



Hope in Suffering

A KID'S COMPANION TO 1 PETER

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To those suffering throughout the world for Jesus. May he strengthen you and help you, may he uphold you with his righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10).

© Katelin Chew, September 2024

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Using This Book

Welcome to *Hope in Suffering: A Kid's Companion to 1 Peter*! I'm so very excited we're going to begin this journey together. This is a journey that may feel hard at times but learning about God's Word and digging into it is a habit that will change your life. Let me explain how this will work. My hope is to shed some light on what you're reading. Sometimes the Bible can talk about people, places, and culture you may not understand. By using this Companion, I hope to illuminate some of the things that are most confusing or hard to follow when you start studying God's Word. Please know that if you read anything, read the Bible. Don't read this and think it covers everything. I will do my best to try to present a helpful tool, but if you only have time to read this book or the Bible, choose the Bible every time; it is the living, active Word of God.

That being said, my hope is to help you on your journey. This book provides a summary and some explanation of the events in 1 Peter, section by section and chapter by chapter. It's like if your friend tells you what happens in your favorite show. You get an idea of the plot, but still want to see it for yourself. The same is true with this and the Bible—I will give you highlights and extra information, but you get to check it out for yourself. Also included will be little pop-ups in the form of sticky notes. These will be titled "Who's Who?" "Say What?" "Where in the World?" and "Did You Know?" These are little notes that will help you to tie historical and cultural facts to what is happening, explain words, or give information on who is being talked about and why they're important to the story. If you come across something underlined in the main body text, you'll know there is a corresponding sticky note.

Who's Who?



This note will highlight a person or group of people. It will tell you what they did and, in some cases, where you can see more of their story in other parts of the Bible.



Say What!?

This note will define words that may be tricky to understand or are really important to know as you learn more about Jesus.

Where in the World?



When you see this note, be prepared to learn a little bit more about a place in the Bible. These may include maps, historical facts, or cultural information from sources outside the Bible.



Did you know?

This note will cover anything else that would be useful to understand what you're reading, or simply things that I think are interesting.

Finally, throughout this book, you will see sections called "Hope That's Alive." In 1 Peter, Peter tells the churches that they have living hope in Jesus. With Jesus as the Living Hope, our hope in him is also alive—it is growing and forming us into who he wants us to be. These sections, therefore, will offer extra thoughts, discussion questions, or practical ways for you to apply what you're learning and help your hope to come alive.

I can't write about everything, and you may have questions I don't address. Ask your questions anyway! Ask a parent, and if you don't get an answer there, find a pastor or someone who can point you in the right direction. The beauty of digging into God's Word is that you will always have questions. I've been walking with Jesus for a while, and I still have lots of questions. Never let questions or confusion discourage you because God is always in the process of revealing himself to those who seek him. We need only to ask for his wisdom. So ask and seek him! Seek him in prayer, in the pages of your Bible, in the daily activities of life, and even in the pages of this book. Now I want you to turn your brain on and get ready to learn about the heart of God through the book of 1 Peter.

A Note to Parents

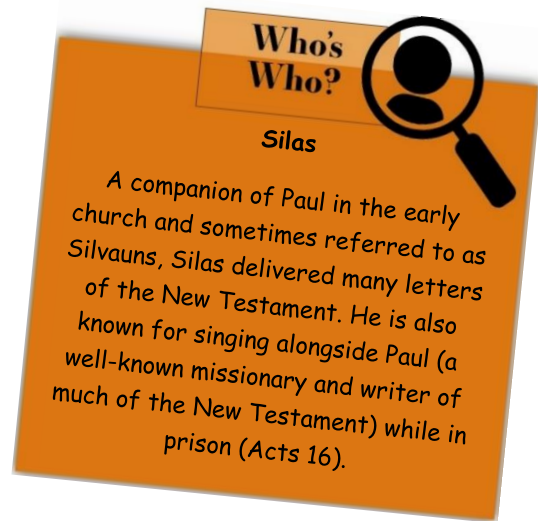
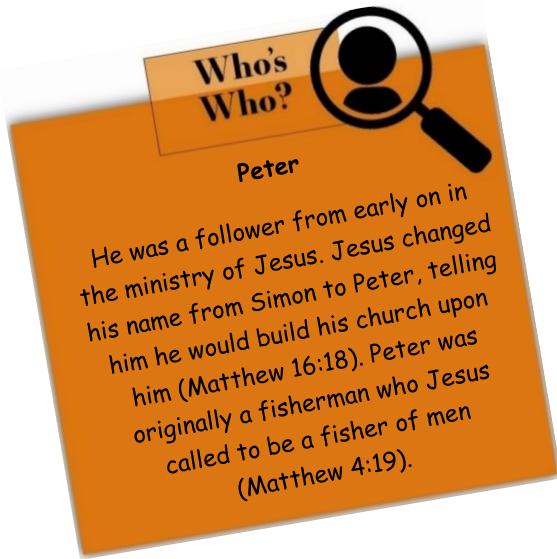
I read the Bible as a kid, so I know how it can feel overwhelming or just too hard. As a mom, I've also read the Bible to my kids, which is hard in its own way. My prayer is that this book will guide you and your family's study and help to light a path. One tip that I have used with my own children is to read the Bible in **small sections**. Our family does this by using the subheadings within each chapter of the Bible. Some days I'll read aloud for one section, and my kids will be ready to move on to another activity. Some days they'll want to keep reading. I let them dictate the pace. Because I've found this to be so helpful in my own family, I have divided this book into subheadings as well. Each of these subheadings relates directly to the latest version of the NIV Bible. Choosing a Bible translation can be difficult, as they each have pros and cons. This translation was chosen based on reading levels and because it is already widely used for children and beginner Bibles.

Introduction to 1 Peter

When we read the Bible, it's helpful to understand what we're reading, who it was originally written to, along with its original purpose. Check out these quick facts about 1 Peter to get a feel for the letter before we begin.

Who:

1 Peter was written by the Apostle Peter and Silas to the heavily gentile churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. The order of these churches listed might have been the route the letter messenger took when delivering the letter.¹



What:

Like much of the New Testament, this was a letter sent to be read and spread in the churches. Peter also wrote a second letter (which we call 2 Peter).²

Where:

Peter likely wrote the letter in Rome.³

When:

Because the letter doesn't mention Paul, it is assumed he had left Rome by this time, helping scholars to date the letter better. It also seems to speak only of small persecutions, rather than the massive persecutions that occurred in Rome beginning in AD 64, it is assumed this letter was written between AD 62- AD 64, though possibly as late as AD 67.⁴

Why:

Peter wrote this to encourage the believers to trust and obey God, lead holy lives, and stand firm, especially in the face of persecution.⁵

Things to look out for:

Notice how Peter speaks of holiness, the sufferings of Jesus, and our eternal hope.

Holy Because (1 Peter 1)

Where in the World?



Turkey

East of Greece, these cities of present-day Turkey were varied. Some were large trade centers while others were remote villages.¹

1 Peter 1:1-2

When Peter writes, he is writing to churches that are in present-day Turkey. Some of these churches were started by Paul, and some may have heard the gospel first from Peter himself.² In Acts 2 after, after Jesus died and rose again, the Holy Spirit came, and crowds gathered as they heard the followers of Jesus praising God in their own languages. Then, Peter preached a sermon and 3,000 people believed. Some of those 3,000 may have traveled home and began

their own churches, those Peter is writing to now.

These churches spread throughout Turkey have something in common—they are strangers or exiles. Outcasts. Foreigners. Ones who don't fit in. Here, we get our first glimpse into why Peter is writing this letter. He wants to encourage and remind the followers of Jesus that, though they may find themselves as outsiders in this world, they have a future hope and a future home that is well-worth

whatever they may endure in this lifetime.³

Along with their common bond of being outsiders, the churches to which Peter writes (and we ourselves) also have the common bond of being chosen by God through the sanctifying work of his Spirit. The Spirit enables the people of God to live lives obedient to Christ. Here, we see Peter showing the work of the Trinity in the lives of believers.⁶

God is above and

beyond time. He knew us before creation and his plans have been from before the beginning. Is that a bit hard to wrap your brain around? It's hard for me, too! But the Bible tells us that God knew us

Who's Who?



Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity (see below). Some of his roles are to convict the world of sin, distribute spiritual gifts, and empower believers.

Say What!?

Sanctify

"The ongoing process where the Holy Spirit works in believers... to make them more like God."⁴ Just like your body is growing and changing, our lives should be growing and changing to look more like God.

Say What!?

Trinity

Trinity means tri-unity or three-in-one. Christians believe in one God that exists as three persons: the Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit. They exist and function together in perfect unity and the single entity called God.⁵

As you read the Bible, know that some things remain beyond us. If we could understand everything about God, he wouldn't be very big!

before we were born (Psalm 139). He knows all and is over all. Peter longs to remind the churches that God is not surprised by what is going on in their lives—he sees and knows. And because we serve a God who is above all things, we can trust that he is at work according to his plans, even if they don't make sense to us. I don't know about you, but that gives me great comfort!



Did you know?

Obedience

The Christian believes that Jesus is Lord, and this is a play on the common phrase at the time that "Caesar is Lord." You see, the Romans considered Caesar their lord, meaning they would obey him as their king. The Christian life, then, is one meant to be marked by obedience to Jesus as Lord and King.⁸

God the Father knows, and he also sanctifies through his Holy Spirit. This idea of sanctification is that we are becoming more and more like Jesus. We are growing in holiness, faith, and love.⁷ The whole purpose of this is so that we can walk in obedience to Jesus by the sprinkling of his blood.

Who is Jesus? What is Salvation?

If you're new to reading the Bible, "the sprinkling of his blood" mentioned in 1 Peter 1:2 might sound a bit strange or icky, but it is one of the most important truths of Scripture. We're going to take some time over these next two pages to explain and understand this, because Scripture hinges on it.

During the time of writing, it was common practice for both Jews and gentiles to offer sacrifices that required killing animals and doing something after with the blood of that animal. From the Old Testament, we see that blood was sprinkled on the Israelites in three different scenarios: after they were given God's law and agreed to it, to become priests, and to cleanse one of a skin disease.⁹ Students of Peter disagree on which is being referred to here, but I can see a piece of each.

Who's Who?

Jews

God's chosen people. Also called Hebrews and Israelites in the Bible.

Gentiles

Anyone that wasn't a Jew.

Say What!?

Old Testament

The Bible is made up of 2 "testaments" or covenants or promises. The Old Testament (OT), in the beginning of your Bible, tells the story of the Israelites, while the New Testament (NT) shares the message of salvation through Jesus. The OT points to a coming savior and we see that fulfilled in the NT by Jesus.

In this section, Peter is discussing obedience to Christ for us as believers, which is similar to when the Israelites agreed to obey the law of God in Exodus 24:5-8.¹⁰ As believers and followers of Jesus, we are also called priests later on by Peter in this letter. Finally, we are all diseased. In the Old Testament, disease and sickness defiled a person, sometimes

Who's Who?

Adam and Eve

Adam was the first man created by God and Eve, his wife, was made from his rib (Genesis 1-2). They lived in perfect harmony with God in the garden of Eden until they disobeyed and ate the fruit from a tree they were not allowed to eat from. This act of disobedience is when sin entered humanity.

to a point where they had to remain outside the Israelite camp (Leviticus 13:46). We, however, are not defiled by sickness but by sin.

This sin entered the human race through Adam and Eve and has plagued humanity ever since.

It disrupts our relationship with God, and it stains us. This sin also has a cost, and that cost is death. Everyone of us should die because of our sins, because of our

Say What!?

Sin

Sin is when we do something wrong, or when we miss the mark (think of throwing at a target and totally missing it). Sin is knowing we're supposed to do one thing, but we do something different.¹¹ Sin separates us from God and would keep us from him forever, but thankfully Jesus paid the price for our sins. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, the cost of our sin is paid when we ask him for forgiveness.

stain before our perfect, holy God. But God, in his great love for us, made a way where we would not have to be separated from God in death. He sent his Son Jesus into the world, and Jesus, though he never sinned, took our sins upon himself on the cross and died the death we were supposed to die. His hands and feet were pierced with nails, and his blood was poured out as a sacrifice for us. This is the blood that sprinkles us—the blood that takes our place when we claim Jesus as our Lord.

Maybe you're thinking, wait, how could someone who died be Lord? And that is a great question. But the answer is even greater: Jesus is not still dead. He died on the cross but three days later, he rose from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He walked the earth for forty days after his resurrection, showing himself and explaining the meaning of everything, then he ascended

into heaven where he sits at the right hand of the Father. And guess what? He's coming back. He is coming back to reign

as King and claim for himself the people that have put their trust in him.

That is the blood we are sprinkled with. And that is why we follow Jesus and seek to know him. If this is the first time you've heard of this, I rejoice with you! This is the good news of Jesus. He died and made a way for you to be right with God. Your choice is whether or not to believe this and claim him as your Lord. You can make the decision right now. You can ask for forgiveness from the stain of your sins and ask God to cover you with the blood of Jesus, then you can figure out what it means for him to be your Lord and live the rest of your days walking with him, learning from him, and growing in him. It may mean that you become a bit of a stranger in this world. An outsider or an

outcast. Your life will begin to look a lot different than the one you led before. As God works in you, keep reading Peter's letter to the churches scattered throughout the world. It will encourage you, teach you, and remind you that you are not alone.

Say What!?

Forgiveness

To give up all claim of a punishment; to pardon.¹² When Jesus died on the cross, he took our punishment, and our debt was paid. We need only confess our sins and seek his forgiveness. Once we do, our sin is removed as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).



Did you know?

Heaven

In the same way Jesus died and rose again, those who believe in him will also be resurrected (rise again) to everlasting life. We will be given new bodies and live forever with Jesus in a new heaven and new earth, where there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain (Revelation 21:4).

Praise to God for a Living Hope (1:3-12)

Who knew you could get so much from the greeting to a letter, huh? If the previous section felt like a lot, don't be discouraged, this is the main purpose of the Bible. That is the gospel: the good news. It's the reason that we are all here and it is why Christians follow Jesus. With all that information on the gospel that we just covered, we can better understand what Peter is writing in the beginning of his letter.

He first praises God for the new birth and living hope we have in Jesus. That hope comes from the fact that Jesus was resurrected and now we can live in hope knowing that we have an inheritance in Jesus that won't spoil or fade. When Peter talks about an inheritance, it's helpful to know a little background from the

Old Testament. The Old Testament speaks a lot about a promise that Abraham received. It was a promise of descendants (or kids) for Abraham and for the land of Canaan, sometimes referred to as the Promised Land. This Promised Land was granted to Abraham as an inheritance that the people of Israel sought after and longed for. But part way through the Old Testament, the Israelites were removed from the Promised Land because of their disobedience and the land was destroyed. They did return, but to a land in shambles.

What Peter wants his readers to know is

that the true Promised Land isn't in Israel—that is just a shadow or representation pointing us to heaven. The real Promised land is found through salvation in Jesus. And this is a Promised Land that gives believers great hope, because we know that we will be resurrected just like Jesus was and live

Did you know?

New Birth

Jesus taught a Pharisee named Nicodemus that to inherit life, he needed to be born again of the Spirit (John 3). Peter picks up on the same analogy here, meaning that our lives will look reborn and totally changed because of the hope we have in the death and resurrection of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹³

Who's Who?

Abraham

Considered the Father of the Jewish people, Abram (later called Abraham) was called by God to leave the land of Ur to go to the land of Canaan. He was promised the blessing of land and offspring that outnumber the stars in the sky. We see this promise fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus was from the line of Abraham, meaning that Abraham's offspring has given new life people outnumbering the stars.

Where in the World?

Canaan

Canaan is modern-day Israel. This land is still violently fought over today.

Did you know?

Salvation

In the original language of the Bible, salvation is talked of in three tenses: "I was saved," "I am being saved," and most frequently, "I will be saved."¹⁴ We are saved when we believe in Jesus as our Lord, but it is also an ongoing, daily process where he is saving us from our old way of living. Finally, it will be complete when he returns.

Say What!?

Repent

Repent means to feel sorry for past actions and long to change.¹⁵ It's to turn from the way you were going and go the other way, towards Jesus.

eternally with him. This inheritance, this Promised Land never spoils or fades. But this is only for those who believe.

See, salvation comes when we confess our sins and repent. It comes when we invite Jesus to be the Lord of our lives. Then, in our faith in him, we are shielded until the fullness of salvation comes.¹⁶ This hope of

salvation can cause us to rejoice, no matter what we face. It is here that we get a first glimpse that the people reading Peter's letter are facing trials. We don't know what the trials are that these people face, but we know that Peter longs to encourage them by reminding them that these trials won't last in comparison to the eternity of heaven.¹⁷ Instead, these trials can help to purify us and make us more like Jesus, just like gold is refined by fire.

Hope That's Alive

I don't know about you, but I don't like trials. Some trials can be exhausting. Some can be hard. Some can be annoying. Some can completely alter our lives. No matter the trial, Peter wants us to know that, for Christians, they can result in the glory and praise of God. Our trials shape us, and if we allow them to, they can shape us to look more like Jesus.

Have you ever seen a person carve a sculpture with a chainsaw? I saw it once at a fair and it was fascinating. I watched a man take a block of wood and, with a really awkward tool, turn it into a beautiful statue of a wolf. Throughout the process, he was hacking and sawing. Saw dust and chunks of wood were flying everywhere. If you looked when he began, you wondered how he could ever turn the chunk of wood into anything other than a chunk of wood. But when he was done, it was obvious why he made every cut. Why he took pieces from here and shavings from there. Somehow, he turned wood into beauty.

God is doing the same with us. Our cuts don't come from a chainsaw, but they often come through trials. What Peter wants us to remember is that, in the hands of the Master Artist, we can trust that God is faithful to use these trials to shape us, so we look more like him. Next time you're facing a trial, I hope you take a moment to pause. Pause and first, thank God for the trial. Thank God that he is able and willing to use anything and everything to help you become more like him. Second, ask God what he wants to teach you. Maybe it's boldness, maybe it's patience. Maybe he wants you to grow in your love and compassion for your enemies. Whatever he wants you to learn, be willing to listen and grow. Then, your trials will be worthwhile and your faith of more worth than gold.

Say What!?

Faith

"Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is our belief and trust in God and his Word.



Did you know?

Refined by Fire

When gold is refined, it is heated to extreme temperatures to remove impurities. Though precious, even this will perish. Faith, however, has an eternal impact and is purified through trials.¹⁸

Who's Who?

Prophets

The main prophets of the OT are found in the books named after them. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel are the longest books, while the 12 shorter books of prophets can be found on your Bible's Table of Contents from Hosea to Malachi.

1:10-12

Peter now says some things about salvation that are quite interesting. He claims that the prophets longed to look into the great depths and mystery of salvation (1:10). These men were used by God throughout the Old Testament, and some of them even predicted both the first and second coming of Christ. Still, they didn't see the whole picture—they didn't know when it would happen, and they didn't fully understand how—so they searched diligently.¹⁹ Peter wants us to rejoice that we now have the understanding of salvation that the prophets of old—the heroes of the faith of the Jews—longed for. We have recognized the Messiah, and we have entered into his saving grace, meaning we get to take part in the glories that are still to come.²¹

Say What!?

Messiah

This simply means "the one anointed by God."²⁰ Today, Jews still await the Messiah. Christians believe that Jesus was, in fact, the promised Messiah.

The whole of the Old Testament is pointing to Jesus and the salvation that comes through him alone. The prophets pointed to him, and the angels marvel at the beauty of salvation that we find in him. Don't let anyone tell you the Old Testament is boring or outdated. It is through the Old Testament that we can recognize Jesus as the Messiah who fulfilled the prophecies of old and will yet return to fulfill even more! And that, dear readers, is something we should marvel at as well.

Be Holy (1:13-25)

The next section begins with the word "therefore." It's helpful when reading the Bible to remember what type of book you're reading. The Bible is divided into different books or genres. Just like you can read a history textbook, a science journal, and a poem, the Bible has different genres. The Bible is still nonfiction- it is

Did you know?

Second Coming

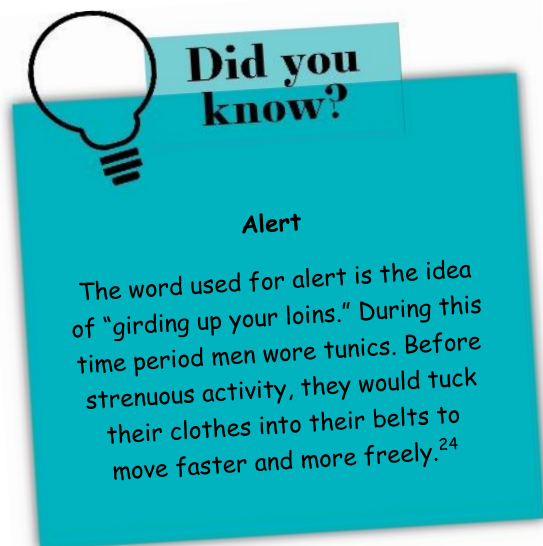
Jesus is coming back! Zechariah, Isaiah, and Daniel predict a second coming of Christ, as does Revelation in the NT. When Jesus comes back, he will judge the people of the earth, separating them into two categories. Those who placed their faith in him as Lord will be rewarded, while those who refused will be removed from his presence to eternal punishment (Matthew 25:31-46).

Who's Who?

Angels

Angels are mentioned over 250 times in the Bible. Their name means "messenger." At one point, some angels rebelled under Satan and are now what we call demons or fallen angels. Pure, good angels are powerful and obedient to God and dazzling in appearance. Angels are not to be worshipped but are to be respected as Messengers and armies of God.²²

true- but some books have a different emphasis. You have the Law, the prophets, history, wisdom, and the letters. Peter is writing a letter, meaning he didn't break it up into subheadings with chapters and verses, he simply wrote a letter. So when we read the Bible and take natural breaks at the subheading, it's important for us to look back and remember what he was talking about in the previous section, because it was all one thought as he wrote it.



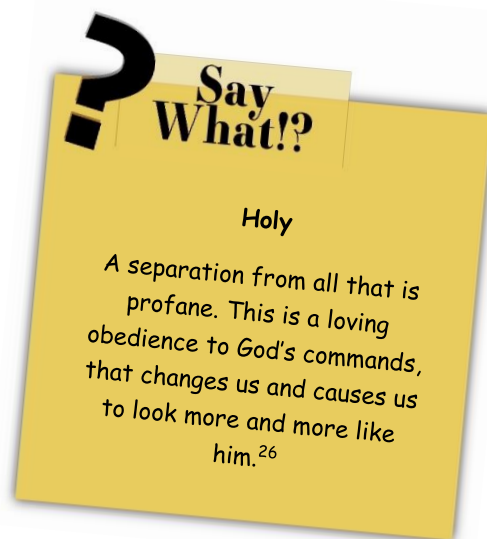
That said, Peter's *therefore* applies to the beautiful truth of salvation he just explained. Because we have salvation, because we are saved and rescued by Christ, we then should be changed from our old way of thinking and living.²³ This is why Peter calls his readers and us to have minds that are alert and fully sober. To be self-controlled and to set our hope on the grace of Jesus. See, Peter doesn't want us distracted. He understands how easily we can forget that we've been saved from our old way of life. We can slide back into bad habits and forget that we have been rescued from sin and darkness.²⁵ He therefore

wants us to be alert and ready to take action against this. He wants us to be holy, just as God who called us is holy.

Hope That's Alive

Holiness can be a church word that gets thrown around a lot, and maybe we hear it and let it pass in one ear and out the other because it seems vague and hard to understand. So instead of focusing on the word *holiness* let's focus on what it looks like. Holiness looks different. Do you remember that Peter is writing to people who feel like they're strangers in the world? They are people who don't fit in. This, then, is an encouragement to them and us. It is okay if we look different from the people around us. Not only is it okay, but it is commanded. We aren't called to fit in, we are called to look like Jesus. I don't mean physically, I mean with our thoughts and words and actions.

The only way we can know what Jesus looks like is to read our Bible and spend time learning from his Word and in prayer. Jesus said to his followers in the book of John that by seeing him, they had seen the Father. One of the reasons he came was to show the world the Father, and his heart and love. The more we know him, the more we can understand what he wants us to do. Maybe he wants us to put away our video games and spend time reading his Word. Maybe he wants us to play with the kid that nobody likes, even if it means we won't look cool. Maybe he wants us to change the way we speak and the words that come out of our mouths.



Say What!?

Convict

To bring to a realization of one's guilt. God convicts us when we recognize something we've done wrong and feel sorry for it.²⁷

The list could go on and on, and trust me, it continues even when you're an adult. Our holiness will never be achieved in this lifetime and on our own. We can't even grow in our understanding of Jesus without his help. But we are still called to try. We are still called to be his obedient children. We are still called to gird up and change from the inside out. This takes time and it takes work. Thankfully, God is working within us by his Holy Spirit to convict us, challenge us, and change us. Out of our love for him and the hope of our salvation, we can obey, trusting that his way is better than ours.

1:17-25

Peter then reminds us that God, our Father, is Judge and he judges impartially (this means he doesn't show favoritism, even to his children).²⁹ This can be a difficult teaching to understand, especially because it is rarely talked about in churches today. What Peter is saying is that the children of God will not get away with behavior that he would not want in others.³⁰

Have you ever seen this? Maybe you have a kid in class who is the "teacher's pet." And even if the teacher's pet does

something wrong, the teacher lets them get away with it because they're the favorite? When that happens, you feel like it's unfair, right? Well, the same would be true if God considered us his "pets." If he let it slide when we sinned, but not when others sinned, he wouldn't be fair or just, but he *is* a fair, just God.

Because of this, we should fear God. We should long to serve him faithfully because he is so great and so mighty, and he poured out his love for us by dying for our sins as a lamb without blemish. But, dear

friends, he is merciful too.³³ He knows that we fail. He knows that we struggle to live lives of holiness. And, amazingly, he tells us that we can ask him for forgiveness. Peter himself knew of this forgiveness firsthand.



Did you know?

Judge

God will judge the world through Jesus one day. Some will be raised to eternal life, some to death. 1 Timothy 4:8 says a crown of righteousness is waiting from the Righteous Judge for all who believe. This could also mean that God is judging or "purifying" his children now through their trials.²⁸



Did you know?

Fear

Fear in this sense relates to awe and reverence, but also to a fear of discipline. It doesn't mean God is harsh or unloving, but Holy and just, and we should respect and fear his discipline.³¹



Did you know?

Lamb without Blemish

In the book of Exodus, the Israelites were in slavery. God warned the people of Israel and Egypt that all the firstborn sons would die. If, however, the people painted their door frames with the blood of a lamb without blemish, they were "passed over." This became a lasting feast for the Israelites, and it points to Jesus, the ultimate Passover Lamb that saves us, not from slavery, but from sin.³²

Before Jesus died on the cross, Peter denied even knowing him three times. He disowned Jesus, he turned his back on him, he failed. Big time. And after Jesus rose from the dead, I have to wonder if Peter thought he was done for. He had to have assumed that he had lost the love of Jesus and lost his place as a follower. But Jesus calls him back. John records a conversation between Jesus and Peter after his denial, and you can read about it in John 21:15-25. There, Jesus asks Peter if he truly loves him, to which Peter emphatically declares he does. Then he tells him to feed his sheep. You see, Jesus knows we'll make mistakes, and he is faithful to forgive those in us. But even then, Jesus called Peter to action. He didn't want him to sit still in his forgiveness. He called him to take action, to feed his sheep, and take part in building his kingdom.

Who's Who?



Isaiah

Isaiah was a prophet beginning in 740 BC (over 700 years before the birth of Jesus). He prophesied to the divided kingdoms of Judah and Israel, and then to Judah alone. He foretold of God's judgment and salvation by the birth of Jesus. His name means "The Lord Saves," and you can read about him in the Old Testament book named for him.

The same call is for us, young readers. We are given such grace and forgiveness, and with that, we are called to pour out our lives for our Savior and Judge. We are called to be born again—no longer living the empty life we lived before, but a life with the purpose of sharing this great love with others. A life with the purpose of becoming more and more like him each day.

To end the chapter with an exclamation mark, Peter quotes Isaiah to remind his readers that they are like grass. Our lives are short. They wither and fade, but the Word of God endures forever. Nothing in this life that we could focus on or live for will last, only God and his Word. This is why we should be holy. This is why we should live our lives differently. This is why we should live with our focus on him, because the message of salvation is what endures.

Stones (1 Peter 2)

Did you know?

Moral

Writings at this time often included moral lists (things people should do) or vice lists (things people shouldn't do). The Bible includes many. Check out Mark 7:21-22, Romans 1:29-31, and Galatians 5:19-20 for a few.¹

As our chapter and verse divisions sometimes do, chapter one stopped in the middle of a thought. Peter was calling us to live our lives as those born again, knowing that they are short, but that the Word of the Lord endures forever. Because of this new life, Peter gives his readers another way to practically live out their faith. He gives a list of habits that people can rid themselves of so they might live moral lives.

Many of the words on this list are words you may have heard but never understood what they mean. When I see a word I don't understand in the Bible, it's easy for me to glaze over and just move on. Though you'll gain better understanding of words as you grow and as your vocabulary increases, I want you to try to develop a habit of searching out the parts of the Bible you don't understand. If you

don't know a word, ask somebody. If something doesn't make sense to you, ask why. Pray, find an adult or mature Christian. Whatever you do, seek answers. There will be parts of Scripture we never fully understand, but we do serve a God who longs to reveal himself to us, so let's ask questions and truly seek out what his Word is communicating to us.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Malice | This word could have been translated "all evil." It includes intent and actions. |
| Deceit | Harming through trickery or falsehood. |
| Hypocrisy | Masking inward evil by looking righteous on the outside. |
| Envy | The opposite of being thankful when something good happens to someone else. |
| Slander | Speech that harms or intends to harm a person's reputation. ² |

Instead of evil, like that listed above, Peter longs for us to crave pure spiritual milk, so that we can grow up in our salvation. Have you ever babysat? Or maybe you have a really young sibling or cousin that you spend time with. If you've ever been around a baby, you know when they're hungry. They cry and yelp and cause quite a fuss until they get that bottle or milk from their mom. Peter wants us to be like that. Not like babies in our faith or understanding, but babies in the sense of how much we desire and need the Word of God that was preached to us.⁴

Hope That's Alive

I wonder if this is a prayer you could pray. It's one I pray for myself and my family often: that we would deeply desire the Word of God. That we would hunger for knowledge, understanding, and love of him. It's so easy to push Bible reading to the side. There are a lot of adults I know who have never read the Bible, or read it very inconsistently. But this is not the life to which we are called. We are called to crave God and his Word.

In the same way that we wouldn't want to go a long time without food, we should not want to go a long time without God and his Word. He sustains and helps us. He guides us. He gives us strength.

Did you know?

Milk

Milk here isn't the same as in Hebrews 5:12-13 or 1 Corinthians 3:2. In those places, their desire for milk is an analogy for how they are babies in their faith, which is bad. Here, it refers to a deep desire for God's Word.³



Did you know?

Good

When Peter says they have tasted that the Lord is good, he is referring to Psalm 34. He meets all our needs, and the Scriptures are his very words. Therefore, we can taste them again and again to know what he is like.⁵

a new light. This is someone who knows the Word of God because he craved the Word of God. As you grow in your craving and knowledge, the Scriptures will come to life for you too, helping you

He establishes us and teaches us. He is so good. So I pray that you would crave time with him. I pray that this study is helping you to taste and see how good he is. And I pray you continue to crave him more and more.

The Living Stone and a Chosen People (2:4-12)

Here we get into a part of Peter's letter that will take some explaining. You see, Peter is about to make several analogies from Scripture to explain the work of Jesus and our role in this new life. I want to point out how beautiful it is that we get to see an example right here of someone who craves the Word of God. Peter is about to start quoting different parts of the Bible in rapid succession, while also taking the whole of the Old Testament and speaking about it in to explain and bring to light ideas for others through the work of God's Spirit within you.

Peter's analogies center around stones. He calls Jesus the living Stone, then he calls us living stones that are being built into a spiritual house, and then he explains from Scripture where this idea comes from.

First, Peter quotes Isaiah, saying that Jesus is the cornerstone. Those that trust in this cornerstone are never put to shame, because they will eventually see the fulfillment of their faith and hope at the return of Jesus, making every moment of hardship and struggle in their life worth it. We who believe see Jesus as precious

and will be honored for it.⁷ Those who believe, then, are living stones being built into a spiritual house.

But then there are those who reject and don't believe.

Concerning those who don't believe, Peter quotes from Psalm 118 saying Jesus was the stone the builders rejected. When Jesus walked the earth, he was despised. The chief priests and teachers of the law refused to believe in him as Lord and had him put to death. However, by this very act, Jesus fulfilled the law and prophets and was raised up, to the glory of God the Father. Unfortunately, this rejection of Jesus was not only done by the chief priests and teachers of the law but has been done by many since. There are many who reject Jesus. They run from him, refuse him, despise him. He therefore becomes a stone that "causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall" (2:8). This stumbling comes from disobedience.⁹ It isn't that they don't know the message, it is that they don't obey the message because this is what they were destined for.¹⁰



Say What!?

Cornerstone

This was the foundation stone that was laid first, and by it all other stones were laid. Jesus is the foundation of our Spiritual house.⁶



Did you know?

Spiritual House

Christians become the New Temple. In the OT, God's glory dwelt in the Temple, laden with gold and jewels. Now the Temple is even more beautiful as it is made of people seeking to live like Jesus by his Holy Spirit within us.⁸

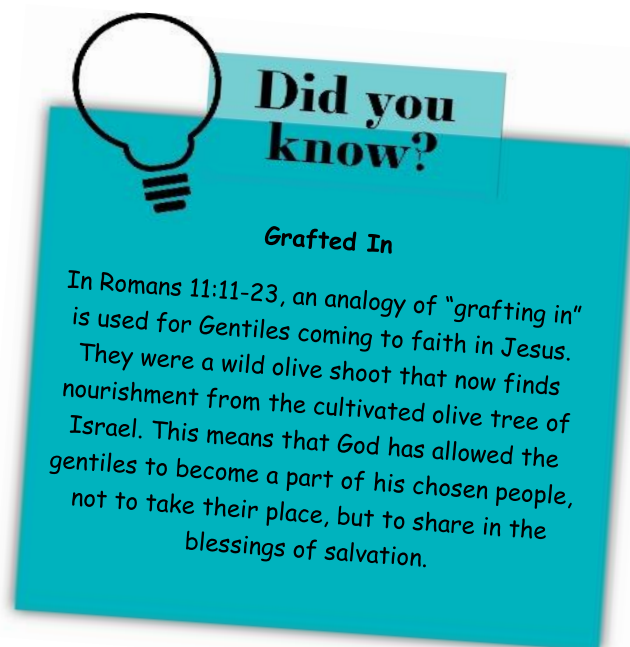
And here comes a very difficult part of the Bible. I want to follow my own encouragement to you and not skip over something because it's hard or because I don't fully understand it. See, even adults struggle and have trouble grasping parts of the Bible. Here, Peter says that some are destined to disobey God. The discussion of this passage and others like it have caused churches to split over their disagreements. Some believe that God could never destine people to death, others claim that he can.

To the best of my very limited ability, allow me to try to explain. God knows everything. He is above and beyond time. He knows the beginning and end of the story of the world before it's read aloud to us. Therefore, he knows that some people will choose him, while others will reject him, but that didn't stop him from creating those who would reject him. That didn't stop him from dying on the cross and offering salvation to all who would choose to believe in him, even knowing that some wouldn't. That is love. Some would wonder, "but then why would God make those who would reject him anyway?" And the Bible doesn't talk much about that. He gives us free will and the ability to choose him. He does not force himself upon us and he will have mercy upon whom he wants to have mercy (Romans 9:14-25).¹¹ And Peter says in his second letter (2 Peter 3:9) that God is patient, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

The truth is, we don't know the end of the story. We don't know people's hearts. Therefore, our role is not to decide who we think should or will be in heaven. Our role is to share what God has done for us and allow him to will and work in whatever way he chooses in our lives and the lives of others.

If it gives you any hope and peace, know that the verb used in Greek (the language the NT was originally written in), could make this verse read: "they are presently stumbling because they are presently disobeying the message." It could mean that some are stumbling now, but that doesn't have to be their story forever. They can still be rescued if they surrender their lives and their wills to Jesus. Peter knows this because later on, he calls for the church to live lives that others may see and give God glory. There would be no point to that if we were called to just give up any hope of the disobedient being saved.¹² Nothing is too hard for God. And he may just use you, your story, and your life, to help one who was stumbling around in disobedience to find him and be rescued.

Peter then draws the contrast of those who believe with those who don't. Those that do believe are a "chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" called from darkness to light (2:9). Here, Peter is making a bold statement. All of these identities that Peter is listing have so far only belonged to Israel in the OT. Israel is God's chosen people. Israel has a priesthood established by God. Israel is meant to be his holy nation that belongs to him. And Peter now calls Christians a part of this, they are grafted in.



Who's
Who?

Levi

The third son and tribe of Israel. The Levites were set apart to God (Numbers 8) to do work in the Tabernacle and later Temple.

Not only do Christians have this identity, but we have an even greater access to God through Jesus. During the time of the Temple, the Jews made sacrifices to God to give thanks or for forgiveness for their sins. The common people, however, were not priests. This honor only belonged to the tribe of Levi. Within the tribe of Levi, there would be a High Priest. The High Priest was the only one allowed into the presence of God in the temple, and even he was only allowed once a year (Leviticus 16, 21:10-12).

But Peter says that now *we* are the Temple.

We have access to God through the blood of Jesus, poured out for us on the cross. We can come into the presence of our Holy, Living God without fear. We can speak to him and hear from him. He is building us into a spiritual house and now we, a royal priesthood, can offer sacrifices. These sacrifices aren't of animals, but the sacrifice of our lives, our desires, and our actions to bring glory to God. We are living sacrifices that can offer praise to God who pulled us from darkness to light.

Did you
know?

Glory of God

When Solomon built and dedicated the first Temple in 2 Chronicles 7, the glory of the Lord filled it so much that the priests were unable to play their instruments. Solomon was so overjoyed that he sacrificed over 40,000 animals. How much more amazing is it that God's glory fills believers?

Hope That's Alive

We, as believers, are living stones. We are the place where the glory of God dwells. Do you see yet why Peter is so concerned about the way we live? Until Jesus, the Temple was where people could come before God. Now, Christians contain the glory of God within them. This is incredible. It is also a great responsibility. We represent Jesus to a world that does not know him. When we claim his name, we must live according to his Word.

Have your parents ever said something along the lines of, "You represent our family, so behave." Or maybe you play on a sports team and the coach reminds you, "When you play, you play for our school. You play for the name on the front of your jersey, so make

us proud." We bear the name of our family or school, and we want to represent that name well. The same is true of following Jesus. To claim the name of Christian is to claim the name of Christ. You represent him. People will see how you live. They will see the choices you make and listen to the words you speak. So ask yourself, am I representing Christ the way he calls me to in his Word? Or am I representing myself and my desires? How can you put on a "Jesus jersey" this week and represent him well? How can you live as a stranger in the world and abstain from the desires that war against your soul? What good deeds can you do this week to bring glory to God?

Living Godly Lives in a Pagan Society (1 Peter 2:11-25)

This point of the letter marks a new section from Peter. His letter began with deep theological truths and offered a few practical commands. Now, he is going to get very practical for his

Did you
know?

Darkness to Light

Think of claw arcade games. The claw drops and pulls a toy out of the game and delivers it to you. We are like the toy in our sin and darkness. God picks us up and transports us into the light.

readers.¹³ Before he called them to holiness, now he will tell them how to be holy. Before he challenged them to be rid of evil, now he will tell them how to act.

Make no mistake, Peter knows this is a battle. He claims in the beginning of the section that these sinful desires are waging war against their souls. We are still in this battle. The battle to live for Jesus is hard and it is daily, but we are called to it for an extraordinary purpose. By our lives, people will see our deeds and glorify our Father in heaven. That is what it's all about, and it starts with submission.



Did you know?

Authority

Scripture is quite clear in our role of submission to governments. The only time it is overruled is when obeying man contradicts obeying God.¹⁴

Submission is a word that makes our culture cringe. When we hear about submission, we feel confined and chained. Most people I know, myself included, buck at the idea of submission the same way a wild stallion bucks at the idea of a saddle on its back. Yet this is what we're called to as God's people, and Peter is going to explain how.

First, Peter calls his readers to submit to authority, from emperors to governors. This would have probably been a hard pill for Peter's readers to swallow, and maybe difficult for Peter himself. At this time, the Emperor of Rome was Nero. Not long after this letter was written, he would

begin widescale persecution of Christians, even killing Peter himself.¹⁷

Regardless of the severity of persecution the believer's faced, Peter wanted them to remember that rulers are set in place by God. He is sovereign and has given us authorities for our benefit. Yes, we're free people, Peter tells his readers, but the freedom found in Christ really makes us slaves to God. Because of that freedom, we are free to show the same patience and love that God showed us through Jesus. We are called to fear God, love other believers, and show proper honor and respect to everyone, including the emperor.¹⁸

Second, Peter talks to slaves—or perhaps a better translation—servants of the household. Please know that Peter wasn't condoning slavery. Slavery also wasn't the same as the horror that was found during the 18th and 19th centuries.¹⁹ In Roman times, slaves sometimes sold themselves into slavery (though most were wrongfully captured as prisoners of war and then sold). These slaves often were skilled workers who ran households and often worked alongside their masters, though the slaves had a lower status. This isn't to say that some didn't mistreat their servants, clearly from this passage, we can see that some did. But the relationship of a master and slave during this time might be more closely related to an employer and their employees.²⁰ Or perhaps, for our young reader's benefit: a teacher and their students.

Whatever relationship example we can try to compare with the relationship found between slave and master of Peter's day, it's clear that there is submission to the authority—no matter if the authority figure is kind or harsh. Peter says that there is nothing commendable to get in trouble for

Who's Who?



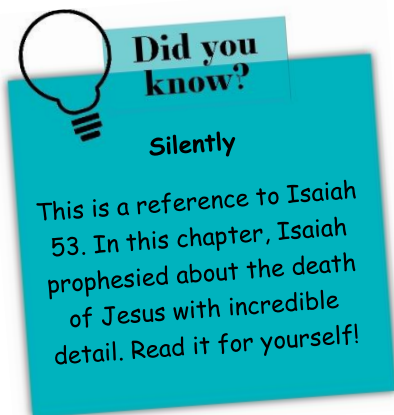
Nero

Becoming Emperor at the age of 17, he reigned from AD 54-68. After a fire in 64 (which the Romans believe he started) he blamed Christians and began a mass persecution against them.¹⁵ Peter and Paul both likely died in the persecution under his reign.¹⁶

doing something wrong. But if you suffer when you do something right, you can know that God sees and commends this.

Hope That's Alive

Once when I was in school, I got talked down to by a teacher because of my faith. It turned out he was an atheist, and he didn't care much for my faith in Jesus. I remember being hurt and angry at that. I didn't really know what to do with it, and I lost a lot of respect for that teacher from that interaction. I wish I had known this passage. Then, I would have realized that, though he spoke rudely to me, I still needed to show him the respect he was due as my teacher. I also would have been encouraged to know that God saw the interaction. He knew that I was being mocked. He is not blind to insults that are hurled at us and he doesn't disregard our feelings. He sees and knows. He knows because he has been there. More on that in a moment, but first, I wonder if you've ever been ridiculed because of your faith. Have you been mocked or degraded? If you have, I hope you forgave that person the same way that Jesus forgives you. I also hope that you can show the person respect and love, just as Peter is calling his readers to. It isn't easy, but it allows us to shine brightly in a world that seeks revenge and paybacks.



1 Peter 2:21-25

We can be certain that God knows how we feel in our suffering because he himself suffered all sorts of ridicule and mockery. Jesus was mocked and beaten and cursed by the very creation he made, enduring it patiently and silently, knowing that his Father would make all things right.

This, young readers, is how we can endure suffering, even if we haven't done anything to deserve that particular suffering. We can endure it because we have the example of Jesus. Jesus was disowned, betrayed, beaten, whipped, and mocked. He was spit on, given a crown of thorns, and laughed at. Yet he patiently endured, trusting that God would make

things right.

Hope That's Alive

Can I take a second to point out here that "make things right" isn't always the way we think of it. Certainly, God can make things right by allowing the other person to face consequences for their sin. But he can also make it right through the very blood of Jesus, forgiving them, and cleansing them of all wrongdoing. This one feels harder, doesn't it? We want people to pay for their sins! We want them to be punished! But we must think of this in light of our own sins. See, our own sins deserve punishment. The very death that Jesus died should have been ours. But he endured it so we might be made right with God. If he could do that while we were still sinners, how much more should we forgive those who wrong us, trusting that God will either punish them or cleanse them, according to his will and purpose. With this in mind, we are more easily able to pray that God would forgive even our worst enemies when they mistreat us.

If you are struggling to forgive someone, can I suggest praying for them? There was a person I didn't want to forgive when I was in college. She had hurt me in incredible ways. One day, I felt prompted to pray for her. My first reaction was, "Her!? No way! Do you know what she did to

me?” But God gently reminded me of how great my sins were, so I began to pray. It was hard at first. But as I continued to pray for her, my heart softened, and I became less angry, less bitter. Over time, my prayers had helped me to truly forgive her from my heart. Think of an “enemy” you have. Try praying for them this week. Ask God to show you how he values them. Ask God to bless them and forgive them. It is difficult, but it might just change your heart, making you more like Jesus.

Submission and Suffering (1 Peter 3)

Submission is no easy topic in our culture today. We long for equality and never want to be ruled over. God, however, shows throughout his Word that submission doesn't equal inequality and that it is an important feature of his design. He is a God of order, and with order comes authority and obedience. In the same way that Jesus submitted to the will of the Father, we are called to submit to those in authority over us. Peter ended the last chapter talking about how slaves should submit to their masters, and he will begin this chapter discussing how wives should submit to their husbands.

Hope That's Alive

Before we begin, know that I'm assuming most reading this book are kids, or kids being read aloud to by their parents. That means this topic of wives submitting to husbands doesn't relate to you yet, and it may never, but we're still going to touch on it. We're going to because I think there is an important discipline to learn while reading the Bible. That discipline is this: sometimes what we're reading may not be "just what we needed to hear." You won't always open the Bible to a perfect passage that meets you exactly where you are. Sometimes you will, and I rejoice that God so intimately speaks to us. But sometimes, you will read things that don't necessarily apply to your life in that moment. Perhaps not at that moment, but someday. And in order to prepare you for someday, it's important to continue reading Scripture. You never know when God will bring something to your mind that you read or learned and help you to apply it to your life. With all that said, let's learn about husband-and-wife relationships.

1 Peter 3:1-7

When Peter is talking to wives, he mentions their submission so they may win over unbelieving husbands. In this time, typically the husband determined the faith of the family. Christianity was a bit radical in the sense that women could come to this faith before their husbands. If they did, it could be seen as an act of disobedience or disrespect.¹ Because of this, Peter wants those women believers to be especially submissive and respectful to their husbands, so they can see the value of Christianity. This doesn't have to involve impressive preaching or persuasive arguments, but simply living out their faith and beliefs day by day.

Submission also doesn't mean the woman is completely disregarded. Think of it this way, you, as children, are called in other places in Scripture to submit to your parents. This doesn't mean your parents have a right to be mean, abusive, and never let you make any decisions. It simply means that, at the end of the day, the parent is in charge. You may think your bedtime should be 10, your parents say 8. You are welcome to request a discussion, to plead your case. If, however, at the end of the day, your parents decide that an 8 o'clock bedtime is right for you, they get the final say. When Jesus prayed in the garden before his crucifixion, he didn't want to do it. But he submitted and asked for God's will to be done. The same is true with husbands and wives.

Peter also doesn't want women to worry about their outward appearance, like their clothes, jewelry, or hairstyles. The true mark of beauty found in a



Did you know?

Outward Appearance

Many scholars do not believe this to be a law against hairstyles and fashion, but against being overconcerned about the outside when the inside (how we act and live) is what matters.²

woman is in gentleness and a quiet spirit. This means not demanding your own way.³ We see this modeled throughout Scripture in more than just husband and wife relationships. We are called to consider others as better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). We are called to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39). We are called to humility. We are called to gentleness (Colossians 3:12). This is where true beauty lies, and this inward beauty should be what women desire.

Who's Who?



Sarah

Originally named Sarai, God changed her name to Sarah. She was married to Abraham. Sarah was unable to have children until at the age of 90, when God blessed her with a son named Isaac. She was known for her beauty, but Peter points out how her submission to Abraham made her a worthy role model. You can read about Sarah in the book of Genesis.

Peter then gives an example from the Old Testament of Sarah. Sarah was called to some difficult things in her life. She left her homeland. She traveled to Egypt. She waited on a promise of children.⁴ Throughout these hardships, though, Sarah followed her husband Abraham, who was called by God. Abraham is known in the Bible for his faith, and I think it would be fair for us to know Sarah by her trust. She trusted Abraham as he followed God, and willingly submitted to him. In times where fear could have ruled her, she trusted in the promises they had received. This is beauty.

Peter ends the section with a note to husbands as well. He

calls for them to be considerate of their wives. This can also be translated to *knowledgable* of your wives.⁵ Husbands are called to treat women with respect as the weaker partner and heirs with them in the gift of life.

Before my girls that are reading this get frustrated with some of the word choices, let's seek understanding. When Peter calls for husbands to be considerate, or knowledgable, he wants men to discover and understand their wives. He wants the husbands to be aware of what brings them joy, what upsets them. Of their goals, their fears, their dreams and their doubts.⁷ It is a beautiful thing to be understood, especially by a spouse.

When Peter uses the word *weaker* partner, he does not mean intellectually or spiritually. He means physically.⁸ It is scientific fact that men are typically stronger than women. At maturity, men are often bigger with higher muscle mass. Wives were called to be gentle in their wills, husbands are called to be gentle in their actions. It is not okay for a man to use his strength against a woman—this is displeasing to God. It is so displeasing, that it actually causes their prayers to be hindered before him. God is always concerned about the weak. Yes, there is authority in government and in households, but those in authority are always called to the high standard set by Jesus: to serve, to lay their lives down, to submit to the Word of God. Submission is hard, but so is using authority in a godly way.

Did you know?



Heirs

To remind men that women are equal heirs with them is to remind them that God does not show favoritism in his kingdom. Men and women are different in their roles, but both are equal. The Bible did much to elevate the status of women at the time of writing.⁶



Say What!?

Exhort

To urge earnestly by advice or warning.⁹

Peter longs for his readers, whether they are in authority or in a submissive role, to follow the example of Jesus.

Suffering for Doing Good (1 Peter 3:8-22)

Peter is going to close out the chapter with another list of practical exhortations. As always, when we come across a list in Scripture, we'll put it into a chart so you can easily see the definitions.

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Like-minded | This is to think and act in harmony. ¹⁰ |
| Sympathetic | Pity or compassion felt for another's troubles or sufferings ¹¹ |
| Love one another | Love in the Bible is self-sacrificial. Here, it applies to loving those within the church. ¹² |
| Be compassionate | A tender heart in actions, feelings, and emotions. ¹³ |
| Be humble | The opposite of pride in both ideas and attitudes. ¹⁴ |

If we put ourself or our churches in this list, I wonder if it would remain true. If I titled this chart "Katie is:" would it be accurate? What if you added your name? Your church's name? After looking at it, if you find maybe you aren't very humble or very compassionate, or like-minded etc. Pick one to work on. In a notebook, write down the name of someone you could love better, and then write down a few ways you plan to show love this week. Or write down an area you could be more humble, and ask God to reveal ways to make you humble in that space.

Then comes Peter's final exhortation of this paragraph. He tells his readers not to repay evil with evil or insult with insult. Instead, he encourages them to repay evil with blessing. Wait, what? Nothing about this is our normal reaction when somebody wrongs us. If someone speaks evilly against us or insults us, at the very least, we often become angry. Many times, we seek

revenge. We want the last word. We want to win others over to "our side" by spreading the same evil talk about others that was spread about us. But Peter calls us to the opposite. He calls us to payback evil and insults with blessings. Why? Because to this we are called.

Once again pulling from the Old Testament, Peter quotes Psalm 34, reminding us to keep our tongues in check, to seek peace, and to live righteously because it pleases the Lord. When we do this, Peter says that we will be less likely to be harmed by others. Who would bother you if you're seeking peace, living righteously, and speaking well of others? If, however, you do suffer from these godly actions, you are blessed.



Did you know?

Psalm 34

This is quoted in 1 Peter 2:3, 3:10-12, and Hebrews 6:5. Written by David when he was on the run, it was likely a favorite of the early church.¹⁶ Read it for yourself!



Did you know?

Blessing

Blessing here means to say kind words. Not just to refuse to respond to the evil, but to actively use kindness in dealing with evil.¹⁵

Perhaps, when Peter thinks of blessing in this sense, he is remembering back to a teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5 where Jesus says, “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (verses 11-12). When we suffer for Jesus, in whatever form that takes, we do not need to fear—it is not unusual, it is not new, but it is seen by God and he will bless us for it.

Take a second here to consider what a person who is doing the mocking or insulting might think. If you were really mean to someone and they simply wouldn’t respond with meanness of their own, would you find that unusual? I would. Peter knows that those who are causing the suffering might notice, too. This is why he then tells the Christians to be ready to give an answer for the faith they profess. He is saying, “People are going to want to know why you’re different, so be ready to tell them!” But when we tell them, we must do it in gentleness and respect. This is the same gentleness he called wives to earlier in the chapter—a gentleness that doesn’t demand it’s own way.¹⁷

We cannot make people come to Jesus. We cannot change their hearts. That is not our job, it is the job of the Holy Spirit. Our job is to simply be ready to provide and answer for the hope we have, and allow God to work in the hearers heart. The way we suffer and the way we respond to insults might be just what God uses to bring others to him.

Hope That’s Alive

Have you ever thought about the reason for the hope you have? Have you ever thought about why you follow Jesus? We are called to be prepared to answer people that want to know why we’re different. This has two parts to it. First, we must live differently. If our actions are like everyone else’s when we suffer or even in how we go about our daily lives, how will anyone wonder about Jesus from watching us? If we curse, if we gossip, if we lie, cheat, and steal, if we return evil for evil and insult for insult, why would anyone think we’re any different from them? If, however, we return evil with blessing, if we live lives that look radically different from what others are doing, and flee from temptation when we want to give in, people will notice. That’s the first step.

The second step comes when people do notice that we’re different. It’s then that Peter calls us to be ready to give a reason. Our reason comes from Jesus. His death and resurrection made it possible for us to come to him and be forgiven for our sins. His gift of the Holy Spirit enables us to live lives that look different, lives that glorify him. Take a moment to reflect on why you follow Jesus. What has he saved you from? How has he changed your life? Then, when you’re asked, you can give an answer for the hope you have.

1 Peter 3:18-22

Verses 18-22 are some of the most heavily debated verses in the New Testament. We won’t go into a deep dive here, but I do want to offer you the main questions people have on this passage, and the three main interpretations that scholars offer. The three questions are as follows:

1. Who are the Spirits?
2. What did Christ preach?
3. When did he preach?¹⁸

With those questions, people have mainly come to three different views for various reasons.

View #1

After Jesus died but before he rose, (though some say after his ascension) he preached to fallen angels in Hell that his victory was won.

View #2

Jesus preached to human spirits in the realm of the dead, proclaiming his victory after his death, but before his resurrection. Some suggest he offered them a second chance at salvation, but this is misleading, as Scripture never offers a "second chance" to unbelievers after death.

View #3

Jesus preached through Noah to the unbelievers during the time of his building the ark.¹⁹

Who's Who?

Noah

Noah was a descendent of Adam (10 generations later). His name meant that He would comfort the people in the labor and painful toil of their hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed. (Genesis 5:29). He lived righteously and found favor in God's eyes. See the story in Genesis 6 and 7.

Regardless of the view you take, the passage takes us back to Noah. Noah is a strong representation of the judgment of God in the OT. When the world had become increasingly evil, God had Noah build an ark. On the ark, animals and Noah's family were saved through the water. Peter uses this as a symbol for the salvation from future judgment. Peter explains that the flood waters don't save us, but the waters of baptism do.

Did you know?

Future Judgment

Jesus spoke of the days of Noah when referring to his return and future judgment of the earth. Check out Matthew 24:36-51.

Say What!?

Baptism

The dipping of a Christian in water to symbolize the washing away of their sin and of spiritual purification.²⁰

Now hold on, because no work on our own can save us. Only the work of Jesus—his death on the cross and his resurrection can pay for our sins and make us alive in him. That is why Peter adds in verse 21 that it is not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience before God that saves us. The water doesn't clean us, Jesus does. We can only have a clear conscience before God when we have confessed our sins and come to him for forgiveness through Jesus. Baptism, then, is an outward symbol of the work of salvation that has already been done in our lives.

If you haven't been baptized and want to know more about what this means, I would encourage you to talk to your parents, a pastor, or a mature Christian. Before Jesus ascended into heaven after his resurrection, he gave what is called the Great Commission. He said, "go

and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).” He told us to be baptized. In the early church, baptism was like the wedding ceremony of a marriage—it made everything official. You do not need to be baptized to be saved, but it is the next step after you’ve decided to put your faith in Jesus and follow him.

Well done, young readers. You have made it quite far through the book of 1 Peter; you’re over half way done! This was a heavy chapter with some difficult teachings, but you made it through! Keep reading and learning, you are laying a foundation for your life that will not crumble, no matter what storms may come!

The Christian Way (1 Peter 4)

Living for God (1 Peter 4:1-11)

As Peter has done throughout his letter, he again reminds his readers of the perfect example to which we look. He points us to Jesus. Jesus suffered in the body and we will likely suffer to for our allegiance to him. When Peter says that he who has suffered in the body is done with sin, he doesn't mean that the person will never sin again. He is simply stating that, when we willingly, peacefully submit to the sufferings of living for Christ, it shapes us to look more like Jesus and to break with our sinful patterns.¹ To suffer for Jesus is a choice against sin.² And the more we look like Jesus, the more we live with his will in mind, the less heed we pay to our own sinful desires, and the less we live for our earthly life.

You see, we lived in darkness long enough. Peter points out a list of sinful lifestyles that his readers used to partake in and tells them that was their past, but their future is Christ. Therefore, they are fleeing from these practices and their old friends don't get it. Their work friends don't get it. Because of this,

they heap abuse on them.

But Peter knows that all will give an account to God. Though people may mock or persecute or even kill the body, Peter wants to remind his readers that this is why the gospel was preached. It was preached to the dead so a Christian may live.

Hope That's Alive

Have you ever dealt with anything like this? Perhaps you're young and you've known Jesus for much of your life. If so, maybe you never had a friend group you belonged to that wasn't Christian that participated in an openly sinful lifestyle. But if you're older, and you're just learning about Jesus, this passage probably speaks strongly to you. When we come to Christ, a change occurs. We no longer live the way we used to live, we no longer do the things we used to do, and this causes an upset in our friend and school or work circles. Suddenly, we get uncomfortable with the things being talked about. Suddenly, we don't want to do the things we used to do because we know they are wrong. And this can cause our friends to turn against us. It caused the churches to whom Peter is writing the same problem.

To you, I would say something similar to what Peter said. I would encourage you. I would remind you that this isn't your home. I would explain that these troubles are temporary and that suffering only lasts a while. I would help you to remember the high cost at which your life was bought and hope that you realize there is nothing in this world that can truly satisfy—no friendships, no activities, no lifestyle. All of that is empty. Our fulfillment comes from Christ, from being made



Did you know?

Sinful Lifestyles

This list involves many of the common practices of the Greeks. From work festivals to religious practices, Peter reminds his readers that the culture and lifestyle they once took part in has no place in the life and culture of a believer in Christ.³



Did you know?

Dead

The phrase preached to those dead could mean those who were spiritually dead before or those who heard the message and believed while living, that have since died.⁴

into new creations by his death and resurrection, from living a life of holiness—no matter how others react—and from fixing our eyes and hearts on our eternal home. This is no easy task. Much of the New Testament is a reminder of this to the people. But through the power of the living God at work within you, you can endure the heaping abuse, you can endure friendships that end, you can endure dying to your old life and living a new one for the hope to which you’ve been called.

Who's Who?

Moses

Born into slavery in Egypt, Moses' mom placed him in the Nile where the Egyptian princess picked him up and raised him. He would later flee from Egypt and return to lead the Israelites out of slavery to the edge of the Promised Land. His story is found in Exodus.

1 Peter 4:7-11

That hope we're called to is near. After the Spirit came at Pentecost, the final age of history came about. From sin entering the world through Adam and Eve, to the flood from which Noah was saved, to the promise given to Abraham, to the law given through Moses. Finally, to the freedom and redemption given through Christ by his death and resurrection—the fulfillment of the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament, he

poured out his Spirit and the church was born.

Make no mistake, this is the final age before the return of Jesus. We have no idea how long it will last—that isn't for us to know. But there will come a day and a time when Jesus, like a thief in the night, returns to judge the living and the dead. He will then make his dwelling among us and those who have accepted his grace, dying to their old way of life and being born again in him, gain eternal life with Jesus. Those who do not will face an eternal death, separated from him in the torment of Hell. Therefore, we must be clear-minded and self-controlled so we can pray.

I wonder if Peter is referring to this because he learned this lesson once before. There was a time when Peter was neither clear-minded nor self-controlled. On the night Jesus was arrested (leading up to his death on the cross) he asked Peter and others to pray. Peter and his friends, however, fell asleep. When Jesus returned to find him sleeping, he asked Peter: “are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mark 14:37-38). You see, Jesus knows and Peter learned that prayer helps us to not fall into temptation. In prayer, we have access to the

Say What!?

Pentecost

This was a Jewish feast to celebrate the giving of the law to Moses and the Israelites, also called the Festival of Weeks. You can read about it in Leviticus 23. Now Christians celebrate this for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Where in the World?

Hell

Hell is a lake of fire, created and prepared by God to be the eternal confinement for the Devil and his followers. The Devil isn't “king” of hell, that is his prison. Jesus actually talked more about Hell than heaven; not to scare people—to warn them. Jesus loves us so much that he gave his life so we might choose forgiveness and grace and not go there.⁵



Did you know?

Love

When it says love covers a multitude of sins, it doesn't mean that it atones for them like Jesus did on the cross, it means that love forgives and does not stir up strife or broadcast sins. Christians can forgive because they have been forgiven.⁶

Creator of the universe. We have the ability to enter the throne room of God through the precious blood of Jesus. We can ask for help. We can ask for strength. We can ask for guidance. So pray, dear readers. Live clear-minded and self-controlled lives so that you can pray and stand firm.

And love. Love is the high call of the Christian life.⁷ Jesus said people would know us by our love (John 13:35), and Peter calls his readers to that. Primarily, this command to love is meant within the Christian community⁸ (though other places in the Bible also encourage us to love those outside), through hospitality and the use of our gifts.



Did you know?

Hospitality

This originally meant offering food and lodging the travelers for two or three days without an expectation of payment.⁹

The gifts Peter is referring to are the gifts of the Spirit. Though many places in the Bible give lists of these gifts, they're all different. It is assumed that these lists don't necessarily cover every gift from the Spirit, but those to which the writer of the letter was emphasizing.¹⁰ Rather, the gifts of the Spirit are so vast and varied, that we can be amazed at how God uses our physical talents and abilities that we may have been born with, and also supplies us with greater spiritual gifts and talents when we come to him. Here, Peter doesn't give a long list of gifts, but gives two categories of gifts—ones for speaking and ones for serving.¹¹ Whatever category our gifts fall into, we should use them as if speaking for God or serving in the strength he provides so that God may be glorified.

Suffering for Being a Christian (1 Peter 4:12-19)

Peter begins this section with a reminder to his readers that suffering should be no surprise to them. This is not strange or unusual. Jesus faced suffering, and we can expect it to. Instead of fear or confusion as to why we're suffering, Peter calls us to rejoice. Maybe you're thinking, wait, what? Why would I rejoice in that? First things first, we are not meant to seek out suffering, but we are meant to know that suffering is to be expected when you're a Christian. The reason we can rejoice in this suffering is because God is using it to make us more like him. That same idea of the refiner's fire from chapter one of 1 Peter is present here—God uses sufferings in his people to shape and refine them, helping them on their way to holiness.¹²

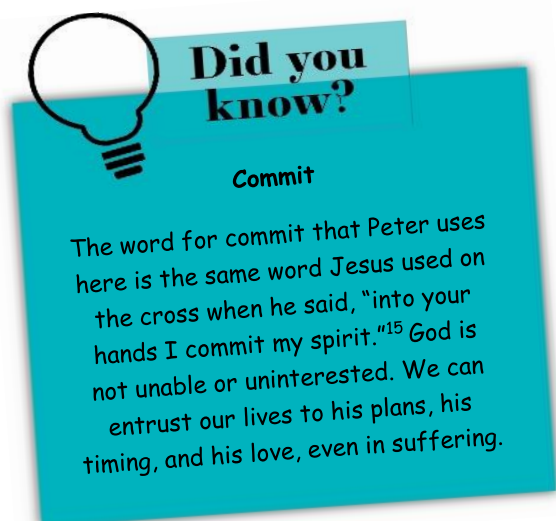
Not only can we rejoice because God is shaping us, but also because we bear his name. To be punished for being a Christian means that you are acting differently enough for people to notice. If you are suffering ridicule or mockery because of Jesus, rejoice that people see a glimpse of him in you! Of course, you won't do this perfectly, but at least people recognize you belong to Jesus. It's this belonging to Jesus for which we should suffer—never as criminals or meddlers—that wouldn't be bearing the name of Jesus well. Suffering may come, Peter knows, but let it come for our trust and faith in Jesus, not breaking the law.

Hope That's Alive

Perhaps this is news to you. It's very rare in churches today that we talk about the suffering associated with following Jesus. We often only talk about the "good" parts. Hear me out, suffering for Jesus is a good part, because he is using it to make us more like him, but it often doesn't feel like it at the time. You see, in Christ, there is life and hope and love and peace, greater than anything we can imagine. But there is also a death. A death to the ways of the world. A death to the way you used to live. A death to your own will and desires. And this is hard. This brings on rebuke and ridicule from others who don't follow the way. So if you were taught that loving Jesus is this beautiful joyride through life, I would encourage you to read a Gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John) and to read the book of Acts. In these books we see story after story of hardship and ridicule. Suffering and even death. I don't say this to scare you, but to warn you. Jesus himself told his followers to count the cost before deciding to follow him (Luke 14:25-35). He said that if the world hated him, it would hate them (and us) as well (John 15:18). No, this journey is not easy. But we have his Spirit at work within us, we have a community of believers all around the world enduring the same things we are enduring, and we have a hope that is eternal—outlasting any form of suffering we could face here. So take heart, young readers. Your suffering is making you new. It is refining you and purifying you. It is shaping you to be more like Jesus. And in the end, when you see Jesus face to face, it will be so worth it.

1 Peter 4:17-19

Returning to Peter, he says that the judgment of God is starting with us. This doesn't necessarily mean a judgment of condemnation. Rather, it means that our suffering is purifying us. It is judging us and removing what should not belong in the life of a Christian.¹³ A future judgment will come. And there, those who have not walked with Jesus will be condemned and separated from Jesus in eternal life. The eternal outcome for unbelievers, Peter is expressing, will be far worse than the suffering of Christians now.



Then Peter quotes a proverb about how it is hard for the righteous to be saved. This doesn't mean that God is struggling to save us. He isn't too weak. Instead, it is a strong reminder that none of us deserve to be saved.¹⁴ We all deserve death. We all deserve eternal separation from God. But through the blood of Jesus, we can be made right. We can have life. Because of this, we can commit ourselves to our Creator. He is beyond powerful. He is all-knowing. He is mighty. He is near. Because of who he is, we can continue to do good, committing our ways to him.

Final Instructions (1 Peter 5)

To the Elders and the Flock (1 Peter 5:1-11)

Who's Who?

Elders

These were the leaders of local congregations, usually older, wise men.¹

Peter begins the final portion of his letter to the elders of the church. Himself an elder, Peter reminds them of their call to be shepherds of the flock. The analogy of a shepherd is used commonly throughout the Bible. Moses and David were shepherds before they led the people of Israel. Jesus also calls himself the Good Shepherd (John 10). Finally, when Jesus reinstates Peter, he tells him to feed his sheep (John 21).

Throughout these analogies, we, the people of God, are the sheep. You see, sheep need quite a bit of help. They are considered very fearful animals and they are easy prey to the predators of the world. Sheep need a protector. Because sheep are known for following their shepherd's voice, they also need guides who will lead them well.³ Peter calls the leaders of the church to be those good guides, since they are under the Chief Shepherd. His call has three things the elders should do and three things they shouldn't.⁴

First, Peter calls for these Shepherd-elders to watch over their flocks willingly—not because they are forced into the role. God wants eager, humble servants.⁵

Second, Peter calls on his elders to be eager to serve rather than seeking dishonest gain. This role of elder is not to be pursued for money, but for serving. Jesus himself claimed that he didn't come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom (Matthew 20:28). With him as our perfect example, leaders of the church should always be looking for ways to serve rather than gain something for themselves. Finally, Peter calls on his leaders to be examples. They are not to lord over others, making demands and treating their flock harshly as

people under them. Rather they are to lead by example, showing their flock how to serve and live for Jesus, resulting with those leaders receiving a crown of glory.⁸

Peter then shifts to the younger people of the church. He calls them to submit to those who are older and for all to clothe themselves in humility towards one another. Do you see how submission is woven throughout the layers of the church?⁹ Elders submit to the Chief Shepherd, younger submit to the older. If all are *truly* walking in submission to their leaders and the leaders are walking in submission to Jesus and the Word of God, we have no need to fear the word submission. We can trust that our Good Shepherd will lead and guide his church with all grace and beauty.

Did you know?

Shepherds

Shepherds in this day led their sheep, they didn't drive them from behind. Church leaders are called to lead by example like shepherds.²

Did you know?

Money

It is not wrong to be paid for work within the church—some elders in this time were paid. But to be driven by greed and selfishness is wrong.⁶

Did you know?

Crown of Glory

Winners of the Isthmian games (like our Olympics) were given a wreath of withered parsley. How much greater is a crown that doesn't fade?⁷

In light of that trust in a Good Shepherd, Peter says we can cast all our anxiety on him because he cares for us. This word for cast is a decisive action.¹⁰ We must choose to do this, sometimes again and again. See, anxieties will come in life. Our call as Jesus followers is to cast them on Jesus each time they arise.

Hope That's Alive

The world today is full of talk about anxiety. Though this talk isn't a bad thing, it is important that we have wisdom about how people say to handle anxiety. A lot of the world's advice for handling anxiety is to focus on ourselves and our habits and our own mind space. The Bible is contrary to this. The Bible calls us to focus on Jesus, to cast our anxiety on him. To seek his face and his purpose. Focusing on ourselves often leads to greater anxiety and greater selfishness, whereas Jesus calls us to focus on him and serving others. You would be amazed at how looking to the hardships and difficulties of someone else can guard your mind from your own selfishness and fears.

I don't mean to make light of anxiety. I myself have had moments where fear felt like it would swallow me up. Where hopelessness and stress clouded my thoughts. I only speak from experience when I say that the more I focused on those fears, the greater the spiral became. When I acknowledged my fears and then decisively and prayerfully forced myself to focus on Jesus, I began to feel peace in the midst of the struggle against fear. So seek him, dear children. Our God is wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:25). His Word is our counselor (Psalm 119:24). He is our peace (Micah 5:5). He is steadfast in all times of trouble (Psalm 46:1). He is sovereign- over all and above all (Colossians 1:17). He is in control (Philippians 3:21). It is to this Good Shepherd that we can continually throw our fears and anxieties. And in him, we can find and rest in lasting peace.

Who's Who?

The Devil

Also called Lucifer or Satan in the Bible, he was an angel of incredible beauty. However, in his pride he wanted to overthrow God and brought many angels with him. He was the serpent in the garden who tempted Eve, ushering sin into the world. His goal is still the same, to create his own kingdom. He wages war against all, through deception, discouragement, and accusation. Thankfully, he is a defeated enemy because of Jesus' death and resurrection.¹¹

1 Peter 5:8-11

Peter's final call to his readers is to stand firm against our enemy the devil. Peter longs for his sheep to be alert and sober-minded, because the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking to devour us. Oof. That sounds a bit scary, huh? If I came into your house and told you there was a lion outside, how do you think I would have said it? "Oh by the way, I saw a lion on my way here." Or would it have been more like me, sprinting through your door, panting with exertion, slamming the door shut and yelling, "There's a lion out there!" I think it would be more

Say What!?

Alert

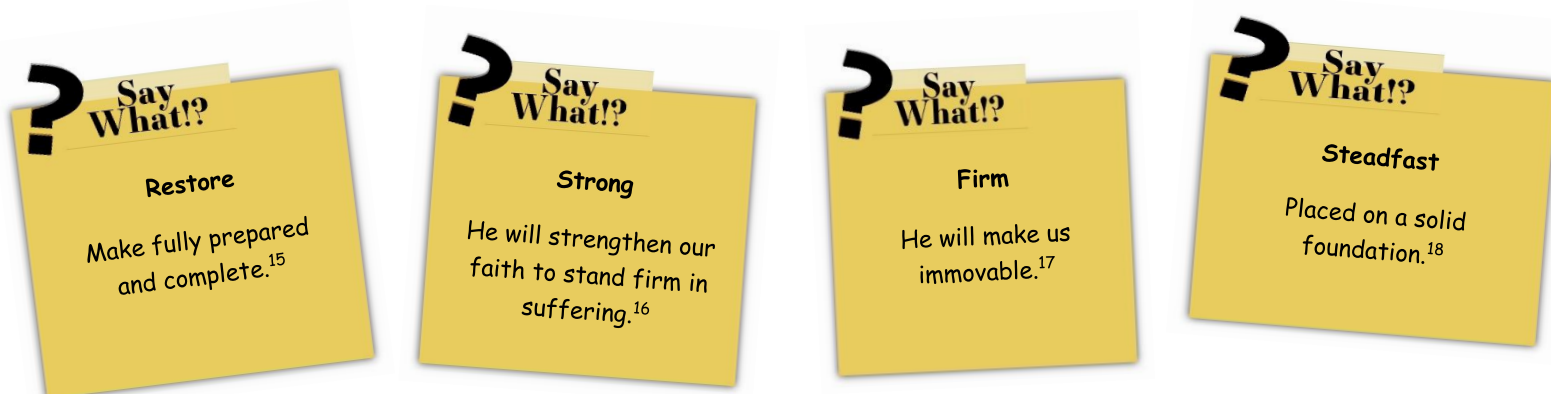
To be on watch like a soldier.¹²

Sober-minded

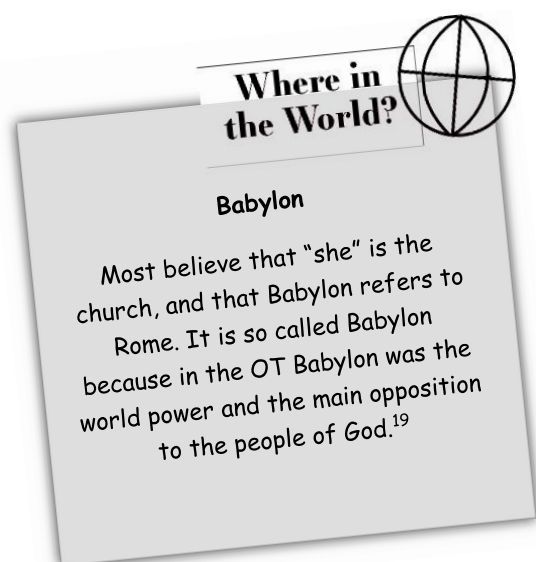
To be self-disciplined and to think rationally, not foolishly.¹³

like the second, don't you? And that seems to be a cause for alarm. There is nothing casual about a lion, and Peter wants us to be aware.

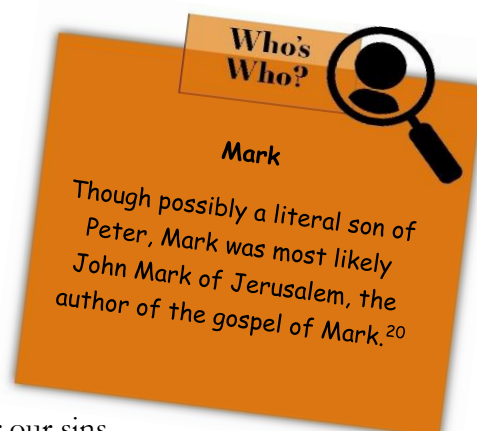
But there comes great hope from his next sentence. Peter calls the church to resist the devil, standing firm in the faith, because others throughout the world are undergoing the same sufferings. We can resist this lion.¹⁴ The devil has no power over those of us who belong to Jesus. The Bible says that "greater is the one who is living in [us] than the one who is in the world" (John 4:4). Yes, we must be aware of the devil and his schemes, but this awareness shouldn't lead to fear. It should lead to a steadfast holding of our faith and trust in our Good Shepherd, who is far more powerful than the devil. As we cling to the God of all grace, we know he restores us. He makes us strong, firm, and steadfast. Rest in that today, young readers. If you don't feel strong or firm, know that in 2 Corinthians 12:9 Paul is told that God's power is made perfect in weakness. Have no fear if you feel weak. Your strength is not your own. Your strength comes from the Spirit of the Living God at work within you. So cling to him today. Hold fast to him today, because his is the power, forever and ever.



Final Greetings (1 Peter 5:12-14)



We have made it to the end of our letter and the end of our time together. Peter has written briefly with the help of Silas, encouraging his flock to firmly stand in the grace of God against all trials and suffering. Peter sends greetings from she who is in Babylon, and from his son, Mark, reminding the Christians that they are not alone in their walk with Jesus. He ends his letter with love and peace, the love and peace which is found in Christ alone. The love and peace which enables us to withstand any trial or suffering that this world or the devil throws at us. The love and peace modeled by our Good Shepherd as he died on the cross for our sins



enabling us freedom and the strength to live according to his Word, no matter the mocking or ridicule we face.

I pray you know that love and peace found in the Savlation of Jesus, dear readers. I pray you can stand firm in the midst of struggle and trial. I pray that you can endure suffering for a little while, knowing that it won't last forever. Indeed, it will end someday, and you will see the face of your Savior. You will enter that eternal glory with the King of kings and Lord of lords, knowing that all you endured here was not in vain, but was worth it to enter your eternal home with Christ Jesus. Stand firm, my dear friends, because in Jesus, even the worst of suffering has an ending happier than any fairytale.

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