

1st Peter Introduction and Chapter 1- John Karmelich

1. As Christians, we're supposed to have joy at all times. The bible teaches that we should be joyful always. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4 NIV)
 - a) Yet, how do you do that practically? How do you have joy during the rough times of life? How do we have joy in pain? (Now there's a nice, easy way to begin a study! ☺)
 - b) The Hebrew word for "joy" is a picture to "jump up and down with excitement".
 - c) Well that's all well and good, but what about the practical aspects? For example:
 - i) Why does God allow me to suffer so much? How do I have joy then?
 - ii) If Christians are supposed to have joy at all times, what about when I'm in real pain, or in financial trouble, or one of my closest friends is really sick? How do you expect me to have this joy during such times?
 - iii) The answer is we are supposed to grieve during difficult times. God does not expect us to deny the reality of any given moment and artificially be happy.
 - d) Joy in tough times has to do with having the "eternal perspective" during such times.
 - i) One of the main purposes of 1st Peter is to have hope.
 - ii) Hope is defined as "A wish or desire accompanied by confident expectation of its fulfillment" (American Heritage Dictionary).
 - iii) I emphasize "confidence" because that is what Peter is trying to preach through this letter. It is the idea that we are confident that God has called us, saved us, and God allows difficult times to happen to us in order to mature us as believers. God allows difficult situations ultimately for His glory. We may not know why we are going through such issues, but God does and it is for His purposes.
 - e) My point here is that having a "confident hope" in our salvation, the fact that God has a wonderful, eternal plan for our life, gets our focus off of our problems, and unto God. That should bring us an internal joy despite our external circumstances.
 - f) Peter wrote this letter to Christians going through, and about to go through horrible situations that make your life and my life look like a walk in the park. Peter does not preach to have a pity party. Peter focuses on the eternal hope that is our salvation. That is why 1st Peter was written.
2. Speaking of which, welcome to my study of 1st Peter. Let's get some fundamentals out of the way and then we'll dive into chapter one.
 - a) Let's start with the "who". We know it was written by Peter the apostle. The first verse of the letter says so. When the early church was trying to decide which letters were genuine versus counterfeit, 1st Peter and 2nd Peter were pretty well recognized. These letters had much less controversy than others.
 - b) The only "doubters" bring up the point that this is eloquent Greek and Peter was essentially a fisherman. Peter's native language was probably Aramaic. This is a "cousin" language to Hebrew, which was the common language of 1st Century Israel. Greek was also a common language, but a secondary language.
 - i) The answer to that question is that 1st Peter was written roughly 30 years after Jesus was resurrected. Peter had time to get more education. Further, the letter was cowritten by Silvanus (or Silas in some translations, 1st Peter 5:12), which was a Greek name. He could have proofread the original letter.
 - c) Next, let's talk about the "when": Most scholars date the letter about 64AD.
 - i) This was over 30 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus.
 - ii) When you read the Gospels, we know more about Peter's personality than any other disciple. Peter was the spokesman for the disciples. He had a boldness to speak whatever was on his mind, whether it was the correct thing to say or not.

- a) The classic joke about Peter was, “The only time Peter opened his mouth was to change feet”. Peter was a “shoot first, ask questions later” guy.
- iii) We are now reading of Peter thirty years later. This is born-again Peter. This is a seasoned, mature, older Peter. This is the Peter that has spent the last thirty years or so as a living witness for Jesus Christ.
- iv) The Roman Emperor at this time was Nero. History records that Nero burned Rome so he could rebuild it even greater than it was. When word got out that Nero ordered this fire, he needed a scapegoat. He blamed the Christians. A great persecution began as ordered by Nero. Some persecution happened prior to this event, but this specific event set off a wave of persecution against the church. This started soon after Peter’s letter was in circulation. That is important to understand in light of Peter’s discussion of “having hope in rough times”.
- d) Next, let’s talk about the “why”: Let’s start with a prophecy Jesus made to Peter:
 - i) Jesus said, “I (Jesus) tell you (Peter) the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!” (John 21:18-19 NIV)
 - a) The point here is that Jesus told Peter that when he was old, he would be crucified. Anyone living in the Roman world at that time understood that the phrase “stretch out your hands” refers to crucifixion.
 - b) Imagine living your life knowing that one day you were going to suffer tremendously at your deathbed by crucifixion!
 - c) How does one have hope and joy knowing “that” is around the corner?
 - ii) If you are sick or in pain and a stranger tells you to “Cheer up, it’s going to be ok”, you’re first reaction is usually to insult that person, and say, “Excuse me, what do you know about what I’m going through?”
 - a) Comfort during rough times best comes from someone going through the same thing or has gone through the same thing. When you and I are hurting, we are more likely to listen to someone who has “been there” and take their advice more seriously.
 - b) Peter survived thirty years of Christianity, despite the fact that he was beaten, thrown in prison and saw his brother Andrew be killed King Herod. (All of this is discussed in the Book of Acts)
 - c) Peter also knew that he too was destined to die one day at the hands of the Romans. Imagine walking though life knowing that was your final destiny here on earth! That is why Peter was “picked” to write a letter about hope. Peter was “qualified” to write it! He wrote about “hope during suffering” as one who truly understood what this topic was all about.
- e) The last issue to deal with is the “where”. Where was this letter written?
 - i) Chapter 5, Verse 13 says the letter was written from Babylon. That city did exist, and it was in what-is-today part of Iraq. (Today it is essentially a village with some of the ancient ruins still in place.) It was hundreds of miles from Jerusalem.
 - ii) Scholars debate whether Peter was being literal or not about writing from Babylon.
 - iii) The “anti-literal-Babylon” argument is that there is no historical writings of Peter ever going to the City of Babylon. Some believe that “Babylon” was a code word for “Rome”. Peter wrote this letter primary to Jewish Christians. Jewish people knew that historically, the Babylonian Empire conquered Israel and made them scatter over the globe. In a similar way, Rome is causing a persecution to Christians and having them scatter. Since this letter was to be circulated, Peter needed to speak of the Roman persecution “in code”.

- iv) The “Pro-literal-Babylon” argument is that Babylon was still a thriving city at the time of Peter’s writing. There was a good size Jewish population living in Babylon. Paul said that Peter’s primary ministry was to the Jewish Christians (Galatians 2:7-9). Therefore, Peter was on a missionary trip to Babylon and picked this spot to write this letter.
 - v) There, now you decide which one is right. ☺ I lean toward the literal view, but we’ll just have to ask Peter one day.
 - f) OK, enough introduction. Let’s go on to chapter 1.
3. Chapter 1, Verse 1: Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,
- a) Well, if you have any doubt about who wrote this letter, it should end right there.
 - b) When we write letters today, we usually say “Dear so-and-so, then write the text of the letter and sign our name. In that culture, the order is different. First, you state your name, then who the letter is to, and then the text of the letter. All of the New Testament letters follow this style of writing.
 - c) Remember that Peter’s original name was Simon. Peter was a new name given to him by Jesus (Matthew 16:18). The word Peter means “little stone”. Jesus point in Matthew is that Jesus himself is the foundation of the church, and Peter himself was chosen to be the first “little stone” to be added to a “stone structure” that is the Christian church.
 - d) Peter specifically choose to call himself “Peter” here and not Simon. (Occasionally you will read of Paul referring to Peter as “Cephas”, which is the Aramaic translation of Simon. The word “Cephas” may have been his original name as Simon is a Greek name.)
 - e) My point here is that we read of Peter having “boldness” in his new name in Christ.
 - i) One of the themes that will be developing over the next set of verses is how we are “chosen” by God and are “in God’s hands”. That is a subtle reason why Peter choose his new name as opposed to the name he was born with.
4. Verse 1 (cont.): To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood:
- a) The first part of Verse 1 was the “who” the letter was from. The remainder of Verse 1 and Verse 2 are about who the letter is written to.
 - b) The letter was written to specific Christians in locations in Asia Minor. This territory is part of modern Turkey. The point here was the letter was designed to be circulated.
 - c) Notice the letter spends very little time talking about the “literal” aspect of who the letter is written to and spends a lot of time talking about the “personality traits” of those the letter is written to.
 - d) My point is we are not to read this letter and think, “Well, this letter is written to a bunch of people in cities I’ve never heard of. Why should I take it seriously?”
 - e) If you look at the characteristics of the people Peter was writing to, we need to say, “Wait a minute, that is describing my life as a Christian. Therefore, this letter does apply to me as well as a bunch of people who died over 2,000 years ago!
 - f) The specific terms used to describe these Christians include “strangers of this world”, chosen by God, the work of the Spirit, obedience to Jesus, etc. My point is to notice the terms and understand that if we have committed our lives to serving Jesus these terms apply to us. With that understood, we can now talk about the “specific’s” of these terms.
 - g) Let’s start with the phrase, “strangers in the world”. The original Greek word implies “dispersion”. It implies one who is driven out of their homeland and is now strangers in a strange land.

- i) One of the concepts of Christianity is that we are “in, but not of the world”. Our home is in heaven. (John 17:13-21). The idea is once we realize that we belong to Jesus, we live for Him. We live to live a life pleasing to him. We are to no longer conform how the “world” (non-believers) live, but to conform to how the bible teaches us to life. In that sense, we are to be “strangers in this world”.
- h) The next term Peter uses to describe believers is “chosen”.
 - i) Let’s start with the idea that God is perfect. If God is perfect, He cannot learn anything. (See Isaiah 46:10). Therefore, if God is all-knowing, then He knows in advance who will choose Him for salvation and which people out of their own free-will, will not choose him. We as people are not all knowing, therefore, we don’t know who will choose God, but God does know.
 - a) The “dilemma” then becomes, “If God knows all in advance, is that fair? How do I know that God choose me?” The correct answer is to declare your allegiance to Jesus and then you’ll know that God picked you. ☺
 - b) A point to understand is that God is greater than we are, and we as humans cannot fully comprehend the balance between an “an all-knowing God” and one who allows free-will. Personally, I find that debate boring. I simply accept the fact that God is smarter than I am and I trust his judgment in the balance between pre-destiny and free-will. Since I don’t know who’s “in” and who’s “out”, my job is to be a witness to all people.
 - ii) Now that I’ve gotten that out of my system, ☺ Peter’s point is a different one.
 - a) Peter’s point is since we are chosen by God, take comfort in that fact.
 - b) Peter’s theme is about giving comfort to those who are hurting. The first thing we need to realize is that we are chosen by God. Again, if you’re not sure, declare your allegiance to Jesus as God, accept His payment of your sins, and change your life accordingly to what the bible teaches and then you can know you are chosen by God.
 - c) If God is a god of perfect love, and since God choose us, then God must have a wonderful plan for our eternal destiny. Further, God wants to mature us and prepare us on earth for that destiny. Therefore, we must begin by comprehending that we are chosen by God, and therefore we are “strangers” to any alternatives this world has to offer.
- i) The next phrase to describe Christians is “through the sanctifying work of the Spirit”.
 - i) Let’s start with a brief discussion of the Holy Spirit. You can’t find a section in the bible titled, “Let me tell you all about the Holy Spirit. Here is His role, function, and purpose”. Because of that, we look for references here and there, and put it together to understand The Holy Spirit.
 - ii) The Christian view is that the Spirit of God is a separate “entity” from God the Father, but is still “one” with God. You cannot find the word “Trinity” in the bible. That word was coined by the church after studying the whole bible and coming to the conclusion that there were “three entities that make up God, each is separate, but each is the same”. The Hebrew word for God is “El-o-him”. That word is plural-compound; the same way “one nation” is a plural compound.
 - iii) The reason there is no direct chapter on the Holy Spirit is because His job is not to draw attention to Himself, but to God the Father and to God the Son. His job is to convict people of their sins and draw them closer to God. His job is to help mature us in our faith toward God.

- a) Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." (John 14:15-17 NKJV).
- b) Jesus point is that believers "have" the Spirit of God, a.k.a., "Holy Spirit" working within us to draw us closer to God.
- iv) This leads us back to Peter's statement. The word "sanctifying" or sanctification implies to "set apart". If I had a specific plate in my kitchen that was for the exclusive use of my wife and no one else, I have "sanctified" that plate for my wife. The idea here is that since we are chosen by God, we are "set apart" from the world to be with God forever. Further, we are "set apart" by the Spirit so that the Spirit can mature us in our faith toward God.
- j) Peter then says we are to be "Obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood".
 - i) If you are "set apart" by the Spirit of God, the question becomes, "What are we set apart to do?" The answer is to live in obedience to Jesus.
 - ii) What does the "by his blood mean?" That refers to the fact that the shedding of his blood was necessary for the forgiveness of sins. (See Hebrews 9:22). God's requirements for sins are the same in the Old Testament as the well as the New Testament. It is that the shedding of innocent blood must be given to atone for sin.
 - iii) The reason God required an animal sacrifice in the Old Testament is to show the "sinner" that by killing an innocent animal, you learn that innocent people get hurt by our sins. That practice was also designed to be a prophecy for Jesus.
 - iv) A "perfect" sacrifice must be done to actually eliminate sin as opposed to just "cover" sin. The Old Testament sacrifices were designed to cover sin. For example, if you got a stain on a white wall, you could paint the wall white again and the stain would be "covered". That is the idea of the animal sacrifices.
 - v) The actual removal of the sin is another story. If God is perfect, he requires that we be perfect to spend eternity with Him. (If God allows "imperfect" people in heaven, God is not being perfect in His justice toward sin. Therefore, the removal of sin required a perfect sacrifice. That is why God himself had to be sacrificed.
 - vi) The illustration I always liked is the concept of how, "How does God reconcile "perfection in love" and "perfection in judgment"? If God forgives us, He is not perfect in judgment. If God judges us for some sin we are guilty of, He is not being perfect in forgiveness (love). The only reconciliation is for God-himself to pay the price for sins.
 - a) (That is why Christians reject the Mormon and Jehovah Witness teaching that Jesus is somehow "lower" than God the Father. If Jesus was "lower" than God, then God himself is not paying the price for our sins. That does not reconcile the dilemma of a perfect loving/forgiving God with a perfect judging God.)
- k) Back to the point. If we are chosen by God, if we are "set apart" by the Sprit of God", what are we set apart "to do? The answer is obedience to Jesus Christ.
 - i) That starts with accepting Jesus payment for our sins.
 - ii) In a sense it "ends there". If you simply do that, and do it sincerely, there is nothing else. There is a separate issue of maturity as a believer. If you read through all of the New Testament, more time is spent teaching how to grow and mature as a believer than the fundamental gospel message. My point is the basic Gospel message is "it alone" and at the same time, "there is more to it".
 - iii) To grow in maturity is to live a life in obedience to all Jesus taught.

- l) Unfortunately, we' haven't finished Verse 2 yet. I'm getting way behind here. ☺
5. Verse 2, (cont.): Grace and peace be yours in abundance.
- a) This was a greeting that was common Paul's letters and now here in Peter's letter.
 - b) Grace refers to unmerited ("unearned") favor or blessings by God. Grace must come first in order to have peace with God.
 - c) The point here is that once we understand the "concepts" of our salvation as listed in verse one and two, then and only then can we comprehend the grace and peace that God desires to bestow upon us as stated in the last sentence of Verse 2.
 - d) Believe it or not, we actually made it Verse 3. ☺
6. Verse 3: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.
- a) Verse 3 tells us to praise God. Verses 3a-5 tell us why we are to praise God!
 - b) Before I dive into a phrase-by-phrase commentary, remember what is Peter's motivation for writing this. He is dealing with "pain". He is writing to people who are facing a death sentence for believing in Jesus. (And you thought you had problems! ☺) This whole letter is about having hope during such time. That hope brings joy and internal peace from within. Peter is teaching about getting our minds, hearts and our bodies to be heavenly-focused instead of fear-focused.
 - c) This paragraph opens with the praise of God. Next time you or me are having a pity party for one, start to praise God. Praise God for the past times that He has rescued us out of situations. Praise God to remember that all of "this" is temporary in comparison to eternity in heaven. Praise God because He loves us and has a purpose for whatever situation we are going through.
 - d) Notice in Verse 3 the expression, "new birth".
 - i) This is Peter's way of saying we are born again. I take the view that all Christians have two birthdays. The day we are physical born, and the day we mentally or verbally made a decision to dedicate our life to follow Jesus. "New birth" implies a new life. Peter is teaching how once we make that commitment, we are asking our inner-self to "move over, God's moving in". For the remainder of our lives, we struggle to let God control every aspect of our lives in order to mature us and prepare us for eternal life.
 - e) Next, notice the phrase "living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead". This is the emphasis that Jesus is alive. Peter states the fact (not the theory) that Jesus is alive. Peter was an eyewitness to that fact. Now it is thirty years later and Peter is preaching what he saw with his own eyes.
 - f) The next phrase is about our inheritance. This is about our heavenly rewards. Peter says it cannot "perish, spoil or fade". As long as we are trusting in Jesus, we can't lose. That reward is there. Yes, the "amount" of reward is based on our faithfulness, but Peter is talking about the fundamentals that we are saved.
 - i) Remember Peter's audience: They secretly meet in caves in order to go to church. Any stranger is a potential spy for the Roman government. Telling a stranger about Jesus could get you killed. Peter is saying to them and saying to us, "Look, it's worth it. Yes, it's difficult and yes, it is painful. Peter is emphasizing the fact that all of this is "true" and all of it is worth it.

- ii) We may not be facing a death sentence, but most adults understand suffering. Unfortunately, it comes with life. Peter is saying to you and to me in effect, "Yes, this is difficult. I'm not trying to play down the suffering you're going through. I'm trying to teach you how to have joy during such times. Remember that no matter how bad it is, eternity is a lot longer than any time frame you have here. I'm not condoning suicide, as that is a violation of the commandment to not murder. All I'm saying is that the eternal rewards and your hope in Jesus is "worth" all that you're going through now."
 - g) The next phrase is "who through faith are shielded by God's power".
 - i) First of all, the bible teaches that God will not allow us to suffer more than we can bear (1st Corinthians 10:13). God does not tempt us (James 1:13), but God does test us (Exodus 16:4, Deut. 8:2, et.al.) in order to mature us as believers.
 - ii) You also have to remember that God allows Christians to be killed. Why? Because if people could just be Christians for the "fringe benefits" they are coming to God not out of love or a need for forgiveness, but out of the seeking of rewards or protection. So what is the "shield" all about? It is the fact that God's loving hand is always there. He is looking out for the best for us. If God is allowing a horrible thing to happen, the purpose is ultimately for His glory.
 - h) The last phrase is "power until the coming of the salvation..."
 - i) Peter was waiting for the rapture! This is about waiting for the return of Jesus. Our focus as Christians should always be toward Jesus. Not only toward what He did 2,000 years ago, but also to the future day that he returns. Won't most of us die before that happens? It doesn't matter. Either way, once we are "absent from the body", we are to be present with God (See 2nd Corinthians 5:8).
7. Verse 6: In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.
- a) Tying the last group of verses together, Peter is saying, "Look folks, yes what is going on is terrible. I'm not playing down you're suffering. If anything, I'm trying to get your hope up. The way to have joy during such trials is getting your focus on the eternal perspective. I know it's tough to comprehend that a god you've never seen is real, but take it from me (Peter) who has personally witnessed it all that Jesus is alive, He is preparing a place for you in heaven for all eternity and He is coming back for you." That hope brings us joy during whatever suffering God is allowing us to go through, ultimately for His glory. This idea is summarized by Verse 6.
 - b) Notice the phrase, "In this you greatly rejoice". This is our hope. This is our internal relief from troubles. This is our focus.
 - c) I'm not preaching against avoiding the aspirin. ☺ God blessed us with doctors and hospitals and we should use whatever means are at our disposal. Medicine can help heal our bodies, but we need God to heal our hearts. Peter is preaching about attitude during such times.
 - d) I like the phrase "a little while". When things are bad, we are convinced they are going to go on that way forever. The pain makes us pessimistic and think it will never get better. If you like, I recommend underlining that phrase "a little while" in your bible. It is a reminder that whatever "it" is, it is temporary.
 - i) Try to visualize one hundred years. Try to visualize a thousand years. Now keep going until you can't think that far in the future. Consider that in relevance to whatever you are going through.

8. Verse 7: These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- a) If you don't get anything else out of this lesson, learn the fact that what you and I are going through has a purpose. That purpose is to give praise, glory and honor to Jesus.
 - b) Now, here's the "rub": We may not know why we are going through such trials. God never promises us that He will reveal to us why He allows these things to happen. God just promises to believers that all "things" that happen to us eventually glorify God.
 - i) That is the idea behind Romans 8:28 which says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (NIV). Notice this verse mentions nothing about God revealing to us about why these things happen, just that they work for good for God.
 - ii) I always liked Chuck Swindoll's illustration on this point. He said that when we get to heaven, the only words we're going to get out of our mouth is "Oh". For example, "Lord, why did you allow this to happen? Oh. Lord what about this and that?" Oh. And what about such and such? Oh."
 - iii) One of the points of the book of Job is that Job himself is never told why he had to suffer. We as the reader know the reason (to test him, as implied in Chapter 2), but Job never knows. In the last few chapters of Job, when God answers Job's questions about why he went through the questions, God answered in effect, "Excuse me, where were you when I made the heavens and the earth? Who are you to question my motives?" The point is God is in charge and we are not. If God chooses to reveal to us why we go through specific trials, it is His prerogative. God is under no obligation to tell us the reason he allows trials in our lives. All we are told is that it does happen for His glory.
9. Verse 8: Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,⁹ for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.
- a) Peter is stating the fact that we have a joy over a God we never see. Notice the phrase, "You have not seen him, you love him". It is the reminder that we have joy serving a God that we have not seen. Verse 9 speaks of the rewards of serving a God we have never seen, which is our salvation.
 - b) It's kind of funny to think about the fact that we are in love with a guy we've never seen. We serve a God that we've never seen eye to eye, never shook His hand, and never had God audibly speak to us. We've never had a burnish bush, a sea parting nor had our glass of water turned into wine. ☺
 - c) As for me, God reached out to me first, when I was pretty much minding my own business. All I did was respond. My "miracle" is how much my life is different and my behavior is different, and I have an inner joy no matter what happens in my life.
 - d) I find that most people don't come to God through "logic". There are relatively few people who diligently study the bible and come to the conclusion this is true. In most cases, people are told some facts about the Gospel message and then come to believe it. At that point, they desire to learn more about God and start studying the bible. This point is relevant here as Peter is talking about growing in maturing in faith in a God we accept by faith, and not some visible "facts" in our life. In turn, once we accept those facts, once we take that "leap of faith", then is when God starts to work in our lives and we begin to see the evidence of the reality of God's existence.

10. Verse 10: Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.
- a) Peter is saying that the Old Testament writers would read their own stuff and try to figure out what it meant! (I have this problem when I proofread! ☺) For example, Isaiah Chapter 53 speaks of a suffering Messiah to come. There are many references in Isaiah to a ruling Messiah (Chapter 60) Peter is teaching that such writers couldn't reconcile the concept of a suffering Messiah with other predictions that teach of a reigning Messiah.
 - i) I've heard a sermon by a prominent Orthodox Jewish rabbi that believes there will be two Messiah's to come one day. (He called one "Messiah Ben Joseph" and the other "Messiah Ben David". One is to suffer like Joseph in Genesis and the other is to reign like King David). This is a Jewish view and not "the" view. My point is you can read the Old Testament and come to that conclusion. He couldn't reconcile the idea that the same Messiah comes twice!
 - b) Peter is teaching that the Old Testament prophets were not given full knowledge that the Messiah is to come twice. Why doesn't the Old Testament bluntly say the Messiah is to come twice? Part of the answer is God wanted it to be a mystery and the "church" to figure it out. For example, look at Paul's comment in Romans on this topic:
 - i) "Now to him (God the Father) who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him." (Romans 16:25-26 NIV)
 - ii) Paul is saying in Romans what Peter is saying in 1st Peter. It is the idea that the Old Testament prophets were given "clues" as to God's redemptive plan for mankind, but were not given the privilege to fully comprehend it.
 - iii) One of the best analogies I know about Old Testament bible predictions is that it is often like seeing a mountain range out in the distance. When you see a mountain range, you may not see a great valley between some of those mountains. That "valley" represents a long time span. This is why many predictions about Jesus First and Second Comings are often intertwined in the same sentence.
 - iv) With all of this "in mind", I'd like to encourage you to go re-read the last few verses of 1st Peter. Hopefully, the verses will make a little more sense once you comprehend the fact that the Old Testament writers didn't fully comprehend what they were predicting about Jesus first and second comings.
 - v) It may help to remember that just as Jesus' first coming wasn't a one-moment event but covered a good time span. So is The Second Coming. The predictions and events tied to Jesus Second Coming represent a set period of time and not a single moment.
11. Verse 12: It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.
- a) Peter is continuing his commentary about how much or how little the Old Testament prophets comprehended. The key phrase is "they were not serving themselves but you". These writers were writing for the benefit of future believers even more so than their immediate audience.

- b) It would probably help at this point to stop and comprehend the big picture about the bible itself. The bible is a collection of 66 books written over thousands of years. About 30% of the bible is predictions given to validate the bible as the Word of God. Let's say all of the bible was written by one guy at one time. There would be much more doubt about its authentic and accuracy. However, if you had a collection of writers over a thousand years writing on the same topics with the same degree of accuracy, it validates the whole book as being God inspired.
- i) The bible is a lot like a jigsaw puzzle. One can only see the whole picture once the whole puzzle is put together. Each Old Testament writer was given "a piece of the puzzle". It wasn't until the entire bible was put together that we can fully comprehend God's redemptive plan for mankind through Jesus Christ.
- c) Meanwhile, back to Peter. ☺ The last sentence of Verse 12 says, "Even angels long to look into these things." Peter's point is not only did the Old Testament prophets not fully comprehend the facts, but neither do the angels!
- i) What we know of angels comes from studying bits and clues throughout the bible. One thing that is implied here is that angels are not "all-knowing". Angels can travel in and out of time as we know it, but they are not all-knowing.
- ii) God does not reveal all knowledge to us at once. For one thing, we couldn't handle all of it at once. God reveals things to us in pieces so that at each step we can give thanks to God for His "victories" in our lives. I believe, but can't prove, that God does the same thing for angels as well. The angels can praise God by watching our lives and watching how God ultimately "wins victories" in the world by people who have faith in him. I believe that is Peter's point about how angels desire to see what we as believers are doing.
12. Verse 13: Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- a) Peter changes tones in Verse 13. Everything up to Verse 13 is about all the wonderful things God has done for us and will do for us. Verse 13 is saying, "OK folks, since God has all of these wonderful things in store for us, now what do we do? How do we deal with all of our suffering? How do we "wait" for God to come?"
- b) Peter starts with "prepare your minds for action". This is a paraphrase. The literal translation means "gird up your minds". Remember the 1st Century Jews wore long robes. To run fast, they would gird (tie up) their robes high so they could run. Peter is using a similar word picture about "preparing" our mind to be focused on God.
- c) OK John, that's neat. How do we focus on God all the time? Does that mean we can't watch television or talk to anyone because we have to focus on God all the time? ☺
- i) Of course not. It does involve a commitment. For example, if you are married, it doesn't mean you think about your spouse every moment of every day, but it does mean you are committed to that person and spend a lot of time ministering to their needs and building your relationship. The same idea applies to God. A commitment to God requires regular time spent with Him.
- ii) Peter's comments focus on an act of discipline. He says "prepare for action, be self-controlled". There is a sense of self-discipline required to be a Christian. Don't let that term scare you. It just means to spend regular time with God. It means forming good habits. The motivation should never be "I have to do this", but I "want" to do this. If you love someone, you want to spend time with them. The same principal applies to our relationship with God. This has to be balanced with the concept that we don't make a "little god" out of self-discipline in that we are dependant upon our strength to be a good Christians as opposed to God himself.

- d) Peter then says, “Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.” I emphasize the word “is”. When we first were saved, God’s grace was revealed to us. When Jesus comes back for us, despite the fact we still sin after we are saved, God’s grace and mercy still save us and we are called into heaven. In the meantime, God’s grace through Jesus is being revealed to us, moment-by-moment as we live our daily lives in obedience to His will.
13. Verse 14: As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."
- a) Here is the “high point” of the chapter. Let me paraphrase Peter: “Before you were born again, you pretty much lived for whatever whim popped into your head. It was all about glorifying yourself and living for whatever pleasure you could think of. You walked away from that stuff because you now understand that nothing in life ever really satisfies you and further, there is a redemptive plan for our lives. Now we focus on the eternal life as a way of living our life here on earth. God is holy. That means, “separate”. It is the idea of separating ourselves. It is similar to the term “sanctification”; holy means sanctified or set apart for God’s purposes. Since we are set apart by God to live in eternity with Him, we need t live our lives for Him.
- b) To be “holy” is not to walk around with special robes and be pious. It is about living our lives for God. It is to regularly judge our actions and see whether or not they are pleasing to God. It is about praying regularly for God’s will to be done in your life. It is about examining our lives to see if we are living a life pleasing to God. It is about reading the bible and see if are lives are conforming to God. Then and only then can we “go about our business”. It is similar to the expression, “Love God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength, and then go do whatever you want”. That is living the “holy life”.
- c) OK, but what about when I mess up? The answer is to seek forgiveness and ask God to help you live in conformity to His will. Accept the fact by faith you are forgiven.
- d) The next question is, “What do I do with the rotten thoughts floating around my head?” Paul answers that question:
- i) “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2 NIV)
- ii) Notice the similarity between Paul’s comments here and Peter’s preaching about being separate from the world and being “holy”. “Renewing the mind” is when those thoughts come to “give them to God” as opposed to acting upon them. For example, “Lord, right now I’m thinking of something that I know is not pleasing to you. I give you that thought. Help me to act in a way that is pleasing to You.
14. Verse 17: Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.
- a) I’ve stated many times that God’s judgment is in two phases. One is whether or not we accept Jesus or not. The second phase is based on how we acted with that knowledge. Our rewards in heaven are based on our actions. That is the judgment Peter has in focus here. As for nonbelievers, they will be judged based on what knowledge they did have about Jesus and God the Father and how they acted on that knowledge. (This is the idea behind much of Romans Chapter 1.)
15. Verse 18: For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.
- a) Everybody worships something. Find out where a person spends their free time and disposable income, and you will find their “god”. Many people make a god out of “stuff”. It is like the bumper sticker that says, “He who dies with the most toys wins”.

- b) This ties to Peter's point that we were not redeemed (saved) with things like silver and gold. This goes back to the idea of the perfect-judgment for our sins. We are guilty of sin and need to pay the price for sins. A perfect-judgment must be rendered. This is why God himself had to pay the price for sins. We can't be "bought off" with stuff God created, only with God himself. Again, this is why God himself had to pay the price for sins, not anything God created. This is another reason why Christians cannot accept the idea of Jesus being any lower in deity and equality than God the Father is.
 - c) The last part of Verse 19 emphasizes how Jesus is like "a lamb without blemish or defect." Let's make something very clear: Jesus never sinned, period. (See 2nd Corinthians 5:21). When Jesus came to earth, he was tested and tempted (Hebrews 2:18), but never sinned. This tells us it is not a sin to be tempted, only to act upon that temptation.
16. Verse 20: He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.
- a) The first phrase of Verse 20 sounds like God picked Jesus at random. It sounds like God the Father saying, "Ok, everybody line up, I've got to pick someone to be crucified." ☺
 - b) That is not what the verse means. Tie the first half the sentence with the second. It simply means that the "plan" for Jesus to die on the cross was planned prior to the creation of the world began.
 - c) This leads to the next question: Why didn't God reveal all of this to Adam and Eve? Why didn't God tell Adam and Eve after the fruit incident, "That's ok. You see, I'm going to send Jesus to die for your sins so you can spend eternity with me."
 - i) Part of the reason is that God needed to show man how much we need Him. It was centuries and centuries of failure to meet God's standards of right and wrong showed the need for Jesus to come. Further, all the predictions through the centuries help to validate who Jesus was. That is what Peter meant by the last words of this sentence "for your sake". The first Century believer was "lucky" enough to be around after Jesus was resurrected and they could comprehend the scope of the Old Testament writers. We as Christians have been "lucky" enough to be born at a time after the entire bible was complete and canonized that we can see the whole picture. It is amazing to think that God went to "all of this trouble" for our sake. All of this "time and trouble" by God shows how much he loves us.
17. Verse 21: Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.
- a) OK, now we have all of this knowledge. Now we comprehend the big picture. Because of all of this, now we have hope in God. Our knowledge of the Gospel message, our study of God's redemptive plan for mankind, all the evidence of the bible and history helps to strengthen our faith and hope in God.
 - b) This leads back to the opening topic of our suffering. The way we cope with pain, the way we deal with our suffering, is to apply that knowledge of God to our hearts and get our focus on what is really important.
18. Verse 22: Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. ²³For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.
- a) One of the great motivation tools for any leader is to give a standard to live up to. Imagine being a leader and telling those under you, "Since you all have this great skill to do this-and-that, let's go ahead and do this...." By complimenting those under you by stating what skills or knowledge they have, they believe it and act upon it.
 - b) Peter is giving us a standard to live up to here. Re-read these verses with that in mind.
 - c) Notice the specific command given by Peter in Verse 22: To love one another deeply from the heart. God reveals His love to us. We respond by offering our love back to God. If we have the love of God in us, we should "naturally" want to love others.

- i) To love one another is not to go around hugging strangers. Not that I have a problem with a good hug. ☺ The word for “love” is about putting others as a priority over yourself. It is to put someone’s else’s needs over your own. To love one another is to minister to someone else’s needs as a priority.
 - ii) Of course, there is a balance here. If we’re busy trying to help others, we’ll never get our laundry done. ☺ One can go overboard and commit to everyone who asks of you and kill yourself trying. One has to spend time alone with God in order to have the strength to serve others. Again, the key word is balance.
 - d) The point Peter is getting at is since God has called us, since we obey the truth of God’s word, since we have this love in our heart, the “natural output” of what we take in should be used to help minister to others.
19. Verse 24: For "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.
- a) The last two verses are a quote of Isaiah 40:6-8. Peter is stating, like Isaiah, that all the “things” of this world are temporary. Ask elderly people how fast life goes by, and they’ll say it was quick. Eternity is a lot longer. People live and die like grass and flowers in comparison to eternity. That is Peter’s point here. God goes on forever. God’s word stands the test of time forever.
 - b) Peter’s “big picture” is about how to have hope and joy during rough times. Peter is ending this chapter with the idea that no matter what we are going through, in comparison to eternity, the time span is “nothing”. It may not stop the pain, but it will give us perspective on our suffering in comparison to eternity. That brings us hope. That brings us eternally joy, no matter what we are going through.
20. Let’s pray: Father, we ask that we live the remaining days of our lives as pleasing to you. Help us to change moment by moment to live in accordance to Your Will. Root out the aspects of our lives that need to be changed. Help us to have the balance of doing “works” that are pleasing to You, but at the same time, realize that our dependence is on you and not on having the disciple to do such works. Guide us as we glorify You. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.