

# **Trials From Without — 1 Peter**

## **1. Let's Get Acquainted — 1 Peter 1:1,2**

**1 Peter 1:1** *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: may grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.*

Is a man an apostle just because he says so? No, he must meet three requirements: 1. He must be an eye witness of Jesus. 2. He must be able to perform miracles on demand. 3. He must be one who pioneers the Gospel to new places. Unusual faithfulness ties everything together. **2 Corinthians 12:12** Peter was a genuine apostle and an extraordinary bearer of Christ and the Gospel.

He addressed these saints as those who live like aliens. Like the elite of Hebrews 11 they have been called to something and called from something. If they wanted to go back they could, but they didn't — they were looking for a city whose builder and maker is God. So like ambassadors on foreign soil they live everywhere but without earthly roots. Their accountability is to the country to which they belong.

These people are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. That is their rock solid foundation. God is the author and completer of our salvation and it is of Him and from Him and for Him and back to Him. Man's part is to cooperate with Him and believe in Jesus with the faith that God gives thus enabling him to believe. These early believers rested joyfully in God's sovereignty even as they lived out their responsibility.

It was the sanctifying work of the Spirit that kept everything in motion. The Holy Spirit's work is three-fold: 1. Positional — when one is saved he is placed into the family of God and set apart from everything else. 2. Practical — over the years that he walks with Jesus and surrenders to the filling of the Holy Spirit his position more and more becomes his practice. It is a growth process accompanied by up's and down's but always with ultimate perseverance and joy. 3. Permanent — there is a day when every believer will step into His presence . . . ***Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24*** There will never be temptation or sinning again, no failure, no regrets, no shame, just permanent joy!

All of this is very purposeful, it is the platform for obedience to Jesus. The life that flows out of these truths is a surrendered life that is not self-reliant or independent. Rather totally dependent on Jesus to live Himself through the person. Peter wrote to establish you Christians in a faith that could sustain them through the trials that come from inside the church. This opening teaching is what he will build on for the rest of the book.

He pointed out their powerful covering — the blood of Jesus sprinkling them with cleansing, right standing, protection, purpose and much more. Jesus' blood is precious to every believer who understands that without His blood there could be no salvation. But by His blood come the riches of forgiveness, adoption, imputation, redemption and a guaranteed future. Meanwhile the blood covers and protects from the enemy and his cohorts. The blood cleanses and protects the conscience, freeing it from dead works so you can serve God.

Just a few words, but what powerful teaching!

So may grace (the super-abundant supply of God Himself to you for the need of the moment) and peace (that mental/emotional calm that inexplicably guards the heart as you pray with thanksgiving) be yours in fullest measure. What sweeter salutation could one give another? Receive this truth. Let the Christ in you bring these words to life in your moment by moment experience.

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### 2. You Are Protected — 1 Peter 1:3-5

**1 Peter 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Maybe you have struggled a bit with the sovereignty of God. The clear meaning of the term is that God is absolutely in control of all that He has created. Salvation is absolutely of Him starting with choosing His people prior to creation. Then He effectually calls the ones He chose. He gives saving faith to the ones He calls and they cooperate, using that faith to believe in Jesus and be born again, regenerated by the Holy Spirit. What about the “free” will of man? Adam’s and Eve’s wills were free until they sinned. They forfeited the autonomy of the human race that day so that we are either under the control of sin (old man) or under the control of the Spirit of God (new man) **Galatians 5:16-18**.

The best way to understand this is to think of a coin. Two unique sides that run parallel but can not be imposed on each other. You look at one side at a time and don’t try to reconcile the man’s head with a bird or building. If two people look only at opposite sides of the coin they may get in a big argument as they describe it. Same with salvation — from God’s side everything is sovereign activity. From man’s side everything is personal responsibility — whoever will, anyone who comes, pray without ceasing . . . all these are human duties and when we believe in Jesus it really does seem like a free, personal decision, and it really is until you turn the coin over and realize what God has been doing.

Think about it — I’ve heard people argue that God forknew based on His ability to look down through time and see who would believe in Jesus. If that was true God would be subject to man. Not a true or comforting picture. Let God be big, REAL BIG, your entire existence depends on Him along with the promises of His word, your inheritance and everything. The sovereignty of God is the bedrock of saving and living faith.

God chose His people and His great mercy caused them to be born again. Someone worries that God didn’t choose **everybody**, another said the amazing thing is that He chose **anybody**. His mercy was the effective agent in the new birth. Being born again is a completely spiritual event. It happens when the Holy Spirit gives a person the ability to confess Jesus as Lord and believe in their heart that God raised Him from the dead **Romans 10:9-13; 1 Corinthians 12:3**. Nicodemus wondered whether he would have to get inside his mom and be born again. Jesus assured him that the “again” part is spiritual, not of water like natural birth. It’s a birth from above brought about by the Holy Spirit. Have you been born again?

With the new birth comes living hope and that through the resurrection of Christ. When Jesus resurrected He conquered death, hell, sin, the grave, and satan and that opened the door to mankind so that whoever believes in Him shares in the victory and the prospect of eternal life. Believers look forward to the next life where they will receive an imperishable, undefiled, non-fading inheritance that is reserved for them in heaven. Jesus said that our treasures ought to go there where moths, rust and thieves are no threat. A reserved inheritance!

It’s good that God is looking out for this reward, but the other thing is that is protecting the inheritor at all times with His power. Both sides of the matter are guaranteed a positive outcome. A reserved inheritance for a protected heir. The believer’s responsibility is to exercise the faith God has given as life goes on. There is a dimension to salvation that will happen at Jesus’ appearing. True and faithful believers will be revealed with Him in a staggering celebration of God and His grace. Individual’s faith will be on display in honor to their King.

Remember, Peter is laying foundational truth here from he will launch teaching on how to triumph in trial that comes from outside the church. Be sure to receive it and get your anchor points in place. A few challenges lie ahead . . .

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### 3. The Value of Trials — 1 Peter 1:6-9

***1 Peter 1:** 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.*

The first five verses of this chapter give a lot of reasons to rejoice, but now a potentially distracting necessity — trials. The meaning of the word ranges from temptation to proving. When the devil uses it behind it, your failure is the intent. When God is in it He intends to prove you and thus make you stronger.

Carefully read the text and note that when you are passing through a trial it is distressing, but it's real target is your faith. The trial is happening to prove (assay) your faith. When a miner discovers ore or a gold nugget he brings it to be assayed. Heat or chemicals are used to prove the quality of the substance being tested. If it assays well enough he puts greater effort into mining the area. Then the metal is refined for ultimate use. When it's gold in question the refining may involve repeated melting in a crucible. Each time the gold is heated until liquified the jeweler skims off the dross that floats to the top. He repeats the heating and skimming process until he can see his reflection in the purified gold.

That's what trials do to your faith. God gave you the faith to start with. Jesus is its author and perfecter **Hebrews 12:2**. We all tend to combine faith with other things like doubt, common sense, experience, or fear. That downgrades it from what God intends it to be. So He allows trials which are necessary to purify your faith. Trials feel like fire a lot of times. If you're in the process right now it may seem like there is no end in sight. Worse it may be that you have come through one set of trials to only now be facing another round. You are tempted to think God has abandoned you and that you will soon crash.

Read on . . . your faith **will end up** producing praise, glory and honor at the revealing of Jesus Christ. **You will make it** and on that day when Jesus steps forward to be revealed (gr: apokalupsis) to the entire universe — uncovered, unveiled, fully disclosed. On that day your faith will be ready to shine forth in praise to Him. You won't remember much about any trials at that moment, you'll just be glad for what they accomplished in your life. You'll only have shining faith to present so you'll want it to be as pure and radiant as possible.

Won't it be amazing to see Jesus. You have sung to Him and about Him, studied His word, prayed to Him, witnessed for Him . . . but have never seen Him. Yet you love Him and believe in Him and greatly rejoice in Him with a glory-filled joy that is essentially inexpressible. Isn't it wonderful when you have those very special times with Him? Maybe in the night, or when out in creation, or a time in His word or praise and worship. You almost see Him. He is so real. But on **that** day the nail-scarred One will stand as every creature confesses "Jesus is Lord".

Well, there is a bottom line to all of this — you obtain as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your soul. You may think that sounds odd since you got saved when you believed in Jesus. Remember the ministry of the Holy Spirit? He sanctifies positionally, practically, and permanently. Here is the same idea. When you believed in Jesus and confessed His lordship you were saved positionally. You were placed by adoption into the family of God **Galatians 4:5,6**, you were seated with Jesus in the heavenlies **Ephesians 2:4-6**. However, your soul was not totally saved. Saved from sin's penalty, yes, but not from its practice. The cycle Peter described frees your soul from bondage to sin into obedience to Christ. That gives you unspeakable joy as you live in freedom and glorify your Savior in each moment.

So are trials worth anything? Actually a lot!

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### 4. Introduction to Inspiration — 1 Peter 1:10-12

***1 Peter 1:10** As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, 11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look.*

There are three key words used in understanding divine revelation. **Inspiration** is the supernatural act of God in which the Holy Spirit moved men to record God's revelation of Himself. Inspiration guarantees that the Scriptures are complete and without error in the original autographs. The Spirit did not dictate the revelation to the writers as you can tell by the different styles of writing throughout the Bible.

**Preservation** is the next word. It relates to the transmission of the Bible from the writers to today. We believe that God gave a complete and dynamic revelation of Himself and that He protected it as it made its way through history to our time now. Many scholars have given their lives to the study of manuscripts and textual fragments and have found miraculous events involved in preserving the record. I recommend that you read Josh McDowell's Evidence That Demands A Verdict to gain insight into how we got our Bible. We believe that we have every bit of God's Word, preserved in accuracy and completion.

When it comes to understanding and interpreting the Bible **illumination** is pivotal. It means that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the writers now illumines the believer to understand the writing. It is important in studying the Bible to follow principles of study and interpretation, but the most important thing is to call on and rely on the Holy Spirit to teach and give an accurate understanding. Use some of the countless books written about the Bible, many godly men have produced these. It's also vital that you let the Bible interpret itself. Don't isolate a verse and build your thinking on that. Instead, compare Scripture with Scripture and don't let your interpretation of one verse contradict any other verse. In the end listen to the Spirit's voice and you won't go wrong.

Peter wrote to encourage believers who were facing trials. He spoke of inspiration in order to establish the authority and reliability of Scripture which made it an anchor point for life. He spoke of inspired writers prophesying of how things would be for believers today. The he said that the Spirit of Christ who was within them predicted Jesus' suffering and ultimate glory. The prophets asked Him who He was talking about and when the events would happen. The answer was that the revelation was for a future time and people when the gospel would be preached by different men.

This teaching establishes the unique quality of the Bible. The fact that it contains the writing of 60 some men, recorded over a period of hundreds of years and has not error and conflicting message is in and of itself a miracle. The fact that a person can sit down with the Word of God, call on the Spirit of God and come away with an accurate understanding is fantastic.

This adds up to authority which is very important in dealing with trials that try to destroy you or your faith. When the surf of life is swirling all around you and you feel isolated and oppressed, turn to the Word of God, let it minister to your needs and then fill you with strength and resolve to walk in victory as the trial rolls off defeated. You can trust your Bible and you can't spend too much time reading and meditating on it. Receive it into your spirit and let the Holy Spirit and Jesus feed it to your soul.

Angels may feel jealous that salvation is for us and not them, but we can stand in confidence on God's Word and find sure ground in the middle of shifting sand.

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### 5. Healthy Thinking — 1 Peter 1:13-16

**1 Peter 1:13** Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **14** As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, **15** but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; **16** because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Thinking is one of the most important facets of the Christian life. You've heard of "Stinking Thinking" and of "Positive Thinking" and those terms have a lot of truth connected to them. There are two life principles that start with thinking.

1. What you think is what you are — *Proverbs 23:7 For as he thinks within himself, so he is. He says to you, "Eat and drink!" But his heart is not with you.*

2. What you say is what you get — *Mark 11:23 "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him." Matthew 12:34 "You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart."*

You are responsible for your mind and its thoughts. This is one area of life that God leaves up to you. So He speaks through Peter with vital instruction on healthy thinking. The first thing is to prepare your mind for doing something. This is proactive not reactive. Determine the way you should walk and engage your mind to follow the route. Have some mental boundaries and don't let your mind wander into places that will bring you down. Fill it with God's Word and meditate on it day and night.

Some supportive actions begin with keeping sober in spirit. Sober isn't somber but it means to be in control. It speaks of discipline and watchfulness. You can have your mind all tuned up and ready, but if you are allowing scattered emotions and feelings to hang around they can overpower your mind and prevent the action you have planned.

This next phrase is so important. **Fix your hope completely** on the grace to be brought to you at the revealing of Jesus Christ. Hope is the key to accomplishment in life. There are countless things to hope for or in. Peter said all of your hope needs to dwell on one event on one day – the day Jesus is at last revealed to the universe. That day and that event need to capture your heart and mind. Think about your hope. Is it in a career, a certain amount of money, a vacation, a . . . ? If you hope in transient things you will never be satisfied and your thinking may never achieve good health. But if you have a take it or leave it attitude to things and long for Jesus' amazing day you will free your mind to do right.

Purity is the next supporting quality of healthy thinking. Be obedient to God and stay away from former lusts that controlled you before you came to Jesus. Don't leave doors open for them to come around and tempt you and take you down. You may fall once in a while but as a pattern boot those things out of your life, quit thinking about them and keep your hope where it needs to be. Notice that these lusts go with ignorance so don't be ignorant. Dig into the Word and let Jesus form Himself into you through it. Let Him strengthen the new man and starve out the old man.

Replace lustful thinking, talking, and living with holiness. "Wholeness" is the word. Sin divides you all up, godliness makes you whole. How much better to be whole than to have secret rooms in your heart where lust can lurk and guilt and shame can distract. Be holy in all that you do even as God your Father is holy. Do I hear a protest? "I can't ever do that. He must not really mean it." Instead of summarily dismissing the concept why not believe God to do this amazing thing in you and your life. Let His light into every last corner of your existence and then walk in it. This is a final support to a ready mind that is producing healthy thinking.

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### 6. Valuing Redemption — 1 Peter 1:17-21

**1 Peter 1:17** If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; **18** knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, **19** but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. **20** For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you **21** who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Salvation is simply amazing. God planned it all prior to creation decreeing that He would permit the fall and then provide redemption for the world. He established from the start with Adam and Eve that if they sinned death would result. Satan lied by saying you will not surely die, instead you will have everything God is holding back from you. Eve believed the devil instead of God and Adam followed right along. God had also decreed that Jesus would become a man and die for sin. This is where blood comes in. The life of the flesh is in the blood. Sin lives in the blood of every human being. That sin was put there by the father. Jesus came into the earth without a human father and thus did not have original sin. He triumphed over all of the devil's temptation so He never had sin.

The reason He had to die for sin was that blood is the only payment acceptable to God. Our blood all has sin in it, Jesus' doesn't. So He could die and shed His innocent blood as a substitute for us. ***The just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.*** **1 Peter 3:18** Do you understand that nothing but the blood of Jesus can pay for your sin? People want to offer religion, self-reformation and the like to God, but Jesus is the only One who can save you from sin. His blood is precious like the sacrificial lamb in the Old Testament — unblemished and spotless. You can believe in Him and receive Him right now. Pray something like this: *God, I know that I'm a sinner and I can't save myself. I believe Jesus died on the cross in my place and that He resurrected. So I believe in Him as my Savior and receive Him. I also agree with you that from now on Jesus is Lord of my life. Thank you God for saving me.*

Now you are in eternal relationship with God and that fact should affect your life today. You can now call God your Father and that should produce a feeling of reverence and awe because of who He is and because of what He and the Lord Jesus have done for you. Looking back to before Christ days makes no sense because the perishables like silver and gold and the futile pursuits handed down from ancestors didn't redeem you. The blood of Jesus did and you need to honor it and be devoted to it and your Savior.

The other benefit of this salvation is that it connects you permanently with God the Father. This work of Jesus on the cross was all planned long before creation, but now He has come here and the salvation is personal. Through faith in Christ you have faith in God and included in that is the reality of Jesus' resurrection. Of course if He hadn't resurrected there would be no Christianity, but He did and believing in Him means you are believing in God as well.

This is another teaching that lays foundation for you to anchor to when buffeted by trials. Precious blood has bought you and saved you, so you don't have to yield to pressure and talk that demeans you. You are a born-again, sanctified, Spirit-filled, heaven-bound, rejoicing believer in Jesus and you overwhelmingly conquer in all things. Don't let anyone talk you out of it for even a minute.



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7. New Relationships — 1 Peter 1:22-25

**1 Peter 1:22** Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For, "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, 25 but the word of the Lord endures forever." And this is the word which was preached to you.

Relationships depend on what people bring to the table. We hear a lot of talk about baggage being drug around with a negative impact on different people. Notice Peter's first comment — you have obeyed the truth and purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren. Coming to a relationship with a purified soul is the key to things going well. Conscience is part of the soul and if it is clogged up with guilt or shame it will quickly impact any relationship. For one thing it ties up a portion of the emotional part of the person and makes them unavailable to someone in that aspect of their life. Psychologists talk about projecting feelings, attitudes and actions on someone because of unresolved personal issues. Don't forget that a conscience can be clear and reset to where it provides freedom instead of bondage.

**Hebrews 9:13** For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

The conscience, according to Romans 2, is supposed accuse or excuse as it provides moral compass to a person's thinking. If a person defiles or sears their conscience it can get inverted and accuse or excuse opposite of what it should. A person in that condition may have great difficulty in relationships. There is something to hide, a feeling of shame and guilt that makes open transparency impossible. Note the solution — the blood of Christ can cleanse a defiled conscience and free it from dead works to serve the living God.

That's Peter's premise. Back in verse 2 he spoke of obedience going hand in hand with being sprinkled with the blood. If you obey God and rely on the cleansing blood you will indeed be ready for loving, sincere relationships. That's what makes church sweet when it is. On the other hand, people with unresolved conflicts and impure hearts live in lust and frustration that will boil over into inexplicable conflict at any moment. It is beautiful when people come together in obedience and purity and then fervently (passionately, forgivingly, unconditionally, respectfully) love each other from the heart.

There is another dimension to understanding the foundation for healthy relationships. The Word of God is a huge part of everything. The new birth is inseparably linked to the Word. It is imperishable, living, and enduring and was the seed that made life in the family of God possible. So anchor your soul in the Word. Saturate yourself with it and let it change you as it conforms you to the image of Christ. Again, don't try to wrest the Scriptures to some personal application. Instead receive the Word into your spirit and wait on the Holy Spirit and Jesus to form the Word into your soul and body. Realize that the commands of the Bible are being given to the Christ in you and that's good because He **can** obey them.

As your life is built on the Word of God and you walk in obedience to it, your conscience will constantly be cleansed and kept free for investing in meaningful relationships that will be a source of joy and comfort. This eternal Word is your hope of all good things. Be glad!

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8. Priorities — 1 Peter 2:1-3

*1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.*

Peter certainly champions the notion of being real. That focus flows out of the holiness of God. **1 John 1:5 asserts, "God is Light and in Him there is no darkness at all."** Nothing hidden or duplicitous, nothing shady, just one whole entity with no division or hypocrisy. As you surrender to Jesus and the Holy Spirit they will conform you to holiness of the Father. This will likely entail the removal of some things from your heart so that new things can come. Our text is a lot like **James 1:21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.** Some things left over from the Old Man have to be purged so that holiness can happen.

Both Peter and James advocate a powerful reception of God's Word, but it can't happen when the heart isn't purified and ready. If you are having a struggle to study and understand your Bible you might want to look here first. Peter has five deadly attitudes or actions that have to go.

**Malice** — this word speaks of an evil habit of the mind that results in doing evil to others. It has to do with a person's character and how evil lurks about in their life and from time to time acts out. Peter said to put it aside.

**Deceit** — it means to bait. Fraud, guile, or craftiness. Audulterating information in order to manipulate or trick. Deceit has to go also.

**Hypocrisy** — a sin that is denounced in Scripture like no other. Jesus indicted the Pharisees again and again for their's. It simply means putting on an external appearance that covers up the evil and corruption on the inside. Hypocrisy corrupts the conscience and that prevents holiness of life. Get rid of it.

**Envy** — Peter is speaking of bursts of envy. It means jealousy and the pain felt at the sight of excellence or happiness in someone's life. It's quite similar to covetousness which is to want something even at someone's expense. Envy makes a person incapable of anything good and always results in evil. Don't need this.

**Slander** — has to do with speaking evil of someone. Ironically slander may be factual, but it is being spoken with the intent of tearing the person down. This one is really deceptive and misleading even as it causes division and faction in the Church. We could live a long time without slander.

Once these things are gone it's time to move on in the Word. James said to put aside filthiness and wickedness and then with humility receive the implanted Word. Filthiness is sexual/moral impurity. Wickedness is evil in heart and act. You can't receive the Word as baby's milk or implanted if your heart has any of these sinful traits. So ask God what He sees in you. Repent of any sin. Call on the Holy Spirit to fill and control you and then get into the Word. Nurture a great longing for it, meditate on it, memorize it, surrender to Jesus so that He can live it through you. You will grow with respect to salvation; you will experience the saving of your soul in practicality. This life will protect you from destructive trials.



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### **9. Stone Upon the Corner Stone — 1 Peter 2:4-6**

**1 Peter 2:4** And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is 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 will not be disappointed."

Here is the foundation of everything — Jesus Christ, the choice stone, the precious corner stone. Your standing with God, your praise and worship, your stability in life, the strength of the church, and victory over trials all flow out of the bedrock that is Christ. Jesus told Peter: Matthew 16:18 "I say to you that you are Peter (a small stone), but upon this rock (bedrock) I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." He probably remembered that the day the Holy Spirit gave him this to write. Notice how all of these things add up to strength, endurance, and faithfulness even when being tried by fire. If you are anchored to a solid foundation your building will withstand the storm.

In other Scripture the church is pictured as a set of temples. **1 Corinthians 6:19** *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.*

It starts with individual believers being individual temples of the Holy Spirit. Those temples are called together in local churches which are also temples of God. **1 Corinthians 3:16** *Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.*

This is a corporate temple indwelt by the Holy Spirit just like the individual believers who are also temples. **Ephesians 2:19** *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*

Paul expands his scope here to speak of a final holy temple within which a constant building process is going on with people being saved, then added to the local church temple which is being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. The complete, eternal temple is presented in **Revelation 21:9** *Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.*

This amazing 1500 mile cubed city is called the New Jerusalem, the wife of the Lamb. Read all of Revelation 21 and 22 to get the incredible picture. We know the church is betrothed to Christ the bridegroom and this takes place after the Marriage of the Lamb. So here the church is, an eternal temple made of the most dazzling minerals, jewels, gems, pearls and stones imaginable. Do you suppose the ingredients of the city come from the fiery test of pastors' work in local churches? **1 Corinthians 3:11** *For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

So Peter paints a humble picture of Jesus' rejection by men but exaltation by God through which He was named the Chief Cornerstone. His body is composed of individuals pictured here as living stones being built up into a spiritual house for a holy priesthood that can offer up spiritual sacrifices of praise made acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

This is a powerful word picture, one that calls you to faith and commitment. And when you place your faith squarely on Jesus you will never be disappointed. Never . . .

## **Trials From Without — 1 Peter**

10. The Outcome of Unbelief — 1 Peter 2:7,8

**1 Peter 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," 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.*

The sad reality is that many people don't ever believe in Jesus. And they will be hugely disappointed one day and forever. The troubling thing is that to a non-believer the precious Corner Stone becomes a stumbling stone. They are offended by Him on many counts. Peter was an eye witness to this rejection and stumbling as he spent several years with Him throughout His earthly ministry. People were upset by what He did.

Jesus healed people all the time and very often on the Sabbath. Since they did not believe in Him, the Pharisees went crazy over how He broke their version of the Law. Jesus taught them many things about the right way to do Sabbath, but their love for coercion through religion made their ears deaf. Also, they didn't like what He taught. John 6 was a high water mark as He taught about the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. And then about salvation being possible only if God causes it. When Jesus finished His teaching that day He looked and everyone but the twelve disciples had left. He said, "Are you going to quit too?" Peter said, "Where would we go and with whom? Only you have the words of life."

They didn't like who He hung out with either. These self-righteously bloated religionists were horribly offended when He ate with Zacheus the IRS Agent. Or when a woman who was a sinner anointed his feet with perfume and her tears.

But it was His claim of deity that put everything over the top. They very correctly interpreted His statements to mean, "I am God. The Jehovah God of the Old Testament, the One and Only True God, and I am equal with my Father." From, this launching point He forgave sins, healed the sick, raised the dead and began to build an eternal kingdom.

It is quite evident that the main reason people stumble over Jesus now and then is rebellion. They resent the accountability He stresses and want nothing to do with submission to His authority. And authority He has. **Philippians 2:5** *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

His passion at Calvary resulted in sin being paid for and Him being exalted above all but the Father. **Revelation 19: 11** *And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords."*

When He comes in glory they will all confess His greatness then. But their disobedience to His Word will mean it's too late and they will bear the weight of their doom for eternity. It's a wonderful thing to be a believer in Jesus!

## **Trials From Without — 1 Peter**

### 11. The High Price Of Being Redeemed — 1 Peter 2:9-12

**1 Peter 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; 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. 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.

The make-over that God does in the life of every believer is beyond comprehension. Look at the titles affixed to the people of God in verses 9 and 10. Just take a few minutes to reflect on what God has done for you through your relationship with Jesus. So much of the truth presents a contrast between now and your previous life. Everything comes down to the fact that you have received mercy and that has changed everything.

Verse 11 moves into the responsibility that is attached to the gifts of mercy. You are now called on to pay a high price of sacrifice, dedication, and changed lifestyle. God's work for you and in you makes you an alien and stranger to the world where you were so comfortable. It's not so much about you rejecting the world as it is the world rejecting you. But, you must reject the fleshly lusts that war against your soul. These sinful desires are increased by all sorts of things in the world's system. God calls you to live free of them even as you keep your behavior excellent.

We live in a time of unprecedented duplicity in Christians' lives. Many put on a public persona that tries to look committed to Christ and as if it is pursuing holiness. Yet, in private they tolerate and participate in things that trample on the blood of Christ and give the devil direct access to their life and family. The social network often reveals more than the person intended as they forget how much of the postings are visible to everyone, and what is revealed is this other life with desires, vocabulary, and behavior that contradicts all Jesus is about.

Meanwhile, God is seriously calling every Christian to renounce the evil of the world and live as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession. Why? So that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Every age group has its own struggle with all of this. When you're a kid or a teenager you naturally want to be cool and belong and all that. So you worry that if you got totally crazy for God you'd have to live in a way that would prevent that. So you develop a "church" version of you and then you have the "school" or "neighborhood" version. Doing that leaves you feeling guilty and surely makes Jesus sad because you are in a way denying Him.

Adults have more power and can do more things and keep them secret if necessary. These things that are hidden because they are shameful rob the person of the freedom and power to live a victorious life and as the shame and guilt increase the spiritual reality decreases and they are sidelined.

God is calling us to a life of undeniable good deeds that when observed will produce spontaneous praise and glory to God. What if we repented of all the cut corners and compromise, and then dedicated ourselves to a life on the level to which God has called us. Come on, it's a new year, a year of opportunity, a year yet untarnished. What if God had everything we have to give. What if He empowered and enabled you to live up to your desire and promise. What if you started expecting to do His word and then did it?

He has made the way and you can do it! God's best to you in 2011!

## **Trials From Without — 1 Peter**

### 12. Relating To Human Authority - 1 Peter 2:13 – 25

**1 Peter 2:**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. 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. 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. 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. 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, 22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

The governments mentioned here are ordained and appointed by God for the punishment of evil doers and the praise of those who do right. There have been governments that weren't in that category. Peter and John encountered one in Acts 4. Having been arrested for ministry and the preaching of the Gospel, they made a strong defense of their actions. They were ultimately commanded to stop. In Acts 4:19 Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; 20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." It seems that their answer reflected the submission in attitude that Peter teaches here, even though they took the course of what has come to be called *civil disobedience*. The United States of America would not exist had the colonists not stood up to Great Britain. So this is a difficult area of life to discern. Maybe it's a matter of conscience and every believer has to decide case by case. If a person determines that some level of resistance to government is appropriate, that person will certainly have to accept the ensuing conflict or penalty. But submission to a Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini and the like seems out of the boundary of this text.

The section that begins in verse 18 addresses work relationships. The emphasis is on dealing with unkind employers who are unreasonable and Peter recommends submission in all cases. He indicates that a submissive attitude, especially in the face of suffering, will ultimately prove your strength and find favor with God. The treatment is unjust and therefore you go a long way in demonstrating your faith if you bear up under it. Maybe the outrageous governments are to be obeyed as well . . .

Well, the conclusion of the matter begins in verse 21 where Peter points to Jesus as the example of unjust treatment and personal response. He points out that the suffering Jesus endured was in part to set an example for us in following in His steps. Jesus did or said nothing to come against His unrighteous tormentors. He calmly took what they dished out and He did it by constantly entrusting Himself to the Father who judges righteously.

Furthermore, He was bearing OUR sins in the process and that was hostility toward Him on our part. But He did it so that we could die to sin and live to righteousness, and be healed by the wounds He received. Read about the final outcome in Philippians 2 where God highly exalted Jesus and gave Him the uniquely supreme Name of King of kings and Lord of lords. Thus the text teaches that following Jesus is done by submitting to some pretty ugly stuff, but in the end God will make it all right.

I can't answer all the questions raised, especially in government part, but I know that we can each pray, submit to God, and He will tell us what to do when it's time and take care of all the results. Victory over another trial from without!

## Trials From Without — 1 Peter

### 13. The Empowered Wife 1 Peter 3:1-6

**1 Peter 3:1** *In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 3 Your adornment must not be merely external — braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.*

The concept Peter dealt with in these verses was opposite of the human wisdom that guided people in the culture. Same as in our time. The word *submission* is unacceptable to most everyone. Self-will, rights, entitlements, etc. are much more popular. So the trial from without that Peter encountered when addressing what he hoped were godly wives, was the conflict with thoughts and feelings that his instruction would stir up. And the controversy was intended to turn women away from the place of faith, to a place of assertiveness and independence that would destroy lives and ruin families.

He started his teaching with “In the same way . . .” Submission is the topic and Jesus is the example. So, in the way Jesus was submissive to His murderers (He didn’t resist or say a word, instead, He entrusted Himself to God) in the end of chapter 2, wives be submissive to your husbands. And look at the promise that flows out of the command — even if your husband is disobedient to the Word, you can win him without a word by your behavior. We’ll come back to that in a bit. Let’s understand submission.

Peter took a practical look at the meaning of the word and stressed three ideas:

1. vs. 3 – Don’t rely on external things for your true beauty.

*He doesn’t mean that dressing nicely and fixing hair is wrong, just that those don’t become the focal point of beauty, because godly beauty is internal, not external.*

2. vs. 4 – Adorn your heart with a gentle spirit.

*A gentle spirit is a meek spirit and meekness means abandoning your personal rights to God and waiting on Him to return them as privileges. Let part of your inner beauty be that you are not defensive or demanding about your rights. You don’t try to claim them because you have given that job over to God. That brings a certain beautiful calmness to anyone who does it.*

3. vs. 4 – Adorn your heart with a quiet spirit.

*Quiet means fearless and fearless is as beautiful as gentle. A wife who is trusting God to the point of having no fear is supportive of her husband, not resistant to his ideas or dreams, and with these attitudes finds him eager to know her thoughts and willing to listen.*

Any wife who does these things will find God at work in her husband, bringing him into obedience to the Word. It may not be easy and probably won’t happen in a few minutes. Consider the example of this kind of beauty in the text. “Just as Sarah obeyed Abraham . . .” That’s an extreme illustration of being submissive. Not once but twice, Abraham asked Sarah to tell a middle eastern king that she was his sister, he thought, to protect himself because of her great beauty. Both times she did it without a complaint. Can you imagine what could have happened to her? But what did? Nothing, because she hoped in God and trusted Him for everything and He brought her out without a mark.

Ladies, your trial in this is to believe God and His Word and wait on Him to provide everything, even as you wait in submission. Hard? yes. Hurtful? can be. Worth it? every time

## **Trials From Without — 1 Peter**

### 14. An Empowered Husband - 1 Peter 3:7

**1 Peter 3:7** *You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.*

We talked last time about the power God vests in wives to influence their husbands for good. It's the inner beauty of a meek and fearless spirit that connects with God's working to reach even a disobedient man. Now, in one verse, Peter addresses husbands, beginning with "in the same way."

The *same way* is the way of faith. Sarah was the example of a godly, protected wife whose husband, Abraham, twice subjected her to unthinkable threat. She passed through the trouble unscathed because God watched over her. Now, employing that same kind of victorious faith, a husband is instructed in how to relate to his wife.

First, a husband is to be understanding (*using practical knowledge, discretion, prudence*), realizing that his wife is probably physically weaker. I say probably because it's sometimes not true, but the man should always allow for a difference and show his wife patience and kindness at all times. This seems obvious, but many of us have been in moments of stress where we demanded too much of our wives and gentleness was forgotten. Maybe you've had that happen and there was an observer who pointed out your harshness — that's pretty humiliating.

The next thing to do is honor your wife as a fellow heir of the grace of life. Earlier in this chapter, Peter spoke of wives being submissive to their husbands and some men erroneously take that to mean they should rule over their wife. It's true that a husband is to lead the family; it's true he will give an account for all that happens, but the ground is still level at the foot of the cross and there is no hierarchy in Christ. Wives are fellow heirs with husbands in all God is doing in grace, and husbands must have an attitude of equality when dealing with their wives. Men, you will be blessed by the insights your wife will share with you out of God's Word if you are listening. However, if you take an attitude of superiority you will forfeit much in your marriage. Intimacy will be undermined if you make your wife feel like she is lesser or secondary. She may withdraw to some extent for a lack of motivation caused by feeling belittled. If this goes on long enough, it may threaten your marriage or leave it open to external sabotage. Consider Paul's words to the Galatians:

***Galatians 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.***

In God's view there isn't even such a thing as male and female, but we are all one in Christ. Sure, a man must carry out his family responsibility, but always with an attitude of honoring and valuing his wife as a person divinely endowed with all the same things he has from God.

There is a reward. The man who has these attitudes toward his wife will have a successful prayer ministry. Mistreating a wife or having a haughty attitude toward her will hinder a man's prayers. God will not answer the prayers of a man who dishonors his wife. I've known men in this position and their frustration level was high, yet they didn't seem to notice what they were lacking in their prayer effort. They were so full of themselves that they trucked their wives in many ways. Then God withheld answers to prayers, but they ran right over that warning and their conflict reflected in their children to where the family was marked by tension and anger.

Men, stop and take inventory in your marriage. Would your wife say that she is cared for with the gentleness a woman deserves? Is she honored for who she is and what she does? Does she feel that she is your equal? Or are you just blasting ahead, doing your thing, leaving her to fit in where she can?

Maybe you two should find a quiet place where you can candidly discuss your relationship in light of 1 Peter 3:1-7 and find out if God

has more for you than you have been experiencing. There is no better human relationship than a intimate marriage.



## Trials From Without — 1 Peter

15. The Defensible Life - 1 Peter 3:8-17

**1 Peter 3:8** To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; 9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. 10 For, "The one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. 11 He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes Of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." 13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. 17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

A clear conscience is an invaluable strength when you are being attacked. Peter is writing about coping with trials and attacks that come on you from outside the family of faith. He is talking about being strong even when pagans seek to slander and discredit faith and you who embrace faith. He instructs in how to live the life that honors God and produces no guilt or shame. A big part of it pertains to Christian relationships which are to be established in harmony, support, encouragement, and blessing. You notice that there may be conflicts among believers, but the wounded party is never to respond with evil or insult, instead with a blessing. Humility and brotherly kindness must mark church life.

This sort of behavior is not a surface thing, rather there is a certain personal aspect to individual lives that will produce the godly relationships. Verse 10 asserts that life, love and good days all come from tongue control. Evil speaking or deceit can ruin everything. Verse 11 indicates that doing good, while seeking and pursuing peace further supports the best things. Verse 12 brings the Lord into the picture as He looks with favor on righteous people and answers their prayers, even as He is against those who do evil. Peter's conclusion to the thought is that no one can harm a person who is zealous for what is good.

Yet suffering can come into the picture as enemies of the Cross may attack people who are living righteous lives. Maybe they are jealous, maybe intimidated, or made to feel guilty, who knows? But such unfair persecution is really a blessing. So don't be intimidated or troubled, but continue to set Christ apart in your heart, be ready to give gentle explanation for your faith, and be sure to keep a clear conscience so that you come out on top in any situation. By the way, **a clear conscience** is simply the ability to say that you have not wronged anyone without doing everything humanly possible to make it right. You may encounter these sorts of conflicts in your family. You may have pagan relatives who are critical of your faith and find ways to really hurt your feelings. This is exactly the sort of thing Peter is addressing. Unbelievers can be so uncomfortable with believers and their righteous life that they revile, slander, attack, etc. When that comes from family it is very painful and confusing because it is hard to know how to respond.

The faith response Peter advocates is founded on agreement with God that it is better to suffer for doing right than for doing wrong. Then, be sure you are humble, not defensive; gentle, not surly; respectful, not sarcastic; loving, not unkind; and very patient as you have occasion to explain yourself. You know that prolonged attack can raise doubts in your mind. You can wonder if you really are right and doing the right things, or if the accusations are true and you are the problem. This is where it is vital that you have a good conscience with everyone in your life so that guilt doesn't come from some other source and take you down. Pursue the right things, let God conform you to them and then watch and wait as He works out the conflicts so you have no shame. You can do this!

## **Trials From Without — 1 Peter**

16. Two Anchor Points - 1 Peter 3:18-22

**1 Peter 3:18** *For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; 19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you — not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience — through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.*

A secure anchor is often the key to surviving a fierce storm, or to simply remaining attached and protected when buffeted by wind or strong current. Sailors or fishermen have found that their safety and success often depend, at least in part, on an anchor. Life needs anchors. So many things are so uncertain and the greatest uncertainty (apart from the Word of God) is the question of what follows death. Many people refuse to think about death. They stoically stare straight ahead with no reaction or engagement on the matter, as if ignoring it eliminates it (I see way too much of that while ministering at funerals). There are also a great many perplexities as you live from day to day. Finances, health, relationships, job, equipment maintenance, school, neighbors — all of these areas and many more can bring stress, doubt or fear into your life. So let's talk about the anchors that Peter presents, anchors that will keep you centered, balanced, focused, and victorious.

The first anchor is Jesus and all that He has done for you. He once for all died for your sins! The just for the unjust. Why? So that He could bring you to God. The only way to pay for sin is with death and shed blood. OK, Jesus died and shed His blood for you. When you believe in Him as your Savior and Lord, your death issues are eternally resolved. Further, He may have died in the flesh (natural), but He was made alive in the spirit (supernatural). It's that aspect of Jesus' resurrection that is so awesome. By transforming His human body into a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:44,45) He now lives in the spirit of every born again person and is available to be nourishment to their soul and to live His life through them. Jesus paid for your sins by substituting Himself for you, then made it so He can victoriously live His life through you at all times.

I don't have much to say about verses 19,20. You can read a lot of commentaries and hear a lot of opinions about what they mean. I guess they just mean what they say and I don't know of other scripture that sheds much light on them. They're more of a segue to our second anchor and that's baptism. Peter declared that baptism saves you! There are people who believe that baptism is part of saving grace and works with Jesus' blood to pay for sin. Unfortunately, that contradicts sound teaching on salvation. Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5; Romans 4:1-25 all teach that salvation is purely by faith and not any works. So in what way does baptism save you?

It's not that it washed dirt off of you, but rather that it gives you a clear conscience before God, and a clear conscience provides salvation in every moment. With a clear conscience before God, you are anchored in the place of no guilt, no doubts, no vulnerability to attack or lies, because you know that you are in right standing before God, having obeyed His Word. Don't overlook the fact that your good conscience is based in Jesus' resurrection for you, which ties the anchors together.

On the one hand, Jesus has done everything for you so that your sins are paid for and removed, and you have relationship with God for time and eternity. No one can change that in any way — it's an anchor! On the other hand, you have obeyed the Gospel and the command to be baptized so now you have a clear and confident conscience and are impervious to any enemy attack

Proceed with a life of obedience to God and reliance on Jesus to live His obedience in you and through you in each moment. Rejoice and be strong, live an anchored life to God's glory and for your good.

## Trials From Without — 1 Peter

### 17. The Blessed Result Of Affliction - 1 Peter 4:1-6

**1 Peter 4:1** *Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 3 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. 4 In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; 5 but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.*

No one likes to suffer or to endure affliction. Nor does anyone want their leader to suffer. Peter expressed it with intensity the day Jesus reminded the disciples of His impending trip to Calvary. He insisted that these things could not be so and that he for one, wouldn't have it. Jesus rebuked Peter as speaking for the devil in words of human wisdom. Read the details in Matthew 16:13-28.

By the time Peter wrote this epistle, Jesus had died, resurrected and returned to Heaven. Peter had been through some stuff, witnessing persecution in the Church, and the time for his martyrdom was drawing near. Yet, as the Holy Spirit spoke through him, he presented a very positive outlook on suffering in a human body. There are certain points of view and steps to take in receiving full benefit from difficulty in life. By the way, **suffering** is any perceived lack in your life.

The first thing in benefiting from suffering is to get prepared. Arm yourself with an attitude of mental strength and emotional balance. "Jesus did it, I'll do it." There's nothing wrong with suffering, even though it may be undesirable. So get hold of yourself and accept the possibilities. And the benefit? Suffering will make you back off from sinning. It will free you from lusts and fulfilling the desires of pagans. Peter said that there has been time enough for sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. It's time to wake up, sober up, tighten up, and step it up. Suffering will help.

Have you yet experienced that truth? Have you noticed that it is much easier to live a holy and committed Christian life during hard times. It seems that when health is perfect, finances bountiful, relationships working, you can get a little lax in your intensity for God. You coast a little on Bible reading, prayer, witnessing, just about everything.

But, when a blast of lack comes on, you hurry right over to the Cross and deeply repent of anything and everything you can think of. Your prayer life takes a big upswing, and you start craving the Word. Why? It's just how it is. The trouble makes your soul weak and you are willing to surrender to Jesus and His Spirit.

This will get an immediate reaction from the pagans you had started to hang out with. They will get all in your face, wondering what's wrong with you and when you're going to get normal again. Don't worry, that's part of the "trials from without" that comprise Peter's total letter. Remember that these naysayers will have their day before the Great White Throne judgment of God. Share Christ with them if you can. Even if you weren't strongly living for Him for awhile, go ahead and give them the Gospel. Maybe some will come to faith.

Meanwhile, don't let suffering throw you. It's common, it's effective, and it'll change your life totally for the good. Get ready, hunker down and be faithful to Jesus as He works some things out in your life for His glory and your good. If you need to whine a little, call me **720.530.0348**, I'm a quiet listener and I've been through plenty of these learning modules.

## **Trials From Without — 1 Peter**

18. Maintaining Strong Fellowship - 1 Peter 4:7-11

***1 Peter 4:7** The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. **8** Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. **9** Be hospitable to one another without complaint. **10** As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. **11** Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

When facing trials or difficulties it is vital to have strong fellowship among the believers. The support that each one gives to each other makes the difference between victory or defeat. As trials come from outside the church, the enemy is often at work inside trying to weaken the body with pointless conflict. Peter here states a list of good and basic principles that will strengthen everyone.

His opening premise is that he was living near the end of time. We smile because he wrote this over two thousand years ago and we don't know how much more time will pass before Jesus comes, triggering the end-time sequence that concludes in eternity. This is another instance where New Testament wording points to the imminent rapture of the church. Peter was expecting Jesus' return and in light of it urged sound judgment and sober spirit as an impetus to prayer.

Fervent love builds on the foundation of prayer. A love that covers each other's sins so that conflict or disappointment can be avoided. Fervent love is intentional and cultivated, and requires constant maintenance. It's the lubricant that keeps relationships smooth through the daily grind of life.

Hospitality flows out of love and the tricky part is keeping it free of complaint. It's easy to plan social or hospitable events, but sometimes fatigue comes in and it gets a little harder. Or maybe somebody didn't carry their part — that's where fervent love comes in and lets it go without complaint.

Personal spiritual gifts are to be put to use in mutual serving of one another. Gifts flow in conjunction with grace, manifold grace, that all comes from God. God always assembles a complete body in a local church. Eyes, ears, hands, etc. come together to accomplish tasks that are bigger than the individual parts. If some people don't exercise their gift, the body feels the shortfall. But when everyone does what God has equipped them to do, great things are accomplished.

Speaking is always a sticky wicket. Oh how the tongue can light destructive fires and do great damage. So when speaking, stop and yield to the Spirit who can make speech sweet and encouraging rather than something less. Take speech seriously as if you really are speaking God-words at any time. That will totally eliminate offence even as you speak words that build up instead of tear down.

Then when serving, be sure to do it by the strength God provides. Human resources start out with great enthusiasm, but often run out before the task is done. Divine strength doesn't run out or weaken. Peter really set out to establish that everything relates to the spiritual realm. Fellowship among saints can be radically fulfilling when it starts with God and His supply of everything.

When people live this way God is glorified. That is, He is made big and recognized for His power and love. It is vital that each individual in the church assume personal responsibility for these actions and attitudes. Don't wait for someone else, don't blame someone else, rather step up to the plate and hit your own grand slam.

Come to Jesus and seek His supply for your needs. Let Him fill you, satisfy you, and prepare you to be a strong link in the chain of fellowship that walks in the train of His triumph.

## **Trials From Without — 1 Peter**

19. Triumphant Over Suffering - 1 Peter 4:12-19

**1 Peter 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; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? 19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Peter wrote with such optimism that he made trial, affliction, and suffering seem practically desirable. He could do that because he saw beyond the natural into the realm of eternity and its values. He took Jesus' teaching seriously when He said that His disciples would not have things better than their Master — since He endured rejection and suffering, so would they. Therefore, Peter took it all in stride and urged the people to not panic as if a fiery ordeal was unexpected. Rather, they should link their level of suffering to their level of rejoicing when Jesus and His glory would be revealed. This always forward thinking perspective made Peter a powerful influence on the body of Christ.

He further emphasized that the suffering should not be resulting from sinful or inappropriate behavior, but if the suffering is related to being a Christian it is not a cause for shame, but for glorifying God. I'm pretty sure that Peter remembered his own struggles with suffering for Jesus. He even denied Jesus three times in one evening! Yet Jesus forgave and restored him and he went on to preach on the Day of Pentecost when the Church was born, plus other occasions resulting in thousands coming to faith in Christ. He knew the reality of cultural conflict over Christ and then failing or triumphing at different times.

You may have experienced some level of trial because of your faith. Maybe you are passing through a fiery ordeal right now. You feel battered and beleaguered and you wonder if you will make it. First remember that Jesus has gone through all that you are plus much more. He knows your pain and will not leave you or forsake you. The writer to the Hebrews said:

***Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***  
**Hebrews 4:14-16**

Call on Jesus right now to be your strength and hope as you bravely continue taking one step at a time, trusting Him with the outcome.

Peter's last emphasis in these verses concerns salvation. He speaks in demanding terms that are appropriate for the Gospel. Being a Christian is no casual thing. God holds believers to a high standard — the standard of grace. Grace teaches the requirement of a holy life and God constantly evaluates His people with this measure. The difficulty of salvation is not for the one being saved, but the One doing the saving. Look at the price Jesus paid for His own; the suffering, the rejection, the physical pain. But oh, the glory that follows!

The people who disobey the Gospel have no such joy or hope. While a believer in Jesus knows forgiveness, relationship with God, fellowship with God, eternal life, the surety of heaven, and more, the pagan has this life with its trouble followed by eternity away from God in pain and torment for ever and ever.

The bottom line is trust your soul to the faithful Creator and for glory do right no matter what. The day you stand before Jesus, you will be so glad as your life brings joyful glory to Him.

## Trials From Without — 1 Peter

20. Good Internal Relationships - 1 Peter 5:1-7

*1 Peter 5:1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.*

It's really important to have solidarity when facing external trials. When you are dealing with the enemy you will hear lies and accusations intended to cause doubt and distrust in your relationships. If the attack is successful and causes you to question the loyalty or dependability of people around you it can be totally distracting if not devastating. So, starting with the pastor, Peter gave instruction on how to relate to each other in a way that builds up, encourages and makes everyone strong even in the midst of trials.

The term *elder* is equivalent to *pastor*. Peter spoke from experience as he exhorted pastors to be shepherds. He had walked with Jesus, witnessed His death, shared in His resurrection glory, and watched Him ascend to heaven. Out of all that came his four-fold instruction:

**1. Be a shepherd, not a cowboy.** Don't drive the people, calmly lead them. Sheep need deep, sweet grass and cool, calm water. They need protection from wolves. They need their leader to be dependable and stable as he takes them from pasture to pasture while meeting all their needs.

**2. Exercise oversight.** A pastor must have an agenda and a means of accomplishing it. He must share these things in a way that calls people to action. Sometimes he must give extra encouragement to individuals or the whole church in the need to move in the right direction. He is not an authority, but calls the church to submit to the authority of the Lord Jesus and His Word. He is to do all of this willingly and without any constraint other than following the will of God.

**3. Not for sordid gain.** It's eagerness to serve that motivates a godly pastor. He is not consumed with the love of money, but is eager to invest in Kingdom work for eternal reward. He should be financially rewarded for faithful service, being paid appropriately for his fulfillment of much responsibility.

**4. Not over-lording,** but leading by example. It's not "do as I say", but "follow me as I follow Christ". This can be a delicate balance as a pastor must lead, and at times with firmness. Yet, he is not to be autocratic and domineering. He should be living a Christian life that models the walk with Jesus.

The motivational hope for a pastor is the appearance of Jesus, the Chief Shepherd. A man who has served faithfully will receive from Him an unfading crown of glory. I have to tell you that I want that . . . really bad!

Peter addressed the young men next, urging them to let the elders lead and teach them, but for all of them of any age to be humble toward each other. Humility is vital because it obtains the grace of God and after all, grace is the supply that makes everything right in the church. Pride is a devilish destroyer, but mutual respect for each other, while trusting the mighty hand of God will make a church impervious to enemy attack. And what do you do while humbly waiting on God for promotion? Cast all your cares on Him. If you find it challenging to wait and to be humble while waiting, roll your anxiety over on Him. Let His love flow through you to the one who needs it. Let His peace fill you as He works out His perfect plan in your life. Let's keep the devil out!!



## Trials From Without — 1 Peter

21. Dealing With The Devil 1 Peter 5:8-14

**1 Peter 5:8** Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **9** But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. **10** After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. **11** To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen. **12** Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! **13** She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark. **14** Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ.

Before I talk about 1 Peter, I want to say thank you to everyone who blessed Kathee and me with the “pounding” a couple weeks ago. What an incredible surprise that was! And it encouraged our hearts. We feel blest to be able to serve Jesus with you and so appreciate your commitment and faithfulness. God has brought us a ways down the road and will see us thru to the end. May He reward your kindness in many ways.

Abrupt change of focus . . . Peter gave some instruction on handling our adversary, the devil. He starts with stressing the need for a sober outlook. Alertness is required because the enemy will ambush you if he can get away with it. So pay attention and be disciplined in your outlook. See, the devil seldom comes running right up to you offering you temptations or whatever; instead he is subtle and comes with seemingly innocent questions that start eroding your faith or hope so slightly that you barely notice. If you are goofing off he will get way ahead of you and with a sudden roar freeze you in your tracks and then eat you.

He is good at making this attack at 3:00 AM just like physical lions. They prowl around in the dark, sneaking up on their prey and suddenly roar. Fear makes the object of their attack stop dead and in a few seconds it is dead.

You are more vulnerable in the middle of the night because half of your brain is asleep and your reasoning ability is limited and your faith a little wobbly. So you are much more susceptible to his lies than at 10 in the morning when your coffee has done its job and you’re perking on all cylinders.

Remember that lies are his tool. Jesus told religionists in John 8:44 *“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”* Just look at that — he is a murderer who has no truth in him, he speaks lies out of his nature being a liar and the father of lies.

Jesus cautioned in **John 10:10** ***“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”*** He’s up to three no good things: stealing, killing, destroying. He never means you good, only evil and pain and suffering in the process. On the other hand, Jesus came to give you life and that abundantly.

So resist satan! Don’t listen to his lies, don’t listen to places that are playing his lies. Be firm in your faith by keeping the Word of God in your heart and mouth. Receive Jesus and His abundant life moment by moment. And don’t think you’re singled out. Believers world-wide suffer the battle with the devil. It’s OK, greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. And remember that in the whole process God is at work perfecting, confirming, strengthening, and establishing you. You may not always see it, but He is and other people may see it in you before you do.

Peter asked that we take him very seriously in his short epistle. He identified it as the grace of God and wanted believers to stand firm in it. Every word he wrote contributes to victory over trials that come from outside the family of God. Review his words and make every effort to stand strong in grace, faith and victory.