

THE EPISTLE OF

First Peter

WITH INTRODUCTION

AND

CHAPTER QUESTIONS

By: Reg Ginn



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CHAPTERS 1-5

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CLASS QUESTIONS

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OUTLINE

THEME: “The Reality, Rewards, and Responsibilities of Your Salvation”

Chapter 1: The Reality and Rewards of Your Salvation

1. Fulfilling the eternal plan of the Godhead. vs. 2-5
2. Testing your faith in Christ to receive a great reward. vs. 6-9
3. Attaining things previously unattainable. vs. 13-21

Chapter 2: The Responsibilities of Your Salvation

1. Personal growth in Christian character. vs. 1-23
2. Offering spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ. vs. 4-9a
3. Proclaiming God’s praises as a special people. vs. 9b,10
4. Glorifying God by your honorable conduct before others. vs. 11,12
5. Learning to be submissive to other people in imitation of Jesus. vs.13-25

Chapter 3: More Responsibilities of Your Salvation

1. Learning to be submissive to others (continued). vs. 1-22
 - a. Submission to spouses. vs. 1-6
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Chapter 4: Suffering as a Reward of Your Salvation

1. The expectation of suffering. vs. 1-6
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Chapter 5: Special Responsibilities of Your Salvation

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The First Epistle of Peter

INTRODUCTION

1. **THE BOOK:** “None of the other of the Christian writings has caught more of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ than has 1Peter. It is profound writing bearing every evidence of the holy inspiration which has been claimed for it. It has been called preeminently an epistle of hope; but it is also an epistle of courage, of fidelity, of perseverance and of confidence. The great majority of doctrinal pronouncements of the Christian religion appear within it.

“In this great epistle, Peter fulfilled his commission to ‘feed’ the church of God; and there is absolutely nothing in it except basic Christian teaching” (Burton Coffman).

- a. It was written by an apostle-- “Peter” is the first word of the letter;
- b. It was written about 65 A.D. just prior to the great persecution against the church initiated by the emperor Nero, who persecuted Christians in an effort to divert attention from the serious problems and abuses attending his reign over Rome.
- c. It was written to “pilgrims” of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithinia, the “elect.” (1:1,2)
- d. It was written from “Babylon.” (5:13)
 - (1) “Babylon” (“the great” [city], etc.)-- figurative name in Revelation for Rome;
 - (2) “Babylon”-- also a city on the Euphrates thought by some to have been a center of settlement for Jews of the dispersion;
 - (3) “Babylon” might or might not refer to a literal place; it may have figurative reference to a general condition of wickedness in a world opposed to Christ.

- II. **THE AUTHOR:** Peter was a most unusual man even apart from his role as an inspired apostle and writer of New Testament revelation. He possessed many fine qualities which we would do well to emulate. He also was beset by human frailties about which we should be warned. He makes a very profitable character study for every Christian. Coffman says, “Peter was endowed with a great mind, a thorough knowledge of the scriptures, a fearless disposition, and with a moving power of eloquence, as indicated by his sermons (Acts 2). He was also a man of great physical strength; and even at a time in his life when he had slowed down a bit (John outran him), he did not hesitate to plunge into the sea for a swim of a hundred yards after working all night (John 21:8).” Events in his association with Jesus give us some indication of his person and character:

Events prior to the crucifixion of Jesus:

1. He dared to walk on the sea (Matthew 10:2);
2. He displayed a deep loyalty to Jesus, even as many others defected (John 6:68);
3. He protested the crucifixion and was rebuked by the Lord (Matt.16:23);
4. He was among three disciples permitted to witness three great events in Jesus’ life (Gethsemane; the transfiguration; the raising of Jairus’ daughter).

Events relating to the last days of Jesus on earth:

1. He boasted of his future faithfulness (Luke 22:31-34);
2. He cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (John 18:10-12);
3. He followed "afar off" during a time of great danger (Matthew 26:58);
4. He denied the Lord three times when accused as a disciple (Mark 14:55-72).

Events following the Resurrection of Jesus:

1. He saw the risen Lord before the other apostles did (1Corinthians 15:5);
2. He confessed his love for Jesus three times (John 21:15-17);
3. He was charged to "feed" and "tend" Christ's sheep (John 21:15,16).

Events following the Ascension of Jesus:

1. He preached the first gospel sermon in Jerusalem (Acts 2);
2. He took a leading role in the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5);
3. He was asked to support Paul's preaching to the Gentiles (Galatians 1:18);
4. He was inconsistent under pressure about eating with Gentiles (Galatians 2);
5. He was crucified upside down for his faith, according to tradition.

Similar passages in 1Peter and in the Gospels

<u>Topic</u>	<u>1 Peter</u>	<u>Gospels</u>
Obedience	1:1,2	Matthew 7:2ff
Blood of Christ	2:24	Matthew 26:26
New Birth	1:23	John 3:3,5
Godly Life	2:12	Matthew 5:16
Suffering for Christ	3:14	Matthew 5:10
Baptism	3:21	Mark 16:16
End Things	4:7	Luke 21:32
Reproached for Christ	4:14	Matthew 5:11
Watchfulness	5:8	Luke 12:45

(Adapted from Coffman, Commentary)

Chapter One: “The Reality and Rewards of Your Salvation”

Verses 1,2-- **“Peter an apostle...to the pilgrims...”** Peter exhibits no effort to be recognized as pre-eminent among the apostles, as would befit the “vicar of Christ on earth.” He had learned humility through his behavior in denying Jesus (Matthew 26:31-35; 69-75). His self-introduction is inadequate for a “prince of apostles”-- predecessor of popes.

The recipients of this letter were “pilgrims,” sojourners in a strange land. They were pilgrims away from their native land of Palestine, but also away from their real home in *heaven* (Col. 3:2). They were also the “elect,” *chosen* by God:

1. According to His foreknowledge. The implications of *what* God chose to know from eternity are hard for the human mind to reconcile with man’s personal responsibility under the gospel, but *one* thing is clear-- man was created to be a free agent and as such he has *always* been held accountable for his actions. [See 2Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:13; Mark 16:15,16.]
2. Through the sanctification of the Spirit. The Spirit *leads* lost people to be *set apart* as saved people when they obey the Spirit’s commands in the gospel (Romans 8:14; Acts 2:38,41,47).
3. For the goal of [continuing] obedience and cleansing from sin (1John 1:7). The figurative “sprinkling” of Jesus’ blood for cleansing reminds us of the literal sprinkling of animal blood (Exodus 24:8). However, Jesus’ blood can forgive sins, while animal blood could not (Hebrews 10:4)!

Verses 3-5-- **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...”** The resurrection of Jesus gives hope to hopeless men because it validates the *power* of God to exercise His *mercy* in man’s salvation (John 3:16). The resurrection is God’s most convincing proof of Jesus’ divinity and authority (Romans 1:4). The saved now have a living hope of living in heaven forever. Any spiritual hope entertained by the *Jews* through Jesus as their Messiah died in disappointment when He died on the cross (Matt. 27:39-43). Any expectation held by the *Gentiles* grew out of idolatrous faith and was only false hope (Ephesians 2:12). The shattered hope of the *apostles* was also revitalized when Jesus arose from the tomb (Luke 24:21). The hope of *persecuted disciples*, whose property frequently was confiscated by their persecutors, was now transferred to heaven, where no one could interfere with their enjoyment of eternal possessions. By their faith Christians would be *kept* [protected] even through difficult times and would ultimately receive everlasting property when it was God’s time to “reveal” [give] it (John 14:1-13). God promises *no* reward to the unfaithful and disobedient (Mt.25:1-13).

Verses 6-9-- **“In this you greatly rejoice...”** The salvation of the saints is real and is worth any price they had to pay for it. Only rejoicing can spring from our confidence in this reality. No one enjoys “various trials,” but we rejoice in spite of them. [See Romans 8:18.] The trials of our faith provide *opportunities* to:

1. Prove the *genuineness* of our faith to ourselves and to others. Trials that test our faith are as essential to us as the fire which tests the genuineness of gold;
2. Give *praise, honor, and glory* to Christ at His return [See 2Thessalonians 1:10.];
3. Experience and *inexpressible joy* based on the solid values of hope;
4. Receive the *end of our faith*-- the salvation of our souls. This will provide eternal rest from all trials and temptations (2Thessalonians 1:7).

Verses 10-12-- **“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired...”** This salvation is a unique blessing to *present-day* saints:

1. Old Testament prophets promised it, but without a clear comprehension of the things they foretold. They knew what to say but not what it meant, because they spoke from the Spirit’s mind, not from their own. [See Nehemiah 9:30.]
2. The *what* and the *where* of Christ’s sufferings and the glory to follow were unclear until the “present salvation” was revealed [e.g., Philip’s preaching of Jesus as the slain Lamb of Isaiah’s prophecy and of the benefits of His sacrifice-- Isaiah 53:7,8; Acts 8:30-37.].
3. It is based on *reality*, not just on the *promise* of someone’s sufferings and glory. What was “testified beforehand” is now “reported” in the gospel as fact.
4. It provides an *immediate* opportunity for people now to receive the blessings of the “things” of the gospel. No more wondering and waiting!
5. It reaffirms God’s singular concern for man that surpasses any concern for angels. [See Hebrews 2:16.]

Verses 13-25-- **“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind...”** This salvation is demanding of its recipients. [See Romans 12:1,2.]

1. We must overcome the hindrances [“gird up the loins”] of our former lusts. This requires changing our resolve about sin and our practice of sin [See chapter 2:1]. We can’t carry old baggage along on our new journey to heaven. Changed lives are now in order.
2. We must be filled with hope. Our attitude is to be different, focusing ahead on the reward of grace and leaving behind the despair of the past. [See Philippians 3:13,14.]
3. We must be obedient children. The ignorance of “childhood” that made sin so attractive is to be replaced by the knowledge that comes with spiritual maturity that exposes the repulsiveness of evil practices.
4. We must be holy [separate, different] in our conduct. Our values must change as

we compare the respective benefits of godliness and ungodliness. [See chapter 4:3,4.]

5. We must be fearful [respectful] of an impartial Judge who will reward or punish strictly according to one's deeds (2Corinthians 5:10). This fear should motivate us to amend our conduct toward a more righteous lifestyle.
6. We must be grateful for the sacrifice made in our behalf. Christ's blood secures a redemption not available by any other means. [See John 3:16.]
7. We must be committed to family behavior. Our love must be special toward other members of God's family into which all of us have been "born again" through obedience to the truth. God's "house rules" must be respected, and one of these rules is to "Love one another" (1John 4:7). Our family behavior is centered in this mutual love shared by *all* members of the family.
 - a. Mutual love removes all danger of hatred and quarreling among the children. Sincere love should grow into *fervent* love for one another, and our increasing expressions of love will reflect how much our love has developed.
 - b. Mutual love must come from hearts made pure by the word of God. Pure [honest] love will produce pure feelings toward others in every area of life. Natural [human] love may become corrupted and cheapened, but our family love is as unchanging as the word of God which produces that love in our hearts. [See chapter 2:1,2.]
 - c. Mutual love must be energized by a respect for God's word, remembering that God's word will judge us according to how well we have loved one another. [See 1John 4:20.] Lives lived by human motivations are unstable and unsatisfying, but those directed by heavenly love are secure and rewarding.
8. "This word" about Christian conduct and love [as discussed in this chapter] is as much a part of the gospel preached by the apostles as anything else that Christians may consider as important to their salvation.

The First Epistle of Peter

QUESTIONS-- CHAPTER ONE

1. Peter addresses his letter to “pilgrims” and “elect.” How were *both* terms appropriate for these individuals? (vs. 1,2)
2. What *three* things does he say about their election? (vs. 2)
3. The “living hope” of these Christians gave them what *two* assurances? (vs. 3-5)
4. A genuine faith, though “tested by fire,” will result in _____, _____, and _____ at the return of Christ. (vs. 7)
5. What great blessings are attached to the faith of true believers? (vs. 8) [See also, John 20:29.]
6. About what extremely important events did the O.T. prophets testify many years before they occurred? (vs. 10,11)
7. By what means were the “what” and the “when” of O.T. prophecy communicated to the recipients of this letter? (vs. 11)
8. *Five* things are required of Christians in order to take advantage of the revelation about N.T. salvation. What are they? (vs.13-15)
9. What is the basic reason why every Christian should be “holy”? (vs. 15,16)
10. Why is it appropriate that every Christian should be careful of his conduct? (vs.17-19)
11. How does the gospel of Christ tie together eternity past and eternity future? (vs.20,21,4)
12. What is the specific quality essential for every Christian who desires to overcome the trials inherent in serving the Lord?
13. By what means have children of God become members of the same spiritual family? (vs.23)

Chapter Two-- “The Responsibilities of Your Salvation”

Verses 1-3-- **“Therefore, laying aside...”** The first responsibility of salvation enjoined by Peter is GROWTH. But before there can be growth, there must be preparation for growth. “Laying aside” is not growth, but certain negative behaviors must be discarded before positive growth can occur. The particular practices to be discarded all have to do with the ill treatment of others: “malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, evil speaking.” These are to be replaced with actions motivated by the “fervent love” of chapter one (verse 22). Our growth in love will assure that we grow appropriately in every area of discipleship.

1. Growing in love for God will be manifested by an increase in our obedience to His commands to us. “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).
2. Growing in love for brethren will be seen in an increase in our affection for family [church] members. “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another...” (Romans 12:10).
3. Growing in love for our fellow men is obvious as we increase our service to them. “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all...” (Galatians 6:10).

It is through the “pure milk of the word” that we can learn *how* to grow in love, and by that same word we will be *motivated* to love as only Christians can. Our growth in both love and action will become more spontaneous and more inevitable as we share in the outpouring of grace that comes to those who “live by love” in God’s family.

Verses 4-10-- **“Coming to Him as a living stone...you also as living stones...”** The second responsibility of salvation is a WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER REJECTION BY MEN. Being a Christian was not then, and is not now, the most popular course that one may follow. However, each disciple must remember that he is not “above his teacher” and should expect percecution as a part of his discipleship (Matthew 10:24; 2Timothy 3:12).

We “come” to Jesus (Matthew 11:28-30) with full knowledge that He stands as the foremost example of the truth that God’s servants will be rejected by the people of the world. A part of our committment is to follow His example of faithfulness in the face of rejection. [See 2:21ff.] His example not only teaches responsibility on our part but also great rewards from God when we are responsible to our duty. A stone rejected by men as “dead” [useless] became a “living” stone and was declared by God to be “precious” [indispensable to salvation]. We, too, can be “living” and precious tools of God when Jesus lives in us as we live in Him. [See Philippians 1:21,22; Colossians 1:27.] Notice these similarities suggested by Peter and Paul:

“DEAD AND ALIVE IN CHRIST”

(Romans 6:1-11)

CHRIST

1. Rejected the world of sin: 1Peter 1:22;
Romans 8:3
2. Rejected by the world of sin: John 7:7;
1Peter 2:4
3. Died to the world of sin [His body crucified]: Romans 6:10
4. Raised to live with God: Philippians 2:9
5. Chosen [accepted] by God to serve His purpose: 1Peter 2:4

CHRISTIANS

1. We reject the world of sin:
1Thessalonians 1:9
2. We are rejected by the world of sin:
1Peter 4:4
3. We die to the world of sin [our old bodies are crucified]: Romans 6:6,8
4. We are raised to live with God in Christ: Romans 6:11
5. We are chosen [accepted] by God to serve His purpose: 1Peter 2:5,9

The purpose for which we are chosen by God is threefold:

1. To become a “spiritual house” where spiritual service may be offered as it was in the Jewish temple;
2. To become a “spiritual priesthood” that is qualified to offer service to God as qualified priests were in the Old Testament dispensation;
3. To make “spiritual sacrifices” to God in recognition of His supremacy over spiritual Israel just as He was always supreme over physical Israel.

Interestingly, while the temple, priests, and sacrifices under the Law were all separate entities, under Christ’s rule they are all one and the same. Each Christian is a “living stone” in the spiritual temple [church]; he is also a “royal priest” qualified to serve God in every spiritual service; and he is likewise the “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1) that is offered up to honor both Father and Son. How wonderful is our status *and* our responsibility!

Verses 6-8-- **Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture...**” The rejection of Christ by the world continues throughout the gospel age. It had been prophesied by Isaiah (2:16) and by the Psalmist (Psalm 118:22) hundreds of years before Christ came to the world. Persecution for Him was in God’s plan. There are still, hundreds of years after He came, *many* who reject Him and *some* who believe in Him. He is still both scorned as a “rock

of offence” and embraced as the “chief cornerstone” of the very foundation on which salvation is built. Unbelievers [as a class] yet “stumble” over Him in disobedience, just as prophesied in the divine word.

Verses 9,10-- **“But you are a chosen generation...”** God continues to exercise His right of choice as He always has in other times. Whereas some are “chosen” for destruction [as a class] due to their disobedience, Christians are “chosen” [as a class] for significant blessings because of their obedience to God. Peter assures us that we are: [1] a chosen generation; [2] a royal priesthood; [3] a holy nation; [4] His own special people. These were advantages enjoyed on a physical level by the *Jews* in an earlier time. But *we* are *also* [5] proclaimers of His praise; [6] the people of God; [7] called out of darkness into light; [8] obtainers of mercy. These spiritual opportunities might be especially appreciated by *Gentiles*, who were “new” at this business of finding favor with the True God.

Verses 11,12-- **“...I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims...”** The third responsibility that salvation imposes on the saved is HONORABLE CONDUCT, that is, conduct that will bring honor to God. Such conduct will serve two worthwhile purposes: [1] Bar human lusts from successfully attacking the souls of disciples; and [2] exert a positive influence on the hearts of unbelievers when they observe our godly behavior. The scoffers’ first opinion of us might well be a “knee jerk” reaction based on the shock of how great a change comes over the truly-converted saint. The difference before and after conversion is a *perceived* indictment of conduct still practiced by “evil doers.” Their second opinion, however, is entirely different. Opportunities over time to observe the good works of disciples will bring some to admit the virtue that lies in following Jesus’ footsteps. The “day of visitation” may refer to the time when severe persecution would beset Christians [Macknight] or to any occasion when good deeds would be observed. This change of heart might be likened to Peter’s declaration that a wife can “win” her husband through the *demonstration* of a godly life [chapter 3]. Good works cannot *replace* the word, but they may give an *audience* to the word!

Verses 13-17-- **“...submit yourselves to every ordinance of man...”** The fourth obligation of the Christian life is SUBMISSION TO GOVERNMENTS. Christians have often been accused of sedition and must be very careful to *demonstrate* their obedience to the rule of civil law (Acts 17:7). It is good for the government and it is good for the church for God’s people to obey the laws of the land (Romans 13:4). The impression we make on the civil world is important for “the Lord’s sake.” All levels of government are worthy of our respect. Obeying the law [“doing good”] will discount any claim that Christianity encourages civil disobedience. The spiritual *liberty* we enjoy cannot become an excuse for us, a “cloak for vice,” to avoid our obligations to others. We must always pay our debts, honor our contracts, keep our promises, and be careful in our workmanship. Christians are even *free* to be more honest and dependable than others because we

serve on the basis of “want to” [love] and not “have to” (Matthew 5:4). Fear [of God], Love [of the brotherhood-- spiritual and physical], and Honor [for all men] are so closely connected that they cannot be separated.

Verses 18-25-- **Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear...** The fifth and last lesson to be learned by children of God in this chapter is SUBMISSION TO MASTERS. God places a premium on authority in such relationships as government, marriage, employment, etc., because authority is the basis of man’s submissive relationship to Him. [See 1John 4:20.] The efficacy of all relationships is diminished or destroyed when parties to those relationships ignore the inherent authority that is involved.

Servants [slaves] who became Christians in the first century did not by virtue of spiritual freedom become free from their physical servitude. The consequences of salvation *enhanced* rather than *removed* their obligations to serve their masters. The basis of all service of the Christian is “conscience toward God.” [1] A good conscience will always prompt one to do what he knows is right regardless of the circumstances [See chapter 3:21]; [2] a good conscience is mindful of the impact that both obedient and disobedient behavior have on God’s name and Christ’s church; [3] a good conscience seeks always to follow the example of Jesus [“What Would Jesus Do?”] in both pleasant and unpleasant situations, acknowledging that He *always* did what was best! His behavior was unfailingly in keeping with His divinity. Our reaction to every circumstance should likewise correspond to our spiritual nature as the children of God. [See Matthew 5:39.]

Christ’s wrongful suffering was for the salvation of others. He did not demand *fair treatment* by His adversaries, or our salvation would never have come about. He “did not threaten,” although He could have. Instead, He placed the ultimate judgment of His personal righteousness or unrighteousness in the hands of One who would be *honest and fair* in His decision.

We sometimes feel that it makes no difference what *people* think of us, as long as *God* knows our hearts. However, it is very important that people think well of our behavior as Christians. We act and react; and we even suffer the ill treatment of others in a way that “adorns” the gospel not only to enhance our *own* salvation but also to favorably impress lost people toward *their* salvation as well. [See chapter 2:12.] Someone once observed, “We are Christians even in the checkout line at Wal-Mart.” How true! The Great Shepherd and Overseer gives us guidance to be submissive, to respect all men, and to sacrifice ourselves in whatever way may be necessary to help others to “return” to God as we have returned.

1. What must be done *prior* to seeking the blessings of “spiritual milk”? (vs. 1,2)
2. What should motivate a Christian to study the word of God? (vs. 3)
3. What did these disciples especially have in common with Jesus? (vs. 4)
4. *Two* characteristics of Christians make it possible to offer acceptable “sacrifices” to their God. What are they? (vs. 5)
5. List at least *four* ways in which Christians may offer acceptable “sacrifices” to God (vs. 5).
[See also, Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 4:18; Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15.]
6. The same “living stone” (vs. 4) is regarded in two entirely different ways by different men. What differences are there in these men and in their regard for Christ? (vs. 6-8)
7. *Four* blessings inherited by Christians enable them to praise God as no others can. What are these special blessings? (vs. 9)
8. Give Peter’s “before” and “after” descriptions of God’s children. (vs. 10)
9. How do verses 11 and 12 relate to the adage, “You can’t argue with a demonstration”?
10. What fundamental misunderstanding about Christianity does Peter seek to correct in verses 13-17?
11. How do the instructions in verses 18-24 relate to a basic early teaching of Jesus about how we should respond to bad treatment from others?
12. Who provided the ultimate example of such behavior? How? (vs. 22-24)

Chapter Three-- “More Responsibilities of Your Salvation”

The blessings of salvation are many, too many to be counted. But, in common with other things of value in our lives, there are responsibilities attached to the blessings. Peter has discussed several in the previous chapter. Now, he adds three more to the list of our obligations, all of which have to do with learning to be *submissive* to others: (1) TO SPOUSES; (2) TO MISBEHAVING BRETHREN; (3) TO OPPRESSORS.

Verses 1-7-- **“Likewise you wives, be submissive...”** The first lesson about submission is directed to the WIVES in Peter’s audience. Christian wives might easily make, or be accused of making, two serious mistakes in their relationships with their husbands:

1. They might feel no obligation to submit to *unbelieving* husbands who did not share in the *liberty* of salvation; liberty was license to ignore bonds previously respected;
2. They might decide that since all were *equal* in Christ [See Gal. 3:28.], the old standards of “inequality” in the husband-wife relationship no longer applied; submission to husbands was taken away on the cross along with other things no longer important. Of course, regulations attending marriage were no more dependent on the Law of Moses than was marriage itself. It was “from the beginning” (Matthew 19:8) that God required wives to be submissive to their husbands:
 - a. The wife’s subjection was established with the first marriage between Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:16b);
 - b. Subjection was required under the Law of Patriarchy, illustrated by the relationship between Abraham and Sarah (1Peter 3:6);
 - c. The Law of Moses reaffirmed the importance of the husband’s role of leadership in every marriage. The father’s authority over his daughter was passed to her husband upon her marriage [See Numbers 30:3-16];
 - d. The same arrangement of leadership/followship was made an integral part of the gospel’s regulation of marriage (Ephesians 5:22-24).

The proper conduct in marriage becomes even more crucial when wives become Christians. Whereas the wife was concerned about her personal responsibility to respect marriage regulations that bind *all people*, now she must consider her behavior toward her husband as an important factor in his salvation or damnation. “Chaste conduct” [“free from “fault” regarding the marriage relationship] involves submissiveness as well as other things. Her demonstration of respect [“fear”] for the husband’s status in the family may have a great impact on his attitude toward the religion responsible for that demonstration. “The word” [gospel teaching] alone may not be enough to warm the cold hearts of some husbands. Of course, someone must teach them the truth of salva-

tion (Mark 16:16). Still, the attractiveness of patient and godly conduct by Christian women [A word] may open doors that otherwise might forever remain closed. Wives should be aware of both the opportunities and the dangers of what they “preach” to their husbands about the genuineness and desirability of the gospel as an agent of change in the lives of sinners.

There is much discussion about “What Do Men Want?” in their marriages. Peter declares that it is not *glamour* but *character* that is prized by serious-minded husbands. It is not the “outward adorning” but the “hidden person” of the heart that really matters. Character [“a gentle and quiet spirit”] has an abiding [“incorruptible”] influence on those it contacts; physical beauty soon fades away, along with whatever impact it might have had for a short while.

Women who trust God have always “kept their place.” Respect for their rightful role in marriage is as vital now as in the past. Times have changed, but the inherent relationships that either make or break a marriage have not. God, who made both sexes, still knows what good men want in good women and what is healthful for their marriages. “Sarah’s daughters” who obey their husbands out of respect and not out of “terror” do well in bringing tried and true principles to their family relationships.

Verse 7-- **“Likewise you husbands...”** Checks and balances are necessary in any worthwhile relationship to assure fairness. The Christian HUSBAND is not immune from rules about his marriage conduct. His “control” must be exercised with an “understanding” of the true role of each partner in the marriage and of their role *together* as children of God. He, too, must *submit* to principles governing the conduct of husbands:

1. He must *honor* his wife as the “weaker vessel” in the marriage. She is [generally] weaker physically. Respect for that weakness will not allow a good husband to “play” while his wife works. It will compel him to comply with the role that God has given him as the breadwinner for the family [See 1Tim.5:8-14; Titus 2:4,5.];
2. He must show regard for her as the “weaker” spiritual party in the marriage. While women [as a class] are more spiritually sensitive than men, and thus “stronger,” they are restricted from leadership in the church (1Timothy 2:11,12). This fact does not in any sense, however, diminish the importance of their work in the home or in the church. They are not “second-class citizens” in either place. Woman’s value to both institutions should receive only the highest honor;
3. He must understand that his wife is a “joint heir” of salvation. She is as precious to God as he is, although their roles are different. The “working out of his salvation” (Phil.2:12) is enhanced by her spiritual support, as her salvation is by his support. It is God’s desire that husband and wife get to heaven *because of*, and not *in spite of*, each other!

4. He must be fully aware that his personal salvation is dependent on how well he dwells with his wife “with understanding.” Anything that may “hinder” his prayers and service to the Lord must not be taken lightly!

Verses 8-12-- **“Finally, all of you be of one mind...”** This passage seems to be directed to situations where some MISBEHAVING BRETHREN were mistreating other saints. That always presents a “sticky” problem in the church. Peter’s solution to the problem, nevertheless, is straightforward and simple:

1. All parties should “have the same mind.” This was the same formula given to settle disputes among brethren at Corinth (1Cor. 1:10). The “mind” of Christians must always be conformed to the mind of the *scriptures*, which always teach peace, and to the mind of *Christ*, who acted in behalf of others, not for Himself (Phil.2:3-8);
2. Compassion for one another is essential to good relationships among Christians. All of us make mistakes, and any unforgiving spirit can cause serious fractures in the unity of God’s people. Remember, God forgives us as we forgive others (Matt. 6:12);
3. Love as brothers is an obvious factor in solving problems of mistreatment among members of the church. After all, even in the world, “blood is thicker than water.” Surely, our mutual relationship to the blood of Christ should count for everything in how we regard one another in our day-to-day associations;
4. An expression of tenderheartedness will go far in restoring peace among brethren. A tender [“pitiful”-- full of pity] heart compels us to treat one another with the utmost consideration. The “good” Samaritan exemplifies how a “tender” heart will act;
5. Courtesy [“humility”] is another thing that will often encourage a wrongdoer to rethink his behavior toward someone else. Courtesy is a means of causing others to feel good about themselves, and sometimes that is germane to causing them to feel better about us, too. The simple but almost forgotten practices of “Sir” and “Ma’am,” men standing in the presence of ladies, warm handshakes, etc., can go far in human relations. Humility requires that we place the feelings of others above our own (Philippians 2:4).

Each Christian must do his own part in maintaining harmony in the church. Regardless of the behavior of anyone else, we should always act responsibly and considerately. The word of God warns us that He will punish wrongdoers and reward rightdoers, without regard to who they may be.

Verses 13-22-- **“And who is he who will harm you...”** Less serious but usually more flagrant is the ill treatment Christians suffer at the hands of WORLDLY OPPRESSORS. We

are promised persecution (2Timothy 3:12), but oppression is hard to face, regardless of its source. There are some rules in place to govern our reaction to the bad attitudes and bad actions of those who try to be difficult toward us:

1. Do not be dissuaded from your commitment to Jesus by any threat made against you;
2. Always “be ready” to defend the truth on which you base the behavior that is objectionable to another. Be sure your defense is made with humility and fear [respect] toward those guilty of mistreating you;
3. Remember that when we return good treatment for bad, we “heap coals of fire” and sometimes turn the contempt of oppressors into shame about their behavior toward us;
4. Suffering of any kind can make our “following of what is good” more precious to us. We value more those things that cost us something than those that are “free.” [See 2Samuel 24:24.] We become more spiritual-minded when we must rely on spiritual remedies to our troubles. Ill treatment can in this way become a “blessing” to us;
5. Peace is a high priority for God’s elect. [See Psalm 34:12-16.] Let God avenge the wrongs done to us.

Jesus Christ is the best example of how God’s servants can be in subjection to others, even when they are behaving badly toward us. To the ultimate degree He exhibited what it means to “do good to those who do evil to us”:

1. He put His spiritual goals ahead of His personal interests-- the “just” suffered for the “unjust”;
2. Salvation was always His uppermost concern. Preaching salvation to those who were “imprisoned” in sin, He sought to rescue the perishing. The spiritual must always take priority over the physical, and where salvation is involved, *no* sacrifice is too great to make;
3. Salvation was the prime concern of God long before Jesus came to make salvation a reality. In the grossly evil world before the flood, God engaged Noah to preach salvation, just as Jesus was to preach it many years later. God did not only *desire* that men be saved. He provided a *means* for salvation. Noah sacrificed himself to make lost people aware of the danger of destruction and how they might escape it. Jesus sacrificed Himself much more completely for the same reason;
4. God’s devotion to saving the lost should be a convincing argument to His people that salvation is too precious to squander. They must not be guilty of inappropriate behavior even in the most unpleasant of circumstances.

Subjection is not an end in itself. It is rather a step toward our goal of heaven. The humiliation experienced in this world will be turned into glorification in the world to come. Jesus now enjoys authority in heaven because He was willing to be humbled on the cross. We, too, should be willing to “exchange our cross for a crown.” Paul’s promise is pertinent to this mindset: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

The First Epistle of Peter

QUESTIONS-- CHAPTER THREE

1. Does Peter's inspired advice given about the winning of husbands have a wider application? (vs. 1,2) Explain. See Matthew 5:14-16.
2. What negatives and positives govern women in deciding "what to wear"? (vs. 3,4)
3. A key factor in a Christian woman's conduct toward an unbelieving husband was displayed long ago by what O.T. character? What is this factor? (vs. 5,6)
4. A husband who ignores his responsibilities to his wife places in jeopardy what part of his own Christian life? (vs. 7)
5. List *six* essential characteristics of our brotherly relationships in the church. (vs. 8)
6. If we would receive a _____, we must give a _____.(vs. 9)
7. The _____, _____, and _____ of God make it necessary that we *refrain* from what *two* things and that we *do* what *two* things" (vs. 10-12)
8. Contrast the actions and reactions of *unbelievers* and *believers* in verses 13-17:
 - (1) Threats (1)
 - (2) "Asking" a reason (2)
 - (3) Defaming "evildoers" (3)
 - (4) Being ashamed (4)
 - (5) Persecuting "evil" deeds (5)
9. What was the grand purpose behind the death of Jesus on the cross? (vs. 18)
10. Who were the "spirits in prison" to whom Jesus preached? (vs. 18,19) [See Luke 4:17-19; 2Timothy 2:26.]
11. An outstanding example of what happens when men abuse God's patience occurred in whose lifetime? Who benefited from being aware that God's patience will at some point be exhausted? (vs. 20)
12. What lessons should be learned *now* about time and man's obedience to God? (vs. 21,22)

Chapter Four-- “Suffering as a Reward of Your Salvation”

Suffering has always been associated with righteous living. “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2Timothy 3:12). The saints to whom Peter wrote already were feeling the effects of Nero’s vindictive actions toward them, and they would soon endure the severe persecutions of Jerusalem’s fall. They needed to be able to understand their suffering in the context of God’s plan for His people. They needed to be encouraged to persevere under extremely difficult circumstances and to know that God intended suffering as a part of salvation’s *rewards* rather than just a *burden* to be borne until a way of relief could be found.

Verses 1-6-- **Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh...** This passage deals with the EXPECTATION OF SUFFERING on the part of God’s people.

1. Christians should prepare [“arm”] themselves mentally and spiritually for their approaching trials.
2. What Jesus did for us, we can do for Him. Since He suffered so willingly on our behalf, it is not unreasonable that we should willingly suffer for His cause.
3. The sufferer finds it easier to “cease” from sin when he suffers than if he should live a life of ease free from suffering. Resistance to persecution enhances resistance to other temptations [“lusts”]. “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop” applies here. When our defenses are raised against a severe problem, e.g., persecution, and our focus is centered on solving that problem, we seem to have less inclination to notice things that otherwise might cause us to struggle spiritually . Churches also have fewer *internal* disturbances during times of *external* pressures. Trouble can make what we believe seem more meaningful and precious to us. Perhaps the quickest way to convince some negligent saints about the preciousness of the *opportunity* to worship with the local congregation might be to lock the church house doors for awhile and deny them access to such worship altogether!
4. Persecution also calls attention to the value of time and its use: “Enough of our past time” has been *wasted*, Peter declares, in the practices listed in verse three. The *rest* of our time may well be cut short by the persecution and should be used properly-- for the “will of God” and not for the “will of the Gentiles [sinners].”
5. Christians who have abandoned sinful lifestyles cannot expect to receive much support from those whose sinful company they no longer keep. Their reformation is a moral indictment of the sins of their former associates. Still, the pain of persecution is intensified when the persecuted are deserted by their “friends.” We all remember how Job’s three friends added deeply to his suffering.

6. Obedient people will be vindicated eventually, if not now. Their accusers might change their warped opinions and feel shame upon further reflection [chapter 3:16], but shame for them in the judgment is certain. God will *not* abandon His children in their trials!
7. The gospel enables us to die in the flesh [kill the old man] and live in the spirit [by the new birth]. This is the primary purpose of our salvation. But a secondary purpose is that our godliness might be condemned by worldly men, which in turn will serve to condemn them in the judgment. [See Luke 11:31,32.]
8. Some of these early disciples may have already been killed or may have died from other causes, but survivors needed to be assured that they would “live” just as Christ lived following His crucifixion by the wicked men who persecuted Him.

Verses 7-11-- **“But the end of all things is at hand...”** Since suffering will come to God’s children, it can best be confronted and turned into a *blessing* when we understand the importance of SHARING SUFFERING and the things that suffering brings.

1. “The end of all things” was near. Jewish “things” would soon end when Jerusalem would be destroyed in 70 A.D. Persecution would become a “fiery trial” (verse 12). Christians would suffer because of the perceived connection between Christianity and Judaism, whether or not they were from a Jewish background.
2. It was important to give one another support, both moral and spiritual, to enhance everyone’s endurance. Notice the use of “one another” in verses 8, 9, and 10.
 - a. Fervent love would foster a complete commitment to one another and would “cover” the sins of [1] brethren, who would be considered worthy of support despite their shortcomings as Christians; [2] persecutors, whose ill treatment might seem less severe when that treatment was shared mutually by numerous saints.
 - b. Hospitality would be needed to ease the displacement of some of the persecuted from their own homes. Additionally, a closer association among ill-treated disciples would allow them to give greater encouragement to one another.
 - c. Gifts of grace, whether miraculous or common in nature, would also encourage the persecuted. These gifts were a validation of God’s support for them while their suffering continued. Some needed to speak about faithfulness and endurance, as they had been taught by the gospel. Others, as good “stewards” [managers], needed to do [minister/serve] whatever they could for their fellow saints, using whatever God had provided to them. The gifts the *we* have received from the Lord must likewise be used today for the good of *all*. They are not “my” gifts or “your” gifts; they are “ours.”
 - d. The mutual support and encouragement offered among brethren would glorify the Father and the Son who had provided the things needed for such.

Verses 12-19-- **“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial...”** Suffering would be either a curse or a blessing to these disciples, depending on their REACTION TO SUFFERING.

1. They must not feel that these “fiery trials” were peculiar to them alone. They were not being singled out because of some flaw in their character or behavior. All saints suffer some form of adversity in reaction to their godliness. When we are buffeted with problems, we can either say, “Lord, why *me*?” and betray our self-pity; or, we can ask, “Lord, why *me*?” and question our own worthiness to be cherished enough by the Lord so that He would test our faith and allow it to be strengthened by the test.
2. They could rejoice that any suffering they might undergo in this world for the name of Christ would be wonderfully rewarded in the world to come. They would be glorified as they basked in the glory of their Lord through eternity.
3. Also, apart from the prospects of receiving a heavenly reward for their suffering for Jesus, it was an added reward to their faith that God through the Spirit would give them the resources needed to *glorify* Jesus’ name while those around them were *blaspheming* that “noble” name by which they were called. [See James 2:7.]
4. A word of warning-- there is no virtue in suffering *per se*. Be certain that suffering results from righteous conduct, not unrighteous. Suffer *as* [because you are] a Christian. Don’t get caught up in ungodly behavior, thinking that any particular sin is justified by the circumstances of your troubles. A seventy-year-old woman was convicted of selling drugs. Her ill-gotten gain had for years been the sole support for her family. Her lawyer was quoted in the newspaper, “It’s not fair!” But situations never justify iniquity!
5. These Christians could take courage in the fact that God’s concern for His church would sustain its members in one way or another. Though “by the hardest” they would come through the perils of persecution, be aware of where that left those who were not members of the body: they were altogether “without hope and without God in this world.” [See Ephesians 2:12.] There would be no hope of escape through the Lord’s help and no comfort in death when they did not escape.
6. The only course of action for people of faith in difficult times is to “commit their souls to God” and to do His will while circumstances permit. God has promised to love and to keep us, and He who had the power to create all things also has the power to keep His promise that:

“The Lord is on my side;
I will not fear.
What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

The First Epistle of Peter

QUESTIONS--CHAPTER FOUR

1. About what did Peter tell Christians to have “the same mind” as Christ? (vs. 1) About what did Paul tell us to have the “mind of Christ”? [See Philippians 2:5-8.]
2. What desirable condition usually occurs in a Christian’s life after he has acquired a willingness to suffer for Christ as Christ suffered for him? (vs. 1,2)
3. What kinds of behavior characterized the recipients of this letter before they became Christians? (vs. 3) By what term are such things called in Galatians 5:19-21?
4. What was difficult for former “sin-buddies” to understand about these disciples? (vs. 4-6) How had these saints followed Paul’s admonition in Romans 6:1-7?
5. What were “all things” whose end was “at hand”? (vs. 7) [See also, chapter 5:10.]
6. “_____ covers a multitude of _____.” (vs. 8) How?
7. How should God’s gifts to His saints be used? (vs.10,11) What is a good steward? [See 1Corinthians 4:2; Titus 1:7.]
8. Why should disciples not “think it strange” when trials come to them? [See 2Timothy 3:12.]
9. There is glory in suffering as a _____, but none in suffering as a _____, _____, _____, or _____. (vs. 13-16)
10. What “judgment” was “about to begin”? What lesson was there in this fact for the saved? For the unsaved? (vs. 17,18)
11. What consolation was offered to these soon-to-be-suffering saints? (vs.19)

Chapter Five-- “Special Responsibilities of Your Salvation”

It is always difficult to discharge one’s responsibilities in the church. It is especially hard to “tend to business” when many obstacles are in the way. The “fiery trial” did not lessen the importance of satisfying their regular day-to-day obligations, nor did it relieve those with special duties from doing them as faithfully as ever, and perhaps even more so.

Verses 1-4-- **“The elders who are among you, I exhort...”** One group within local churches who had obligations beyond those incurred by every faithful member of those churches was the ELDERSHIP. It is important to have faithful elders, especially in stressful circumstances. Someone must make decisions for the group, give advice and encouragement, and work to foster a calm atmosphere among the members. Men with age and life experiences and who have a good character are best suited to guide those faced with persecution or trouble. It is vital that they *lead* well; it is also essential that the rest *follow* well. Peter, by virtue of his inspiration and practical experience [as a “fellow elder”] was well-equipped to speak about elders. According to his instructions, we learn that elders are men who:

1. Must be exhorted [warned and encouraged sometimes to do their duty]. Theirs is no easy task, and difficult jobs often require a little prodding. Elders should always welcome the encouragement of their congregation. While elders are not to be subjected to unsubstantiated accusations (1Timothy 5:19), *constructive* criticism is always in order and will be appreciated by sincere men;
2. Shepherd the flock of God. Good shepherds have a deep concern for *every* sheep in the flock and for every spiritual situation that touches each sheep. Good shepherds have one goal: *to lead the whole flock to heaven’s eternal pasture, without the loss of one!* Thus, they [1] protect the sheep from whatever dangers may arise to threaten their way (Titus 1:9); and, [2] feed the sheep a spiritual diet that will promote their spiritual health and endurance (Acts 20:28);
3. Oversee the church. They will try to remain aware of the needs and problems of the members of the church. They will seek righteous solutions for those needs and problems. Elders should not be considered as “nosey” when they display interest and concern about situations being experienced by those in their charge;
4. Serve willingly and eagerly. It is unlikely that reluctant elders will be able to inspire willingness and commitment in others. Therefore, the *first* qualification to be met by the man who aspires to the eldership is that he must “desire the position of a bishop” (1Timothy 3:1);

5. Are examples to the other church members in their *personal lives* and in their *service to the Lord*. People will not readily follow a leader in whom they have no confidence;
6. Will be rewarded for their faithful service as elders. But this is a two-headed coin. Elders will “give account” for bad service as well as for good (Hebrews 13:17). A “heavier judgment” will be theirs if they fall short.

Verse 5a-- **“Likewise you younger people...”** While the reference to YOUNGER PEOPLE is brief, it is nonetheless very important. Younger members of the church might act rashly and react inappropriately under the pressures of tribulation. In a moment they could destroy everything that others had worked hard to achieve in meeting the challenges of persecution. Peter’s simple but firm advice to them was, “Listen to your elders.” That is still a good idea. The church does not need to have others perceive us as encouraging our youth to be rebellious. In every age, young Christians must “flee youthful lusts” (2Timothy 2:22) and be “an example to the believers” (1Timothy 4:12).

Verses 5b-11-- **“Yes, all of you be submissive to one another...”** “A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.” All members of the church have certain responsibilities in God’s service. Each member must carry his own weight if the church is to prosper in its work. This was especially true during times of persecution and turmoil.

Peter did not, of course, intend to cite every duty of the GENERAL MEMBERSHIP of the church. Instead, he selected several obligations that he judged would be most significant to the tribulation ahead:

1. Responsibilities common to all church members.
 - a. *Submit to one another*-- be humble. Esteem others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). In the midst of danger, don’t think only of our personal safety and well-being, but remember that our brethren face similar problems and perils.
 - b. *Submit to God’s will in all things.* Trust in deliverance by “the mighty hand of God,” and be convinced that our trust will surely result in victory over our distress, in one way or another.
 - c. *Pray earnestly for God’s help* in every difficult situation. He “cares” for us as nobody else can. When things seem dark, remember to look for the light of His love. This will make it possible to endure the unendurable.
 - d. *Be very cautious of the devil’s assaults* on our faith. He will flagrantly attack us as a “lion” in bad times when he has the upper hand, and he will “devour” us spiritually unless we resist him “steadfastly in [things that involve] the faith.”

- e. *Never feel isolated or alone in our struggles.* Problems are the common lot of all God's children (2Timothy 3:12). There is strength in numbers, and we have a vast reservoir of help available from all others within the fellowship of Christ. They harbor special feelings and have special concerns for us, and they will assist us through whatever troubles we may face.[See Ecclesiastes 4:9,10]
 2. Blessings common to all church members who persevere-- God will:
 - a. *Perfect them.* Faith will "have its perfect work" (James 1:4) and we will be able to endure any temptation or trial that Satan may send.
 - b. *Establish them.* We will be "rooted and grounded" in love for God and for His truth (Ephesians 3:17). We will be set for the defense of the gospel against any assault that might be made by our adversaries (Philippians 1:17),
 - c. *Strengthen them.* Through God's word we will become spiritually strong (Acts 20:32) and enjoy the strength of the Lord and the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10). We will be able to save ourselves from disaster and will be influential in the salvation of others as well.
 - d. *Settle them.* We will learn to possess a calm resolve to be faithful in whatever situation we may face. We will have a confidence that springs from the fact that "He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say:
 'The Lord is my helper;
 I will not fear.
 What can man do to me?'"
- (Hebrews 13:5,6)

Verses 12-14-- **“By Silvanus, our faithful brother...”** Silvanus served either as Peter’s penman or messenger, or both. Was this the same brother who worked with Paul on various occasions? [e.g., 1Thessalonians 1:1.]

“She” [a local church] who is in “Babylon” [Rome? Mesopotamia?], along with “Mark” [John Mark?] joined with Peter in greeting the saints to whom this letter would go. It was surely an encouragement to them to know that many others were concerned for their welfare.

The “kiss” of love, or “holy kiss,” was practiced among the early disciples and was also common to the culture within which they lived. It was important that all such contacts be kept “holy” among saints and not be allowed to degenerate into ungodly behavior.

“Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus.” This is a great promise to people

who were soon [if not already] to have no outer peace for awhile! We, too, can have a peace that “passeth understanding” if we believe that we are faithful in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7)!

The First Epistle of Peter

QUESTIONS-- CHAPTER FIVE

1. Peter described himself in *three* different ways. How? (vs. 1)
2. Elders were to _____ the flock as _____. For which “flock” did they bear this responsibility? (vs. 2)
3. List the positive and the negative behaviors associated with this service. (vs. 2,3)
Not _____ **but** _____.
Not _____ **but** _____.
Not _____ **but** _____.
4. By whom will faithful elders be rewarded? What will the reward be? (vs. 4) What similar promises are made to others? See Revelation 2:10; 2Timothy 4:8. What is the common basis of all these promises?
5. Submissiveness always requires an attitude of _____ (vs. 5,6)
6. Give *three* reasons why humility should be a naturally-occurring trait in Christians. (vs. 6,7)
7. How does Peter depict the devil’s threat to Christians? What defense should be offered by Christians when they are threatened? (vs. 8,9)
8. Christians who successfully come through their trials may expect to enjoy *four* desirable outcomes of their experiences. What are they? (vs. 10)
9. When the saints had received **blessings** as the result of their sufferings, what would that outcome prove about the God who had brought such blessings about? (vs. 11)
10. Peter had written to afflicted saints in an effort to encourage them not to misunderstand the situation they were in. In what unusual way did he describe that situation? (vs. 12)
11. Where was “Babylon” from where this letter was written? (vs.13) See “Introduction to First Peter.”

