

The fourth command now comes into play. The word generates life as a seed; it also sustains life as milk.

2:1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

2:2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation-

2:3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Our duty is to long for the word (2:2a), our goal is to grow in it (2:2b), and the incentive to do so is that we have tasted the goodness of God (2:3) (Hiebert, 112).

Peter is not implying that those who he is writing to are immature in their faith, and are still in need of milk instead of meat (contrast I Cor. 3:1-2). Rather, he is comparing the believer's longing for the Word to a baby's longing for milk. In classical Greek, the term "babe" was used of the embryo, the unborn child. However, in later times, it was used of a suckling infant or even small children (Hiebert, 113). When babies are hungry they protest profusely, even if the meal is a few minutes delayed. In fact, when a baby cries, one of the first questions asked is, "Is he or she hungry?" Peter commands believers (the verb is an imperative, not a statement) to desire the pure milk of the Word as a baby desires its bottle.

The Word is active in bringing about salvation, but it is also the nourishment needed for spiritual growth.

Paul told young Timothy that believers are "constantly nourished on the words of the faith" (1 Tim. 4:6). He also challenged believers to "put on the new self [lit., 'man'], which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph. 4:24). The "newness" that we are to put on is the holiness and righteousness which "come from the truth." The process of renewal thus takes place because "the new person is ultimately related to the truth of the gospel and of the apostolic tradition, a moral truth able to give rise to the virtues of righteousness and holiness in those who receive it."

Everything required for our personal Christian growth is found in the inspired Word of God. It is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16).

The Word of God is like food to help us grow. The implications of this truth are tremendous, both for individuals and the church. Because of its nourishing life-giving power, Paul exhorted believers to "let the word of Christ richly dwell within you" (Col. 3:16). Then this richly indwelling Word brings about certain results (3:17-4:1), which are essentially the same as those produced by the filling or control of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18-6:9). This suggests a vital connection between the indwelling Spirit and the indwelling Word. The Holy Spirit fills or controls us as the truth of the Word of Christ is richly dwelling in us. In other words, being "filled with the Spirit" comes about by our letting Him implant the Word of God deeply in our hearts. (Saucy, Scripture, 11-12)

Those who have been born again have gained a taste for the things of God (2:3) as the Psalmist also exclaimed in Psalm 34:8: "O taste and see that the LORD is good."

The phrase, "***put away all malice put away all deceit put away hypocrisy put away envy put away all slander***" in I Peter 2:1 modifies the command to long for the word and therefore is a command as well. This also tells what fervent love entails. Being born again by the word generates spiritual life and moral transformation.

"Putting away" relates to the changing of clothing, but as a metaphor it refers to divesting oneself of ungodly qualities or deeds (Eph. 4:22; Ro. 13:12 [see comments in my notes on Romans]; Col. 3:8). In James 1:21 (see above) it says, we are to take off all filthiness (Zech. 3:4) and lay aside "all that remains" of wickedness. Here we are to put away "all malice, all deceit, along with hypocrisy, envy, and all slander."

- "malice" describes wickedness of every kind
- "deceit" means cunning or craftiness, and originally referred to a bait for fish. It carries the idea of deceiving in order to get what is wanted
- "Hypocrisy" denotes an actor playing a role – the face portrays something different than is really in the heart
- "Envy" is a feeling of displeasure when hearing or seeing that someone has received something you want. Hypocrisy wants to leave the impression that we have something that we lack, envy wants to defame or despise people when they have something that we don't
- "evil speech" is used of speech that degrades or runs others down

We cannot fervently love one another or receive the nourishment of the word if these vices remain and are active in our lives. No residue of wickedness should be left. Nothing from the old way of life should continue to thrive. God is never satisfied with a partial cleaning, being mostly pure or almost righteous. He demands that every bit of wickedness be swept away.

After telling us that having tasted the kindness of the Lord we should long for the milk of the word, Peter tells us how we are to view our relationship to Christ; Jesus is the "living stone," rejected by men but precious to God; we too are living stones joined to Him to build a spiritual house.

I Peter 2:4-8

4 And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

6 For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed."

7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone,"

8 and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

1. Jesus is the Living Stone

In verse 6, Peter refers to Christ as the cornerstone, as he does in his speech in Acts 4:11-12. No doubt he is just repeating what he had been taught; Christ identified Himself as the rejected stone as well (Matt. 21:42-44; Mk. 12:10-11; Lk. 20:17-18).

The word "cornerstone" (akroyoniainos - ἀκρογωνιαίος) only appears in the Greek translation of the OT, 1 Peter, and other Christian writings; it never appears in any Greek literature of the time period (Carson, Commentary of the NT use of the OT, 1026). It seems that this stone is part of the foundation rather than the capstone on top of the wall or an arch (as some suggest), for it is called "a stone of stumbling" (I Pet. 2:8) and it is hard to imagine someone stumbling over a capstone on the top of a building. It is also related to a foundation in Ephesians 2:20-21. In the Book of Isaiah, the cornerstone is both an image of hope that saves God's people, and a rock of judgment that crushes His enemies (Isa. 28:16, 8:14-15). Christ fulfills the function of the cornerstone in Isaiah and in Psalm 118:22; He is the stone which supports the whole weight of the building and is of foundational importance among the people of God in obtaining their salvation, as well as the One who will crush the enemies of God.

2. We are also living stones, being built into a spiritual house with Christ

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The choice of the word "house" over "temple" makes the word ambiguous. "House" can refer to either a dynasty (a people), or a building where deity lives (Jobes, 150). In this verse the emphasis is on a building. Those who come to Christ become living stones who are used by God to build a spiritual building, a spiritual house where God dwells. The fact that this "house" is built in Zion clearly shows that the temple where God's presence resided is in view. Paul said we are "God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:19-22).

There are two words commonly used in Greek that are translated as "temple;" naos (ναός) and hieron (ἱερόν). Naos (ναός) most often refers to the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctuary, where the presence of God resided, or to the holy place that was next to the holy of holies and contained the altar of incense, the table of show bread, etc. The hieron (ἱερόν) is a broader term that includes both the temple precinct and the sanctuary. In the OT the temple building was in the midst of Israel and signified God's personal presence among His people, but the people were never called "the temple." However, in the NT we find that believers are called the naos (ναός) of God, the holy place where God Himself dwells; "Do you not know that you [PLURAL = you people, collectively, that is, the church] are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (I Cor. 3:16)

The imagery of living stones speaks of unity and significance and identifies the purpose of believers. We as a church are meant by Christ to be a corporate dwelling of God in the Spirit. We are joined to Christ and to one another so we can offer up sacrifices to the glory of God.

3. We are a holy priesthood

“We are not merely the passive building where God dwells; we are also the active participants in worship. And not just participants, but a special kind of participant, the priests” (Piper).

The priests brought the sacrifices into the tabernacle in the OT, but now that tabernacle is replaced by the church, and the priests are replaced by you, those who believe in Christ. It is our privilege as priests to draw near to God with spiritual sacrifices.

4. We offer spiritual sacrifices

As priests, God’s people are qualified to offer up spiritual sacrifices.

What are the Spiritual Sacrifices that the believer offers?

In the context, Peter is probably referring to obedience as the sacrifice that pleases God (Michaels, 101), for we are a “holy” priesthood. This reminds us of 1:15-16 where holy conduct is mentioned. But verse 9 also mentions that we are to proclaim the glories of God, which could also be what Peter intended. Whatever the case may be, the Scriptures mention numerous sacrifices we can make to God.

The Sacrifice of Our Lives

Using the terminology of the OT sacrificial system, Paul says in Romans 12:

12:1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

A barrier between God and man exists because God is holy. If God was not willing to accept a substitute for our sin, we would never be able to approach Him. For that reason, the Levitical system of sacrifice was given to man. It was through sacrifice that man could enter the presence of God in the temple. The need for holiness in the presence of God has not changed.

In the OT, only animals that were free of any blemish could be offered to God as a sacrifice. We are to offer a nobler, more spiritual sacrifice – ourselves. Though the expression “your bodies” is nearly equivalent to “yourselves,” Paul probably used it deliberately not only to make a stricter analogy to an OT sacrifice, but also to emphasize that our total being is to be offered (I Cor. 6:20).

In contrast to the sacrifices in the OT where the animal was slain before it was offered, our sacrifice is to be living. A living sacrifice is perpetual. It is not offered once and consumed upon the altar, rather it continues as long as we have life. It must be perpetual, for the presence of a holy God is always with us. It must also be holy. In this context, “holy” is almost equivalent to “without blemish” in the OT. Our sacrifice is to be free from anything which would cause the offering to be rejected.

Lastly, Paul says that our sacrifice is to be “acceptable” (i.e. well-pleasing). In sacrificial terms this is comparable to a “sweet-savor” sacrifice. These were sacrifices in which God took particular delight, for they were free will sacrifices of worship and praise (as opposed to non-sweet savor sacrifices that were offered for sin) – cf. Eph. 5:2; Phi. 4:18.

When we offer ourselves to God in this way, it is a “reasonable (“spiritual” in the NAS is probably a poor translation) service of worship.” “Reasonable” in English can mean that God isn’t asking too much of us. But in Greek, the word means that it is rational. It is worship that comes from the mind. The opposite of rational worship is worship that is mechanical, automatic, or ritualistic. The lesson to be learned from the word “rational” is that we are not “spiritual” in the biblical sense unless our worship is characterized “by conscious, intelligent, consecrated devotion to the service of God” (Murray, 112).

Not only is God to be worshipped in our minds, there is to be a corresponding holiness of life. Verse 2 tells us “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.” The “world” (literally, “age” *αἰώνιον*; not *κόσμος* – kosmos) draws attention to the characteristics of the period that we live in. It is the moral environment, not the physical environment. Satan is called the God of this world (age) in II Corinthians 4:4 (cf. Eph. 2:2). Being “conformed to this world” stresses sharing the same character, values, morals, aspirations, impulses, etc. with the unbelieving, while being “transformed” stresses with equal strength movement in the opposite direction. “Transformation” is a change of appearance from one thing to another (Haldane, 556; Matt. 17:2; II Cor. 3:18). Instead of looking like the unbelieving, the Christian is to be transformed by allowing the truth of the Word of God to change his thinking so that his life matches the new spiritual world into which he has been introduced (II Cor. 3:18). (Notice, the word “transform” is a passive verb. We don’t transform ourselves; rather it is God who transforms our conduct through the renewal of our minds. We are commanded to cooperate with this transformation process.)

The result of a transformed life is that “you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” The word “prove” in Greek can have the meaning of “discern,” “test,” or “approve.” In this case, the believer is not testing God’s will to see if it is good or bad, rather, through the renewal of the mind the Christian is able to recognize (discern) God’s will which is described as “good and acceptable and perfect.” The same thought is found in Ephesians 5:8-10 – “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), proving (finding out by experience, recognizing, discerning) what is acceptable to the Lord.” “The renewed mind, enlightened by the Spirit, and tuned by regeneration to

seek God's glory, will compare the options and thereby perceive what course of action will best please God" (Packer, Rediscovering Holiness, 172).

"This passage involves two facts: first, that God had a plan for our lives, which He is very willing and desirous that we should discover; and, second, that only those who surrender themselves to Him, rejecting conformity to this age, can discover that will" (Newell, 456).

The Sacrifice of Praise and Thanks

Hebrews 13:15: Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

"Through Him" is in an emphatic position in Greek stressing that it's through Christ alone, not the Levitical system or any other means that the worshipper can come to God (cf. I Pet. 2:5). Our association to sacrifice is no longer with animals but with Christ. It is not physical but spiritual.

"Sacrifice of praise" follows the wording in Leviticus 7:12 that describes the peace offering. A peace offering was a voluntary offering that was brought whenever the worshipper chose to render special thanks to God.

This "sacrifice of praise" is further described as "the fruit of lips that confess his name." The wording is taken from the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT in Hosea 14:2. In the original Hebrew it reads "calves of our lips." In other words, we can offer sacrifice (calves) to God through our speech. The sacrifice that pleases God are words acknowledging and praising Him, as well as words of thanks and praise that flow from our hearts.

In Hebrews 13:16 two more examples are given of sacrifices which we can offer.

The Sacrifice of Doing Good

Hebrews 13:16: And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

To "do good" is a general idea, referring to any act that pleases God, while "to share with others" has, more specifically, to do with giving material possessions, experiences, encouragement and comfort.

In Judaism sacrifices were offered at specific times for specific reasons, but there are no circumstances in which praise, doing good, and sharing should cease. According to verse 15, these sacrifices are to be offered continually.

The Sacrifice of Sharing in the Work of the Ministry

Hebrews 13:16: And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Paul calls giving financial support to the work of the ministry ***“a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.”*** (Phil. 4:18)

“The first expression (lit. an odor of sweet smell), appears frequently in the OT, first as a description of Noah’s sacrifice (Gen. 8:21) and then in the directions for the Levitical offerings (cf. Exo. 2:18, 25, 41; Lv. 1:9, 13, 17). At Ezek. 20:40, 41, in an eschatological context, the language is transferred and applied to the house of Israel, whom the Lord promises to accept as “a sweet smelling sacrifice” when He gathers them from the nations where they had been scattered. The original imagery of a fragrant offering is that of God taking pleasure in the odor of the sacrifices that His people offer Him. The expression is then used figuratively of an offering (or those who offer it) that is pleasing and acceptable to Him” (O'Brien, 541).

In the NT the sacrificial death of Christ is called “a fragrant offering” (Eph 5:2). In speaking of the financial gifts of the Philippians as a fragrant odor, Paul is asserting that they are of the highest worth since they are pleasing to God (O'Brien, 541).

The second sacrificial expression in Philippians 4:18 means “acceptable sacrifice” and was the common word used for either animal or grain sacrifices in the OT. “In addition it could include spiritual sacrifices such as a broken spirit (Ps. 51:17) or of the sacrifice of praise (Ps. 50:8)” (O'Brien, 541). Paul uses the term “acceptable” as the goal and motivation of the whole Christian life (Ro. 12:1, 2; 14:18; II Cor. 5:9; Eph. 5:10, cf. Col. 1:10). Financial giving is part of a well-rounded life that brings pleasure to God.

Last week we explored what it means to be living stones that are joined to Christ, the cornerstone, and talked about the kinds of sacrifices that we can offer to God as “priests.”

Although we come to Christ as a precious stone, not all appreciate Him as such. Hundreds of years before Jesus appeared, hostility toward Him was predicted in the image of a stone rejected by the builders.

2:6 For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

2:7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,"

2:8 and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

5. Jesus is precious to God but rejected by those who disbelieve

In I Peter 2:6-8, Peter quotes from three OT passages (v. 6 = Isa. 28:16; v.7 =Psa. 118:22; v. 8 = Isa. 8:14) and shows that there are two building projects: one by men, and the other by God. When assessed by human builders, Jesus is found to be unfit; nevertheless, God has made Him the cornerstone regardless of men's assessments.

Psalms 118 is a psalm of joy that includes both the prediction of the reign of the Messiah (Ps. 118:25-26 cf. Matt. 21:9; Jn. 12:13) and His rejection (Ps. 118:22). It was well known by the people of Israel and was sung by the Levites at Passover to celebrate the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage (Carson, 1027). So this Psalm was being sung during the week that Jesus was crucified (Jn. 12:1; 13:1; 18:28). As the Levites sang Psalm 118, the Psalm itself was being fulfilled before their eyes; Jesus, the rejected stone, was crucified. Furthermore, the parallelism goes even deeper. The deliverance from slavery in Egypt foreshadowed the greater deliverance from the bondage to sin. It was through His rejection that the true meaning of the exodus and Passover came to pass.

The Jews' blindness to this psalm is hard to understand. We know a messianic interpretation of the "foundation stone" in Isaiah existed before the writing of the NT.¹ Nevertheless, the scribes and priests could not see that the same stone was rejected in Psalm 118. This fact is borne out in Matthew 21:33-46 (cf. Lk. 20:9-19). After hearing Jesus tell the parable of the evil tenants who killed the son of the owner of the vineyard and declare that the owner would destroy the tenants and rent the vineyard to someone else, the people responded in horror - "May it never be!" (Lk. 20:16). Though they couldn't help but admit that for such a sin the punishment was just and what might be expected, they could not bear to hear of it. Jesus' response to their horror was to quote from Psalm 118:22-23, Daniel 2:34, and Isaiah 8:14-15 and ask what these passages mean (Lk. 20:17). The assumption is that what should happen to the tenants of the vineyard is self-evident for the Scriptures themselves say: "**The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone (Psa. 118:22)**. Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls (Isa. 8:14-15), it will scatter him like dust" (This is also probably an allusion to Daniel 2:34 that refers to a stone not cut by human hands that comes from a mountain, which is later identified as a kingdom that crushes all the other kingdoms). Jesus then concludes that the kingdom of God shall be taken from the Jews and given to a nation yielding its fruits (Matt. 21:43).

Paul used the same verse with the same application in Romans: "What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written, '**Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and he who believes in him will not be disappointed.**'" (Ro. 9:30-33).

That which humanly speaking could not happen, did! The Gentiles who were not looking for righteousness are the ones who attained it. On the other hand, the Jews who tried to attain

righteousness didn't because they tried to get it by their own strength instead of faith. They refused to submit to the method of justification that God proposed. They stumbled over Christ, the Rock, who is the foundation of true faith and life.

"We too readily overlook how fundamentally divisive Jesus Christ is, even though the point is repeatedly made not only in the NT but in the OT prophecies concerning Him" (Carson, Commentary of the NT use of the OT, 1026). In encountering Christ, people are changed. Some respond positively, others do not. Those who reject the Stone do not find salvation but will instead find that the stone they rejected will crush them. Those who accept Him are not disappointed. The Lord provided a foundation stone for the nation of Israel and placed it in Zion (Jerusalem), but Israel completely missed it. The same stone exists today and all who reject it, whether Jew or Gentile, do so at their own peril.

Once again we see the theme of election (cf. I Pet. 1:1-2). The divine passive "to this doom they were also appointed" can only mean that God has appointed them to this end. Nevertheless, God's sovereignty does not relieve man of responsibility, for Peter has also said they "stumble because they are disobedient to the word."

In verse 9 Peter turns his attention back to the believer with the words, "But you."

2:9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 2:10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

We are a Chosen Race, a Holy Nation

The terms "chosen" and "race" are both significant. Being chosen indicates God's initiative in saving us. We didn't choose Him; He chose us. "Race" denotes descendants of a common ancestor and thus designates a people with a common heritage, sharing the unity of common life" (Hiebert, 132).

In the OT Israel is called a "chosen" people (Isa. 43:3). In Deuteronomy we learn that the basis of God's election had nothing to do with any intrinsic superiority of the people (Deut. 7:6-8) but was due to His love for the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and in line with keeping His promise that their descendants would become a great nation. The only reason that the nation has a holy status is because they were chosen by God (Deut. 4:37; 14:2).

The fact that Israel was chosen by God makes them a unique nation distinct from every other nation on the earth. This national election, however, does not guarantee individual salvation. That is based on God's election of the individual for salvation. In Deuteronomy 10:15-16, those who are elected for salvation are commanded to circumcise their hearts, while the nation had outward circumcision only. Paul tells us, "For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants . . . it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants" (Ro. 9:6-8).

What is true of Israel is now applied to every believer under the New Covenant. We too are the elect of God. We are a new race, united by our common heritage through the new birth (I Pet. 1:23), and “because it is a spiritual birth, it transcends all natural distinctions of ancestry, languages, or cultures” (Hiebert, 132).

TYPOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

“The phrase ‘chosen race’ echoes Isaiah 43:3, which announces that God Himself is Israel’s only Savior, who will deliver His people from their exile in Babylon. Peter frames his letter in the motif of the historic Babylonian exile in order to identify his readers with the OT promises of deliverance” (Jobes, 158). Later in Isaiah 43:20-21, God declares that His chosen people were formed for Himself to declare His praise. Peter directly applies the same mandate to his Christian readers.

The fact that Christians form a new race is one of the reasons Christians are rejected by the world. In the first century they were alienated from society (see notes on 1 Pet. 1:1). We are still alienated today.

We are a Royal Priesthood

Throughout the NT, Israel’s exodus from Egypt is used as a picture to portray the freedom of God’s people from the slavery of sin. Peter also draws from the covenantal language directed toward Israel at that time to explain what God has done in Christ. Exodus 19:5-6: “. . . you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

Although Israel had its own priesthood, as a holy nation every individual could be viewed as a priest in relation to the unbelieving world. What was to be true of them is true of every believer who has experienced the salvation of God.

The priest’s primary service to God was to offer sacrifices on behalf of the people (see notes on I Pet. 2:4-5), but they also served God by being His witnesses. In the OT the priest was called “the messenger of the Lord” because he proclaimed the law (Mal. 2:7; Lev. 10:11; Deut. 33:10). We too are to be messengers of the Lord by proclaiming “the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” “Rendered more literally, the believer is to advertise the excellencies, or noble acts of God” (Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program*, 43), “especially the redemption brought about by Christ’s death and resurrection, and the divine wisdom, love, power, and mercy which lay behind it and in it” (Swelyn, 167).

Note the following:

1. The church’s purpose is defined by her mission. We are to proclaim the excellences of God, both verbally (II Cor. 5:20) and through our behavior (I Pet. 2:12). This behavior includes suffering for righteousness (I Pet. 2:20-25) as Christ did.

2. The sovereignty of God in salvation comes up again in verse 9; God is the one who calls us out of darkness into light.

3. In the context of being priests, “light” most likely indicates that we have been transferred from darkness into God’s presence (cf. I Jn. 1:5; II Cor. 4:6).

The fact that all believers are priests to God is known in theology as “the priesthood of all believers.” This must not be construed as meaning that there is no structure of authority in the church such as elders/pastors/overseers; rather it establishes the ideas of obedience, privilege, holiness, mission, and self-identity for everyone who knows Christ.

We are People for God's Own Possession

The concept of the “people of God” also originates in the OT in reference to Israel. Israel was a people, who through God’s election, was established to have a special relationship with Him. Israel is distinct (holy) from all other nations on the basis of this relationship.

Deuteronomy 14:2 says, “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”

Based on these verses in I Peter, some assume that the church has replaced Israel as the people of God. However, such a conclusion is unwarranted, for the prophets predicted that others besides Israel would come under the designation of “the people of God”. Zechariah 2:11 says, “Many nations will be joined to the Lord.” Even before the NT came into existence, it was predicted that the title “people of God” would extend to Gentile nations.

The people of God include Jews and Gentiles who are one because they are all related to God through the same covenant salvation.

The emphasis once again is a great blessing – being God’s possession should cause every believer to be filled with gratitude and joy.

2:10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

“For” of verse 10 explains how we became a people of God; we were shown mercy.

God is frequently portrayed in the OT as One who abounds in mercy (Exo. 34:6; Psa. 103:8; Jonah 4:2). In fact, He delights in showing mercy (Mic. 7:8). Mercy is often used of God’s immovable loyalty to His covenant and love for Israel, especially when Israel was unfaithful (Lincoln, 100, O’Brien, 165). It is an expression of love and generosity which is unexpected (Anderson, O’Brien, 165). Mercy is neither a duty nor an obligation, but a free act of God based on the promises He has made to His people. It is His response to a desperate, helpless situation and is related to grace, love, and compassion, all of which are extended to Jew and Gentile alike. “Mercy,” like “grace,” emphasizes that man is not part of the

picture. It is a free act that comes from God and is directed toward people who cannot rescue themselves.

Chapter 2 verse 10 is Peter's final description of the believer and is an allusion to Hosea 2:23, implying that we are a fulfillment of that ancient prophecy.

At the time when Hosea was written, Israel was an *unholy* nation who had rejected God. Hosea's prophecy in 2:23 is the promise of Israel's future restoration. Though Israel had estranged herself from God, the prophet predicts that a day will come when there will no longer be any estrangement. Israel will be bound to God and He to them.

In an extremely beautiful OT passage God says through the prophet Hosea:

2:19 "I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy;

2:20 I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD.

The word "betroth" speaks of the grace of God. It means "to woo a virgin." Though the majority of the book of Hosea pictures Israel as an adulteress or a harlot, God now calls out to her as if she were an unsullied virgin. She is seen as though she has never sinned. (cf. II Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-27; Feinberg, *Minor Prophets*, 21).

The intensity of God's commitment to His bride is emphasized by the fact that three times in these two verses He says He will "betroth" Himself to her, and each time He adds a new dimension to His love. He will be with His bride (1) forever, (2) in righteousness, (3) in justice, (4) in lovingkindness, (5) in mercy, and in (6) faithfulness.

Then God says,

2:21 "It shall come to pass in that day that I will answer," says the LORD; "I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth.

2:22 The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; They shall answer Jezreel.

After the relationship to Israel is restored, God is free to shower His blessings upon His people once again (cf Hos. 2:3, 9). Verse 21 implies that the skies are pleading with God to send rain to the earth and this is God's answer to the skies' request. He declares, "I will answer the heavens."

Likewise, the earth is pleading to the heavens for rain, and the sky will answer the earth's cry. Lastly, the grain, vine, and tree then ask the earth for its provisions to prosper, and the earth responds so that there is an abundance of food, oil, and drink. And they all shall answer Jezreel!

The valley of Jezreel was the center of Israel's food production and means, "God plants" (cf. Hos. 1:10-11; Mic. 5:7; Isa. 37:31). Israel's needs (and by application – our needs too) will be met in a bountiful abundance once mercy is displayed.

From this context comes Peter's quote:

2:23 Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; Then I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they shall say, 'You are my God!' "

The tendency of most people who read this passage is simply to read verse 23 as a reference to Gentiles becoming the people of God. But that is not what God is saying. These verses are telling us that God Himself will plant Israel in the earth and she too will prosper. Hosea 1:11 which is correctly paraphrased by The New Living Translation says, "What a day that will be-- the day of Jezreel-- when God will again plant his people in his land." Similar wording is used of Judah in Isaiah 37:31: "the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward."

In Hosea 1:6, Hosea's wife Gomer had a second child through adultery and the child was named Lo-Ruhamah, meaning "not pitied." His third child was named Lo-Ammi, meaning "not My people" (1:8). When these names were given, they were appropriate for they were representative of the condition of Israel at that time. Israel was no different than the Gentile nations around her; she was like those who were not God's people.

The condition of Israel and the promise of future blessing in these verses provide a parallel for us today. Though Israel was declared to no longer be the people of God, God would show her mercy. In the same way, God would show mercy to others who are not His people through the salvation of Israel's messiah.

In Romans 9:22-25, Paul tells us that although God desires to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known by judging those who are in rebellion against Him (cf. Ro. 2:5), He endured them with patience (9:22) in order that He might make His glory known to us (vessels of mercy – 9:23). Then he adds ". . . **not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.** As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' and her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'"

All who enter the New Covenant do so on equal ground; both Jew and Gentile are people in need of mercy. Rebellious Israel in the times of Hosea thus becomes a picture of the Gentile world, and as such a symbol of all who need mercy.

In Ephesians 2, Paul enumerates our blessings but contrasts what we have in Christ to what was the possession of Israel:

2:11 Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands--

2:12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Five deficiencies are listed and all of them are related to being outside of God's saving purposes and His people, Israel.

(1) We were separated from Christ. In the theme of Ephesians, this means that we were outside the realm of life and salvation. To Gentile readers it may sound strange to put "*being outside of Christ*" and "*being outside of Israel*" in a parallel thought, but Paul conceives of Messiah as belonging to Israel. (2) We were separated from the commonwealth of Israel. This meant that we were alienated (estranged) from the sphere of God's elect. (3) The Covenants with God were enjoyed by the elect. The plural, "covenants," includes the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. (4) We were without hope, excluded from the promise of Israel's Messiah and ultimately, salvation. (5) "Without God" signifies that we were without the true God.

The words, "But now," in Ephesians 2:13 introduce a dramatic contrast to the position we currently enjoy. Though we were once "far off" we have "come near" in Christ (see notes on Eph. 2:20-22). In Christ we receive the salvation of Israel's Messiah, we have become God's elect, we are beneficiaries of the Abrahamic Covenant – "in you (Abraham), all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:3), and we now have hope and have entered into a relationship with the living God.

Thanks be to God who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ!

Note 1: During the exile in Babylon, the Jews gradually forgot Hebrew (in which the OT was written) and began speaking Aramaic, so paraphrases of the OT were written in Aramaic to be read in the synagogues. These paraphrases were called Targums. In a Targum of Isaiah the "foundation stone" was believed to be a reference to messiah (Carson, 1025), dating this interpretation long before Christ appeared.

1 Peter 2:11-17

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Verse 11 begins a transition to the main body of the letter. Peter begins by reminding us that we are not part of this world (1:1); we are part of God's holy nation (verse 9). We are "aliens and strangers." The thought parallels Abraham's experience. Abraham called himself "a stranger and a sojourner" (Gen. 23:4). Hebrews 11:9-10 tells us that by faith Abraham lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land. Historically, living as a stranger has always been part of God's process in forming His people.

Christians do not hold the values of the society in which they live. The world has a different god, values, loves, and focus than we do. The pleasures of the world that are socially acceptable are geared at stimulating ungodly desires. Peter says they "wage war against the soul." The soul is more than just the immaterial part of man; it is the whole person and the new identity he has in Christ that the war is waged against.

Inevitably, living in two worlds will lead to conflict. Jesus said we cannot serve two masters. Nevertheless, though our first loyalty is to God, we are also challenged to live in a right relationship to our society and then graciously endure the grief and alienation that will inevitably result.

The first century Roman world marginalized Christians simply because they were known to be different. Christians are to behave in such a way that even the unbelieving consider them virtuous by their own standards. If this is done, any accusations leveled against the believer will be seen to be malicious and unjust slander. In other words, we are to live by the good values of society that do not contradict the values of God.

"We must cultivate the mindset of exiles. We need to wake up so that we don't drift with the world and take for granted that the way the world thinks and acts is the best way. When you see yourself as an alien, an exile with your citizenship in heaven, and God as your only Sovereign, you stop drifting with the current of the day. You ponder what is good for the soul and what honors God in everything: food, cars, videos, bathing suits, birth control, driving speeds, bed times, financial savings, education for the children, unreached peoples, famine, refugee camps, sports, death, and everything else. Aliens get their cue from God and not the world." (Piper)

Something to notice in verses 11 and 12 is that the battle for the soul is also a battle for the glory of God. They are opposite sides of the same coin. These are first fought at the level of our desires and then at the level of our behavior—first at the level of what we feel, and then at the level of what we do.

The goal of human behavior is the glory of God. God chose a people for Himself in order that they might be for Him a people and a name and a praise and a glory (Jer. 13:11; Isa. 43:21). In other words, God formed a people for Himself that they might make a name for Him—that they might spread His reputation and increase His fame and promote His renown. Peter says, "Keep your behavior excellent so that . . . the Gentiles might glorify God." The positive significance of our lives is derived from whether our lives direct people's attention to the glory of God.

“If we live our lives in such a way that they don't point people to the glory of God, then our lives are without positive significance from a Christian standpoint. What we become is just an echo of a God-neglecting culture. We fit into the world so well that our lives don't point beyond the world. We are no longer aliens and strangers, but simply conforming citizens of the God-ignoring world” (Piper).

“And so let us fight first of all to be aliens and exiles in the world of the passions and desires. This means making God your passion. Fill your mind with things that exhibit the greatness and value and beauty and truth of God. And shun all the things that stimulate desires that compete with God. Regulate your life in order to cultivate a passion for God and the things of God. Be ruthless in cutting out of your life everything that stirs up desires displeasing to God.” (Piper)

Secondly, live life in a way where your behavior glorifies God. This is a constant theme throughout Scripture.

- Proverbs 4:23: Keep your heart with all vigilance; for from it flow the springs of life.
- Matthew 5:16: Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good deeds and give glory to your father in heaven.
- Titus 2:14: Christ gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.
- Galatians 6:10: As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially those who are of the household of faith.
- James 1:27: Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.
- Ephesians 2:10: For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Doing good deeds before an on-looking world is a necessary part of declaring God's marvelous works and making Him a name on the earth. But the glory that we might bring to God also comes at the day of visitation.

The idea of God “visiting” people is used in the OT for God’s intervention with grace for His people and judgment for the unbelieving (Isa. 10:3; 23:17; Jer. 6:15). The “day of visitation” is an expression paralleled in Luke 19:44 in referring to the incarnation of Christ. In I Peter 1:12 the day of visitation is probably the day when Christ “visits” the earth a second time at His return. That day includes both judgment and salvation.

In other words, the testimony of believers in the world can have two results, both of which lead to the glory of God. First, as people observe your lifestyle that reflects the hope that is within you (I Pet. 3:15), they too may believe and become one of the multitudes to glorify Christ at His return. However, the believers’ good behavior in a sinful world also becomes a testimony against the unbelieving who maligned them, and brings glory to God by attesting to the truth of the Christian gospel.

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,

14 or to governors as sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Submission to secular human authority is defined in 2:13-15 as part of God's will for the believer in order to silence ignorant slander. The good works that are to be done are not specified, although we might speculate that if they did not supersede the behavior of ordinary law-abiding citizens they would not stand out, and the believer would be seen as doing no more than what was expected. Perhaps Peter is suggesting that the believer should stand out as a model citizen, going beyond the call of duty. Jesus had told His disciples "whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two" (Matt. 5:39-41).

It is important to see that these verses put our social and political life in relation to God. The Bible is not a book about how to get along in the world. It is a book inspired by God about how to live to God. In Galatians 2:19 Paul said, "Through the law I died to the law that I might live to God." The aim of life—including our social and political life—is to live with God in view, under his authority, and for His good reputation.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution

"Christians do not submit to human institutions simply because they feel like it, or because they have compliant personalities, or because the institutions have coercive powers. We do not look first at ourselves to see what we feel like doing, nor do we look first at the institution (like government) to see if it there are consequences for not submitting. We look first to God. We consult God about the institution. And we submit for his sake." (Piper)

Peter did not live in an idealistic world. Nor did he live in a world of peace. He lived at a time when governments were extremely corrupt and Christians were persecuted.

John Piper gives a little historical background on the environment in which Peter was writing in:

In AD 37 a boy was born in Italy named Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus. His mother's name was Agrippina the Younger. She married the Roman Emperor Claudius who adopted her little boy and changed his name to Nero Claudius Drusus Germanicus. The adoption and the name change were all part of his mother's plotting to see him, instead of Claudius' biological son Britannicus, become emperor of Rome.

In AD 54 when Nero was 17 years old, his mother arranged for Claudius to be poisoned to death, and the boy was proclaimed emperor of Rome. His reign would last 14 years, until he committed suicide at age 31.

In the first half of his reign, there was relatively good government because as a youth he received good counsel from Burrus, the head of the Praetorian Guard, and from Seneca the famous stoic philosopher.

Nero was selfish and calculating and incapable of ruling well on his own. He became paranoid of all the rumors about plots to kill him. In 55 he had his stepbrother Britannicus killed. In 59 he had his mother executed. And in 62 his first wife was executed. And Seneca his former counselor was forced to commit suicide. . .

The apostle Peter probably arrived in Rome sometime around AD 63.

In the night of July 19, 64, a fire broke out in the southern part of the city. It raged for six days, spreading far and wide. When it was about to die out, it suddenly broke out again in the northern part of the city and burned three more days. Ten of the 14 wards of the city were destroyed. The frenzy in the city was indescribable.

Rumors began to spread that Nero himself had started the fire because of his delirious craving for magnificence and desire to embellish and rebuild the city. To divert attention from himself, the historian Tacitus says, Nero blamed the Christians for the fire, since they were hated anyway and were good scapegoats.

The effect was horrendous. There had been no persecution like it since the Lord had risen 30 years before. In the gardens of Nero the Christians were crucified, sewn into wild beast skins and fed to dogs, drenched in flammable oil and lifted on poles to burn as torches in the night.

Eusebius tells us that Peter was crucified "because he had demanded to suffer" (E.H. 3.1.2–3).

Peter's letter was probably written some time shortly before this terrible persecution. Christians were being slandered and mistreated (2:12, 15) as he wrote, but this was typical all over the empire, he says in 5:9. The great persecution was not there yet. But it seems that Peter could see it on the horizon with prophetic accuracy. For example, he said in 4:12, "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."

Peter was well acquainted with corrupted leaders. Nero was not the only ruler Peter had known. He had known of Pilate, the governor in Judea, who washed his hands of Jesus' murder, had Him beaten, and turned Him over to be crucified with no grounds. He had known of Herod Antipas who executed John the Baptist as a dancing prize and later put his purple robe on Jesus and

mocked Him with his soldiers. Peter was probably a boy in Galilee when he heard that Herod the Great had killed all the children in Bethlehem.

So Peter was not naïve about the vicious world of government corruption and wickedness. He did not live in a "Christian nation." He knew the depravity of human nature and the utterly ruinous corruption that political power can bring. This was the world into which he wrote our text: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by Him . . . Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king" . . .

The point of drawing attention to Nero and Pilate and Herod is not to say that there is a Nero or Pilate or Herod in power today in America. The point is to say that if Peter could command the Christian community to honor the king and the governor, knowing the wickedness of Nero and Pilate and Herod, then how much more must we honor the governor and the president who are not in that category—even though they may endorse and promote acts which we regard as immoral and even barbaric.

Although it is debatable when 1 Peter was written, it is not debatable that God foresaw the persecutions of Nero coming. God did not have Peter write a book that would be outdated in a few years when persecution intensified. Even if Peter was written in the earlier years of Nero's reign when things were relatively calm, the word of God is eternal and was intended to be applied under all circumstances in which we find ourselves.

NOTE: When Peter tells us that the purpose of kings and governors is to punish evil and praise good, he is giving God's purpose for government. We know this from Romans 13:4 where Paul says that civil authority "is a minister of God to you for good . . . [and] it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil." So what verse 14 expresses is not that God endorses whatever political leaders, dictators, or evil Lords do, it tells us what God designed government for. Governments do not save; they are to maintain external order in a world seething with evil so the saving message of the gospel can run and triumph on its own power.

***16 Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.
17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.***

Verse 16 is related to the comments made on 1:18 (see notes there).

"What this verse teaches is that we belong to God and not the American government. We are slaves of God and not man (1 Corinthians 7:22–23). We do not submit to human institutions as slaves to those institutions, but as God's free people. We submit in freedom for His sake. Not in bondage for the king's sake.

God has transferred us in one profound sense from this age to the kingdom of His Son. We have passed from death to life. But then for a season He sends us back into this age, as it were, not as we were once—as slaves to sin and guilt and the whims of this age and its institutions—but as free people, as aliens who live by other values and other standards and goals and priorities. We do submit. But we submit freely, not cowering before human authorities, but gladly obeying our one true King—God.

Our whole disposition of freedom and joy and fearlessness and radical otherness from this world is rooted in our belonging to God—which in one sense is slavery (because his authority over us is absolute) but in another sense is glorious freedom (because he changes our hearts so that we love doing what he gives us to do)." (Piper)

In other words, we submit to governing authorities, not because they are equal in authority to God, but because God is the ruler and owner of both, and when you belong first to Him and His kingdom, you can be sent by Him, for His sake, for His purposes, for His glory into the kingdom of this world. If we use our freedom for evil, it means we misunderstand and are abusing it. We may have been set free from sin, the law, the penalty of the law and every other master, but we are slaves to God.

"In this way Christian submission to the institutions of this world becomes an act of tribute to God's authority over the institutions of the world. You look a king or a governor in the eye and say, "I submit to you, I honor you—but not for your sake. I honor you for God's sake. I honor you because God owns you and rules over you and has sovereignly raised you up for a limited season and given you the leadership that you have. For His sake and for His glory and because of His rightful authority over you, I honor you."

So verse 13 subordinates all submission on earth to a higher submission to God when it says, "Submit for the Lord's sake." We keep the speed limit for God's sake, not because we might get a ticket. And all our driving becomes an act of worship." (Piper)

Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

I Peter 2:18-25

In the context of chapter 2, a proper attitude toward submission becomes Peter's first example of what it means to keep our behavior excellent among the Gentiles (2:12). In this section he elaborates on three areas where submission is needed: citizens to government (2:13, 17), slaves to masters (2:18-25), and wives to husbands (3:1-6). From Peter's instruction it is obvious that Christianity is intended to be lived out within the context of culture, even in the most basic unit of society, the household.

18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

The Greek word for “submit” is hupotasso (ὑποτάσσω). Tasso (τάσσω) means “to arrange” and hupo (ὑπο) means “under,” thus the word means “to arrange under.” Behind the idea of submission is that of order. It translates 13 different words in Hebrew that can mean “to acquiesce”, “to submit,” “to acknowledge someone’s dominion or power,” or “to humble oneself.” Hupotasso (ὑποτάσσω) was used of hierarchical positions and stresses one’s relationship to his/her superiors. Submission could be mandatory or voluntary.

[Grammar note: Every time hupotasso (ὑποτάσσω) appears in the active tense, it is used in relation to Christ (I Cor. 15:25-28; Eph. 1:22; I Peter 3:22; Heb. 2:8). The middle voice verb is used of having to submit to someone else – Lk. 10:17-20 (demons are to submit to the disciples); Ro. 8:7 (speaks of Jews who do not submit to the law); I Cor. 15:28 (Christ submits to the Father); Ja. 4:7, Heb. 12:9 (men submit to God); Lk. 2:51 (Christ submits to His parents – cf. v. 40 & 8:21); Col. 3:18, Eph. 5:22-24, I Pet. 3:1, Tit. 2:5 (wives to their husbands); Ro. 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13 (citizens submit to the government; I Pet. 2:18, Tit. 2:9 (servants submit to their masters); I Pet. 5:5a (younger people submit to their elders).]

It is clear from the 40 NT passages where the word appears that submission has to do with subordination to someone of higher authority in an ordered system. God has established certain authorities and submission to them is due to the recognition of their divinely given positions. Submitting to them is submitting to the will of God.

In 2:18 the appropriate attitude toward an authority is described as “fear” or “respect.” When we submit, we are to do so with a sincere and willing reverence, where we acknowledge and accept our station in life. In short, respect arises from a right understanding of our God-given position.

The opposite of “fear” is what Paul calls “eye-service” (ὀφθαλμοδουλεία, Colossians 3:22). In Ephesians 6:5-7 it says, “Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.”

In these verses, the service of the slave is described in four ways:

- (1) “with fear and trembling in sincerity to Christ (6:5),”
- (2) “not as merely eye-service to please men (6:6),”

Eye-service is serving only while the master's eye was on the slave, but doing nothing beyond that.

(3) "as slaves of Christ doing the will of Christ (6:6),"

As a slave of Christ, our motive in serving others is a response to divine authority. For that reason, serving earthly authorities should be from the heart and the performance of even the most mundane task seen as an act of worship.

(4) "as service to the Lord" (6:7).

Since Christ is our Master who tells us to obey our earthly masters, regardless of how kind or severe they may be, there is no excuse not to obey them fully. To obey them is obeying Christ; to disobey or disrespect them is rebellion against Christ. When a superior abuses his power, he must give an account to God, but he does not lose his position of authority.

19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

20 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.

Most people don't have any trouble submitting to people they love, but have a multitude of reasons for not submitting to someone who treats them poorly. People throughout the centuries, including Christians, justify their anger and their critical spirit by the wrongs that have been done to them. Therefore, Peter wants to emphasize that our reason for submitting to those in authority has nothing to do with how they treat us; they could be incompetent, abusive, unloving, harsh, self-centered, or display any other type of ungodliness. We do not submit to others because of their behavior; we submit because we serve Christ who established their position over us. Submitting for HIS sake finds favor with God.

It is a general truth that what we do is approved by God when we are influenced to act by our desire to serve Him.

The following notes on I Peter 2:21-25 are all taken from D. Edmund Hiebert (Bibliotheca Sacra 139 (1982) 32-45) but have been modified for easier reading. At times he is quoted directly. At other times I have paraphrased and condensed. I am indebted to him for the clarity he brings to this text. Additional thoughts are noted. The original text is available at http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/Ted_Hildebrandt/NTeSources/NTArticles/BSac-NT/Hiebert-1Peter2-Pt1-BS.pdf

The Call to Suffering Confirmed by Christ's Example

21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

"You" is speaking of the household slaves mentioned above. The verb "called" looks back to the time of their conversion and indicates that God Himself acted in calling them to such a life. We have been called to suffer for, and while, doing good. Williams rendered this phrase, "It is to this kind of living that you were called."

Peter's words assure servants that God has given them a new dignity; their suffering is no longer to be seen as a personal fate, it is suffering because they are the people of God. Secondly, they have a new motivation to endure, for by doing so they are following the example of the Lord Himself.

Since this "call" applies to them not as slaves but as believers, it holds true of all Christians. It is a clear reminder to all believers that "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Jesus, Himself, repeatedly stressed that being His disciples involved cross-bearing (Matt. 10:38; 16:24; Luke 14:27).

The motivation that should compel us to suffer voluntarily is found in the words "Since Christ also suffered for you."

"Nothing seems more unworthy," Calvin observed, "and therefore less tolerable, than undeservedly to suffer; but when we turn our eyes to the Son of God, this bitterness is mitigated: for who would refuse to follow Him going before us?"

Christ's example of suffering involves suffering for the good, or wellbeing of others. His actions provided us with a picture of what our behavior should look like. The word "example" is a rare word in the NT, denoting a model to be copied by the novice. The term, literally an "under writing," could refer to a writing or drawing which was placed under another sheet to be retraced on the upper sheet by the pupil. More probably, the reference is to the "copy-head" which the teacher placed at the top of the page, to be reproduced by the student. Another possibility is the suggestion that the reference is to an artist's sketch, the details of which were to be filled in by others. Under any view, the example was not left merely to be admired, but to be followed line by line, feature by feature.

"For you to follow in His steps" asserts the purpose in citing Christ's example, but also changes the figure of speech. Christ's example now becomes the guide along a difficult way. "His steps" are elaborated in what follows.

The words "follow in" means to follow 'upon' the line that Christ's footprints mark out. This same verb also occurs in Mark 16:20 and 1 Timothy 5:10, and in neither case does it denote stepping precisely in the footprints being followed. The picture is rather that of following in the direction that the steps lead. In the elaboration which follows, it is soon obvious that failing human beings cannot always place their feet exactly in the steps of the Lord Jesus. Niebor aptly suggests that the situation is "like a little boy

following his father through the snow. The father takes far too long steps for the boy to step in them, but he can go the same way his father went.”

THE PORTRAYAL OF CHRIST'S REDEMPTIVE SUFFERINGS

In the verses that follow, as Peter continues to address suffering servants, he refers to Isaiah 53 in which, Messiah, the Servant of God (Isa. 52:13) suffers unjustly. Isaiah 53:5 says, “But He was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.” Isaiah 53:7 states that “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.” Significantly, Peter addresses household servants with a passage in Scripture that refers to Messiah as God’s Servant (Isa. 52:13).

Verses 22-25 develop the picture of Christ's sufferings and can be broken into four sections marked by the four relative clauses; the first two clauses tell us what Jesus did *not* do, the third one tells us what He *did* do, and the last one tells us the purpose of His suffering.

WHAT CHRIST DID NOT DO (vv. 22-23a cf. Isa. 53:7, 9; Mk. 14:61; 15:5, 12-20)

22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;

23 (a) and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats

The first relative clause, in verse 22 declares that Christ “committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth.”

"Who committed no sin" asserts His sinlessness in the realm of conduct. Christ performed many deeds but none that were sinful, falling short of the divine standard. This testimony by one who was closely associated with Jesus during His entire earthly ministry cannot be lightly set aside. In 1:19, Peter declared Christ's unblemished character; here he asserted His unique sinless conduct. Christ's sinlessness is explicitly declared in 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; and 1 John 3:5. It is also asserted by Christ Himself in confronting His enemies (John 8:46), and affirmed by Him before His disciples just before His death (John 14:30). The testimony of history has sustained the claim. He demonstrated His sinlessness under the most intense provocation and undeserved suffering.

"Nor was any deceit found in His mouth" The verb "found" is stronger than "was," and indicates that His speech passed the most rigorous scrutiny of His enemies. No evidence of guile, so characteristic of fallen man (cf. 2:1), could be detected in His words. Sinlessness in speech is a mark of perfection (cf. James 3:2) and confirms the purity of His heart (Matt. 12:34-35). This aspect of Christ's example was "particularly applicable to slaves in the empire, where glib, deceitful speech was one of their notorious characteristics, adroit evasions and excuses being often their sole means of self-protection."

Christian slaves are reminded that in their trials they must look to the Lord Jesus and strive to copy His innocence and truth.

The second relative clause that develops the nature of Christ's sufferings is in verse 23a: "while being reviled, He did not revile in return"

To revile denotes the hurling of insulting and abusive language at an opponent. On various occasions Jesus' enemies spoke bitterly and viciously against Him. They said "he was possessed with a devil. They called him a Samaritan, a glutton, a wine-bibber, a blasphemer, a demoniac, one in league with Beelzebub, a perverter of the nation, and a deceiver of the people." But it seems that Peter had especially in view the scene during Christ's trials and crucifixion, events during which the normal human urge to "revile in return" would be especially strong.

During the week of His passion, Jesus was subjected to severe physical sufferings: He was struck in His face, crowned with thorns, beaten with a reed, savagely scourged, forced to bear His own cross, and crucified, the most painful method of execution ever devised. Yet through it all, He never threatened retaliatory revenge on His tormentors, nor even predicted that they would be duly punished for it. It had been noted that some of the early Christian martyrs could not resist the natural urge to threaten their executioners with divine punishment. Even the Apostle Paul on one occasion, when abused in court, did not resist the temptation (Acts 23:3). Mistreated slaves at times threatened revenge in some near or distant future. Peter's picture of what Jesus did not do speaks clearly to all who suffer.

WHAT HE DID DO (v. 23b; cf. Mk. 14:62)

23(b) but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

"But" marks the transition to what Christ DID when suffering. It is summed up in the statement "kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously."

The verb "entrust" basically means "to hand over" and was commonly used of delivering up a criminal to the police or a court for punishment (Matt. 26:14-16; Mark 14:41-42; John 19:11, 16). Here it states Christ's own action of "entrusting" or "handing over" the situation to God, the righteous Judge.

The point is, not that the Lord was concerned about His own fate, but that He preferred to leave vindication to God rather than take action Himself against His enemies.

"That is, he handed over to God the whole situation including himself and those abusing him and the hurt done and all the factors that made it a horrendous outrage of injustice that the most innocent man who ever lived should suffer so much. He trusted it all into God's hands as the one who would settle the matter justly someday. He said, 'I will not carry the burden of revenge, I will not carry the burden of sorting out motives, I will not carry the burden of self-pity; I will not carry the burden of bitterness; I will

hand all that over to God who will settle it all in a perfectly just way and I will pray, Father, forgive them they don't know what they do (Luke 23:34).” (Piper)

Jesus’ suffering did not mean that God had abandoned Him, but His suffering was God’s mysterious way of accomplishing the redemption of humanity. His trust paid off (Jobes, 197).

THE NATURE OF HIS REDEMPTIVE SUFFERINGS (v. 24a cf. Isa. 53:4)

In the original text, ***“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross”*** begins with a **third relative clause** (who Himself bore ours sins. . . NKJ) and introduces the nature of Christ’s suffering.

Christ was our sin bearer. “Sin” basically portrays a falling short of the target or missing the mark, and thus characterizes sin as a falling short of God's standard and purpose for man. But in the New Testament, the concept is not merely negative; it also involves a positive element of willful disobedience to the known will of God. The plural "sins" embodies the multitude of sins committed since man's fall.

“To bear” is a verb which means "to carry up, to bring from a lower place to a higher place." It is a ritual term; in the Septuagint it is used of bringing a sacrifice and laying it on the altar (Gen. 8:20; Lev. 14:20; 17:5; 2 Chron. 35:16; etc.). In James 2:21, it is used of Abraham bringing his son Isaac up on the altar. Clearly Isaiah 53:12 was in Peter's mind, "He Himself bore the sin of many." Christ's death was not that of a heroic martyr dying for a rejected cause; it was redemptive and substitutionary in nature.

THE PURPOSE OF HIS REDEMPTIVE SUFFERINGS (v. 24b)

so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness;

Christ's redemptive sufferings had a practical purpose: they were so "that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." Though this translation makes it sound like dying to sin is part of our daily experience, it actually relates to our death to sin in the past, while living to righteousness depicts God's purpose for our present life. An experiential realization of the release from sins makes it possible to live a life of righteousness.

Peter's **fourth relative clause**, "by His wounds you were healed," gives us the result of Christ’s death that we experience. The words are an allusion to Isaiah 53:5, "And by His scourging we are healed."

The literal reference is to the scourging which Christ endured, but possibly the picture may be understood as including all the sufferings which terminated in His death. By Christ's stripes, the wounds that sin had inflicted on our souls "were healed", not merely "will be healed." Peter's words involve a striking paradox, well summed up by Theodoret (ca. 393-ca. 458) in his oft-quoted exclamation, "A new and strange method of healing; the doctor suffered the cost, and the sick received the healing!"

THE RESULT OF HIS REDEMPTIVE SUFFERINGS (v. 24c-25 – cf Isa. 53:6)

2:24(c), 25 for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

"For" in verse 25 explains how and from what state we came to our experience of spiritual healing. "You were continually straying like sheep" pictures our previous lost condition, but a decisive change has taken place. That is, "Now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."

Our conversion brings us into personal union with "the Shepherd and Guardian," one individual identified under two aspects. In the New Testament the shepherd is a familiar figure of Christ (Mark 14:27; John 10:1-18; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 7:17). The term "Guardian," used of Christ only here in the New Testament, is to be taken in close relationship with "Shepherd." Derived from the verb which means "to look at, to care for, to oversee," the noun designates one who inspects something or someone and keeps watch over it or him; hence he is an "overseer." In the New Testament the term is used in close association with the pastoral function (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:2; 1 Pet. 5:2-4). The double designation assured the afflicted readers of Christ's full care for His own. He not only leads and feeds and sustains His own, but He also guides and directs and protects them. As Shepherd and Guardian He cares for their "souls," their true inner selves. The Christian slaves addressed are reminded that their bodies may be subject to the power and caprice of harsh masters, but their inner life is under the constant watch care of their Great Shepherd.

In Isaiah 41 God's words to Israel surely apply to us as well:

⁹ You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts And said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you.

¹⁰ 'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

Additional thoughts:

Is it God's will that His people suffer unjustly?

This text assumes so. Peter says in verse 21: "*you were called to this purpose.*" But he also says in 4:19, "Let those also who suffer *according to the will of God* entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right." And again in 3:17, "It is better, *if God should will it so*, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong."

God wills that we live our life out in a world full of evil, that we might make His excellences known in behavior that reveals a changed life and trust in God.

When we endure unjust suffering as is described here and trust God:

- We demonstrate that God is more precious than whatever we lose through suffering.
- We show that we truly believe that God will take care of us (He is the shepherd and guardian of our souls).
- We believe in His justice and that one day He will settle all accounts (He judges righteously).
- We acknowledge that we are still sinners and are not earning anything by this patience. Therefore, we show the greatness of God's great grace.