

# **The High Calling of the Christian According to the First Epistle of Peter**

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When the Apostle Peter addressed his letter known to us as “The First Epistle of Peter” to a group of Christian congregations in Asia Minor, he spoke to a group of believers who had come to know the sweetness of the Gospel, but who had also come to realize that the very name of Christian in that world and in that place brought with it certain trials and certain responsibilities. Peter aims to strengthen them in their trials, to encourage them to take up their responsibilities willingly and cheerfully, for the Gospel’s sake.

What Peter has to tell that group of Christians back in the first century has been written for our learning as well. We too have been called by our God to undergo affliction, in order that our faith might be purified and that our devotion to our Lord and Savior might be the more complete. We too have been called to live indeed in this world but not as of the world; we too have been called to make of our daily lives a kind of sermon to the ungodly, so that by the very example of our own Christian conduct that God who has called us to himself might be glorified by the men who “see our good works”.

Before we can take up a study of the Epistle proper, it shall be necessary that we refresh our understanding of Peter the Apostle himself: his person, his place in the early church, and especially his writing of this letter. Then we shall take up the letter itself and follow Peter as he speaks of the privileges, the duties, and the present trials of the Christian.

## **I. Historical Introduction** **The Person of the Writer of this Epistle**

Simon (or Symeon), the son of Jonas (or John) and the brother of Andrew was at home in Capernaum, the headquarters of our Lord during one period of his public ministry, though according to John 1:44 he seems to have come originally from Bethsaida. According to Mark 1:30 he was married at the time of his call by Jesus, and when speaking of him in his later years, Paul refers to the fact (1 Corinthians 9:5) that his wife accompanied him on his missionary journeys. He and his brother Andrew were partners with James and John in the fishing business on the Lake of Galilee.

Both he and Andrew had been disciples of John the Baptist. They certainly belonged to the number of those who now, in the fullness of the times, were with the aged Simeon and Anna, spoken of in Luke 2, looking for the Consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25), and were nourishing their hope in the Christ, the Messiah, who was to come, on the words spoken of him, his coming, his significance, and his work, in the prophetic revelation as contained in the Old Testament. Andrew was the first to find the Messiah, and then brought Simon to our Lord, who at once recognized in him the latent possibilities which would develop into Rock-like strength of character, under the guidance of Jesus, by the gift of the Holy Ghost. While he and Andrew were engaged in their work of fishing, Jesus summoned them to follow him as his disciples, promising that henceforth they should be “fishers of men.”

The calling of Peter to apostleship came some time later, when Jesus selected twelve to be his special companions, in order that he might train them to be his Messengers, his Ambassadors. On their first mission they were sent out “two and two” (Mark 6:7); and though

Scripture doesn't say so, it seems to be a plausible conjecture that Peter's companion on this first mission was John. For they had previously been partners and, together with James, had formed the innermost circle of the Twelve at the time of the Raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37), at the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2), and in Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). It was Peter and John who "made ready the Passover" (Luke 22:8). At the last Supper it was to John that Peter made signs (John 13:24). They alone entered the High Priest's palace at the time of Jesus' trial (John 18:15), and they alone visited the sepulchre when the news was brought that the tomb of Jesus had been found empty (John 20:2-10). To the risen Lord, Peter directed the question concerning John's future (John 21:20). After Pentecost Peter and John together healed the cripple (Acts 3:1-10), together they were arrested by the Sanhedrin (Acts 3:11), together they make the journey to Samaria (Acts 8:14). Together with James the Lord's brother they were regarded as "pillars" of the church and vigorously supported Paul's work among the Gentiles, as Paul reports Galatians 2:9. So from the very first Peter has been closely associated with these who stand in the very forefront as leaders in the work of carrying the message of salvation to Jew and Gentile alike.

The Gospels portray the character of Peter as that of a man warm-hearted and impulsive, ever ready to dare all and doubt nothing, but whose confidence, until he has been "sifted as wheat" is partly self-confidence, which failed in the hour of trial. It is this sanguine temperament of Peter's that accounts for the fact that just he is the person to be carried away by the moment, always meaning well, but not always incomplete control of circumstances or of himself. Peter's temperament accounts for what we might term lack of strength of will, as it became evident in his attitude in the matter of the obligation of the Gentiles to the ordinances of the Jewish law. He had received Paul readily (Acts 9:27) and had shown that he understood and was ready to act according to the principles of Christian liberty; but at Antioch, under the stress of surroundings (Galatians 2:11ff) he wavers and his conduct does not give the clear testimony that his profession would demand until Paul sets his right.

But it is this same Peter, who, in the school of Christ and of life, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, grows in strength and firmness of character, in clarity of perception and willingness to sacrifice and to testify to the Truth, so that he becomes the Peter who is revealed in this letter and in the other writings of the apostolic age, one in doctrine and practice with Paul, the apostle, who, as the representative apostle (*protos* Matthew 10:2) had been entrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:19) and had been given the responsibility of establishing the basic principles according to which the Church of the New Covenant was to do its work among men. For when Jesus gave him the keys of the kingdom of heaven he thereby designated him as a steward, who was to give to his household of the Church of Christ of the treasures of the house at need: to use less figurative language, just as Peter had, because of his character, often served as spokesman for the entire group of apostles, so now Jesus singles him out, as the representative apostle, and charges him with the stewardship over the mysteries of God: he is to preach and teach, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. He is to have no claims above or to the exclusion of the other apostles. And nowhere does Peter claim "primacy" or anything like it. When he exhorts the elders, as he does in our epistle, he does so as one "who is also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ" (1 Peter 5:1). Likewise, when Jesus says: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19), he is merely using the rabbinic Jewish expression of "bind and loose" in the sense of "establishing the basic principles" according to which the Church shall do its work among men. And all these obligations were fulfilled by the Apostle when he beginning with Pentecost represented the group of the apostles and became the

leader of the earliest church. For beginning at the first Pentecost at Jerusalem he preached sin and grace, and continued thus to feed the sheep of Christ as our Lord had charged him. And this he continues to do in our epistle.

Thus does our God to this very day select, and by his Holy Spirit, guide and mold men who are to be the chosen vessels charged with carrying out the will of God among men. Traits of character in themselves objectionable are in the school of the Spirit trained to exert their energies in a God-pleasing direction. For Peter, sanguine in temperament and filled as he was with an abundance of restless energy, was often impulsive in action and hasty in speech. He asked of Christ permission to come to him, walking across the water (Matthew 14:28ff); it was Peter who drew his sword and smote the high priest's servant, striking off his ear (John 18:10); Peter again objected to the thought of Jesus' Passion and tried to dissuade his undertaking it (Matthew 16:22), so that the Lord has to rebuke him with a: "Get thee behind me, Satan!" But in the Peter we see in the Book of Acts this superabundant restless energy is all being applied to the task of fulfilling the office of a steward to whom have been entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven. He at once takes the lead among his brethren. He proposes the election of a new apostle to take the place of Judas the Betrayer who has "gone to his own place" (Acts 1:25). We have already alluded to his being spokesman on the Day of Pentecost. Then, in the successive stages of the development of the church traced in the Book of Acts: Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, "unto the uttermost part of the earth", Peter consistently takes the initiative. He with John performs the first miracle (Acts 3:1-8) and acts as spokesman when they are tried by the Sanhedrin (vv.11ff). Although all the apostles are described as working "signs and wonders", it was Peter's shadow that brought healing to the sick who were laid out in the streets on their beds (Acts 5:15). When the apostles were imprisoned and miraculously released Peter again acted as spokesman before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:29ff).

The persecution which followed Stephen's martyrdom scattered the Christians but thereby extended the Gospel to Samaria, and in that stage again Peter with John is sent by the apostles to superintend this new development and set his seal of approval upon the work begun by Philip (Acts 8:14ff). Again in the period of rest which followed Paul's conversion, Peter undertook a missionary tour "throughout all quarters" (Acts 9:32) and healed Aeneas at Lydda and Tabitha at Joppa (Acts 9:33-43).

But the greatest conquest of all still awaited Peter. For it was through the instrumentality of Peter himself that God was to inaugurate the second period in the history of the Christian Church. In the earliest days the Word had been preached only to those of the house of Israel. But as Peter says Acts 15:7: "A good while ago God make choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe." For that change, the preaching to Gentiles as well, even in spite of Christ's world-wide missionary commission, Peter's impulsiveness was scarcely prepared. So God sent him the vision of the great sheet let down from heaven to the earth, wherein were all kinds of beasts (Acts 10:12). Being commanded to "Rise, kill, and eat", Peter's old habit of contradiction first of all reasserted itself in his protest against "anything common or unclean" (v.14) But no sooner had God's teaching penetrated to him that God was "no respecter of persons" than he boldly went to Caesarea, baptized Cornelius and his companions, and stood ready to defend his action according to the new light granted him. Thus the door was opened to the Gentiles, and the second era in early Church History, that of world-wide development had begun. Yet with the baptism of Cornelius, Peter's position of leadership in the early church seems to have begun to wane. His courage and steadfastness had

given solid support for laying the foundations of the church, and from that time on the work passed chiefly into the hands of others.

For these events probably took place very soon after Paul's conversion (c.34/35 A.D.), and apparently Jerusalem was for some years longer Peter's headquarters. When Paul visited Jerusalem three years after his conversion (Galatians 1:18) Peter was the only apostle present except James the Lord's Brother. Shortly before the death of Herod Agrippa in 44 A.D. James was martyred and Peter imprisoned. Upon his release by an angel, he left Jerusalem and "departed to another place" (Acts 12:17)

A very wide-spread tradition in the early church represents Peter as making Antioch a center for mission work among the Syrian Jews as an "Apostle of the Circumcision" (Gal. 2:7)

We next hear of him at the Apostolic Conference at Jerusalem in A.D. 49/51. Very probably soon after this conference Peter journeyed to Antioch where then occurred the incident of his refusal to eat with Gentile Christians to avoid offending Jewish Christians though previously he had eaten with Gentile Christians (Galatians 2).

After this incident we have no knowledge of Peter's movements for several years, except the incidental notice in Paul's First Corinthians 9:5 that Peter's wife accompanied him on his mission work.

The existence of a Cephas party at Corinth affords no sufficient grounds for supposing that Peter himself visited Corinth, nor is it probable that Peter himself visited Pontus and other provinces of Asia Minor.

Peter's work and martyrdom in Rome are attested by evidence that is early, wide-spread, and unanimous: *Clement of Rome*, the earliest of the "Apostolic Fathers" (c. 95 A.D.) speaks of the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul, and seems to select these two because they took place in Rome; *Ignatius of Antioch* in writing *To the Romans* (c. iv) says, "I do not command you as Peter and Paul"—again probably selecting the two apostles who had worked in Rome; *Papias of Hierapolis* (c.130 A.D.) described *First Peter* as written from Rome; *Dionysius of Corinth* (c.170 A.D.) described Peter and Paul as visiting Italy and suffering martyrdom; *Irenaeus of Lyons* (c.190 A.D.) says (*Heresies* 3:1): "Matthew published a Gospel—while Peter and Paul were preaching and founding the Church in Rome"; and again, *Heresies* 3:3: "The Churches of Rome founded by the two most glorious Apostles Peter and Paul; *Clement of Alexandria* says (c.200 A.D.) "When Peter had preached the word publicly in Rome, the bystanders...exhorted Mark to write out his statements." *Tertullian of Carthage* (c.200 A.D.) describes the mode of Peter's death and places it in the reign of Nero in Rome, and *Origen of Alexandria* (c.250 A.D.) says that Peter was crucified head downwards at Rome.—The point we wish to stress here is that the earliest evidence calls the church at Rome the result of the *joint* labors of *Peter and Paul*, and that it declares that both apostles died by martyrdom in the Imperial City.

### **The Date and Place of Writing of First Peter**

We nowhere find a comprehensive account of the movements of the apostles and their helpers in the wide field of the Mediterranean area. Here and there a name appears in one of the apostles' writings, and we must piece these scattered bits of information together in order to arrive at something like a satisfactory picture of the Apostolic Age and of the circumstances connected with the writing of very many of the documents that have come down to us. Our difficulties are only increased by the utter lack of an absolute system of dating in the books of the New Testament (so many years A.D.); so that here again whatever we say is necessarily the

product of reconstruction and conjecture. Of course, we ought to add that because we lack precise information on the date and place where a certain epistle was composed in no way whatsoever detracts from the apostolic truths expressed therein by these called ambassadors of God.

Peter calls the place he writes from “Babylon”. This cannot be the old Babylon of Mesopotamia nor the Roman military colony in Egypt by that name, but as we have seen, it must be Peter’s matter of speaking for *Rome*.

The following reconstruction of the movements of Peter and Paul in the closing years of their lives would seem to satisfy the information we have: When Paul arrived in Rome, Peter could not yet have been working there (Acts 28:22). In the epistles of his first Roman captivity Paul mentions numerous fellow-workers, including Mark and others “of the circumcision”, but is absolutely silent about Peter. So Peter may have come to Rome on Paul’s invitation about the time of Paul’s release from his first captivity. The two worked there together for a time before Paul started on the missionary work that had been interrupted by his arrest and imprisonment and that is implied in the Pastoral Epistles. Peter remained in Rome with Mark until he journeyed to Jerusalem, probably in 63. Mark had been with Paul in Rome at the time of the writing of Colossians but Paul looks forward to his journeying to Asia Minor and Colossae (Colossians 4:10). So possibly Mark and Peter go eastward through Asia Minor to Jerusalem in the spring of 63; they shortly thereafter retrace their steps to Rome, but arriving there, find that Paul has not yet returned as they perhaps hoped he would. Peter then falls victim to the Neronian persecution in the summer or autumn of 64. His First Epistle must therefore have been written somewhat earlier, possibly in the spring of 64 A.D. Perhaps on the return journey to Rome Silvanus (the “Silas” of Acts) joined the missionary pair.

### **The First Readers of the Epistle**

The epistle is addressed to the Christians scattered throughout the Roman provinces which constituted the region now called Asia Minor, with the exception of the coast-land south of the Taurus mountains, the region known as Cilicia, which was probably passed over because it belonged to the mission field that centered at Antioch. The district is certainly a wide one but great facilities for travel were provided by the Roman Empire. Apparently Silvanus was proposing to make a circular tour starting from some seaport in Pontus and ending his journey somewhere on the coast of Bithynia. That would account for the arrangement of the names of the provinces in which the people addressed live (Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia, 1 Peter 1:1.) Such a tour to visit the chief centers of Christianity in a vast district to just what we find in Paul’s missionary journeys. So now Silas, the erstwhile companion of Paul, undertakes to visit congregations in Asia and Galatia founded by Paul, and in Pontus, Cappadocia, and Bithynia founded we know not by whom, and carries this circular letter of Peter with himself to be read to and by the several churches as he comes to them. From the entire tone of the letter it is evident that on his circular tour Silas will find Gentile Christians. There will of course be individual Jews present, but the character of the churches to be visited will be that of the Gentile Christian community.

### **The Occasion of the Writing of First Peter**

Peter writes his epistle in order to admonish and comfort Christians who must suffer because they are Christians. The reason for their suffering is closely connected with the attitude

of the Roman state towards Christianity. For the policy of Rome toward the subject-nations of the Empire was to allow each of them to retain their own religion on the following conditions: 1) that it was a national religion and was content to take its place side by side with other national religions, without claiming to be absolute; 2) that it did not cause political or other disturbance; 3) that it managed its own religious disputes. Now Judaism did of course claim to be absolute, and repudiated all other gods than Jehovah as dumb idols, but at the same time it was intensely national so that the Romans not only allowed it toleration but even granted special privileges and exemptions to the Jews, for instance in the matter of military service.

At first, therefore, when Christianity was regarded by Roman officials, like Gallio, as “a question of words and names and Jewish Law,” it shared the same protection as Judaism. On several occasions the magistrates restrained the attacks made upon Paul, and in Romans 13:1-4 Paul describes civil magistrates as God’s delegates for avenging wrongdoing, whose praise may be obtained by doing what is good. Nevertheless, there was from the very first an inevitable antagonism between the Empire and the Church. The bigotry of the Jews and their open hostility towards Christians would soon make it obvious that Christianity was no more sect of Judaism. As an absolute religion which could admit of no compromise with idolatry, no worship of the Emperor side by side with that of Jehovah, it could not fit into the Roman system any more than Judaism. Besides this it was not even a national or hereditary religion but a new “Superstition”, which soon came to be regarded as a “pestilent superstition” for various reasons. It claimed to provide a universal bond of brotherhood, higher and more paramount than that of the Empire, whereas under Nero Emperor-worship was steadily growing stronger as the necessary link to unite the many nationalities and many gods of the subject nations. It also caused divisions in families and interfered with the religious rites which formed so large a part of social and municipal life. In many cases, as at Philippi and Ephesus, as Luke shows in Acts, and afterwards, as the Roman writer Pliny the Younger shows, in Bithynia, trades which were connected with idolatry were considerably affected by the spread of Christianity. Again, no conscientious Christian could take part in the public games and religious festivals or join in the criminal profligacy of their neighbors. Consequently Christians came to be regarded as gloomy and morose, “enemies of the human race,” or else as officious “busybodies.” Having thus incurred popular hatred the Christians would often be compelled to hold their meetings in secret, and the foul imagination of malicious enemies before long interpreted the meetings of the Christians for divine worship as involving cannibalism and incestuous lust. Even as early as Paul’s arrival in Rome the Jews there told him that their only knowledge of Christianity was that it was “everywhere spoken against” (Acts 28:22), and according to Tacitus it was because the Christians were already hated by the mob for their supposed crimes, and were regarded as guilty wretches deserving the extremest form of punishment that Nero a few years later selected them as scapegoats on whom to vent the popular fury and divert suspicion from himself in connection with the great fire that had broken out and had caused so much suffering at Rome.

From the first therefore Christianity had been an unlawful religion and one which was inevitably in conflict with the state. No official edict was really necessary to legalize the punishment of Christians, and it was quite possible that persecution may have been countenanced in the provinces by some magistrates before the outbreak of the Neronian persecution. Naturally however the policy of Nero in treating Christians as outlaws would be regarded as giving imperial sanction to persecution, and the Emperor’s example would soon be widely followed in the provinces. In the Neronian persecution it is disputed whether Christians suffered merely for their religion “as Christians” or only for other crimes which were attributed

to them. Some forty years later in the reign of Trajan, Pliny, the governor of Bithynia, in a letter to the Emperor shows that he had himself put Christians to death for “the Name” only, if they obstinately refused to recant, and Trajan’s letter in reply gives imperial sanction to this procedure, implying that it was not necessary to prove any further crime beyond the fact of being a Christian. But Christians, he says, are not to be sought out, and anonymous accusations are not to be accepted. For the period between Nero and Trajan there is no evidence of any change of policy, and the account of the Neronian persecution given by Tacitus seems most naturally to imply that as early as 64 A.D. Christians in Rome suffered for *the Name* only. The Christians arrested under Nero were charged not so much with arson as with “hatred to the human race.” This probably refers to their religious view, which made Christians run counter to all the religious ideas, the social festivities, and the moral standard of the times. So in the days when Peter wrote his epistle Christians were being hounded as votaries of a new and pestilent superstition. In none of the words of the apostle ought we see a reference to any organized persecution conducted by the state. The sufferings of the Christians in Asia Minor to whom Peter writes are rather the insults, the abuse, the social boycotting, the unjust accusations, and the rough usage such as Christian converts in a heathen country have constantly had to endure. And Peter reminds them that because they are disciples of Christ they cannot expect anything else. As their Lord has led the way, so must they follow: *per aspera ad astra, per crucem ad lucem*. In the mean time, in their everyday natural relations, which exist by divine ordinance or sufferance for man’s sake, they are to do their duty: as citizens to their government, as slaves to their masters, as spouses to one another.

But why, we might well ask, did Peter undertake to write to Christians whom others had converted? The division of labor agreed to at the apostolic conference (Galatians 2:7-10) according to which Paul was entrusted with the evangelization of the Uncircumcision and Peter with that of the Circumcision, was by this time outmoded. The Gospel had indeed been preached to Jews, yes, to the Jews first. But as a nation Israel had rejected the Christ. As a nation Israel was hardening itself incurably, and the wrath of God, as seen for instance by Paul in First Thessalonians 2:16, was about to descend swiftly and certainly upon Israel and Jerusalem. There is every indication that Paul and Peter adjusted things amicably among themselves, so that Peter now joined Paul in the work of the Gentile mission, most probably in the city of Rome itself, as we have already seen. Now Silvanus, the old and well-deserving companion of Paul, who was well known personally to many Asia Minor churches because of his association with Paul in the work there, intended to make the proposed circular journey in Asia Minor, and Peter availed himself of the opportunity afforded by this proposed journey of Silas to send a letter to the scattered Christians of that vast district. But why would Peter write to churches founded by Paul? Was he perhaps interfering in the mission field of another? The very fact that the latter problem is not touched on in any way proves that there was perfect understanding between the two great apostles, who had now for some years been working shoulder to shoulder in great task of bringing the Gentiles too to Christ. As an apostle of Jesus Christ Peter too has of course received the universal mission command, but he nowhere stresses the point, and least of all does he stand upon his authority. What he has to say to these Christians of Asia Minor he says in response to the promptings of brotherly love. He nowhere stands upon his dignity, but everywhere his humility speaks. Peter has received the gift of comforting and of exhortation, and as he admonished his readers: “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10), so he now exercises this gift of admonition and exhortation over against them. What the nearer circumstances of the case

may have been has not been revealed to us. Silas was evidently intending to revisit districts where he had already been working together with Paul (5:12 Peter speaks as though Silas is well known to his readers), or, as has been plausibly suggested, he may have been undertaking the journey as Paul's messenger. However that may have been, he must certainly have been glad to become Peter's letter-bearer in this instance. The promotion of union between Jews and Gentiles in the Church had always been a subject dear to the heart of Peter. As we know from Acts, that object was equally dear to Silas. It would therefore be a real strength to him in his mission to the provinces of Asia Minor to have such a letter as this, written by the recognized leader of the Jewish Christians, welcoming the Gentiles as members of the New Israel of God.

Moreover, it was a time of threatened danger and rising persecution. Satan was going about "desiring to have them" in the smelting fire which was to test their faith. It was therefore a fitting opportunity for Peter, who had himself known the shame of falling in the hour of trial, when Satan had "sifted him as wheat," to fulfill his Lord's command, "When thou hast turned again, strengthen thy brethren."

### **The Apostle Peter as Author**

The quality of the Greek of First Peter has always been admired, for it shows an appreciation for the niceties of the language above that of quite a number of the other books of the New Testament. The writer must have been a diligent student of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, for he is saturated with its language. Such literary attainments, it has been urged, are incredible in a Galilaean peasant like Peter, who is described in Acts 4:13 as "ignorant and unlearned", and is stated by Papias and other early Fathers to have required the services of Mark as his interpreter. Precisely what Papias means by his statement is in dispute; yet it is quite possible that the reference must be to the Latin and not to the Greek language at all. At any rate, the evidence that Greek was spoken commonly in the towns bordering on the Sea of Galilee is becoming increasingly more abundant. And in view of the large element of Greek life in Galilee, it is certainly probable that Peter had some knowledge of colloquial Greek from the first. Again, the words "ignorant and unlearned" applied to the apostles need not mean any more than that they have had no professional training in the schools of the rabbis of the time. And, we may well suppose, that in choosing Peter as one of his apostles, Christ saw in him intellectual as well as spiritual gifts and fitted him for his work by blessing the use which he made of those gifts on which the largest call would be made in carrying on the task of the Christian mission. In his intercourse with Greek-speaking Jews at Jerusalem, with Jews of the Dispersion on the day of Pentecost, and with Cornelius the centurion, Peter must almost certainly have spoken Greek. Nowhere is there a hint of the employment of an interpreter, and his knowledge of the Greek of daily intercourse would steadily increase during his sojourn in Jerusalem and his missionary work when Antioch was perhaps his headquarters. Furthermore, in "searching the Scriptures" he would be dependent upon the study of the Septuagint. It is now generally agreed that Hebrew was familiar only to scholars in the time of our Lord. Apparently Jewish children were taught to read Hebrew and the lessons in the Synagogue were still read in Hebrew, except among the Hellenists, who would use the Septuagint Greek throughout. But even where the Hebrew was still read in the synagogue service, an "interpreter" was required to give an Aramaic paraphrase, the interpretative paraphrases which when written down at a considerably later date were known as the Targums. Hebrew manuscripts seem to have been costly, whereas Greek books were quite cheap, so that it is probable that even in Galilee the Septuagint was "the people's Bible." It is



therefore by no means impossible that the language of the epistle is chiefly Peter's own, though it is certainly allowable that his amanuensis, who must here have been Silvanus, assisted him in expressing his thoughts in an idiomatic form and in giving that literary polish to the epistle that it has in such a marked degree. There seems to be no reason for assuming, as Zahn does, that Peter entrusted the actual work of composition to Silvanus, having such complete confidence in Silvanus that he could trust him to express the precise meaning Peter intended though in a much more polished form than Peter would have been capable of if left to himself. The passage this thought is based on (5:12) is best taken in its usual meaning in Greek letters. Peter says: "By Silvanus I have written briefly unto you". Regularly that would mean: "Silvanus is the one who is bringing this letter to you", and there is no reason for taking it in anything but its usual sense. As the same time, this is not to deny in the least the very great stylistic influence that Silvanus as amanuensis may well have had upon the epistle as it went forth from Rome in its final, finished form. This consideration may have great significance in an entirely different direction. The present writer has long felt that there is a marked similarity between the Epistle to the Hebrews and First Peter both as to language and thought sequences. He has been unable to investigate the matter further (for want of time), but at least one modern writer has made the same observation, yet has not investigated the subject further. That writer is Wohlenberg, editor of the volume on Peter in the Zahn Kommentar series. If further study should prove that this general impression is supported by actual finds, would we not be much closer to a solution of the entire problem of the Epistle to the Hebrews than we have ever been? For if Silvanus, or Silas, Paul's companion, wrote Hebrews, we would have an explanation for three things about that epistle that we have only had conjectures about until now: these are, first the fact that Hebrews from the first found its way into the canon of the New Testament even though it is nameless as we have it; secondly, its similarity in thought and theology to Paul; and thirdly, its utter dissimilarity from Paul in language and style. This thought is mentioned here merely as a suggestion. Perhaps someone of you can make something worthwhile of it.

The foregoing was intended to make us somewhat better acquainted with the Peter who wrote this epistle, with the times in which and the conditions under which he wrote, and with the general occasion of his sending this letter to the Gentile Christian congregations that lay in a mighty circle in northern and northwestern Asia Minor.—We turn now to Peter's work itself for a more intensive consideration of the high calling of the Christian according to the words of Peter himself.

## **II. The High Calling of the Christian**

In 5:12 Peter says that his object in writing to his readers was to "encourage them, and to testify that *this* is in very truth the grace of God, and to bid them stand fast in *it*." His words here used obviously refer not only to the immediately preceding section about persecution but rather to the whole theme of the entire epistle, which is: the high calling of the Christian, his privileges, his duties, his conduct in his present trials. Their call as Christians is a part of God's eternal purpose whereby the grace of God was to be extended to the Gentiles. That purpose had long been foretold by the prophets, and they, the readers, were to see it being fulfilled in themselves, so Peter now writes this heartening epistle to them to remind them that everything they as Christians are and have is such because precisely to them applied every promise for good that was ever made to God's faithful here upon earth. The grace of God had been shed abundantly upon Israel; this people had rejected that grace when as a nation they rejected Jesus Christ and

the word of reconciliation with God which his apostles preached; so now they, the Gentile Christians of the New Testament, were the full recipients of God's grace, the New and the True Israel of God.

On that grace they are to set their hope (1:13); and in this new kingdom of God, there is no distinction of persons: husbands and wives are fellow-heirs of the free gift of life (3:7). But God's grace is bestowed only upon the humble (5:6); let them therefore humble themselves to bear the discipline of suffering which He is sending them. Yet they must bear in mind that it is none other than the God of all grace who has called them to eternal glory in Christ (5:10); so if the road to that glory leads through a brief space of suffering, it is no mark that the grace of God has been slackened toward them. Rather it is a mark of God's favor toward them, because such suffering is the prelude to their eternal glory.

Thus we have indicated the three main topics of the epistle:

1. The Privileges of the Christian;
2. The Consequent Duties of the Christian;
3. The Present Trials of the Christian.

These three topics respectively form the theme of the three main sections into which the epistle may be divided:

1. 1:1-2:10
2. 2:11-4:11
3. 4:12-5:14

Still it should be remembered as we proceed that the epistle is no formal treatise capable of strict logical analysis, and the three main topics indicated are to some extent interwoven throughout. Anyway, would we expect the warm-hearted and energetic Peter to remain strictly and coldly logical? Rather, as in the days when he walked with our Lord on earth, Peter now, when brought face to face with his great theme, is often carried away by the fervor of his enthusiasm, and we are the gainers because of its being so.

### **1. The Privileges of the Christian:**

Peter opens his letter with the salutation (1:1-2) which we paraphrase thus: "I, Peter, write this letter to you as the duly commissioned apostle of Jesus Christ; and you, my readers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, all Roman provinces within the earthly empire of Rome, are really God's chosen people, the New Israel of God, although, like the Jews of the Dispersion, you live as strangers in a foreign land. My commission as apostle and your position as members of the chosen people are not the result of chance. We are what we are because God, our Father, from the first foreknew us and contemplated us as his children and his ambassadors. And this his eternal purpose for us he effected by consecrating us to his service by the Holy Spirit, pledging us to obedience, as he pledged Israel at Sinai, by looking upon us as sprinkled with the blood of the covenant victim, Jesus Christ.—May God's gifts of grace and peace be increased as your trials are increased." This salutation closely resembles the salutations of Paul's letters. It designates the writer and says why he may write (he is an apostle); it names the readers and their privileges, and indicates one of the leading thoughts of the epistle; namely, that Christians were set apart by God's foreknowledge to be his chosen people, consecrated to a life of sacrifice as members of Christ.

We consider the special privileges of Christians enumerated here: they are *the New Israel of God, though they live as strangers scattered throughout the Roman provinces named.*

Literally, Peter calls them “foreigners” or “strangers” *of the dispersion*; he used the word *dispersion, scattering, diaspora*, deliberately. For Israel in that day was living in a dispersion. As a nation Israel had ceased to exist; control of its government had passed into foreign hands, and its people were scattered throughout the world. So in the first place the word dispersion would make one think of the Jews, living scattered over the entire earth. Now here Peter applies the word to Christians, not merely in the sense that Christians are a scattered body of sojourners in the world, but this is one of the privileges of Christians! Here one of the titles of the old Israel is transferred to the New Israel of the Church of the New testament. And just as the Jewish Dispersion had served to spread the knowledge of Jehovah more widely, so the Christian Church scattered far and wide is the new “Dispersion” and has the similar work to do of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the heathen world around. For they, the readers named, living in the Roman provinces of Asia Minor are really citizens of heaven. They are chosen, select, separated from the sinful world in which they live, residents of earth, and yet aliens in the sense that their home, their true citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20 “But the commonwealth to which we belong is in heaven”; Luther: “*unser Wandel ist im Himmel*”)

What Peter says here may well be taken to heart by Christians of all times. We are in the world but not of it. Externally, we do what the children of the world do. We need food, shelter, and rest; we exert ourselves to acquire an education, to do the things whereto our positions in life obligate us. And yet how different the attitude with which we as Christians approach all this: what the world does, it does for its own glory; what we Christians do, we do to the eternal glory of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Peter says that Christians are such elect as a result of a *foreknowing of God*. Peter mentions the doctrine of the Christian’s election in a matter-of-fact way, and does not enter into a discussion of it at all; and yet since this doctrine is the very quintessence of the Gospel, it is well worth our while to look a little more closely at it here.

Peter is addressing Christians who stand in need of comfort. And whenever Scripture mentions the fact of the Christian’s election, it does so for the express purpose of giving comfort. For a Christian may confidently trust in God to preserve him because God has from eternity chosen, or elected, him unto salvation. This doctrine Scripture proclaims in order to comfort and strengthen our faith. True, all Gospel truths are to serve as food for faith. And this is true in particular of the Gospel truth of election. For this doctrine stresses the fact that from beginning to end our salvation is *by grace alone*. As our dogmaticians say, the doctrine of election underscores the *sola gratia*. Therefore, as is true with every Gospel truth, calculation and speculation about the doctrine according to the dictates of human reason can lead only to error. To us Christians, especially in times of stress, it has been revealed that we may confidently trust in God to preserve us to the end because he has from eternity chosen us. This truth as declared to us we Christians gratefully accept. But as soon as we begin to speculate about the doctrine asking: “Why are some elected, and not others?” *Cur alii prae aliis?*, we fall either into Calvinism, which adds to the Scripture statement the terrible doctrine that all men are either predestinated to eternal salvation or are predestinated to eternal reprobation (or damnation) according to an eternal absolute decree of God; or we fall into the error of synergism, which assumes that in regeneration there is a co-operation of divine grace and human activity. No, as Scripture teaches, election is the act of God on His Christians by which he from eternity conferred on them the favor of everything their Christianity means. Thus it is “*our historical sanctification dated back to eternity*” (J. Meyer). And since the Christian’s faith is not the result of mere chance, and since the plans of God cannot miscarry, the fact that we are “foreknown” by

God serves to reassure our faith and thus to preserve us unto the end.—Surely, the comforting doctrine of our predestination to eternal salvation is not the least of the Christian's privileges.

This eternal election of God now takes effect in us by *the hallowing by the Holy Spirit*. As Christians, Peter wants his readers to feel that they have been sanctified, literally "set apart" for himself to a life-time of hallowed service. This condition they owe entirely to the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, by daily contrition and repentance they are purified from sin, for they are thought of as being daily *sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ*. The reference here seems to be to the sprinkling of the whole people of Israel at Sinai (Exodus 24:4-8). Moses proclaimed to the people all the words of the Lord, and they promised obedience. Then, to make it a binding covenant, an altar was built and victims were killed as representatives of each tribe. Half of the blood was poured upon the altar as representing Jehovah, while the other half was sprinkled upon the people as the other contracting party in the covenant. The people heard the Book of the Covenant read and promised: "All that Jehovah hath spoken will we do and be obedient." The blood sprinkled on them is described as the "blood of the covenant." This ceremony is also referred to in Hebrews 9:7,11-22 where it is contrasted with the new covenant of which Jesus is at once the mediator and the covenant victim. The blood once shed upon the altar of the cross as the pledge of God's share in the covenant is also sprinkled upon the people as the pledge of their share in it. So the Christian was once, at his baptism, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. But since the Christian daily returns to his baptism, the blood of Christ, sprinkled as it were upon him at baptism becomes for him also a source of continuous cleansing.

And, says Peter, *this blood of Christ* is to have a personal power with them. It is to *make for their obedience* in the Holy Spirit. For the choosing by God and the sanctifying process of the Holy Spirit upon them is intended to result in their obedience. For as Christians they will no longer listen to the promptings of the flesh but only to those of the Spirit. But to be able to render this holy obedience and have an ear only for the will of God and the promptings of His Spirit, they need the gracious help of the Lord. For it is the *grace of the Lord* that will make the blood of Christ work their purification too. Therefore to the extent to which they receive this help of the Lord they will have *peace*.

In his salutation Peter has stressed to his readers the thought that they owe their very Christianity to an act of divine Love. In the next section Peter goes on to show how necessary it is that Christians become fully aware of the full meaning of this same divine Love which has been operative in their favor from all eternity. They are begotten to a living hope of attaining to an incorruptible inheritance which has all along been kept in reserve for them. Prophets long ago foretold the extension of God's favor to them, the Gentiles. Angels are watching this development of God's all-embracing plan of love with eager eyes. They have been ransomed from slavery, as Israel was from Egypt. They are living stones built into a holy Temple of which Christ is the corner stone. They are therefore a holy nation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood. They are begotten by the word of God who lives and abides forever. They are called to eternal glory. (1:3-12) The whole passage is an expansion of the words "elect according to the foreknowledge of God" in the salutation, and is intended to show that the choosing of the Gentiles was no afterthought but part of God's eternal purpose. So the mystery of Christ is being now revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets, namely the mystery that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs with Israel and that the Church, as the New and world-wide Israel, is the means of making known even to the angelic beings the manifold wisdom of God in planning the course of the ages (cf Ephesians 3:5-12). It is hard to do justice to Peter's succinct and pregnant phrases by means of a mere translation, so we shall again offer a paraphrase of this section (1:3-12). Peter

writes: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for by raising Him from the dead he has anew begotten us, His other children, to a new life of hope which is directed towards an inheritance which, unlike Canaan, can never be ravaged, never be defiled, never fade. It is an inheritance which in God’s eternal purpose was all through the ages designed to be extended to you Gentiles and has been reserved in heaven for that purpose. Your present hold on that inheritance may seem strangely to belie that hope, for you are beset by dangers and trials of all kinds, but you are under the watch and ward of God’s almighty power if only you have faith to avail yourselves of the deliverance from all evil which like the inheritance was ready prepared to be revealed in the “last time”, that is, in this, the New Testament age, which has already begun. Living in that age as you do, you can exult, even though for the time being God may require you to experience sorrow in all kinds of trials, in order that the genuineness of your faith, (a far more precious genuineness than that of gold, which is only a perishable substance though trial by fire is employed even for its testing) may be discovered by the Divine Refiner, thereby resounding unto praise and glory and honor for you and consequently to Himself, when Jesus returns to judgment at the last day. True, you never saw this Jesus in the flesh as I did; yet you love him, and though you cannot see him now, yet, believing on him as you do, you exult with a joy too deep for words. As Christians the glory of heaven is yours already, as is also the long-promised end of your faith, the deliverance from evil of your souls.

“I said that the deliverance was ready prepared, and so it was. The deliverance now revealed to you was spoken of by the prophets, who prophesied about the extension of God’s grace to you Gentiles. The prophets searched diligently to discover what or, at any rate, what kind of time the Spirit of the Lord is Anointed which was in them signified when it solemnly declared beforehand in God’s name the sufferings destined for the Messiah and the glories which were to follow those sufferings. It was revealed to them that it was not for their own age but for you that they were uttering the messages of deliverance which were now openly announced to you by those who brought you good tidings by the mission of the Holy Spirit from heaven. And this unfolding of God’s loving purpose for His creatures is watched with wondering eyes by the angels.”

So does Peter first of all thank God’s mercy which has been so richly shown in this (v. 3) that they have been “born anew”, that is, put into a new condition of life. This is a life of hope, a hope not dead and vain, like the hope of those who do not know God; but it is a real hope, one that lives because Jesus Christ rose from the dead. For the resurrection of Jesus gives the foundation and guarantee for that which is the content of every Christian’s hope, the resurrection and glorification of his own body (Romans 8:23-25; Philippians 3:21). In a certain sense this hope is a treasure which the Christian has here and now. The full possession of that hope, to be sure, still lies in the future, but it is so certain that in a very vivid sense he possesses it here and now. So Peter says that as Members of Christ we here and now are “heirs of the kingdom of heaven”; nor is this hope like the old Messianic hope of the Jews, which had become languid and conventional directed as it was to a Messiah who should be an earthly ruler and reestablish the physical throne of David. The Christian hope is full of growth and vitality. The goal (v. 4) to which our hope points forward is the spiritual Canaan, “the lot of our inheritance.” Unlike the earthly Canaan it can never be ravaged by hostile marauders or polluted by heathen profanation or scorched and withered. Yes, Christians are already in possession of the inheritance so long reserved for them. A human heir may be cheated of his inheritance, may never enter into full possession of it. The high privileges of the Christian, begun for him in eternity, won for him by the dying and subsequent exaltation of Christ, and still in the safe keeping of God, are assured to

the Christian. This Peter wishes to stress to his readers. They need such assurance; because of their manifold trials and sufferings they stand in need of just such encouragement.

Having been reborn of God, Christians, says Peter, can be certain of a third thing in addition to their hope and their inheritance (v. 5). That is *their Salvation*. Peter evidently uses the word here to cover the whole range of the deliverance as it was wrought by Christ, both in its negative aspect as rescuing them from the wrath under which the whole world was lying, and in its positive aspect of imparting to them eternal life. So too Paul uses the word in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 where “wrath” is the opposite of “to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” This salvation the readers are described as already receiving, for it was all along in readiness to be revealed “when the fullness of the time was come.” The last time has already dawned for Christians (v. 6), so that all blessings of Christians are both *future* and *present* together.

And this is still true, says Peter v. 6, in spite of the trials and hardships in which his readers live. They are going through things which might cause them to waver in their faith should they fail to recognize God’s purpose for them in these very trials. They are being persecuted because they confess to be Christians. But (v. 7) God intends the best for them, the Christians of Asia Minor whom Peter is addressing, when he allows these trials. For trials reveal the genuineness of their faith. Faith is more valuable than perishable gold. Yet the less valuable, perishable gold, is tested as to its genuineness by the trial of fire. So the more valuable, their ever-living faith, may be likewise put to the test in persecution, here compared to a “trial by fire.” In these trials Paul exhorts them to stand firm, ever confessing, never denying their faith, so that when Jesus returns to judge the quick and the dead they may stand at the right hand of his throne of judgment. Thus by suffering is man to attain to his glory. Man was indeed created to be the glory and image of God (1 Corinthians 11:7) but in his present state of sin man comes terribly far short of the glory intended for him by God (Romans 3:23). Only in the person of Christ has this glory and honor been attained (Hebrews 2:9). So it is only the “Christ in us” that constituted our “hope of glory”. But only through suffering did Christ enter into glory. That was the pathway to glory indicated for him in Old Testament prophecy. And the same pathway of suffering is employed by God in bringing his other sons to glory. It is only by suffering with Christ that we can be glorified with him (Romans 8:17) But our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:18). So does Peter speak of the trials of Christians as a refining process which will result in glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Fellowship in Christ’s sufferings should be a cause of joy that the readers may rejoice with exultation at the revelation of Christ’s glory (4:13) To be reproached in Christ’s name means that a mark of the glory which is one day to be theirs is already resting upon them (4:14). Therefore Christians are to joy in their trials and griefs; this joy is irradiated with the glory to which such sufferings really belong (1:8). And those who thus keep the faith even through persecution, griefs and trials, are winning for themselves the heavenly reward of victory, which he bears away from the contest who keeps the faith to the end. They are saved because they partake of the eternal life of God and because they are utterly torn away from the world which lies under the power of death because of sin.

How great the privileges of these readers of Peter’s epistle! They were indeed Gentiles, but even to the prophets it was revealed that by speaking as they did of the sufferings of Christ and of the resulting glories they were not serving themselves but the readers of the epistle, these Gentile Christians of Asia Minor when Peter addresses. The full meaning of the sufferings of the Son of God has been given to them by those who brought the Gospel message to them. God by his Holy Spirit is accomplishing his purpose in the world, the redemption of man. Therefore to

the very angels of heaven the accomplishment of this divine plan of redemption is a mirror in which they see the wisdom of that God who from the beginning announced his plan of salvation and in the history of the world and of his church accomplished it, even to the individual cases of these suffering Christians in Asia Minor to whom Peter is saying over and over again that the aim and end of all they go through in their faith in the Lord can be but the final glory of themselves and of that God who made them (1:9-12).—Such, says Peter, are the privileges of Christians.

## **2. The Consequent Duties of the Christian**

Such privileges carry with them corresponding responsibilities. Therefore Peter bids his readers to gird themselves for active service with sober earnestness and confident hopefulness (1:13). They must prove themselves obedient children. In the days of their ignorance it was more excusable to follow the shifting fashion of their own wayward desires, but now they have been called by one who is all-holy and therefore they must be holy (1:14-16). In claiming God as their Father they must remember that He is also the Judge, by whom every man's work must be tried, and He will not show partiality or favoritism to His children. They must therefore pass their time as sojourners in the world in reverent fear of offending God (1:17).

The seed from which they are begotten is nothing less than the word of God who lives and abides forever; its fruits in their lives should therefore be of the same character. Their love for their fellow-members of God's family must be heartfelt and unrelaxed. Malice, guile, hypocrisy, or unkind talk must be put away.

In the exercise of their "holy priesthood" they must offer spiritual sacrifices to God (2:5). As a "peculiar people" it is their task to proclaim the excellences of the God who has called them out of darkness.

In the following section the duties of Christians are emphasized in fuller detail. They must remember that they are only settlers in the world; that their true home is in heaven. But there are all kinds of fleshly lusts carrying on a constant campaign against their souls, and from these they must abstain (2:11). They must set an example of honorable conduct to the heathen among whom they live (2:12).

Though they are not of the world, they are in the world and must submit to all the institutions which God has appointed for its orderly governance. The state, the household, the family are all intended to be earthly copies of divine ideals. As citizens they must honor the Emperor and magistrates; Christian liberty must not be misused as a cloak for social or political anarchy. They are only free because they are God's bondslaves. As such they must give all men their due honor, and towards their brethren in Christ this means love. Though they can no longer worship the Emperor, reverent fear of God in no way excludes but rather demands honor to the Emperor (2:13-17).

As members of an earthly household, the fear of God should prompt servants to submit to their masters, even though they be unreasonable and awkward to deal with. To suffer injustice with patience will win God's verdict of "well done". It is the path which the Lord Himself trod and the servant is called to tread in his steps (2:18-22).

As members of an earthly home wives should submit to their husbands even though they are still heathen. The spectacle of a Christian wife's chaste conduct is a more potent force than argument to win her husband to the cause of Christ. Instead of outward finery the wife's truest adornment is a meek and quiet spirit. If they claim to have proved themselves true daughters of

Sarah, they must imitate her submission. The saintly women of old owed their charm to their persistence in well-doing, undisturbed by any excited exhibition of panic (3:1-6). But such submissive conduct on the part of the wife involves a corresponding duty on the part of a Christian husband. Husband and wife not only share an earthly home, but are also co-heirs of the gift of life. Both are “chosen vessels” of God, but the wife is cast in a more fragile mould and therefore needs to be treated with greater honor. Conjugal intercourse must be based upon this conception; otherwise the blessing promised to united prayer will be curtailed (3:7).

Besides such particular duties there are obligations binding upon all Christians alike. Unanimity, sympathy, love as brethren, tenderness, humility should be the characteristics of the Christian society. There should be no spirit of retaliation of “evil for evil, or reviling for reviling.” Rather curses should be met with blessings, for blessing is the special inheritance to which Christians are called. But if, in spite of all their efforts, Christians are called upon to suffer for righteousness’ sake, they must not be panic-stricken. If only they keep the presence of Christ enshrined in their hearts, they will silence their revilers by living Christ-like lives, and must be ready to answer for their faith with meekness and reverent fear.

They are stewards whom God has entrusted with varied gifts to be used in His service. Those who have gifts of utterance must remember that their message is not their own but God’s. Those whose duty it is to minister must do their work with all the strength that God gives them (4:10f)

In chapter 5 Peter has a special message to the elders. He bids them shepherd God’s flock not under a sense of compulsion or with any sordid mercenary motives but willingly and gladly, not domineering over those entrusted to their care but leading them by their example (5:1-4).

In short all Christians should gird themselves with humility in their relations towards one another, and above all in their attitude towards God, humbly submitting to whatever discipline of suffering He may impose upon them. To be anxious and worried is to distrust God’s loving care (5:5-7).

### **3. The Present Trials of the Christian**

The matter of the present sufferings of the Christian is such a persistent theme in Peter’s epistle that most of what needs to be said here has already been given. We need but summarize Peter’s discussions of the matter:

In 1:7 the varied trials through which Christians have to pass are described as the smelting fire to test the purity of their faith.

In 2:12 Peter reminds his readers that Christians are liable to be denounced as malefactors.

In 2:18 servants who suffer wrongfully are told to bear it patiently. By so doing they may imitate Christ’s example and follow in his footsteps.

In 3:9 Christians are told to meet revilings with blessings. 3:13 Peter says that zealous devotion to what is good will probably spare them from injury, but if they should be required to suffer for righteousness’ sake, it is a blessed thing. If only they maintain a good conscience by persistent good conduct they may shame their maligners into silence. But if God’s will should require them to suffer, it is far better to suffer for well-doing than-for evil-doing. Let them consider the sufferings of Christ.

In 4:1 they are told to face sufferings in the flesh, armed with the same conceptions which enabled Christ to endure the Cross and despise the shame. They should regard suffering in



the flesh as a means of terminating the old regime of sin and fleshly life, to live a new life unto God in the spirit.

In 4:12 Peter again reminds his readers that sufferings are a smelting fire to test their faith and character. They must not be regarded as a strange misfortune happening by chance. It should be a matter of joy to have fellowship in Christ's sufferings in order that they may have exultant joy at the revelation of His glory. To be reproached in the name of Christ is a blessed thing for it means that the spirit of that "glory" is already resting upon them.

In 5:6-10 Christians are told to submit humbly to God's hand in patiently enduring suffering. In one sense their sufferings are the work of Satan, for he employs them to try and devour his prey in inducing Christians to give way. But in another sense they are the accomplishment of a divine purpose of loving favor, and that same purpose is being accomplished in the Christian brotherhood in other parts of the world as well. In calling His children to His eternal glory in Christ, God requires them to pass through a brief period of suffering, and he will provide them with what is necessary to establish and strengthen them.