

PATIENT SUFFERING AS PILGRIMS

1st Peter

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assemblies Bible studies, some from home life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "What the Bible Teaches, 1st Peter, J.B. Nicolson. John Ritchie Ltd.
- "The Life Application Bible." Tyndale House and Zondervan

1st Peter 1:1-2

There are many forms of suffering the people of God have been called to endure in their lives as pilgrims and strangers passing through the world on our way to heaven. Physical abuse usually gets the most attention because it is not only experienced by the sufferer but is observed by those who look on as those opposed to the Gospel of God vent their animosity on those who represent God in a godless world. The suffering of saints who experience the suffering caused by disease is often not able to be explained, nor entered in by those who look on with sympathy. Being ostracized by peers and/or workmates places one in a position of loneliness and the object of scorn which creates a suffering that is unseen by anyone, but is real and often misunderstood. Persecution that comes when one will not enter into the activities of the majority, or is active in that which is not popular because it demonstrates holiness in life, is to be expected by those who live godly lives.

Suffering is often the cause of temptation because the pressures of our flesh and emotions appeal to our sinful nature to find relief. Early Christians suffered and were abused because they were saved by grace, acknowledged Jesus Christ as Lord and followed Him. They were committed to the Gospel message and met together as believers to carry out the commands of the Lord as assemblies of Christians. As the Gospel prospered and spread through the Roman Empire and beyond, persecution followed bring suffering to many.

Today believers in many parts of the world are suffering for their faith in Christ when they turn to the Lord from man-made religions, and even when they turn from "Christian religions" that teach the works of mankind for salvation, the doctrine of salvation by grace alone because of the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf.

Peter had experienced this himself. He had seen others saved through his preaching of the Gospel. He had been threatened, and imprisoned. Many who the Lord saved through his efforts had not only suffered because of their faith in Christ, but they had been killed. This can be harder on those who have preached the Gospel than if they experienced the difficulties themselves. In fulfilling the commission the Lord gave, we not only present the need of repentance to God for sin and the truth of salvation given to us by God when we trust the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior, we also interfere enough in other people's lives that they are turned from "darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Evidence of the new birth is seen in changed lives.

When we know Christ personally and listen to His word by reading the scriptures, our confidence remains even though the suffering continues. In this day in which we live these same pressures continue, but faith, loyalty to our Lord, love for others, the comfort of the Spirit and hope remain unmoved. The pressures of opposition and suffering because of our faith do not have the power to take away our joy and patience when they happen. The result of trials are actually approved by God, not necessarily the process.

1st Peter 1:1. *"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,"*

PETER.

*A fisherman has learned some things others may have missed
There is a lifestyle that one adopts when called upon to fish
He quickly learns the time to rise in order to have a day successful
Often it will be just before sunset when finally, he gets his net full.*

*If one day is wasted in fruitless searching and there are no fish to be found
A real fisherman rises and goes out again because he knows the fishing ground
The fisherman knows that every day he is responsible to do his part
But ultimately it is God who makes his work successful even when it is dark.*

*Peter learned before being sent, an apostle has an important message
There is a work that may be very hard before people pay attention
One never knows which word or phrase will bring a desired result
All we can do is make sure that the hearers can find no fault.*

*Gifts are varied God knows what is right in preparing His own for work
Our responsibility lies in being consistent never our calling to shirk
By God alone and power from Him the results we will leave to His grace
When our work then is done there'll be glory to Him as we His leading trace.*

"O God of the heavens, earth and seas: I thank Thee today for every evidence of Thy leading in the lives of Thy people. Whether the outspoken leadership of Peter, or the quiet following of a sister who seems to many, insignificant – all are known by Thee and able to be what Thou would have them be. I thank Thee for this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

There are some important things to notice as we read through the opening words of this letter to the Lord's people who are scattered abroad today. The title "Jesus Christ" is a reference to the humanity of our Lord and also the fact that He was a Person who was appointed, "Sent," to accomplish a particular purpose.

*The apostle of Jesus Christ. v.1. The person called
The blood of Jesus Christ. v.2. The grace needed
The resurrection of Jesus Christ. v.3. The new birth given
The appearing of Jesus Christ. v.7. The rewards presented (at the judgment seat of Christ)
The revelation of Jesus Christ. v.13. The actions expected.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ was appointed to fulfill a mission in this hostile world, and He came and accomplished that mission. Now it is our turn because we too have been commissioned to preach the Gospel, make disciples, baptize them and teach them. This appointment was clear to Peter who was an apostle in the foundation of the church. We are built upon the foundation of "the apostles and prophets" to carry out our divine appointment.

1st Peter 1:1. *"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,"*

STRANGERS.

*I guess we Christians don't fit very well
In a society with the world as its goal
What gives believers joy and motivation
Doesn't seem to satisfy a worldling's soul
We talk the same language but to a different drummer
We march and sing a different tune
Most around us expect to be here a long time
We strangers expect to be leaving soon
Around me people strive for more and better
Measuring meaning in life by success
Strangers to the world-system only really want
To be involved in what God is able to bless*

*To folks living around me the best a person can do
Is to be available to be a friend to those in need
We who are "strangers" from God's kingdom
Our "best" is to the Word of God to give heed
To neighbors and friends around where I live
What makes them happy is to have fun together
To those who are in God's kingdom our joy is to see
Them truly repent and the finally call God their "Father"
A work of God's grace in one's soul changes
That person's life to look forward to life in heaven
Others think all is well they're "good people"
They don't think they need to be forgiven.*

*It's not just here, it is the same wherever
Kingdom people live and their testimony is found
Even though they lived there all their lives
Those who are saved and heaven bound
Are still considered there to be odd strangers*

*On some kind of an unusual mission
We are living here temporarily and are not asking
Nor seeking some kind of a high worldly position
So, they are polite and often very nice
But almost all want to keep their distance
Because living for an absent unseen Master
Requires an on-going consistent persistence.*

*To know God's will we follow His daily guidance
By reading through His Word on a daily basis
And committing oneself to friendship is secondary
To be willing to do all God says
A stranger I will remain though in daily contact
With those who are in these nations all around
Hoping and praying that some Gospel seed
Will fall and remain on fallow ground
And bring forth much fruit when seed germinates
So that fruit will fully develop and remain
Producing a friendship of those in God's family
Former strangers, now God's children we believe the same.*

"Father God, I know I am not well accepted as a companion of those who are around. They are polite and kind but want to keep their distance because they know Linda and I are involved in the work of the kingdom of God. I thank Thee that there is enough of a difference in us that people can see it. May we be always committed to our heavenly calling. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 1:1-9

CHOOSE JOY

V.1-2. There are good reasons for living even when suffering. Perhaps one of the best is that we gain a perspective through suffering that we learn in no other way. A life without suffering is frivolous and purposeless. Peter's apostleship gave him a reason for living beyond catching fish to feed his family and others. He had gained a worldview from the Lord Jesus Christ that fit in with the divine purposes of God. Peter knew where he belonged in God's scheme of things and this letter was part of the responsibility of his work as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

The early Christian believers to whom Peter wrote likely included some who had been saved on the day of Pentecost according to the place names in the first verse of chapter one. Now his spiritual children were facing persecution. Nero had focused his attention on them because they would not worship him as a god, nor would they go into the pagan temples which were a money-making business that needed people to attend and pay. The immorality of pagan and/or false worship is well known today where people set up the opinions of men and women in the place of God. Even in "Christian" churches people charge money for the slightest things in an effort to enrich the organization. They also have removed the moral standards of the word of God and replaced them with laws made by governments to please the people and accommodate to the debased moral practices in which people want to be engaged.

The "strangers scattered" across the Roman Empire would stand out wherever they were found even though they were comparatively speaking few in number. Those who follow the Lord and scriptural teaching are misfits in modern secular society. Even religion is more concerned about money and social acceptance than what the Lord wants and the eternal welfare of the souls of men and women.

1Peter 1:1-2. *"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered abroad throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia; elect according to the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."*

PILGRIMS.

*To be passing through a foreign land,
One has to know on what you stand;
And why you are different from those around,
From how they look and how they sound;
To the way they dress and how they act;
You need to face it as a fact.*

*You are a pilgrim just a-passing through,
And those around will be watching you;
To see if you truly walk the walk;
Or if you're like some others – just full of talk;
The difference is there, it should be plain to see;
The pilgrim is from sin set free!*

*It started first when God did choose,
From His knowledge long before we knew
The Father; and the Spirit too,
Had fixed their interest right on you.
The Spirit had set you each apart,
And the Father knew right from the start,
That when you heard how Christ had come,
And died for all – not just for some;
The cleansing blood that for sin did flow,
Would make you to the Savior go.
What He did for you on the cross that day,
Would stir your souls to Him obey.*

*As strangers here we don't belong,
To all the ways of this worldly throng.
Our citizenship and the place we love,
Is in our Father's house above.
We don't quite fit with all around,
And still it's here that we are found
To live the Gospel, and preach it too;
And when we can, to win and woo
The families and friends we have,
That they in Jesus will believe.
We're "elect" for that, so let us show;
By love to others how much we owe.*

*Pilgrims are those who, though here, are found;
Are moving on to "higher ground."
They are moving on with faces set,
On future times not reached as yet;
Where their true home above is waiting there,
For them to come, and with God to share
The place prepared, a mansion-home;
Where we will be when He shall come.
Saints who suffer here below,
Will in that place God's blessings know
In a way they never had before,
When at last they're home on the heavenly shore.*

*So while we are here in this foreign land,
We move on through guided by His hand.
There may be suffering and trials sore,
Because of sin that increases more
As each day goes by in intensity,
And faith seems to fade into obscurity.
But when the traveling time is done;
We will know that faith is held by them
Who had known God's grace, as well as peace;
And found that passing through this place
They were safe because in Christ they hide;*

And all they needed was multiplied.

"O God of the traveling saints: guide us each day that we may never take a wrong turn into some smooth lane that seems so attractive. Keep us with eyes fixed like the Savior's were when He was on His way to Jerusalem. Ours needs to be fixed on Thee right through all the attractions of this situation we are passing through. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

The believers who are baptized as a public testimony to their faith in Christ, often faced with personal persecution from friends and family because they are charged with abandoning "the faith of our fathers." The reality is that instead of returning to the faith of our fathers who were committed to the word of God and followed its teaching, they have accepted the ideas of men, and adopted man-made practices. Consequently, there are comparatively few who are found where the word of God only is the source of information for our doctrinal teaching, our guide for conduct and the instruction for church practice. Christians everywhere are subject to misunderstanding, ridicule and harassment by those who feel judged by the holy living of those who follow the scriptural teaching of the Bible.

Peter knew his responsibility as an apostle and he wanted the believers to know who they were. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God" would assure them that the Lord they obeyed would not abandon them in the trials they were enduring. The Lord did not then, nor does He today, promise to keep His people from suffering. Instead He promises to be with them through the suffering. "When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee."

1st Peter 1:2. *"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: grace be unto you, and peace be multiplied."*

ELECT.

*Did God know before making the world that someday I'd come along?
Does He know before words are written if the lines will be part of a song?
Is everything planned or does anything "just happen" that God allows to be?
Is the Church only "elect" or is there some way "elect" is a reference to me?*

*I don't think it is an abstract word only at times used in general
But God is telling me He really foreknew
That I would be born and the history of my life
Would be such that His nature and wisdom would show.*

*Does God know every member that will ultimately be a part of the Body of Christ?
Is it within the framework of His plans for the ages He would make me His choice?
Does my response have any part in the way He designed to bring my salvation to pass?
Is there some choice I have that makes me responsible to accept the life God wants me to have?*

*It is true God has plans and purposes to fulfill
It would be foolish of me to ever doubt that
It is also true God gave me a will
And through His grace, faith empowers me to act,*

*Does "foreknowledge" include every thing He does and all that comes in the future?
Is "foreknowledge" only individual or does it include events in every culture?
Are the births and the deaths, the wars and the murders all part of what God already knows?
Are the good things and bad, the failures and victories, known even when done by those He chose?*

*I have to remember God is different than me
He exists in an eternal "now"
There's no past to Him and no future either
All that He has planned His foreknowledge allows.*

*So to all my questions that are not clearly answered I'll just trust in the word "elect"
One who has "foreknowledge" of everything that happens certainly has the right to select
Everyone to hear His Gospel and give them the right to believe
On Him who lives in an eternal "now" and as a "chosen" one Christ to receive.*

"I know it is no accident Thou hast called the Church to be predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ. It is certainly important that the Bride be suited in every way to the One who has called us to be with Him forever. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Christians are not called upon to abandon their human heritage to follow Christ. Our attitude toward them is still of love and personal interest, but our Lord has a prior and higher claim on us. We have been chosen where we are to be those who introduce others to the Lord Jesus Christ by preaching the Gospel in whatever way we can. Persecution against believers is one of the ways God has arranged of making people aware of the truth of the Gospel. "Why don't you charge a fee like everyone else?" "If there is no cost, there has to be a catch!" are two common phrases heard where the Gospel is preached without money and without price. The Holy Spirit also is involved in the redemptive work of the children of God. The Father chose us; the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and draws us to move from sin to our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us even when we were in our sins. It is the "blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, that cleanseth us from all sin."

Those whom God has chosen obey His word and "walk in good works" as God has planned, So to those who the Gracious Trinity of God have given eternal life, Peter implies not only that grace and peace are there for us to enjoy and live in, but there is an infinite supply of grace that is multiplied by an infinite supply of peace at our disposal. It is there for us even in the midst of suffering of any kind. When grace and peace are multiplied to us, "fullness of joy" results, even in the situation we are called to pass through. Though those things are naturally impossible for us to deal with, God has provided for us that which we need.

It was Peter's objective in this letter that those scattered Jewish believers remember the fact that God chose them because He knew them and loved them. They were a special possession to Him. Sanctification had set them apart from others to obey the truth in salvation and in their lives as children of God. Grace demonstrates His love for us and peace includes the blessing of salvation in us. We are found in fellowship with God on the basis of the atoning work of Christ when He shed His blood for us on the cross. What a motivation for service for Him through the pressures and pain of persecution and suffering!!

1st Peter 1:2. *"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."*

THE TRINITY.

*Far beyond the ability of man to express and fully understand
Is a fact revealed in the scriptures of truth helping me to comprehend;
A little bit of what it means for me to be a child of God
And how it came to pass as three equal Persons' work unfolds.*

*The Father in wisdom was willing to identify the elect
The Holy Spirit used the Word to draw me from sin to faith
The Son, the Lord Jesus paid the price with the shedding of His blood
And the blessings of redemption are truly all of God.*

*The Holy Spirit sets one apart when first convicting me of sin
And when repentance and faith in Christ takes place, He then enters in
Leading and sanctifying the one to whom He gave to whom He gave new life
So that a new believer now obeys, and grace and peace are multiplied.*

*The sprinkled blood is the proof that Christ's life was given for me
Obedience and sanctification of the Spirit proves I have life indeed
Appreciation for God's work in bringing me to real faith
Is evidence that what God is doing in me is truly a work of grace.*

*As life unfolds and experiences come, the Holy Trinity
Still works in my life, each using His role in perfect harmony
Instead of just looking back to a work God did in days of yore
The work of the Trinity goes on each day multiplying more and more.*

"O Holy Three-in-One: I come to Thee Father, in the name, the authority, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and led by the Holy Spirit declare to Thee my gratitude and love for Thee. I am not worthy of speaking to Thee, let alone being accepted by Thee. So in grateful thanks I express my awe at being allowed to be in Thy family and a part of the unfolding kingdom of God. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 1:3-4

PRAISE FOR A LIVING HOPE

Born again believers do not have to live in defeat or despair because of the new birth has given us a vibrantly alive new life in Christ. Whether we are enjoying and experiencing that daily depends on our choices as to what we do and how we nurture the fellowship we have with our Lord. When the Holy Spirit gave us new life, eternal life, this guaranteed that Satan, sin and death could not have dominion over us. This new birth and "lively" (living) hope is not based on wishful thinking or our willpower that in the future we may get everlasting life. This is a secure assurance based on the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead and is alive forevermore.

Praise to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is certainly in order, when we think of the mercy He has extended to us that has given us every reason to choose joy in times of suffering. Far be it from us to neglect God when we receive such gifts from Him. We praise Him for His mercy that exceeds our sin and need. We praise Him for the new birth given to us when the Holy Spirit regenerated us who were dead in trespasses and sins. We praise Him for the resurrection of our Lord who guarantees us that we have been justified. "He was raised again for our justification." We praise Him for the assurance that because "He lives, we shall live also." We praise Him for the new life He has given us that enables us to pass through sufferings as conquerors because our God is with us in the trials.

This living hope began when we trusted Christ and became children of God. Our Father gives us the grace and strength to be faithful to Him in the trials we face and as we pass through all the difficulties of life here on earth. We not only have a living hope, but we have a permanent inheritance as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. We have been chosen by God and as obedient children who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ, this new birth gives us a vibrancy of life caused by the sure hope of the inheritance we will share with our Lord for ever.

1st Peter 1:3. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."*

ABUNDANT MERCY.

*As a trait of character mercy is quite rare in most of the sons of men
Because it implies something has to come from me that will be a benefit to them
And I will be deprived of what I think is mine when I to another show mercy
"After all, isn't it only fair to insist the miscreant to pay the full penalty?"*

*But then the tables are turned and I'm found out to be the one who is wrong
And I am the one needing mercy for I have continued to sin so long
The sinking feeling of guilt permeates through every part of my life
And now I am longing for mercy, while justice full payment requires.*

*How thankful I am for God's mercy way beyond the mercy I needed
For by His mercy not only He saved me, but the hunger inside He feedeth
That mercy described as "abundant" goes way beyond deliverance from hell
It touches every phase of my life until I say, "He does all things well!"*

*His mercy is in no way deserved but it has opened new vistas to me
And to assure me of a future secure, the risen Christ I will see
Things that come to trouble me, His mercy deals with in grace
He paid the price that's needed so I won't be embarrassed when I see His face.*

*Again I bless my God and Father for His mercy is so great
And I bless the Lord Jesus my Savior for willingly taking my place
When the cost of sin was paid and abundant mercy to me was a fact
And I bless the Holy Spirit who through God's Word in faith made me act.*

"I have experienced Thy mercy all through my life Father, and thank Thee that it is still a fact of my life that mercy is being continually shown to me. I give Thee grateful thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

This inheritance stands apart from that which one may receive from our earthly forbearers. The inheritance the Jewish believers to whom Peter was writing was only a distant and fading memory they had heard about from others but had never experienced for themselves. Moreover, they would never experience it because of the influence other nations had on them to the extent they turned away from what they had been given by God, to seeking other baser

things other people had. Now they had nothing but a fading memory their fathers told them about, and a powerless, joyless form of religion.

Peter's letter clarified to them the extent of blessing the new birth brought them now and awaited them in the future. The substance of the living hope is eternal life. That life is eternal in its very essence and is kept by God Himself in its preservation for us. He has given it to those who believe to enjoy now and it will never decay nor fade and is not able to be contaminated by sin. It is undefiled. The inheritance Israel had was defiled by the influence of false religions and their own failures to live by the word of God He had given them. Their own sins had brought about the events that led to the loss of their inheritance. That will not be theirs as a nation in reality until the Lord Jesus Christ reigns as the True King on David's throne.

The Christian's lively hope that is based on the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, is that we have eternal life now that we can experience and live by each day, and it is ours forever. We have been born again by an "incorruptible seed" that by its very nature gives us new life that remains ours through life. That eternal life will not change and the inheritance in the eternal city in the future is the same as the eternal life we enjoy today in the house of God here. God has reserved that inheritance for us and it will never decay nor will its reality fade. By its very nature eternal life is unstained by sin.

When a believer who has received Christ by faith, and in reality, trusts Him, for some reason sins, that is an act of the old nature that remains and deceives us and ties us to that which is around us. It is incumbent on a child of God who has been born again to "reckon dead" that which ties us to the life of sin and in a real way live life in the power of that which has been accomplished for us in a spiritual way. We have been born again by the Spirit of God. Now we are to "walk in the Spirit" and we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Our sin-prone bodies and natural flesh tie us to the earth presently. Our sin and failures grieve us and also the Holy Spirit within us. But when "this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption," then we will experience the full joy of our inheritance when we are "with Him and like Him."

Our inheritance is reserved for us by God, and by the power of God we are reserved for our inheritance. No wonder there is praise for God in our hearts, and joy even when there is sorrow because of circumstance, as we realize who we are in Christ, all we have in Christ and what we will be forever in Christ. This "lively hope" - "living hope," that the resurrection of Christ guarantees will never perish, spoil or fade away. Praise God!!

1st Peter 1:4. *"To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,"*

AN INHERITANCE.

*From among the dead a stirring never known before
The Giver of Life who gave His life
Into His body life returns
And He is alive for evermore.*

*Men who were dead in trespasses and sins
Were born again by the Spirit of God
Who can give spiritual life and hope in a Person;
Now a whole new family is formed, all who've been born again.*

*Temporarily we are here, but in this place we won't stay
An inheritance we have tasted awaits our coming
And we, with Him who died and rose again
Are joint-heirs of eternal blessings through an eternal day.*

*There is nothing in that inheritance that will spoil or rust
It is impervious to all elements around
For all of the inheritance is spiritual in nature
Every part of it has the divine imprint of the God in whom we trust.*

*This inheritance won't perish, we can't use it till it's gone
It has the essence of God in every part
The fullness of this inheritance cannot be measured
There is no way to deplete all its riches until they're done.*

*Every part of this inheritance retains its inherent freshness
It's like it is new every time we claim a part
The brightness of spiritual glories forever it retains
Such an abundant inheritance with all its glories He has given us.*

"I think I am tasting some of the blessings already Father God, of all inheritance means. The conference filled me with joy when I heard those young men Thou hast called to Thy service. Preserve them, O God. They are smart, gifted servants – but they are men. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 1:5-12

PRESENT TRIALS

Christians are "kept" (guarded) by God's power, not our own works or even our own faith. Our faith is in our God who saved us and keeps us. We receive the blessings of God by faith and for that reason the grace of God is used in power on our behalf. We trusted Him in the past for our salvation from the penalty of sin when we repented of our sin and believed the Gospel. Our present sanctification is also real by the power of God and results in daily salvation from sin's power. It will be the power of God in the future that brings our salvation from the very presence of sin when Christ returns and we are glorified together with Him.

The trials, temptations and suffering of the Jewish Christians to whom Peter was writing, were severe because they did not follow the trend of humanistic religion that revered the emperor of Rome as a god, and they would not worship at pagan temples nor embrace the Roman ideals of conquest, self-interest and power. Christianity exposes the immorality of those who reject the standards of righteousness given in the scriptures. They reject the grace of God and in actuality that grace condemns them. Those who reject the Gospel and exalt human effort condemn Christians for their self-sacrifice out of love for Christ that constrains them to further the things of God and seek souls to be brought to the Savior.

1st Peter 1:5. *"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time;"*

KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD.

*It is always here – always available – always functioning
God's power – maintaining life – graciously unctioing
The life of a believer with a view of furthering
A testimony established which God began by regenerating
With His power, this lost soul who in darkness had been wandering
And now keeps me by His power through the Spirit's indwelling.*

*Decisions have to be made and I wait awhile for an unfolding
Of God's mind being made plain to me so that I will be upholding
The truths and purposes of God as faith acts in truth maintaining
The on-going work He has placed in my hand and grace given for sustaining
What God has done through this clay vessel and keeps it by strengthening
It through His Spirit and His Word passing it on through teaching.*

*That power first seen and experienced came to me when saving
Grace unfolded to me the truth of salvation and that same grace is keeping
Me as the three Persons of the Godhead each work on my behalf by staying
With me through every step of life-giving meaning to my existence by guiding
Me and allowing me to act in faith as opportunities keep arising
To serve in faith and works with God's keeping power every need supplying.*

"Father God, I do respond to Thy keeping power by acting in faith in relation to the work of this day ahead. There are things to be done in which I need Thy power. There are some decisions to be made that should only be made when I am assured of the power to do them. So I ask for wisdom to act in faith today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 1:6. *"Wherein ye now rejoice, though now for a season, if need be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:"*

MANIFOLD TEMPTATIONS.

We certainly rejoice in salvation

*The future by God's grace is secure
Even though there are many temptations
By God's power we through them endure.
But instead of trials getting lesser
The persecution gets increasingly stronger
From every quarter the world applies pressure
And it seems like each trial lasts longer.*

*It is similar to Peter's day right now
The worship of God is often scorned
People scoff when to God's Word we bow
And get angry when we refuse to conform.
Religion to most is like business
They measure success by its size
Not accepting the fact that God chooses
What is right, not what seems right in men's eyes.*

*Service for God brings resentment
For most people will only serve for a price
But even in temptations is contentment
When we look for God's "Well done" not some prize.
Love for the Lord is not faked
It is part of the new nature God gives
So, testing time is what we must take
After all, any testing is much less than His.*

*To live morally exposes the sin
That is so prevalent and accepted today
The temptations and evil within
Leave people powerless God's law to obey.
So instead of accepting the fact
That God's people are going to be faithful
The world, flesh and the devil all act
To make believers, like them, to be sinful.*

*But the Lord has proved by His life
When we follow His steps, we can conquer
The temptations that come and the strife
For the Spirit is within us to succor.
And the Father hears clearly each heart cry
Sending answers in peace to the heart
And the power of God is so nigh
We can defeat temptation at its start.*

"Father, I am thanking Thee now – ahead of time, for the power of God that enables me to overcome the temptations of this day that lies before me. Please guide my steps, words and thoughts lest I sin against Thee. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

All believers are going to face trials when they shine as lights in the darkness of the world. Trials are part of the refining process. The Lord allows trials to deal with our limitations and impurities, in the same way gold is heated so the impurities in it come to the top and are able to be removed. Persecutions, difficulties and the trials we are called to live through, refine us and strength our faith. That in turn makes us useful to God in His service.

There is wonderful truth for suffering saints to remember: we are shielded by the power of God, and He enables us to be true to our faith in whatever trial we face. The gift of salvation takes us through the heat of persecution and teaches us patience. Patience in turn teaches us to be the kind of people the Lord wants to take His Gospel to the world. When we are passing through the times of suffering God allows, we have the confidence that this is not unknown to our heavenly Father. He has planned and does direct our lives to accomplish the good He intends. We may not consider what happens to "good" at the time, but in love, and by the supply of needed grace, His supply of grace and strength proves our faith to be genuine and valuable.

When the dross is removed and praise, honor and glory for our Lord is the result, that is good fruit. This will be made manifest at the judgment seat of Christ when we will receive "for the things done in the body, whether it be good or bad." At that time, we will see everything for what it really was in the eyes of our Lord and we will have joy in being

allowed to share in His glory. We have not seen Him with the eyes of our body, but by faith we love Him, and believe on Him without question. The answers to every "why" we might have may not be given, but faith in Him assures us of justice at the end of this time of trial and testing. In the future we will be glad He allowed us to pass this way. Unspeakable joy, though it leaves us speechless, will open our faith-eyes to the glory that surpasses our highest imagination.

1st Peter 1:7. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"

MORE PRECIOUS.

*The process requires a lot of heat
For the objective of purifying to be complete
Much that is dross is to the eye unseen
It has to be heated until there is a sheen
Which mirrors the face looking into the gold;
The reflection seen there should be similar to God's.*

*Who would think that gold would perish;
It is one investment many people cherish
Thinking it will remain for as long as they live
Giving security to them, for the more that they have
Will guarantee they will have full and plenty
Forgetting that God can soon our pantry empty.*

*However, the trials in life we try to avoid
Have a value that exceeds the purest gold
For the trials will make us to be more like Christ
Who knows what is important from first to last;
And allows the testing times to come over me
That through the mirror of the gold, my Lord they'll see.*

*And this is only the beginning of the matter
For there is coming in the future, maybe sooner than later
When the Lord Jesus appears in His power and glory
With all of His saints, each with a different story
Of trials in life that God faithfully brought them through
Each reflecting honor to Him who is "The Faithful and True."*

"Father God, I know that these trials I go through from time to time have a reason behind them. I may not always know what that reason is but I know Thee, and trust Thee to allow what will be for Thy glory. May there be some gold in my life for Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 1:8. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:"

JOY UNSPEAKABLE.

*How can I express something that's beyond expression?
How can I define a joy that defies description?
Probably by lines that can't be filled in
When I consider the honor and glory that belongs to Him.*

*So, I will just say though I have not _____
And I love Him because _____
Also, I _____ without hesitation
And I _____ and _____.*

*It is beyond my _____ to _____
And His _____ and _____*

So with, a _____ that is _____
I will continually _____ to _____.

*Glory that is limitless goes far beyond my scope
But in Him who is my life I have placed my hope
And trust and give Him any and all glory that might be mine
That through a redeemed sinner He saved, His glory will shine.*

"O God, there are many things that go beyond my ability to express their meaning and value to me. The joy I have from Thee is truly beyond expression. Amen."

Until that time comes, our service for God is to be done faithfully for His glory. That will mean we will need to rise above, and resolve conflicts in some way. It will mean we will need to endure and suffer some hurtful situations with which we will have to live. It may mean we have to daily face a boss and workmates who resent our Christian faith. We may have to deal with unruly and resentful children and perhaps endure rejection by a spouse. There will be times when we are waiting a long time for some matter to be resolved. We will have to wait patiently rather than go forward without divine guidance.

Some of the Jewish Christians may have seen Jesus and knew why He came, suffered, died and rose again. The suffering prophets of the Old Testament times knew vaguely what was coming and who was coming, but the significance of the things the Holy Spirit moved them to write was not clear to them. They knew Messiah was coming, but the New Testament writers could describe the whole event of Christ being here on earth. The Holy Spirit guided them to tell of the life, death by crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord in detail. The Spirit made plain to the apostles the glory that would follow the resurrection and ascension of Christ. The Old Testament prophets could write of the coming kingdom, but did not even know of the church of God being the bride of Christ.

1st Peter 1:9. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

THE SALVATION OF YOUR SOULS.

*The result is not always seen when first we act in faith
We will be in glory before the full path we can trace
But there is a real reason when we act upon the unknown
The One in whose word we have trusted is God's eternal Son.*

*So we won't know every turn ahead in this life of faith we walk
And we don't know the end result every time we have a talk
With some other souls who too are in this life of faith we take
But in trust without serious question, this journey we will make.*

*In this life of faith, we have joy that God Himself has given
For our sins have been laid on Jesus and we are now forgiven
But there is another part to this salvation God indeed provided
That is the salvation of my life by the Spirit God imparted.*

*And in a future day when we are forever with the Lord
We will know another salvation promised in God's Word
That will be the salvation of this body now earth bound
The fleshly attractions that now hinder will not in heaven be found.*

"I thank Thee Father, for the promise of a complete salvation from hell, from sin, from sin's power and from sin's presence. In faith I thank Thee now for the place in heaven Thy gift of salvation has given me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 1:10. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:"

THE GRACE THAT SHOULD COME UNTO YOU.

*They looked through the shadows and saw outlines of truth
The Holy Spirit moved upon them to write things of holy worth
And they knew the Messiah was coming in a general sense*

*They longer for clearer light as to the extent of God's grace
And though they knew it would be seen by men – that was about all
They could grasp or reveal when on men they would call
To repentance and faith seeking to turn men to God
And the Holy Spirit moved them to write down His Word.*

*Then on to the world's stage came the Lord Jesus Himself
And the things that were hidden were revealed to help
Those who in darkness and the bondage of sin were found
It was the revelation of grace that now could be known
By the searchers who waited to see how God's grace
Would be known and experienced by man's fallen race
Amazing as it is, the One who was rich became poor
That we would know grace's riches now and forever more.*

*Now the faith of believers can be both greater and stronger
Knowing of Christ's death and resurrection keeps us in darkness no longer
So now we experience God's grace in its revealed fullness
And deliverance from sin by the Holy Spirit's witness
It is a well-known fact that we can experience grace by faith
Resting one's soul in Him because He took our place
And His grace that at Calvary purchased eternal redemption
Can bless us and keep us when God gives us salvation.*

"There is nor doubt that grace has come to me Father God. I am not my own, I have been bought with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That grace has been made plain to me. Those believers of the Old Testament times were looking for an expected sight of that grace to be shown to them. I am thankful for the fact of that grace having been revealed to me. I praise Thee for this great grace, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

The key theme of the Bible is the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The message of His suffering and the glory that follows started in Genesis and is described in many ways through the books of Moses, the prophets and the psalms. The Lord Himself used those scriptures to describe His life to two people as they walked the road to Emmaus. The Holy Spirit gave a consistent message to all forty-plus writers of scripture regarding the redemptive narrative. Those who knew Christ and are linked to Him by His grace through faith, can benefit by knowing their sufferings follow that of our Lord. What we experience, He already endured. The glory that awaits us is the glory He has gained from His suffering, death and resurrection.

Angels are mere bystanders when it come to the suffering experiences believers share with our Lord. Apparently all the other "families" in the universe look on with a certain fascination as the people of God who love the Lord and follow the Savior, follow His example and the path He went through suffering and trials that leads them to glory with Him. When the Holy Spirit was sent down from heaven by the Lord Jesus Christ to dwell in His people, there was given power through Him to do what was beyond mere human inclination. When the Lord's people understand this and claim the promises given that enable them to endure and triumph over trials, then we can appreciate all that God is doing through us and with us.

1st Peter 1:11. *"Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."*

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

*It started to be told right in the garden itself
His heel would be bruised by His foe
Offerings and sacrifices innumerable were made
So that me of God's provision might know
There is a way of acceptance not of man's making
That sinful men could avail themselves of
The sinless substitutes they could bring
Would assure them of the fact of God's love.*

The Holy Spirit would often convict them of sin

*And bring to their minds the way back
To God who accepted the right offering they'd bring
And God's Word would make their forgiveness a fact
If a man was honest and faced squarely his problem
God proscribed the kind of offering He would accept
He would come to the altar and there, his sin's confessing
With his hand on the sacrifice – God would accept it.*

*Those who in faith did what God said
Would be enlightened by the Spirit – looking beyond
He would reveal this was a type of Christ who would come
For Christ alone would be God's perfect Lamb
Those people who saw this, were by the Spirit reborn
For He guided them into the truth of redemption
And when they heard of Christ sufferings for them
They would experience the joy of salvation.*

"Father, it brought great joy to those who waited for Christ to appear. I rejoice because He has already come and suffered and died and rose again and is coming to receive us to Himself. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 1:12-25

THE PILGRIM'S WONDERFUL SALVATION

There are number of ways in which our salvation is described in 1st Peter that are beyond that which is normal. "Abundant mercy" has to do with God's forgiveness and kindness to us when we were in our sins and needed His salvation. Involved in this description of mercy, is the word "abundant." Mercy is like clemency in a court of law and consideration when one has injured another. Pity, sympathy, leniency and compassion all help us understand the "abundant mercy" God has shown to us.

Another superlative describes the inheritance we have been given by God's grace. An "incorruptible inheritance" is one that is indissoluble. It does not lose its value for any reason nor by any pressure applied to it. We have received this inheritance by legal means so that any charge against it will fail. An inheritance is passed on to others by legal succession or by a will made that states the giver's will. This has come to us from our heavenly Father.

An "imperishable faith" is related to the trials of life a believer goes through. We usually think of gold as something that would never perish because it is impervious to rust and decay, and is hard enough material to not be lost by erosion of any kind. The lesson we learn from this superlative is that our trust is in a Person who permanence is eternal - without beginning or end.

In verses eight and nine reference is made to "inexpressible joy" that defies definition. Our trust is in one we cannot see but we love Him and find our greatest joy in pleasing Him. Our joy comes from within our soul and spirit rather than being limited by our senses. When we know that we are pleasing the eternal God and that is our ambition, our joy is such that it is more than can be described. "Unfathomable grace" was such in its scope that it goes deeper than our deepest need and higher than our most profound expressions of gratitude and imagination. Who can fathom such grace as "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich." He suffered the death of the cross which is beyond our conception of infinite suffering, to bring us infinite blessing.

1st Peter 1:12. *"Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."*

UNTO US THEY DID MINISTER

*They watched as people died for their faith
They looked beyond the event to others
Others who would hear and wonder, needing assurance
And the Holy Ghost moved them to report –
To confirm not just the event – the suffering –
The reason these saints were strong in faith.
The Gospel that brought the good news of salvation
Gives the long view of life, and can open the eyes*

To the future – to the Throne-Sitter – to the Savior
Reminding them and us – of the promises

When thou passest through the waters... the fire...
The floods... I will be with you."

"I will come... and receive you unto Myself..."

"Where I am, there will you be also..."

And the sufferings they passed through

As they ministered to us of their faith

Arouses a stirring of "Like precious faith"

That amazes even as the watching angels

Who wonder at the deep response to grace;

And the faith produced by promises made

Knowing Him but never having experienced

The delivering power of the Gospel –

But the blood of the saints – the testimony made –

Serves us today and we move into our day –

Strengthened – to be tested in some way ourselves.

"I thank Thee, Lord God, for the faithfulness of the saints in the past whose lives and testimonies left a strong legacy of faith for the succeeding generations including mine. I pray today that I will have some sort of spiritual legacy to leave to those who follow in the generation following. May Christ be formed in them as a testimony to those who follow them if the Lord tarries. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 1:13. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, and be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;"

THE REASON.

Perhaps he paced awhile before he sat down to write
As the Holy Spirit moved upon him giving some new light
To his understanding so that he could know and tell
The saints why suffering is to be expected – why some fell
Under the painful sword of suffering for righteousness' sake
Letting them know why the road saints walk is hard to take
But God has a plan which most certainly will be fulfilled
In which the testimony of suffering will the teaching of grace be upheld.

The mind that wanders so easily must be wrapped up tight
Like garments tightened around a body before the actual fight
For actions demand that our scattered thoughts be focused
On Him and the calling He has placed before us.
Grace has its demands – faith must be placed in Him
And the controlled mind is then able to overcome sin
Keeping us looking ahead – way ahead, in hope
Knowing we have only experienced a little of grace's wide scope.

A day beyond trials and suffering that hones the mind
To a sharpness beyond nature to where we can find
The faith that allows us to suffer in life and die
That we with Christ our example will truly know why
He went through all He did before His revelation
And we too testify to a coming day of full salvation
From not only the consequences, but the presence of sin
And by grace, share His glory when His kingdom here is seen.

"Help me to be resolute in purpose, O God, that Thy glory may be glimpsed in some little way through my response to Thy grace. When Christ is revealed there will be justice and righteousness. May there be a response today from my heart to Thy grace, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Toward the last of chapter one we are taught about a redemption price that goes far beyond all silver and gold in its value. How much is the "precious blood of Christ" worth? It is an "inestimable ransom" paid with by the only perfect life lived on earth. The perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ were in evidence when He was seen daily by imperfect human beings. He was "without blemish" in His nature and "without spot" in His testimony.

Because of the nature of the salvation God has given us, we have been born again by an "incorruptible seed." This seed is not capable of being morally corrupted and it is impervious to decay. The new life we have been given by God cannot fade nor fail forever. This life enables us to reach for the command our Gracious Father has given us by making us "a new creation" and giving us a "new nature," to "Be ye holy; for I am holy."

1st Peter 1:14. *"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:"*

OBEDIENT CHILDREN.

*The Father knows – a child may often question
The Father waits – a child acts without hesitation
The Father can see what is far ahead
A child jumps to conclusions without a thought instead.*

*The Father has experience – the child very little or none
The Father knows unseen results – the child just wants his work done
The Father has authority – the child wants his own way
The Father's word is law – the child careless about what he says.*

*An obedient child will wisely stop to consider
What the Father says and how he came hither
An obedient child not knowing what might happen
Will trust his Father who sustains and keeps him.*

*The obedient child brings great joy to his Father
What the Father asks of him he will not try to alter
The obedient child expresses his love when he acts
Without an argument with his Father who he completely trusts.*

*Ignorance fades when the child is obedient
And the Father can trust him with things more significant
Maturity of the child produces in the Father a trust
In the willingness of the child to act in ways the Father can bless.*

"This morning Father, I have a contented spirit as I think of the willingness of this young man and his wife to act on Thy will. The growth and maturity that were missing in the past is evident. The heart of a caring shepherd is there. He still needs to work with others he may not always agree with or even like very much. Work with them and in them I pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1Peter.1:14-16. *"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written," Be ye holy, for I am holy."*

HOLINESS.

Some words are really intimidating because of the implied expectations that seem so impossible. And yet holiness is a command of God to His suffering children. How can this be? Integrity is rooted in the very character of God, and so one who is publicly set apart for God is charged to be "holy." We can never merit salvation through our own holiness; that only comes through the holiness and righteousness of Christ. But we have been made holy (sanctified) through the blood of Christ [Heb.10:10]. We have been made holy and are called to be holy in our lives. The purpose behind this is that we might be holy and blameless before Him in love. Holiness is necessary for fellowship with God. Holiness is required for my own well-being. Holiness is required for effective service for God. Holiness is required for real assurance of salvation. There is a holiness that is imparted but it is necessary that I pursue holiness as well. Dying to sin is something that Christ has done for me. Sin cannot have dominion and yet I am challenged to not let it reign in my mortal body. The potential for resisting sin is within me, placed there by God. The responsibility for

resisting sin is mine. To live a holy life is to live in conformity to the moral precepts of the Bible. It is not a series of prohibitions or a peculiar style of dress and mannerisms that are to lead me to seeming perfection. It is more an awareness that I have been consecrated to God; to a life that is different; to non-conformity that keeps me from being a gossip, a covetous, bitter person, and leads me to practice and experience the fruit of the Spirit.

"O Holy Father: I know it is right that the expectations be high because I am Your child. There is this problem that I have and that is, I have this tendency to be like those around. I want to get rid of this chameleon-like tendency to blend in. I really want to be an up-stream Christian in a down-stream world. I want to be at the head-waters of faith when the Lord comes. Please take this changing skin off me so the Spirit of God can give me the needed power to go against the tide. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

BE HOLY

Our response to such a glorious salvation calls for mental action in which, with serious and thoughtful minds we prepare ourselves by rejecting a shallow, flippant attitude toward eternal things. By looking ahead to the final aspects of saving grace when our Lord comes, we obey our Father and conduct our lives in accordance with the divine nature He has given us. This involves a consistent desire for holiness that can make holiness real.

We have been adopted into His family and our lives and works reflect on the One who has called us. He is holy and set apart from sin and impurity. It is only right that we also be set apart from a worldly lifestyle both in our speech and all aspects of our conduct. The moral perfections of our Lord move us to live in moral purity. One who is truly sober is a disciplined person who can be trusted with important things. To set our "hope" on something means we are focused on suitable things, not scattered in a careless way. Our God is holy and He is the standard of holiness for all of His children. He is a God of mercy and justice who is committed to His children and cares for them. When His children are like Him in holiness, they should be merciful and just. They should be willing to make necessary sacrifices for the eternal welfare of others.

1st Peter 1:15. *"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;"*

BEHAVIOR.

*New watching eyes follow facial features – impressions
Little hands and feet learning what to do and where to go – imitations
Life-style is formed by following the model – facsimile
Things learned in early life follow us – eternally.*

*Learning days are past and other watching eyes are on me – evaluating
Behavior in young days can ruin a whole life – hesitating
And opportunities that come only once are lost – procrastinating
A life that had great potential is in danger of being – humiliating.*

*God calls us to behave in ways that are – holy
Wanting us to effectively live our lives for Him – solely
He called us to be separate from sin living – uniquely
From our hearts to consider what pleases our Lord – completely.*

*It is not just a suggestion to live a holy life – daily
It is a command that appropriate behavior be lived – visibly
God has called us to be adopted as children in His – family
And what we learn and are now will characterize us – eternally.*

"Being Thy child Father, is a wonderful privilege. Living in a way that honors Thee is my desire daily. I pray that I live in a way behaviorally that will represent Thy family in a good way. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 1:16. *"Because it is written, 'Be ye holy: for I am holy.'"*

HOLY.

*There is a world of difference between God and mortal men
Yet He makes a command that we be holy like Him.
How can such a thing ever happen to us who are born in sin?
Devotedness and dedication are possible by the Spirit within.*

*To be holy involves being set apart as a vessel for God's use
To be holy means I allow the Spirit to guide in everything I choose
To be holy means turning from sin and its terrible influence*

To be holy involves walking with God so His favor I will not lose.

*To be holy means I'm different, yet not different for "different's" sake
But it will show reality when a different road I take
And there will be a difference also in the decisions I will make
The "peculiar people" designation will produce holiness I can't fake.*

*What qualities I see in God, He wants to see in me
The things that are important to Him are now my priority
The focus of my life and efforts should help other people see
Even though I am not perfectly holy now, in the future I will be.*

*They should see a contrast between me and the world's ways
There should be evidence that I intend to act on what God says
My concern is to let holiness be seen throughout the coming days
And that God's holiness be seen in me as a result of God's free grace.*

"I know I am a work in progress Father God, and I pray that I will be empowered by the Spirit to let Thy holiness be shown through me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

BE DIFFERENT

The manner of life that is consistent with our profession of faith, even when it leads to suffering, means that we will be dedicated to Him and our devotion to Him will set us apart from the influence of sin. To that extent we will not blend in with those who love and practice sin. It can be offensive to people when we are different just for the sake of being different. We can't help there being a contrast between righteous and sinful living.

Reverential fear has a certain dignity about it that reflects a wholesome respect for God. This is not the terror of fright that is a cowardly fear but the true recognition of the nature of the One before whom we live. This is not a casual use of words we use with equals who are similar to use in nature. Rather it is an awareness of the fact the Almighty God of the universe has commissioned us with a work. He has equipped us to do what He expects and to accomplish that work. We are to "persuade men" to seek the Lord while He may be found.

When our minds are focused on Christ, and the precious blood He shed to redeem us, we can realize the futility of life without Christ. Silver and gold are "corruptible" and the whole world is in bondage to that which is corruptible. Being redeemed by "the precious blood of Christ" frees us from that bondage. In order for freedom to be a practical reality to us daily, we need to pay attention to what we look at; think about the consequences of sin instead of the pleasures of sin; commit ourselves to have a reverence for God from the beginning to each to the end; and make it a point to communicate with Christ in specific way during the day. In practicing these things, we can maintain our focus on those things that will honor and glorify Him.

1st Peter 1:17. *"And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."*

REVERENT FEAR.

*Just because I know God as Father
Doesn't mean I am free to do what I want
Every part of my life should be a testimony
To a new nature God did in me impart.
As a citizen now whose home is in heaven
I travel this world as a stranger
And testify with holy fear that is reverent
The Great Judge is my heavenly Father.*

*I don't assume because I am privileged
To be a child of Almighty God
That I have no obligation or restrictions
I am bound to act by His Word.
With reverential fear and respect
It is important for me to be consistent
Living each day as a pilgrim
In holiness committed to be different.*

"Holy God, my Father: I am aware that I am free in Christ to be obedient to Thee and Thy Word. I thank Thee for the liberty that has guidelines for successful living. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 1:18. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;"

REDEEMED.

*It was there every day making demands of perfection
Wherever you turned, it came from every direction.
Condemning each action not done by true faith –
Charging the supreme penalty; showing no grace.
The mind was not immune from its challenging claim
Words were examined, especially when speaking God's name.
The things one's hands approached waited to be judged
The places feet took one as forward they trudged
There was no place to escape the demands of the law
It condemned at every turn all things one did and saw.*

*As a schoolmaster it was skilled at pointing out one's wrong
But the demands it imposed didn't promote any song –
For perfection in every case was what the law required
There was no relief from guilt for a sinner in anything he tried.
Is there no deliverance from the law's high demands?
Is there no way one can be free if he does the best he can?
Am I doomed because of sin and the law I often break?
Is there not some antidote, something I can take?
Yes, there is, some One has come near to make your case His own,
Redemption from the wages of sin has come through God's dear Son.*

"Holy God, I thank Thee today for Thy Son who came to redeem me from the fatal curse of the law. The traditions demanded death. Jesus brought me life and I praise Thee in His name, Amen."

1st Peter 1:19. "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:"

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.

*How much is it worth, the blood that we need?
How quickly we stop its flow when for some reason we bleed!
How essential to life and basic survival blood is
I can't live very long without the life that it gives.*

*But my blood loss means death no matter what I do
It doesn't give life to my spirit and my soul
For sin has passed on to me, it is part of my nature
And I am doomed by sin's penalty for the eternal future.*

*Unless there is someone who doesn't have the same problems
Someone without sin who is able and willing to solve them.
Praise God, there is Someone who was willing to give
His precious blood on the cross that sinners might live.*

*He is sinless and always was perfectly holy in His being –
He knows every sin and every need with omniscient seeing.
He was willing to live here so that proofs could be seen
He was God in the flesh, totally sinless, His blood perfectly clean.*

*Watched for years by men as a Lamb to be slain –
His words and actions scrutinized again and again.*

*One said it well even though he didn't on Him call,
"This Man is innocent; I find in Him no fault at all."*

*The precious blood of Christ meets the highest redemptive price
Those who accept His payment for them are exceeding wise
For this precious blood is the only way one is redeemed
His blood paid the full price, it cleanses from all sin.*

"Father, I thank Thee for the Savior and the cleansing power of the blood, when the Lord Jesus Christ gave His life for me. Amen."

SUPPORT WITH LOVE

The redemption we need in order to escape from sin's bondage was not an after-thought in the mind of God. This was set in motion before the creation of the world. Both the law and the coming of Christ were part of God's plan rather than an act of desperation to salvage lost men and women. Jewish and Gentile believers both can be confident that our faith and hope in God is a part of His whole redemptive purpose.

Sincere love leaves no doubt as to its reality. It involves giving with no strings attached. There is sacrifice that shows we recognize and understand the needs of others. The example of Christ's love for us is the template for our love for others. Attention is not focused on what I can get out of some action or relationship. Truth on the other hand, has a way or generating moral purity and Christ-like love that cannot be denied.

1st Peter 1:20. *"Who verity was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,"*

MANIFEST IN THESE LAST TIMES.

*Before there was water in all the seven seas
Before there were animals, birds – even trees
Before man walked in Eden, God had a plan
Christ would come to earth to redeem fallen man.*

*It happened just the way the prophets had foretold
Christ came to earth sleeping with sheep in their fold
The place of birth, the town where He grew
Were exactly what God planned – before creation, He foreknew.*

*People watched His life, heard the words He did say
They kept their eyes on Him who we know as, "The Way."
He was God in human flesh that came here to redeem,
And bring back to God those who believed on His name.*

*We are not left in darkness to wonder who He was
Light now reveals who Jesus is to us.
The reason we now know Jesus came to earth
God manifested Him so we know the Redeemer's worth.*

"Father God, I am reminded that it was in Thy plans to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ to us as the Redeemer. I do believe in Him without reservation. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 1:21. *"Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."*

FAITH AND HOPE.

*It seemed to them who lived in times so dark,
Things had finally gone out of control.
The trials they were in and the strange laws of men
Attacked not only their bodies but their souls –
Until they could see things, as it were, from above
And from the perspective of God they could see –
The law had a reason, it still condemned sin
And it showed to them Christ's purity.*

For He was perfection in person and life
There was no claim sin had on Him at all.
He it is in whom we must believe,
He was never contaminated by sin from "the fall."
Through Him we believe and can come to God
Who raised Christ in power from the dead;
Now in full life at the throne in heaven
Our Lord Jesus for us continually pled.

The truth of the matter is – the law is good
By it we are condemned and brought to God –
And in faith I see Christ has died for me
God's eternal plan I know by faith in God's Word.
Christ is not dead; He rose from among them
The hope I have is based in God Himself –
Who gave the law to condemn sin in the flesh;
And then sent Christ who in His fullness did bless.

"Father God, thank You for the revelation of Thyself and Thy Son through the Word of God. Faith has come to me through Thy Word and hope too is given, and assured through Thy Word. I thank Thee for it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 1:22. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:"

LOVE ONE ANOTHER WITH A PURE HEART.

There is no room – no place for pretense
The Holy Spirit has taught truth and I have some sense
Of the value of love for the people of God
Who also are purified by obeying God's Word;
Our lives we share in the good times and bad,
Knowing God can prosper or take all we had
To make us like Christ who with a fervent love
Laid aside all He had so that He could give
What we needed most and that He could supply,
When for us He bore our sins and for us did die.

Love was the reason Christ stayed on the cross
Love is now the reason why we will not be lost.
That same love should be seen from me to others,
Evidence is seen of love by how I respond to my brothers,
And how much I'm prepared to give that they might know
I love them in Christ, and by my love I can show
That what happens to them is important to me –
It is by fervent love they are enabled to see
The Spirit has worked in me like He worked in them
And we are one together because we are one in Him.

"Father, these are Thy children and their needs are varied. I can't meet all those needs, but I can love the needy. Help me to help them in whatever way is appropriate. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

The word of God is one of the two things used to bring new birth to us. The Holy Spirit of God is the other. When these two come together, life is generated in the human soul, and those who were dead in trespasses and sins are now alive in the power of Christ's life given to us. The information from the word of God, and the direct action of the Spirit of God in convicting us of sin, revealing Christ to us as the sacrifice for sin and regenerating us produces eternal life. The power of the Gospel-seed is imperishable because by its very nature it is a living and enduring message. We are redeemed by the incorruptible blood of Christ, so we have an incorruptible inheritance. We will have an incorruptible body and an incorruptible crown to give our incorruptible King who we serve. All of this is made

possible when we come alive by the incorruptible word of God "that liveth and abideth forever." All possessions, accomplishments and people will fade and disappear, but God's will, God's word and God's work is permanent.

1st Peter 1:23. *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."*

INCORRUPTIBLE SEED.

*Life comes from the death of a seed when it is planted
I cannot describe it all, I take certain things for granted.
God has implanted inside seeds a life-force,
When moisture and warmth is added, life takes its course
Bringing from death a life that's much greater
Designed and maintained by an intelligent Creator.*

*That life-principle is in nature and in the realm of the soul –
The seed of God's Word is planted by the Spirit before
It brings forth a new life, that lives on forever –
It is a work of God, not of human endeavor.
The seed is planted when the Gospel is preached,
And the light of the Spirit all barriers breach.*

*Life comes forth – at the first it seems small
But any plant is little before getting big and tall.
That seed incorruptible has life in it hidden –
And when the Spirit of God works, from it life is bidden
To come forth breaking bands that long have held
The life of the seed that now is revealed.*

*The new life produced is not some passing fad –
It has stirred the man's soul and now he is glad
To know what God began, when at first he did bring
A new life eternal from the seed that did spring
Faith in that Word that God planted now grows –
And the new life begotten by incorruptible seed now shows.*

"I thank Thee Father, for the evidence of new life in those who recently told us they have been born again. Help me to nurture them in some way, by Thy Spirit and Word whenever I see them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 1:24. *"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:"*

ALL FLESH.

*By nature, the life we see around us is temporary
It germinates, grows and produces what its nature gives
And then slowly, but surely, dies –
Gradually disintegrating to its original source –
It is not eternal.*

*By its nature grass is only for a year,
Then another blade comes to take its place.
Some trees last for generations
But they too are dying a slow death –
They are not eternal.*

*Animals, birds, fish all have a life-cycle
Made by a wise Creator and maintained
To fulfill a divine purpose
But they too have only a short life –
None of them are eternal.*

Beauty and color are seen in gardens world-wide
Flowers in forests, mountains – even deserts
Bloom in glorious colors and scents that amaze us
But they too are only temporary – they wither and die –
Their beauty is not eternal.

"I am always amazed at Thy power and the beauty which has been place in Thy creation, Father God. Is it human sin that has brought such world-wide death? How terrible the consequences of human sin! Sometimes I even grieve. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 1:25. "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

THE WORD OF THE LORD.

A year seems long when one is a child.
Forever to them is the time to walk a mile.
But as we grow older the years seem shorter,
And a mile is not much more than around the corner –
So "forever" is used in a relative way –
It doesn't always mean what the words really say.
None of our words really finds the meaning
Of what "forever" means when God is speaking.
Because "forever" to Him means totally without end –
"Forever" cannot change to suit definitions of men.

"Forever" is the length of the life of God.
"Forever" describes the existence of His Holy Word.
"Forever" has no limits on the truth within
The Word of God describing the consequences of sin.
"Forever" is the length of the life God gives –
"Forever" is the length of the love that is His.
"Forever" God's Word is settled in heaven –
"Forever" is how long my sins are forgiven.
I can't describe the word, but this I see –
"Forever" is how long God's trustworthy Word will be.

"I thank Thee, Father, for the assurance of the eternal character of Thy Word. The words and laws of men are short and they change them often to mean something different. I thank Thee for the unchangeableness of Thy Word. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 2:1-12

THE PILGRIM'S SPIRITUAL PRIESTHOOD

1st Peter 2:1. "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings,"

LAYING ASIDE.

The new birth is real, you are different now –
Sometimes it is hard to explain just how
And what has happened so people understand
You live in the same body but are a different man
With different interests and a different Guide
Who doesn't just talk, but lives deep inside;
This body of clay and gives new views
Of life and the spiritual birth that happened to you.

The reactions to things and pressures around
Fade away a lot since I'm on redemption ground.

Instead of being concerned about what others think,
I'm wanting to please Him who saved me from hell's awful brink
And changed not just my life, but my nature too.
So, I am wanting and able to please Him who
Paid for my ransom and set me free
To live my life in spiritual liberty.

Now these grievous things like hypocrisy,
Evil speaking and malice, guile and enmity,
Are no longer controlling the life I live –
And I have power to serve the One who gave
His life on the cross and it's revealed in His Word
He died to save me, and that He might be Lord
Of my life so that from now on the things I do
Will honor Him, and perhaps bless others too.

"O Father God, these evil characteristics that come from the world still try to rise up from time to time. Give me the wisdom to catch their first signs and set them aside by the power of God. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 2:2. *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"*

THAT YOU MAY GROW.

There is a natural instinct in normal newborn babes
For nourishment to grow that their lives may be saved.
There is an unrestrained hunger that comes from within
And the natural result is you will see growth in them.

The same is true when new life from God is given –
There are different desires seen in citizens of heaven.
Growth is not measured by all the words that I say –
Or how I can impress people from day to day.

There is a newfound desire for the Word of God –
It is not attitudes put on to impress the people of the Lord.
There is a desire implanted by the inward new nature –
That instinctively wants me to grow in spiritual stature.

Love for God and love for the Lord Jesus Christ
Prompt the Spirit in me to make me want to rise
Above what I was just a short time ago
And seek spiritual nourishment in order to grow.

The hunger is there, it is part of the life-cycle
That just wants to develop, not to gain a big title
As one who is developing way beyond his years –
No, I just want to be known as one who for his Savior cares.

"This morning, O God, I bow before Thee to express appreciation for the Holy Spirit who helps me get spiritual food from the scriptures. I can sense a real fulfillment within when something has been added to my spiritual life and growth. Thanks so much, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 2:3. *"If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."*

TASTED.

That first taste may be small as we take a sip
And the sweetness and goodness pass our lip.
Then the urge is there to swallow and keep
That flavor, that goodness – the next swallow is deep.

*The first taste of grace I hardly did know –
My life was spared perhaps I was too young to show
Any serious response, only I was glad to be alive –
And I know it was God who let me survive.*

*Listening to prayers, reading the Bible, singing hymns –
Although I was ignorant God was working then
In grace to bring me in time to Himself
And as time went along, God's grace was often felt.*

*The Gospel of God's grace opened my careless heart,
And the Spirit began to convict me, grace began to start
A work of revelation of God to my soul –
And then Christ's death for me show grace to the full.*

*That first taste of grace made me want grace even more.
Grace to live by brought me to a far shore.
Grace has been with me through life, God still does bless
And daily, sometimes hourly, I'm aware of His graciousness.*

"Even here this morning, Father, I am conscious of Thy grace in giving a good rest, giving good health and every needed and granted blessing. I praise Thee for Thy grace. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 2:1-3

SPIRITUAL MILK

The salvation of sinners began in the mind of God before the creation of the world. When our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world and He reigns in righteousness, we will have experienced what the fullness of salvation really means. The word "therefore" at the beginning of 1st Peter chapter two connects the new birth experience of those who are born by the Spirit and the word of God into the family in chapter one with the words, "as new born babes."

A birth brings joy into a family when a new life begins with all of its potential, its gifts, its uniqueness and its promise. One characteristic children share is a likeness to their parents and a similarity to their siblings in many ways. There is also an instinct for a newborn to want often nourishment that leads to growth. The growth rate of a baby is very easy to see from one month to the next. That growth is due to the nourishment of milk.

There are things a new believer (older believers also) want to get rid of because of the spiritual poison they contain. Any sin prevents spiritual growth. Anything that is not suitable for a true believer must be put off so the divine nature and the love it produces can be real and evident. There is a list of five specific items at the beginning of this chapter that harms others.

Malice is bearing ill-will toward other people. Even though one may feel justified in this for some reason, bearing malice against another person is sin that must be gotten rid of. Guile and deceit are the same actions of deliberate dishonesty that appears to be one thing but is actually not what it appears to be. Our Lord is the example for us of One who had "no deceit in His mouth." Hypocrisy is essentially a mask that is put on to hide the reality in a person. Envy is a form of resentment that if allowed to go unchecked can lead to terrible consequences. Pilate knew that the chief priest had "delivered Him (Jesus) for envy" to be crucified. Evil speaking has as the true motivation behind it, the desire to hurt another person's reputation. Any and all of these will curb, and perhaps stop, the spiritual appetite for the spiritual nourishment we get from the word of God.

As those who are genuine believers show an actual craving for the word of God, there will be growth as they read and learn from the pure, reasonable and logical word of God. They are born again through the word of God and the Spirit of God and now must grow through the word of God the Holy Spirit has moved "holy men of old" to write. Once a believer learns how to find nourishment for their spiritual life through the scriptures, their spiritual appetite will increase and the maturing process will become evident.

The word of God stands uniquely alone among all the writings of men. Whether it be the books of other religions, or things people write about the Bible, the word of God alone is free from impurities. It is not tainted by the variety of

opinions men hold. When truth is accepted as spiritual milk, there is satisfaction that accompanies the understanding of divine things that God reveals in His word. One taste leads to another and before long a habit is formed that becomes real and satisfactory to our spiritual appetite.

Our first taste of spiritual food was the grace of God and the goodness of the Lord when He saved us. His salvation provided a new taste for that which we had never experienced before. We wanted more knowledge and understanding of this One who loved us and saved us. We had a desire to share that with others so they too could have and enjoy what we had. In our thirst and hunger for righteousness and the satisfaction that life gives us, we are encouraged and motivated to go farther into "the sincere milk of the word." The growth process, once it begins, by its very nature urges us to get more because the taste of these nourishing words is so satisfactory.

1st Peter 2:4. *"To coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious."*

A LIVING STONE.

*A very unusual analogy makes me stop and think,
What is the "Living Stone" God chose me to bring
To that I might see beyond what is normal to men,
And see what He has chosen and what is precious to Him.*

*To men a stone is some hard, inanimate thing.
Yet to me, about a "Living Stone", there's a song I sing
Because this Stone is a Person who gives life to what's dead,
And this Living Stone is not just the foundation, it's also the Head.*

*This Stone is the Lord on which the house of God is built.
Everyone who comes in faith, the life of the Stone has felt.
We came past the scorners, mockers and such –
And found the Living Stone was warm to the touch.*

*Life from that Stone brought life from Him to me –
The Stone that men rejected was a Stone that can see.
And that "Living Stone" is also "Living bread" that came from heaven,
And it is also "Living Water" and the "Living Way" God has given.*

*I have come to this Stone, or better, God brought me to it –
And I find by that Living Stone, there's a place where I fit.
The life that is in that Stone is the life that is in me –
So, the spiritual house I'm a part of will last eternally.*

"O God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ: I thank and praise Thee this day for allowing me to come to Christ, and imparting to this small pebble a life that will last forever – like that of the Living Stone. Amen."

1st Peter 2:5. *"Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, and holy priesthood; to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."*

OFFER SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES.

*Look at that young lady, she has come alive!
She was as hard as a rock, like a stone she did lie
Without interest in God of any apparent kind
No evidence of life – seemed like she would never find
Christ or salvation, but it has come to pass –
She surrendered to God – accepting Christ at last.
Now a living stone she wants to please her Savior –
She can offer spiritual sacrifices of doing good to a neighbor.*

*He was such a loner until God saved him by grace
He is back home now – not wandering from place to place.
It seems like he understands he is part of a spiritual house –
And finds there are other people God Himself did choose
To be part of a "house", a dwelling place for Him –*

*Where believers come together and spiritual offerings bring.
A spiritual sacrifice that is acceptable is our money and goods –
God is exalted with needs met by those who sacrificed what they could.*

*There is something unique when one is part of the family of God
Along with all the saints, a believer is in a holy priesthood.
Spiritual sacrifices rise from all around the whole world,
When Christians offer the sacrifice of praise like a flag unfurled
And the world lying in darkness and despair hear the words of a hymn,
And wonder at such a priesthood that is so different from them –
The unbelievers can learn when we offer the sacrifice of praise –
The holy priesthood of believers are examples of God's grace.*

"Holy, Eternal God, may the close association of true believers always have a testament of grace to be observed by all the people they come in contact with. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 2:4-10

SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES

There are a number of ways our Lord is presented as the Living One. He is the "Living Water" that springs up into eternal life quenching the thirst of one who finds the world and all it offers does not satisfy. He referred to Himself as the "Living Bread" which came down from heaven that sustains and strengthens the life of those who eat of that bread. He is the "Living Way" that gives us direct access to God our heavenly Father. That way was opened by His suffering, death and resurrection that made possible the removal of sin. Reconciliation to God is now possible when one steps through the "Door" to "The Way, the Truth and the Life."

1Peter 2:2, 5, 9, 11, 16, 19, 25. *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby... lively stones... royal priests...strangers and pilgrims... servants of God... sufferers... recovered sheep."*

SIMILIES.

*A pilgrim passing through this land,
Is never sure just where he stands.
Other folks who live around here,
Have not been troubled about going there,
Where the pilgrim knows his home is in
Heaven, 'cause he has been born again –
He is a "new born babe!"*

*To tell some people that you are a stone,
That lives and breathes the air of home;
Where Jesus lives and the Father waits –
Why, they would think you were too late;
When sense was passed out, you were out to lunch.
It is hard to explain the divine touch,
That made me a "living stone!"*

*A priest to some, is a man in black,
Who walks about with his face so slack,
They don't know if he is here or there.
But a royal priesthood, represents and shares,
God's blessings, and His words of life.
He passes on, in times of strife
Hope, because he is a "royal priest!"*

*Strangers and pilgrims have their faces set,
Towards the home of the Savior they once met;
When in sin's dark hold, they found relief;
And were blessed abundantly by saving grace.*

*So now on their way through this desert land,
They move with steady pace and staff in hand
Because they are "strangers and pilgrims."*

*On their journey though to the home above,
They are called to serve the One they love.
They serve their Master by serving men,
Providing for needs and help when they can.
The time they spend to serve the Lord,
Will have in the future, a sure reward:
They are "servants of God."*

*Problems arise on this journey through,
From those who don't want the Gospel true.
Some saints will suffer, through all their years,
And others less; yet each one bears
The burdens of loss, or pain, or grief.
But the day is coming of sweet relief:
For the "patient sufferers!"*

*We are not perfect; we will all need help.
And shepherds over the Savior's flock,
Are there to bring back those who stray afar,
And recover them from where they are,
To where the Chief Shepherd keeps the soul
Safe – and where each one can fulfill his role;
As a "recovered sheep!"*

"O Guide and Guardian of the pilgrim traveler: in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I commit this day of the journey to Thee for direction, protection, correction and instruction. As the need arises, help me make whatever course changes that are necessary without complaint or resentment – and help me not to wait to make the changes but to act right away. Amen."

As the "Living Stone" our Lord is identified as the One all Israelis would know who brought life-giving water to their ancestors while they were on their journey to the promised land through the wilderness. He was rejected by men but chosen by God, and is precious to Him and to us who believe. He was the prepared Stone when "the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." The coming of Christ was no after-thought by God. Believers have come to Him and continually do like those in the Old Testament times came with their offerings and worship. He is the Living Stone in contrast to the dead stones of the Jewish temple.

Unbelievers attempt to build a temple for God from the "stones" they think they can cut out by themselves. The "Chief Corner Stone," the "Living Stone" has already been prepared and laid in place for the spiritual temple God is erecting. The church is a living temple to which every believer is added as a "living stone" built upon the foundation of "the apostles and prophets." Like Christ was chosen, so are we to be placed in this spiritual house. The picture Peter is portraying is that of a building composed of many parts that are "fitly framed together." It takes more than one piece to make a wall. None of us is independent from other living stones. The unity of community is not well accepted in modern society and modern church life. People want to think they can come or go as they please, especially if they are in a large fellowship. Believers are dependent on each other for safety, testimony and worship. Participation on the part of each one enhances the value of the whole.

1st Peter 2:6. *"Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture; behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded."*

CHIEF CORNER STONE.

*It is obvious to the eyes of persons who building practices know,
The building that we see on top, depends on what is below.
The testimony of apostles and prophets, even though they're gone,
Form the foundation of the walls the Church is builded on.*

*But foundation stones could be crooked, not made of the right stuff –
So, something else is needed long before a finished roof.*

*The very first stone laid is the Chief Corner Stone of the Church –
And that Stone has to be so perfect that earthquakes won't make it lurch.*

*The Chief Corner Stone was scrutinized, but the "experts" passed it by.
They wanted what they wanted, not the One the Holy God did eye.
That Stone was completely solid, in it was found no flaw –
The shape and form were perfect – this building could not fall.*

*God laid it in its perfection so that every stone could easily fit
The foundation stones added, and other stones came out from it.
In every direction the walls made of living stones each know –
The Chief Corner Stone personally, He is the "Faithful and True."*

*The building is almost done now, there has been no deterioration –
Though there have been challenges and wars, the saints from every nation
Form a part of this structure that's sound, never again with there be One
That is securely built and will always stand on Christ, the Corner Stone.*

"We certainly have been attacked, O God. Cheap builders are trying to get cheap material into the building. But it is not too hard to tell when a stone is cold and hard, or warm and living. We all get our heat from that precious Corner Stone. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 2:7. "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,"

HE IS PRECIOUS.

*Because of who He is, eternal in His being –
Because of what He knows, omniscient in His seeing –
Because of where He came from, willing in His leaving –
To those who believe on Him,
He is the Preciousness from God.*

*Because of where He came to, earth so full of sin –
Because of His spotless character, totally undefiled within –
Because of His incarnation, He became a man among men –
To those who believe on Him,
He is the Preciousness - the Son of God.*

*Because of His grace He became poor, that we in Him might be rich –
Because of His mercy He rescued us, who were fallen in sin's ditch –
Because of His love he went to the cross, from sin's payment did not flinch –
To those who believe on Him,
He is the Preciousness – the Lamb of God.*

*Now to us who Him obey; He is the One we hold most dear –
Now to us who Him obey, He is honored and His name we revere
Now to us who Him obey; He is the Head who is ever near –
To those who obey Him,
He is the head of the Corner – the True Christ of God.*

"There are times Father, when words don't come so easily when I am speaking to Thee about the Lord. He does surpass all descriptions we humans try to use. But I thank Thee for the many ways He is revealed in scripture in all His fullness. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1ST Peter 2:8. "And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto they were appointed."

A STONE OF STUMBLING, AND A ROCK OF OFFENCE.

Look at them come to hear His gracious words –

*Look at their faces as they turn from His truths –
Look at their body language, they are turning away –
Look at their attitude; they are rejecting what he does say.*

*They stumbled and fell, and took others down too –
They were offended at Him even though they knew
What He did and who He was, was so different from them
That they stumbled and fell, offended at His truth, never to rise again.*

*Watch how people react at His name, you can see if they believe or not.
See what they do when you carry a Bible and you can tell what they've got.
Bow and pray – see if they stay to engage in conversation with you.
Look at their face – see if God's grace indicates if they are false or true.*

*People stumble at times over the Head of the Corner, because His name is Jesus.
They are uncomfortable and resentful to think there is One who always sees us.
They're offended at the fact that the Rock in the track knows every sin we do.
They do not intend their ways to amend or submit to Him that is true.*

*Isn't it strange to see normal men stumble over a thing like a word;
But the reason it happens is they don't want to submit to Jesus Christ as Lord.
I'm not surprised when one who never relies on Him who holds our breath in His hand,
Turn away and fall be they ever so tall, and won't rise until before His throne they stand.*

*Then they're too late to wipe clean the slate of sins which they did commit.
How sad is the case when they look on the face of the One who our sins did remit;
But when they stumbled over the Stone – the One who sits on the throne, they'll see their awful mistake.
The Rock of Offence will send them out hence, from the throne to the fierce burning lake.*

"I wonder Father, if there are ways I have not tried that will cause people to listen and not stumble. The word of God is all I know that will bring the right results. Help me to continually keep in Thy Word and pass it on to others. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

"Spiritual sacrifices" offered by a "holy priesthood" are acceptable to God. The priesthood of all believers means that each one has direct access to God. Priests are to reflect the holiness of God and of our "Great High Priest." The spiritual sacrifices we have to offer are not insignificant when we are true worshippers. Priests also intercede for others before God and represent God before others.

Our High Priest offers acceptable sacrifices of that which we bring to Him as gifts and sacrifices to offer on our behalf [Heb.8:3]. There is the sacrifice of a consecrated body [Rom.12:1] which is a willingness to that which is impossible to a natural man. Audible praise [Heb.13:15] is a sacrifice when we take time to think deliberate thoughts that are praiseworthy to God. The sacrifice of temporal goods [Heb.13:16] indicates labor has been expended to meet the needs of others. Gifts to the Lord's servants [Phil.4:8] is sharing what we have for a specific purpose. The sacrifice of thanksgiving [Ps.107:22] puts into words gratitude for blessings we have received. The openness to let our emotions show produces the sacrifice of joy for God's mercies [Ps.27:6]. The sacrifice of contrition [Ps.51:7] produces real repentance. Righteous living before the Lord when we refuse to compromise with what is wrong, is an acceptable sacrifice. The sacrifice of one's own self [2Tim.4:6] means the pain of reproach, suffering and perhaps death is involved. Better than any physical sacrifice is the sacrifice of obedience [1Sam.15:22] which is a direct response of love to our Father.

1st Peter 2:9. *"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."*

GOD HAS A PURPOSE FOR US.

*This all started way back in the mind of God
Before the world was made –
There would be a unique family
Among all the families of earth and heaven –
God chose to be the Son's holy Bride.*

*He came down from heaven, for a time lower than angels,
That He might be like them, apart from sin –
He experienced everything they could to the fullest extent –
And then seated them in the highest with Him.*

*He made them different; they are a work of God's doing
For even though sin is all around –
They are a set-apart nation, holy in character –
Through them all families see how grace does abound.
Some look with antagonism, others with delight –
As they see God's glory unfold.
Seraphim hover, angels burst into praise,
As the story of God's Son is told.*

*Forever these people will be a special possession of His.
To make them His, His life willingly gave.
Through that act of redemption, He purchased His people,
Who will declare forever, "It is Christ alone that saves!"
As a priesthood of people who represent Him on earth –
An elect generation, a holy nation who God blesses –
We who have come from darkness to life; given new life –
Will be forever declaring His glory by our praises.*

"O God, who is worthy to be praised forever, I come this morning with thoughts of Thyself, Thy Son and Thy glory that I can't seem to get out in words. Please take these feeble thoughts of appreciation and words of praise. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

When we put our energy and resources at God's disposal, and trust Him to guide us, our spiritual priesthood becomes real to us. Peter never claimed to be the foundation of the church. He confirms, as did the apostle Paul, that there is "no other foundation." The Lord Jesus Christ, the Rock of ages, is the Chief Corner Stone the church is built upon. Those who put their trust in Him will not be ashamed. Some people stumble over Christ because they have rejected Him or refuse to believe He is who He says He is. "The stupidity of the experts," "the stone which the builders rejected," reveals the foolishness of those who suppose themselves to be builders. That Stone will cause them to fall. They disobeyed the message of the Gospel and because of that are destined to fall.

The royal priesthood of which each believer is a part, has the responsibility of bringing people to God. Believers have been designated, chosen by God for this specific purpose. As a holy nation we are united with all the saints of God in acting as intermediaries between God and sinful people. This is "the ministry of reconciliation" to which we must be committed. This special possession of God is an unusual, peculiar people. Our calling is to demonstrate publicly the praises we have of God for the grace that brought us from the darkness of sin into the light of salvation.

Our relationship with God is not based on our jobs, our accomplishments, our wealth, our education or our self-concept of success. Our worth as persons comes from being children of God. It is because of what God has done that there is any value in what we do in life. It is our privilege as spiritual priests to declare to the world the greatness, the glory and the authority of our God.

Before we were saved, there was no real purpose for God in us because we were in darkness. We were in our sins under His condemnation. Disobedience and self-will separated us from Him. But when we came to Him as sinners who needed forgiveness and accepted His offered mercy, now we live with a purpose and are able to be reconcilers in Christ's name. We are able with authority to call people to be reconciled to God, and when that happens, there is blessing that lasts.

1st Peter 2:10. *"Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."*

NOW THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

*Once dead – but now alive
Once lost – but now found
Once in darkness – but now in light
Once in mire – but now on holy ground*

*Once poor – but now made rich
Once an enemy – but now a son
Once an orphan – but now one of His
Once at the end of the road – but now just begun*

*Once an alien – but now a friend
Once an hungered – but now I'm filled
Once cast out – but now brought in
Once in sickness – but now fully healed*

*Once under the curse – but now I am blessed
Once in bondage – but now set free
Once Satan's slave – but now by God possessed
Once burdened down – but now walking in liberty*

*Once in hopeless poverty – but now an heir of God
Once in weakness – now given power to live
Once ignorant of truth – now possessed by the Word
Once empty-handed – now all things I have*

"I thank Thee, O God, for the abundant mercy that has saved and preserved me. For all the ways I've been blessed. I thank Thee. For all the promises of the future – I praise Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 2:11-12

THE BATTLE FOR THE SOUL

It is not uncommon for new believers when they are under the pressure of suffering to yield to the desires of our fleshly nature. Those around us accept "sinful living" as natural and act according to their sensual inclinations hoping to find some kind of satisfaction. But those to whom Peter wrote were more than friends, and more than "dear friends." Those saints of God were "dearly beloved" to Peter. His personal love for them is a reflection of God's love that indicates the strongest appeal to them to act on his exhortations.

When someone becomes a child of God their citizenship is in heaven. We are aliens from another world and are foreigners who are passing through this world as ambassadors for our Lord Jesus Christ. As strangers our location is very temporary. We haven't settled down and moved in to be part of this corrupt world system. Even though we are here on a temporary assignment, there is a detachment from the world system and its pleasures because they are inconsistent with that which is righteous and holy.

As pilgrims our relationship with the people of the world is that we are among them but not one of them. A holy nation is one that is separated unto God. We are here to represent God by testifying of our Lord and by displaying His characteristics by the way we live. In response to the love shown to us, and the fact that we are only temporarily here, we have an obligation to demonstrate Christ-likeness to those around us. We remain loyal to our Lord and to the truth of God and to His people, at the same time we make our appeal to other people to "be reconciled to God."

Even though we may feel like strangers, because we are strangers our conduct should be above reproach. Others may be attracted to sin and live dishonorably. It is incumbent upon us to be honorable in all of our contact with the world. Honorable living is our responsibility in our personal and family life. In business dealings and social events, there is a dignity that accompanies righteous living that unbelievers will not like nor appreciate because it exposes sinfulness. Even though the hostile attitude is there, when the critical eye "beholds" the good works that support the witness of a believer, God will be glorified in the future.

1st Peter 2:11. *"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;"*

WAR AGAINST THE SOUL.

*I was born here, but now I am an alien
I have lived here all my life, but I am a stranger
I have citizenship, but this is not my home
I live peaceably here, but to many I'm a danger.*

There is a reason that I am different

*There is a cause to which myself I owe
I am a citizen now of heaven
Living here where lusts war against my soul.*

*I have to say "Yes" when others say "No"
When God gives a call for me to follow Him
And I have to say "No" when others say "Yes"
Because I am called to be separate from sin.*

*When some go down to enjoy sin's waters
I go up to be at the house of God
When I go down to rescue the lost and perishing
Others go up to bow at the idols of the world.*

*There is a part of me that wants to be accepted
By all the people who live in "Vanity Fair"
But as a stranger and a foreign pilgrim
I must turn from it even though I live here.*

*This nation will pass, but God's kingdom is forever
This all will fail but heaven is for sure
This all will never bring real satisfaction
But I will be satisfied when like Christ I am pure.*

"Father, please help me keep a pilgrim character and not be embarrassed by being a stranger. After all, my Lord was a "stranger to His mother's children." In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

We do not have to defend ourselves with words because "good works" do that in a more powerful and meaningful way. The unbelievers are not coming to a snap judgment on the spur of the moment, but have been observing the consistency of Christian conduct and actions that are beneficial. Their evaluation may be that which brings blessing to themselves, let alone "glorify God" in the day of inspection. That will be when the actions of the saints and sinners is inspected by God when He visits.

It is our hope that the "day of visitation" will be a time of salvation for sinners who have seen the high quality of life Christians live. Without skillful arguments or eloquent speeches, the attractiveness of the lives of believers influence them to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to be expected that the contrast of the quality of living of a child of God and that of pagan unbelief, will open up slander from the "evildoers. Evidence of godly character and the power of the word of God being demonstrated in an individual's life cannot be discredited. Both in the day of grace when the Lord is saving souls, and in the day of judgment, God will be honored, and the lives of believers who live righteous lives and do good works, will be made plain by Him who judges justly.

How wonderful it is when those who one time criticized and opposed the Gospel, joins in praising God. The God who saved them both will be glorified. The image given is that of God as the "overseer" (a bishop) will diligently inspect the actions of believers and unbelievers alike. In view of that "day of visitation," we are challenged to "abstain" from any desire of the flesh that opposes the holiness of life and labor in which we are called to be engaged.

1st Peter 2:12. *"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."*

PEOPLE ARE WATCHING.

*The conduct of life has a lot to say –
About what is important and really matters to me.
The way I work and talk every day –
Testifies to people who only believe what they see.
So even though they choose to talk behind my back –
The problem is theirs far more than mine.
They know in their hearts there's something they lack –
And that's why they are looking for some fault to find.*

*There is a consolation – there is a day that's coming
When they will want or have some serious need.
When that time comes, by God's grace, I'll be waiting
To help them along and my words they will heed.
Because I believe there comes a time in each life
When people know they need God and don't know where to turn.
When that day comes, may I have shed enough light –
So that what I do and say, they will no longer spurn.*

*I do worry over those who are close –
That there is something in me that turned them away.
I search, looking back over some decisions I chose –
To see if some action I can take that their will, will sway
Their decisions and turn them to God from sin.
Lord, help them see what they're doing affects others –
By grace, call them back to begin life over again –
And help me to live in a way that honors, Thee, Father.*

"I know Heavenly Father, what I do here has an effect on other people. By Thy great power, I choose to live in a way that honors Thee, no matter what others My do. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 2:13-3:7

THE PILGRIM'S PRACTICAL SUBMISSION

1st Peter 2:13. *"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;"*

BE SUBMISSIVE: for the Lord's sake.

*For some reason this submission is hard to do.
It is not so hard when it comes to safety and a special few –
But there are some laws that have passed that seem unfair,
And yet God commands me to submit as long as I am living here.*

*I think this has to do with the public and how they see the Gospel.
If I am against the government, it will make preaching soon impossible.
The citizens of this place should know I am a law-abiding man –
And I will cooperate with them and obey the very best I can.*

*However, I am subject to higher laws than these –
God has a higher authority and Him I am obliged to please.
As long as the ordinances don't conflict with the moral laws of God –
I am committed for Christ's sake to keep ordinances as I should.*

*The name of the Lord is what is really involved in keeping laws of men.
Some saints suffer and others have died rather than compromise Him.
Laws at times are foolish, and in some places turn people from God –
When that happens, I must leave or die there to keep God's Word.*

*Some of the saints have no choice – they have no place to go –
To submit to laws will mean hard times that some may never know.
Lord, keep the courage of the saints so high as they obey
The laws of men as they can, that other men God will praise.*

"I am praying today, O Lord God Most High, for Thy people who are living in places where there is opposition to Thy Gospel. Give Thy people a gracious way about them. Help them not to render evil for evil. Help them to speak when they should and be silent when it is the way to act. Glorify Thyself in those choice people – and also in this feeble, free man who until now, has been preserved from so much. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 2:13-17

SUBMIT TO GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

The way Christians behave in a community is of great importance to people who watch us from day to day. Christian attributes are not always admired in the "me first" society in which we live. For a person to be submissive, meek and humble is to most people a sign of weakness. These may seem at first glance foolish to those who are determined to "stand up for my right." To those who recognize they are under the supreme authority of our Lord, we can understand the reason He has ordained civil authority. There has to be a form of rule and authority to maintain an orderly structure in a society of any kind.

Three areas of society to which the doctrine of headship applies are the civil government, the local assembly and the private home. In each of these areas of human living there is a divinely appointed leadership. "Emperors" are those who lead nations and "governors" are leaders in a more localized section of society. "Elders" are divinely appointed leaders in assemblies to whose leadership we submit. Husbands are appointed by the Lord as the "head" and are the guides in individual households. In each of these areas of life, God's purpose is orderly and successful living.

1st Peter 2:14. *"Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well."*

PUNISHMENT AND PRAISE.

*"The wicked flee when no man pursueth," so the scriptures say.
Often those in authority face the wicked every day –
They know better than I what the outcome of wickedness would be
If those who control public behavior ignored the evil they see.*

*I will show respect to those God has chosen to lead –
I may not always agree with them but to their authority I'll heed.
And seek to be a citizen who people can look to and say,
"He is the kind of person I trust, so here I will live and stay."*

*Part of our testimony is in how people see us act.
They will be willing to believe our message knowing it is fact
That those who love the Lord are model citizens –
And the neighborhood will be safe, at least the house we live in.*

*It is right for me to acknowledge the good I see people do.
It is right I give praise and honor those whose word is true.
It is right that I respect the office that leaders hold.
It is right when I don't compromise God, to do what I am told.*

*When praise is appropriate to give, then from me it should be given.
When praise for some special act is done, I should make it known to men.
That praise is always for others, not praise directed to me –
Ultimately the aim is for praise to be for God, and what He has allowed to be.*

"There are those, Father God, who deserve recognition and there are those that deserve punishment. Give me the insight to give praise where it is due. Do the same I pray for those who are in authority in our city and country. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Recognition of properly constituted authority is the way cooperation is maintained for the benefit for the greatest number of people. To be charged for breaking civil or moral laws is not consistent with our Christian commitment. To be persecuted for obeying God when the laws of a nation contradict the moral laws of God, is to be expected. An "ordinance" is a creation. An "ordinance of man" is a creation of mankind. Any true creation comes originally from God, the Creator, so we have to consider human ordinances in principle, as divine in origin unless they contradict the word of God. To disobey human institutions in a general sense, is to disobey God.

It is easier to do this under some political systems than under others. Peter was teaching these principles when he was under the rule of Nero; one of the vilest rulers of all time. It was under the practices of these very principles that he was put to death. Every ordinance that maintains the appropriate life of the citizens is to be submitted to for "the Lord's sake." Paying taxes, getting necessary licenses, buying and selling property - these all have costs and rules to which we must submit even though we may feel they are unfair. Any command by civil authority to do what the

scriptures teach is sin, we must not do. We owe our allegiance to God and are guided by the scriptures and the Holy Spirit as to when it is right to not obey the rules people make.

1st Peter 2:15. *“For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may out to silence the ignorance of foolish men.”*

STOP FOOLISH TALK.

*Words have a way of multiplying when people come together.
Sometimes they can be edifying, when wandering thoughts they gather.
The believers were told when this happened, speak one by one –
The results would be very profitable when the speaking time was done.*

*There is another format that foolish people use –
The whispered word in another's ear leads to subterfuge.
The lying lips and gossiping tongue have evil as intent –
Usually wanting to bring someone down when the conversation ends.*

*If a bunch of people talk at once it is hard to make some sense
Of what the point of the talk was when the noise finally ends.
The problem usually still remains for we don't know what was said –
If it happened like that in a hospital, the patient would be dead.*

*When you know there's gossip or talk going around –
Quietly go about your work – among them don't be found.
Move from the room to attend to some help you can do for others.
Walk away so you can attend some work for your sisters and brothers.*

*If it is noised abroad there is some spurious tale –
That would put down the people of God, to make their purpose fail –
Don't retaliate or reply, go find some good work to do –
And it won't be long until others know what is false and true.*

“O All-Knowing God: help me keep the door of my lips that I speak no guile. Make me to consider before I say something, whether the words will be to profit or be foolish talk. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

By obeying righteous laws and those who enforce them, we are able to stop the slander and false accusations that are directed against believers. Many of the daily events in life are governed by laws that may not seem to be precise and are not easily understood. The principle by which we live is to obey the laws unless it is clearly against what our conscience dictates under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "Well doing" has to do more with attitude in this passage rather than charitable acts of kindness. To walk in a godly manner in an ungodly society will stir up the consciences of foolish people. They will seek to challenge and condemn a child of God, but appropriate Christian behavior will silence their foolish accusations.

Even in totalitarian societies we are free to choose our actions. However, we are not free to choose the consequences of our actions. So, we are able to live as free people but are not to use our freedom to excuse ourselves from our obligations. We are free from the bondage and domination of sin to live holy and righteous lives in obedience to our Lord - not to our own will. We are free to serve our Supreme Master and are doing that when we submit to His delegated authority.

Evidence of true submission to God's will is a Christ-like attitude that is shown to all people in general. I have four responsibilities. First, I am to give honor to all people when the appropriate occasion arises simply because they are human beings made in the image of God. With this in mind I am to show them the respect and courtesy that is due them as those who are valued and loved by God. Secondly, I am to continually love and demonstrate that love to the Lord's people. Those who are children of God are in the same family of which I am a part. I may not agree with them in everything, but I am to love them in spite of that. Third: to fear God means I truly hold Him in awe and am thus motivated to obey Him in all things. This will keep me from abusing my "christian liberty" because I want to please Him. I am not to be frightened of Him nor scared to approach Him, but to reverence, honor and submit to His supreme authority. Fourth, "honoring the king" means that I recognize his authority as one who has been placed in that position by God. I do not have the right to speak evil of him nor to obey him only as I choose. I am to "pray for kings and those in authority." When I do that there is a lasting effect that cannot be cancelled by another person's vote that may be the opposite of mine if I choose to vote.

Our freedom in Christ does not make us free agents to do our own will, but we are free to follow our Lord. It is not our role to organize opposition against the government or promote rallies to protest those things with which I do not agree. Public protests are held when the will of the governed is pitted against the will of those who govern. Those who understand who we are in Christ can have more lasting influence by Christ-like living in submission to those who rule, and when we show proper respect towards everyone including rulers. Demonstrating submission may seem at first to be weakness, but ultimately it is evidence of our true Christian commitment.

1st Peter 2:16. *“As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.”*

EVERYTHING REFLECTS ON GOD.

*Waking moments give a message through my facial expressions.
First words tell of an attitude more than giving information
Early morning actions leave an impression on the minds of others –
Is the beginning of each day a good reflection on my Father?*

*Choices are made in the morning, about things needing to be done.
Careful or careless consideration happens before leaving home.
I am free to act and choose, which is right or too much bother –
Are the things I do each day a good reflection on my Father?*

*God chose me to be His servant, to do what He has planned.
It is important that my service pleases Him, not what pleases man.
From morning to night, I must be guided in everything by His Word –
Are the things I have done already, reflecting well upon my Lord?*

*It would be inappropriate – let alone be very unwise –
For me to act independently, living only before men's eyes –
For each attitude and action, each thing both seen and heard –
Are bound to leave an impression or reflection on my God.*

“Whether in attitude or expression, I pray, O Lord God, that I may honor Thee this day. I haven't spoken to anyone yet this morning but before the day is done, I'll probably interact with a lot of people. Keep me from independent actions and careless words that in any way dishonor Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

1st Peter 2:17. *“Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”*

HONOR, LOVE, RESPECT.

*I'm in the world and will be till the Lord calls me home;
So, I am going to interact with people where I go and come.
There is a degree of dignity that is found in every man.
I can show honor without deceit and bless him in Jesus' name.*

*Those who are in God's family have a special link to me.
Often when first meeting a believer we find we enjoy their company.
Whether I see the saints often, or only meet once then leave.
There is a special bond in Christ that all God's children have.*

*Whenever I hear God's name or speak His name myself –
There is a certain attitude toward Him that is not hard to tell.
He deserves the highest respect and always our reverence –
For God is the Highest of the high; even down to giving me breath.*

*It is right to honor our leader, or at least the office he fills.
God has put him in office, putting in or out as He wills.
It is right to honor the king even though he ignores the Lord –
I can do nothing but pray for him and make sure that I fear God.*

"O God, in this world of billions of people, I know it is important that courtesy is a part of the way I live. To fear Thee, seems to come naturally. To love Christians seems to have been built in since You saved me. To honor all men and arrogant kings is hard to do. Please help me to keep my voice silent when I do not agree with the wrong, I can do nothing about. Give me the grace to show honor when I can. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 2:18-25

SUBMISSION IN SERVICE

There was likely the tendency to bitterness on the part of household slaves who had been captured by a conquering army and brought against their will to serve without pay. Those whose debts had brought them to the position of indentured servants also would naturally have an attitude of latent bitterness toward those who had them under their "beck and call." But God in grace had allowed them to hear the Gospel and He had saved them by His grace. Masters and slaves both come to Christ in the same way. Now things are different. Attitudes and actions are to be correspondingly different. Because of the blessings divine intervention brought to the life of a slave, it is expected by God that the Christian lives and acts like Christ.

Not all employers are the same. Some are reasonable and kind while the expectations of others are inconsiderate and harsh. The attitude of a child of God is to be such that we show respect to those who are over us no matter what they are like. The conditions in which one works or the kind of person for whom we work, is not the basis of our attitude. We are to be submissive for the Lord's sake unless we are asked to sin. Then we must say "No" in spite of the consequences that may follow.

1st Peter 2:18. *"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward."*

SUBJECTION.

*It is not very easy to submit to a man who, though he is my master
Sometimes, though he is slow himself, wants me to work much faster.
If I am not careful there can arise in me a spirit that grows bitter,
Causing me, instead of working, to become a lazy sitter
Watching the door till I see him come and then tear into my work,
Perhaps forgetting he can tell by output if I am prone to shirk,
It is important as a Christian that I work as to the Lord,
And when that practice is consistent, there is a double reward.
Pay for services rendered is the normal motivation,
But working as to the Lord is an act of consecration.
If the man for whom I work is a fair man, that to me is good.
It is much easier for me to commit to doing all I should.
If he is hard to please and seems to make me a target –
I have the motivation to know the Lord does mark it
And lets me know when I do my work as unto the Lord Himself –
He will recompense in His own way and time in ways I cannot tell.*

"I expect Father God, there are a lot of Christians who are made fun of because they are Thy children. In the workplace that may be very hard to take at times. Give to the faithful servants of Thine the courage and grace to do their labor as unto Thee. Give them the joy of knowing they serve Thee even in daily labor. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Behind the Christ-like attitude is the objective that that by the good example of a child of God, there may come a day when the person who was unfair and inconsiderate will see the reality of the faith of the Christian he knows and will want to find Christ. One who is "thankworthy" is one who is demonstrating grace even when suffering unjustly. Usually one who treats others with disdain and unjust knows they are that kind of person. Sometimes that is because they have an exalted opinion of themselves, and other times it may be, they are testing a believer to see the depth of their faith and commitment to God and righteousness.

When abuse comes because of our fault or failure, that is to be expected. If an employee expects favors because they profess to be a Christian, or because they simply do what they are supposed to, there is nothing really special about that. If one shows up late, leaves early or lingers long at a coffee, that is a negative because people expect more of a Christian who is open about his faith than they expect of others. Teasing, personal attacks or being ostracized is to be expected when we identify ourselves with our Lord. God actually looks upon that with favor. Our Lord Jesus Christ conducted His holy life before men without ostentation or bravado. His Father spoke openly and

declared His pleasure at the life of His Son. Hopefully He can speak openly in time to come of those of us who live for Him.

1st Peter 2:19. *“For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.”*

SUFFERING WRONGFULLY.

*“It is not fair,” I find myself prone to say –
When what I wanted or planned didn’t come my way.
I think for some reason it should have happened to others,
But finally, I stop complaining and begin to think it over –
Reminding myself, as grace steps in to humble me –
Christ suffered wrongfully when He died on Calvary.
But looking beyond the wrong, He saw the blessing –
Not only for men like me, but Divine Holiness pleasing
In a legal sense, all charges laid upon the lost,
And suffering wrongfully, He paid the total cost –
So that redemption in its greatest sense
Could for the sins of others make full recompense,
And bring many sons to glory through that which was unfair,
When He suffered wrongfully – He my sins did bear.
Now in freedom from sin’s penalty and guilt
Are blessings brought to me because His blood was spilt.
So now in a much lesser way, there are times I suffer –
It may be wrongfully, but my first reaction I will cover –
Looking farther ahead in faith knowing that my Lord
Can bring from wrongful suffering some blessed reward
That I can pass on to Him as a token of appreciation
And gratitude I have because He paid for my salvation.
When I tell to others stories or incidents of God’s grace,
Wrongful suffering then seems trivial – completely out of place,
To complain of a little discomfort that came to me –
When I view all the resulting blessings for eternity.*

“I thank Thee, O God, for allowing me to experience a little unfairness that I might appreciate more Thy goodness. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

1st Peter 2:20. *“For what glory is it, if, when ye buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”*

ACCEPTABLE WITH GOD.

*Not every problem is undeserved –
Some difficulties happened when I swerved
Off the course I knew was right and proper,
To see if there was something better the world did offer –
And found that the trouble was of my own making,
Because of a shortcut I insisted on taking.
There is no virtue or real reason for complaint –
The problem was my own and the suffering was sent.*

*On the other hand, some things happen as a challenge to God.
The difficulties came because of being faithful to His Word.
Time after time attacks against us were made –
Each one an affront designed to make us sad.
But the Spirit within and commitment to Christ as Lord
Made it so the suffering didn’t seem nearly so hard.
God gave patience to endure whatever was sent along,
And by His grace the weakness in me was made strong.*

Not now too concerned with what might come to pass –

*If God allows it, it won't forever last.
He knows the reason the event originally took place –
And can change the whole matter into a work of grace.
If it is acceptable to God, it is okay with me –
What has happened is because He allowed it to be.
With patience and trust I will just move along –
Knowing if the Lord wants to, He will bring right out of wrong.*

“May the words of my mouth and my actions be acceptable to Thee, O God. When things are hard to understand, help me to endure it all with grace. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

It is important for us to realize that suffering is often part of God's plan to bring results that could not happen any other way. Such suffering and misery can be accepted as a privilege when we are submissive. God accepts such suffering and the attitude that accompanies it as a reflection of our Lord and He commends it. In this way we follow His steps on earth though we can never actually follow in His steps. He was unique in His absolute sinlessness. Patience, calmness and confidence testify to the reality of our faith.

Our Lord was impeccable in His nature and life in that He could not sin. We have a sinful nature and in spite of the new nature imparted to us, we may sin. But that is never to be normal living to a child of God. God's standard for our life and conduct still is sinlessness. Willful sin is never to be expected in our lives. We are to be in subjection to God's will and not consider disobedience to Him to be an option. The Lord Jesus not only did not sin and could not sin, but there was nothing in His words that was not right and appropriate at the moment.

1st Peter 2:21. *“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:”*

HIS STEPS.

*It is a part of life we would like to do without –
Injustice is frustrating when it continually comes about.
But it should not surprise us, for to follow we are called –
The Lord Jesus endured much more when He was in the world.*

*At home He was despised, a stranger to His brothers.
In Nazareth He found no honor, He was treated worse than others.
So, it is no surprise when the same things happen to me –
If I am following His steps, that's what I expect to see.*

*It should not bring resentment if I'm misunderstood.
Not that I want it to happen, I would avoid it if I could.
But the steps of the Lord are different He walked a lonely path –
Even when He blessed others from many it brought wrath.*

*I know that we live different lives, our Sundays are for God.
Others think it strange we keep that day set for the Lord.
When we travel far, we want to meet with the believers –
And we find the language strange, but the saints gladly receive us.*

*His steps went where God wanted to bring others divine blessing.
My steps too should go where God's will I am committed to pleasing.
His steps led to suffering so I should not be surprised
If I too am rejected because God's truth I dare not hide.*

*His steps led to death; I am not sure where mine will lead.
But this I know; it is right when His calling I will heed.
His example is plain – for God's glory here to earth He came.
I am here on earth at the present, so for my God I will do the same.*

“I know I am not able to imitate deity, but I am called to follow my Lord's humanity. So, Father God, I need the courage to travel the rough roads. Help Thy servant I pray. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

He never retaliated against those who allied themselves against Him. Neither should we. When He was insulted, He never returned insults. Neither should we. When physical suffering was put on Him, He never threatened those who hurt Him. Neither should we. When He was under the pain of thorns, nails, bones out of joint, a beaten back, reproach and humiliation, He was still full of love and compassion. He committed everything to God His Father. So, should we. When we truly commit a matter to God, we can leave it there knowing that in His own time and way, righteousness will prevail.

When He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree," He was sacrificed for us for us as our substitute. His suffering work for us as our substitute. His suffering work for us was that which saved us from the righteous wrath of God. This was a once for all accomplishment that never had to be repeated. The result is that we are separated from our sins by love for Him and loyalty to Him in a practical and on-going way. The motivation is so great that when we appreciate what he did for us, how could we go on sinning when He has done such a great work for us? Now the goal of life is to "live unto righteousness.

1st Peter 2:22. *"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:"*

NO SIN.

*Sinless in humanity – there never has been another
Sinless in His being – no sin did Him attract
Sinless in His person – nothing He need cover
Sinless in His speaking – no words need He retract*

*Sinless in His thinking – delighting His Father's will
Sinless in His actions – each act was planned to bless
Sinless in rebuking – the voices of evil He did still
Sinless in His walk – each step was in righteousness*

*Sinless in His life – there was nothing that defiled
Sinless in His prayers – holy communion with His Father
Sinless in His teaching – no innuendos were implied
Sinless in attitude – the needy to Him gather*

*Sinless when He was betrayed – His showed no needless anger
Sinless in His deep anguish – when His soul was in deep pain
Sinless in His submission – bringing blessing to the strangers
Sinless in His humiliation – retaliation He restrained*

*Sinless when falsely accused – a purpose He must complete
Sinless when reproached for others – He took that responsibility
Sinless when physically beaten – pain on His body they did mete
Sinless when mocked by men – He bare all their cruelty*

*Sinless when condemned – no words spoken in self-defense
Sinless when led as a lamb – He used no power to resist
Sinless when cruelly nailed – looking into the soldier's face
Sinless when hanging on the cross – till His spirit He did dismiss*

*Sinless in the eternal past – sinless in the future
Sinless when on earth He lived – no sin could in Him claim
Sinless in His priestly work – our acceptance is secure
Sinless is He forevermore – Jesus is e'er the same.*

"I praise Thee Father for ever sending the sinless Christ of God to earth that we might live in Him." In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Patient endurance not only has God's approval at our workplace, but also if and when we are called to suffer. Our Lord, "for the joy that was set before Him," endured the cross and despised the shame. As our example, the One we are to imitate intends us to act the way He did in those circumstances. He suffered without sinning - without deceit or

guile. So should we. He never retaliated when He was provoked. Neither should we. He lived righteously even when suffering unjustly. So should we.

The death of Christ ended our sinful life making it possible for us to live righteous lives. Now that we are healed by His stripes, we move ahead in faith to live righteously. As our Shepherd, He feeds and protects us, and as the Overseer of our lives, He guides and directs us. Peter knew the words of Isaiah 53 and was not directing those Hebrew believers to the temple or even to a church, but to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the us. He now supports us with the strength of His arm and watches over us with His all-seeing eye that knows what is behind, ahead and around us.

1st Peter 2:23. *“Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:”*

COMMITTED.

*When spoken against and cursed
A silence that is above normal humanity
Pedigree – power – personality – personhood
Spoken against in insulting untruths
How can His holy character – His righteous standard
Be silent in the face of blatant disregard –
Commitment – total trust – unswerving confidence
In a Righteous Judge*

*The suffering of rejection – a stranger to His own
The suffering of denial – from a familiar voice
The suffering of betrayal – a companion sells Him out
The suffering of humiliation – a drunkard’s slurred song
The suffering of abuse – excruciating pain
Yet no threatening words of retaliation –
Commitment to a charge – a righteous work –
And a Righteous Judge*

*Lesser – feeble in comparison – yet real to me
Misunderstood – frustrated – wondering amazement
Why the silence – the avoidance – the gossip
Why the misrepresentation – the untruths
I have no answer – but I “know in whom I have believed”
His example – His commitment challenges me
To be committed – to yield - to trust – unhesitatingly
The Righteous Judge*

“I have no answers Father God: but maybe I don’t need them as to why some say and do what they say and do. But I yield to Thee. I trust Thee without hesitation – The Righteous Judge, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

1st Peter 2:24. *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”*

DEAD... AND ALIVE.

*Deliberately bearing a load not His own
A righteous Redeemer for my sins did atone
Suffering on the tree He bare all alone –
The wrath of God for me.*

*In His body on the tree an excruciating weight
For sins so terrible He the punishment did take
All legal claims He full payment did make –
When He died on the cross for me.*

*Because for me He died, then I am dead
The proof of death was in the blood He shed*

*The work was done when "It is finished" He said –
He was the Substitute before God for me.*

*To sin I am dead settling all legal claims
All charges are erased by the authority of His name
God sees the Substitute and redeemed sinner the same –
He appears in the presence of God for me.*

*He is alive now so I have a new life too
Payment for sin is complete there is nothing else to do
Even while living in this world, He will see me through –
And God is waiting in heaven for me.*

"O God, the healing of my soul from sin's sickness is a daily wonder to me. From the grace that initiated it to the peace that comes as a result from it – it is all of God and I do so appreciate it. Thanks, from my heart, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 2:25. *"For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."*

WERE... BUT NOW.

*In the past far away and going much farther
Self-willed and thinking little of a gracious heavenly Father
Not concerned about sin's guilt nor taking time to bother –
To seek Him while He could be found.*

*In the dark not realizing what real light is
Walking in darkness going deeper in sins
Not looking above at the glory that is His –
A sheep in a dark night is lost.*

*Changes have come, the lost sheep is found
The wanderer has stopped – grace turned him around
Now in Beulah-land walking on holy ground –
The Shepherd has the sheep in His fold.*

*Now instead of darkness he is walking in the light
Now walking by faith – no longer in the night
Realizing living by faith is much better than sight –
The Bishop tends to the need of his soul.*

*One time blind, but now by grace can see
One time an alien, no longer an enemy
One time lost, but now saved for eternity –
The wanderer is safe and secure.*

"Father, all Thy blessings are so appreciated now. How gracious of Thee to bring straying people into Thy family. I thank Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 3:1-7

SUBMISSION IN MARRIAGE

The example of our Lord is given to us so we can understand how we can be truly submissive to authority and at the same time maintain our identity as a consistent Christian. The subject of humility is given from 2:19 through 3:12. Subjection is linked with humility as we live in the social setting in which we are found. "Submit" is the key word beginning with our submission to God ("for the Lord's sake"), to government, to masters and wives to husbands in the same spirit. Leadership in an ordered social structure is important to maintain order and proper function. The government leader, the employer and the husband each have an area of social responsibility to which we must submit.

Our outward testimony displays an inward attitude that reflects our upward conduct before God. Submission of wives to husbands does not imply inferiority, but recognized authority. The strategy for believing wives to win their husbands is given here by Peter. Submit to your husband's leadership in the way you submit to God, government and masters.

In the time in which this was written, the husband and father had absolute authority over all family members by Roman law. When a woman became a Christian, she could endanger her marriage if she made demands of her husband. The strategy was to "win" her husband to the Lord.

1st Peter 3:1. *"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they may also without the word be won by the conversation of the wives."*

WITHOUT THE WORD.

*A lot of things can reach the heart without a word to say
Silence comes quite easily when a person bows to pray.
The watching eyes receive a message – "I'm not the only one
Who is in her life since the time she said she is new born."*

*Facial expressions send a message of joy or quiet calm.
Such simple glory tells a truth just like a hymn or psalm.
"She has pressures too – she is putting up with me –
But she has a higher view of things it is very plain to see."*

*Her demeanor of contentment speaks volumes to her husband –
He can't mistake the fact her life seems very blended.
She loves her children and her husband – loves her Lord as well-
She lives her life in a Christ-like way to turn those she loves from hell.*

*Subject to his leadership, she doesn't usurp his role –
She knows her subjection unto him reaches down into his soul.
He appreciates her ways and often she may not say a thing –
Submitting, that some day to the Savior her husband she will bring.*

*Graceful living for God is more than just a form.
To a watching, wondering husband, she lives for God at home.
Who knows what simple act or the attitude she displays –
Will be the one thing that is needed as in the future he will praise.*

*"O God, many of the Lord's people live in divided homes. Please help our sisters and brothers to be like Christ before their loved ones.
In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

"Without a word be won" means simply "to make a profit" as in a business transaction. This gain means to win a person without guile, without threats, without reviling - even without words. This promise must have been directed towards those believers who became Christians after they were married. Christians are instructed to not be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Christians who go against revealed truth have no claim on an answer. God is forgiving, and in mercy may answer in a positive way in spite of our disobedience.

The godly motive is to win a loved one to Christ, not make demands that create resentment and barriers. Godly submission involves respectful behavior that displays reverence toward God and true humility. Moral purity can not be hidden. Reverence toward God and suitability as a true helper of her husband make an undeniable impression. The principle of modesty in dress still reveals the value of one's character rather than the physical attributes on display. Exhibiting elaborate jewelry, hairstyles and going to extremes of dress to attract attention is not consistent with the conduct our Lord expects of both men and women. The primary beauty of a child of God is in the heart and is seen without attracting attention to the head, the neck or the body.

1st Peter 3:2. *"While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear."*

MODESTY AND RESPECT.

*I watch as she struggles to keep her long hair tidy.
I observe at a distance her choosing clothes reflecting piety.
I proudly take my place beside her appreciating her modesty.
I know that what is outwardly seen is genuine honesty.*

*I stand apart and often glance to see if she's alright,
And see her ministering to someone with countenance so bright.*

*I look as she moves with dignity among the people of God –
I know she is a good example of a woman owning Jesus Lord.*

*Her name and reputation are held in high respect.
She knows what she is doing, the truth of God protects.
The joy her face projects, gives power unto her words –
Those who observe her know she lives before her Lord.*

*Her witness in visible ways, adds to what I teach.
Her attitude enforces the message – enabling me to reach
Those who form opinions of me just by watching her –
And they conclude what I have to say is living truth for sure.*

“Father God, there must be a lot of impact and lasting impressions created by godly sisters. Help them to find joy and meaning in their calling and role. Continue to use Linda in ways that are so effective. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

1st Peter 3:3. “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing gold, or of putting on apparel:”

OUTWARD.

*Glamour shots – beautiful hair – sophisticated women
Are able to be seen everywhere self-consciously making an impact –
Based on visual responses, people buy and sell
Almost anything that appeals to their sensual attractions –
Looking on the outward appearance to gain –
To lust – to be discontented with what they have –
To live for the moment – to fail and fall
For a life of dissatisfaction and loss.*

*Deliberately dowdy – they try to look and make others think they’re holy –
Outwardly denying their own self-respect for impressions
Or traditions made by men; thinking this earns favor with God.
A special humiliating hair-style so everyone knows
The wearer is different – supposed to be godly –
And the apparel sends a message –
“You must be like me to please God.”
That outward look, though modest, misses the point.*

*Outward does not reach the heart when it appeals to the lust.
Outward does not change the person if it is only self they trust.
Outward can deceive some to thinking the modern way is best.
Outward may give the impression that holiness depends on dress.
Outward may appeal to some and be repellent to others –
Outward doesn’t determine whether one is a Christian brother.
Outward cannot be ignored, but it isn’t proof of life –
Outward is usually taken care of to put “self” in the best light.*

“O God, I am not denying the fact that how I look is important because it does send a message. But I can see how it can deceive people. Help me to be real even in outward appearance. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

The heart of a person is seen by a "meek and quiet spirit." A gentle person who is able to control her speech reveals an inner beauty of character that testifies to her faith in God. That kind of virtue has been tried and proven by "holy women" of the past who have set their hope in God. There is a calm assurance that He will reward true humility and their subjection to the husband's leadership. There is nothing in the context of this passage of scripture that forbids any adornment. Rather there is the comparison made of outward decoration and the inward ornament of a meek and quiet spirit that grows in its attractiveness as time and years pass. Youth and beauty fade with the passing of time. Character develops and demonstrates the grace of the soul and moral strength that is found in godly women. "Amazement," or hysterical fear because of some potential problem will not be a concern of a righteous wife.

Husbands need to take into consideration the fact that normally women are not as physically strong as men. Moral and intellectual strength are in no way inferior in a woman than in a man, but physical abuse or attacks can take place if a man does not protect his wife. When a man honors his wife he will respect, help, protect and stay with her to keep her safe. He will understand he is the one who is to provide for her, not the other way around. He will treat her with courtesy and consideration. With tact and insight, he will seek to lighten her load in order to make a home together (dwell with). It is his responsibility to take the initiative in anticipating needs, avoiding things that would make his wife uncertain and removing the causes of her apprehension and fears by gracefully ministering to her.

1st Peter 3:4. *“But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”*

QUIET SPIRIT.

*There is something about one's spirit
Which cannot be detected by some sound.
Visual images cannot display it –
It is not something to be tossed around.
Generally, it takes time
For what is inside to come out –
And the spirit of a person is seen
In meekness not some great shout.*

*God alone is really the one
Who knows the true spirit of a man;
Reality is not hidden from Him –
He is not moved by impressions or sham.
Some people who know what is right
Can detect through one's face and hands –
If the spirit is quiet or uptight –
Revealing what words ne'er can.*

*God knows and appreciates His truth
In women who live their lives before the Lord.
He values very highly their inward life and worth
That speaks volumes without the spoken word.
The ornaments women may wear
Is not what is important unto Him.
Their quiet spirit to others declares
Their true worth is what is within.*

“Father, I thank Thee for helping godly sisters to maintain a positive spiritual testimony to those in their homes, in the assembly they are a part of and in the community in which they live. Give them daily grace to keep a meek and quiet spirit. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

1st Peter 3:5. *“For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands:”*

HOLY WOMEN.

*Stop to consider those women from the past
Spoken of in passing; faithful to their task,
Of supporting and guiding husbands and their children
Knowing the public often would choose to overlook them.
Faithful to their calling, filling a God-given role –
Seemingly not considered, but really the heart and soul
Of a family group God used, helping chosen men
To stay the course not deviating till God brought them to the end
Of a specific task or work that has affected a generation –
And from those women sprang the fruit resulting in many nations.
It must be hard to be in subjection to some unthoughtful men –
Knowing that they couldn't accomplish their goals without them.*

*Trusting God is better than the praise of a fickle crowd –
 Those holy women wore their grace like a covering shroud.
 Living before the Lord alone in subjection to a husband,
 Sets one apart from the pushy crowd demanding, “Up with women.”
 To choose to live before the Lord is what God really planned –
 He just gave different roles to fill for women and for men.
 To be holy is of great value, such a life can't be denied,
 Even though frustration and resentment are inside.
 A life lived for the Lord and a husband's work supported,
 Can bring satisfaction and reward when we're all transported
 From living here to heaven where each will give account
 Of a life lived for God and what on earth did count.*

“Father, remember the honorable, faithful women who supported, and still do support, the work of others. Give them joy in knowing the role they fill is significant to the whole work of God even though it may be unrecognized by the crowd around. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

When a man "nourishes and cherishes" his wife, they will find they each fill a role that compliments the role of the other partner. Both bring their strengths and abilities to the marriage, and both share in "the grace of life" that they will have forever. The nature of eternal life adds great value to any relationship that goes beyond temporal and passing happiness. By sharing the blessings of God's grace, every part of the life of two believers becoming one by marriage, is enhanced beyond body and soul, to include the sharing of spiritual life as well.

The prayer life and love life of husbands and wives will be under the attack of the world, the flesh and the devil. Satan will attempt to create friction and discord between husbands and wives. The believing husband should maintain family unity through prayers with the family and reading the Bible to get divine insight into the family and spiritual life. God holds the husband responsible to keep the balance and orderliness of a family. He must treat his wife well so his prayers are not hindered.

1st Peter 3:6. *“Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.”*

AS LONG AS YE DO WELL.

*We all have our choices to be made often under pressure.
 And the results aren't known just now, but God alone can measure
 The impact made when someone chooses to give another honor;
 Such as a holy woman who knows her husband depends upon her.*

*To support another's role is often hard to do –
 But it is not so hard if the other to God is true.
 When one's husband takes a lead and God's word does tell –
 The faithful wife who supports him truly is doing well.*

*“Doing well” may be costly but God has His reasons
 To allow hard times to come in life's many seasons.
 Whatever may come, even a spiritual “dry spell” –
 We still must be committed for the Lord's sake to do well.*

*The Lord uses His set apart ones, both brothers and sisters –
 To fulfill the role He has given, sometimes without assistance –
 Knowing that from one who is committed to do well –
 The results will come later when the His will we do fulfill.*

*We don't need to fear, though another may be higher –
 The role He has given is ours to use and aspire
 To accomplish for His glory and leave the results to Him –
 Knowing in a coming day a full reckoning will be then.*

"Holy God, my Father. I know things done by Thy people for Thy glory alone is what is really valuable. Honor those honorable women, I pray Thee, who submit to, support and sustain their husbands in the fear of God. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 3:7. "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge. Giving honour unto the wife, as unto a weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."

YE HUSBANDS.

*I am a husband of two score years and more:
I know her – she knows me much better.
We have learned, we have changed – adapted.
Learned: by observation, by correction – by love –
And the growing continues, the learning curve rises
To heights impossible to me alone –
Not just by my experiences, but shared knowledge –
A process not easily measured because time is slow;
But the changes I know in myself – unseen –
Unexpressed perhaps – but formed by God
Through her, who though smaller in size –
Is wiser and larger in intellect and grace.*

*Alert, aware of the nuances of life and family –
I miss so many of them and that she knows.
But does not hide from me what I need –
Nor make a burden of small things.
And as we bow two heads together –
With signs of the coming winter upon us – and pray:
The grace we've experienced coming freely from God,
The joy we share as common goals are reached,
The blessings beyond counting (we give God our thanks)
Fill our home, our stewardship, our hearts
With a sense of God's nearness and peace –
And we move into winter contented, and hopefully – with grace.*

"Father God, I want to give her the honor she deserves. It is not hard to do that publicly, but I wonder do I do it privately. Where I fail, please help me learn. When I do not meet her expectations, please open my eyes. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 3:8-22

THE PILGRIM'S SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

The concluding part of the book of first Peter begins with the word "finally" as the teaching and exhortations are summed up. He had addressed "dearly beloved," slaves, wives and husbands, and now again has all Christians in general in his mind. All of us need to be aware of the fact our daily conduct is a witness to those who are not saved. Our behavior is expected to be exemplary, and our integrity without question. Attitudes are important as we live among and respond to the hostility of those who do not believe on our Lord Jesus Christ.

Oneness of mind indicates a common purpose of believers is to glorify God. This does not mean we all have the same opinion about everything, but that in harmony with our brothers and sisters, we have the same objective. Compassion, a sympathetic response to the needs and feelings of others will move me to meet those needs in the best way I can. In the family of God, love to our brothers and sisters will lead me to demonstrate that love by helping, encouraging and supporting them. "Pitiful" indicates a tender-hearted person is sensitive to others with a compassion that moves me to care for them. This inner affection is not a calculating attitude, but is spontaneous by nature. Courtesy is the attitude of humility that is Christ-like. When another person has a good success, I rejoice with that person and encourage them to go further. The person with a humble mind will be gentle and understanding toward others. All of these qualities are seen in Christ and it is our purpose in life to reflect Him.

1st Peter 3:8. "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."

CHOICES THAT AFFECT FELLOWSHIP.

It is possible only if a choice I make

To consider the opinions and paths my brothers take
To be equally as important as the things I state –
To be of ONE MIND with each of them.

When I stop my own things and open my eyes –
It enables me to notice when another's problems arise –
To forget my own interests and to sympathize –
And show COMPASSION to him.

It doesn't mean I have to over other people gush –
Not does it even mean I may have to give so much.
It is more that I value them and try to keep in touch –
To shown Christian LOVE to them.

I don't have to see everything as another friend may see –
But it is really important that I express some real empathy,
And from a tender heart show they are important unto me –
And have a PITYFUL heart to them.

My brothers and my sisters deserve my respect –
They are of great value, and when I pause to reflect –
There is an appropriate way of expression when we connect –
So, I am truly COURTEOUS to them.

"O God of compassion and grace: I thank Thee for Thy saints, Thy chosen ones, the elect. May I, by Thy grace to me, show my fellowship with them by sincere attention. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 3:9. "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

DEFUSE.

How will it end if I can hurt him more than me?
Through my evil retaliation will God's grace be easy to see?
If he goes down in flames, will it make me a rising star?
What will be actually accomplished, will things be better than they are?

He is fast with words but I think I am much faster.
If she says one more word, so help me, I will blast her!
Then everyone will know enough to not say a word to me –
But it is strangely quiet here, we never see any company.

No, a thousand times! Never let it e'er be said,
"When he is done with you, you'll be better off quite dead!"
Do it the other way: when you are cursed, then you must bless –
If you are railed against, don't challenge or take offense.

Give to others a blessing and some day one will come to you.
Always commit to graciousness, retaliation thus eschew.
Others when blessed will be glad to see you come their way.
And in a conversation, they will listen to what you say.

The overriding principle in fellowship is peace.
Others will take heed then, when you exemplify God's grace.
You and I will find when in happy fellowship with each other –
That God can bless us both when we joy in one another.

"Heavenly Father, there seems to be good fellowship in this place. But there hasn't been salvation blessing for a long time. If there are some barriers or things left undone, reveal it please, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Animals "render evil for evil." That is in their nature. Getting even with those who oppose, and taking vengeance is considered by the world to be a sign of strength. The strength of character in a believer is exemplified in our Lord, who "when He was reviled, reviled not again." Railing means one is being insulted. The believer is called upon to respond by blessing, not to just suffer in silence. Such blessing brings light that drives away darkness. It allows us to minister grace to the benefit of others whether it is acts of mercy, or prayers of intercession.

In quoting from Psalm 34, Peter brings to bear the power of the word of God upon the suffering saints. The tongue is a little member of our body that can bless or curse. It is to be controlled and used for good. The lips give character to the words the tongue forms. Lips give the hidden meaning of the words, a true and visible expression. A curled lip, the down-turn of the lips, a smile can all be used with deceit, guile or with honesty. Avoiding evil is a choice, as is knowing what is right and doing it. To avoid evil and have nothing in its place that is good, leaves one in danger of being a moral vacuum. Peace does not always stay with us, so we have to pursue it. It is not an automatic response to events in our lives, but it is a result of commitment when we deal ahead of time with things that could cause problems. When a conflict does arise, one who pursues peace acts quickly before the matter gets out of hand.

1st Peter 3:10. *"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:"*

WATCH YOUR TONGUE.

*With waking moments, each day a pattern is set
Open your eyes first –
Wait long moments before you open your mouth
A morning hymn of praise and joy
A prayer from the lips of the soul
Reaches beyond the limits of sight
And is heard – blessings to the soul come
Thoughts previously unknown await discovery
As the eyes of the understanding open
The tongue remains behind closed doors
The broad expansive pastures of the mind are green
The fragrance of sweet thoughts
Leave no room for the spoken word
The mind first, then the senses blaze with light
Above the pages, above the room, above unfolding scenes
The "love of life" and "good days" comes from up there
Silent words – loud thoughts form
The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit
Crowd in to fill the waiting vessel
And from God's fullness, the mind and heart
The emotions and senses absorb God
Limited it is true, but breathtaking in its fullness
God fills all the corners of being
With unseen light, life, grace and faith like pillars
Truth rises like a living, moving, breathing sword
Righteousness forms walls to protect
Peace takes its place to prepare me for the storm outside
Love rises and finds its occupation everywhere –*

Then opportunity comes, and tongue and lips are ready to join all the others in a sanctified chorus – Now let the day begin!

"Holy Father, some moments are very special. I don't want to trivialize them or make them like sickly sweet sanctimonious babble. But I am grateful that You look on the heart not just on the outside. Search me and know me, O God. Keep me from religious flesh as much as from any other. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 3:11. *"Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it."*

DON'T AND DO.

*It is always around – often right in front of your eyes
Some things are subtle – others outright lies;
When you know evil is there – quickly turn away –*

If you act with haste you will live another day.

*Right alongside but sometimes hard to see –
Is a need to be met right there in front of me.
I must not wait to act when doing good,
Or evil steps in where I should have stood.*

*Peace can come when one will make diligent search.
Some things must be forsaken before it you will reach.
Peace doesn't just "happen" – it accepts no compromise –
Any who offer peace without price is telling you lies.*

*Peace is worth pursuing because for it a price was paid.
When Christ was on the cross, on Him our sin was laid.
The barriers were broken, walls were taken down –
Peace can be yours, when Christ as Lord you crown,*

*Peace is not enforced by an army with guns.
Lasting peace comes through God's only Son.
Receiving Him is one thing, obeying is another –
Peace for living can be lost by disobeying our Father.*

*But God is willing to restore a disobedient son to Him –
Who is willing to confess to Him any besetting sins;
Peace in the life is ours when we don't do the wrong –
When we do what is right, by His grace our peace is strong.*

"I know peace can be lost quickly Father. To leave undone what is right, or to act in a way that is wrong, is to forfeit peace. I love Thy Word, Father. I want Thy peace always. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

We are not alone in this pursuit because our Lord is aware of who we are and what is happening. His eyes are on us and His ears are listening to our prayers. His head is bowed to hear what we mean even when we can't say it right. At the same time His face is "upon" those who do evil. God is concerned for His persecuted pilgrims who suffer for righteousness. Payday has not yet come - but it will!

The way we cope with opposition and persecution affects the outcome of the event. Suffering is not the normal outcome when one is a law-abiding, peace-seeking child of God. But and if the suffering for Christ does come as a result of doing good, there is a special blessing for that. We don't have to fear their threats or intimidation. Agitation really comes as a form of unbelief, the contrast of which is a calmness and even the happiness from being blessed. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake."

1st Peter 3:12. *"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."*

EYES, EARS AND FACE... OF THE LORD.

*Forever open, beholding the evil and the good
Never slumbering or sleeping
Seeing the lonely in the desert – or a city
And yet –
From the morning to night, he watches over His own
Preserving, protecting afar or near at home
For these are the righteous, the children He chose
His gaze watches carefully each one of those.*

*Every idle word He hears and He remembers
And the cry of the sparrow that falls to the ground
Sounds of marching armies – dying men
Those who take His name in vain are guilty*

*And yet –
The first prayer of thanksgiving as the Spirit gives the words
The prayer from the bed in the darkest night is heard
The final prayer from one who is next doo to heaven
He ears of the Lord are focused on those He has forgiven.*

*His face is so bright the sun hides its face from it
Like thunder clouds directed toward evil
His countenance is like lightning
He observes every dark act, everywhere, always*

*And yet –
One who in the rush of first evil is verily condemned
One who arrogance denies God right to the end
One who knows better but for love of darkness turns away
The face of the Lord now is against them – and in a future day.*

“I am indeed very thankful Father, that Thou hast heard my prayers of intercession. The answer is of course up to Thee. It is a fact that people who have come to listen to us here in these last weeks have come to some decision. It seems they choose to turn away from Thee rather than to repent and turn to Christ. Have mercy on them Father – and on us as we preach the Gospel in this last meeting. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

1st Peter 3:13. “And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?”

WHO WILL HARM YOU?

*Watching with eyes runny and reddened with drink
Trying to see if there is some mistake you will make
That will ease their conscience even as a drink they take –
“He’s a Christian, just see what he does!”*

*The job is difficult and many are tired
The boss pushes hard he doesn’t want to be fired
There is one among them whose work is by love for Christ inspired –
“He’s a Christian, let’s see what he does!”*

*The heads are bent low, students are taking a test
One has prepared long, she is doing her best
She’s not cheating she is different from some of the rest –
“She’s a Christian, watch what she does!”*

*We have nothing to fear when we do what is right
We are under observation by day and by night
People expect us to be different who “walk in the light”
“We are Christians, be wise in all we do!”*

*Others look for excuses for doing what they know is wrong
They look for failures in Christians they can lead along
But they can not harm you when for Christ you stand strong –
“We are Christians, and God knows what we do!”*

“Holy God, I know you behold the evil and the good. May I be strengthened to commit myself to do the good in spite of what others may do, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

it is right for us to be ready to give an answer to those who want to know about our faith. But it is also important we do so in a right way with a proper attitude. A respectful, calm answer from one who has truly acknowledged the Lord God as the One who is control of our life, is what is expected from one who has sanctified Him in our heart. The logical "answer" (apologia; apologetic) doesn't happen by wishful thinking but by careful learning from the scriptures. An unbeliever usually acts and reacts without evidence of knowledge and faith. The gentleness and respect of a

Christian who give a sensible, biblical answer regarding their personal faith and hope, lends the weight of personal concern for the questioning person's welfare.

Meekness and a good conscience go together and will enable us to define that which is good. We may not be able to keep from being slandered by those who say what is untrue, but by good behavior we are helped to avoid anything that would dishonor our Lord. A good conscience and commitment to righteousness puts the words of malicious gossip in a bad light. God's permissive will may allow the suffering that comes from unjust accusations. He sometimes has a purpose behind the "deep waters" we are called to pass through. He knows what is needed even though it means our discomfort and suffering because He knows the "big picture."

1st Peter 3:14. *"But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror; neither be troubled."*

DON'T BE AFRAID OR TROUBLED... BE HAPPY.

*All the friends at school have heard –
When you come near, they look at you and stop talking.
As you get closer, they turn and walk away –
Because you said "No" when they said, "Yes."*

*In the lunchroom the employees are taking a break,
Stories are being told and some want to see the reaction you make.
When you excuse yourself, you sense in them some hate –
Because you left when others stayed.*

*The family all wanted to spend a weekend –
Away from all pressures so they can unwind.
They became upset when you stayed behind –
Because you "remembered Him" and they "remembered us."*

*There are always going to be choices for which you must suffer.
If it is not for one thing it is bound to be for another.
But we can be happy when we do the will of our heavenly Father –
Because God's will, is more important than mine.*

"O All-knowing God, when the tendency in me is to fear or be worried, let me see above all the "goings on" and see Him who is my delight I am indeed happy when I know sweet fellowship with Thee in spite of the fear and trouble of suffering for "righteousness' sake." In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 3:15. *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that lieth in you with meekness and fear:"*

SANCTIFY... BE READY.

*I will have nothing to say to others
If the Lord God said nothing to me.
My heart has to be set apart for Him
Before I can answer questions carefully.
To speak for God means truth from the heart
Has to be spoken out responsibly.
When I have taken time to take in what He says
Then listeners will spiritual things see.*

*When the Lord is sanctified within –
Then there will be evidence of it without.
When I can express my hope with meekness
I will never have to rant or shout.
The respect one has for holy things
Can be seen when I am going about
My daily routine and the work I do –
And what I testify will then have some clout.*

*I don't know when an opportunity arises
Until I am already in the situation.
I won't have time to review God's truth
When I am already in a conversation.
So being ready involves taking time –
To learn the doctrines of salvation.
That will only really have an effect
When I have chosen daily sanctification.*

"Lord God, reign in my heart this day. I know when I have listened to Thee and as I speak to Thee now, I pray Thee to help me be ready for what will arise today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1Peter 3:15. *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:"*

BE READY ALWAYS.

*I have a question – can you tell me why
That lady there seems to let go by,
So many things that he says to her?
Why - most would never to him defer!
He's asking things unreasonable;
And she's making to him understandable,
The value of her saving trust,
In the Savior she loves, that he now must,
Confess that her faith in the living God,
Is so real that he can't deny there is a Lord;
Who rules over the affairs of men,
Knowing how and where and when,
We live and move and by Him breathe.
He knows it's true because he can see
In her, living reality.
Her answer – her life is there for him to see –
She wins him by her modesty:
And then he too believes.*

*The places we work - at home or school;
Where answers are needed as to why we do
The things we do and the way we act:
These all bring into the open, facts
That are unexplained, until an answer is given –
"We live our lives for the Lord in heaven."
Our work is for Him in the first place;
Then we do our best in this workplace;
Where the way we work, how long, how hard;
These all reflect on our gracious Lord.
It may be at the break, or on the way home;
The question is asked of you, "How come...?"
And your chance has arrived you have been praying for,
And you tell of your hope to him once more.
Use your words with respect and meek;
They may be used by God for the one you speak,
To bring to life and fan the flame;
That will bring more glory to His holy name.*

*Among the believers there always will be,
Some with questions for you and for me.
Some may seem simple or silly to you,
But to a new saint's desire to know the truth;*

*The quest to find the answer that's right,
Is a evidence that in them is new life.
They deserve some time and some serious thought,
So they can be contented with the answer they sought.
So take time to pray that "God only wise",
Will give you the light that the questioners prize.
It has to be found in the scriptures of truth;
So the answer you give has God at its root.
When all that we find is then said and done;
The answer we give, needs to be the right one.
The time may come when the answer you gave;
Through them, may be the one that will save
The person they answer from sin's dark night,
And bring that soul into God's clear light.*

"O Source of every truth, and Answer to every question: by the work of the Holy Spirit, use these things that I have learned to the benefit of others You bring across my path in life. I believe they have a right to a sensible answer. Help me to give it at the right time. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

The example of unjust suffering is when our Lord "suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." He did that once for all with the objective that our sins which had alienated us from God has been dealt with by our Lord Jesus Christ. He personally has provided and holy and just way that we came come to God and not be afraid of being rejected. That wonderful fact has brought us into a relationship with Him without fear of divine retribution. We have not been just brought to heaven, but unto God Himself. He did this when He suffered in His body when He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree." The Holy Spirit raised that same body on the third day when He was "raised again for our justification."

1st Peter 3:16. *"Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."*

GOOD CONSCIENCE... GOOD CONVERSATION.

*Good conscience and good conversation really go together.
It is quite hard to really have one and not affect the other
Because one is without and the other is within –
Both are working well when there is the absence of sin.*

*Conscience involves knowing – the inward things I may think,
Conversation involves doing – the actions my thoughts will bring.
If conversation gets careless and goes off somewhere on its own;
Conscience works hard to stop conversation and keep it from doing wrong.*

*A seared or dead conscience leaves conversation without any guide.
Conversation out of control leaves conscience with no place to hide.
When conscience is awakened and again acts to take control –
Conversation gets back on track and carries out the work of the soul.*

*When conscience and conversation both are working well –
Then soul and spirit together use both God's message to tell.
And those around who oppose you with dark and evil intent –
Are powerless and ashamed at the lies they to others around have sent.*

*In humility "conversation," that is, the way my life I do live –
To God alone all glory for victories in life will give.
And conscience within stirs soul and spirit from themselves to raise –
Heart and voice to give God alone all honor and glory and praise.*

"The inner and outer expressions of self, O God, often try to follow whatever voice is strongest. Help me Lord God, to only allow the Holy Spirit and Holy Word to control these two parts of me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 3:17. *“For it is better, if for will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.”*

IT IS BETTER.

*Two who work together well will always bring results.
Sometimes they'll produce praises, other times unfair insults.
But whatever the results may be, I must be sure of this one thing –
Doing evil is never an option no matter what the results bring.*

*God has not given assurance that everything allowed brings pleasure.
Some times difficulties arise bringing unwanted suffering without measure.
The Lord Jesus always did God's will and the cost was very high.
I too if I follow the example of Him, will know that evil is nigh.*

*If suffering comes unexpectedly, and surely this will happen –
My responsibility is to be sure my conscience is always sharpened
So only well-doing is the cause for suffering to occur –
And evil doing has no part in the suffering I might endure.*

*There really is no honest excuse if I suffer for the evil I do.
That is to be expected if to God's will I am not always true.
Far better to suffer for doing right, when everyone else chooses wrong.
Suffering for well-doing is far better, and that suffering makes me strong.*

*I must seek to maintain my integrity even though there is pain.
To avoid suffering for righteousness sake is only a foolish gain.
I must expect if I am living for Christ there will be false accusations.
But “the better” results in suffering is personal consecration.*

“O God, I do not ask for suffering. But when it comes, please give me a strong inclination to be Christ-like in suffering from first to last. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

1st Peter 3:18. *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”*

THE REASON.

*It happened once for all – but what an awful “once”
In His spirit He was troubled – the Righteous and Holy One
Always in continuous, perfect, harmonious fellowship
With his Father – they both were always “One”
But one dark day, divine justice picked the “Just”
To suffer for the “unjust” – and in His spirit –
He suffered – for me!*

*Emotions crowding in upon His holy soul
Followers saying strong words from weak hearts –
A denier, and worse – another one was a betrayer
All the senses linked with His holy humanity
Like tight cords binding Him to the divine will –
To suffer for the “unjust” – in His soul –
He suffered – for me!*

*Cords bound Him – led as an animal – humiliation
Blindfold upon all-seeing eyes – fists – spittle
Hair pulled out – thorns driven in – hatred
The whip – the lash marks – the bleeding back
The weight of the cross – the nails – the suffocation
The darkness – to suffer for the “unjust” – in His body –*

He suffered – for me!

“May I never forget, O God, ‘When He was on the cross, I was on His mind.’ May I never cease to review, to be humbled, to submit to Thy divine will. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

An end of suffering for believers will come, and beyond that is glory. The Spirit of God who raised Christ from the dead, has given us new life. The Holy Spirit through the preaching of Noah presented the truth of salvation to people whose spirits are now are imprisoned because they rejected his warning message. Noah was ignored by the people who heard his preaching and they have learned that "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," is an indisputable fact. They were lost because they were disobedient to the message and rejected the truth. There was one hundred twenty years of preaching, and the visible testimony of the ark being built by Noah for his family left them without excuse. Noah "prepared the ark for the saving of his house (family)" by faith in the warning God gave him. Others could have been saved by faith if they had listened. The ark was not built to save everyone *in* the flood, but they could have been saved *from* the flood. The ark is a picture of salvation and security. It was in the ark that Noah and his family was saved through the judgment of the flood. Those who heard the Gospel preached by Noah before the flood had ample opportunity to be saved.

Noah and his family were forever separated from their old life. There was no going back. Their new life was lived by new rules. They were saved "to walk in newness of life." When a believer is saved, they have died with Christ. The "baptism" of the cross was the way our sins were dealt with. The baptism of the Spirit happened because of the Lord's death, burial and resurrection, and has been imputed to the believer. The baptism of a believer in water is a visible representation of that fact. Baptism does not put away our sins. That was done when "Christ suffered for sins." Rather baptism is the act of obedience to the demands of a good conscience. Our conscience appeals to us to be committed to that which we expressed in baptism.

This last of 16 references to Christ being at the right hand of the Father points us to the One who is in control. Suffering believers need to know that He is permitting the suffering. He orders and causes things to happen because He has an eternal purpose of which we are not fully aware. In spite of satanic attacks, government opposition, mockery by people or the challenges of wicked men, our Savior and Lord is in His place of authority on the right hand of God. We can be comforted by the fact that those sufferings for righteousness are temporary. That in which we are involved and represent, is eternal.

1st Peter 3:19. *“By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison”*

THE HOLY PREACHER.

*He has worked in the power of His Person
Preaching truth both in and out of season
Never failing in the divine intent
Always fulfilling that for which He was sent
Convicting, revealing, regenerating,
Awakening, striving, prophesying –
He did all this in the ancient days of old
Through Noah He preached warning of the flood
But instead of repenting and to truth paying heed
Mankind kept on practicing their unholy deeds
For those who through Noah, heard the Spirit speak
Are in a place today far beyond the reach
Of light and life, of salvation and reason
They are now incarcerated in hell's dark prison
No longer does the Spirit with them strive
No longer hear a preacher like when they were alive
Separated from their bodies and, far more, from God
None to bring warnings from God's Holy Word
Lost to life, to friends, forever without hope
The Spirit of God no life-giving scriptures quote
But in memory in the dark still can remember
The servant of God stirring conscience like an ember
But because of the world and its awful attraction
The preacher was a nuisance, an unwelcome distraction
Now imprisoned with no hope, no life, no light*

Consigned forever to everlasting night.

"Holy God, how terrible are the consequence of rejecting the striving of the Spirit and of ignoring Thy grace. Impress this on me I pray, whenever I preach the Gospel. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 3:20. "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

EIGHT SOULS WERE SAVED.

Often people want to hear a count of heads
To measure success as the Gospel spreads
From place to place, "How many were saved?"
But I can't tell those to whom God gave
New life and rescued them until I see
Evidence of the Spirit's work that came to be
When they entered into "The Ark," making Christ their Lord
And living out their faith in life guided by His Word.

Noah preached a lot for one hundred and twenty years
As he worked, he preached, he probably shed a lot of tears
While relatives and friends went on about their lives
Paying no attention while the Holy Spirit strives
To save them and deliver them from judgment to come
But Noah's message did reach those in his own home
So, we know of at least eight whom God did save
And that's the number the Spirit has given us to have.

Maybe there were others who God saved, that died
Perhaps some were drowned who their faith in fear did hide
They didn't enter the ark – were not physically saved
It could be that a few heard Noah's message and believed
But for one reason or another like happens here today
They didn't make it known so I am not able to say
How many trusted Christ as their Savior and their Lord
We won't know all the results until the day of reward.

"I know, O God, every one Thou dost save is in Thy kingdom. I also know it is not my right to give numbers as the measure of success in Thy work, I rest in Thy mercy towards sinners, knowing You want all men to be saved. I just pray Thee to continue to use Thy Word long after it has been preached. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 3:21. "The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:"

THE ANSWER.

Above them the water coming in torrents from the sky
Beneath hidden fountains never seen by human eye
All around those in the ark, safe, keeping dry
Was water pressing, a type of those who would die.

They moved into a new world, cleansed by judgment, not a stain
We too when baptized testify to the world we're born again
In Christ our Living Ark, we're safe, He bore the pain
Under the authority of Divine Persons, we answer in God's name.

Relief came to those in the past when they heard the storm descend
Day after day the judgment fell until quietness spelled the end
Of divine wrath against mans' sin and the world was finally cleansed
And fellowship with God and man could now begin again.

Judgment fell on Christ when He bore God's wrath for me

God was satisfied, could justify me righteously
Faith in Christ alone has brought true fellowship to be
A fact to those who believe and are saved eternally.

Now testimony is established lived out by those of faith
The good conscience answers publicly for I am saved by grace
And that answer of good conscience is in some public place
I pledge my allegiance to God's Son until I see His face.

"Father God, it is my intention to live out what Thou hast given me. My baptism took place as an act many years ago, but I know as a fact it must be lived out daily. I pray for grace and strength to live a baptized life today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 3:22. "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

When coming out of the water of a baptism ceremony
There is a larger truth to tell which that one accompanies
As Christ who died for sin and its full price, He has paid
He was resurrected in three days – no longer among the dead.

His resurrection does declare the atoning work is done
God raised Him from the dead, fully satisfied that His Son
Has met every claim justice demands so that we are free
The resurrection proves full justification now for me.

The door to heaven is open now, Christ has ascended on high
He who suffered once for all for sin nevermore will die
There in holy splendor seated at God's right hand
Is the only One in the universe who is truly God and Man.

All power above and below is under His jurisdiction
There is no area of life that can avoid His interdiction
He conquered the powers of darkness when He defeated death
And the universe is His dominion – all its height, its width and depth.

Every creature is subject to Him who gives to each their life
Every authority of angels or men is exposed by His holy light
That emanates from Him who is the Source – all comes from Him
And the holy brightness of His Person never will grow dim.

"Holy God, under the authority of Him who is supreme, I bow and submit again this day to Thy divine will. May it be a true fact his day that I am doing that which pleases Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 4:1-19 THE PILGRIM'S SUFFERING AND THE GLORY OF GOD

1st Peter 4:1-11

LIVING FOR GOD

The sufferings Christ endured were certainly unjust. Those who accused Him before Pilate included false witnesses who could not agree even in their accusations. Four times He was declared innocent by Pilate who knew it was for envy the Jews wanted Him to be crucified. His righteous, holy life and the blessings He bestowed on others by His words and deeds exposed the religious hypocrisy and sinful motivation in the lives of those who made Him suffer. In spite of all men did to Him, the Lord Jesus Christ did not retaliate, but "endured the cross, despising the shame." "Father, forgive them," were words He spoke that demonstrated His love for us and the provisions grace provided for us. The same attitude He had towards those who persecuted Him when He suffered is expected of those who suffer today.

1st Peter 4:1. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin."

THINK LIKE CHRIST.

*He's been through whatever way you will pass
His life down here was proof –
That in His body at Him every lot was cast
Hoping He would endure enough
Of every form of human suffering
That He would turn away from the cost
Of sin's awful debt He alone could pay
That we could be saved – not lost.*

*To a lesser degree His sufferings we must share
When we represent our Lord to the world.
Our minds must go past what at the moment we bear
So, the banner of the cross can be unfurled.
It will never be popular to suffer for Christ
Sinful flesh avoids suffering if it can.
But it is life's highest privilege to identify with Him
Who suffered in His flesh as a man.*

*The suffering may be physical it may be short or long,
It may attack emotions through the family and break your heart.
But the Lord when down here often had to suffer alone
In poverty and hunger, in soul and physical pain
He remained true to the reason He was sent.
Sin loses its hold on us when we do the same
Following His example and the way He went.*

"O God, I thank Thee for the grace given to meet every situation, every temptation and every obligation that comes my way. Help me to lay hold on Thy strength in my weakness. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1Peter 4:1. "Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin."

ARM YOURSELVES.

*It was anticipated, necessary, unavoidable – He was not caught unaware by His suffering.
In the flesh, as a man, pain, anguish of body, soul and spirit – it was all part of His suffering.
In His mind He was prepared because there was a reason for it – His suffering.
It had to be, there was no other way, human sin made it happen - His suffering.
It was imposed by wicked men, supported by easily swayed people – His suffering.
It was consistent with the will of God; it was known by Him – His suffering.
He was just and was taking the place of the unjust – in His suffering.
He knew the reason; He was willing to endure the consequences – by His suffering.
There was no other person, no one capable, no other substitute – to take His suffering.
His soul was troubled because He could not be saved – from the hour of His suffering.
He was troubled in His spirit as He anticipated the separation from God – by His suffering.
His body was troubled by the pain, the abuse, the weight of sin's cost – when He suffered.*

Yet He was armed in His mind – prepared in every way, for the time of His suffering led to the time of His glory in resurrection, ascension and dominion in the future. His face was set as a flint, the mirror of the strength of His mind as He anticipated His suffering and the glory that should follow.

Yet He was armed in His mind - as He tasted death for every man. The act of separation from God was a bitter taste and His visage was marred more than any man's, because of the high cost of bearing our sins in His own body as He passed through the hours of His suffering.

Yet He was armed in His mind - as He saw beyond the cross, the death – to the time when He would bring many sons to glory with Him. Then He and the children of faith in Him would share together the new life of God without limitations.

The joy of presenting a finished work to God and the bride of His love-gift would be presented as a chaste virgin to Him – the arming of the mind gave Him the willingness to endure. The cost of faith, the joy, the life of God to live with vigor, vision and with grace – Will mean suffering will happen – arm yourself with the mind of Christ.

Godliness, Christ-likeness, heavenly citizenship with the eye on the future – Will mean suffering will happen – arm yourself with the mind of Christ. Testimony: public and private, to the many and the few, whether accepted or not – Will mean suffering will happen – arm yourself with the mind of Christ.

The daily walk against the tide of human opinion and popularity that we crave – Will mean suffering will happen – arm yourself with the mind of Christ. Opposition to the enticement of sin and the voice of natural human reasoning – Will mean suffering will happen – arm yourself with the mind of Christ.

“Father of hope and love and grace: I am glad for the assurance of the Word of God making clear that the choice to suffer rather than to yield to the pressures of sin is available to the trusting believer who knows Thee. I need to be continually reminded of the ability to arm the mind. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

1st Peter 4:2. *“That he no longer should live the rest of his life in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”*

FROM NOW ON.

*“Climb higher – get bigger – become stronger”
The mantra of mankind never changes
You are a failure to men, if you’re not farther than when
You started climbing the ladder of sin’s wages.*

*But on the road to heaven, the way up is down
The winner is he who surrenders
Laid up for the warrior is the sufferers’ crown
Who in humility gives God all he tenders.*

*During the years of new life even when in grief
The surrendered one lives no longer for sin
He is willing and wants to – whether long or brief –
To do the will of God and be obedient to Him.*

*The past is past, no claim does it hold
On one who moves onward for God
The new life of faith is so superior to the old
We would be ashamed not to own Jesus as Lord.*

*Don’t waste time looking back, now look farther ahead
To the glory that in Christ will soon be revealed
No longer are we servants to sin – to that we are dead –
From sins’ sickness and demands we are healed.*

“A new day has begun Father. Even from this moment on I pray I will look ahead to doing Thy will – not back to what men think is successful and right. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

The mind of Christ in His people prepares us for the conflict we can anticipate. Our Lord intends us to be mentally prepared to endure unjust suffering because of the nature of sin itself and the consequences of sin. We as believers are no longer under the dominion of sin. We are not controlled by it and instead stand against it. Our focus is to be on Christ, "Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despised the shame ...". We have died to sin and have risen to a new life in Christ. He is done with sin, and we also will be done with sin (ceased) literally and eternally. Presently the believer who has the mind of Christ, resolves to walk in newness of life and takes up his cross of identification with Christ each day in attitude and action. Suffering as a Christian should not make us ashamed when it is for doing good. Our sanctification (cease from sin) is actually advanced when suffering for righteousness.

The will of God for us is a constant desire to go forward in fellowship with God while we are still on earth. Our "time" is the length of our life. The destination is clear. The principle of the will of God is the determining factor as to how long suffering in life will endure. The motivation to endure comes in part from a look at the past. Six sins are mentioned beginning with filthy conduct, and ending with idol worship. When a radical change happens at conversion,

we may expect contempt and opposition from old friends because we no longer associate with them in previous sinful practices. By going in the opposite direction from our past life, we incriminate those who still continue in that which we once participated. Our motivation to fulfill God's will in the present makes us change our lives to please Him now, not just because of our past deliverance from the consequences of sin.

1st Peter 4:3. *"For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:"*

MOTIVATED BY THE PAST.

*What a litany! To some the epitome
Of life as it is meant to be –
But to look at the waste, leaves a bitter taste
Of living that is abhorrent to me.*

*For as in the times past, none of that can last
The pleasures of sin are but for a season –
Living like that is foolish – in fact
It is living without a sensible reason.*

*I am motivated to change; it is not passing strange
That one who is forgiven much truly loves the Lord
Knowing what we're saved from, and now how far we've come
Motivates us to submit to the will of God.*

*To watch those who seek, whose will is so weak
That they fall for each temptation that comes –
Is a grief to my soul, for this fact I know
Those who live so have senses that are numb.*

*Lord, I look all around, and I can hear the sound
Of merriment that seems to go on forever
But I pray they will be stopped, before they're overtopped
And before they from Thee are eternally severed.*

*"O Holy God of mercy: for preserving me from the life-style of so many that takes them away from Thee – I give my heartfelt thanks.
May I in some way be able to show them a better way. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

1st Peter 4:4. *"Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:"*

MOTIVATED BY THE PRESENT.

*"Why won't you join us? Look at what you're missing!"
These are statements quite often I do hear.
"Well, I have found a much greater blessing!
Could I with you some of these blessings share?"*

*Peace in my soul that lasts both day and night –
Comfort of mind and spirit deep within.
Joy that remains, it doesn't depend on sight.
Hope when things seem darkest comes from Him.*

*Assurance when uncertain, light in times of gloom
Faith when you can't even see ahead.
Contentment even though others see only doom
Grace that fully supplies my every need.*

*With all these things I have, what have you to offer
That can compare with such blessings just like this?
Is there something I am missing that you can proffer?
To fill up what you thinking in life I miss?*

*Have you found real satisfaction? What is your motivation
To rise up each morning with a smile?
Are you more able to help those in need who by faith in God do heed?
And are willing for His sake to walk the extra mile?*

*What about the model you leave for those who follow –
Do they want to be like you and do what you do?
Are you willing to say to them, "Be like me, you'll be fulfilled then!
And you will never be ashamed when life is through?"*

"I am daily aware, heavenly Father, that life is only worth living when there are benefits that last and will bring honor and glory to Thee. May the efforts of this day be motivated by results that can be perceived in the near future. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 4:5. *"Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."*

MOTIVATED BY THE FUTURE.

*My time will come when I must state the sum
Of things that I did in life
I will tell the Lord why I did, or did not reply
When challenged to wrong or right
As I look ahead is there fear and dread
Or is there joy as I think of that day
When I will see the Lord's face and His way with me trace
And He waits to hear what I say.*

*Those who for Christ did live, will account then give
Of those things they did while serving the Lord
Those who lived for earth with no second birth
Will be judged by their very own words
The Judge knows each heart and of life every part
Of each and everything we did and why
This is not some unfair scheme or some far out dream
But a look ahead into the real "bye and bye."*

*With such a day in view, saved and unsaved too
Need to stop and seriously look into their future
Motivation is given to those going to hell and heaven
To consider carefully what in life we nurture
How great is the gain for those who love His name;
To walk in the ways of the holy
And how great the loss of those who count the cost
And live for this present life only*

"O Righteous, Holy God: as I look ahead this morning, I ask for divine assistance to live in view of a future day. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Judgment is ahead in which each will "give account" (say in words) that which has been done. For "the quick" (the living) it will be at the judgment seat of Christ where both words and works will be evaluated. This is not a judgment for sin. That took place on our behalf at the cross where our Lord fully dealt with our sin. Judgment for the believer has to do with our stewardship and rewards for faithfulness. "The dead" are those who are not saved and who will stand before the Lord Jesus to give "account." At that time every mouth will truly be stopped. The Judge is "ready to judge." He is prepared. The day is appointed. There is motivation to endure because of the future. The certainty of coming judgment keeps us from being short-sighted. For believers, we look ahead to a glorious future with our Lord. Life is not wasted even when we suffer, and the grave is not the goal.

We are commissioned to preach the Gospel now so that in the death of Christ a believer has been judged for sin because "Christ died for us" when He "loved me and gave Himself for me." The preaching of the Gospel also

assures us of eternal life now and forever. That motivates us to live according to God in our spirit, and commit ourselves to accept and do His will even if it means suffering.

1st Peter 4:6. *“For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”*

THE REASON.

*Not only around here but both near and far
The Gospel is preached to all men
Sometimes in plain words a message is heard
Telling plainly of the Savior from sin
But there are other ways the Holy Spirit says,
“Repent of your sin and seek earnestly salvation.”
Whether it is through one’s conscience or creation or experience
The Gospel is preached in every nation.*

*Some will ask, “What about those in the past?
Are those people saved or lost?”
The answer is that God is a righteous Lord
Who personally has paid sin’s cost –
And will do what is right for He sends the light
That is needed to reach the soul of each man.
Each person is able through that light made available
To know God and His grace during life’s span.*

*The proof of life is seen in each redeemed human being
When their life is controlled by God’s Spirit.
There will be evidence of love given by God from above
And those who look on – maybe even mock – will see it
There will be a change in behavior out of love for the Savior
That will be hard to refute by those who mock.
Evidence of reality is seen when appreciation for God is keen –
Such people not only talk but walk the walk.*

“O Lord of the harvest, there are those in far fields who are reaping today where the Holy Spirit has been working for generations. Bless their labors. And here where we are only able to get what is in the corners of our fields – keep us, I pray, from quitting. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

1st Peter 4:7. *“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”*

THE END IS NEAR.

*Mocking voices rise as money-makers hasten
To add to their accumulated horde – even more
Not willing to face what just plain common sense says –
“The end is near!”*

*Loud laughter gets louder as revelers party
Dancing feet and bodies seem so frenzied
And the music deafens normal hearing to drown the message
“The end is near!”*

*Slumped over a bar empty glasses give evidence –
Darkness and despair come from slurred words –
Fear of the past, disappointment in the present, fear of the future
“The end is near!”*

*The older folks watch the younger with sad eyes –
Grey heads shake in unbelief at the rejection
Of morals and standards and honor and respect –
“The end is near!”*

*Behind closed doors the leaders gasp – unbelieving
Now finding out there is no real solution
We passed the point of no return long ago –
“The end is near!”*

*Preachers warn the public to prepare for even worse times
Christians in private conversations wonder – and pray
Pages in the Bible have made it plain to those who read –
“The end is near!”*

“Father, it would be wonderful if the Lord came today. I want to be ready and watching for the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Believers in Christ know He promised to return for them, and the future plans of God will be fulfilled as prophesied. Since our Lord made the promise, Christians have been expecting the Lord to come in their time. "The end" is not far away in God's purposes. Salvation of sinners is one of the objectives of the suffering of the saints. God's plans are unfolding in our time, and that is true of every generation of believers. The awareness of the imminent return of Christ keeps believers ready to meet Him. Love for others and for God presses us to be sober (self-controlled) and prayerful.

Before every other consideration in life is the need for an intense, fervent love for other Christians. Whatever we invest of time and talents for the benefit of God's people will make a lasting difference. Our possessions, status and fame are not what counts in the kingdom of God. An open home and an open heart toward strangers as well as those we know is of great value. That is when it is opened without grumbling, complaining or fussing about the inconvenience and expense.

1st Peter 4:8. *“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.”*

FERVENT CHARITY.

*How do I know who are children of God?
Look for fervent love in the family.
How can I tell those who love God's Word?
Look for fervent love for the Bible,
How can I know those who have concern for souls?
Look for fervent love of the Gospel.
How can I know those who are people of faith?
Look for fervent love doing the impossible.
How can I know those who have love for His name?
Look for fervent love for His honor.
How can I know those who of Christ are not ashamed?
Look for fervent love of their heavenly Father.
How can I know those who give themselves to prayer?
Look for fervent love for the Master.
How can I know those who heavy burdens share?
Look for fervent love for their neighbor.
How can I know those whose word I can trust?
Look for fervent love for me.
How can I know those who give their very best?
Look for fervent love for all they see.
How can I know those who love the Lord's return?
Look for fervent love as each day begins.
How can I know those who won't from righteousness turn?
Look for fervent love for Him.*

“I see evidence of Thy grace in so many of Thy people, Father. What a joy to be among them and share life with them. May I be willing to give to them even as I receive from them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

1st Peter 4:9. *“Use hospitality to one another without grudging.”*

HOSPITALITY TO ONE ANOTHER.

*They came unexpectedly – a family of four
Looking for information as one stood at the door
They wanted directions to a place safe to stay.
Their plan was to camp out there for just a few days.
But the lady of the house quietly said to her husband,
“Tell them to come here, the parents and baby can use our room.
The other two children can use the room close by –
We will sleep in the parlor – you and I.
They look like they need a rest and a friend or two.
It is obvious God sent them for me and you.”*

*Year after year that same family came.
More children came too – all welcomed the same.
Friendship and fellowship grew deep and strong.
Both families were glad when they came along.
Then the children got older and gradually moved away.
After awhile only the husband and wife came to stay.
But the grace each couple shared had given the children light
And they knew the value of a welcome for just a few nights.
Now the children and grandchildren do the same for others –
They learned hospitality through their fathers and mothers.*

*My parents now have died – they’re gone to their reward.
The other man and his wife told us of the things they were showed.
They too are gone now, but both left a righteous legacy behind –
Of two families to whom hospitality is firm in their mind.
It is well for us to remember we serve God when serving man –
Hospitality is one way to do for God what we can.
It is a significant act to show kindness with no angle
Some have – maybe you – served with some unknown angel.*

“Father God, for opportunities to show grace and kindness in a tangible way – I pray Thee now, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Christian living involves clearness of mind and actions so that we are effective in our prayer life. Fervent love is so we can be able to bring genuine blessing to others. By showing hospitality we demonstrate the kindness of the Lord to us when we show it to others. When we use our God-given gifts to minister to others, we reflect the grace of God that has been ministered to us. Spiritual gifts have been given to us as stewards of God's grace. The "manifold grace of God" tells us that there are many areas of life in which the grace of God is providing for our needs, and through us, the needs of others.

The public speaking ministry some have, must be biblical and given in context to keep the truth that is written as God intends. We do not have the right to use God's word in a way to manipulate others or impose our opinion on them. It is what God says and means in the word of God that is important, not our opinions. Personal service is also to be done in a way that God is praised when I use God-given abilities. Speaking God's truth is a solemn responsibility because we are letting our "light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." We do not add to God's glory but magnify that glory when we extol, praise and honor our Lord Jesus Christ. His is an eternal glory and dominion, and our hearts assure us that this is right, to which we add our "Amen."

1st Peter 4:10. *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*

STEWARDS OF GRACE.

*Many facets of grace stand out as I consider
God, with divine intent, has given much to me.
Pre-conversion sanctification, a heritage
Generations of fore-bearers experienced God's grace
And passed it on – unknown perhaps
But now I look at a family tree –*

God saved many in the past –
Now that same grace is extended to me.

A commitment to truth, to the Bible, to grace –
Was passed on to me – now here, in this place –
I have opportunity to minister to others
As a steward of what was ministered to me –
Grace to live daily with dignity and honor
As a representative of heaven, of a kingdom, and a King
Grace that sustains in dark times and good –
Grace from God's storehouse given to me to pass on.

The Gospel of God's grace – full and complete
Every spiritual need sinners have, is in the Gospel met.
Unfolding to others through clay vessels –
Human channels telling of mercy and free grace.
Fulfilling a commission – a calling from above
To pass on truth – to minister grace to hearers
To open eyes to divine light, to give hope –
To tell of grace and peace – to save the lost.

"Gracious God, there is no doubt that Thy grace is sufficient for every need. The supply is limitless from Thy infinite and gracious Person. I thank Thee now in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 4:11. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

SPEAK... SERVE.

The words came from a man but they must be heard –
God uses men to speak for Him.
Let him who hears keep in mind this truth –
It is God who speaks through men.
The responsibility is heavy for he must speak as an oracle –
The words must be the very words of God.
To interpose as an "oracle" ideas and opinions of oneself
Is to fail in this calling of the Lord.

The same motivation is in service when ministering to others –
This is not some casual work we're called to do.
God gives ability to fully carry out given tasks –
And the purpose is that through me, His grace will show.
I dare not be careless for God's glory is at stake –
He deserves my best to be done in every way.
Those who benefit from spoken words and gracious deeds –
Will bring honor and praise to God by what they say.

Truths passed on to others by those who love the Lord –
Are never wasted words when they are spoken.
The ultimate result may never by me be heard –
But the final conclusion of the matter is when the books are opened.
Who knows at the moment what the outcome will finally be –
Of simple obedience to God's command.
I am privileged now to bear as each day gives to me –
Opportunities of service when passing through Beulah land.

"This day is opening up to me Father. Whether here in this quiet place or in the public – help me to honor Thee in word and deed. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 4:12-19

COMPANIONS IN SUFFERING

With words of endearment for those children of God who are called upon to suffer for their faith in Christ, Peter address them as "beloved." It is not a "strange thing" for unbelievers to oppose and persecute Christians. "All that will godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," Paul wrote. Our Lord Jesus said when people insult, persecute and speak evil against believers, they will be blessed. It is in the testing times of suffering; God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. Hardship and trouble, strengthens our faith.

"Partakers of Christ's sufferings" means that suffering saints have something in common with our Savior. His sufferings were to atone for our sins. Any suffering we may be called to pass through is because we have been forgiven of our sins, and those in darkness "hate the light because their deeds are evil." Our "rejoicing" presently is that of the joy of seeing a light shining in darkness. The "exceeding joy" in the future revelation of Christ's glory, is the overwhelming joy of seeing accomplished that for which we have longed. We share as companions with Christ the experience of suffering now. We will share the "joy that was set before Him" in the future. Our joy will be beyond normal joy as we see Him in His glory.

1st Peter 4:12. *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:"*

FIERY TRIAL.

*Some are there right now, Father – the match has been struck,
Give to those whom Thou hast chosen a grace unique –
To bear the pain and suffering – the loss and the hurt –
Give them the needed strength for which they seek,*

*Whether just given news that has left them breathless and in shock –
Draw near and give their spirits Thy sweet rest.
Hear and answer their prayer – and mine – as at Thy door we knock,
Please lead them through this trial in the way You know is best.*

*In some distant place there are those under persecution –
It is coming from those who are their friends and family.
Lord God, give them wisdom and power during this opposition –
May Your love and mercy through Him be plainly seen.*

*If the time comes for me to suffer – to pass through a fiery trial –
May I remain true and faithful to Thee, my Lord.
On the way which Thou hast led me, I have in every mile
Experienced Thy gracious presence and comfort by Thy guiding hand.*

*It probably shouldn't be strange to me to have serious ordeals –
For that is a promise to those who live for Thee.
The times I've had to face troubles, in a little way I feel –
The comfort of Thy presence and the ways You've strengthened me.*

"I am sure Father, there are many presently going through fiery trials. Help them to endure. Give them strength to overcome. Through this time use them to glorify Thy own holy name. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 4:13. *"But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."*

EXCEEDING JOY.

*To look at things through natural eyes,
Leaves much to be desired –
For our views often change as events unfold.
What we once enjoyed now only makes us feel tired.
Difficulties that were once only a challenge –
Now bring us pain and suffering.
Opposition to truth and the Gospel message –
Discouragement may with them bring.*

*But when with holy eyes we see
In that suffering, reasons for joy –
Then we see God has allowed this to be
It is not some unsolvable ploy.
God allows it to happen with the future in view –
A day when His glory is revealed –
Then we will know what we never before knew –
All the reasons events were from us concealed.*

*As the sufferings come, we can embrace each one –
Each event able to bring God some unique glory
In some time in the future things will be much clearer –
And the sufferings past will be part of the story
Of how God led us through the obstacles He knew
Would reveal to others the value of faith.
From His gracious view, we'll see how we grew
To be objects of His saving grace.*

"O heavenly Father, I can sense even in some who know me well, a misunderstanding of why we press on even when I am tired. Thank You for allowing me to share in many ways the cost of proclaiming redemption's story. He paid so much for what cost me so little. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

It should not be a surprise to Christians that God allows, and may plan, suffering and hardship for us. Reproach or being censured for the name of Christ is cause for being blessed by God. It is not a reason for us to pity ourselves, but accept suffering as a privilege for which we thank God. The early believers of this age of grace, "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."

However, not all of the suffering Christians endure is for the right reasons. If a believer is doing wrong and claims he is being picked on because he is a Christian, his understanding of the reason for his suffering is wrong. Wrong attitudes, unpleasant behavior, provocation caused by tone of voice or a pushy attitude even when doing "the work of the Lord," may bring insults, suffering and retaliation on us - and we caused it. Suffering for our allegiance to Christ is worthy suffering. Suffering for being opinionated and aggressive in order to win an argument even on religious topics, is not appropriate. Any criminal activity on the part of a Christian will have consequences that bring hardship the same as any other law-breaker. If I "put my nose" into the affairs of other people as a gossip or a person with unasked for advice, likely there will be unhappy results that will make me ashamed.

1st Peter 4:14. *"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part, he is glorified."*

THE SPIRIT OF GLORY AND OF GOD.

*Two results are potentially there –
One we bear alone – the other we share.
If I avoid reproach, I am on my own –
If I accept it gladly, then His grace is shown.*

*I am not left to be reproached without any help
The Spirit of God and new life within myself –
Give me joy where normally there would be sadness,
I can share the reproach of Christ with a measure of gladness.*

*The end result is what is really at stake –
For God is glorified by the reproaches I take.
And the way I take them is very important
It reflects on God and all that He wants.*

*Those who don't know God find a reason to blame –
We who know and love Him do not react the same,
Because we understand in the problems of life*

Is where God is revealed as we walk in His light.

*The Spirit of glory goes beyond works of men –
For it is the Spirit of God revealing what is within –
He takes what seems bad and from it brings good –
And through the reproaches He's honored by me as I should.*

"Father, I can't honestly say I welcome the reproaches that come from seeking to honor and glorify Thee. When they come, at times I may seek to avoid them. But when in the midst of them, I find a unique joy I don't experience in any other way. I pray for grace to accept – yes even welcome these reproaches for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 4:15. *"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men"*

BUSYBODY.

*"Why, you really must do something now!"
"Do you know what she did?" Mary said to Jed,
"Now Mary, just wait, are you sure it was a date?
Or did they have just another sick cow?"*

*"Jed! Don't make fun, I am sure she was gone
Much longer than to tend to a beast!
She left home at eight, and it was very late –
I am sure it was two in the morning at least!"*

*A day or two later, the rights of the matter,
Came out in the open so clear.
Franklin's mother took sick, at a quarter to six,
And she called for one she knew really cared.*

*When one's nose is so long, they don't know right from wrong,
That is a person you cannot truly trust.
Their words are like cancer; think they have the answer –
But didn't figure out the problem at the first.*

*Lord, help me remain silent in spite of what I think –
To say nothing until folks need my assistance.
Until their call comes, please keep me at home,
And while there to mind my own business.*

"O all-knowing God; You know every situation. Keep me from jumping to conclusions. Help me keep the door of my lips sealed when they should be. Keep me from sinning with words. Assist me to be ready to help and to refrain from being nosy. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

The word "Christian" was first given to disciples in Antioch as a term of derision and persecution. They were learners of Christ who were known among themselves as "brethren" or "saints." This is not a word of which we need to be embarrassed, but rather a title we can and should bear with dignity and honor. To be a follower of Christ in the early days of the church and be called a Christian, was used as a scornful word. By the time the second generation of Christians were saved, it was a title of honor. The word has been demeaned in the world today because it is applied to all kind of things; such as Christian school, Christian religion, Christian books and songs. Many who attend a Christian church whether they are born again or not, consider themselves Christians. To be loyal to Christ in adversity and to keep on doing what is right according to the scriptures, may bring some form of suffering even from those who claim to be Christians.

"Judgment in the house of God" is not to condemn the Lord's people but to instruct, purify and correct us by some form of discipline. By the testing of divine discipline, we learn our own potential for sinning has not been eradicated. We are not sinless people. When corrective measures are taken, we learn to depend on the Lord and to resist sin and its temptations. We are helped by "judgment" that means the future may be even more difficult than the present. But because of the "judgment" we are more prepared to face the future, be faithful to the Lord and to trust Him when we accept the discipline He sends with grace and faith. Our salvation is only because of God's mercy. How serious it is when a person rejects that mercy and rejects Christ! There will be justice and judgment done when the "ungodly

and sinner" come before the great white throne and then are cast into the lake of fire. It is there where the ungodly and the sinner will appear. The quotation from Proverbs would have clarified for those early Christians, the same as for us today, that God is in control and righteous justice will prevail for saints and sinners.

1st Peter 4:16. "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

BE NOT ASHAMED.

*At first it was hard, for the pressure was on
To be conformed to what others thought was right.
But it didn't take long, to realize that was wrong –
When one's a Christian they now become light.*

*So it is to be expected, not avoided or neglected,
That to suffer as a Christian is the norm.
Really, how can one in sin, know even how to begin
To understand that a true Christian is new born.*

*Old things have passed away, all the things that others say
Doesn't affect my standing in Christ in the very least.
When suffering as a Christian comes, then we show God's grace,
And realize those who live for God really are the blessed.*

*To glorify God when under pressure, maybe really is no pleasure –
Still it means as a Christian, I am not ashamed.
But to suffer for doing wrong, when by the Spirit I'm made strong,
Gives the opposition every reason to lay blame.*

*To glorify God is such a privilege, even to bear a Christ-like image
Makes living as a Christian a meaningful life.
To represent a Holy God, and to know that Jesus is my Lord,
Makes suffering as a Christian to being what is right.*

"Righteous God, What little I have gone through compared to others of "like precious faith," seem like nothing but a brief cold. But if there is something that may have glorified Thee, whether in my actions or in my restraint, I give Thee all the glory. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 4:17. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?"

JUDGMENT MUST BEGIN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD.

*It has to happen – these testing times – we may not always know the reason.
God knows why, so it's enough to know He has allowed these difficult seasons.
To try to avoid the inevitable may lead us to seriously miss the point
Of persecution being allowed that will strengthen every joint
Used by me to walk in the light of testimony with the Lord –
That the lasting things might be revealed, and remove the stubble, hay and wood.*

*The people of God are purified when there is judgment in the house of God.
A lot of things that have claimed my time are dealt with in the light of God's Word.
The serious attraction of the world and flesh must be faced and purged,
And the wiles of the devil lose their grip when persecution's purpose is served.
The true believer will stand by the power of God and will become a stronger man –
Knowing God will not allow more that is needed for me to take a stand.*

*But there are others who seem to be real, until persecution comes to them.
Under the pressure of things is revealed what is missing – no life- only a sham
It is hard to imagine what a tragedy it is, when pretending to live is dead.
They live only for now, wanting what is convenient, not bothering to look ahead.
For life is so short – eternity so long – they were hoping they'd cease to exist –*

But the judgment that purifies those who are real, for the unreal will not cease or desist.

*I need to be careful not to complain when I know God is working on me.
There will come a time when the reasons for all, I'll then be able to see.
But when I think of the lost who won't count the cost of living and dying in sin.
Then I consider how important it is that I never neglect to be faithful to them –
That they turn from the ties, falsehood, and lies that bind them deceiving their soul.
Perhaps what they see when persecution comes to me, will lead them into God's fold.*

“There are times of testing right now, Father God. Others are watching to see what we will do here. We ask for divine wisdom to show us the right way to proceed through these deep waters. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

With that in mind, believers can expect that there will be both good times and bad times, but our trust in God's sovereign will should never waver. As the "faithful Creator," a reference to our Lord Jesus Christ "by whom and for whom all things are and were created," we can commit ourselves to Him without fear. Trust in Him overcomes fear or depression we might have because of the circumstances in which we are found. When the pressures of opposition come, and the situation seems helpless to us, faith in our Lord will keep us from bitterness and hatred toward those who cause the suffering. God is faithful to His word and His people. He knows us and will not allow more than He enables us to endure. Peter's words would have comforted those who were enduring physical and social suffering. The same holds true when it comes to emotional or other forms of opposition when we remain loyal to our Lord and are committed to do His will whatever the consequences.

So, the glory of suffering is a benefit to us when we understand it is a refining process to bring Christ-likeness before those who observe the suffering saints. The blessing of suffering enables the believers to experience the presence and fullness of the Holy Spirit in special ways. The discipline of suffering helps us to evaluate our service and conduct in view of the future day of accounting. Then we can get the right perspective regarding our service as to whether we pass through this testing in God's will, for God's glory and for God's purpose.

1st Peter 4:18. *“And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?”*

WHERE?

*The day is coming when all will be revealed –
All the questions unanswered will be known.
There is not a whole lot that is not still concealed –
But enough is written down that we're shown –
We who are saved look behind and see
How close to hell we had come –
But God by His grace brought salvation to me
And now I can claim heaven as home.*

*The end for me is secure – I am saved
By grace and God's power divine.
The results of salvation and living by faith –
Assure me I am His and He is mine.
I truly look forward with anticipation and joy –
That danger that stalked me is passed.
Now there is peace, Satan no longer can toy
With my mind for God gave me life that will last.*

*But the enemy of souls is working his dangerous ways
With those who have turned from God's grace.
His claim on their souls and the lies he says
Will take them to such an awful place –
That words can't describe the horrors of hell
Separation from God is eternal.
All hope is gone – no Gospel will tell
Of a way to escape that infernal.*

*Where will I be and the saved of the Lord?
Who in His presence forever we'll rejoice!
Where will we serve Him – the Almighty God?
That service will be one of His choice!
Where will the lost go that die in their sins?*

*Hell is ahead of them without any question!
After the judgment when they stand before Him –
They will be in eternal perdition!*

“O God, make me consider again the importance of what I do. Keep me from making comparisons. Help me to see every person as a fellow-traveler to eternity. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

1st Peter 4:19. *“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”*

FAITHFUL CREATOR.

*He is the same as when He spoke first in the world –
“Let there be light,” and the light began to shine.
He’s the same as when He came and salvation’s plan unfolded,
And the light that shone on sinners was Him.*

*In the future He’ll still be for all eternity,
Known as the “Faithful and True.”
He is a faithful Creator to those who are suffering –
And His grace and power will bring them through.*

*The will of God may lead to places we’d avoid,
If we were choosing the pathway of our life.
But if it’s here at home or serving Him abroad –
Let not the suffering be suffering caused by strife.*

*The Word of God unbound leaves an impact around
That the faithful Creator can use as He will.
The keeping of my soul I will leave to Him who found
Me and saved me, and I know will keep me still.*

*My trust is in Him alone who will finish what He started,
When He made a “new creation” out of me.
He provided for my need when His Spirit He imparted,
And joy from His travail the Creator will then see.*

“O God, Thy faithfulness has been unchanging. Since the Lord Jesus Christ, the “Faithful Creator,” made me new in Him, I have found it a joy to let Him use me as He will. When I press for my own will – I lose that joy. I am learning Father. Please be patient with this lump of clay. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

1st Peter 5

THE PILGRIM SHEPHERDS AND THE FLOCK OF GOD

The theme of submission is through this whole epistle as the way believers can live in difficult times and still have a significant impact of the spiritual life of others as well as themselves. In an assembly of called out Christians, order and effectiveness are maintained by those the Holy Spirit raises up to lead God's people. In this passage of scripture Peter confirms the fact that "elders," those who are mature in the faith; "shepherds" (pastors), those who teach the word of God; "bishops," those who oversee the administration of an assembly, are the same persons. There are various parts of the work to which they have been called. Counsel to the shepherds is the first part of this chapter and counsel to those under their charge (the flock) follows.

Giving honor and heed to those who are older is a common attitude throughout the world. Wisdom often comes through years of experience. An older person carries a great responsibility toward those who are younger in the faith. Not only should an elder pass on spiritual wisdom and understanding by words, but also by example. The plurality of elders provides for both variety in gifts, but also safety in governing the saints. By there being more than one elder there is safety from false teaching; there is the value of godly discernment and a balanced ministry is able to be maintained. No one person is given a special authority nor personal glory. By a number of equally responsible men in leadership, in times of persecution the testimony is able to be preserved from being splintered or disintegrated. As elders, they guide God's people. As shepherds, they give authority to the words they teach and practice. As overseers, they guard the flock and protect it from false teachers and satanic attacks.

1st Peter 5:1. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder; and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed."

AN ELDER... A WITNESS... A PARTAKER.

God knows His servants well, to this I must pay heed.
Roles that He assigns, to them we must fill the need.
To whom much as been given, from the same much is required –
To give back our best for Him is the response that love inspired.

The flock of God is precious and their needs are always there.
God, in His grace, chose more than one the load of care to share.
Each "elder" aids the others and together they oversee
As "bishops" and as "pastors" the flock they feed.

A witness passes on to others what he sees and knows.
To witness Christ dying literally, in true devotion showed.
I'll never see this visibly but in my mind from week to week,
Faith burns brighter in my soul when of my Lord I speak,

At the Supper of the Lord where saints gather to remember –
Faith often begins to burn more brightly instead of just an ember.
As the Word of God is read and from it truth is spoken –
Our witness for the Lord grows bold and our mouths for Him are opened.

Glimpses of His coming glory through God's Word sometimes are given.
There are some places where we read of what it is like in heaven.
Peter had seen for a few brief moments what Christ is like in glory –
And he never forgot the sight – its impact in the Gospel story.

I don't know very much about what the future will reveal.
But this I know; I will be there when His glory is not concealed –
For every eye will see Him and those who now in labor share
We will see His glory in all its fullness and reflect it for we'll be there.

"O heavenly Father, I am thankful that Thou hast given to me some work to do for Thee now. Give me, I pray, wisdom to meet needs of Thy people. Help me to present the Gospel in the way a true witness should. Please keep me motivated as I think of the future glory of my Lord. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 5:2. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind."

A READY MIND.

It is there in each one of us ready to be used – waiting impatiently
As a child basically responding only to sight and sound – latent potentiality
Gradually absorbing what is needed to live and grow – feeding constantly
Unfolding as a flower to the sun to receive information – growing continually
Absorbing as a sponge the good and the bad – learning indiscriminately
Now seriously needing wise guidance from those older – teaching patiently
Easy prey for everything that comes along unless overseen – guide administratively
Needing now to hear those truths that we live by – unfolding carefully
Learning that wrong often follows hard behind right – warned faithfully
The things learned and understood now claimed – practiced consistently
And the results of guarding the ready mind is faith – growing exceedingly
A mind fed and nurtured by those who know God – guarded lovingly
Now has learned the value of others coming to faith – cares anxiously
And shows interest in their spiritual well-being – thinking spiritually
Seeing beyond material gain and self-glory – speaking compassionately
In turn having learned from those older, gets involved – counseling wisely
Now themselves making the will of God become real – defining clearly

*Showing by life-style and words taught – the way of God more perfectly
Going over the basics and impact of doctrine – communicating repeatedly
So the new and growing ones will do the same – living justly
And will see the value of living for Christ – loving fervently
As the cycle of generations of faith continues it depends – on those willingly
Feeding and leading the flock of God – with a loving mind readily.*

“The cycle of generations catches up to me now, Father. I am considered now as one of the older generation. By Thy Spirit and guidance – help me to faithfully discharge the responsibility to the younger generations, those things that are right that I was taught by others. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

1st Peter 5:3. “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”

BEING EXAMPLES.

*They came from God, born of the Spirit –
Given to a generation to reveal God’s grace.
Special to Christ’s name, each one now to bear it –
Put on earth as His representatives in this place.*

*Some are young in faith, others lived for God for years –
Yet the example doesn’t esteem one age above another.
This flock of God needs guidance, those who wisdom bears –
So they can give good leadership to the sisters and brothers.*

*Leadership isn’t only words, although words can be important –
Of greater value is spiritual sight that watches what you do.
Those who lead glance back, seldom if aware of their deportment –
Because those who follow your leadership will soon be like you too.*

*They will talk much like you talk; they hear the words you say –
So, their language will reflect on how you spoke God’s truth.
The prayers you make in public, what you do on the Lord’s Day –
Will all be lived out twice as sheep determine each act’s worth.*

*Sheep will follow shepherds to the beach or the place of prayer –
Believing what should be of value to them is what is valuable to you.
If sometimes you stop to wonder why so few of them are there –
Consider your own example to them lest your failure you will rue.*

*Think of One you follow using Him as your example –
And then maybe those coming behind will consider the way they go.
When sheep feed their souls from day to day, from you they’ll taste a sample –
And determine from your example what is important to do and know.*

“Father God, I know others are watching me and forming opinions and practices. They are Thy heritage. Help me lead them to green pastures and still waters. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Peter identified himself as an elder who had responsibility for the Lord's people. He knew by experience the fact of, and needs associated with, "judgment in the house of God." He was an example of an elder before he instructed them to be examples to the flock where they were. He was also a "witness of the sufferings of Christ." He doesn't refer to himself as a witness of the glory of Christ even though he had been on the mount of transfiguration. The sufferings of Christ brought about his restoration after his failure. He knew personally the power of discipline and the effects of restoration. As a "partaker of the glory that shall be revealed," he recognized he would share in the glory of Christ even though he had experienced failure. Suffering and glory are mentioned in the epistle as a theme of Old Testament prophets. It is also a cause of rejoicing for the saints, and here as a motivation to the elders to be faithful in their work.

Teaching and tending the flock of God is a solemn responsibility that includes making disciples, leading them and restoring them when there is failure. They were not distant leaders but were among the flock and actively working

with them. In that way they could watch them and discern when potential problems and needs arise. The motivation behind this work is not because they are compelled to do it, but they are willing to do it because they know they are caring for God's flock. Their service is not under pressure nor for material gain but an eagerness to do this for their Lord. They are concerned as to what they can give, not what they can get. Their leadership is not by intimidation or threats, but by example, spiritual willingness and a delight for the privilege to serve the Lord by serving His people. In this way they can show others the way to live an effective and satisfying life that has meaning and purpose.

1st Peter 5:4. *“And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”*

CROWN OF GLORY.

*It is not because of age or the color of one's hair –
It is not because of great achievements that he's standing there –
It's because of faithfulness and burdens he was willing to bear –
That he stands before the Chief Shepherd and a crown of glory wears.*

*It is not because he was so smart and made a lot of money –
It is not because he had great titles; actually, he had not any –
It is because he knew the flock from MaryJane to Benny –
That he stands before the Chief Shepherd now wearing a crown of glory.*

*It is not because he was paid to care – the Spirit put care within –
It is not because he demanded it that people followed him –
It is because it was obvious to all he really cared for them –
That he stands before the Chief Shepherd and that crown of glory shines.*

*That crown is not given to those who are worried about the cost –
That crown belongs to those who care, not wanting any to be lost –
That crown is worn by burden-bearers who suffered major loss –
When he stands before the Chief Shepherd that crown won't lose its gloss.*

“Faithful leadership must be a delight to Thee, O God. Those who You are able to trust must be a special group of people. They are serving Thee because they love Thee and Thy heritage. Bless them. Feed them. I honor them here before Thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

1st Peter 5:5. *“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”*

BE SUBJECT ONE TO ANOTHER.

*I don't always have to insist others do what I think is right –
And because I'm older, think the younger's work is trite –
Nor should I ignore the calls when I'm in bed at night –
Every saint deserves my respect.*

*I may not agree with all the older ones on every point –
What some younger folks do tends to put my nose out of joint –
However, God knew what He was doing when the Spirit did anoint –
Every one of us to be servants of His.*

*To those who are older and experienced, I will gladly submit –
When it comes to things I wonder about, they've already done it
And I'll show respect and subjection, for I believe it is fit –
Every one has his or her role to fulfill.*

*May my pride never keep me from hearing what the young people say.
They're of a newer generation; I'm from a far different day –
By watching and asking questions maybe I'll learn more of the way –
Every generation has their strengths and weakness.*

If all of us together show respect, dignity and humility –

*Then all of us could live and labor together in real harmony –
And being subject to one another would help us live happily
Every one appreciating the strengths of the others.*

"Father, I have to admit there are times I am unduly critical of the patterns and practices of the younger generation. And I also know there have been times when I have been critical of the resistance to change of the older generation. Please forgive me, Father, and allow me to mingle with joy and appreciation among Thy family without a critical spirit. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

The reward of shepherds is in the future. "The crown of glory" never fades because the evidence will be seen in the eternal kingdom wherever God's people serve Him. What we learn here from those who lead us, will equip us for the service the Lord will give us in the future. This particular crown is unique to the shepherds because they will receive it from the "Chief Shepherd" who gave His life for the sheep. He gave His life when He died for them. Shepherds give their lives by living for the sheep under their care. They are stewards who are caring for those who belong to the Chief Shepherd. Such a privilege it is to be entrusted with the stewardship of a living, fruitful flock.

In the same way spiritual leaders are subject to the Chief Shepherd, younger believers are to submit to their shepherds. We are to submit to them like citizens submit to the government, employees to employers and wives to their husbands. Now the younger, are to submit to those of advancing years. Young people have a tendency to act first before careful consideration of a matter and the outcome. Pride can keep older people from trying to understand young people, and it can keep younger people from paying attention to or listening to older people. It is right for us to respect those who are older than us, and it is right for us to listen to those who are younger than us. In this way we can learn from each other.

Humbling ourselves in the sense of being "clothed," demands submission and obedience. To try to humble someone else ends in us humiliating them. Among the people of God in an assembly, the right attitude is the opposite self-serving. Humility toward others includes humility toward God. He resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. That principle was not new to those who read the book of Proverbs and perhaps had heard the letter from James. Our position and status are not something to worry about. God's recognition is what counts and in His own time, either now or in the future, He will lift us up. God's timing and His blessing go together. He expects us to recognize His care, our own need and His ability to meet that need. That means we let Him take our worry, stress and struggles and deal with them in His own way. We need to submit to Him who controls circumstances rather than to the circumstances themselves. Assemblies of God's people have been placed by the Lord so that we can help one another and when needed can "bear one another's burdens." God is faithful in His care for us and uses whatever means is necessary to handle our worries according to His will, not ours.

1st Peter 5:6. *"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may be able to exalt you in due time:"*

HUMBLE YOURSELVES.

*This doesn't happen by accident; it happens by choice –
When I sense pride is rising and then I hear God's voice
Telling me the solution before His hand comes down hard –
Its presence is firmly applied as in grace He starts
To do what is needed that I may pay good attention –
And make changes on my own and avoid possible contention
That accompanies pride leading to serious downfall –
Making of no effect what had such great potential –
A unified group of people who respect one another
Knowing though we're different yet we all have the same Father
Who under His mighty hand can bring each one to his knees -
Where face down in the dirt we finally listen to what He says.*

*It didn't have to be hard; it began with a choice to make –
As before us opened the way the wise, humble person will take.
And there find sweet fellowship among the saints of God –
Where also God can use you to tell of His love to all the world.
When such times come then the humbled person prays –
God is there to answer as He listens to what he says –
And because of living faith, and evidence of real grace*

God lifts that person up, putting them in a special place –
To fulfill some service God has given to do it as he must,
And God uses the one He knows He can really trust.
One who has humbled himself and his weakness thus confessed,
By lifting up of God's hand, through humility others are blessed.

"Pride is an awful thing, I know, Father: and yet it seems to raise its ugly head, in the most unseemly ways. I certainly have nothing to be proud of – and yet there is a tendency to want to take credit for the things so other people will think more highly of me. I think I can feel the pressure of Thy mighty hand even now – and I thank Thee for it. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1Peter 5:6. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."

THE CHOICE OF HUMILITY.

Erect posture; shoulders back; head held high; eyes that look
around to see if others are looking –
Every hair in place; no wrinkles to be found; self-conscious
checking out of how others may perceive –
Time spent in front of self-reflection; views from without; from
left to right and back again –
A walk self-conscious with every step considered; an image
seeking to be impressed upon the minds of others –

And then...

From above the pressure is applied with steady force, firmly
placed upon proud shoulders.
A hand that cannot be denied, and yet without hurt or pain
unless resisted.
A father-like pressure making a change in self-image, self-
consciousness, self-reliance, self-love:
So unmistakable because of the sense of divine love in the
fingers and palm that moves against the rising of self.
The hand is redirecting, refocusing, refusing to allow an
independence from the family life I have.
That hand does not slap nor curl into a rock-like fist, but there is
no doubt that it is controlling me.
That mighty hand holds the world and keeps all the movements
of time and space in order lest catastrophe fall.
That hand holds each breath in it and allows each needed one to
keep this frail mortal man alive.
His finger carved out the divine will in hard resisting rock, and
let it be seen lest any or all of us think things are out of control.
The mighty hand of God leaves no doubt as to the degree of His
interest and concern, in the one He loves.

I have a choice...

Yield and gladly accept the divine intervention that keeps me
from sin; or resist – and lose.
Bow in humility and contriteness at the first sense of pressure
placed on this arrogant head; or struggle – and fail.
Willingly bow my knees and heart at the first signal of His hand
directing me into a different path; or try to turn – and fall.
Get used to the prostrate position and the worn knees on my
pants; then, when perhaps least expected – that hand goes under
the arm and lifts, until I am in the upright position of submission
to His direction alone.

"O Mighty One that resists the proud and give grace to the humble; who puts down and raises up; who knows what is needed and when and why. I willingly step back from a place of self-importance to accept with joy, the divine pressure placed upon me. I am amazed that You even bother to care, let alone to change me. I thank you for the pressure and awareness of You. Amen."

1st Peter 5:7. "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

HE CARES.

*It is there with all the symptoms and visible signs
The furled brow, sad eyes, the bowed head, the deep sighs
The shoulders are slumped, obviously the load is heavy
Few words are spoken, sometimes there is not any
There is some weighty care – the anxiety is real
Something is eating at the heart, the very way we feel
There is more here to deal with than one alone is able
What to do when to solve it we're not capable.*

*The solution is plain when in deep pain or suffering
One needs help from one another who knows the abyss you're in
Of all those you know who are friends all around you
There really is only One who knows all you are going through
Who is able and willing to personally shoulder your burden;
And comfort your heart and deal with all you are feeling
For He has been there and knows what it is like
To not have someone else move to make the burden more light.*

*The weight of the cross He bare when falsely condemned
The sins of all the world were bore solely by Him
He knew what it was like to be abandoned by brothers
He experienced people He helped, leaving one after another
As a man He experienced all you will ever go through
And so is wanting to ease the cares that press upon you
He is omnipotent with the power to assume your full load
As the omnipresent God, He's able to deal with more than you'll know.*

"Gracious God, the willing burden-bearer of every saint: I come again this morning as one who is fully aware of my inability to meet my own need, Yet, for Thy own reasons, I have this great work to do. I place my fears, doubts and lack of ability upon Thee knowing Thou art able to do exceeding abundantly above all that I might ask or think, In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

We need to be alert and self-controlled because the devil (slanderer) is moving about to bring down the testimony of a believer who has focused attention on himself and his troubles. We are to be self-controlled in view of our salvation; self-controlled in view of the nearness of the end and self controlled in view of the power of the enemy. Clear, controlled thinking is the opposite of anxiety that focuses on ourselves. It is important that we be watchful and spiritually alert to the attacks of the devil who knows we are vulnerable when we are persecuted, suffering and feeling alone and helpless. If we are cut off from believers we are in acute danger. How important it is to keep our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ in firm faith. Then we are able to resist the devil even as our Lord did when He was tested by the devil. We are not alone in this because all over the world children of God are going through the same things.

In the midst of all this suffering, the "God of all grace" is there to meet the needs fully. Trials will come for "a while." The devil will attack. Opposition and persecution will happen. The God of all grace knows when to step in and restore and strengthen us. He is able to keep us steadfast. Suffering is not an end in itself because it is passing. When we rest in God, His grace will work on our behalf by His strength. The pilgrim's suffering is temporary with the purpose of maturing, establishing, strengthening and making us steadfast in the faith. Suffering puts a firm foundation of the experiences of living by faith. It is God's grace, glory, power and dominion that brings all this about and hence the doxology from Peter is given to which all who have passed through this can add their own "Amen."

1st Peter 5:8. "Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"

YOUR ADVERSARY.

He's there, just outside the circle of Divine protection

*Always moving, always looking for a fatal gap
A place unguarded by a sleeping watchman
Insatiable appetite burning his vitals with anger
Making infernal noises that cause fear in human hearts
Intimidating by noise, mockery and diabolical threats
Never resting in his lies and evil plans to consume –
To stop those who live and breathe the air of freedom by grace.*

*So there they stand, some awake in the night watches
Others rising before dawn to take their place as guards
Those who say to God the names of the weak and aged
Others who are young and don't know the dangers
Of giving place to the devil and they try to accommodate
For some immature reason, thinking evil has a good intent
So brother and sister "Vigilant" have to be awake to defend
To guard, to warn, to awaken those in danger – to intercede.*

*But that is not all; the caring humble person has to watch himself
He is under attack too, so he has to be of a wise, cautious mind
Though he can defend himself from the roaring noises without
There is also the problem of noisy echoes of past failures
Filling the ears of his mind with ancient and new accusations
That the devil takes advantage of when seeking to devour
To stop an older believer would be a great victory
So, man the bulwarks of your responsibility – and watch.*

"Holy God, my Father: please keep me from being spiritually sleepy in view of the dangers around from the wild beast. Give me awareness of his evil designs and the willingness to stand up in these times of opposition. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 5:9. "Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

HOLY RESISTANCE.

*Vulnerable and alone; isolated and feeling abandoned?
Stop! Consider this while you are undergoing this test.
All over this world there are saints that seem stranded –
But for His own reasons, God knows this trial is best.*

*To give you some cheer, remember He is near
And in faith, trust Him to give Divine power
To endure and bare, the pressures that are there
For the God you serve is a strong tower.*

*Lift up eyes of faith and see, what is allowed to be
Will in God's own way bring glory to Him.
Imagine that He, across the world's seven seas
Has people just like you standing in resistance to sin*

*What a glorious thought, after these battles are fought
Faith triumphs and the angels in heaven sing praise.
Instead of naught, watchers see what God has wrought
And the universal song is, "Jesus saves!"*

*Stand fast faithful saint; pray, watch and wait,
For the day of reckoning will someday come.
The devil's roar will fade, don't you be afraid,
Be strong to resist – God is still on His throne!*

"Help the suffering, O Lord. Give power to the tested ones. Encourage the great band of the tested to be strong in Thee, and in the power of the Spirit of God to resist the devil. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 5:10. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

A WIDER PERSPECTIVE.

*God knows you, that why He called you
To endure what is not natural to men.
That He might show, and you might know
What truly is important to Him.
In His own way, and through things that may
Make you wonder why you are going through
Suffering that will stop, yet what about today?
Well, consider for a moment what God will do.*

*He will give you more grace, and some day you will trace
The path of life from a wider perspective.
Your faith becomes stronger; trials won't last any longer
Then is needed for your benefit to be corrective.
And you will become firm, when at last you can turn,
Seeing all the good that testing produced.
When the passions of pain burns, is when we truly learn
What without it we could never have deduced.*

*From the suffering some will die, having never known why,
Until the day the big picture is seen.
This is just a short time where as lights we can shine,
Some day we will look back to where we've been –
We will bless God He made sure, we would mature
And be established and strengthened through Him.
In the future we will stand, on heaven's table land –
With much wider perspective our praise will begin.*

"Father, my vision is wider now than it used to be. May I glimpse in some way – in a better way – what a great and marvelous work of grace is going on all over the world. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

Faithful brothers are those who have been tried and proven like Silvanus (Silas). He was trusted by the brethren in Jerusalem to carry an important letter to Antioch. He knew what it was to endure suffering when he was with Paul. He was involved in ministering to the believers at Thessalonica and Corinth. Perhaps Silas helped Peter in writing this epistle that encouraged the suffering saints knowing that Silas was experienced in suffering and had stood fast when he was challenged as they were being challenged. The assembly at Babylon, and Mark who was regarded with affection, wanted their greetings to be sent so they could know others cared for them as well as Peter. Fellowship in suffering times is a great encouragement, and has the power to strengthen us. After listening to the words of this letter, the suffering saints would have turned to each other in a special way. Perhaps with tears they would have said to each other, "Peter and those with him, know what we are going through and genuinely cares for what is happening to us."

Peace is a wonderful way to conclude a letter that is written in times of persecution. Those in Christ can have peace. Those who do not know Christ will have "no peace." Peter was one who paid the price of faithfulness with his life. The price we are called upon to pay at this present time and place may be to stand for our Lord in faith by living with endurance, patience and courage in times of opposition, persecution and suffering.

1st Peter 5:11. "To him be glory and dominion for ever and for ever, Amen."

TO HIM BE GLORY AND DOMINION.

*The devil tried to have his way – to claim authority
But standing steadfast in the faith are God's people living victoriously
From voices raised in heart-felt praise their song ascends to God*

"To Him be glory and dominion – Jesus Christ is Lord!"

*From angel bands and distant lands there comes this song of praise
And from prison cells some voices join as the redeemed of the Lord do raise
Their words and thoughts to honor God from scenes in the dark of night
"To Him be glory and dominion – In Christ is purest light!"*

*Children sing as they too bring with sounds so sweet that swell
The chorus of the young to link with those who want to tell
The world above and here below the glories of God's grace –
"To Him be glory and dominion – Our Lord is, O so great!"*

*In quiet times of worship or when thousands join to sing –
Where those upon sick beds and those laboring hard to bring
Their praise and worship to the Lord in spirit and in truth –
"To Him be glory and dominion – Let praise for Him go forth!"*

*Sometimes it seems like there are so few, that praises go unnoticed
But then I stop to reconsider – everywhere these words are quoted
God is exalted, Christ is honored, the Spirit has His way –
"To Him be glory and dominion – Christ reigns eternally!"*

"O God of glory and victory: to Thee I give my voices and words; my body and my spirit; my strengths and labors; my thoughts and intentions; any lessons learned and those yet to learn – that in some little way, the Lord Jesus Christ may be honored forever. Amen."

1st Peter 5:12. *"By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying, that this is the grace of God wherein ye stand."*

A FAITHFUL BROTHER.

*Is he the same man who with Paul sang Gospel songs in the night?
If so on his body too would be marks showing he was strong in the fight
To bring the Gospel to sinners and nurture those who God saved
He was faithful in helping one brother; now to others he is faithful to serve.*

*To be second or third is not easy for one who wants glory for self
But second or third are still usable when he who wants first is shelved.
The difference between serving God truly and looking like a winner to men –
Is one has brief honor on earth, and the other, has treasure in heaven.*

*When a man God has chosen, picks you to help with the burdens he bears
It is really the Holy Spirit who chooses the one in that labor to share.
To be faithful in serving is the highest calling one on earth can get –
The Lord Jesus came here to serve, but on earth His glory is not yet.*

*The Lord and the servant in heaven, are recognized to be laborers together –
And in a coming day both will receive honor when the nations of earth all gather.
The Master will be seated on His throne, the servant will His bidding do –
Silvanus who served Paul and Peter, will be known as serving Jesus too.*

*Faithful brothers and sisters who labor in service will gain a servant's reward.
Those unrecognized by many, will have true recognition from God.
The man who carried a letter, the sisters who night-watches did keep –
The ones who went forth with the Gospel are joined by those keeping the sheep.*

*Through each one's faithful service on earth, is reflected God's marvelous grace –
And whatever labor the service expended will bring glory when we see His face.
All the believers who have been blessed by your efforts will join together with you –
The "Well done good and faithful servant," will be God's "Amen" to what you now do.*

"Bless the labors of the faithful brothers and sisters, O God I pray. Give them the quiet satisfaction of doing just what you want them to do. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 5:13. *"The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son."*

CONNECTIONS.

*Remarkable things happen because of God's grace –
People come to know each other without seeing their face.
Word gets out that some unknown people have believed –
There's rejoicing when we hear Christ has been received –
By others in some town we didn't know existed –
Where some faithful servants stopped as the Spirit insisted
There were some in that place He had convicted of sin –
And though not known to the messenger, they were known to Him.*

*Now there's a gathering of believers "outside the camp,"
And the approval of God upon them is stamped.
When they learn there are others who believe God like them –
They appreciate hearing that and new fellowship begins.
They pray across the miles most of them will never travel –
And the mystery of the church begins to unravel.
They get the big picture of what God is doing in the world –
And the banner of "love for one another" now is unfurled.*

*Individuals and assemblies of Bible-believing saints –
Can share through prayer what each is up against.
Victories can be shared and sometimes problems that perplex
So those who are older can help younger know what to expect.
A fellowship based on God's Word begins to develop –
And strength that comes from sharing that work does envelop.
For the duration of life and a work for God being done –
These connections are maintained out of love for God's Son.*

"Father God, the salutations that come from time to time from distant places is a great joy to me. To hear about El Barril or Chikokiloti is as important in some ways as hearing from English Point or Gander Bay. Remember the saints in those places like El Valle or Santa Tecla or Grants Pass – and give them joy in knowing they are not alone. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

1st Peter 5:14. *"Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen."*

A KISS OF LOVE.

*I have heard of "the kiss of betrayal" and "the kiss of death"
And want to stay as far from those as I possibly can.
But there is another that is a kiss most holy –
It is the greeting of assurance you can count on this man.*

*When you see them coming toward you it lightens your step
You know that this person is one that is true.
Their interest is genuine they know what is good –
And want the blessing of God to rest upon you.*

*There is no subtlety, no deceptive intentions –
They smile and there is evidence of love on their face.
The "embrazzo" or handshake or kiss on the cheek –
Is evidence that God through them is showing His grace.*

Accompanying that greeting when coming or going –

*Is a peaceful intent that gives strength to your feet.
How important it is to others the same as to me –
That they sense the same intention when I them do greet.*

*It may seem a same thing to those who don't know better –
That a greeting of arrival or leaving is important.
There are some things that can't be faked by them or me –
A "kiss of charity" is an act of spiritual deportment.*

"Father, Peter was certainly a man You could use. How he must have delighted Thee as he went from place to place speaking of Thy Son and his love for the Lord. As he got older, he was used especially for the saints it seems, because he had suffered too. Is this an area of service I should consider more as I get older? Guide me I pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

