elsewhere in the world are going through the same thing. And when the time comes, God will raise them up and bless them.

He has called them to eternal glory in Christ, and they will reach that destination. He will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish them. He ends with the benediction.

Following the benediction, there are a number of short greetings. Sylvanus is mentioned first of all. He is a faithful brother by whom Peter has written to them.

This might be a reference to Sylvanus being the one who bore the letter that was carried to different places. Or maybe Sylvanus is the one who was the amanuensis. I believe it is more likely to be the latter.

As Peter's amanuensis, it is possible that Sylvanus exercised a lot of latitude in what he wrote. He might have been writing just according to the general theology of Peter in his own words, with Peter approving and signing off on it at the end. There is plenty of room for debate, but the possibility of such involvement by Sylvanus might explain the quality of the Greek that we see throughout the epistle, a quality of Greek that probably exceeds what we might expect from someone with the education of a Galilean fisherman.

Peter communicates greetings from she who is at Babylon. She who is at Babylon is almost certainly not Peter's wife. Rather, it's a reference to the church.

We find a similar female personification of the church in 2 John. Where is the Babylon in question? It is almost certainly not the literal Babylon, which had been wiped out by that point. The traditional alternative to this is that Babylon is a reference to Rome, where the early tradition argues Peter lived for some time.

Another possibility, depending upon your reading of Revelation 17 and 18, is that Babylon is a reference to Jerusalem. We know that both Peter and Mark lived in Jerusalem, so it would not be surprising for them to send a letter from that city. Within the New Testament, we find several inversions of the Old Testament themes that associate Jerusalem with captivity.

Jerusalem is in captivity with all of her children, Paul argues in Galatians 4.25. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus reworks material that was originally associated with oracles against Babylon in the book of Isaiah and relates them to the destruction of Jerusalem. And then, of course, in Revelation 17 and 18, Jerusalem, I believe, is the Babylon the Great, the harlot that is destroyed. Peter also communicates greetings from Mark.

In Acts 12, after he was released from prison by the angel, Peter went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. The Mark here is almost certainly the Mark who wrote the second gospel. Recognising the association between Mark and Peter, we can also see something more of the unity between various parts of the New Testament.

Matthew's gospel has affinities with James, the gospel of Mark is associated with the material of Peter, and Peter is associated also with Jude's material. Luke was a missionary companion for some time with the apostle Paul, and John's material includes both his gospel, his epistles, and the book of Revelation. This suggests that there are essentially four families of material within the New Testament.

And when we consider the overlap and the interaction between these families of material, we will have a fuller sense of the variegated unity of the New Testament as a corpus. The letter ends with a charge to greet each other with a kiss of love. As in Paul, this token of affection was a sign of the unity of the church as the family of God.

A question to consider, how does the vision of the oversight of elders and pastors that Peter presents in this passage serve as a challenge to prevailing notions of leadership in our day and age?