1 Peter 1:1-2
ELECT EXILES
Main Theme: Peter introduces the letter by announcing his authority and their identity. He is an apostle. They are elect exiles who are living life according to the redemptive plans of the Triune God.

ANCIENT LETTERS

Ancient letters always had a certain form. Like our emails, their letters included the identity of the sender and the recipient (at times, there was also a kind of extended subject line). Also like our emails which start with things like 'hi', there was a greeting before the main body of the letter. The Apostles transformed what was usually a customary secular greeting - 'I hope all is well with you' - into something spiritually profound. So, we will look at three things in this first study: (1) the identity of the sender (Peter), (2) the identity of the recipients (elect exiles), and (3) the greeting ('grace and peace').

FROM: PETER

Peter was the first person to grasp the true identity of Jesus. Jesus said that he would build his church on that 'rock' (the act of confession, not Peter himself). Peter writes this letter to re-emphasize that confession. It doesn't contain exciting, eye-witness stories about Jesus. Rather, it presents the basic Apostolic message of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Peter claims to be the author of the letter. Some scholars have doubted this, but there isn't enough evidence to reverse the claims of verse 1.

Peter says that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ. An apostle was like a highly trusted mailman delivering special letters from a King to his subjects. Only certain people were trusted to carry these letters from God to his people. Whereas Paul goes to great lengths to defend his apostolic authority in his letters, Peter feels comfortable just saying, 'an apostle of Jesus Christ' - his name carries that much weight (think: Steve Jobs in the computing world). Peter calls himself a 'fellow elder' in 5:1. Though an apostle, Peter identified with his people. He did not raise himself above God's people. He knew that he was not his own master, and that all the authority of his words were derived from his King: he was under strict orders to say only the things that Jesus taught.

APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY

Consider claims of people who say things like, "God told me ..." When pastors make precise predictions about Christ's return and give authoritative explanations for disasters like 9/11, most Christians can see through these bogus claims. But sometimes well-meaning Christians confidently assert that God told them to do certain things (go to seminary, head to the mission field, leave a church, sometimes even leave their wife). But we must always remember that there are no more apostles. That means that no one speaks for God in an authoritative way anymore.
The written witness of his chosen apostles is sufficient for us. And fortunately they are compiled for us in a wonderful book called the Bible.

TO: CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR

Peter was recognized as the leader of the early Jerusalem church. Acts 1-12 makes this clear. After the events of Acts 12, it is commonly believed that because of persecution in Jerusalem Peter was forced to go to Rome. On his way, he probably passed through northeastern Asia Minor and helped to establish churches. The core members of these churches were converted Jews who had become Christians at Pentecost (Acts 2:9) and then returned to their homeland with a desire to worship Christ corporately. Peter writes this letter to those churches. He writes from Rome. He says as much in 5:13 where he follows the apostolic practice of referring to Rome as 'Babylon'. 'Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia' lie along the southern corner of the Black Sea. Silvanus carried of the letter from Rome into this wild region. Interestingly, these are regions where Paul refused to go. The Holy Spirit told him to stay out of areas (Acts 16:6) that had already heard the gospel, presumably from Peter.

ELECT EXILES

Peter is not writing to an individual church (like Paul's letters to the Corinthians). He is writing to a group of churches (like Paul's letter to the Ephesians). Therefore, it doesn't contain much that pertains to the particular situations of each Asian church. It does, however, deal with a crisis (more below) that's plaguing all the churches of northeast Asia Minor. Peter encourages them all to believe the gospel in the midst of this crisis.

To that end, Peter identifies the people in these churches as 'elect exiles.' He is bestowing this identity upon them by pronouncing these words over them. Ed Clowney says that these two words encapsulate the essential identity of a Christian. On the one hand we are absolutely certain of our good standing before God. On the other hand we are strangers in the world. We can say to ourself: "Soul, you are chosen by God, a true child of Abraham. You are the subject of the true King. You are beloved by God. You are set apart for his service. You are his agent. Not because you are smart or strong or wise or attractive. But simply because God decided to love you." We can also say to ourself: "Soul, you are a resident alien because your true family is scattered all over this world. The reunion won't happen until your elder Brother gets back. You are a fish out of water here. You are Robinson Crusoe stranded on an island. Like Peter, you are in Babylon."

ELECT

The good news is that these (mostly) Gentiles have been chosen by God to have the same status as Jews. Throughout the letter Peter applies the language of God's people from the Old Testament (elect, holy, children, temple, living stones) to these young churches of new converts. They are not second-class believers, they are neither an afterthought nor a parenthesis in God's
plan. It is truly amazing grace that God would elect these people who had inherited the 'futile ways' (1:18) of their fathers. 'Gentile Christians' should always be shocked by the paradox of that title.

In Acts 11 Peter was shocked when God asked him to eat a meal in the household of a Gentile military officer named Cornelius. As a Jew, Peter would have been loath to enjoy a meal with people munching on unclean food (pork, shrimp, etc). But Peter was obedient and supped with Cornelius' household. Years after this breakthrough in Peter's mindset, he reverted to his old ways and refused to eat with Gentiles in Antioch. Paul rebuked him for this and in v.1 we see the fruit of his repentance.

It is likely that you, dear reader, are a Gentile. Have you ever considered how astounding it is that you would find yourself a part of God's family? Paul encouraged the Gentiles to be humble and grateful for their unlikely adoption. When such grateful humility begins to work in you, you will find yourself being less judgmental and distrustful of other racial, socio-economic, politically oriented groups. Grateful humility makes it easier to eat meals with people that you are inclined to disdain and reject.

EXILES

The bad news is about election is that it makes someone into an exile. The elect are no longer at home in this world, this Empire. The Empire is the futile way of life that is opposed to the Kingdom of God. The Empire fuels a complex of attitudes and impulses centered on idolatry, greed, arrogance, selfishness, and vanity. Israel had always been persecuted by the Empire precisely because she was elected by God. She was set apart as 'holy' - distinctively unlike the Empire. After the Empire had crushed her and ground her to powder, she was scattered all over the world (Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome). These scattered Israelites were called "The Dispersion." Notice that Peter applies this term to the churches of Asia as well (v.1).

To be an exile means to be a stranger in a strange land. You should expect to be viewed as a stranger. You should expected to be treated as an oddity. You will find yourself longing for a new home. Your native country is no longer your place of birth. You are passing through, an immigrant in America (or whatever country you live in). There is no such thing as home here on earth. Everything is tainted with exile here. Indulging in nostaligic memories ('country roads take me home') about one's past is a misplaced longing for one's real home in the World to come.

SUBJECT: GRACE AND PEACE

In spite of our homelessness, we are inhabited by the Three-Personed God. Peter asks, "according to what power or person or force could the likes of you Gentiles be elected?" He answers, "according to the Father's foreknowledge, the Spirit's sanctification, and the Son's blood." Theologians sometimes say, "the Father planned our salvation in eternity, the Son accomplished it in 33 AD, and the Spirit applies it today." Peter's prayer at the end of v.2 is a way of saying, "let this redemption come more fully. May the unmerited favor of God be clearer
and clearer to you. May you experience more of the deep peace that you have with all three persons of God. See how they work together to love you. Understand how long they have counseled to save you. See how arduous and painful was their exertion in saving you. And look now at how powerfully and divinely they work on you to transform you."
1 Peter Bible Study (chapters 1-3)

1 Peter 1:3-12
Main Theme: Peter immediately acknowledges the sufferings of his churches. He is straightforward with them about the persecution they are facing. But then there comes a magnificent trumpet blast where he announces to them the greatness of their inheritance. He ends by grounding that inheritance in the ancient visions of the prophets.

TRIALS (6)

In verse six we read, "you have been grieved by various trials". After Pentecost converted Jews went back to their home in Asia. Jews were already disliked by Gentiles. Now these Christians are disliked by Jews and Gentiles. The persecution of Emperor Nero had not started yet. The persecution mentioned in verse six is probably unofficial. The government isn't invading their homes, confiscating their property or burning their bodies. Rather they are being shunned in the marketplace. They are losing their jobs. They have been kicked out of the synagogue. They're good name has been tarnished. They are being maligned for not joining their old friends in their wild parties.

In America today Christians are not physically persecuted. However, becoming a Christian often means losing the favor of coworkers, neighbors, friends and family. The more serious we become about our faith, the more our old friends are likely to shun us. Some people will think that we have become too extreme, foolish, or even brainwashed. Perhaps you have taken a financial hit by being becoming a serious Christian. Maybe you can no longer join in the office politics. Maybe you've lost status in the community. Peter would call these "various trials."

To strengthen us in our trials, Peter talks about "the sufferings of Christ" in verse 11. He is helping us to see that our Lord and God endured the same sufferings that we endure. It always comforts me to hear a friend share their struggles because I know I'm not alone. How much more comforting to know that my God shares my struggles!

INHERITANCE (4)

Peter employs various phrases to describe our "inheritance". In verse 3 he calls it "a living hope". This hope is not an interior attitude. It is an external reality: "the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Though resurrection happened 2000 years ago, it is the basis of our inheritance. From deep inside Jesus' resurrection the New World erupted within our universe. It's not a miraculous anomaly within a materialistic universe. It is the first event of the New World which is "imperishable, undefiled and unfading" (4). It is the first bud of spring.

Peter uses the word salvation three times (5, 9, 10). Westerners tend to think of salvation individualistically. But the New World is much larger than a collection of individuals. Of course, the New World does include "the salvation of your souls" (9). But in verse 5 Peter speaks of "that final salvation which will be ready to be uncovered for you at the last time" (Williams translation). The phrase contains a hint of something very large and wonderful soon be unveiled, like a giant present under the tree on Christmas morning. Jesus has already gone to prepare the New World for us. In his father's house there are many rooms.
Peter wants his readers to fix their thoughts on this "living hope". It's alive in the same way that fire looks like it has a life of its own. Peter says that trials "test" our faith. This means that, like gold in an inferno, our lives are purified by suffering. We increase in beauty as pain and frustration burn away impurities and dross. Pure gold can't be broken down anymore. It's not like copper which corrodes. It can last for thousands of years. Gold seems about as imperishable as it gets. Peter says that our faith is so pure, lasting and beautiful that it makes gold look perishable. So as we pass through trials, it is critical that we remember that we are God's long-term building project. He is constructing a grand cathedral rather than throwing up a big-box store.

JOY (8)

The joy that Peter speaks of comes from "living hope". Christians rejoice because of two of the greatest events in history. First, "the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (3). Second, "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (7). The New World began to trickle into our world when Jesus defeated death. When Jesus comes back, the New World will inundate our world like a flood. The dam will break and fill the earth with "praise, honor, and glory" (7).

If the New World that Peter is describing really has started breaking into our world, we have every reason to be happy. If the "unveiling of Christ" (verse 7, Williams) is as good as Peter says it is, then we ought to be joyous no matter how deep our suffering. Worldly happiness is avoiding suffering or faking happiness in the face of tragedy. Christian joy is honestly weeping over tragedy while insisting on ultimate joy of Resurrection. Worldly happiness has to deny the facts. Christian joy insists on them. There are three peals of joyous thunder in this passage: ("blessed" in v.3, "rejoice" in v.6, "joy" in v.8). Verse 8 is particularly strong. It may be the strongest statement of joy in the entire bible. What is "joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory"? It is so great that it can't be put into words. I cannot understand the joy of a great piano player making beautiful music. He can't even explain it to me. Christians cannot put into words the joy that they sometimes feel. It is distinguished from circumstantial happiness by the fullness of glory. Glory is weighty and deep. "Full glory" is an abiding interior glow that persists through trials because of the absolutely certainty of the mighty well-being to come. What if you caught a glimpse of how bright your future was? Before Resurrection, the human race didn't know what was on the other side of death. It was terrifying. After the resurrection, the greatest terror has become the greatest occasion for joy. Imagine living even one hour of your day with no fear of death. Imagine living as if death were a prelude to resurrection. This is why Peter says that faith is "more precious than gold" (7).

PROPHETS (10-12)

Many of Peter's readers would, understandably, doubt his claims about the New World (for starters, that it even exists). Therefore Peter makes it clear that his message is not a recent spiritual innovation. To the ancients, antiquity was a mark of authenticity. We like the latest fad. They liked the oldest tradition. In verses 10-12 Peter is underlining the fact that Christianity is
actually very old with all the markers of ancient authenticity. He says that the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection was predicted by poets and seers like Moses, David, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. How did these writers foresee these recent events? How could they know about things that were centuries in the future? First, they "made careful investigations and persistent research about this salvation" (v.10 in Williams translation). Second, they were inspired: "the Spirit of the Christ within them pointed to" this salvation (v.11, Williams). So, Peter is affirming the agency of the human authors of scripture. Isaiah wasn't a keyboard that the Holy Spirit typed upon. In one sense, these prophets were like any writer - Dante, Shakespeare, Milton - who scratched their heads, erased words, and had writer's block. But in another deeper sense, Isaiah was literally inspired. He was carried along by the Holy Spirit. As Peter says in his second letter, "no prophecy of Scripture has ever yet originated in man's will, but men who were led by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2 Peter 1:21) So, the purpose verses 10-12 is to bolster the reader's confidence in the credibility of the New World.

If you are the type of person that has a hard time trusting the Bible, it is important to know that Peter anticipate your doubt. You are not alone. The New World does seem incredible. But it will help the skeptic to make careful investigation into the writings of the Hebrew Scriptures. Among religious texts, the Bible is outstanding because it can bear our scrutiny and persistent research. In fact, the Bible doesn't just bear our scrutiny, it asks for it.
1 Peter 1:13-21

HOLY PEOPLE

Main Theme: Peter turns from hope to ethics. Because of their great inheritance, the churches are supposed to act in a way that is completely different from the people around them. They are to be holy. In chapter 1 we encounter the 3 major themes of the letter: suffering, hope, and holiness.

THEREFORE (13)

This little word is extremely important in Christian ethics. It shows that Peter is grounding his call for action in God's redemption of his people. You see the same thing in verse 18. Peter says, 'conduct yourselves with fear… knowing that…' showing that his call to conduct is based on what they know about God's redemption. This pattern occurs throughout the letters of the New Testament. The practical point here is that we must obey God in a peculiar way. We must never think that we can obey God without him enabling us to do so. We cannot obey him out of our own moral strength. We can only obey him to the extent that we understand the Gospel. Belief in the gospel is the coal car that fuels the train of love. But we also have to be careful not to wait to obey him until we feel like we have a firm grasp on the gospel.

KERYGMA (18-21)

The earliest Christian preachers created an agreed upon set of propositions that summarized basic Christian beliefs. These "set pieces" ensured that their doctrine was unified. Verses 18 through 21 are probably a set piece that Peter simply dropped into his letter. He didn't invent it. It was formulated in conjunction with the other apostles. We call this the good news. The Greek word kerygma means proclaim or preach. Imagine Peter and Paul proclaiming this same basic creed, one in Athens and the other in Pontus. Different versions appear in the various letters, but there are always the same basic elements of cleansing from the past and hope for the future. In Peter's case we see both a ransom from futile ways by the blood of Christ and also the great hope of the resurrection of the dead. Consider how you might personalize this good news to your setting in life. How would you present "the old, old story" to your contemporaries?

SOBER MINDED (13)

Notice the words "mind" and "minded" (13) and "ignorance" (14). Christianity is religion of the mind. It is a thoughtful way of living. Peter is saying "put on your thinking cap". In other words, a certain kind of ignorance is an unholy thing. To be sober minded is to be realistic. It is to understand the deepest reality of our universe. Peter encourages us to be mentally prepared. This means rejecting all escapist fantasies. Sober is the opposite of drunk. A sober mind is a disciplined mind that reigns in all efforts to lose yourself in dreams or drugs or alcohol or entertainment. Notice of the connection between mental soundness and hope. To be sober is to be able to face the future with hope. Denial of death is the ultimate escapist fantasy. Christians
must never deny the reality of death. We must face it hoping for the revelation of Jesus Christ. A Christian must "be very careful not to be indifferent about the future."

HOLY

Peter is concerned throughout his letter that his congregations should be holy. This means that he wants them to be set apart as a peculiar people, literally "children of obedience" (14). We have a new identity as Christians. We are called to imitate the conduct of our morally perfect creator. He has enabled us to be free from the destructive passions and the meaninglessness of this world. As soon as we believe in the new world, we get 'exiled' (17) from this old world and we are set apart. We become extraterrestrials. All of the twisted ways that we used to use our body, mind and spirit are replaced by wholesome and healthy ways. It is like a former prostitute that takes all her old jewelry and clothes and ministers to disabled kids at her former high school by taking them to the proms dressed in the adornment she once used for sin. Peter is saying, "you are now God's possession. Don't use your beauty to conform to the passions of the world".

JUDGMENT (17)

There will be a final judgment. Everyone will be judged according to his deeds. God will show no partiality. Without a final reckoning, everyone is ultimately moral equivalent because after death, people like Osama Bin Laden and people like Mother Teresa would have exactly the same future. No one could truly say whose life was better. So there is an impartial judgment. But this judgment need not eclipse the certainty of a Christian's hope in heaven. Peter assures his congregation that The Judge is their "father" (17). Peter says that God's judgment is impartial. But Peter also knew that when he was adopted by the God and Father of Jesus Christ, he could neither be condemned nor cast off. For a Christian, our last judgment occurs when we believe in Christ. At that moment we are judged to be 'righteous'. And yet this immediate justification always produces fruit that will be taken into account on the last day of Judgment. That fruit will be judged impartially - black and white, male and female, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor will all be treated the same way. But what might it mean to conduct ourselves with fear of judgment all the while knowing that the Judge is our Father? There is a kind of holy reverence for God that is entirely compatible with the certainty of resurrection.
1 Peter Bible Study (chapters 1-3)

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

THE WORD

Main Theme: Peter takes a few verses to draw his reader's attention to the power of mere words. The Word - the declaration of the good news - is like mother's milk that gives life to a baby. It is also like a tiny seed that grows into a mighty tree. It transforms as it nurtures love and starves hate.

THE WORD

Clearly the central theme of this passage is "the Word". I was trained as a new Christian to think that the phrase "the Word" was a reference to the Bible. If you look at the way that the apostles use the phrase, however, they almost never refer to the Bible. Instead, "the Word" is a reference to the good news that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the grave. If you look at the way that Peter uses "the Word" in verse 23 it is evident that he does not mean the Bible. He says that the Word of God gives us "new birth". The Bible doesn't give us new birth. Jesus Christ gives us new birth.

THE BIRTH OF LOVE (22)

In verse 22 Peter says that our souls are purified by obedience to "the truth". "Truth" here is synonymous with "Word". Peter has such a nuanced sense of the gospel that he has many ways of speaking about it. In one sense, it's like believing a Word that somebody has just spoken to you. In another sense, it's like obeying a system of truth. Either way, it purifies our soul. I was talking to someone recently who said that her experience in Africa over the summer convinced her not only that God loved her but also that she had the power to love other people. The gospel filled her up with so much of God's love that it crested over the lip of the cup and overflowed to other people. Notice the logical progression: the truth purifies our heart and then out of that pure heart we are enabled to love other people. Having a heart purified by the gospel leads to loving behavior. Practically speaking, we must wonder whether we truly understand the Gospel if love is not issuing forth from within. The two words that Peter uses to describe this love are "sincere" and "earnest". Pure love is always sincere. It does not dissimulate. Paul says that "love believes all things" which means that loving someone means trying not to be suspicious of them. It means making every effort to tell yourself good stories about their motives. Earnest means that love is not fake. It is not a put on. Ask yourself whether your "love" for other people is truly sincere and earnest. To the extent that it is not, confess this to God and ask him to help you to feel the wonder of the gospel which declares that we are forgiven, adopted and inhabited by God.

THE DEATH OF HATE (2.1)

In 2:1, Peter describes the flip side of love. He describes the action of hate. In the same way that we put away winter clothes come May, love means putting away the hateful emotions of the heart. Peter gives a list of five hateful emotions. Notice how these are the opposite of sincere and earnest love. Malice means ill will. "Malice of forethought" is a legal term that will always
aggravate the penalty of a crime in a court room because even secular courts know the destructive power of malice. Deceit is clearly the opposite of sincere. We deceive people because we want to get things past them and hide our schemes from them. We deceive people because we do not trust them. And this deception leads to more distrust. Hypocrisy is a thespian term that Jesus turned into a moral term. It means that you act righteous on the outside without intending to be righteous in the heart. Hypocrisy is the opposite of being earnest and it is the main reason that people give for abandoning the church. Envy is a very deep and basic emotion. I once saw an experiment done where to monkeys are put in a cage. Each is given a cucumber. Then the first one is given a grape and the second is given a cucumber again. The second monkey reacts with frustration. But the researcher gives the first monkey a grape again. This time the second monkey becomes extremely uneasy. When the second monkey is given a cucumber again, he leaps on to the bars of the cage, rattles the bars, and starts screaming. Envy runs deep. The fifth word that Peter uses is slander. Slander means encouraging others to dislike people. This doesn't necessarily have to be a lie. It could be telling damaging stories about people even if they are true. It is the opposite of going to a person and telling them how they are hurting you (or themselves or other people). Notice that none of these five vices are involve sensuality, lust, greed, gluttony, or any other physical sensation. They are more dangerous than sensuality because they are the complete opposite of love.

SEED (23-25)

Peter uses profound metaphors for the life-giving power of good news. First, he compares the gospel's regenerative power to that of a seed. And not only a seed, but an imperishable seed. Perhaps the most important aspect of a seed is that it is alive. It is active. You might even say that it is a predator. It works on us before we ever respond to it. The particular seed that Peter is talking about remains forever. Unlike physical seed it does not weather but retains its glory and beauty. Unlike a flower, the seed of the Gospel only grows in splendor and majesty from season to season. There is nothing limited, temporary or culturally relative about the Gospel. It spans all time and space. The story of the good news of Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension will be told and retold over all the earth and throughout eternity to the praise and glory of the Triune God.

MILK (2.2-3)

The second metaphor that Peter uses is that of mothers milk. The Gospel, says Peter, is like milk that a baby drinks to live. This milk contains exactly the right God-created nutrients that are needed by the child to grow and be healthy. God, who designed our hearts, knows exactly what we need spiritually to grow healthy and loving. The gospel is exactly the right message that every human being needs to hear to make them come alive again. It is for every nation, male and female, Jew and Greek, slave and free. You may have heard the gospel and you may even think that you agree with the Gospel, but if it isn't giving you life, you may not actually be drinking it.
TASTE (23)

Peter quotes from the Old Testament Psalms to help his readers understand more about the precise nature of the milk that he is commending. The Psalmist writes "taste and see that the Lord is good". This is more than a cognitive event. It is one thing to know that a Krispy Kreme doughnut is good. It is another thing to taste that it is good. Ultimately, the gospel is not a set of propositions, nor even a series of historical declarations, but something you taste, namely the goodness of God. The gospel is about God. Specifically, the gospel is about the character of God. To believe the gospel is to taste the graciousness of God. It is to have the graciousness of God on one's tongue. To have a pallet that enjoys the graciousness of God.
1 Peter 2:4-10

**LIVING STONES**

Main Theme: Peter here introduces a long section of his letter on submission (which sometimes leads to suffering). Before asking them to voluntarily submit to people in authority Peter builds them up with an exalted sense of their new identity (The Temple of living stones) and their new priestly calling (declaring the praises of God).

**NEW IDENTITY (9)**

Peter is about to tell his readers many hard things about their submission to authority. He has prepared them for this subject by taking about the way that the gospel kills hate and brings love to life. But now he talks about an uncomfortable aspect of loving someone: sometimes having to submit to them. Some of the churches might have felt like Peter was asking them to be a doormat to the 'Powers' around them. Knowing this, Peter reminds his readers of their exalted status before he asks them to be subservient. Several times in this section Peter tells these Gentiles that they have all of the privileges and responsibilities of the children of Abraham. He has already called them 'elect' at the outset of the letter and he wants them to be amazed by this again. Once they were not people under the banner of Mercy. But now they are God's people who have received mercy. They are legitimate Israelites. Israel was a proud nation in the best sense of that word. She knew herself to be cherished and chosen. She was aware of her uniqueness among all of the nations in the world. Peter says to his gentile converts - 'you have the same blessedness as Israel!'

**SPIRITUAL HOUSE (5)**

In verse 5 Peter says that the church is a spiritual house. By that, he does not mean that the church meets in a building. Rather, he is saying that the saints are the living stones in an invisible house. We are living stones. In the Old Testament the temple was the dwelling place of God. The holy of holy's in particular was inhabited by God who dwelled at a certain spot in the middle of that massive room. Then Jesus said that he was the real temple. He said that if the temple was destroyed he would raise it back up in three days. And he clarified that he wasn't referring to Herod's temple but to his body. Therefore, since the church is the body of Christ, we (not the sanctuary) are also the temple. Consider the implications of the fact that churches are built of people not of stones and wood. How is this a critique of our understanding of church? How is it a confirmation of our practices as a church?

**THE CORNERSTONE (6-7)**

Peter uses the metaphor of a cornerstone. A cornerstone (or foundation stone) is the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation. It is critically important since all other stones will be set in reference to this stone. The cornerstone determines the alignment of the entire structure. The Bible is rich with cornerstone imagery. Peter got the idea from two passages in the Old
Testament. In Psalm 118:22 (quoted six times in the New Testament) the psalmist uses the concept of a cornerstone as a metaphor for a marvelous new work that God is going to accomplish in the future. Jesus himself appropriates the imagery of Psalm 118 to describe his own marvelous ministry. Isaiah also uses the language of cornerstone in Isaiah 28:16. Peter quotes Isaiah in verse seven. Why is it so important that Jesus is The Cornerstone? Because, like a cornerstone, he is precious to God. Precious here doesn't mean cute. Peter is using the word 'precious' the way Gollum uses the word about the Ring. It is deeply, critically important. God evaluates all human behavior by the plum line that is set by the cornerstone. The cornerstone tells you what straight looks like. Everything must be aligned with the cornerstone because it is 'precious' to God. But it is not precious to humans. The cornerstone is rejected by the leaders of human religious institutions ('the builders'). This is why it is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense (Isaiah 8:14)

LIVING STONE (4)

Peter also refers to the Messiah as a "living stone". Not only are stones clearly not alive, they are the very opposite of being alive. But the living stone has thoughts, and initiates action. The structure of God's temple is established by the life of the stone. His life is characterized by human rejection (7) and divine exaltation (4). The builders considered Jesus to be a misfit. He was not even worthy to be placed on an edifice much less be the cornerstone of a building. The entire world regarded Jesus as refuse. He was betrayed, abandoned, or condemned by every human being who knew him. The human race fired him. We crucified him. But God considered him to be chosen and precious. God valued his act of crucifixion as the most beautiful and lovely human action ever performed. All structural soundness in the church must be aligned with God's preferences. "Christ and him crucified" is the plumline for any solid church. All words, actions, and attitudes in a church must be evaluated by the measuring stick of Jesus Christ's sacrifice. What does that look like for church leadership? What does that look like for how a church should minister in a particular neighborhood?

NEW CALLING (9)

Just as Peter's churches have received a new identity, so they have also received a new purpose in life. Their purpose is to "proclaim the excellency of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Verse 5 says that they are to "be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices."

"Before there was a special priestly class in Israel, there was the idealized notion of all Israel as a priesthood (Exod 19:6), and it is to this ancient notion that Peter makes his appeal (vv 5, 9)." (J. Ramsey Michaels, Word Biblical commentary). The job of the priests was to make the glory of God known to everyone around them. They made every effort to show people how merciful and how creative the Creator really is. They used symbols, they performed dramatic actions, they dressed up in elaborate costumes, they sang, they wrote poetry, they prayed, they read from the Law. All of it was to show God's people what a satisfying and magnificent and resplendent Being God is. The church has the same task. We are royalty. We are the priesthood. We are
holy. We are King's private treasure. And all of this is supposed to make us very talkative about his greatness.
1 Peter 2:11-20
SUBMISSION TO GOVERNOR AND BOSS
Main Theme: Peter begins his section on submission by encouraging his readers to continue to extricate themselves from the destructive ways of the Roman Empire. In doing this, they will be targets for derision. Peter encourages his readers to remain submissive to even bad leaders even in the midst of derision and persecution.

BELOVED (11)
ἀγαπητοί (‘beloved’) has much the same meaning as the ἐκλετοῖς (‘elect’) of 1:1. It reinforces the title of honor already given to the readers. God has loved them and made them his people (cf. 2 Thess 2:13). Being God's people makes them “aliens and strangers” in a Roman society dominated by hedonism. It demands that they live a different kind of life from that of the Empire.

PASSIONS (11)
Peter exhorts his readers to make a clean moral break with the “natural impulses” of their past (cf. ἐπιθυμίαι - ‘passions’ - in 1:14; 4:2) because these impulses belong to the “darkness” out of which they have been called (cf. 2:9). Because the "passions" are such an integral part of Greco-Roman society, abstaining from them is almost the same thing as resisting the Gentile way of life, being a "sojourner and exile". Thus to “renounce your natural impulses” (v 11) is fundamental to Peter's emphasis on Christian “conduct among the Gentiles." Today we live and an increasingly pagan society where we are encouraged to gratify our pleasures, the quicker the better. What does it look like for a Christian in America to conduct herself with honor among the Gentiles?

WAGING WAR (12)
Peter claims that our natural impulses “wage war” against our best interests. Paul says the same thing in Rom 7:23 and James in James 4:1. The strength of Peter's flesh vs. spirit language is unusual in the New Testament. Peter is adamant that his people declare an all out war against their cravings not only because they are God's people in a foreign land but also because those cravings destroy their soul. As one commentator says, the soul is "the ultimate personal good of peace and security before God. Although no less physical than the life that perishes (cf. 1:24), this life is ... purified by the acceptance of God’s word (1:22; cf. 3:20–21), placed under God’s protecting care (2:25, 4:19), and destined for eternal salvation (1:9)."

EVILDOERS (12)
Christians were being called 'wrongdoers' in Northeast Asia in 70AD. In America in 2012AD Christians are still called, 'evildoers': homophobic, hypocritical, moralistic, judgmental,
intolerant, sexist, weak. The church spends lots of time defending itself against these charges. I know that I become quickly defensive when I am accused of one of these things. But Peter tells his people to expect to be maligned in these ways. His response is that we must continue to be honorable. Notice what he says in verse 15: "by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people." His suggested apologetic is not the word of self protection, but the deed of honor. This apologetic must influence our reading of 2:11–4:11. The reason that he wants his people to be subject to every human institution is so that the Gentiles around them may see the glory of God and come to faith in Christ.

SUBMISSION (13)

Verse 13 is the introduction to Peter's teaching on submission to human institutions: the state, the workplace, the home. Verses 14-17 deal with submission to the government. Peter has two purposes in asking his people to be subject to every human institution. First of all, he believes that these institutions are generally for the best. Even though sin can creep into all three institutions, they generally restrain evil and promote good. He says, "governors are sent by God to punish those who do evil and praise those who do good." The second and more important reason that Peter asks his people to submit is so that God may be glorified. He says, "be subject for the Lord's sake." This implies that his request is not for the sake of the Emperor as much as it is for the sake of the King of Kings. There is a profound paradox in Peter's instructions about submission to the government. On the one hand he says be subject in verse 13. On the other hand he says live as people who are free and verse 16. Martin Luther once said that Christians are servants to all and slaves to none. Peter is saying, "freely lay down your life. Not because you are slaves but because you are royalty."

THE WORKPLACE (18-20)

Submission to the 'boss' ('company', 'manager') is dealt with in verses 18 -20. Even if the boss is unjust, the worker must treat her with respect. The opposite of 'all respect' is grumbling, complaining, working very slowly, taking frequent breaks, talking about the boss behind her back. In Colossians 3, Paul writes, 'Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord'. So we should work in a way that is full of integrity. Character is sometimes defined as what you do when no one is looking. Our character should be impeccable at the workplace. Coworkers should notice the way that we work and see a difference. Peter says in verse 19 that we ought to go about our work, "mindful of God."This means that we have an audience of one. To be mindful of God means to have your mind full of his words and deeds while you work (memorizing scripture and meditating upon it is one way to do this). In the "Practice of the Presence of God" Brother Lawrence says that we can wash dishes and scrub floors in such a way that we are worshiping God and aware of his face looking down upon us. Peter talks about "a gracious thing" two times in the last two verses. It is gracious to in Dewar suffering for doing good. That is one of the major themes of this whole section about submission: if we are suffering because of our submission to a bad institution, it is a gracious sight to God.
He does not enjoy seeing us in pain, but he loves to see us so full of joy because of our relationship with him that we are willing to undergo unjust persecution for his sake.

BAD INSTITUTIONS

It is worth noting that many theologians and moral philosophers have wrestled with these passages about submission. Especially important is the question, "what do we say about bad institutions?" For instance "should a citizen living in Nazi Germany submit to the laws of the evil state?" Or, "if your boss is a petty tyrant, are you allowed to refuse submission to his capricious whims?" I think the best answer to these knotty questions is that we must submit to everything that these institutions command unless they command us to do something that is directly against the higher command of God. For instance, if a doctor is asked to perform an abortion by the hospital where she works, she should not submit to that command. When Daniel was asked to pray to Nebuchadnezzar, and he rightly refused. When the apostles were asked to stop preaching the gospel by the authorities in Jerusalem, they refused as well. On the other hand, Peters audience lived under a government that was far more oppressive than our current government. The working conditions of the servants that Peter is talking to and verse 18 are far more difficult then almost any work conditions that can be found in America today. So, if he is asking his people to submit to these semi-tyrannical institutions, how much more should we to our current institutions.
1 Peter Bible Study (chapters 1-3)

1 Peter 2:21-25

THE ATONEMENT

Main Theme: When Peter says "to this you have been called" he is referring to enduring unjust suffering. Throughout the book Peter is concerned to train his people to be able to suffer for righteousness sake. In this section he motivates his readers to submit to suffering by appealing to the atonement of Jesus Christ. He is both our example and our substitute.

CALLED (21)

These five verses are a parentheses with in the submission section of the letter. Peter has just been talking about the institution of the workplace. He's going to talk about the institution of marriage next. But first Peter inserts of these verses to give his readers extra motivation to submit (it can be hard to submit, especially to unfair leaders). Where does the extra motivation come from? Peter answers, 'atonimg work of Jesus Christ.' The word atonement is an old English word meaning "at one ment". By dying and rising for us Jesus has made us at one with his Father, he has restored our once strained relationship. Precisely how does Jesus accomplished this? That has been a long debate amongst theologians. Broadly speaking, there have been at least two major answers in this debate. First, some Christians think of the atonement as primarily 'exemplarist' - Jesus leaving us an example of how we ought to live. Other Christians think of the atonement as primarily 'substitutionary' - Jesus taking our place and giving us his place.

EXAMPLE (21)

Peter says that "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example." At first sight this statement seems to support the exemplarist theory of the atonement. In other words, Peter seems to be motivating his churches by reminding them of the example of Jesus. There's a famous book by Charles Sheldon called 'In His Steps'. The title of the book is drawn from the last three words of verse 21. The tagline of Sheldon's book is, 'What would Jesus do?' This book's popularity in the late 90s led to the now-famous 'WWJD' wristbands. There was a great French theologian named Peter Abelard. He believed that the life and death of Jesus Christ was primarily an example to us of divine love. The energy that came out of the cross was primarily inspirational. I used this the other day on my son who was reluctant to go to Sunday school because he felt sick. I said, 'Cooper, I have had to preach sometimes when I was sick and I didn't want to. Even Jesus went to the Cross when he didn't want to. You can go to Sunday school even though you don't feel like it.' This is a crude version of the moral influence theory of the atonement because I was asking Cooper to submit to me by appealing to the moral example of Jesus. There is no doubt that Peter wanted the long-suffering of Jesus to be an example to his people, but a mere example is not helpful to sin-sick human beings.

ENTRUSTING OURSELVES (23)

In verses 22-23 Peter gives us one of the ways that Christ has left us an example of righteous suffering. Part of suffering well includes the ability to hold one's tongue. Verses 22-23 describe
Jesus' ability to hold his tongue. Notice, he did not speak with deceit, he did not revile, he did not threaten. He resisted three of the main ways that we are tempted to sin when we are being unjustly attacked. Consider the ways that you verbally fight back when someone threatens you. Because Jesus was able to keep on entrusting himself to his father, he was able not to be defensive. There is a link between trusting God and holding your tongue. We respond to even the slightest verbal abuse like a wild animal backed into a corner because we don't trust God. Jesus entrusted himself to his father. He knew his dad (who responds to injustice with patient, settled resistance) had his back. In Romans chapter 12 Paul tells us to 'leave room for God's righteous anger'. In other words, Jesus exemplified a kind of trust in God that allows a person not to have to engage in verbal retribution. It wasn't that Jesus didn't care about the injustice at he suffered. Jesus knew that his father would plead his cause, would apply the appropriate retribution. He trusted God to do all of the judging.

SUBSTITUTION (24)

Notice that Peter does not simply say that Christ left an example to us. He says "Christ also suffered for you." This means that he endured suffering for our sake. He didn't just intend to inspire us. He intended to actually give us something. The heart of Peter's Atonement theory is not exemplarist but substitutionary. Jesus is an example, yes, but more importantly he is our substitute. And his substitution gives us power to follow his example, to be long-suffering. The motive force is not willpower but gratitude and wonder. Verse 24 is the crux of the atonement. Peter draws from several verses in Isaiah 53 the center of which is 'by his wounds you have been healed'. If you go back and read Isaiah's poem you see that this is the only phrase in the present tense. The impact of Isaiah's brilliant literary device is to shine the spotlight on the central accomplishment of the suffering servant: 'by his wounds we are healed'. We get his healing and he gets our wounds. This is the great exchange. Verse 24 refers to a tree. Actually, it isn't 'a tree' but 'the tree'. The tree is a motif that runs throughout Scripture. It is the place of judgment. It is the hangman's gallows. Deborah the judge sat under a terebinth tree. This was her courtroom. If a person was convicted of a capital offense, that person would be hung right there in the heart of the courtroom. Obviously, this functioned as a powerful deterrent to further criminal activity. Deuteronomy 21:23 says, 'everyone that hangs on a tree is accursed'. Jesus hung on the tree like a criminal in a courtroom. He did it because we were accursed. He bore our curse. The curses we earned, he took. The blessings that he earned, he gave to us. This, more than anything else, is the power source of our ability to suffer injustice with grace.

THE RETURN (25)

Not only is Jesus our example, and our substitute, he is also our shepherd. He stands with us and teaches us step-by-step how to suffer well. He oversees our souls. Our submission to the great overseer will help us to submit to the sub-overseers: boss, mayor, husband. Without being shepherded we are not able to submit to bad institutions. Without elder oversight we cannot continue to consistently move towards genuine, loving, trusting submission. Without his rod and staff we won't even have any desire to submit.
1 Peter Bible Study (chapters 1-3)

1 Peter 3:1-7
WIVES & HUSBANDS

Main Theme: Paul deals with the last of the 3 subordinates who he is addressing in the main body of his letter: wives. He tells them to submit to their husbands - even if they are fearful of bad husbands. He tells them to do so in order to witness to the gospel and in glorify God by their gentle spirit. He also tells husbands to live with their wives in an understanding way respecting them as equals in Christ.

SUBORDINATES (1)

The word "submission" (5) is a dirty word among Westerners in the early 21st-century. In Asia minor during the Roman Empire it was a commonplace. We must also remember that to Muslims it is a beautiful word. We have to be very careful about getting up on our high horse when it comes to the subject of submission. Peter has been thinking hard about this subject because it is so prevalent in the Greco-Roman world in which he lives. Almost all moral philosophers in his day had specific things to say about the Household code. There were standard norms and practices in the large Roman households of Peter's day. These households included both husband and wife, servants, slaves, children, and perhaps grandparents and grandchildren. It was very important that the members of these households understood their roles. Peter is addressing the subordinate member of the household: the citizen, the servant, and now wife (he does briefly address the husbands is verse 7, but does not have as much to say to them). For Peter, the Gospel changes everything about how one is to relate to the person with authority over them. Often times the one in authority had the power to make the lives of the subordinate full of misery. Peter is encouraging the subordinate - under the authority of the government, the boss, or the husband - to voluntarily serve the one in authority over them. Peter grounds this exhortation in the Christians union with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. It is significant that Peter begins chapter 3 with the word, "likewise." He has just reminded his churches about the good news of Christ's death and resurrection. 'Likewise' refers to Christ's way of saying. 'Likewise' means 'in the same way that Christ submitted for your sake and suffered long for you'.

WIVES (1-2, 5-6)

What does it mean for a wife to ... 'be subject to your husband'? One translation uses 'defer to' instead of 'be subject to'. Verse 2 helps to flesh this out a bit. Deferring to someone is similar to being respectful. In Ephesians 5 Paul says, 'lives, respect your husbands'. To respect someone is to be reverent towards them. To honor the image of God that they are. It maybe helpful to think about the opposite of respect and deference. In Genesis 3, after the rebellion of humanity against God, the woman is cursed. Eve becomes marked by a habitual and compulsive habit of wanting to consume or control Adam (lit. 'your desire will be for him'). Christian wives are empowered by their union with Christ to resist the urge to rival and compete with their husbands. They are enabled to revere and defer to their husbands. Peter's mandate is evangelistic. He wants for the conduct of the wives to be so 'pure' that they are able to win over their husbands 'without a word'. It is interesting to notice, here, the power of a word-less witness. Peter may be implying that
Christians who live with unbelievers on a daily basis, perhaps working with them every day - should be careful not to exhaust them with constant references to Jesus. It is important to proclaim the Gospel, of course. But to those we spend time with regularly, a barrage of words can sometimes backfire. Possibly, Peter is also putting his finger on one of the ways that women are tempted to disrespect their husbands: by manipulative speech patterns like complaining, grumbling, nagging, or nitpicking. Peter says that the good news (the word) enables wives to relate to their husbands without any disrespectful speech patterns. Notice the contrast in verse six. Sarah called her husband "Lord". I don't think that this should be applied literally in our day. But there is an application. You can tell a good deal about someone's level of respect for another person by the way they address them. Think about the different ways that people begin their sentences to their spouse. Sometimes even the way they say their name - "Margie!" - is disrespectful. Even when we say - 'Sweetie', 'Love', 'Darling', and 'Honey' - the tone can convey exasperation, irritation or anger.

ADORNMENT (3-6)

After his reference to 'pure conduct' Peter's mind jumps to the subject of adornment. The adorning of Christian women must be radically pure in a Roman world of high fashion. This is a part of being an exile and a stranger in this world. Christian women are empowered by Christ to abstain from obsession about their beauty (which would include constantly looking in a mirror or reading fashion magazines). Christian women are freed from the crushing burden of always having to manage hair, jewelry, and clothing. None of these things are evil in themselves. But as living stones and elect exiles, Christian wives must be focused on something inside that no one could ever photograph. They ought to fantasize about being a beautiful soul rather than winning a beauty contest. Christian women will want to look beautiful to God more than to men for He is smitten by a gentle and quiet spirit.

HUSBANDS (7)

The command about adornment has as much to do with men as with women. Men are being indirectly warned not to focus on the external beauty of a woman. Men have a tendency to make women into objects: things that they can look at, tools of their pleasure. In doing this, a man reinforces a woman's desire to have her external beauty praised and adored. Peter refers to fear in verse 6. He seems to be thinking that the wives would be frightened by the behavior of their husbands. A husband can be frightening in many ways. His sexual pressure can be frightening, his verbal violence can be frightening, and his refusal to listen to his wife can be frightening. Therefore Peter says to husbands, 'live with your wives in an understanding way'. This command is amazingly relevant to us. If someone were to ask my wife, 'how would you like for Ben to treat you?' I think she would say, 'I want him to live with me in an understanding way'. To be understanding is - among other things - to listen, to agree with her assessment of my weaknesses, to admit that she's right. Peter says that the woman is the 'weaker vessel'. This doesn't mean that she is more foolish or or cowardly than men. It means that she is more sensitive. Women have very delicate emotional sensors. They register emotions on a finer scale than men. Because of this she is more fragile and easily damaged. Some feminists would be
angry that Peter calls women 'weaker vessels'. But he goes on to say that women are 'heirs' with their husbands in the grace of life. Peter is clear that he believes that women are in every way equal to men in Christ. They have different gifts and responsibilities, but they are equally royal in Christ. The importance of the husbands conduct towards the wife is underlined in the last phrase of this section. Apparently a husband's prayer can be hindered if he is mistreating his wife. If a husband does not live with his wife in an understanding way, it will damage his relationship with God. God becomes more distant to the husband when the husband becomes more distant from his wife. I find that whenever I am fighting with Margie, it is almost impossible for me to pray. One last insight. In Ephesians 5, Paul gives the majority of instructions to the husband. Peter gives the majority of instructions to the wife. In Ephesians 5, Paul points out that husbands have a sanctifying effect on the wife. Peter points out that wives have a sanctifying effect on their husbands.
1 Peter Bible Study (chapters 1-3)

1 Peter 3:8-22
RIGHTeous suffering
Main Theme: Peter concentrates on one of the main themes of his letter: righteous suffering. First, he deals with the love that should exist within the church. Peter then moves from love of the brother to love of the enemy: the greatest challenge to love. Even as he calls his people to evangelize with gentleness and respect, he tells them that they are going to suffer for it. He ends by giving them the example of Christ to encourage them in their suffering.

FINALLY (8)

It is surprising that Peter says 'finally' with 2.5 chapters left in his epistle. It seems that he is summarizing his ethical instructions to his churches. He's closing his section on how Christians should relate to those who are outside the community of the church. And now he turns to 'all of you'. These instructions are internal: for the church community. In other words, he's turning from a set of outward facing instructions to a set of inward facing instructions. Verse 9 lists five qualities that a Christian should bring to her church community. Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 13 contain similar instructions. Notice how all five things create harmony and unity. The first and last qualities have to do with state of mind. Harmony within a family begins and ends with a mindset: unity of mind cannot exist without intellectual humility. If I am not teachable then I will be the type of person that rocks unity. If I am certain that I am right about everything I do and believe then I will break the mental unity of my church. Be very careful if you think that you are a prophet to your church. The middle three qualities have more to do with emotional sensitivity. A tender heart means a heart that is very finely calibrated to the feelings of others. It is similar to sympathy. The two Greek words that make up the English word "sympathy" have to do with deep feeling (pathos) and harmony (like symphonic). Brotherly love sits in the middle of these five qualities as it encompasses them all. It means having a genuine affection for fellow members of your church. It means hoping for the best for those in our community of faith.

LOVE SUPREME (9)

In order to achieve the quality of character described in verse 8, one must be prepared to bless those who curse us. The highest calling of love is to love our enemies. At times, those enemies are with in the church. We should not be surprised if a fellow member of the church undermines us or does something that damages us. Most of the time this will come through what they say. To 'revile' someone is to insult them. Gossip is a form of reviling. Peter says that we must bless those who revile us. Imagine that there is a person in the church that you compete with. They seem to be taking things that are yours. They seem to be looking for ways to undermine you. Someone else comes up to you and says, 'you know that person (your enemy), they really annoy me'. Everything in you wants to join in the negative speech and pile it on. But love calls you to defend them. Love beckons you to talk about their good qualities instead.
GOOD DAYS (10)

In verse 10 Peter quotes from Psalm 34.12-14. One thing that this tells us is that the ethics of the New Testament are very much in keeping with those of the Old Testament. Righteousness looked the same in Israel as it does in the church. Jesus did not come to change the meaning of righteousness (though he did come to deepen our understanding of it). Both Peter and the Psalmist appeal to our own well-being in their ethical encouragement. It may seem odd - perhaps even self-serving - that they should motivate us by saying 'love in order ... that you may obtain a blessing' or 'if you want to love life and see good days then love people.' But there is a long tradition of wisdom in the Old Testament that says, 'God created the world to work well when people love each other'. In other words, love is the law of human nature. Love is built into the very fabric of the universe. Therefore things go well with us if we love well. Not partaking in gossip, not trying to deceive people with your words, making every effort to create reconciliation amongst people, these things make life lovely. These things make family gatherings enjoyable they make workplaces pleasant. The reason for this is simple: love is the essence of God's character. that God's eyes light up and His ears perk up when he sees his children loving each other. But his face darkens and his aspect becomes grim when he sees people deceiving each other and reviling each other.

RIGHTEOUS SUFFERING (14)

Although things tend to go well with us when we pursue peace and love other people, sometimes the opposite occurs. Sometimes we 'suffer for righteousness'. Sometimes we 'suffer for doing good'. And yet, even here Peter appeals to our desire for blessings. In a very strange paradox he says that even when we suffer for righteousness we will be blessed. There is a backhanded blessing that God gives to his children in their suffering. It is a blessing that the world knows nothing about. It is the kind of blessing that made Paul and Silas sing hymns of joy in their prison cell. Notice that Peter dwells on this strange blessing right before he talks about evangelism. It is very interesting that in the context of evangelism Peter expects his readers to be afraid and troubled. Instead of being afraid they are to 'honor Christ the Lord as holy' at the deepest level of their consciousness. The opposite of fear is not human strength . That is a delusion. The opposite of fear is God's strength at the center of a weak human heart. Peter says two things about evangelism. First, we must have reasons for the hope that we have within us. Again, hope is a major theme in 1 Peter. Hope it's not our subjective feeling, but the objective reality of the new world. We have to be able to give people reasons for believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is incumbent upon us to be able to explain why the existence of the new heavens and new earth make sense of our world. But sharing the gospel goes deeper than giving reasons. The heart of evangelism is reverence for Christ and the ensuing gentleness and respect for the evangelized. It is noteworthy that many non-Christians get fed up with the lack of respect and unnecessary forcefulness of Christian evangelicals. The remedy for this character defect is to set one's heart on the holiness of Christ. A deep awareness of the holiness of Christ makes us broken people and people with enough confidence to be gentle.
CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUS SUFFERING (18-22)

To help his people suffer for their righteousness, Peter sends them back to the good news. It is amazing how many times the apostles remind their churches of the good news in their short letters. Each time there seems to be a slightly different take on the same old story. In this case, Peter's take on the gospel is very unique. The essence of Christ's righteous suffering is an exchange. The righteous is given for the unrighteous. He is cast away from God so that he might bring us to God. All of this was accomplished by means of his crucifixion and resurrection ('Put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit'). This single great event accomplished the liberation of his people from their dungeon of sin. Peter refers to a great mystery in verse 19-20. He refers to Noah's Ark as a God-given pattern for Christ's great liberation. 'In the spirit', Jesus was actually present and Noah's day proclaiming salvation to all human beings as God patiently waited to bring the flood (20). Jesus was the real ark that brought us safely through the water. When we are baptized we symbolically jumped aboard the ark. Now He has 'gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him'. The depths of his humiliation combined with the heights of his exultation are announced to Peters churches so that they will be able to suffer long for doing good knowing that they - like Christ - will eventually be exalted.