



OBEDIENCE IN SUFFERING

The Imperatives of 1 Peter

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THE IMPERATIVES OF FIRST PETER

MCBC Man of the Word, Fall 2013

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THE IMPERATIVES OF FIRST PETER

Theme

People of the world are increasingly hostile and antagonistic to Christians. What is the proper response, and how should a Christian conduct himself in the midst of a hostile world?

Theme Passage

For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

1 Peter 2:20

Time

10 weeks: September 1 –November 9

Goals

1. Encourage my prayer partner by contacting him and praying for and with him. (Stay in contact. Meet for mutual encouragement.)
2. Learn to respond properly to slander, hostility, ridicule, and marginalization from a hostile world.
3. Remember right conduct based on commands in 1 Peter.
4. Meditate on Scripture sections throughout the week.
5. Read through 1 Peter in a single sitting at least once each week.
6. Read *Living as a Christian* by A.W. Tozer.
7. Review 10 Armory for Victory Scripture passages, one each week.

Events

Men's Prayer Breakfasts: August 31, October 5, November 9

Men and Boys Retreat at The Wilds: September 13-14

Speaker: Nathan Crocket

My Prayer Partner (name, phone number, email):

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1. A Christian's Hope and Holiness
September 1-7
2. A Christian's Conduct in Fear
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3. A Christian's Love for the Brethren
September 15-21
4. A Christian's Longing for the Word
September 22-28
5. A Christian's Submission and Respect
September 29-October 5
6. A Christian's Stability in Suffering
October 6-12
7. A Christian's Response to Suffering
October 13-19
8. A Christian's Oversight or Subjection
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October 27-November 2
10. A Christian's Sober Resistance
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Appendix 1 - A Christian's Harmonious Living

Appendix 2 - A Christian's Sober Service

MAN OF THE WORD PROGRAM

The leadership of Mount Calvary Baptist Church created the Man of the Word program in obedience to the command of 2 Timothy 2:2: “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” This ministry functions under the leadership of Pastor Mark Minnick, Pastor John Tipton, and Chris Baker, elder. The following men are the current Man of the Word officers.

President	David Boyd
Vice President	Dan Dahlhausen
Treasurer	Neil Scroggins
Food Director	David Baker
Project Coordinator	Al Ellison
Manual Director	Dan Schaffner

We are grateful to Pastor Mark Minnick for his encouragement and leadership and for his vision for the men of Mount Calvary Baptist Church.

PRESIDENT’S BURDEN

I began attending Mt. Calvary in the fall of 1991. My memory from 22 years ago is a bit fuzzy at best, but I do remember taking part in the Man of the Word program. Saturday morning prayer breakfasts were always a favorite time for me. I still have the manuals from back in those days and enjoy looking back at them, especially the articles written by the men of our church.

From December 2001 to the summer of 2007 my family and I lived in Mississippi. Each month we purchased a CD from Mt. Calvary that included all the sermons. However, one aspect I could not have shipped to me was the encouragement and fellowship from like-minded men at Mt. Calvary--especially through the prayer partner facet of the program. The Lord did provide other men to encourage me, but not at the spiritual level I had come to enjoy and desire.

Even though that is only one person’s perspective, I’ve heard mixed reviews over the past few years about the prayer partner component of the Man of the Word program. I have heard of prayer partners who have made a lifelong impact on each other and prayer partners who can’t remember the names of the other prayer partner. I have heard of men being assigned to a prayer partner who never even contacted them once during the cycle! Is that hard to believe?

One of my greatest desires as the president of our men’s ministry is to witness the spiritual growth of our men because of mutual encouragement. Let

us face the fact that most men do not confess their faults one to another or that we are too proud to admit when we are struggling with sin in our lives. Our tendency is to encourage each other in mutual enjoyments and hobbies like fishing/hunting, sports, favorite video games, etc. Why is that? One reason is that those things have no personal risk involved.

Compare the risk involved with talking about Clemson football (no real risk unless you are talking to a Gamecock fan) and biblical solutions to losing your temper with your children. I have had discussions about both Clemson and losing my cool with my children with some of you. The second one is more difficult to talk about, but the spiritual response is much more helpful. I want to strongly encourage you to develop a relationship with other men in our church that allows for spiritual edification, especially with your prayer partner. You have to be willing to risk exposing your own faults, and you have to be willing to offer biblical encouragement to others who expose their own faults.

Why is this so important? I've been studying and meditating on Hebrews this year and I have found three passages that teach us to encourage one another and warn us against falling away from the faith. This falling away is a real problem, and part of the solution is to encourage one another in the faith. The three passages are Hebrews 3:12-13; 10:23-25; and 12:12-13. We are to encourage one another day by day so that we will not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We are to stimulate one another to love and good works and encourage one another as we see the day drawing near. We are to strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble.

Over the next three cycles I hope to expound on each of these passages and encourage you to encourage each other. By encouraging one another and praying for one another about specific spiritual needs we will see more men in our assembly overcoming temptations and becoming more Christ-like.

PREFACE

Our times are disturbing are they not? Would you say our society is more hostile than ever to Christianity? You've probably been saying that since you were old enough to notice or care. And if you're a young man, I'd guess your parents are sure to warn you about all that's wrong in our society. You may already be wondering if you really want to stick out like a sore thumb as a Christian. Do you have a choice? If you're older, you can probably remember a time when people were "God-fearing" and expressions of faith and morality were in the "mainstream," though, there have always been some who've wanted to "tear the fetters apart." Unfortunately, now the voice of opposition and rebellion seems louder than it has ever been. What should we do about this? How loudly should we complain? Should we complain?

Last semester I heard an excellent sermon preached by Kerry McGonigal entitled "A Christian's Response to Shame in Society" during a chapel service at Bob Jones University. (You can listen to the message here:

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=31113158340>) Kerry points out that now more than ever in our society there is a negative and increasingly hostile perception of Bible believers. With this in mind he urges Christians to respond in three ways to the shame and antagonism we are facing.

1. We should not be surprised when we are rejected by the world because Jesus was rejected too. 1 Pet. 4:12
2. Don't retaliate when you are opposed by the world because God is our protector and we trust ultimately in Him. 1 Pet. 3:9-11, 12-13
3. We shouldn't be ashamed because our honor is already here but not quite yet. 1 Pet. 2:4-10

When I heard this message, I was immediately drawn to study First Peter for myself so I could better understand the nature of our suffering, how to respond to it, and my responsibility to live as a Christian in this increasingly hostile world.

Shortly after I embarked on this study, I learned I would have the opportunity to be the Man of the Word manual director. Immediately, the Lord brought this topic to mind as something we could pursue together. In light of current events, the emphasis in Sunday school last spring on living as pilgrims, the summer study on the topic, "The Just Shall Live by Faith," and the Fall series on the pilgrim Psalms, I believe there is no more timely study to pursue than a study of obedience in suffering based on the Epistle of 1 Peter.

This booklet, "Obedience in Suffering," is divided into ten weekly sections, with each section made up of:

- Armory for Victory Memory Verse. This can help you keep up with the church's Armory for Victory program.

- Meditation Passage. This passage is related to the devotional article for the week, and can be rehearsed throughout the week.
- Single Sitting Investigation. This gives you ideas you can look for and mark as you read through 1 Peter in a single sitting each week. First Peter can be read out loud in a single sitting in less than 30 minutes.
- Book Reading. A.W. Tozer's never before published book, *Living as a Christian* will complement our study in First Peter, and be a great challenge and encouragement.
- M'Cheyne Bible Reading Schedule. For those who wish to keep on track in reading through the Bible in 2013 using the M'Cheyne system.
- Devotional Articles. These are studies on the meditation passages written by men in our church. The words in those passages that are imperatives in the Greek text will be the emphasis of these devotionals. Note: Other phrases in the passages can be translated as commands too.

May the Lord transform us as we let the teaching of First Peter permeate our lives!

Dan Schaffner
August 2013

INTRODUCTION

Dan Schaffner

Meditation Passage: I Peter 1:1-8

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ . . .

To whom is Peter writing? Peter addresses his letter to “those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout” various regions. The term “aliens” has the idea of a pilgrim or a sojourner. The Greek word for “scattered” is diaspora. We’re familiar with the “Dispersion” of the Jews from their homeland, but Peter is probably just referring “metaphorically,” to “Christians scattered in various minority groups in a non-Christian world,” according to commentator D. Edmond Hiebert. (Hiebert, I Peter, 46-47)

Our translations add a third description at the end of the verse after the list of regions stating that they are “chosen.” Perhaps it is fitting for translators to connect the term “elect” with the beginning of verse 2; however, this threefold description actually begins with the word “elect” in the Greek text and could be rendered, “to chosen sojourners of the Dispersion.” (Grudem, I Peter, TNTC, 52) Grudem continues, “Nowhere else in ancient Jewish or Christian literature does a writer qualify ‘sojourners’ with the adjective ‘elect’ (eklektos), as Peter does here.” (Grudem, TNTC, 52) The placement of this adjective first is showing emphasis. What a comforting thing to know that wherever Christians find themselves, they are elected by God to not quite fit into the land where they are living—that is, they are called to be true citizens of another place.

Now, that is not to say that they do not put their roots down where they are sojourning. Abraham sojourned in the land of promise for several hundred years where he did business, raised livestock, entered into treaties with inhabitants, chased down marauding invaders, and so on. But the author of Hebrews reminds us he never received the promises, and he “desired a better

country that is a heavenly one.” We too are waiting for promises while, in the meantime, we dwell in our cities and towns on earth.

Next, Peter tells us something else that is determined by God’s foreknowledge. Through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, these elect ones will obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood. These two ideas speak of a Christian’s responsibility to obey Christ and the blood that is available to us when we should fail. It is no accident that Peter describes his readers in this way because we will find as we read and study the letter that it is hortatory in nature—that is Peter gives many instructions that Christians are obligated to obey. This leads me to discuss the purpose of Peter’s writing.

What is the purpose of the letter? The content certainly gives us many clues to the occasion of the writing, but Peter places a key at the end of the epistle to give us a clue about his purpose in writing it. In 5:12b he says, “I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!” Of these two purposes, Edwin Blum writes, “The reference to exhortation reminds us of the commands for ethical living he has given his readers while the reference to testimony stresses the reliability of what he has born witness to.” (Blum, 1 Peter, EBC, 253) Concerning this purpose, commentator Wayne Grudem adds,

Since many of the exhortations in 1 Peter concern faith and obedience, it may be suggested that the purpose of 1 Peter is to encourage the readers to grow in their trust in God and their obedience to him throughout their lives, but especially when they suffer. Peter accomplishes this purpose by pointing to what God has done for them in Christ, then applying that to the reader’s lives. ... [O]ne verse that perhaps better than all others in the letter summarizes these concerns [is] “Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19). (Grudem, 1 Peter, TNTC, 40)

Our study will lead us to follow these commands, yet we also hope to be motivated and encouraged by the second purpose stated in this verse.

The epistle is also laced with testimony. Before Peter begins giving commands, he grounds us in the wonderful truths of our great salvation so that our obedience is a response to the wonderful riches of our inheritance. He reminds us that we are born again to the hope of living again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ; he reminds us that we have an imperishable inheritance that is undefiled, unfading, reserved in heaven for us; he reminds us that we are kept by the power of God through faith to be saved in the last time; finally, he explains that, though our faith should be tested with fire, it will result in praise, glory, and honor when Christ is revealed. Peter will ground his commands in other such encouragements along the way. How can neglect to obey the One who has done so much for us?

1 A CHRISTIAN'S HOPE AND HOLINESS

September 1-7

Armory for Victory Memory Verse

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Meditation Passage

Therefore prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit* fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

1 Peter 1:13-16

Single Sitting Investigation:

Read through First Peter in a single sitting at least once this week. (This can be done out loud in less than 30 minutes). As you read, or after you read, list or mark all the references to a future revelation of glory, or our future hope.

Book Reading: Pages 7–25

Introduction: The Amazing Christian

Ch. 1: A Christian Believes in Things He Cannot See

M'Cheyne Bible Reading Schedule

Sept 1	1 Sam 25, 1 Cor 6, Eze 4, Ps 40, 41
Sept 2	1 Sam 26, 1 Cor 7, Eze 5, Ps 42, 43
Sept 3	1 Sam 27, 1 Cor 8, Eze 6, Ps 44
Sept 4	1 Sam 28, 1 Cor 9, Eze 7, Ps 45
Sept 5	1 Sam 29, 30, 1 Cor 10, Eze 8, Ps 46, 47
Sept 6	1 Sam 31, 1 Cor 11, Eze 9, Ps 48
Sept 7	2 Sam 1, 1 Cor 12, Eze 10, Ps 49

A CHRISTIAN'S HOPE AND HOLINESS – Chris Baker

Meditation Passage: 1 Peter 1:13-16

Therefore prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit* fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”

Imperatives: Put your hope (in) . . . ; Be [becoming] holy

I Peter 1:13 reminds me of Romans 12:1-2 where Paul admonished the reader to first consider the mercies of God. After that, his exhortation is to not be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of the mind so that the believer may prove what the will of the Lord is.

So here in I Peter 1:13, Peter begins with the word therefore, which would indicate that he is proceeding on the basis of what he just discussed in the previous verses. In those verses he reminds these converted Jews who have been scattered out into other locations because of their faith of several things: God not only chose them through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit but also sprinkled them with Jesus' blood. They have been born again. They have a living hope and have obtained an inheritance which is reserved for them in heaven. He also tells them that their trials are only temporary for the proving of their faith. In other words, keep the faith. So, in view of all which has been done and with a view of what is to come, now he is going to admonish them on how to proceed in these trying times to please the Lord, the One who called them.

Peter goes right to “Central Command,” the mind, and says this is the place to start. If the mind is not right in its thoughts, error will be awaiting to lead you. And we are preparing our minds for action. This would indicate that this is not a passive work ahead but an active work. So be ready for the action. To be ready he says we will need a sober spirit. This means we are to be vigilant or circumspect.

With this kind of a mind and spirit we are to fix our hope on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. This hope is not a “wish” for something that we want to happen, but it is something that we can expect to happen in the future. It is going to happen. It is a done deal. Praise the Lord! Yes, focus on that great event.

Then in verses 14-16 he admonishes us not to be conformed to the former lusts or desires in our behavior but be holy like the Holy One who called us. The word holy at its root means separate or unique. We are set aside or separated for this work of God. When we are saved, we are set apart by the Lord as His children. But we are also becoming more holy or separate in our behavior

as time goes by. For instance, Peter says we are to desire the milk of the Word. This Word will help us to be more like the Lord as from faith to faith.

I remember when I enlisted in the military that one of the things that was done immediately was to get every enlistee's mind into a state of "following orders." That was our fix. Our hair was shaved off so we looked like soldiers. We marched in formation so we looked like an organized, orderly group. We had a leader or leaders that we were to emulate and seek out for counsel. They had a mission, a plan to accomplish the mission, and the resources to do it. And they also had an expectation that the mission would always be accomplished. Similarly, we have been inducted in the Lord's army by His blood, set apart for this great, active work, given the supplies to carry out the stated mission, and know the final outcome. The Scriptures give us counsel as we go along the way. We must keep our eyes on the One who has called us, has done so much for us in the past, and will see us through to the end. What a glorious day that will be!

Knowing what the Lord has done for you, are you preparing your mind for action, keeping a sober spirit, fixing on the hope of the grace to come, and separating to God to be like Him? May the Lord help us to be strong in Him!

2 A CHRISTIAN'S CONDUCT IN FEAR

September 8-14

Armory for Victory Memory Verse

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

James 1:5

Meditation Passage

If you address the Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that our faith and hope are in God.

1 Peter 1:17-21

Single Sitting Investigation:

Read through First Peter in a single sitting at least once this week. (This can be done out loud in less than 30 minutes). As you read, or after you read, list or mark all the terms related to our salvation.

Book Reading: Pages 27–40

Ch. 2 The Christian Understands the Truth About Salvation

M'Cheyne Bible Reading Schedule

Sept 8	2 Sam 2, 1 Cor 13, Eze 11, Ps 50
Sept 9	2 Sam 3, 1 Cor 14, Eze 12, Ps 51
Sept 10	2 Sam 4,5, 1 Cor 15, Eze 13, Ps 52-54
Sept 11	2 Sam 6, 1 Cor 16, Eze 14, Ps 55
Sept 12	2 Sam 7, 2 Cor 1, Eze 15, Ps 56,57
Sept 13	2 Sam 8,9, 2 Cor 2, Eze 16, Ps 58,59
Sept 14	2 Sam 10, 2 Cor 3, Eze 17, Ps 60,61

A LIFE OF FEARING YOUR IMPARTIAL FATHER – Rajesh Gandhi

Meditation Passage: 1 Peter 1:17-21

If you address the Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that our faith and hope are in God.

Imperative: Conduct yourselves in fear

Writing to dispersed believers in many places in Asia Minor (1 Pet. 1:1), Peter began by emphasizing vital realities for them to consider as born-again children of God the Father (1:3, 14, 23; 2:2). Among these, he highly stressed the glorious consummation of their salvation that they would experience at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:5, 7, 9, 10, 13).

In view of these things, he challenged them with multiple commands (1:13, 15, 17, 22). His third command charged them to live in a way (1:17-21) that needs more attention in our day.

As obedient children of God (1:14) who pray (1:17) to our Holy Father (1:15-16), it is vital that we keep in mind that we “address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work” (1:17). Being children of God does not exempt us from His holy scrutiny and assessment of all our ways!

We who pray to our Father do so to the One who knows all our secrets (Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 4:5) and shows no favoritism in His dealings with any of us (1 Pet. 1:17a). His dealing with us in this way necessitates that we live our entire Christian lives fearing Him and His perfectly fair assessment of us as His children (1:17b).

We must live in such fear of our impartial Father because of the glorious redemption that He has granted us (1:18-19). He has not redeemed us from our formerly futile living with the things that man values most, such as silver and gold (1:18). Instead, we have been redeemed with what God values infinitely more than any material thing that fallen man values—the precious blood of Christ, the unblemished and spotless Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:19; John 1:29)!

We must live a redeemed life of fearing our impartial Father to whom we pray because the priceless blood with which He redeemed us was the blood of the Christ whom, on the one hand, He foreknew in eternity past (1:20a). We must also live such lives because, on the other hand, Christ “has appeared in these last times” for our sake (1:20b).

Through the eternally foreknown Christ who has appeared to redeem us, we are believers in God (1:21a). Through that Christ we are believers in our Father who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory so that our faith and hope are in God (1:21b).

We have learned from 1:17-21 that God demands that we live a redeemed life of fearing our impartial Father to whom we pray. To learn some specific truths about what such a life looks like, we need to consider some related teaching (3:7-12).

Based on the example that Christ has left for us (2:21-25), husbands must live properly with their wives: (1) living with her in an understanding way that takes into consideration that she is weaker because she is a woman; and (2) showing her honor because she is “a fellow heir of the grace of life”(3:7a-d). Living in this way with them is necessary for husbands so that their “prayers will not be hindered (3:7e).

Comparing the teaching of 3:7 with 1:17-21, we learn that one specific aspect of living a redeemed life of fearing our impartial Father to whom we pray involves husbands relating with their wives in a way that shows that they fear God. God knows everything about how each husband is treating his wife, and every husband must fear displeasing the Father to whom he prays by mistreating his wife!

In 3:8-12, Peter then provides related teaching about Christian conduct that not just husbands but also all other believers must heed. A close examination of this passage shows that it ties directly with what we learned from 1:17-21.

Summing up what he has been saying, Peter challenges all believers about being “harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit” (3:8). Being such believers includes “not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead” because we have been called “for the very purpose that [we] might inherit a blessing” (3:9).

He explains our calling to that purpose further by citing Psalm 34:12-16. Because the teaching of that passage is an inspired explanation to children of how they are to fear the Lord (Ps. 34:11), Peter’s use of it here to explain our calling shows that we have been called to be children who fear the Lord in certain specific ways (3:10-11).

From the citation of Psalm 34:12-16 in 1 Peter 3:10-12, we learn that we who would lead a blessed life of fearing God must keep our tongues from evil and our lips from speaking deceit (3:10). We must turn away from evil, do good, seek peace, and pursue it (3:11).

Peter then explains these directives by inserting “for” at the beginning of 3:12, which is not in Psalm 34:15. By doing so, however, he does not change the original meaning; he brings out the logical connection that was there all along but was unstated. We are thus called to inherit a blessing (1 Pet. 3:9) through heeding certain directives about fearing God (3:10-11) because His eyes “are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer” (3:12a-b), but His face “is against those who do evil” (3:12c).

Because Peter's teaching here (3:8-9) is about fearing God (3:10-11) in view of His differing responses to the prayers of people according to His assessment of their lives (3:12), we see that what he teaches us here parallels his earlier teaching about fearing our Father who impartially judges those who pray to Him (1:17). The comparison of 3:8-12 with 1:71-21, therefore, teaches us some specific aspects of fearing our impartial Father to whom we pray.

As men of the Word, let us live such (3:7-12) redeemed lives of fearing our impartial Father to whom we pray (1:17-21)!

3 A CHRISTIAN'S LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN

September 15-21

Armory for Victory Memory Verse

Do not worry then, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear for clothing?" For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:31-33

Meditation Passage

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY IS LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHER, AND THE FLOWERS FALL OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you.

1 Peter 22-25

Single Sitting Investigation:

Read through First Peter in a single sitting at least once this week. As you read, or after you read, list or mark all the references to love, harmony, kindness and peace.

Book Reading: Pages 41-62

Ch. 3: The Christian is Redeemed from a Foolish Way of Life

Ch. 4: The Christian's Hope Versus All Other Hopes

M'Cheyne Bible Reading Schedule

Sept 15	2 Sam 11, 2 Cor 4, Eze 18, Ps 62,63
Sept 16	2 Sam 12, 2 Cor 5, Eze 19, Ps 64,65
Sept 17	2 Sam 13, 2 Cor 6, Eze 20, Ps 66,67
Sept 18	2 Sam 14, 2 Cor 7, Eze 21, Ps 68
Sept 19	2 Sam 15, 2 Cor 8, Eze 22, Ps 69
Sept 20	2 Sam 16, 2 Cor 9, Eze 23, Ps 70,71
Sept 21	2 Sam 17, 2 Cor 10, Eze 24, Ps 72

A CHRISTIAN'S LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN – Neil Scroggins

Meditation Passage: 1 Peter 1:22-25

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY IS LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHER, AND THE FLOWERS FALL OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you.

Imperative: Love one another

THE ABILITY TO LOVE THE BRETHREN.

Scripture describes unconverted people as incapable of truly loving (i.e. John 5:42). But when we respond in "obedience to the truth" (Gospel truth) we are "purified" (a word which refers to an event in the past with ongoing results) and given the ability to have a "sincere" (or un-hypocritical) love for the brethren. This is a hallmark of true disciples (1 John 1:14); a characteristic which attracts others to the Gospel (John 13:34-5). Peter further expands on this point in verses 23-25 where the new birth is presented as not only giving us the ability to love this way, but also that it is an expected activity when considering the nature of the new birth.

THE COMMAND TO LOVE THE BRETHREN.

Having established the foundation of love for the brethren, Peter gives his readers an imperative – "fervently love one another from the heart". The un-hypocritical affection (*philadelphia*) we have for other believers is a natural outgrowth of the transformation that happens at the new birth. Peter now exhorts believers to go beyond this kind of love; to go far beyond in their love for other believers. In this command Peter uses a different word for love (*agapao*); a word which deals more with the will than with emotion. The real key to this passage is found in the description of how we are to love. We are to love both "fervently" and "from the heart".

Fervently (*ektenos*) is a compound adverb with two parts: the preposition "ek" and a verbal root meaning "to stretch out the hand". There is then by implication a stretching, straining, or extending of oneself that is pictured. Like an athlete straining to finish a marathon.

We are also told that this fervent love should be "from the heart". This should not be motivated by a sense of legalistic expectation but from a heart that seeks to love God and our neighbor.

So then, it is by an act of our will that we extend ourselves to other believers. Doing this will involve time, effort, and energy. (Perhaps this is why it is an imperative, since this kind of effort doesn't come as naturally as the sincere affection referenced earlier in verse 22.)

SOME APPLICATIONS FOR LOVING THE BRETHREN.

So what are some practical ways that we can extend ourselves to each other? We can certainly pray for each other (“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another...” James 5:16). We can show concern for others. But in order to do anything we must first know what is going on in their lives. We must find time and make the opportunities to get to know one another. Casual conversation in church won’t do this. The typical pleasantries (“How are you?” “I’m doing well.”) won’t do it. We have to be willing to ask harder questions, more specific questions. Granted, we don’t want to ask inappropriate questions or questions that would put someone in an awkward position. But could we be brave and ask questions like...”What has the Lord been teaching you lately?” Or “How can I specifically pray for you and your family?”

Beyond praying, James would tell us that we need to “put feet” to our prayers and find ways to practically help each other (“If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?” James 2:15-16 ESV). Our standard of living is far better than those in the first century, but we still have many needs. We shouldn’t wait until someone has a debilitating illness to bring them a meal or invite them over to our home. Do you have a practical skill (plumbing, auto repair, etc.) that you can use to be a blessing to others? Looking for opportunities to come alongside someone who doesn’t have that skill will provide you with opportunities to show love, teach someone a practical skill, as well as finding opportunities for deeper conversation.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews the writer warns his readers of the dire consequences of falling away – rejecting Christ and His sacrifice in favor of returning to the old sacrificial system. He admonishes, “But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” (Hebrews 3:13, ESV). Later in that same epistle the writer exhorts the believers: “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24-5, ESV) This business of loving one another fervently from the heart can have significant impact in our lives individually as well as in the corporate life of our local assembly.

4 A CHRISTIAN'S LONGING FOR THE WORD

September 22-28

Armory for Victory Memory Verse

But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

2 Thessalonians 3:3

Meditation Passage

Therefore putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

1 Peter 2:1-3

Single Sitting Investigation:

Read through First Peter in a single sitting at least once this week. As you read, or after you read, list or mark all the commands or exhortations

Book Reading: Pages 63-89

Ch. 5: The Fundamental Difference Between the Christian and the Non-Christian

Ch. 6: The Christian Puts Aside Certain Things

M'Cheyne Bible Reading Schedule

Sept 22	2 Sam 18, 2 Cor 11, Eze 25, Ps 73
Sept 23	2 Sam 19, 2 Cor 12, Eze 26, Ps 74
Sept 24	2 Sam 20, 2 Cor 13, Eze 27, Ps 75,76
Sept 25	2 Sam 21, Gal 1, Eze 28, Ps 77
Sept 26	2 Sam 22, Gal 2, Eze 29, Ps 78:1-37
Sept 27	2 Sam 23, Gal 3, Eze 30, Ps 78:38-72
Sept 28	2 Sam 24, Gal 4, Eze 31, Ps 79

A CHRISTIAN'S LONGING FOR THE WORD – Dan Dahlhausen

Meditation Passage: 1 Peter 2:1-3

Therefore putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

Imperative: Long for the pure milk of the word

GOT MILK?

Hohhot, China, just recently hosted the first international milk industry festival. As the festival opened thousands of people competed in drinking as much milk as they could in the shortest time, attempting to challenge and break the current Guinness World record. The Star Daily reported that one guzzler won “the fastest milk drinker” award by guzzling almost one-half gallon in just over ten seconds. Milk and milk products are widely recognized as key sources of important nutrients typically deficient in the American diet. Milk includes such nutrients as Vitamin D, calcium, magnesium, and potassium. In fact, due to current American dietary practices it is difficult for people to meet national nutrition guidance goals unless they are consuming dairy products. Scientific research has shown that intake of milk or milk products improves bone health, lowers risk of cardiovascular disease, and lowers both hypertension and Type II Diabetes. So Americans are encouraged to drink three glasses of milk a day. Yet the consumption of milk for ages two and older is less than three-quarters of a cup a day (for ages 2-11 it was only one-half cup a day), much less than recommended. Why? In many cases milk has been replaced by less healthy drinks including carbonated beverages, fruit juices, power drinks, and etc. They taste better and in many cases cost less. Although not the only cause, this practice has contributed to the obesity epidemic and malnutrition problems now being seen in the United States.

1 Peter 2:1-3 says: “Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.” One of the imperatives given in this section is to “long for the pure milk of the Word”. The word long presents the idea of a strong craving. It denotes active seeking, not passive receiving. I am sure most of us have seen a hungry baby actively seeking (crying) for food, and then, when fed, rapidly downing the milk. Do we seek God’s Word this way? Do we daily awake setting our minds on the task to see what we can learn and apply from God’s Word? Sadly, surveys show that less than half of professing Christians read the Bible daily. A new life requires suitable food. Just as a newborn babe needs constant nutrition during the day and night, we must also seek and acquire spiritual refreshment throughout the day. Desire alone is not enough; a well thought plan must be enacted. In most cases the old saying is true; “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” For me this is best done by a good Bible time and quiet

hour each morning. This puts me in the mindset God desires by giving me God's perspective on life. How are my thoughts and attitudes? Are they in alignment with God's? During the day as I deal with the secular world, scripturally based prayer and recall of memorized portions of Scripture sustain me.

The world and our flesh are very deficient in godly nutrients. How much in the world truly displays the fruit of the Spirit? Growth and improvement in wisdom and grace are the design and desire of every true Christian. Before my salvation 33 years ago, my desire was to satisfy my worldly appetites, but the moment of salvation it changed to a desire to know and satisfy spiritual appetites. The spiritual desires grow more and more over the worldly desires the more I feed them. While in medical school I was taught that if you can get somebody to do an action or change a way of life for 30 days you have developed a habit. In the case of prayer and Scripture reading it will be work at first but as we see the rewards of these daily disciplines our attitude towards studying God's Word will progress from liver, to meat, to dessert. Then you will really miss your morning time in the Word if something replaces it. So, how have you done this day—this past week—this past month? What is your plan, and have you instituted it? Don't fill your life with the nutrient deficient pleasures of life. God's desire and command in 1 Peter is to "long for the pure milk of the Word" even to the same degree a newborn hungry baby needs and seeks milk. So our job is not to drink the most milk in the shortest amount of time but to be constantly taking in our spiritual nutrient enriched source of food. Are you satisfying your spiritual appetite?

5 A CHRISTIAN'S SUBMISSION AND RESPECT

September 29-October 5

Armory for Victory Memory Verse

My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God

Psalms 84:2

Meditation Passage

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to the king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

1 Peter 2:13-17

Single Sitting Investigation:

Read through First Peter in a single sitting at least once this week. As you read, or after you read, list or mark all the references to submission.

Book Reading: Pages 91-105

Ch. 7: Christianity and Experience not an Experiment

M'Cheyne Bible Reading Schedule

Sept 29	1 Ki 1, Gal 5, Eze 32, Ps 80
Sept 30	1 Ki 2, Gal 6, Eze 33, Ps 81,82
Oct 1	1 Ki 3, Eph 1, Eze 34, Ps 83,84
Oct 2	1 Ki 4,5, Eph 2, Eze 35, Ps 85
Oct 3	1 Ki 6, Eph 3, Eze 36, Ps 86
Oct 4	1 Ki 7, Eph 4, Eze 37, Ps 87,88
Oct 5	1 Ki 8, Eph 5, Eze 38, Ps 89

A CHRISTIAN'S SUBMISSION AND RESPECT – David Baker

Meditation Passage: 1 Peter 2:13-17

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to the king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

Imperatives: Submit, honor, love, fear, honor

"I didn't vote for him, I don't like anything he stands for, he's not even in my party, and as a matter-of-fact I just plain don't like him, and you are telling me I need to submit to his authority?" These words probably could be heard from as many Christians as those who do not lay claim on anything spiritual. However, the command to submit does not come from the mouth of man but the mouth of God. I must admit that at times I personally find it hard to carry out this Scriptural admonition. It just does not sit right to honor or submit to that which one knows is wrong. To quote Habakkuk, "Therefore the law is ignored and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous. Therefore justice comes out perverted." Hab.1:4 Do you ever feel that way? You and I are certainly not alone. Yet, the Scripture is clear on this command.

The word "submit" causes many to cringe. It brings thoughts of forced servitude and being abused. However, we must consider the reason for the submission and the outcome that God predicts. We must consider it [the authority] as coming from the Lord and that our submission might bring about salvation, or the way it's put in our text in verse 15 that we might "silence the ignorance of foolish men." When we do right in this way, keeping a good conscience, we have the opportunity to become "bond slaves of God." We are, therefore, in essence truly submitting ourselves to God to honor God for the benefit of ourselves and others.

In a world where more of our leaders are evil rather than good, where the attitude of those leaders is to bring about the abasement of their constituents, and where God is not even an afterthought, it becomes very hard for people to find it in their hearts to honor and submit to those in that authority. Yet, we are commanded not only to submit but to honor these leaders. We should emulate men like David, who, though he had been anointed as king, and was being hunted by jealous King Saul who was intent on killing him, still refused to harm or kill Saul, even when the opportunity afforded itself. Why? Because it was against God's law to disrespect a king in such a manner. The king was God's appointed man. By doing what he did David was actually exercising a freedom that did not become a "covering for evil" but actually elevated him to a servant

or bond-slave of God. In essence his fear of God overcame his desire to harm or kill his king.

Daniel was given a task by the Lord Himself. Not only was he to live as an Israelite amongst the Babylonians, he was also to be a servant to the king. In serving this foreign king, Daniel, a man of God, had to honor him without becoming like him. He refused to “defile himself with the king’s choice food or the wine which he drank.” (Dan 1:8) Later Daniel was given the much more daunting task of interpreting a dream that God had given to Nebuchadnezzar. This interpretation would be for a dream that would not likely be in the king’s favor or for that matter Daniel’s. Daniel alone out of all of the interpreters and wizards would interpret the bringing down of the king by the power of God from the king’s position of a self-proclaimed “god” to a beast of the field. A year after Daniel interpreted the dream (Dan 4:29, 30) the prophecy was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was brought down about as low as a human can get. The result of this abasement was that after seven years of wandering the fields and eating grass like a beast Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed “My reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor was restored to me . . . Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, exalt, and honor the King of Heaven...” (Dan 4:36, 37) Daniel had honored the king by fearing God and doing what God commanded and the result was now this very foolish king was honoring, fearing, and praising God.

The key then in all of our lives is that we honor our leaders, but as they do evil things we must do what God demands. We should not join their evil as we honor them because our first allegiance is to God and His righteousness. God is over the leaders of the nations of this world. As bad as many of our leaders in America are, we still have the freedom to choose our leaders. Many peoples of the world have much more evil to overcome than we do and they, too, must fear God and submit to their leaders. Perhaps our leaders are a reflection of the attitudes that prevail in our own souls and our lack of fear of God. God, however, takes care of the oppressed, (Ps. 8, 9) and those leaders who refuse to honor God will in time have their names literally “forgotten” on the earth. Those that fear and trust God will be with Him forever.

As men we are not to live unto ourselves. We live in the world with others and are admonished to “honor people”. These people are the righteous and the unrighteous. We as Christians, however, are admonished to love the “brotherhood”—the righteous. By worshipping and praying with the “brotherhood” we put them, our leaders, and ourselves before God on a regular basis and cause God to rain His mercies not just on ourselves but all mankind—again the righteous and unrighteous. “Unfair!” you say? God’s love, mercy, and justice sometimes seem that way. He sends the rain on everybody because He desires in His gracious mercy for all mankind to come to Him, fear Him, and honor the ultimate King—Himself. We have to, in effect, by faith, want to honor and submit to our leaders. And by honoring them we honor our magnificent God.

The question we must ask is an individual one. “Do I submit to and honor those in authority?” We’re not talking about doing obeisance to them or

any type of worship, but the greatest honor—that of praying for the leader and asking God to guide them and to “deliver us from evil.”

O worship the King, all glorious above,

O gratefully sing His power and His love;

Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,

Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.

6 A CHRISTIAN'S STABILITY IN SUFFERING

October 6-12

Armory for Victory Memory Verse

Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

Proverbs 27:6

Meditation Passage

Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than doing what is wrong.

1 Peter 3:13-17

Single Sitting Investigation:

Read through First Peter in a single sitting at least once this week. As you read, or after you read, list or mark all the references to (dis)obedience, doing right, doing good, conduct or behavior

Book Reading: Pages 107-125

Ch. 8: A Christian Believes He Is Exactly What God Says He Is

Ch. 9: The Christian's Life Among Non-Christians

M'Cheyne Bible Reading Schedule

Oct 6	1 Ki 9, Eph 6, Eze 39, Ps 90
Oct 7	1 Ki 10, Phil 1, Eze 40, Ps 91
Oct 8	1 Ki 11, Phil 2, Eze 41, Ps 92,93
Oct 9	1 Ki 12, Phil 3, Eze 42, Ps 94
Oct 10	1 Ki 13, Phil 4, Eze 43, Ps 95,96
Oct 11	1 Ki 14, Col 1, Eze 44, Ps 97,98
Oct 12	1 Ki 15, Col 2, Eze 45, Ps 99-101

ARM YOURSELF TO REMAIN STABLE IN SUFFERING - Brian Bollon

Meditation on 1 Peter 3:13-4:6

Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than doing what is wrong.

Imperatives: Do not fear, Sanctify Christ as Lord, Arm yourselves

Normally, we expect that people who do good to earn respect. They get written up in newspaper articles and receive awards, right? But Peter raises a very real possibility: that Christians may be treated as enemies of society rather than heroes (3:14). This should not surprise us. Jesus, the perfect man who did the most good and lived the most righteously, was hated and crucified (3:18).

Of course suffering injustice is no indication that God has deserted us. We are still blessed by God's personal care for His righteous people (3:12, 14). The Lord has preserved us from persecution, but He allows us to suffer hundreds of small injustices at the hands of the world. So Peter gives us three commands to stabilize us.

Peter draws two commands from Isaiah 8:12-13 – do not fear, and regard Yahweh as holy (“do not fear” and “do not be troubled” are synonymous). When Judah was threatened by invasion, King Ahaz looked to other countries for help, rather than turning to God. God counseled Isaiah: Don't be afraid of what everyone else is afraid of [literally “don't fear their fear”]; don't be terrified (8:12). Instead, regard Me as holy (Is 8:13). Rather than fear people, fear the one true God! Instead of using their energy and resources trying to form an alliance for protection, serve Me. I will be your sanctuary (Is 8:14).

That's the background Peter has in mind: looming danger, the possibility of defection from God to get relief, and God's unique ability to care for His people. So, you Christians, don't be afraid of the worst the world can do to you! Don't let your heart be stirred up like a stormy sea (3:14)! [Most versions translate Peter's words, “don't fear their fear,” as “don't be afraid of their intimidation,” which seems the opposite of the meaning in Isaiah, but can fit the context in 1 Peter. In either case, the point is the same: don't be afraid of people and what they can do to you.] Instead, sanctify Christ as Lord (3:15). Peter borrows Isaiah's language but applies it to Jesus. Regard Jesus, God's Messiah, as God. He displayed His unique authority when He cast out demons during His earthly ministry (Mt 8:28-32). After His resurrection every power has

been subjected to Him (3:22). Recognizing Jesus' deity, and therefore sovereignty, prepares us for any possible suffering we might experience.

These twin commands—don't fear man but fear God—act as the keel on a sailboat—the fin that sticks down from the bottom. If you try to sail without the keel, the wind pushes the boat right over. You're capsized! But if you remember to lower the keel, the force of the keel pushing on the water counteracts the force of the wind on the sails. Even though the boat leans, it won't tip over. (Of course this isn't a perfect analogy, because you have to know how to sail properly.) When you choose to regard Christ as Lord in your heart and fear Him rather than people, you drop the keel down and your boat remains upright even though the wind pushes it. In fact, you're moving forward! You can advance the gospel as you answer people who notice your hope (3:15)!

Peter's third command puts gospel-advancing stability in military terms. We're taking up arms in the world-wide battle over who's in charge (4:1). We're not arming ourselves with guns or swords; we're arming ourselves with the same stabilizing perspective that led Christ to suffer injustice (for our sins, not His own!) on the cross (3:18). Obeying God is the only right option, even if we die for it (3:17), because God really exists and really cares whether we do right or wrong (3:10-12).

At first glance Peter seems to say that people who are suffering persecution no longer sin (4:1). But that doesn't seem to be supported by the teaching of Scripture. What does fit with other Scripture teaching is that believers must consider themselves united with Christ; they are dead to sin (Christ 'suffered in the flesh' refers to His death) and alive to God (Rom 6:11). Therefore, we offer ourselves to serve God rather than sin (Rom 6:13). Peter's way of saying the same thing is that we live no longer for self-gratification but to please God (4:2).

This paragraph sheds light on why Christians – who are working hard to do good – often suffer injustice from unbelievers. Christianity doesn't teach merely virtue and good deeds for the general welfare of society. It places righteous living firmly in the context of God's glory, human rebellion, coming judgment, and mercy only for those who surrender (4:5). Righteousness flowing from the gospel actually provokes the injustice we suffer because it condemns sin (4:3-4).

We haven't been called (yet) to remain faithful in the face of persecution. But we have been called to remain faithful in the face of so many opportunities for self-gratification. Experiencing injustice makes giving in seem even more appealing. We could walk away from gospel-focused righteousness and live for entertainment, career, or indulgence. We, like Peter's initial audience, could avoid misrepresentations, mockery, and criticism. We could avoid a hundred slights and snubs, avoid being passed over for promotions, avoid lost jobs, and avoid the strained relationships with people we love.

But you've already wasted enough time pursuing your own pleasures (4:3)! Instead of walking away from Christ, we hopefully anticipate God's ultimate vindication (4:6) and extend the gospel to those who are still under condemnation – even the ones who treat us unjustly.

Arm yourself to fight – not people, but your constantly tempted, sinful heart. Stabilize yourself by refusing to fear men and regarding Christ as Lord. You can fearlessly accept suffering as God's will, ready to explain your hope.

7 A CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE TO SUFFERING

October 13-19

Armory for Victory Memory Verse

Do not enter the path of the wicked And do not proceed in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not pass by it; Turn away from it and pass on.

Proverbs 4:14-15

Meditation Passage

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share in the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

1 Peter 4:12-16

Single Sitting Investigation:

Read through First Peter in a single sitting at least once this week. As you read, or after you read, list or mark all the references to suffering or trial and all references to joy or rejoicing.

Book Reading: Pages 127-151

Ch. 10: A Christian's Presence Among the Unsaved

Ch. 11: A Christian's Relation to Government and Authority

M'Cheyne Bible Reading Schedule

Oct 13	1 Ki 16, Col 3, Eze 46, Ps 102
Oct 14	1 Ki 17, Col 4, Eze 47, Ps 103
Oct 15	1 Ki 18, 1 Thes 1, Eze 48, Ps 104
Oct 16	1 Ki 19, 1 Thes 2, Dan 1, Ps 105
Oct 17	1 Ki 20, 1 Thes 3, Dan 2, Ps 106
Oct 18	1 Ki 21, 1 Thes 4, Dan 3, Ps 107
Oct 19	1 Ki 22, 1 Thes 5, Dan 4, Ps 108, 109

A CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE TO SUFFERING – Dan Schaffner

Meditation Passage: 1 Peter 4:12-19

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share in the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

Imperatives: Do not be surprised, Keep on rejoicing, Do not suffer as . . .

The first two imperatives Peter gives in this section are going to challenge our normal reactions to the antagonism the world heaps on Christians and the resultant throwing off of Christian norms. We've certainly had plenty to react to in recent days. You may already be throwing up your hands and saying, "What is this world coming to?" But what is the biblical response we are commanded to have?

First, we are told we must not be surprised when we suffer. Yes, this response is commanded. We are often surprised when something happens that is outside of our expectations. Our conversations with one another often inadvertently reflect a measure of surprise—so do our social media posts. We react to a Supreme Court decision, an act of legislation that is passed, or a news anchor who in our opinion shows great bias by skewering a "Christian" argument for some moral issue. Perhaps we expected the "American Judeo/Christian dream" to last forever. This is not to say that we should not pray that God would perform mighty works of revival as He has in the past. Such mercy on His part would mean many more souls for His kingdom. However, Peter tells us not to think this suffering is a strange thing. Our expectation should be that this type of suffering is normal. It is normal because it is what we should expect from a world that is actually "surprised that we do not run with them in the same excess of dissipation." (1 Pet. 4:4) Think of this: we as Christians have a bird's eye view of human history, seen through the lens of Scripture. We don't know all the twists and turns our culture will take, but we have a general expectation that people are not going to love God, and they are not going to love His people. We should also consider suffering as normal because we are told that this is God's means of testing us. He calls it a fiery ordeal or burning ordeal, which has the purpose of testing. What do you think is being tested? I believe this phrase hearkens back to the imagery in 1:7 where Peter mentions that now we may be "distressed by various trials" that are designed to prove our faith just like gold is proven or refined by the smelter's

fire. The result of this refining process is praise, glory, and honor in that verse (1:7), and here in 4:13-14 God's glory and our rejoicing are mentioned.

But what, you might be wondering, is the nature of the fiery ordeal? Is it imprisonment, torture, the seizing of our bank accounts or property, or martyrdom? Those things may come, they certainly occur in other parts of the world, and they would eventually occur in the first century, but a full blown Roman persecution was not in view at the time Peter wrote. (Though, the Holy Spirit through Scripture certainly prepares Christians for that and any persecution that may come through the ages.) The type of persecution is actually specified in several places in the epistle and it seems to be verbal in nature. In this same section we are told we are reviled (v. 14). Elsewhere in the epistle the suffering is described as our being spoken against (slandered) as evildoers (2:12), our being intimidated (3:14), and our being maligned (4:4). I think it is important to mention that we may not even face these kinds of abuses personally. It may be that we are reacting to the verbal malice that our society is hurling at Christians in general—invective which is very visible and constant with all the media options we have available to us. We still need to react biblically.

Second, we are commanded to keep on rejoicing. Our rejoicing is to be continual. There is an implication that we were rejoicing prior to suffering, and we will keep on rejoicing through it. This doesn't seem right. Doesn't it seem strange that we would enjoy suffering or the fact that our society seems to be crumbling before our eyes? Peter is not saying that we are to enjoy the suffering per se; in fact, he calls it a fiery or burning trial. However, when we suffer there are reasons we are commanded to respond with rejoicing. First, we are to rejoice because when we suffer, we have the opportunity to share in the sufferings of Christ. In this way we are partakers with Christ. The Greek verb here (*koinoneo*) is the word for "sharing in" and in its noun form is often translated as "fellowship." Second, when we suffer we can be motivated to rejoice by looking to the future when we will experience exultant joy at the revelation of Christ in His glory. Finally, being reviled for righteousness' sake is a blessing because it is a sign that God's Spirit and glory remain/abide on us. Suffering is not a sign of God's displeasure; it is a sign of His blessing.

The final imperative in this section is a warning. It is actually a negative command. We are commanded absolutely NOT to suffer under certain circumstances. We are not to suffer as a result of our own criminal activity or sin (murderer, thief, or evildoer). Also, seemingly a different category, we are not to suffer as a "troublesome meddler." This word has been a little difficult for interpreters and commentators to define because it's a rare word. It's a compound word with one part meaning "belonging to another" and the other part "overseer." Thus the idea is probably meddling in other people's affairs, according to Gingrich and Danker's Shorter Lexicon. You can see how this is not a valid reason for suffering or a reason that should garner sympathy. Peter strengthens this warning by mentioning that God's judgment will begin with the household of God. Peter ends the section positively by saying that those who are doing right and suffering for it can safely "entrust their souls to [God] a faithful

creator.” Men, we have every confidence of God’s care when we suffer obediently and every cause for shame if we suffer for doing wrong!

How can we demonstrate we are obeying these commands? First, we must be very careful how we comment on the verbal abuse, criticism, misrepresentation, hostility, mocking, or marginalizing (should I list more?) we see Christians suffering. We must consciously call to mind and rejoice in our bond in Christ and our future hope of glory. Can lost people see this if we are grumbling and complaining about what Christians are going through? Finally, we must live a life of obedience. We ought not to bring shame upon our heads for suffering as a result of wrong we’ve done.

8 A CHRISTIAN'S OVERSIGHT OR SUBJECTION

October 20-26

Armory for Victory Memory Verse

And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

Jude 22-23

Meditation Passage

Therefore I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of* God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor as yet lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

1 Peter 5:1-5

Single Sitting Investigation:

Read through First Peter in a single sitting at least once this week. As you read, or after you read, list or mark all the references to judgment or reward.

Book Reading: Pages 153-178

Ch. 12: The Christian Cannot Be Harmed

Ch. 13: The Christian Believes the Whole Bible

M'Cheyne Bible Reading Schedule

Oct 20	2 Ki 1, 2 Thes 1, Dan 5, Ps 110,111
Oct 21	2 Ki 2, 2 Thes 2, Dan 6, Ps 112,113
Oct 22	2 Ki 3, 2 Thes 3, Dan 7, Ps 114,115
Oct 23	2 Ki 4, 1 Tim 1, Dan 8, Ps 116
Oct 24	2 Ki 5, 1 Tim 2, Dan 9, Ps 117,118
Oct 25	2 Ki 6, 1 Tim 3, Dan 10, Ps 119:1-24
Oct 26	2 Ki 7, 1 Tim 4, Dan 11, Ps 119:25-48

A CHRISTIAN'S OVERSIGHT OR SUBJECTION – Brian Collins

Meditation Passage: 1 Peter 4:12-19

Therefore I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of* God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor as yet lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

Imperatives: Shepherd (care for), Be subject

Peter wrote his first epistle to exhort Christians in Asia Minor to pursue Christ with courage and perseverance in the face of persecution and temptations. First Peter 5:1-7 follows a discussion of suffering and glory (4:12-19) and precedes a section on temptation, suffering, and glory. Peter tells the believers that they should not be surprised if they encounter suffering and testing. In fact, they should rejoice that they can suffer for Christ's sake (though they should not suffer for evil-doing). Thus they should glorify God if they suffer as a Christian. But if they are suffering for doing evil, they should remember that God's judgment begins with His household. Therefore, believers should make sure that they suffer according to God's will and not for their sins.

Since the church is to face suffering, and since God's judgment will begin with the church, Peter turns to the church leadership in chapter 5 and instructs them in how they out to oversee suffering and tempted believers.

In 5:1 Peter identifies himself in three ways: he is a fellow elder, a fellow witness, and a sharer of the coming glory. Peter first identifies himself as a "fellow elder." He may have invented this Greek word, for this is its first appearance in any known Greek writing. Later Christian writers used the term frequently. Peter may use this term to indicate that he did feel himself exempt from the judgment of which he warned the others. Also by using this term he indicates both his position of authority which gives him a right and responsibility to speak while also not acting as lord over those he exhorts (cf. 5:3).

Peter next identifies himself as a witness of the sufferings of Christ. While Peter could be saying that he was an eyewitness to Christ's suffering, it is more likely that he is saying that he testified or witnessed to others about Christ's suffering. This is a significant testimony to bear to believers who are suffering for Christ's sake.

Finally, Peter identifies himself as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. This refers to the glory of Christ when he returns. Christians are able to suffer in the present because they can look forward to a time of glory to come.

These three self-identifications tie Peter personally to the themes of suffering and glory which he has been developing throughout the book as well as to theme of this section, eldership.

Peter's action in this section is to exhort the elders of the churches. According to Douglas Moo, "An exhortation comes with authority, but it is the authority of a preacher who is the mediator of God's truth rather than that of a superior issuing a command" (Moo, Romans, NICNT, 748-49).

The content of the exhortation begins in verse 2: "shepherd the flock of God among you." The pastoral imagery reaches back into the Old Testament where it is used of often of Israel's leaders and even of God. Peter is commissioned in John 21 to shepherd God's flock. Here he passes along that command to his fellow-elders.

Oversight is the means by which the elders shepherd the flock. Isaiah says, "All we like sheep have gone astray" (53:6), and Peter refers to these believers as having formerly been wandering sheep (2:25). In a situation of suffering, where pressure from the world may cause the believer to wander, but in which God's judgment will begin with his people, the elders of the church are to shepherd by overseeing the people of God to ensure that they are not wandering away from the truth in doctrine or life. This responsibility is heightened by identifying the flock as God's possession. He is called the "Chief Shepherd" in 5:4, and the elders are undershepherds responsible for the flock in their locale.

Peter then gives three statements of contrasts which express the manner in which the elder is and is not to exercise his oversight. First, the elder must serve willingly rather than under compulsion. Elders were chosen by others, (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) but it must be something desired by the man himself (1 Tim. 3:1). Both are aspects of his call. Second, the elder must serve not for the sake of the money (serving for the sake of money rather than for God makes the gain illegitimate). Instead, the elders are to serve freely, eagerly, and generously (the Greek word occurs repeatedly in 1 Chron. 28:21-29:27 (LXX) and 2 Cor. 8-9). Third, the elders are not to act as lords (see KJV) over the flock. They are not kings whose will is carried out because they have so commanded. Rather, the flock is allotted to their charge. This emphasizes that the elder oversees the people of the church because of a God-given responsibility. He thus has no right to act as a lord. Rather, he leads the flock by his example. This, of course, does not preclude exhortation such as Peter is engaged in in this passage. But in the contrast it emphasizes that elders shepherd their people not by giving orders but by getting out in front of them and modeling the Christian life.

The elders who heed Peter's exhortation can look forward to a reward—glory—when Christ returns. Significantly, Christ is called the Chief Shepherd which indicates once again that elders are undershepherds.

Just as the elders are to be humble overseers under the chief shepherds, so also the rest of the congregation are to act humbly toward one another. Peter

especially singles out those who are younger. They must be subject to the elders. Grudem notes, “‘be subject,’ implies submission to authority, not just deference or respect” (Grudem, 1 Peter, 136). Perhaps Peter singles out this age group in particular because it has the most difficulty with submission to authority.

Peter quotes Proverbs 3:34 to show he has Bible for his exhortation to elders, young men, and congregation alike. The proud, whether elder or young person or whomever, God will resist. But to the humble God gives grace.

9 A CHRISTIAN'S HUMILITY

October 27-November 2

Armory for Victory Memory Verse

Now I urge you brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

Romans 16:17

Meditation Passage

And all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

1 Peter 5:5b-7

Single Sitting Investigation:

Read through First Peter in a single sitting at least once this week. As you read, or after you read, list or mark all the references to Jesus Christ. Be sure to include all titles.

Book Reading: Pages 179-200

Ch. 14: The Christian Is a Stranger in a Strange Land

Ch. 15: The Christian Bears His Suffering with Joy

M'Cheyne Bible Reading Schedule

Oct 27	2 Ki 8, 1 Tim 5, Dan 12, Ps 119:49-72
Oct 28	2 Ki 9, 1 Tim 6, Hos 1, Ps 119:73-96
Oct 29	2 Ki 10, 2 Tim 1, Hos 2, Ps 119:97-120
Oct 30	2 Ki 11,12, 2 Tim 2, Hos 3,4, Ps 119:121-144
Oct 31	2 Ki 13, 1 Tim 3, Hos 5,6, Ps 119:145-176
Nov 1	2 Ki 14, 1 Tim 4, Hos 7, Ps 120-122
Nov 2	2 Ki 15, Titus 1, Hos 8, Ps 123-125

HUMBLE YOURSELF – Joel Arnold

Meditation Passage 1 Peter 5:5-6

[A]nd all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

Imperative: Humble yourselves

In the context of the local church, Peter names the ingredient that must underlie every successful relationship. Chief elders, he says, must shepherd the flock gently, as examples. Those who are younger, must be subject to those elders. To insert a Pauline phrase, we are called to “submit to one another.” (Eph. 5:21).

But this is the real world. Who ever heard of an organization where the leaders lead by example and the other members willingly defer to their leadership? This would take a miracle.

And a miracle it is. The only way this kind of thing ever happens is when people choose to leave their egos at the door, thinking less about themselves than the honor and interests of others. To return to Peter’s way of saying it, they would all have to “clothe themselves with humility.”

It’s striking that the basis for this humble submission is the ultimate leader—Jesus Christ Himself. We “humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.” In other words, mutual submission doesn’t hinge on the qualities of the people around us. Humbling ourselves is a response to the Chief Shepherd. We are all profoundly foolish, sinful and small before Jesus; how could we possibly spend our time comparing ourselves in His presence? To return to Paul’s words, we submit to one another “in the fear of Christ.”

And the responsibility for this falls on us. We are to humble ourselves. Peter even motivates us with an Old Testament quotation (Prov. 3:34) and probably an Old Testament example. In Daniel 4, God warned the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar that his arrogance had led him to the brink of catastrophe. If he didn’t humble himself, God would humiliate him lower than the poorest, weakest subject in his entire kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar would live like an animal.

And for seven years, he did. Eating grass, washed only by the dew and rain, so unsightly in his condition that he hardly looked human, Nebuchadnezzar learned humility and learned it well. At the end of his reeducation, the mighty king finally confessed that “those who walk in pride [God] is able to humble,” or in Peter’s words, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Nebuchadnezzar may be the only Babylonian king you and I will someday meet in heaven.

And his example demonstrates that arrogance is one condition God doesn't allow to stand. You either humble yourself or God will! It's part of His nature to humble the arrogant. If God responds that way to pagan kings, how much more out of love for His own children?

And so, Peter says, humble yourself so that God won't have to. You're much better off if you do it voluntarily. Because the really positive part of the command for the humble is that you can trust God to "exalt you in due time."

Obviously, the point isn't that we crave personal honor or humble ourselves only to get what we want. But just as we're turned off by arrogance, there's also something beautiful about a man whose honor is found solely in his relationship with God, knowledge of Scripture and conformity to Christ's image. That man will manifest the voluntary self-humbling of the Chief Shepherd and experience the joy of being exalted by God, even as Christ was (Philip. 2:7-9).

And the good news is that God "gives grace" to those that acknowledge their need. One practical way to humble yourself right now is to ask for God's help. After all, what we need is grace, and God gives that to humble people! Even in that expression of dependence on God, you're manifesting a heart attitude that relies on Him rather than yourself.

You can be sure that those who voluntarily humble themselves in the presence of the mighty God will be exalted in His goodness and grace. Your life, your relationships, and even your church will be the better for it.

10 A CHRISTIAN'S SOBER RESISTANCE

November 3-November 9

Armory for Victory Memory Verse

If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

Meditation Passage

Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you. To Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 5:8-11

Single Sitting Investigation:

Read through First Peter in a single sitting at least once this week. As you read, or after you read, list or mark all the occurrences of the word "sober."

Book Reading: Pages 201-222

Ch. 16: The Christian Doesn't Have a Care in the World

Ch. 17: The Christian Stands Firm Against False Teaching

M'Cheyne Bible Reading Schedule

Nov 3	2 Ki 16, Titus 2, Hos 9, Ps 126-128
Nov 4	2 Ki 17, Titus 3, Hos 10, Ps 129-131
Nov 5	2 Ki 18, Phm, Hos 11, Ps 132-134
Nov 6	2 Ki 19, Heb 1, Hos 12, Ps 135,136
Nov 7	2 Ki 20, Heb 2, Hos 13, Ps 137,138
Nov 8	2 Ki 21, Heb 3, Hos 14, Ps 139
Nov 9	2 Ki 22, Heb 4, Joel 1, Ps 140,141

A CHRISTIAN'S SOBER RESISTANCE – David Boyd

Meditation Passage: 1 Peter 5:8-11

Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you. To Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Imperatives: Be sober, Be on the alert, Resist

First Peter provides many imperatives about how believers should live the Christian life. In the passage at hand (5:8-11) Peter warns believers about a very serious enemy of Christians--one who desires to destroy (devour) them. The commands in this passage are infused with hope that the work of this enemy will be used to perfect believers. They are also given the promise that the afflictions will ultimately bring glory to God.

We have an unseen enemy who has been actively pursuing God's people ever since he tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden. Peter sends us a warning that we must be on the alert for this enemy and to resist him with faith. Otherwise, we will find ourselves becoming devoured as his prey.

"Be sober, be alert." These commands come right after the assurance that we can cast all our anxiety on God because He cares for us. Our sober alertness is not a hand-wringing anxiety of not knowing what to do, but it is a deliberate watchfulness, knowing that our enemy is nearby. Peter describes our enemy with the analogy of a roaring lion. If we take a trip to the mountains and find a large sign warning us of mountain lions in the region, that should cause us to be very cautious. However, it shouldn't prevent us from enjoying our camping trip. We would take the warning, and be sure to take precautions about how we set up camp or how we conducted ourselves. We might even read up on mountain lion behavior, and learn their paw prints.

Peter is giving us a big warning sign for our journey through life, "A Roaring Lion Is In The Area—Be Serious, And Use Caution!" What do his tracks look like, and what kind of behavior does he have? We can find his sign and behavior in Scripture, the annals of Christianity, and in our daily walk. But many of us seemingly ignore that this lion is actually out to get us!

Some of the tactics he uses include, "the Lord didn't say _____," or "that won't hurt you," or "nobody will ever know." Everywhere we go this enemy's presence can be seen. The television and radio have his paw prints. The checkout aisle at the grocery store has evidence of past prey enticing us to join them. Conversations with coworkers smell of this enemy's presence. What should we do? Are we to completely avoid the news, the grocery store and

conversations with coworkers? Absolutely not! We are to live in this world with caution, and when we detect our enemy, we are to “resist him, firm in faith.”

Resist him by faith in what? The object of our faith is the finished work of Christ who not only conquered sin and death but ultimately will conquer our enemy by throwing him in the lake of fire forever. It is also by our faith in the truthfulness and trustworthiness of God’s Word, especially when we hear that someone says God’s word is not true. Possessing and exercising faith is the means to completely resist our enemy. A false faith will have no effect in resisting this enemy, just like a picture of fire, instead of real fire, will have no effect on a real lion.

You and I are facing the same enemy. Saints of the past have faced this same enemy. Our children will face the same enemy until the glorious day of Christ’s return. Peter makes use of that fact to encourage us. The experience of facing our enemy will produce suffering in this life. However, that suffering has a stated goal. Our great God, who allows the suffering, will use it to perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish us! Amazingly, God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him, to those who are the called according to His purpose--He even uses the roaring of our enemy and the potential devouring. Saints in the past have been conformed to the image of Christ and we, too, are being conformed to the same image! All this ultimately brings glory to God. We will be able to join in with Peter’s doxology at the end of this passage, “To Him be dominion forever and ever! Amen.”

Our enemy uses so many different means to destroy us. Can you spot them or point them out to someone else? Are you living your life with sober attentiveness to this enemy? Are you teaching your children and helping other men to learn the signs of the enemy? We must encourage one another and not hesitate to caution one another about these things.

Maybe some of you have already succumbed to the enemy’s lure and you feel like you are being devoured. Acknowledge your sin before God, and ask for forgiveness. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. You, too, can fit into the category of so many others when Paul said, “and such were some of you, but you are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ!” Then you, too, will be able to resist him, firm in faith!

APPENDIX 1

A CHRISTIAN'S HARMONIOUS LIVING – Royce Franklin

Meditation Passage: 1 Peter 3:8-12

To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, "THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT. "HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT. "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

Imperatives: One must keep his tongue from evil, one must turn away from evil, one must seek peace

EXPOSITION

Verse 8 lists Christian characteristics that keep the tongue from evil; HARMONY (like minded) SYMPATHETIC (of one accord) BROTHERLY (to love as family), KINDHEARTED (compassionate), and HUMBLE IN SPIRIT (not arrogant or prideful). It is interesting that of these five characteristics only the word for compassionate is found somewhere else in the New Testament. It is used here and in Ephesians 4:32. This tells us how important Peter thought these words were to the New Testament Christians, and they are important to us in today's culture. We need these words as a check list for our own souls.

Verse 9 tells us there is to be no retaliation for ill treatment. Matthew 5:39 tell us, "But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also." The result of obedience is blessing. Blessing is used over 400 times in the New Testament often in opposition to cursing. The word "blessing" as used here literally means to speak well of someone. By giving a blessing to someone who has offended means we will be well spoken of. Raymer in the Bible Knowledge Commentary says verses eight and nine are Peter's exposition of Psalm 34:10-12.

Years ago in another city I was a member of a church where a very divisive issue had to be decided. Certain male members were angrily calling each other outside the church to settle their differences with their fists. I know a man who as the pastor of a church received death threats because of his position on a certain issue. Certainly there will be no blessing for these types of responses. We can disagree without being disagreeable.

In verses 10-12 Peter quotes Psalm 34:12-16 with its imperative emphasis to further impress his readers (and us today). Psalm 34 was written by David when he changed his behavior before Abimelech. Spurgeon suggests David wrote this Psalm after that event and intended to commemorate the event

and wisely “not to sing his own exploits of folly.” David also wrote it carefully, “in almost exact accordance with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.”

Verse 10 speaks of the blessing of the one who will obey the command to keep his tongue from evil. James 1:26 echoes, “If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless.” James states the problem well. Sometimes we speak without thinking from our emotions. If that is our habit we need to stop. I am looking at a book titled *How To Say No To A Stubborn Habit* on my bookshelf. Reading that book could give some help but I think the Holy Spirit is the best teacher for bad speech habits. Isaiah (6:5) at his commissioning said, “I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips.” So we need the burning coal of the Holy Spirit to touch our tongues and change our habits.

Verse 11 commands the believer to turn away from evil. I like the way Spurgeon says it, “Go away from it. Not merely take your hands off but yourself off. Live not near the pest-house. Avoid the lion’s lair, leave the viper’s nest. Set a distance between yourself and temptation.” Of course, Spurgeon did not live in the time of the internet where temptation is just a click away. How many times I have been to Walmart and my eyes have been confronted with a temptation.

Dear brother, if you are into a bad habit, reading a self help book might help, but from my observation and thinking it is only when you are overcome with the love of God through the working of the Holy Spirit will you find victory. Reading His word through faith believing makes victory over sin possible. **HUMAN WILL POWER ALONE WILL NOT DO IT!!** Be careful though that you do more than just read words in the Bible to learn to love God, but read the words through the lens of faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” Dr. Jim Berg has said, “Satan has custom made designer sins for us,” so we need to be on our guard. We cannot keep temptation from the branches of our tree, but we can make sure it does not build a nest there.

Verse 12 motivates us by reminding us that God sees the activity of both the righteous and the wicked. The all-seeing-and-knowing God is aware of our temptations and trials. Jeremiah 32:19 says, “Great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, giving to everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds;” Psalm 103:14 assures us, “For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.” What a comfort (when we are obedient) and what a discomfort (when we fail).

APPENDIX 2

A CHRISTIAN'S SOBER SERVICE – Al Ellison

Meditation Passage: 1 Peter 4:7-11

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer. Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Imperatives: Be of sound judgment, Be sober in spirit

The Apostle Peter wrote his first epistle to prepare the recipients for the persecution of Christians not only in his time but for the time to come. The entire book deals with how the believer responds to this persecution not only from those outside the church but from fellow believers as well. He reminds us in 1:1 that we are aliens (sojourners – those residing in a place that is not their homeland). Throughout the book Peter repeats the theme of the Lord's second coming. He tells us in 1:13 that we are to "prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Peter seems to put special emphasis on the certain and near coming of the Lord when he says in 4:7 "The end of all things is near". By saying this, Peter is not saying that all is going to be destroyed, but that upon the Lord's return to the earth all things as we know them now will be changed when He rules and reigns for 1000 years in righteousness. As in Peter's day, we live in a time of unrighteousness. Governments institute unrighteous laws and pervert justice to suit their world view; one of rebellion against the Word of God and God's Son. As believers we look forward, with anticipation, to the return of our Saviour!

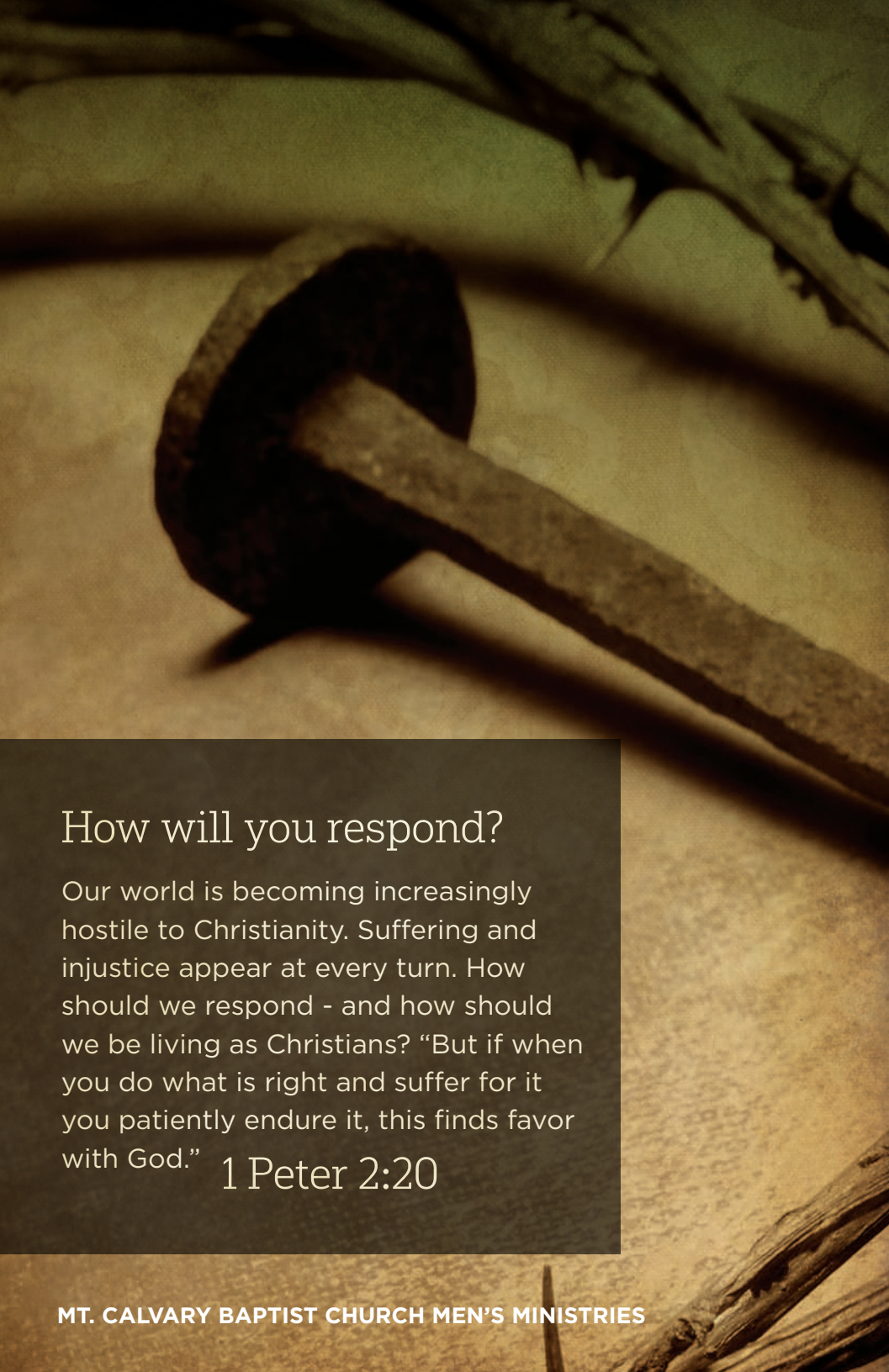
Because of the Lord's imminent return we should be of "sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer (literally prayers- all kinds of prayers). We constantly hear the opinions of the world, clamoring for our affections and minds. We must "gird up the loins of our mind" and get sound judgment and a sober spirit from God's word. World philosophy twists the mind so that we do not think God's thoughts after Him and thus we do not have the "mind of Christ" in making decisions that would direct our lives in ways that please the Lord. "Saturation bombing" was a term used in the Viet Nam war. It simply meant that the B-52 bombers from Guam would fly over an area of North Viet Nam and bomb every square foot of a particular area so that everything was devastated. As believers we need to saturate our minds with the Word so that we are of "sound judgment and sober spirit" and are able to offer up scriptural prayers of all kind to Him who is able to do abundantly above all we ask or think.

Peter gives several subordinate commands and instructions to his readers in verses 8-11. In verse 8 he places love for “one another” above all of them. This “agape” love that we are to have for one another is also an indication that we love God. John says it plainly in I John 1:9, 10. “The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now, The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause of stumbling in him.” We are to fervently love one another. The idea is that we are to take great delight in loving the brethren. This kind of love forgives sin and perceived wrongdoing toward us. May the Lord help us to have godly love for one another.

Peter admonishes us in verse 9 to be hospitable to one another. Being hospitable in Peter’s day did not simply mean polite and welcoming. It meant, as demonstrated by the believers in the book of Acts, to be willing to give up personal property or other worldly goods so that the needs of others might be met. We live in a world of “me, mine, and ours.” As God’s children we should first of all recognize that everything we have belongs to God and He has loaned all that we have for the purpose of furthering His kingdom. Being hospitable with our time, talents, and resources may mean that others may have the ability to minister the gospel in places and ways that we never can.

Peter tells us in verse 10 that we have all received a special gift. We certainly can see this in the multi-gifted assembly of Mount Calvary Baptist Church. Some of the members of this local assembly have multiple gifts and others one gift. Whatever the gift, it is a great delight to see them “employ (put to use) these gifts in serving one another.” What a joy to belong to a church which exercises its gifts as “good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Whether serving as greeters, parking lot security, ushers, singing in the choir, teaching, or being a prayer warrior, we all can be good stewards of the manifold grace of God and one day hear from the Lord, “Well done that good and faithful servant.”

Peter brings to conclusion this section in Verse 11 when he reminds us that when we speak we are “to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God.” Whatever God says is what we are to say and however God says it is the way we need to say it. As we go about being witnesses (telling what we know) of the gospel we need to be clear and plain with our listeners. Being vague and undecided about what God says about any subject can give the listener false conclusions about his condition before God. Peter goes on to say that we need to remember that our service for the Lord is not in our own strength but “by the strength which God supplies”. This is a critical area of which all believers should be aware constantly. So many times we rely on our own wisdom, our own strength, or our own abilities. Whenever we do this we are in danger of glorifying ourselves. Peter says that we are to speak and to serve in the strength that God supplies “so that in all things God may be glorified (His name made big).” May the Lord help us to speak and serve God that He may be glorified through Jesus Christ, “to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”



How will you respond?

Our world is becoming increasingly hostile to Christianity. Suffering and injustice appear at every turn. How should we respond - and how should we be living as Christians? "But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God." 1 Peter 2:20